



Rivers of Memory, Mountains of Trauma: A Comparative Ecocritical Study of Mirza Waheed and Basharat Peer

Harshita Sharma

Research Scholar,

Department of English,

Ranchi University, Jharkhand.

hars.2016.ind@gmail.com

 <https://orcid.org/0009-0008-4516-8268>

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Abstract:

The scenic terrain of Kashmir has also shaped its cultural imagination, history, and daily life. More recently, contemporary Kashmiri authors have incorporated political conflict, exile, and ecosystems into their representations of nature. This paper conducts an ecocritical analysis of two contemporary Kashmiri books: Mirza Waheed's *The Collaborator* (2011) and Basharat Peer's *Curfewed Night* (2008) to determine how ecological environments generate trauma, memory, and resilience within Kashmir. This analysis employs concepts of ecocriticism, post-colonial environmental studies, and environmental memory. The article argues that both works illustrate Kashmir's inability to disconnect ecological considerations from its socio-political histories. Kashmiri literature is thus woven together through the experiences of violence, loss, and survival.

The Collaborator depicts natural features like mountains, forests, and rivers as impacted by militarization, death, and ecological disaster; whereas *Curfewed Night* focuses on how rivers, orchards, and seasonal landscapes have been used by Kashmiris to sustain memory, identity, and collective belonging during long-term violence. Although these two works are written in different genres (one is a novel, and the other a memoir), both pieces of literature illustrate that the Kashmir landscape can be understood as an ecological witness to the consequences of political violence and cultural alienation. By putting these two works together, the article argues that contemporary Kashmiri writers articulate an environmental consciousness in which the terrain acts as a site of trauma, memory, and political conflict. These narratives offer an ecological perspective of militarism, extending existing discussions of ecocriticism in postcolonial contexts. The focus on literature also shows how it can be used to keep alive the environmental memories of places with their difficult histories.

Keywords: Ecocriticism; Kashmir; Environmental Memory; Political Violence; Trauma Studies; Postcolonial Ecocriticism.

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Introduction

Kashmiri literature explores memory, belonging, and place through descriptions of natural landscapes that mediate the damage inflicted on communities by prolonged political conflict and social upheaval. Beyond recounting personal experiences, these writers engage with cultural legacies, environmental ethics, and collective memory. Exposure to these conflicts has heightened the vulnerability of both human communities and their natural environment. The daily realities of military occupation, curfews, displacement, and violence have altered life in the region, having left both physical and psychological traces on the region's topography. Rivers, orchards, and valleys are not just locations of human experience but also storehouses of memory, where political upheaval has left its mark. In these ways, Kashmiri writers are exploring how environmental and social histories are intertwined.

This article analyzes Mirza Waheed's *The Collaborator* (2011) and Basharat Peer's *Curfewed Night* (2008) to explore how the Kashmiri terrain meditates trauma, memory, and resilience in contemporary Kashmiri literature. The landscape in *The Collaborator* not merely serves as a physical setting; it bears the imprint of prolonged human conflict. Waheed has shown how these sites are shaped by violence, uncertainty, and ecological disruption. In contrast, *Curfewed Night* presents how the rivers, orchards, and Valley are archives of memory and cultural identity of the region. Peer has tried to highlight their role in sustaining resilience and collective identity throughout the decades of conflict.

By examining these two texts together, this article argues that contemporary Kashmiri literature articulates an environmental consciousness in which the ecological and sociopolitical crises are closely intertwined. The article draws upon ecocriticism, postcolonial environmental

studies, and theories of environmental memory to illustrate how landscapes serve as living archives of violence, displacement, and survival. More broadly, contemporary Kashmiri literature illustrates how environmental changes and political conflicts are deeply interconnected while also highlighting the role of literature in preserving ecological memory and developing ethical relations with the nonhuman world.

Literature Review

Recent decades have seen a surge in scholarly interest regarding the relationship between the environment and literature. The rise of ecocriticism has brought a new perspective to literature and nature, challenging traditional ideas about how people interpret literature. Early ecocritics argued against anthropocentric (human-centered) modes of literary interpretation by arguing that literature should not be read as a reflection of human experiences, but also as a site of interactions between humans, ecological systems, and environmental ethics. Lawrence Buell argues that ecocriticism has expanded the study of literature by focusing on how humans are connected to the natural world (Buell 1–28). Environmental Humanities has expanded the scope of ecocriticism by examining other environmental concepts such as environmental memory, sustainability, and ecological justice. Ursula Heise argues that environmental narratives connect local ecological issues with broader global environmental issues (Heise 30–54). Similarly, the concept of “slow violence,” given by Rob Nixon, describes forms of environmental destruction that occur gradually, often remaining invisible until their effects inflict profound harm on the environment and humans (Nixon 2–15).

