

Ecocriticism and Sacred Space in Raja Alem's The Dove's Necklace: Urban Transformation and Cultural Displacement in Mecca

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Abstract

This study analyzes The Dove's Necklace by Raja Alem from an ecocritical perspective, focusing on the novel's depiction of the dynamic, often antagonistic, relationships between modernity, cultural memory, and environmental conflict in Mecca. The novel's critique of cultural and ecological consequences of development is set amidst rapid changes to the urban fabric of the Saudi state as per Vision 2030. The problem addressed in this research relates to the scant attention given to ecocriticism within contemporary Saudi literature, most especially literature that deals with sacred urban spaces. The study is qualitative in nature. It uses thematic and textual analysis within the framework of five interconnected ecocritical themes to analyze urbanization and environmental degradation, the conflict of modernity and tradition, the significance of the natural world in cultural and spiritual identity, the human-nature dynamic, and the environmental degradation and loss in the personal and collective psyche. The ecological and cultural disruption is demonstrated by the literary figures of the vanished doves, the lost deserts of the ancestors, and the streets of Mecca. This study contributes to the field of ecocriticism, especially for non-Western scholars, by juxtaposing Western scholarship on ecocriticism and Islamic environmental ethics. The study provides evidence of literature's ability to articulate urban change's impact on cultural discontinuity and addresses issues of interest to researchers, teachers, and policymakers on the intersections of urban development, cultural sustainability, and then, of course, literature.

1. INTRODUCTION

The contemporary urban transformation of Mecca, influenced by Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 program, continues to alter the city's social and ecological systems. Mecca has undergone significant transformation due to urbanization and displacement over the past several decades. Conflicts between preserving Mecca's heritage and economic urban development have been exacerbated by the degradation of the city's older neighborhoods. Mecca's older neighborhoods and the city's large size have enabled the crossing of global heritage to precipitate the degradation of heritage. Within these global changes, the city's developing heritage increasingly relies on urban literature and other cultural production to document the global consequences for the city's focal environment.

The Dove's Necklace by Saudi novelist Alem captures the troubles of the city. The city speaks through the narration of a street; the city's lament is recorded through the monologue of a dead street. In contrast to the city's dead parts, the contemporary city, facing economic destruction, has been spiritually transformed by modern construction. The city speaks to conflicts of cultural displacement, as outlined by dominant narratives of modern construction in the city and modern urban development literature, particularly in Mecca. In doing so, she problematizes the sense of urban loss and the type of attachment to a sacred city being altered.

Alem has characterized Mecca as "the woman, a city of memory and secrets," and her saying, "When they tear down the alleys, it is like erasing my childhood," illustrates the city's soul losing its collective grief. The novel, therefore, serves as a unique record of spirituality and mourning while modern critique flows.

Through Ecocriticism, the mourning in Alem's work becomes comprehensible and serves as a point of convergence, considering the cultural and environmental transformations present. Glotfelty and Fromm (1996) define ecocriticism as the study of the relationships between literature and the physical geography of a place, looking for the moral and spiritual implications of one's consciousness. This field has undergone several phases and continues evolving. The imagined landscape and nature writing by Buell (1995, 2005), as well as thinking about globalization and environmental justice by Heise (2008, 2016) and Garrard (2011), are a few examples. The term "slow violence," coined by Nixon (2011), speaks of the hidden violence of neglect and industrialization and the inevitable environmental degradation it brings about. The increasing presence in the literature is a testament to the absence of thought on ecological degradation in Alem's work on the modernization of Mecca.

In the Arab world, the field of literary studies has lacked the incorporation of ecological studies. As noted by Alharbi and Abdel Maqsood (2025), and similar to Shamim (2024), Arab poetry and other fictional verse tend to prioritize an overarching, general discourse over direct critiques of an ecological character, and to perceive and approach nature more metaphorically, rather than weaving it into an ecological discourse. Even this limited engagement does not denote indifference, given that sociopolitical and spiritual conditions, as well as structured concerns, have typically dominated Arabic literature, with climate change and unsustainable urban growth taking center stage. A growing body of scholarship attempts to incorporate and foreground an ecologically framed critique of Arabic literature. In this growing body of literature, the present work seeks to contribute to scholarship on non-Western ecocriticism by examining the integration of spiritual ecology and sacred geography within the environmental imagination of contemporary Saudi fiction.

