
**Anticipating the Unknown: An Ethical Critical Study in Cormac
McCarthy's *The Road***

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ABSTRACT:

Human beings expect and anticipate the unknown, including wishes, ambition, and the future. At times, the future is imagined as bright and hopeful. At other times, the future is expected to be gloomy and ominous. Therefore, human beings deal with the future with fear and skepticism. These fears are justified given the circumstances in the present, including human conduct in general, the conditions of wars, and environmental changes.

Since literature recalls the past and tackles the issues of the present, it also expects what will happen in the future by visioning what the future would be. The visions presented in literature motivate the reader to think of other possibilities for the future by amending the present. Usually the future is portrayed through literary works, such as: science fiction, but in Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*, the future is presented to show the reader that the it is the outcome of the past and the present.

The current paper is an ethical critical study of Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*. It aims to explore the reasons that lead to a dark future in McCarthy's *The Road*. The paper aims to approach *The Road* by using Ethical Criticism. The paper also investigates human's reaction to these changes in the future.

Key words: (Ethical, father, reaction, road, son)

Ethical Criticism

Ethical criticism developed in the latter half of the twentieth century in response to post structuralism theory. It explores the relationship between criticism, literature, and ethics. It is an attempt to bring the field of ethics together with the field of aesthetics. Ethical criticism investigate issues , such as the ethical aspects of literary works. It also explores the role of cultural and moral values that determine the writing and the explanation of literary texts. Ethical criticism is associated with the work of American critics, namely, John Gardner, Wayne C. Booth , Martha C. Nussbaum, and J. Hillis Miller (Cuddon,2013, p. 255).

John Gardner, an American literary critic and an essayist, explains that art must be moral. Besides, criticism should judge the works of literature in terms of their moral value. True art is recognized by its careful,

and truthful analysis of moral values. Art is not necessarily didactic, because it aims to make people learn in a mode that does not depend on authority (Gardner, 2005, pp. 3-4).

In his book *On Moral Fiction*, John Gardner states that true art is the art which explains life and implants correct modes of human behavior. True art reflects upon the possibilities of the future. It also celebrates good actions and mourns sad events as true art will never “giggle” in the face of death (Gardner, 1978,p.100).

Ethical merits or flaws in literary texts are not necessarily considered aesthetic merits or flaws. But, the moral values conveyed in a work of art and the way in which it is written contribute to the beauty of the work. Thus, the criticism of the moral values of a work is part of the criticism of the way it is written (Hagberg, 2011, pp.5-6). A literary work can be enduring or self-sustaining if the work has some moral content which sustain the reader’s satisfaction in it. The moral content provides enduring interest of a work of art. Consequently, the criticism of the ethical power of a literary work is also a criticism of its success as a work of art (Hagberg,2011, pp.23- 24).

Many moral values are expressed through the emotional aspect. Thus, standards of wrongness is expressed through emotions such as anger and hatred. Therefore, readers judge a situation in terms of values and principles (Hagberg,2011, pp.42). Readers are invited to read, feel, and evaluate the literary work according to their standards of rightness and wrongness as well as the influence attained by the literariness of the literary work.

The Road is a novel written by Cormac McCarthy (born in 1933). McCarthy is an American author who wrote ten novels, a screenplay, and two theatre pieces (Lincoln, 2008, p.175). He is well known for his reluctance to interviews and public appearance. In 2007, he agreed to participate in “ The Oprah Winfrey show” which was his first appearance on television (Broncano, 2014, p.6).

The Road is Cormac McCarthy’s tenth novel which gained acclaim when it was published. It is the outcome of the changes that happened in history, man’s values and environment(Bloom, 2009, p.183). Cormac McCarthy’s *The Road* (2006) portrays a dark future in America when an unspecified event ruins civilization and human society completely, leaving a barren land. People who survived are either victims or cannibals (Railton,2007, p. 131). The novel traces the journey of a man and his son. Both of whom travel and strive to survive in this desolate world. The novel is written from the father’s perspective and his flashbacks inform readers of what happened before the novel starts (Railton, 2007,p. 131).

