

Research Article

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Narrating the Ruins: Eco-Orientalism, Environmental Violence, and Postcolonial Ecologies in Arab Anglophone Fiction

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Abstract: The article asks how the current Arab Anglophone fiction re-works violence to the environment as a legacy of empire, war, and displacement thus challenging the mainstream ecological discourse of presenting Arab geographies as passive, degraded, or ecologically marginal. Through close readings of *A History of Water in the Middle East* by Sabrina Mahfouz (2019), *American War* by Omar El Akkad (2017), and *Salt Houses* by Hala Alyan (2017), the study shows how these writers use poetic collage, speculative dystopia, and diasporic realism as an aesthetic strategy to make ecological loss appear as historical, gendered and politically stratified. Based on postcolonial ecocriticism, the slow violence, and criticism of eco-orientalism, the article argues that these texts are not only a representation of environmental crises but theorize them by means of embodied memory, affective disruption, and literary form.

Keywords: Arab Anglophone literature, postcolonial ecocriticism, environmental violence, eco-orientalism, slow violence, diaspora and displacement, gender and ecology

1 Introduction

The present environmental degradation in the Arab region is a case of ecological collapse and political violence. The interaction of armed conflict, settler occupation, and resource extraction, which interacts with climate destabilization, creates dispossession spaces, which are both environmental and geopolitical (Graddy-Lovelace & Ranganathan, 2023). These crises are regularly naturalized or self-perpetuated in the dominant narratives of the public sphere. However, what David S. Bell and Milica Zarkov call eco-Orientalism is how Arab and Middle Eastern environments are constructed as arid, poorly managed, and doomed.

These reductive framings are based on colonial archives and are replicated in modern media and policy discourse, thereby preventing an understanding of how the empire, militarization, and global capital create conditions of environmental precarity in Arab geographies. Moreover, they erase the agency of Arab communities, as they are represented as inactive victims, but not as part of ecological struggle, memory, and imagination.

This article will argue that Arab Anglophone fiction not only challenges such misrepresentations but also rewrites the environmental narrative itself. Arab Anglophone fiction refers to literary texts authored in English by writers of Arab origin, both those residing in the Arab world and those in diaspora, especially in Europe and North America. This is not a linguistic category, but also a category that is characterized by mutual cultural, historical, and geographical interaction with Arab identities. Although these authors are not the same in terms of nationality, migration backgrounds, and styles, their works are all connected to the

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themes related to Arab histories, geographies, and socio-political realities. Bound by the experiences of displacement, postcolonialism, and transnational belonging, Arab Anglophone fiction is a large and diverse genre, spanning documentary poetry, speculative fiction, diasporic realism, and other genres, exploring ecological violence as a regional and global issue.

Readings of the texts *A History of Water in the Middle East* (2019) by Sabrina Mahfouz, *American War* (2017) by Omar El Akkad, and *Salt Houses* (2017) by Hala Alyan indicate how Arab authors rethink environmental violence as a political and cultural formation that is interlaced with the colonial pasts, gendered displacement, and racialized survival.

The study uses postcolonial ecocriticism, ecological exoticism critiques (Huggan & Tiffin, 2010), and slow violence (Nixon, 2011) in reframing Arab environmental literature as a central argument for the current discussions of climate justice.

2 Theoretical Framework

The present study of Arab Anglophone fiction utilizes an interdisciplinary approach that combines postcolonial criticism and ecocriticism in order to discuss the representation of environmental violence in the literature of colonized and racialized geographies. Whereas postcolonial studies are concerned with power, empire, and historical domination, ecocriticism questions ecology, materiality, and interdependence (Aghoghovwia, 2022). Their intersection provides a healthy perspective with which to look at the environmental aspects of imperialism and opposition. This framework is anchored on four concepts, namely eco-Orientalism, slow violence, ecological exoticism, and postcolonial ecocriticism. Both of them help to achieve a more textured picture of how Arab settings are being imagined, distorted, and challenged in literature.

2.1 Eco-Orientalism: Environmental Othering of Arab Geographies

The eco-Orientalism concept, developed based on Said's Orientalism (1978), criticizes the environmental stereotyping of Arab and Muslim spaces. It reveals how these geographies are commonly represented as ecologically impoverished, arid, barren, and/or mismanaged and therefore culturally and environmentally inferior. These portrayals reinforce discourses of decay and pathology that hide the structural and political causes of environmental degradation.

