



FROM ECOLOGICAL MASCULINITIES TO POSTCOLONIAL ECOMASCULINITIES: A DIFFRACTIVE READING OF CONTEMPORARY ANGLOPHONE PAKISTANI FICTION

Nosheen Rana
Mrsnosheenrana@gmail.com

PhD Scholar, NUML, Islamabad, Pakistan.

Abstract

This paper interrogates the possibilities of “ecological masculinities” (Hultman and Pulé’s 02) as a counter-hegemonic alternative masculine practice among postcolonial Pakistani men in three Anglophone Pakistani literary texts that are Mohsin Hamid’s *Exit West* (2017), Aamer Hussein’s *Another Gulmohar Tree* (2009), and Shandhana Minhas’ *Tunnel Vision* (2007). Drawing on Martin Hultman and Paul Pulé’s (2018) foundational claim that “all masculinities have an infinite capacity to care towards Earth, human and themselves” (*Ecological Masculinities* 179), this study is an attempt to examine implication of ethics of care in postcolonial literary context. Grounded in Karen Barad’s (2007) notion of “agential realism” (*Meeting the Universe* 172) and Donna Haraway’s (1997) feminist epistemological knowledge, this article employs diffractive reading as a methodological framework to understand how realities are constituted through “intra-action” of human and more-than-human agencies (Barad). This study situates its literary analysis within the theoretical corpus of “slow violence” developed by Rob Nixon (2012) and engage critically with Martin Hultman and Paul Pulé’s notion of “ecomasculinity” (2018) to see whether or not the notion of ecological masculinity, that is developed principally in the Global North, can be productively extended to the postcolonial Pakistani context. This study thus contributes to the existing scholarship on ecological masculinity and postcolonial criticism by collectively generating the provisional figuration that this study names as Postcolonial Ecomasculinity.

Keywords: *Care, Diffractive Reading, Ecological Masculinities, Postcolonial Ecocriticism, Slow Violence.*

Corresponding Author: Nosheen Rana (PhD Scholar, NUML, Islamabad, Pakistan)
Email: Mrsnosheenrana@gmail.com

1. Introduction

The contemporary world is facing social and ecological crises that have their roots in gender inequity. Issues like climate emergency, biodiversity collapse and social injustice cannot be meaningfully addressed without challenging power structures that have authorized social, ecological and gender violence (Hultman and Pulé 61-71). Critics have already argued that communities that are economically and socially undervalued are most likely to be exposed to environmental hazards (Bullard, 1999; Dobson, 1999). Susan Buckingham's remarkable work, *Gender and Environment* (2000), offers one of the earliest systematic arguments on how gender relations have affected the natural environment. Buckingham's work establishes gender and the natural world as mutually constitutive terrains of inquiry. She has used case studies from the developed and developing world to explain gendered roles within the family, community and international connections to establish an argument that environmental issues impact men and women differently. Buckingham notes that toxic waste is produced by wealthy nations whereas toxic industries are mostly located in communities that are estranged and find it hard to escape from the negative effects of pollution because they have the least power to resist. Buckingham's study exposed that in most cases, it is a poor neighborhoods consisting of immigrants in a rich country or a developing nation that is exposed to health and safety hazards in return for jobs and foreign exchange. Moreover, within these poor ethnic minorities and communities, women are more likely to be poorer than men because of their dependency on men (Buckingham 1-10). Modern society in its present form is gendered. Relations between men and women are unequal not only because of historically sustained social structures that have positioned men above women but also in the contemporary world when the world is facing the climate emergency, there exists a clear difference in capacity of women and men to address these issues because of gender bias involved in addressing environmental issues.

Ecofeminist political ecology and feminist environmentalism has interrogated different dimensions of gender-environment nexus. In their work, *A Feminist Political Ecology Perspective* (2013), Dianna Rocheleau, Barbara Thomas-Slayter, and Esther Wangari have developed an analytical framework of feminist political ecology that links insights from feminist cultural ecology, political ecology, feminist geography and feminist political economy. In their argument they treat gender as a critical variable that has capacity to provide access and control over environmental resources based on one's class, caste, race, culture, and ethnicity. Dianne et al. argue that the conventional dichotomy between "quality of life" (in industrialized countries) and "survival issues" (in Africa, Asia and Latin America) needs to be reconsidered (4-5). They insist that issues related to environment are inherently political and devoid of neutrality and access to and control of environmental resources are "inextricably linked to one's positioning in gender, race, class

and culture (4-5). Based on their analysis on gendered sciences of survival, gendered environmental politics, grassroots activism, gendered environmental rights and responsibilities, Rocheleau et al argue that national and international environmental movements are mostly “domain of men” where ecological knowledge comes through “daily management of the living landscape” (6-7). They further argue that distribution of resource and responsibilities between men and women is far out of balance as women carry a disproportionate share of responsibilities and hold very limited rights and economic means to determine the future of environmental quality. This argument defines gendered experiences of women who are harmed by patriarchy and masculine domination in environmental movements. However, while doing so, masculine subjects who share the same precariousness and vulnerability are often made invisible.

Ecological feminist knowledge prepares the analytical ground for Martin Hultman and Paul Pulé who extend the feminist political ecology to engage the masculine subject itself. In their work, *Ecological Masculinities: Theoretical Foundations and Practical Guidance* (2018), Hultman and Pulé agree that the institution of masculine patriarchy is at the core of the current ecological and social crises (03-04). In another work, *When Gender Equality and Earth Care Meet* (2021), Hultman and Pulé opine that in contemporary world, global, social, and environmental challenges have their roots in long history of patriarchal domination and exploitation (Hedenqvist et al.). Building their argument on ecofeminist scholarship and critical studies on men and masculinities, Hultman and Pulé (2018) identify two dominant configurations of contemporary masculinity that are: “industrial/breadwinner masculinity” and “ecomodern masculinity” (03). Industrial/breadwinner masculinities are mostly organized around extractive economic logics and the patriarchal provider ideal, whereas ecomodern masculinities acknowledge socio-environmental crises but they rely on techno-rational solutions without addressing deeper structural inequalities that produce the crises. Hultman and Pulé (2018) argue that despite their differences, both *industrial/breadwinner* and *ecomodern* masculinity retain hegemonic elements that include but not limited to overt exploitation over human and non-human resources by positioning humans outside of and above from the rest of nature. Rebecca Leigh Rutt and Lisa Tjørring in their work, *Killing with care? The potentials at the sustainability/masculinity nexus in an ‘alternative’ Danish slaughterhouse* (2024) argue that in practice, both *industrial/breadwinner* and *ecomodern* masculinities remain “acutely but distinctly in conflict with the wellbeing of the planet” (1544). In response to existing dominant scripts of masculinities, Hultman and Pulé (2018) propose a third figuration that is “ecological masculinities” (223). The notion of *ecological masculinities* refers to an alternative masculine practice that is rooted in relationality, care, and ecocentric/ecofeminist ethic of care and responsibility towards human and more-than-

human world. It is a move from “masculine hegmonisation to ecologisation” (231). In theory the concept of *ecological masculinities* refers to,

[...] (re)awaken ways of being, thinking, and doing masculinities that engaged with Earth, place, and people at the same time; to deepen relational connections (both amongst humans and between our species and the other-than-human world), and to support us all to experience the feelings of loss associated with the anthropogenic changes that are upon us, so that we can together respond to the monumental social and environmental challenges at hand with increasing and widening circles of care (Pulé and Sykes *Transforming Destructive Masculinities Norms* qtd in Rutt and Tjørring 1545).

Martin Hultman and Paul Pulé (2018) call for “wider circles of care” towards the “glocal commons” (177) needs to be structural, personal, systematic and intimate shift from hegmonisation to ecologisation (Hedenqvist et al.). The theoretical notion of ecomasculinity insists that all men have an “infinite capacity to care toward Earth, humans and themselves” (Hultman and Pulé 180). However, these capacities have been suppressed by hegemonic scripts and there is urgent need to address internalized sense of superiority among men to move towards ecological and social planetary justice.

