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Eco-consciousness through the Dialectics of Hope and Hopelessness in Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*

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Abstract

The dialectics of hope and hopelessness unfolds eco-consciousness in Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*. In the narrative, two unnamed characters embark on their journey through the devastated landscape in search of life supporting climate and safety. This paper examines how their journey oscillates between optimistic and pessimistic events. McCarthy's fiction implicitly attributes the natural disaster to human misdeeds. Going after material achievements and material greed, human beings are paying less attention towards ecological issues. They are interfering the course of nature and violating the web of interdependence of the biotic and abiotic world. Consequently, it has invited different types of apocalypses pushing the ecosphere in danger. This paper claims that the display of the dystopian world is purposeful for the author for making human beings serious towards ecological issues. To create awareness against such misdeeds, the novel gives a sense of imminent environmental peril. At the same time, the novel presents different events and situations that signal hope with a strand of positive possibility. This dialectical presentation of hope and hopelessness that creates eco-consciousness is the issue this paper has explored in the novel. Applying qualitative research design, this study critically examines and analyzes both dystopian and hopes generating events and situations in the novel. Lawrence Buell's critical insights on environmental apocalypse serve as a theoretical perspective for textual analysis of the primary text.

Keywords: Environmental apocalypse, dialectics, eco-consciousness, dystopian world, biotic and abiotic world

Introduction

The dialectics of hope and hopelessness that generates eco-consciousness is explored in this study by critically analyzing both the dystopian and hope-generating events presented in Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* from an ecocritical perspective. Dealing with the dystopian events, this novel exposes the threat to the entire humanity in

the endangered situation. It is indicated through mass robbery, mass murder, and extreme natural disaster. They are the outcome of human negligence to the wellbeing of this ecosphere. Even in such a gloomy atmosphere, the novelist sheds the light of hope and creates optimism through certain events and situations. He presents two unnamed characters struggling through the devastated landscape to reach the coastal area. In every step, they encounter threats to life but manage to reach the goal. The narrative incorporates certain hope generating events and situations within that desolate world such as the resilient human spirit and humanitarian qualities; the presentation of mothers, dreams and memories; the successful inclusion of the boy in a new family; and the appearance of the town with electric light and possibility of sailing ship.

As post-apocalyptic fiction, this novel deals with a severe crisis, leading human civilization to the verge of extinction. Along with the gloomy world, the novel also shows optimistic events and situations with an indication of regeneration. This research identifies and critically analyzes both dystopian and hope generating events, revealing the purpose behind the dialogic presentation of these contrasting elements. Following qualitative research design, this paper uses the critical ideas of Buell in relation to the environmental apocalypse trend for the purpose of analysis.

Literature Review

This section makes a review of the responses of various critics in McCarthy's *The Road* so as to frame a research gap. Tim Edward highlights the issue of desolated landscapes after the catastrophe. He focuses on the critical condition of natural components as he remarks, "The landscape itself is largely mute, darkened, clouded, its color palette stripped of beauty and diversity and reduced to variations of gray" (56). Edward explores how the novel addresses not just the issue of human survival, but also the survival of all organisms in the landscape haunted by anthropogenic disaster. The beauty of nature has gone with the collapse of diversity caused by the calamity. This study examines the chaotic aspect of the novel as well as focuses on the events and situations that signal the possibility of regeneration and future life. However, Glenna M. Andrade and Ashley Kunsu discuss the ending of the novel. They challenge the notion of the hopeful ending in the work, claiming, "*The Road* is more than a simple quest for a safe home. It challenges the boundaries of typical Post Apocalypse novels and complicates the usual, hopeful ending" (2). The novelist claims about uncertainty as the whole atmosphere is inappropriate for life and the survival is questionable. Conversely, Ashley Kunsu highlights the positive aspect of the novel indicating the possibility after the apocalypse. He states, "*The Road* is not tabula rasa, not a re- imagination from scratch; it takes what remains after the world has been destroyed and goes forward from there in search of what is next" (69). His focus is the future that the novel indicates. At this point, Andrade highlights the gloomy atmosphere, whereas Kunsu discuss the situation after the apocalypse. Nevertheless, the critics have not paid attention to the dialectical presentation of hope and hopelessness. This study equally focuses on both sides in a dialectical way, showing how the dialectics can create eco-consciousness in readers.

