

## **APOCALYPSE FANTASY AND MYTH IN THE ROAD NOVEL**

**Sattar Ayyed Badi**

School of Foreign Languages, English Dept, Huazhong University of Science and Technology. Hubei Province, Wuhan City, China.

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**ABSTRACT:** *The Road is McCarthy's latest work which was published in 2006 and awarded the Pulitzer in 2009. This novel belongs to a style called sub-politely and post-apocalyptic science fiction which describes the situations following the exposure of planet earth to a super disaster. The worst can be expected if the catastrophe happens in the planet where destruction and havoc spread widely. No death of other living organisms including humans! That eliminates nearly all life on the planet blue! All on the severity of the bad will never be worse than losing what was left of human beings on earth their humanity! Crashing the humanity! To overwhelm animal instinct! Eat each other! Fear of each other's. This paper will attempt to shed light on what has happened to the world of a fictional catastrophe with a legendary artistic framework in the McCarthy Road novel.*

**KEYWORDS:** Cormac McCarthy, The Road, Apocalypse, Myth

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### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **Apocalypse in The Road**

As it is said in the article "Apocalypse literature now and then", many postmodern scientists have tried to imagine what the end of the world would be like and how our own post-industrial actions will most probably be the cause of the disastrous end. The novel portrays what comes after the end. Even though the cause of the catastrophe is unknown in the novel, we can assume that this post-apocalyptic world is the cause of human actions (McCarthy, 2006, p.100).

The novel *The Road* is considered as a genuine book expresses the tendency of exhaustion; this theme is very clear to suffering of the father and son in the novel itself when they endeavor to wander in South-eastern of U.S, and they witnessed the killing of animals and plant life on earth. By analyzing this feature in the novel, it can be considered as the main topic of the whole novel. Cormac embodies this disaster with his protagonists and reviews their suffering during the events of the novel. Exhaustion is not found in the novel plot or theme, but it is found also in the sentences and style of the novel itself. We can analyse this aspect through finding out long sentences and phrases, conjunctions recurrence, exuberant vocabularies and employing linked independent clauses. To focus on these points, Kunsu explains that this transformation is more obvious in the novel *The Road* than the previous Cormac's works. Kunsu identifies in the novel *The Road* the vision of what happens after disaster caught by fire or hunger.

*The Road*, as an example, discovers Cormac's tendency to penetrate into what history buries throughout a different type of style. In the same time, *The Road* reflects at the end of it the world which loses nature and shows up the missing of hopes in life.

The topic of exhaustion is embodied very well in Cormac's works. He employs this theme on the characters of the novel to the extent that he makes them suffer a lot from the events and stances around them. He also raises questions about what can happen after disasters and how

human beings can live without nature, animals and plants. The factor of exhaustion can be as an impact to instigate the characters on what they react in turn.

Through the post-apocalyptic image, Cormac reviews the volume of devastation in the civilization due to the great struggle between the human and the nature. The novel reviews also the stances of the boy and father towards cannibalism in which they show up their abhorrence to cannibalism, reflecting their humanity in this situation. Cormac employs in this novel cannibalism, as we can conclude, the worsening of capitalism in the world and its reaching to the end. This capitalism is quite clear to take control of all ownership and all what happens around (Frye, 2013, p.122).

One of the most characteristic features of the novel *The Road* is that the time and place which are unspecified. The name of the father is not quite clear also during the path of the novel. Cormac deliberately works on this ambiguity and a little flash of light is left to the reader. Cormac puts us and the reader under many questions and expectations. Even the title of the novel, it refers to ambiguity since the word apocalypse is a Greek word which means unleashing or unrevealing. So, this novel reflects its tendency towards the future throughout these points. Cormac raises many questions concerning with the vision of the unknown future. Cormac, as we have analysed before, concentrates on the collapse of the world under the shadow of devastation, and he considers death as a creature brought by fire to the boy. Through this image, Cormac embodies this fire as an enemy to the world, and the son is responsible for saving the world. This fire is like a symbol or allegory in the novel refers to many details or descriptions in the text. It may mean the beginning of emerging the civilization or rebirthing (Bloom, 2009, p.57).

According to what has been discussed, this novel is built on the thought of collapsing the world and universe, employing the narration of the Christian apocalypse, but its vision is different. Cormac sheds light on the aspect of the frontier of narration. Since Cormac tackles the subjects of borders within problematic countries, he peers deeply at transfrontera or (cross the border) which is a new tendency in literature as whole.

To determine the dimensions of the novel frontier, we can find out that this novel and its text do not give us a hint on the time of the world and its collapse. So, we can see, depending on the theme of destruction, that there is no connection between the creatures and the social life. But this connection stands on the theme of death tackled by the novel.