It is significant to note that Hultman and Pulé’s conceptual framework of ecomasculinity that is based on relationality and care is not an entirely new gesture, but it is built on the conceptual scaffolding that feminist political ecologists have already laid. Raewyn Connell, in her work, *A whole new world: Remaking masculinity in the context of the environmental movement*, (1990), interviewed six “environmentally considerate men” and argues that environmental engagement is a crucial way to cultivate distinctive gender politics grounded in solidarity, and moral clarity in aesthetic and personal relations. However, such environmental engagement “poses a direct challenge to hegemonic masculinity” and environmentally considerate men are labelled as “gender traitors” (Connell 452-478). It is also opined that ecological politics is a means to disturb such discourses that associate masculine identities with access to control to objectify natural resources. Consequently, there is need for a discourse that is new, mutually enriching, and can initiate non-oppressive conversations between men and nature. Hultman and Pulé’s relational turn in masculinity studies gains further depth in Arne Naess’s (1993/2017) philosophy of “deep ecology” that foregrounded “self-awareness, nature reverence and care for Earth” as personal ethical imperatives and advocates “Self-realization!” (Naess qtd in Hultman and Pulé 118) as the recognition of the intrinsic value of all lives. Critics argue that if gendered power relations decide who bears responsibility and who holds authority over the environment, then any concept like *ecological masculinities* must build its expansive circle of care in connection with feminist environmental scholarship based

on relationality (Requena-Pelegri 135-149). Such relationality implies openness as well as vulnerability and precariousness that is essential for the development of environmental ethics.

Within the existing scholarship on *ecological masculinities*, there exists a significant gap. The application of *ecological masculinities* as counter-hegemonic masculinities in postcolonial literary contexts is remarkably thin. The framework of *ecological masculinities* has emerged from the industrial North and pays limited attention to impacts of race, class, ethnicity, culture, and sexuality in constructing masculinities. In postcolonial contexts where the legacies of colonial extraction have left marks of acute environmental degradation and the most violent displacements, it is crucial to understand that the question of ecologised masculinities and ethics of care is of the greatest urgency (Gilligan: *In a different voice*). This study, therefore, undertakes a critical reading of three literary texts through the frameworks of *ecological masculinities* (Hultman and Pulé 2018) and *slow violence* (Nixon 2011) and explores the ways man-nature relationship within selected postcolonial texts is shaped by historical, political, gendered, and material realities of both land and people. It also examines how masculine subjects in selected texts navigate questions of rootedness, land, displacement, ecological precarity, and gendered identity. Navigation of such trajectories in the present study contributes to the under-theorized intersection of postcolonial masculinity studies and ecological masculinities, thus foregrounding both the obstacles and the emergent possibilities for such caring and relational masculine subjectivities that can be found within the ruins of ecological and patriarchal modernity.

1.1. Problem Statement

The contemporary framework of *ecological masculinities* is mainly developed by Martin Hultman and Paul Pulé (2018). They offer a prominent vocabulary for engaging men in environmental responsibility (Hultman and Pulé, 2018, 2020, 2024) as they distinguish *industrial/breadwinner*, *ecomodern*, and *ecological masculinities* and offer a structural way out of environmental degradation and reorientation. However, the existing framework has its empirical base assembled in the Global North, that centering around “wealthy, Western, white males” (Hultman and Pulé 19). These masculine subjects of industrial modernity are dominant referents who either benefit from or resist extractive masculinity from a privileged position. Moreover, the framework’s dominant articulation emerges from Western epistemological conventional knowledge and overlooks the cultural, historical, and political realities of the postcolonial world. This means that postcolonial subjects, whose relation to environmental degradation is the result of colonial inheritance, neocolonial pressure, and present-day political-economic precarity, are overlooked in existing knowledge on *ecological masculinity*. Hultman and Pulé clarify that their conceptualisation provides an implicitly universal ideal rather than a set of ideas

that are historically, culturally, and geographically situated (qtd in Rutt and Tjørring). There is an urgent need to extend the conceptual sphere of *ecological masculinities* to include postcolonial subjects and examine how the notion of care among postcolonial subjects carries impacts of constrained authenticity under shared colonial and ecological vulnerability. This study undertakes a critical reading of three selected works of Anglophone Pakistani fiction, *Tunnel Vision* (2007), *Another Gulmohar Tree* (2009), and *Exit West* (2017), to study how postcolonial men's ecological subjectivities are more complex than the existing simplified care/domination dichotomies.

1.2. Research Questions

The study is designed to address the following questions:

- I. What does the selected fiction depict about the postcolonial limits of Hultman and Pulé's notion of ecological masculinities and what conditions does it reveal as enabling 'broader care' beyond Northern privilege?
- II. How do selected Anglophone Pakistani novels reframe postcolonial men's relation to nature as shared colonial-ecological vulnerability rather than care or domination?

1.3. Significance of the Study

The present study addresses a blind spot in the contemporary framework of ecological masculinities offered by Martin Hultman and Paul Pulé (2018). The framework, developed primarily in the Global North, is acknowledged, within its own scholarship, to have overlooked the strong influences of race, class, sexuality, and culture in constructing masculinities (Rutt and Tjørring 1545). It can be observed that Hultman and Pulé's conception of *industrial*, *ecomodern*, and *ecological masculinities* has been constructed from empirical bases and does not include postcolonial societies (Hultman and Anshelm 84-96). Existing scholarship possesses limited capacity to reflect on what happens to the men-nature relationship when the male subject is structurally constrained by colonial inheritance and neocolonial political-economic precarity. This study intervenes in this gap by staging postcolonial Pakistani men in their care relation to the more-than-human world, to offer an insight that the existing framework cannot yet accommodate. Practically, the study argues that the notion and practice of "broader care" for the "glocal commons" (Hultman and Pulé) cannot be assumed to travel, in its intact form, from privileged contexts into materially precarious ones. Methodologically, by placing three literary texts, *Exit West*, *Another Gulmohar Tree*, and *Tunnel Vision*, as a relational spectrum spanning presence, this study resists the universal application of typologies developed in Global Northern contexts and aims to produce a postcolonial ecomasculinity vocabulary to understand environmental, gender, and conservation work in postcolonial geographies such as Pakistan. Within Anglophone Pakistani literary scholarship, the study contributes

an ecomasculinist reading to texts that have been historically analyzed through postcolonial, feminist, and transnational lenses alone.

1.4. Research Tools

In this study, I have employed a qualitative research design by combining textual analysis and diffractive reading to understand how postcolonial masculinities in selected postcolonial Pakistani novels are entangled with ecological, colonial, and postcolonial forces. Textual analysis facilitates the close examination of characters, prevalent themes within the text, and the symbolic textures to demonstrate postcolonial Pakistani men's relation to the more-than-human world. The data for textual analysis consists of three selected Anglophone Pakistani novels. I have read the texts closely to highlight certain textual cues within novels' settings, images, dialogue, and motif clusters to understand which texts do and do not register masculine ecological subjectivity and how hegemonic masculinity is dramatized through explicit expressions of absence and silence. I have combined textual analysis with diffractive reading to see how postcolonial masculine identities *intra-act* with colonial histories, socio-cultural patterns, and ecological crises.

Drawn from Donna Haraway (1992) and Karen Barad (2007), diffractive reading is a way of reading selected texts in parallel to extract comparative findings. In her work, *Meeting the Universe Halfway* (2007), Karen Barad argues that meaning pre-exists in its relational occasion. This means that human and non-human entities exist in relation to each other, and their meaning is co-constituted through an ongoing relational process and not through isolated properties of stable subjects. Diffractive reading allows readers to read texts with and through one another while carefully tracing intra-actions between the human and the more-than-human world to generate new, creative, and previously unimagined differences. Diffractive reading, therefore, becomes a way of attending to specific patterns of difference instead of looking at a single hierarchical axis of interpretation. This methodological choice allows this study to critically see relationality between male subjectivities, their ecological inheritances, and the visibility (and invisibility) of "slow violence" within postcolonial settings. Moreover, the combination of textual analysis and diffractive reading allows this study to understand relationality, materiality, and the entanglement of ideas, bodies, and environment as intra-connected while they co-constitute meanings with and for each other in selected literary texts.

1.5. Theoretical Framework

This research draws on a theoretical framework from two interconnected strands of scholarship, Martin Hultman and Paul Pulé's (2018) framework of "ecological masculinities" and Rob Nixon's (2011) concept of "slow violence". These two theoretical ideas are distinct as "ecological masculinity" is a typology of masculine subjectivity whereas Nixon's "slow violence" describes impacts of colonialism in the form of ecological harm and resource extraction that have become visible across time and space.

However, this study argues that these two theoretical notions interlock at a point where male ecological subjectivity in postcolonial fiction becomes legible.

Martin Hultman and Paul Pulé (2018) define “ecological masculinities” as theoretical and practical responses to social, ecological, and global crises. They argue that through diversified, more relational and caring masculinities, social and environmental challenges can be addressed that have their roots in a long history of patriarchal domination (Hultman and Pulé 25). They build their argument on nearly half a century of ecological feminist analysis, critical studies on men and masculinities, deep ecology, and feminist care theory to argue that destructive enactments of hegemonic patriarchal social structures are the root cause of the contemporary world’s injustice and exploitation. However, they propose a three-type “archetypology” (qtd in Rutt and Tjorring) that distinguishes three forms of masculinities: Industrial/breadwinner masculinities, ecomodern masculinities, and ecological masculinities. They explain *breadwinner masculinities* as rooted in control, management, and extraction of means of production. They opine that this is most readily identified with white males from wealthy Western nations who extract and control. *Ecomodern masculinities* are identified with men who are not blind to the ecological crises as they acknowledge socio-environmental crises. However, behind their enlightenment-inspired techno-managerialism (Rutt and Tjorring 1542-1565), they have the same hegemonic mindset as that of industrial masculinities.

