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RESEARCH PAPER

Environmental Crisis and Trauma in Faryal Ali Gauhar's An Abundance of Wild Roses

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the representation of environmental trauma in Feryal Ali Gauhar's An Abundance of Wild Roses with the objective of understanding how ecological disturbance shapes the emotional and psychological lives of a rural community. Grounded in environmental trauma theory and eco-criticism, the research challenges conventional trauma narratives that prioritize war or personal loss by foregrounding the slow, pervasive impact of environmental degradation. Employing a qualitative methodology based on close textual analysis, the study treats the landscape not as a passive backdrop but as an active force that materializes memory, fear, and collective anxiety through images of landslides, damaged soil, climatic irregularities, and social disruption. The findings reveal that environmental uncertainty produces sustained psychological instability, emotional withdrawal, and social fragmentation, particularly among communities whose livelihoods depend on the land. The study recommends ecological restoration, sustainable land management, community-centered environmental education, and responsive policy measures as essential strategies to address environmental trauma and promote long-term psychological and social resilience.

Keywords: Environmental Trauma, An Abundance Of Wild Roses, Climate Change, Harsh Weather, Individuals and Community Disturbance ,

Introduction

Feryal Ali Gauhar is a Pakistani novelist, actor, film-maker, and columnist. She has made significant contributions in the areas of literature, media and human rights. Her father, Sayyid Gohar, is a retired army officer and she is the youngest among her siblings. She is the sister of Madeeha Gauhar, an excellent theatre personality and founder of the Ajoka Theatre group. She was born in Lahore on 18 December 1959, Her early schooling was from American School

Lahore, where she became the very first female student council president from Pakistan. Then she got a Political Economy degree from McGill University, Canada. Later on, she started professional training in filmmaking and documentary production at the University of Southern California. She is known for being deeply involved in cultural, social, and environmental issues, having contributed extensively to literature, cinema, and development works in Pakistan. She was a United Nations Goodwill Ambassador for UNFPA from 1999 to 2004. She advocates for gender equality, poverty alleviation, and reproductive health. She currently serves as a Cultural Heritage Consultant to WAPDA (Water and Power Development Authority) for the Diamer-Bhasha Dam project. She is also a passionate animal rights advocate and Environmentalist. Her writings focus on social injustice, ecological

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destruction, human suffering. She is the author of three novels, which include, among others, The Scent of Wet Earth in August, No Space for Further Burials, and An Abundance of Wild Roses. Her novel An Abundance of Wild Roses is set in a rural Pakistani community that focuses on religious, psychological, social decay, and environmental disorders. The novel portrays a community victimized by environmental disorder where forests are dying, land is dry, and eerie silence surrounds the environment, which makes individuals' lives harsh. The whole community feels depression and hesitation in their personal lives due to environmental destruction. Individuals in this community are mentally upset with fear of harsh weather.

Their lives affected by cultural, religious, psychological, ecological, and emotional degradations. Trauma not just effect the environment but it deeply effects communities' culture, religion, and mental health of individuals of community. In this text individuals effected by lack of spiritual believes, social decay and psychologically disturbed. So, nature and individual have deep relation. If nature disturb then individual's religion, emotions and culture automatically disturb. In this text all the deficiencies of natural disaster are present. Individuals of community not want to give favor to stranger on the other hand religion says every person should to visit patient and do complete favors in this novel the stranger is patient peoples not give favor this is the lack of spiritual decay.

The divine warning is also the part of this novel the individuals like musa hit disaster, blocked roads, snow fall the stranger's arrival are the signs of divine punishment of fate. Cultural trauma is also present in this text. In novel individuals not talk each other openly they carry their pain quietly. This shows a cultural loss of expression, empathy, and healing causer by fear and tradition. kulsooms mentally disability and the outsider's silent trauma show how violence and displacement break the relation between self, land, and society which is the direct sign of cultural and environmental trauma.

The novel deeply reflects cultural environmental trauma where the renued landscapes, broken social trust and emotional silence show both culture and environment both damages. The novel shows that trauma caused by ecological disorder does not remain limited to a single individual but it spreads silently through the whole community. This condition of community reflects the individual's mental health struggles such as anxiety, depression and ecological distress. The whole society confuses due to harsh effects of environment. Individuals are totally depressed due to ecological disturbance. The weather is too much cold peoples of society faces the harsh weather in their daily life works. Some characters are busy in collection of woods for burning fire. Everything freezes due to snow falling. There is no water in the whole village for drinking. Peoples of effected community face the lack of water and other things which are essential for living things.