Erik J. Wielenberg examines the moral dimensions of the novel who asserts, "*The Road* contains both a clear moral code and examines its connection with meaning in life. Along the way, I discuss the struggle of the man and child to live up to the moral code" (1). Wielenberg points out how the characters' adherence to moral conduct in the crisis of survival underscores their humanity. Moreover, the child's moral orientation is stronger. The survival of the child in the new world guarantees the continuity of human morality in a post-apocalyptic world. This study further elaborates the moral aspect of

the characters as an indication of future possibilities and examines their interplay with pessimistic situations. Similarly, Lydia R. Cooper draws parallels between the novel and grail narrative. She argues, “*The Road* examines pervasive apocalyptic fear in order to explore if and how the human project may be preserved” (219). Like the traditional grail narrative, McCarthy's novel in modern sense focuses on the spiritual and moral renewal that is needed for the continuity of human existence. This study agrees with Cooper's view of creation of fear for positive effect. But the focus point of this study is to analyze the dialectics of optimistic and pessimistic events and situations that contribute to create eco-consciousness.

Mohamed Miffdal analyzes the postmodern life-style portrayed in the novel: “Mc Carthy's style in this novel bears the seed of deep philosophical questioning of the postmodern way of life and its effect on our relation to the real and to the values of altruistic love, sacrifice and freedom” (1). The novel is taken as the exposition of the vices of the postmodern way of life that disregards the value of altruism, sacrifice, freedom, etc. This study further investigates both the dystopian and hope generating events in a dialectical way to show how they create eco-consciousness. Differing from other critics, Brent Ryan Bellamy observes the issue of women's exclusion in this novel. He blames the novelist for avoiding women's presence in the narrative: “The problem here is that *The Road* effectively banishes the women from its pages, despite the fact that she is necessary to the flourishing of the man and the boy” (157). Bellamy points out how the importance of women is nominalized in narrative by allocating them less space though their role remains crucial to the cohesion and successful completion of the plot. To address this issue, this study analyses how the mother doing suicide stands for hopelessness and the mother in the new family stands for hope.

As discussed above, it is clear that the critics of *The Road* have shed light on different aspects of the novel. Edward raises the issue of desolate landscape, Andrade challenges the hopeful ending and Kunsu highlights the possibility after the apocalypse. Similarly, Wilenberg discusses the moral dimension of the novel whereas Cooper compares the novel with grail narrative. Miffdal's concern is to critique the postmodern life style and Bellamy raises the issue of women's exclusion in the novel. However, no research work has attempted to analyze the dialectics of hope and hopelessness that aims to create eco-consciousness in this novel.

Environmental Apocalypticism: A Theoretical Perspective

Ecocriticism is an interdisciplinary movement that explores the relationship between literature and environment with the acute awareness of the damage caused to the environment by human activities. This interdisciplinary movement got its independent identity with the publication of *The Ecocritical Readers* in 1996, in which the author Cheryll Glotfelty defines it: “What then is ecocriticism? Simply put, ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and the environment” (xviii). Different philosophical movements examine different aspects of human life and society. But ecocriticism concentrates on the study of the relationship between literature and environment. In the past, the environmental aspect was disregarded in the analysis of literary works but Glotfelty brought this issue in light. Showing its similarity with Feminism and Marxism in matters of raising voices for the marginal, he highlights the earth-centered approach in literary studies. Like Glotfelty, another scholar in ecocriticism, Lawrence Buell defines the movement: “Ecocriticism might succinctly be defined as study of the relationship between literature and environment conducted in a spirit of commitment to environmentalist praxis” (430). Ecocriticism examines the relationship between literature and environment with the motive of preserving the

environment. This movement shows the negative impact of anthropocentric invasion on ecology.

Buell, one of the leading thinkers of the environmental apocalypse trend, presents a literary vision of environmental catastrophe that results from human insensitivity to the natural course. Among the master metaphors, he relates to the whole order of nature; the metaphor of the web is very crucial to talk about the interdependence of plants and animals: "Plants and animals are after all bound together; bodies and the world are caught in a network of dependence" (283). To prophesy the unintended consequences of human interventions into nature and its world-wide disaster, Buell brings the reference of Rachael Carson and Leslie Marmon Silko who have used the web metaphor in *The Silent Spring* and *Ceremony* respectively, and presented the disaster caused by the introduction of DDT (dichloro-diphenyl-trichloroethane) in the food chain and release of atomic energy of uranium in bombs that collapsed the whole web of life.

