

Social Representation of the Revenge of Nature in Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* (2006)

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Abstract

This article examines the revenge of nature in Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* (2006). Characters exploit and abuse nature through nuclear weapons and bombs. Nature proves to be an active agent that takes its revenge on society. This article follows an eco-critical approach so as to examine this theme. Nature has a negative impact on society since it influences social relations in a post-apocalyptic world. This study investigates the representation of social relations in the novel after the nuclear disaster. It focuses on the mother's suicide and the presence of the father and his son in a postapocalyptic world. The man and his child do not have friends and stay in desolate places because of the fear of the presence of other people. They are also afraid of cannibals, gangs of criminals and thieves; this is why they cannot trust anyone and do not have any social relations.

Keywords: Revenge, Nature, Society, Social Relations, *The Road*.

Some American postmodern novels examine the revenge of nature. They artistically describe first the reasons that lead to the revenge, manifested in characters' despoliation of the natural world through detrimental atomic bombs or excessive farming. This article tries to discuss the revenge of the natural world on society through having a impact on it. It demonstrates Cormac McCarthy's representation of the power and strength of nature to counter characters' harm. This revenge of nature is analyzed through the lens of ecocritical studies. This study analyzes Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* (2006) depiction of the revenge of nature on social relations. This study traces McCarthy's success in presenting nature as an active agent that has the intention to avenge itself. McCarthy offers a deconstructive reading where nature is not a passive entity that can be debased. This study analyzes nature's destructiveness in McCarthy's novel through a natural disaster so as to mirror the power of nature to control societies' destinies and its negative influence on their relationships .

As long as nature avenges itself on society, one has to trace what society itself has done to the natural world. In fact, society has an important role in the exploitation and debasement of nature. In "The

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Social Construction of Nature: Theoretical Approaches to the History of Environmental Problems," Elizabeth Ann R. Bird explains that any common scientific knowledge about nature is a 'social construct' rather than purely scientific research or construct (Bird 1987, 256). This means that everything is negotiated within a single society before constructing a discourse on nature. This entails that society is more risky, unsafe, and threatening than science. This shows that it can be regarded as dangerous since it celebrates the notion that nature is a passive object that can be dominated and exploited. Additionally, even though society attempts to construct the natural world, some of its members cause severe environmental problems. Bird argues that "[e]nvironmental problems represent situations in which some segments of society engage in practices that adversely affect other members of society and have the potential to injure the future quality of survivability of the planet" (1987, 261). This means that some people do not care about the outcome of their man/ nature discourse that encourages the abuse of nature even if they cause existential crises in the near future. This implies that society itself is dangerous because it endeavors to construct knowledge of nature for its own interests. This also entails that society does not care about environmental problems.

It is worth noting that society relies on science so as to dominate and exploit nature. Western society is convinced that a human being is privileged to debase nature for his own sake since he has certain abilities to reason and think properly (Keulartz 1998, 28). This leads him to believe that he is superior to the natural world; hence, he constructs discourses that serve him to use nature. In this respect, Michel Soulé boldly suggests that scientific "disciplines ... are social crystallizations which occur when a group of people agree that association and discourse serve their interests" (1986, 84). Society, consequently, sometimes constructs false scientific knowledge about nature that serve its intentions. To illustrate, it confirms that pesticides, chemicals, bombs, and wars do not harm the natural world.

Western society considers the natural world as a passive entity. Stephan R. Kellert claims, "Western society confirms its superiority over the rest of creation by the presupposition of unique human capacities for reason, speech and moral choice" (1995, 105). This explains to what extent Western society is hypocritical because it assumes superiority over the natural world for its own interests. This society justifies its manipulation and control of the natural world by characters' 'rationality' and reason (Levy 1999, 204). This means that society is blamed by some scholars because of the man/ nature discourse it invents so as to dominate nature.

Some scholars blame these societies for elaborating on human/ nature dichotomy. According to Ladelle McWhorther, this dichotomy is the main reason that causes the exploitation of nature, which eventually leads to its destruction (1989, 612). Society elaborates this dichotomy in order to maximize its wealth and economic profits. As long as this social construction of nature is destructive, society is considered as responsible for humans' feeling of superiority over nature and its despoliation. In this context, Kate Burningham and Geoff Cooper point out, "[t]he critique is not simply that social constructionism is incorrect in denying an independent agency of the natural world, but also that the position is dangerous and morally or ethically wrong" (1999, 300). This entails that social constructivism is highly critical because it develops a false discourse about nature that causes its total destruction.

