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Glaciers That Bleed, Mountains That Speak: Nonhuman Agency and Ecological Injury in Gauhar's *An Abundance of Wild Roses*

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ABSTRACT

*Climate change has significantly transformed the fragile mountain ecosystems of the Hindu Kush Himalayan region, rendering glaciers, forests, and biodiversity increasingly vulnerable to ecological degradation. Literary narratives set within these landscapes offer a valuable site for examining how environmental crisis is represented and understood, yet relatively little scholarly attention has been paid to the way nonhuman entities are granted agency and voice within South Asian fiction. This study examines Feryal Ali Gauhar's novel *An Abundance of Wild Roses* through the ecocritical framework developed by Garrard (2012), focusing in particular on the tropes of wilderness, dwelling, apocalypse, and animals. Employing a qualitative textual analysis, the article explores how mountains, glaciers, forests, and animals in the novel function not merely as passive settings but as active ecological presences that register, communicate, and respond to environmental injury. The analysis demonstrates that the novel reimagines wilderness as a living and wounded entity whose suffering mirrors the consequences of climate change and unsustainable development, while the disruption of dwelling and the erosion of indigenous ecological knowledge challenge conventional anthropocentric assumptions embedded in mainstream literary representation. The study argues that reading the mountain and the glacier through Garrard's foundational tropes allows these entities to be understood not merely as backdrop or symbol but as literary agents whose wounds carry their own narrative and ethical weight. By applying Garrard's tropes to Gauhar's text, this article offers a fresh interpretation of the novel's environmental imagination and contributes to the growing body of scholarship on South Asian ecocriticism and mountain ecologies.*

Keywords: Greg Garrard, Ecocriticism, Nonhuman Agency, Ecological Injury, *An Abundance of Wild Roses*, Feryal Ali Gauhar, Mountain Ecologies

1. Introduction

Climate change has emerged as one of the most pressing concerns of the present century, and nowhere is its impact more visibly inscribed than upon the mountain ecologies of the Hindu Kush Himalayan region. The glaciers of northern Pakistan, once regarded as permanent and unchanging features of the landscape, are now retreating, fracturing, and, in the language that literature increasingly uses to describe them, wounded. Feryal Ali Gauhar, a Pakistani novelist, filmmaker, and long-time environmental advocate, sets her novel *An Abundance of Wild Roses* in the remote mountain village of Saudukh Das in Gilgit Baltistan, a setting that places the novel directly within

this zone of ecological crisis. From the opening pages of the novel, the glacier is described as a living body that has bled quicker than before, its surface fractured and littered with debris, flooding the fields that generations of villagers have cultivated. This image of the bleeding glacier, from which the present article draws its title, signals that Gauhar's novel refuses to treat the nonhuman world as inert scenery against which human drama unfolds. Instead, the mountain and the glacier are granted a form of embodied presence, one that registers injury, exerts force, and shapes the destinies of the human characters who live in its shadow.

The novel further extends this nonhuman presence through its use of spirit voices that speak in the collective first person, describing themselves as watching, hearing, and even binding the fate of human beings and the elements of the natural world together. Such moments destabilize the conventional hierarchy in which the human occupies the position of the sole speaking and perceiving subject, while the mountain, the river, and the animal remain silent objects of description. This article argues that Gauhar's novel constructs an alternative ecological imagination in which nonhuman agency is central rather than peripheral to the narrative, and in which ecological injury, whether caused by glacial melt, militarization, or unsustainable development, is represented as a wound shared between the human and the nonhuman world.

To examine this representation, the present study draws upon the theoretical framework developed by Garrard (2012) in *Ecocriticism*. Garrard's text remains one of the most widely used introductions to ecocritical theory, offering a set of key tropes, namely pollution, wilderness, apocalypse, dwelling, and animals, through which literary texts can be read for their environmental commitments and assumptions. This article uses these tropes as an interpretive lens through which to analyze how Gauhar constructs the mountain landscape of Gilgit Baltistan as a site of wilderness that is simultaneously sacred and endangered, how the characters' sense of dwelling is disrupted by ecological and political forces beyond their control, how the narrative gestures toward an apocalyptic register in its depiction of glacial collapse, and how animals in the text are granted forms of agency and moral significance that trouble any strict boundary between the human and the nonhuman.

