



## **Desolate Terrain and Capitalist Echoes: Eco-Marxist Analysis of *The Road* by Cormac McCarthy**

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### **Abstract**

The research aims to explore the capitalistic echoes and ecological degradation in McCarthy's *The Road* (2006). The novel enriches contemporary discourse through reflecting interconnectedness of the ecological degradation and capitalist materialism shaping everyday lives of its characters. The present research is qualitative and the text has been explored through Eco-Marxist theoretical framework. The study dissects symbolic interactions between nature and economy, using J.B. Foster's Eco-Marxist lens to shed light on the wider ramifications of environmental and economic crises in modern literature by examining the contracting behaviors of diverse characters in comparable situations in his work *Marx Ecology: Materialism and Nature* (2000). This research advocates for the critical study of dystopian fiction through the lens of Eco-Marxism in order to underscore ironic aspects of ecological deterioration, crises created by capitalism, and socio-economic disparities of the depleted world. The scholarship also proposes an examination of the interrelation between literary fiction and critical global challenges extensively from the point of view of the Sustainable Development Goals SDGs and Anthropocene. This work suggests further exploration of the novel through theoretical lenses such as alienation, psychoanalysis, and survival of the fittest for future scholarly studies.

**Keywords:** Eco-Marxism, capitalist exploitation, environmental degradation, survival, post-apocalyptic literature, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

History has exposed environmental crises resulting from unchecked industrial and capitalist expansion, which have led to ecological degradation displayed in McCarthy's *The Road* (2006). The Industrial Revolution led to devastating consequences of ecological desolation from 1960s to the 1980s. The illustration of the historical conflicts has provided an in-depth glance at the post-World War II industrial era in McCarthy's potent narrative voice. The analysis of various socialists in the 1920s developed consciousness about Marx's indication towards ecological concerns in his works for Soviet Russia before the issue could entice the attention of the United Nations toward global environmental crises. The esoteric debates among socialists emphasized the Eco-criticism in literary theory. Socialists justified their ecological stances by juggling with the capitalistic approaches through their narrations as a caveat through the illustration of ruins. Theorists revived Marx's and Engels' concerns through conjectural works promoting the diverse aspects of Marxism. The putative authors correlated the



exploitative activities of capitalism to highlight the drastic diminutions in biodiversity and the intensifying human misery. Various scholars and socialists extracted the idea of disruption in the natural cycle, which Marx introduced as the threshold concept of “metabolic rift” in his work *Capital*, 1867. The socialists’ perspective of eco-criticism in the nineteenth century emphasized the destructive tendencies of capitalism towards the environment.

The novel’s artistry lies in its ability to embody global anxieties in a profoundly human story. The concept was a result of the influence of German chemist Justus von Liebig on Karl Marx to project the concepts of environmental degradation, wasteland, and resource depletion. Marx projected the exploitation of human labor and nature under the industrialization of capitalism. Moreover, Engels’ concept of human interventions in nature led to the unintentional ecological consequences (Engels, 1976). The main focus of early Marxist theory was on class struggles and political dynamics rather than exploring it through an Eco-critical perspective. The Marxist lens covered the political concerns of society, dealing with the behavioral shifts towards humans and social morality exploitation. The ecological perspective is the neglected concern of theorists’ studies, distant from major environmental studies. The remnants of civilization indicate the relentless pursuit of profit with negligence of ecological sustainability. The consequences of environmental collapse resulted in barren land, resource scarcity, and uninhabitable wasteland, leading to survival struggles. The persistent struggles of the characters echo Foster’s notion regarding capitalism’s unseen resource exploitation. The importance of nature has also been considered as an inevitable logical idea as an external resource binding the capital expansion. In their studies, the theorists supporting the Eco-Marxist perspectives emphasize the interconnected arguments of ecological degradation and capitalist exploitation. Jason W. Moore and Foster discussed the loss of necessities in post-apocalyptic circumstances after facing the rage of capitalism.

The background of the novel describes the haunting circumstances faced by the leading characters in a desolate terrain. The state of affairs of characters in rendered barren and stripped of resources, confronted with conflict between moral and immoral decisions for survival. Therefore, the perspective shifts from prioritized accumulation of profit towards inevitable destruction, disclosing the ruins of capitalist expansion. The Post-Capitalist void creates the roadmap of social disturbance, causing disruptive factors between humans and nature. The warning through the literary context has been considered as the call of awakening towards the disturbing circumstances caused by capitalism. Marx’s concept of alienation promotes the broader perspectives of isolated beings and exploited labor under the extreme power and control of capitalism. The alienating features disclose the permeating human relationships with nature to provide sustenance to the capitalist logic. Michael Foucault gave an argument in the nineteenth century of “bio politics” to inquire into the tenuous bond shared between individuals to consider the fractured social fabric left after capitalism’s dissolution (Michael Foucault, 1974). The hardships portrayed the remnant features of a bygone era, illustrating shattered landscapes and traumatized personalities echoing the horrors of the past. Foucault’s idea of the “absent cause” of history reshaped modern literature and culture to indicate the concerns of individuals and nature’s estrangement caused under capitalistic structures. Additionally, the analytic perspective of modern studies covers the apocalyptic