Individuals of community faces the difficulties to perform their works in this harsh season. All the peoples including numbrdar live in their homes due to ecological disturbance. They cannot do their works properly due to harsh weather. Ecological harsh disturbance totally damages the daily life of individuals. Doctor is symbol of emergency even dr is also depressed to reaching near patient. Environmental disorder destroys the essential missions of individuals. At last of novel weather is completely disturbed all the crops are destroyed due to snow falling and wild roses are germinated in place of crops. The novel presents a society and its natural environment as simultaneously destroyed at ecological, emotional, religious, and social levels. The characters' confusion regarding whether to send the wounded stranger to the hospital highlights both environmental paralysis and moral hesitation. The blocked road caused by a massive landslide and heavy snowfall symbolizes how ecological disruption halts not only physical movement but also ethical action (Gauhar, 2007). The villagers' refusal to extend hospitality or mercy to the outsider reflects a profound lack of spiritual commitment and a violation of religious values that emphasize compassion and collective responsibility. This failure illustrates spiritual decay, where religious principles exist in form but not in practice.

The novel also foregrounds cultural destruction through silence and emotional repression. Characters avoid open communication and carry their pain privately, indicating a loss of cultural expression, empathy, and communal healing caused by fear, tradition, and prolonged environmental decline. The outsider's silence and Kulsoom's mental breakdown reveal how violence, displacement, and ecological instability fracture the bond between self, society, and land. The erosion of traditional social values such as hospitality, compassion, and care serves as a clear marker of cultural trauma. Furthermore, religious environmental trauma is evident in the novel's symbolism, where rain traditionally represents divine blessing and land is considered sacred. In contrast, the lifeless, cold, and silent environment reflects spiritual emptiness and a crisis of faith. Although the community prays, nature remains unresponsive, symbolizing a perceived withdrawal of divine mercy and deep spiritual disconnection. The neglect of Islamic values regarding the care of strangers further reinforces the theme of religious disorder and spiritual trauma.

To examine these themes, the study draws on environmental trauma theory, particularly the work of Kai Erikson (1976), who analyzed how environmental disasters damage collective identity and emotional life. In *Everything in Its Path: Destruction of Community in the Buffalo Creek Flood*, Erikson (1976) demonstrates that ecological disasters produce long-term psychological and social consequences that extend beyond individual suffering to affect entire communities. His work underscores the deep interdependence between ecology and social life, suggesting that environmental destruction constitutes the destruction of community itself. This theoretical perspective is directly applicable to *An Abundance of Wild Roses*, where ecological collapse disrupts livelihoods, social relations, and emotional stability.

Additionally, the concept of solastalgia introduced by Australian environmental philosopher Glenn Albrecht (2005) further illuminates the emotional suffering depicted in the novel. Solastalgia refers to the distress experienced when one's home environment undergoes destructive change, such as dying forests, polluted air, or increasingly harsh weather conditions (Albrecht, 2005). In the novel, characters experience profound emotional pain and psychological disturbance as their familiar landscape deteriorates. Environmental disorder directly affects mental health, producing anxiety, depression, and ecological grief. Since access to clean air, water, and food is essential for a healthy life, ecological degradation undermines both physical survival and psychological well-being.

Environmental trauma theory focuses on the emotional and psychological consequences of environmental destruction, particularly in rural communities where people maintain an intimate relationship with the land. The novel vividly illustrates how pollution, deforestation, extreme weather, and dying landscapes generate fear, eco-anxiety, solastalgia, and collective suffering. These community-wide impacts demonstrate that environmental trauma in *An Abundance of Wild Roses* is not confined to individual experience but permeates the entire social structure. Ultimately, the novel reveals how ecological disturbance produces widespread mental distress, spiritual disconnection, and social fragmentation, confirming the profound relationship between environmental disorder and human psychological health.

Literature Review

Howard Cooper categorizes literature reviews according to their purpose, structure, and intended audience, emphasizing that an effective literature review should move beyond mere summary to synthesize existing research in order to generate new understanding (Cooper, 1988). This process enables researchers to situate their studies within the broader evolution of knowledge in a given field. Consequently, a literature review serves multiple functions, including contextualizing research, identifying intellectual trends, and highlighting gaps in existing scholarship. Similarly, Booth, Sutton, and Papaioannou argue that a literature review must present a coherent and reasoned justification for why new

research is necessary rather than simply cataloguing previous studies (Booth et al., 2016). They assert that a strong review identifies relevant theories, recurring patterns, and unresolved questions that shape the direction of the study. In this way, the literature review clarifies what is already known, how a topic has been approached, and where inconsistencies or gaps remain. Chris Hart also views the literature review as a critical tool for refining research questions and strengthening conceptual clarity, noting that critical engagement with existing literature helps expose biases, limitations, and deficiencies in earlier research (Hart, 1998).