Post-Colonial Ecocriticism examines how colonization and military conflicts have shaped human-environment relationships. Elizabeth DeLoughrey and George Handley argue that post-colonial ecological crises cannot be understood without understanding the political and historical

forces that have created those crises (DeLoughrey and Handley 3–17). Similarly, Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin argue that environmental issues in formerly colonized regions are inseparable from issues of power, identity, and social justice (Huggan and Tiffin 12–35). These arguments are particularly relevant to areas experiencing prolonged political turmoil, where environmental destruction and social upheaval happen simultaneously. In such contexts, landscapes become more than mere physical space; they act as repositories of memory, sites of traumatic experiences, and creators of cultural identity.

South Asian literary scholarship has increasingly examined how trauma, memory, environment, and violence intersect in displacement through literary portrayals of landscape, which encapsulate ecological history as well as collective memory of trauma. Environmental space often serves as a witness to historical violence as well as sites of contested cultural memory. As such, Nixon's concept of slow violence has been extremely helpful in understanding the example of the continuing political conflicts producing not only pain for humans but also producing ecological devastation that remains largely unrecognized and absent from dominant narratives of history (Nixon 2–15). This has resulted in a reconceptualization by many scholars of the role played by the environment in the formation of individual and collective identity in societies that exist in some form of political conflict.

Kashmiri literary studies have largely focused on issues relating to Political Violence, Trauma, Memory, Resistance, and Identity. *Curfewed Night* is widely considered a significant contemporary Kashmiri literary work produced during the current period of turmoil. It has received major critical acclaim due to its role as an exemplary model of emerging literary testimony. In her article, *Voicing the Pain of Conflict-torn Kashmiris: A Study of Basharat Peer's Curfewed Night*, Mohd. Nageen Rather investigates the text as a powerful vehicle representing the suffering, the

displacement, and the trauma suffered by the common man in Kashmir over the course of many years of conflict. It is also noted that the text provides a fundamental description of life, love, and hope for millions of ordinary Kashmiris and will provide future generations with a testimonial account based on the voices of ordinary Kashmiris who are frequently marginalized in political contexts. Similarly, Nishi Upadhyaya, in her article "*Fear-filled Valley: Basharat Peer's Curfewed Night*," has written an article providing an examination of the portrayal of physical, psychological, social, and political impacts of militarization in the text, in which she notes how Peer has successfully used his own experiences, Journalism and Historical Documentation as vehicles for conveying the true life experiences of individuals and families living in Kashmir who were victims of violence.

Additional literature has examined how *Curfewed Night* fits into the genre of resistance literature. Qaisar Bashir, in his article *Conflict Literature from Kashmir: A Study of Curfewed Night and The Half Mother* positions Peer's text within a broader body of Kashmiri writing related to conflict, as those writers attempt to communicate emotions, desires, etc., of people affected by political upheaval. Similarly, in "*Resistance Literature in the Kashmir Conflict: A Study of Basharat Peer's Curfewed Night*," Shahnawaz Bashir Zargar argues that *Curfewed Night* challenges the dominant versions of the Kashmir conflict by emphasizing the experiences of those who have been marginalized as well as on subaltern communities. In his article, *Deconstructing the Politics of Ideology and Language Play: A Critical Study of the Ending in Basharat Peer's Curfewed Night*, Ghulam Mohammad Khan critiques the ideological and linguistic aspects found throughout *Curfewed Night*, with a focus on how Peer challenges the political views that shape popular conceptions about Kashmir. In conclusion, these works support *Curfewed Night* as an extremely valuable text in terms of trauma, memory, resistance, and political testimony.

Although numerous scholars have examined *Curfewed Night* from a socio-political and historical standpoint, they tend to treat the landscape mostly as a passive backdrop. While they do offer important perspectives on the role of topography and space in shaping Kashmiri identity, they rarely analyze them as active agents in the development of memory, trauma, and cultural significance in Kashmiri life. Therefore, the ecological aspects of the text remain largely untouched.

