

Literature and Confronting Environmental Change: Exploring the Role of Literature in Models from Arabic Literature

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This research explores the role of Arabic literature in addressing the global crisis of environmental change, which presents complex challenges requiring interdisciplinary solutions. While science and technology play a crucial role in tackling this crisis, literature also has a significant function in shaping awareness, ethics, and critical perspectives on environmental issues. The study aims to identify how Arabic literary texts can contribute to this effort, complementing scientific and technological approaches.

Methods: The research examines five Arabic literary texts, both modern and classical, that represent different ways literature engages with environmental change. Using postcolonial ecocriticism as a methodological framework, the study provides an environmental reading of these texts within a global ecological literature project that emphasizes ethical considerations.

Results: The findings reveal that Arabic literary texts have effectively fulfilled representative, educational, and critical roles in addressing environmental change. Literary works highlight environmental issues and expose their hidden dimensions, critique flawed human values regarding nature and promote ecological awareness. By engaging both intellect and emotion, literature fosters a deeper understanding of the crisis.

Conclusion: The study concludes that Arabic literature should be further integrated into environmental discourse as part of a broader research initiative that collaborates with science, technology, and media. Such an interdisciplinary approach would enhance ethical awareness, acknowledge the global scale of the crisis, and contribute to more informed governmental policies toward sustainable development.

Keywords: Environmental literature, environmental change, postcolonial ecocriticism.

Introduction

The world is facing an environmental crisis driven by accelerated ecological changes over the past decade and compounded by the crisis's intellectual, ethical, economic, and political dimensions. Addressing it has become imperative. In response, environmental movements have emerged, organizations and agencies have been established, and journals, writings, and research papers have proliferated—together forming the foundations of environmental sciences aimed at curbing environmental degradation by changing human attitudes and behavior toward nature.

The initial confrontation relied on science and technology to meet this goal; yet it has become clear that these tools alone are insufficient. Other resources—most notably literature—must be harnessed to achieve the most feasible, rapid, and cost-effective solution to date: raising public awareness of the environmental crisis and motivating people to take part in confronting and remedying it. Within this framework, the present study explores the role Arabic literature can play in addressing the challenges of environmental change. As a powerful, motivating medium capable of speaking to people directly and forging an emotional bond between humanity and the environment—while instilling a sense of responsibility—Arabic literature can spur readers to join the effort to safeguard our planet.

1.1. Importance of the study

The research is part of the environmental criticism movement that is taking shape globally around environmental literature, and it presents contemporary environmental readings that make it a tool for confronting environmental change.

1.2. Research Questions

The research's problem and questions are defined in the following question: Can literature, particularly Arabic literature in different eras, play an effective role in confronting the environmental change crisis, complementing the roles of science, technology, and the media? The first section tackles this overarching question, while the applied section addresses the subsidiary questions that branch from it, namely:

What environmental change issues does Arabic literature represent?

What messages can it convey to confront and mitigate environmental change?

How does literature communicate its environmental messages to the public to educate and motivate them to participate?

2. Research Methodology

The research adopts the postcolonial eco-criticism approach in five literary texts from both modern and traditional sources, highlighting contemporary environmental thought issues and revealing the receptivity of Arabic literature to contemporary environmental readings and the potential it possesses to confront the crisis of environmental change. These texts are: the poem "A River Dying of Thirst" by Mahmoud Darwish, the two short stories "I Saw the Palm Trees" by Radwa Ashour and "The Girls' Ward" by Muhammad Al-Makhzanji, the novel "The Soul of Muhebat" by Fouad Qandil, and "The Chapter on the Tale of the Hermit and the Guest" by Abdullah ibn al-Muqaffa.

3. Literature Review

Thamer (2019) examined the Arab writer's awareness of the environment; Al-Sultani (2021) examined aspects of environmental representation in Arab literary heritage; Saeed (2022) analyzed the general environmental vision in "I Saw the Palm Trees"; Qalqul (2022) explored the characteristics of magical realism in "The Soul of Muhebat"; Abdul Hafiz (2023) examined the presence of environmental theory in Arab literary heritage and applied it to three novels; last but not least, Al-Shalqani (2024) aimed to link environmental criticism trends to Arab critical heritage, using examples from Arabic literature.

These studies adopt a general approach: presenting environmental criticism in its various directions, applying it to some partial or comprehensive models, and demonstrating the presence of environmental writings in Arabic literature. This study is distinguished by its exploration of the roles of Arabic literature in confronting contemporary environmental change issues, using a postcolonial environmental criticism approach, to benefit from its potential in addressing them.

3.1 Literature and the challenges of Environmental Changes

3.1.1 The Artistic and Ethical Challenge

The ongoing environmental changes have raised significant questions on literature and its role in confronting them, such as: How does literature respond to the natural world? Can literary imagination create a more environmentally focused way of being in the world? What can we learn from literature about the inter-connectedness of the Earth's inhabitants? (Eaton, 2016). These questions seemed difficult and numerous, and research and working papers were published to answer them, stemming from a sense of responsibility toward the Earth and its inhabitants. The recurring answer was: We need to find better ways to imagine nature and humans' relationship with it, and to be able to address environmental change. Literature has thus emerged as capable of creating these methods, particularly since it possesses two functions that enable it to fulfill this role: representational and social. It also possesses an important environmental heritage.