People cannot be independent from the natural world. In this context, Franca Bellarsi explains that "[n]o societies or individuals can entirely extirpate themselves from the exchange between the human and non-human" (2009, 72). This indicates that nature plays a major role in social lives and interactions. Due to human abuse of nature, it reveals its own identity as an independent entity in certain narratives and aims to unveil its agency to humankind. This appears when nature attempts to take revenge on society. In some American narratives, nature is represented as a fully fledged agent that can act when it needs or wants; therefore, nature has a voice and agency. It is worth noting that postmodernism is paramount for ecocriticism since it highlights 'difference' and plurality of subjects (Oppermann 2012, 45). The notion of nature as a different entity is significant for the revenge of nature since the novelist regards it as a subject and provides it with a voice. This means that nature appears as an active and a powerful entity that can oppose and counter characters' debasement and abuse. Serpil Oppermann argues that 'ecological postmodernism' refers to the existence of numerous "material entities of this world ... [that] seem to map our discursive as well as material reality" (2014, 28). This shows that nature consists of several agents that have the ability to influence, guide and control characters' lives.

Some American novels describe nature as an agent that takes revenge on society. Nature is regarded as an 'actor' because it does not have to bear characters' acts and abuse (Latour 2005, 10). This kind of representation is crucial in literary works because it describes the strength of nature. This also shows that nature is not a recipient of characters' acts as long as the word 'actor' means that it has a voice, an intention and a creativity like characters. In this account, Christa Grewe-Volpp argues that nature is "an active force capable of subverting cultural and social achievements... Nature as a trickster cannot be contained and manipulated forever, it will reemerge in surprising and often unpleasant ways" (2006, 78). It appears that nature can go against social advancements in order to shock characters and the entire society. Nature has the power to change, alter and oppose social lives.

As long as nature has a voice in literature, its main aim is to take revenge on society because of human excessive abuse of the natural world. In this vein, Bruno Latour boldly suggests, "[t]he repressed returns, and with a vengeance... nature, over which we were supposed to gain absolute mastery, dominates us in an equally global fashion, and threatens us all" (1993, 8). This excerpt demonstrates that nature that was repressed becomes an oppressor of characters and mainly the entire society. It aims to menace the society's existence. It is worth noting that the relationship between the society and nature is generally considered as 'autonomous' in the world (Rouse 2002, 12). This entails that society and nature are opponents because they cannot construct any relations with each other; therefore, nature will inevitably search for a way to oppose society and takes revenge on it. David N. Livingstone (1995) points out, "nature certainly sets limits on what we can say about it" (1995, 371). In other words, the natural world attempts to restrict human practices such as excessive farming or the use of nuclear weapon that harm nature. In addition, nature strives to transform characters to "bed guests" if they behave "like parasites" (Galtung 1993, 201). This means that nature abuses society through making life unbearable. Furthermore, Isaac Asimov and Frederick Pohl consider natural disasters as "threats to human life" (2018,

30). A natural disaster can be viewed as the best example of nature's revenge in American literature. They are threats because they influence the interactions between individuals in a single society. This also may entail that the revenge can appear through natural disasters such as hurricane, tornado and flood.

Thomas Heyd, in *Encountering Nature: Towards an Environmental Culture*, assumes that nature counters characters because several societies fail to cope with any environmental phenomenon. He puts it, "[t]he natural environment affects us human beings in a variety of ways" such as natural disasters or illnesses (2007, 40). This shows that nature endeavors to hurt human beings. Eventhough Heyd states that nature harms societies, he does not state how humans cannot expect the creativity of the natural world. In contrast, Lawrence Buell claims that "[a]t the turn of the twenty-first century... perceived environmental crisis will doubtless prompt many affluent individuals, communities, and societies to seek safe havens from which they can blame- or trash- the victims" (2007, 35). This shows the influence of climate change or natural disasters on societies whether they are poor or rich. The negative impact of these disasters occur because of the inability of government members to find solutions to this kind of situations. This leads these societies to seek a new safe place or blame other victims for their failure. The revenge of nature may cause severe problems within a single society because it has a negative influence on social insecurity and social relations.