aspects of the narration to display the ruins caused by capitalism in McCarthy's cautioning tale to mirror the contemporary threats. Simon Schleusener provided the critical viewpoints to mention the political ideologies termed as "mode of regulation" with referential support from various theorists and socialists (Simon Schleusener, 2017). The chronicle binds the American literary discourse with the ecological aspects of utilizers and mobility to promote the classic road motif. The novel upholds the neoliberal concepts to criticize capitalism with a cautioning tone, elaborating the consequences of wordlessness with the end of consumerism. The dystopian narration has captured attention with its focus on "capitalist realism," exposing the consequences of assuming a capitalist free society. Moreover, Thomas Hobbes encapsulated the impossible attributes of a coherent alternative society to capitalism by stating "state of nature" in his book *Leviathan*, 1651. Capitalism has promoted cannibalism, describing the concept of dog-eat-dog as it upholds the political and economic system, favoring exploitation according to its rudiments and requirements. Absolute monarchies of consumerism have violated the ecological balance, heading towards impudent revolutionary attitudes. The representations of unyielding factors of bleak, ruined landscapes have prominent arguments against the social structure of capitalist society, exploiting human life and nature, instigating massive forfeiture. A dystopian world discloses the unbridled industrial impacts on the world; the idea is described briefly in McCarthy's *The Road*.

The prevalent factors presented in McCarthy's novel pull attention towards resource depletion, environmental collapse, and the inevitable conclusions caused by capitalism. The abusive behaviors toward labor and nature have created a world devoid of natural resources. The setting describes the unsettling illustration of late-stage capitalism's final collapse more than constructing a destroyed landscape in the book. The novel is a stark representation of consumer culture, economic systems, scavenged goods, and material prosperity heading towards catastrophic consequences. Marxist theorists significantly linked the unquenchable thirst for profit and growth of capitalism with the devastated environment. This study aims to investigate how McCarthy's post-apocalyptic vision exposes the extractive nature of capitalist systems and functions as a critique. *The Road* (2006) has allied the Eco-Marxist critiques with capitalism's dehumanizing impacts on ecological devastation and the alienation of societal cultures. A world demonstrating the capitalist promise of growth and abundance fallen apart, leaving behind a landscape of despair and shambles, is depicted starkly in the novel through the depictions of the leading characters, father and son, under circumstances of violence, hunger, and shortage. Capitalist realism, the idea that capitalism is the only workable economic system despite its inherent inconsistencies and destructive tendencies, is questioned by McCarthy's *The Road* (2006) through its depiction of resource depletion and the monetization of survival itself.

Hence, the novel recapitulates the socio-historic situations of devastated America through the revised contextual shift on the present-day state of affairs. The study on *The Road* (2006) provides an insight into a post-apocalyptic narrative to display the barren land resulting from a nuclear catastrophe. The narration unveils the bleakness, survival struggles, and denatured environment to feature the intersection of apocalyptic ecological catastrophe and the cannibalistic system of capitalism. The theoretical framework of Eco-Marxism by J. B. Foster, *Marx Ecology: Materialism and Nature* (2000), has correlated the



ecological concerns with the Marxist critique emphasizing the crucial requirement of an equitable and sustainable future. The social analysis of the novel displays a continuous plunder of Earth's resources through particular confronting events. The narration can create a vision to inspect the drawbacks of cannibalistic systems, leading to ecological grief and social injustices. The remnants of capitalism persist in the form of scavenging, hoarding, and exploitation of scarce resources in the post-apocalyptic scenario. The study has tried to envision the critical portrayal of *The Road* (2006) by McCarthy as a dismal, harsh tale cautioning the world to provide embellishments in contemporary literature about ecological and socio-economic challenges. The novel could also provoke the cautious thought of a battleground for survival to highlight the physical struggle of characters. The literature could be adopted as a warning and mirroring scenarios of the present world from natural and economic structures.

The research interlinks the literary analysis and ecological critique to provide insights towards raising concerns about global environmental issues through the framework of Eco-Marxism on *The Road* (2006) by McCarthy. Through the post-apocalyptic lens, the narration is a symbolic depiction of foundational crises in the contemporary world with limitless growth and environmental destruction faced by Western capitalism. Furthermore, the study aims to promote literary academia through the Eco-Marxist work on the contemporary literary narrative. Firstly, the novel highlights eco-criticism through the global ecological degradation and breakdown of man's and nature's relationship with each other. The potential of starvation and struggles to stay alive provides a clear vision towards the eco-critical movement. Secondly, the apocalyptic rhetoric provides a stance towards the innovations of capitalism and the cannibalistic system. The novel directly criticizes the national identity and capitalistic scenarios leading towards the destructive path of the economy and environment. The evolution of capitalism is represented as a factor of industrialization and excessive emissions of gases in the atmosphere. Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* allegorically depicts a world fueled by greed, unsustainable usage of resources, and mass extinction, leading towards starvation and psychological and physical conflicts. The novel depicts a lawless society where survival depends upon scavenging for a meager existence. Overall, the study is significant as it examines the aftermath of ecological degradation due to the capitalist approach in the contemporary world.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Previous critiques have made insightful observations survival, naturalism, and morality in McCarthy's *The Road* engaging with eco-critical, existentialist, or trauma analyses, there is an astonishing absence of studies explaining the novel through an Eco-Marxist framework. This thesis fills that void by linking environmental degradation to capitalism and revealing how survival itself is inextricably linked to structural exploitation. The existing studies primarily focus on survival, father-son relationships, and moral dilemmas in a devastating world. The interconnectedness of environmental degradation and socio-economic collapse is often neglected. Although some works discuss the ecological concerns in the narration, the studies did not delve in depth to analyze the ecological concerns from a Marxist perspective. This study has addressed this literary gap with the framework of Eco-Marxism in *The Road* (2006) to align the capitalist



