# Climate Change Representation in English and Arabic Literature: A Comparative Literary Study

تمثيل تغير المناخ في الأدب الإنجليزي والعربي: دراسة أدبية

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Abstract		

The research contains a lifelike description of climate change representation in the literature or literary genres. The world is changing geographically, politically, and economically. Realistically, all the events and crises of climate change that occur in the world through an unexpected or unprecedented period on the regional or global level. The climate change crisis plays a prominent role in the world and its effects will go on to the future. Therefore, tackling the climate change phenomenon has been represented in literary genres such as novels, dramas, poetry, and poems and so forth.

This research discusses the climate change representation in English and Arabic literature. It then seeks to evaluate the importance of the role of English and Arabic literature and the literary voices such as authors, writers, novels and plays in confronting climate change crisis today. It also pays attention to evaluate the critical studies that represent climate change in English and Arabic literature. The research explores the intricacy of climate change representation in English and Arabic literature as an intricate phenomenon scientifically and culturally in literature. When novelists, playwrights, authors, thinkers, writers, and creators are interested in representing the climate change phenomenon as a scientifically and culturally intricate and debatable phenomenon in literary works, they will seek with interest to represent nature or the environment in literary works as a practical framework and try to explore its effects on Novels or dramas, and produce realistic narration methods and cultural and scientific innovations in depictions. This study also urges writers and authors to do what they do best to present audible literary voices raised to the world for understanding and portraying the climate change crisis and strive to represent it in literary works.

Keywords: Climate Change, Literary Representation, Crises, phenomena, Voices

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الملخص

البحث يحتوى على وصف حي لتمثيل تغير المناخ في الأدب أو الأنواع الأدبية. العالم يتغبر جغرافياً، سياسياً، واقتصادياً. بشكل واقعى، جميع الأحداث والأزمات المتعلقة بتغير المناخ التي تحدث في العالم خلال فترة غير متوقعة أو غير مسبوقة على المستوى الإقليمي أو العالمي. تلعب أزمة تغير المناخ دوراً بارزاً في العالم وستستمر آثارها في المستقبل. لذلك، تم تمثيل ظاهرة تغير المناخ في الأنواع الأدبية مثل الروايات، الدراما، الشعر، والقصائد وما إلى ذلك.

يناقش هذا البحث تمثيل تغير المناخ في الأدب الإنجليزي والعربي. ثم يسعى لتقييم أهمية دور الأدب الإنجليزي والعربي والأصوات الأدبية مثل المؤلفين، الكتاب، الروايات والمسرحيات في مواجهة أزمة تغير المناخ اليوم. كما يولى اهتماماً لتقييم الدراسات النقدية التي تمثل تغير المناخ في الأدب الإنجليزي والعربي. يستكشف البحث تعقيد تمثيل تغير المناخ في الأدب الإنجليزي والعربي كظاهرة معقدة علمياً وثقافياً في الأدب. عندما يمتم الروائيون، كُتاب المسرحيات، المؤلفون، المفكرون، الكتاب، والمبدعون بتمثيل ظاهرة تغير المناخ كظاهرة علمية وثقافية معقدة وقابلة للنقاش في الأعمال الأدبية، فإنهم سيسعون بجدية لتمثيل الطبيعة أو البيئة في الأعمال الأدبية كإطار عملى وبحاولون استكشاف تأثيراتها على الروايات أو الدراما، وانتاج أساليب سرد واقعية وابتكارات ثقافية وعلمية في التصوير. كما تحث هذه الدراسة الكتاب والمؤلفين على القيام بما يجيدونه لتقديم أصوات أدبية مسموعة للعالم لفهم وتصوبر أزمة تغير المناخ والسعى لتمثيلها في الأعمال الأدبية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: تغير المناخ، التمثيل الأدبي، الأزمات، الظواهر ، الأصوات.