The author invites the readers to confront the dilemma of making correct choices in a space where the end is inevitable. The imminence of this end might make some readers question the reason of continuing this journey (Boscaljon, 2014, p.xiv). Readers are introduced to a gray world of ashes where darkness and silence prevail and the remaining human beings

suffer in this miserable condition. Such a dying world offers no hope in the future (Boscaljon,2014, p.xiv).

Humans' Destructive Role in the Present and the Future

The setting of *The Road* is a world that has been destroyed and burned. What is left is a dying civilization (Clark,2014, p.146). In *The Road*, a disaster took place before the novel starts. The world was inflicted by a fatal form of light, which led to these effects (Murphet and Steven, 2012,p.11). In *The Road*, the ecological system of Earth is destroyed by a cataclysmic event about eight years ago. No specific reasons are provided. Thus, readers are free to consider the following reasons: a nuclear conflict, a worldwide epidemic, or global climate change. All of which are caused by human's decisions and mistakes (Railton,2007, p.131). *The Road* causes the reader to feel anxious concerning the future. The mystery of the future may cause people to reconsider the past and the present (Boxall, 2013, p.215). The novel depicts a world marked by loss. The plants are dead and animals are gone too. Pure water is very rare. It is a world where there are no governments, or geopolitical laws (Clark,2014 p.148).

The world's climate goes through a process of change. Many changes happened in the past and will probably happen in the future. A number of studies observed an increasing amount of gases which is responsible for the warming of the surface and the atmosphere as well as the disturbing of the global hydrological cycle (Sellers and McGuffi, 2010, p.3). Other topics that are related to climate change are: cloud feedbacks, nuclear winter, economics of abatement of emissions, and wild life conservation. All these topics are related to climate (Sellers and McGuffi,2010, p.5).

Man is a crucial factor in these changes since man has always found pretexts to practice destruction and use lethal weapons. USA decided to use the atomic bomb against Japan during the second world war for several reasons: firstly, the atomic bomb will force Japan to surrender; thereby, war will stop quickly. Secondly, the atomic attack would help USA balance the international powers after the war as well as many other strategic reasons. (Koppe, 2008, p.30) The raids caused a huge firestorm which destroyed a large area of land. Besides, the injuries and loss of lives were awfully great within a short period of time. There was an increasing number of radiation and related diseases (Koppe, 2008,p.31).

Sometimes destruction is not caused by wars. Catastrophes are caused by mistakes committed by human beings when they use energy wrongly. In Chernobyl reactor, radioactive substances were emitted which caused the fatal pollution of the air, water, trees, rivers, and seas. Radioactivity prevailed over every living thing around the area causing potential sources of danger to people (Nevinger, 2009, p.vii). Therefore, human beings play a great role in determining the future climate through their practices (Sellers and McGuffi,2010, p.10).

In *The Road*, an image of a wasteland is emphasized through dust, death of nature, and ash. Birds and animals are no longer present in this world. Trees are burned as well as buildings. The air is extremely polluted

and filled with ash. Even though it rains frequently, this ash never disappears (Bloom, 2009, pp.185-86). Moreover, the description mentioned in the novel is similar to a nuclear attack drawn from the father's memory (Bloom, 2009, p.185): "The clock's stopped at 1:17. A long shear of light and then a series of low concussions. He went into the bathroom and threw a light switch but the power was already gone" (McCarthy, 2006, p.45).

No bright colors are found in this world. Everything is gray. The city, the ice, the beach, the sea, the water, the windows, the clothes, the human body, and the tree stumps are gray. Not only tangible objects are gray, but also the days and the hearts are described as being gray. Other elements of nature are gray, such as the dusk, the dawns, the light, and the sky (Murphet and Steven, 2012, p.10). Another passage in which the same barrenness is expressed:

Everything covered with ash and dust. Fossil tracks in the dried sludge. A corpse in a doorway dried to leather. Grimacing at the day. He pulled the boy closer. Just remember that the things you put in your head are there forever, he said. You might want to think about that (McCarthy, 2006, p.10).

