

## **CAPITALISM, CLASS, AND CLIMATE: AN ECO-MARXIST ANALYSIS OF MOHSIN HAMID'S MOTH SMOKE AND UZMA ASLAM KHAN'S TRESSPASSING**

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### **Abstract**

*A balanced eco-system is very essential for a healthy human life. Growing urbanization and industrialization are disturbing the balance of eco-system through pollution and global warming. This paper examines the interconnection between capitalism, ecological damage and class inequalities in the context of Pakistan as reflected in Mohsin Hamid's Moth Smoke and Uzma Aslam Khan's Tresspassing. The eco-Marxism theory of John Bellamy Foster serves as a theoretical framework for this research which states that capitalist economic system negatively impacts both humans and their natural environment. Both the texts criticize capitalism and highlight the resulting environmental challenges and class struggles leading to an eco-Marxist discourse on social and environmental justice. The analysis reveals how both the authors address the effect of capitalist practices on the environment and marginalized communities which will contribute to a deeper understanding of the socio-environmental framework of contemporary Pakistani society. By foregrounding eco-Marxist themes, this study aims to invite readers to reflect on the urgent need for more equitable and*

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*sustainable systems that honor both social justice and ecological balance.*

**Keywords:** *capitalism, climate, eco-Marxism, environmental degradation, Moth Smoke, Tresspassing.*

## INTRODUCTION

*A major and global concern of today world is climate change and environmental degradation. Man is facing a severe environmental crisis, largely due to his own eco-unfriendly practices. Our modern life style and cultural advancements continue to pose significant threats to the Earth's biosphere. Technological advancements are gradually depleting natural resources. Current environmental issues such as rising global warming, ozone layer depletion and the rapid melting of glaciers serve as alarming reminders of our disregard for nature which has made our nature at the threshold of extinction. Ecological problems are often presented as a conflict between nature and human progress. The increasing tension between the overconsumption of natural resources, human accumulation of material wealth and individual well-being versus a need for sustainable environment is becoming more evident. Moreover, the prevailing capitalist system with its emphasis on private ownership and profit-driven production has further complicated man's relationship with nature and therefore demands urgent attention (Navanit, 2019).*

*To effectively address environmental problems, it is important to know their root causes. Environmental issues are complicated and arise from various factors. Sometimes, nature itself is to blame—like volcanic eruptions, earthquakes or tsunamis that happen without any human influence (Romadhon, 2011). On the other hand, humans have also made these issues worse through actions like over consumption, industrial development and resource extraction (Usman & Lorente, 2022). The relentless pursuit of economic growth and profit, often associated with capitalism, has driven unsustainable practices that harm the environment. Baer (2010) says that most climate experts agree that climate change is mainly caused by the rise in greenhouse gases, specifically carbon dioxide, which started increasing rapidly after the Industrial Revolution. Many*

*Progressive scholars argue that global capitalism is doing serious harm to the environment. Business owners try to make more money creating a “perpetual treadmill of production and consumption” (Baer, 2010, p. 4) usually powered by fossil energies that release greenhouse gases. Back in 2010, the International Energy Agency predicted that by 2030, the world would be using over 50% more energy, mostly from fossil fuels (Baer, 2010, p. 64). As long as we rely on fossil fuels, global temperatures will keep rising.*

*Rueckert (1978) says that Eco-criticism as a movement began to develop in 1990s in response to human destructive approaches towards nature highlighting the frequent environmental calamities facing by earth. It examines how literature questions, reflects, criticizes or suggests different perspectives on nature and how these perspectives shape our relationship with the environment. As an interdisciplinary field, eco-criticism is enhanced through knowledge from other fields such as environmental science, history, philosophy, geography, political science, sociology etc. (Clark, 2001). Eco-Marxism is an interdisciplinary study which combines Marxist beliefs with ecology and examines the exploitation of natural resources caused by capitalist system. Indeed, Eco-Marxism blames capitalism and considers it responsible for the destruction of nature.*

## **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

*Today’s world is facing a wide range of problems in different forms among which the major one is environmental degradation. The ecological problems are the unavoidable consequences of capitalism in which the drive for increasing profit leads to the degradation of environment and exploitation of natural resources. In the context of Pakistan, rapid urbanization in the quest for resources and industrialization has caused certain social and environmental problems. This research paper highlights how Pakistani literature addresses these social and environmental crises. The study also examines how these Pakistani authors criticize capitalism, pinpoint environmental challenges and illuminate class struggles which eventually contribute to the discourse on social and ecological justice.*

## **RESEARCH OBJECTIVE**

*To examine how the novels *Moth Smoke* and *Trespassing* illustrate environmental degradation and social injustice through an Eco-Marxist*