Rob Nixon in his work, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (2011), argues that the violence caused by toxic drift, deforestation, oil spills, the environmental aftermath of war, and climate change takes place gradually and often invisibly. The idea of “slow violence” refers to violence that occurs gradually and out of sight, a violence of delayed destruction that is dispersed across time and space. It can be understood as “an attritional violence that is typically not viewed as violence at all” (Nixon 02). This violence is ignored by capitalist authorities, and it exacerbates the vulnerability of ecosystems and people who are poor, disempowered, and often involuntarily displaced, while fueling social conflicts that arise from desperation as life-sustaining conditions erode. Nixon opines that the major representational challenge generates the need to devise stories, images and symbols to highlight the elusive violence of delayed destruction. Two strands of theory, *ecological masculinities* and *slow violence*, are brought together in this study to address a different kind of question. Hultman and Pulé’s framework produces a typology of masculine subjectivity about men’s caring relations with the human and natural world (Hultman and Pulé 69), whereas Rob Nixon’s framework offers insights into visible and invisible ecological harms across geographies of unequal racialised and class-stratified vulnerability. Added together, these two theoretical notions ask a question that neither can ask alone. This question is: how does a male subject’s relation to nature change when the nature he relates to is itself the residue of slow, attritional, racially uneven,

colonial and neocolonial violence? This study addresses this question with the understanding that the colonialist regime that has alienated indigenous people from their lands and culture has also extended its violence through neocolonial capitalism in contemporary times.

2. Literature Review

The intensification of climate change, environmental degradation, human displacement, and resource depletion has fundamentally transformed critical studies over the past three decades. Scholars are compelled to reconsider the relationship between literary studies, material environments, and structures of power. The initial emphasis of ecocriticism was on wilderness, preservation, and environmental ethics. This knowledge was largely informed by Euro-American environmental experiences. Nature was privileged as a universal category, whereas historical conditions such as colonialism and capitalist modernity, which have shaped ecological crises across the Global South, were overlooked. Postcolonial ecocriticism, as a literary field, emerged as a critical reconfiguration of ecocriticism. Postcolonial scholars challenged this anthropocentric and geographical limitation. Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin, in their work, *Postcolonial ecocriticism: Literature, animals, environment* (2015), argue that environmental degradation cannot be viewed separately from histories of empire, dispossession, racism, capitalism, and development (Huggan and Tiffin 3-18). Huggan and Tiffin insist that the political project of colonialism functioned as an ecological enterprise and slowly transformed colonised landscapes into sites of extraction, commodification, and economic exploitation. Colonised territories became active laboratories of resource accumulation. Natural resources such as forests, rivers, minerals, and agricultural land were reorganized to benefit imperial economies (13–17). Postcolonial critics note that ecological destruction cannot be understood independently of colonial violence, as both result from the same colonial processes of territorial expansion and capitalist accumulation.

Upamanyu Pablo Mukherjee further develops the argument on postcolonial ecocriticism in his work, *Postcolonial Environments: Nature, Culture, and the Contemporary Indian Novel in English* (2012). Mukherjee argues that postcolonial environments should be understood as historically produced material formations and not as passive geographical settings. This also underscores that ecological degradation is a universal environmental condition, and environmental crises are unevenly materialized through colonialism, globalism, and dysfunctional power relations. Rob Nixon expands this concept in his influential work, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (2011). Nixon challenges the dominant understanding of violence as immediate, spectacular, and dramatic. He argues that environmental destruction has unfolded gradually in colonised territories, thus producing cumulative forms of harm that remain politically invisible as they lack catastrophic immediacy. Nixon's work exposes the ways

environmental violence affects developed and underdeveloped communities unevenly. Toxic waste, deforestation, forced migration, and ecological displacement are the result of prolonged processes whose impacts keep accumulating across generations. Nixon argues that environmental violence mostly affects marginalised communities whose suffering seldom enters into dominant political narratives. Nixon's conceptualisation of *slow violence* highlights the direct relation between ecological damage and structural inequality, thereby demonstrating how environmental crises are a direct result of colonial extraction and capitalism.

Within ecocriticism scholarship, gender is approached through ecofeminist perspectives that highlight women's reproductive work and feminist ecological knowledge to expose the gendered distribution of environmental burdens (Rocheleau et al. 4-7). These interventions challenge patriarchal assumptions and are embedded within environmental development. However, scholars have paid little attention to the ways masculinities themselves are historically constituted through ecological transformation. Consequently, masculinity is not discussed as a historically contingent ecological formation but either as an implicit structure of domination or as a stable social identity. This limitation is significant within postcolonial contexts, where masculine subjectivities are constantly shaped by colonial histories, militarization, capitalist modernization, and environmental precariousness. Postcolonial men occupy contradictory social locations as they experience structural privilege within their patriarchal systems, but they also face vulnerability within broader colonial and neoliberal power structures. Critical engagement of postcolonial ecocriticism with gender has remained comparatively uneven. Most of the scholarship on postcolonial ecocriticism raises questions of environmental justice, colonial extraction, and indigenous knowledge, but masculinity has remained unmarked. Existing postcolonial ecocritical scholarship has not sufficiently theorized contradictory social locations of postcolonial men, nor has it fully examined how ecological degradation is actively involved in the production of masculine identities. This gap can be addressed through a sustained dialogue between postcolonial ecocriticism and masculinity studies.

Masculinity studies as a critical field has challenged essentialist understandings of masculinity by conceptualizing masculine identity as constantly shifting, historically contingent, relational, and socially produced. Raewyn Connell's (1995) conception of hegemonic masculinity provides a foundational understanding as it demonstrates that masculinities are structured by class, race, sexuality, and institutional power. Moreover, masculinities are organized through hierarchical relations (Connell 76–81). Rather than existing as a singular or universal identity, masculinity comprises multiple configurations of practice that continually negotiate dominance and subordination within changing historical circumstances. In her work, *Masculinities in global perspective: Hegemony, contestation, and changing structures of power* (2016), Connell argues that colonialism is

a significant factor that has shaped masculine formations. Imperial expansion has contributed to the construction of racialised and national masculinities (Connell 303–318). However, within masculinities and postcolonial studies, ecological relations remain peripheral as environmental processes are only considered external. Recent scholarship on ecological masculinities directly addresses this theoretical omission. Martin Hultman and Paul Pulé (2018) argue that dominant forms of industrial masculinity have historically legitimized environmental exploitation through false ideals of technological mastery, economic progress, and control over nature (Hultman and Pulé 21–39). They challenge the conventional assumption that ecological degradation is a direct result of masculine domination. Critics argue that masculine identities are neither fixed nor permanently destructive. Based on this argument, Hultman and Pulé propose an *ecological masculinities* model that is grounded in care, relationality, and environmental responsibility (Hultman and Pulé 223–241). They propose ecological reconfiguration through practices of care and argue that these care practices must extend beyond anthropocentric understandings of responsibility.

The scholarship on postcolonial criticism is directed towards exploring power structures that have shaped and reshaped gendered identities. Power is structured in terms of domination, exploitation and conflict. The circumstances of colonialism as well as its overthrow impact the production of consciousness, especially gendered consciousness of colonised people. Aníbal Quijano, in his work, *Coloniality of power and Eurocentrism in Latin America* (2000), differentiates between “colonialism” and “coloniality”. He explains “colonialism” as a phenomenon that refers to a historical period of direct domination and control, whereas “coloniality” is an ongoing phenomenon that involves an enduring pattern of power through organizations of knowledge, culture, race and subjectivities and outlives the formal period of colonisation. Quijano terms this phenomenon as “coloniality of power” (Quijano 215). Critics argue that in postcolonial societies, after the formal ending of colonisation, there are certain colonial institutional and cultural forces that remain functional even after their formal political independence (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin). Critics in the field of men and masculinities argue that masculinity itself was a tool of colonial rule. The colonial regime imposed a “colonial matrix” by pushing gendered identities of colonised “brown and black men” into an essentialized and homogenized image of “hyper sexualised beasts”. Such a representation posed men of colour as a consistent threat to both white and native women, a discourse that West used to justify force and rescue brown women from brown men (Spivak 171-219).

