

**CLIMATE INSPIRED FICTIONS AND PRESENT OBLIGATIONS TO  
FUTURE GENERATIONS**

An Undergraduate Research Scholars Thesis

by

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# ABSTRACT

Climate Inspired Fictions and Present Obligations to Future Generations

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In the 21st century, industrial expansion across the planet, individual and global mobility, and capitalistic-driven consumption have generated increased air and water toxicity, rising ocean levels, and mountains of non-biodegradable plastic. Climate fiction, or “cli-fi,” raises awareness about and promotes further research into addressing some of these climate issues. The narratives of this genre also present situations that aid in promoting an ethical transition to a more sustainable environment for present and future generations. The cli-fi novels that are the focus of this thesis - *American War* by Omar El Akkad and *The Wall* by John Lanchester - invite readers into an intergenerational conversation about our responsibilities to the planet for future generations. These fictional narratives raise questions about how to best practice a care ethic for the Earth and the future. Asserting that the climate crisis is of anthropogenic origin, the novels allude to humanity’s obligation to balance their actions’ benefits and costs across time and space. In this thesis, I will analyze the ethical questions generated in these futuristic novels and draw on the similarities and differences the characters experience in a climate crisis. Through a young

protagonist's view, each novel explores intergenerational conflict around global warming and provides an opportunity to debate implementing an ecological ethic of care for the future.

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Finally, to my parents, without their support in my attendance at Texas A&M University, I never would have had this opportunity to conduct research; I express my greatest appreciation.

The novels quoted in this text, *The Wall* (2019), by British journalist and novelist John Lanchester and *American War* (2017), by Egyptian-Canadian journalist and novelist Omar El Akkad brought wonderfully crafted stories, unique but comparable into a discussion.

Then academic articles and novels, gathered through the vast amount of available published sources in the Texas A&M Library Database, cited in the references, were utilized for conducting the thesis by the student. All other work performed for the thesis was completed by the student independently.

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## INTRODUCTION

Climate change generally refers to the human-instigated heating of the Earth's temperature. It is alleged to have begun during the 18th Century Industrial Age and continues rapidly during the current age of neoliberal capitalism. The increasing worldwide consumption of fossil fuels releases vast amounts of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, accelerating the heating of the Earth's atmosphere to dangerous levels. This current climate crisis raises ecological, political, economic, and technological questions about the future. It also demands that humans begin to imagine and discuss more sustainable and ethical relations with each other and the planet. Here, I discuss the ethical dimensions of two climate-fiction novels because the climate crisis threatens to change the currently valued condition for human, nonhuman, and environmental wellbeing.

Cli-fi novels advocate for raising awareness and promoting further research into addressing climate change issues. The narratives of this genre aid in promoting the discussion of an ethical transition to a more sustainable environment for present and future generations. The cli-fi novels that are the focus of this thesis - *American War* by Omar El Akkad and *The Wall* by John Lanchester - invite readers into an intergenerational conversation about our responsibilities to the planet for future generations. These fictional narratives raise questions on how to best practice a care ethic for the Earth and the future. In this thesis, I will analyze the ethical questions of these futuristic narratives and draw on the similarities and differences the characters experience in a climate crisis. In adopting a young protagonist's view, the novels shine a light on connections between intergenerational conflict and climate catastrophe and provide opportunities to debate what an ecological ethic of care for the future might entail.

## **Review of Climate Change as an Ethical Discussion**

Humanity faces a threat to its standard weather patterns, access to essential resources, and the quality and freedom of living under relatively stable political and social structures. The nonhuman-sphere, likewise, faces threats to existence with a decrease in biodiversity that would follow. These issues have generated an ecological discourse that advances energy transition and a shift in human activities, such as over-consumption and individual mobility. While there is still some debate about climate change as an anthropocentric crisis, most scientists agree that global warming is a humanly caused phenomenon. A study conducted by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in 2007 found that 97% of 1,372 climate researchers who were active in the field “broadly agreed with or directly enforced” the statement that it is “very likely” that the anthropogenic action of emitting greenhouse gases, mainly concentrating on the 20th century, is responsible for “most” of the “unequivocal” warming of Earth’s temperature (2007 IPCC Study qt. in James 136).

Environmental philosopher Simon James regards the climate crisis as a moral issue. He insists that to address the political and social challenges of the climate problem, “one must also consider the demands of morality” (James 137). James emphasizes the unethical shape of the global peril: “Although it is the rich who bear the greater responsibility,” and benefits of technology and industry, “for climate change, it is the poor, and in particular, poor people in poorer countries, who tend to bear the costs” (James 137). Developing countries will continue to face the impacts of a changing climate. Simultaneously, those who enjoyed their individual mobility, vast highways, and mass production and consumption practices will suffer the least (James 137). Similar to this approach to ethical thinking, John Nolt, a philosopher on environmental and intergenerational ethics, argues that only under the conditions of one’s ability

to prevent or cause harm is one morally responsible for the harm to another. Should the knowledge of one's actions reveal damage to another, it is one's responsibility to acknowledge that harm.

The position of James and Nolt is also applicable to ethical relations with future generations of humans who will live with the future effects of damage to the planet inflicted by current human activities, namely human's continued reliance on fossil fuels. The uneven distribution of environmental costs in the present unfairly distributes risk and harm to the future, requiring an acceptance of human moral responsibility for the future. It is difficult to pinpoint which individuals directly or indirectly, intentionally or unintentionally, harmed other individuals in specific ways at specific times. There is not one person, country, or generation responsible for addressing the issue because the range of vastly interconnected global effects of the crisis is overwhelming. Most of those who will receive the worst effects have yet to exist, placing a false perception that climate change is not an existential problem for humankind.

### **Review of the Genre of Climate Fiction**

Cli-fi novels merit critical attention because they explore ethical concerns surrounding climate change. As Stephanie LeMenager notes, cli-fi provides a focal point to raise awareness of global climate change. Citing theorist Ursula Heise, LeMenager explains that climate fiction "poses a challenge for narrative and lyrical forms that have conventionally focused above all on individuals, families or nations since it requires the articulation of connections between events of vastly different scales" (Heise qt in LeMenager 477). Climate fiction mirrors the present-day frustrations of the overwhelming philosophical and existential climate crises.

Some of the early popular cli-fi novels include Jules Verne's, *The Purchase of the North Pole* (1889), and multiple novels from British author J.G. Ballard, *The Wind from Nowhere*

(1961), *The Drowned World* (1962), and *The Burning World* (1964). While the earlier novels reflect a minimal understanding of climate change, the revelation of scientific information about fossil fuel consumption and increased atmospheric carbon levels introduce stories such as Susan Gaine's *Carbon Dreams*, and later many of Margaret Atwood's dystopian novels, *Oryx and Crake* (2003), *The Year of the Flood* (2009), and *MaddAddam* (2013). Since the early '90s, the newly expanding genre has welcomed a flood of new titles that reflect the climate crisis as it is understood now.

### **The Novels Selected for Analysis in this Thesis**

This thesis looks closely at two cli-fi novels: *The Wall* by Lanchester and *American War* by El Akkad. Both novels portray future dystopian worlds that have been altered by unchecked global climate change. The first selected novel, *The Wall* by British writer John Lanchester, is a dystopian novel told from a young man's perspective in what is assumed to be Britain, where he is sent to man the Wall. This Wall's construction was due to rising water levels and "Outsiders" who are desperate for the resources on the inside of the Wall. The protagonist and his love interest begin to understand why their world became the way it is. They question the Wall, those on the inside of the Wall, and those on the outside until they themselves become Outsiders. The second novel, *American War* by Canadian-American writer Omar El Akkad, tells a story of a family falling apart. When the father dies as an innocent bystander in a suicide bombing, he leaves the mother, twin girls, and eldest son to survive in the Second Civil War fought over the ban of oil. The main protagonist, the 'tomboy' twin Sarat at the age of six, retreats with her family to the refugee Camp Patience, where they face bloodshed and violence, poverty, and conflict. This novel discusses the story of a displaced family who lives in a world ravaged by

climate change and forced to face disappearing coastal land, limited food production, and chaotic social issues during a Civil War.

This research will focus on the novels' ability to illuminate dilemmas of environmental concerns such as rising water levels, social displacement, decreasing crop production, and the lack of a reliable economy or governmental structure. These novels are also interested in exploring the shift in the social order and its inevitable breakdown due to climate catastrophe. The novels provide an opportunity to consider how climate change could affect most if not all aspects of life for future generations. The first section of the thesis will highlight the examples of climate change in weather patterns and rising sea levels, food and resource scarcity, transportation and energy use, and different forms of community. The second section will then consider how these examples of climate change affected not only the individual sphere of life, but on and the grander scale in changing the social and political atmosphere. Both novels feature storylines that imagine scenarios with immigration issues, social tension, and political division surrounding a climate crisis. The third body section will then discuss how the symptoms of climate change, and the chain effects of shifts in the social and political atmosphere, have caused intergenerational tension by featuring examples in the books.

# 1. THE MISTAKES OF PAST GENERATIONS: A CLIMATE CRISIS

*The Wall* and *American War* help readers imagine a world turned upside down by the climate crisis. In this, they hope to motivate readers to act on behalf of the planet and the future now. Characters confront the terrifying symptoms of a changing climate and must deal with its effects in all aspects of life. The texts clarify that climate catastrophe results from the older generations avoiding the crisis by clinging to old governing structures and ways of thinking. In both books, it is an earlier generation that has caused the younger generation to be born into the dangers and discomforts of the climate crisis.

