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## ENVIRONMENTAL (IN)JUSTICE AND APOCALYPSE: A TEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF *THE ROAD* AND *SALVAGE THE BONES*

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### ABSTRACT

*The present study investigates Cormac McCarthy's The Road and Jesmin Ward's Salvage the Bones to highlight environmental injustice leading to apocalyptic conditions. It explores various perspectives, such as maldistribution, consumerism, apocalypse, recognition, and injustice, to highlight that these elements contribute to destroying nature's harmony, resulting in an apocalyptic world. Qualitative and exploratory, this study uses Honneth's theory of Recognition as a theoretical framework to highlight how nature revolts against human beings. Textual analysis of both the novels illustrates unjust behavior and Nature's revolt in the form of man-made and natural disasters. The study finds that male and female authors use the same approach to highlight environmental issues in the contemporary era. It concludes that novels best offer new insight into exploring environmental justice through imagery and metaphorical representations rather than statistics.*

**Keywords:** Recognition, Apocalypse, Environmental Injustice, Mal-distribution

### Introduction

Literary text offers a different insight to look at environmental justice through imagery and metaphorical representation. It reflects the recurring problems of individuals arising out of environmental issues. Based on the larger framework of ecocriticism, the present study highlights the relationship of humans with the nonhuman environment in which they live. Selected novels

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reflect this relationship and portray the effects of environmental injustice on the environment resulting in apocalyptic conditions.

Ecocriticism has developed the relationships between literature and environment (Garrard, 2004). It focuses on how the relationship of human being with his physical environment is established in literary works; the relationships between living organisms in their natural environment as well as their relationships with environment. Its concern is to illuminate the ways in which humanists fight for the world in which they live. The reflection of this struggle in the area of culture and spirit speaks for the urgency of action or the urgent need to address environmental issues affecting human beings on a larger scale.

### **Literature Review**

This study is situated in the field of ecocriticism, which involves the interplay between the natural environment and literature. Ecocriticism holds a significant place among contemporary cultural and literary theories because of its close relationship to ecology. It provides an interdisciplinary perspective to analyze literary works in the broader context of environmental issues. Glotfelty defines ecocriticism as a genre of nature writing that has not yet received the recognition it deserves. Environmental Justice Movement (1982) advocates the re-evaluation of eco-critical narratives. Garrard (2004), defined ecocriticism as a literary or cultural analysis of issues related to the environment. He further demarcated ecocriticism as “the relation of human and non-human” (p.5).

Estok (2001) proposed an extension of ecocriticism to Shakespearean studies, contending that it involved more than simply examining the relationship between the environment and humans. It promotes transformative actions, which denotes a structural shift in the proposition of thoughts, feelings, and actions following a re-conceptualization of beliefs and assumptions.

Contemporary literary works depict nature with the main concern of human survival, ignoring the actual objective of climate change (Mehert, 2016). These also imply humanoid activities irreversibly damaging the natural atmosphere. Novels imply the idea of apocalypse in the near future or in a world that reflects post-apocalyptic scenarios (Springer 2016). The concept of an impending apocalypse as a common thread pertains to religious as well as secular beliefs, viewing an ultimate disastrous event as an inevitable ending, with potential causes including plagues, famines, wars, natural disasters, environmental degradation, and nuclear results.

Hill (2018) argues that in post-apocalyptic literature, human survival is threatened. She further discusses human compassion and empathy as the main concern of apocalyptic studies. Cade (2020) suggests that post-apocalyptic literature imagines a future where the survival of humanity is threatened by multiple ecological apocalyptic scenarios. The debate in the above discussion is about the survival of humanity, but the harms inflicted on nature by human beings are ignored. It is arguable that Gothic descriptions of darkness, along with pictures of chaos, hostility, and horror, have been employed for both entertainment and philosophical reflection. The landscape of the apocalyptic world is all too familiar: a deceased world, one which has suffered a huge catastrophe, after which life becomes sporadic and limited, when existence is in itself a fight. This is the setting

of numerous science fiction writings, predominantly those connected with one of its common subgenres, post-apocalyptic literature (Mann, 2001, p. 502).