Alem represents this integration of faith, ecology, and urban identity within her novel *The Dove's Necklace*. Her novel depicts the transformation and mechanization of Makkah, and the inversion of the city from a spatial and organic nexus of layered, rich urban memories to a sterile, abstract urban center dominated by construction cranes, dust, and high-rise buildings. In this regard, it is as if Alem has succeeded in crafting Makkah as what Buell (2005) refers to as a 'toxic sublime,' that is, a complex landscape wherein loss and 'progress' coexist. Such a perspective and vision are entirely in line with Heise's (2008) eco-cosmopolitanism.

Alem's Mecca reflects the unique phenomenon of postcolonial contexts: the imbalance between aspiring to progress and, at the same time, neglecting the spiritual and the ecological.

New developments in ecocriticism, particularly in urban ecocriticism and postcolonial ecocriticism, offer fresh interpretations of these paradoxes. Urban ecocriticism redirects attention from the wild to the urban, as most human-environment encounters occur in built environments. It pays attention to the presence of an urban ecology, the surplus of materials, and the moral contradiction of developments in the city. In contrast, postcolonial ecocriticism focuses on the untold stories of colonization, the extraction of resources, the consequent cultural marginalization, and the eco-critical narrative (Handley & DeLoughrey, 2011). Wenzel (2020) argues that postcolonial ecologies must also consider an eco-petro-modernity

frame. The Global South's economic and cultural dependence on oil places it at the intersection of the oil economy. LeMenager (2014) also shows how oil infrastructure shapes cities and, by extension, the everyday lives, identities, and beliefs of inhabitants and religious communities. The environmental consciousness of modern cities, she argues, is also sustained by the very energy systems people use in their everyday lives. These interpretations help inform the religious side of Mecca, which, at the same time, relies heavily on oil as part of its economy. The devotion of the people provides the holy city with energy, life, and balance.

The novel shows Alem grappling with global theoretical concerns within the more local and intimate geography of Mecca. Mecca's city streets and alleys used to hubs of prayer and communion. Now, they are zones of ecological alienation and silence--or mourning. That dead street silence communicates, as described by Oppermann (2013), 'storied matter.' That is, every space and every material has a story to tell, or a story to sustain. In Alem's narrative, the neglected stones, winds, and empty houses of Mecca articulate removal and displacement as a matter of despair. The devastation dialects are spiritual and ecological. Similarly, the urban changes Alem depicts, along with the urban manifestations of the ethical dissonance of disowned integration within sacred modernization. In mourning, Alem fuses the aesthetics of dead streets with the consciousness of loss and longing to offer a unique spiritual Saudi ecocriticism. In spiritual ecocriticism, Alem must frame the loss of material and metaphysical elements to articulate the distinction within his work.

In contrast, *The Dove's Necklace* is aligned with the Islamic environmental ethic. The moral relationship with the rest of creation, which counters anthropocentric environmental sustainability, rests on the tenets of moral trust (*amanah*) and stewardship (*khilāfa*) (Dussin, 2024; Smith & Al-Bahrani, 2025). These concepts capture the ethical dimension of postcoloniality and the justice demands of people and ecosystems. Within an ecocritical framework, the concepts of *amanah* and *khilāfa* offer the discipline a new moral vision, placing the responsibility for ecological awareness on a spiritual plane. Alem's synthesis addresses and characterizes a city's spirit and stewardship, along with the city's particular and distinctive ecological betrayal of the spirit—which is dual and potentially destructive. Moreover, the novel surpasses and integrates disciplines by combining environmental ecocriticism with theology, shifting the focus of ecocriticism from the Western secular world to highlight the Islamic world's contribution to the discourse on the environment.

However, while the study of Mecca is important, it could potentially lead to overstretching the Islamic ecocriticism framework. Mecca exemplifies the Western adversarial view of nature as a wild, untamed wilderness by offering sacred architecture, ritual movement, and urban life as part of ecological spirituality. Furthermore, it embodies the city's tensions between globalization and local traditions, particularly in the conflict between economic modernization and the moral traditions of continuity. The current study of these tensions situates Mecca within the discourse of modernity as a Western city, yet with a profound sacred ecology. In Mecca, urban development reveals, on the one hand, deep, destructive, and ecological challenges, and, on the other hand, the intertwining cultural and spiritual resilience of the city. Thus, this study seeks to answer these questions:

2. How does *The Dove's Necklace* portray the environmental and spiritual consequences of rapid urbanization in Mecca?
3. In what ways does the novel represent the dislocation of cultural and ecological memory?