trajectory by highlighting the features of resource commodification, class struggles, and ecological loss due to capitalism. This study examines the novel's depiction of resource paucity, dehumanization, and ecological collapse. This study will provide nuanced insights into McCarthy's inscription of the intricate link between environmental degradation and capitalist exploitation in post-apocalyptic literature. *The Road* has narrated a vast critical discourse of social affairs and ecological loss to offer a critical analysis of the wasteland, as McCarthy provided a gloomy story in 2006 about the future of America. The study would unfold the major critical perspective of Eco-Marxist analysis, concentrating on the narration's ecological and socio-economic perspectives. The story depends upon the character of the father and his son's journey across a ruined landscape to scrutinize the ecological perspective that leads to anthropogenic and environmental collapse. The economy's downfall has been displayed through the struggle for survival and roaming for food on barren land, illustrating the ecological devastation covering the sky with toxic particles and dusty smoke due to capitalism. The environmental degradation and socio-economic drawbacks have unveiled the contemporary concerns of the cannibalistic system of capitalism.

Cormac McCarthy's fiction is associated with the tradition of literary naturalism, discussing the critics involved in the ecological destructive scenarios of the novel through their studies, as the setting is climate fiction. Steven Frye articulates McCarthy's "romantic naturalism" (Frye, 2009, p. 9), whereas James Giles (2013) criticizes contemporary naturalism embracing the "multilayered determinism" in *Outer Dark*. Moreover, the criticism by Dana Phillips describes the narration as "radically non-anthropocentric," and Eric Carl Link describes the story as "cosmic optimism". The novel portrays the reduction of life to its barest realities, which shows the naturalist impulse of McCarthy into violence and human depravity, and analyzes the antecedents to contemporary social mores leading towards the impending circumstances. The scholarly critics discovered various perspectives of the fictional narration to create a conscious awareness regarding the ecological circumstances in America. The critical analysis of ecological collapse in *The Road* broadens the framework of anthropocentrism, displaying the effects of humans on the environment with their nuclear empowerment and industrial approach. McCarthy's work has dramatized the representation of environmental collapse, considered a stark caution against mankind's contemporary trajectory through the scholarly lens of Timothy Clark (Clark, 2014, p. 27). Such ideas enrich Eco-Marxist interpretations by linking the ecological wretchedness to systematic exploitation under capitalism. Furthermore, Michael Pinky proposed the genre that "favors indeterminacy" to highlight the dramatic external encounters of post-apocalyptic destruction and the internal thoughts of the protagonist as he went through survival scuffles. The socio-economic portrayal of previous studies opens the room for further analysis of survival struggles in the barren land.

Moreover, Jason Moore (2019) also critically depicted the ecological and economic intersection in the novel, and according to Jason, *The Road* has both literal and symbolic representations of devastated nature inveterately damaged by human voracity. The present study undercurrents the socio-economic perspective as a significant scholarly study, such as Carl Freedman (2015) discloses the disintegration of capitalist structures and the lingering impacts of social structures. The novel is a stark depiction of survival regardless of the



destructive circumstances, and scarce resources to create an image of capitalist ideologies by putting society and ecology at stake; *The geocultures of domination - of capitalist white supremacy and patriarchy - emerged in their modern, dualistic form in the long sixteenth century* (Moore, 2019, p. 17). Bill Brown has developed a literary text approach named "thing theory" to study the tender treatment of destructive nuclear perspectives in the narrations (Autumn, 2001, p. 12). For instance, McCarthy's desire to shed his narrative of frivolous objects of civilizations could uncover the drawbacks of the capitalistic approach, resulting in severe and devastating scenarios in the future. The American lives represent the destruction caused in the contemporary world due to man-made objects through fictional perspectives and imagery. The nostalgic narrative of McCarthy provides a poignant glimpse of the future evoked through a humanistic approach to contemporary advancement through the capitalist system. The scholarly analysis of the Pulitzer Prize-winning novel *The Road* delves into the Marxist insights after environmental discussion; however, the direct connection between the environment and economy is omitted in the story, which provides a blatant representation of warning through various factors. Carl Freedman (2015) provided a critical analysis of the novel to reflect the implicit warning in McCarthy's prose to highlight the disintegration of capitalistic structures and the residual impacts of class hierarchy. For instance, the rampant cannibalism displayed in the chronicle appraises the blind drive towards self-preservation, breeds, and resource-centered secondary and tertiary, eventually leading to abusive behaviors and social and ecological oppression.

The present article involves a clear vision to inquire into the overlapping elements of environmental decay and capitalist critique in post-apocalyptic literature, to investigate the narration through the theoretical lens of Eco-Marxism. The novel portrays the catastrophic situations of a devastated environment to reflect capitalist exploitation and allegorically depict barren landscapes, human survival, and the erosion of social and ecological systems. The argument provides a narrative on broader perspectives of dystopian and ecological concerns to offer concentrated and nuanced interpretations of capitalist structures. McCarthy contributed deeply to engaging the critical analysis of capitalism and ecological concerns through literary works to develop an understanding of the destruction of capitalist structures. John Bellamy Foster enriched the discussion with the concept of "metabolic rift" to focus on the blatant factors leading to disturbing circumstances in society. The notion has developed critical viewpoints regarding the story's bleak landscape, fractured social order, and fading remnants of humanity, considered as lasting impacts on the environment and social relations. J. B. Foster posits a fundamental rupture between human societies and natural ecology under the capitalist profit-driven greed of production, damaging the ecosphere and causing exhaustion of natural resources (Foster, 1999, p. 366). A stark echo of desolate terrain symbolizes the scorched, lifeless world interpreted as a literary manifestation of this rift as a long-term consequence of a fractured society. The narrative has aligned the reasons for splintered identities, displaying remnants of pre-capitalist society revolving around the demand for industrial development, neglecting ecological concerns. The idea of rift has been discussed in relation to the reaction that occurred against exploitation and untenable consumption of resources, positioned as the prevailing critique of the unsustainable trajectory of capitalist civilization.