This two-fold othering (both cultural and ecological) brings Arab landscapes down to the simplest binaries: desert/oasis, scarcity/abundance, oil/water. These dichotomies have in the past been used to mobilize colonial intervention in the name of environmental modernization, as Davis (2016) asserts in *The Arid Lands*. Arabs were also depicted as bad custodians of nature, and the degradation was attributed to cultural backwardness, not imperial extraction, militarization, or manipulation of resources (Davis, 2016, p. 7). This criticism is realized in literature, as in the case of *The Arsonists City* by Hala Alyan: the landscape of Beirut, ravaged by war and gentrification, does not allow itself to be reduced to a war-torn image, and is instead a place of ecological activism and memory.

2.2 Slow Violence: Temporal Displacement of Environmental Harm

Slow violence is a concept introduced by Rob Nixon and refers to the type of environmental damage that is not dramatic like war or natural calamities and happens slowly and imperceptibly (Nixon, 2011, p. 2). This violence is gradual and tends to befall marginalized groups long before getting institutional attention or reaction. Slow violence in Arab fiction is presented as a long-term ecological degradation, which is related to displacement,

war, and the collapse of infrastructures. As an example, one can cite the silent destruction of urban landscapes in post-war Beirut or the gradual obliteration of the rural setting in occupied territory. Literature is one of the main vehicles by which these scattered evils are brought to light, and in which the reader is forced to see violence not in its most photogenic instances.

2.3 Ecological Exoticism: Aestheticization and Commodification of Arab Nature

Ecological exoticism is theorized by Huggan and Tiffin in *Postcolonial Ecocriticism* (2010) and describes the romanticization and commodification of nature in previously colonized territories. The Arab landscape is frequently re-visualized by a global gaze that deprives it of political circumstance and re-imagines deserts, ruins, and refugee camps as icons of sublime decay or mystical wilderness. This idealized image creates what Huggan termed the ecotourist gaze, whereby environmental pain is consumed as cultural entertainment. This kind of description simplifies things and places Arab settings in a passive and non-temporal state instead of politicizing and making them active.

The Arab authors fight such exoticism by re-appropriating ecological spaces as the arenas of resistance, history, and identity. The trees and buildings in Beirut in Alyan's novel are not the beautiful ruins, but living witnesses to war, memory, and redevelopment. The environment is not merely a set, but an actor in human struggle and existence, and so it interferes with the voyeuristic nature of global environmental discourse (Alaimo, 2010).

2.4 Postcolonial Ecocriticism: Decolonizing Environmental Narratives

Postcolonial ecocriticism combines ecology and empire studies in an attempt to criticize Eurocentric environmentalism, which focuses on wilderness preservation or carbon emissions and does not pay attention to race, colonial history, and indigenous land rights. In *Allegories of the Anthropocene* (2019), Elizabeth DeLoughrey demands that the environmental collapse should be viewed in a long imperial history (p. 5). The Arab fiction is important in what DeLoughrey describes as counter-cartographies, or the stories that do not accept imperial spatial and temporal constructs (2019, p. 82). Arab literary texts navigate the new ecological imaginaries through metaphor, narrative structure, and multilingualism. The disjointed recollections of dispossessed characters, the intertwining of ecological and political trauma, and the denial of colonial borders all disrupt hegemonic discourses of nature and space.

For example, multilingual performativity in the novels by Naguib Mahfouz challenges national and linguistic boundaries, whereas embodied environmental trauma in the fiction of Alyan highlights the experience of environmental violence. Such narrative devices do not serve as aesthetic but epistemological devices, redefining our perception of environmental injustice (Hezam, 2018).

3 Sabrina Mahfouz's *A History of Water in the Middle East*: Reclaiming Liquid Histories

A History of Water in the Middle East (2019) by Sabrina Mahfouz is more than a poetic reflection on water: it is a militant act of archiving, a dramatic unpacking of empire, a feminist re-envisioning of environmental memory. Combining poetry, performance, self-reflection, and state transcripts, Mahfouz reveals how British imperialism carved itself upon the waterways, bodies, and knowledge of the Arab world. Her work opposes the colonial technoscientific archive and the Eco-orientalist imaginary, and it does not depict water as a backdrop or as a metaphor, but as a political landscape, which is filled with violence, surveillance, and inheritance.

