

War, Technology and Environment in Paolo Bacigalupi's *Tool of War*

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Abstract

This article explores the negative effects of war on the environment and the natural resources. War is deadly and destructive by nature having the ability to alter the biosphere. The potential consequences of war and technological activities on the ecosystem have long term effects on the environment. Paolo Bacigalupi utilized a combination of near future earth and crime fiction plot in his novel *Tool of War* to bring out the consequences of war and modern technology. The novel is set in a dark future devastated by climate change and is one among Bacigalupi's *Ship Breaker* trilogy. The character Tool is a genetically engineered weapon, bred for massacre, survival, and loyalty but when human-made invention turned against him, it resulted in war and destruction of the environment.

Keywords: War, Technology, Climate Change, Environment, Destruction

Many world wars have been fought and several of them have always brought progress in some part of the world. Environmental implications in wartime altered the weather patterns, deforestation and most importantly destruction of human beings in one way or the other. *Tool of War* is the third book in the *Ship Breaker* trilogy. The stories takes place in the world where nearly everybody fights in a military conflict. The novel *Tool of War* is set against the backdrop of post-apocalyptic America which has been devastated by civil war. The condition of the drowned cities has become worse after the civil war as described:

The Drowned Cities: a coastline swamped by rising sea levels and political hatreds, a place of shattered rubble and eternal gunfire. It had been a proud capital, once, and the people who inhabited its marble corridors had dominated much of the world. But now the place was barely remembered on maps, let alone in places where civilized people gathered.

The histories it had dominated, the territories it had controlled, all had been lost as its people descended into civil war- and eventually were forgotten (1).

The places which once dominated the country were destroyed by war. Ecologist Arthur H. Westing in his work *Pioneer on the Environmental Impact of War* states that “Self-inflicted environmental damage in wartime, a self-inflicted so-called ‘scorched-earth’ tactic, occurs reasonably often. The Law of War is silent on this matter, and considerations of whether it is possible to minimize such damage is not here considered further” (15).

Tool is a half-man designed for military and combat purpose by his master General Caroa. Tool is designed to be loyal to his master, later he stands as a glitch and becomes a threat to General Caroa. It is clear in the words of General Caroa: “And every time we devise new technology and tactics to crush our enemies, in turn, adapt and do the same to us, and so it goes, back and forth. The essential truth of nature. The essential truth of war” (157). In order to destroy Tool, he destroys the majority of people and harms the environment. The destruction is described as, “Where the palace had been, pillars of black smoke boiled up into the sky. She shaded her eyes against the fires, squinting against the intensity of light and heat . . . Even the lake in front of the palace was on fire” (23). To put an end to a single augment Tool, the people around were burned to ashes and the buildings were destroyed, “The fires were spreading, engulfing adjacent buildings, burning with an unnatural fury. Rising storm winds fanned the flames higher. A gust of heat and smoke washed over her” (23).

Tool has become the head of an army of soldiers and conquered the warring factions that have been fighting for control of the half-submerged ruins of the mid-Atlantic coast. In the drowned cities’ atmosphere of war he has fulfilled his genetic fate and becomes the ultimate warlord. Tool is an example of human advancement in technology, when he acted upon his own will; no one was able to accept it. This created tension in the creator of Tool and he planned his destruction. The frightening kind of destruction shatters Tool in every ways. General Caroa uses advanced technology to destroy Tool but he escapes in every attacks. These attacks caused great devastation to human kind and to the environment. Tool is described as follows:

Tool clung to clipper ship as it climbed another mountainous wave face and then raced down its back . . . All of his is burned, and yet he felt little pain. He was dangerously wounded, his nerves seared dead, and the burn of the missile strikes was still burrowing inward. Even now, heat rose from his skin, his scarred flesh smoking. He smelled like a coywolf that his soldier boys had once roasted over a campfire. (50)

Humankind and environment have close relationship; the effects of environment are bound to influence humankind in multitudinous ways. The novel describes how the underprivileged people suffer because of war and change in climatic conditions. Warren Chin in his article “Technology, war and the state: past, present and future” delineates technology as “A significant limitation of AI and machine technology is that currently they cannot replicate the dexterity of humans in handling delicate objects, and this does leave a role for humans in the workplace” (777).

Bacigalupi’s idea on augments’ revolt towards humans at any juncture reflects a cautionary exploration of the sudden consequences associated with advanced technological developments. The novel is a story of war that occurs in many parts of the world. The United States is torn by civil war for various reasons. China is a mega power that attempts to act as a peacekeeper. There are augments like Tool, who work for the rich people. People are murdering each other and children are taken as soldiers without any consideration. They are tortured and ill-treated. At last, they die without even enjoying their childhood. Mahlia is a young girl who has her hand amputated because of the war. She is a survivor who lost her childhood in the realms of war. In the war to kill Tool, Mahlia and other soldiers were also attacked.

It is Portrayed as Follows

Mahlia couldn't breathe. She'd been hit in the belly, but it seemed the round had gone through her, instead of exploding. One minute she'd been holding the rear door, firing alongside Ocho, and then the bullet had nailed her and she'd stumbled back and then there'd been the explosion pushing her back further . . . Van's head was shot off. His body lay tumbled over, pouring blood from numerous wounds. In the centre of the room, Tool lay on the floor, whimpering. Mahliah tried to reach for her rifle, but an armored soldier kicked it from her hand. (191)

Mahlia, Ocho and Van survived in the war-torn area, living a hunger and danger filled life due to war commotion. Their lives had no value in the corporate world. Bacigalupi tackles war from the point of view of children who are caught in a situation not of their making, but who will do anything to survive. The issue of the child soldiers is the heart of the novel, but it also touches on war atrocities. The novel *Tool of War* is intended as a warning. It imagines the future of the United States based on historical precedents and on the current lack of reaction to minor wars and global warming. Fredric Jameson describes science fiction as a unique method to present history. He specifies in his work *Archaeologies of the Future: The Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fictions*, "It is this present moment that . . . upon our return from the imaginary constructs of SF is offered to us in the form of some future world's remote past, as if posthumous and as though collectively remembered" (288).

Tool of War presents the impacts of war and the ecological crisis in a more explicit but expository manner in discussing its sociopolitical and physiological implications for Tool's world. Bacigalupi repeatedly emphasizes the need for the protection of young adults and the conservation of resources through this fiction. This novel provides awareness for the society regarding war, environmental destruction and the condition of humans during wars.

References

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