#### $1. \ \textbf{Introduction}$

In discussing climate change representation, particularly in literary studies and literature. In this regard, the climate change crisis has recently been a global issue, because of the threat it poses to the globe, at a time when the repercussions of the climate change crisis are seen as a matter of human security, and the concept of climate change refers to long-term shifts and changes in natural environment. These natural changes could be changes in natural factors, and /or the result of human activities which have recently become the main driver of climate change problem. The study deals with climate change problem in literature and its representation in English and Arabic literary works such as the novels, plays, poetry, prose and stories. Moreover, some ecocriticism analyzes of climate change representation in literature propose that it plays an active role in helping us how to deal with the climate change problem. In fact, the climate change problem has become a threat to human existence today, especially the climate changes that have occurred in the 21<sup>st</sup> century are driven by human activities from all economic, political and geographical directions and require the authors, educational institutions and mass media to join efforts in confronting the climate change problem and seek to represent it in the literary genres and spread the literary and scientific cultures to understand climate changes in order to achieve a stable environment for future generations. It can also be said that climate change is a specter that threatens the world lately, and the climate change phenomenon is a scientifically and culturally complex phenomenon, and the global needs more tangible plans and innovations in tackling the climate change crisis.

In effect, the study at hand foresees that the globe in the upcoming days may face hard times "when we will be wanting the voices of authors, writers, novels and plays who can see alternatives to how we live now, can see through our fearstricken society and its obsessive technologies to other ways of being, and even imagine real grounds for hope. We will need writers who can remember freedom, poets, visionaries, realists of a larger reality" (Ursula, 2014). In this sense, the study of climate change representation in literature has become one of the most significant problems in our present time. Literature also helps us develop our creative and cultural capabilities to understand and translate the complex phenomena that have a negative effect on the human environment and seek to represent them as a complex issue in literary genres. Literature also is one of the most important fundamental factors in building human knowledge and analyzing complex human and natural phenomena that have a direct impact on humanity's existence, on the actual basis "literature has had a long relationship with climate as the human species attempt to capture its home environment and convey a sense to others, develop an understanding of why landscapes vary from one place to



another, and communicate as well as preserve our environmental knowledge" (Dando, p. 454).

In this literary study, climate change presently, engages a major stand not only in political and scientific conferences or protocols but in the cultural, scientific and literary imagination. In the present time, climate change and its impacts appear to be expressed in a range of literary genres and critical works and conveyed through the voices of novelists, playwrights, and authors. This study particularly, hopes that in drawing and adopting the appropriate ideas in which the phenomenon of climate change is represented in English and Arabic literature and produce realistic narrative methods and scientific and cultural innovations in representing climate change in literary works.

The study discusses the great complexity of climate change, provokes and inspires authors, writers, novelists and thinkers to innovate, so that they can adequately imagine, depict and communicate it. It also seeks to present the most important valuable solutions and takes the necessary measures to tackle the climate change phenomenon through the literary criticism in English and Arabic literary works and others. Finally, the research proposes to represent climate change in literature and adjust to describe our current moments of our climate crisis.

#### **1.1 Research Problem**

Although the climate change problem is recognized globally, rather the literary representation of climate change crisis may be a comparatively unexplored field. Additionally, comparative studies usually concentrate on Western and European literature, ignoring the diverse and privileged views presented by non-Western authors. The current study addresses this gap by discussing climate change representation in English and Arabic literature and how literature contributes to or tackles the understanding of the climate changes that face the global.

#### **1.2 Research Objectives**

The main objective of this study is to examine the representation of climate change in English and Arabic literature as a comparative literary analysis and more specifically to discuss the following objectives:

(1). To evaluate the critical studies that represent climate change in English and Arabic literature.

(2). To provide appropriate solutions to the climate change phenomenon that threatens the globe.