Psychoanalytic and trauma theories have significantly advanced understanding of psychological reactions to emotional suffering and mental illness. Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory introduced the concept of the unconscious mind, proposing that human behavior is shaped by unconscious desires and early childhood experiences (Freud, 1915). Central to this framework are the interactions among the id, ego, and superego, as well as defense mechanisms that function to protect individuals from psychological distress. Trauma theory, however, shifts focus toward the impact of overwhelming experiences—whether sudden or prolonged on psychological well-being. Cathy Caruth's work emphasizes how trauma disrupts memory, identity, and narrative coherence, a framework that has been used by scholars to examine the effects of war, social neglect, and personal betrayal on traumatized characters (Caruth, 1996). For instance, studies analyzing war narratives have highlighted psychological trauma, identity loss, and post-traumatic stress disorder as central consequences of prolonged conflict.

This theoretical approach has also been applied to literary representations of civil war, such as *Brotherless Night*, which is often examined through trauma theory to reveal the psychological impact of the Sri Lankan civil war on Tamil civilians, particularly the identity fragmentation and PTSD experienced by the protagonist. Such intersections between trauma theory and literary studies have generated extensive scholarship spanning psychological, cultural, and literary perspectives. Further expanding trauma studies, van der Kolk argues that trauma affects both mind and body, demonstrating how traumatic experiences alter brain function and physiological responses, thereby supporting integrated psychological and somatic approaches to trauma treatment (van der Kolk, 2014). In recent years, trauma studies in literature have extended beyond individual experiences of war and violence to include the emotional and psychological consequences of environmental disruption, laying the groundwork for contemporary explorations of ecological trauma and its impact on the human mind.

Material and Methads

The present study adopts a qualitative research design, as it does not rely on numerical data but instead focuses on interpretation, textual analysis, and critical examination of underlying meanings. This approach is particularly suitable for literary research that seeks to explore emotions, symbolism, and thematic complexity within a text. The study analyzes the representation of environmental trauma in Feryal Ali Gauhar's *An Abundance of Wild Roses* to examine how ecological devastation affects psychological well-being and disrupts the social fabric of a rural community.

Using qualitative textual analysis, the research investigates the interconnected experiences of environmental degradation and human suffering, highlighting how damage to the natural environment mirrors identity loss at both individual and collective levels. Close reading techniques are employed to analyze narrative structure, language, imagery, and symbolism that convey fear, silence, emotional distress, and social disintegration. Rather than attempting to quantify these experiences, the study seeks to interpret how the text represents loss, resilience, and resignation in the face of ecological collapse. This methodology enables a nuanced understanding of how environmental disorder functions as a source of psychological and communal trauma within the novel.

Results and Discussion

An Abundance of Wild Roses by Feryal Ali Gauhar isa story of a loathsome, poor, superstitious Pakistani village fighting against the very practical scenario of a global warming world. And as a landslide crashes a fallen tree to the forest floor, it reveals a stranger man wrecked and ruined. He is helpless and feeling hopeless. It makes villagers all too uncomfortable. Men seems like some kind of victim, threat, or a message from God. Editing by Noor Hussain and Hassan Ali, the villagers gaze by Musa Madad, and the fight between their fears greater than or lower than their pains. In the end how they should treat him the setting is significant too, with landslides, floods, snow and dry earth become a mirror of the physical and mental terrain. This motif of silence manifests as actual silencing and repression of the community voice regarding ecocide suffering Maryam, Kalsoom, Zarina and scores of other women are portrayed performing domestic responsibilities and destruction of the environment on their shoulders stressing that degradation has its effects on emotional health. And the sound of the call to prayer through a valley "too weary to hear" human religion or culture is hopelessly intertwined with environmental distress.

The harsh and quiet environment symbolizes the state of emotion and fear felt by the characters. What Hassan experiences during his near death in environmental settings shocks him so badly that he never fully recovers from the psychological effects. As a result, physical survival is not the only impact of environmental changes, but it also provokes adversely to the mental health of individual.