The critical literature on Mirza Waheed's novel *The Collaborator* has primarily focused on issues of violence, militarization, identity, and conflict, though recently ecocritical scholarship has begun to be concerned with this text. One of the best examples of this new ecocritical scholarship is Saba Pirzadeh's article *Topographies of Fear: War and Environmental Othering in Mirza Waheed's The Collaborator and Nadeem Aslam's The Blind Man's Garden*. Pirzadaeh employs postcolonial ecocriticism to explain how "environmental othering" provides insight into how military discourse has altered ecological topography into places that are both hostile and secure. However, narratives that portray these war-torn countries as being at war are often used to justify the destruction of the terrain.

In Jan Mohmad Pandit's article, "*Ecological Othering: A Postcolonial Ecocritical Study of Mirza Waheed's The Collaborator*," the military occupation of Kashmir and its effect on the environment, driven by an overly militarized presence, disrupt both ecological equilibrium and the collective memory of the Kashmiri people. This research demonstrates how militarized borders transform the natural environment into a politicised space and thus erase their ecological and cultural significance. These same issues are examined in the ecocritical analysis of Mohammad Shoaib regarding Waheed's *The Book of Gold Leaves*, connecting the degradation of the environment to the political instability and ongoing destruction of the ecological heritage of

Kashmir. All of these analyses confirm a growing emphasis on environmental perspectives in contemporary Kashmiri literary criticism.

The existing research devoted to *Curfewed Night* has concentrated almost exclusively on trauma, resistance, political violence, memory, and testimonial writing. Research on *The Collaborator* has similarly dealt mainly with militarization, identity, conflict, and, more recently, environmental degradation, especially in the context of postcolonial ecocritical discussions. These studies, though addressing the importance of place and landscape, have not explored how ecological spaces impact memory, trauma, resilience, and the formation of cultural identity. Furthermore, there has not yet been a significant comparative ecocritical study of the two texts in terms of environmental memory, political violence, and ecological transformation, which is an area that remains poorly researched.

This article seeks to fill this gap by presenting a comparative ecocritical reading of Basharat Peer's *Curfewed Night* with Mirza Waheed's *The Collaborator*. By using ecocritical theory, theories of environmental memory, and postcolonial environmental studies, this comparative ecocritical reading will examine how rivers, forests, mountains, and orchards are used as an integral part of the development of trauma, memory, resilience, and identity in contemporary Kashmiri literature.

Theoretical Framework and Methodology

This study primarily employs ecocriticism, postcolonial environmental studies, and environmental memory as its analytical framework. Following Glotfelty, ecocriticism examines the relationship between literature and the physical environment (Glotfelty xviii). However, because Kashmir's environmental history is inseparable from militarization, displacement, and

political conflict, the study extends beyond traditional ecocriticism to incorporate postcolonial environmental perspectives developed by DeLoughrey and Handley and by Huggan and Tiffin. These approaches enable an examination of how ecological spaces become implicated in histories of violence, occupation, and resistance.

As Lawrence Buell notes, environmentally focused literature encourages readers to view place as a character and to reflect ethically upon human responsibilities to the nonhuman world (Buell 7-8). Furthermore, as Greg Garrard points out, nature is often depicted in literature as a vehicle to deliver ethical and political criticism of the conditions of living and the matters at hand (Garrard 5-7). As such, these two perspectives provide a framework for interpreting landscape as an active participant in creating memory, identity, and meaning rather than just as a passive entity.

Using both environmental history and postcolonial environmental criticism allows the author to examine the particularities of the historical and political situation in Kashmir. Environmental critics have linked environmental issues to histories of violence, dispossession, and the inequality of power, which persists within postcolonial societies throughout the world (DeLoughrey and Handley 3-17; Huggan and Tiffin 12-35). This perspective is critical for addressing Kashmir because the social and ecological landscapes of the region have been transformed significantly by militarism and political violence, and the author looks at how these histories of suffering, memory, and resistance have altered the environmental settings.

The article also draws on theories of environmental memory, which see landscapes as memory based upon previous historical experience and culture. It allows one to examine how ecological spaces can represent the impact of violence and also provide opportunities for belonging and resiliency.