### **1.3 Research Significance**

The current study aims to examine the representation of climate change in English and Arabic literature. Before considering the styles in which literary studies deal with English and Arabic representations. Actually, I have selected the current study because I want to evaluate the ways in which representations of climate change are critiqued in English and Arabic literature and how the literary work is shaped by its age. This study pays more attention to a deeper comprehension of how literature shapes our knowledge and awareness of climate change. The study contributes to comparing the literary responses of English and Arabic literature, and well also shed light on the concepts and the diverse cultural narratives surrounding this global challenge. Furthermore, the study seeks to present useful insights and valuable with significance of literature in enhancing global solidarity and achieving environmental justice in the face of the climate crisis.

# **2.** A Literary Comparison of Climate Change Representation in English and Arabic Literature

This study pays more attention to discuss literary responses to climate change representation in English and Arabic literature about environmental justice and sustainable development in all the world. Although there are studies in English and Arabic literature, but there is no comparative analysis in both English and Arabic literature. In addition, comparative studies often focus largely on English and Western literature, neglecting perspectives of diverse literary voices presented by Arab authors and intellectuals. The current study presents a literary comparison to represent climate change in English and Arabic literature through distinction, narration, and creativity in both literary representations. The study also explores the subjects in both representations that include natural disasters, economic and humanitarian crises, or political conflicts such as occupation, displacement, murder, social problems, and the search for valuable solutions to face the climate change crisis.

### 2.1 Climate Change Representation in English Literature

The study provides a general survey of climate change representation in English literature. According to Kumar & Singh (2021), in their article Significance of Literature in Evolution of Environment, "literature plays a critical role and is the reflection of modern day society. Environmental criticism is the term for the association among literature and the environment. Basically, it is the analysis of depictions of life and the connection among literature as well as the environment" (p. 1). According to Buell, he defines "ecocriticism' as a study of the relationship between literature and the environment conducted in a spirit of



commitment to environmentalist praxis" (p. 430). Fundamentally, literature contributes significantly to or tackles the understanding of climate change and the complex phenomena that face the world. Moreover, literature is present and future of nations in providing cultural and scientific innovations in characterization through literary criticism in English and Arabic literary works and as it is known that "literature is a reflection of humanity and a way for us to understand each other. By listening to the voice of another person, we can begin to figure out how that individual thinking. I believe that literature is important because of its purpose and in a society, which is becoming increasingly detached from human interaction, novels create a conversation" (Austin, 2022).

The current study, recognizes the importance of literary genres and criticism in tackling climate change crisis. The novel is the experience, test and creation of ideas very similar to that of an inventor or scientist. The findings of novelists and authors could be worthy contributions to resolutions on climate change policy. Additionally, literature has overridden time and it is still with us in the present and future. In the context of addressing climate change and represents it in the literary works. Literature is not only portal past events, it is also evocative of our present and future. According to Austin (2022), in her article, she said that "literature allows a person to step back in time and learn about life on Earth from the ones who walked before us. We can gather a better understanding of culture and have a greater appreciation of them. We learn through the ways history is recorded, in the forms of manuscripts and through speech itself" (2022). However, literature shed light on how authors and novelists reacted to climate change and imagined its effect on nature. It also reveals many literary works like British writer and novelist, J. G. Ballard, wrote in "his first science fiction novels about apocalyptic climate changes," in his novel "In The Burning World (1964, later retitled The Drought) his climate catastrophe is human-made, a drought due to disruption of the precipitation cycle by industrial pollution" (Milicia, 2021). More recently, Nixon (2011), said that "the climate problem as a problem of representation: Climate Change and a host of other slowly unfolding environmental catastrophes present formidable representation obstacles that can hinder our efforts to mobilize and act decisively" (p. 2). According to Higgins & Somervell (2020), in their article "(The Conversation under a Creative Commons license)" asserted that "In Paradise Lost (1667), Milton complains that a cold climate may damp my intended wing and prevent him from completing his masterpiece. This may well reflect the fact that he lived through the coldest period of the 'Little Ice Age." They also discussed that "when Milton suggests that it was the fall of man that brought in pinching cold and scorching heat to replace the eternal spring of Eden, his narrative has clear figurative resonance with our present crisis" (2020).