Alternatively, McCarthy's *The Road* has been conceptually intertwined with Plato's philosophy of "Allegory of the Cave," sharing common thematic perspectives. The idea of acquiring nature's knowledge and the quest for truth throughout a journey bridges the philosophical patterns with the narration. The allegorical exploration of the text has enlightened the way towards the truth against the darkness and dismay of the passage. The characters' moral and immoral choices help to recognize the elements of goodness and hope within themselves, lacking the spark due to distressed circumstances. Carole Juge (2009) has gathered the bygone and contemporaneous pieces regarding text to enhance the study, highlighting peculiar but crucial perspectives in the narration. In Plato's allegory, he describes prisoners who are in chains and cannot see the outside world, which is perceived as the shadows of reality. The allegory depicts the challenges associated with discovering, helping others discover, and the difficulty associated with seeking truth; one eventually escapes and struggles to articulate the truth; the others, preferring to remain in darkness, are ignorant. Reflecting on these insights in *The Road*, a man and a boy travel through a post-apocalyptic world, all life has been consumed, and the ash-filled sky doesn't let through anything bright; likely, the sun is a metaphor fueled by life and hope. In this case, the boy encapsulates Plato's 'escaped prisoner' as he holds onto a feeble light as a symbol of optimism and blimey representing the man, unlike the boy, who acknowledges the dire reality they are facing, traveling through the moral depravity of their decisions along with the incessant risk of violence. Thus, the boy in *The Road* and the escaped prisoner from Plato's allegory become symbols of hope and righteousness amidst a chillingly bleak actuality, everyone navigating life's challenges in different ways, which uncovers the relentless burden brought by the need to confront new knowledge.

*The Road* (2006) has been scrutinized through various theoretical perspectives along with other literary works analyzed through lens of Eco-criticism and post-apocalyptic narrations. McCarthy's narration has also garnered considerable attention for the stark illustration of the devastated landscape and fractured identities of characters. Other scholarly studies that occurred earlier have covered the vast dimensions of existential crisis, moral and ethical decisions, and emotional perspectives of characters, along with theological narratives to analyze the novel. However, *The Road* got limited attention on ecological disasters as a consequence of capitalism. The present study has tried to narrate the cautionary tale under the prism of Eco-Marxism to bridge the interlinked perspectives of Eco-criticism and Marxism, consequential to one another in a collapsed world. Though the previous studies have discussed Eco-criticism and Marxism separately in different literary critical works, from perspective of the survival dynamics and ruined environment. But the alignment of these contradictory lenses has not been intended to emphasize the narration. Instead, the studies covered anthropogenic, eco-critical, existential, trauma readings, and a naturally collapsed world while discussing bleak, calamitous narration. The absence of an intertwined perspective of Eco-Marxism in the novel leaves a critical gap in existing literary works to acknowledge McCarthy's depiction of a ruined world facing environmental loss due to capitalist exploitation. This study seeks to fill the gap with the Eco-Marxist prism to critically emphasize *The Road* (2006), depicting capitalist structures contributing to catastrophic consequences of ecological devastation.



### **3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The present study involves a qualitative research method to analyze the novel *The Road* (2006) by Cormac McCarthy as a primary source to explore the themes of ecological degradation and the capitalist system. An Eco-Marxism study is used to scrutinize the novel through in-depth textual analysis. John Bellamy Foster has provided insights about metabolic rift to understand capitalism's unsustainable connection with nature through his work *Marx Ecology: Materialism and Nature* (2000). The Marxist perspective of Karl Marx and Engels has disclosed the environmental ramifications due to class struggles in a capitalist society. The textual references have been analyzed through qualitative methods of data collection to justify the research statement. Moreover, secondary sources of data collection, including websites, journals, and articles on Eco-Marxism and post-apocalyptic literature, have validated the thesis statement. The qualitative methods of research have broadened the intersecting concepts of capitalism and ecological crises. The exploration of the journey has opened various perspectives on dissecting narration to attain favorable references. The method clings to the desired area of study to develop a realization regarding the grim pragmatism of survival. The analysis has involved supportive material from both primary and secondary sources to mention the trepidations regarding the required area of interest.

The study has been analyzed through the theoretical framework of Eco-Marxism to display the encountered environmental challenges of the capitalistic system and to discuss the intersecting elements between environmental destruction and capitalist structures. The novel portrays desolate terrain to symbolize ecological loss under capitalism through the Eco-Marxism framework to fill the gap in literature studies on the novel by Cormac McCarthy, *The Road*, to blend ecological concerns with the Marxist ideas of opposition to globalization and capitalism. The study's main objective is to analyze the impacts of ecological degradation and capitalist materialism on the lives of characters in the novel, struggling for survival by maintaining their morality. Likewise, the theory has appreciated the critical analysis of capitalism as the reason for human alienation from society and nature. Eco-Marxist theory describes the validity of its application through the elements of resource scarcity, environmental destruction, and their correlation with the cannibalistic system of capitalism. John Bellamy Foster and Jason Moore named the modern age 'capitalocene' as it is dominated by economic power. The stance of capitalist production develops the incessant demand for consumption and imperial expansion through wars, inflicting poverty, and degrading nature, leading to worldly destruction. The Marxist theory has displayed the indefinite apocalypse scorched nature, and the Eco-criticism theory leads towards the representation of barren land, cold weather, and a forever-grey sky shrouding the sun. The Eco-Marxist perspective has also analyzed the post-apocalyptic America, in *The Road* (2006) to portray the two anonymous characters of father and son's journey from North to the East. Overall, the theoretical framework of this research provides the foundation for exploring Eco-Marxist theory through displaying various contemporary global environmental risks and biodiversity loss to the futuristic-dead landscape.

