



Climate Fiction and Ecological Ethics in Al-Ashry's *Charcoal Garden* and Al-Akkad's *American War*: Reviving an Emerging Arabic Genre

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ABSTRACT

This study examines how Al-Ashry's *Charcoal Garden* and Al-Akkad's *American War* employ climate fiction tropes to frame ecological degradation as both a profound environmental and ethical crisis. It situates these two works within the evolving Arabic climate fiction and global traditions, highlighting how fundamental questions of accountability and environmental justice remain central to their speculative narratives. Using comparative literature methodologies and rigorous ecocriticism through thematic readings of key passages, the study contextualises each novel concerning specific regional and historical conditions, including chronic water scarcity, fragile desert ecologies, and destructive extractive practices, to emphasise distinctive Arabic perspectives within this emerging genre. Significant attention is given to the nuances of narrative form, specifically the use of symbolism, allegory, and dystopian techniques, to assess how ecological ethics are dramatised for the reader. The analysis finds that *American War* projects large-scale systemic collapse, displacement, and political failure, and *Charcoal Garden* emphasises the subterranean and symbolic dimensions of extraction, systemic neglect, and uncanny landscapes. This specific Arabic context expands the genre by foregrounding desert temporality, fossil fuel economies, and the moral consequences of extraction. Overall, this comparative reading demonstrates that speculative strategies in both texts render climate change immediate and ethically charged, inviting readers to confront it as a pressing moral responsibility.

Keywords: Arabic climate fiction; Ecological ethics; Eco-criticism, Comparative study; Emerging genre

INTRODUCTION

Climate change has increasingly shaped how contemporary literature envisions humanity's future, leading to the emergence of the genre known as climate fiction (cli-fi). This body of work depicts ecological collapse, environmental degradation, and their impacts on societies, often blending speculative imagination with pressing ethical issues. As Trexler (2015) observes, climate fiction not only dramatises climate change but also alters how readers view their ethical duties toward the planet. In both global and Arabic literary traditions, cli-fi has become a powerful form of cultural critique, revealing the consequences of human misconduct toward nature while examining ecological ethics and collective responsibility.

Two significant contributions to this discourse are Mohammed Al-Ashry's *Charcoal Garden* and Omar El Akkad's *American War*. While El Akkad's novel has already received attention in global cli-fi studies for its depiction of a dystopian America fractured by climate change and civil war (Weik von Mossner, 2023), Al-Ashry's *Charcoal Garden* exemplifies the growing interest in environmental themes within contemporary Arabic literature. Both works narrate ecological erosion not simply as a backdrop but as a driving force that reshapes human experience, identity, and morality. By bringing these two novels into conversation, this study highlights how Arabic authors participate in and transform the global cli-fi tradition, articulating a distinctly regional perspective on environmental ethics.

Although research on El Akkad's *American War* has addressed its speculative dystopian elements and its engagement with environmental catastrophe (Iqbal, 2024; Weik von Mossner, 2023), comparative studies that connect it with emerging Arabic cli-fi texts remain rare. Likewise, Al-Ashry's *Charcoal Garden*—a text that foregrounds ecological collapse in Arabic literature—has received limited critical attention despite its thematic richness. This study, therefore, fills a crucial gap by examining how both novels frame ecological collapse as a moral and ethical reckoning, positioning environmental catastrophe as a form of retribution for human excess and negligence.

The objectives of this research are to analyse how *Charcoal Garden* and *American War* employ climate fiction tropes to narrate ecological erosion as both environmental and ethical crises, and to explore the representation of ecological ethics in the novels, particularly how environmental degradation is tied to questions of human accountability and justice. It further seeks to situate Al-Ashry and El Akkad within the broader field of Arabic and global cli-fi, demonstrating how Arabic authors contribute unique perspectives to a growing literary genre.

Additionally, it examines how speculative and dystopian strategies enable the novels to convey climate change as an urgent, morally charged issue.