3.1 Mapping Imperial Hydro-Politics: Water as an Archive of Colonial Power

Water in the story of Mahfouz is a material and a colonial text. The play digs up the history of the British imperial domination of rivers, canals, and aquifers, which was never neutral, but always in the context of governance, military occupation, and racialized labor. By use of bureaucratic records, engineering reports, and historical treaties, Mahfouz revivifies the imperial archive but denies it the voice. Rather, she breaks its power by irony, fragmentation, and embodied testimony.

The Suez Canal, which is usually glorified in the Western discourse as an infrastructure miracle, is in the text by Mahfouz a scar, a scar of labor exploitation, epistemic violence, and spatial reorganization. She writes that we dug ourselves into servitude, recalling the colonial rule of Egyptian workers as forced labor. In this case, digging is literal and symbolic: dislocation of ground and dismemberment of sovereignty. The canal turns into a vehicle of empire as well as historical forgetting.

Mahfouz rejects the cleansing language of British hydrology in which words such as irrigation development and canal stabilization obliterate the violence they conceal. Her intervention is reflective of the intervention by Achille Mbembe, who challenges people to read imperial archives not as neutral repositories, but rather as tools of governance that create and justify domination (Mbembe, 2003).

3.2 Gender, Surveillance, and the Postcolonial Body as Hydro-Political Terrain

Mahfouz presents her story as a personal experience: she was interviewed to obtain a security clearance to work in a UK government job. It starts as a banal bureaucratic procedure that soon turns out to be a platform of racialized and gendered surveillance. Her Egyptian-British origin, her bilingualism, and her journeys are all to be viewed suspiciously, as reflections of the colonial fear of movement, loyalty, and inscrutability.

The unwillingness of Mahfouz to make herself legible, to simplify, translate, or apologize, reminds us of the concept of strategic opacity by Gayatri Spivak. She uses the fluidity of language, identity, and form as a form of defiance to the state in its quest for clarity and control. This is a gendered eco-resistance as well. Colonial and patriarchal ideologies tend to confuse femininity with the unruly nature, which is emotional, excessive, and destabilizing (DeLoughrey, 2019, p. 94).

3.3 Poetic Form as Decolonial Methodology: Rewriting the Eco-Orientalist Aesthetic

The most radical intervention of Mahfouz is her formal experimentation. *A History of Water in the Middle East* is a hybrid text, a hybridization of spoken word, song, documentary transcript, Arabic interjection, and theatrical interruption. This rejection of the coherence of genre is already a decolonial act, a conscious sabotaging of the conventions of imperial narrative, which require linearity, domination, and monolingual accessibility.

Instead of providing the reader with a digestible narrative of the environmental trauma, Mahfouz carries out what Rob Nixon terms a rescripting of the environment (2011, p. 21), a refusal to explain ecological trauma in imperialistic terms. Her writing is dissonant, multilingual, and polyphonic.

Such rejection to translate is not exclusionary; it is pedagogical. It makes the Western reader decant himself, to face the boundaries of his access and his right (Haraway, 2016). According to DeLoughrey (2019), this kind of pedagogies of interruption is the core of postcolonial ecocriticism, which does not seek to present nature as a fixed entity but to expose the entangled violence that constitutes how we know it (p. 98).

4 Omar El Akkad's *American War*: Climate Apartheid, Necro-Politics, and Postcolonial Echoes

American War (2017) by Omar El Akkad is a scorching piece of speculative fiction that transposes the ecological and geopolitical shocks of the Arab world to a torn-apart United States of the future. The novel is set in the late twenty-first century, following a second American Civil War and enacts a radical shift in the orientation of climate collapse, in which the United States is the epicentre of war, displacement, and environmental destruction. Egyptian-born Canadian journalist, El Akkad, creates a speculative geography that reverses the vectors of the Orientalist gaze, forcing Western readers to reckon with environmental catastrophe not as a spectacle at a distance, but as an intimate confrontation with their fantasies of immunity.