The research paper has analyzed Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* in the context of Eco-Marxism through a conceptual framework. The desolate and lifeless world in the novel reflects the rupture of natural cycles brought about by



capitalism, an idea formulated in Foster's theory of the metabolic rift. Moore's context of the Capitalocene positions environmental degradation in the planet-wide tale of capitalist expansion and hence highlights the critique of systemic exploitation in the text. Malm's vision of fossil capitalism explains how industrial and technological processes engender the apocalyptic vision in the novel. Further, McCarthy's novel is a reflection of the dominant cultural logic of decline and despoliation of modernity, as explained by Jameson in his critique of late capitalism. Joel Kovel has also reaffirmed this analytic framework by framing capitalism as the chief enemy of nature, as presented in vivid form in the devastated lands and commodification of strategies of survival in the novel. Victor Wallis has added depth to the discourse by relating ecological decline to social inequality and class war from an eco-socialist angle. Individually and together, these approaches have bridged the gap between theory, discourse and textual analysis and encouraged an analytic and critical as opposed to a descriptive reading. This context has highlighted *The Road* as an allegory of the harmful legacy of capitalism and not merely a survival-fixated novel. Thus, Eco-Marxism has been important in how it has highlighted intersections of ecology and economy and power and enabled a critical analysis of the ecological consequences of capitalism.

#### **4. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION**

The evocative imagery of McCarthy's narration invites compassion and reflection along with critical perspectives to convey fragility of human bonds. The research has discussed the theoretical perspectives of Eco-Marxism, aligning two variant concepts of ecological degradation and capitalist structures within McCarthy's *The Road*. The framework synthesizes Marxist critique and environmental concerns to highlight the ravaging and exploitation of the environment and labor accordingly. The rapacious structures lead to socio-ecological crises, leaving the blatant, unheard stories of victims. The Eco-Marxist lens has helped to explore the portrayal of environmental collapse as the aftermath of unrestrained capitalist activities, causing resource depletion and systematic inequalities. McCarthy's post-apocalyptic narration has boosted the representation of the capitalist world's ruins. The devastating background of the story unfolds the massive production modes exhausting natural resources, resulting in a barren wasteland devoid of sustainable life. The factual events have been extracted as key elements of the text to apply the theory to gather desired material supporting the stance of the present study. The study has portrayed the interactions between characters to cover the desperate survival struggles and unstructured capitalist governance. The present section has revealed the critiques of capitalist systems in *The Road* (2006), emphasizing environmental and social consequences to highlight the fragile nature of civilization suffering from stripped material. The narration has identified the unstable capitalist accumulation deconstructing the key elements of desolate terrain, fragmented characters' personalities, fractured economic system, and survival struggles amidst paucity.

##### **4.1. Ecological Degradation and Economic Paucity**

Cormac McCarthy has introduced the factor of survival as the most basic impulse in a dystopian society because of cannibalism following the capitalist collapse. The socialists reported about concepts of Karl Marx depicting the life-threatening effects resulting from the consumer system, resulting in ruined



nature and society, parallel to global issues identified by SDG-13 (Climate Action) and SDG-15 (Life on Land). *The Road* (2006) presents a grim representation of environmental destruction through the depiction of dead grass, ash-filled air, cloudless sky, and murky water in order to reinforce the socialists' observations regarding the capitalist world and emphasize the breakdown of the climate and land resources. The loss resulting from a system focused on self-survival and consumption over the general good resulted in the devastated wasteland with immoral activities of surviving humans and cannibals, promoting the need for the preservation of life on earth, as highlighted in SDG-15. Nomadic groups exhibit the attitude of the bourgeoisie's tireless exploitation of labor and resources from the proletariat through constant exploitation of vulnerable humans as their sustenance, a sign of capitalist excess that disrupts climate stability and ecological existence. McCarthy also brought out the idea of 'second nature' through the description of post-apocalyptic America in the novel to vindicate the position of Garrard. Stephen O'Leary's notion of 'Frame of acceptance' was referred to by Garrard on the backdrop of Eco-Marxism to establish a relationship of literature as a medium to decide the concerns of time, corresponding to the urgency of climate action. The journey portrays the no man's land, but the "tattered oil company roadmap" displays the element of hope in dismay:

*The tattered oil company roadmap had once been taped together, but now it was just sorted into leaves and numbered with crayon in the corners for their assembly. He sorted through the limp pages and spread out those that answered to their location* (McCarthy, 2006, p. 44).

The lines have supported the concept of "spatial fix" proposed by David Harvey (2003) over capitalist ruins to claim the geographical exploits in sustained life, resulting in meaningless, fragmented maps and systems. The inhospitality of nature describes the misuse of resources by humans in a capitalist society. The narration has clarified hunger pangs through the finding of food and warm clothes, along with secretive sneaking in abandoned places and houses.