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*lens.*

## RESEARCH QUESTION

*How do Mohsin Hamid's Moth Smoke and Uzma Aslam Khan's Trespassing reflect Eco-Marxist themes of environmental degradation and class struggle?*

## SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

*Mostly environmental issues are the products of modern technology. The underdeveloped countries are facing the challenges of adjustment to the changing environment, such as the effects of climate change, pollution, and depletion of resources. The role of literature and art in making people aware in respect to their environment has become very significant in these situations. Writers' voice can create awareness about the urgent need of ecological sustainability. So, the findings of this research paper can contribute to the formation of environmental awareness and ecological ethics in readers by showing them different ways in which literature reflects, questions, criticizes or proposes various visions of nature and the relationship between humans and the environment.*

## LITERATURE REVIEW

*Man in the 21st century is facing the unbeatable challenge of ecological collapse which has been intensified since the rise of industrialization due to capitalism. Shrinking of seasons, weather change, heavy rains, unbearable heat waves, summers in winters, winters in summers and all the ecological changes are part of decade's long inhumane treatment of nature at the global scale. Sultan (2023) states that "capitalism and climate change are two sides of the same coin" (p.9). The capitalist mode of production characterized by industrial development and the resulting high emission of greenhouse gases is responsible for extreme weather such as record breaking heat waves and prolonged droughts. This adversely affects human ecosystem and the food production. Nawaz (2023) says that industries compete for profits in a capitalist system and prioritize short-term financial gains over long-term environmental sustainability. This endless pursuit of economic expansion leads to extraction of resources, overproduction and*

*excessive consumption, all of which are major contributors to the emission of harmful gases and degradation of environment. This has accelerated climate change and its harmful effects on vulnerable population. Capitalism also encourages and engages people to buy a lot of things often useless. Companies make several advertisements and create products which do not last for long time on purpose. This makes people to buy more than they actually need. This practice not only uses up a lot of natural resources but also creates garbage, trash and pollution. This exerts pressure on nature and natural resources and in turn leads to climate change.*

*Pakistan is one of the countries badly hit by climate change in the world. Abubakar's report (2017) titled as "Pakistan 7<sup>th</sup> Most Vulnerable Country to Climate Change" published in Dawn informs us about the damage caused by climate change. He brings a bitter reality to the forefront that "the super flood of 2010 placed Pakistan on the top slot among the countries most affected by climate change" (Abubakar, 2017). In 2024, during a record smog season, Pakistan was the third most polluted country in the Swiss Air Technology Company's annual report (IQAir, 2025). Official estimates indicate that Pakistan experiences 128,000 deaths per year as a result of climate change (Dawn, 2019). Lahore and Karachi which are Pakistan's largest cities and economic centers face serious climate change threats due to its spatial positions, dense population and infrastructure hazards. According to IQAir report (2024), Lahore is among the most polluted cities worldwide. Similarly, according to WHO report published in The Newsletter (2024) Karachi is the fifth most polluted city in the world. It is significant to mention the ambiance of Lahore and Karachi as these are settings of Moth Smoke and Trespassing. But it is not only Lahore and Karachi which are affected by pollution; other regions of Pakistan are getting equally affected. All of the above facts and figures mentioned in different newspapers and articles inform us about current horror provoking situation of Pakistan's climate which needs an immediate solution. Adamson (2009) says that despite the heightened focus on environmental issues in both politics and public sphere in recent times, there have been limited environmentally conscious initiatives in Pakistan. Meaningful action cannot be undertaken unless individuals become aware and actively advocate for a healthy and*

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*sustainable natural environment.*

*Saeed (2023) says that literature has consistently functioned as a medium for reflecting human experiences and within it lays the potential to evoke a significant shift in our connection with the natural world. Ecological awareness denoting an acknowledgement of our intertwined relationship with environment and the urgent need for its safeguarding has emerged as a critical concern amid escalating environmental crisis.*

*Pepper (1993) says that "Eco-Marxism, is a sociopolitical ideology introduced by Ben Agger in 1979, which combines Marxist critiques of capitalism with ecological concerns and environmental movements" (p.23). Helmy (2021) states that eco-Marxism is the criticism of how capitalism harms the environment and cause ecological rift. In an era of rising environmental crisis, Eco-Marxism provides a compelling framework for challenging us to reimagine our relationship with nature and rethink about sustainability in the face of capitalist's destruction. It tends to bridge the division between environment and social justice through highlighting the ways in which capitalist's practices accelerates environmental degradation. The growing environmental challenges have forced the critics to turn their attention towards natural and environmental concerns in literary works in order to develop environmental consciousness of people.*