4.1 Temporal Fractures and Slow Violence: Living in a Future That Already Exists Elsewhere

The ecological strength of the novel is focused on the treatment of time by El Akkad. The climate collapse in the *American War* does not come out of the blue, nor is it overdramatized by one or two apocalyptic occurrences. Rather, the novel plays out on a time-space of attrition, and it is in this way that the novel reflects Rob Nixon's conceptualization of slow violence as a violence that is gradual and out of sight (Nixon, 2011, p. 2). New Orleans was flooded by the Mississippi River, the coastlines were eroded, and the fossil fuel wars divided the country.

To Sarat and her family, degradation of the environment is not an exception but a state of being. Water is toxic, air is poisoned, and land is uninhabitable. These facts are presented in sparse prose, which indicates the normalization of catastrophe. The lack of shock or spectacle is a narrative device, one that refuses the reader the luxury of distance or redemption. The allegation of slow violence by Nixon that the poor and the disempowered are the most affected (2011, p. 2) is performed by way of structural desertion of the Free Southern States, in which Sarat is born into an infrastructural ruin and erasure of bureaucracy.

The logic of time in the novel breaks the dichotomy of the past and future. El Akkad is a time-collapsing story, making the future America a strange reflection of the modern Global South. The processes of the slow environmental death (state neglect, uneven development, and resource extraction) are not the visions of dystopia but the continuation of the histories. According to Nixon, climate change has already gotten its way with the most vulnerable groups (2011, p. 15).

4.2 Environmental Necropolitics: The Management of Disposable Bodies and Wasted Landscapes

The ecological violence in the *American War* is not carried out with the help of bombs only, but with the logic of abandonment. Based on the idea of necropolitics, which is the ability of the state to determine who can live and who must die (Achille Mbembe), the novel demonstrates how environmental governance is turned into a means of racialized disposability (Mbembe, 2003, p. 11). The South is a war zone not only politically but ecologically, a sacrifice zone, where polluted water, sickness, and infrastructural breakdown are the norm.

The refugee camp, Camp Patience, in which Sarat spends her adolescence, is symbolic of this necropolitical geography. As a temporary holding place, it turns into a social death zone. Children are brought up in poisoned mud, families are served rotten rations, and death is bureaucratized and impersonalized. The concept of grievable lives (and ungrievable ones) by Judith Butler finds its echo here: Camp Patience is where life is unprotected, unlamented, and systematically foreclosed (Butler, 2009).

4.3 Reversing Eco-Orientalism: The Arabization of American Suffering

The reversal of eco-Orientalist tropes is one of the most provocative strategies of the novel. *American War* was created, as El Akkad has commented, as a result of his experience reporting in Egypt, Afghanistan, and Guantanamo Bay, where Arab bodies and landscapes were regularly portrayed as naturally violent, chaotic, and environmentally doomed. These tropes are applied to white Southern Americans in the novel, who are presented as refugees, radicals, and ecological victims.

The drone attacks, refugee camps, and state surveillance remind one of the Middle Eastern wars of the early twenty-first century, only now it is the American reality (McIntosh, 2021). The North media reporting on the war resembles Western war reporting: decontextualized violence, moral opposites, and racial profiling. El Akkad builds a story that robs the Western reader of the pleasure of exoticizing suffering. Rather, he provides a mirror: a reflection of their downfall, in the words they previously applied to other people.

4.4 Speculative Fiction as Postcolonial Method: Dystopia, Displacement, and Testimonial Imagination

Speculative fiction is not escapist in the case of El Akkad, but testimonial. The novel relies on the formal aspects of post-conflict literature, such as unreliable narrators, fragmented testimony, state documents, and silences, to create a counter-archive of climate catastrophe. The testimonial form in which *American War* is written locates the novel in the context of a larger tradition of postcolonial environmental thinking, which is interested in the memory of land, the transmission of trauma, and the narrative of dispossession.

The sparse style of the prose in the novel, the lack of description, and the lack of emotionalism all reflect what can be called ecological minimalism, aesthetic sparseness reflecting the psychic numbing that comes after long-term environmental violence. According to Nixon, slow violence literature tends to avoid spectacle, instead of a cumulative effect (Nixon, 2011, p. 6).

