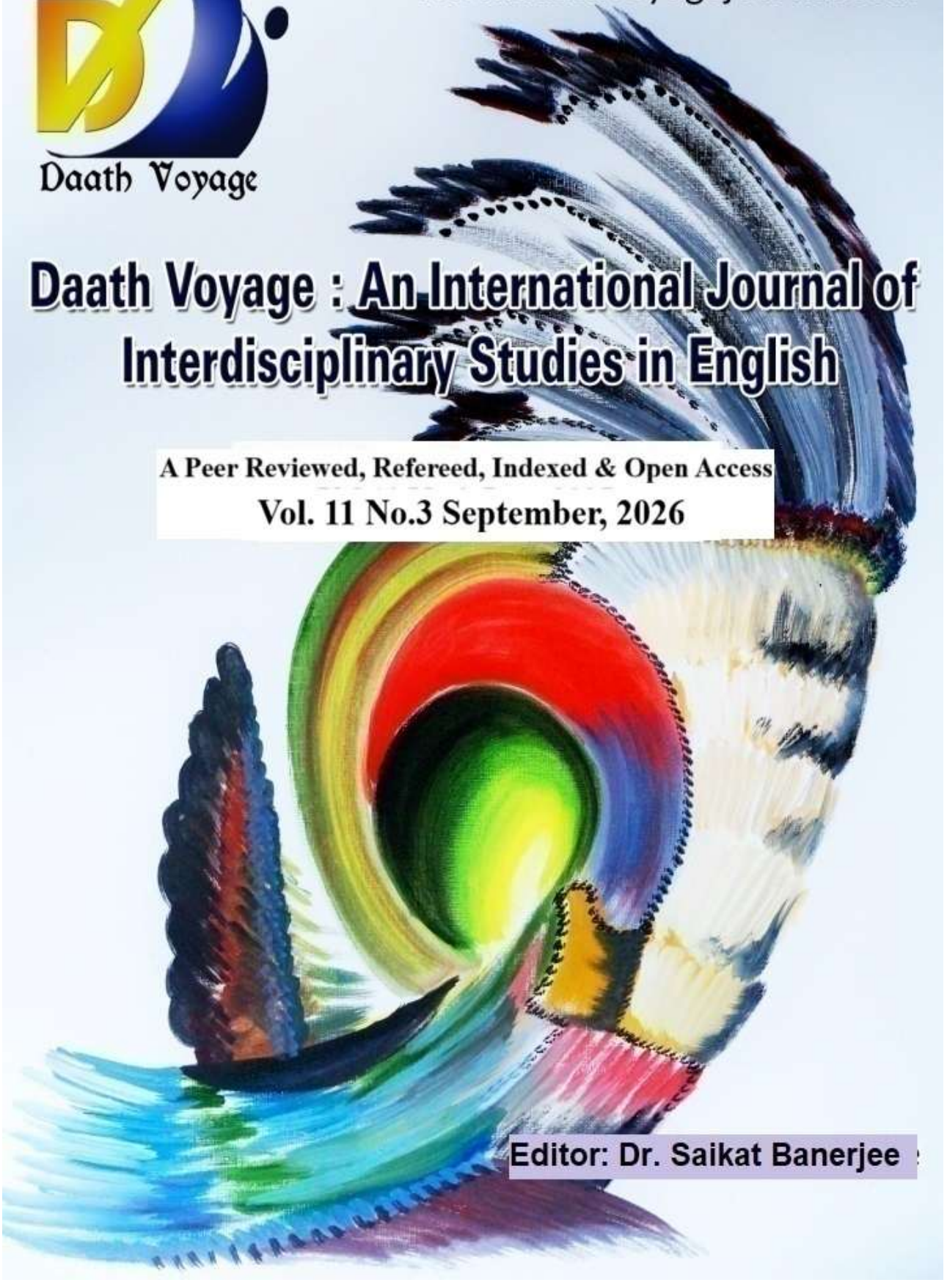
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Resource Scarcity and Youth Survival in Paolo Bacigalupi's *Ship Breaker*

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Abstract: Paolo Bacigalupi's *Ship Breaker* is a Dystopian novel. Bacigalupi pictures a world with environmental destruction and damaged ecosystem in his novel. Bacigalupi sketches a society where youth do dangerous job for survival. The damaged environmental create a society where youth suffer a lot to meet their basic necessities. The setting of the novel is sea coast. People face lot of dangers in the imaginary world. Characters like Nailer, Pima, Nita, Sloth and Jackson boy were encountering lot of dangers. Children in the novel reshape their lives and learn to survive in the shattered world. The paper surveys the scarcity of resources and survival of youth in Paolo Bacigalupi's *Ship Breaker.*

Keywords: Climate change, Resource scarcity, Child labour, Environmental degradation, Dystopian literature.