4. How does Alem's narrative contribute to a non-Western ecocritical discourse that integrates spirituality, identity, and place?

These questions guide the study's close textual analysis and theoretical approach concerning the mediation of core values and ecological situations within literature. Framing the approach within postcolonial and Islamic contexts, the study not only interprets Alem's novel but also contributes to contemporary scholarship in building an Arab ecocritical lexicon that focuses on modernity within the challenges of sacred urban ecocritical contexts.

Regarding the methodology, the study adopts the qualitative interpretive framework of literary ecocriticism and ecological close reading, wherein Islamic ethical thought and other ecological critique theoretical texts of Buell, Heise, Nixon, Wenzel, and LeMenager are used alongside *The Dove's Necklace*. The analysis draws on the motifs of dust, wind, alleys, and the personified voice of the city, illustrating how these motifs narrate an ecocritical narrative of the intersecting triad of environment, spirituality, and identity. The study is therefore able to examine not only the changes to Mecca but also the implications of those changes on the world and what it means to relate to the world and to the created world. With the integration of the theoretical framework into the introduction, this section demonstrates how *The Dove's Necklace* engages with both urban and postcolonial ecocriticism, while also providing an original spiritual interpretation of the environmental crisis.

Marco's keen sensibility captures the intangible tensions, both within and without, the sacred city of Mecca. As an iconic site of ecocriticism, Mecca is uniquely positioned to mediate the discord of eking out a balance between progress and preservation, modernity and religion. Alem's perspective captures this reality succinctly: the unfolding of the fate of cities, like the rest of the world, is a consequence of human ethics and human spirituality.

5. METHODS

This research analyzes Alem Raja's *The Dove's Necklace* through an ecocritical lens, focusing on the loss of ethnicity, decline of the ecologies, and the change in the urban landscape of Mecca. It analyzes the ecological disruption and the author's meaning-making in the sanctified spaces by commenting thematically on the novel's characters and settings. The investigation focuses on thematic analysis in order to touch on the intertextuality of deep ecology and the consolidated literary components of deep spatial and environmental scarred identities.

The identification and definition of the core themes employed an inductive process based on the novel's repetitive readings and engagement in academic ecocritique. The analysis has been conducted under the umbrella of ecocriticism in balance to the rest of the world. It demonstrates the intersections of memory, space, and nature in the urban landscape of Mecca. The five themes attended to were organized and structured in a way that enhanced the focus of the research.

Table 1. *Themes of the Study*

Theme	Description
Sacred Space and Urban Transformation	Focuses on how the spiritual geography of Mecca is altered due to urban development.
Cultural Displacement and Memory	Highlights the loss of communal and historical identity as neighborhoods are dismantled.

Human–Nature Relationship	Explores the symbolic and spiritual roles of nature in the characters' lives.
Environmental Degradation	Discusses the portrayal of mechanization and ecological loss within the city.
Spiritual Ecology	Examines the dissolution of spiritual connectedness resulting from environmental and cultural changes.

To contextualize these themes visually, Figure 1 and Figure 2 provide a historical and contemporary comparison of Mecca's urban landscape. These images enhance our understanding of the ecological and cultural shifts Alem's narrative explores.