‘Environmental justice is an influential analytical tool to addressing such environmental disparities. It is regarded as a social movement that seeks to accomplish fair and equal distribution of the material resources as well as equality in the endurance of economic production and distribution of toxic wastes. Gordon (2012) argues that flood risk and environmental discrimination are inextricably linked. This flood risk, stemming from social disparities, is a product of multiple factors, including historical processes of urban development, economic and political inequality, and deeply ingrained discriminatory attitudes towards the environment.

### **Research Methodology**

The present study uses a qualitative and exploratory research paradigm to use Honneth’s theory of Recognition (1995) as a theoretical framework for analysis. Honneth incorporated justice theory and social theory to develop his own ‘Theory of Recognition’ (1995). Honneth’s opinion of ‘Recognition’ not only deals with the way one accommodates and gives respect to others keeping the cultural practices in mind, but it is also the concern of individual identity and respect. Textual analysis by Belsey (2005) helps focus on the implied meaning of the selected novels, providing solution to a particular problem. Textual analysis explores the novels to find the injustice that nature is subject to and the reciprocal revolt of nature on human beings. The analysis focuses on the language and literary techniques employed by the authors, examining the themes, historical and social background of each novel, as well as the use of language, symbolism, and other literary devices to convey meaning and create a compelling narrative. The study is delimited to highlighting the issue of environmental injustice in the form of irregular distribution and blind consumerism that leads to an apocalyptic condition on earth.

### **Environmental Injustice and Apocalypse**

This study attempted to investigate unequal distribution of resources and ill treatment of nature resulting in an apocalyptic situation, and the violent reaction of nature against humans in the selected novels. To achieve this objective, the research examined various viewpoints, including recognition, apocalypse, misrecognition, maldistribution, respect, and injustice.

Using Belsey’s (2005) method of analysis, this study explored the historical and cultural context. *The Road* (2006) interprets the frailty and cruelty of human civilization projected on the environment. The symbolic nature of the novel is interpreted while keeping the historical and cultural connotations in mind. Motifs like fire, ashes, and burnt forests recur throughout the novel, representing destruction as well as renewal. The road itself is taken as a symbol that represents the journey of the father and son. It also represented the idea that life is a journey without any fixed destination and one must follow the road of life wherever it takes it. Similarly, *Salvage the Bones* (2011) is the story of fifteen-year-old Esch, living with her family in southern Mississippi. Ward’s novel involves the unstoppable nature of Katrina, inclosing the narrative through twelve days leading up to the storm. With each passing day, the previous knowledge of the forthcoming hurricane. It becomes more deceptive and haunts the novel’s text and characters. During the fifth day, the storm becomes fully known, and therefore recognized, as Katrina: “The storm, it has a name now. Like the worst, she’s a woman. Katrina” (Ward, 2011, p.124). Throughout the novel, the struggle and hardship of this poor family are portrayed as they try to survive in the catastrophic

Hurricane Katrina. The study relies on Belsey's textual analysis. It involves examining how the language and structure of a text contribute to its meaning and the values it conveys. A textual analysis of Ward's novel *Salvage the Bones* (2011) highlights the injustice to the environment.

In *The Road* (2006), the language and literary elements depict the injustice towards the environment caused by human activity on earth. The novel employs various techniques to communicate this message, including symbolism, imagery, and metaphors.

One of the primary literary elements in the novel that conveys (in)justice towards the environment is symbolism. The author used the image of the ash and the gray landscape to symbolize the devastation caused by a catastrophic event. The ash is pervasive and covers everything, indicating that the environment has been irreversibly damaged. Additionally, the father and son's journey through the gray landscape, which is devoid of life, emphasizes the loss of biodiversity and ecological destruction. This symbolism serves to illustrate the impact of human activities on the environment.

The novel contains vivid imagery to convey injustice to the environment in the novel. For instance, the descriptions of the desolate, barren landscape, filled with decaying remains and polluted water, illustrate the profound harm that humans have caused.