While the novel has begun to attract critical attention since its publication, existing scholarship has approached it primarily through frameworks concerned with human trauma, gendered oppression, and discursive construction, leaving comparatively little room for a sustained reading of the mountain and the glacier as agents in their own right. This article addresses that gap by offering a close reading of *An Abundance of Wild Roses* that foregrounds the mountain and the glacier as entities capable of memory, injury, and a kind of speech, drawing on Garrard's tropes as the article proceeds in several stages. It begins with a review of existing scholarship on Gauhar's novel and on ecocritical approaches to South Asian literature, before outlining the primary analytical lens.

Theoretical framework drawn from Garrard in greater detail. It then moves to a close textual analysis organized around the representation of glaciers as living entities, mountains as sentient witnesses, and the broader politics of ecological injury as these intersect with themes of dwelling and narrative voice in the novel. The article concludes by arguing that Gauhar's text offers a distinctive and ecocentric contribution to contemporary Pakistani fiction, one in which the nonhuman world is not merely described but allowed, in a very real narrative sense, to speak.

1.1 Research Questions

This study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. How does the novel construct the glacier and the mountain as active nonhuman agents of ecological injury?
2. How do Garrard's tropes of wilderness, dwelling, apocalypse, and animals illuminate the novel's human and nonhuman relationship?

1.2 Organization of the Paper

This article proceeds through four further stages. Section 2 reviews the existing scholarship on Gauhar's novel, situating it within the trauma based, ecofeminist, and eco-narrative readings that have shaped its early reception, and identifies the gap this study addresses. Section 3 sets out Garrard's ecocritical tropes of wilderness, apocalypse, dwelling, and animals as the interpretive framework guiding the analysis. Section 4 applies this framework directly to the novel, tracing the bleeding glacier, the contested wilderness of the Black Mountains, the disruption of dwelling, and the animal encounter that closes the analysis. Section 5 concludes the study by drawing these threads together and proposing directions for future research.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Feryal Ali Gauhar's Fiction and Its Critical Reception

Feryal Ali Gauhar occupies a distinctive position within contemporary Pakistani Anglophone fiction as a novelist, filmmaker, and long standing environmental and human rights advocate. Her earlier works, *The Scent of Wet Earth* in August and *No Space for Further Burials*, established a recurring concern with social upheaval, war, and psychological suffering, themes that carry into her most recent novel. Critics have noted that her prose combines lyrical intensity with an unflinching engagement with grief and displacement, a quality that has shaped much of the early critical response to *An Abundance of Wild Roses* since its publication in 2024 (Bibi et al., 2025; Ullah et al., 2025). Because the novel is so recent, the body of scholarship surrounding it remains small and has emerged almost entirely within the past two years, a fact that itself signals the need for continued critical attention from a range of theoretical positions, including the one pursued in this article.

2.2 Environmental Trauma and the Psychology of a Wounded Landscape

One strand of scholarship reads the novel through the lens of environmental trauma theory. Yasmin et al. (2026) examine how ecological disturbance in the novel produces sustained psychological instability, emotional withdrawal, and social fragmentation among the villagers of Saudukh Das. Drawing on Erikson's (1976) account of collective trauma following ecological disaster and Albrecht's (2005) concept of solastalgia, which describes the distress caused by the deterioration of one's home environment, their study argues that the harsh weather, landslides, and blocked roads in the novel are not incidental details but active forces that generate fear and psychological disorientation among the community. They further draw on Heidegger's (1927/1962) notion of being in the world to suggest that when the natural environment becomes hostile, it destabilizes the very foundation of human selfhood. This reading positions the landscape as a source of communal suffering, though its primary interest remains the emotional and psychological interior of the human characters rather than the agency of the nonhuman world itself.

