
RESEARCH ARTICLE

Xenophobia and Mechanisms of Coexistence in Post-Apocalyptic World: A Study of Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*

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ABSTRACT

The demeanours of coexistence and phobic conditions of the post-apocalyptic world in Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* (2006) are what this paper revolves around. This study discusses the nature of human relationships in a time of catastrophic destruction. It examines how the fears from unknown events and individuals would contribute to holding back the interaction of humans and how coexistence should take shape at all levels of the apocalypse. The study aims to illustrate the impact of a disaster in bringing trepidation and its role in the demise of coexistence subsequently. However, it further aims at sustaining the concept of coexistence and then promoting the concepts of solidarity and progression in a frightful world void of humanity and ethical values. The results of the research revealed that tolerance, altruism and adaptability with the 'other' are the most considered mechanisms for achieving coexistence. It underlines that people should behave morally and humanely and that coexistence is the criteria for life to go on. In short, *The Road* is a novel that recounts a contemporary, almost realistic story that reveals premonitions of extinction. Yet and throughout its discourse, it discloses thoughts of tolerance and attitudes of coexistence. McCarthy projects the light on the inscrutable scenes and static interactions of people through post-apocalyptic time. However, in his narrative manoeuvre between good and evil, life and death and fear and courage, he could revive the spirit of coexistence for his characters and in the sight of his readers as well.

KEYWORDS

Coexistence, Cormac McCarthy, Post-apocalyptic, *The Road*, Xenophobia.

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1. Introduction

Being unknown in the time of catastrophe does weaken the bonds of coexistence and intensifies the hardships of post-apocalyptic times as well. The paper is to argue the reactions toward what sounds wired and foreign that will do individual acts selfishly and to identify the suitable mechanisms to socialize again. It tackles the issues that impede the readjustment in an inverted scales world of apocalypse. How people should integrate into the distressful society, how each should maintain the scopes of coexistence and to what extent xenophobic confrontations play a contradictory role to realize adaptation are all matters of interest to question.

Cormac McCarthy (born in 1933) is the Pulitzer laureate in fiction (2007) for his last and featured novel, *The Road* (2006). He is one of the prominent writers in contemporary American literature for the nuanced notions of life that he tackled in the aftermath of cataclysms. *The Road* is the story of an unnamed father and his son on travel towards the south to get away from an eradicated landscape annihilated by an anonymous cataclysmic event. During their trek, both were in imminent danger of being predated by cannibals and a threat of starvation that obliged them to scavenge in the remains of the rubble to survive and to store food supplies to insure their trek. As possible, they avoid strangers on the premise to reach their destination that might save them from their present uninhabitable site. However, the coast they reach is no less glum, for it is as "grey as lava sand" (McCarthy, 2006, p. 236), and the ocean is "not blue" (230). Subsequent to their reaching it, the father has an ailment before his death, and the son is taken on by a strange family. The novel ends dramatically with the death of the father and with the uncertain future of the son.

Not only the father who dies but rather his promise to his son that they will die together and he will not send him "Into the darkness alone" (265).

For the last several years, unremitting endeavours have been magnificently dedicated to studying the texts of apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic literature. The novel has been described as the most literary masterpiece in the recent writings of post-apocalyptic literature. The novel is not merely a portrayal of the apocalyptic horror that a society may be blighted with, but it is likewise a vision to theorize standards for acclimatization in a declining world. These views are critically examined in reliance on the proceedings the man and the boy adopt in *The Road* throughout their imminent apocalypse, once for salvation and once for coexistence. More specifically, the research is to follow up on the reservations and antipathetic reactions of the father towards strangers he faced during his trek. In return, it is the empathy and leniency of the son that revives the spirit of coexistence in the time of absence. Furthermore, the demeanours of both the father and the son in keeping up with the straits they confront during their arduous journey are attentively considered too.