Destruction begets destruction. The disaster has not come to an end yet. The ecological system of earth is harmed by the consequences. Trees are still burning and "the smoke coming off the ground like mist" (McCarthy, 2006, p.41). The changes of weather caused a tremendous damage. Hurricanes and storms harmed the trees and deformed its shape: "The edge of the lake a riprap of twisted stumps, gray and weathered, the windfall trees of a hurricane years past" (McCarthy, 2006, p.11). Storms attack the land frequently and move the light dead trees easily: "Down country a storm had passed over the isthmus and leveled the dead black trees from east to west like weeds in the floor of a stream" (McCarthy, 2006, p.16).

Fire has turned most of the landscape into ash. Furthermore, all animals and trees vanished and food is scarcely found and what remained is preserved in cans and jars (Clark, 2014, p.123). The weather is "getting colder every day" (McCarthy, 2006, p.36). perhaps the winter is very close or because it is one of the effects of the catastrophe. They will move southwards to find a warm place. Besides, they are afraid of "others" (McCarthy, 2006, p.24). These "others" are human beings, but they are cannibals and criminals.

Early in the novel, a man and his son begin a journey in the American south, Kentucky and proceed in the road (Clark, 2014, p.123). But some of the places were deadly silent:

They moved on east through the standing dead trees. They passed an old frame house and crossed a dirt road. A cleared plot of ground perhaps once a truck garden. Stopping from time to time to listen. The unseen sun cast no shadow. They came upon a road unexpectedly and he stopped the boy with one hand and they crouched in the roadside ditch like lepers and listened. No wind. Dead silence. (McCarthy, 2006, pp.58-59)

A sense of foreboding is conveyed throughout the novel. Images of the lifelessness of the land and the physical decline are depicted to show the passage of time. The image of the unseen sun adds to the darkness of the scene (Clark,2014, p.123).

The author portrays an image where senses overlap. The blackness of night hurts the listening ear: “The blackness he woke to on those nights was sightless and impenetrable. A blackness to hurt your ears with listening” (McCarthy, 2006, p.13). The search for light signifies the search for salvation and redemption. He “looked toward the east for any light there was none”(McCarthy, 2006, p.3).

The reasons of this massive destruction are not mentioned in the novel. The flashbacks of the man show that they were not expecting such a horrific catastrophe and they were surprised to witness this cataclysmic event (Clark,2014, p.132). After they saw light and heard the sound of an explosion, the man’s wife asked: “What is it? She said. He didn’t answer.” (McCarthy, 2006, p.45)

The impact of this event is similar to a nuclear explosion, but the man’s inability to answer his wife’s question implies that they have no idea about what is happening. It might be a nuclear blast because of the alterations that happened to the ecological system. On the other hand, it might be a catalyst caused by war and humans themselves (Clark,2014, p.132).

Human minds are haunted by the notion of planetary death, which is an unalterable disaster. Such a disaster is unavoidable for the dying planet (Boxall, 2013, p.14). The water in the river is not pure and its movement is very slow: “he looked over the wasted country. The road was empty. Below in the little valley the still gray serpentine of a river, motionless and precise. Alone the shore a burden of dead reeds” (McCarthy, 2006, p.5). The water of the river is stagnant and the plants are dead.

Modes of Reaction :The Quest to Find a Haven

The characters in *The Road* are not given names. The protagonist is referred to as “the man” and his son is referred to as “the boy.” The man is in his mid-forties (Clark,2014, p.123). The boy was born after that event; therefore, he is probably seven or eight. The man’s overwhelming love for his son is extremely profound. Their relationship help them overcome the violence and the poverty of the world in which they live (Clark,2014, p.122). The first reason for this journey is to find a warmer place. They were moving south. There’d be no surviving another winter here” (McCarthy, 2006, P.4). The weather changes constantly. Therefore they cannot stay in the same place. Probably they will not survive the next winter.

