Another World Just Out of Sight: An Apocalyptic Study of Emily St. John Mandel's *Station Eleven*

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by

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled **Another World Just Out of Sight: An Apocalyptic Study of Emily St. John Mandel's *Station Eleven*** submitted to St. Mary's College (Autonomous), Thoothukudi, affiliated to Manonmaniam Sundaranar University in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the Degree of Master of Philosophy in English Literature is a work done by Jeya Nivetha S. during the year 2021-2022, and that it has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma or similar title.

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DECLARATION

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PREFACE

Emily St. John Mandel is one of the prolific figures among the Canadian writers. She is a novelist and essayist. Largely known for her socially-conscious thriller and crime novels she has taken to writing about contemporary issues of the time. The purpose of this dissertation is primarily to study the apocalyptic logic in Mandel's *Station Eleven.* **Another World Just Out of Sight: An Apocalyptic Study of Emily St. John Mandel's *Station Eleven*** aims to explore the viability and necessity of cultural expression in a post-apocalyptic environment while demonstrating the value of faith, memory and technology even in difficult situations. It explores the way in which *Station Eleven* offers hope not through a rekindling of an exhausted past but in a new imagined future where identity, ideals and community can be redrawn. For detailed understanding, the thesis is divided into five chapters.

In the **Introduction** a brief outline of Canadian writers and an account of author's profile and her works are discussed.

The second chapter **The Quintessence of Time** deals with the study of apocalyptic understanding of time and the three components which reflects its central features are the critical appropriation of religious apocalyptic logic, the critique of utopian teleology and non-linear narrative structure.

The third chapter **Pandemic and Posthumanism** gives an epochal analysis of Shakespeare's modernism drawing points of comparison with Mandel's postmodernism. Shakespeare's *Lear* and Mandel's *Station Eleven*, both portrays world-breaking disaster however through various abstract social focal points

The fourth chapter **Envisioning Real Utopia** address the conflict between memory and imagination and emphasizes utopian possibilities that could come along with disaster in contrast to most post-apocalyptic texts that value their modern civilization by inspiring a sense of nostalgia for the present.

The final chapter **Summation** concludes the entire dissertation.

The researcher has consistently referred to and resorted to the guidelines prescribed by the MLA Handbook 8th Edition for the preparation of the thesis.

Chapter One

Introduction

Literature is a truthful expression of life. Its primary aim is to give knowledge, power and delight with the help of its various forms like poetry, drama, novel, short story, essay, biography, autobiography and criticism. It is true that where there is life, there is love and where there is love and life, there is literature. Therefore love, life and literature are inextricably joined together. W. H. Hudson has rightly remarked that literature is an essential record of what men have seen and experienced in life, as well as their thoughts and feelings at the time concerning those things that have the greatest immediate and enduring interest on the individual.

The study and teaching of literature plays a central role in human beings' search for meaning. Literature, which is a subset of story, serves the same functions as all other forms of story by teaching us as humans what is significant in life, what is deserving of our admiration or our contempt and what it is like to be people who live in different circumstances, in other historical periods and in different gender bodies. By showing us how life may be lived in this way, it also teaches us what we should pay attention to and what we can afford to ignore. Additionally, literature has a larger social purpose by questioning and upholding cultural ideals.

The term Canadian Literature refers to that which is written in what is now territorially Canada or written by Canadians abroad. Canadian literature in English can be said to begin in the early 17th century with Jacobean poetry in Newfoundland, in the many years that followed with various wayfarers composing accounts of contact or in the mid-18th century with the epistolary fiction of the English garrison community in Quebec.

Writers have described Canada in numerous ways, for illustration as a French or English colony, a ‘fifty-first state,’ a Pacific Rim country, an Arctic mammoth, a friendly home or an uninhabitable nature. Canadian literature has frequently had to deal with similar differences in attitude not just because numerous Canadian authors were born away and brought outlanders prospects with them but also because popular attitudes frequently eternalized conceptions of Canada. Three pervasive conceptions portray Canada as a physical desert, an artistic wasteland and a raw land of investment occasion and resource extraction. These deformations have created a followership for stereotypes which Canadian writers occasionally corroborated by writing romantic adventures of the frozen North in which everything regional was savage or hostile and ‘civilization’ was important.

Canadian culture continues to be shaped by a range of language in use and by wide variations in terrain, social experience, indigenous societies and immigration patterns. Nonetheless, still much their aesthetic practices and political commitments may differ. Canadian literature brings numerous shared perspectives to their representation of nature, civility and human commerce, whether at home or abroad. Some critical approaches to Canadian literature have tried to identity national or indigenous characteristics in literature. Other criticism has fastened on language and formal strategies, propositions of knowledge and meaning, ethics, politics and psychology of race, gender, fornication, race, identity and terrain. Characteristically, Canadian writing resists the binaries associated with perfectionism, embracing notions of multiple alternatives, working pluralities, multivoicedness and negotiated or evolving resolution instead.

Some of the famous Canadian Writers are Margaret Atwood, Rohinton Mistry, M. Montgomery, Kathleen Margaret, Alice Munro, Stephen Leacock, Sinclair Rose,

Margaret Laurence, Eden Robinson, Susan Juby, Emma Donoghue, Thomas King and Emily St. John Mandel.

One of the prolific figures among Canadian writers is Emily St. John Mandel. She is a novelist and essayist. Largely known for her socially-conscious thriller and crime novels she has taken to writing about contemporary issues of the time. This has led to her becoming one of the most sought-after writers currently working within her specific field to date. She has written numerous essays and six novels. Emily Mandel is also a staff writer for *The Millions* an online literary magazine.

Mandel's contribution to the field of literature is voluminous. Her essay includes *Emilie* (2010), *On Bad Reviews* (2011), *The Second Life of Irmgard Keun* (2011), *Irene Nemirovsky, Suite Francais and The Mirador* (2011), *The ___'s Daughter* (2012), *Eating Dirt: On Charlotte Gill and the Life of the Treeplanter* (2012), *Sussana Moore, Cheryl Strayed and the Place Where the Writer Work* (2012), *Strange Long Dream: Justin Cronin's The Twelve* (2012), *Drinking at the End of the World: Lars Iver's Exodus* (2013), *I Await the Devil's Friend Request: On Social Media and Mary MacLane* (2013), *The Bulldozing Powers of Cheap* (2013), *A Closed World: On By Grand Central Station I Sat Down and Swept* (2014), *You'll Probably Never Catch Ebola – So Why is the Disease So Terrifying* (2014), *Susan Sontag, Essayist and So Much Else* (2014), *The Year of Numbered Rooms* (2016), *The Gone Girl with the Dragon Tattoo on the Train* (2016).

Mandel's first three novels were titled as *Last Night in Montreal* (2009), *The Singer's Gun* (2009), and *The Lola Quartet* (2012). Her debut novel, *Last Night in Montreal*, follows a young woman with a secret who can't seem to settle in one city. When she being pursued by a private detective and a former lover, she is forced to come in terms with her own past and the secrets that haunted her childhood she can't

remember. It is a story of love, amnesia, compulsive travel, the depths and the limits of family bonds and the nature of obsession.

The Singer's Gun, is a beautifully crafted and exquisitely told tale of Anton Waker, who grew up surrounded by corruption, but later decided to live a honourable life. When his cousin blackmails him into doing one last job his life unravels. As a result, his forged diploma is revealed and his secretary disappears. He remains in dilemma when he has to choose between his loyalty and his desire to live life with integrity

The Lola Quartet is a literary noir novel that takes place in Florida following the 2008 economic collapse. The protagonist of this novel is Gavin Sasaski, a young journalist in New York city. In early 2009, the world has gone dark very quickly. The economic collapse has turned an era that magazine headlines once heralded as the second gilded age into something that more closely resembles the great depression. The last thing he wanted to do is to move to his hometown of Sebastian, Florida. But he is in no position to refuse when he was offered a gob by his sister Eilo. Beside Eilo has shown him a photo of a ten-year-old girl who could be homeless and in trouble. The little girl looks strikingly like Gavin and has the same last name as his high school girlfriend Anna. Gavin being obsessed with detective films, makes an effort to track down Anna. It is an investigation that soon takes a surprising dangerous turn.