Critical fields of postcolonial ecocriticism and ecological masculinities have significantly contributed to an understanding of the relationship between environmental degradation and gendered subjectivity. However, both fields remain largely grounded within representational modes of analysis. Literary texts have been interpreted as

reflections of ecological crises, and masculinity is understood as a social identity that responds to environmental change. Such analytical approaches are theoretically productive, but they continue to presume that material and ecological realities exist independently of the interpretative frameworks through which they are analyzed. Feminist new materialism challenges this representational logic. Karen Barad in her work, *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning* (2007), introduces the notion of “agential realism”. She reconceptualises matter, discourse, and agency as mutually constitutive and not as ontologically distinct categories. Barad's framework invites scholars to examine how literary narratives themselves can participate in the material production of ecological knowledge and gendered subjectivities (Barad 132–85). Barad’s concept of “intra-action” is also one of the most significant interventions within feminist new materialism. The notion of “intra-action” contrasts with the existing notion of “interaction” (Fenwick and Edwards 59) that favours the independent existence of subjects and objects. Moreover, “intra-action” posits that entities exist through a relational process that constitutes them. Barad argues that agency cannot be exclusively considered as a human attribute; rather, agency is evenly distributed across various material-discursive practices that define the relations between humans, ecological landscapes, histories, institutions, technologies, and other non-human matter (Everth and Gurney 6). Karen Barad’s conception of “agential realism” and “intra-action” dissolves the binary distinctions between nature and culture and insists that matter actively participates in the production of meaning. Traditional ecocritical approaches often interpret landscapes, animals, or plants as symbolic representations that reflect human experiences. Baradian ontology introduces the active participation of natural agents and historical events in the production of narrative meaning. Implementing Baradian ontological knowledge within literary studies allows scholars to understand how ecological and social events contribute to the formation of subjectivities. Within postcolonial fiction, knowledge of intra-action and agential realism helps one understand how colonisation has impacted human experiences through complex material and discursive entanglement of colonial infrastructures, urban ecology, migration, memory, and environmental precarity.

Donna Haraway, in her work, *staying with the trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (2016), extends Baradian relational ontology and reconceptualizes the idea of care. She argues that care is a practice of “response-ability” as human beings are accountable to the more-than-human worlds. By denying the conventional anthropocentric narrative of environmental mastery, Haraway argues that ecological survival demands that humans “make kin” across species, histories, and all material differences rather than maintaining a rigid distance between humans and non-humans (Greenhalgh-Spencer and Zaliwska 3). Her remarkable call for “staying with the trouble” advocates human

involvement with the natural world through relational care and understanding of the fact that existing ecological damage and vulnerabilities are caused by years of exploitation and environmental degradation. Together, Barad's concept of "intra-action" and Haraway's call for "response-ability" provide ontological knowledge to understand existing scholarship on ecological masculinities (Hedenqvist et al. 2017) that also require intra-active practices of care, vulnerability, and environmental "response-ability". However, in postcolonial contexts, this Baradian-Harawayian framework complicates this assumption because care itself is not an exclusively "innate" human virtue; rather, it emerges through entangled connection among human bodies, non-human agencies, ecological processes, spatial arrangements, and affective histories. Consequently, care cannot be understood simply as an independent practice; rather, care becomes an intra-active phenomenon through which identities are continually constituted, contested, and transformed.

3. Data Analysis

3.1. Postcolonial Masculinity and Necropolitics of Migration in Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West*

Mohsin Hamid's novel *Exit West* (2017) revolves around two main characters, Nadia and Saeed and their forced displacement from their hometown. The novel is set in an unnamed city (Hamid 01) that is under threat of war. The geographical setting of this city is in a postcolonial space where power structures and neo-colonial violence are at work. In the midst of inter-state conflict between militants and the government, residents suffer because of economic disparity and uncertainties. In this city, where food is scarce and human lives are not valued, common people are forced to leave their homes through "magical doors" (Hamid 63). Saeed, Nadia and many other people find a way to enter developed countries. Ironically, in the contemporary world where "geography is destiny" (Hamid 11), immigrants only face physical, psychological, and emotional displacement, thus maintaining their vulnerable status in advanced countries. *Exit West* is a story by Hamid where migration is staged as an environmental event that re-engineers human subjectivities through its "slow violence" (Nixon 02). From the perspective of postcolonial masculinities, the relocations of the main protagonist, Saeed, are not only figurative; rather, they refer to attritional displacement of land-based masculine privilege.

In *Exit West*, the landscape of the unnamed city demonstrates human violence against nature. Saeed and Nadia note how their freedom is snatched from them, and they cannot mobilize independently in their own city as there are "walls", "fences", "sandbagged checkpoints" and "razor wire blockages" (31). Power groups create all these obstacles to control human and natural resources. The metaphor of the "window" runs throughout the text to highlight slow violence practiced in the city. Hamid writes:

One's relationship to windows now changed in the city. A window was the border through which death was most likely to come. Windows could not stop even the most flagging round of ammunition: any spot indoors with a view of the outside was a spot potentially in the crossfire. Moreover, the pane of a window could itself become shrapnel so easily, shattered by a nearby blast, and everyone had heard of someone or other who had bled out after being lacerated by shards of flying glass. (41)

In the city of *Exit West*, death is “possibly most likely to come through windows because of militants” air attacks (41). People do not close their windows because these windows are the only source of light and wind for them. However, in the absence of window glass panes, people freeze to death and are forced to put heavy furniture in front of these windows. These details about curfew and windows in the text, when read through Rob Nixon’s lens of “slow violence”, signal such temporally and spatially distributed environmental damage that escapes attention from contemporary media or politics. In *Exit West*, confined within their homes, Nadia and Saeed look at the sky and notice “night sky”, “stars”, and “moon's pockmarked brightness” only because the city has lost “electric lighting” (Hamid). As immigrants in London, they look at the sky not to find stars but clusters of “drones”, “helicopters”, and “surveillance balloons” that are looking for immigrants to expel them (78). Necropolitics of immigrants where authorities choose who can stay and who must be expelled from the country depicts slow violence that is not registered visually and politically. Erman Örsan, Yetiş, and Yekta Bakırlioğlu, in their work, *Fatalistic normalization, daunted managerialism and afflictive condemnation as forms of slow violence* (2023), notice that slow violence does not manifest its erosive nature immediately; rather, its effects are noticed only when one looks back after a certain period of time (Yetiş and Bakırlioğlu 1). In *Exit West*, we see that ecological and social violence is slow but not gendered as both Nadia and Saeed are affected equally.

The “slow violence” framework by Rob Nixon is not exclusively a frame of victimhood; rather, it identifies a structural condition in which masculine agency is (re)allocated to institutions beyond the individual male. It can be the household, the city, or the postcolonial state. Women are usually constrained to their homes as compared to their masculine counterparts who have more freedom and flexibility to move. However, in *Exit West*, we see that the phenomenon of *slow violence* operates as a structural mechanism for the male protagonist. The novel starts by describing Saeed’s early life that is anchored in conventional patriarchal expectations. He is the only son of his parents (Hamid 4), a breadwinner, family steward and caring male friend of Nadia who is responsible for his parents’ and Nadia’s protection (22). However, the chaos in his city collapses the spatial architecture on which Saeed’s life has always depended. As a young man, he is expected to take care of his parents and Nadia. In *Exit West*, slow violence of displacement hollows out the postcolonial provider role from Saeed whose masculine agent’s structural

culpability is obscured. Saeed and Nadia are victimized in their own postcolonial unnamed city as well as in Western countries where they are considered a threat to the nation's safety by natives (Hamid 75). Their unjust displacement, militarized border control, and status as immigrants make them equally vulnerable. For Saeed, this vulnerability is combined with his inability to perform his socio-cultural patriarchal role of stewardship that the colonial-era social contract has promised colonised men. In their new society, Nadia can enjoy freedom from patriarchal domination (108) whereas Saeed finds himself struggling in a new place where his patriarchal contract is not honored and his role of protector is shifted to the one who needs protection. Such redirection is one form of slow violence. Consequently, Saeed as a postcolonial masculine subject starts losing his relation to Nadia (110), land, and people around him as he loses his capacity to be a custodian.