2. Background

Quite recently, and in response to the post-modern strenuous ramifications, writers have started to follow a new tendency in narrative composition. In this new direction, writers paid considerable attention to demonstrating the calamities and tribulations of modernity and to what extent one may coexist with their consequences. *The Road* has been critically successful and perceived as a felicitous continuation of literary performances for a tremendous writer such as Cormac McCarthy. The novel is considered a prime model to which the post-modern paradigms of the apocalypse are attributed. Focusing on the terminological decent of apocalyptic expression, Cudden, in his dictionary of literary terms, roots the origins of the semantic meaning of "apocalypse". The term is mainly descendant from a Greek lingual heritage which means "to disclose". The writings of such kind of literature open up an extensive domain to convey waste visions of the world and a desolate prognosis of mankind's destiny (2014, p. 47). *The Road* is a model of contemporary science fiction that a reader can witness through its 'ecological change' which Cudden indicates as one of the "experiences beyond the confines of normal human experience" As a science fiction, he notes that *The Road* provokes "serious question about what it is to be human" (p. 638). From this perception, McCarthy's *The Road* could be perceived as an estimate of to what extent human manners could be evaluated under the shade of the exhausting coexistence of apocalypse.

Among McCarthy's miscellaneous purposes of writings is the chronicle of American proceedings in the aftermath of the Great Depression (1929-1939), which emerged in the details of his last novel, *The Road*. It is also a prediction of what might take place in the future of the United States of America, especially in the world of post-September 11 attacks 2001. This disaster seemingly portended to create a modern post-apocalyptic world, figuring out senses of resentment and retaliation toward the other. Thijs Grootveld explained that *The Road* "predicts that constructing an Other, and thus creating a polarized society, may lead to the end of humanity and human civilization." (2019, p. 32) McCarthy implicitly attempts to catch the attention of readers to what the American future might be in case of considering the traumatic event of September "*The Road* has its core the desire to drive the reader's imagination into contact with an extreme vision of an apocalypse-ravaged future America" (Cooper, 2019, p. 221). As staying with his son, John Francis, McCarthy recalls the apocalyptic settings of both realistic and psychological backgrounds that the Sep. 11 attacks leave on some Americans to live with. With these familial echoes, McCarthy lived with his son, reviving in him the context of the chaotic disorders their city of El Paso might become after years. The images of obliteration occupied his mind and made him think of his son's predestination amid such urban devastation and moral decay that people may turn to (Luce, 2008, p. 9).

3. *The Road* as a Post-Apocalyptic Novel

The cold and the silence. The ashes of the late world carried on the bleak and temporal winds to and fro in the void. Carried forth and scattered and carried forth again. Everything uncoupled from its shoring. Unsupported in the ashen air. Sustained by a breath, trembling and brief (McCarthy, 2006, p. 7).

As the novel opens, the views and scenes McCarthy described signify a disastrous affliction that occurred shortly before and portends an exhausting life to come "The city was mostly 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 doorway dried to leather." (2006, p. 6). William P. Greenwood made this clear throughout his juxtaposing the irrevocable destruction of society with the infernal journey the father determines to make with his son. He states that this journey "prophesies a nightmarish future for humanity in a world in which society has ceased to exist, where evil reigns" (Greenwood, 2009, p 90). McCarthy repeatedly portrays chronicles reflecting the fact that post-apocalyptic life is falling apart "Odd things scattered by the side of the road. Electrical appliances, furniture. Tools. Things abandoned long ago by pilgrims enroute to their several and collective deaths" (2006, p. 168). The constant endeavour for getting a refuge is the formation of post-apocalyptic life and the daily preoccupation of the man and the boy in the novel. They also engrossed in their protection from the fluctuated and turbulent weather and the risks they may expose in the world of apocalypse.

Furthermore, the applied expressions clamped the text with the context are perfectly and effectively employed to tell the function and the environment of the novel. Words such as murk, dimming away, ash, wasted, barren, grimness, fading, dusk and whatever is concerned with the degenerated life are significantly used to refer as an indication of the declining world of apocalypse. Over and above, depression and the decline of living are precisely depicted throughout the struggle between nature and human existence. In *The Road*, nature is crumbling, and human is degraded from the value of life by being interesting only in material existence, disowning the virtues the humans once created for. The barren trees, the junks of the man, the driftage of ash, the wreckage of buildings and the dispiriting and disheartening attitudes and other many spiritless expressions all are marks to define the atrocious world aftermath of a disaster. This bleak and dismal portrayal reveals McCarthy's dreary climate and his resemblance between the productive nature and the depression of humans in a post-apocalyptic time.