Defining 'apocalypse' as a master metaphor, Buell states: "Apocalypse is the single most powerful master metaphor that the contemporary environmental imagination has at its disposal" (285). This metaphor has become an important part of modern fiction. Though critics like Jem Bendell argue that environmental apocalypse never happens, it is still significant to warn people. In regard to the purpose of apocalyptic literature, Buell argues: "We create an image of doom to avert doom" (295). It means that apocalyptic literature creates the dystopian events to avert such events compelling people to think seriously. In this case, there occurs the dialectics of hope and hopelessness in environmental literature.

Buell identifies five modes of perceptions to serve environmental apocalyptic ends. They are "Interrelatedness, biotic egalitarianism, magnification, conflation and the sense of eminent peril" (305). Interrelatedness refers to the interdependence between plants and animals, biotic egalitarianism focuses on the equal right and share of the universe to live and work in a hygienic environment, and magnification proposes the intrinsic distinct value of every component of the biosphere. Conflation promotes unity between the biotic and abiotic world. The sense of imminent environmental peril is the major signal of the environmental apocalypse. It is the fear that the present misdeeds might lead to the horrific future. This sense of peril plays a role in arousing eco-consciousness in human beings and making their behaviors eco-friendly.

The theoretical insights of ecocriticism, especially the ideas of environmental apocalypse that expose the dreadful consequences of present misdeeds related to ecology, are used to analyze the primary text mainly focusing on the examination of the interplay of hope and hopelessness embedded in it.

McCarthy's *The Road*: Critical Analysis ***Dialectics of Hope and Hopelessness in The Road***

To expose the interplay of hope and hopelessness, the analysis begins with the exploration of the dystopian world depicted in the novel and moves to the interpretation of hope generating events and situations. As a whole, the world of the novel is pessimistic. Ecology is on the verge of destruction. Dust, darkness, and coldness are ruling elements. The resilient human spirit with struggling motive, strong moral conviction, and humanitarian qualities of the major characters play a role to generate hope. The progressive presentation of female characters, memory, and dreams of the characters also function to create a positive environment. Particularly, the last part of the novel where the son gets a supportive family creating optimism in the critical situation of the novel. In this context, this study claims that the dialectical presentation of the dystopian as well as hopeful events and situations are for positive results. The

presentation of the dreadful events strikes the mind of readers and gives a message that if their activities are not controlled in time, the result will be terrifying. But at the same time the hope generating events are for keeping the spirit of hope for positive possibilities. The dialectical presentation effectively makes the readers aware of the negative consequences of their misdeeds and makes their behavior eco-friendly.

The Road covers the events and situations that are horrific and heart-breaking. Both nature and human behaviors are challenges for the survival of human civilization. The earth has lost its natural beauty and power of regeneration. It has turned into a place “barren, silent and godless” (2). Natural qualities of the earth have gone ruptured. The earth has become an inappropriate place for humans, animals, and plants. The surface covered by ash and the landscape devoid of greenery dominates the world. The extreme cold and longer nights have added to the suffering of characters in their journey for survival. The environment has become horrific “where all was burnt to ash, before them no fires were to be had and the nights were long and dark, and cold beyond anything they had yet encountered. Cold to crack the stones. To take your life” (13). Nature is not in the normal condition but it is in the extreme form. The long and dark nights have made the situation more horrific. The extreme cold is terrific that can crack the stone and take human life.

The cause of the disaster that generates nothingness, and pessimism is the outcome of human attempts to keep the environment totally under control and misuse nature’s malleability. In this case, Buell points, “To turn utopia into dystopia we need only deny the environment’s malleability. If there are land imposed limits to growth and resistance to human tempering, or if the environment can resist our control, then attempts to control it will produce the death or the revolt of nature” (265). Buell uses two opposing visions of the world: utopia and dystopia to show the negative impact of human interference to natural course. He suggests that the success or failure to maintain ecology determines utopia and dystopia. Human beings’ attempt to manipulate the course of nature to fulfil the material greed results in nature’s revolt. When nature revolts, human civilization falls in danger. In other words, by imposing the rules and interest upon nature and limiting it, human beings are inviting natural disasters and putting human civilization at risk.