## 1.1 Weather and Sea Levels as Examples of Climate Change in Cli-Fi

Both novels emphasize the broad and severe effects of climate change on landscapes and lives. *The Wall* centers on the mass immigration flows that respond to resource scarcity. It places readers inside the perspective of a man assigned to protect a massive wall, constructed by a nation that appears to be England, in response to rising sea levels and the desperate immigrants fleeing their flooded homes. The Wall's construction aims to maintain peace and order for those inside it by protecting them from "the Others" outside. News received on the inside of the Wall by the "defenders" refers to "crops failing or countries breaking down or coordination between rich countries, or some other emerging detail of the new world we were occupying since the Change" (Lanchester 11). The characters in the novel use the phrase "The Change" to describe the shift caused by the climate crisis. The simple term, capitalized, suggests something of the gravity of all of the significant changes brought about by global warming left unchecked.

Instead of subtle descriptions of daily life after climate disaster in *The Wall*, El Akkad prefers more striking examples of the ways climate change impacts everyday life. In *American*

*War*, a civil rebellion over the prohibition of oil erupts, dividing the USA in two. The novel explains that political and social polarization results from a nation struggling to adapt to rising oceans, extreme storms, and resource scarcity. El Akkad describes how the heating climate affected the weather and landscapes. To illustrate some of the natural world changes, El Akkad mentions examples as they happen through characters' experiences. Sarat, for instance, admires a book that washes up on shore, *The Changing Earth*, at their shipping container home. The inside includes illustrated maps of the world, both old and new. The new maps look similar except that coastlines now pushed inland and islands were gone "with the edges of the land shaved off" (El Akkad 23). While the sea swallowed the land, so did its topography change. In the book's prologue, Sarat's nephew, Benjamin, introduces his hobby of looking at old postcards from the early 21st century and reminiscing about what it had been like before the Earth's climate changed the environment of America. His collection features pictures of beaches bordering the oceans before the rising sea erased them and untouched landscapes before they were burnt and browned by the sun and flooded with those displaced from the coasts. He compares these landscapes to his present, where "all but the sea and the mountains are gone," and the creeping sea pressured to constantly reinforcing docks when the intense storms roll through unannounced<sup>1</sup> (El Akkad 5).

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<sup>1</sup> The ocean is at the Mississippi Sea. Described with brown coastal water, "the sea's mouth opened wide over ruined marshland, and every year grew wider" (Lanchester 11). As the water seeped into the land, old factories and buildings, railways and roads disappeared, everything swallowed to where even the great city of New Orleans was now underwater. There were governmental efforts in America to rally a response to the rising water levels. Decades prior, before the lower half of Louisiana's was swallowed by the sea, the government spent billions of dollars building miles of seawalls, raised causeways, and even floating towns with the optimism that enough, "concrete and dirt and pride and money," the land could be saved, (Lanchester 68).

The novel describes dust storms, the rarity of snow in the North<sup>2</sup>, and underground cities built to escape the heat<sup>3</sup>. Across the sea, those in the Bouazizi Empire now live in subterranean dwellings because the surface is too hot. In Cairo, the empire's capital, it is "frighteningly hot, even in January," too hot to be outside. Eventually, residents are forced to retreat north or "the burgeoning indoor and underground cities that have largely replaced the ancient ones above the ground" (El Akkad 115). The novel includes instances like these to drive home to the reader the pending dangers of global warming.

## 1.2 Examples of Resource Scarcity in Climate Change

In *The Wall*, climate change has affected daily life, including the book's examples of food and resource scarcity. Present-day commodities like honey and chocolate are a delicacy<sup>4</sup>. Generally, in this future, there is not overproduction of food because there is resource scarcity<sup>5</sup>. The food you eat is the food in season, and agriculture is no longer a human-operated sector. Kavanaugh explains that even he lived in the city, and when visiting the country, everything

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<sup>2</sup> Alongside the intense weather patterns, those in the North rarely received snow anymore. Benjamin shared that "it hasn't snowed in years," except for an occasional frost in January (Lanchester 6).

<sup>3</sup> After retreating inland to the refugee camp, Martina had spent enough time there to sense when a dust storm might come. She could sense the "familiar aridity, an accretion of invisible weight in the air," before a bronze fog would envelop the sky for a few days causing the camp to run out of air canisters and wet wipes (Lanchester 93).

<sup>4</sup> In *The Wall*, one of the highly valued sweet treats of this future is chocolate. It is a rarity for the period after the Change. Similar to chocolate in *The Wall*, for Sarat, honey is a rarity. When Gaines asked Sarat if she'd ever tasted honey and she said she didn't much enjoy the honey that comes in the rations, he explained to her that it was not honey, "that's mush, grown by scientists in a lab in Pearl River," (El Akkad 146). As he served her honey spread on a piece of toast, he explained it came from something living, and "what you get from the living you can never truly copy, you can never fake" (El Akkad 146). Additionally, 'fake' food circulates in the camp is when the adults get together for religious service; they "serve that orange juice that tastes like oranges" (El Akkad 94).

<sup>5</sup> When a smaller group of Kavanaugh's friends from the company went camping, Mary, the aspiring chef of the group, shared her excitement for the future off the Wall, "when she could cook whatever she wanted, as long as it was in season," (Lanchester 73). At this point, everyone was limited in the variety of ingredients they could use by the season and availability of an item. As someone born in a generation that never experienced massive warehouse shops and grocery stores, she finds the unlimited accessibility in the range of ingredients "weird and wrong too" (Lanchester 73). She conceptualized the idea that what is grown from the ground during that particular season. is "what you've got to cook and that's what you've got to make it interesting because there's no choice you know?" compared to going to large shops where you buy, "stuff that just got off a plane from who knows where," (Lanchester 74).



seemed empty and underpopulated. “Even now when we grow all our own food and there’s more said about farming and food than ever before, you never actually see any people working on the land. Drones and bots, yes; people, no,” insinuating that only artificial intelligence, robots, and the sort are growing the food that is in season (Lanchester 136). Agricultural and rural living do not exist in the future, inside *The Wall*.

The storyline of *American War* similarly provides examples of similar crop production and resource scarcity issues. The refugee camp’s access to clean water was through the water bottles shipped monthly in boxfuls<sup>6</sup>. Restaurants still exist; however, the menu differs heavily from what it would be in the 21st century. When the Chestnut sisters visit the port town of Augusta, they stop at a restaurant where in the changing climate included a menu of “chicken liver; cracklings; rice smothered in redeye gravity; corn chips and Mississippi caviar; beef that was not beef but pigeon, charred black on the outside and pink within,” this cut of meat is also referred to as ‘flying steak’<sup>7</sup> (El Akkad 246, 248)<sup>8</sup>. The camp received prepackaged foods from the Empires across the sea, some lab-grown, and the South scrounges for food and clean water while the north enjoys fresh meat. These details contribute to the novels’ attempts to raise

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<sup>6</sup> “their crumpled remains were the most ubiquitous form of litter in the camp” (El Akkad 90). For beverages served to the older crowd, during a time of limited crop production in the South, the wartime alcoholic beverage was referred to as joyful, “made from whatever was on hand, no two jugs ever the same” (El Akkad 110).

<sup>7</sup> Used to their ‘flying steak’ and chickens, meat is a delicacy for the South. When visiting the rebel group that called themselves the Virginia Cavaliers one day looking for her brother, Sarat saw they were grilling meat. Questioning the source of the rare sight, one of the rebels slipped that they had earned it from one of the Northern generals. He explained that this meat was well deserved and hard-earned compared to the “pigs up there, they eat like this every night,” and when he asked Sarat the last time she had steak, she could only remember once back when she was little in Louisiana (El Akkad 189). After sinking her teeth into the charred outside yet, juicy marbled flesh inside, she questioned how someone could “eat this well every day and not die from the shame of it - when just a few miles away there lived so many subsisting on so little” (El Akkad 189).

<sup>8</sup> Another striking difference of the restaurant is how the owner had decorated it with old extinct animals. He was a collector of “long-dead things, species that had once existed but could not adapt to the planet’s unbreaking fever,” heads of caribou, muskoxen, sea lions, and white foxes stared down upon the customers (El Akkad 246).

awareness and advocate for the planet and the future. This dystopian future world is one readers can prevent from coming into existence.

### **1.3 Examples of Climate Change in Transportation and Energy Use**

In these storylines, another example of how climate change influenced daily life includes the shifts in energy use and transportation. In *The Wall*, the novel hints that due to the global damages that previous energy sources incurred, there is now efficient use of nuclear power. Inside the Wall, “energy is plentiful, thanks to nuclear power, but fuel isn’t, especially not aviation fuel,” only the Elite that governs and funds the country the Wall surrounds are still able to utilize oil (Lanchester 27).

Considering the ban on oil in *American War*, presumably there is a significant reduction in automobile usage. The family takes a “Civilian Transport’ school bus powered by solar panels on its roof to travel to the refugee Camp Patience, and the bus moves slowly while the panels collect sunlight (El Akkad 63). There are no longer open freeways because of the north and south divide, and now there is a middling border. Compared to the prewar nation, whose highways ran across all states freely, that now was divided in the middle and barricaded with “razor wire and guard towers” that served as checkpoints for the border (El Akkad 68).

