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RESEARCH ARTICLE

OCEANS OF INEQUALITY: CLIMATE MIGRATION, ENERGY COLONIALISM AND PRECARIOUS FUTURES IN OMAR EL AKKAD'S WHAT STRANGE PARADISE

Tharani N

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Abstract

Omar El Akkad's *What Strange Paradise* is a powerful account of the global inequalities reshaping climate migration in the twenty-first century. This paper applies the framework of Energy Humanities to illustrate how the refugee crisis as depicted in the novel is highly situated in the historical framework of energy colonialism. The economic systems of resource extraction, reliance on fossil fuels, and geopolitical imbalance between the Global North and South are the roots of the precariousness and expulsion of the protagonist, Amir. "Not only do these structures destroy internal ecologies, but they also create the political environment and lived realities that constrain populations to migrate and disappear. The Mediterranean Sea, the novel's stage, is a space of energy reflection where the motifs of climate change, militarized borders, and global consumption converge. The ocean is no longer a site of freedom, liberty or connection, but of zealotry, surveillance and inequality. It reflects who is given migration and who is cast to precarity. In its depiction of submerged bodies, failed rescue attempts, and shattered expectations, the novel reveals the human cost of a world organized around disparate energy regimes. This research reads *What Strange Paradise* as a narrative structured by energy histories, demonstrating how climate devastation, economic dependence and fossil-capitalist systems co-create refugee flows, forced migration and unpredictable futures. The analysis points out that the novel not only humanizes the experiences of displaced persons but also challenges readers to confront the global energy mechanisms that cause such crises. In the end, the paper argues that El Akkad's work views the ocean as a sharp metaphor for contemporary inequalities, unfairness and the precarious futures brought about by energy colonialism.

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Introduction:-

In the twenty-first century, an unusual convergence of climate change, unwilling migration, and global inequality has been increasingly referred to as a climate refugee crisis. High tides, extreme weather, destruction of ecosystems, and lack of resources have displaced hundreds of millions, especially in places already on their knees from the historical effects of colonialism and economic interdependence. But the literary narratives of the past tend to represent refugee

movements as sudden humanitarian crises or security threats, obscuring the deeper structural forces that propel displacement. Literature, particularly contemporary climate and migration fiction, is an essential site for exposing these dark dynamics, by foregrounding lived experience, while interrogating the global systems that produce vulnerability. In this discourse, appears as a forceful measure. *Strange Paradise* (2021), Omar El Akkad The story is about Amir, a young Syrian refugee who manages an extreme shipwreck in the Mediterranean Sea. The novel follows Amir's perilous path from a war-ravaged homeland to the shores of Europe through fragmented memories and changing perspectives, revealing the violence of borders, the indifference of state power, and the frail solidarities that emerge in spaces of exclusion.

While the novel has often been read as a humanitarian narrative of displacement, these readings risk divorcing the refugee crisis from the material and historical conditions that make such journeys inevitable. This paper argues that *What Strange Paradise* needs a more profound interpretive framework, one that links forced migration to global energy systems and their colonial legacies. The interdisciplinary field of Energy Humanities offers such a lens by looking at how energy regimes, particularly reliance on fossil fuels, shape social, political, ecological, and cultural life. In this field, scholars argue that extractive energy systems have structured modernity itself in ways that privilege the Global North while making the Global South sites of resource depletion, environmental sacrifice, and political instability. From oil extraction in the Middle East to climate-induced conflicts and economic precarity, energy infrastructures are inextricably bound up with the conditions that cause displacement. From this perspective, climate migration is not an incidental byproduct of progress, but a predictable outcome of fossil capitalist systems predicated on energy colonialism.