Nature has a negative impact on a single society at a large scale since it causes suffering. Frederick Buell notes that nature will cause "a proliferation of injury and problems- it involves economic and social disruption... it plunges local populations into a misery, and it degrades life for global populations through large-scale economic and environmental change" (2003, 70). This entails that nature leads society to face some social issues such as the lack of insecurity and poverty. Nature avenges itself on the entire society through creating several problems within it. Characters in some novels do not remain as a single unity because they start fighting each other to ensure survival. Peter Quigely points out, "[t]here is a way to think about how social meaning is generated, how it is contoured, raised, given shape, how it is undermined, and what role 'nature' plays in such a dynamic" (1999, 199). Quigely explains that nature is an active factor and agent whose main aim is not only to trace the destiny of the society but also to decide the relationship between the individuals of a society. Therefore, this article investigates social relations amongst characters because of the revenge of nature.

Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*

The Road (2006) revolves around two main characters, namely, an unnamed man and his son who are taking the road to the south. Cormac McCarthy traces the abuse of nature and its revenge on these characters, which appears through a flashback because the novel is not narrated in a linear way. This article discusses social abuse through an unnamed disaster. It is worth noting that Oppermann explains that "one of the destructive practical consequences of anthropocentric models of knowledge that describe nature either as a lifeless mechanism or as a mere textual construct is the capitalization of local ecosystems in the name of economic progress" (2014, 23). That is, society is destructive of the natural world because it considers it as soulless and static so as to boost its benefits which is always material

wealth. In *The Road*, McCarthy exposes humans' abuse of nature through an unnamed disaster. The narrator says, "[t]he clock stopped at 1:17. A long shear of light and then a series of low concussions... A dull rose glow in the window glass" (McCarthy 2006, 54). From this quote, it is clear that something dangerous happened in this world but it remains somehow unclear. The catastrophe may have appeared either as a result of a nuclear bomb or meteorite (Frye 2012, 138). However, Aitor Ibarrola Armendariz argues that even though the incident is obscure, "we do know that it is human-created" (2018, 84). In the above quote, the "shear of light", "concussions" and the rose color in the sky imply that it is more about a nuclear bomb. But, the main humans who are responsible for the nuclear bomb are not present since the narrator mentions it through a flashback. Through this bomb, McCarthy portrays the danger society can cause owing to its constructed knowledge that nature is passive. Hence, humans empower technology and modernity without paying attention to its impact on the natural world. Humans have the power to destroy everything that surrounds them mainly the natural world.

McCarthy provides the reader with a detailed portrayal of the damaged nature after the incident through the use of post-apocalyptic genre. Claire P. Curtis argues that post-apocalyptic fiction represents the aspect of nature (2006, 4). The narrator of the novel depicts the state of nature, which is "barren, silent, godless" as a result of the nuclear bomb (McCarthy 2006, 2). Here, nature appears as if it is desolate, arid, deserted or even dead. Humans, subsequently, have to face this general atmosphere as a result of their acts. Further to this, forests are already dead and burnt during the nuclear bomb and after. It contains dead trees and everything is "faded and weathered" (6); this is why nature appears as void of any sense of life. This landscape is viewed as a 'corpse' and 'carcass' of the world (Hurbert 2017, 73). Here, McCarthy's representation mirrors the extent of harm humans may cause to nature because they do not protect it.

Nature is portrayed as an active agent because it avenges itself on society and social relations. In fact, there are only few people after the nuclear bomb (Lkaç 2019, 71). In the novel, the father lives with his only child in the post-apocalyptic world while the mother is totally absent. Through a flashback, one learns that the mother has committed suicide long after giving birth to the child. Unlike the father who believes that they are survivors of this post-apocalyptic world, she does not consider herself as such. Frye argues that the mother is an atheist and a 'nonbeliever'; this is why she loses hope in humanity (2012, 141). She is hopeless because she is aware that humans are cruel and criminals in this post-apocalyptic world. She believes that she will be unable to survive after human extinction. This bad relationship between the man and his wife arise just after the nuclear bomb and human extinction. McCarthy portrays the negative impact of the natural world on family members since the world seems barren and dead. Significantly, the mother admits that "they will catch us and they will kill us. They will rape me. They'll rape him. They are going to rape us and kill us and eat us and you won't face it" (McCarthy 2006, 58). McCarthy provides the reader with a short segment to show the mother's point of view concerning the monstrous world they are facing. McCarthy relies on several expressions such as "catch us", "rape us",

"kill us" and "eat us" in order to unveil the mother's fear of cruel people and cannibals. The mother regards suicide as a release since she does not have to face a cruel and a monstrous society.