Where once the logos of fast food and gas stations sprinkled the highways, now, the “logos of the gas stations had been blacked out,” and a few rebels had redrawn the logos in graffiti (El Akkad 69). Where once greenery occupied either side of the roads, now the trees that lined the highway “carried no leaves, only barren branches,” leaving less of a view to gaze out the window (El Akkad 69). When passing through the Mississippi Border to get to the camp, looking out the window, Sarat noticed as they moved through Louisiana that “the fields they passed were empty and browning, the trees limp and bare” (El Akkad 72). Blown-out tires

decorated the sides of the road along with billboards that illustrated images of “destruction and carnage: city blocks reduced to rubble; the dust-lacquered corpses of children; soldiers from the Free Southern State assisting the destitute families who lived in the border towns,” (El Akkad 72). These examples are vastly different depictions of traveling the open, well-maintained roads of the automobile-driven American 21st century.

#### **1.4 Different Forms of Community in *The Wall***

In both novels, people are forced to congregate in different forms of communities. *The Wall* provides a glimpse of the potential communities that form in response to climate change. After living in the walled nation, Kavanaugh experiences a flotilla community that survives off the ocean and pirates that brave the seas scavenging for resources, both committed to daily routines that ensure their survival. This is of ethical concern because it is almost a backtracking of human evolution. For the older generations, their life course was dictated by their aspirations. For the newer generations surviving this climate crisis, these communities are forced to spend their days scavenging for resources. The novel ends with uncertainty when Kavanaugh and Hifa’s final community is with a hermit on an oil rig in the middle of the ocean, maybe a metaphor to the grander notion that for all of humanity, once their supplies run out, they will return to scavenging for survival.

Kavanaugh and his group came across a unique form of communal living when spotting a flotilla community out at sea<sup>9</sup>. The community is composed of floating structures tied together and anchored between the island’s protective rocks. As other boats floated by, they arrived piecemeal and over time. Their crews were from nowhere and anywhere,” this was when

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<sup>9</sup> Approaching the island, they were distraught to see there was nowhere to land because the Island, “like every coastline in the world after the Change,” was beachless (Lanchester 185). However, the rocky ground jutting out of the water formed a cove where they found a flotilla of boats in the middle.

Kavanaugh realized that he himself was an Other, joining a community of Others (Lanchester 188). These communities were not created by shared ethnicity, culture, or nationality. Instead, they were individuals separated from the larger population and living as a group of strangers. The floating community survived by setting traps, catchments, lines, and nets throughout their floating structures, and Kavanaugh was amazed that the community well-stocked in fish and water<sup>10</sup>. There were no fires with a lack of fuel to cook their food, fish, and seagulls; the meat was eaten raw.

Everyone in the community has some responsibility, “nobody was idle,” almost back to the hunter and gathering stages of humanity when there were always things to do with the nets and traps (Lanchester 194)<sup>11</sup>. The maritime life was not easy, constantly worrying about food supply, a storm tearing the community apart, or dangerous Others out at sea. Kavanaugh realized that winter would be a challenging time on the water. He also knew it was survivable because “the community had already survived a winter and knew how to do it” (Lanchester 194). That is not to say there have not been many people lost along the way. The group that recently joined the floating community assumed there had once been other members in the floating community, “the subject was never discussed.” (Lanchester 199). However, one could assume they sailed to find land and food, some might have succeeded in finding land in the South or getting over the Wall, but most likely, many past members probably had died either at sea or attempting the Wall. Here humanity has adapted to the rising water levels and limited resources by living on and off the

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<sup>10</sup> However, there was a lack of fuel with a small amount of wood, “which was too precious to burn,” and a small quantity of fuel, “it wasn’t clear what to do with that, so it was being kept for emergencies,” (Lanchester 188).

<sup>11</sup> Sick of nothing but fish, seaweed, and seagulls as their diet, the leading couple of the community, Kellan and Mara, asked Kavanaugh to dive and look for more food. Kavanaugh explains that recreational swimming, “wasn’t especially popular in the world after the Change... nobody swam in the sea anymore,” however the task gave him a sense of purpose with something to do, “other than just exit and wait for... it wasn’t clear what,” as a result, he found a variety of seaweeds and scallops to add to their diet (Lanchester 192).

ocean. It is dangerous, lonely, and challenging, yet in a community, the future generations found strength in numbers as a principle of adaptation. For future generations, there are two options, either living in a nation whose resources are protected behind walls or living as a scavenger out on the open sea. Outside of the Wall, with the absence of a governing authority, a community will face the threat of other communities vying for their resources while lacking the ability to protect them, in this case, the violent example of the pirate attack.

When Hifa and Kavanaugh were separated from the flotilla community after the pirates invaded, they interacted with another individual who recognized strength in numbers, yet in small numbers. The couple came across a rig, an “oil or gas installation,” where they met their host, the hermit, the third member of their final community in the story<sup>12</sup> (Lanchester 229). When Hifa thanked him for saving them, he did not speak in response, and when she asked if they could look at the rest of the rig, the man replied with a twitch of his head. After facing the banishment from the walled nation and the welcoming hospitality of a floating community torn apart by unwelcoming pirates, both Kavanaugh and Hifa were curious why their hermit host had let down the ladder to the rig. When asking, “why...why did you let us on?” the mute hermit replied by using pieces of paper, boats, and a box, the rig to symbolize his story<sup>13</sup> (Lanchester 250). He responded with two fingers, “the answer appeared to be because there was only two of

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<sup>12</sup> They circled the rig looking for a ladder, however after checking all the possible locations for a ladder, they were disheartened (Lanchester 229). Until a retractable ladder appeared, “for a moment I doubted what I was seeing, then realizing that it must be a retractable ladder and that somebody had extended it for us.” (Lanchester 231). This meant that they were not alone and that somebody was allowing them into the shelter of the rig. When they reached the top of the ladder to a platform, someone locked the door leading to the rig but a jug of water and a small paper bag full of granola bars, “of the kind we had been given when we were on the Wall,” a was left out for them, (Lanchester 234). The following day when they woke up on the platform, they were happy to see another fresh jug of water, and the door to the rig bolted shut the night before was now open for them.

<sup>13</sup> He explained by using the pieces of paper circling the box that people that were once on the rig with him had left. When other boats came by and revolved around the rig, he did not let them down. However, when Kavanaugh and Hifa’s boat, a notability smaller piece of paper, came to the rig, the hermit decided to let them in. He was lonely, the people there “all went away,” and he was on his own (Lanchester 250). After sharing his story, Hifa asked again why the two of them and not the other boats that visited the rig, he responded with two fingers.

us” (Lanchester 252). Where the flotilla community had been small, it still required group participation for gathering food and water and attracted dangerous communities like the pirates that presumably also circled the rig. The hermit understood that in a future where everyone is scavenging for survival, a smaller group is easier to manage and provide for while simultaneously defending from loneliness. While the hermit’s form of communication “was going to take some getting used to as a form of communication, learning a new nonlanguage,” Kavanaugh and Hifa were welcomed into his shelter where he shared his safety and resources, and that was communication enough (Lanchester 252).

After leaving the larger walled nation, Kavanaugh faced the reality of the hardships of survival outside of the Wall. The lifeboat crew found hope in finding a friendly and survivable community, only to meet the violent interaction with the sea scavengers. The couple found solace in their temporary companion on their rig, only with the illusion that supplies will eventually run out. Yet again, they will be forced to brave life at sea for survival. Ethically, this is concerning because it starkly contrasts what presently the majority of what humanity experiences. Where now there are higher concentrations of congregated living and abundant resources from overproduction, the future generations might be forced into living in smaller communities while constantly worrying about having enough resources and will continue to rely on strength in numbers for survival.

### **1.5 Different Forms of Community in *American War***

Similar to Lanchester’s novel, in *American War*, Omar El Akkad shows a few examples of changes in living conditions and communities under the pressures of a future with a changing climate. These examples are less troublesome than those in *The Wall* because they feature better adaptation practices for everyday living. Ethically, this credits the notion that even if there is

future resistance to adaptation in politics, the human population will still need to respond with sustainable practices.

The first form of communal living in *American War* was the Chestnut's storage container home in Louisiana. Sarat's family lived in a steel container from a shipyard that was anchored in cement. Built for sustainability, the container was fashioned with solar panels on the roof and supported a rainwater tank that was all protected by a tarp when it rained (El Akkad 12-13). They maintained a chicken coop, and in their small kitchen that made up a third of their shipping container held their pantry for food<sup>14</sup>. When Sarat's father died in a rebel bombing, in the absence of the family's sole provider's it caused the mother and children to pack up and move to a different community. The Chestnuts later relocated to the Charity Houses in Georgia reserved for refugees from the Southern states that similarly depict adaptation measures in sustainable living. On their new plot of land near the bank, they had a portable desalination box that cleansed the river water, 'soiled with salt far outland, where the ocean intruded on the sunken country,' and produced about two gallons of drinking water in an hour on solar power<sup>15</sup> (El Akkad 219). This form of living highlights some simple adaptations to daily life that the typical American family would experience in the future of a changing climate. While some in the present would find issues with the standard of living depicted in the story, others would prefer a less materialistic and consumption-focused lifestyle, especially in reducing an electric and water bill.

The second community the family came across was the refugee camp, a result of war-torn America. While this example is not directly related to climate change adaptation, it is a

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<sup>14</sup> The pantry was stocked with, "sweet potatoes, rice, bags of chips and sugar cereal, pecans, flour and pebbles of grain milled from the sorghum fields," and a mini-fridge that used a lot of the solar panel energy to keep their milk, butter and old Coke cans (El Akkad 14).