Literary fiction has always been concerned with the role of humans in existence and with maintaining their relationship with nature (Branch, 2007, p. 33). What is known as environmental fiction and climate fiction has emerged, which includes graphic novels, short stories, plays, poems, and novels, and its aim is to represent the biophysical processes and the unprecedented social and political challenges imposed by the environmental change crisis (Mayerson, 2017, p. 309). Literature has proven its ability to represent environmental degradation and its damages, and that it possesses what has been called the environmental function of narrative (Lemenager, 2023, p. 41), a function that enables it to transmit influential messages about the environment, changing human behavior in dealing with it, and in line with the general trend within the social and environmental sciences and environmental criticism, which sees the environmental crisis as a product of human culture that determines how our moral system works, and how we behave with the environment (Salama, 2023, p. 14). Since the last two decades, literature has become part of what is known as environmental politics of resistance, reform, and revolution (Mayerson, M. 2017. P. 310).

3.1.2. Challenging Anthro-pocentrism:

In the context of this resistance, literature has moved toward representing the idea of anthro-pocentrism and revisiting it as the framework that dominates our perceptions and governs our ethical and environmental order (Branch, 2007, p. 32). Writers and poets have demonstrated new rhetorical, conceptual, and narrative creativity in representing non-human beings, such that they are neither a vehicle for expressing human meanings nor are they personified as weak human beings (Clark, 2019, p. 11). Literature has embarked on creating a new language that suits the voice of things (Ruckert, 2021, p. 373) and is appropriate for representing non-human beings, especially after the transformations they have undergone. The world to which words such as spring, nature, sea, river, and rain once referred is no longer the pure form they represented before the era of environmental transformations (Clark, 2019, p.12).

In the current period, writings have emerged that abandon the traditional realistic form and respond to the new environmental situation in which the world - according to the cultural analyses of post-colonial eco-criticism - has become associated with problematic concepts, such as anthro-pocentrism, human and nonhuman nature, identity, and gender. Literature has presented these concepts, which have preoccupied contemporary environmental sciences, as urgent environmental issues, transcending them with its ability to represent their invisible relationships to the crisis of environmental change and to bring together environmental and social concerns into a single vision.

3.1.3. Reading Literature as an Ethical Environmental Project

Post-colonial Eco-criticism:

There is an overlap between literature and eco-criticism in two aspects: eco-criticism theorizes the roles played by literature in confronting the environmental change crisis, and eco-criticism's role in rereading

literature with an environmental reading that spans the ages, covering ancient and modern forms (Lemenager, 2023, pp.36-40). This reading reveals representations of the environment and the cognitive and ethical environmental messages it conveys. The research focuses on the second aspect, which achieves its primary objective: demonstrating Arabic literature's ability to represent issues of environmental change by reading examples of it that differ in form and time, from an environmental, post-colonial and ethical perspective.

Confronting environmental change requires literary creativity that deviates from traditional writing patterns. It also requires a re-reading that deviates from inherited reading patterns, enabling us to see representations of the environment in literature throughout its history and the ideology that has governed these representations in each period. Influenced by its interest in exploring representations of the environment and its issues in literature, eco-criticism has become an interdisciplinary field, where literary, cultural, scientific, and political fields converge (Clark, 2019, p. 15). It seeks to offer unconventional environmental readings of literature that are free from anthro-pocentrism. This desire has guided it in a postcolonial direction, shifting its reading of literature away from Western critical standards and perceptions, which are rooted in ancient philosophy of the natural world and humanity and are tinged with anthro-pocentrism.

The development of postcolonial eco-criticism has been linked to the development of the debate on the environment in the environmental sciences. It has become the other face of contemporary eco-criticism in its comprehensive vision of environmental change issues. There is now a perception that all eco-criticism can be "postcolonial" in the broadest sense, and some have described it as a modern and useful Anthropocene critique (Clark, 2019, p. 138). Therefore, postcolonial eco-criticism is useful for study from this angle, and from other angles, including that its environmental analyses are directed towards the human moral position and commitment to his natural environment, and that the work of postcolonial eco-criticism is not only related to the non-human world represented by plants, animals, and birds, but also includes the human relationship with them (Salama, 2023, pp.13-14). These are two issues that guide the applied practice of the study. In addition, post-colonial environmental criticism is a global academic phenomenon whose interests go beyond Western European and American literature, and discusses works from various world literatures. This is an approach that has distinguished environmental criticism since an early time (Bull, 1996, p. 6).

Over the past ten years, critical studies have poured in from various regions of the world, addressing texts from our region in the Middle East. The names of Arabic works have begun to be mentioned in valuable studies. This means that the application of eco-criticism to Arabic literature is not arbitrary, and that the study falls within this global effort. The methods and approaches of analysis, and the eco-critical arguments upon which they are based, are taking shape on a global scale. This academic situation nominates eco-criticism to be an intellectual movement and a critical discourse on the level of our planet (Clark, 2019, p.137).

There is a discussion about a global environmental literature that could arise from eco-criticism's method of selecting ancient and contemporary texts from different cultures and literatures to re-read them from a contemporary environmental perspective. Postcolonial eco-criticism aspires for these texts to form the core of this hypothetical literature, and for it to constitute—despite its diversity and difference—a common horizon in confronting the challenges posed by a global environmental crisis. It would be "an ethical project because it requires us to represent an ethical relationship with the world as a single whole" (Clark 2019, p. 146). From this perspective, the research reads Arabic literary texts as part of this hypothetical ethical project.

3.2. The Role of Arabic Literature in Confronting Environmental Change Issues

This topic answers the sub-questions identified in the study's introduction by reading a group of texts using postcolonial environmental criticism, leading to the discovery of the role of Arabic literature in confronting environmental change as part of this ethical project to protect the Earth.