In these lines the depiction of trauma and psychological disturbance caused by an environmental disorder justifies the Martin Heidegger's idea of being-in-the-world which states that humans' mental conditions are deeply influenced by their surroundings. When the natural environment becomes threatening it alter individuals' moods and mental health, as seen in Hassan's shock and fear (Robinson 1962). Martin Heidegger's concept of being-inthe-world, highlights that human existence is inseparable from its environment. Being-in-theworld means humans are embedded in and dependent on the natural world Heidegger's philosophy explains how environmental disorder disturbs the mental state of individuals by disrupting their sense of being-in-the-world (Heidegger, 1927). Sabiha's breakdown is not merely emotional; it is deeply rooted in the oppressive and disordered space that surrounds her. The narrow window symbolizes the inaccessibility of hope and the futility of escape, intensifying her psychological distress. Her trembling and sobbing are responses to a hostile environment that denies comfort and directly affects her mental state. Heidegger argues that when the world loses coherence, it exposes human vulnerability and anxiety (Heidegger, 1927). This idea is reflected when Sabiha collapses to the floor, overwhelmed by both inner turmoil and external environmental disarray. The surreal stillness following Moosa's bellow further demonstrates how emotional violence distorts both human consciousness and the natural world. Thus, the text reveals how environmental disorder generates psychological suffering, echoing Heidegger's notion of disrupted being. Sabiha's mental disturbance is intensified by the congested and hostile environment, while the community at large struggles under harsh weather conditions that compound emotional instability.

The approaching storm is foreshadowed through images of "brisk winds" and the "creaking of wood," which function both literally and symbolically as harbingers of trauma. The rubbing branches of apricot trees depict a land stripped of peace, where seasonal cycles no longer promise renewal but instead reinforce fear and precarity. This environmental uncertainty aligns with Paul Ricoeur's concept of narrative identity, which explains how individual identity is shaped through the continuous interaction of past, present, and future (Ricoeur, 1992). However, when ecological rhythms are disrupted, this narrative continuity fractures, leaving individuals psychologically disoriented. The breakdown of natural cycles in the text mirrors the fragmentation of personal and communal identity, reinforcing the close relationship between environmental instability and mental trauma.

Pastoralism summer grazing winter scarcity wrought by ecological and political tweak themselves. Moosa's anxieties encapsulate this break as the natural world does not serve its conventional role of rooting identity but imposes, instead, dislocation and doubt.

Conclusion

The land of the text, as we have seen, is never just background but it is unstable, damaged, and in flux. The ground keeps shifting, trees keep falling, landslides keep blocking roads and season after season, life is disrupted for people. These disturbances do not just materialize in the lives of community members but they become part of an emotional world among community members. There is a land they live on that nourishes the roots of their fear, silence, and anxiety. It shows us how the first feature of environmental trauma is braided throughout the text that the extreme weather traumatizing the characters are a result of disrupted ecologies. They live in the fear of what the land will do next and this rivets their response to surrounding events. What the arrival of the injured stranger does is simply crystallize its mission. His corpse is under a downed lumber halfdead, scarred by the world. But the response the people give him goes beyond mere curiosity or compassion. That fear and confusion merely reveal how disturbed they already are. The second characteristic of environmental trauma is the normalization of entire community impact, and this story brings that to light as well. This i think reinforces this idea that rather the trauma evident in the text is neither solely personal or communal.

The environment transforms to be a force molding into the entire social fabric of the order. However, the results reveal that the text does not stretch the boundaries of environmental trauma when the theoretical lens is applied. The experiences of characters fit the theory that the emotional and communal from the theory which are definitely factors. It indicates that the text not only relate the tale of a far-off valley but rather investigates how people react when their setting is placed into a state of disorder and danger. At the end of the study, An Abundance of Wild Roses is argued to provide an emotional reflection of humanity individualized by the disarray of the surrounding environment. The study shows that not all trauma comes from war or violence but sometimes come from the land, quietly.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations are proposed to address the psychological, social, and ecological implications of environmental trauma highlighted in An Abundance of Wild Roses. Future research should further integrate eco-criticism with trauma studies to deepen understanding of how environmental degradation shapes mental health and collective identity, particularly in rural and land-dependent communities. Scholars may also extend comparative analyses to other South Asian literary texts to examine shared patterns of ecological and cultural trauma. At a practical level, the study underscores the need for sustainable environmental policies, ecological restoration, and community-based awareness programs that acknowledge the psychological consequences of environmental destruction. Strengthening local support systems, promoting environmental education, and encouraging ethical stewardship of natural resources can help mitigate ecological distress and foster resilience. Finally, incorporating literary insights into interdisciplinary discussions among policymakers, environmentalists, and mental health professionals may contribute to more holistic responses to environmental trauma and its long-term impact on communities.

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