Methodology

Through a qualitative comparative textual analysis of *The Collaborator* (2011) and *Curfewed Night* (2008) by Mirza Waheed and Basharat Peer, respectively, this article seeks to examine how the landscape mediates experiences of trauma, memory, displacement, and survival. This analysis explores how ecological features are represented in relation to militarization, political conflict, and daily life.

By comparing the representations of nature by both authors, this article highlights key similarities and differences in their texts. For instance, while *The Collaborator* emphasizes the materiality of violence inscribed on the landscape and the rupture of ecological continuity, *Curfewed Night* underscores the role of nature in sustaining memory and identity and providing continuity during periods of conflict. The analysis of these two texts in conversation with each other indicates that contemporary Kashmiri literature articulates an ecological consciousness that reveals intimate relationships between the history of nature and the history of political conflict.

In these texts, nature not only serves as the setting of human activities but also as a repository for memory of ecological and political conflict. By reviewing several recent works by contemporary Kashmiri authors, this article aims to show how contemporary Kashmiri authors understand their current location and landscape, providing new insights about how Kashmiri literature can contribute to broader discussions within ecocriticism.

Mirza Waheed and Ecological Rupture

The Collaborator (2011) shows both the political and violent history within Kashmir through its distinct geographical features. Waheed has included the mountains, rivers, orchards,

and valleys as an illustration of how these natural features have been negatively impacted by the violence experienced. He portrays the landscape as an active participant in the conflict, rather than a mere backdrop, aligning with Cheryll Glotfelty's argument that the natural world is not simply a backdrop to literature, but plays an active role in representing the world in a literary construct (Glotfelty xviii).

In the beginning of the novel, the narrator talks about his childhood stream, calling it a river that still flows “in the same old fashion—lazy and considered, as if pausing now and then to reflect on the macabre change in the scenery around it” (Waheed 23). The stream serves as a silent, contemplative witness, registering the macabre transformations of the valley within its own flow. Additionally, he describes the stream as having carried with it “childhood dreams, unfulfilled wishes and bloated corpses” (Waheed 24). The stream acts as both a living entity and an archive of collective memory, holding on to vestiges of both personal memory and political violence. Rather than simply being a set where the story happens, the landscape collects and holds on to the stories of loss that define this place. Waheed extends this description by noting that the stream serves as his “personal Hades,” thereby emphasizing the stream as an area where memory, death, and continuity of the environment overlap (Waheed 24).

Another example of Waheed's evidence is illustrated in how militarization disrupts the continuity of nature and everyday life. The valley that was once a source of innocence and plenty has now become associated with violence and death, a transformation the narrator reflects on when he writes about the valley in his childhood: “a calm, largely uninhabited, solitary place nestled amidst the rings of our hills and mountains” (Waheed 13). The description of the valley as a pastoral setting is sharply contrasted to the later occasion when the narrator returns to see the same valley littered with dead bodies: “Wretched human remains lie on the green grass like cracked

toys” (Waheed 14-15). This contrast reveals how socio-political turmoil not only diminishes the value of human life but also the ecological value of a place. From a place of leisure, remembrance, and belonging, the valley has now become a site of trauma. This use of imagery supports Lawrence Buell's contention that literature about the environment illustrates the interdependence between the social order and the ecological order and shows how violence against people has a simultaneous effect on the places in which people live (Buell 7-8). Waheed uses Ashfaq's observations to highlight the ecological effects of militarization through his explanation of war's effect on the destruction of the environment. During a shelling episode, he points toward the mountains and exclaims, "Look at that forest they have just scorched, look!" (Waheed 45). The statement captures the destructive nature of military conflict to both human communities and natural environments, such as ecosystems. As a result of an indecipherable act of violence, the tortured beauty of the mountain landscape is marked by the physical manifestations of human suffering, which become symbolic of the emotional anguish suffered by local populations. In this way, Waheed presents the natural world not merely as a backdrop of socio-political turmoil but also as an active participant in that process; therefore, providing support for ecocritical arguments which assert that environmental degradation and human suffering exist inextricably linked.

Waheed's depiction of terrain is not merely aesthetic; it serves as a site of ethical and political significance, preserving the memory of the inflicted violence. For example, in the forest, the trees do not speak but merely watch the narrator with great attentiveness. This silence disturbs the narrator as it reflects his internal strife. Moreover, the trees appear to look at the narrator with a "long, deliberate look," indicating their judgment of him as "the one who has to tell this story" (Waheed 72). Waheed provides a visual and textual record of the violence done to the people of

Kashmir through his portrayal of the natural features. The physical landscape may not have the ability to speak, but it continues to challenge people to remember.