*The Road* (2006) can be taken as a product of the historical and cultural context in many ways. Firstly, the novel reflects the anxieties of the 21st century through its depiction of a post-apocalyptic landscape. 21<sup>ST</sup> Century literature portraying post-apocalyptic scenarios like *The Road* (2006) demonstrates how this literature engages with the anxieties of contemporary life (Alexander, 2020, Trexler & Putra 2011). The landscape of the novel reflects the apocalyptic distortion. Language of the novel, such as 'barren' and 'ashen', and the landscape represent the post-apocalyptic anxieties. McCarthy's portrayal of the landscape suggest that the world suffered from an irreversible damage most likely caused by human ignorance for instance Grindley attribute the distorted landscape to a possible nuclear war: "the physical landscape, with its thick blanket of ash; the father's mystery illness; and the changes in the weather patterns of the southern United States all suggest that the world is gripped by something similar to a nuclear winter" (Grindley, 2008).

For all the country was shrouded in snow, snow falling still in the cold and the dark, snow on snow, the flakes whirling down from the high peaks, the wind wuthering, so that the grey road was almost invisible. (McCarthy, 2006, p.3)

These lines represent the anxieties of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, about a society that has collapsed and the struggles of the survivors. The cold and harshness represent an unpleasant feeling of difficulty and harshness.

Similarly, the historical and cultural background of *Salvage the Bones* (2011) is crucial while interpreting the novel. In 2005, Hurricane Katrina caused widespread devastation. This calamity caused chaos, resulting in over 18 thousand deaths and billions of dollars (Graumann, Houston, Lawrimore, Levinson, Lott, McCown, Wuertz, 2006). The novel is set in the time of this calamity, the storm is presented as a metaphor for the environmental injustice that happened in America. The novel reflects the impact of cultural and historical background through the language used in it; thus, the meaning of the text embeds historical and cultural information (Bucholtz, 2003).

*Salvage the Bones* (2011) is set in the year 2006 in Mississippi, United States. Cultural influence

is prevalent throughout the novel's leading character, Esch, who sets out to explore life of her own. She becomes sexually active at an astonishingly young age and undergoes many sexual encounters,

It was easier to let him keep on touching me than ask him to stop, easier to let him inside than to push him away, easier than hearing him ask me, 'Why not?' It was easier to keep quiet and take it than to give him an answer. (Ward, 2011, p.23)

It illustrates the authoritative nature of men over women, which is present in eastern as well as western culture (Katzman, Lee, 1997). Esch is unable to say no because of the abusive nature of her relationship. She warped her sense of self-confidence into her sexual desires and equated it with swimming, which was her favorite hobby. She claimed that "the only thing that's ever been easy for me to do, like swimming through water, was sex when I started having it" (Ward, 2011, p.22). The effect of Western culture on the younger generation is evident in the above description. Esch is also the caretaker for her brothers and for her father at a very young age. Her compassionate, helping nature gives us evidence of the importance of communal unity. Even though Esch's brothers and father are unable to nurture her the way they should, they refuse to even acknowledge her womanhood, which indicates another aspect of cultural dominance in the form of patriarchy. Her father even comments on the feminineness of the storm by referencing it "like the worst—she's a woman" (Ward, 2011, p.124) because of the name Katrina that was the reason behind the destruction in their area. Motherhood and the nourishing nature of mothers is also a strong cultural aspect in many parts of the world (Flax, 1978). In the novel, memories of how Esch's mother used to nurture them haunt her; that is why she consistently remembers her mother's carefulness. She recalls instances of her mother's patience as she "she cleaned us like kittens," "clinging to her mother" (Ward, 2011, p.22, 59, 69). Characters like Esch are intelligent and educated and have a strong sense of family and community construction; she says, "Where my brothers go, I follow" (53).

*The Road* (2006) explores the struggle for survival of a father and son in a land desolated by an unknown catastrophe. *The Road* (2006) uses very easy and simple language. According to DuMont the language of the novel is very simple, with the use of short and comprehensive sentences without taking away its aesthetic essence. He says that "The Road does not devalue the artistic, communicative, or ethical impulse that drives this moment of expression" (DuMont, 2012). Furthermore, the use of short and simple sentences creates a sense of urgency and makes the readers feel the struggle of the characters in real time (DuMont, 2012). We can see this kind of language use in the novel as well. Irregular and simple sentences convey the harshness and uneasiness of the characters in the harsh environment. Throughout the novel, sentences are short and simple, creating a sense of urgency and relatability to real time.