As a Post-Apocalyptic text, the absence of the feminine figures in *The Road* confirms the barrenness of life and extremely eliminates the possibility of coexistence. It is narratively weaved as a sign of sterility in the scopes of coexistence. The man, in return, is appeared as a widower and is constantly in search of protection for his son. During the process of the novel, the man reincarnates the role of the mother, in, for instance, feeding and reassuring his son. This lack of intimacy and amiability assists McCarthy to deliver his message of sterilization in the aftermath of the catastrophe. It is worth noting that the figure of the woman appears twice, first at the very beginning of the novel when the father remembers his wife and their cheerful times. This memory serves the chronological order of the novel and detects the vast disparity between the pre and post-apocalyptic periods. The second occurrence of the feminine is in the ending when a mother appears with a family to save the son, who is now left alone after the death of his father. This turning point is patently to revive the hope that once demised after the death of the son's mother. Moreover, and since post-apocalyptic novels are part of science fiction, McCarthy asserts the scientific references throughout the narration even if these signs are in some positions beyond lines. As a model, the nature of the solar system is taken the account in explaining the dimmed times for the shortage of the day compared with the night. The sunrise, sunset and crimson colour are frequently watched by the man and the boy, along with the rain that continually falls as well as the rareness of the light that can be only illuminated from their lamp. All these climatic factors will unconsciously flash in our minds and arouse the scientific intellectuality that probably drives us to think of scientific theories as Global Warming. It is also possible to lead further analyses for the reasons behind some natural disasters, such as deforestation and desertification.

The materialistic world, McCarthy expertly demonstrates in *The Road*, had previously experienced in American society. To wade in the realms of apocalypse is to involve equally in the physicality of objects and human behaviour. Being in a post-apocalyptic society does not necessarily oppose the human nature of morals or manners of coexistence while passing through hardships certainly occurs. So, one cannot assert complete negativity in such a world without humanistic signs of coexistence. McCarthy always lets us guess in which way the world is declining. His focus on how the world turns into a wasteland after it was a productive land transcends his concerns about the overlapping and sequence of events. The novel thus "participates thematically in the projects of contemporary popular responses" (Copper, 2019, p. 222). Susan Kollin, in her analysis of the modern American post-apocalyptic upheaval, comments on the recasting of narration of *The Road* that is "ancient and yet also quite contemporary" (2011, p. 166). It is the cataclysmic deconstruction, Americans hardly adapted and still adapting, which evolves the motifs inside McCarthy to write a novel of *The Road*. Concisely, McCarthy presented *The Road* to date American history of the first half of the 20th century and to visualize his early time of the 21st century as well. Moreover, it is to assert the apocalyptic hardships where fear and lack of human resources overpass the human's will to live and coexist.

4. Xenophobia

Xenophobia, as Philippas clarified, "is the excessive fear, dislike, and even hostility toward of anything "foreign" or to anything and anybody from outside one's social group, nation, or country"...The word "xenophobia" comes from a Greek word with two components: the first component is "Xenos", which means "foreigner," and the second one is "phobos", which means 'fear'" (2014, p. 309). *The Road* revolves around the father and son's fear of strangers and whatever is unknown and ambiguous in a post-apocalyptic region. Unlike numerous post-apocalyptic novels, McCarthy's *The Road* has the uniqueness of anonymity starting from its main characters whose names are recognized as the "man" and the "boy" or the "father" and the "son". Despite their anonymity, their fictitious names may act as pseudonyms for further values and human figures for the current life that is supposed to be considered. The "man", for instance, may indicate the nature of most humans in the time of apocalypse. So, anonymity, in this context, promotes the universality of the objectives the novel invites to understand. Thus, the unknown characters are indicative and intentionally recounted by McCarthy to generalise his thoughts and not to be limited to his fictional persona.