*With its depiction of social struggles and economic crisis leading to natural degradation, Moth Smoke embodies the political and socioeconomic consciousness of contemporary Pakistan. Bose (2000) examines class differences in Moth Smoke while using the word "nuclear" as a metaphor to discuss socioeconomic disparities. He highlights that the wealthy elite in Moth Smoke were regarded as liberal and capable while the poor were not even allowed to think like liberals. With particular reference to the elite class and how they vary from the rest of society, Judd (2006) says that Moth Smoke demonstrates that, with rare exceptions, the upper class is full of dishonest and corrupt individuals who jeopardize the lives and rights of the lower classes.*

*Yaqoob (2020) in her research paper "Human Perversion and*

*Environmental Space: An Eco-critical Reading of Mohsin Hamid's Moth Smoke*” has examined the harmful impact of pollution on the psyche of human beings. She argues that unhealthy and toxic environment corrupt human emotions and distort reasoning. She proposes that Daru's downfall is not only due to corrupt and economically unbalanced society in which he lives but is also due to the devastating effects of polluted environment as symbolized by the recurring images of dust, heat, smoke and foul odor. She concludes that the novel shows the inseparable connection between man and the environment in which he lives, highlighting how the harm done to the environment directly impacts human well-being, health and happiness. Tanvir, Ahmad, Saleem, and Hayat (2019) in their research paper have aimed to develop a sustainable link between ecology and literature. Through an Eco-critical analysis of Mohsin Hamid's fiction i-e *Moth Smoke* and *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia*, they find out that culture and nature do not oppose each other but rather promote the impact of each other by establishing a sustainable co-existence. The researchers argue that whether intentionally or not, the writer has sought to make the people feel affection and respect for nature along with a careful procession in culture. Human's survival on this planet demands a sustainable relationship between nature and man. If he creates imbalance in this relationship, man will face many challenges to even survive on the earth.

Khan's debut novel *Trespassing* is a multi-layered narrative which includes the conflict of two generations, doomed love affair, gender roles and environmental degradation in Pakistan. The text has already been studied from different perspectives e.g Abbas and Yaqoob (2021) have explored the theme of psychological violence resulting from “housewifization” and its role in reinforcing patriarchal power structures in Uzma Aslam Khan's novel *Trespassing* using Genette's model of narratology. Through qualitative research, the researchers have analyzed how the novel's narrative structure illustrates the ways in which psychological violence inhibits the social and psychological growth of women and also deprives women of their sense of self-respect and integrity.

Bashir and Yasmeen (2025) in their article “Uzma Aslam Khan' *Trespassing*; A Postcolonial Eco-Feminist Analysis” examines *Trespassing*

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*as a postcolonial text. The researchers argue that Trespassing focus on the difficulties and sufferings of women and nature in the context of Pakistan. This study determines the role that literature can play in the development of eco-friendly and a fair society by highlighting the integration of women's efforts to the issues of environment and power dynamics in postcolonial societies. The researchers argue that the expressive narrative style and vibrant characters of Trespassing invite the readers to explore how post colonialism, ecology and gender are interconnected. In her research paper titled as "Unveiling Environmental Disasters in Uzma Aslam Khan's Trespassing: An Eco Critical Study," Gul (2023) examines the novel Trespassing from an Eco- critical perspective and aims to expose the negative impacts of modernity, urbanization, and capitalism on both living and non-living environmental entities. Sessions' Deep Ecology (1995) serves as a lens through which she examines Khan's environmental concerns. She argues that the novel shows how humans have taken over the environment. It draws attention to how cruel people may be to animals in order to meet their own agendas. The researcher makes an effort to demonstrate the intrinsic value and significance of non-human existence in the context of deep ecology. Her study recommends an egalitarian approach towards the natural environment because it is only through this eco-centric attitude that humans will be able to walk hand-in-hand with their surrounding environment and create a sense of wholeness, balance, and totality.*

*This review shows that the selected novels have been studied from different perspectives but no study has critically examined how the selected narratives reflect and critique the intertwined nature of ecological degradation and socio-economic disparities which the current research addresses.*

### **RESEARCH METHDOLOGY**

*This work is a qualitative research design, which is more appropriate in the analysis of literature because it is concerned with the interpretation of textual data in words and symbols. The primary data in this study is the original text of Mohsin Hamid's Moth Smoke, and Uzma Aslam Khan's*