Station Eleven (2014) is Mandel's fourth novel which takes place in Great Lakes region before and after a fictional swine flu pandemic, known as the 'Georgian Flu' which has devastated the world, killing most of the population. It is a post-apocalyptic saga spanning multiple timelines. Set in the days of civilization's collapse, *Station Eleven* tells the story of a Hollywood star, his would-be saviour, and a nomadic group of actors roaming the scattered outposts of the Great Lakes region,

risking everything for art and humanity. One snowy night a famous Hollywood actor slumps over and dies onstage during a production of *King Lear*. Hours later, the world as we know, it begins to dissolve. Moving back and forth in time from the actor's early days as a film star to fifteen years in the future when a theatre troupe known as the Traveling Symphony roams the wasteland of what remains. This suspenseful, elegiac, spellbinding novel charts the strange twists of fate that connect five people who are the actor, the man who tried to save him, the actor's first wife, his oldest friend, and a young actress with the Traveling Symphony, caught in the crosshairs of a dangerous self-proclaimed prophet.

The Glass Hotel, is the fifth novel of Mandel and the first in winning the Arthur C. Clarke Award in 2015. It follows the aftermath of disturbing graffiti incident at a hotel on Vancouver Island and the collapse of an international Ponzi Scheme. The main themes are human fallibility, guilt and complicity, wealth, greed and happiness. The protagonist is Paul, a lonely student at the University of Toronto. At a night club he gives tablets to some people he is hoping to befriend and one of them dies shortly after. Paul flees to the apartment of his half-sister Vincent. Five years later, Paul and Vincent work at a hotel on Vancouver Island. Paul is fired as he was suspected for writing a graffiti on a window in the lobby. The graffiti would appear to be intended for Jonathan Alkaitis, a wealthy investor who owns the hotel. Vincent, who is working in the bar gets into a relationship with Alkaitis and moves to his house in Connecticut. She led a luxurious life by accommodating her partner. Alkaitis is arrested and it is revealed that his investment success is a Ponzi scheme. He is sentenced to 170 years in prison where he dreams of a country life in which he made different choices. He is often haunted by the people he defrauded. Vincent changes her identity and works as a cook on a shipping freighter. She disappears from

the ship in the midst of a storm. Her on-board boyfriend is suspected of killing her. Leon Prevant, who lost his life savings investing with Alkaitis is sent to help investigate. Paul finds some success as a composer but has a long-term heroin addiction.

Sea of Tranquility (2022) is a novel of time travel and metaphysics that precisely captures the reality of our current moment. It is one of Mandel's finest novels and one of her most satisfying forays into the arena of speculative fiction. Edwin St. Andrew is eighteen years old when he crosses the Atlantic by steamship exiled from polite society following an ill-conceived diatribe at a dinner party. He enters the forest spellbound by the beauty of the Canadian wilderness and suddenly hears the notes of a violin echoing in an airship terminal an experience that shocks him to his core. Two centuries later a famous writer named Olive Llewellyn is on a book tour. She's traveling all over Earth but her home is the second moon colony a place of white stone, spired towers, and artificial beauty. Within the text of Olive's best-selling pandemic novel, lies a strange passage where a man plays his violin for change in the echoing corridor of an airship terminal as the trees of a forest rise around him. When Gaspery-Jacques Roberts, a detective in the black-skied Night City is hired to investigate an anomaly in the North American wilderness he uncovers a series of lives upended. The exiled son of an earl driven to madness, a writer trapped far from home as a pandemic ravages Earth, and a childhood friend from the Night City who like Gaspery himself has glimpsed the chance to do something extraordinary that will disrupt the timeline of the universe. It is an elegant demonstration of Mandel's facility with a range of tones and historical periods. This novel is about finding meaning and beauty within a world that is constantly dying about relishing a life that seems always on the cusp of awful and irrevocable change.

Among all six novels the selected novel is *Station Eleven*. It is Mandel's fourth novel and has won Arthur Clarke Award in 2015 and Toronto Book Awards. The Setting of this novel is post-apocalyptic future where a flu outbreaks that affects the world's population.

The central plot of *Station Eleven* is a pandemic that within few days kills most of the world's population. It is a non-linear novel in which events are situated with reference to pandemic. The novel opens on the night when Georgian Flu reaches Canada. Famous actor Arthur Leander has a heart attack while performing the titular role *King Lear*. Following this collapse Jeevan, a paparazzo who was recently trained as a paramedic rushes from the audience and performs CPR but unfortunately Arthur dies. He comforts Kirsten Raymonde, a young girl who performs one of *King Lear's* daughter. Leaving the theatre, Jeevan receives several calls from his friend Hua, who is a doctor warning him of the Georgian Flu outbreak. Jeevan stocks up on living supplies and goes to stay with his brother who is a paraplegic. In coming days an increasing number of people died due to virus, internets were shutdown, cities fall silent. Jeevan and his brother continue to survive for two months. When the supplies run out Jeevan's brother commits suicide thinking that he is unsuited for survival. Jeevan heads south where he joins a settlement. He marries and provides medical service there.

Kirsten survives the first year of pandemic with the help of her brother who then dies. She managed on her own for a few years and then she joins a group of musicians and actors known as Travelling Symphony, who wanders town to town performing music and Shakespeare's plays. As they travel Kirsten scavenges for magazines with information about Arthur who she fondly remembers. She also carries with her a sci-fic comedy series *Dr. Eleven* which Arthur gave her. The series

symbolically parallels the survivor's plight. Flashback shows that this series was written and drawn by Miranda Carrel, Arthur's first wife. Twenty years later, the symphony arrives in the town that they visited two years earlier. They were shocked to discover that the town is now controlled by a religious group under the Prophet. Two symphony members Charlie and her husband Jeremy stayed in the town two years before was no where to be found. The symphony leaves heading for the Museum of Civilization in Severn City after knowing that the missing members headed that way. Unknown to the Symphony members a girl slated to become prophets next wife hides in one of their caravans. The Prophet and his followers pursue the Symphony and captures several members as a bargaining chip. They catch Kirsten and several other members. When the Prophet was about to kill her one of his followers shot him and kills himself. They arrive at the museum of civilization which is run by Clark Thompson, who was Arthur's best friend.

Station Eleven also has accounts of Arthur's rise to fame, his relationship with Miranda, her creation of *Dr. Eleven*, his relationship with Elizabeth his second wife and his son Tyler who is actually the Prophet. Following Arthur's death Clark, Elizabeth and Tyler catch the same flight to Toronto for his funeral but the flight is redirected due to the outbreak. They land in Severn City where they form a community with other survivors. Clark finds the Museum of Civilization. Two years later, Elizabeth and Tyler leave with a religious cult. Years later when Clark hears Symphony members account of the Prophet, he recognizes him as Tyler. The novel closes as the Symphony heads south towards a set of electric lights that recently appeared on the horizon.

The important aspect that is located in *Station Eleven* is Death and Survival. It begins with Arthur Leander's death from a heart attack and then quickly moves on to

depicting a world in which 99% of the population has died from a global flu pandemic. In this way the novel explores death on both a personal and a global scale. On a personal level the main characters of the novel are all connected to Arthur in some way. His death on stage affects everyone because they witnessed it like fellow actress Kirsten or audience member Jeevan and in Clark and Miranda's case Arthur was a very important albeit complicated part of their life. So, the novel can show how different people react to Arthur's death. This connection of the novel's main characters through Arthur and his death also underscores the impact that individual lives and individual deaths have on a surprisingly large network of other people. However, Arthur's death is immediately followed by the Georgia flu pandemic in which billions of people die. Through the juxtaposition of a single death with mass death the novel is able to suggest how all dead are as unique and important as Arthur while also describing how mass death can often make those who have died anonymous or simply a statistic.

Station Eleven doesn't just focus on the dead. It also depicts the particular experiences both physical and psychological of those who survived. For instance, survivors often wonder why they survived while others didn't and the novel shows how such a desire to find meaning in survival drives some like Elizabeth and Tyler to grow increasingly religious. Meanwhile, the novel also shows just how random survival actually is both through Jeevan's luck in receiving a call from a friend warning him of the pandemic and the way that Miranda's graphic novel which she had no intention of sharing becomes an important piece of art for a number of the survivors. Although surviving the flu is a random event, the characters must fight to survive in the hostile and deadly post-collapse world in order to remain alive and sane. Kirsten's knife tattoos document the people she has had to kill embody both the

stakes of surviving and its toll. She was forced to kill in order to remain alive but performing those killings has marked and changed her both figuratively and literally. Meanwhile, Jeevan's paraplegic brother Frank realizes that he is a burden on his brother and he kills himself in order to increase Jeevan's chances of surviving. The novel emphasizes the way that characters try to avoid death at all costs but it also shows time and again how closely survival is linked to death like two sides of the same coin. The words of both the Traveling Symphony's motto and of Kirsten's second tattoo read, "Survival is Insufficient" (Mandel 58). The novel argues that humans to be human must do more than just survive, they must live. It then offers art, ingenuity, and kindness as means of truly living.