Similarly, the language of *Salvage the Bones* (2011) serves as a powerful tool for effective communication, creative expression, and engaging storytelling (Kreuz, Roberts, 1993). The novel offers several instances of figurative language that reflect the injustice to the environment and the approaching apocalypse. Symbolism in *Salvage the Bones* (2011) helps to convey the themes of environmental injustice and the impending apocalypse. By employing these literary devices, the novel presents an intense and evocative depiction of the characters' struggles and resilience.

The place they live in is called the 'Pit', which is no less than a swamp and is presented as a symbol. The noun and verb forms of the word 'swamp' describe Esch's home: "pond would spread and gobble up the property and make it a swamp" (Ward, 2011, p.14).

The novel reflects the approaching Hurricane Katrina looming as an impending apocalypse (Eckersley, 2008). The storm here serves as a powerful symbol of the destructive forces of nature and the consequences of environmental injustices (Hewitt,2019). The imminent arrival of the hurricane heightens the tension and emphasizes the vulnerability of the characters. The absence of resources, infrastructure, and government support in such communities further emphasizes the injustice they face in dealing with such a catastrophic event (Hewitt,2019). China, the family's pit bull, embodies qualities of resilience and survival.

Skeetah grabs China by the head and pulls and her body comes out and she is scrambling. She flies clear of him, twists in the air to splash belly first in the water. She is already swimming, fighting (Ward,2011, p.235).

The dog is presented as a symbol of loyalty and also as the embodiment of strength and resilience. Through China, the novel emphasizes the strength and resourcefulness necessary to confront and overcome injustice.

In *The Road* (2006), one of the most significant symbols is fire, which is both a source of warmth and comfort for the father and son and a destructive force that has destroyed the world around them. The father and son scavenge for wood and other materials to build fires, which provide them with light and heat but also attract attention from dangerous predators and other survivors. This duality of fire as both a necessary tool for survival and a destructive force that has contributed to the collapse of civilization underscores the environmental injustice at the heart of the novel. *The Road* (2006) is seen as a symbol of the destruction caused by humanity's disregard for the environment (Hix, 2011). Roads in the novel are littered with abandoned vehicles, a constant reminder of the unsustainable and wasteful nature of modern society. "*The Road* (2006) is a symbol of how we have destroyed our world that is represented through the apocalyptic world in the novel" (Hix, 2011). The novel represents the journey that the father and son take, both literally and figuratively, towards a better future for themselves and for the environment. Another literary device employed in *The Road* (2006) to illustrate environmental injustice is personification. In the novel, nature is personified as a breathing entity that is highly affected by human activities. In the novel, one instance of personification can be seen from the following lines:

The blackness he woke to on those nights was sightless and impenetrable. A blackness to hurt your ears with listening. Often he had to get up. No sound but the wind in the bare and blackened trees. (McCarthy,2006, p.14).

This personification of the natural world highlights the devastating impact of human activity on the environment and suggests that the planet itself is suffering as a result. The use of this technique illustrates the devastation caused by an apocalyptic event on the environment. The passage shows the demolished landscape that has been ravaged by fire.

The

Esch's description of the arrival of Hurricane Katrina in *Salvage the Bones* (2011) gives the same personified form of nature "The air is thick and wet and alive, like something breathing against

me. The trees shake and whip, and the world goes dark.” (Ward ,2011, p.3). In this passage, the air and the trees are personified as if they were living beings with the ability to breathe and shake, emphasizing the power and unpredictability of the hurricane (Thornber 2012). Esch's description of the outcome of Hurricane Katrina illustrates the power and agency of the natural world. "The air is a giant breathing thing, sweating us all down" (Ward,2011, p.147). Nature, with all its wrath, is capable of causing devastating storms like Katrina and result in apocalyptic circumstances. The metaphor of the air as a "giant breathing thing" also emphasizes the interconnectedness of all living things and the way that environmental damage can have widespread effects (Schlosberg, Collins, 2014).