(1) Awareness of Human and Political Injustice and Environmental Destruction:

1- Mahmoud Darwish's Poem "A River Dying of Thirst."

The poem *"A River Dying of Thirst"* (Darwish, 2014) by the Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish is a famous and widely translated text. In it, he employs natural landscapes to serve his own history and destroyed identity. Darwish crafted it to overcome the challenge of proving who owns the language of this land and who best writes it. Within this challenge, the poem embodies one of literature's commitments to confronting our environmental crisis from a postcolonial eco-critical perspective: the relationship between human and political injustice and environmental destruction, as an inseparable relationship, and how injustice leads to the destruction of people and their identity along with the destruction of space.

The poem's theme is environmental par excellence. It depicts the pollution of the Jordan River and the diversion of its waters by Israel, using the third-person narrative to tell the story of a river once teeming with life, but now lost due to the oppression of a brutal force. The poetic narrative follows a regular temporal trajectory, with the narrator, from the beginning of the poem, recalling a moment of the river's life in the past ("there was a river"), from a point in the present ("here"). We find ourselves faced with a retrospective narrative operating according to the mechanisms of collective memory linked to history and identity (Al-Sheikh, 2021, p. 15). The poet recalls a scene in the natural world, from a location where the river has become, in the words of water studies, "an archaeological relic" (Kott, 2019, p. 12), representing exceptional value for him. The river was part of pure nature and its beauty, and in the poet's consciousness, it was linked to the divine goodness that overflowed upon humanity as it flooded "descending from the heights of the mountain". After describing a scene recalled from memory of the pure nature of a river flowing with distilled water from above, the poet recounts its material and moral gifts to the people living there, depicting a human existence dependent on it both materially and morally. The river brings them trees and palm trees in the Jordan Valley and brings joy to those who watch along its banks. It is a series of glorious deeds of the river, interrupted the moment its mother is kidnapped, and everything changes. The river gradually begins to die, like a child whose mother has been taken away, losing its source of life and slowly dying of thirst, as the title and ending of the poem indicate.

The poem embodies the tragedy of humans and the river together, with a discourse that does not separate the fate of humans from the fate of the river, which is to die of thirst. This expression embodies suffering over a long period, with which the poet condemns the oppressors who kidnapped his mother, and did not care about his suffering and death, and insisted on killing him by changing the nature that was formed over extended times. The poem refers to it with the third-person pronoun in the verb "they kidnapped," which metaphorically indicates the taking away of the causes of life from the river, just as the causes of life were taken away from humans by destroying it.

The voice that tells the story of the river is the voice of the human poet. The poem did not give the river a voice to present its case independently of humanity. It did not even depict the damage inflicted on the river by the forces of injustice, nor its negative consequences for humanity, as some theorists of experimental environmental literature demand. The poem used language that personified the river with metaphors, giving it a human character (visiting, carrying, laughing, singing), and similes (like a gentle, light guest), presenting it with a pure, ideal image that aligns with the image of the river and fresh water that is ingrained in the human psyche: the magnificent work of the rains that nourished it and carved its course from the mountaintops down to the villages in a beautiful scene; and the energy the river silently expends on humanity, as the simile of "the gentle, light guest" suggests.

The poem features a system of metaphors that represent the strong connection between the river and the people living in the villages and tents. It demonstrates a strong symbiotic relationship in which people depend on the river. In this context, we find that the metaphor that formed the pure image of the river and its relationship with people is of the event structure type (Lakoff, 2014, p. 34), which Lakoff

calls the metaphor of the terrain (Lakoff, 2014, p. 35). We have a specific place (the valley), and the river's self-movement within it (descending, visiting, carrying), which has a purpose represented by the villages and tents it visits, and a means by which the river makes its way down from the tops of the mountains; to reach its destination unhindered.

This metaphor makes the river a symbol of a magnificent natural geography, presenting an image of it of the kind Paul Willis has described as a higher form of beauty that pulsates with life (Willis, 2016), and overflows with it. However, the metaphors' function goes beyond this. The metaphorical discourse in the poem uses metaphors as a manifestation of national identity (Al-Sheikh, 2021, p. 17), and as a mechanism for memory to resist the loss of this identity due to political and human injustice. Thus, the metaphors are imbued with a human character.

The figurative language is humane from the beginning of the poem, but this language shifts with the shift in the scene at the end of the poem, where the pure image of the river, associated with life and giving, disappears and is replaced by metaphors semantically linked to suffering and death, representing the cruelty of injustice and its effects on the river. The poet's narrating voice then becomes a protest against the human and political injustice inflicted on his people in the Jordan Valley and Palestine. It is noteworthy that the poem does not personify death itself, nor does it semantically attribute the killing of the river to it. Rather, it makes death a result, not a cause, so that the perpetrator of the killing remains a truly unjust human force, expressed by the verb "kidnapped." In this way, the poem embodies a human voice of protest against the harm inflicted by human and political injustice on the environment, especially since the harm befell a natural being that has become embedded in the human consciousness as a symbol of the gift of life and its mystery.

Thus, the poem depicts the destruction of the river as an immoral act, devastating both human and non-human. In this ethical context, the poem addresses the human conscience of the recipient, with its inherent human cultural heritage connected to water (Kot, 2019, p. 8). This highlights the relationship between the river and humans, using it as a means to condemn those who destroy the environment for their injustice. The poet's need to protest injustice, as a voice for the oppressed and subjugated, is what prompted him to speak with his own voice, not the river's. However, he granted the river a strong presence by depicting its independent actions and their impact on their lives. The poem reveals that the river is one of those rivers that straddle natural, cultural, and political boundaries, treated not as sites of respect and mutual understanding, but rather as a cause for violence against humans and the natural world, inflicting injustice upon them without distinction.