The revenge of nature appears at a family scale at the opening of the novel. The mother's failure to convince her husband to commit suicide will lead her to leave them and commit it alone in the forest. The narrator explains that "she was gone and the coldness of it was her final gift. She would do it with a flake of obsidian" (60). It seems that the mother is a cold-hearted person because she leaves the house and the other members of the family without caring about their lives. The narrator also compares her act to a 'flake of obsidian' which refers to a strong rock. McCarthy uses a metaphorical word to represent the mother's reaction and her attitude towards death. The mother does not care about her life because she is traumatized of human acts. This shows that the revenge of nature on the mother is psychological because she is traumatized and leads to her suicide. The revenge of nature on the mother is more psychological because she cannot confront a harsh environment. The revenge of nature is also social due to the absence of the members of a single family because the child is obliged to live with one parent.

The man and his child are taking the road to southern cities so as to find warm weather. The narrator points out, "[t]hey were moving south. There'd be no surviving another winter" (2). Here, they are unable to bear the cold weather in a post-apocalyptic world this is why they travel alone in the forest so as to survive. At the early beginning, it seems that these two characters do not have social relations such as family relations or friends. According to Aylin Lkaç,

Not only does the narrative present a symbolic vacuum, an absence of socio-economic context and personal ties that would form the basis of identity that help create meaning in life but also language gradually disappears word by word, following the disappearance of the referants to which these words are supposed to correspond. (2019, 73)

From the above excerpt, Lkaç tackles the absence of social or economic relations that helps them form their normal identity; this has an impact on the lack of communication and use of language. In opposition to this, *The Road* focuses more on the missing relations with other humans because of human extinction. The father relies on his binoculars to check the road and sleeping area because he wants to be safe. Early in the morning, the narrator claims that the man "watched the boy and he looked out through the trees towards the road. This was not a safe place. They could be seen from the road now it was day" (3). It seems that the father and his son are travelling alone since the father has to check a safe place for them to walk. It also appears that the father is afraid of being seen by others in the road. McCarthy, therefore, describes the characters' lack of friends or relations; hence, human extinction represents the disappearance of any sign of a single society in the novel.

While walking along the road, the man and his child have to be careful from any social encounter. The father relies on a set of materials and ideas to proceed in their trip; the father and his son possess a cart where they have to put unnecessary things such as extra clothes. They also own knapsacks where they have "essential things. In case they had to abandon the cart and make a run of it" (4). This implies that they have to put necessary things in their knapsacks in case they face any dangers. The father also

depends on a broken motorcycle mirror in order to check if there are other people behind them on the road. McCarthy, therefore, depicts characters' fear of the unknown in this postapocalyptic world because they do not really know what might happen to them.

McCarthy further describes the absence of characters and societies in *The Road* since the father and his child do not encounter other people in the forest or in the desolate city. McCarthy draws the reader's attention to the cities, which are emptied from their inhabitants. The narrator relates that "[t]he city was mostly burned. No sign of life... A corpse in a doorway dried to leather" (10-11). This city is devoid of any characters except the father and his son; hence, this may mirror the absence of society. Citizens of this city might have died or escaped after the apocalypse. The quote also refers to corpse of a dead man or woman that might have died or was killed because of this postapocalyptic world. This corpse also does not have a proper burial that people must have after their death; therefore, the father and his son have to confront such horrible scenes in their journey.

The Road portrays its characters' long journey without having any social interactions. It is worth noting that characters have abused nature; subsequently, this causes the rise of new social risks (Moran 2010, 7-9). The risk is manifested in the revenge of the natural world on society through natural disasters. In "Integrating Agency with Climate Critique" Adam Trexler explains that climate change is considered as the 'agency' of nature (2013, 222). In the novel, nature is portrayed as an active agent that obliges these two characters, father and son, to take the road alone during the day. The narrator says, "[t]hey stood in the rain like farm animals" (McCarthy 2006, 20). One can also notice the absence of other people or community with whom they can seek shelter from this bad weather; hence, nature is capable of dividing and separating a single society. They do not have any companions or any social contact with people because of human extinction or their fear of others. McCarthy focuses on two characters in his novel who live and remain alone.