2.3 Eco feminist Interventions: Patriarchy, Extraction, and the Female Body

The most substantial body of existing scholarship on the novel approaches it through ecofeminist theory, and three recent studies illustrate the range of this engagement. Bibi et al.

(2025) apply Shiva's (2014) concept of maldevelopment alongside Warren's (2000) ethics of care to argue that the ecological collapse of the village functions as a literary representation of extractive development models that displace sustainable, gender equitable economies. Their analysis treats the collective voice of the Spirit Beings as an ecocentric counter epistemology that indicts human, and specifically male, exploitation of the land, while reading female characters such as Kulsoom as embodiments of an ethic of care that resists the logic of extraction. Ullah et al. (2025) pursue a related argument with a stronger emphasis on symbolism, identifying the recurring image of the wild rose as the novel's central metaphor for feminine endurance and resistance. Their reading emphasizes that resistance in the novel is rarely staged as open rebellion but is instead enacted through everyday practices of care, ritual, and ecological attentiveness, positioning women as both the primary victims of environmental degradation and its most consistent custodians. Asghar et al. (2026) extend this conversation through the concept of dualism, drawing on Plumwood (1993), Merchant (1990), and Beauvoir (1949) to argue that the novel constructs a rigid binary between masculine rationality and authority on one hand and feminine or natural passivity on the other, a binary that legitimizes the simultaneous control of women and land by patriarchal figures such as Moosa Madad. Taken together, these three studies converge on a shared theoretical premise, namely that the subjugation of women and the exploitation of nature in the novel stem from the same patriarchal logic, even as they differ in their specific theoretical emphasis, ranging from political economy to symbolism to dualistic ontology. What unites them is a consistent reading of the nonhuman world as a mirror or symbol of gendered suffering rather than as an independent literary agent in its own right.

2.4 Eco-Narrative Discourse and the Linguistic Construction of Nonhuman Voice

A further study by Fatima and Arshad (2025) moves away from thematic and symbolic analysis toward a discourse-based approach, combining Stibbe's (2023) eco-narrative framework with Lazar's (2005) feminist critical discourse analysis. Their study examines how specific linguistic choices, including personification, metaphor, and what Stibbe terms narrative activation, discursively grant animals, mountains, and spirits the grammatical status of agents capable of perception, memory, and moral judgment. They argue that this linguistic activation works alongside a parallel discourse of gendered resistance, so that ecological and feminist concerns converge at the level of language itself. This study is the closest in spirit to the concerns of the present article, since it explicitly addresses nonhuman agency, though its methodology remains rooted in discourse analysis and linguistic patterning rather than in the thematic and ethical categories developed within ecocritical theory.

2.5 Research Gap and the Rationale for a Garrardian Ecocritical Reading

Read together, the existing scholarship on *An Abundance of Wild Roses* demonstrates a clear and consistent pattern. The trauma-based study centers human psychological suffering, the ecofeminist studies center the parallel subjugation of women and land, and the discourse-based study centers the linguistic mechanics through which nonhuman agency is constructed. What remains absent from this scholarship is a reading that engages the mountain and the glacier through the foundational tropes of ecocriticism as articulated by Garrard (2012), namely wilderness, dwelling, apocalypse, and animals, in order to treat these entities not primarily as symbols of gendered trauma, effects of narrative grammar, or sites of psychological projection, but as literary agents whose injury carries independent ethical and narrative significance. This article addresses that gap, offering a close reading of the novel that positions the bleeding glacier and the speaking mountain at the center of its own analysis rather than as a backdrop to human or gendered concern.

3. Theoretical Framework: Greg Garrard's Ecocriticism

Greg Garrard's *Ecocriticism* (2012) provides the principal theoretical resource for this study, offering the most developed account of the conceptual vocabulary, wilderness, apocalypse, dwelling, and animals, through which literature has traditionally represented the nonhuman world and its relationship to human culture. These four tropes, together with Garrard's foundational discussion of what ecocriticism is and does, organise the reading of Gauhar's mountains, glaciers, and animals undertaken in this study. Each trope is examined in turn below before being drawn together into a single interpretive model capable of reading the mountain and the glacier not as background to Gauhar's narrative but as entities whose injury the novel treats with its own history, memory, and voice.