<sup>15</sup> Karina, the caretaker of the Chestnut's residence, met with a young rebel on a skiff who delivered their groceries and a diesel drum for their secret generator stashed in the locked storm shelter beside the house (El Akkad 220).

community that forms as a social response to political action responding to the change. Quartering the four slices of the middle of Mississippi, Georgia, Alabama, and South Carolina, Camp Patience housed the refugees that were “assigned to tents according to their native state” (El Akkad 90)<sup>16</sup>. People are organized by tent neighborhoods and are supplied by “anonymous benefactors across the ocean in China and the Bouazizi Empire” (El Akkad 98). They shower in gender-separated tents, and their proximity of defecating in the same spot causes a ‘trench’ of waste (El Akkad 101). There are only a few fathers and husbands in the camp, similar to Marcus’ dad, “like many of the men in the camp, he was potbellied and possessed an unruly beard that hid the contours of his neck,” his and the other men’s presence in the camp, “registered as vaguely anomalous,” in a base predominantly composed of women and children (El Akkad 103). The camp features an example of mass displacement, a lack of purpose for the residents, and living with limited resources, all as a collective response to a nation undergoing political and climate change. Like the Chestnut family, the residents were seeking asylum from the violence of war; a war started because of the ban on oil. How probable this specific scenario is to the realistic future is questionable. However, it opens the conversation that authoritative political response to global warming could ripple effects on society.

The camp community is an example of what it would look like to live as a displaced person. However, for those living through the crisis in the city, the book provided an example of what massive displacement and a large population would do to a cityscape. While residing at the

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<sup>16</sup> In the middle of these four slices were the camp’s administrative buildings for new refugee processing, the medical centers, mess hall, and a chapel with tents spreading out until the bordering fences. The north of the refugee camp was Tennessee, which was Northern country where Union soldiers would shoot down anyone who attempted to cross the North’s southern border. The refugees from the slice of South Carolina were permanently stuck in Patience, with “no hope of ever going home, because the South Carolina they knew was no more,” it was now infected by a virus intended to prevent the war (El Akkad 89). Those inside the quarantined South Carolina wall are stuck there, and their family stuck outside can never return home.



Chestnut residence, Sarat visited a futuristic cityscape reversed from the present day. Upon entering the capital of the South, Atlanta, Sarat recognized how there was a reverse ordering to the cityscape. She knew that once the skyscrapers assembled in the center of downtown and beyond that, the hospitals, universities, parks, businesses, and neighborhoods extended to the outskirts. Now she noticed how the tallest buildings on the outer edges of the city were “a wall of towering slums pierced the sky, afloat in haze” (El Akkad 284). These buildings were overflowing with refugees from the South, “from places ravaged at random by the Birds; the poor of the southernmost coast who fled the storms and the scorching heat; soldiers and rebels and people who were born here,” or whose families were from there and knew nowhere else to go (El Akkad 285). The city’s innermost held the bureaucracy of the southern states, including the capital, residences of the political officers, and mansions of the “South’s neo-grandeens, who owned the sweatshops and the factories and the farms” (El Akkad 285). What used to be a bustling economy of an internationally traveled metropolis now shelters the masses displaced for a majority of reasons, most related to the rising water or the war, both reasons stemming from the changing climate. All of the communities in *American War* show some form of adaptation to the changing environment and internal flows of migration. While the story of the Chestnut’s first shipping container home and the second Charity house both operating sustainably is featured in a fictional novel, it is a safe prediction to expect houses of future generations equipped with the need to manage sustainably. And while the refugee camp and inverse cityscape where communities were examples of unimaginable massive flows of migration, it is not inconceivable to expect that if there is political enforcement of climate change policies that disrupt daily American life, many will face a challenge of adaptation to the policies.

## **2. THE GOVERNING POLITICS AFFECTING BOTH GENERATIONS**

In both *American War* and *The Wall*, the issues erupting from climate change have shifted the daily practices of life and forms of community. It has also influenced a shift in the social and political atmosphere, both of concern ethically because it helps imagine the potential of what it could look like for future generations alongside unchecked climate change. In *The Wall*, there is unfair political enforcement of mandatory service on the Wall while Elites are exempt from that service while enjoying other privileges. These Elites attempt to maintain their hierarchy by pacifying the nation by providing them Help, or the Others forced into servitude if they safely travel inside the Wall, which is disapproved of by some of the population. Both novels discuss immigration issues, in *The Wall* more mass immigration and in *American War* internal immigration. Then in *American War*, the story illuminates the social division and internal displacement in response to the war brewing over the banishment of oil use and the repercussive impacts on the economy and many aspects of individual life.

### **2.1 The Governing Elites and their Politics in *The Wall***

The political atmosphere in these climate fiction novels illuminates the issue that under a changing social and environmental atmosphere, so too will the political sphere shift. In *The Wall*, few issues raise ethical questioning. The Elites or government authorities send the younger generation to the Wall while abstaining from the mandatory service themselves. Aware of their corrupt actions, there is resistance among the citizens inside the Wall who disagree with the Elite's use of Other's as slave-like servants as the Help with no socioeconomic status in society. In maintaining the "us vs. them" mentality between the Defenders and the Others, they ensure blind loyalty from the new generation and control the immigration flows.

When a younger politician addressed Kavanaugh and his company, he described the Change and the political and social situation in that area. He justifies the reason there is a Wall and the critical task of its defense. He appealed to a difference of experience between generations by differentiating this change with, “there was our parents’ world, and now there is our world,” highlighting the disparity between the present generation experiencing the aftermath of actions from older generations before (Lanchester 104). In this narrative, the Change is continuous, and there was an initial wave of people seeking safety in their new reality. During Kavanaugh’s time on the Wall, he would play a role in a second wave of scrambling for “new shelter, to climb to higher ground, to find a ledge, a cave, a well, an oasis, a place where they could find safety,” causing flows of people from South to North to hopefully reach the inside barriers of the Wall or for the North Sea cast survivors to seek the South in response to an unwelcoming North (Lanchester 105). The politician revealed to the Defenders of societal resistance and disagreement towards the policies of the Wall. That there were “those who see our desire for security, for safety, for peace... as a selfish desire,” and the organization of these people results in the internal network of communicating with Others to help them inside the Wall (Lanchester 106-107). The novel alludes to the certainty of governmental corruption and self-interest that influenced the life trajectory of the generation born into the crisis that man the Wall.

The environmental crisis in *The Wall*, that started the reaction of immigration and protection of resources, illuminate the governing politics and ethics from the past generation lingering around that affect the newer generations. The Elites and politicians continue to abuse powers and enjoy their privileges of hypocritically avoiding service to the Wall while enjoying the benefits of protection from the Others. The Defenders are forced into a mandatory service under the constant fear of allowing an Other over the Wall and facing the punishment of being

cast to sea. The Others, hoping for a safe, warm, dry, plentiful place to live, manage to get inside the Wall only to face death or slavery.

## **2.2 Immigration Issues in *The Wall***

Due to the issue of climate change, there is mass immigration from resource scarcity and rising oceans. One of the significant ethical issues presented in *The Wall* is the treatment of those in the future generations who are forced to be immigrants, the “Others.” The Elites maintain order and immigration flows within the walled nation by controlling the chipped citizens and allowing some of the outside Others into the Wall, “it’s how they renew themselves and how they spread just enough of the benefits around to stop disorder rising from below” (Lanchester 71). The Elites would inform the Defenders anytime there was a breach on the Wall, “we’d hear when, where, how many,” embedding into their nature the “us” versus “them” sentiment to any outside immigrants (Lanchester 11). At first, the law allowed the Others who managed to get inside to stay if they showed they had valuable skills. However, this law changed when it acted as a pull factor and attracted more Others. Now when someone gets over the Wall, they “have to choose between being euthanized, becoming Help, or being put back at sea. There’s no escape and no alternative,” and those inside the Wall must be chipped, previous Other or native citizen (Lanchester 45). Most of the Others within the Wall choose to be Breeders. Their children, usually of various ethnicities, are given to older assumed white couples native to the Wall, possibly enforcing complete assimilation and preventing ethnic enclaves. Kavanaugh pondered what it would have been like as an Other on the wrong side of the Wall considering that the “Wall must look like a terrible thing from the sea,” however his compassion was short-lived when he admitted that it was ingrained into the Defenders to constantly stay on guard and, “were used to feeling frightened of them, hostile to them: if they came here, we would kill them,”

because those on the Wall understand it as, “we don’t owe them anything. I’m glad I’m one of us and not one of them” (Lanchester 64).

If these alienated Others make it over the Wall and choose to live, they become the Help. Within the social structure, the Help is lower than the average citizen, almost a slave yet never explained that way; they are “free” and allotted by the governing authorities if you can pay for their living costs (Lanchester 56). An assumed structure places the Elites at the top, the Defenders and Breeders of the new generation, and the older generation living inside the Wall as average citizens. Then the Help at the bottom are almost considered as domestic servants. These people, who were once Others displaced by the worldwide change and chaos, who survived the long days floating under the sun and the frightening nights in turbulent waters with waves twice the size as their floating devices, managed to get on the inside of the Wall only to be exploited into servitude instead of freedom and stability.