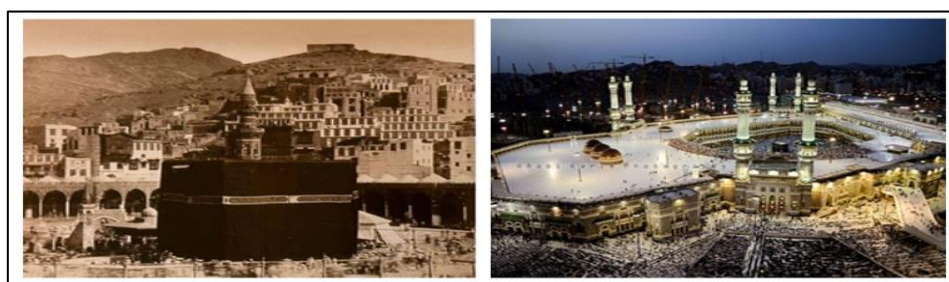


Figure 1 and 2. Mecca in earlier times and the expansive urbanization of modern Mecca (Licensed Getty Images: <https://www.gettyimages.ae/photos/old-makkah>)

To enhance this text's framework for interpretation, Figure 3 shows the multifaceted relationships among individual culture, the world of nature, and spiritual identity. This Venn diagram illustrates the overlapping themes of urban transformation, cultural memory, ecological loss, and sacredness that surface from the selected themes of *The Dove's Necklace*. It highlights that the crisis Merin depicts in Mecca is not only ecological, as Alem suggests, but also profoundly spiritual and cultural, thus calling for an expanded conception of the sustainability of sacred places.

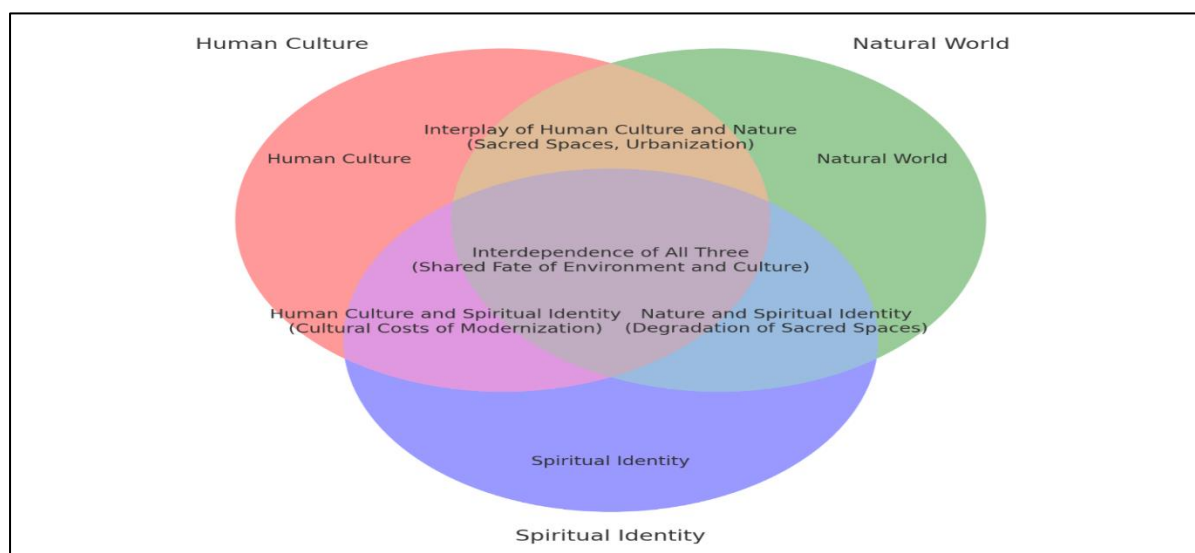


Figure 3. The Nexus of Culture, Nature, and Spiritual Identity in *The Dove's Necklace*

. This intersection serves as the basis for the conceptual map in Figure 4, which organizes the salient themes of the textual analysis. It abstracts the more prominent concepts as well as their interconnections and spherical derivatives, including, but not limited to, environmental degradation, modernization, cultural impoverishment, and spiritual alienation.

The map illustrates the points made so far together, which aids understanding, but also serves to emphasize the ways in which the structure of Raja Alem's narrative intertwines with the ecological and cultural concerns of present-day Saudi Arabia.