Another reason is the father’s lung infection which makes him cough. The father is dying gradually : “... he stood bent with his hands on his knees, coughing. He raised up and stood with weeping eyes. On the gray snow a fine mist of blood” (McCarthy, 2006, p.26). This reference to the father’s illness comes from the very beginning of their journey. (Bloom,

2009, p.187) They walk in a path filled with danger; thus, they are always afraid and attentive (Clark,2014, p.123).

When reality is extremely dark, dreams become the resort to which the father can restore light and safety: “In the dream from which he’d awakened he had wandered in a cave where the child led him by the hand. Their light playing over the wet flowstone wall” (McCarthy, 2006, P.3). The boy is the reason of his struggle against darkness and despair: “He knew only that the child was his warrant” (McCarthy, 2006, p.4). The boy is the reason why he did not give up. He is the only source of light in that desolate land. The coming steps will be taken by the boy.

The past does not provide a refuge for them. They do not look back to the past. They are hardly aware of time. The boy is in need of maternal care and he wishes he was with his mother (Lincoln, 2008, p.167). The father kept the pistol ready and kept the boy close to him when they walked through a city. Readers may expect them to feel happy when they pass a city after an exhausting journey. Yet, they show a different attitude:

They passed through the city at noon of the day following. He kept the pistol to hand on the folded tarp on top of the cart. He kept the boy close to his side. The city was burned. No sign of life. cars in the street caked with ash, everything covered with ash and dust. Fossil tracks in the dried sludge. A corpse in a door way dried in leather. (McCarthy, 2006, p.10)

Everything has burned and dead bodies were everywhere. The city is empty at noon; there is no one there. Everything is covered with dust as if many centuries elapsed since any living creature lived there

The father sometimes believes that they are counting down until the inevitable moment when he will use his revolver to take their lives both although it is meant to save them from cannibals and criminals (Railton,2007, p. 131).

The man and the boy have a map which is torn into pieces. The map represents a world that no longer exists (Bloom, 2009,p.193). The torn map parallels the devastated world in which they live: “Long days. Open country with the ash blowing over the road. The boy sat by the fire at night with the pieces of the map across his knees. He had the names of towns and rivers by heart and he measured their progress daily” (McCarthy, 2006, p.181).

Time is relative. They feel they need to light “ the long gray dusk, the long gray dawns” (McCarthy, 2006, p.7). They feel so because they are in a state of exhaustion and anxiety. “The days sloughed past uncounted and uncalendered [sic]” (McCarthy, 2006,p.230). They do not keep a calendar and he does not know the month: “with the first gray light he rose and left the boy sleeping and walked out to the road and squatted and studies the country to the south. Barren, silent. He thought the month was October but he wasn’t sure. He hadn’t kept a calendar for years” (McCarthy, 2006,p.4). Time passes in an unstopping manner: “Tolling in the silence the minutes of the earth and the hours and the days of it and the years without cease” (McCarthy, 2006,P.3).

They walk alone in that desolate land because the company of others is a threat to them (Lincoln, 2008,p.166). They have brief and direct

conversations due to the exhaustion of their emotional and physical energy; therefore, their conversations reflect their mental state. The lack of conversations between the father and his son is caused by the cruelty and harshness of their reality. The rarity of small talks is not because they are not on good terms, but they are tired, frightened, and exhausted. The boy repeatedly says he is afraid and the man sleeps little at night (Clark,2014, p.124).