Mandel explores the concept of faith, complicates it and ultimately leave open-ended in the novel. Mandel portrays faith as offering many of the same values of art. It provides purpose and community and injects continuity and permanence into a terrifying changing world. Further, faith is rooted in the idea that everything happens for a reason. In the face of a pandemic that decimated the Earth and left only a few survivors behind, such a viewpoint can be comforting because it offers a justification for the mass death and assuages the guilt of those who survived by making it clear that they deserve to survive. However, through the character of Tyler, the Prophet, Mandel also shows how faith can become extremely dangerous. Faith for individuals can be the means of personal survival but in society it can become a means for power and control. The Prophet, as a cult leader takes on such power and then abuses it by taking multiple young wives for himself and by forcing his will upon other people:

> The great cleansing that we suffered twenty years ago, that flu was our flood. The light we carry within us is the ark that carried Noah and his people over the face of the terrible water, and I submit that we were

> saved. Not only to bring the light, to spread the light, but to be the light. We are saved because we are the light. We are the pure. (60)

Because the novel seems sceptical of faith as a social power and therefore on the idea that things happen for a reason it seems reasonable to assume that the novel similarly doesn't put much stock in the idea of fate. However, *Station Eleven* abounds with so many coincidences that it can be tempting to see them as fate. The plot focuses on figures who by chance or by fate keep falling in and out of each other's lives. Jeevan, the man who covered Arthur as a paparazzo took an unflattering picture of Miranda and broke the story of Arthur's second divorce as an entertainment journalist and was there at the moment of Arthur's death to attempt to save his life and to comfort Kirsten. Kirsten received one of Miranda's comics possibly the only editions of the books existing other than the ones belonging to Tyler, Arthur's son, the boy who Kirsten read about in tabloids and who would grow up to become the Prophet. However, they might also be seen as representing a different idea of fate one in which fate is not directed by some God but rather by the influences in people's lives. In this view these characters are 'fated' in the sense that they have become what they have become because of those they are connected to. Tyler is influenced to become the polygamous Prophet because of how Miranda's *Dr. Eleven* affected him because of his mother's post-collapse religious belief in everything happening for a reason and perhaps also because of his father Arthur's own womanizing ways. Tyler isn't fated to become the prophet in the sense that he has no other choice but rather in the sense that the things he has inherited from those connected to him have pushed him in that direction.

The pertinent point discussed is the collapse of civilization. By telling the story of the collapse and including depictions of life both before and after it, Mandel

is able to explore civilization through different lenses. Before the collapse civilization is presented as mundane and at times stifling or even as misguided and problematic. Arthur and Miranda's transition from their small native island to larger cities exhibits the disconnection between humans and nature. On Delano Island, for example, the night sky was filled with stars but in a large city like Toronto the stars are obscured by light pollution. Though civilization appeals to Arthur and Miranda for the anonymity, privacy and freedom it offers, the difficulty of describing their island home to others also illustrates the way that civilization also disconnects human beings from each other. In the golden age of technology humans seem to sleepwalk through life. Indeed, the only zombies in this apocalypse story are cell phone zombies who walk around completely disconnected from their environments and the people around them. But after the collapse devices and technologies that had come to seem mundane are suddenly revealed to be miraculous. In the depiction of modern society people seemed to be isolated by their technology. But in a world without technology, airplanes, television, radio, or internet people are truly, physically cut off from each other unable to know what is going on in the world at large or even in the next town over:

> No more flights. No more towns glimpsed from the sky through airplane windows, points of glimmering light; no more looking down from thirty thousand feet and imagining the lives lit up by those lights at the moment. No more airplanes, no more requests to put your tray table in its upright and locked position- but no, this wasn't true, there were still airplanes there and here. They stood dormant on runways and in hangers. They collected snow on their wings. In cold months, they were ideal for food storage. In summer the ones near orchards were

> filled with trays of fruit that dehydrated in the heat. Teenagers snuck into them to have sex. Rust blossomed and streaked. (31)

Meanwhile, the loss of antibiotics and medicine make formerly routine infections suddenly life threatening. Even getting food or finding shelter becomes profoundly difficult. Devices taken for granted twenty years earlier now seem to survivors as miraculous and get preserved as artefacts in the Museum of Civilization by those hoping to preserve knowledge of and eventually return to that civilized world that they now think of as a kind of paradise. The way that the survivors think about the civilization that has disappeared shows how much humans rely on civilization and yet also underscores how many of its miracles are taken for granted:

> There seemed to be a limitless number of objects in the world that had no practical use but that people wanted to preserve: cell phones with their delicate buttons, iPads, Tyler's Nintendo console, a selection of laptops. There were a number of impractical shoes, stilettos mostly, beautiful and strange. (258)

The novel makes clear that a part of the reason people takes the privileges of civilization for granted is our inability or perhaps refusal to see just how fragile civilization is. For instance, at one-point Mandel traces the design, production and shipping of one product that passes through countless human hands on the way to the consumer. In following the journey of this product, Mandel shows that such a journey passing across so many minds and hands is miraculous but also that the entire journey is in some sense invisible neither the person receiving the product nor those along the product's path ever thinks of it in its entirety. In a sense modern civilization is built on connections while at the same time hiding those connections. At the same time by

highlighting how the connected world can accomplish such marvels Mandel also captures the irony that this very connectivity is what enables the destruction of civilization. It is because our civilization is so advanced and connected that the virus is able to spread so quickly and efficiently throughout the globe. Finally, by highlighting the human enterprise that goes into each object Mandel emphasizes that even while our civilization has produced amazing technology it is not technology that makes civilization but it is people and the failure of civilization occurs not with the failure of technology but with the mass death of human beings.

Mandel also makes clear that while civilization is made by humans' civilization is not what makes us human. During the collapse many people can't accept that civilization has truly fallen. Instead, they believe that soon the lights will turn back on and the Red Cross will arrive. In other words, they can't imagine civilization failing and they continue to believe that civilization will show up and save them. Such fantasies provide comfort but they also fit the Georgia Flu epidemic within a larger narrative in which human civilization is unstoppable and always progressing. Civilization does collapse, the Red Cross never rides in to the rescue. And yet the novel makes clear that life continues. Towns slowly emerge out of the chaos. The Travelling Symphony travels from town to town bringing art and culture that has endured. A museum devoted to the memory of the past emerges. Religious groups seek meaning. The post-collapse world is tenuous and dangerous and the people in it can do terrible things but they can also love and build connections and use their ingenuity and create art. So, when at the end of the novel Kirsten sees a town in the distance that seems to be using electricity it is not the story of civilization returning like some airplane suddenly appearing in the sky.

The concept of memory is evident throughout the novel. With its plot set both before and after the Georgian Flu pandemic, *Station Eleven* depicts both pre-collapse civilization as it was and that same civilization as it is remembered by characters who have survived. Through these characters and the different ways, they experience and respond to their memories. The novel engages in a nuanced exploration of memory itself. Through Kirsten alone for instance, the novel shows how memory can be a comfort and source of hope as Kirsten seeks out books and gossip magazines in abandoned homes in order to spark memories of people and the world, she used to know to keep her vision of that world alive. At the same time, the fact that Kirsten even needs such 'reminders' speaks to how easily memories can slip away and be lost and how the sense of losing one's memories can be a source of terrible anxiety.

The novel also shows how lost memories can be a blessing. Kirsten regards her inability to remember any of year one after the collapse as a gift an escape from otherwise unbearable trauma. The novel also shows how memories of trauma can impact people. For instance, Tyler's polygamy as the prophet bears a sort of resemblance to his own father Arthur's wife hopping in pre-collapse days that resulted in Arthur leaving Tyler and his mother and seems to suggest that Tyler is in some sense re-enacting those memories in a twisted way that puts him in the position of power. The novel also shows that even good memories can be painful or damaging as those who best remember civilization before the collapse often miss it most after. Through character after character the novel shows how memories both good and bad can influence a person's behaviour and identity. But it's not just individuals who have to navigate memory in the novel.