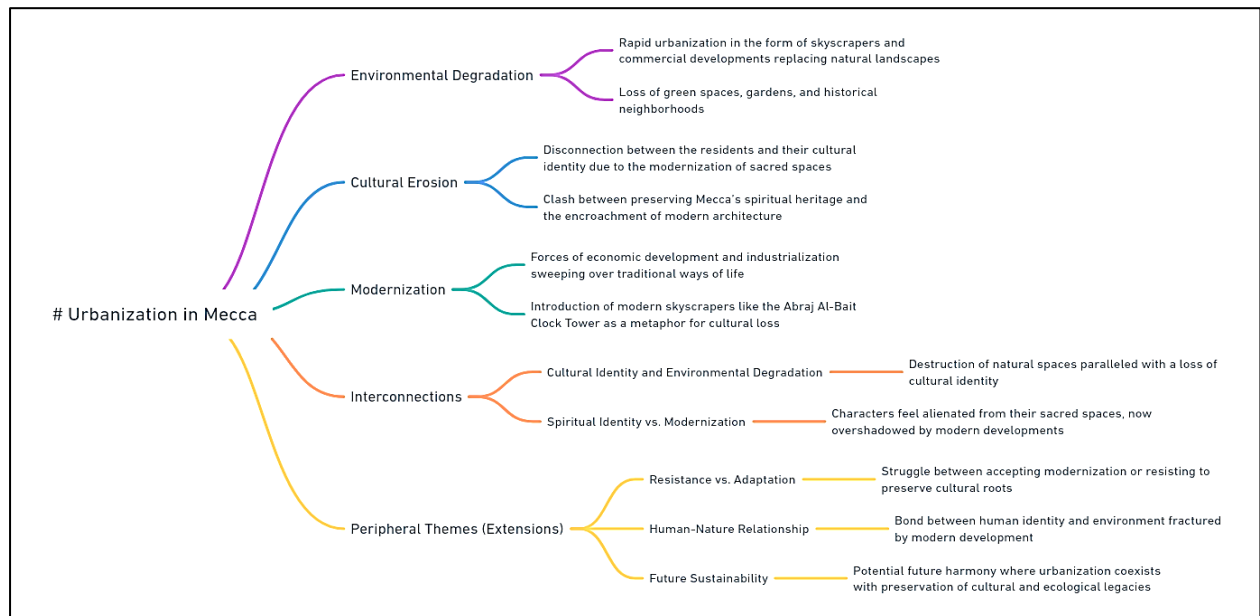


Figure 4. Thematic Map of Ecocritical Concerns in *The Dove's Necklace*

The study continued with thematic coding for an analytic reading of the text at the level of the paragraph. Such a reading pairs selected passages from *The Dove's Necklace* with concepts of ecocriticism and the sacred space. The selected passages are first allowed to speak for themselves without the prior imposition of theory. The aim here is to demonstrate how the narrative techniques employed in the book articulate and, at the same time, interrogate the cultural transformations and the concomitant ecological dilemmas in and around contemporary Mecca. This reading also hopes to demonstrate the relevance of such narrative tensions in other contexts.

6. TEXTUAL REVIEW AND ANALYSIS

This section offers a close reading of *The Dove's Necklace* (Alem, 2016), structured around the central themes identified earlier. The analysis examines how Raja Alem incorporates these themes into her narrative to convey ecological, cultural, and spiritual dislocation within the context of Mecca's transformation.

6.1. Sacred Space and Urban Change

Raja Alem's illustration of Mecca as a sacred city undergoing physical change highlights the conflict between modern development and the spiritual geography of the site. The narrator of the novel, the street, mourns the loss of the city's identity by stating, "She saw her beloved alley 's devoured by steel and concrete. The city's veins carried no memory, only noise" (Pg. 219). "The wind that once whispered a prayer carried only the hum of the cranes," (Pg. 222). These phrases capture the 'alienation of space,' which signifies the inability of modernization to connect the current city to its past spiritual and historical identity. Alem continues to tell me Mecca's sacred geography as more than just a religious space, but as something 'alive' that is changed by the hostile environment civilization brings. The city's landscape is losing its sacredness and blurring more and more, posing the question to the reader: 'How does modern civilization change the memory that is 'associated' with the 'place?'

6.2.Cultural Displacement and Memory

Cultural displacement and memory — personal and collective — play a pivotal role in Alem's novel. The author's description of the historical neighborhoods being destroyed is illustrated as a form of cultural loss. "When they, 'tear,' down the alleys, it is like, 'erasing,' my childhood," (Pg. 97). What I see here is a fragmentation in relation to the prayer life of the people, as indicated by the lines, "People drifted from one block to another, no longer rooted in the earth where their fathers prayed" (p. 184). "The prayers of yesterday seemed homeless, looking for corners that no longer existed" (p. 190). The disconnect is both physical and existential. The cycles of life that were once customary and dictated by the surrounding setting have been strangely disrupted.