The father searches for food in an empty house while he leaves his child outside with a pistol. Here, the father takes numerous precautions due to his fear of the unknown or the presence of other people. The father leaves his child outside the house holding a gun in case anybody comes because the father is unable to know what may happen to them. The father finds some things that he can use such as blankets. He also notices some canned tomatoes but he cannot trust this food; "he studied them. Someone before him had not trusted them and in the end did he" (21). This unveils the lack of trust in a post-apocalyptic world. The father is unable to take unnecessary risks when it comes to some canned food notably when it is homemade. This absence of trust in this post-apocalyptic world may generate fear and a sense of lack of confidence among people under such conditions. Therefore, this may reflect the revenge of the natural world on social relations and trust.

On their road, the father and son have to face cold weather. In this account, "narrative agency... denotes the vitality, autonomy, agency, and other signs that designate an expressive dimension in nonhuman entities" (Oppermann 2014, 30). In other words, literature uses personification in order to

provide nature with a voice, agency and intentionality to expose its aims. In *The Road*, winter seems very hard for this family because they always feel cold in the forest mainly northern states. The narrator tells, "[n]o place to make a fire that would not be seen" (29). Even though they feel cold, they do not make fire so that to avoid the presence of others. Consequently, the father's fear of other people may reflect that society is very dangerous. Their fear of others may imply that nature has an influence on social relations. The father becomes very sick because he is coughing and bleeding; his illness does not fade because they are still in the northern areas. As a result, the father and his son face the possibility of death in the forests.

McCarthy also pinpoints the role of water in attracting people, which can be found in the river, sea or ocean. Therefore, fire and water have a positive side, which manifests in warming, drinking or bathing, and a negative side, which is manifested in attracting people. The father seems afraid to encounter others besides the river or the beach because he cannot be sure who are these people. It seems that he is afraid of any gangs or cannibals. The father escapes from social interactions in this postapocalyptic world. One day, the man and his son want to spend some time besides the river so as to bathe and enjoy their time. However, they have to check the presence of others before even going there because there may be dangerous people. They also have to go early because of any new visitors. The father admits that "the waterfall is an attraction. It was for us and it will be for others and we don't know who they will be and we can't hear them coming. It's not safe" (42-3). This indicates that the father urges his son to remain in remote places in order to avoid bad people such as murderers or thieves. This implies his fear of other people because their behavior after the apocalypse is unknown and his wife has already warned him of cannibals. The father is always afraid of society because, unlike his son, he already knows human evil and has witnessed the nuclear bomb and the apocalypse. This refers to the father's hopelessness in humankind and their deeds. Their main aim in going to southern cities is to find warm places because they feel cold in northern places.

McCarthy describes burnt trees in northern forests where he does not name the cause of burns; however, it may have a connection to the post-apocalyptic world where the entire world is devastated. The narrator writes, "[w]ithin a year there were fires on the ridges and deranged chanting. The screams of the murdered... He thought that in the history of the world it might even be that there was more punishment than crime" (33). No one can save these characters, who subsequently die. By so doing, McCarthy portrays the power of nature to punish humankind since burnt people are unable to save themselves or find others to assist them. This punishment refers to the revenge of nature on these characters because nobody can save them.

One morning, an unfamiliar sound wakes the father; a group of strange men are coming to the father's view. The group seems very dangerous because of the clothes, masks and their 'diesel truck'. The father is shocked to see this group coming to their side; hence, he has to escape along with his child. The father says, "[w]e have to run. Don't look back. Come on" (63). McCarthy depicts the father's solution which is always to escape and hide in the wood, notably in a low place in the forest. In this post-apocalyptic world, there are mobs because these men hold guns. Therefore, the father's fears from people emerge because of menacing groups of men that appear in the novel. The father and his son are facing