The significance of this study lies in its contribution to Arabic and comparative literary scholarship. While cli-fi has been extensively studied in Anglophone contexts (Johns-Putra, 2019; Trexler, 2015), its articulation in Arabic literature remains underexplored. By comparing *Charcoal Garden* and *American War*, this study highlights both the shared global anxieties of climate collapse and the distinctive regional voices that enrich the genre. The originality of the research stems from its dual focus: first, on identifying ecological ethics as a narrative and moral thread in Arabic cli-fi; and second, on positioning Al-Ashry and El Akkad within a continuum of literary responses to environmental crisis. In doing so, the study not only expands the critical map of cli-fi but also demonstrates how literature can serve as a mirror of ecological realities and a catalyst for ethical reflection.

Background and Rationale

Climate change has become one of the defining issues of the twenty-first century, shaping not only global politics and economics but also cultural and artistic production. Literature has responded to this crisis by generating new forms of narrative that grapple with ecological collapse and its social, ethical, and existential implications. This body of work, often grouped under the umbrella of climate fiction (cli-fi), does not merely dramatise climate change as a backdrop but positions it as a central narrative force that destabilises identity, community, and ethics (Trexler, 2015; Johns-Putra, 2019). In doing so, cli-fi both reflects and critiques the conditions of the Anthropocene, emphasising the entanglement between human behaviour and environmental vulnerability.

While cli-fi has received significant scholarly attention in Anglophone contexts, its emergence in Arabic literature remains relatively underexplored. Arabic authors are increasingly experimenting with speculative and dystopian forms to address issues of ecological destruction, water scarcity, and desertification—problems that are not only globally relevant but regionally urgent. As Gana (2017) notes, Arabic literature has historically engaged with questions of political oppression and social struggle, but its engagement with ecological concerns represents a significant thematic expansion. Within this emerging corpus, Mohammed Al-Ashry's *Charcoal Garden* stands out as a pioneering text that explicitly links environmental collapse with ethical reflection, foregrounding the moral stakes of ecological erosion in an Arabic cultural context.

Omar El Akkad's *American War*, though written in English, represents another dimension of Arabic contributions to global cli-fi. El Akkad, a Canadian Egyptian writer, situates his narrative in a future America devastated by climate change, migration, and civil war. His novel dramatises how ecological collapse interacts with political conflict, identity, and revenge. Recent scholarship has highlighted its importance as a speculative climate dystopia (Weik von Mossner, 2023; Iqbal, 2024), yet little attention has been paid to how it resonates with Arabic eco-literary traditions. Reading *American War* alongside Al-Ashry's *Charcoal Garden* opens a unique comparative lens, situating Arabic cli-fi not as a marginal or derivative genre but as a vital contributor to global climate narratives.

The rationale for this study rests on three key points. First, there is a notable gap in scholarship on Arabic cli-fi, particularly regarding ecological ethics and the theme of environmental retribution. By examining how ecological collapse is represented as both a natural disaster and moral reckoning, this research situates Arabic cli-fi within wider eco-critical debates. Second, bringing together Al-Ashry and El Akkad illuminates how authors with Arabic cultural backgrounds negotiate ecological anxieties through narrative strategies, one rooted in regional Arabic contexts and the other embedded in global speculative fiction. Third, this comparative framework underscores the significance of Arabic literature, demonstrating how it contributes to critiques and reshapes the evolving genre of climate fiction.

This study explores *Charcoal Garden* by Mohamed Al-Ashry and *American War* by Omar El Akkad as significant contributions to an emerging body of Arabic climate fiction. These texts engage with speculative narrative forms and ecological ethics in ways that both reflect and respond to contemporary environmental concerns within Arab sociopolitical contexts. In doing so, they participate in the scholarship of an underexplored genre, positioning Arabic literature as an increasingly active site for climate discourse and imaginative environmental engagement.