Introduction

Dystopian literature is a genre that examines imagined societies where life is marked by loss of individual freedom, oppression, extreme inequality, environmental disaster and suffering. Dystopian writers set imaginary world where the society gone wicked in some way. These worlds often seem to be controlled or frightening. Despite the fact that these stories are fictional, they mirror real concern about today's world. The characters in these novels often live in fear or forced to follow rules. The protagonist in these novels was usually a young person who notices that something is wrong and attempts to get away from the structure. Bacigalupi has created Nailer's character in such a way.

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Nailer is the protagonist of Bacigalupi's *Ship Breaker.* He is portrayed as a teenager. He works as shipbreaker in the gulf coast. He used to scavenge valuable materials from abandoned oil tankers. Nailer was born in a poor family. Nailer does dangerous work for his survival in the novel. The environment has been damaged in the novel. So marginalised people are compelled to do dangerous work just to lead their life. Many youths were involved as a labour in the oil tankers. Many people earn money and make a living through the abandoned tankers. They have to do this dangerous work because they have no way to earn money. Environmental collapse and poverty lead them with no safer options. The oil tankers in the novel is the symbol of industrialization. It represents the time when people depended on fossil fuels. The careless usage of natural resources by the industries for excessive production and consumption leads to social inequality, poverty and environmental collapse.

Scarcity defines Nailer's life in the novel. Resources are limited. Scarcity forced him to do dangerous work. Nailer lives in a world where environmental destruction and poverty have created a shortage of resources. Children like Nailer were not able to lead a privileged life like normal child. They struggle to meet their basic needs like clean water, food, shelter, safety and money. The novel therefore hoists important question concerning the correlation between ecological crisis and human vulnerability. When natural resources become insufficient who will bear the prime consequence?

Bacigalupi's novel considers this point of view by revealing that human survival depends on ecological systems and that environmental destruction inevitably affects political and social structures. This paper discusses that resource scarcity and environmental crisis which leads to child labour and survival.

Theoretical Framework

Posthumanism test the traditional faith that humans exist separately from the natural world. It highlights the connections between animals, human, environments, technologies and material objects.

> According to Foucault power before the eighteenth century consisted chiefly in the right to decide life and death, the right "to take life or let live" more broadly- and derivative of this -it was a subtraction mechanism right to a portion of the wealth tax products, goods and services… essentially a right of seizure: of things, time, bodies, and ultimately life itself (Wolfe 51).

Post humanist philosophers question this human-centred worldview by highlighting interconnectedness among animals, humans, machines and environments. Every individual often forget

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that this planet is shared by other species also. "Nature and culture or reworked; the one can no longer be the resource for appropriation or incorporation by the other" (Haraway 9). In Paolo Bacigalupi's novel the relationship between people and objects is particularly highlighted. The deserted oil tankers that Nailer and his gang dismantle are not merely physical materials. "Bright tropic sunlight and ocean salt breezes bathed him. All around, sledge hammers rank against iron as swarms of men and women clambered over the ancient oil tankers hearing it apart" (Bacigalupi 5). They depict the relics of a previous society. And that society was built on consumption and fossil fuels. These deserted tankers carry the history of human technological ambition. The abandoned oil tankers are the consequences of environmental exploitation.

The novel also challenges the notion that technological progress spontaneously improves human life. Though advanced technologies subsist in Bacigalupi's future world. They were not equally accessible to everyone. Powerful individuals and wealthy corporations' profit from technological development. "But the late twentieth century in U.S. scientific culture the boundary between human and animals is thoroughly breached. The last beachheads of uniqueness have been polluted if not turned into amusement parks" (Haraway 10). While the poor communities in the novel continue to reside among environmental destructions. This inequality mirrors throughout the novel. Technology does not survive independently of political and social systems. Technologies are moulded by power structures and human choices.

Nailer bears the responsibility of both damaged environmental and economic system in the novel. His exhaustion, injuries and struggle for daily survival depicts how poverty and environmental destruction works together to shape his life. "Our bodies ourselves bodies are maps of power and identity" (Haraway 65). His life is portrayed like inhaling toxic fumes, handling dangerous materials, climbing through abandoned oil tankers to earn money for food. He doesn't have choice to choose his life.

Posthumanism also lets a reconsideration of the conceptions of survival. In many traditional narratives, survival is connected with duel and individual strength. Paolo Bacigalupi's *Ship Breaker* displays survival as reliant on relationships and support. Nailer's transformation happens when he begins to deny the violence and self-centeredness encouraged by his environment. His relationship with characters such as Nita proves the importance of compassion and ethical responsibility in a world endangered by scarcity.