Slow increment in *Exit West* reorders the typology of *ecological masculinities* (Hultman & Pulé). Saeed is not the privileged Global Northern subject who can undertake care work from a position of restoration, nor is he any ecomodern-technician who can absorb ecological language and discharge it. He is a postcolonial subject whose masculinity is constructed in and through shared ecological vulnerability. Saeed becomes an ecological subject who is not the master of nature, but the surviving witness to its catastrophe. In the midst of his survival struggles, Saeed notices the lemon tree on Nadia's terrace and thinks how he and the tree are the same. Hamid writes:

[...] so he was unprepared for the feeling of awe that came over him, the wonder with which he then regarded his own skin, and the lemon tree in its clay pot on Nadia's terrace, as tall as he was, and rooted in its soil, which was in turn rooted in the clay of the pot, which rested upon the brick of the terrace, which was like the mountaintop of this building, which was growing from the earth itself, and from this earthy mountain the lemon tree was reaching up, up, in a gesture so beautiful that Saeed was filled with love, and reminded of his parents, for whom he suddenly felt such gratitude, and a desire for peace, that peace should come for them all, for everyone, for everything, for we are so fragile, and so beautiful, and surely conflicts could be healed if others had experiences like this, and then he regarded Nadia and saw that she was regarding him and her eyes were like worlds. (Hamid 22)

Both Saeed and the "lemon tree" share a precarious history and geography. The references to "root", "pot", "brick", and "climbing gesture" register kinship and not ownership. Saeed's genuine feelings of "awe", "wonder", "gratitude" and "desire for peace" dissolve the binary of human protector and protected nature; rather, the tree shares the vulnerable status with Saeed as they both witness the violence of displacement together. In London, when Saeed sees a fox and wonders how it would survive, he is relieved each time it has not been "disappeared", "killed" or has "not found another part of town to make home" (Hamid 68).

Saeed's brief encounters with the natural world demonstrate an ecological-masculinity gesture. Saeed is a postcolonial male subject who is constrained by social, climate, and economic precarity, but he witnesses non-human survival as his own. Moreover, the reference to Saeed's ritual of offering prayers for his parents and people around him serves as a parallel register. Hamid writes that prayer for Saeed is more "about being a man."

[...] being one of the men, a ritual that connected him to adulthood and to the notion of being a particular sort of man, a gentle man, a man who stood for community and faith and kindness and decency, a man, in other words, like his father. (118)

In a phallogentric-capitalist-supremacist regime, prayer becomes Saeed's "code" and "promise" for the protection of humaneness. It functions as "a connection wire" between him and people who have departed (117). Prayer for him is a mechanism to cope with damage and loss caused by capitalism and displacement. Half a century later, when Saeed and Nadia are reunited as "an old woman in her black robe" and "an old man with his stubble" (118), they greet each other like companions who have survived the violence and injustice. The lemon tree dies, the fox is gone, but its figural kinship persists.

3.2. Erasure of Ecological Memory in Amir Hussein's *Another Gulmohar Tree*

In Aamer Hussein's *Another Gulmohar Tree* (2009), the male protagonist, Usman, lives in Karachi, one of the largest cities in postcolonial Pakistan. His struggles in his married life with an English lady Lydia and hiccups in his literary career go side by side. Usman, an advocate of independent national identity (Hussein 34) observes with confessed helplessness the persistence of colonial inscription in his social life as well as in postcolonial city, Karachi. These colonial marks situate him within a state that Jessica Maufort (2014) notices as the structural condition of a postcolonial subject who is "spatialized" as "Other" in his social and natural environments (Maufort 155-174). In newly independent country Pakistan, Usman notices that the colonial-era topographies still organize the city's social and ecological coordinates. With sadness, Usman registers that the "brave new capital Karachi" that was once considered "heedless of the past" and "free of traditional or colonial influence" carries "Orientalized Gothic construction" of a business centers whereas streets carry "English names" like Elphinstone Street, the Clifton seafront, Gandhi Gardens, Frere Hall (Hussein 49). Usman's marriage with Lydia also carries marks of colonialism. He struggles to sustain his national and gendered identity as he finds himself surrounded by a community of "mimic-men" and women who are citizens of Pakistan but carry "English taste and opinions" (71). In *Another Gulmohar Tree*, we find an emotional arc of the narrative that gradually inclines towards indifference and disentanglement. Usman's emotional withdrawal, hostility, sarcasm, and professional envy toward Lydia and her creative work can be understood as manifestation of unresolved

colonial trauma that resides within postcolonial subjects. This colonial trauma is one form of *slow violence* that has harmed emotional, intellectual and social lives of postcolonial subjects.

Critics argue that postcolonial masculinities are inseparable from the histories of empire and the continuing legacies of colonial modernity. In a groundbreaking work, *Colonial Masculinity: The “Manly Englishman” and the “Effeminate Bengali”* (1995), Mrinalini Sinha notes that during colonial era, Indian races were categorized as “martial” or “effeminate”. This categorization was solely based on men’s physical ability to serve British army. This categorization deprived Indian men of their masculine glory and elevated European virility as a civilizing norm (Sinha 1-17). Discursive *slow violence* happened as British colonisers used colonial discourse to crash diverse and fluid indigenous expression of manhood. Colonized men were presented as effeminate, childlike, or irrational thus leaving little or no room for alternative expressions of masculinity. Maria Lugones's (2007) argues that the colonial regime treated indigenous manhood either a tool of empire or a sign of inherent weakness (Lugones 192-193), thus separating them from their female counterpart. Critics like Ashis Nandy (1983), Sikata Banerjee (2005), and Frantz Fanon (2008) argue that postcolonial masculinities are inseparable from colonial history. The central debate in this field is whether postcolonial masculinities should be understood as victims of colonial emasculation or as agents that have reproduced patriarchal domination in postcolonial societies. Character of Usman in *Another Gulmohar Tree* shows complexity in postcolonial masculinities as we find confusion between emancipation or domination, vulnerability or violence, heteronormativity or queer alternatives. Usman’s gender role within his cross-cultural marriage cannot be explained through R.W. Connell’s (1995) framework of masculinities. Postcolonial critics also argue that Connell’s conception of hegemonic, complicit, and subordinate masculinities is insufficient in postcolonial settings where imperial logic of gender roles posit colonized or post-colonized masculinities at a subordinate position within the hierarchy of masculinities. This also refers to the complex situation of Usman within his postcolonial settings and cross-cultural marriage where he is neither purely dominant nor purely victim. His presence is defined by a power geometry in which his colonial past, neocolonial capitalism, religious traditions, and indigenous eco-knowledge coexist with patriarchal privilege.

Usman’s access to indigenous ecology is constrained by colonial inheritance. His own life depicts this problem. In his late literary career, Usman turns to storytelling as a form of ecological restoration through narrative. His attempt to write about “social realism” through traditional tales from Punjab and Sindh with a “bitter tinge of political allusion” (Hussein 60) can be understood as his desire to reclaim his indigenous culture and land that has been damaged by colonial power. In his first story, “Miss Frog” appears

to a little boy when he sings her a song. A tree gives “coins” to the boy (01). Ecological violence comes in the form of the monstrous stepmother who intoxicates the boy and poisons Miss Frog. This story represents indigenous man–nature symbiosis that is destroyed by colonialism that renders indigenous subjects as incapacitated and the ecology as toxic. Usman’s second story of two farmers, one “rich and complaining”, the other “poor yet grateful” (Hussein 29) encodes colonial settlement and redistribution of land and gratitude itself. Usman’s book that receives one of the prestigious awards for best children’s storybook signals Usman’s negotiation with his own suppressed emotions of vulnerability, love, and longing for a just world free of hegemonic power structures.

In *Another Gulmohar Tree*, Usman reclaims his connection with ecology through stories. His family plants a gulmohar tree in his garden after his death (Hussein 90). The memorial tree does not undo the slow violence of colonial and postcolonial events that happened in the form of loss of biodiversity because ecological destruction, on any humanly meaningful scale, is irreversible. However, this gesture shows relational commemoration Usman’s stories about frogs, crocodiles and green lands are a reminder that power structures have damaged the planet Earth through species extinction and climate change. Through his stories, Usman stages an alternative masculine care practice that does not depend on any territorial restoration. Usman’s family choose to pay tribute to his caring nature through a tree. This action echoes Marzia Varutti’s idea of ecological grief. In her work, *Claiming ecological grief: Why are we not mourning (more and more publicly) for ecological destruction* (2024), Marzia Varutti argues that mourning over the loss of biodiversity requires willingness to acknowledge the loss and take pause to make sense of it. This allows one to feel the loss and share those feelings with others for ritual mourning practices (Varutti 553). Usman’s stories and his family’s tribute of planting a gulmohar tree function together as a small-scale ritual of “ecological grieving” (Varutti 553). This re-coding of the masculine care role recasts Usman, a postcolonial subject, as a witness and victim to slow violence rather than a proprietor of it.