The poem—based on the way it represents the river and its fate—is analogous to spatial studies that deal with water, mapping diverse places and lifestyles across the world according to structures of social, political, and environmental violence that are often hidden. However, the poem embodies these and depicts them from a resistant perspective, thus offering a sensitive rhetorical and conceptual creativity for a local environmental issue, transcending—as postcolonial environmental criticism desires—the local environment to the planetary scale (Marland, 2023, pp90-91). The impact of the political injustice of brutal forces on environmental destruction is seen in many regions of the world, and thus we are faced with a model of literature's ability to achieve the environmental slogan "think globally, act locally," as a solution to confronting the crisis of environmental change.

2. The Environment of the Poor: Forms of Social Organization and Environmental Abuse:

"The Girls' Ward" by Muhammad al-Makhzanji:

"The Girls' Ward" (al-Makhzanji, 2007) is one of the stories in the collection *"The Coming One,"* published by Muhammad al-Makhzanji in 1983. It demonstrates an early environmental awareness, evident in his subsequent short stories and journalistic writings. This awareness is clearly evident in its depiction of a pivotal environmental issue: people's deprivation of healthy living conditions and their

plight resulting from social and environmental ills that have turned them into victims. This issue is part of a larger issue of place in postcolonial eco-criticism: the environment of the poor and immigrants, whose representation is viewed as a moral obligation. It thus complements the issue of political injustice and its impact on the environment in the poem "A River Dying of Thirst".

This issue can be explored, starting with the title, while focusing the reading on the stylistic data of the text. The story's title is an additional combination of two words, between which there is a semantic paradox; each word denotes direct and suggestive meanings that are contradictory. The word "ward" refers to places with a negative character, such as hospitals, prisons, and shelters. It suggests negative connotations, such as suffering, poor conditions, overcrowding, distress, and punishment in prisons; illness and death in hospitals; and weakness and loneliness in shelters. It leaves an impression of depression and pessimism. The word "girls" has a temporal and human connotation; it identifies a period in a woman's life, associated with positive meanings, some of which are poetic, such as virginity, vitality, beauty, the future, marriage, and fertility. It gives an impression of optimism.

The paradox also applies to the story's structure. The story is divided into five paragraphs, each following a precise sequential pattern governed by paradox. The first paragraph begins with a main sentence, which includes the story's title and reveals the narrative context in the first person of a co-narrator, a doctor at the hospital. The paragraph includes important information that explains the title and decodes its semantic paradox: it is an isolation ward in a hospital for girls with tuberculosis. The ward then conveys two environmental connotations: it is a hospital for the poor, and an isolation ward for girls suffering from a disease that, unless the patient receives adequate care, becomes a place of death, not recovery.

The second paragraph alludes to the girls' actual death in the context of the doctor's description of the pile of cloth the nurse had brought down when he encountered her on his way to the girls' ward. He saw hundreds of embroidered words of remembrance, beneath which were the girls' names, drawings of roses, sailing boats, rising suns, and flying birds. The words of remembrance refer to the girls struck down by illness, but they also evoke the meaning of the continuation of remembrance, as if they had used writing to resist forgetfulness and absence. The story progresses, in the third paragraph, with the doctor's movement toward the ward; his eyes give us an image of the ward, as if it were a moving surveillance camera. When he arrives at the ward and describes it, the vocabulary of his discourse changes from the vocabulary of life and resistance in the previous paragraph to a depressing vocabulary, emphasizing the poverty of the environment: Ward 3, the gloomy darkness, the bare beds, and the single window through which a weak beam of sunlight passes.

The doctor's description paints a picture of a place lacking the necessary sanitary conditions; it embodies the abuse that compounds the plight of the girls, who are afflicted by the poverty of the place and illness. In its final paragraph, the story moves on to the girl, presenting us with a living example that embodies this abuse and its effects on humanity. The story is completed with the ward and the girl—the girls. The story moves with the doctor's eye to the description of the girl as he looks at her. A girl alone in the ward, shy and delicate, two characteristics that semantically belong to the domain of girls. Thin and pale, two characteristics that semantically belong to the domain of "ward." It is a painful paradox that embodies the magnitude of the ordeal and abuse. In its final paragraph, the story leaves the girl alone in the ward, awaiting expected death on her bare bed in the gloomy darkness. The others have died, and the situation that led to their deaths continues.

It is an environmental abuse that reveals an invisible cause behind it, which is the social organization embodied by the ward/place. The sick girls are abused because they are poor. The story thus presents a model for literature's commitment to addressing issues of environmental change, in the optimal manner, in the view of postcolonial critics, which reveals the invisible social factors in our environmental crisis with its human and moral dimensions. This is by viewing the abuse of human and

non-human existence as a product of injustice, systems of government and economy, and forms of social organization, especially hierarchy (Timothy, 2016, p. 4).

The story's form is realistic and familiar, its language is clear, and the event is ordinary, a short scene taken from everyday life, from people's experience in their local environment. It is presented in a clear style that affects their emotions and prompts them to rethink their social system as part of the responsibility for the environmental crisis, without violating the conditions of art.