6.3.The Human Nature Connection

Alem has a funny habit of including inanimate objects in his narratives — for example, the trees, the breeze, and the animals — that, in one way or another, contribute to the bonding and spirituality of the people. One scene describes: "She looked for the tree that once shaded the courtyard, but only dust remained" (p. 176). "The bird that used to sing at dawn had vanished; only silence greeted the rising sun" (p. 183). As the characters gaze vacantly across the world, the dusty surroundings starkly contrast with the machines starkly contrast, revealing the characters' emotional vacancy. Nature is not merely ornamental but rather profoundly symbolic, representing peace, an abiding presence, and a metaphysical connection.

Alem is "critical" of this disjoined marriage of elements, suggesting that the absence of nature is a consequence of a loss of self and one's position in the world. Alem illustrates the loss of nature through changes in the setting of Mecca, resulting from physical changes in the surrounding environment. Alem (2016) describes in *The Dove's Necklace*: 'Every alley turned grey, coated in the ash of machines' (p. 193). She captures the suffocation of a place overrun by the narrowing borders of deepening, disproportionate mechanization, which crosses out the city, nature, and the very ability to breathe and remember. "The sky wore a veil of dust, hiding the stars that once guided night prayers" (p. 196). The line illustrates how dust and concrete overpower life itself, epitomized by the character who says, 'Even the sky no longer wept; it watched in silence' (p. 204). Alem's urban transformation imagery becomes a locus of mourning, with nature as a witness that disappears and is absent.

6.4.Spirit in Nature

Alem's most subtle theme: 'Even the breeze had lost its prayer' (p. 241). *The Dove's Necklace* quote underscores the interdependence of nature and spirituality in the face of collapse, signaling the absence of a once-sacrosanct pulse of life. 'She walked past the well that once sang verses; now it was dry, mute, and forgotten' (p. 244). The city's existence, with its well, emblematically marks its nonspiritual void, an area no longer conducive to any kind of spiritual interaction. Alem does not present spiritual desolation as a crisis of faith. Rather, it is an interruption in the mutually nourishing relationship between people and their sacred environment. In this way, Alem elevates the ecological crisis to the role of an existential crisis, emphasizing the integrated relationship between spiritual and ecological sustenance.

7. DISCUSSION

This discussion examines the findings that correlate the theoretical and practical aspects of ecocriticism with the study's guiding research questions.

The first research question was: How does The Dove's Necklace portray the environmental and spiritual impacts of rapid urbanization in Mecca? The analysis indicated that Alem represents Mecca as more than a physical city; he also renders it a spiritual landscape that is modernly expanded and disrupted. The characters mourn the historical memories of the sacred spaces that were laid, and emotionally, spiritual memories are lost. This finding contributes the spiritual ecology of ecocriticism in a more profound and nuanced way, as it demonstrates the loss of urbanization in the religious and cultural consciousness, which physically and culturally alters the landscape.

The second question asked: In what ways does the novel represent the dislocation of cultural and ecological memory? The memory and place theme, especially in the context of dismantled neighborhoods and lost communities, describes displacement as more than relocation; it is also an identity severance. Alem's characters are distanced from places that have been erased or altered, underscoring Middle Eastern ecocritical discourse surrounding memory and rootedness (Oppermann, 2013).

The third question analyzed: In what way does Alem's story shape a non-Western ecocritical perspective that combines spirituality, identity, and place? Alem's accounts of vanishing aspects of nature and of the broken relationships between people and nature illustrate the growing attention in literature to the problem of ecological alienation. Alem's work differs from the Western ecocriticism tradition, which often glorifies ecological wildness (Buell, 2005). In Alem's case, the loss of integrated urban nature—everyday and spiritually experienced human life intertwined with the urban wildness of green places, birds, and trees.

In comparison to the available literature, it aligns with Iovino and Oppermann's (2014) plea for the integration of contextual and cultural factors and the embodiment of space within the field of material ecocriticism. However, it contests the predominance of nature-centric ecocriticism and proposes a shift to the built environment and its sacralized geographies. Previous work has focused on the nature of Arab literature (Nash, 2001), while few have addressed the specific case of sacred cities, particularly Mecca.