In *What Strange Paradise*, the Mediterranean Sea becomes a key symbolic and material site of convergence of these energy histories. In El Akkad's account, the sea, once imagined as a space of exchange and connection, becomes a zone of surveillance, militarization and mass death. The bodies of refugees floating in its waters speak to a failed humanitarianism as well as to the unequal distribution of mobility, safety, and environmental protection in a world sustained by unequal energy consumption. The sea thus becomes a "energy-inflected" geography, illustrating the intersection of climate change, border regimes and global consumption patterns. By placing *What Strange Paradise* within the frame of Energy Humanities, this paper argues that the novel reveals the nexus of climate devastation, fossil-fuel economies, and refugee precarity. Instead of treating displacement as a separate tragedy, El Akkad's narrative connects global energy systems to the production of human suffering and uncertain futures. In this way, the novel urges readers to consider the ethical and political obligations written into present-day energy consumption and its persistent colonial legacy.

Energy Humanities – Theoretical Conceptualization:-

Energy Humanities is an interdisciplinary theoretical framework that investigates the role of energy systems in shaping cultural practices, social relations, political power, and environmental conditions. As a subfield of the larger discipline of Environmental Humanities, Energy Humanities challenges the view of energy as a neutral or merely technological resource. Instead, it foregrounds energy as a key organizing force of modernity that impacts everyday life, economic development, and global inequality (Szeman and Boyer). The framework moves the focus from energy as infrastructure to energy as culture and power, offering a critical understanding of contemporary crises such as climate change, ecological collapse and forced migration. One of the foundational concepts in Energy Humanities is the concept of energy regimes, especially the dominance of fossil fuels since the industrial revolution. Such regimes have been responsible for unprecedented economic growth and mobility in the Global North, while generating environmental degradation, political instability, and economic dependency in the Global South.

Scholars argue that fossil-fuel modernity cannot be separated from capitalism and colonial expansion, because the practices of extraction have been historically embedded in imperial projects that reorganized land, labor, and resources for energy production (Mitchell). So the benefits of energy abundance are unevenly distributed, and the ecological and human costs are externalized onto marginalized populations. Closely related to this is the idea of energy colonialism, which refers to the continued extraction of resources and environmental sacrifice in postcolonial spaces. Energy colonialism repeats historical patterns of domination, making certain geographies expendable to satisfy the global demand for energy. Regions rich in oil, minerals, or fossil resources are often sites of ecological devastation, militarization, and political contestation, which directly contribute to displacement and migration (Daggett). Seen from this angle, climate refugees are not accidental victims of natural disasters but rather the outcome of a world-system built on unequal patterns of energy consumption and extractive economies.

Energy Humanities also focuses on energy injustice, and how vulnerable communities suffer the effects of pollution, climate change, and environmental risk. But while the populations of the Global South contribute little to global emissions, they are now suffering rising temperatures, water scarcity, and the loss of livelihoods (LeMenager). Rich countries, meanwhile, continue to consume energy at unsustainable levels. This injustice produces what scholars call “sacrifice zones,” places where environmental and human costs are normalized and made invisible within dominant narratives of progress (Daggett). Forced migration is thus one of the most obvious consequences of these hidden energy inequalities. In literary and cultural studies, Energy Humanities offers critical tools for analyzing the ways in which narratives register the social and ecological consequences of energy systems.

Literature is a counter-archive revealing the veiled by energy infrastructures: displaced bodies, submerged histories and uneven futures. Literary texts, in turn, reveal the lived realities of fossil-fuel dependence and climate change through attention to landscapes, mobility, and environmental precarity (Szeman). This framework, applied to Omar El Akkad’s *What Strange Paradise*, enables the refugee crisis depicted in the novel to be read as a consequence of fossil-capitalist modernity rather than as a singular humanitarian tragedy. Amir’s displacement is a manifestation of the entanglement of war, climate instability and economic dependency of energy colonialism. In the novel’s representation, the Mediterranean Sea becomes an energy-inflected space where global consumption patterns, border regimes, and climate change converge. The novel problematizes unequal energy structures that produce precarious lives and uncertain futures through the lens of Energy Humanities.