The environment's anger is illustrated in the novel according to Esch: "The earth is angry, and the trees are the earth's fists, and they beat against the dirt" (Ward,2011, p.40). Earth and the trees are personified as if they were engaged in a violent struggle, underscoring the destructive impact of the hurricane on the natural environment (Schlosberg, Collins, 2014). In the novel, personification is used frequently to highlight the connection between human actions and their consequences on the environment. By portraying the environment as an emotional and responsive entity, the novel emphasizes the urgency of addressing environmental issues and the need for greater environmental stewardship.

Emphasis on the theme of environmental injustice in *The Road* (2006) is carried out by frequently repeated words and phrases that evoke a sense of loss, decay, and destruction, such as "ash," "gray," "barren," and "waste" (McCarthy, 2006, p.2,6,7,11,13). Repetition in the novel represents the irreversible devastation that is associated to environmental injustice directly as the reason behind this apocalyptic world. The land in the novel is completely dead, which is represented by words like 'ashen waste', a place where there is no chance of survival. Other repeated symbols are 'cold', 'barren', 'charred', and 'dead', which are used for the landscape, again representing the devastation caused by an unknown catastrophe. (McCarthy,2006, p.7, 13,42,57). The description of a landscape "pale and cold and dead" (McCarthy 2006 p.7) is repeatedly used to stress the damage that has been caused though the reason behind it is not known, but the remains of concrete buildings and billboards suggest the overconsumption of natural resources. The remains of buildings and infrastructure also represent environmental injustice in the novel (McCarthy,2006, p.4,5,20,21,29,130,135). These images of remains serve as a reminder of a world that has been lost because of human negligence. Furthermore, it also emphasizes the contrast between the apocalyptic world of the novel and the vibrant world of the past, which is relatable to the present. It suggests that if the environmental injustice is not taken seriously this world will also become barren and ashen just like the novel (Edwardes,2008). "the gray, cold, uncaring concrete paved over with blacktop and the cars on it motionless" (McCarthy,2006 p.80) emphasize the inhumanity of the infrastructure over the natural world. Excessive use of concrete does not work in harmony with nature; it ultimately becomes the cause of destruction.

Repeated motifs of water, storm, and destruction in *Salvage the Bones* (2011) are utilized to emphasize the environmental degradation and the characters' impending doom (Ward, 2011, P. 14, 40, 177, 215, 217). "Papa Joseph thought the earth would give under the water, that the pond would spread and gobble up the property and make it a swamp. (Ward, *Salvage the Bones* 14) Repetition of the phrase "the water is rising" (Ward,2011, p.40) serves as a warning of the impending disaster and reflects the injustice of the environmental conditions that have led to this

situation (Bares,2019). Esch's concern for survival and injustice to the environment is portrayed in the novel: "The water is still rising. It has been raining for days. And the bayou is clogged with all the plastic bags and bottles, with the trash we throw out" (Ward,2011, p.41). It highlights the environmental degradation and the characters' weakness in the face of natural disasters (Moynihan, 2015; Bares, 2019).

Reference to the "giant pit" is another repeated image in the novel. It is used to dispose of dead animals and other waste. In the novel, it serves as a symbol of environmental degradation as well as environmental injustice (Moynihan, 2015). It is evident in the novel that "the pit is overflowing" and that "the smell is everywhere" (Ward,2011, p.102). The repetition of this motif helps to highlight the injustice of the environmental conditions that have led to the creation of such a pit and the characters' powerlessness to change their circumstances (Moynihan, 2015; Bares, 2019).