3.3. Slow Violence and the Unmaking of Patriarchal Custodianship in Shandhana Minhas’ *Tunnel Vision*

Shandhana Minhas sets the story of her novel *Tunnel Vision* (2007) in Pakistan’s most populated and economically fertile city, Karachi. This city is a colonial-modern metropolis which she describes as “a whore, a manmade, man-driven, man-gratifying whore” (Minhas 36). Ayesha, the main protagonist, observes the ways urban ecological conditions of the city are designed to impose risk on the city’s working women and female elders. The local discourse “*Karachi ki aurat kamzor nahi, Karachi kay mard main zor nahin*” (09) sustains the organic ideology of men-as-protectors who are put on a pedestal to be only feared and obeyed by men. Such public discourse makes it difficult for Ayesha to retain her role of an independent working woman that she acquires after her father’s

sudden disappearance. *Slow violence* in *Tunnel Vision* happens in the form of such public discourse that celebrates men's superiority over women. In her work, *It's Karachi, It's, Where Life and Love Come to Die: Representing Gender, Space and Identity in Karachi You are Killing Me* (2022), Khamsa Qasim notes that patriarchal constraints on women's mobility, employment, political involvement within the city of Karachi (69-88). In the novel, we can see that Ayesha's perception of Karachi is different from that of a traditional male whose privileged position as a man in a patriarchal society can protect him from the curious gaze of the crowd. Ayesha, in her own city, is both an observer and an object of observation only because she is a woman who has decided to financially support herself and her family. Her household is also a miniature of the city where she sees male indifference towards their responsibilities and acts of care.

Tunnel Vision's innovative move lies in the depiction of hegemonic masculinity shown by Ayesha's father who is mentioned as Abba (father) throughout the text. Hegemonic masculinity is defined as a socially dominant form of masculine behaviour that promotes physical strength, emotional stoicism, and avoidance of vulnerability (Connell and Messerschmidt 829-859). Young Ayesha notices Abba's emotional stoicism as her father's tone changes from compliments to daily complaints as Ayesha's mother goes through postpartum health issues. Abba not only becomes emotionally distant but there arises an abundance of rudeness and humiliation in his behavior. He even dismisses his wife's health problems as a woman's problem that he as a man does not know how to handle. Abba's response toward his wife's physical and mental health demonstrates his flawed and ambiguous understanding of care. After Ayesha's mother falls ill, particularly postpartum, with symptoms ranging from "fatigue" to "depression", Abba reluctantly invites a doctor into the household to assess her condition (Minhas 248). Ayesha observes that the doctor's visit was like a meeting of two paternal caregivers who have the least interest in a woman's well-being. Ayesha remembers how the doctor asked questions about Jahan only to her husband and not to Jahan herself. Within a patriarchal setting, propriety is attached to female patients whose bodies can only be addressed via male kin. Young Ayesha could not understand why a woman's body requires a male expert's specialized translation to enter the home she inhabits. This whole phenomenon of patriarchal care confirms Puig de la Bellacassa's (2011) point that detachment from others and nature creates a "moral desolation" and "cognitive numbing" that leads to acts of cruelty towards others (Bellacassa 85-106). In *Tunnel Vision*, we also note that authority travels between men. The doctor's medical authority and Ayesha's father's domestic authority are aligned. Male supremacy and inequality within patriarchal norms and structures promote this shift in authority. Within the ecological masculinities frame as elaborated by Hultman and Pulé (2018), Abba's "care" is precisely the kind of industrial/breadwinner approach in which care is conceived as supplementary to masculine

authority rather than as an ethical responsibility. Abba's call to the doctor does not show care for Jahan's body, rather, he only cares for his own schedule that is being affected. Abba does not show "broader care", instead, he is unable to reciprocate care that he had been receiving from his wife before she became sick. He finds escape routes.

In *Tunnel Vision*, Ayesha's father is a man-made figure of the postcolonial society, who carries internalised insecurities. He is a man who is trying to attain a heroic image through power yet finds it hard to exercise his power because of his own vulnerable subordinated middle-class status. Ayesha recognises the postcolonial capitalist matrix. She knows that her father carries the wounds of insult given by his wife's father who occupied a higher social status than he and disapproved of his daughter's marriage with him. Moreover, Abba has other insecurities. The novel exposes Abba's masculine conflict through bodily contrast. Ayesha remembers that her mother was a very beautiful, tall Hyderabadi woman, about 5'7", with fair, flawless skin, almond-shaped hazel eyes and "hair as glossy as that of the best sacrificial goats" whereas her father had "dark skin" and "comparatively shorter height" (Minhas 161). Apparently, her father would "strut proudly by her side" with stomach in and chest out to make up "what he lacked in height" (Minhas 161). Ayesha's observation of her father's bodily comportment is a way to upgrade his "inferior" status at the start of marriage. His father-in-law thought that he was not good enough for his daughter because he did not have the right "pedigree" (165). This shows a relational-ontological map of how masculinity becomes hegemonic depending on the context and hierarchy of relations. Ayesha's father becomes, in the typology of Hultman and Pulé (2018), neither an ecomodern technocrat nor an ecological-masculine caregiver, but a third figure: the postcolonial patriarch whose slow-violence disposition is also the signature of his common jammed entrapment within a colonial-patriarchal family form that he did not design. His father-in-law renders Abba inferior, and Abba exhibits power over his wife to compensate for his lost self-esteem. This relocation of patriarchal claim and the exercise of breadwinner power as compensation for structural humiliation reflects theories on the postcolonial patriarchal household as a place in which shame is metabolized into dominance.

The novel's *slow violence* frame emerges precisely in Abba's calculated exit. The "exit politics" Hultman and Pulé call for creating space for a broader, deeper and wider masculine care (Rutt and Tjørring 1544), is entirely a failed operation in Abba's life. *Tunnel Vision* is therefore not a novel in which the slow-violence frame is illustrated metaphorically, rather, it is a novel that examines the phenomenon of *slow violence* at the domestic level. The novel's central event, Abba's sudden disappearance, is narrated in highly specific language. One day Abba quietly takes his belongings and leaves for good (Minhas 60). Initially, the family assumes that he might have had an accident, but after searching all possible places and contacting his friends, Abba is declared missing of his

own free will. Abba's missing-body narrative is, in the lexicon of *Tunnel Vision*, the missing piece of a slow violence common. It shows how a male subject whose possessive mask of breadwinner-privilege has produced his own relational disappearance. Years after his removal, Ayesha's mother suffers from anxiety and depression, and the family enters a phase of structural abandonment. Jahan lacks trust in anyone; there is a fractured relationship between mother and daughter, and Ayesha's struggles to financially support her family and live a life as a normal girl become the post-event of Abba's erasure. Hultman and Pulé (2018) warn that if human beings do not create space for a broader, deeper and wider masculine care there will be great human suffering and accentuated ecological demise. Abba exemplifies the kind of male who is trapped in obligatory surrender. Abba's re-appearance decades later, "salt-and-pepper hair, all white in places now but with a hint of "burnt orange, residue of a home henna job" (Minhas 303), beside another woman and a young boy who are most probably his second wife and son, confirms the praxis that Abba's socially sanctioned role of the male breadwinner gives him unquestionable authority to practice slow violence of abandonment over his wife and two children, Ayesha and Adil.

Tunnel Vision becomes more legible when read through a postcolonial ecomasculinity lens that acknowledges that colonial care discourse has been inherited by postcolonial male subjects within relational ontologies of which they are themselves recipients and that slow violence is observable not only in environmental degradation but in the routine structuration of intimate life. The local ideology "*Karachi ki aurat kamzor nahin, Karachi kay murd main zor nahin*" sustains men's prescribed role as protector-and-provider, with the consequence that men show consent to patriarchal structures that guarantee them privileged positions and freedom to perform exploitative masculine practices. Hultman and Pulé's framework of industrial/breadwinner, ecomodern, and ecological masculinities is unsettled by Minhas's portrait of Abba, who is neither an industrial/breadwinner solely defined by extractive control nor an ecomodern techno nor an "ecological" caregiver. He is, rather, a constrained figure sentenced by the colonial-patriarchal legacy. He shows "constrained authenticity" that is itself the residue of prior injuries. Abba cannot care for his family precisely because he has been forced to perform dominance over them in place of the self-esteem the patriarchal contract never delivered. As a postcolonial masculine subject, he is also impacted by the ideologeme of effeminacy during the British Raj (Krishnaswamy 28). He performs his masculinity, as a postcolonial man through trope of colonial mimicry whose relationship to land, family, and female kin are already disturbed because of colonial-era patriarchal norms. Critical reading of *Tunnel Vision* that ecomasculine ethics in postcolonial context require deconstruction of patriarchal protection-discourse inherited from colonial care structures to recognize relational ontologies as material rather than metaphorical to develop the notion of a

“broader care” that includes self, kin, and Earth. Social setting presented in *Tunnel Vision* inverts this formula, as slow violence in the form of avoidance of care is the novel’s central lesson. The novel offers not solutions but a diagnosis, and within an analytical framework of postcolonial ecomasculinity, this diagnosis is what makes *Tunnel Vision* a text that registers the missing male figure of the more-than-human patriarchal family as the missing biological and ecological figure whose loss and resulting violence can no longer be reversed.