*Trespassing, whereas secondary data is obtained from different existing scholarly materials, which address the question of the relations between capitalism, environmental degradation, and social justice. To analyze data, the study uses textual analysis as suggested by Catherine Belsey (2013) who highlights the participatory nature of the reader in creating meaning through his or her own interpretations as opposed to basing on the intention of the author or secondary resources. This method will enable the researcher to come up with independent and critical findings by closely reading the primary texts then referring to the supporting literature. The theoretical basis of the research lies in the Eco-Marxism, especially in the writings of John Bellamy Foster whose research focuses on the inherent connection of capitalist systems and environmental disasters. Foster (2000) asserts that degradation of the environment is deeply rooted in capitalism since it places more emphasis on profit making rather than sustainability. One of the most important ideas of his theory is social metabolism that characterizes the active interrelation between humans and nature, but capitalism interferes with this natural process, resulting in what Marx called the metabolic rift. This division is an indication of the ecological imbalance brought about by exploitative measures like extraction of resources, industrialization, and profit-making production. In the capitalist system, nature has become a commodity and labor and environmental resources are exploited leading to ecological devastation and social inequalities. These problems are further amplified by the separation of bourgeoisie and proletariat, where the marginalized groups are disproportionately affected by the impacts of environmental damage, but the capitalist elites are not. Foster also condemns the dominance of corporations in decision making where profitability prevails over the ecological issues making it difficult to achieve sustainable development. This paper, in the end, uses the Eco-Marxist theory to examine how the chosen novels critique capitalism and display its harmful impact on the environment and marginalized groups, thus, contributing to the wider debates on the role of literature in combating socio-environmental injustices.*

## **DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS**

*Moth Smoke subtly yet powerfully critiques the burgeoning consumer*

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*culture in Lahore, revealing how the capitalist drive for endless accumulation fuels unsustainable practices and deepens class divides. The characters' aspirations are often tied to the acquisition of material goods as Daru says, "I wish for work and money and air-conditioning" (Hamid, 2000, p.189). This mirrors a societal obsession with status and wealth. Foster (2000) argues that this relentless pursuit of 'more' contributes to a disrupted urban metabolism, where resources are extracted and consumed at an unsustainable rate, generating waste and pollution. The novel emphasizes the need of a healthy ecosystem which is essential for a healthy social and individual life by directing our attention to the causes for this broken relation between humans and the environment. The author appears to criticize the violence of capitalism when he mentions, "Why do people turn on hot air [ACs] in the middle of summer" (Hamid, 2000, p.107). According to Morris (2000), in capitalist system, "whatever a man gets, comes at the cost of some other man's loss" (p.32) as Moth Smoke reflects. The novel questions the logic of industrialization and capitalist economy which prioritize money, profit and material good. John Bellamy Foster's eco-Marxist theory (2000) criticizes that in capitalism, the inherent drive for profit and endless accumulation leads to both social inequality and the degradation of the natural environment. He views capitalism as a "robbery system of nature" (Foster, 2000, p.67), where the environment is considered just a resource to be used for profit, making an irreparable rift in the "metabolism" between nature and humanity. This perspective emphasizes the connection between ecological and social issues, arguing that they are not separate crises but rather two sides of the same coin, both stemming from the logic of capital accumulation.*

*In the novel, the author portrays Lahore which represents Pakistan, as a disillusioned capitalist society. In this capitalist society the author shows us the irrational categorization of humans into classes based on wealth as Hamid (2000) says, "There are two social classes in Pakistan" (p.100). This aligns with Karl Marx division of society. Karl Marx (1967) argues that "the capitalist society is divided into two classes i-e proletariat and bourgeoisie"*

(p.59). The rich possess all the comfort, social respect, facilities and purchase power having “greater control over their immediate environment (Hamid, 2000, p.100). Their power drive them to the destructive actions that are hidden or justified by the system. Corruption, drug addiction, money laundering, murdering, adultery and exploitation of lower classes are some of their destructive actions. As Daru points out, “God has been very kind to Ozi’s dad, the frequently investigated [due to corruption] but as yet incarcerated” (Hamid, 2000, p.15). People placed at the bottom of this economical hierarchy are considered inferior. Daru who belongs to a lower class says, “I have never been in a Pajero which costs more than my house and moves like a bull, powerful and single minded” (Hamid, 2000, p.27). Due to the deprivation of the privileges that the wealthy possess, the poor often look at the rich people with revenge and envy. Their desire for wealth, feelings of revenge and envy push them to harmful actions like drug addiction and dealing, adultery, murder and robbery. Daru turns to drugs and robbery of boutiques as “he was in debt and had no job” (Hamid, 2000, p.64). However, unlike the rich, they face the social and legal punishment for their crimes. Daru tragic downfall in the novel highlights this harsh reality of the society depicted in the novel. Karl Marx (1856) believed that a socio-economically divided society results in the alienation of individuals from humanity. The emphasis on material wealth and status reflects how capitalism leads to the exploitation of individuals driving them to engage in corrupt practices for financial gain.