What the matter takes control of the novel is that it talks about something in future, and it is difficult to specify its frontier. The presence of the future theme gives the novel an impact to seek for certain solutions in life and how to deal with it.

We understand well that the world in the novel *The Road* is coming to be devastated and collapsed entirely. So, the image of the grail employed by Cormac McCarthy is to express about this devastation, and how the world is exposed to every bad thing. Grail narratives employ the dimensions of questions and answers. To analyse this trait, it is noticed that the son strives to save the world and struggle for survival, but with all these challenges it gives us and to the reader a hope for continuing life and existence in the future. Regarding to the boy, the theme of saving people in urgent and dangerous circumstances reflects a deep philosophy which the boy believes in. He sacrifices himself for others because he stands as the only one who can for salvation (Kunsa, 2009, p. 190).

We conclude throughout this deep analysis that this novel *The Road* is a story to the victory of human beings and an attempt to struggle for survival in very difficult circumstances. The novel reflects also the presence of people who try to defend the earth from all risky changes.

It is obvious that the novel *The Road* shows up various different hospitality. We see that the father and boy show their ethics towards saving the world. By knowing that the son was born after the nuclear devastation, we can conclude that his presence in the novel is the source of ethics. As an ethical responsibility, the son takes responsibility of saving the world as possible as he can.

To analyse and understand what post-apocalyptic feature is, we realize that Cormac McCarthy uses new elegant names and employs the meaning in a nice way to the extent that the reader and character of the novel are liberated from the shackles of the old language. Thus, Cormac tries to take control of form and content in his works. Even the events of the novel, Cormac tries to appear the world is a better place to those who believe in life and peace.

One of the most problematic matters on Cormac McCarthy's novel *The Road* is the place of happening the devastation and collapse. This matter is not quite clear. The novel also is discerned with the variety of themes and matters in the same book. It is important to point out that this devastation does not take place due to weapons, wars or radiation. But devastation is considered as a physical image. The nuclear winter is the type of the devastation which the novel tackles.

It is understood that the path of narration is panic and fearful. But Cormac McCarthy shows up in this novel that the geography of the world of the novel is built on devastating and catastrophe. This environment is enough to create horror and fear, showing that this borderless and apocalyptic environment is evident entirely in the beginning of the novel (Frye, 2013, p.150).

### **Myth in McCarthy's *The Road***

Cormac McCarthy employs his wild imagination in *The Road*, depending on his experience. McCarthy's imagination has adopted this thought from a historical and mythical reality. First of all, the atmosphere of the novel is clumsy, full of darkness and full of surprises. "It is clear, therefore, that although McCarthy recognizes the role of myth in conveying the values of a culture, and in providing the system of belief by which experience is mediated, and his first novel does not represent the characteristics of myth itself. All the characters in the text remain believable human beings, unlike so many of those of the later texts whose deliberately exaggerated stature and characteristics mark them out as mythic"(Cant,2008,p.66).

As a matter of fact, this novel is not restricted by a certain time or place. Thus, McCarthy in the novel *The Road* does not refer to the time and place of happening the disaster. He tries to symbolize certain phenomenon like *The Road*, south and the sea, using the element of myth in its struggle.

The disaster, which is drawn by McCarthy in *The Road*, reflects the impact of superstition. The mythical atmosphere, which represents the dramatic texture of the novel, is prevailed in its events. Depending on the unrealistic embodiment (Hussein, 2000, p. 17), it is an imaginative and imaginary mainstream happens in a limited period which represents the madness of humans and the good and bad powers.

The structure of the novel, *The Road*, stands mainly on myths which represent the impact of methodology. These myths and methodology appear in the image of the lost land and dying the king. Thus, Cormac harnesses metaphors to make the reader comprehending the general environment of the novel. Hence, the topic of the grail narrative is illustrated in the death of the king and vanishing his empire in the novel. Cormac McCarthy embodies the grail as a metaphor in the novel to reflect its capability of healing people who are in bad need, employing the superstitions and the hidden powers in doing that. Due to the repeating of these metaphors with the grail, it is concluded that it is used to give the novel a deeper perspective which makes the reader to contemplate into the events of the novel.

The reason beyond employing this metaphor and repeating the same word is to show up what is purity and impurity. This contrast between purity and impurity embodies one of the most important themes in the novel; purity reflects the grail and impurity reflects the results of the bad people in the society. Cormac McCarthy focuses on the grail, as a symbolic to myth, because it is considered as the main aspect of the book genesis. It is also obvious that the boy is a symbol of the grail in the novel. This boy, who represent the myth in the structure of the novel, has come to make salvation, knowing that he came out after the devastation of civilization. The task of the father is to protect his son as well.