social insecurity, instability and injustice when one of the members of this gang descends in the forest and discovers them. This feeling of insecurity leads the father to kill the man even though he is aware that he is going to attract the other members. Once the man is killed, both characters have to escape so as to avoid the rest of the group. McCarthy's core aim is to focus on human deterioration this is why he portrays violence in the novel (Frye 2012, 17). According to Frye, violence is a result of human deterioration. It also appears that "[m]ost of the values and institutions that man has depended on to build communities, such as friendship, education... and government, no longer bear significance in this world" (Armendariz 2018, 97). According to Ibarrola- Armendariz, nothing that humanity has created matters in this post-apocalyptic world. This mirrors the absence of any sign of government that can protect people or punish these groups of people. Here, Michel Foucault argues that "[w]e are the "subjects," the victims and perpetrators, of a disciplinary society- a society in which discipline operates as a widespread, familiar, and fundamental form of coercion" (qtd. Hass 1996, 61). Foucault's quote reveals that people are the victims of a disciplined society that shapes hate. McCarthy portrays the rise of gangs, violence and murder to show the government's inability to impose law and order. There is also an emergence of coercion since characters do not care about their violence on others. Nature is taking revenge on people by isolating them, turning them against each other and destroying the very basis of their existence, which is social interaction and relation.

In another morning, the father notices another group of people walking on the road; this is why he is always cautious owing to his fear of dangerous people. McCarthy offers a detailed description of this dangerous group of people whose members wear red or orange clothes and the leaders of this group are in the front while low rank people follow them. McCarthy portrays this kind of people so as to focus on the father's fear of his society and alienation in their journey. The narrator writes,

An army in tennis shoes, tramping... The phalanx following carried spears or lances tasseled with ribbons, the long blades hammered out of trucksprings in some crude forge upcountry... They passed two hundred feet away, the ground suddering lightly. Tramping. Behind them came drawn by slaves in harness and piled with goods of war and after that the women. (McCarthy, 96)

In this quote, there are different social classes where powerful people, especially the gangsters, enslave others for their own interests. It appears that there are leaders, phalanxes, slaves and women. Slaves are the ones who are supposed to work and transport things while women are given a lower status since they are the last mentioned. The quote may also uncover the total absence of the government in the post-apocalyptic world, which leads to the dearth of social security. This also entails that the position of nature in a post-apocalyptic world is viewed as a prime mover of the entire society (Curtis 2010, 18). In this vein, Fred C Alford claims that nature is considered as a place where violence exists (1985, 20). In the novel, this leads societies to become more vulnerable to violence because there are leaders who are using power to enslave and dehumanize others; consequently, McCarthy pinpoints the impact of the revenge of nature on society through the theme of social violence. This shows that the lack of security

enhances the father's fear from society and devastating groups who hold guns and other kinds of weapons. In this sense, *The Road* revolves around the lack of social connections in a post-apocalyptic world because it focuses on the theme of menace and risks that a society faces. One can notice that McCarthy's representation of social violence entails the fall of human civilization to barbarism.

The man and his child do not only face dangerous people but also cannibals. McCarthy depicts two signs of cannibalism in the novel so as to mirror the revenge of nature on social stability. It is worth noting that characters' destruction of the natural world causes the lack of food because of the extinction of animals and the absence of vegetarian food. Society, indeed, is dependent on the natural world (Bellarsi 2009, 72); because it needs to get food to survive. Whereas, the deficiency of food results in the rise of cannibalism in the novel. The presence of cannibals in the novel is intertwined with the problem of ecological crises because once humans do not find food, they seek 'human consumption' (Hubert 2017, 67). In one of the deserted houses in the forest, these characters face cannibalism for the first time. It occurs when the father decides to check some food in the house thinking that it is devoid of human presence. In part of the house, "huddled against the back wall were naked people, male and female, all trying to hide, shielding their faces with their hands. On the mattress lay a man with his legs gone to the hip and the stumps of them blackened and burnt" (McCarthy, 116). This excerpt demonstrates the presence of cannibals. It appears that there is a group of men and women who are locked in a cold and dark room. The cannibals do not care about the gender of people they eat. The quote also unveils that people who are kept as captives seem afraid of others because they are conscious of their coming fate. It also seems that one of the men has already lost part of his body to cannibals. Hence, nature takes revenge on people because it has turned them to cannibals; this in turn shows their inadequacy to be modern people as they used to acknowledge. The revenge of nature also causes social division because the father and his son do not help these people and escape from the cannibals so as to avoid being prey to them.