Moreover, Marx's idea of commodity fetishism has linked the novel, encapsulating the prominent and crucial indications regarding consumers' capitalist habits for profiting from industrialization at the price of devastated conditions of nature and a classless society. The concept of facing severe circumstances by the labor class carried under the hands of capitalism to support the consumer society with continuous exploiting behaviors conflicts with the nature of man:

*The weather lifted and the cold, and they came at last into the broad lowland river valley, the pieced farmland still visible, everything dead to the root along the barren bottomlands. They trucked on along the blacktop. Tall clapboard houses. Machine-rolled metal roofs. A log barn in a field with an advertisement in faded ten-foot letters across the roof slope. See Rock City* (McCarthy, 2006, p. 18).

The devastated unstructured landscapes have clearly represented Jason Moore's concept of "capitalism as world-ecology (2003), representing the ruins caused by the uncontrolled activities of capitalism, trying to justify the constant abuse and increased production. However, mirroring Moore's argument at the present moment, this sign is merely a spectral remnant of a past time, highlighting the pointlessness of consumerism in a society where the only thing



to worry about is survival. Marx's concept of "commodity fetishism (1867) mentions the exploitation that occurs due to capitalist accumulation under unchecked masked consumer activities, leading the world to a destructive future with loss and void conditions through dominating factors underpinning the capitalist production.

The research dives into the in-depth critical concept of Jason W. Moore regarding Capitalism's role in pushing the world into the situation of extreme desolation through commodification and industrialization. The concept evokes the imagery of death, emptiness, and miscellanies of devastated life, supporting the idea of "Capitalocene" to align the metaphorical representation of a dead world with capitalist exploitation:

*Like an animal inside a skull looking out the eyeholes. He wore a beard that had been cut square across the bottom with shears, and he had a tattoo of a bird on his neck done by someone with an ill-formed notion of their appearance (McCarthy, 2006, p. 53).*

Desolate terrain has prominently indicated towards the significant factors of the world as a body, to mention various sites of post-capitalist decay through the fragmented social and aesthetic structures of human habitat. Marx's concept of alienation has focused on the absent capitalist structures to highlight stripped resources and a crude utilitarian approach to analyze the destructive world through the description of the tattoo. Fredric Jameson has provided a strong argument against the meaninglessness of culture and identity in a post-capitalist world, echoing the ruins and destructive collapse of capitalist society. Andreas Malm has also supported the stances regarding dehumanizing elements of capitalist destruction, referring to the primitive idea of human existence to symbolize the regression of human progress. The idea mirrors the over-extraction and exploitation as capitalist dismay to reflect the ultimate circumstances creating the non-thriving humanity in a dead land.

## **4.2. Capitalist Materialism and Fractured Industrial System**

The expression of narration has depicted brutal violence and survival instincts, aligning with the Eco-Marxism theory to specifically mention the capitalist ruins in the dystopian era. The idea provides a representation of various prominent factors enforcing the blatant concepts regarding human survival and ecological loss through continuous exploitation under capitalism, highlighting SDG-7 (Affordable and Clean Energy) and SDG-9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure). Moore's concept of capitalocene (2015), bridged with a stark illustration of a post-apocalyptic world, covers the significant destructive circumstances leading to the commodification of human life and distressed survival conditions, according to the cautionary call of the world-ecology crisis:

*He was a big man, but he was very quick. He dove and grabbed the boy and rolled and came up holding him against his chest with the knife at his throat. The man had already dropped to the ground, and he swung with him and leveled the pistol and fired from a two-handed position balanced on both knees at a distance of six feet (McCarthy, 2006, p. 56).*

In a critique of capitalism's involvement in ecological degradation, Jason W. Moore makes the case that capitalism views nature as an endless resource, resulting in social breakdown and environmental collapse. Humans in *The Road* are thrust into a pre-industrial, pre-capitalist world where physical survival is crucial as society falls, indicating towards the logical endpoint of capitalist



destruction, supporting Moore's critical perspective on the unsustainable logic of capitalism. Malm's claim that a collapse in the climate will drive humanity back into a survivalist, neo-primitive state is reflected in the shift from an organized society to one based on sheer force.

The study proceeds with the representation of elements about ruins of capitalism and the specter of cannibalism through the theoretical perspective of David Harvey (2010) about consumer capitalism generating crises in the world. Harvey portrayed the blatant reality of capitalism being crisis-prone as its survival depends upon the continuous exploitation of the environment and humans acting as cannibals eating their own species for its development. This concept develops understanding about capitalist structures generating crises to deepen class divisions as they cause decay of the working class through exploitation and resource consumption, leading to a devastated realm:

*In the morning, they would see if there were tracks in the road or not. This was the first human being other than the boy that he'd spoken to in more than a year. My brother at last. The reptilian calculations in those cold and shifting eyes. The gray and rotting teeth. Claggy with human flesh* (McCarthy, 2006, p. 64).

Although Harvey has discussed the concept of "special fix (1981) to talk about capitalism moving to new areas to explore and extract values, the dystopian setting of the narration denies the existence of new frontiers left in entirely consumed space. Marx presented the concept of alienation later; Harvey's critical works introduced "universal alienation (2018), presenting the destruction that occurs under capitalist reign, affecting social bonds, leading to devastated communities, trades, and governance as a cost of capitalist ruins. The ironic representation mirrors the illusion of solidarity capitalism empowering cannibalism under extreme circumstances of scarce resources, promoting the idea of encountering humans under frightful divisions of race, class, and wealth, directing the ultimate dispossession of people both metaphorically and literally for survival. Harvey's idea of "financial capitalism (2010)" turns out to be a critical overview to acknowledge the predatory survival instincts and calculating entities considering human flesh as the only source of survival once material wealth is exhausted.