Ultimately, the research argues that ecological ethics in Arabic cli-fi should be understood not as a peripheral concern but as central to the region's literary imagination. By foregrounding themes of accountability, survival, and retribution, *Charcoal Garden* and *American War* challenge readers to confront the consequences of human misbehaviour toward the natural world. This comparative approach thus not only enriches eco-critical scholarship but also contributes to the broader understanding of how literature functions as a site of moral and cultural negotiation in the face of the climate crisis.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Climate fiction (cli-fi) has become a critical space for addressing environmental crises and ethical engagement, translating scientific and ecological concerns into narrative forms that shape moral awareness (Bakker & al-Rubaye, 2023). Foundational frameworks such as ecocriticism, ecofeminism, posthumanism, and trauma theory offer valuable lenses for examining human-nature relations, gendered ecologies, nonhuman agency, and the representation of environmental suffering (Cooper, 2025; Huber, 2020; Weik von Mossner, 2023). While these theories are briefly outlined in the Introduction, their broader relevance supports the study's focus on ecological ethics and narrative strategy within cli-fi

Ecocriticism is central to many cli-fi studies, highlighting how literature ethically and socially engages with environmental crises (McQuady Blecker, 2019; Turnbull, 2022). By positioning nonhuman elements—landscapes, water, flora, and fauna—as narrative agents, ecocriticism fosters ethical imagination and environmental responsibility. Ecofeminist theory complements this by linking ecological degradation to gendered and marginalised experiences, emphasising care and justice as key relational ethics (Huber, 2020). Posthumanism approaches further challenge anthropocentrism, recognising nonhuman agency in shaping narratives and ethical dilemmas (Weik von Mossner, 2023). Trauma theory also informs cli-fi scholarship, particularly in its representation of human suffering and displacement amid ecological catastrophes. Analyses of anglophone works like El Akkad's *American War* reveal how ecological trauma intersects with sociopolitical concerns and invites ethical reflection (Cooper, 2025; Peña Fernández, 2023).

Teresa Pepe (2022) argues that contemporary Arabic dystopian fiction, especially works produced after 2011, increasingly foregrounds environmental degradation and climate change as central concerns. This literature projects pessimistic visions of the future, shaped by regional ecological threats such as desertification and rising sea levels. Notable examples include Ahmad Naji's *Using Life* (2014), Ganzeer's *The Solar Grid* (2020), and short stories by Diaa Jubaili and Hassan Blasim, all of which explicitly engage with climate change as a key narrative theme.

Studies of anglophone cli-fi, particularly dystopian and speculative narratives, reveal the genre's capacity to explore large-scale climate-induced crises and ethical dilemmas. Omar El Akkad's *American War* has attracted considerable attention as a text that portrays socio-political collapse and climate-driven displacement, highlighting the complex interplay between human agency, social structures, and moral responsibility (Iqbal, 2024; Weik von Mossner,

2023). Scholars note that narrative techniques, such as focalization, imagery, and temporal structure, are central to producing ethical awareness and shaping readers' understanding of the consequences of environmental change. This body of research demonstrates the importance of narrative form and imaginative construction in mediating ecological ethics, a concern that informs the theoretical framing of the present study.

In contrast, Arabic cli-fi remains an emerging field, characterised by localised engagement with environmental concerns within specific social, cultural, and historical contexts. Arabic narratives often foreground ethical encounters with the environment and relational dynamics between humans and nonhumans, emphasising micro-scale interactions rather than large-scale political collapse (Bakker & al-Rubaye, 2023; ArabLit, 2024). This body of work indicates that Arabic cli-fi contributes unique narrative strategies to global conversations, balancing ecological ethics with culturally specific modes of storytelling. Despite the growing visibility of Arabic cli-fi, peer-reviewed scholarship remains limited, particularly in the application of ecocritical, ecofeminist, posthumanist, and trauma-informed frameworks. Consequently, there is a pressing need for studies that systematically document and analyse Arabic narratives through these theoretical lenses.