Energy Colonialism and Climate Migration:

Energy colonialism provides an important lens through which to understand climate migration as a structurally produced phenomenon, embedded in historical and current systems of extraction. Energy colonialism originates in colonial practices that reconfigured land, labor, and resources to serve imperial interests and persists today through multinational corporations, unequal trade relations, and dependence on fossil fuels. Formal colonialism may have ended, but postcolonial sites are still sites of resource extraction and environmental sacrifice, feeding the energy-intensive economies of the Global North at the expense of the ecological and social costs of energy production (Mitchell). Environmental degradation is one of the chief effects of energy colonialism. The extraction of fossil fuels, mining, and the building of large energy infrastructure often involve land dispossession, water pollution, deforestation, and the collapse of ecosystems. Such disruptions put agricultural livelihoods and local economies at risk, making communities more vulnerable to climate shocks.

Climate change is also intensifying extreme weather events such as droughts, floods and heatwaves, putting populations already vulnerable to extractive violence at further risk. In such conditions, migration becomes a survival strategy rather than a voluntary choice (LeMenager). According to Energy Humanities scholars, climate migration must be theorized through the logic of fossil capitalism, which externalizes environmental costs in the service of economic profit. The worst climate impacts are often felt in places that add very little to the world’s carbon emissions, highlighting the moral and political contradictions of the global energy system. Energy colonialism generates what Cara Daggett refers to as “sacrifice zones,” spaces where environmental destruction and human pain are normalized and rendered invisible in the dominant narratives of progress (Daggett).

These zones are disproportionately located in the Global South, re-inscribing global hierarchies of vulnerability and disposability. The climate migrants emerging from such contexts are often framed as humanitarian burdens or security threats, rather than victims of global energy injustice. Border regimes increasingly rely on surveillance technologies, detention centres and militarized enforcement to control migration flows. This answer obscures the structural role of energy consumption in the production of displacement and legitimises exclusionary policies. Energy Humanities critiques these narratives by connecting mobility restrictions to the uneven distribution of energy benefits and burdens, where wealthy nations live energy-intensive lives and displaced populations are denied safety and mobility (Szeman and Boyer).

Literary representations are key to understanding the lived experience of energy colonialism and climate migration. Fiction opens a space for readers to experience the embodied realities of displacement that are often erased by policy-oriented conversations: hunger, fear, loss, and hope. Literature, foregrounding individual stories within larger structural contexts, becomes a counter-archive, recording the human costs of extractive economies. Energy Humanities invites readings that attend to landscapes, infrastructures, and mobility as expressions of energy-driven modernity, revealing how environmental collapse intersects with political and economic violence. *What Strange Paradise* by Omar El Akkad presents climate migration as the result of war, ecological instability, and economic

precarity rooted in energy colonialism. Although the novel does not explicitly mention fossil-fuel extraction, the conditions that lead to Amir's flight—social upheaval, environmental vulnerability, and geopolitical conflict—are inherently linked to the history of energy exploitation in the Middle East. The Mediterranean Sea is a symbolic and material space where shipwrecks, drowned bodies, and failed rescue operations reveal the consequences of uneven energy consumption. The sea becomes a cemetery for climate migrants, evidence of the lethal consequences of a world organized around dependence on fossil fuels and border exclusion. By showing displaced lives and hostile borders, *What Strange Paradise* critiques the global energy systems that produce forced mobility, while simultaneously denying recognition and protection to migrants. The novel's treatment of climate migration as a result of energy colonialism reveals the ethical failures of contemporary energy systems, challenging readers to confront the global implications of their everyday energy consumption.