### **4.3. Commodification of Humans and Survival Hierarchies**

The character holding a weapon for self-defense has opened the room for discussion about morality and the danger of life in the bleak situation, emphasizing global concerns of "Zero Hunger" under SDG-2 and "Reduced Inequalities" under SDG-10. The opening of the novel has shown loss, death, fear, and hope, which lead to the end where the character of the son maintains his morality and empathetic concerns for other struggling people. Their commitment to each other of "carrying the fire" (McCarthy, 2006) clarifies their morality and faith for a compassionate and sustainable world. Ultimately, the research has discussed the objectives of characters struggling through capitalism and ecological loss. The Eco-Marxism critique of McCarthy's post-apocalyptic narration, *The Road*, has highlighted the forfeiture due to cannibalism in the capitalist society of the American West. McCarthy has tried to re-mythologize the literary and historical perspectives of the American West in his work. The characters of father and son displayed a constant search for food to emphasize the consequences of environmental depletion under capitalism. The roaming



bodies have caused life-threatening circumstances to expose remnants of humanity in the novel. The narration has reduced resources into scavengers to highlight the collapsed economy based on accumulation and production. The reference from the novel has portrayed the commodification of survival to reflect the lingering influence after societal collapse:

*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 is uncoupled from its shoring. Unsupported in the ashen air. Sustained by a breath, trembling and brief. If only my heart were stone* (McCarthy, 2006, p. 10).

The details have projected a clear image of fractured economies, ecological collapse, and food paucity, indicating that canned food and clean water have gained importance as currency by reducing material necessity, as the leading character of the father has depicted desperate survival attempts for his son, facing class struggles. Marxist theorist Fredric Jameson (2005) has pointed towards the inherent flaws of capitalistic social structures through his concept “Ruins of Late Capitalism,” to mention the relentless consumption leading to the irreversible environmental and social collapse in the future. The discussion takes turns towards Raymond Williams’ concept of “structure of feeling (1954), highlighting a lived experience of capitalist ruin rather than an abstract ecological catastrophe through the novel’s imagery of ash-covered terrain, biohazard suits, and scavengers armed with makeshift weapons, reinforcing the bleak post-apocalyptic settings. The illustration of the leading character a father suffering from health issues in brutal survival circumstances is represented through coughing, slouching, and carrying weapons to make possible efforts for his journey:

*They came shuffling through the ash, casting their hooded heads from side to side. Some of them are wearing canister masks. One in a biohazard suit. Stained and filthy. Slouching along with clubs in their hands, lengths of pipe. Coughing. Then he heard on the road behind them what sounded like a diesel truck* (McCarthy, 2006, p. 59).

William focused on the material consequences of capitalism, representing individuals reduced to scavengers to show fractured capitalist structures having strong impacts on nature and humans, with lingering consequences in devastated land. William (1977) gave a stance of capitalist ideologies, patterns shaping the world’s perception of nature. For instance, the rudimentary perceptions of the story have been indicated through ‘diesel trucks’, which depict ghosts of industry and persistence of machine empowerment haunting the survivors all the way through the plot. The grotesque scene has deliberated about the moral and social breakdown causing dehumanization in a post-apocalyptic world with representation of bleak environment and desolate terrain; echoing capitalist greed and exploitation consumption. Terry Eagleton has encapsulated strong factors of capitalist exploitation and commodification of human life to blatantly portray capitalism eroding human ethics and dignity by consuming humans as a source of food:

*He could see part of a stone wall. Clay floor. An old, darkly stained. He crouched and stepped down again and held out the light. 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. The smell was hideous* (McCarthy,



2006, p. 93).

Aligning the post-apocalyptic landscape of the novel with James O' Connor's concept of "Second Contradiction of Capitalism (1998); the ruins and absent life-sustaining resources has been anticipated from the text, undermining the ecological conditions essential for production and survival. Connor has narrowed down the critical exploration towards the ruins and enforced exploitation of people by capitalist-driven accumulations while discussing the environmental collapse as the main cause of resource paucity in the globe. Furthermore, J. W. Moore's idea "Capitalism as world ecology (2015)" has introduced an argumentative stance towards cannibalism scenes displaying capitalism's destructive logic of consuming resources, leaving poisoned, catastrophic elements in the ecosphere, eventually resulting in exhaustion of life-resources. Along with the notions of O' Connor and Moore, the argumentative analysis of the settings opens the room for Terry Eagleton's moral critique of "commodification of human life (2011), which covered the idea of cannibals transforming human flesh into mere sustenance.

#### **4.4. Capitalism's Ideological End and the Ethics of Sustainability**

Mark Fisher has provided the concept of "capital realism (2009), aligning the organized stark imagery in the passage regarding the desolated terrain after capitalist collapse, leaving ruins and scarcity in the world, forcing the remnants to struggle for life under threat of cannibalistic gangs. Fisher's notion helped a bleak setting to critically analyze the text under the Eco-Marxism lens, encapsulating the capitalism that thrived on overproduction by industrialist structures. Textual lines have observed representation of the natural world's demise, causing situations survival tenuous to reflect scarcity, futility, and decay, promoting elements of death of comfort and sustainability:

*They kicked through the trash in the aisles of a food market. Old packaging and papers, and the eternal ash. He scoured the shelves looking for vitamins. He opened the door of a walk-in cooler, but the sour, rank smell of the dead washed out of the darkness, and he quickly closed it again. They stood in the street. He looked at the gray sky. Faint plume of their breath (McCarthy, 2006, p. 68).*

The characters have rummaged through emptied shelves, and deteriorated consumer goods remain, once being symbols of abundance, symbolizing the unsustainable nature of capitalism's overproduction in dystopian catastrophe. The nasty stench emanating from the walk-in refrigerator is a terrible reminder of nature's deterioration, supporting the Eco-Marxist critique that capitalist exploitation does not simply disappear but instead persists in the form of environmental and biological destruction. The father and kid, standing in the street, their breath heavy in the chilly air, represent the frailty of humanity in a post-capitalist wasteland. Capitalism's effects are seen in this barren landscape, to highlight the fact that even survival is uncertain, not in wealth but in its destructive aftermath as a destroyed planet, a malfunctioning system, and lives reduced to bare endurance.