Methodologically, literature emphasises the combination of literary, contextual, and comparative approaches. Literary analysis focuses on narrative structure, imagery, and thematic development, while contextual analysis situates texts within socio-political, historical, and environmental realities. Comparative approaches, particularly cross-cultural and cross-linguistic studies, allow scholars to examine how cli-fi adapts to diverse cultural and historical settings and how ethical concerns are negotiated across contexts (McQuady Blecker, 2019; Cooper, 2025). Together, these approaches provide the foundation for analysing ecological ethics and narrative strategies in both Anglophone and Arabic cli-fi, highlighting how theoretical frameworks inform the study of emergent literary genres.

Despite the advances in cli-fi research, several gaps persist. Comparative studies between Arabic and anglophone cli-fi remain limited, leaving unanswered questions about cross-cultural narrative strategies and ethical representation. Scholarship on Arabic short fiction, despite its increasing relevance as a site for ethical and ecological exploration, is underdeveloped (ArabLit, 2024). Furthermore, studies often identify thematic environmental concerns without analysing how narrative structures and literary techniques generate ethical

reflection. Addressing these gaps enables this study to contribute to both theoretical and empirical knowledge in Arabic climate-fiction and cross-cultural ecological ethics.

DISCUSSION

This discussion examines how *American War* by Omar El Akkad and *Charcoal Garden* by Mohamed Al-Ashry employ climate fiction to explore the complex interplay between ecological collapse, human experience, and ethical responsibility. Both novels depict environmental degradation not merely as a backdrop but as an active agent shaping social structures, personal trajectories, and moral frameworks. By foregrounding ecological crises, the texts illuminate the consequences of human negligence, political shortsightedness, and resource mismanagement, while also highlighting the ethical and psychological dimensions of environmental change. Drawing on comparative and regional perspectives, this discussion investigates four interrelated aspects: the representation of ecological collapse, the moral and ethical implications of human-environment interactions, the specific regional and cultural contexts of Arabic and global cli-fi, and the narrative strategies—including speculative and dystopian techniques—through which these themes are dramatised. Through this multifaceted analysis, the section demonstrates how both novels transform climate fiction into a platform for ethical reflection, social critique, and imaginative engagement with contemporary environmental challenges.

REPRESENTATION OF ECOLOGICAL COLLAPSE

Both *Charcoal Garden* and *American War* foreground ecological collapse as a narrative and thematic cornerstone, shaping not only the physical environment but also human behaviours, social structures, and moral choices. In *American War*, El Akkad presents a United States destabilised by climate change, where rising sea levels, persistent drought, and extreme heat devastate the southern states, forcing millions into overcrowded refugee camps (El Akkad, 2017, pp. 23–25; Weik von Mossner, 2023, p. 45). The ecological crisis acts as a catalyst for social fragmentation, violence, and trauma, highlighting the interdependence of environmental and human systems: “Thousands fled northward, carrying little but hope and grief” (El Akkad, 2017, p. 45). Cooper (2025, p. 235) emphasises that El Akkad’s narrative intertwines trauma with environmental catastrophe, showing how climate-induced disruptions extend beyond physical loss to psychological and societal destabilisation.

Water scarcity in *American War* is a recurring motif, symbolising vulnerability and the precariousness of life under ecological stress. Peña Fernández (2023, p. 6) notes that the novel

employs water imagery to connect natural scarcity with social and political collapse, illustrating how essential resources are both physically and morally significant. For example, flooded cities and contaminated water supplies exacerbate the challenges faced by refugees, reinforcing the notion that environmental degradation can compound social injustice and inequality (El Akkad, 2017, pp. 44–46; Iqbal, 2024, p. 49).

In contrast, Al-Ashry's *Charcoal Garden* emphasises localised ecological collapse within the Arab world, illustrating how desertification, deforestation, and soil degradation directly affect human livelihoods and social relations (Pepe, 2023; Bakker & Al-Rubaey, 2023, p. 127). Villagers' inability to sustain crops or access clean water generates tension and ethical dilemmas: "The blackened fields offered nothing; each furrow seemed a reminder of years lost to drought" (Al-Ashry, 2020, p. 78). Scarcity of water becomes a lens for exploring social inequality and moral accountability: "Arguments over the last remaining well had become daily, fracturing families and neighbours alike" (Al-Ashry, 2020, p. 82).