3.1 Defining Ecocriticism: Nature, Culture, and the Environmental Crisis

Garrard begins from Cheryl Glotfelty's founding definition of ecocriticism as an earth centred approach to literary study, comparable to the gender conscious lens of feminist criticism or the class-conscious lens of Marxist criticism (Glotfelty, 1996, as cited in Garrard, 2012, p. 3). Richard Kerridge's complementary definition describes the ecocritic's task as tracking environmental ideas and representations across cultural spaces and evaluating texts according to their coherence and usefulness as responses to environmental crisis (Kerridge, 1998, as cited in Garrard, 2012, p. 4). Garrard immediately complicates the monolithic idea of a single environmental crisis implied by Kerridge's phrasing, insisting instead that ecocriticism must examine how nature and culture are themselves constructed in language rather than assume a stable, extra textual nature that literature simply reflects (Garrard, 2012, p. 4). Ecocriticism, on this account, is therefore both a political practice, aligned in method with feminist and Marxist criticism, and a sceptical, interpretive one that questions the very terms, nature, wilderness, crisis, through which environmental meaning is produced. This double commitment, an earth centred political purpose held together with a sustained suspicion of naturalising rhetoric, forms the methodological premise of the present study. Gauhar's novel, set in the Black Mountains of Pakistan and shadowed by war, patriarchal violence and resource extraction, offers exactly the kind of text in which nature functions neither as a passive backdrop nor as a stable referent but as an entangled participant in social and ecological crisis. Reading the novel through Garrard's framework therefore means attending simultaneously to the environmental claims the narrative makes and to the rhetorical constructions through which those claims are made available to the reader.

3.2 Wilderness as a Contested and Living Space

Garrard gives particular attention to William Cronon's influential critique of wilderness as an ideological construction that, in Cronon's own phrase, quietly reproduces the very values its devotees claim to reject (Cronon, 1996, as cited in Garrard, 2012, p. 77). For Cronon, the wilderness ideal renders nature authentic only when humans are absent from it, a purity achieved by erasing the long histories of indigenous habitation and labour that actually shaped supposedly untouched landscapes (Cronon, 1996, as cited in Garrard, 2012, p. 77). Garrard extends this critique through Bill McKibben's argument in *The End of Nature*, which mourns a wilderness contaminated beyond recovery by anthropogenic climate change and, in doing so, risks reinstating the very purity myth it laments (McKibben, 1990, as cited in Garrard, 2012, pp. 77 to 78). Both positions caution against treating mountains and glaciers as timeless, self-sufficient wilderness untouched by human history. This caution bears directly on Gauhar's Black Mountains, which function simultaneously as a working landscape, a battleground and a site of myth.

The mountains that keep watch over the villagers are not wilderness in Cronon's sense of an uninhabited sublime; they are lived in, fought over and slowly damaged by extraction and conflict. Reading the mountains as a contested rather than a pure space allows the study to trace where the text resists, and where it reproduces, the wilderness myth that Garrard warns against. Where the novel personifies the mountains as sentient witnesses to human conduct, the analysis must ask whether this personification restores the entangled history that Cronon finds erased from wilderness discourse, or whether it instead recreates a new, mythic purity in which the mountains stand outside and above the human conflicts they observe.