The evidence presented herein illustrates Garrard's argument that literary landscapes serve as sites of moral and political enquiry, where ecological concerns about power and responsibility intersect (Garrard 5-7). In *The Collaborator*, the trees in the forest take an active role in the narrator's struggles with loss, guilt, and memory. The forest is an example of how ecological settings can be incorporated into the fabric of humanity's violent past. The tension between the beauty of the landscape and the destruction by military violence highlights the complicated relationship between the aesthetics of nature and conflict.

The narrator, looking through the tree stump, sees "the village, the smoke, the valley, the river, the trees," and states, "Everything appeared resolved here" (Waheed 107). For a brief moment, the panoramic view of the valley allows the narrator to be one with the environment in an environment of harmony. The landscape is calm and whole, but the calmness will not last, as the narrator's attention is drawn to the sound of people approaching. This suggests that the militarized environment disrupts the ecological setting.

This lack of ecological refuge in a conflict zone is illustrated by the clash of physical isolation with the violent intent of the approaching sounds of the people. The relationship between the mountains and the violence that occurred shows that the mountains are likewise marked by war. Reflecting on cross-border shelling, the narrator imagines how "there would be blood and Sulphur, on the trees" and how the pines would be transformed into "umbrellas of crumbling flame, smoke and ash" (Waheed 104). The act of destroying the environment is shown not simply as a side effect of wars but rather as a byproduct of war on specific people involved in armed conflict.

This reinforces what Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin have said about the dual nature of postcolonial environments bearing both ecological manifestations of violence and sociopolitical manifestations of violence, namely, that the mountains, forests, rivers, and trees found in Waheed's Kashmir have become sites containing the recorded history of the conflict that has shaped the ecological landscape of Kashmir (Huggan and Tiffin 13). Thus, Kashmir will continue to preserve the memory of the conflict and the physical devastation it has wrought, but it will also document the broader, global implications of "militaristic" activity.

Thus, through the images he evokes through language, Waheed establishes an inextricable relationship between the ecological experience and the "human" experience. The trees represent a silent witness to the events that have taken place; the mountains represent a site of shellfire; and the valley represents a momentary point of refuge. Each of these aspects of the landscape of Kashmir serves as a powerful reminder of both the suffering and survival that have occurred. Through the ecological space memory, violence, and ethical responsibility are always being negotiated. This aligns with Buell's belief, as discussed in *Environmental Imagination*, that environmental literature shows the connection between socio-ecological systems (Buell 7–8).

Also, Waheed points out that conflict changes human experience of ecological temporality. Seasonal cycles happen, but they no longer represent renewal or continuity; they have now become a combination of uncertainty, absence, and hope. In reference to the beginning of winter, the narrator says, "Winter came. First slowly and then suddenly." (Waheed 92) With the arrival of winter comes a collective stillness that settles "over the valley, over the pine-encrusted mountains and their clouded peaks, over the street, over everything" (Waheed 92). These two descriptions are more than a weather report; they describe a condition that has come from the military

occupation and the loss of lives. The physical landscape can be imagined to be caught up in uncertainty shared by the community of all those who have disappeared or died at the border.

When the mountain passes are closed for the season, this entire constraint heightens. The narrator states that “there wasn't going to be any excitement for the next few months” (Waheed 92), connecting natural rhythm to the restrictions created by war. In essence, ecological time continues to progress according to its natural cycles; however, it does so through a lens of violence related to both political separation and civil war. The mountains are covered in snow, their peaks hidden from view amongst the clouds, while the valleys remain as silent witnesses to lost hopes and unresolved grief. Through the use of the environment as an expression of historical trauma, Waheed allows his readers to experience the historical trauma in an emotive way. This view aligns with Buell’s (Buell 7-8) assertion that environmental literature contains a duality of ecological and human history and demonstrates how the natural processes have a moral or political impact in times of social conflict.

