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Bonds Amidst Ecological Ruin: Friendship, Loyalty and Human Resilience in Paolo Bacigalupi's *The Drowned Cities*

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Abstract

The post-apocalyptic world explores a society with various devastations and ecological reconstructions to frame an innovative creation for future protection as well as accommodation. Bacigalupi envisions the emerging journey of America after climate catastrophes from his novel *The Drowned Cities*, published in 2012. He travels through different versions of human life analysing importance of environment and human bond through the medium of various characters. The shared experiences of individuals within their own devastated land of survival created mutual bonds of respect with fellow biological organisms. The war zone affected the livelihood of younger generation due to their forced migration in backstabbing their own innocent people. The characters Mahlia and Mouse share a bond of loyal friendship considering themselves as a single family without same blood lineage. The non-human creature named as Tool does not accept the ideas of human mind in suppressing their own inventions. He enumerates as a half man fighting for his own resilience through broader ways of knowledge gained from Mahlia's friendship. The theory on Ethics of Care helps in understanding the elements of attentiveness, responsibility, competence and responsiveness to favour the bond of mutual loyalty from Bacigalupi's destructed land of Orleans. The study finds resilience not from physical adjustments of individuals but also through the psychological contributions regained from emotional supports. The wider risk to protect fellow friends adapt everyone within the collapsed society, but through the psychological compassion of acceptance from humanity.

Introduction

Climate crisis leads to traumatic impacts among people from different locations of the world. The disastrous attack of catastrophical change not only resists the regular movement of people belonging to a particular region, changes the responsive nature exhibited by humans throughout the world. It collapses peace among all individuals learning about the disaster from any other location because changes can be witnessed by anyone. The vulnerability affects the psychological balance of human mind making them to suffer without any systems of protection. Ecological ruin occurs from nature induced change as well as from human mistakes affecting the cleanliness livelihood. The war is one such condition mentioned by Bacigalupi while talking about the unity of different political groups in destroying opponents territorial growth as well as people. The civil war in *The Drowned Cities* involved the participation of UPF, a militarised group whose only aim was dominating the Drowned cities by making its people as refugees, and Army of God who used religion as a weapon to degrade other rivalry groups. This has led to unity among different people irrespective of their age, gender and cultural group they have belonged to before war disaster.

In the novel, Paolo Bacigalupi identifies friendship as a recognition of respect granted to individuals waiting for a refugee landscape. Mahlia, woman protagonist of the novel, is a young individual possessing mixed identity of both Chinese and American nativity. She was disliked by soldiers from Army of God. They cut off her right hand and tried to torture her physically. Mouse, as a young boy with braveness, interrupts the situation safeguarding her by risking his own life. This creates a bond of emotional resilience between two strangers with friendship. Mahlia, in return pays for this friendship with loyalty when Mouse was forced to work with war soldiers manipulating his identity by dislocating the name as Ghost. She understood that prevailing violence will be an impactful consequence for preceding migratory phase but remained calm as freedom comes alive with each individual's sustainability. The belief and trustworthy opinion of Mahlia towards Mouse could be interpreted as

> But Mouse isn't a soldier boy, she said. He's not like that. He's good. He's kind. He… *He likes dumb jokes, and he likes to catch snakes and eggs, and he's always up for a trip into the jungle, and he can't read books for the life of him, and he's scared of sleeping inside at night, and when you're feeling like hell because you're a castoff, he*

> *comes around and sits with you. And when the Army of God's got you by the hair, and you got one hand already lying on the ground, he steps up and saves you.* He is not that kind of person. (Bacigalupi 231)

The half man creature tries to divert the minds of Mahlia mentioning that Mouse stays close with her only due to the physical sickness imbibed in her body. The ruining thoughts did not change her mind because getting involved in war as a soldier boy will not change the prioritisation of friendship connecting two individuals belief.

The unconventional familial bond is the resemblance of care given to people during ecological collapse. Doctor Mahfouz, is one such character who did not hesitate to give shelter for abandoned Mahlia. The loyalty possessed by him reveals the accumulation of knowledge within a small sphere. He lived in a small refugial camp with many books spread throughout the floor showcasing interest in the field of medicine. His ideas are widespread through Mahlia's practical skills in protecting people even after the death of Doctor Mahfouz. The loyalty beyond friendship arranges a family to do rituals even at the encounter of death from collapsed war situation.