What mostly discriminates against a post-apocalyptic society is the few number of people. This shortage of human existence will generate a paralyzed reaction which, in turn, will create a sense of xenophobia and trepidation to get along. "Could there be another one somewhere? I don't know. It's possible" (McCarthy, 2006, p. 169). In the novel, the man frequently points out the strangers he accidentally meets as "bad guys", and sometimes he with his son refers to them anonymously using pronouns or

ambiguous words such as 'someone' and 'they'. On one of the xenophobic occasions is, the conversation occurred between the son and his father about expecting anonymous foreigners to approach them.

I think there's someone following us.

[...]

Let's just go. We should hide our trash.

Because they'll think we have lots of food.

Yes.

And they'll try to kill us.

They won't kill us.

They might try to.

[...]

I think we should lay in the weeds for them. See who they are.

[...]

They trundled over the bridge and pushed the cart out through the woods, looking for some place to leave it where it would not be seen. They stood looking back at the road in the dusk.

[...]

How far back do you think they are?

I don't know.

It's getting dark.

I know.

What if they go by in the dark? (McCarthy, 2006, pp. 162-163).

McCarthy repeatedly employs this description to sustain the eccentricity of the post-apocalyptic world and to emphasize the inevitable fear of the anonymous in such an environment. Xenophobia here is a natural echo of the degeneration of social mores and principles that claim, in search of redemption, new ethics for humanistic rehabilitation. In general, *The Road* is substantially imbued with profound anticipation and feelings of fear from foreigners. "*The Road* critically interrogates the increase of xenophobia" (Grootveld, 2019, p. 32). This phobia permeates the novel to explicate the inevitable fates that humans might be facing in the dystopian world of apocalypse.

He [the man] woke in the night and lay listening. He couldn't remember where he was. The thought made him smile. Where are we? he said. What is it, Papa? Nothing. We're okay. Go to sleep. 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 (McCarthy, 2006, p. 70).

Being uncertain of who and what may be encountered is adequately enough to feel anxiety and fear. The unspecified destiny the man and the boy pursue in the indefinite world reveals the horror and doubt to coexist with each other. From the onset of the novel, the man uses his binoculars to study his position, looking out for what he might encounter. He is in constant apprehension of the surroundings that always intimidate his endeavours to survive with his son "he looked out through the trees toward the road. This was not a safe place." (McCarthy, 2006, p. 3). The fear of the unknown generates acts of violence by the father towards those who threaten his secureness and, more specifically, his son's life as cannibals and other foreigners. Cannibals, in *The Road*, reflect the brutal pragmatism of the post-apocalyptic world that somehow represents the contemporary postmodern time that stands against the free will of humans. Such 'bad guys' are the scavengers from whom the father protects his son, "the father fears the boy's face-to-face engagement with these scavengers because he does not want his son to drown in any relation" (Sydner, 2008, p. 79). Such a group of scavengers, according to Sydner, exports xenophobia to the father, which may "portend additional groups like this one, communes no longer able to survive in one location" (80). Like his father, whose phobia of the unknown encompasses his life, Sydner asserts that the son similarly "learned to be fearful of exploring places" (80). However, the son reversibly prefers to indulge with others representing the antithesis of his father. With the absence of humanity and the prevalence of the evils, the man is in constant awareness of his son's danger of existence. He is often living in a panic ambience while they are on their road to the south, where McCarthy suggests safety. Amid this disruption and anticipation, the father occasionally meditates with his pistol to gun his son down instead of dying brutally to cannibals. Afterwards, the father refutes his idea of predation and resumes again trying to adapt to his anxious world of apocalypse. This contemplation is subconsciously crystalized to be an obsession with fear.

Do you think somebody is coming?

Yes, sometimes.

You said nobody was coming.

I didn't mean ever (McCarthy, 2006, p. 127).