In theorizing, this work calls for a more comprehensive approach to ecocriticism that incorporates non-Western frameworks and considers urban sacredness, spirituality, and the environment in relation to one another. It seeks to highlight the patterns and places that have been ignored in the ecological discourse and develops regional ecocritical practices in line with Islamic, spiritual, and indigenous approaches to place.

Alem's literary work offers urban planners an opportunity to reassess and rethink their approaches to planning cities that incorporate culture and spirituality. Advocating for development that balances the preservation of the social memory of the community and the bio-geo diversity of an area reflects the community's holistic ecological integrity. This resonates with the work of Bandarin and Schofield (2012) on historic urban landscapes, where sustainable urbanization incorporates a community's cultural heritage and social urban heritage.

Notwithstanding the contributions, the work has to be understood through the prism of its limitations. The reliance on a single novel and a general lack of fieldwork or community engagement also imply that community engagement has not occurred. In an integrative framework, future work might consider collaborations among urban planners, religious scholars, and community members, as these cultural frameworks are relevant to lived

experiences. To amplify the contextual landscape, the work might include those from the Saudi literary canon whose ecological or cultural discourses may be read as comparable.

All these factors make it possible to consider *The Dove's Necklace* as a literary artifact and as a socio-ecological critique. Alem's approach to sacred places and patterns of displacement addresses issues of detached heritage, spiritual ecology, and moral modernization through ecocritical thought, bringing the inquiry to the intersection of globalization. The reading exercises that approach close reading affirm that, in the narrative, Alem is responding to the urban development of Mecca and its consequences for the local culture and the local religious soul. In this sense, the study contributes to the broader environmental literature, a field from which Saudi literature has been notably absent (Buell, 2005). In contrast to most Anglophone ecocriticism that focuses on the development and preservation of wilderness areas and the ecology of the climate, *The Dove's Necklace* focuses on urban sacred landscapes, not only on the Mecca of the world, Muslims, but also of the world. Compared to other ecocritical readings of the Arabian region that center on exile and political struggle (Nash, 2001), Alem's novel introduces a new voice from the tradition of Saudi fiction, one that speaks to spiritual ecology.

This confirms and expands upon the framework for culturally situated ecocriticism, which incorporates indigenous and sacred traditions, as developed by Oppermann (2013), and provides a new point of departure for analyzing Mecca. Alem's depiction of the city critiques the assumption that the socio-spiritual loss associated with modernization is inevitable and will go uncontested. More than the loss of a physical place, she evokes cultural dislocation as an injury to memory and identity, thus highlighting spiritual loss as an urgent ecological matter.

This study contributes to the theory of non-Western ecocriticism by focusing on a sacred landscape of ecocritical discourse that is usually ignored. By highlighting this landscape, Alem advocates for a multicultural framework that incorporates the spiritual dimension of land into ecological relationality (Iovino & Oppermann, 2014). In terms of fiction, the study reveals a new avenue for cultural preservation and the promotion of environmental consciousness, which is especially relevant to rapidly modernizing societies.

On a policy level, readings of Alem's narrative encourage urban planners in historically and spiritually, rich cities to engage in culturally sensitive design. Such contexts should integrate heritage conservation to include community memory and ecological loss as boundaries to be minimised in design regulations, in line with modern, globalized, and participatory design frameworks.

However, the current research must be understood as having three limitations. The first is that the primary analysis is based on just one novel. Although this is a richly layered narrative, it is unlikely to capture all the variations of sacred geographies in the non-Western world. The second limitation is that the analysis remains predominantly interpretative and does not provide enough empirical support for the proposed policy innovations. The third limitation is that the design and coding of the spiritual indicators are in a preliminary stage and need to be longitudinally researched on more case studies to gain added value.

Focusing on a novel by this author means that this research is likely to be limited in its ability to provide insights into contemporary Saudi fiction as a whole. Moreover, the analysis is confined to the text without incorporating any interviews or surveys specifically designed for the broader local context that could support and enrich the claims made in the analysis.