3. The Environmental Ethical Crisis and the Review of Societal Values:

"I Saw the Palm Trees" by Radwa Ashour:

"I Saw the Palm Trees" (Ashour, 1989) is a short story by Radwa Ashour, part of her first collection of short stories, published under the same title in 1987. The collection depicts the experiences of various models of women in a style characterized by simplicity, depth, and realism. It is a unique environmental text in its subject matter and perspective, given its publication date; awareness of the environmental crisis and the role of literature in confronting it had not yet taken shape in Arabic literature. The story critically depicts a pattern of environmental thinking that is connected to the idea of anthro-pocentrism, which sees humanity as the source and sole subject of value in the world (Timothy, 2016, p. 13). It calls for a reconsideration of the cultural values and ethics that have established this idea, and raises this central issue through its heroine, Fawzia, who is an expatriate among relatives in the countryside, and work colleagues and neighbors in the city.

Fawzia is a woman from Upper Egypt who migrated from her village in Upper Egypt and settled in Cairo, where she took a low-paying job. She narrates her story in the first person. Her story is not preoccupied with the migration or the low salary, but rather with her relationship with crops and people. Her crisis is revealed through her narrative, which conveys an important environmental message. She has been attached to crops since childhood until they became the focus of her life. Her relatives in the countryside, her neighbors neighborhood, and her colleagues disapproved of this relationship, as well as her green way of thinking and living, and they harmed her and her crops.

The story begins with a scene of the heroine searching for buds to plant on a winter day. The elements of the scene indicate her existential connection to agriculture: the duration of her search, which lasts a full day during a harsh winter, her inner emotions of fear and anticipation during the search ("I am no longer able, and my heart is pounding, I was confident"), and the rapid, successive movements of her search ("I went down to the streets, crossing them and stopping by the trees, looking and checking. I stretched out my hand to feel and sense"). The heroine embarks on an adventure because she feels a need for something she lacks, and she wants to obtain it to restore balance to her life. But her search fails, and when her colleague at work sees her, he mocks her, describing her as crazy. His mockery recalls the beginning of her relationship with agriculture since her childhood in the village, when she postponed going to her cousin's funeral until she finished planting the basil stalk, and some of her family accused her of insanity.

Fawzia conjures up images of her home and upbringing to reveal the history of her relationship with agriculture and the social and cultural foundations that shaped her way of thinking and life. She grew up in a village house with mint on the roof, cactus at the bottom, and a palm tree at the door. Her father always spoke of the palm tree as a blessed tree, explaining to her how it was created from the remains of Adam's clay and the ways it resembled humans.

When she moved to Cairo and returned to farming after a while, her behavior was met with outrage by her colleagues and neighbors. Her colleagues whispered and criticized the idea that she had clay under her fingernails, even though she was an employee. Neighborhood residents denounced her behavior, accusing her of being crazy. Both adults and children used verbal and physical violence against her. Sadness overtook her, but amidst this crisis, two surprising events occurred: the first was a vision of palm trees. She saw them before sunrise, and within them, she saw the faces of her departing family.

The second is a visit from one of her neighbors at the end of the story who saw the plants on the balcony, so she came and asked her to teach her, so she taught her and gave her a mint stick.

The story depicts a violent crisis Fawzia experiences with her social surroundings. This appears to be a crisis of morals or environmental values resulting from differences in social upbringing. The heroine believes in environmental values with a strong religious foundation, which has made her relationship with the environment different from those around her, to the point of contradiction. The depth of the crisis becomes clear when examining the character patterns and their discourses, and the relationships between them in the narrative world. The story presents two contrasting types of characters in terms of values, behavior, and discourse: one type believes in the values of greenery and adopts them in their actions and speech. Its models are Fawzia and her rural family, Uncle Muhammad, the nursery worker, and the neighbor who asked to learn about farming. Another type, in contrast, has no environmental morals or values; they see no value in planting. Their models are their coworkers and the people of the neighborhood. The environmental moral crisis is represented by the paradox between Fawzia and this group.

The heroine has environmental ethics founded on the idea of equal value between humans and plants, and on removing barriers between them. The palm tree is her aunt, as stated in the hadith that her father used to quote. She has a desire to live in a green environment, which is evident in the system of distributing plant pots in her small house and her attempt to beautify her workplace. The neighborhood people and her colleagues stood firmly against her desire, and she failed twice. The first time, she was upset by the ugliness of the workplace, so she placed three jasmine trees on the building's balcony. Her colleagues turned to the mud on her nails and blamed her. The neighborhood people treated her more violently. The children smashed the plant pots on the balcony and insulted her with crazy terms. The grocer's manager withheld the tins she used to plant the plants in, and Umm Sulayman bullied her when she tried to stop her son from harming the plants.

The rhetorical inconsistency in their dialogue reveals a huge cultural and moral gap. The use of the title "Mother of the Plant" in their dialogue embodies this gap. Umm Sulayman used it to mock Fawzia when she likened Sulayman to the plant. Fawzia, however, actually imagined herself as "Mother of the Plant," perceiving the relationship as a lineage between members of a single family. Her cognitive awareness of a shared origin was also represented in the intermingling of her people with the palm tree in the vision: their stature was tall, their faces were at the ends of the palm trees, the color of fronds, and it was not clear whether they were standing behind the trunks or the trunks were behind them. This vision dissolves the boundaries between humans and palm trees and highlights the significance of the title "I saw the palm trees," which interpretively translates as "I saw my family".