Environmental degradation portrays a broken relationship with nature. Continued environmental degradation could lead to a "spiritual and cultural apocalypse"(Adeola, 2001). Furthermore, this damaged relationship ultimately leads to harsh consequences, which are then irreversible (Adeola,2001). We can see this injustice and broken relationship in the novel. "By day the banished sun circles the earth like a grieving mother with a lamp" (McCarthy,2006 p.32). The barren and lifeless world and the sun circling the earth like a 'grieving mother' suggest that nature itself is wretched at its destruction, which is possibly because of human ignorance and excessive consumption. The struggle for survival of the father and son highlights the importance of nature and human relationships. The scarcity of food and extreme weather conditions in the novel imply that humans are the possible reason behind this devastation (Gardner,2015). Furthermore, the novel can be taken as a warning for the present generation to build a healthy and sustainable relationship with nature (Gardner,2015). *The Road* (2006) portrays this idea that the unknown catastrophe is because of blind consumption of the natural resources.

On either side the country stretched across the rolling hills, almost entirely deforested. They ran out into the road and the boy looked back at the hills, confused. What's wrong, Papa? It's nothing. They just cut down the trees. What trees? he said. The trees. The boy was incredulous. All of them? Yes. It's hard to explain. (McCarthy,2006 Chapter 4)

This passage clearly illustrates that environmental degradation is caused by human beings; excessive loss of forests and other natural resources can have a significant effect on the environment. Pollution is also taken as a form of environmental injustice that leads to disastrous results (Chakraborty, Basu, 2021). According to a report, air pollution caused the deaths of nine million people in 2015 (IPBES, 2019). *The Road* (2006) implies several instances of environmental injustice in the form of pollution. Father and son come across a polluted river that has turned 'grey' and has become entirely lifeless without any sign of living beings (McCarthy, 2006, p.18, 38).

The water in the plastic jugs turned dark with ash and he always smelled of smoke and there was a fine grit of soot in their hair and on their clothes. They passed a burned out city with buildings like giant blackened shells of locusts crumbled along the roadway. Beyond that the skeletal remains of a bridge. The

concrete piers like blocks of some sunk civilization. (McCarthy, 2006, p.68)

The effects of pollution and environmental degradation are reflected through these lines. The blackened shells of buildings and the skeletal remains of the bridge illustrate the devastating impact of pollution on the environment.

*Salvage the Bones* (2011) also addresses the devastating realities of modern-day life. Its depiction of Hurricane Katrina as an event that exacerbated and exposed illustrations of injustice. The novel's symbolic violence is the portrayal of the harms of climate change and inequity (Malewitz,2015). It is the representation of the challenges posed by Hurricane Katrina as a thread of ongoing disasters shaped by global, contemporary human, and non-human forces (Malewitz,2015). The human world deteriorates into a living hell because of this apocalypse. The whole vision of human existence becomes dystopian as the environment continues to deteriorate devastatingly.

The description of Bois Sauvage (a fictional place in the novel where the story is set) characterizes more-than-human nature as itself weakened (Malewitz,2015). Hurricane Katrina in the novel shows how people contributed to the environmental degradation of the Gulf Coast, endangering the lives of people living in that area as well as the natural environment (Bullard, 2000, Bullard & Wright, 2009).

We rode up and out of the black Bois that we knew and into the white Bois that we didn't that spread out and upcountry, past churches and one-room stores selling cigarettes and hot fries, chips and cold drinks in glass bottles and penny candy, the kind of stores that have one gas tank out front with the writing scratched off. (Ward, 2011, P. 70,71)

In contrast to the pastoral beauty of rural life, Bois Sauvage was infested with ruins, signifying environmental degradation due to climate change and consumptive capitalism (Malewitz,2015). *Salvage the Bones* (2011) depicts instances of capitalism and consumerism through extreme environmental degradation. "The Pit," demonstrates how willful acts of forgetting sustainability ended up in devastation (Malewitz,2015).