#### Climate Change Representation in English and Arabic Literature: A Comparative Literary Study



The Scientific Journal of the Faculty of Education

This research pays particular attention to climate change representation in English literature. It is clear that representation problem of climate crisis is not limited to literary works, but modern novels are considered one of the most important literary representations that will deal with this vast problem. As many literary works are revealed by some novelists like Jeanette (2007) in his novel The Stone Gods, "this novel opens on the planet Orbus, a world very like Earth, running out of resources and suffering from the severe effects of climate change. Inhabitants of Orbus hope to take advantage of possibilities offered by a newly discovered planet, Planet Blue, which appears perfect for human life" (p. 471). Simply stated, for Austin in her article, when she also asserted that "history is not only a gateway to the past, it's also suggestive of our present and the future. Within every time period lies different people and within them, different stages in our ever-growing culture. Each individual before was a product of their own time. As a species we evolve every day and without that timestamp that literature gives us, we would know nothing about the past" (2022), with reference to Shakespeare's play "Macbeth is thoroughly modern in its treatment of human psychology, but the language of climate is also everywhere in it (sometimes in the same sentence). One of the most remarkable nature lines is Macbeth's own: The earth was feverous and did shake. He imagines the earth as weak as a stricken child or elder, and realizes that he is a viral agent of the worlds disease" (Higgins & Somervell, 2020). Most certainly, Estok discussed that "ecocriticism is more than "simply the study of Nature or natural things in literature; rather, it is any theory that is committed to effecting change by analyzing the function-thematic, artistic, social, historical, ideological, theoretical, or otherwise of the natural environment, or aspects of it, represented in documents (literary or other) that contribute to material practices in material worlds" (p. 220).

In our current time, we find that "the acclaimed Indian novelist Amitav Ghosh argues that future generations may well think so. How else to explain our imaginative failure in the face of global warming? In his first major book of nonfiction since in an Antique Land, Ghosh examines our inability at the level of literature, history, and politics to grasp the scale and violence of climate change" (p.165). Also in Ghosh's book, it is "the book is composed of three parts: Part I: Stories, Part II: History, and Part III: Politics. The first part, Stories, explores why the modern novel struggles as an art form to describe and grapple with the concept of climate change. To understand this shortcoming, Ghosh highlights the role of the uncanny. In the second section, History, Ghosh highlights the role of colonialism in the climate crisis. With examples ranging from Miami to Mumbai to New York, Ghosh explores why urban planning deviated and deviates from the indigenous multigenerational knowledge that compelled cultures to build away from the ocean. In the final section, Politics, Ghosh notes that activists who single out capitalism as the systemic driver of climate change miss an important



element: imperialism. Ghosh describes how writers and artists increased their engagement with political movements at the same time as industrial activities intensified. Ghosh ties these three sections together with a comparison between the Paris Agreement and Pope Francis's 2015 encyclical on climate change" (p.196).

### 2.2 Climate Change Representation in Arabic Literature

Honestly, the climate change crisis constitutes a major threat to delay economic and political growth haste in the Arab countries, and it is considered a serious threat to the infrastructure which was previously built. The Arab countries also suffer from climatic changes that occur in the region in our present time. The study provides a general survey of climate change representation in Arabic literature, according to Verner in his book "(Adaptation to a Changing Climate in the Arab Countries)" said that "adapting to climate change is not a new phenomenon for the Arab world. For thousands of years, the people in Arab countries have coped with the challenges of climate variability by adapting their survival strategies to changes in rainfall and temperature. Their experience has contributed significantly to the global knowledge of climate change and adaptation (p.xvi). But over the next century global climatic variability is predicted to increase, and "Arab countries may well experience unprecedented extremes in climate. Temperatures may reach new highs, and in most places there may be a risk of less rainfall," under these circumstances in "Arab countries and their citizens will once again need to draw on their long experience of adapting to the environment to address the new challenges posed by climate change" (Verner, p.xvi). In these days, climate change represents one of the most prominent challenges that face the global, as it seems that the prevailing countries in the world are unable to provide appropriate solutions of the climate change phenomenon that threatens the global. However, the seriousness of the issue, is that literature has wide horizons in understanding and depicting the climate change in literary genres and spread a wide culture that adopt a new understanding for dealing with the climate change crisis.