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Resource Scarcity and Climate Collapse

Bacigalupi builds a future where climate change has altered geographical landscapes and aggravated competition for basic necessities. Rising sea levels, environmental degradation and destructive storms have modified the Gulf Coast, leaving communities striving to survive. The novel pictures climate breakdown not as a single disastrous event but as an ongoing condition that forms everyday life.

The ship-breaking yards illustrate the remains of a resource-dependent society. Nailer and other workers search deserted vessels for valuable materials. The act of dismantling ships represents humanity's attempt to endure by devouring the remains of its own industrial past. The tankers are remembrances of an era when fossil fuels ruled global economies. They also depict the environmental consequences of that generation.

Bacigalupi reveals that resource scarcity stirs different groups unequally. Wealthy communities have ingress to resources, technology and protection. While poor workers experience the brutal consequences of environmental turndown. They suffer to the core. Contention for survival establishes an environment where exploitation becomes natural. Workers are cherished according to their economic usefulness and physical ability in the novel. Children such as Nailer are compelled into dangerous labour. Poverty leaves them with few options. Through this depiction, Bacigalupi discloses how environmental disasters often amplify existing social inequalities.

The novel does not afford scarcity as an unavoidable natural condition. Instead, it recommends that scarcity is united to systems of political and economic control. The unequal allocation of resources establishes suffering. The powerful groups resume to benefit from exploitation. In this way Bacigalupi's novel bonds ecological destruction with questions of responsibility and justice.

Child Labour and Survival

Nailer's life as a teenage worker exhibits how environmental collapse affects younger generations. He is not given the chance to experience childhood in a conventional sense. He works in a dangerous condition to live. "Nailer CLAMBERED THROUGH a service duct, tugging at copper wire and yanking it free. Ancient asbestos fibres and mouse grit puffed up around him as the wire tore lose" (Bacigalupi 1).

The ship-breaking industry relies on the labour of young workers. Children's bodies are seen as tools within an economic system that rates profit over human dignity. Nailer's bond with his father,

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Richard Lopez, further explains how violence and poverty affect children. Richard denotes a destructive form of masculinity crafted by desperation and hardship.

Children in poor communities are anticipated to become economically productive at an early age. “Pima, their boss girl, taller than the rest and filling out like a woman, black as oil and hard as iron” (Bacigalupi 9). Sloth is one among the workers. “Sloth, skinny and pale, bones and knots of knees and dirty blond hair, the next candidate for duct and -scuttle work when Nailer got two big, her pale almost permanently sunburned and peeling” (Bacigalupi 9). Moon Girl who has lost her mother and grown up in poverty. “Moon Girl, the shade of brown rice whose nailshed mother had died with the last run of malaria and who worked light crew harder than anyone else because she’d seen the alternative” (Bacigalupi 9). Nita has never experienced poverty. But her encounters with Nailer and tankers she also becomes one among them. Jackson Boy died due to unsafety measures pictured in the novel. Children in the novel learn survival skills. Children enhance cooperation and solidarity as survival strategies.

Nailer is not outlined only by his conditions. Through his adventures with Nita and other characters, he initiates to imagine a different way of living. Nailer’s survival rests on not only on physical strength but also on ethical choices, loyalty and compassion is clearly given by Bacigalupi.

Capitalism and Environmental Exploitation

Bacigalupi gives a strong review of economic systems that focus profit over human welfare and environmental responsibility. The world in the novel is crafted by systems of production for their welfare. Corporations that have drained natural resources. They are articles of an earlier period of extravagant consumption.

> Oil's importance as a commodity which lubricates and upholds the world-system of capital informs McCarthy's vision of an America bereft of oil as a barren wasteland scarred by the spatial violence which petro-capitalism has performed. In Bacigalupi, capitalism endures in ever more sinister configurations, negating the naïve idealism of eco-apocalyptic discourse which assumes that the end of oil will necessitate social and political change (Donnelly 156).

The novel also researches the correlation between environmental protection and wealth. Characters with economic power can decamp many dangers faced by people like Nailer. The marginalised communities remain exhibited to environmental gambles. Bacigalupi therefore questions the presumption

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that technological progress indulgences everyone equally. Workers are prized according to their productivity.

> Tool shrugged. "No one expected Category Six hurricanes. They didn't have city killers then. The climate changed. The weather shifted. They did not anticipate well." Nailer wondered at that idea. That no one could have understood that they would be the target of monthly hurricanes pinballing up the Mississippi Alley, gunning for anything that didn't have sense to batten down, float or go ground (Bacigalupi 9).

Through its description of climate change and economic inequality, novel designates that environmental problems entail more than technological remodelling. It claims changes in social structures and a retrospect of values surrounding consumption, responsibility and labour.