In the novel, it is never specified what causes the apocalypse. However, there are some clues for speculation. For example, there is a presence of fire and ash everywhere, which is caused by industrialization and globalization, symbolically indicating that the apocalypse is imminent. The event of finding the large amounts of food stored in a bunker indicates that the world before the apocalypse is full of possessive people who lack the eco-friendly production system. It signals the consumer culture dominating the world before the apocalypse. The extreme use of plastic for keeping food items signals the cause of the environmental degradation. The key cause is not anything but insensitivity of human beings to nature. In the novel, as the father enters into the bunker, he feels a great surprise. There are different food items beyond his expectations:

What is it Papa? Come down. Oh my God. Come down. Crates upon crates of canned foods. Tomatoes, peaches, beans, apricots. Canned hams. Corned beef. Hundreds of gallons of water in ten gallon plastic jerry jugs. Paper towels, toilet papers, paper plates. Plastic trashbags stuffed with blankets. He held his forehead in his hand. Oh my God, he said. He looked back at the boy. It’s all right he said. Come down. (146)

The extreme use of plastic for keeping food signals the cause of the apocalypse. Crates, cans, gallons, jugs, paper plates, plastic trash bags, etc. are the indications of the plastic waste that pollute the ecosphere in different ways. The contamination of the land, water,

and air leads to biohazards that deteriorate the health of ecosphere and leads to a dystopian event. This sort of situation of exploitation and pollution of nature is criticized by Lynn White Jr. who stresses, “Formerly man had been part of nature; now he is the exploiter of nature” (42). This exploitation ultimately destroys an ecological balance and puts the whole ecosphere in crisis.

Inhumanity pervades human behavior throughout the novel. The scarcity of food turns surviving humans into cannibals. Killing people becomes a normal rule of life. The boy’s mother worries that the future is going to be dominated by bad people: “The world soon to be largely populated by men who would eat your children in front of your eyes and cities themselves held by cores of blackened looters” (192). She does not see any positive sign but inhumanity and cruelty ruling the world. Cannibals will dominate the world where robbery, rape, killing, and other evil activities will be part of life. Andrade rightly points out, “The *Road* attends to the immediate consequences and the impetus of survival and personal mastery, where the cause is not central to the action” (3). The novel actually depicts the immediate consequences of the apocalypse that are terrible. Both horrific nature and terrible human beings are the immediate consequences of the apocalypse.

Michael Chabon discusses the situation of nothingness. He writes, “The only true account of the world after disaster as nearly complete as searing as the one McCarthy proposes, . . . would be a book of blank pages white as ash. But to annihilate the world in prose one must simultaneously write it into being” (3). As mentioned in the statement, presenting a post-apocalyptic world is exposing nothingness. The phrase ‘blank pages white as ash’ signals it. In this sense, depicting the world after certain apocalypses is difficult. Nothingness dominates the whole world and pessimism prevails everywhere. This presentation of the dystopian world is purposeful as it aims to avert the dystopia as Buell marks, “We create an image of doom to avert doom” (295). Its corrective purpose is its essence. Even in such a terrific situation, this study explores the same issue of the dialectics of optimistic and pessimistic events and situations that generate eco-consciousness in readers of *The Road*.

Resilient Human Spirit, Humanitarian Qualities, and Surpassing Crisis

In order to support the idea of hope and regeneration, the novelist presents the two unnamed characters with their resilient spirits in *The Road*. Though they suffer much from the catastrophe, they continuously struggle till the end. The father diverts the son from the suicidal path of the mother to the path of struggle. Against “the mother’s nihilistic belief in the pointlessness of human survival,” he empowers the struggling spirit in the boy (Cooper 223). Calling the boy a ‘good guy,’ the father inspires him to continue his struggle even in adversity. He assures his son this way: “Okay. This is what the ‘good guys’ do. They keep trying. They don’t give up” (145). The father inspires the son not to give up in any circumstance. There is no moment in the novel when the father loses hope. He responds to the pessimistic view of his wife in an optimistic way: “We’re survivors’ he told her across the flame of the lamp. Survivors? She said. ‘Yes’” (57). The old man’s struggling spirit charged with potential never feels defeated. As Ernest Hemingway, in *The Old Man and The Sea*, claims, “A man is not made for defeat. A man can be destroyed not defeated’ (71); here, the father loses his life but never feels defeated. His struggle is not his individual targeting his personal safety but for the continuity of the human race by keeping his son alive.