The resilience is figured out after such human adjustments through emotional balance and social acceptance. An individual with resilient nature does not favour complete positive economic growth, rather finds their way to overthrow crucial societal bound dangers. Tool, is portrayed as a gigantic figure disturbing basic human life as he is created with the technological power to withstand crucial gun shots and escaping strategies. He is isolated for his autonomical feature but gains strength through emotional freedom in forgiving human nature. The posthuman loyalty benefits the distinguished opinion of people in safeguarding their own species identity. Tool, the influential posthuman although supportive for human livelihood adjustments remembers his own pack relationships with fellow genetically engineered half-men. He has helped them during crucial war situations setting a standard for collective identities. His power to determine his own role in the war territory of Drowned cities reveal the originality of half man rather being treated as a weapon for attack. Joan C.Tronto, an American political theorist details about the elements required for care in a collapsed condition of individuals livelihood from her book *Moral Boundaries: A Political Argument for an Ethic of Care* stating that:

> The four elements of care are: caring about, noticing the need to care in the first place;

> taking care of, assuming responsibility for care; care-giving, the actual work of care that needs to be done; and care-receiving, the response of that which is cared for the care. From these four elements of care arise four ethical elements of care: attentiveness, responsibility, competence and responsiveness. (127)

The characters from Bacigalupi's *The Drowned Cities* find liberation through loyalty acknowledging the routine of care to be accepted and granted in requirements of suffering.

The sufficiency of human care and protection does not stop the ecological world from destroying human contributed architectural contributions. The Washington monument stands iconic for its unique structure as well as for the power it withholds in demonstrating political power. The flooded dislocations made the monument appear as an image rising through water landscapes. The loss of belief and helping hands are disturbed from the consciousness of wealthy individual. In a similar manner, the swamps surrounding the poor community accommodation is transformed into waterlogged location for adaptation of various wildlife habitats that remain as a threat to human survival. This ruined insight is analysed by Mahlia, Mouse and Tool making them create a powerful bond with developmental safety.

The reward from collapse of urban infrastructures were that they accommodated safety measures for many scavengers. The ruined buildings can't be used by the wealthy people because their expectation to accommodate without sufficient resources degrades their own personal livelihood. These devastated resources are precious allotments to scavenging people as they have not witnessed a constructed building to sleep in peace. The situation breakdowns scavenger resilience from the brilliance of status differentiation created by people having nativity in their urban architectural space.

The loss of adaptability after ecological ruin makes discrimination between habitable space and its failure to manage crisis. A societal occupancy with suitable habitats provide opportunities for shelter, food, security claiming that social communication among people will be enhanced further to maintain a bond of friendship and loyalty. The flooded zone from Bacigalupi's Drowned cities intruded salt water through the infrastructural living urban spaces. This collapsed building walls later contributed to human-induced destructions of settlement burning and civilian migration. The awaited resilience is witnessed in contrast to that of

Shanghai Island because it withstood all climatic disasters from rising sea levels as well as from greater revolution of war attacks. The cooperation to work together in benefiting the Chinese society is narrated using Mahlia's father as hezuo, meaning the unity implied in technological development to safeguard people from various environmental dislocations. The comparison in two cultural variation is narrated as

> The difference was obvious to Mahlia when she sailed through the canals of the Drowned Cities. All the Drowned Cities people were poor and raggedy, while the peacekeepers were tall and healthy. The pictures of Island Shanghai that were printed on the Chinese paper money showed a similar difference: Island Shanghai, tall and gleaming, surrounded by blue ocean, in comparison to the Drowned Cities, where muddy, brackish water swamped every street and ate away at the foundations of buildings. Mahlia had been glad she was Chinese then, all the way up until her father took a toy wooden horse away from her and she bit him for it. He slapped her then, and said she had too much Drowned Cities in her. (Bacigalupi 62)

The loss of bond from post-apocalyptic landscapes are envisioned when people exhibit disbelief from their own cultural background that

prevailed over years with same customs and beliefs. The mental perception to obey and follow technological benefits are diminished as people understand the choices of betterment in another country without ruined conflicts of military as well as ecology.

The Drowned Cities focuses on ecological ruin with challenges induced to human bound relationships in compassion and healthy individuality with reference to secured resilience from loyalty. The study finds the difference between technological and human resilience demonstrating that mutual care amidst all crucial situations will help in perseverance of a nation from the edge of destruction that awaits in future.

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