It should be noted that when Fawzia recalled her rural home, the place of her first upbringing, her memory recalled nothing but trees as an organic part of the home, their species, and their chosen locations. After the death of her family, Fawzia described herself as "cut from a tree." This is a central metaphor for conceptualizing the idea of a single origin between human and non-human beings, as it falls within a type of common conceptual or conventional metaphor, "People are plants" (Lykov, 2014, p. 59). It means that Fawzia envisions the process that took place in her life, and her separation from family and home by severing the branch from the tree. It is an analogy between two entities. This type of metaphor is characterized by the fact that when one perceives an entity, they simultaneously perceive all of its characteristics (Brant, 2017, p. 151). Thus, Fawzia perceives an analogy between her being and that of the tree. The heroine, then, has a specific formation in which the family's social and natural environment participated together. Environmental studies confirm the role of nature in shaping the human being and shaping their intellectual and cultural worlds, and call for a re-evaluation of our concepts of this role (Brant, 2017, p. 149). Due to this upbringing, it is unlikely that others would understand what she understands. It was logical that the contradiction in values and morals would lead to a severance of communication between the two parties, the dominance of a sense of alienation over

Fawzia, and the continuation of two phenomena in their relationship: the astonishment of her behavior to the point of accusing her of madness, and her complaint of not being understood.

In this way, the story embodies an environmental vision of the heroine, who is culturally besieged. The heroine is subjected to siege and exclusion for challenging the idea of human centrality. The story then links the environmental issue, as postcolonial environmental criticism links it, to the issues of women, gender, and race within a single value system (Al-Zahrani, 2021). He sees the assault on the environment as the other side of the oppression and marginalization of women. The oppression has led to her feeling of alienation, but the story gives us hope at the end of the event with the emergence of characters close to her way of thinking, such as Ahmed's uncle, the nursery worker, and her neighbor who taught her how to plant. It gives us hope that society can review its way of thinking, its value system, and its moral constitution.

On the other hand, the development of the event was a romantic, humane one, with this promising ending. However, the heroine's humanistic model did not overshadow the depiction of the environmental moral crisis resulting from the anthro-pocentrism that guides people's practices within the regional environments of the countryside and the city (Muhammad, 2022, p. 473), and represents the extent of the need to change its system of environmental values. The story built its discourse on the symbol of the palm tree, a stable symbol with cultural and religious weight in people's consciousness. Through it, it conveys its message of reviewing society's environmental values, constitution, and goals in order to build a new environmental culture (Muhammad, 2022, p. 474), and revising its stance on the values of respect for personal rights, understanding, and compassion, of which the heroine was deprived. Society can do this when it feels that its cultural standards are fragile and unjust, and generating this kind of feeling is what literature does.

4. Representing Human Nature and the Relationship between Man and his Environment:

"The Sul of Muhebat:by Fouad Qandil "

"The Soul of Muhebat (Qandil, 2009) is a novel published by Fouad Qandil in 2009. Critics classified it as "magical realism, but reality dictated its different style. He wrote it to reflect his contemplations of an Egyptian reality whose social transformations had altered its class structure and values, making it seem almost absurd. It can be said that its message complements the cultural and ethical role of "I Saw the Palm Trees" If "I Saw the Palm Trees", drops the boundaries of value between humans and plants "The Spirit of Lovers" drops them between humans and animals by presenting the concept of human nature in its relationship to the idea of human exception based on the belief in totemism, but from a perspective that agrees with the concept of "animal" as discussed by .critical ecology (Timofeeva, 2018, p 35).

Fouad Qandil prefaced his novel with an introduction that included a quote from James Frears's The Golden Bough. The introduction explains the belief in totemism as one of the stages through which the human concept .of God has passed, and its essence and function as a protective animal for humans (Frazer, 2015, pp. 3-4) However, he expanded on this essence and function by addressing another philosophical idea, which - according to the threshold of introduction - is the depiction of the dialectic, or conflict: between nature and reason, instinct and thought, or primitiveness and civilization, in the context of depicting the transformations of reality. He was helped to present his idea by the flexibility of the magical-realistic structure, which can address a philosophical ,idea with its mythology and symbolism, especially when it relates to a reality that seems unreasonable (Qalqoul p. 31). The novel's treatment took on the issue of human exception and the concept of human nature, thus ,2022 converging with environmental theorists' presentation of the concept of human nature in the context of their review of common concepts about the relationship between man and his environment as a necessity to confront environmental change, and totemism was a focus of this review (Timofeeva. 2018, p.36).

In general, "The Soul of Muhebat is one of the important examples of environmental narratives that utilizes " the magical realism technique to depict its environmental theme. It achieves the necessary conditions for this .style by blending realistic and fantastical elements in a delicate and calculated balance (Abu Ahmed, 2009, p. 62). The fantastical element is represented by the rooster, which blurs the boundaries between human and animal .(62 natures, as well as its relationships with humans, in addition to the anthropological elements that are part of the living popular cultural heritage (Qalqoul, 2022, p. 29).