In *Moth Smoke*, People of Lahore are not living in harmony with their environment but as commodities shaped by an industrial capital society. Their identities are rooted in material wealth, luxuries and consumerism not in human values which drives them into a relentless pursuit of money. It supports Lenin’s opinion (1981) that a capitalism produce “a short range and pragmatic view” (p.45) which pushes people into a constant labor for collecting more. In such a system, spiritual satisfaction, intellectual development and emotional depth becomes an alien and irrelevant issues. The accumulation of wealth becomes the sole logic of living a good life for those whose is defined not by human values but by the capital. The character of Ozi in *Moth Smoke* is one of the key examples regarding this. He

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*represents the extravagance of the consumer culture and is the only son of a corrupt bureaucrat. He loves air-conditioners with “a passion unrivaled by his love for any other species of inanimate object” (Hamid, 2000, p.105). The novel also suggests that he values it more than human relationships as he prefers air-conditioning in room over his own wife. In the novel air-conditioner becomes a powerful symbol of material wealth, social privilege and enormous power of purchase. Hamid (2000) mentions that Ozi “looks like an overgrown child. A child who gets everything. Gets away with everything” (p.95). He possesses all that are considered essential by a capitalist society for a successful and happy life such as luxury cars, good education, extravagance parties and a grand house. The novel reveals his darker side that his reckless love for fast driving leads to a fatal accident in which he kills a boy but feels no shame or guilt. Despite possessing material luxuries, he is not happy in his family life and seeks escape and satisfaction in extravagant gatherings. These detail aspects of his character invite readers to deeply examine his psyche in order to discover how chaotic it is. His cognition and psyche appears to be distorted. He is seeking well-being and happiness through material luxuries and wealth because “he felt that the cars and clothes and dinner parties made him a good husband” (Hamid, 2000, p.104). The lifestyle of Ozi represents the elite culture of Lahore which has neglected the harmony between culture and natural environment. As Yaqoob (2020) says that the novel enable readers to see how when a culture and society disregards nature it not only causes environmental decay but also disturbs the whole society. Daru consumerist desires include “wish for work and money and air-conditioning” (Hamid, 2000, p.189). He also loves to have “a Pajero or a Land Cruiser” (Hamid, 2000, p.175). These consumerist desires of characters represent capitalist values which contribute to both social divisions and environmental degradation. This reflects the real-world environmental challenges where the overconsumption and neglect of elites intensify climate change, pollution, and deplete natural resources.*

*The novel reflects that a society built on the power of wealth and luxury*

give rise to a consumer culture. Such a culture is characterized by pride, arrogance and artificiality with little or no concern for environment. Luke (1997) says that “such a system taking man as separate from the nature becomes one of the major cause of environmental abuse” (p.5). The wealthy elite, represented by characters like Ozi, enjoy a lifestyle of luxury and excess as he possesses “not one but two lovely Pajeros” (Hamid, 2000, p.15). They consume vast amounts of resources and contribute disproportionately to environmental problems. Their affluence is directly linked to the abuse of both natural resources and human labor. In contrast, the marginalized and impoverished, such as Daru, are forced to live in increasingly degraded environments as “neat mounds of rubbish in front of the neighbors’ houses smolder” (Hamid, 2000, p. 204). They lack access to basic necessities and bear the brunt of the city's pollution and “trash smoke rising only to be beaten down by the rain” (Hamid, 2000, p.204). This disparity shows how the metabolic rift as highlighted by Foster (1999), is not just an ecological phenomenon but also a social one, exacerbating existing inequalities. The novel also illustrates how the characters' daily lives contribute to the urban metabolic rift. Their consumption patterns, their reliance on automobiles, and the general lack of environmental consciousness perpetuate the cycle of resource extraction, waste generation, and ecological degradation. In the novel there is no reference that shows the concern of either rich or poor for the decay of environment or the ecosystem they inhabit. According to Yaqoob (2010) the characters are, in a sense, both victims and agents of the metabolic rift, trapped within a system that prioritizes economic growth over ecological sustainability.

Furthermore, this consumerist drive worsens social division. The stark contrast between the opulent lifestyles of the wealthy elite, like Aurangzeb or Ozi, and the struggles of the marginalized, such as Daru, highlights the unequal access to resources and the disparate impact of environmental degradation. The elite can often insulate themselves from the worst effects of pollution and decay while the poor are left to bear the brunt of a deteriorating urban environment. The novel highlights how the wealthy elite like Aurangzeb are able to insulate themselves from the worst effects of environmental degradation and heat as “they wake up in air-conditioned