Supporting the father’s motive of struggle, Cooper argues, “After all, the father’s quest is to physically keep his son alive and metaphorically, to preserve in this world a vessel of nobility capable of providing that there is some merit to the

continuation of the human race” (227). For the father, the boy is not only his son but also the representative of the human race in the new world. Therefore, he always attempts to inculcate positive human qualities like mercy, pity, kindness, and cooperation in the boy. This noble purpose has added courage to the father despite his old age and weak health. The father is in a critical health condition, but he never loses hope of meeting other people and handling the boy. He stresses, “There are people. There are people and we will find them. You’ll see” (261). He is incapable of speaking properly; losing physical strength but never loses hope. Even at the cost of his life, he succeeds in his mission of continuing the human generation by handing over the boy to another family with children. This representation of the struggling spirit keeps on optimism in the readers throughout the novel.

Therefore, McCarthy's novel is not only an exploration of the depth of human despair, but also a story of resilient human spirit that underscores hope. The untiring spirit of the father and the son indicates that even in the darkest of times, there is still the possibility of hope and the strength to carry on. The ideas of G.M. Hopkins expressed in “God’s Grandeur” are applicable here: “And though the last lights off the black west went / Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs” (11, 12). After the darkness, there comes light and after the difficult situation, there comes the comfortable one. The strength and endurance that the father and the son show in the journey proves a testament to the power of human spirit in the face of unimaginable darkness.

In contrast to the contemporary world of derailed humanity, the moral conduct of the father and the son hints at the good possibility. The post-apocalyptic world is full of cannibals and robbers who never care about morality and ethics. The terrific situation leads the boy’s mother to suicide as she senses inhumanity and cruelty coming up. In such an immoral and inhuman world, the moral conduct of the two characters and their attempts to be ‘good guys’ is unique. The son never compromises in a matter of morality whereas the father sometimes deviates from it. In their journey, repeatedly the father shows his cruelty to other survivors. But instantly the boy brings him back to the humanitarian path of good guys: “I have to watch you all the time, the boy said. I know. If you break little promises, you’ll break big ones. That’s what you said. I know. But I won’t” (35). He becomes the watchdog of his father’s moral conduct and does not let him deviate from the moral path.

In relation to the emphasis on the issue of morality, the novel is praised by critics. The post-apocalyptic world is bleak and desolate, chaotic, and meaningless. The moral conduct of the characters makes the life meaningful and living worthy. The morally justified behavior of the characters compensates the pessimistic physical environment. The unique moral conduct of the father and the son shadows the cruelty and inhumanity of the gangsters. The struggle of the boy and his father to live up to the moral code is meaningful. It signals the continuity of human morality in the new world. This focus on the issue of morality in a dystopian world has been credited by critics. For example, Wielenberg highlights it: “*The Road* is among other things, a meditation on morality which makes human life meaningful” (1). Wielenberg emphasizes it as an essential aspect to make human life meaningful in a meaningless post-apocalyptic world. In normal situations, a person can easily be moral but true ordeal occurs in the face of crisis. Those genuinely moral characters only can sustain through the ordeal. The characters like the father and the son are morally approved ones who continue their moral conduct even in life-threatening crises.

Generation of Optimism and Denial of Dystopian World

The portrayal of the female characters in *The Road* signals positive possibilities in the dystopian world. The idea of Greta Gaard and Loris Gruen exposes the value of women in the situation dominated by death orientation: “Her reproductive capacity and life bearing activities stood in sharp contrast to the death orientation that underlies culture” (278). Female characters deserve the possibility of regeneration with reproductive capacity and life bearing activities. At the same time, their emotional domination opens the possibility of pessimism and negative decision like suicide. Even the presentation of the female characters is dialectical: one ending life and another regenerating it.

There are three female characters presented in three different situations: the mother of the boy, the pregnant woman, and the mother with other children. The mother of the boy commits suicide to escape from the evil consequences of the apocalypse. She sees no possibility of a better world but just terror, horror, and darkness. Feeling insecure even before her husband, she decides to suicide. In her conversation with her husband, she announces, “I’ve taken a new lover. He can give me what you cannot. Death is not lover. Oh yes he is” (58). Openly she declares her decision of doing suicide with the assertion that her husband cannot provide her security from evil people. She represents pessimism.

