



RESTORE OR REMORSE: ENVIRONMENTAL DETERIORATION IN PAOLO BACIGALUPI'S *THE WINDUP GIRL*.

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ABSTRACT

Paolo Bachigalupi is an exemplary writer of American Science Fiction and Fantasy Fiction. He has won the Hugo and Nebula award for his seminal work, *The Windup Girl*. It is set in future Thailand, which highlights the effects of rising sea level, bioengineered plagues and the power struggle between the Trade and the Environmental Ministry. Publishers' Weekly acclaims it as, "This complex, literate and intensely felt tale, which recalls both William Gibson and Ian McDonald at their very best, will garner Bachigalupi significant critical attention and is clearly one of the finest science fiction novels of the year". The research paper hone in on the effects of climate change and how the corporates strive hard to degrade the environment to gain profit. It also sightsees the red tape issues: rising sea level, desertification, dust storm and bioengineered plagues.

Keywords: climate change, eco-marxism, science fiction.

Climate Change is often looked down or ignored by most of the people all around the world. Climate Change refers to the long-term changes in the wind patterns, precipitation, rainfall, global temperature and weather patterns. Humans are responsible for the emission of green-house gases and burning of fossil fuels which leads to the rapid changes in climate. Nature, on the other hand backfires humans with calamities like, flood, drought, storm and so on. According to the World Health Organization, nearly two lakh and fifty thousand people are getting affected due to the climate change per year.

Cli-Fi Writers like, Kim Stanley Robinson, Barabara Kingslover, Nathaniel Rich and Paolo Bachigalupi, have contributed much to the unheeded issues, climate change and rising sea level through their valuable writings. Desmond Tutu pens, “Twenty-five years ago people could be excused for not knowing much or doing much about climate change, but today we have no excuses”. The subject matters like climate change and global warming that threaten the environment and the humans can only optimized by creating awareness among people especially, young generations.

The Windup Girl, a biopunk science fiction novel, set in future Thailand, published in 2010 by Paolo Bachigalupi, an exemplary writer of Science Fiction, which pinpoints the destructing effects of the agriculture undertaken by the capitalists. Hageman writes, “The Windup Girl is considered a remapping of global capitalism as a dynamic of ecology, economy and geopolitics” (287). The apocalyptic world mentioned by Paolo Bachigalupi suffers from food scarcity, energy crisis, rising sea level and bio engineered plagues. How people adopt to the situation, what happens when Genetically Engineered Seeds are used for farming and the power struggle between the trade and environmental ministry are focalized through the lens of Eco-Marxism theory.

Eco-Marxism is an ideology that combines the political ideology, Marxism with bionetwork or green politics. The term ‘Eco-Marxism’ was first introduced by Ben Agger in 1979, in his seminal work, *Western Marxism: An Introduction, Classical and Contemporary*

Sources. Marxism and Ecology are entirely different principles, the former is about class relations and latter highlights, the relation between humans and environment. Eco-Marxism is defined as “a sociopolitical ideology that fuses the Marxist critique of Capitalism with ecological issues and pro-environmental movements” (Pepper 23).

Social Metabolism, is a significant term in eco-marxism, that was first introduced by Karl Marx which means the energy flow occurs between the human beings and nature. Without the support of nature, it is impossible for human beings to survive. Similarly, the nature's existence is based on humas' nutritious waste. *The Windup Girl* is a dystopian novel, set in the twenty third century Thailand, which suffers from energy and environmental crisis. To fix the grave issue called famine, Thai government decides to produce genetically modified seeds to resolve the prevailing food crisis. But, the Genetically Engineered Crops produces diseases like Blister Red and Cibiscosis.

In the beginning of the novel, Anderson Sama, who is an undercover, sent by AgriGen, to locate the Thai seedbank finds “ngaw” (1) in the market, which is free from gene hacked diseases. The dominance of the Genetically Modified products is evident through Anderson's words, “The alley bustles with Thais purchasing everything from gene ripped versions of U-Tex rice to vermilion variant poultry” (4). The energy flow between the human and environment is hurdled by the genetically modified food crops. Thailand has appointed the gene rippers to invent new variety seeds. Hock Seng is served with “wide fried U-Tex noodles, a crab and green papaya salad, along with lab mu, gaeng gai, and streamed U-Tex” (197) by Dung Lord. He advices Hong Seng not afraid of the food served to him as they are free from gene hacked diseases. He says, “The chicken is latest gene rip and the papaya are just picked from the eastern plantation. Not a trace of blister rust in the last two seasons” (197).