Those who have Help have to afford them, usually, “Help is unaffordable for most ordinary people,” so when Kavanaugh and a group of those in his company went for a camping trip during their break, they brought along Help (Lanchester 68). Considering that usually, you have to carry your food and gear when camping anyway, carrying extra portions, or rather having the Help carry their own plus the group’s portions and gear sounded like a grand idea. They could walk with their small fun-sized packs while the Help carried larger packs with all of their gear. This allowed the group to explore all day and come back to dinner cooking, tents set up, and a fire going. That sounds like a wonderful camping trip. It gave Kavanaugh’s group a “taste of what it’s like to be rich” to be like the Elite who have servants for free. However, even Kavanaugh and others during that time could understand that it was also awkward, “from the human point of view,” for the group who “weren’t the kind of people,” who had Help regularly

and Kavanaugh was surprised with, “how little adjustment it took,” to get used to having a domestic servant (Lanchester 68). For some, having the Help is surely a status symbol, “a technique for signaling that you were rich,” and how easily those in the newer generation were exposed to having an almost slave and easily got used to it, appreciated it because to them they only understand, “having Help was like having a life upgrade” (Lanchester 76). The unethical treatment of future immigrants relates to similar treatments of the immigration crisis in the present day. However, similar to most other examples in these climate fiction novels, a climate crisis will amplify these issues’ severity; one of those highlighted in both books is immigration.

### **2.3 Immigration Issues in *American War***

Similar to *The Wall*, *American War* presents a storyline questioning the ethical treatment of future immigrants during a climate crisis, in this case, internal migration. The American North and South’s collective actions and the foreign powers’ contribution, coupled with displacement from coastal lands underwater due to climate change, has created a major internal immigration issue. Sarat’s father was an immigrant who had “sneaked into the country from Mexico as a child back when the flow of migrants still moved northward,” and Martina, the mother, was born in America (El Akkad 17). However, the father’s immigrant status might have influenced his inability to acquire a north work permit. Additionally, to an immigrant status influencing inner migratory flows, now political affiliation could affect one’s ability to cross borders. When Sarat’s parents were discussing what was required to get a permit, Benjamin knew a man who “knows the man at the permit office,” that without his recommendation, they might as well “try to shoot” their way across the Northern border (El Akkad 18). Martina warned him not to say he did any work for the Free Southerners because if he does, they would then “take you into another room and ask you all kinds of other questions. And then, in the end, they won’t give you a permit

on account of security freemasons or whatever they call it” (El Akkad 19). Benjamin assured his wife that the North has a high demand for labor, they have jobs and schools there, and it was worth the effort. Later, when the family’s sole provider dies, the Chestnuts are forced to migrate inward to a refugee camp. When talking to the older man on the bus, he shared to Martina that his children and grandchildren were in California that is now Mexican territory. Since then, he has lost communication with them. He himself was displaced from his home when Southern gunrunners wanted his land to dock their ships on the Mississippi and gave him ten minutes to pack, “ten minutes! To pack up fifty-six years!” the old man exclaimed in distraught (El Akkad 67).

Immigrants flooded to the North, and most landed in refugee camps like the Camp Patience Refugee Facility. It was considered neutral ground in the Civil War and supported by the Red Crescent, one of the aid groups, “the one they send to all the biggest wars,” yet it was run by the Free Southern State soldiers who make sure that no armed rebels are entering the camp (El Akkad 77). The family was assigned to a tent in the camp’s Mississippi section to stay for the next six years. That is as far north as the migratory flow generally goes in this storyline, stopping halfway at Mississippi. To avoid further internal migration, the North prevents unauthorized internal migration from the south, especially from the camp, by guarding the road and gate that leads to the Northern Tennessee border where snipers in the trees will shot anyone who crosses, they “don’t care if its kids or women or anybody” (El Akkad 103). Where once immigration flows from abroad and the Southern border concerned the federal government and independent states, now the divided nation of the North only cared that none from the South entered its borders and shared in its resources. Presuming that the American government adopts climate change adaptation policies a lot sooner than the hypothetical years of the late 2070s-

2080s in El Akkad's novel, perhaps the nation's chaos will not grow to include internal mass displacement and a middling divide between North and South.

#### **2.4 The Political Divide in *American War***

*American War* similarly provides a fictional storyline crammed with political issues of internal displacement and migration during a Civil War fought with innocent citizens caught in the crossfire. El Akkad's novel relates to a different set of ethical questions regarding the future generations aimed at the American crowd. It provides a scenario that erases one, if not the most favored, commodity of American capitalism, oil, and society, resulting in social and political collapse. The nation is divided when the North bans fossil fuel use and production, the South rebels. The Second American Civil War spanning twenty years was fought between the Union and secessionist states of Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, South Carolina, and Texas before merging with Mexico. The Southern states were resisting the Sustainable Future Act, "a bill prohibiting the use of fossil fuels anywhere in the United States" that was drafted in response to "decades of adverse climate effects, the waning economic importance of fossil fuels, and a deadly oil train derailment in 2069 (El Akkad 27). The South's declaration of independence in 2074 started the war. It was followed by five years of battling along the northern borders of Mississippi, Alabama, and Georgia, coined the "Mag" until the fighting mostly subsided (El Akkad 27). Following the initial five years, rebel insurrectionists, supported by foreign agents from the Bouazizi Empire that were 'anti-American saboteurs,' engaged in guerrilla violence such as suicide bombings (El Akkad 28). During a long negotiation process, when peace was around the corner with the war about to conclude on the Reunification Day Ceremony, the protagonist Sarat was sent into the capital of Columbus, Ohio, in 2095 and released a biomedical warfare agent. The "Reunification Plague" was a virus that resulted in a nationwide epidemic



claiming an estimated 110 million lives, effects felt throughout the country for the next ten years (El Akkad 28).

The protagonist Sarat is first confronted with watching a Civil War unfold and disrupt her family's safety and peace. Wanting to contribute to the cause, she is taken under Albert Gains' wing, a recruiter for the southern rebels. When asked why he was from the North but fighting for the South, he explains that, "when the North tells you what they're fighting for, they'll use words like democracy and freedom and equality," yet those words do not mean what they used to and he claims they are misconstrued in the eyes of the North (El Akkad 174). This novel implies a general frustration from both sides, America as a whole, against the governing decisions and the major negative impacts these decisions have made on American citizens. The novel's protagonist, Sarat, is one member of the newer generation born in war-torn America that is gullible and easily brainwashed by a foreign influencer, Gains, to return America to its former glory. Like many born in her generation, this young woman is deprived of what would be considered today as a 'normal' childhood, as she faces growing up in a nation barely adapting to the changing climate.

Within the nation, the Southern rebels fought against the Northern Union "rather than stop using that illicit fuel responsible for so much of the country's misfortune" (El Akkad 23). After the ban of using anything fossil-fuel-powered, if one was caught with an old fossil-powered boat, car, or machine, they were arrested. However, some northern states, surrounding the rebellious Red states such as Louisiana, Arkansas, Tennessee, and North Carolina, were sympathetic to the cause of the Free Southern State', generally, "a man caught using fossil fuel in these parts was still an outlaw" (El Akkad 22). Those that risked owning a vehicle that still ran on 'prohibition fuel' signaled "not only of accumulated wealth but of connections, of status" (El

Akkad 25). This sounds inconceivable for 21st century America, a ban on oil, getting arrested for driving a fossil-fuel-powered car, the lack of individual mobility. These are overused and underappreciated presently that, if unaddressed, might endorse a future very similar to *American War*'s hypothetical scenario.

## **2.5 The International Political Situation in *American War***

El Akkad's novel provided an opportunity to imagine a scenario where there is a shift in the world's powers, the cycles of core and periphery country exploitation have shifted where America is transitioning to the periphery in its chaotic state. In a globalized world, the American atmosphere continues to have international relations. However, not many are allies. The dabbling of international forces into American politics further influences the chaos and the negative experiences of the future generation. As previously mentioned, the Bouazizi Empire's involvement with the American Civil War intended to prolong the war as much as possible (El Akkad 118). Firstly, international involvement was capitalistically driven. During the war's inner turmoil and disruption in their economy, there was a heavy reliance on foreign powers for the secessionist states. The states like Louisiana with their ports and Texas with their refineries were once rich in the currency of fossil fuels, "but as the rest of the world learned to live off the sun and the wind and the splitting and crashing of atoms, the old fuel became archaic and nearly worthless" (El Akkad 31). With the refineries and drills abandoned, the rebel states preferred to fight over prohibition and were running low on resources, "people came to rely more and more on the massive ships that arrived every month from the other side of the planet stocked with food, clothing, and other human necessities" (El Akkad 31). These ships from the growing superpowers of the Chinese and the Bouazizi Empires when a few decades earlier were "nothing more than a collection of failed and failing nations spread across the Middle East and North

Africa,” since the Fifth Spring revolution, old regimes were toppled, and new global powers emerged (El Akkad 31).

These newly emerging global powers of this futuristic scenario aim at acquiring and remaining in power. Once the global powers might have included America, now it was solely the Bouazizi Empire and China. When she was approached with carrying out the task of releasing the virus, Joes, an old friend of her mentor Albert Gaines, visited Sarat with the knowledge that a man who was attempting to find a cure for the virus that immobilized South Carolina had in the process created an even deadlier virus, “another disease of sorts, capable of wiping out entire cities, entire nations” (El Akkad 378). This man had arranged a deal with the Bouazizi Empire for refuge away from the *American War* and soon to be an infected country. All he required of Sarat was the willingness to release it. When she asked why it mattered to him if he was an agent of the Bouazizi Empire, he explained that his Empire is new with the intention of being the most powerful in the world, and thus, others must fall. In his twisted intentions, he revealed that if the war were reversed, if the South had been winning, perhaps he would be offering a Northern rebel to release the virus; it is “a matter of self-interest, nothing more” (El Akkad 379). While these fictional stories sound very far removed from present reality, it is sometimes necessary to remember the text’s subtle messages. While never directly stated, presumably, the American nation, more specifically the youth of the newest American generation, is exploited to further the older generations’ agenda, which is a foreign power. However, like most interests of the older generation, Albert Gaines and those who shared his beliefs felt less of a value placed on the younger generation by brainwashing them into acts of terrorism, sometimes in the form of suicide. Throughout both novels, an overall repetitive theme is a lack of value the older

generation placed on, the newer generation they were bringing into the world, acting in a 'matter of self-interest, nothing more' (El Akkad 379).