3.3 Apocalypse and the Rhetoric of Environmental Catastrophe

Drawing on Kenneth Burke, Garrard, following Stephen O'Leary, distinguishes two rhetorical frames through which environmental catastrophe is narrated. The tragic frame conceives of environmental wrongdoing as guilt requiring sacrifice and moves inexorably toward an unavoidable end, while the comic frame conceives of wrongdoing as error, retains a sense of open-ended human agency, and moves toward recognition rather than doom (O'Leary, 1994, as cited in Garrard, 2012, p. 95). Garrard warns that the tragic frame tends to foreclose agency and can license passivity or fatalism in the face of crisis, since individual choice appears futile against a predetermined catastrophe (Garrard, 2012, pp. 95 to 96). The choice between these two frames matters for a novel in which glaciers bleed and mountains speak, since it determines whether such images register as fatalistic prophecy or as a call to corrigible human responsibility. If the narrative frames the melting and bleeding of the glaciers purely as retribution for the violence of war, without granting any character the capacity to alter events, the imagery aligns with Garrard's tragic mode; if, conversely, the same imagery accompanies moments in which specific characters recognise their complicity in the mountain's injury and remain free to act differently, the comic mode is closer to the mark. This distinction supplies a precise interpretive test for the chapters that follow: whether the personification of glaciers and mountains functions as tragic spectacle that forecloses response, or as a comic corrective that implicates specific human actors, war, patriarchal violence, extraction, whose choices remain open to correction.

3.4 Dwelling: Place, Belonging, and Ecological Memory

Garrard's chapter on dwelling turns from the tourist's wilderness and the prophet's apocalypse to a mode of inhabiting land through duty, memory and long-term responsibility, an inheritance he traces partly to Heidegger's meditation on dwelling and partly to the georgic tradition of working landscapes exemplified by writers such as Wendell Berry (Garrard, 2012, pp. 117 to 122). He is equally attentive to the dangers of this trope, particularly the romantic figure of the Ecological Indian, the assumption, associated with J. Baird Callicott among others, that indigenous or traditional communities possess an innate, animist harmony with their environment (Callicott, 1983, as cited in Garrard, 2012, pp. 130 to 131). This figure, Garrard insists, risks becoming as ideological as wilderness itself, flattening real communities into symbols of ecological virtue while erasing their history of labour, error and change. Both faces of dwelling, the ethical model of long-term responsibility and the cautionary critique of romanticised harmony, are pertinent to the mountain village of Gauhar's novel.

The villagers' generations long inhabitation of the Black Mountains constitutes dwelling in Garrard's sense, yet the novel's spirits and myths of the mountains must be read with the same critical caution that Garrard applies to animist claims, neither dismissed as mere superstition nor uncritically celebrated as timeless ecological wisdom. What Garrard's account of dwelling does not fully resolve is whether such animist claims might carry genuine interpretive value in their own right rather than only ideological risk, a question this chapter returns to once the vocabulary of material ecocriticism has been introduced.

3.5 Animals: Agency, Otherness, and the Nonhuman Subject

For the animal chapter, Garrard builds on John Berger's argument that when humans look at animals, the animal may return the gaze, producing a charged awareness of both likeness and difference between species (Berger, 1980, as cited in Garrard, 2012, pp. 152 to 153). From this, he develops a typology of representation, crude and critical anthropomorphism, zoomorphism, mechanomorphism and allomorphism, that distinguishes sentimental projection from genuine attention to nonhuman otherness (Garrard, 2012, pp. 154 to 155). This typology equips the study with precise terms for the novel's animal figures, among them the wolf dog whose struggle against ice and death to protect a soldier resists easy categorisation as either a domesticated pet or a purely instinctual machine, precisely the kind of ambiguous figure Garrard's typology is designed to clarify. His typology, however, remains focused on how animals are represented for a human reader. Bruno Latour's concept of the actant, defined as any entity that acts or to which activity is granted by others, an entity that modifies another entity in a given situation, extends the analysis further by allowing the wolf dog to be read as a participant that genuinely alters the outcome of events rather than only as an object of the reader's anthropomorphic or zoomorphic gaze (Latour, 1996, 2004, as cited in Iovino, 2018, p. 15). Serenella Iovino and Serpil Oppermann develop a related idea of narrative agency, in which nonhuman bodies are understood not only as objects of perception but as tellers of their own stories, sites where matter and meaning intra act in Karen Barad's sense (Barad, 2007, as cited in Iovino and Oppermann, 2012, pp. 77, 79). Reading the animal figures through Garrard's typology, Latour's actant and Iovino and Oppermann's narrative agency together allows the analysis to register them simultaneously as represented others and as agentic participants in the story. Stacy Alaimo's concept of trans corporeality, cited approvingly by Iovino and Oppermann as a model of interconnected agencies moving across bodies, further clarifies how the animal, the human characters and the surrounding ice are bound together in a single field of material exchange rather than kept apart as separate subject and setting (Alaimo, 2010, as cited in Iovino and Oppermann, 2012, p. 84).