Various events increase the boy's fears, for example, when the man visits his childhood home, the boy is deeply afraid that he asks his father to leave the house (Clark, 2014,p.123). "We should go, papa. Can we go? Yes. We can go. I'm scared. I know. I'm sorry. I'm really scared. It's all right. We shouldn't have come" (McCarthy, 2006, p.23).

The boy is concerned about his father's safety. He is scared of the possibility of his father's death leaving him alone. He knows his father is dying , but his awareness is based on his father's waning body (Clark,2014, p.124-125). One of the reasons he could not talk is that everything is falling apart:

The world shrinking down about a raw core of entities. The names of things slowly following those things into oblivion. Colors. The names of birds. Things to eat. Finally the names of things one believed to be true. More fragile than he would have thought. How much was gone already? The sacred idiom shorn of its referents and so of its reality. (McCarthy, 2006,p.75)

They belong to different times, the past and the present. After the man wakes in the middle of night, he watches his boy and reflects: "maybe he understood for the first time that to the boy he was himself an alien. A being from a planet that no longer existed" (McCarthy, 2006, p.129).

The boy's good intentions motivate him to help others, but his father focuses on the road. The father does not have the time, resources, and strength to help others as there are fellow starving travelers. He believes that doing so will expose his son to danger (Clark,2014, p.129). After a violent storm, the man and his son see an exhausted man. The boy poses a number of questions: "Papa? ... what is wrong with the man? He's been struck by lightning. Can't we help him? papa? No. we can't help him. The boy kept pulling at his coat. Papa? He said. Stop it. Can't we help him papa? No. we can't help him. There's nothing to be done for him" (McCarthy, 2006,p.42).

The man and the boy are trying to cope with the results of that disaster. They proceed in their journey because they follow a number of rules concerning when to hide and when to travel. They even know what to look for whenever they come across a house or a car (Clark,2014, p.133).

The man and the boy examine the abandoned huge diesel train in the desolate land. The train is a representative of the capitalist-industrialist period (Boxall, 2013, p.14). They realized that "the train would sit there slowly decomposing for all eternity and that no train would ever run again" (McCarthy, 2006, p.152). Again, the father tries to repair the trolley's wheel mount:

They collected some old boxes and built a fire in the floor and he found some tools and emptied out the cart and sat working on the wheel. He pulled the bolt. Then he bolted it all back together and stood the cart upright and wheeled it around the floor. It ran fairly true. The boy sat watching everything. (McCarthy, 2006,p.14)

This passage distracts the readers from the dilemma of the characters. The passage draws the reader's attention to a practical activity. The boy was observing his father attentively in order to learn a practical lesson (Bloom, 2009, p.192).

When the father was exploring a boat named ironically “pajaro de Esperanza” (Bird of Hope), he came across a beautiful object, an ancient brass sextant. But he did not take it. He examined it carefully and put back in its case. The man realized that this object belongs to another time. His reaction represents cultural demise as beautiful objects do not belong to this new appalling world (Bloom,2009, p.192).

Inside [the box] was a brass sextant, possibly a hundred years old. He lifted it from the fitted case and held it in his hand. Struck by the beauty of it. The brass was dull and there were patches of green on it that took the form of another hand that had once held it but otherwise it was perfect...He held it to his eye and turned the wheel. It was the first thing he'd seen in a long time that stirred him. He held it in his hand and then he fitted it back into the blue baize lining of the case and closed the lid and snapped the latches shut and set it back in the locker and closed the door. (McCarthy, 2006,p.192)

The man maintains his sanity by focusing on the safety of his son and the procedures he must follow to secure his son's life. When he explores a wrecked ship, he tries to find devices that might be useful(Clark,2014, pp.133-134).