### 3. INTERGENERATIONAL ISSUES IN CLIMATE FICTION

The first of the two previous sections addressed how these cli-fi narratives depict how the effects of climate change influence the characters' daily lives. This is related to the conversation of sharing an ethical concern of whether the environment the present generations are handing to the future generations will be one where they can live without issues of resource scarcity and difficulty transitioning to sustainability. The second of the two previous sections explained how in the narratives under the pressures of a changing climate, there were humanitarian issues of internal and mass immigration, a corrupt or unstable political sphere. These previously mentioned sections relate to a third discussion of how in these narratives, there is a notable theme that exemplifies the tension between people in these future narratives, specifically between generations, with examples of human interaction in both familial and outside relationships. The effects of the climate not only influenced the environment and the social and political spheres but also created tensions broadly between generations as well as intimately between familial generations. Both *The Wall* and *American War* exhibit examples of intergenerational issues throughout the character's storylines.

#### 3.1 Broader Intergenerational Issues in *The Wall*

There is a broader intergenerational issue in the narrative of *The Wall*. Through the example of the policy enforced inside the walled nation that affects the younger generation born after The Change. In *The Wall*, Lanchester presents the young protagonist, Kavanaugh, who is sent to handle the National Coastal Defense Structure (NCDS), or simply the Wall, in obligation towards his two-year mandatory service. For those in his generation, "everybody goes to the Wall no exceptions. That's the rule" (Lanchester 33). The younger generation, born inside the

Wall during or after the Change, is forced to defend a structure that the previous generation built to solve a problem the previous generation caused. When Kavanaugh and his company are on leave after their first two weeks on the Wall, drinking and rowdy, they begin the melancholy chant of the “all-time Defender classic” (Lanchester 51). “We’re on the wall because. We’re on the Wall because. We’re on the Wall because....” then in the chant, they stomp three times and pause for three beats and repeat the chant, leaving no definite reasonable answer as to the reason for their obligation to mandatorily serve on the Wall when the previous generation did not (Lanchester 51). The younger generation serves without reason or purpose other than the knowledge that the previous generation lacked the ability to solve the issue, referred to as the Change, that raised the water levels and limited resources and caused the nation to construct the Wall.

Part of the previous generation living inside the Wall feels a sense of guilt that is apparent when coming across traveling Defenders when the general public moved away to avoid the company (Lanchester 57). Those in the younger generation who served on the Wall shared in common the reality that there would be life, “before the Wall and after the Wall,” assuming they were able to complete their service and Others did not get inside the Wall resulting in Defenders turned to the sea in their place, or they were killed in the attack (Lanchester 57). The comrades in Kavanaugh’s Company and his fellow Defenders “were friends because of things in the past, not the present” (Lanchester 57). The years in which this generation completes their mandatory service would probably time around when a 21st-century teenager graduates from high school potentially with the aspirations of attending college. Life after the Wall has the potential of normalcy. However, every individual born into the new generation is forced into a mandatory

service, a period during which they could die in an attack or be unfairly sentenced to live on the sea.

### 3.2 Broader Intergenerational Issues in American War

The seemingly purposeless military service the youth of the walled nation faced in *The Wall* is similar to what the young generation born into the climate crisis of the *American War* narrative experienced. The Southern Rebels were of a younger generation fighting in a war the older generation started because they clung to old ideals of capital from oil. While the driving reason for the war, the ban of oil, is relevant to the older generation, the younger generation is fighting because of the social pressures and hardships they have experienced in their present, due to the past's actions. The rebels were, "almost all of them teenagers," who wore mismatched uniforms and used weapons that were smuggled abroad from foreign armies, or their weapons were salvaged from their parents and grandparents, "the guns often older than the boys who carried them," (El Akkad 44). Up against the north, these young men were "untrained and ill-equipped," up against a superior army, they surely faced death, however, "in the dead-end towns where they were born, lay a slower kind of death - death at the hands of poverty and boredom and decay" (El Akkad 45). During this time of war and unrest, the younger men from this generation, instead of achieving an education or finding a job, join rebel groups in the South<sup>17</sup>.

In the beginning of him starting down the path of a rebel, Simon concerned his mother, Martina. When he came home drunk one night stumbling around in the tent to wake up Martina

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<sup>17</sup> Like Simon as a member of the Virginia Cavaliers and all the other rebel groups, they were all, "simply boys with guns, fanned out across the border, picking fights with Northerners'" (El Akkad 188). Some forms of protest start small, in the refugee camp, Simon and other rebels in the South's younger generation involve themselves in new forms of protest by hanging prohibited posters in their tents. After camp administrators banned any poster that featured a prohibition fueled muscle car, snakes of any kind especially the rebel rattlesnake, anything with the symbols or names of the Southern rebel groups, the current poster trend is to hang a poster of "pristine Texas desert, unspoiled and unmarked" in response to the overcrowded land (El Akkad 97). When the administration would ban images of empty pastures, the young rebellious generation would find something else to hang on their tent walls.

and the twins, Martina confronted her son about the pendant he wore of the Virginia Cavaliers, a southern rebel group. However, with no school, no promising jobs, and nothing better to do than being brainwashed by the South's cause, most young men choose to die in the Rebel's cause. At the camp and throughout the South, young men were charged with dealing with the consequences and duties of wartime generated from the past generation's actions. While throughout human history, war is repetitive in nature and safely assumable to occur in the future, a war that is instigated by an older generation's actions or lack thereof, not just their ideologies, that is fought by the younger generation already suffering the disparity of growing up in an environment ravaged by climate change is unfair. These two broader examples from both narratives highlight fictional storylines that invoke the necessary emotions to care for future generations to avoid experiencing anything less than the benefits of present actions.

### **3.3 The Young Generation betrayed by the Older Generation**

A more integrated example of how the influences of climate change pressures on the societal and political sphere influence many aspects of an individual life is the relationship between Sarat and Albert Gaines in *American War*. Sarat was a member of the young generation who, after growing up believing that her mentor of the older generation had her best interests at heart, was betrayed. Sarat met Albert Gaines at the age of twelve, who first sent her on errands delivering cash to different people around the camp. He claimed to help southerners by traveling around the South and looking for "special people," of which he believes Sarat to be one (El Akkad 149). These special people to Gaines are those who, "if given the chance and the necessary tools, would stand up and face the enemy on behalf of those who can't," even if that cost them their lives (El Akkad 149). This is the beginning of Gaines's exploitation of Sarat's gullible innocence at twelve years of age, appealing to her to help him in his agenda, the agenda



of a spy from the Bouazizi Empire sent to help the South and prolong the Civil War. Potentially the catalysts to the Southern suicide bombers, similar to the ‘special people’ description he just gave.

After she ran his errands, she would spend hours in his office as he taught her about nature, showing her textbooks containing “pictures of all the plants and animals that didn’t survive the planet’s warming,” he explained to her the history of the South, he most often, “talked about the way things used to be” (El Akkad 165). He recalled when ‘whole pigs’ were smoked and peaches, pecans and key lime pie existed, she fantasized in delight about this old world that had once existed that she “held to it some ancestral claim” (El Akkad 165). As a young curious and gullible 12-year-old, all of his stories were probably fascinating. He was using it to educate her on the old world. He explained her country had once been a fertile land, about the first Civil War and about what had led them to their circumstances. He instigated her infatuation with how the world used and used it to manipulate her into understanding how badly the nation failed at preventing the chaos it faced in the struggle to adapt to the changing world.

After the massacre, the three siblings settled into their new home, but Sarat was bent on revenge and fueled by her anger towards the complexity of the crisis in the divided nation. She would meet with Albert Gaines at a cabin where he taught her how to shoot, “at first he’d asked her if she preferred to make herself a weapon,” to become a homicide bomber (El Akkad 32). This, at first, she considered but then disliked the thought of leaving her family behind. She trained until she ‘hunted’ and shot a general, which instigated a turning point for the Second American Civil War<sup>18</sup>. Albert recruiting Sarat isn’t unique. He did this to many others, Sarat was

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<sup>18</sup> This rallied his son, Joseph Weiland Jr. who assumed dictatorship at the War Office, to exact his revenge by capturing over 250 rebel fighters from the South, ultimately her assassination helped, “pave the way for the eventual eradication of the rebel menace,” (El Akkad 238).

aware of his other 'pet projects and every time news of a successful homicide bomber reached her, "she always wondered if it wasn't Gaines who'd eased the farmer's suit onto the martyr's frame" (El Akkad 287). Through the later course of events, after being kept as a prisoner of war in horrible conditions and tortured for the first three years of her seven years there, she was released for a period of time as a broken woman<sup>19</sup>. For a while, she grew close to her nephew Benjamin, but when first given the opportunity to kill one of the guards who tortured her and then the opportunity to kill herself in order to deliver the Reunification Plague to the North, her short time of healing did not make up for a lifetime of hardship.