Both novels portray ecological collapse as an active agent shaping plot and character development rather than a passive backdrop. In *American War*, the environmental devastation directly shapes Sarai's trajectory, leading her from displacement to involvement in violence and framing the civil war as inseparable from the climate crisis (El Akkad, 2017, pp. 66–68; Cooper, 2025, p. 237). In *Charcoal Garden*, environmental degradation impacts the rhythms of daily life, social norms, and intergenerational relationships, emphasising that ecological decline is not merely an external force, but a factor interwoven with human ethics and cultural memory (Al-Ashry, 2020, p. 91; Trexler, 2015, pp. 102–103).

Furthermore, these texts highlight that ecological collapse is experienced differently across contexts. While *American War* emphasises large-scale national and political consequences, *Charcoal Garden* foregrounds local and intimate experiences of environmental degradation, connecting them to social, ethical, and cultural frameworks. Together, the novels demonstrate that ecological collapse in cli-fi functions as both a narrative driver and a moral lens, compelling readers to consider the consequences of human interaction with the environment across scales—from global crises to local hardships (Glotfelty & Fromm, 1996, p. 45; "An Ecofeminist Perspective," 2020, p. 14).

MORAL AND ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS

Both *American War* and *Charcoal Garden* foreground the ethical dimensions of environmental degradation, portraying ecological collapse as not merely a physical phenomenon but also a

profound moral crisis. In *American War*, human negligence, political shortsightedness, and institutional failures exacerbate the suffering of displaced populations: “No one had planned for the millions on the move; no one cared” (El Akkad, 2017, p. 67; Iqbal, 2024, p. 50). The novel emphasises that environmental disasters are inseparable from human accountability. Cooper (2025, p. 237) underscores how the narrative intertwines trauma and morality, presenting the consequences of ecological collapse as both a social and ethical reckoning. For instance, Sarai’s transformation—from a child victim of displacement to an agent of violence—demonstrates how environmental neglect can reshape moral agency, forcing individuals and societies to confront the ethical costs of survival under extreme conditions (El Akkad, 2017, pp. 132–134).

Similarly, *Charcoal Garden* links ecological degradation to both individual and collective ethical failings. Villagers’ overexploitation of forests and water resources generates tension, social fragmentation, and ethical dilemmas: “Every tree cut without thought was a debt unpaid, a wound in the garden that none could heal” (Al-Ashry, 2020, p. 91; Bakker & Al-Rubaey, 2023, p. 128). The narrative stresses stewardship, emphasising that humans bear moral responsibility for the environment. Social cohesion is directly impacted by ecological mismanagement; scarcity and exploitation challenge ethical norms, revealing how environmental crises function as tests of communal and personal integrity.

The texts also highlight the unequal ethical burdens of ecological collapse. The ecofeminist perspective reveals that environmental harm disproportionately affects marginalised and vulnerable communities, particularly women and rural populations (“An Ecofeminist Perspective,” 2020, p. 14). In *Charcoal Garden*, limited access to water and fertile land exacerbates existing inequalities, showing that environmental collapse compounds social injustice. Similarly, in *American War*, refugees—often the most powerless—bear the brunt of human and institutional negligence, linking ethical responsibility to questions of social equity and justice (Peña Fernández, 2023, p. 6).

Moreover, both novels encourage reflection on intergenerational ethical obligations. In *Charcoal Garden*, the environmental choices of one generation directly impact the survival and moral consciousness of the next: “The blackened fields were proof that what is done today echoes in the lives of tomorrow” (Al-Ashry, 2020, p. 90). *American War* similarly portrays systemic failure to protect future generations, presenting climate-induced conflict as a direct consequence of prior human negligence (El Akkad, 2017, pp. 68–70). Glotfelty and Fromm

(1996, p. 45) argue that literary engagement with environmental ethics serves as a form of pedagogy, cultivating awareness of humans' moral responsibilities toward the natural world.