The whiteness of the Anthropocene is also put into question in this speculative framework. According to Dipesh Chakrabarty (2021) and T. J. Demos (2016), powerful climate discourses tend to homogenize environmental crises by forgetting their unequal distribution and historical context.

5 Hala Alyan's Salt Houses: Diaspora, Displacement, and the Intimate Ecologies of Exile

Salt Houses by Alyan (2017) is a silent, yet strong intervention in postcolonial ecocriticism. Whereas the poetics of archiving by Sabrina Mahfouz or the speculative inversion by Omar El Akkad is based on a more conceptual approach, Alyan tells her story in a sequence of personal, atmospheric scenes, which trace the ecological degradation of Palestinian exile over generations. By relocating the Yacoub family time and again, first to Kuwait, then to Beirut, Amman, Paris, and finally to New York, the novel creates geography not of geopolitical space but of memory, home routine, and estrangement of the environment.

Alyan does not build her ecological vision by dramatic representations of climatic disaster or explicit resource warfare. Instead, the destruction of the environment is presented as the silent, gradual destruction of day-to-day contact with land, air, food, and ceremony. This part discusses the contribution of *Salt Houses* to what may be termed diasporic ecocriticism – a critical practice that considers how ecological awareness is influenced by displacement, migration, and a disrupted sense of belonging. Diasporic ecocriticism puts emphasis on how environmental sensibilities are reconstituted within the environment of exile, statelessness, and cultural dislocation (Riaz et al., 2023). This is the case in *Salt Houses*, which plays out in four dimensions: exile as atmospheric dislocation; environmental memory transmission; gendered environmental work; and diaspora as a state of ecological estrangement.

5.1 Home as a Vanishing Ecosystem: Exile and Atmospheric Displacement

Since the first pages, *Salt Houses* have connected displacement with environmental estrangement. As Salma, the matriarch of the family, looks back on the migration of her daughter, she says, even the air will be different. The characters of Alyan travel in cities that are not marked by monuments but by environmental impact, by the flavor of fruit, the odor of jasmine, and the dust of the air. Place attachment is developed through the profound environmental experience, as cultural geographer Yi-Fu Tuan argues in his theory of topophilia (Tuan, 1974). In *Salt Houses*, these attachments are broken many times. Nablus courtyard gardens cannot be recreated in the desert-like Kuwait neighborhoods or the impersonality of a Manhattan apartment.

5.2 Environmental Memory and the Inheritance of Dispossession

One of the main themes of *Salt Houses* is the passing of loss through generations, in particular with the aspect of environmental memory. Her daughter Alia can only remember bits. Manar, her granddaughter, born in the United States, has only heard and seen Palestine in pictures. This transition from a state of direct ecological engagement to one of mediated memory is the tragedy of this novel: not merely the loss of territory, but the dimming of that knowledge and language which once held that territory in meaning.

Rob Nixon states that environmental violence encompasses the muting of the cultural memory that supports place-based traditions (2011, p. 19). What Alyan does is not to dramatize this silencing but to erode it in silence. The encounter of Manar with a lemon tree in Palestine, a tree that she has never seen, is not a memory but an inherited desire. It is one of those moments of emotional environmental awareness: a mourning of a world she never directly lived in, yet that she carries in her body and her imagination. This echoes the concept of the so-called imperial debris of Ann Laura Stoler: the affective and material residues of colonial displacement (2008). In *Salt Houses*, debris is in the form of environmental echoes: strange tastes, inaccessible odors, and disintegrated rituals.

5.3 Gendered Environmental Labor and the Domestic Archive

Women are seen as custodians of continuity in the environment throughout the novel. The soap-making by Salma, cooking by Alia, and balcony gardens by Souad are not some minor domestic activities but micro-practices of ecological resistance. In *Material Feminisms* (2008), Stacy Alaimo and Susan Hekman present the argument that the body and the domestic are critical spaces at which environmental and political histories intersect. This is confirmed in the story of Alyan. The kitchen turns into a place of ecological conservation; seasoning a dish or planting a garden is a memory of grief and survival. These rituals resonate with the idea of a subversive ecology of intimacy by Rachel Stein, in which the territory is not what makes displaced women belong, but care in a body (Stein, 2004).