Unlatched and raised the hatch to the engine compartment. Half flooded and pitch dark. No smell of gas or oil. He closed it again. There where lockers built into the benches in the cockpit that held cushions, sail canvas, fishing gear. In a locker behind the wheel pedestal he found coils of nylon rope and steel bottles of gas and tool box made of fiber glass. He sat in the floor of the cockpit and sorted through the tools .(McCarthy, 2006, pp.226-27)

The Horrific Side of Humans' Reaction to Decline

The boy goes through violent conditions and death too early in life (Clark, 2014,p.135). When they discover a barn, they boy urges his father to search it, but the father refuses and says, “let's go” because he sees “three bodies hanging from the rafters.” (McCarthy, 2006,14) “burned figures half mired in the black top, clutching themselves, mouth howling.” “I don't think you should see this” (McCarthy, 2006, p.160).

In that future, there would be no jokes, no innocence, no more state roads, no moving cars, no civil governments, no order, and no moral principles. Atrocities committed by gangs are found in the shape of burnt corpses as well as the smell of dead bodies (Lincoln, 2008, p.166). A few

number of human beings are alive, but they constantly kill and eat each other (Bloom, 2009, p.186).

The boy sees “a charred human infant headless and gutted and blackening on a spit” (McCarthy, 2006, p.161). The father could not intervene, but “he bent and picked the boy up and started for the road with him, holding him close. I’m sorry, he whispered. I’m sorry” (McCarthy, 2006,19). The man apologizes in order to console his son and because he could not prevent him from observing these horrific scenes.

McCarthy depicts evil to the utmost. He suggests that People kill and harm each other because such acts are found in the surrounding environment. The difference lies in the way humans deal with evils in life (Clark,2014, p.132). When the man and his son met a cannibal, the man threatened the cannibal that he is going to shoot him (Clark,2014, p.129):

you aint got but two shells. Maybe just one. And they’ll hear the shot. Yes they will, but you wont. How do you figure that? Because the bullet travels faster than sound. It will be in your brain before you can hear it. To hear it you will need a frontal lobe and things with names like colliculus and temporal gyrus and you wont have them anymore. They’ll just be soup. Are you a doctor? I’m not anything. (McCarthy, 2006, p.54)

When the cannibal threatens to kill the boy with his knife, the man uses medical terms to distract him. Terms, such as, “colliculus” and “temporal gyrus.” The man abandoned his previous career because the circumstances in which he lives do not allow him to help others. The man’s main concern in life is to protect his son (Clark, 2014,p.129): “ my job is to take care of you. I was appointed to do that by God. I will kill anyone who touches you. Do you understand?” (McCarthy, 2006, p.65).

The Father: A Carrier of Hope and Moral Values

The Road gives an insight of how hard times influence the family in particular and the society in general. The novel conveys a message that the mutual love between the father and his son is what helps them confront total destruction: “Then they sat out along the black top in the gunmetal light. Shuffling through the ash, each the other’s world entire” (McCarthy, 2006, p.5).

The father’s upbringing to his son qualifies him to differentiate between the good guys and the bad guys. He is fully aware that those who are ready to sacrifice themselves and protect their families are the good guys. He is also certain that those who kill others to ensure their survival are the bad guys(Broncano,2014, p.127).

The father tries to teach his son moral codes. He narrates stories of courage and justice in order to help him understand the difference between the bad guys, cannibals, and the good guys (Murphet and Steven, 2012,p.138). In spite of the father’s disillusionment and fears, he preserves a hopeful concept. He explains to his son that they belong to the “good guys.” He narrates stories of heroism and hope in order to help his son confront a dark reality (Railton,2007, p.132). This is the reason why the boy used to ask his father the following question: “you can read me a story, can’t you papa?” (McCarthy, 2006,p.7).

The father believes that there are two missions assigned for him: he must keep his son safe. He must also influence his son positively by narrating a set of heroic stories and by explaining correct ideas and beliefs (Railton,2007, p.132). The father believes they have a chance. He advises his son to carry the fire: “you have to carry the fire. I don’t know how to. Yes you do” (McCarthy, 2006, P.234). to which his father answers: “It’s inside you. It was always there. I can see it” (McCarthy, 2006, P.234.). The father is aware that they will survive because they carry the fire. The father and his son bear the fire although they live in a dark cold world(Lincoln, 2008,p.168).