The argumentative analysis covers the imagery of post-apocalyptic settings, mentioning the suggestive facts about regressive, primitive forms of power and violence breaking down capitalist structures into brutal, anarchic order. Men have been predicted as cogs due to their illustration as masked, smoked-breath bodies symbolizing industrialization's toxic legacy, fortifying environmental



concerns in a devastated ecosystem. The theoretical standpoints of George Lucas have strengthened the arguments about ecological concerns in the passage through the Eco-Marxist lens, to mention an ethically collapsed cannibal society focused on survival at the cost of perceiving feeble humans as a food source.

*No smoke from the dead fire. Nothing to be seen of the cart. He wallowed into the ground and lay watching across his forearm. An army in tennis shoes, tramping. Carrying three-foot lengths of pipe with leather wrappings. Lanyards at the wrist. Some of the pipes were threaded through with lengths of chain fitted at their ends with every manner of bludgeon. They clanked past, marching with a swaying gait like wind-up toys. Bearded, their breath smoking through their masks.* (McCarthy, 2006, p. 77)

George Lukács has presented the core concept of “Reification (1923)” to support the transformation of human relationships and qualities into relationships between things under capitalism, converting labor into commodity objects and instruments stripped of autonomy and agency. Lukács’ concept has analyzed the marauders metaphorically as mechanical enforcers of vehemence breathing smoke through masks as faceless industrialized figures heading towards the final stage of alienation, losing their human essence. The imagery serves as a powerful critique aligned with Lukács’ concept to scrutinize the elements of capitalism conditioning human behavior on the demand of survivalist instincts of cannibalism under ecologically and economically devastated desolate terrain.

Ultimately, the analytic arguments of the study have critically examined J. B. Foster’s Eco-Marxist illustrations of post-apocalyptic landscape, divulging the possible features of alienation, dehumanization, and existential crises as the aftermath of devastated capitalist structures converting the world into complete ruins and human social states. McCarthy’s narration has been depicted through the perspectives of various theorists to scrutinize the symbolic gestures aligning with the objectives of the present study. The notions of Karl Marx and Jason W. Moore have reflected the desolate terrain as a critique of late capitalism, enforcing the world into a void of irreversible ecological loss and collapsed civilization. Rob Nixon’s idea promotes the interconnected significant features in the novel to confront the environmental catastrophe beyond an anthropocentric perspective, situating the in-depth connection of humans with nature, affecting each other by all means in every situation, either of nourishment or devastation. According to Timothy Clark (Ecological Scale), the story highlights the futility of individual agency in the face of systemic breakdown, compelling readers to confront environmental calamity from a perspective beyond capitalist anthropocentrism. McCarthy’s novel has demonstrated ideological frameworks that support environmental damage while simultaneously critiquing them by incorporating novel challenges to the ideological frameworks that support environmental damage while simultaneously criticizing it by combining Marxist ecological thinking. The analysis calls for a reappraisal of humanity’s role in determining or possibly preserving its ecological future, a position that is consistent with the larger Eco-Marxist debate mirroring contemporary concerns of SDG-16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions) and SDG-17 (Partnerships for the Goals). The conflict of a father and son, as envisioned by Andreas Malm and Frederic Jameson, represents the dislocation of the working class in a society wherein survival has supplanted ideology. Overall, McCarthy’s book is a cautionary tale about capitalism’s unsustainable course, calling for introspection



beforehand mankind is reduced to borrowed resources, borrowed time, and borrowed grief.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The novel stands as a remarkable contribution to ecological and social thought as the narrated fiction has extensively debated opinions on contemporary global problems as a cautionary account. *The Road* (2006) projects a harsh vision of ecological and social disintegration shedding light on key elements prioritized by the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), specifically pinpointing ecological and social balance. Lack of food in the story reflects SDG-2 "Zero Hunger," while its lifeless cities warn of unchecked urbanization, reflecting SDG-11 "Sustainable Cities and Communities," and its criticism of hoarding resonates with SDG-12 "Responsible Consumption and Production." Above all, McCarthy advocates climate inaction, resonating with SDG-13 "Climate Action" and underscoring the imperative of sustainable human–nature relations. The final implications of this article have portrayed works of literature as both witness and warning, forcing readers and scholars to reassess contemporary ecological and social directions. *The Road's* uncertain close, neither promising escapes nor victory, becomes its virtue because it forces the reader to confront the consequences of unchecked consumerism and environmental dereliction. From an Eco-Marxist perspective, the novel is a literary testament to the dangers of capitalism's severance of its connections to nature, while offering a muted appeal to envision alternatives based on justice and sustainability. The metaphor of "carrying the fire" engenders hope of broken struggle, underscoring that the survival of humankind and its environment cannot be disentangled. The novel asserts that the globe cannot accommodate endless consumption without massive costs to yield cataclysm, foretelling that acquisitive industrial convulsions might turn the world into a wasteland. Lastly, by using eco-aware practice, social responsibility, and ethical choice, McCarthy's novel presses us to envision a future that prioritizes the balance between humankind and the natural world and holds that balance sacred.

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