McCarthy further represents the idea of cannibalism later on in the novel. It is evident that in the near future cannibals will appear more as a result of the scarcity of food; they can eat other people's children. McCarthy depicts the monstrosity of people after the apocalypse; therefore, this society can never be a modern one. In *We have Never Been Modern*, Bruno Latour argues that "[n]o one has ever been modern. Modernity has never begun" (1993, 47). That is, society can be viewed as uncivilized and barbaric because of people's actions. In *The Road*, cannibalism frightens the man and his son because they cannot bear the presence of these monstrous people. In this regard, Curtis admits that "fear is everywhere: fear of starvation, of cold, of cannibals" (2010, 23). This also provides a vision of the metamorphosis of American society as it becomes savage and barbarian. According to Frye, McCarthy is interested in the theme of violence in the world since he concentrates on human dramatic events because humans cannot survive without 'bloodshed' (2012, 17). This is the case of the cannibals in the novel; this leads the man and the child to become more frightened of any other humans. McCarthy portrays how these characters hardly escape from the house because of the cannibals, two men and a woman, who are coming toward the entrance of the house. This shows the fall of civilization and humanity to have a normal social life during the post-apocalypse. It also depicts the collapse of society to barbarism because

under this condition no one can trust others. Therefore, cannibalism is a symbol of the revenge of nature that is destructive because it influences social relations.

In *The Road*, the man and his child always keep a distance from others. In another day, they have to hide when they suspect the presence of people in a nearby area. It is worth noting that a normal character's behavior is to socially interact with others; however, any awkward or bizarre interaction can be considered as abnormal. There are several reasons that cause the lack or absence of social interaction. Social anxiety disorder and social phobia can be viewed as some of the main reasons that cause the lack of interaction. As long as McCarthy's characters hide because of their fear of others, social phobia must be defined. In *Fearing Others: the Nature and Treatment of Social Phobia*, Ariel Stravynski argues that "as a phobic pattern it concerns a state of anxious distress in the face of looming threat" (2007, 3). Here, characters do not have social interaction because they are afraid of confronting society; therefore, they prefer to hide and stay away from any distress. This is the case of the father and his son who hide from any social interaction because of their distress and fear of confronting cannibals or thieves. They also hide their belongings mainly food they have found a bit earlier in the novel. Consequently, hiding in the forest because of their fear may imply the revenge of the natural world on these characters' social interaction.

From their hidden place, the man and his child watch three men and a pregnant woman walking inside the forest. Once this group leaves, the two characters check the burnt area. It appears that this woman has given birth to her child and kills it. The narrator says, "[w]hat the boy has seen was a charred human infant headless and gutted and blackening on the spit" (McCarthy 2006, 211). The woman is afraid of the child's future in this post-apocalyptic world; as a consequence, she murders him before falling prey to cannibals. This shows the negative impact of a barren landscape on characters because they become more barbaric due to the loss of a sense of humanity. Like this small group, the man and his son are also hiding from monstrous people particularly cannibals. Here, McCarthy represents the loss of any human and moral values that people can rely on (Ibarrola- Armendariz 2018, 89). The loss of humanity arises owing to barbarism and cannibalism after the apocalypse. Hence, the absence of social safety leads people to mistrust each other. This shows the revenge of nature on the entire society after the fall of the government to protect people and set rules concerning social relations.

The father and his son are afraid of society, this is why they do not have social interactions. On the road, they see an old man alone who suffers from some sight problems; hence, the first thing he does is to remain in his place. The main problem these characters face is whether to talk with this old person. The old man appears in a very poor condition and admits, "I don't have anything... You can look if you want" (172). This quote unveils that this man tries to save his life from these strangers because he is afraid of being stolen or killed. He also tries to be peaceful with anyone who meets him. The revenge of nature appears through people's failure to trust each other in this post-apocalyptic world. The father and his son attempt to be good people in this world; they, consequently, do not harm this person.

The father and his son dispute whether to help the old man or not. While the father assumes they have to continue their road, the son urges him to help the old man because he is 'scared' (172- 3). The father, subsequently, provides the man with some canned food he has found some days before. They also help him to spend the whole night with them in the forest. This shows that the father and son attempt to help a stranger in a monstrous world even though they do not trust others. Therefore, the man and his child try to be good people towards this man because they believe that they carry the fire. Likewise, the father invites this old man to have dinner with them. McCarthy provides the reader with their discussion; he writes, "[d]o you want to eat with us?/... What do I have to do?/... You don't have to do anything (176-7). This mirrors the old man's inability to believe in the existence of good people; therefore, he investigates the ways he can help or serve the stranger. This also entails the character's inability to believe in any good manners or values that can be shown by others; however, the father tries to be humble for his child's sake. Here, McCarthy provides his readers with a vision that few people can sometimes be helpful despite the dangers. Even though the father feeds the old man for a day, the day after he orders him to leave because he is aware that he can neither protect him nor feed him in the following days. That is, he is unable to be nice to other people for a long time due to the current circumstances.