3.6 Synthesis: Toward a Framework for Reading Nonhuman Agency in Gauhar's Novel

Garrard's four tropes, wilderness, apocalypse, dwelling and animals, supply the interpretive categories through which this thesis approaches the mountains, glaciers and creatures of *An Abundance of Wild Roses*, but they require supplementing where matter itself claims a speaking, storied role. Iovino observes that ecocriticism has long attributed a kind of eloquence to nature, as when tree rings or glaciers are said to record and tell the story of the earth, and concedes that such *natura loquens*, a speaking nature, remains, strictly, a metaphor (Iovino, 2018, p. 12). Rather than abandoning the metaphor, material ecocriticism reworks it: an agentic nature is, in her phrase, a telling nature, and this narrative agency, not mere anthropomorphic decoration, is the central concern of the field (Iovino, 2018, p. 13). Iovino and Oppermann's complementary account, building on Jane Bennett's concept of vibrant matter and Latour's concept of the actant and the collective, proposes that matter possesses its own narrative agency and that landscapes and substances can be read as tellers of stories rather than passive settings for human action (Bennett, 2010, and Latour, 1999, as cited in Iovino and Oppermann, 2012, pp. 79 to 80). Iovino's discussion of Italy's Seveso dioxin disaster is especially instructive for a study organised around ecological injury: there, she argues, the poisoning of bodies and land is itself a narrative agent, revealing through its material damage the social and ideological structures that produced it, so that the toxic landscape becomes a co-author of its own story rather than a silent casualty (Iovino, 2018, pp. 20 to 21). Read alongside this precedent, the bleeding glaciers of Gauhar's title need not be treated as decorative personification; they can instead be read, in Iovino's terms, as injured matter narrating its own damage, a reading that Garrard's tropological categories alone do not supply.

Combining Garrard's account of wilderness, apocalypse, dwelling and animals with Iovino and Oppermann's account of storied, agentic matter therefore allows the thesis to ask two related questions of Gauhar's novel: how does the text construct nature through the inherited tropes that Garrard identifies, and how, within and against those constructions, does the nonhuman world of the Black Mountains emerge as an agentic, narrating presence bearing witness to its own ecological injury. It is this second, supplementary question, largely absent from Garrard's own account, that justifies reading his ecocriticism alongside Iovino and Oppermann's material ecocriticism throughout the chapters that follow.

4. Textual Analysis: Nonhuman Agency and Ecological Injury in Gauhar's Novel

The Black Mountains above Saudukh Das do not simply frame the events of Gauhar's novel, they participate in them. What follows traces this participation through Garrard's (2012) tropes of wilderness, apocalypse, dwelling, and animals, returning to his framework only where it sharpens a claim the novel itself is already making about its glaciers, its storms, and its watching mountain.

4.1 Wilderness as a Contested and Living Space

Garrard (2012) explains that wilderness has conventionally been imagined as an empty, pristine space untouched by human history, an idea he complicates by drawing on William Cronon's argument that such purity is itself a cultural construction that erases long histories of habitation (Cronon, 1996, as cited in Garrard, 2012, p. 77). Gauhar's Black Mountains resist this myth of emptiness from the opening pages of the novel. The range above the village is introduced as the abode of the Spirit Beings, described as living inside the black mountain and watching everything that unfolds in the world beneath them. This single detail transforms the mountain from scenery into a kind of consciousness, one that observes rather than simply exists.

The novel reinforces this sense of an inhabited wilderness through its careful attention to named features of the landscape, the Doorway of Chartoi, carved into a cliff rising a thousand feet above the ground, and the Castle of Stone and Ice that the villagers associate with the Spirit Beings. These are not generic mountains but a landscape saturated with story and belief, which positions the wilderness as continuous with human culture rather than separate from it, a point Garrard identifies as central to any serious ecocritical reading of wild space (Garrard, 2012, p. 78).