In this frightful world of apocalypse, every stage is endangered to be deformed with a misfortune destiny; and that is why *The Road* is xenophobic. Even during the warmth instants, the fear of what will be occurred after is the main concern of *The Road* reader also. By this, the phobia of being in an encounter with obscurity or eccentricity haunts the father and is likewise the premonition of the readers "The task for both the readers and the characters then, is to imagine what comes next, what may be salvaged and what must be left behind" (Kollin, 2011, p. 164). According to what is stated above by Susan Kollin, both characters and readers contribute to expect what will take place "in order to rebuild society and re-conceptualize human relations to nature and to each other" (164). Here, the fear of unexpected events serves probably to save lives and set an early logical reaction for any future trespass. The father tells his son that he "should always be on the lookout. If trouble comes when you least expect it, then maybe the thing to do is to always expect it" (McCarthy, 2006, p. 128). To clarify, the constant watching by the father for the grimness of post-apocalyptic living saves his son's life and prevents him from predation by cannibals. Throughout the novel, McCarthy lavished chaotic scenes maybe; first, to affirm the unstable life of the post-apocalyptic world and second, to advertise elements of suspense that could enhance the narration and give greatness to work.

The emotions of xenophobia in *The Road* are intermittently appeared to confirm the premonitions of fear "There's nobody left besides them in this wasteland, anybody is nobody. What is left is only what fear means to them" (Lincoln, 2010, p. 166). The emergence of these phobic states is significantly concerned with the father and the son. But in a specific point from McCarthy, a third character also laments this world of abandonment and decay. Greenwood explained that "her decision to end her life was driven by the psychological and physical exhaustion of struggling to survive in the postapocalyptic reality" (2009, p. 78). The mother here is the intended figure who shares her concerns and fears of aliens with her husband, the father. Susan Kollins argues the mother's vision concerning the forthcoming and her despair of being survived "The mother ...argues that no one survives. Fearing the worst and opting out" (2011, p. 167). This apprehension lets her believe in the impossibility of continuing in such a phobic life, especially with her knowledge of cannibals who might invade their lives at any hour "They are going to rape us and kill us and eat us, and you won't face it" (McCarthy, 2006, p. 56). Her anticipation of irreversible fate, along with her desperation, ironically leads her to liberate herself and survive only by committing suicide "The woman's decision to kill herself ... comes from ... what the future might entail" (Kollins, 2011, p. 170).

5. Familial, Ethical and Humanistic Coexistence

In *The Road*, McCarthy declares the bleakness of existence the man and the son exemplified throughout their journey. They first try to coexist with their anarchic reality by seeking opportunities for their survival as eating and protecting themselves from being hurt or exploited. Before this, the concept of coexistence had been crystallized in memory of their house that once prospered with vitality and exhilarating life. Both retrieve familial memories that strengthen them to bear and coexist with the barren reality of their own. Though post-apocalyptic outcomes have negatively occurred, they still pursue after their dispersed hope to catch a productive existence in a sterile environment "They ... went back up the hill and made their camp in the dry dirt under the rocks, and the man sat with his arms around the boy trying to warm him" (McCarthy, 2006, p. 8). Still, coexistence in a cataclysmic world is scarcely gained unless there is a cling to ethics and humanities that will ultimately turn the despair to hope. Lydia R. Copper associated this vision with the ethical demeanour of the son with others, "the boy's generosity in the face of terror suggests that if there is any value to human life, it lies in a categorical rejection of fear-based behavior" (2019, p. 234). McCarthy skilfully leaves his readers to get along with the hope of salvation by confirming the moral principles every now and then. Hence, the value of being in an interconnected family is to sustain the idea of coexistence with the surroundings and between each other. In *The Road*, the father and the son adopt their familial harmony as a source for their insistence on survival toward the loneliness and the risks they encounter during their journey for salvation. It is this mutual conformity that keeps them last in their journey, adopting their faith in each other as a pier to the safe side of their world.