Mandel also explores what might be described as communal memory. Among the survivors there are those who remember the pre-collapse world very well those who are younger and remember it indistinctly and those who were either so young when the collapse occurred or who were born post-collapse and therefore can only know of the pre-collapse from what they are told. In another way, this last group only knows of the world before based on what other people remember and choose to tell them. Communal memory has an element of choice to it and the novel portrays different communities making different choices. Some towns decide to tell their children almost nothing about the pre-collapse world in the hopes of protecting their children from the pain of having lost out on that old world. In contrast, other characters see preserving memory of the past as critical. The Traveling Symphony can be seen as preserving memories of the past by performing their art. Clark preserves memory of the past with his Museum of Civilization.

The novel seems to side with the idea that communities have an obligation to preserve and pass memories on. Part of this obligation is immediately practical such as the transfer of skills that pertain directly to survival or the preservation of knowledge that in the particular setting of the novel makes it possible for the post-collapse world to perhaps eventually recreate its lost technology. But even more importantly the novel portrays how shared memories build social bonds. It shows how the strength of communities in effect are founded on communal memories whether they are preserved in art or museums or stories told by the old to the young. Memory is valuable not only because it is practical but also because engagement with communal memory is an engagement with human history and contributing to and learning from communal memory is a way of holding on to humanity after the collapse.

The importance of art can be seen in this novel. In contrast to modern technological civilization which *Station Eleven* portrays as fragile the novel presents art as something that endures. The first scene of the book which takes place on the evening of the collapse and the first scene after the collapse both feature Shakespeare's famous play *King Lear*. Even after the collapse of civilization and the death of billions art remains. Art is powerful enough to survive the epidemic in part because it isn't reliant on technology or modernity. But even more so, the novel implies art survives because it is so vital and so inextricably connected to human life.

Art offers people a way to understand the world and a way to connect to a world now gone. It offers a way to connect to each artist to audience and might even be said to offer a way for an artist to connect to his or her own self as Miranda seems to explore, process, and escape her own life through her art. And finally, art connects people to the shared history of humanity. The people watching *King Lear* after the collapse despite the hardships of their lives and the world they know they've lost still feel themselves part of the human story:

> They'd performed more modern plays sometimes in the first few years, but what was startling, what no one would have anticipated, was that audiences seemed to prefer Shakespeare to their other theatrical offerings. People want what was best about the world. (38)

Art may not be necessary to basic survival to just staying alive but the novel focuses on the idea that for humans, "Survival is Insufficient" (58). As the novel portrays it, the insufficiency of mere survival could be described as what makes us human or in another way, it is the human instinct to create and celebrate art that

makes us human. Art therefore will endure so long as humanity does and humanity will endure so long as art does.

Chapter Two, **The Quintessence of Time**, analysis *Station Eleven* with regard to the developing assemblage of contemporary dystopian fictions and to investigate the apocalyptic tradition. Traditional apocalyptic narratives uncover an idealistic teleology to history, an organization of time that profoundly illuminates western innovations and its metanarratives. The contemporary post-apocalyptic novel isn't just overwhelming tragic however expresses temporalities reproachful of the whole world destroying model of history to account for unwritten fates which are vital to organization. The three components which reflect the central features are the critical appropriation of religious apocalyptic logic, the critique of utopian teleology and non-linear narrative structure.

Chapter Three, **Pandemic and Posthumanism**, offers an epochal examination of Shakespeare's early modernism drawing diverges from Mandel's postmodernism. Shakespeare's *Lear* and Mandel's *Station Eleven*, both portray world-breaking disaster however through various abstract social focal points. Composing as an early innovator, Shakespeare keeps on reflecting the parts of the current lifeworld. However, he was unable to expect the techno-cultural advancements that have reinvented the structures and machinery of capitalism, correspondence, transportation, information, energy supply and how these have reshaped and improved the encapsulated human subject.

Chapter Four, **Envisioning Real Utopia**, emphasises that Mandel's novel is on the imaginary and utopian possibilities that could come along with disaster in contrast to most post-apocalyptic texts that value their modern civilization by

inspiring a sense of nostalgia for the present. Miranda's self-published comic book, *Dr. Eleven,* suggests the importance and primacy of imagination over remembrance in the wastelands of the future. The comic's ability to survive the consequences is what gives the novel its positive tone. This chapter explores how *Station Eleven* offers hope by imagining a future in which the conventional lines and bounds of relationships, principles, identity, and community might be rebuilt in "another world just out of sight" (333) rather than by reviving a tired past.

Chapter Five, **Summation**, sums up the previous chapters and concludes the entire dissertation.

The next chapter begins with the traditional apocalyptic temporality demonstrating how it fosters innovation and a theorization of the concept of critical temporality and comparing *Station Eleven* with other recent dystopian novels to illuminate the key themes of post-apocalyptic collection of works and the fundamental temporality they articulate.

Chapter Two

The Quintessence of Time

Apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic fiction are subgenres of science fiction that are set in a time period where the end of the world is depicted. Most post-apocalyptic novels are set in future however some are about the demise of long-gone civilization. The plot may centre on efforts to prevent apocalyptic events, discuss their effects and repercussions or be post-apocalyptic taking place after the event. Focusing on the psychology of survivors and how to keep the human race alive and united may be the priority in the immediate aftermath of the disaster. The future world in post-apocalyptic fiction frequently lacks technology or has only a few stray remnants of culture and technology.

The post-apocalyptic genre which Andrew Hoberek labels as the genre turn of contemporary fiction has become so widespread that Frederick Buell refers to it as a 'cultural dominant'. *Station Eleven* is set among what Heather J. Hicks refers to as an "unprecedented outpouring of fully developed post-apocalyptic narratives by major, critically acclaimed anglophone writers" (5-6), in her study of the twenty-first-century post-apocalyptic novel. Contrary to Hicks, the contemporary post-apocalyptic literature does as such to analyse development rather than to save it and explicitly to study the apocalyptic understanding of time that underlying Western advancement through what is termed Critical Temporalities. Certainly, rather than analysing the present apocalyptic imagination one should instead consider how it relates to the harms and hazards of the current socio-historic conjuncture, particularly the ecological threats. In order to comprehend the current post-apocalyptic fiction, one should consider time which is the actual core of the apocalyptic imagination. Three

main elements that forms its core are *Station Eleven*'s basic allotment of strict religious apocalyptic logic which is compared to Douglas Coupland's *Player One* (2010) second, the portrayal of the Georgian Flu's effects and *Station Eleven*'s assessment of utopian teleology which is compared to Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* (2006) and third is *Station Eleven*'s non-straight account structure which is compared to David Mitchell's *Cloud Atlas* (2004).

The apocalypse is typically thought of as a calamity with tremendous scope and overwhelming effects which results in a catastrophic dystopian state. Apocalypse on the other hand is derived from the Greek word apocalyptian and etymologically means to expose or unveil the revelations of the traditional apocalyptic paradigm that are interwoven with time and the ideal world. Since its strict beginning, apocalyptic writing has flourished in times of emergency and the apocalyptic myth responds to this unsettling sense of order by reinforcing teleological design and comic meaning.

The goal of traditional apocalyptic logic is to organise time and make it accessible by showing that the entire sequence of human experiences is moving toward a final goal that will put an end to all that has happened before. *The Book of Revelation*, the final book of the *New Testament* and the main text of strict apocalypticism, ultimately does not describe the horrifying end of the physical world but rather the revelation of an idealistic new world, the New Jerusalem, the heavenly realm which foreshadows the committed toward the end of history.

The apocalyptic view of history creates 'history' as a fictitious invention and the traditional apocalyptic paradigm is at the actual core of common Western creativity. This utopian teleology is crucial to the Western understanding of time. According to the new world concept, the time of disclosure and imperialism is shaped

by apocalyptic beliefs. The apocalyptic belief in the restoration of the revolution after fierce purifying is a foundational element of every major contemporary revolution from the American to the French to the Russian. Current metanarratives are apocalyptic, in that they compile historical explanations in the context of utopian teleology. However, tragic events frequently occur in modern dystopian scenarios. This distinction between conventional and modern apocalyptic imagination is brought forth in self-reflexive manner by *Station Eleven*. Apocalyptic discourse's main idea or at least a sense-making utopian historical teleology is unquestionably undermined by post-apocalyptic ruined aftermaths.