The second one is the pregnant woman to whom the father and the son meet on the way with three other men. The novelist describes her: “Three men and a woman. The woman walked with a waddling gait and as she approached he could see that she was pregnant” (208). There is no other detail of the pregnant woman. The truth is that she gives a better message than the first one does. The pregnant woman stands for the possibility of regeneration of human beings.

The third one is the woman with other children. The boy meets her after the death of his father on a beach. Her role is very crucial as she occupies the father’s place and takes the boy’s responsibility. She puts her arms around the boy to remind him of the love of the mother. In her talk with the boy, she emphasizes the continuity of human generation: “She said that the breath of God was his breath yet though it passes from man to man through all of time” (306). The boy loses his father but the company of the woman proves crucial for him. He gets courage and inspiration to struggle in the uncertain world.

Brent Ryan Bellamy discusses the development of women characters as he explains: “*The Road* extends from the limited frame of survival in the novel to its expanded dimension of reproduction” (165). The first woman raises the issue of survival and the second and the third women expand to the dimension of reproduction, regeneration, and better possibility. The female characters in three different circumstances show the movement from pessimism to optimism. In literal reading, the position given to female characters in the narrative reflects them as less important ones. However, this study exposes a vital role the female characters play to impart a message of better possibility. The progress of the female character from the suicidal one to the character that inspires the hero to struggle in the new world is very crucial from the perspective of generating hope in the time of crisis.

In contrast to the dystopian world of reality, the utopian world exposed in dreams and memories of the characters signals positive possibility in *The Road*. Two struggling spirits, the father and the son continue their journey full of suffering, pain, silence, and darkness. Repeatedly they escape from the existing trouble to memory and dream. They give them solace and simultaneously create optimism in the readers. The memories from the childhood of the father are presented in the following lines:

There was a lake a mile from his uncle's farm where he and his uncle used to go in the fall for firewood. He sat in the back of the rowboat trailing his hand in the cold wake while his uncle bent to the oar. . . . The shore was lined with birch trees that stood bone pale against the dark of the evergreen beyond. The edge of the lake is a riprap of twisted stumps, gray and weathered, the windfall trees of a hurricane year past. . . . This was the perfect day of his childhood. This is the day to shape the days upon. (11-12)

This memory recounts both the childhood of the father and nature in its beautiful form. Missing both of them haunt the old man. The revelation of nostalgia for the lost childhood and lost natural beauty is the essence of the memory. In other words, it is the nostalgia of the lost world. This situation of nostalgia is depicted by Tim Edward who claims that "juxtaposition of a seemingly edenic past with a clearly hellish present" (58). This is the dialectical representation of joy and pain, and hope and hopelessness. This dialectical representation is the value of the novel for completing its aim of eco-consciousness.

The beauty of nature from the past and the memory of his wife remain deep rooted in the father's mind. Therefore, they come in his dream. He finds his wife among flowers, dazzling appearance, dark hair decorated with combs of ivory. The green and leafy canopy, flowering wood, flying bird, uncanny taste of a peach, and phantom orchard are related to the spellbinding nature:

In dreams, his pale bride came to him out of the green and leafy canopy. Her nipples piperlayed and her ribs bones painted white. She wore a dress of gauze and her dark hair was carried up in combs of ivory, combs of shell. Her smile, her downturned eyes He dreamt of walking in a flowering wood where birds flew before them. He had the child and the sky was aching blue but he was learning how to wake himself up from such siren worlds. (17)

The beautiful and serene woodland environment with birds flying before them is charming in its beauty. The father is aware about the impossibility of such beauty in their current reality. They function as reminders of the past and possibility in the far future. This desire for pristine nature assimilates with the ideas of John Hannigan: "Unspoiled natural settings took on a special meaning; that is, the stress of city living created a rising tide of nostalgia among the urban middle class for the joy of country life and outdoor living" (41). In the novel, nostalgia is for the natural beauty of the pre-apocalyptic world. As the people of the city desire for the unspoiled nature, the characters desire for the pre-apocalyptic natural beauty, which was destroyed by the unwise industrialization backed up by consumer culture.