Spotting the light on the description of the scorched landscape McCarthy portrayed, one can imagine the enormity of the gloominess in the post-apocalyptic ambience the man and the son fight to coexist with. The depressing surroundings, McCarthy constantly refers to, bear to the mind a comfortless visualization, full of grey and piles of junk and ashes. These living sustainability challenges have not thwarted the determination of the man and his son to progress on their journey for a better life. McCarthy, therefore, endeavours to manifest that coexistence with the harsh circumstances of living is the most effective manner for survival. Despite the hardships and the dispersal of impulse, progression, as a mechanism of coexistence, is yet the essential mode and the most secure outlet to keep pace with life. Another point to consider in the realm of apocalypse is the lack of faith. It is a ubiquitous feature for the people who strive only to secure themselves regardless of others. Yet, in *The Road*, McCarthy frequently asserts the strength of faith as a mechanism of coexistence to exceed the crises of the apocalypse. This faith could be seen in the recurrence reassurances the father delivers to his son for the inevitability of their salvation. Furthermore, the physical and spiritual coexistence is the dominant strife in the novel, where the scope of survival lies in-between. The spiritual coexistence captures the scene of attachment between the man and the boy on the one hand and the son and strangers of their trek on the other hand. The altruistic alliance that gathers the son with others provides an impression of moral and peaceful coexistence that contribute to reviving the inanimate spirits of the post-apocalyptic world. This goodness of the son could be transformed into an aspiration for a future that

will combine humans in a harmonic bond to live and interact conformably. McCarthy, in turn, shows the hardness of this harmony by the collapse of the horrific world witnessed where people perish and naturally turn to the wasteland for the damage of its inhabitants and plants. However, a breath to a thrived life is still possible through the coexistence with the remnants of nature and humanity. This call for the reunion is what McCarthy tried to imply for the restoration of the virtues that had once governed the world of prosperousness.

The ramifications of the deteriorated circumstances usually stand as a stimulus for a better life. In *The Road*, McCarthy tacitly recounts two perspectives of coexistence; reciprocal and irreciprocal. The reciprocal coexistence can be abundantly conspicuous with the son in his deeds and constant comments over what he and his father pass by during their trek. The boy, as McCarthy has amply conveyed, is apparently appeared as a son who does not seem compatible with the surroundings of the apocalypse. Yet, he, as a symbol of hope in the mid of despair, is brought to disentangle the interwoven threats of existence and continuity of living. Whether in hardship or leisure, the son is always thankful and generous to others and constantly ready to coexist with external factors. Unlike his father, he is mostly ready to harmonise with foreigners and to coincide with their conditions. The old man he meets with his father is an eminent instance where the son interferes with his living affairs and empathizes with his unpleasant conditions in the shade of apocalypse. Thus, the son becomes the source of coexistence that without his representation of goodness, the novel was to deliver a negative impression void of an optimistic factor to rely on. Furthermore, his mental growth echoes the maturity that the father should exemplify instead. However, what is implicitly clear is that the maturity of the son in the imminent end of life was a vital gleam of hope to stimulate and sustain the idea of reciprocal coexistence. In this context, the boy becomes the only mediator between life and death. His insistence to cope with the ruthlessness of living awards him the title of hope saver in most of the critical writings of the novel.