The recent surge of post-apocalyptic novels however highlights the critical tension between the modern and historical understandings of the apocalypse by appropriating apocalyptic tropes to subvert them from within and more profoundly by being fundamentally concerned with time and history, a concern that is frequently embodied in their structural narrative features. The current post-apocalyptic discourse is about critical temporalities and developments of time that examine a hegemonic temporality. Apocalypticism has had such a big impact on innovation and it may also be considered to be a persistent illness of the Western governmental issues and poetics of temporality, a condition Derrida labelled as "delirium of destination of Western advancement" (53). The critical temporality of today's post-apocalyptic fictions questions the hegemonic temporality of modernity and time as a teleologically neutral and monolithic continuum. According to the postmodern narrative movement in historiography the critical temporality of these texts reveals the contemporary and doomsday view of history as a narrative that is deeply entwined with power systems.

The postmodern disruption of a sensible epistemology prompts that there are no definitively observable historical facts. As Munslow rightly mentions, “there is no ultimate knowable historical truth, that our knowledge of the past is social and perspectival, and that written history exists within culturally determined power structures” (27). Highlighting the tragic elements of traditional apocalyptic discourse, modern post-apocalyptic novels suggest that despite how idealistic this end may be, those who put an end to history also regard themselves as the primary legitimate translators and experts of this telos. Additionally, determinism which teleology incorporates divides the likelihood of moral judgments and decisions. The apocalyptic metanarrative, according to Lee Quinby, is a classic innovation of power or knowledge because it upholds the “tenet of preordained history disavows questionings of received truth, discredits scepticism, and disarms challengers of the status quo” (xiii). Through their content and narrative design, contemporary post-apocalyptic books diverge from the apocalyptic “delirium of destination of Western advancement” (Derrida 53), that is, from the closed and deterministic origination of time at its core and it similarly shuts and regulates utopian visions that leave no room for organisation and for alternate visions representing things to come.

Marlene Goldman in her analysis of contemporary Canadian apocalyptic narratives writes:

> Canadian authors introduce particular twists to the familiar myth of the end by challenging rather than embracing apocalypse’s key features, specifically, the purgation of the non-elect and the violent destruction of the earthly world in preparation for the creation of a divine one. (6)

The traditional apocalyptic discourse and its model of history is critical to contemporary post-apocalyptic fiction. The emphasis here is on Mandel's novel in conjunction with another Canadian text, Coupland's *Player One,* which takes place over the course of five hours in a Toronto cocktail lounge as the price of oil rapidly rises and a rough post-apocalyptic situation ensues. The two books challenge the distinction between the elect and the non-elect exposing the pretentious savagery of apocalyptic discourse and demonstrating how both this distinction and the apocalyptic historical theology it establishes are narrative constructs that serve the interests of those who articulate them.

The prophet Tyler, a character that Mandel self-reflexively appropriates religious apocalyptic motifs serves as the best example of *Station Eleven*'s critique of conventional apocalyptic logic. Tyler, the son of Arthur Leander, the character who unites the text's pre- and post-apocalyptic narrative threads is just a tiny child when the virus causes a stir in the community but he grows up to be the endearing leader of a violent doomsday cult. The Georgian Flu, which he views as a "perfect agent of death that could only be divine" (60), is one of the many events that the prophet believes "that everything has ever happened for a reason" (59). The survivors are the elect who as he puts it, were saved "not only to bring the light, to spread the light, but to be the light. We were saved because we are the light. We are the pure, working towards the advent of a new world, the divine plans for which were revealed to him in dreams" (60). Essentially, Bertis, a fanatic sniper in *Player One's* pinnacle oil post-apocalyptic situation accepts that the pre- apocalyptic world is 'dying and corrupt' and about to be renewed through divine intervention. Very much like Tyler, Bertis considers himself to be the prophet of the new world to come, "Life on earth is just a bus stop on the way to greater glory or greater suffering" (Coupland 152) and Bertis

comprehends his murders as participating in a divinely-sanctioned separation between the elect and non-elect. Both Tyler and Bertis display characteristics of what Catherine Keller distinguishes as the 'apocalypse pattern', the belief in verifiable determinism, the tendency to see good and evil as inherently opposed and the ability to distinguish between facts with decency that purges evil from the old world and merits the inevitable utopian renewal of the new world.

Station Eleven features explicit intertextual references to biblical apocalyptic narratives from the flood in Genesis to Revelation. The Georgian Flu, the prophet claims, "was our flood. The light we carry within us is the ark that carried Noah and his people over the face of the terrible waters" (Mandel 60). The prophet's image of the pandemic as an 'avenging angel' echoes *Revelation 15–16,* where the seven bowls of god's wrath are unleashed on the Earth by seven angels. A scene depicts Tyler as a child reading *Revelation 18* to the victims of the Flu sealed forever in a quarantined plane. The city of Babylon, a representation of the corrupt Roman Empire, is predicted to be destroyed by plagues in this biblical passage because "mighty is the Lord God who judges her" (259), is a clear allusion to the Georgian Flu and the prophet's claim that the pandemic targeted those who were lacking in the eyes of God. One of the prophet's followers, who passes away rejoicing in the promise of a "new heaven and a new earth" (Rev. 21:1), frames the apocalyptic origin of the distinction between the elect and the non-elect at the core of the cult's creed by fervently asserting that the survivor's names are recorded in the book of life. This is a reference to *Revelation*, during the Last Judgment when people are judged according to their deeds as written in the book of life and only those whose name is in the book of life will be allowed to dwell with god in the new heaven and earth of the New Jerusalem. Finally, when the prophet is killed towards the end of the novel people find

in his bag "A copy of the New Testament, held together with tape … nearly illegible, a thicket of margin notes and exclamation points and underlining" (Mandel 303), which further confirms the profound influence of biblical apocalypses and of Revelation in particular on the prophet's worldview.

Station Eleven's appropriation of biblical apocalyptic serves to foreground the violence inherent in apocalyptic logic. Kirsten, a child actor with Arthur in the pre-apocalypse and a member of the Travelling Symphony in the post-apocalypse muses, "If you are the light, if your enemies are darkness, then there's nothing that you cannot justify. There's nothing you can't survive, because there's nothing that you will not do" (139), shows that nothing can stop them from surviving because of their willingness to do anything. The apocalyptic distinction between the elect and the non-elect fuels the ruthless actions of the prophet and his followers from killing to raping and enslaving which they commit because they see themselves as the only rightful interpreters and agents of the apocalyptic goal of history the utopian renewal of the new world.

In *Player One*, Bertis justifies his murders through a similar self-righteous moral dualism and teleology. As a sniper he believes he is clearing the way for god's new utopian order "The people he shot bothered God. They angered him" (Coupland 134), although it turns out he is also motivated by a much more mundane reason. He wants to kill his father who ran off with his wife. Indeed, both *Station Eleven* and *Player One* emphasise how the teleological determinism and moral dualism of apocalyptic logic are self-referential narrative constructs which legitimise the oppressions and violence of those who articulate these narratives. Confronted with Bertis' preaching the other characters of Coupland's novel notice that the way Bertis talks is 'weird'. Rachel rightly explains that the sniper is deploying poetic devices

such as rhythm and regularity of speech in order to have a stronger impact and to quickly and effectively indoctrinate. By the same token, *Station Eleven*'s prophet terrorises the population of the region, assembles a cult, and gains power by a combination of charisma, violence, and cherry-picked verses from the Book of Revelation where 'cherry-picked' underlines the constructedness of Tyler's prophecy. Just like Bertis, Tyler uses contrived rhythms and repetition in his speeches so much so that Kirsten notes "a suggestion of a trapdoor waiting under every word of his" (Mandel 59). Both texts expose how apocalyptic discourse is fabricated to push ideological agendas. Yet Tyler's apocalyptic narrative indicates not only the complicity of apocalyptic logic with violence and power structures but also how the appeal of this kind of narrative depends on its promise of a sense-making temporal order.