As there is energy crisis, “megodants” (11) are used in factories instead of man power. The description regarding Megodants goes as, “The noise is loud enough to make the windows shake...even the dung lord must bow before the Megodant Union. Without the

labour of the megodants, one must resort to the joules of men. Not a powerful bargaining position” (20).

Anderson is impressed by the intelligence of the animal when it tries to attack him. “A mountain of genetically engineered muscle” animal is difficult to control and “the mahout who should have controlled the beast is a mash of blood and bone on the floor” (26). There are other genetically engineered animals like chesires, chameleons, dogs and posthumans. The chesires are described as “clever, thriving in places where they are despised. Almost supernatural in their tenacity. Sometimes it seems that they smell blood before it is even spilled” (38).

Emiko, a posthuman designed by Japanese scientists, functions as a secretary and sexual companion to people. Due to the cost of transport, she is left in Bangkok under the custody of Raleigh, who owns a bar. Emiko is humiliated in front of others. Kannika, assistant of Raleigh says, “she was once a rich Japanese plaything. That she is theirs now: a toy for them to play with, to break even” (53). In Japan, New People are treated with due respect, whereas in Bangkok, she is treated as a dirt by the people. She is referred as “heechy-keecky” (153) and ridiculed for her bad movements. She is designed alike human, yet, has limitations like, overheats due to climate, unable to bear children and purely designed to get mastered.

Natural edible elements like, fruits, grains, vegetables and roots are designed in such a way by nature to sustain in a particular place and to benefit the humans. To gain profit, the eatables are exported to various parts of the world. In *The Windup Girl*, Hagg, a Grahamite priest is of the opinion, “Food should come from the place of its origin, and stay there. It shouldn’t spend its time crisscrossing the globe for the sake of profit. We went down that path once, and it brought us to ruin” (134). Nature has an order and when humans try to disorder it, things fall apart.

Bachigalupi showcases the deprived state of other countries like, America, China, Vietnamese, Burma and so on. Red tape issues like, climate change, rising sea level and global warming are global glitches, yet, the country which is hallowed with a wise

representative will escape the nation from the wrath of anger. Kanya thinks how Thailand survived the plagues and escaped the wrath of nature. She thinks,

We are alive. We are alive when whole kingdoms and countries are gone. When Malaya is a morass of killing. When Kowloon is underwater. When China is split and the Vietnamese are broken and Burma is nothing but starvation. The Empire of America is no more. The Union of the Europeans splintered and factionalized. And yet we endure, even expand. The Kingdom survives. Thank the Buddha that he extends a compassionate hand and that our Queen has enough merit to attract these terrifying farang tools without which we would be completely defenceless. (306)

The city is described as fragile as it is in the verge of destruction due to rising sea water. Emiko watches the rites performed by the monks. She says, “every morning the monks of a different temple bless the thread, adding spiritual support to the physical defences that push back the hungry sea” (151). Irony is, humans are responsible for the rise in sea level by burning fuels and coals and later indulges in performing rites to satiate the nature’s wrath.

The Windup Girl, which won both the Hugo and Nebula Award, and a future based novel, chronicles the effects of climate change, food crisis, bio engineered plagues and the failings of Genetically Modified Seeds. It gives a kaleidoscopic view concerning the society, like the immigrants, post-humans and their urge to get freedom from humans, power struggle, bribery and so on. Voice against the corporates and capitalists when they forsake their Ethical Responsibilities. The thirst of corporates to gain money in any forms and the mean measures taken by the calorie companies to milk money by destroying nature is also tinted by Paolo Bachigalupi in *The Windup Girl*.

The Windup Girl is a clarion call of Paolo Bachigalupi, that emphasizes the necessity of taking needed measures against the climate change. His apocalyptic fictions like *The Drowned Cities*, *The Water Knife*, is alike a *Book of Revelation*, in *The Holy Bible*, which foresees and unveils the future. Even the cities of the developed countries like United States are submerged under sea and this gives the people a note that no technology can escape the

humans from the nature's fury. The writer alarms the young generation to act wisely and reinstate the nature to escape its fury.

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