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*houses, drive air-conditioned cars to air-conditioned offices, grab lunch in air-conditioned restaurants, and at the end of day go home to their air-conditioned lounges to relax in front of their wide-screen TVs” (Hamid, 2000, p.100). Through these lines, Hamid illustrates how the economic elite in Lahore, represented by figures like Ozi, are not only indifferent to the environmental collapse but also actively contribute to it, living in luxury. While the poor bear the brunt of the consequences. Daru who belongs to lower class “wake up sweating, staring at a motionless ceiling fan” (Hamid, 2000, p.72). The onset of monsoon remained a very joyful occasion for Daru all his life as it ends the high heat of Lahore’s summer and make it green again. Daru says, “But this year I see it as a time of festering, not rebirth [due to climate change]. Without air-conditioning, temperatures are still high enough for me to sweat as I lie on my bed trying to sleep” (Hamid, 2000, p.200). He further says that “the larvae already wriggling in dark pools of water will soon erupt into swarms of mosquitoes” (Hamid, 2000, p.2000). This disparity reflects the unequal distribution of environmental burdens which supports Foster’s view (1999) that the poor, who contribute least to environmental degradation, are often the ones who suffer the most from its consequences. Global statistics published by a new Oxfam report on 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2015 shows that half of greenhouse gas emissions is caused by the wealthiest top 10 percent world’s population. While the poorest 50 percent of the population who are mostly affected by droughts, devastating storms, and other extreme weather shocks caused by climate change contribute just a tenth.*

*The stark contrast between the lives of the privileged and the marginalized serves as an allegory for the class-based exploitation inherent in capitalism. There are two different social classes in Pakistan. Hamid (2000) explains that “the first group large and sweaty, contains those referred to as the masses. The second group is much smaller, but its members exercise vastly great control over their immediate environment and are collectively termed the elite” (p.100). This description offers a vivid portrayal of the class division in Pakistan, with a particular focus on the*

*environmental conditions and how they reflect broader social inequalities. Hamid (2000) further mentions that “the distinction between members of these two groups is made on the basis of control of an important resource: air-conditioning” (p.100). The writer describes the stark contrast between elite and the masses in terms of access to air-conditioning, which serves as both a literal and metaphorical symbol of environmental control and the disparity between the two groups. According to Hamid (2000), “the elite have managed to re-create for themselves the living standards of, say, Sweden without leaving the dusty plains of the subcontinent” (p.100). While poor hope that “there is always prayer, five times a day which will gain them admittance to an air-conditioned heaven or at the very least, a long cool drink during a fiery day in hell” (Hamid, 2000, p.100). Debardeleben (1985) maintains that “capitalist society also threatens potential abuse of humanly induced climatic changes” (p.51) The distinction between the elite and the masses is not merely economic or social; it is deeply tied to access to resources, with air-conditioning as a symbol of this unequal access. The masses, described as “large and sweaty,” are forced to endure the oppressive climate. This highlights their position in the society where they are vulnerable to the brutal realities of life without the means of escape. In contrast to this the elites are able to control their immediate environment to an extent that they are almost unaware of the sufferings of the rest of society. This unequal distribution of environmental burdens illustrates the eco-Marxist concept of social injustices rooted in capitalism.*

*Manucci in Moth Smoke who belongs to a lower class always says that ACs are hot. He has experienced air conditioning only from the street. So when he feels the hot air expelled by the outdoor unit, he assumes that this is what air conditioning is. Hamid (2000) says: “The first time he saw one jutting out into the street from the wall of shop in old city, he walked up to the noisy box and was amazed at the blast of hot air it sent straight into his face. Why do people turn on hot air in the middle of summer? He often wondered” (p.107). Through this moment Hamid seems to critiques the privilege which the rich have. The air conditioner is almost like a symbol of how wealth and modernity are invasive, and how they affect the lives of the poor by making the environment more suffocating for them. Increasing AC*

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*usage among the wealthy cool interiors while heating the outdoors, worsening urban temperatures for the poor who can't afford cooling. The interplay between environmental degradation and social inequality draws attention to the need for a more equitable and sustainable approach to development. This resonates with Foster's eco-Marxist critiques of capitalism and its impact on society and the environment. Capitalist's structure limits the opportunities for sustainable development as Patterson (2010) says that "the environment cannot sustain capitalism and capitalism certainly cannot sustain the environment" (p.74).*

*The resource extraction depicted in Tresspassing invariably leads to significant environmental degradation reflecting what Foster (1999) terms the 'metabolic rift'. Mining operations can pollute water sources and destroy habitats and large scale development projects can displace entire communities and alter landscapes irrevocably. The novel illustrates the ecological violence inflicted upon the land in the name of capitalist progress which echoes Nixon's (2011) concept of slow violence. Slow violence of nature means that environmental harm unfolds gradually and devastates the marginalized (Nixon, 2011). Khan provides a detailed account of how industrialization and technology have disrupted natural processes and disturbed the ecological balance.*