The events of the novel as well as the end never imply any solution for the dilemma of Earth as violence prevails on Earth. Nevertheless, the man and the pure innocent boy carry the fire, which represents hope, love, light, and refinement (Clark,2014, p.135).

In one incident, they discover tortured people in the cellar of a house, but they are alive. The boy asks his father a number of questions after that incident (Murphet and Steven,2012, p.138): “We wouldn’t ever eat anybody, would we? No, of course not. Even if were starving? No. No matter what. Because we’re carrying the fire. And we’re carrying the fire. Yes” (McCarthy, 2006, p.200). The spiritual fire signifies moral codes as well as the assurance of a future humanity that is expected to be borne by the boy (Murphet and Steven,2012, p.142).

According to the boy, the fire is associated with safety. Thus, as long as they carry the fire, nothing bad will harm them. The fire represents civilization. It also signifies the hope in a better future after this gloomy present. It is also a symbol of light. “We’re going to be okay, aren’t 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, 70).

The fire could be the love they have for each other. This love is the means by which they will communicate after the father’s death: “you said you would not ever leave me. I know, I’m sorry, you have my whole heart. You always did. You’re the best guy. You always were (McCarthy, 2006, p.235).

The novel is about a journey led by the father in order to find a better place. Paternal love motivates the father to proceed in this heroic quest in spite of his own approaching death (Bloom, 2009,p.188). The man and the boy’s relationship is a loving relationship between father and son (Bloom,2009, p.194): “he held the boy close to him. So thin. My heart, he said. My heart. But he knew that if he were a good father still it might well be as [the mother] had said. That the boy was all that stood between him and death” (McCarthy, 2006, p.25).

The father is striving to win a battle against despair. Hope and his belief in the fire help him overcome despair. He had a plan to kill his son if a cannibal attacks them, but he does not do so. The boy begs his father to shoot him so that they will not be separated. But the father refuses and advises his son to proceed (Railton, 2007,p.132). The father implants in his

son a glimpse of hope when death is about to separate them. He tells his son that his voice will accompany his son even if the father is actually absent: “If I’m not here you can still talk to me. You can talk to me and I’ll talk to you. You have to make it like talk that you imagine. And you’ll hear me. You have to practise. Just don’t give up” (McCarthy, 2006, p.235). The boy responds by showing doubt. He doubts his ability to talk to the voice of his father after his death. Nevertheless, the boy promises his father: “I’ll talk to you everyday, and I won’t forget. No matter what” (McCarthy, 2006, p.240).

The man has fears concerning his son’s destiny, he wonders: “But who will find [the boy] if he’s lost? Who will find the little boy?” (McCarthy, 2006, P.236). The father answers his own questions stating that “Goodness will find the little boy. It always has. It will again” (McCarthy, 2006, P.236). After the man’s death, the boy meets a stranger whom he asks: “Are you one of the good guys?” The man answers: “Yeah, I’m one of the good guys” (McCarthy, 2006, p.236). Thus, the father’s expectations are materialized at the end of the novel as his son is not lost. The boy is found by a “good guy” who will take good care of him.

At the end of the novel, the father dies and the boy is rescued by a family of presumed good guys. A family who follows the rules of Divinity that belongs to the old world. The text does not include any further information about the boy’s survival or the kind of man he will become (Murphet and Steven, 2012,p.142).

At the end, death is accompanied by a possible continuity for the young generation. The young generation can pass safely because they are motivated by the inherent vitality of the heart. At the end, the absent female is regained in the figure of the family who rescue the boy. The father’s journey was concluded by the boy’s rescue and survival (Bloom,2009, p.196).