Being coexistent does not confine only to interacting directly with others, but to exceed to have good morals and to show amiability even with people who left but whose charities are still available. Concerning this point, Philip A. Snyder explained the state of the father and his son that "their dramatic encounters with others on the road are of two kinds: those with humans who are literally present and those with humans who are absent, made figuratively present only by their traces" (2008, p. 78). The son, in one of his reactions, shows his irreciprocal coexistence with people with no return response to have. "Dear people, thank you for all this food and stuff. We know that you saved it for yourself, and if you were here, we wouldn't eat it no matter how hungry we were; and we're sorry that you didn't get to eat it, and we hope that you're safe in heaven with God" (McCarthy, 2006, p. 123). Conjugated with tolerance, McCarthy progressively paved the way to bring the idea of coexistence to light. This gradual narration is clearly applied to the son, whose altruism and dedication to the other is what distinguishes his humanity from his father. Regarding this matter, the individualistic character of the father explores his habit of being alone and independent in his living, influenced by the dire consequences of post-apocalyptic reality. He is not flexible enough to interact with others, but only with his son. McCarthy probably seeks to identify the father as a bounded coexistent. He presented him as a "representative of post-apocalyptic humanity" (Gwinner, 2011, p. 143) who looks only after the protection of his family unity. In placing the father in this scope, McCarthy turns once again to set the son in a wider context of social coexistence. Portraying the interaction in such a manner enables McCarthy to weave the plot in a context that evolves the critique of coexistence as a matter of life and brings it to the surface of discussions. During the onerous situations, especially what is concerned with burdensome living, the son appears as a sympathized figure with the strangers. In one of their obstacle blocks on their roads, the son and the father are attacked by a thief with a knife in his hand to take their piled cart. Here, the man shows a realistic reaction and prejudice against him for being a thief and, more importantly, an alien. During this, where his pistol is pointed at him, he takes him off his shoes and clothes and threatens to kill him unless laid his knife aside. After he does what the father tells him, the boy, contrary to his father, starts to ask him to forgive him. The son seemingly thinks as maturely, taking into account what people are experiencing during the days of the apocalypse. However, the son and, in terms of situational coexistence, as it were, could humanely convince his father to give him back his stuff and go on their way. "Just help him, Papa. Just help him ... He's so scared, Papa" (McCarthy, 2006, p. 218).

McCarthy so thoroughly maintains the importance of the "other" to get along with each other. The boy, due to his loneliness in the arid space, creates a virtual other to emerge with a peer for acclimatization. In *The Road*, the boy is in a constant search for an analogue to give a trance to his static life. The child, for instance, who is imaginably seen by the boy, constitutes the motif of coexistence McCarthy sought to involve in the context of his novel. This creation of the "other" countermands the stagnancy and the vicious silence that the novel characterized with. Another example to be considered is the boy's agony over the cannibalized infant he sees at the end of the novel "if we had that little baby, it could go with us" (McCarthy, 2006, p. 168). It is this repetitive reestablishment of the "other" that provides the novel with a sense of liveliness and coexistence. In this context, a reader could infer that it is the boy's desire for readjustment of his reality that turns him to search for another or even to imagine the "other" (Cooper, 2019, p. 232). Philip A. Snyder suggestively alludes to the confrontations that help to irritate the dryness of the coexistence scopes in the shades of the apocalypse. The formations of coexistence occur in the various encounters the father and the son experience on the road. "The literal encounters tend to be fraught with immediate danger, each one a threat to their lives and the goods upon which those lives depend, while the figurative encounters tend to be full of anxiety and hope" (Snyder, 2008,

p. 78). Here, the boy is the indicator of that amelioration for a probable coexistence with others. Lighting-struck man is one of those encounters with whom they lose what could figuratively call a 'reciprocal mutuality'. In return, the son and sometimes his father substantially urge to rebel against the disregard nature of post-apocalyptic life. Yet, Snyder claimed that this world "features a different set of meeting rituals which mock this model of mutual responsibility" (78). As the son keeps asking, "can't we help him? Papa?" (McCarthy, 2006, p. 42), the father, in a reaction to his request, responds negatively that they "can't help him. There is nothing to be done for him" (43). This negative attitude of the father seems to be rational, but not to his son, who is constantly in pursuit to obtain the opportunity for coexistence rather than egotism.

In response to the atrocity of apocalypse, Lydia R. Copper suggested that the soulful bond between the father and the son is, at a minimum, to mitigate the ferocity of post-apocalyptic tribulations. Moreover, it is possible to interpret this familial relationship under the concept of the 'faintest faith' in that subversive life of apocalypse. "The tender, mutually nurturing relationship between the father and son in *The Road* suggests at least a faint faith in the human capacity to be moral and achieve meaningful relationships" (2019, p. 228). Ultimately, despite coexistence is the envisaged message of McCarthy, welfare is still far-fetched to be achieved even with that benignant link of the father with his son "The very best of human nature may, not, in the end, account for much. So, brutal is the post-apocalyptic landscape here that cities have differently found a concrete sense of eudemonia in the ending, despite the tender father-son relationship" (Copper, 2019, p. 228). In return, Lydia also asserts that the novel invokes the connotation of coexistence regardless of the dystopian and the jungle nature of contents. She inferred that *The Road* "concurrently proffers an affirmation of the individual's ability to experience a transcendent and ... empathetic connection with others" (234).