*The novel depicts the ecological dilemmas of urban areas which are exposed to a diverse range of pollution types, encompassing noise, air pollution, litter, elevated temperatures, and dust. Such issues correspond with real world research which shows that mega cities like Karachi face high pollution level due to vehicles emission, industrial discharge, open drainage systems and chemical emissions (Qadir, 2021). Pollution is directly proportional to human population which means that as human population increases so does the pollution. That's why deep ecology advocates for a reduction in human population (Session, 1995). An excerpt from the novel "the sky was light grey haze and the leaden heat immediately stifling, not a star shone through" (Khan, 2003, p. 39) presents a vivid description of the sky. Khan also highlights the widespread unhygienic conditions of urban*

spaces by saying that “the roads lay clawed and abandoned like old meat. Once the city awoke, pedestrians would scoop the dirt in their shoes and kick it into the sooty air, to resettle on the next passer-by” (Khan, 2003, p.39). In these lines Khan criticize the ruthless behavior of citizens linking it to the degrading environmental conditions. The already polluted atmosphere becomes more contaminated due to the irresponsible acts of citizens as “Karachiites walked out of necessity, not for pleasure. Beauty and hygiene were to be locked indoors, adding to their value. No one bothered with public space” (Khan, 2003, p.42). This individual prioritization of personal comfort and cleanliness over the hygiene of public places aligns with Dobson’s (2007) argument that capitalist modernity produces environmental irresponsibility by prioritizing private comfort over community well-being.

Trespassing portrays Karachi as a degrading city where crimes, drugs, illness and broken relationships are the core parts of urban lifestyle. The urban cities like Karachi are overcrowded due to heavy migration of people. Such cities almost lack greenery. The natural environment is replaced by technological developments as Khan (2003) says: “The sky was a peach-gray pierced by dish antennas, sooty rooftops, telephone wires. There were hardly any trees” (p.151). The description of antennas and wires serves as a symbol of technological development which unfortunately comes at the cost of environmental degradation. Khan (2003) mentions that “plastic bags flapped in the branches of trees sprouting in the center of dump. Beneath it was a pit stuffed with rotten food, plastic containers and ash from numerous trash-fires” (p.277). In Karachi “polythene bags hung on tree limbs and telephone wires, plugged open gutters, tumbled along driveways” (Khan, 2003, p. 327). Due to overpopulation in Karachi, there is “noise. Always noise. Construction, neighbors, children on street, generators, loudspeakers. Never a moment of natural silence, the kind in the sunken garden” (Khan, 2003, p.312). This shows how urban life under capitalism disrupts natural and social rhythm.

Trespassing illustrates the displacement of marginalized communities, particularly the fishing community to which Salaamat belongs, as a direct consequence of environmental degradation and the exploitative practices of

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*resource extraction. The character of Salaamat serves as a central figure through whom the devastating impacts of this displacement are revealed. His community faces the harsh realities of environmental capitalism and “had to leave, and, like Salaamat, bow to those who displaced them” (Khan, 2003, p.359). This leads to their dispossession and the loss of their traditional way of life. Characters experience a sense of loss and disconnection from their traditional ways of life as industrial activities disrupt their relationship with the land. This highlights the disproportionate burden of environmental damage borne by marginalized communities. Foster (2000) argues that the capitalist drive for profit often results in displacement and impoverishment of vulnerable populations who are most reliant on local natural resources for their livelihoods. Salaamat, the displaced fisher boy, observes that “villagers had seen too much destruction” (Khan, 2003, p.12) as the traditional living ways are gradually replaced by urban activities. These urban practices are driven by industrialist which ceases the freedom of natives. Salaamat represents rural people in natural environment who are forced to leave their ancestral lands and in doing so they experience loss of identity and become invisible in the urban areas. This sense of displacement is reflected when, Salaamat is called an ‘ajnabi’, ‘alien’, and ‘outsider’ by the city people. “Everything about him – his looks, accent, language, carriage was mocked and shredded” (Khan, 2003, p.131). He realizes painfully that his people who are the natives of Karachi have been “pushed to the periphery, and the native populations forced to work under outsiders who claimed the city belonged to them” (Khan, 2003, p.132). Forced migration reflects Moore’s (2015) argument that capitalism restructures both human labor and ecological space pushing indigenous population to the periphery. Khan criticize this forced invasion and advocates for the rights of local people, which are adversely affected and are deprived of their basic rights by foreign intrusion.*

*Trespassing demonstrates that environmental degradation is not a neutral or accidental process but is rather a direct consequence of the capitalist pursuit of profit. The extraction of resources, the pollution of water*