The Ocean As An Energy Setting:-

In energy humanities, the ocean is increasingly theorized as an energy-inflected space, not as an empty or neutral expanse but as a space shaped by extractive economies, climate change, and global mobility regimes. Historically, the oceans have been the highways of imperial expansion, resource circulation, and energy transportation, enabling the global movement of oil, goods, and labor. These marine spaces are today inextricably bound up with fossil-fuel infrastructures, from offshore drilling and shipping lanes to submarine cables and militarized border surveillance. Therefore, the ocean is an essential space where energy systems intersect with environmental degradation and human vulnerability (Szeman and Boyer). Climate change has made the ocean a visible archive of energy-driven modernity. Dependence on fossil fuels is directly responsible for rising sea temperatures, melting polar ice and more severe storms, changing marine ecosystems and coastal livelihoods.

For communities on precarious coastlines, the ocean has become a dwindling resource or link and a growing threat, instead of an inexhaustible pantry. Energy Humanities scholars stressed (LeMenager) that these transformations are unevenly distributed, disproportionately affecting regions in the Global South that have contributed the least to global emissions. The ocean, then, mirrors the uneven geographies of energy consumption and climate responsibility. At the same time, the ocean has become a heavily policed border zone. Technologies, naval patrols and legal frameworks are monitoring the maritime routes, especially in the Mediterranean, to limit the mobility of migrants. These border regimes cannot be separated from global energy politics, as the states that benefit from fossil-fuel abundance are also the states that utilize energy-intensive security infrastructures to manage mobility.

The ocean thus becomes a contradictory space: it enables global flows of energy resources and commodities, but is deadly for those whose movement is deemed illegitimate (Mitchell). The ocean is often a place of abandonment and erasure in literary representation. Energy Humanities encourages readings sensitive to the erasure of bodies, histories, and labor in maritime spaces. The human cost of energy-driven globalization is evident in shipwrecks, drowned migrants, and failed rescue attempts, showing how some lives are sacrificed for economic stability and energy security (Daggett).

The ocean is an archive of unrecognized violence, a repository of the victims of uneven energy regimes. In Omar El Akkad's *What Strange Paradise*, the Mediterranean Sea is powerfully reconfigured as an energy space shaped by climate change, border militarization, and global inequality. Instead of a place of freedom or passage, the sea in the novel is a hostile environment of death and indifference. Amir's journey through the water is punctuated by overfull boats, engine failures, and the ever-present danger of drowning. These dangers are not randomly produced but structurally produced by a world in which safe mobility is denied to all but those aligned with dominant energy and political systems. Recurring images of floating bodies and failed rescue missions reinforce the image of the ocean as a site where energy injustice becomes deadly.

The global order that relies on maritime routes for oil and trade, allows migrant vessels to go down without a trace. The juxtaposition in the novel exposes the ethical contradictions of contemporary energy regimes that privilege economic circulation over human life. The Mediterranean thus becomes a spatial metaphor of energy colonialism, illustrating how fossil-fuel modernity produces zones of exclusion and death. By positioning the ocean as a space suffused with energy, *What Strange Paradise* invites readers to reconceive maritime borders as political, rather than natural, borders of energy-related inequality. Fossil capitalism's effects are witnessed by the sea which carries the submerged histories of displaced populations. Thus, El Akkad's novel transforms the ocean into a powerful metaphor for modern precarity, where climate change, energy consumption, and the disposability of humans collide.

Narrative Representation of Precarity In What Strange Paradise:-

In Omar El Akkad's *What Strange Paradise*, precarity serves as a key organizing principle, influencing both narrative structure and the lived experience of characters. Rather than portraying displacement as a temporary disruption, the novel depicts precarity as a permanent and normalized condition produced by global systems of inequality, fossil-capitalist modernity, and militarized borders. El Akkad's formal experimentation and intimate characterization render refugee life as a constant negotiation with instability, vulnerability, and disposability. In many ways, the novel's representation of precarity is most significant in its use of a disjointed narrative structure.