Traditional apocalyptic narratives are fictions of historical order that flourish in times of crisis and through his apocalyptic narrative the prophet seeks to restore order in the chaotic post-pandemic world. *Station Eleven*'s critical temporality questions the idea of a historical pre-determined pattern emphasising its constructedness. The staunch rebuttal of apocalyptic determinism through the emphasis on the role that chance plays during the pandemic is echoed when Clark describes the period of contagion as a 'choreography of luck', 'the hours of near misses', of 'coincidence'. Importantly, these "hours of miracles are visible as such only in hindsight" (223), that is the deterministic teleological pattern of apocalyptic logic with its distinction between the elect and the non-elect is always constructed retrospectively after the end, be this a future projection or a past event that is perceived as an end of something, as is the case of the Flu with the survivors. This dynamic is what Frank Kermode terms the 'sense of an ending', "We project

ourselves – a small, humble elect perhaps – past the end, so as to see the structure whole, a thing we cannot do from our spot of time in the middle" (8).

Mandel's novel exposes apocalyptic temporality as an artificial teleological order that one imposes on contingency often with oppressive agendas in mind as is the case of the prophet. Ultimately, *Station Eleven*'s critique of apocalyptic temporality as a self-referential narrative construct is particularly effective because the prophet's fanatic apocalyptic fabrication is an attempt at making sense of history in the wake of an apocalypse.

Elana Gomel claims that plague tales are structured by the repeated mortality logic that completely undermines the teleological progression of the apocalypse. Pestilence's storyline is thus "not so much of a fiction of an end as a fiction of an end indefinitely postponed. It might become anti-apocalyptic in its refusal of the transition from the tribulation to the millennium" (412). Whether or not they are about pandemic, the refusal of this shift lies at the heart of current post-apocalyptic literature because in these works the world's post-cataclysmic devastation is profoundly dystopian. Despite varying degrees of dystopian scenarios, contemporary post-apocalyptic fictions consistently articulate critical temporalities that reject the traditional apocalyptic notion of a utopian teleology active in history. In this regard *Station Eleven*'s more nuanced and hopeful version of the aftermath is contrasted with *The Road*'s unmistakably ravaged and hopeless post-apocalyptic world.

The Road is a recurrent point of comparison for *Station Eleven* in academic analysis. It depicts a father and son's journey in a post-apocalyptic US where after an unspecified catastrophe, "everything is dead to the root" (McCarthy 21). This novel is

one of the most famous examples of the contemporary body of post-apocalyptic novels as it won the 2007 Pulitzer Prize for Fiction. Mandel muses that the novel *The Road* gave scope to many literary writers to approach the concept of post-apocalyptic fiction. But Mandel was deliberate in the timing as her novel is set mostly fifteen to twenty years after the collapse and not the immediate aftermath. This deliberate timing allows Mandel not to dwell on the horror and mayhem brought about by the Georgian Flu, horror and mayhem which are instead at the core of *The Road.* The narrative moves literally and metaphorically away from the road, the actual road of the first post-pandemic years as well as McCarthy's *The Road*.

The only descriptions of the immediate aftermath Mandel give are through Jeevan, a paramedic who tries to help Arthur when he has a stroke on stage the night the pandemic begins. The things Jeevan sees vividly recall *The Road*. Just like McCarthy's father and son, Jeevan and "almost everyone was moving south in a silent landscape. Snow and stopped cars with terrible things in them. Stepping over corpses" (Mandel 193). A description that echoes the snowy wasteland of *The Road*, "barren, silent, godless, strewn with cars in which people were burnt alive" (McCarthy 4, 273). Yet, significantly:

> The road seemed dangerous. Jeevan avoided it, stayed mostly in the woods. The road as all travellers walking with shell-shocked expressions, children wearing blankets over their coats, people getting killed for the contents of their backpacks, hungry dogs. (Mandel 193–4)

This above reference is clearly intertextual to McCarthy's *The Road*, whose world is complete with travellers with shell-shocked expressions, children walking covered in

blankets, people being killed for their backpacks' contents, and a hungry dog. However, *Station Eleven*'s post-apocalyptic scenario is very different from McCarthy's and signifying the shift away from *The Road*, not only does Jeevan keep out of the road but Kirsten cannot and does not want to remember anything about the traumatic year she spent on the road immediately following the catastrophe. When Station Eleven's post-apocalyptic narrative strand is largely situated, twenty years have passed since the outbreak and civilization has stabilised into an archipelago of little communities. Despite the fact that practically everything and everyone has been lost there is still such beauty. Throughout the description of the post-flu world, the term beauty is used. *The Road*'s ponderous counter spectacle of things ceasing to be, the sweeping waste, hidrotic and coldly secular, the silence, and an irrecoverable ecology that implies the lack of a utopian renewal after the end are a long cry from *Station Eleven*'s post-apocalyptic beauty. The classic apocalyptic paradigm's projection of teleology-based post-apocalyptic future onto history fails to make sense, and the sense-making order itself collapses. However, like *The Road*, *Station Eleven* expresses a critical temporality that challenges the utopian teleology of apocalyptic logic.

Mandel's novel is not merely about the destruction of the corrupt old world and subsequent ushering in of a utopian new world but rather a lament about the lost wonders of technology and the splendours of the former world. Beauty features far more prominently in descriptions and memories of the pre-apocalypse, "Why in his life of frequent travel, had he never recognized the beauty of flight? The improbability of it", muses Clark, who is echoed by Kirsten reminiscing about the urban landscape seen from a plane at night, "clusters and pinpoints of light in the darkness, scattered constellations linked by roads or alone. The beauty of it" (247, 135).

The same interplay of artificial lights and darkness can be found in the description of a shipping fleet permanently anchored off the coast of Malaysia due to the 2008 economic crisis. Miranda, Arthur's ex-wife says:

> was unprepared for the fleet's beauty. The ships were lit up to prevent collisions in the dark, and when she looked out at them, she felt stranded, the blaze of light on the horizon both filled with mystery and impossibly distant, a fairy-tale kingdom. (28)

Mandel's incomplete list of the things lost in the disaster includes the brilliant power of electricity, floodlights, porch lights, candy-coloured halogens, screens gleaming, and the points of glittering light that represent towns that can be seen from above through aeroplane windows. Shakespeare's works are used to recreate the best aspects of the pre-apocalyptic world even in the times of transcendent beauty and ecstasy produced by the Travelling Symphony concerts. The reason being that "the things with the new world ... is just horrifically short on elegance" (151).

Station Eleven is described as an elegy of a hyper-globalized present that celebrates the beauty of the pre-apocalyptic world and mourns its loss. Herein lies its critical distance from the utopian teleology of the traditional apocalyptic paradigm. The Museum of Civilization which relates to the bygone hyper-globalized era perfectly captures the elegiac tone of the novel. A laptop, an iPhone, a credit card, and a snow globe are among the everyday items of the pre-apocalyptic world that are displayed in Clark's Museum which is located in the Severn City Airport. These are given the status of art works as a result of the calamity and Clark is moved by them because of the human labour that each one of them needed. The Museum quickly turns into a place of prayer for the post-apocalyptic characters of *Station Eleven*, who hold onto the hope that the world they remember might one day be revived just like

the people of the Undersea in the comic *Station Eleven*, penned by Miranda. Thus, children at school are taught about the way things were, although these are just abstractions and essentially science fiction to them. This refusal to paint the old world as worthy of a destruction that paves the way for a utopian renewal articulates the novel's critical temporality but is not devoid of issues, as Station Eleven ends up unquestioningly celebrating the current system.

The singular civilization of the Museum's name encapsulates the neoliberal dream of a unified globalised world in which all difference is erased under the global free market. Education in the post-apocalypse era insists on transports and communications that create a hyper-connected world in which the boarders are meaningless:

> Satellites beamed information down to Earth. Goods travelled in ships and airplanes across the world. There was no place on Earth that was too far away to get to. Children were told about the Internet, how it was everywhere and connected everything, how it was us. They were shown maps and globes, the lines of the borders that the Internet had transcended. (262)

Clark's reflection addresses but rather miscasts the globalized trade networks in that it fetishizes the beautiful objects at the expense of the workers who make them and workers who are dehumanized into assemblies of working parts. The spectre of the 2008 economic crisis and ensuing recession does haunt the novel in which 12 percent of the world's shipping fleet lay at anchor off the coast of Malaysia in which the container ships laid dormant by an economic collapse. This explains that Mandel took this statistic from Simon Parry's 2009 *Daily Mail* article *Revealed: The Ghost Fleet of*

the Recession Anchored Just East of Singapore. Thus, one might suggest that Mandel's book describes an apocalypse that already happened in 2008 to 2009, but it is a novel not about a post-apocalyptic future but a post-apocalyptic present for the ships embody the breakdown of capitalism's fundamental premise of eternal growth.