*sources, and the destruction of ecosystems all contribute to a process of environmental decline that undermines the ability of communities to sustain themselves. This environmental degradation creates conditions of scarcity, insecurity and hardships which disproportionately affect marginalized communities who often depend directly on the land and its resources for their survival. The tensions between indigenous Sindhis and non-indigenous Muhajirs over land and resources in Karachi and the Sindh province are a recurring theme in the novel. The Sindhi community perceives the arrival of Muhajirs as an "invasion" that compromises their autonomy, culture, and share in vital resources like irrigation water. These dynamic highlights how shift in population and political power, often intertwined with broader economic changes can disrupt established community land relations and create conflict over access to essential resources. Sindhi thinks that "once Indus River had a pride. Now it has a cuff around it. The dams of Punjab are limiting the water's supply. That province teemed with life from five opulent rivers but it had to have more. More is "what Punjab is all about, more food, more water, and more wealth. In much of Sindh, the Indus had dwindled to a trickle" (Khan, 2003, p.35). The drying of the Indus River, a critical lifeline for the Sindhi people, due to the construction of dams in other provinces, exemplifies how resource management decisions, likely driven by economic and political considerations at a larger scale, can severely impact local rural communities and their traditional livelihoods. O'Conner (1998) explains that such environmental degradation intensifies social inequalities and conflicts. This situation shows how uneven capitalist development and resource management prioritize the needs of certain regions or industries over others, disrupting the natural metabolism of the rural ecosystem and affecting communities' dependent on it. Descriptions of water scarcity due to industrial usage illustrate how nature is commodified, reflecting the broader critique of capitalism by eco-Marxists that disregards the intrinsic value of ecological systems. This directly reflects the metabolic rift and uneven power dynamics inherent in capitalist exploitation.*

*The novel highlights how pre-existing social and economic inequalities exacerbate the vulnerability of these communities to environmental change. Factors such as poverty, lack of access to education and healthcare, and*

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*social discrimination limit their ability to adapt to changing environmental conditions and increase their susceptibility to displacement. When environmental degradation occurs, these communities are often the first to be affected and the least able to cope with the consequences. Some of the stubborn of these fishermen goes out every day “competing in vain with the trawlers that had stolen their sea space” (Khan, 2003, p.122). Khan laments the loss of natural beauty and richness of Indus Valley which has been converted into a deserted and “parched landscape” (Khan, 2003, p.101). The abundance of natural resources which once sustained the local inhabitants has been lost. The novel illustrates how the release of toxic smoke by large scale industrial activities and the use of harmful chemicals for fishing further pollutes the environment making it hazardous for humans. They continue their business activities without considering the needs of local inhabitants as “those foreign trawlers had been issued legal licenses now” (Khan, 2003, p.236). As a result, “nearly everyone from [Salamaat] village had left” (Khan, 2003, p.236). These are the harsh outcomes of global corporate expansion which has displaced regional inhabitants into the areas where they are viewed as outsiders. The social and economic consequences of this displacement are severe. Human beings do not see their actions and the loss of basic human morality due to which they fail to acknowledge their role in environmental crises. Worster (1993) suggests that we need a collective struggle against environmental crises. However, many of us are contributing to the disaster instead of working together to minimize them.*

*In conclusion, Trespassing offers a powerful literary illustration of the intertwined issues of capitalism, class, and environmental change through an eco-Marxist lens. The novel vividly depicts the disruption of the rural metabolic rift through its portrayal of resource extraction in the silk and fishing industries, the resulting ecological violence inflicted upon the environment, and the subsequent displacement of marginalized communities like the Indus Valley fishermen. By focusing on these interconnected themes within the specific socio-economic and environmental context of Pakistan, the narrative highlights how capitalist exploitation of natural resources*

*leads to both ecological degradation and social inequality, disproportionately affecting vulnerable populations.*

## **CONCLUSION AND RECCOMENDATIONS**

### **Conclusion**

*To sum up, Moth Smoke and Trespassing, together, emphasize the strong interdependence between capitalism, social inequality, and environmental degradation in Pakistan. Moth Smoke depicts an urban metabolic division in Lahore where the growth of capitalism causes degradation of the environment, social inequality and alienation as it is seen in the tragic life of Daru. It depicts the process of profit-making that destroys the natural state of balance, resulting in an unfair distribution of wealth and undermining the connection between humans and nature, which is consistent with the idea of metabolic rift introduced by John Bellamy Foster. Conversely, Trespassing is more of a rural outlook, where a capitalistic development creates ecological violence, displacement and exploitation of the marginalized groups of people. The novel, through characters such as Salaamat, highlights the fact that the poor are disproportionately affected by environmental degradations. The two texts jointly condemn the destructive nature of capitalism on both society and nature and call upon the necessity of sustainable solutions which can bring back the balance between human and nature.*

### *Further Research Recommendations*

*The current paper is restricted to an Eco-Marxist reading of Moth Smoke and Trespassing, although further investigation can be done going forward by applying the same to other Pakistani novels like Burnt Shadows by Kamila Shamsie or The Wandering Falcon by Jamil Ahmad. Researchers can also use other theoretical lenses, such as ecofeminism to understand gendered aspects of environmental exploitation or posthumanism to understand non-human agency and urban ecological dynamics. Further, interdisciplinary studies that intersect environmental studies, urban studies, and climate fiction can offer more profound insight into the ways in which Pakistani literature engages with and challenges socio-environmental issues.*



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