In the future, scholars may benefit from placing *The Dove's Necklace* next to novels by other Saudi or Arab authors who grapple with the tension between traditions and modernity to determine if Alem is charting an unusual or a typical course. Even richer portraits would emerge from research that integrates urban studies, theology, and environmental sociology, so that the questions surrounding the city, the sacred, and the precariously ecological are addressed in concert, rather than in separate silos.

Alem's text illustrates an important stage in the development of Arab ecocriticism, which is still in its infancy. The novel serves as a powerful reminder of the losses that are often overlooked as modernity continues to expand outward and upward. It challenges the reader to consider what value they assign to memory, land, and the delicate surrounding world. The challenges posed here are particularly crucial as Saudi Arabia commences large-scale development projects. Alem's culturally driven framework serves as both a touchstone and a gentle admonition regarding the espoused policy conversations on sustainability.

8. CONCLUSION

This research analyzed Raja Alem's *The Dove's Necklace* in relation to the environment, sacred space, and cultural loss as they pertain to the city of Mecca. The novel critiques the impact of modern-day Mecca on the spirituality, artistry, and ecology of the city. Alem's portrayal of Mecca suggests a departure from viewing it as a mere geographical coordinate to considering it as a complex, living, and dynamic entity, intertwined with memory and shaped by both nature and humanity.

The novel illustrates disconnection in Mecca's spiritual geography, as modern development progresses, the Mecca of memory. Characters depict a sense of emotional and spiritual dislocation when their communities disappear and their landscapes are destroyed with the vile disposition of collective memory. The absence of the emotional center, nature, is a passive backdrop, and it is nature that asserts, aligns, and, most importantly, defiantly repels in the narrative.

This research on the Arab and Islamic world contributes to the field of ecocriticism by integrating the neglected environmental literature of the Other. IESR, which works from the Global South, and urban ecocriticism are the newfound sources of spiritual ecology to urban environmental studies.

The research has implications for practice, specifically regarding urban design and cultural policy. The rapid urbanization of Saudi Arabia prompts Alem's work as a case of cross-thinking, promoting the possible coexistence of the phenomenon with cultural and environmental conservation. The aspects of the paper can help ground the approaches toward preserving the espoused essence of spaces and history in urban contexts of cities that bear a high religious attribute, in support of the value of *Ki*.

Andrade's (2020) *The Dove's Necklace*, in advocating for thoughtful planning at the policy level, calls for urban development that incorporates strategies for addressing urban development oppression and continuum, integrating the historical and the modern in a way that sustains both the spiritual and the environmental.

However, the study was limited to one culture and one novel, which increases the chances of over-generalization. The sociocultural primary data also needed more conceptual grounding to balance the narrative claims of the text. The intertwining of culture, environment,

and identity in the Saudi and Arab worlds can also engage a wider range of disciplines beyond literature and the social sciences, such as anthropology, urban studies, and even theology. Literature, more than ever, should be listened to, rather than just read. It has the power to reflect, critique, and guide, ultimately shifting perspectives.

This research promotes the value of captivating imaginative literature that foreshadows inclusive and ecologically sensitive futures. This is particularly relevant to researchers, city planners, teachers, and decision-makers who engage with the spatial, existential, and cultural intricacies of Mecca.

To conclude, the table below presents a final unifying strategy that captures the principal research questions, key findings, and the implications of these findings for practice and theory. This representation of the research summarizes the fundamental contributions and highlights the areas where the research has gaps and requires additional focus and integration across disciplines.

Table 2: *Summary of Key Research Findings and Implications*

Research Questions	Key Findings	Implications
1. How does the novel portray the transformation of sacred space in Mecca?	Mecca is symbolically depicted as a fragmented spiritual landscape, losing cohesion due to modernization.	Emphasizes the need for urban planning that respects spiritual and cultural geography.
2. In what ways does cultural displacement manifest in the novel?	Displacement is shown as emotional, spiritual, and communal loss, severing ties to memory and identity.	Suggests that literature can inform culturally sensitive heritage preservation policies.
3. How is the human–nature relationship redefined in the narrative?	Nature is a character and a spiritual entity, and its degradation symbolizes the loss of identity and an ecological crisis.	Highlights the relevance of ecocriticism in analyzing sacred ecological narratives in Islamic and Arab contexts.

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