Station Eleven's ending is a key to the text's deconstruction of utopian teleology. The concluding chapter seemingly adheres to the apocalyptic pattern of end and rebirth. For the depiction of Arthur's and Miranda's last hours is followed by Clark's musings on "another world just out of sight" (333). However, on the one hand, the novel is far from adhering to the radical utopian renewal of traditional apocalyptic discourse. This pattern comprises panic, dissolution of socioeconomic structures, and despair, succeeded by a makeshift return to normality once the disease has run its course. The final discovery of a town with a working electrical grid suggests not the advent of a completely new world and the discovery of a pattern that makes sense of history but rather that civilization may slowly return to its pre-apocalyptic state. Given the positive and optimistic tone of the conclusion, reinforced by the way that electricity and lights are repeatedly described as beautiful also indicates the novel's celebration of the current system.

The key element of the novel's final passage is the sense of possibility rather than the totalising teleological determinism of apocalyptic logic:

> Is it possible that somewhere there are ships setting out? If there are again towns with streetlights, if there are symphonies and newspapers, then what else might this awakening world contain? Perhaps vessels are setting out even now, travelling towards or away from him, steered by sailors armed with maps and knowledge of the stars, driven by need

> or perhaps simply by curiosity: whatever became of the countries on the other side? If nothing else, it's pleasant to consider the possibility. He likes the thought of ships moving over the water, towards another world just out of sight. (332–33)

This passage is another intertextual reference to *The Road*. Clark's optimistic musings on the possibility of ships and life in the countries on the other side of the ocean stand in stark contrast to the father's answers to his son, "Do you think there could be ships out there? I don't think so. … What's on the other side? Nothing" (McCarthy 216). Even when the man contemplates the possibility of ships out there, they are death ships and the hypothetical father and son on the other side are similarly hopeless living among the bitter ashes of the world. While, *The Road*'s passages signify the critique of utopian teleology through a hopeless dystopian scenario in which we find an entropic dissolution. *Station Eleven*'s ending subverts utopian teleology through speculations. The novel's final paragraph consists mostly of questions while the hypothetical ships move towards another world "just out of sight" (Mandel 333) that is, towards a future that contrary to the normative and prescriptive utopian visions of apocalyptic logic remains undefined. This critique of teleology is reflected in *Station Eleven*'s narrative structure.

The critical temporalities of the contemporary post-apocalyptic novel debunk the apocalyptic conception of history at the core of western modernity as a narrative construct. These fictions also focus on the connection between narrativity and apocalyptic logic. Addressing this nexus and through it the power dynamics and determinism embedded in teleology, the narrative structures of the contemporary post-apocalyptic novel articulate critical temporalities that encourages to conceive of narrative and therefore of history beyond the sense of an ending. In this regard *Station*

Eleven's narrative structure is compared with that of Mitchell's *Cloud Atlas*. Both texts complicate the teleological linearity of apocalyptic narratives to make space for unwritten futures which are key to agency.

Cloud Atlas consists of six narratives set between the nineteenth century and a distant post-apocalyptic future. The peculiarity of the novel is that all the stories aside from the sixth, a post-apocalyptic tale in the middle are put to hold to make a way for the next one in chronological order and are then picked back up in reverse order in the second half of the book. This structure articulates a critical temporality that undermines the apocalyptic sense of an ending and more specifically foreshadowing its view of the present as the harbinger of an already determined future which is at the core of the temporality of traditional plots and apocalyptic history alike. Firstly, "Time's Arrow becomes Time's Boomerang" (Mitchell 149) that is, the linear and teleological development of traditional plots and apocalyptic history the 'arrow' of the novel's first half is complicated by the 'boomerang' of the second half. Secondly, the interruption of each story defers closure and even the stories conclusions contain hints to the following narrative. Thirdly, while in the first half of *Cloud Atlas* the chronological order of the narratives encourages readers to look for clues foreshadowing an ending which will integrate and make sense of the various strands. There are gaps in the history traced by the novel and the shifts from one era to the other remain unexplained. The apocalypse is such a gap we do not know what happened just as in *The Road* and this in itself challenges the sense-making function of the end in both apocalyptic history and traditional narratives. These gaps keep spaces of possibility open in the novel's structure indicating Mitchell's intention to debunk apocalyptic determinism and narrative foreshadowing. Rather than reading for the end, Mitchell invites to read *Cloud Atlas* looking for parallels and connections

from the comet-shaped birthmark that links the protagonists of the various stories to their acts of defiance against the predatory logic that brings humanity to the apocalyptic demise.

The chronological ending of the novel, the post-apocalyptic future is effaced through the actual ending of *Cloud Atlas*, the nineteenth-century narrative which suggest that the future is not already written. Just like the parallels between the stories the conclusion emphasises the individual's agency to shape the future and the openness of actual time as opposed to the closure of time in traditional plots. Questioning the passivity of apocalyptic determinism Adam, the protagonist of the nineteenth-century narrative reminds that history admits no rules only outcomes and encourages to believe in the possibility of a better world than one culminating in an apocalyptic dystopian future.

Station Eleven's structure similarly articulates a critical temporality that complicates the sense of an ending. The novel begins with the apocalyptic end, Arthur's death on night one of the pandemics. As Jeevan describes it, this night, "was going to be the divide between a before and an after, a line drawn through his life" (Mandel 20). This is how apocalyptic logic works with the end ushering in a perfect new world which makes sense of everything that happened before. But *Station Eleven*'s apocalypse does not bring any sense-making order. Rather, during the first traumatic months spent walking on the road after the catastrophe, Jeevan's litany of biographical facts unravels and is replaced by strange fragment. By the same way, Kirsten collects fragments of Arthur's life as told in gossip magazines because they are signifiers of her past, of which she has few and disconnected memories.

Station Eleven's plot consists of fragments from before and after the apocalypse which challenges the teleological linearity of apocalyptic temporality. The

narrative continuously moves between the pre and the post-apocalypse without any regular pattern and even in these two distinct periods the narrative keeps shifting between different times from the night Arthur dies and the pandemic begins, to various moments in his life and that of people that are connected to him, from the catastrophe's immediate aftermath, to fifteen and twenty years after it. Just as in *Cloud Atlas*, *Station Eleven*'s structure encourages to read for connections between pre and post- apocalyptic fragments rather than for an end that integrates the various moments. After all, the death of Arthur who ties together the various characters and the apocalypse which is the catalyst of the story has already been given at the beginning of the narrative.

Mandel self-reflexively plays with the determinism of the sense of an ending by deploying apocalyptic foreshadowing as a narrative device that connects the various sections. Similarly, *Player One* features sections foreshadowing what happens in the next hour of the story narrated by the post-human Player One. Sentences like "The Georgia Flu would arrive in a year", "Civilization won't collapse for another fourteen years", "A year before the Georgia Flu", "Two weeks till the apocalypse", "just before the old world ended", "the Georgia Flu so close now" (40, 71, 110, 201, 217, 328), punctuate Mandel's narrative. By opening with the apocalyptic end that is foreshadowed by these sentences, *Station Eleven* highlights not only how the temporal order of the sense of an ending can be imposed on the randomness of time solely retrospectively but also how this order ultimately implies a future that is already written.

The sense of an ending and the deterministic foreshadowing it permits should be related to the closure of time in traditional plots rather than the openness of time as it is lived, where the future is unwritten. *Station Eleven* repeatedly emphasises that

there is no deterministic pattern to time contrary to what apocalyptic logic affirms. Miranda curtly rebukes Elizabeth's apocalyptic belief that everything happens because it was supposed to happen by saying "I'd prefer not to think that I'm following a script" (106). Stressing the role of contingency and chance in life, reflections of Arthur's include "how did I get from there to here?" and "How have I landed in this life? Because it seems like an improbable outcome, when I look back at the sequence of events" (77, 157). And looking back to his past towards the end of his life a retrospection that by definition should allow the sense of an ending to emerge. Clark does not see any meaningful order but only a series of photographs and disconnected short films. A life rather than fictional time is made up of a number of loose ends that resist the retrospective patterning of the sense of an ending. Thus, while the traditional apocalyptic narrative makes the conjunction of meaning and ending its theme both in its expressed understanding of history and in its own narrative procedures, *Station Eleven* leaves with the sense of possibility an open and unwritten future that challenges the closure and determinism of the sense of an ending and that like the gaps in the fictional history of *Cloud Atlas* allows space for human agency.