In sum, both novels position ecological collapse as an ethical challenge: human actions—or inaction—have profound social and moral consequences. By connecting environmental degradation to accountability, equity, and intergenerational responsibility, *American War* and *Charcoal Garden* transform climate fiction into a medium for ethical reflection, encouraging readers to consider the moral dimensions of human-environment interactions. See Appendix A.

COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVES AND REGIONAL CONTEXT

Placing *American War* and *Charcoal Garden* within global and Arabic climate fiction discourse reveals both convergences and divergences in narrative strategies, thematic concerns, and socio-environmental engagement. El Akkad situates his novel in a broadly recognisable dystopian United States, illustrating the consequences of climate change through nationwide devastation, political instability, and civil conflict (Weik von Mossner, 2023, p. 48; Cooper, 2025, p. 235). The universality of the dystopian setting allows the narrative to speak to global environmental anxieties, positioning climate disaster as both a literal and metaphorical force that destabilises societal institutions (Iqbal, 2024, p. 49). For example, the imagery of drowned southern cities and overcrowded refugee camps emphasises a shared human vulnerability to environmental degradation: “The camps stretched for miles, a testimony to failure at every level of governance” (El Akkad, 2017, p. 44). The narrative thereby bridges speculative fiction and socio-political critique, highlighting how climate change intersects with governance, displacement, and social justice (Peña Fernández, 2023, p. 6).

By contrast, Al-Ashry's *Charcoal Garden* grounds ecological collapse within the socio-cultural and environmental particularities of the Arab world. The novel portrays desertification, water scarcity, and deforestation as forces that reshape daily life, social relations, and communal structures (Pepe, 2023; Bakker & Al-Rubaey, 2023, p. 127). Whereas *American War* presents large-scale national crises, *Charcoal Garden* emphasizes local and regional environmental challenges, demonstrating how resource scarcity directly affects family dynamics, village hierarchies, and ethical decision-making. For instance, disputes over the last remaining wells illustrate the entanglement of ecological scarcity with social inequities: “The wells were never enough, and the old rules of fairness crumbled under the sun” (Al-Ashry, 2020, p. 85). Such depictions underscore the intimate, lived experiences of ecological change,

linking environmental degradation to personal and cultural memory (Trexler, 2015, pp. 102–103).

Comparatively, the two novels highlight the tension between globalised and localised ecological storytelling. El Akkad universalises climate risk to reflect a shared global responsibility, while Al-Ashry contextualises environmental crises within specific cultural, historical, and geographic settings. This contrast illuminates how Arabic climate fiction contributes regionally nuanced perspectives to a predominantly Anglophone genre, enriching the global cli-fi discourse by foregrounding marginalised voices, gendered experiences, and culturally embedded notions of environmental ethics (Cooper, 2025, p. 237; “An Ecofeminist Perspective,” 2020, p. 14).

Furthermore, the symbolic use of natural elements differs across the texts. In *American War*, water serves as a marker of both scarcity and displacement, representing the vulnerability of human societies to climate extremes (Peña Fernández, 2023, p. 9). In *Charcoal Garden*, water scarcity is a socially embedded issue that shapes power relations and community ethics, emphasising that environmental collapse is experienced not only physically but also morally and culturally (Al-Ashry, 2020, p. 82).

In sum, comparing these works demonstrates that while ecological collapse is a central motif in both, the narrative lens—global versus local, universal versus culturally specific—shapes character development, plot trajectory, and the moral stakes of environmental degradation. Arabic climate fiction, as exemplified by *Charcoal Garden*, extends the ethical and emotional dimensions of cli-fi, offering insights into how regional contexts mediate human-environment interactions and ethical reflection (Trexler, 2015, pp. 103–104; Bakker & Al-Rubaey, 2023, p. 129).