At the same time, Gauhar avoids the opposite temptation of presenting the villagers as living in effortless harmony with this landscape, an assumption Garrard associates with the romanticised figure of the ecologically noble native (Garrard, 2012, p. 130). When the men of the village pause beneath the snow-capped peaks of the Black Mountains to decide how best to carry a wounded stranger to safety, their relationship with the mountain is shown to be one of hardship and calculated survival rather than serene belonging. The wilderness of Saudukh Das is therefore neither empty nor idyllic, but a contested space, watched over by nonhuman witnesses and worked through by human labour and fear in equal measure.

4.2 Glaciers That Bleed: Apocalypse and Ecological Catastrophe

The image that gives this article its title appears within the first pages of the novel, where the glacier above Saudukh Das is described in explicitly bodily terms. Its surface, littered with mud and debris, is said to have "bled quicker than before, flooding the fields just as they had been sown" (Gauhar, 2024, p. 4). The verb chosen here is decisive. The glacier does not simply melt or overflow, it bleeds, a word that assigns the ice a body capable of injury. Garrard (2012) identifies this kind of imagery as belonging to the apocalyptic trope in environmental writing, in which ecological damage is narrated with a moral urgency that treats catastrophe as something more than a neutral physical process (Garrard, 2012, p. 93). Drawing on Stephen O'Leary, Garrard distinguishes a tragic register, in which disaster appears as inevitable and almost fated punishment, from a comic register, in

which the same disaster is presented as the result of a correctable human error (O'Leary, 1994, as cited in Garrard, 2012, p. 95).

Gauhar's novel moves toward this second, corrigible register. The collective voice of the Spirit Beings describes the wider destruction of the landscape in terms that assign direct human responsibility, condemning the destruction of thousands of years of growth and lamenting the extinction of the forests that were once their homes (Gauhar, 2024, p. 55). Because this destruction is tied so explicitly to human greed rather than to arbitrary weather, the glacier's bleeding reads less as fatalistic description and more as an accusation, inviting the reader to trace catastrophe back to its human cause rather than accept it as unavoidable fate.

4.3 Dwelling and Disrupted Belonging in Saudukh Das

Garrard's account of dwelling describes an inhabited landscape shaped by inherited duty, memory, and long-term responsibility, a mode of belonging he traces through the pastoral and georgic traditions of working the land generation after generation (Garrard, 2012, pp. 117-122). Saudukh Das, introduced as a village high up in the Black Mountains where spirits live, embodies precisely this kind of settled, generational dwelling. The village is anchored in specific, named features of its surroundings, so that the landscape functions less as a setting and more as a shared archive that the community carries within its collective memory.

This form of dwelling, however, is repeatedly placed under strain. The arrival of a wounded stranger unsettles the fragile order of the village almost immediately, as the narrative senses that his fate will mark Saudukh Das in ways no one could ever imagine, suggesting that even a single disruption threatens the accumulated stability of generations. This vulnerability becomes still more visible in the novel's later chapters, where dwelling on the same mountain is reduced, for the men stationed along the glacier line, to a bunker and a sheet of corrugated metal, a temporary and militarised occupation of the slopes that stands in stark contrast to the rooted belonging of the village below. Read against Garrard's model, the novel therefore stages two competing relationships to the same mountain, one built on inherited responsibility and communal memory, the other imposed by conflict and defined by impermanence.

4.4 Mountains That Speak: Animal Agency at the Edge of the Glacier

Garrard draws on John Berger's argument that when a human looks at an animal, the animal may return the gaze, producing an awareness of both likeness and difference between species (Berger, 1980, as cited in Garrard, 2012, p. 152). This encounter with genuine animal otherness, rather than sentimental projection, defines the novel's treatment of the dogs that accompany the soldiers stationed along the glacier. In one such moment, Ibrahim Ali, standing at the edge of a bluff, moves toward the animal that waits for him there, in a place the narrative calls "one of absence", a place where he feels "he had nothing to lose" (Gauhar, 2024, p. 141). The animal here does not comfort him from a position of safety but meets him at the very edge of the mountain's danger, its presence inseparable from the harsh, liminal territory both of them occupy.