The idea is not strange, as eco- criticism discussed the "relative kinship" ,between humans and other creatures influenced by the expansion of animal studies (Wesseling, 2018, p. 366), from the perspective of balance and consideration of the animal's position in the existential environment, not from the perspective of subjugating nature and utilitarian gain that harms it (Marland, 2023, p. 96). The novel depicts these intertwined and complex concepts in an interesting way using magical realism, telling the story of a strange rooster with human characteristics, who establishes an emotional relationship with women of different ages and classes, resulting in an entire generation of "rooster children" A social relationship has developed between the rooster and the women of the villages, especially those who love them. This is possible, and environmental critics have pointed out that the relationship between humans and animals can become interconnected and metaphorically form social relationships, even if they are between unequal groups (Boyle, 2023, p. 163). This relationship has tangible manifestations in the world of the novel, most notably "The Soul of Muhebat" for the rooster, to the point that she announces at the end of the story—after the shock of his flight from her—her intention to marry him in the human way, and the rooster's concern for the child Muhebat gave birth to. This is a tangible behavioral manifestation of parental relationships, the highest level of social relationships. The narrator describes Muhebat and Rashwan's relationship with the animals and birds in their home in a manner that indicates this inter-connectedness, from which we understand that it has become a social relationship. The chickens fill the spacious home of the "lonely" couple and have become a part of the world like the sun, night, and day, like love, sex, light, shade, food, and sleep. The third-person narrator defines the value of animals to the couple, specifically elevating them to the level of human kinship. Their value is not in the amount of money they are worth. They have become like children, family, loved ones, companionship, and a sense of home, and they are entertainment and joy.

The couple's view of the animal differs from the view dominated by the values of human exceptionalism, but it is neither pure nor absolute. It has undergone transformations with the development of events, carrying a connotation of social changes and the conflict between civilization and primitivism, reason and instinct. We can sense this in their relationship with the rooster. Regarding Muhebat there is a thing and its opposite. There is , ".the passion and connection to the rooster as the connection of the soul to the body. It is the "spirit of Muhibbat .She gave birth to him, stabbed her husband when he tried to kill him, and was stunned when he fled from her She did not regain her balance until a statue of it was erected in the courtyard of her house, and it became a shrine for blessing, and to which vows were offered. There is also the utilitarian aspect. She accepted its exploitation in a tourist project. This contradiction between love and utility represents the state of debate between thought and civilization, instinct and primitivism. So the relationship continued like this until the end, after the rooster turned .into a totem

,As for Rashwan, the sterile husband, his relationship with the rooster went through exciting transformations beginning with love and attachment. In his view, as the absent narrator mentioned in the introduction, according to totemism, the rooster was a protector of the home. There was also the exploitation of the "wonderful rooster" .in a tourism project in agreement with the authorities The love and project continued until he discovered the rooster's relationship with his wife. His relationship with the rooster then took on a hostile aspect. At first, in a moment of internal conflict, he considered killing him, but he also considered losing the project, so he backed down and considered castrating him, as this would guarantee his honor and the continuation of the family and the project. Rashwan's feelings differed from those of his lovers, for it was a love governed by benefit, which transformed into hostility governed by the idea of honor based on human exception compared to a lower animal, who possessed what he did not possess in terms of virility. Therefore, it was a love far from being a means of uniting the two natures. This difference paved

the way for his relationship with the rooster to develop in the opposite direction to its development with his lovers. Its development was another manifestation of the conflict, ending with his disappearance from the scene after being stabbed by his lovers. The rooster was freed from all restraint and exploitation, and it was an exciting moment of development in the event, moving it to a new phase and another manifestation of the conflict at the group level.

The rooster moves among the village women of different classes and ages, and they become pregnant by him. The village, like Rashwan, faces a major problem. The men initially deny that the rooster has anything to do with it, but they admit it after the shock of the newborns who bear traits of the rooster, blurring the lines between human and animal. The inability to distinguish and classify becomes clear, so they resolve to kill it. In a tightly choreographed development toward the end, the rooster flees, resisting every family or village's attempt to possess it. He finds no escape from freedom except by ascending to the sun and melting into it. A totem is erected for him, bringing blessings to the community. The novel ends with a legendary ending, with the belief in the totem, just as it began. Between the beginning and the end, the idea that humans are of an exceptional nature collapses.

Representing the issue of human nature through the love between man and animal connects the novel to a vast heritage of Arab fantasy narratives, including the philosophical story, the animal tale, the fable, and the myth, which, according to some researchers, are essentially an embodiment of the powers of certain animals (Khorshid, 2002, p. 98). The novel has been able to employ the narrative potential of these forms to present a model that combines the embodiment of reason and instinctive tendencies, and through it, it transmits an understandable message about a complex environmental idea with ancient mythological roots, linking it to the deterioration of reality. In this way, "The Spirit of Lovers" becomes a model for using the form of magical realism and mixing it with symbolism (Tawfiq, 2006, p. 60). To play an educational role, it proves the ecocritical hypothesis that magical realism is able to represent the concepts of the Anthropocene era in a series of concrete events, understandable and explainable (Timothy, 2016, p. 101).

5. Ecological Imagination and the Issue of Identity:

"The Tales of the Hermit and the Guest" by Abdullah ibn al-Muqaffa:

"The Tales of the Hermit and the Guest" from the book *Kalila wa Dimna* (Ibn al-Muqaffa, 2014) by Abdullah ibn al-Muqaffa (d. 142 AH) is a traditional model of animal tales that use elements from the environment to represent specific issues and convey messages related to them. This genre has received the attention of eco-criticism, which has found it a rich source of research because it includes an environmental dimension even when it appears to focus on something else (Boyle, 2023, p. 163). This description applies to the stories of *(The Hermit and the Guest's Door)*, as they seem to focus on something other than the environment. However, a close examination of their narrative discourse reveals that they address, in essence, an issue with an invisible connection to the environment, namely the issue of personal and national identity. In addition to this, this form is distinguished by what environmental criticism calls "the educational value of nature".