The novel alternates between Amir's memories of Syria, the disastrous crossing of the Mediterranean and his current fight to stay alive on a European island. This non-linear temporality resonates with the lived experience of forced migration. Where time does not move toward resolution, but spirals through trauma and uncertainty. The lack of a stable narrative chronology mirrors the suspended existence of the refugee who does not fully belong to the past nor is securely settled in the present. (El Akkad) Precarity is thus written into the form of the novel itself, and the disjunction of narrative becomes a mirror for lived instability. El Akkad also conveys precarity through vulnerability, especially via Amir's physical and emotional fragility. Hunger, dehydration, exhaustion and fear are recurrent motifs that foreground the refugee body as exposed and unprotected.

The choice to center the story on a child protagonist only increases this vulnerability, and points up the ethical failures of the systems that allow for such suffering. From the perspective of Energy Humanities, this bodily precarity cannot be separated from global systems driven by fossil fuels that prioritize economic circulation, energy security, and border enforcement over human life (Szeman and Boyer). Amir's body becomes a site onto which the effects of energy injustice are materially inscribed. The novel also depicts precarity through the systematic lack of institutional care. Humanitarian organizations, border authorities, and state actors are largely ineffective or hostile and appear to be more concerned with enforcing exclusion than providing protection. Rescue efforts are delayed or denied, rendering the idea of humanitarian intervention meaningless. This absence is indicative of what Cara Daggett refers to as the normalization of harm in "sacrifice zones" where some lives are deemed expendable within hegemonic political and economic systems (Daggett).

In this sense, the refugee is positioned outside the moral boundaries of protection thus exacerbating the condition of precarity. Language and communication are part of the novel's construction of instability. Amir, unable to surmount the linguistic and cultural hurdles, becomes even more isolated, invisible and misunderstood. Silence as a tool of suppression or a sign of resistance Drowned migrants are seldom named and their deaths are offstage. This erasure is indicative of broader discursive practices of flattening refugees to statistics and denying them narrative presence. Energy Humanities highlights how such silences conceal the structural causes of suffering, especially those connected to extractive economies and climate change (LeMenager). Precarity is also relationally constructed through Amir's interactions with others, especially his fragile relationship with Vanna. Their brief connection has moments of care and recognition, but is always under threat from surveillance and state intervention. Such relationships, though humanizing, are structurally unsustainable in a system that refuses to allow for the permanence of displaced lives.

The fragility of human connection underscores the novel's insistence that precarity is not simply emotional but also politically imposed. Belonging is conditional, temporary, and can be revoked. El Akkad's choice of narrative perspective also emphasizes precarity by denying closure or resolution. The novel makes no promises of redemption or safety and we do not know what will become of Amir. This refusal resists dominant narrative expectations that displacement must end in rescue or assimilation. Instead, the text asserts the ongoingness of precarity as a defining condition of contemporary migration. Such narrative openness resonates with Energy Humanities critiques of progress narratives that erase the persisting inequalities produced by fossil-capitalist systems (Szeman). Crucially, the novel locates precarity in a global energy context, without specific mention of energy infrastructure.

The forces that displace Amir—war, environmental instability, and economic collapse—are profoundly entangled with the legacies of energy extraction and geopolitical intervention in the Middle East. El Akkad's focus on lived experience, rather than abstract causality, shows how energy colonialism operates indirectly but pervasively, producing the conditions in which precarity is born. In the end, *What Strange Paradise* presents precarity as a condition that is politically constructed and ethically charged. The novel makes precarity a central narrative logic

through fragmented form, embodied vulnerability, narrative silence, and relational instability. By centering the experiences of a dispossessed child, El Akkad forces readers to confront the human cost of global systems built on unequal energy consumption and border exclusion. As such, the novel is not only a humanitarian narrative but also a critique of the energy regimes that normalize suffering and produce precarious futures.