Family, Violence and Social Inequality

Family affiliations are shaped by the misfortunes of survival, violence and poverty. Bacigalupi features family not only as a source of fortification but also as a tract where emotional trauma and social inequalities are replicated. Through Nailer's corelation with his father and Nita with her family in the novel inspects how environments of deprivation can dominance relationships and human behaviour.

Richard Lopez represents the wreckful effects of a world where brutality has become a method of governance. As a powerful and scary figure among the ship breakers, Richard practises physical strength and extortion to maintain authority. His abusive treatment of Nailer looms how poverty and desperation can distort parental relatedness. Instead of offering care and safety, Richard becomes another peril that Nailer must overcome. His alliance with his work crew provides a temporary sense of neighbourhood. "Moon Girl snorted. The dog-faces would have eaten you alive. That's how they do. Don't even cook their meat. Those monsters always tear in raw. If we left you out there, they'd have been using your ribs for toothpicks" (Bacigalupi 45). Even this environment is convinced by economic and survival competition. The ship-breaking yards create family based on value rather than genuine emotional connection. Workers depend on one another. They are also ensnared within systems that exploit their labour.

The arrival of Nita changes Nailer's thinking of family and loyalty. His relationship with Nita elicits the possibility of compassion and trust. Their interdependent challenges the social divisions between poor and wealthy communities are exhibited by Bacigalupi. The novel also inspects broader social inequality across the contrast bounded by Nailer's world and the world of wealthy enterprise. Nita's elite

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background gives her entry to resources. But Nailer has never experienced the elite background. However, Bacigalupi evades demonstrating wealth as a promise of safety. He displays that both entitled and disadvantaged individuals are pretentious by a damaged world, though their recollections contrast greatly. Though these portrayals in the novel elucidate that social inequality is closely related to environmental crisis, climatic disasters do not simulate everyone equally. They escalate existing divisions grounded on power and wealth.

Hope, Resilience and Ethical Responsibility

The novel presents a hopeless vision of the future. The novel is not completely negative. Bacigalupi explores the possibility of hope through compassion, human resilience and ethical responsibility. The characters struggles explaining a process that survival is not only about abiding hardship but also about sustaining humanity in tough circumstances. Nailer's journey symbolizes a movement from survival based solely on necessity toward survival steered by moral choices.

> You can rest now, he thought. You can wait for Pima. Sloth will tell her you're down here. You can wait it out. He killed the hope. Maybe Pima would come save him. Probably though, Sloth wouldn't say anything about him at all. He was on his own. Nailer balanced on the ledge, on the edge of decision. Live or die, he thought. Live or die. He dove (Bacigalupi 31).

At the beginning of the novel, his main goal is to continue to live within a dangerous system. He tolerates the harsh truths of the ship-breaking industry because he observes few alternatives.

> Life was like that. There were Lucky Strikes and there were Sloths; there where Jackson Boys and there were lucky bastards like him. Different sides of the same coin. You tossed your luck in the air and it rattled down on the gambling boards and you either lived or died. It's the fates," Pima mother muttered. "They have taken you now. No telling what they'll do with you" (Bacigalupi 41).

However, his experiences gradually demand his comprehension of power, responsibility and loyalty. His choice to protect Nita becomes a turning point in his progress. By helping someone from a diverse social class, Nailer refuses the idea that survival demands selfishness. He chooses cooperation over exploitation and compassion over violence. This change suggests that even in a world broken by environmental and social crises, individuals can generate meaningful change through ethical judgements.

The novel also highlights the importance of community and care. Survival cannot be attained through individual strength alone. "Lucky isn't what you need out here," Pima said. "Smarts is what you

need." "Luck or smarts, I don't care, long as I am not dead." (Bacigalupi 48). Characters who collaborate and support one another are more capable of defeating challenges than those who depend only on power and hostility. Bacigalupi therefore presents sympathy as a form of fight against systems built on exploitation.

> The fragile future is also a reality with which the literary humanities must grapple in its disciplinary dimension, staging a difficult negotiation between the antifragility and expansive logic of neoliberalism, and the fragility and critical facility of what remains of humanistic discourse (Botha 1).

Conclusion

The conception of ethical responsibility extends beyond human association to include responsibility toward the surroundings. The damaged world of the novel is the result of earlier generations options. The novel boosts readers to think about how present actions affect future generations. Environmental liability becomes a moral commitment rather than simply a practical need. Through Nailer's experiences, Bacigalupi suggests that hope does not mean ignoring environmental problems. The marginalised suffer a lot because of environmental problems. The novel's message is that humanity's future depends on the ability to create relationships based on respect rather than domination. Bacigalupi highlights the importance of safeguarding future generations. Bacigalupi proposes that survival cannot be accomplished through exploitation alone. It demands recognition of unity and responsibility toward others. The novel advises that rebuilding community requires equal sharing of resources between the rich and poor, corporate and working individuals,

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