Ecological rupture plays a key role in the political landscape in Kashmir in *The Collaborator*. The rivers, forests, mountains, and valleys in the region are not passive entities, but instead are dynamic repositories of the history of trauma, memory, and loss. The narrator's memories of the valley, once a site of childhood freedom, give way to a valley filled with "wretched human remains" and haunted by the absence of lost friends (Waheed 15). As well, the winter months bring "an eerie silence" to the region, as the presence of "a mist, a sense of waiting hung in the air" (Waheed 92) highlights, and the natural rhythms of the seasons remind one of the uncertainty and separation that are now part of human lives. Waheed's representations illustrate the interconnected nature of environmental change and sociopolitical violence. The text thus compels readers to confront issues of ecological justice, historical memory, and ethical

responsibility, as the landscapes of Kashmir function as enduring repositories of conflict while containing artifacts of both suffering and belonging.

Basharat Peer and Environmental Memory

In the text *Curfewed Night* (2008), author Basharat Peer presents a different perspective than Waheed's. Unlike Waheed, who depicts the damage the conflict caused to the environment in Kashmir, Peer focuses on the use and preservation of natural landscapes as a measure of memory of the conflict and the experience of living under curfews and military rule. Landscape features such as valleys, rivers, orchards, and snowfall are described by Peer as places of both personal and collective memory. Therefore, the physical environment becomes a part of the daily experience of living, and plays a significant role in how people remember, deal with, and make sense of experiences of conflict. Peer's text supports Glotfelty's ecocritical premise that literature and place exist in an establishing and developing relationship (Glotfelty xviii).

Throughout *Curfewed Night*, Peer describes natural phenomena as containers for identity and memory. When describing memories about his childhood, he recalls that "The snow would slide off of our roof and hit the ground with a loud thud during the winter months" and describes his brother and him "creating snowmen out of snow and using charcoal for their eyes" (Peer 5-6). Although these examples of interacting with snow may seem ordinary, they establish a connection between personal and collective memory of Kashmir.

For this reason, while nature may serve as a visually pleasant place to look at, it also remains an unforgettable part of his childhood, his sense of belonging, and cultural heritage. Later, reflecting on the persistence of conflict, Peer expresses the hope that war and its causes might one day "disappear like footsteps on winter snow in my childhood" (Peer 178). Snow serves as a

mnemonic device connecting the memories of youth and moments of healing. Natural elements (such as snow or a landscape in general) also provide continuity between personal memory and a collective desire to heal. This aligns with Glotfelty's argument that landscapes affect human perception, memory, and ethical consciousness (Glotfelty xviii).

Like snow, rivers, orchards, and landscaped areas from *Curfewed Night* are also metaphoric indicators of memory or a sense of belonging. Referring back to his youth in Kashmir, Peer recalls that agricultural life was intimately connected to everyday life when he writes, "In Summer, after harvesting mustard, people put the seedlings of rice into the fields(Peer 4). Farmers also continually observed "the sky and the rain" to ensure "the rain didn't come too early in the spring" because delay would ruin the crop (Peer 4). These details illustrate an ecological perspective based on lived experience by connecting human existence with seasonal events in nature (natural conditions). The topography not only serves as habitat for people to live; it structures village life, labor, and cultural memory.

The environmental features in the story act as metaphors for loss and displacement. Peer writes about the experience of witnessing the displaced Kashmiri Pandits' sadness, specifically writing about how one refugee "had eyes that spoke of shady willows, the clear streams, and the apple orchards that he had played in as a child" (Peer 74). The streams and orchards serve to be significant memorials of the past for the displaced, providing a means for the individual to recall connections with home after their physical disconnection from it. Memories of place survive despite displacement; thus, the ecological area acts as a keeper and place of identity for many groups.

Peer highlights the transformation of ecological landscapes due to militarization and how this has disrupted the original meanings attributed to those sites. For example, while reflecting on a fort in Srinagar, an elder states, “There used to be a temple, a mosque, a pond and a few apricot trees there,” before concluding, “Now it is all military...” (Peer 100). The juxtaposition of earlier instances of the combined existence of social, religious, and ecological spaces in contrast to the militarization of the present state illustrates how human and ecological landscapes change due to the conflict. The disappearance of the ponds, orchards, and other communal areas signifies the deterioration of the culture's history. This change reflects Huggan and Tiffin's discussion that postcolonial landscapes often show evidence of the combined effects of violence against people and the destruction of nature due to war in the past, thus serving as both historical archives of trauma and sites for the validation of culture (Huggan and Tiffin 13).