Future of Energy Discussion:-

The preceding reading of *What Strange Paradise* demonstrates that displacement, precarity, and border violence are not incidental side effects of modernity but structurally inscribed consequences of fossil-fuel dependence and energy colonialism. Leaving the question of diagnosis aside, this conversation turns to the question of energy futures, asking how El Akkad's novel gestures towards alternative ethical, political, and ecological possibilities. Within the framework of Energy Humanities, energy futures are not only technological transitions from fossil fuels to renewables but contested imaginaries that shape how societies envision justice, responsibility and survival (Szeman and Boyer). One of the most striking things about *What Strange Paradise* is its refusal to offer a redemptive or optimistic future. The novel does not offer renewable energy, humanitarian reform or policy change as immediate solutions. Instead it shows the utter moral rot of a world order obsessed with maximizing energy consumption.

This narrative refusal echoes Energy Humanities critiques of "green optimism," cautioning against portraying energy transition as a technical fix divorced from questions of inequality and historical responsibility (LeMenager). El Akkad's work insists that any viable future of energy must confront the structural violence built into the existing systems. The novel also interrogates dominant temporal frameworks of energy futures. In mainstream discourses, the future is often imagined as a space of progress, innovation and growth. *What Strange Paradise*, instead, imagines the future as radically uncertain, particularly for displaced populations. Amir's fate is unknown, a testament to the systemic exclusion of marginalized communities from the promise of futurity. In an Energy Humanities sense, this exclusion reveals how fossil-capitalist systems unevenly distribute not only energy but also time and hope, giving some populations a future while leaving others in perpetual crisis (Szeman). Yet, despite its bleakness, the novel gestures towards alternative ethical futures through moments of care, solidarity and refusal. Amir's encounters with Vanna gesture towards possibilities for relational ethics that resist state and energy logics of exclusion.

These ephemeral moments do not dismantle structural injustice, but they imagine a future rooted in mutual responsibility rather than extraction or consumption. Energy Humanities scholars have argued that cultural texts are important in constituting such alternative imaginaries by challenging dominant narratives of energy abundance and entitlement (Boyer). The Mediterranean Sea, discussed as a space of death and exclusion infused with energy, also figures in the novel's vision of energy futures. The sea as a site of mass drowning reveals the unsustainability of modern border and energy regimes. Its size both defies the possibility of full control and represents the boundaries of militarization and surveillance. This ambivalence allows the reader to imagine futures where mobility is not criminalized and oceans are shared ecological spaces and not fortified boundaries. This implies a fundamental reorientation in the way energy is consumed, political sovereignty and environmental responsibility. In *What Strange Paradise*, energy futures are thus framed as ethical dilemmas, not prophetic visions.

The novel asks readers—especially readers in energy-consuming societies—to acknowledge their complicity in systems of displacement and death. El Akkad focuses on the child refugee's point of view, disrupting narratives that naturalize suffering as inevitable or distant. This narrative strategy aligns with the Energy Humanities' argument that energy transitions must be accompanied by moral reckoning and reparative justice, especially for communities historically harmed by extraction and climate change (Daggett). Importantly, the novel resists the urge to imagine energy futures that simply reproduce existing hierarchies in new technological garb. And without reckoning with colonial legacies, renewable energy projects risk replicating patterns of land dispossession, resource control and environmental sacrifice. *What Strange Paradise* implicitly critiques are such superficial transitions, by focusing on human vulnerability rather than technological progress. The future it points to is one of systemic transformation—of rethinking borders, mobility and consumption—not of incremental reform.

This discussion brings together the themes of energy colonialism, oceanic precarity and narrative vulnerability to demonstrate how *What Strange Paradise* functions as a cultural critique of contemporary energy imaginaries. It defies easy answers, forcing readers to face the moral implications of their energy-dependent lives. Such refusal, in the context of the Energy Humanities, is not pessimistic but politically productive and creates space for the reimagining of futures rooted in justice, accountability and ecological care. Ultimately, *What Strange Paradise* frames energy futures as inextricably tied to questions of human value and global accountability. The novel argues

that futures will remain precarious for those already marginalized unless the unequal energy systems that underpin modern life are dismantled. El Akkad's work makes visible the human cost of energy colonialism and asks readers to imagine futures where energy is not a source of domination, but a shared condition of survival.