Besides, Donovan Gwinner maintains a mechanism of coexistence for the father and the son, who rely on being 'good guys' to survive. This goodness stands for the space they reckon to cope with the unbearable burden in a world where everything is unprogressive and monotonous (2011, p. 143). McCarthy, in his expression of "everything uncoupled from its shoring" (11), shows the temporality of living in that ashen world. Nonetheless, the father and the son relentlessly strive to coexist firstly in terms of homely and familial integration and secondly in terms of humanistic and ethical interactions and reactions to the surrounding strangers. Here, the initiatives of coexistence and promiscuity with the other break the xenophobic settings that permeate the novel every now and then. In the final moments of the novel, the man asserts the goodness of the boy and drives the frustrating matters and memories into oblivion. The father, in this stage, empowers his son and makes him overcome his fears. At the end of the novel, the father calls him one of the 'good guys' as McCarthy prefers to emphasise the "persistence of good in a world filled with evil" (Greenwood, 2009, p. 80). The son is ultimately sustained to live and coexist with reality by the dose of hopes the father provides to him through his omniscient memory from which the boy launched himself toward a new life. Willard P. Greenwood maintains this auspicious ending stating that it is "within the context of total social and environmental collapse; McCarthy explores the nature and origin of the human impulse to survive in the face of hopelessness" (78).

6. Conclusion

Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* declares the importance of coexistence in a post-apocalyptic time. From what has been carried out, the formation of coexistence could be familial, ethical, humanistic, reciprocal and irreciprocal, environmental and sometimes situational. The novel is not just a panoramic figuration for the life aftermath of the cataclysm, rather, an appeal to transcend the barren life to the life of coexistence. In *The Road*, the realms of the apocalypse are shown through bundles of post-apocalyptic epitomes as the fear of the unknown and the awkwardness of harmony between a human and his peers of humans.

The novel is a journey toward a destination in the south where warmth and stability could be obtained. It has been found that the dire need for the spirit of humanity and amiable integration is what McCarthy appeals to in his writing of *The Road*. He carefully sought to display uncoupled aspects; the dire consequences of apocalypse and the stress on the humanistic and ethical attitudes. This contrary exposition is skilfully employed to reach for the shore of safety the father and his son strive to pursue in their trek. While the son becomes a symbol of hope and coexistence, the father is featured as a xenophobic figure which in turn deconstructs his axiomatic constants of social inclusion. However, the altruistic and empathetic spirit of the boy significantly breaks the monotonous string of gloominess and adds thematic sobriety to work. McCarthy finally exports whiffs of hopes against all the sombre hymns that post-apocalyptic settings are associated with. Being in an indefinite world does not necessarily lead to doom, though; it might arouse new motives for coexistence and create enthusiastic morale for a better life. In conclusion, xenophobia will be eliminated only by adaptability and coexistence even in the mid of intractable circumstances of a certain post-apocalyptic world.

This study is significantly social and psychological in content. It concentrated more on the emotional agitations of both the father and the son than environmental fluctuations. While some of the mechanisms of coexistence were known in the course of the novel, others are still of considerable importance to cast light on. To illustrate, the coexistence with the concrete objects of the ecological variations will be of great value to discuss and remain arguable in the context of eco-critical literature. However, the lack of information in this area will expand the scope of discussion and will necessitate further studies in the future. Also, it may be noted that the qualitative method of this study may lack additional sources to cite upon. Interviews by some critics and references from some academic conversations and lectures are relevant

examples to be considered in future research. Along with the text analysis, some illustrative portrayals would be considered sustainable to display the thought of the destructive world that McCarthy strived to visualize throughout his narration of *The Road*.

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