The current study focuses on the representation of climate change in Arabic literature, nevertheless, the general deficiency, Arabic literature does include some pamphlets in which humanity is sighted as part of the global environment. Among them, "Taraneem fi dhil Tamara (Hymns in the Shadow of Tamara) by satirist Mohamed Afifi, who died in the 1980s" (Nouri, 2022). The study also finds that Arabic poetry has paid attention to climate in some "poems in Arabic literature, as in the works of poet Ahmed Abdel Moeti Hegazi, such as Ashgar Al-Assmant (Cement Trees), which objects to modern civilization its machines that are robbing man of his humanity. There are some Arabic novels that have also been

#### Climate Change Representation in English and Arabic Literature: A Comparative Literary Study



The Scientific Journal of the Faculty of Education

concerned about the climate, among them *Qadar Al-Ghoraf Al-Moqbeda* (The Destiny of Confined Chambers) by novelist Abdel Hakim Qassem and *Fasad Al-Amkena* (The Corruption of Places) by Sabri Moussa" (Nouri, 2022). There are some allusions to climate change in Arabic literature through images and similes related to the climate crisis. The purpose of this literary allusion or approach is to represent a number of political, social and personal issues and portray them as climate issues. Therefore, the climate change crisis did not emerge as a global issue with catastrophic repercussions on the planet, except in the last three decades, 1980.

Particularly, the research also finds that the Arab countries were incapable of scientific, political and economic innovations, because they were, in the previous decades, Western colonies, defending their freedom and independence from the West. However, the West did not desire those Arab colonies to be an integral part of Western society. According to Ghosh, he argues that "the cultural depictions, history and politics of climate change, and its relationship to colonialism" (p.165). In fact, European and Western countries dominate the global, and therefore there was no global unity and literary voices leading the global and novelists and writers to consider global issues such as the phenomenon of climate change. The causes the Arab countries considered to be a priority, the West had already done with, as it is clear in the novel Al-Ard (The Land) by Egyptian writer Abdel-Rahman Al-Sharqawi, "this novel tackled the struggle against feudalism in the Egyptian countryside, which Europe had been through more than a century earlier" (Nouri, 2022). As we also notice in Libyan novelist Ibrahim Al-Koni (1989) in his novel Bleeding Stone (Nazif Al-hajar), deals with a period of time in which Libya was under the Italian occupation, as it monitors events and incidents in which the mythical was mixed with the real, as during that period the desert was invaded and its animal capabilities that were subjected to genocide were violated, which led to the extinction of some of its animals. Additionally, here is one of the important points of climate change representation in Arabic fiction, which indicates that there have been no literary perceptions of science fiction in "the Arab countries since 1980, but only rather naive attempts suitable for children in Egypt, science fiction commenced in the 1990s in Egypt, but it did not develop further than mediocre stories for teenagers. Arab societies don't strongly believe in science, and so there is no fertile soil for science fiction. In this sense, Arabic literature has a limited conscience" (Nouri, 2022). Therefore, there is no interest or literary interaction in science fiction and natural phenomena in Arab world as a result of the internal and external conflicts that they have been suffering from for a long time. In this context, we find that Arabic literature is limited to topics addressing climatic expressions that refer to the political, economic, and social conditions.



# **3.** An Overview of the Similarities and Differences of Climate Change Representation in English and Arabic Literature

In fact, the climate change crisis now engages a negative position not only in economic, political and social aspects but in cultural creativity and sciece fiction on a large scale. However, this study demonstrates that there is no any literary response towards representing climate change in literary genres and addressing issues of climate change crisis, due to the absence of the voices of literary genres such as plays, novels, poetry, songs and poems, also the absence of the role of technology and media in shaping climate change narratives in English and Arabic literature. It is also currently known that climate change and its impacts are not evident in a range of literary works.