Recognition of any problem is crucial to bring a change in the social structure (Haarstad, 2014). Similarly, while resolving environmental issues, it is inevitable to use different media. The environment's capacity for regeneration is limited, which makes it crucial to utilize its resources sensibly. Failure to recognize the importance and value of the environment leads to extreme degradation (Dean, McMullen, 2007, Honneth, 1995). *The Road* (2006) presents different kinds of consumption. This theme is present in terms of the visible fragments of a landscape consumed by some ecological calamity, as surviving tools of consumer society in the form of cannibalistic groups (Dominy, 2015). *The Road* predicts the United States will be devastated due to its urge to consume more and more. It also warns that the globe is commodified and will be converted to waste as a heap of dust (Dominy, 2015). *The Road* (2006) implies the theme of consumerism through the cannibalistic groups. And utilize these groups as a metaphor to define a civilization or a critique on imperialism and excessive consumption (Dominy, 2015). We can see this in the novel through the struggle of the father and the son to survive: "They're going to kill us and eat us, aren't they?" (McCarthy,2006 p.110). Father refers to these cannibalistic groups as 'bad

people' (McCarthy, 2006, p.76, 93, 102,141). A constant search for food and supplies can be associated with the results of blind consumerism. In the novel, the father and son come across an abundant house where they search for food: "They stood looking at the food. The cans were beaten open with rocks and the food smelled of dead air" (McCarthy,2006 p.20). Extreme effects of blind consumerism and the exploitation of natural resources are portrayed in this description. Blind consumerism in the novel is described through the past society that contributed to the catastrophic event that destroyed the world. The father tells his son, "There were billions of people on the earth when the catastrophe happened" (McCarthy,2006, p.32). The portrayal of a destroyed world in the novel pertains to the blind consumerism before the catastrophic destruction.

*The Road* (2006) also portrays an environment destroyed by an unknown catastrophe. This hostile environment increases the difficulties of the characters involved in the novel, showing a continuous struggle for survival. In present-day environmental literature, calamities are often represented using the exaggerating rhetoric of the Apocalypse, which has become a leading description in texts (Buell, 1995, p.285; Garrard,2004, p.95,107). Apocalyptic descriptions contain the idea that the disaster is a kind of punishment by a divine entity or the result of nature taking revenge on the unjust attitude of the human beings towards it (Veldman,2012). A barren and unfriendly environment is symbolic of the revenge of nature. In the novel, the description of the land as 'barren', 'dead', and lifeless shows the extremity and unproductivity of the land, which is no longer productive.

He shifted the pack higher on his shoulders and looked out over the wasted country. The road was empty. Below in the little valley the still grey serpentine of a river. Motionless and precise. Along the shore a burden of dead reeds.  
(McCarthy,2006, p.4)

Descriptions of harsh weather, such as freezing temperatures and deadly storms, make it difficult to survive. Other than the natural difficulties, humans are also portrayed as a threat to other humans. Throughout the novel, the characters, seemingly hopeless, live in a constant fear of sufferings. Walking into the thin gray light, the father sees this truth of hopelessness.

The world of *The Road* (2006) is a lawless, through which murderers and cannibals committed on maintaining their futile presences at the cost of the weak and helpless (Gallivan, 2008). It presents a world which is "soon to be populated by men who would eat your children in front of your eyes" (McCarthy,2006, p.52). And many of the most horrifying and disturbing descriptions of cannibalism implicit or explicit such as "headless and gutted and blackening on the spit" (McCarthy,2006, p.167). Even more terrifyingly, those unfortunate people locked in the cellars as a human food stock, the man "with his legs gone to the hip and the stumps of them blackened and burnt" (McCarthy,2006, p.93). This extreme expression of the rejection of the will of others is denied by the son. He urges his father to promise never to eat people and the father replies that they "are the good guys" (McCarthy'2006, p.109). That is why they will never do it (Gallivan, 2008). The destruction presented in the novel showcase the fragility of human beings and also the vengefulness of the environment. furthermore, it stresses upon urgent actions to be taken to protect the world (Gallivan, 2008).