In Sarat's frustration during her time plotting to release the plague, she expressed the relationship between the older and the newer generations lost in the war. Those who inspired the war, the older generation, "want it to be like it was when they were young. But it'll never be like that again, and they'll never be young again, no matter what they do," and both the older generation of the North and South are at fault (El Akkad 292). She imagined what her world would have been like if the North had decided to refrain from reacting in violence to the south's rebellion against oil prohibition, how many people would not have died young or old. Her generation is different, they are not bound to the ideologies and clinging to the ways of the past, and while the two sides are fighting for a cause initiated by the older generation, it is up to the new generation to "pull the power from their hands" when facing two sides that, only "ever cared 'about was themselves" (El Akkad 292).

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<sup>19</sup> A broken husk of a woman, who once fought for a cause now felt broken and bent on revenge. Sarat moved home to Simon and Karina with their child, Benjamin, Sarat now about 30 yrs. old looking 50 where she felt most comfortable to stay in the shed. She spent most of her days and nights there occasionally coming out to walk in the evening.

### 3.4 How the Ban of Oil Lead to a Familial Fracture

In the novel *American War*, the storyline follows a family who fractures in a nation undergoing civil strife and climate change. This is of ethical importance in its relation to the standard of caring for the outcomes of future generations. So far, this discussion has presented many examples in two climate fiction narratives of hypothetical scenarios to imagine why there should be a reason to hold an obligation of care for the future. Climate change, according to science, will affect the environment. However, according to humanity, it has been shown to threaten more than the environment, the social and political spheres affecting especially the younger generations born into the crisis. In *American War*, political action taken in addressing a sustainably friendly ban on oil influenced the nation and larger community but also had a more intimate influence on the family. Entering the story at the beginning of the Second Civil War, 2075, the audience is introduced to the young Sara T. Chestnut, “but she called herself Sarat,” who lived with her mother Martina, father Benjamin, her twin six-year-old sister Dana, and older brother Simon (El Akkad 12). Her father died when a rebel insurrectionist detonated their suicide bomb in the lobby of the Federal Services Building in Baton Rouge, where he was trying to get a work permit to bring this family north (El Akkad 37). After her father’s death, when her mother was trying to find a place where they could go for food and shelter now that their primary provider was gone, they were near the new rebel camp when explosions were going off all night of bombs nearby. The very next morning, she frantically packed all of their things, and they crossed the Mississippi Sea’s mouth to find a new place to live in the refugee camp, Camp Patience, with all of the other displaced women and children.

The family is further fractured when the son becomes a rebel causing a rift between the mother and son. With the parents initially just wanting to go North in response to the rising

tensions of Civil War, the father dies, and the mother is left to raise the three children. The three children, mostly the oldest Simon, blames the mother for pushing the father to get a work permit in the North. She was upset that he had joined a rebel group when a rebel set off the bomb that killed their father. Upset, he accused her, “you killed him with all your nagging about going north, going north,” after his cruel words and her responding slap, Simon no longer stayed with his family in their tent anymore (El Akkad 157). While it was not Martina’s fault that the North’s ban on oil caused the South’s economic collapse, nor that she had any control over the situation that her family was in, they were simply a family experiencing the pressures of a changing climate and an adapting America.

Later the refugee camp is attacked and massacred, the brother suffers a severe blow to his head, and the mother dies. The broken family unit consists of two twin sisters and a brain-dead brother until one of the sisters is murdered as an innocent bystander in the war. One night when Dana was out from a boy she liked in Augusta, the Birds killed her. Only a month after releasing “her sister’s ashes free in the Savannah, the Blues finally came for Sarat,” where she endured years of torture (El Akkad 298). These events caused a harshness to form in the protagonist Sarat when she is released from years of suffering as a prisoner of war and goes to live with her recovered brother and his family. Because of all of the hardships the war forced her to endure, she lacked empathy for everyone, including her own family members. Yet, at the end of the story, her brokenness was slightly healed through the bond of her nephew, whom she saved from the deadly virus that eradicated a majority of the North and South population ending the war, and much of America. Sarat experienced a series of life events, all somewhat influenced by the climate crisis, that contributed to her dedication in agreeing to release a deadly biomedical weapon that affected millions. The narrative provides a multitude of opportunities to discuss

hypothetical ethical questions related to what a future generation could experience alongside a future of unchecked climate change. The dramatic actions of Sarat intend to relay the message that it should not come to the eradication of the nation when propositions for policy and social adaptations towards sustainability arise. The cli-fi narrative allows a fictional world to describe the potentiality of the future in the hopes that the future will never come to the expected dystopian ending.

### **3.5 Parental Tension in *The Wall***

Where in *American War* climate change slowly unraveled a family, in *The Wall*, the narrative provides an example to view the intergenerational issue more like a fracture between generations. In *The Wall*, the most notable lack of communication is the loss of intergenerational connection. The protagonist explains he has minimal communication and respect towards his parents. Kavanaugh no longer felt as if he had a home when he was going back to visit them after his first two weeks on the Wall. When he says after moving to his “new home” on the Wall, he experiences that old home with his parents no longer feeling like home (Lanchester 21). After being stationed on the border and understanding his responsibility as a Defender, his new home was the Wall, his new life, job, friends all of it was on the Wall and visiting his ‘home’ where he grew up, “didn’t just seem as if home was a long way away, or a long time ago, it actually felt as if the whole concept of home was strange, a thing you used to believe in, an ideology you’d once been passionate about but had now abandoned” (Lanchester 52). Once Kavanaugh begins to understand what his mandatory service is, why he is serving it, and the reason for his previous tension with his parents, he realizes that home no longer feels like home.

When he does visit his parents, he explains that “we don’t talk much and both prefer it that way” (Lanchester 56). He confirms that others in his generation do not have excellent

communication or relationships with their parents either. He said that “none of us can talk to our parents. By ‘us’ I mean my generation, people born after the Change,” the younger generation sent to man the Wall lacks the ability to relate to their parents because they had different experiences growing up, in different worlds, with different rules. The reason there is the initial estrangement of parents to spark this lack of communication, “Its guilt: mass guilt, generational guilt,” the older generation ‘irretrievably’ messed up the world and, “then allowed us to be born into it,” and they make their children serve on the Wall when they didn’t have to (Lanchester 53). The ‘olds’ or the parents’ generation did not have to serve time on the Wall, “because there was no Wall, because there had been no Change,” and the Wall at the time wasn’t built, and there wasn’t a demand for a workforce to man the Wall (Lanchester 54). The ‘olds’ have no experience in the one most important and formative thing in common among the younger generation, which is a mandatory service on the Wall. They have no advice to give their children in how best to Defend the Wall, “life advice, the knowing better, the back-in-our day wisdom which, according to books and films, was a big part of the whole deal between parents and children, just doesn’t work,” for the relationship between the older and newer generation inside the Wall. Kavanaugh’s anger towards his situation in reality behind the Wall goes along the lines of, should a parent or grandparent want to ‘put him straight’ or give him life advice when he is doing something wrong, he would reply with, “No thanks. Why don’t you travel back in time and un-fuckup the world and then travel back here and maybe then we can talk” (Lanchester 54).

The narratives give an opportunity to talk about how each of Kavanaugh’s parents acts in their position as a parent. Kavanaugh’s mom feels guilty all the time, she is stuck in an unrelenting sensation of guilt and anger. Her guilt which she “channels it into martyrdom and being saintlike and doing everything and never saying a harsh word no matter how badly I screw

up and never being angry,” illudes that Kavanaugh experienced a lack of discipline from his mistakes because of her underlying guilt (Lanchester 55). Comparatively to Kavanaugh’s father, who doesn’t lack the “emotional reflexes of a parent,” like his mother, the traditional paternal duties “to be in charge, to know better, to put me straight, to tell me about back in the day,” lasted throughout his childhood but began to disappear (Lanchester 55). When he started to comprehend, “that the world hadn’t always been like this and that the people responsible for it ending up like this were our parents - them and their generation,” this lead Kavanaugh not to have any interest in what they have to say, or what advice they have to give to him, ever (Lanchester 56).

On another break, later when Hifa and Kavanaugh were more of a couple, Kavanaugh realized that Hifa too felt “the symptoms of familial dread” of visiting her mother when she was greeted at the train station by her mother greeting her and looking her over commenting on her beauty, but other than that no other words were exchanged upon their reunion (Lanchester 137). No questions of how she was fairing or her time on the Wall. She was preoccupied with her self-pity of living alone, a constant topic of conversation about herself, never having a conversation from mother to daughter. Kavanaugh realized that Hifa’s mom was stuck in very self-centered thinking, exceptional because after the Change, self-centeredness is “a harder belief to sustain; it takes much more effort to think that life is about you when the whole of human life has turned upside down, when everything has been irrevocably changed for everyone,” and yet someone can still make anything have to do with themselves (Lanchester 139). Maybe partially, her reasoning to wallow in her constant self-pity and overly dramatic stories is because she understood that the next generation had a far worse deal than her generation, and Kavanaugh could tell that she didn’t like that someone’s hardships were more brutal than her past hardships.

It was here that Kavanaugh found some similarities among the differences between his parents and Hifa's mother and his and Hifa's generation. What their parents' generation had in common was that they doubted their responsibility in how they made their children's world worse off by their past actions, "who broke the world? They wouldn't say that they did. And yet it broke on their watch" (Lanchester 141). In the storylines, both Kavanaugh and Hifa share an intimate example of how climate change caused a rift between parents and children. The children knew nothing about the issue until they grew up in the nation and learned about their service, and when they completed it, they began to understand how unfair their situation is. In present-day reality, the notion that the nation will build a Wall surrounding the whole of the nation seems implausible. However, it does seem plausible that should the present generations refuse to act, then the future generations born into a climate crisis will probably feel a similar apprehension to what the protagonist experienced in these cli-fi novels.