One day, the man and his son remain beside the beach where a man has stolen their food. The father finds a broken boat in the beach from where he decides to bring some left food to save their lives for the coming days. However, once he comes back and takes a walk on the shore, the father discovers bootprints, which indicate the presence of a human being either a man or a woman. The father thinks about their belongings because because he is aware that they do not have food or clothes to wear in the cold weather they are facing. The narrator tells, "[t]he tarp was gone. Their blankets. The water bottle and their campsite store of food... Their shoes were gone... the cart was gone. Everything" (McCarthy, 271). It seems that the marauder thinks only about his safety ignoring the man and the child's current conditions; thus, everyone endeavors to save his life in a post-apocalyptic world. The father, in return, has no sense of pity toward the stranger notably because he leaves him without food when he finds him. The father also leaves the man naked in the cold weather. A while after, the child urges the father to provide the man with some clothes but he is not found in the area. This may imply the revenge of nature on social relations. Even though the father and his son do not have friends, they try to help others such as the old man and the marauder.

The father's health deteriorates a few days later near a house and a stranger shoots him while trying to protect his child. The father is left with a severe injury in one of his legs. Unfortunately, the father dies by the end and leaves the son to head south alone. This child is unable to trust his society because it is full of criminals, cannibals and marauders. Likewise, the child meets a new family who is heading south but the child is unable to trust them at the beginning. He starts asking a few questions to the stranger; he asks whether they are bad or 'good guys' (302). He also asks whether they have children to figure out if they are cannibals and can devour him in their journey. The narrator traces their discussion; "you didnt eat them/ No/ And you dont eat people/ No we dont eat people" (304). His excessive questions reveal his purpose which is to ensure that the stranger is a good one and is not a cannibal. It seems that he has

difficulty in trusting other people and families because he has already seen bad ones. McCarthy provides the reader with an open-ended novel; subsequently, the novel is open to different interpretations about the child's relationship with this family and his future safety. This also reflects the revenge of nature on social relations because they have difficulty in building friendships and relationships.

To conclude, Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* (2006) is one of the novels that represents the revenge on society. This article explores the abuse of nature through an unnamed man-made disaster, which is perceived as a nuclear bomb. This leads nature to avenge itself on the entire American society; therefore, there is no single society or social relations in the novel. The mother commits suicide at the beginning of the novel and leaves the father and his child alone. This suicide refers to a psychological revenge of nature on the mother. More importantly, the father and his son have to live alone and take the road to the south; they also avoid social relations because they escape from several criminals, marauders and cannibals. Therefore, McCarthy succeeds in representing nature as an agent that takes revenge on the entire society.

التمثيل الاجتماعي لانتقام الطبيعة في (الطريق) من إعداد كورماك مكارثي

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الملخص

تتناول هذه المقالة انتقام الطبيعة في رواية (الطريق 2006) لكورماك مكارثي، وتستغل الشخصيات الطبيعية وتسيء معاملتها للطبيعة من خلال الأسلحة والقنابل النووية، ولكن تثبت الطبيعة أنها عامل نشيط ينتقم من المجتمع، وتتطرق هذه المقالة إلى دراسة نقدية بيئية لدراسة هذه الرواية، إذ تؤثر الطبيعة سلباً على المجتمع لأنها تؤثر في العلاقات الاجتماعية في عالم ما بعد المروع؛ ومن ثم، تبحث هذه الدراسة في تمثيل العلاقات الاجتماعية في الرواية بعد الكارثة. تتناول هذه المقالة انتحار الأم والمخاطر التي يجتازها الأب وابنه في مرحلة ما بعد الكارثة، ليس للرجل وطفله أصدقاء، ويقيمون في أماكن مقفرة خوفاً من وجود الآخرين، فهم خائفون من أكلة لحوم البشر، والعصابات واللصوص؛ وهذا يعود إلى عدم وثوقهم بأي شخص في هذا العالم، حيث ليس لديهم أي علاقات اجتماعية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الانتقام، الطبيعة، المجتمع، العلاقات الاجتماعية، الطريق.

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