Conclusion:-

This study examines Omar El Akkad's *What Strange Paradise* through the interdisciplinary approach of Energy Humanities to argue that the refugee crisis depicted in the novel cannot be separated from global energy regimes and their colonial pasts. Instead of presenting displacement as a single humanitarian tragedy, the analysis has revealed how El Akkad's story reveals the structural conditions of fossil-fuel dependency, energy colonialism, climate change and border militarization that generate forced migration and ongoing precarity. By situating the novel in energy histories, this paper speaks to broader debates in climate justice, migration studies, and contemporary literary criticism. The novel, through the lens of Energy Humanities, shows how fossil-capitalist modernity constructs ecological destruction and human vulnerability.

Environmental collapse, political instability, and economic precarity in the Global South (Szeman and Boyer) are also enabled by comfort, mobility, and consumption energy systems in the Global North. Amir's displacement is not due to personal failure or accidental disaster, but the predictable outcome of extractive economies and geopolitical interventions rooted in energy colonialism. The novel therefore contests dominant narratives that differentiate between climate change, war, and migration and instead promotes their structural interdependence. The analysis of energy colonialism and climate migration also revealed how postcolonial regions are sacrifice zones in the global energy system. The extraction of fossil-fuel and the environmental degradation it causes erodes livelihoods and heightens climate vulnerability, turning migration into a survival strategy rather than a choice (Daggett; LeMenager). *What Strange Paradise* captures of these dynamics is indirect, presenting war, scarcity and instability as interrelated forces that compel movement.

By foregrounding lived experience, the novel makes visible the human cost of energy injustice that is otherwise obscured in policy-driven and technocratic discourses. This paper also examined the Mediterranean Sea as an energy-inflected space in which climate change, border regimes, and global consumption patterns converge. In El Akkad's story, the ocean becomes a space of disconnection rather than a space of connection. The juxtaposition of energy circulation (oil transport, shipping routes, maritime infrastructure) with the drowning of refugees exposes the ethical contradictions of contemporary energy regimes (Mitchell). The sea is a potent metaphor for unequal mobility, exposing whose lives are protected and whose are disposable. The analysis of narrative precarity demonstrated how El Akkad's formal choices—fractured temporality, embodied vulnerability, narrative silence, and open endings—reflect the structural precarity experienced by displaced populations. Precarity is a politically produced condition sustained by energy-driven inequalities and exclusionary border practices.

The novel, through its child protagonist, deepens its ethical critique, forcing readers to confront the moral implications of global systems that normalize suffering (Szeman). In this context literature becomes a counter-archive that registers the lived realities that have been erased by dominant energy narratives. The study said that in energy futures *What Strange Paradise* refuses to be optimistic about technocrats and refuses easy answers. The novel refuses to imagine a future secured by energy transition alone, without the reckoning of historical responsibility and structural injustice. Instead, it shifts energy futures as ethical challenges that ask for accountability, reparative justice and a reimagining of mobility and belonging (Boyer). ...El Akkad's story suggests that the future is bleak for those already left behind unless we dismantle the unequal energy systems that power modern life. Ultimately, *What Strange Paradise* places the ocean, the refugee body, and narrative form as sites where the violence of energy colonialism becomes visible.

This paper stresses the importance of literary texts in questioning the cultural, political and ethical aspects of energy systems with the reading of the novel by Energy Humanities. El Akkad's work challenges readers, especially those in energy-consuming societies, to see their complicity in global inequalities and to envision futures not of extraction and exclusion, but of shared responsibility and care. As climate change causes increasing displacement across the globe, the lessons offered by Energy Humanities and literary analysis are increasingly important. *What Strange Paradise* is a powerful reminder that energy is never simply about infrastructure or policy, but a force that shapes lives, deaths and futures. Illuminating the human cost of fossil-fuel modernity, the novel calls for a critical reimagining of global energy relations and affirms literature's vital role in addressing the injustices of the present and the possibilities of a more equitable future.

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