These dreams and memories function as a means of transitory escape from the bleak reality for the characters. The readers also feel relief from the terror and horror of the post-apocalyptic world. These moments are not just escape from the present crisis but the moments that inspire them to continue their struggle in the critical situation. The reality is so pathetic that only stress, anxiety, and pain are parts of life. To generate hope, they have to escape to the past in dreams and memories, which encourage the characters with a glimpse of future possibilities. Their key function is to create hope in the nearly destroyed world.

Inclusion of the Son in the New Family and Uncertainty

The success of the father even at the cost of his life to handover the boy to a caring family is the most significant event that signals hope and continuity of human civilization in McCarthy's *The Road*. The man in the new family gives him the choice: "You can stay here with your papa and die or you can go with me. If you stay, you need to keep out of the road. I don't know how you made it this far. But you should go with

me. You'll be all right" (304). The boy decides to go with him. The concluding part of the novel is discussed extensively by the critiques debating its message. Chris Cleves admits that "the world is irredeemably doomed and has no hope of the good and survival" (1). Cleves finds the world of the novel inappropriate for the survival of living beings. Therefore, her stand is against the hopeful ending of the novel. Opposing Cleves' idea, Janet Manish claims for a hopeful ending of the novel: "The author offers no looking forward although allowing readers to simultaneously see behind. The author's final gesture is the embrace of faith with hope in the face of no hope whatsoever" (2). Manish asserts that in the hopeless world the final event of the novel embraces faith that indicates possibility.

Andrade rejects the idea of the hopeful ending of the novel. He notes, "One final clue to the impossibility of human survival beyond one or two generations is based upon the bleak and hostile destruction of the immediate environment that seems to preclude vegetation from recovering" (9). The bleakness of the environment questions the survival of human beings. Andrade does not see the possibility of human survival for one or two generations because he does not see the possibility of immediate recovery of vegetation by the dystopia. This study identifies the positive possibilities that the end of the novel indicates. Both events, son's matured performance at the deathbed of his father and beginning of his new journey with a supportive family, affirm the aspect of future possibilities. The whole ecosphere is difficult for survival but the maturity of the boy and a supportive family will surely help to overcome the critical situation. A morally justified person with full confidence can create an oasis in the desert. The supportive family with other children strengthens the confidence of the boy. His maturity promoted by the father's stories and encounter of innumerable hardships is strong enough to transcend the derailed world.

In contrast to the bleak and hostile landscape, the supportive father, loving mother, and accompanying children in the new family help the boy to forget his past and begin a new journey. This new journey of the boy to the new world indicates continuity of human civilization that generates hope in the novel. Even in the face of the most unimaginable horror, there is still the possibility of hope and redemption as mentioned by Pamela Bedore: "And yet at the end of this dark novel the reader is left with tiny rays of hope. A tiny bit of utopian thinking" (12). McCarthy assures the continuity of the human race but she indicates that many things are lost permanently. She is nostalgic and regrets the loss caused by the dystopia. He writes, "Of a thing which could not be put back. Not be made right again" (307). Even in the continuity of the human race, things will not be the same. The dystopia will have an ever-lasting effect. In this case, Buell argues that "when the web of interdependence between plants and animals is invaded it causes irreversible damage to our ecosphere" (283). Therefore, there is an urgency of timely actions to protect the ecosphere. The novel presents that the world was not such from the past. It means certain insensitive activities of human beings towards the sensitive ecology are responsible for this outcome.

Conclusion

The above discussion clarifies that the novel revolves around the dialectical presentation of the dystopian and hope generating events. The dystopian events are not for the generation of negative fear but for the positive awareness. People's indifference toward the ecological issue is so strong that they cannot be made serious until certain shocking events are presented. The horror of the events should strike them. Particularly, those societies that disregard the web of interdependence meet irreversible loss. Their negligence of the sensitivity of nature and their ignorance toward ecological issues are

making the situation worse. Their change is essential for the survival of humanity and nature. Only ecofriendly behavior is the solution to the problems. There lies the message of the writer to protect the ecosphere in time. At the same time, McCarthy's novel presents certain hope generating events for signaling positive possibilities. The world presented in the novel is pessimistic. The disaster is so terrific that survival of any animal or plant seems impossible. However, the presentation of the characters with resilient human spirit, presentation of the mother, dream and memories, town with electric light, and the final event of the inclusion of the son in the supportive family indicate better possibilities. As a whole, this novel is successful in generating eco-consciousness through the dialectical presentation of hope and hopelessness in the post-apocalyptic world.

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