In *Curfewed Night*, the act of remembering becomes inextricably linked with nature, especially during moments of retrospection. For instance, when Peer recalls standing atop a forested hillside and seeing the “green valley below with a silver ribbon sneaking through the middle” as well as “the numerous trees with their varied aspects across the land” (Peer 107), he experiences a panoramic view of valley, river, and forest that conveys his temporary escape from the surrounding violence. However, this moment of tranquility does not last long, as shortly thereafter, the approach of a group of people interrupts the silence. This emphasizes how war and violence have affected the natural landscape in the past and will continue to do so. Memory, belonging, and anxiety, therefore, exist alongside one another in their relationship to place.

Throughout the text, the ecological landscape preserves evidence of historical events that would not exist otherwise, due to a lack of records. For example, when Peer recalls visiting an abandoned temple and describing “the weeds and wild bushes had invaded the courtyard,” and

how pigeons flew “out into the dusk over the river Jhelum and the city” (Peer 99). The weeds that have grown throughout the temple and the dilapidated condition of the structure remind one of the violence (both demographic and social) that has caused the displacement of people and communities from this temple. Nature, therefore, becomes an accidental archivist, tracing absences by way of routine ecological change over time. These examples reflect Garrard's argument that literary depictions of landscape prompt a moral consideration of the connection between human history and environmental change (Garrard 5–7).

Ultimately, Peer's environmental images are more concerned about environmental remembrance rather than about environmental rupture. Environmental elements such as rivers, orchards, fields, snow, and forests are ongoing witnesses to individual experience, cultural identity, and collective loss. By embedding memory in the physical landscape, *Curfewed Night* illustrates how ecological spaces provide continuity despite being removed from violence, political instability, and displacement. This text works with Waheed's focus on gestures of trauma that occur within an ecological environment while revealing the landscape as both an archive for trauma and as a means to provide resilience.

Conclusion

This article examined how landscape features function ecologically, ethically, and socio-politically in Mirza Waheed's *The Collaborator* and Basharat Peer's *Curfewed Night* through both an ecocritical perspective and a postcolonial ecocritical perspective. Both authors use various landscape features in Kashmir - including rivers, valleys, forests, mountains, orchards, and seasonal cycles - to tell multiple stories about how these features are an integral part of narratives of violence, memory, displacement, and survival. The landscapes depicted in *The Collaborator*

show the signs of trauma, all inflicted by militarization, with rivers mourning the past, and forests and mountains silently bearing witness to all of the horrendous acts of violence. At the same time, the valley itself becomes a location of surveillance and loss. In contrast, *Curfewed Night* depicts the ecological memories like snow-covered villages, orchards, rivers, and agricultural land as sources of identity and belonging amid the devastation and oppression created by conflict.

The findings support the ecocritical theorists, such as Glotfelty, who argued that the environment plays an active role in shaping human experience (Glotfelty xviii), and Buell, who insisted that the ecological environment is inextricably interconnected with sociopolitical history, particularly during times of conflict (Buell 7-8). Moreover, Garrard's definition of landscape as the medium for ethical contemplation and the postcolonial ecocritical framework of Huggan and Tiffin support the connection between ecological upheaval and sociopolitical disruption and are reflected in the works of Peer and Waheed (Garrard 5-7; Huggan and Tiffin 13).

While Waheed's work foregrounds the landscape as a site of violent rupture and ecological desecration, Peer's text complicates this narrative by positioning the environment as a necessary vehicle for resilience and cultural continuity. Where Waheed emphasizes the erasure of meaning through militarization, Peer investigates the preservation of meaning through memory. By transitioning from the 'scorched' terrain of Waheed's valley to the 'archival' orchards of Peer's memoir, we can observe how the Kashmiri landscape acts simultaneously as a site of trauma and a repository of identity, bridging the gap between the devastation of war and the survival of a people.

In conclusion, while the narrative of Waheed illustrates the ecological degradation of Kashmir due to violence faced by the land, the memoir of Peer exemplifies the strength of the

Kashmiri cultural identity. Both texts show the contribution of environmental memory to the continuity of this culture. Taken together, both representations of the Kashmiri landscape provide evidence to support discussions of ecocritical justice and accountability as well as the relationship between human beings and nonhuman beings by demonstrating that the Kashmiri landscape is an ethical archive of documenting trauma, preserving memory and identity, and creating continuity for indigenous peoples.

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