3.4. Spacetime mattering and the Temporalities of Postcolonial Ecomasculinity: A Diffractive Reading of selected fiction

In *Exit West* (2017), *Another Gulmohar Tree* (2009), and *Tunnel Vision* (2007), the temporal structures consistently resist linear narratives of ecological degradation or masculine development. In fact, each novel presents time as fractured, recursive, and materially sedimented, where colonial histories, environmental transformations, and intimate personal experiences of loss and grief fold into one another. In *Exit West* (2017), the experience of migration is marked not only by sudden movement through “magical doors” (Hamid 94), but also by prolonged waiting, interrupted routines, and uncertain futures. Nadia and Saeed wonder, “where the door to which they had purchased access might take them?” They are unsure whether it would be “some place in the mountains or on the plains or by the seaside” (43). Their act of crossing a border is instantaneous, yet the temporal experience of displacement is slow, repetitive, and unresolved. They inhabit a world in which the future cannot be imagined independently of a homeland that continues to exist in their memories affectively despite its material inaccessibility. Migration therefore becomes a temporal experience of ecological uncertainty rather than a singular event. Rob Nixon’s formulation of “slow violence” is defined by critics as a form of violence that occurs gradually, out of sight, and is dispersed across time and space (Gerhardt 14). This also explains Saeed and Nadia’s experience of displacement that happens because of militarization and results in gradual erosion of belonging. Over time, Saeed becomes more “quiet”, “melancholic” and “distant” from Nadia (Hamid 95). The catastrophic effect of displacement becomes more obvious when Saeed and Nadia, who shared a bond of care and companionship with each other, decide to part ways as they no longer feel connected to each other (Hamid 118). The novel *Exit West* exceeds Nixon’s formulation by showing that slow violence of displacement is not a one-time experience of the individual; rather, there is continuous erosion in one’s relationships with the human and material world. In the text, there are multiple references of Saeed who remembers his home, his parents and his own people in another country (Hamid 118-119). His precarious condition also demonstrates that his subjectivity is continually reconfigured.

Karen Barad’s (2007) concept of *intra-action* explains that events like migration and ecological precarity cannot be understood as external forces acting upon an already

constituted subject. Rather, material-discursive conditions generate temporal rhythms through which one's becoming is continually reconfigured. Saeed's subjectivity emerges through the spatiotemporal entanglements of displacement, memory, and ecological uncertainty. His masculinity is not merely affected by migration but it is materialized through the ongoing intra-actions among human and more-than-human forces that constitute the conditions of postcolonial displacement. This temporal entanglement works with a different rhythm in the second text *Another Gulmohar Tree* where the persistence of the main protagonist Usman's colonial memory blurs the clear distinction between past and present. The narrative of the novel shifts between traditional tales, natural landscapes, family histories, and remembered encounters without any chronological order. Usman's struggle to inhabit the present, with his English wife, is mediated by the enduring temporal force of nostalgic memories, and his past continually reconfigures his masculine becoming. Within the text we note that memory in *Another Gulmohar Tree* is not represented as an internal psychological faculty but as a material practice that is sustained through landscapes, trees, family rituals, and inherited spaces. The past continues to inhabit the present for Usman because colonial histories remain embedded within ecological environments rather than confined to historical recollection. In fact, time itself becomes ecological and materialized through the continued presence of landscapes that bear the sedimentation of historical violence. In fact, Usman writes stories about animals, birds, trees, and land (Hussein 1-29) to constitute his own "customized world" as a way to achieve the "sensation of knowing" and the "sensation of being part of a known place" (Evernden 100). He remembers his past through these stories as an attempt to obtain a cultural simulation of a sense of place. His stories are "landscape portraits" (Evernden 99) that he draws out of his memory. Through them he offers an imaginative spectacle to his readers about what his place would have looked like if colonisation had not happened.

Reading *Another Gulmohar Tree* and *Exit West* together is to understand Aamer Hussein's temporality through Hamid's displaced futures and see how it generates a diffractive interference that unsettles dominant understandings of historical progression. Both Saeed's uncertain future and Usman's remembered past are temporal orientations that constitute dimensions of their postcolonial existence. Their memories continually (re)shape their present ethical relations, but their future remains haunted by colonial ecologies. Karen Barad's concept of "Spacetimemattering" becomes especially relevant here because it rejects the notion that time unfolds independently of material relations (Juelskjær 754-768). There is consistent waiting in *Exit West*, whereas in *Another Gulmohar Tree*, Usman experiences nostalgia and "Solastalgia", a term coined by Glenn Albrecht (2005) to define environmentally induced stress (41-55). Reading the texts diffractively, we can see that these feelings in Saeed and Usman are not psychological states but material-discursive practices through which their postcolonial ecomasculinities

come into being. These two texts also show that identities do not emerge only in the past or in the present alone; rather, there is continual folding of historical, ecological, and affective temporalities that shape gendered and social identities.

The third text of this study, *Tunnel Vision*, introduces another configuration of temporality. Reading Abba's absence diffractively alongside *Exit West* and *Another Gulmohar Tree* extends Nixon's concept of *slow violence* beyond environmental degradation narrowly conceived. Environmental crisis is not restricted to polluted landscapes or displaced populations; it also manifests through the gradual erosion of familial relations, emotional continuity, and everyday forms of care. Abba's absence is not a narrative loss; rather, it reorganizes the temporal rhythm of everyone's everyday life. For many years, Jahan spent days, months, and years trying to find any trace of him. She went from hospitals to graveyards and every possible place to look for him. In her frustration, she became a "cemetery addict" (Minhas 79). With her husband's photograph in her hand, she may have spoken to every burier of bones and guardian of the dead in the city. The young daughter, Ayesha, is grieving as the male lead of their home has disappeared while her mother has disintegrated into some sort of demon lover wronged by fate; her brother, Adil, was too young, and her uncles were "too ineffectual" (136). Their meals, conversations, household routines, and familial expectations become structured by what is no longer present. *Slow violence* is precisely this. A violence that does not declare itself, that lacks the "circumstantial drama of a single identifiable catastrophe," but which, over time, "exacerbates the vulnerability of ecosystems and of people who are poor, disempowered, and often involuntarily displaced" (Nixon 02). Abba's absence acquires material force because it continually reshapes the relationships among family members and the spaces they inhabit. Rather than progressing towards narrative resolution, the novel dwells within unresolved temporalities where grief, care, and uncertainty coexist. Domestic life therefore becomes an ecology of suspended time, demonstrating that slow violence also unfolds through intimate practices of waiting, caregiving, and emotional labour.

Masculinity is frequently represented within postcolonial fiction as the capacity to endure violence, displacement, or historical trauma. However, the protagonists in selected fiction of this study can be defined by their participation in temporal relations that exceed individual agency. Saeed's prayers, Usman's acts of remembrance, and the family's negotiation in Abba's absence do not restore stability or mastery. Instead, they cultivate forms of relational persistence grounded in vulnerability, repetition, and ethical attentiveness. These temporal practices are ecological because they emerge through ongoing engagements with material environments, inherited histories, and more-than-human worlds. Haraway's concept of response-ability further reframes these temporal practices as ethical modes of inhabiting damaged worlds rather than strategies for

overcoming them (Haraway 29–34). The protagonists repeatedly encounter situations in which definitive solutions remain impossible. They know that migration cannot restore home; remembrance cannot reverse historical violence, and domestic care cannot erase absence. Nevertheless, these unresolved conditions generate forms of ethical responsiveness that resist both despair and mastery. In these novels, *acts of care* do not appear as a teleological project directed towards environmental restoration, but they are performed as an ongoing commitment to living responsibly within fractured ecological and historical realities. Such an ethics is profoundly postcolonial because it acknowledges that contemporary environmental crises remain inseparable from colonial histories that cannot simply be transcended. Diffractive reading of these postcolonial literary texts show that ecological is neither exclusively natural nor exclusively political. It resides within the temporal organization of ordinary life, where colonial histories, migration, domestic instability, and environmental precarity continually reshape people's lives. This relational understanding further complicates conventional postcolonial ecocritical approaches that distinguish environmental destruction from intimate social experience. The novels instead reveal that ecological degradation materializes through the ordinary temporal practices of living with uncertainty.