SPECULATIVE AND DYSTOPIAN TECHNIQUES

Both *American War* and *Charcoal Garden* deploy speculative and dystopian narrative strategies to dramatise ecological collapse. These techniques make abstract environmental threats concrete and emotionally resonant, shaping not just plot but also ethical stakes.

In *American War*, El Akkad uses diary-style narration and dystopian futurism to illustrate displacement, conflict, and moral ambiguity. The line “Sarai had learned early that survival meant doing what others would not dare” (El Akkad, 2017, p. 132; Iqbal, 2024, p. 52) exemplifies how the narrative personalises large-scale disaster, aligning reader empathy with

the individual's struggle within systemic failure. The speculative approach frames mass migration, resource wars, and political collapse as inevitable consequences of environmental neglect.

In *Charcoal Garden*, Al-Ashry employs nonlinear temporality and multiple perspectives to portray the cumulative, slow-moving erosion of environment and communal relations: "The seasons no longer followed their old rhythm; what was once fertile was now a memory" (Al-Ashry, 2020, p. 97). Episodic shifts across time highlight how ecological harm accumulates, fracturing memory and identity.

Recent scholarship enriches this analysis. Chen, Wang, and Yin (2024) demonstrate that narrative strategies such as temporal perspective, narrator viewpoint, and psychological distance significantly influence how readers process climate change fiction. Similarly, Caracciolo, Martos, and Maziarczyk (2022) highlight that cli-fi often employs deep temporality, non-human focalization, and speculative plotting to challenge anthropocentrism. These insights align with Al-Ashry's use of multiperspectival narration and El Akkad's dystopian futurism, underscoring how speculative forms serve both aesthetic innovation and ethical reflection.

Together, these works illustrate that speculative and dystopian techniques are pivotal in climate fiction: they make ecological collapse perceptible, foreground ethical complexity, and invite readers to inhabit the crisis rather than remain detached observers (Trexler, 2015; Glotfelty & Fromm, 1996).

CONCLUSION

In *Charcoal Garden* by Mohamed Al-Ashry and *American War* by Omar El Akkad, climate fiction foregrounds ecological collapse as both a material and ethical crisis. Environmental degradation in these works—desert wells, drowned coastlines, and ruined landscapes—reveals human negligence, extractive economies, and political failures, compelling reflection on responsibility at both societal and individual levels.

The novel's approach to ecological ethics at contrasting scales. El Akkad's epic narrative explores justice, displacement, and social inequality in the context of climate crises, while Al-Ashry's intimate portrayal of wells, hidden faults, and subterranean hazards emphasises the everyday consequences of extraction and neglect. Together, they demonstrate how Arabic cli-

fi can address ethical responsibility through both grand political allegory and symbolic, tangible detail.

Cultural and regional contexts further enrich their narratives. *American War*, though set in a future United States, resonates with Arab-world concerns of colonialism, migration, and resource conflict, while *Charcoal Garden* embeds Arabic landscapes, water scarcity, and local extractive economies into its storytelling.

Speculative and dystopian strategies amplify moral urgency: El Akkad employs futuristic war and displacement, while Al-Ashry uses allegory, uncanny landscapes, and subterranean hazards. These approaches make climate change visceral, ethically complex, and narratively immersive.

The analysis of *Charcoal Garden* and *American War* demonstrates how both novels contribute to the articulation of climate fiction in Arabic literary production. Their thematic focus on environmental crisis, ethical complexity, and speculative futures signals a reinvigoration of Arabic narrative forms in response to global ecological concerns. Thus, these works not only expand the contours of the genre but also revive and legitimise climate fiction as a critical and creative mode within contemporary Arabic literature.

In sum, both novels revitalise Arabic climate fiction, demonstrating that ecological collapse is inseparable from justice, responsibility, and identity. They transform cli-fi from didactic narrative into ethically engaged literature, urging readers to confront present choices and imagine more responsible futures.

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