The woman when she saw him put her arms around him and held him. Oh, she said, I am so glad to see you. But the best thing was to talk to his father and he did talk to him and he didn’t forget. The woman said that was all right. (McCarthy, 2006, p.241)

The Road ends with a passage in which readers are given the opportunity to read, think , and decide:

Once there were brooks trout in the streams in the mountains. You could see them standing in the amber current where the white edges of their fins wimpled softly in the flow. They smelled of moss in your hand. On their backs were vermiculate patterns that were maps of the world in its beginning. In the deep glens where they lived all things were older than man and they hummed of mystery. (McCarthy, 2006, p.241)

At first glance, the last paragraph in *The Road* seems to be an intertext borrowed from another novel, because hopeful images and bright natural scenes are inserted after a long series of violent and sorrowful events. Such an end inspires the readers of *The Road* to believe there is light

and renewal in the midst of this hazy darkness. Previously, the father did not want to envision the future as the present is very dark and it will logically lead to a gloomy future. Care, and paternal love make the father afraid as he sees the future as unimaginable and unknown. Eventually, hard times pass and the calculations of the days and the hours will be measured differently from now on. Fear, darkness, and anxiety in McCarthy's *The Road* are replaced by a beautiful natural scene. A replacement that is probably caused by a change in the place where the characters live. Yet, it is definitely ascribed to the truthful faith of their hearts.

Conclusion

The future portrayed in *The Road* is extremely dark, yet the reasons of this grimness are not specified. The novel provides the reader with the results instead of the cause, leaving the reader free to expect and decide. *The Road* tackles the influence of these hard conditions on a family which consists of a father and his seven years son. They go through a journey to escape cold winter and find a warmer place. They suffer from rarity of water and lack of food.

The author extends his survey of human reactions to show the father's attempt to adjust and cope in order to assure survival. He is a protective father who implants moral lessons in his son and encourages his son to proceed. Conversely, there is an aggressive reaction represented by other human beings who turn to criminals and cannibals.

The Road shows that human beings need to establish a safe future through sensible decisions in the present. The novel also tackles the core of humans' faith which motivate them to proceed in a long exhausting journey. Furthermore, the events of the novel explain that the hard conditions can be a test for family ties which are best exemplified in the strong bond between the father and his son.

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توقع المجهول : دراسة نقدية أخلاقية في رواية (الطريق) لكورماك مكارثي

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المستخلص

لطالما كان الانسان في حالة توقع و ترقب للمجهول الذي يحوي الأمنيات, و الطموح, والمستقبل . في بعض الأحيان, يتبادر إلى الخيال مستقبلاً مشرقاً و مفعم بالأمل. و في أحيان أخرى, يُستبصر المستقبل بشكل مشؤم و موحش. لذا يتعامل البشر مع المستقبل بشيء من الخوف و الشك. لهذه المخاوف مبررات بسبب الظروف في الحاضر ومنها سلوك الإنسان بشكل عام, والظروف في الحروب, والتغيرات البيئية.

بما أن الأدب يستذكر الماضي ويتعامل مع الحاضر, فأن الأدب يتوقع المستقبل أيضاً من خلال تصورماهية المستقبل، إذ تُحفز المشاهد المقدمة في الأدب القارئ على التفكير في احتمالات أخرى للمستقبل من خلال إصلاح الحاضر. يُصورُ المستقبل في العادة من خلال قصص الخيال العلمي و الأحداث الخيالية و لكن في رواية (الطريق) لكورماك مكارثي يجري تقديم المستقبل ليبين للقارئ أن المستقبل هو نتاج الماضي و الحاضر.

إن الدراسة الحالية هي دراسة نقدية أخلاقية في رواية (الطريق) لكورماك مكارثي، تهدف الدراسة إلى استكشاف الأسباب التي أدت إلى مستقبل قاتم في رواية (الطريق) لكورماك مكارثي ودراسة رد فعل الانسان لهذه التغيرات في المستقبل.

الكلمات المفتاحية: (أخلاقي , أب , رد فعل, طريق , ابن)