5.4 Diaspora as Environmental Disorientation: Beyond Nostalgia

The most radical feature of *Salt Houses* may be the denial of nostalgic return. In contrast to nationalist discourses of homeland, the characters of Alyan live in a more complicated time. They are not attempting to restore a lost ecology, as a whole, but exist in the contradiction of partial belonging, where memory is temporary, sensual, and fragmented.

The trip to Palestine does not satisfy Manar. Rather, it proves that complete repayment is impossible. It is not the land her family imagined that she would visit. Her experience of it is mediated by loss, desire, and spatial dissonance. Here, Alyan does not want to be romanticized or a victim. Her characters are not victims of dramatic environmental violence but of something more subtle yet no less radical: the gradual dissolution of environmental intimacy.

Hala Alyan reinvents the environment of *Salt Houses* as not the territory of the fixed but as the location of affective inheritance and precarious rebuilding. Her characters exist in the ruins of memory; they engage in rituals of care and remembrance, which tie them to a world that they have lost but not forgotten.

6 Comparative Synthesis: Rewriting Environmental Violence and Belonging in Arab Anglophone Literature

A History of Water in the Middle East (2019) by Sabrina Mahfouz, *American War* (2017) by Omar El Akkad, and *Salt Houses* (2017) by Hala Alyan address the environmental and geopolitical disjunctures of the Arab world in different aesthetic forms and narrative techniques. Even though they are formally different (documentary poetry, speculative dystopia, diasporic realism, etc.), they are bound by a common unwillingness to accept ecological degradation as either accidental or neutral. Rather, the works put environmental violence in the forefront as a structural legacy of colonialism, militarization, and displacement.

6.1 Environmental Violence as Colonial and Necropolitical Inheritance

Environmental destruction, in all three texts, is not merely an incidental setting of conflict but a means of control, desertion, and survival. These accounts make ecological damage historically constructed, politically staged, and racialized to the core. Water turns into an imperial archive in the work of Mahfouz. The Suez Canal, the colonial irrigation schemes, and British hydropolitics are not the infrastructures of neutrality but the instruments of domination (Al-Muqdad, 2025). Mahfouz uncovers the gendered and epistemic violence of colonial water management, disrupting sanitized narratives of development with embodied and poetic testimony.

The novel by El Akkad takes the colonial logic of extraction and militarized abandonment into a speculative future of America, where climate apartheid and the war turn the Southern landscapes into death zones. The path taken by Sarat, as a victim of militants, is not possible to separate from the poisoned environments she lives in.

6.2 The Temporalities of Environmental Rupture: From Deep Time to Inherited Memory

Both writers oppose linear or apocalyptic portrayals of ecological crises. However, they do not put the foreground on the layered, recursive, and spectral aspects of environmental rupture. The hybrid text by Mahfouz highlights the palimpsest aspects of the empire in which the present and the past share the same waterways, contracts, and bodies. Her poetry breaks the continuity of history, which is a reflection of the sedimented violence of hydro-colonialism.

Speculative futurism is reduced by El Akkad into a testimonial present. His dystopia is a mirror of war zones in Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan, and he is not willing to make climate collapse strange and distant. To the readers of the Global North, the future of the novel acts as a reflection of the past and present of the South.

6.3 Genre as Environmental Strategy: Poetic Collage, Speculative Inversion, Diasporic Realism

The genre of each text is an environmental approach. Form is not an accident to content but part of the way ecological criticism is conducted. The poetic collage by Mahfouz opposes archival authority. Her unwillingness

to take on a coherent narrative form reflects the disintegration of the histories she digs up. The logic of imperial coherence is disrupted by performance, interruption, and multilingual layering, which provokes counter-reading.

El Akkad does not resort to speculative fiction to flee reality but to accuse it (Carmona-Rodríguez, 2025). He makes the reader lose their sense of distance and moral exceptionalism by Americanizing the geography of environmental collapse. The speculative is a way of postcolonial inversion, of recontextualizing popular tropes of Middle Eastern suffering in the West.