### **3.6 Apprehensions towards having Children in *The Wall***

Another issue related to generations in *The Wall* is the discussion of not having children with the purpose of not wanting to bring more lives into a world occupied by the Change, where they would be forced to serve the mandatory service to the Wall and the risks that accompany it. In the novel, there is a lack of a chosen familial unit. Instead, there is 'breeding' which is governmental permission for couples to be allowed to bring children into the world but, "people don't want to Breed, because the world is such a horrible place" (Lanchester 33). He challenges that idea by answering the why behind people not wanting to breed in that being that after the 'Change' children should no longer be brought into the world, "we broke the world and have no right to keep populating it. We can't feed and look after all the humans there already are, here and now; the humans who are here and now, most of them, are starving and drowning, dying and



desperate; so how dare we make more of them?” (Lanchester 33). However, the issue for the walled nation is the massive requirement of human resources to defend it. To protect the Wall, they need people to breed (Lanchester 33).

Generally, there is disinterest towards breeding, “people don’t want to breed, because the world is such a horrible place... you breed to leave the Wall,” even if the consensus agrees that it’s unfair to bring children into a world where it is mandatory to serve on the Wall, “breed to leave, that’s the slogan” (Lanchester 33). The idea against breeding “caught on after the Change: that we shouldn’t want to bring children into the world,” because the world is already broken and full of humans in their present who are, “starving and drowning, dying and desperate; so how dare we make more of them?” (Lanchester 34). Those who decide to become breeders are not looked down upon or shunned for having children. It just seems strange to want to bring more people into a world where some share the view that they “broke the world and have no right to keep populating it” (Lanchester 34). The assertion that humanity no longer has a right to bring into the world goes very much against the general understanding of human domain over the Earth in the real present.

The protagonist himself comes across the dilemma of deciding to breed with Hifa when she asked if he would want to. They are both sick of their service on the Wall and enjoyed each other’s company, and it sounded like a beneficial idea. Beneficial in that the nation needs people to defend their Wall and thus encourage breeding by providing privileges of special quarters on the Wall with a shared room, extra rations, more flexibility in choosing shifts, and more of a say in where the couple is stationed on the Wall. Kavanagh and Hifa considered this a “pretty sweet deal. If you could get used to the thought of bringing another person into the broken world,” something they must have overlooked because they moved in together as breeders (Lanchester

128). The pressures of a changing climate should not limit the discussion of bringing children into the world. This is related to the ethical debate of caring for future generations because the present should hold an obligation to future generations where their circumstances are not any worse off than today. When discussing having children has an additional limit of stressing about having a family because of the future's environment, then it is time to address the issue that instigated the concern, fixing the environment.

## CONCLUSION

In the first section, this research found how both novels illuminated potential future symptoms of the changing climate and how it could affect most aspects of life. *The Wall* presented an opportunity to discuss mass immigration flows, resource scarcity and protection, and a nation hiding behind their large Wall in response to climate change's rising sea levels. *American War* described more integrated examples in how the heating climate affected the weather, rising waters, and change in the landscape where coastlines were pushed inland and islands were gone. Due to changes in the environment, there are food and resource scarcity issues that generate the ethical questioning of what world the present generations should give to future generations.

In the second section, the climate fiction novels' political atmosphere provided potential examples of the issues that could arise under a changing social, environmental, and political sphere. In *The Wall*, the narrative showed how the Elites maintain order and immigration flows within the walled nation by controlling the chipped citizens and allowing some outside Others into the Wall. Should they make it over the Wall and choose to live, the alienated Others become the Help. Then, in *American War*, the polarized political tension caused internal displacement during a Civil War that caught innocent citizens in the crossfire. The nation is divided when the North bans fossil fuel use and production, driving the South to respond in rebellion. The contributive actions of the American North and South and the foreign powers coupled with displacement from coastal lands underwater due to climate change had created a significant issue for internal immigration. Both novels illuminate a repetition of a general lack of value the older

generation placed on, the newer generation they were bringing into the world, acting in their own self-interests the new generation is gifted with chaos.

The third section finalized how the climate crisis applies to stress and pressures to all areas of life for these young protagonists born in the future generations. Both narratives illustrated broader generational issues where the younger generation is forced to pay the cost of the previous generation's actions. In *American War*, young Sarat is brainwashed by the marvels of the old generation, too susceptible to see that her mentor, and others from his time, have and always will act only out of self-interest. All of the hardships she endured during the Civil War led to her familial fracture and internal brokenness. Similarly, in *The Wall*, there is a tension between generations most exemplified in parent-child relationships and general hesitation in having children in the newer generations. This discussion finds these narratives bring forward hypothetical storylines that provide the ability to question what actions the present generation has an obligation for future generations' outcomes. Now, in taking a step out of the fictional realm, first, this conclusion will review what it means for the present generation to hold an obligation to the future generation. In closing, the discussion will shift to how that can be implemented into an ecological ethic of care to avoid the dystopic scenarios that cli-fi authors are creatively suggesting.

### **Obligations to Future Generations**

A specific area of concern of environmental justice measures the degree of obligations to future generations held by the present-day people. Some suggest an approach to formulating a future ethic of care to approach these obligations. Many problems arise when discussing the degree of responsibility that current people have to future humans, nonhumans, and the environment because they have yet to exist. Commonly, the suggested remedy to solve any

suspected obligation for a future generation is to preserve the environment and resources sustainably. Contemporary people have an environmental responsibility to future people that is intensified by climate change awareness and its effects, like animal extinction or a global loss of beaches. A counterargument to these losses of wild nature or coastal landscapes argues those born in the future would have never known about the polar bears or building sandcastles at the beach. Those in the future would consequently not know of these things valued by the present if they no longer existed. The question takes on a more profound understanding if more than the extinction of beaches or polar bears threatened humanity. There would be a moral obligation to change the actions in the present that threaten the future.

In John Nolt's book, *Environmental Ethics for the Long Term: An Introduction* (2014), in chapter 4, "long-term anthropocentrism," he explains that when referring to 'future people,' this is the group of "those who will live but have not yet been born," comparatively to 'distant future people' as the group of "those who will be born after we die" (Nolt 93). Concerns for future generations were ironically nonexistent in historical terms because the human capacity to create and destroy was vastly limited compared to more recent industrial and technological benefits and costs. It was the expanding industry and technology, the debated spark of the Anthropocene, that also allowed the knowledge for awareness of the environmental issue we were creating. Note that classifying this group of people with the term 'future' is only a temporal description. Other than the point of time in which they originate, they are not "inherently different from us" (Nolt 93). Simply because the present people do not know the future people does not diminish their moral status. Should the present come across the knowledge that the moral status or quality of life of future generations be reduced by the actions of present people, if one could affect the

other, “then we would have at least the negative responsibility of not harming them” (Nolt 93). There is an intergenerational ethical responsibility between the present and the future.

### **Practicing a Care Ethic**

Nolt is not alone in this view; similarly, in “Care Ethics and Obligations to Future Generations” by Thomas Randall, he restates previous concerns regarding present-day obligations to the future. Considering that future generations rely on the actions or inactions of the present age, Randall explains a correlation between practicing an ethic of care and the intergenerational discussion to conceptualize a “future care ethic” (528). For care ethicists, the relations between people, specifically concerning “a person’s capacity to provide and receive care,” is a natural process of interdependence in human life (Randall 528). A human’s interdependence can worsen or improve their own or others’ conditions of living depending on “the relational webs that we are embedded in” (Randall 529). In this theory, care ethicists ponder the relationship of utilizing natural human interdependence to formulate an atmosphere of practicing care in support of one another, on an intimate personal level of family and friend relationships, and on a grander level of integrating this theory into healthcare, education, etc. (Randall 529). This rationality opens the door for ethically evaluating the relationship between present-day and future generations because of the future’s dependency on present-day actions.

In the view of care ethics, should the present-day owe an obligation to the future people if they do not yet exist? Their situation cannot improve or worsen because they are not yet living, and they do not yet have existing interests. Randall’s future care ethic suggestion states the imagined relationship between present and future peoples, the imagined moral obligation to have a relationship with future generations, allows for imagining a future ethic of care. Those in the present hold attachments to things of value; in this scenario, it is maintaining the environment

with the intention for future generations to inherit them. This intergenerational dependency is reflective as “future generations are dependent on the present generations; the present is dependent on future generation’s possibility” (Randall 536). This relationship is ‘real enough’ to be relevant to care ethics. In this view, the obligation to future generations does fit the care ethics requirement of encouraging to maintain an excellent, caring relationship with other individuals so that all involved will live and flourish.

In the context of the environmental crisis, Randall’s future care ethic prefers choosing sustainable policies over nonregulatory policies, where there is consideration towards the world’s conditions that the present generation is either gifting or cursing to the next generations. Presently humanity should not be “extracting the benefits of resource issues for the present and passing on the costs to future generations without addressing the issue of sustainability” (Randall 543). Sustainability or sustainable development generally refers to enacting long-term solutions for more sustainable use of resources in living, agriculture, production, and consumption practices enforced through policymaking and social structures. According to the famous 1987 report, *Our Common Future*, sustainable development is defined as “a development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (Our Common Future 1987). This idea of sustainability honors the present’s obligation of avoiding the negative responsibility of making global conditions worse through contemporary actions, should the present lack the positive responsibility of improving the conditions for future people. This requirement is that the present does not have a moral obligation to actively pursue improvement for future generations’ conditions other than not to make their conditions any worse than the present.

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