# **3.1** Similarities of Climate Change Representation in English and Arabic literature

In effect, both English and Arabic literature have focused on ecocritical subjects and exploring the relation between humans and the environment. Both English and Arabic literature usually depict the environmental degradation consequences and disasters caused by climate change and their effect on marginalized societies. There are predictions and scenarios after the end of the world, often resulting from climate change, are predominant in both literary traditions. These narratives explore social breakdown, the conflict for survival, and the possibility of renewal. Some literary figures often subject in English and Arab literature for transformations as a result of climate change. They may make a deeper relationship with nature, societal norms, or be defenders of environmental protection.

# **3.2** Differences of Climate Change Representation in English and Arabic literature

In fact, the social and cultural contexts of English and Arabic literature affect their representation of climate change. English literature also often reflects Western viewpoint, while Arabic literature includes Islamic worldview and cultural values. This can lead to various interpretations of environmental issues and possible solutions. English and Arabic literature may use various narrative structures to transport climate change subjects. English literature often uses linear narratives, while Arabic literature may include more cyclical or symbolic elements. The political and social crises of climate change are often explored differently in English and Arabic literature. English literature deals with individual responsibility, development and consumerism, while Arabic literature may address issues of colonialism, occupation and political, social, and economic problems. Recently, English literature has clearly focused on issues related to the

### Climate Change Representation in English and Arabic Literature: A Comparative Literary Study



The Scientific Journal of the Faculty of Education

environment in some literary works, but these literary works do not include issues related to humanitarian crises and provide appropriate solutions in the face of the climate change crisis. While Arabic literature may focus more on the interconnection between issues related to the environment and social justice. In addition, the effect of Islamic customs and traditions on human-environment relations may be a special theme related to Arab works.

## 4. Conclusion

Climate change is one of the major challenges that confront the world recently. As it has become a threat to life and livelihood politically, economically and geographically. There is no way to confront this challenge except by paying attention and recognizing its danger to the world, and this recognition begins at the level of individuals, decision-makers and governments. Among the important challenges associated with climate change are political, economic and geographical issues such as changing regimes, environmental asylum, migration, the spread of diseases and other issues related to the environment.

Ultimately, this study provides an insight into not only climate change as it has been represented in the English and Arabic literature, but also offers some valuable solutions to tackle climate change. The climate crisis is a global crisis that requires countries and peoples to unite in order to achieve a just environment for future generations, especially since the changes that have taken place in the earth's climate since the middle of the twentieth century are driven by human activities from all economic, political and geographical directions. It can be said that climate change is a specter that threatens the world lately, and that the phenomenon of climate change is a scientifically and culturally complex phenomenon, and the world needs more tangible plans and innovations in dealing with the climate change crisis, and we also need the participation of writers, authors, and novelists in building and disseminating knowledge about man-made climate change crisis.

The study also recognizes that literature will help authors, thinkers, innovators, scientists and decision makers to present appropriate solutions in tackling the climate change crisis through expressions, novels and spread the cultures to understand nature. In the context of addressing the climate change crisis, the study seeks to provide some valuable solutions to address climate change in the global, we need to use the right methods through the media, newspapers and magazines to spread a culture focused on sustainability and awareness and explore new ideas that can address the climate crisis. As we recognize that the importance of the novelist as an influence or change. Not only



do we need people who can interpret the seriousness of crisis but we need writers and authors to do best to present audible literary voices to inspire sympathy for our global and help us to build a culture where we meaningfully communicate with this thing that we call nature. We must encourage culture dissemination of climate change and environmentalism in educational institutions to play its main role in helping thinkers and innovators to adopt appropriate ideas to address the climate change crisis in the future. Stories, novels, and literary dramas are supposed to be shared, as they encourage everyone to immerse themselves in the narrative and think about appropriate solutions. We need to get fully involved in tackling climate change. The current study presents a general survey of the representation of climate change in English and Arabic literature.

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