The narration in the Bab Tales is based on generation. A sub-story is born within a frame story. The frame story is the story of King Dabshalim, who asks the philosopher Bidpai for a lesson for those who abandon the craft they are good at and turn to crafts they are not good at. They fail to learn what they are not good at and to return to their original craft. So he tells him the story of the hermit with his guest. Within this story, the story of the crow and the partridge is born, which the hermit tells to his guest.

The mechanism of generation makes the story multi-narrator and multi-narrated, and the listening function is highlighted alongside the narration function. In the frame story, the philosopher Bidpai narrates to the king who listens to the parable of the hermit and the guest. In the second story, the hermit narrates to the guest who listens to the story of the crow and the partridge. Narration and listening determine the nature of the relationship between the two parties and the position of each of

them. The narrator (the philosopher) and (the diligent hermit) take the position of the polite teacher, their title denoting the possession of knowledge and wisdom qualifying them for this position. The narrator (the king), who is from the elite, and (the guest), who is from the common people, take the position of the polite learner. It is known that a parable is a story with a moral meaning, designed to convey a religious principle, a moral lesson, or a general truth, and reveals its educational message through metaphor (Fathi, 1988, p. 47). Therefore, the narrative sites give stories a political and social educational function, and link the narrators and the ones being narrated to in the frame and sub-story with a relationship of similarity, which has an important role in the environmental issue that the stories raise.

In the context of the educational role of stories, we have three symbols that symbolize national and personal identity, and the role of the environment in shaping it. They are: dates, the Hebrew language in the fable of the hermit and the guest, and the gait in the fable of the crow and the partridge. These symbols are linked by a relationship of similarity in multiple aspects, as they are all linked to an attempt to transfer or borrow something: transporting the dates to the guest's country, acquiring the Hebrew language, and the crow acquiring the partridge's gait. All of these are acts of imitation resulting from admiration and fascination with something that the guest and crow do not possess or excel at, and they all end in failure. The reason for failure is the same: the unsuitability of what is transferred through imitation (the dates, the Hebrew language, and the gait) for the imitator (the guest and his country, and the crow). When the attempt fails, the hermit intervenes with discipline, sometimes by speaking to the pilgrims to convince them that the attempt to transport the dates is a failure, and sometimes by giving a pedagogical example, as in the attempt to learn Hebrew, to teach his guest a lesson in how to recognize identity.

The tales establish a parallel between (the human - the guest) and (the animal - the crow), with the crow being a tangible representation of the consequences of losing identity. The crow is a bird known for its intelligence, and it is the first teacher of man who taught him how to bury. Choosing an intelligent animal is a form of approaching the rational and logical human nature; it is a convincing representation of the human world and the cultural imitations taking place within it. Its failure is a sure lesson for both the guest and the king. The two parables (the guest) and (the crow) act in the same way, commit the same mistake, and share the same motive; to emphasize that the human and the non-human, the cultural and the natural, cannot be separated with regard to identity and how it is formed.

In this context, we note that the king used the term "craft" in his request, a term that combines the material and the mental, and refers to "the special organized method used in manual or mental work" (Al-Jawhari, 1974, p. 838). It is associated with skill and good performance of something, and is related to the mastery of language, as it is said: "The tongue of craftsmanship" for the poet and every eloquent person" (Al-Jawhari, 1974, p. 837). The term then refers to the components of culture, including material and mental production, and language, along with mastery and skill, is not acquired merely through imitation and transmission; the environment plays a role in shaping it. It is no coincidence that the event in the parable of the hermit and the guest takes place in Karkh, Baghdad, the capital of the state in Iraq, within and on whose borders Arab culture clashes with Persian, Indian, and Roman cultures. The tales made the sender a wise man, He directs the message of identity to the king, because he is the head of the authority that governs and is responsible for formulating the social, cultural, and environmental policies that define the identity of the state and society.

The tales use an ecological imagination to represent and shape the issue of identity by combining symbols belonging to human existence (the guest) and non-human existence (the date - the plant) and (the crow and the partridge - the animal). The animal symbol is the symbol most closely associated with the ecological imagination, and in this type of imagination, it is more associated than any other with representing latent tensions and glaring contradictions (Boyle, 2023, p. 162). The lesson of identity relates to this contradiction between abandoning the components of identity and attempting to acquire what does not resemble it, which leads to social and cultural problems. The educational lesson itself has

an environmental function, as the chapter tales represent nature as having educational value (Marland, 2023, p. 22).

Conclusion and Findings:

The research, through its theoretical perspective and its practical application, demonstrated significant results, which we summarize as follows:

- Arabic literature responded strongly to a contemporary environmental reading, with a global ethical bent in its representation of environmental issues.
- Arabic literature addressed the central issues of contemporary environmental thought, going beyond merely representing aspects of nature.
- Arabic literature played integrated aesthetic, educational, awareness-raising, critical, and pedagogical roles, proving itself as a means of resistance and reform, complementing the role of science, technology, and the media in confronting complex environmental change issues and a means of sustainable green development.
- The texts represented the inter-connectedness between the elements of human and non-human existence within a single ecological system, as a primary solution to confronting environmental change.

5.1. Recommendations:

The study recommends expanding institutional initiatives that support literary research in the field of environmental change and transforming them into a research project that can be linked to comparative literature research. This will enhance the planetary dimension in understanding and addressing the crisis, provide an accurate understanding of it, and inform countries' measures and development projects. This will also include reviewing societal values, systems, and constitutions, and addressing false values and misconceptions about the environment. This will help achieve a state of recognition of non-human life and its value, as this recognition is the foundation of comprehensive, sustainable development.

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