Read through Garrard's framework, this scene resists any reduction of the animal to pure symbol. The dog's waiting is not decorative, it registers a form of nonhuman companionship that exists only because the mountain itself has produced the conditions, isolation, danger, and proximity to death, that draw human and animal together in this way.

4.5 Synthesis: The Mountain as Witness to Ecological Injury

Taken together, these readings converge on a single figure that organises the novel's ecological imagination, the mountain as witness. From the earliest pages, the Spirit Beings who watch over the world beneath establish the Black Mountains as a conscious presence rather than a backdrop.

The bleeding glacier and the indicted destruction of the forests carry this witnessing further, so that the mountain does not only observe human conflict but appears to register and answer it. The strain placed on dwelling, both in the village and at the militarised post, shows this same landscape caught between two human claims upon it, while the waiting dog at the edge of the bluff extends the mountain's agency into an embodied, animal form.

None of these moments function as ornament. Read through Garrard's tropes, the mountain and the glacier emerge as entities with their own history of habitation, injury, and response, entities the novel allows to bleed, to rage, and, through the creatures that move across its slopes, to speak.

5. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that *An Abundance of Wild Roses* transforms its mountains and glaciers from passive landscape into active participants in the novel's ecological imagination through Garrard's ecocritical tropes. Read through the lens of wilderness, the Black Mountains above Saudukh Das refuse to settle into the empty, uninhabited ideal that Garrard, following Cronon, warns against, the range emerges instead as a landscape that is worked, feared, and watched over by spirits who claim it as their own. Read through the lens of apocalypse, the glacier's bleeding resists collapsing into fatalistic prophecy, since the novel repeatedly traces the damage back to human greed and violence rather than to an unavoidable fate, a distinction that Garrard's account of tragic and comic catastrophe makes visible. Read through the lens of dwelling, the novel reveals two competing relationships to the same mountain, one sustained by generations of memory in the village, the other reduced, at the militarised edge of the range, to a bunker and a sheet of corrugated metal. Read through the lens of animals, the waiting dog at the bluff extends this nonhuman presence into something more intimate, a form of companionship that Garrard's account of animal representation helps to name without flattening it into symbol.

Taken together, these readings support the argument that has guided this study from the outset. Gauhar does not use the mountain and the glacier as background for a human drama that could just as easily unfold elsewhere, she constructs them as entities with their own history of habitation, injury, and response. The image that gives this article its title, glaciers that bleed and mountains that speak, is therefore not incidental description but the organising principle of the novel's ecological imagination. This argument also carries the study beyond the existing scholarship on the novel, which has so far approached it chiefly through trauma, ecofeminism, and discourse analysis, by returning attention to the foundational vocabulary of ecocriticism itself, and by asking what is gained when a mountain is finally allowed to answer for its own wounds rather than simply absorb them. In this sense, *An Abundance of Wild Roses* asks its readers to reconsider what literature loses whenever it continues to treat the nonhuman world as merely the ground on which human stories take place.

5.1 Future Research Recommendations

The findings of this study suggest several directions for further research. A comparative reading of Gauhar's mountains alongside other Himalayan or Karakoram narratives could examine whether the wounded, witnessing landscape identified here recurs across the region's literature or represents a distinctive feature of Gauhar's environmental imagination, particularly given the limited application of Garrard's ecocritical tropes to Pakistani fiction. Another suggested direction is to bring ecofeminist and Garrardian perspectives into closer dialogue, as existing scholarship on the novel's female characters and the nonhuman agency explored in this study both focus on the same wounded mountain without being examined together. Such an approach could offer a richer understanding of how gendered and ecological forms of injury are narrated through shared imagery.

A further suggested area of inquiry concerns the novel's setting near a militarised glacier line. Examining the ecological consequences of conflict in greater depth would extend the present study's discussion of militarisation and provide a more comprehensive account of the relationship between armed conflict and glacial degradation in the region.

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