3.5. Ethics of Care and Postcolonial Ecomasculinity

Throughout three texts *Exit West*, *Another Gulmohar Tree*, and *Tunnel Vision*, care is consistently represented not as an individual virtue or moral disposition but as an emergent practice that arises through the protagonists' entanglements with human and more-than-human worlds. In *Exit West*, Saeed's ethical orientation is repeatedly articulated through ordinary acts of prayer, attentiveness, and his sustained attachment to familiar spaces and non-human life like lemon tree (Hamid 22) and fox (68) despite the instability of forced migration. These seemingly ordinary gestures acquire theoretical significance because they resist the masculinist logic of conquest, domination, and mobility that often structures narratives of displacement. Saeed does not seek to master the fractured environments through which he moves. Instead, his ethical relation emerges through practices of attentiveness to fragile human and ecological connections. Care, therefore, materializes not as an internal moral quality but as a relational practice enacted within conditions of uncertainty. This relational ethics becomes more visible when read through *Another Gulmohar Tree*, where storytelling and remembrance function as ecological practices that sustain communal continuity across historical rupture. The novel repeatedly demonstrates that memory is neither an exclusively psychological faculty nor a nostalgic return to an irrecoverable past. Rather, stories circulate among people, landscapes, trees, and domestic spaces, allow ecological and historical relations to persist beyond individual lives. Usman's engagement with memory is therefore less an act of recollection than an ongoing participation in a living network of human and more-than-human relations. For

Usman, storytelling becomes an ecological practice because it enables relationships to continue across generations without reducing history to static remembrance.

Reading Saeed's practices of prayer (Hamid 121) through Usman's practices of storytelling (Hussein 01) generates a productive diffractive pattern. Prayer and storytelling initially appear to belong to different ethical registers, one spiritual and the other cultural. Yet both resist the autonomous individualism that underpins hegemonic models of masculinity. It is true that neither of these practices can restore control over damaged worlds, but each cultivates attentiveness to relationships that exceed the self. Barad's notion of "intra-action" becomes particularly illuminating in these texts because it foregrounds ethics as emerging from relational entanglements rather than sovereign human intention (Barad 392–94). Prayer and storytelling are therefore not symbolic acts expressing pre-existing masculine identities, they become material-discursive practices through which postcolonial ecomasculinity is continually constituted. Male characters' sense of masculinity emerges through these practices of relational engagement rather than preceding them. This ethical configuration undergoes further transformation in *Tunnel Vision*, where care is articulated through the quiet labour of sustaining everyday domestic life after Ayesha's father's disappearance. The novel repeatedly foregrounds acts of cooking, waiting, remembering, and maintaining household routines that resist spectacular representations of heroism. Masculinity studies have frequently overlooked such practices because they do not conform to dominant narratives of masculine agency (Shefer 505). Yet their very ordinariness reveals a different ecological politics. Domestic labour, emotional endurance, and attentiveness to others are material practices through which fractured relationships remain possible despite loss and uncertainty. Care can be demonstrated through household shared routines, material objects, and domestic spaces rather than through the authority of a singular patriarchal figure as is the case in *Tunnel Vision*.

To read care practices in *Tunnel Vision* diffractively through other two texts *Exit West* and *Another Gulmohar Tree* is to understand that acts like prayer, storytelling, and domestic labour are not separate thematic concerns but are interconnected modes of ecological relation. Each demonstrates that responsibility means participation in shared worlds rather than exercised from a position of sovereign autonomy. Haraway's (2016) concept of "response-ability" proposes an important framework for understanding this relational ethics because it reconceptualises responsibility as the capacity to respond within ongoing multispecies and material entanglements rather than as an abstract moral obligation (Haraway 29–34). Within all three texts we see that protagonists do not have to respond to the ecological crisis from outside it rather they inhabit the ecological crisis as a condition of everyday life. They try to negotiate their relationships that are either incomplete, uncertain, or historically mediated. The significance of these practices gets

evident when considered alongside the colonial histories that structure each narrative. In *Exit West* and *Another Gulmohar Tree*, and *Tunnel Vision*, ecological care is never represented as a universal ethical principle detached from history. Instead, it emerges through landscapes shaped by imperial extraction, migration produced by geopolitical conflict, and domestic worlds reorganized by postcolonial instability. Within these texts ecological and material objects like the lemon tree, the gulmohar, the refugee settlement, the inherited house, and the ordinary objects of domestic life participate in these historical assemblages. We also see that within selected fiction care cannot be separated from coloniality because the conditions under which ethical relations become possible are themselves materially produced by colonial and postcolonial transformations.

Postcolonial ecomasculinity differs from universal models of ecological ethics by insisting that care is historically situated within uneven ecological and political landscapes. These literary representations also complicate the assumptions underlying much of ecological masculinities scholarship. Hultman and Pulé (2018) argue that ecological masculinities challenge industrial masculinity by encouraging environmental responsibility, empathy, and care. While this intervention has significantly expanded masculinity studies, the three novels suggest that ecological care cannot be understood simply as an ethical orientation adopted by reflective masculine subjects (Hultman and Pulé 145–67). Rather, care emerges through material relations that exceed individual intentionality. Prayer in *Exit West* depends upon communal traditions and shared spaces; storytelling in *Another Gulmohar Tree* depends upon memory, landscape, and embodied transmission, whereas domestic care in *Tunnel Vision* depends upon material routines, affective labour, and architectural environments. Postcolonial Masculinities within these texts are not the source of ecological care. Instead, ecological relations generate the very conditions through which postcolonial masculine identities become intelligible. This shift from ethical disposition to relational ontology constitutes the principal intervention of the concept of postcolonial ecomasculinity. Rather than proposing a new normative model of environmentally responsible masculinity, the concept demonstrates that masculinity itself is continually produced through ecological entanglements shaped by colonial histories, more-than-human agencies, and everyday practices of care. Such a formulation departs from identity-based models of masculinity by emphasizing processes of becoming rather than stable forms of being. Postcolonial ecomasculinity is therefore not a category into which literary characters can be classified; it is a phenomenon that becomes visible through the diffractive encounter of literary texts, ecological materiality, and theoretical reflection.

The three novels collectively reveal that ecological ethics cannot be grounded in fantasies of mastery, restoration, or masculine heroism. Instead, they imagine ethical life as an ongoing negotiation within damaged environments, fractured histories, and

vulnerable relationships that can never be fully repaired. This emphasis on incompleteness aligns with Haraway's insistence on "staying with the trouble", where ethical responsibility does not lie in overcoming ecological crisis but in remaining accountable to the complex relations through which life persists (Haraway 1–3). Saeed's quiet attentiveness in *Exit West*, Usman's ecological remembrance in *Another Gulmohar Tree*, and the family's ordinary acts of domestic endurance in *Tunnel Vision* all exemplify forms of response-ability that reject exceptionalism in favour of sustained relational engagement. Their significance lies precisely in their refusal to separate human flourishing from the more-than-human worlds within which it unfolds. Reading *Exit West*, *Another Gulmohar Tree*, and *Tunnel Vision* diffractively demonstrates that ecological care is not the endpoint of masculine transformation but the relational condition through which postcolonial ecomasculinity is continually materialized.

4. Conclusion

This study advances ecological masculinities scholarship in two significant ways. First, it relocates masculinity from the realm of identity to that of material-discursive becoming, demonstrating that masculine subjectivity emerges through the intra-action of bodies, environments, histories, and more-than-human agencies. Second, it situates ecological care within the historically specific conditions of postcoloniality, showing that factors like colonial infrastructures, migration, ecological precarity, and everyday domestic practices are constitutive rather than contextual to masculine formation. Martin Hultman and Paul Pulé (2018) conceptualise ecological masculinities primarily in terms of environmental care and ethical responsibility, emphasizing the transformative potential of alternative masculine identities. This study has read three novels to examine that ecological care is not a simple practice performed by already ecological men, rather, temporal processes of waiting, displacement, mourning, remembrance, and everyday endurance constitute such precarious conditions through which masculinity becomes intelligible. Through textual analysis and diffractive reading of three texts, this study shows that masculinity does not transform directly after ecological awareness emerges rather it is produced within ecological temporalities that are shaped by colonial dispossession, environmental uncertainty, and material vulnerability. This shift relocates ecological masculinity from the level of ethical identity to that of ontological becoming.

This study proposes postcolonial ecomasculinity not as a regional variant of ecological masculinity but as a distinct theoretical framework that synthesises postcolonial ecocriticism, feminist new materialism, and masculinity studies through a relational ontology of becoming. The three selected novels of this study collectively demonstrate that ecological crisis unfolds not only across landscapes but also through time, as colonial histories persist within present environments and continue to shape future possibilities. A diffractive reading reveals these temporal entanglements by tracing waiting through

remembrance, disappearance through migration, and domestic care through environmental precarity. The resulting phenomenon is neither exclusively masculine nor ecological; it is a relational mode of becoming in which time, matter, memory, and care stay inseparable. Postcolonial ecomasculinity thus emerges as an ecological ontology grounded in entanglement, vulnerability, and response-ability this challenging linear narratives of progress, recovery, and masculine autonomy of *ecological masculinities* framework.

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