While discussing the theme of environmental revenge in *The Road* (2006) in the context of the Anthropocene era, the novel presents a vision of a world in which humanity has reached the limits of its domination over nature and is now suffering the consequences (Ganser,2009). The author also suggests that the novel raises questions about the responsibility of humans for environmental destruction and the possibility of ecological redemption. The novel is presented as a critique on human civilization and also the influence of unjust attitude (Ganser,2009). It is clearly depicted in the novel through the difficulties the characters face "gusts of snow so hard they knocked him off his feet and the boy had to drag him back to the road" (McCarthy, 2006, p.15). It shows that nature can be unpredictably dangerous and hostile. "The world is full of fire and chaos, and nature itself has turned hostile" (Walsh2009). The characters in the novel are not only fighting against other groups for survival but also against the nature as well. Nature in this case is clearly working against them (Walsh2009). In apocalyptic narratives "utter destruction lies ahead but can be averted and replaced by an alternative future society" (Wood,2006). From this perspective environmental calamities are "already underway all around" and can only be weakened, but "a future without their impact has become impossible to envision" (Heise,2008). All the risks are prevalent, the challenge is therefore, how the institutions and practices can be developed to avoid this extensive social crisis (Heise,2008).

Esch keeps herself away from China because of the cultural assumptions of humans being as superior. Her approach toward nature was majorly anthropocentric. It means that "all-pervading assumption that are only in relation to human beings has value" (Clark, 2015). China is being utilized rather exploited by the family. She on one hand, was companion for comfort, and on the other hand, was used for dog fighting. Esch was clearly biased against China because she was not human (Clark, 2015). Such discrimination can be rendered through protagonist's view of the physical world in the novel. Her attitude towards the non-human entities is reflected in her description of the Pit.

Papa Joseph let them take all the dirt they wanted until their digging had created a cliff over a dry lake in the backyard, and the small stream that had run around and down the hill had diverted and pooled into the dry lake, making it into a pond, and then Papa Joseph thought the earth would give under the water, that the pond would spread and gobble up the property and make it a swamp, so he stopped selling earth for money.  
(Ward, 2011, p.14)

The entire family displays a highly anthropocentric view of the world. Their definition of nature does not run parallel with the non-human world. Rather, it is presented as "a passive resource for the exploits of Man" (Byrnes, D. 2022). They do not view themselves as part of the natural world. Their understanding centers 'Anthropocentrism' that is why they view themselves as above non-human.

Moreover, Papa Joseph allowed such destruction, and only stopped it when it directly affected his own safety. This mentality descended from generation to generation in their family. Esch and most of the family members adopted the same mentality, their beliefs about humans and the natural world are evidently materialistic. The way of their waste disposal reveals this ruthless materialistic mentality "we dump our garbage in a shallow ditch next to the pit, and we burn it"

(Ward,2011, p.15). It clearly demonstrates the ignorance of their broken connection with the environment. Hurricane in the novel is portrayed as a very powerful object that overwhelms everything mercilessly. "The trees in the woods were restless, the air thick with their sighs and groans. It was as though they knew what was coming" (Ward ,2011, p. 6). This description suggests the power of the approaching storm creating a sense of disquiet and tension. Furthermore, Esch describes this hurricane as a ruthless and hostile monster "The world had turned itself into a monster to fight us" (Ward, 2011, p.143) suggesting that all powers of nature conspired against them.

### Conclusion

Both novels show the interaction of the characters with the natural world in various ways, highlighting the complex relationship between human beings and the environment. *Salvage the Bones* (2011) presents the patriarch, Daddy, as a skilled hunter who relies on the land for his livelihood. He teaches his children to respect the animals they hunt and to use every part of the animal to avoid waste. In broader context, both novels can be taken as a warning to protect nature and these illuminate the importance of nature and the value of sustainability. Through various experiences of the characters with nature, the novels provide insight into understanding the importance of nature and ecological balance. Apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic narratives portray a destroyed world which is irreversible. In *The Road* (2006) the reason behind the apocalypse remains veiled. The contributing factors highlighted in this study confirmed that human negligence and unjust behavior was the reason behind this devastation. The study highlighted factors such as blind consumerism, and irregular distribution of resources due to which the devastation was caused. The approach of this study in broader term is eco-centric rather than anthropocentric, hence it majorly highlighted the factors that negatively affect the environment and the reciprocal revolt of nature in the form of apocalyptic situations. The apocalyptic situations are implied in *The Road* (2006) in the form of barren land and in *Salvage the Bones* (2011) in the form of the hurricane Katrina leading to foremost environmental catastrophe.

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