In *The Road*, McCarthy personifies a destroyed clumsy world which suffers from a global or nuclear disaster. The countenance of the Earth and sky is changed and is devoid of life and order to the fact there are no authority or morals. Only some rescued people are saved because of that imaginary disaster.

In fact, the boy who seeks to save the people from this disaster represent a mythical mode which mingles with a classical style and connected with believing relationship as it happened to the classical myths in Europe, the Christian. I do not decline that McCarthy has adopted this idea of cannibalism in the Christian Europe. "In the sixth chapter of the Bible, John, "It is for sure I say that you if you do not eat the human body or drink his blood, you will not have a real life..." (6:53). this phenomenon has transformed into a myth to some countries in the world due to draught and wars. In a reference to what "Columbus" mentioned in his journey to primitive tribes in America which is well-known by eating enemy's flesh as a type of enmity; it is "Cranqua tribe" (Norhan, 2014, p. 1).

The will-power and patience of that man to bear the burdens of life in this broken long road refer to his mythical courage as a hero woven by McCarthy, and he who tolerates many burdens which surpass the usual people.

"This signifier of the father's doom is encountered at an early stage of the journey and we know that the question the novel must answer is not what will happen to the father, but to the son. McCarthy favoured the answer, expressed in each of his text to a greater or lesser extent, is that of the inherent vitality of the ardent hearted, for whom the significance of life is asserted existentially and in defiance of mere reason alone. So, it is in *The Road*. At first, we can only guess at the meaning of this image" (Cant, 2008, p. 270)

- "The thought made him smiling. Where are we? He said.
- What is it, Pap?
- Nothing. We're okay. Go to sleep.

- We're going to be okay, are we Papa?
- Yes. We are.
- And nothing bad is going to happen to us.
- That's right.
- Because we're carrying the fire.
- Yes. Because we're carrying the fire." (McCarthy, 2006:83).

Not all people may have unique morals. This type of the stories has a role to a super entity of a guardian angel who help the hero and save him in difficulties.

"If the Oedipal Culla represents linear time, the time they can only be "accounted for" by his existential quest in the realm of the unheimlich, and whose journey can be finally terminated by death alone, it is unsurprising that McCarthy remains true to the full extent of his mythic form by representing cyclic, holistic, natural, matriarchal time in the person of Rinty" (Cant, 2008, P. 82).

Life may lose its meaning even in dropping its leaves down to the fact that there is no natural trace to it at all.

- All the trees in the world are going to fall sooner or later.
- But not on us.
- How do you know?
- I just know. (McCarthy, 2006, P. 35).

It is understood that the world in the novel *The Road* is going to be devastated and collapsed entirely. So, the image of the grail employed by Cormac McCarthy is to express about this devastation, and how the world is exposed to every bad thing. On the other hand, regarding to the boy, the theme of saving people in urgent and dangerous circumstances reflects a deep philosophy which the boy believes in. He sacrifices himself for others because he stands as the only one who can stand for salvation. Thus, the perspective of salvation represented by the boy is another way to employ myth in the novel.

As it is said in the article "Apocalypse literature now and then", many postmodern scientists have tried to imagine what the end of the world would be like and how our own post-industrial actions will most probably be the cause of the disastrous end. In other words, *The Road* portrays what comes after the end. Even though the cause of the catastrophe is unknown in the novel, we can assume that this post-apocalyptic world is the cause of human actions (Kunsa,, 2009,p.100).

Cormac McCarthy, relying on the structure of myth, raises many questions concerning with the mythical vision of the unknown future. He concentrates on the collapse of the world under the shadow of devastation, and he considers death as a creature brought by fire to the boy. *The Road* is built on the thought of collapsing the world and universe, employing the narration of the Christian apocalypse, but its vision is different. Cormac McCarthy employs the same idea of this myth, but with different perspective. This struggle happens under the shadow of

devastating and collapsing civilization. Animals are dead and the nature. The novel is a real struggle happens between the post-catastrophe and the environment where it happens. Cormac draws the dimensions of trope and figurative language throughout focusing on the nature in the novel *The Road*. He points out a truth that there is no life without nature, animals and human beings. Thus, devastating civilization means, in turn, the collapse of all the elements in life.

## CONCLUSION

The novel describes the real catastrophe of the human in the interwoven events due to several factors like wars, unexpected natural disasters which destroy everything. The novel as I see it is a real evidence to the human struggle for the purpose of existence and in a world full of inequity and unfair. The novel is social and political in the same time; it is social because it reflects the declined society and struggle between good and bad and determination of the good people in order to build new generations, while it is political because McCarthy portrays the image of the environmental destroy due to destroying and its arms.

The stance of existence to the human beings who are thrown in a devastating world is lack of life due to the catastrophe. The hero does not know what the path hides secrets on his way to the south, hoping for security.

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