Alyan provides a lyrical and slow diasporic realism. Her story is about the sense of detail, housework, and repetitive ritual. These are constituents of a microecology of loss and survival. The family saga usually linked to national continuity is reused to chart environmental discontinuity. *Salt Houses* is not nostalgic in its realism; it is fragmentary, embodied, and provisional.

6.4 Gender and the Politics of Environmental Care

In all three works, women are not only characters but ecological memory, caretakers, and resisters. Their bodies, practices, and voices are repositories of environmental knowledge that have frequently been left out of official histories. Mahfouz repossesses her gendered, racialized body as a hydro-political witness. Sarat has not been presented as a redemptive character by El Akkad, but as a result of ecological and social desertion. She is radicalized by a state that thinks her body can be discarded. Nonetheless, her metamorphosis is not pathologized. Rather, it reveals the environmental necropolitics on which the camp is written, the poisoned South, and the logistics of death that is calculated.

6.5 Reorienting the Environmental Gaze: From Global North to Arab Ecologies

The re-direction of environmental focus is perhaps the greatest common intervention of these works. They make us question not only what an environmental crisis is, but who is allowed to say so. By questioning the Eurocentric universalism of the Anthropocene, these texts put the Arab bodies, landscapes, and history at the center of any meaningful narrative of ecological collapse on the global scale (Amelsvoort, 2024).

Mahfouz insists on acknowledging the role of hydro-colonialism in the creation of the water shortage, water monitoring, and state violence. Her work asserts that the colonial archive cannot be divided into the current environmental governance of the Arab world. El Akkad presents the Western reader with a climate breakdown that has been real to other parts of the world since a long time ago, compelling a moral reckoning with the hierarchies in the global ecological discourse. However, Alyan does not want to make the environment spectacular and redemptive.

7 Conclusion: Reimagining the Environmental through a Decolonial Arab Anglophone Lens

Arab Anglophone fiction is not merely adding to ecocriticism, but is changing its boundaries. Using a wide variety of aesthetic forms documentary poetry in Sabrina Mahfouz *A History of Water in the Middle East*, speculative dystopia in Omar El Akkad *American War*, and diasporic realism in Hala Alyan *Salt Houses*, these texts make ecological violence the central concern not as a crisis, or as a background, but as a historically grounded, politically mediated, and emotionally experienced phenomenon. They disrupt prevailing environmental rhetoric that has long regarded Arab geographies as ecologically desolate or hopeless, and present an intricate perception of environmental remembrance, nurture, and struggle.

Instead of repeating familiar ecocritical tropes of either idealized nature or a universal disaster, these texts bring into light how environmental precarity is unevenly distributed by histories of empire, displacement, and racialization. They make us think of environmental degradation as a plural and situated process, rather than as a unitary global phenomenon, and one that is closely intertwined with the issues of justice, gender, and geopolitical inequality. By doing so, these authors broaden the methodological scope of ecocriticism: they argue in favor of a diasporic, decolonial, ecocriticism that is sensitive to environmental subjectivities of the ruination of war, exile, and dispossession.

The intervention has major implications not only in Arab literature. First, it calls ecocriticism to decenter its Euro-American orientation, making space in it to include voices, geographies, and experiences that have been marginalized in the discipline. Second, it demands more serious consideration of climate justice as a literary and a political concept, one that opposes the universalism of the Anthropocene in demanding differentiated responsibility and vulnerability. Third, these writings exemplify how a very literary form, fragmented, polyphonic, and a-linear, can be a mode of ecological inquiry, how environmental trauma is told, recalled, and rebuffed.

Ecocriticism in the future can possibly be inspired by these writers in order to understand how transnational aesthetics, especially those that are developed either in exile or conflict, can reconfigure environmental thinking across borders. Likewise, the pedagogical strategies focusing on such texts as *Salt Houses* or *American War* may enhance the environmental humanities studies by connecting the issues of environment to the themes of migration, memory, and empire.

The point is that ultimately what this literature body reveals is that it is not merely a matter of providing new case studies to tell the story of environmental collapse through Arab voices, but it is a matter of changing the way we theorize environmental violence, ecological resilience, and the ethics of witnessing. These environmental breakage stories are survival and fantasy stories as well.

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