The critical temporalities of the contemporary post-apocalyptic novel not only expose the apocalyptic conception of history as a narrative construct entangled within power structures through their critical appropriation of religious apocalyptic tropes and the subversion of utopian teleology but through their structures these fictions challenge what is an essentially apocalyptic model of narrative dominated by the end and invite to conceive of history beyond the determinism of the sense of an ending.

A seminal study of Shakespeare's early modernism that draws parallel with Mandel's postmodernism springing from the ideas of Raymond Williams is seen in the next chapter.

Chapter Three

Pandemic and Posthumanism

Literature is a valuable resource as it seeks an understanding of shared human experience throughout history. Several works from ancient world features plagues and epidemics. For instance, the biblical *Book of Exodus* chronicles the 10 plagues of Egypt, while Homer's epic poem *The Iliad* opens with a plague devouring the Greek army camp at Troy. Texts about the pandemic offer a way to work through societal trauma. There is frequently a rebirth of interest in pandemic literature as new epidemics appear.

Emily St. John Mandel's novel *Station Eleven* forecasts ruin in view of a disease, the Georgian flu which is unquestionably more smashing than the COVID-19 Coronavirus. The novel opens with a demonstration of *King Lear*, where Arthur Leander, the performer playing Lear fails miserably vivaciously before a group of people of a coronary episode not because of the disease and viral pandemic strikes that very evening. In few weeks it clears out the vast majority of the human individuals all around the world. Thrown into a wild presence, Mandel's survivors are left to redo common society. The title Pandemic and Posthumanism gives the occasion of this chapter. Throughout recent months the lifeworld has changed however the degree of that change is yet to enlist. Much like the London theatres of Shakespeare's plague, theatres, fields and colleges have shut.

Jan Kott addresses Shakespeare as our contemporary. Marjorie Garber notes that Shakespeare's plays and the eras they are read about almost always seem to be related, "It is one of the fascinating effects of Shakespeare's plays that they have almost always seemed to coincide with times in which they are read, published, production and discussed" (xiii). This has been especially true of King Lear, whose

"meaning … began to change in response to cataclysmic world events like the exploding of the hydrogen bomb, political turmoil in Eastern Europe and Cuba … and the start of the Vietnam War" (231). The play then becomes "Shakespeare's bleakest and most despairing vision of suffering, all hints of consolation, undermined or denied" (231). Elie Wiesel's *Night*, Mandel's *Station Eleven* and Shakespeare's *Lear* acts as a harbinger of the holocaust. Universal conflict, the Nazi concentration camps and Hiroshima stay the incredible emergencies of mid-twentieth century modernism to which Shakespeare would loan his voice and tragic vision. In 1993, Brian Massumi writes, "what society looks toward is no longer a return to the promised land but a general disaster that is already upon us, woven into the fabric of day-to-day life" (11). He further adds:

> The content of the disaster is unimportant. Its particulars are annulled by its plurality of possible agents and times: here and to come. What registers it is magnitude. In its most compelling and characteristic incarnations, the now unspecified enemy is infinite. Infinitely small or infinitely large: viral or environmental. (11)

Pandemic and Posthumanism offers an epochal analysis of Shakespeare's early modernism drawing points of comparison with Mandel's postmodernism springing from the views of Raymond Williams. Both offer representations of world-shattering catastrophe through different literary-cultural lenses. It explores Mandel's appropriation of Shakespeare which in turn is celebratory, nostalgic, and critical. In *Station Eleven*, the Traveling Symphony a ragged troupe of actors and musicians who move from settlement to settlement across the U.S. Great Lakes region entertaining survivors includes Shakespeare in its repertoire. A member of the troupe Kirsten Raymonde, had played Lear's stage-daughter on the night of the pandemic. Twenty

years later Kirstein has been thinking about writing her own play that is modern and addressing the age in which she lives. “She’d been thinking lately about writing her own play…She wanted to write something modern, something that addressed this age in which they’d somehow landed” (Mandel 288). Mandel narrates:

> Survival might be insufficient, she’d told Dieter in late-night arguments, but on the other hand, so was Shakespeare. He’d trotted out his usual arguments, about how Shakespeare had lived in a plague-ridden society with no electricity and so, did the Traveling Symphony. But look, she’d told him, the difference was that they’d seen electricity, they’d seen everything, they’d watched a civilization collapse, and Shakespeare hadn’t. In Shakespeare’s time the wonders of technology were still ahead, not behind them, and far less had been lost. “If you think you can do better,” he’d said, “why don’t you write a play and show it to Gil?” “I don’t think I can do better,” she’d told him. “I’m not saying that. I’m just saying the repertoire’s inadequate. (288)

With these words Mandel declares Shakespeare’s distance from the pandemic-riven 21st century. Critics like Jan Kott, Maynard Mack, R. A Foakes considers Shakespeare’s *Lear* to prefigure the terrors of Auschwitz and atom bomb, but what it fails to envision is the techno cultural innovations.

Frederick Jameson in his work *Postmodernism or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* defines Postmodernism as, “The postmodern is … the force field in which very different kinds of cultural impulses what Raymond Williams has usefully termed ‘residual’ and ‘emergent’ forms of cultural production must make their way” (6). At any given moment within any given epoch the dominant culture authorizes and

instutionalizes the norms and practices. But despite its power and authority the dominant culture contains within itself alternate norms and practices lingering on from the previous ages. This is what William term as the 'residual belief'. These belief remains viable culturally though embraced by a minority. At the same instance some practices are 'emergent' which shows where the culture is heading and many in the dominant culture will embrace these beliefs, trends and technologies even when some resist them. Within late 20th century Western culture, Williams lists organised religion as 'the idea of rural community' and monarchy as 'predominantly residual'. In contrast to these concrete examples his discussion of emergence rests necessarily perhaps in generalization:

> By 'emergent' I mean, first, that new meanings and values, new practices, new relationships and kinds of relationship are continually being created. But it is exceptionally difficult to distinguish between those which are really elements of some new phase of the dominant culture … and those which are substantially alternative or oppositional to it: emergent in the strict sense, rather than merely novel. (123)

these residues of the medieval remain in *King Lear*, the play which strikes as modern in questioning the feudal order, cosmic hierarchy and divine justice.

Harold Bloom in his work *Shakespeare: The Invention of Human* (1998) writes that "Shakespeare is out ahead of us", he adds "Shakespeare enables us to see realities that may already have been there but that we would not find possible to see without him" (487). He claims that it is not the human but the 'ethos of modernity' that Shakespeare invents. The limitations are his understanding of humanness particularly as the category of human continues to evolve through 21st century. These drawbacks are glimpsed in techno cultural transit through postmodernism and

posthumanism, where in "genetically recombined … animals and vegetables proliferate alongside computer and other viruses, while unmanned flying and ground armed vehicles confront us with new ways of dying" (Braidoth 87). As Braidoth quotes within these emergent forms of biotechnology, human is recreated as a negative category who are held together by shared vulnerability and the spectre of extinction but also stuck down by new and old epidemic.

Williams' Marxist analysis of dominant-residual-emergent practices takes class-consciousness as its focus but the present focus is on the postmodern techno culture which breaches the distinction between technology and nature. Writing in the mid-1970s, Williams hasn't envisioned the full impact of the then nascent technologies that would reinvent the structures and machinery of capitalism, communication, transportation, information, energy supply, and even the embodied human subject. As Nick Mansfield puts it, the cyborg, part cybernetic machine, part living organism has become "commonplace in postmodern life, and must be recognized as one of the products of multinational, militaristic capitalism a result of the inventions and strategies developed to fight the Cold War" (ch. 11). In her *Cyborg Manifesto* (1985), Donna Haraway writes: "by the late twentieth century … we are all chimeras, theorised and fabricated hybrids of machine and organism; in short, we are cyborgs. The cyborg is our ontology; it gives us our politics" (190). William could not have known how technology would restructure the 21st century lifeworld, including the very category of the human and neither could Shakespeare and the Georgian flu as described in Mandel's *Station Eleven*, shows what a post-pandemic, post-Shakespearean world might look like. Mandel picks up where the bard leaves off Shakespeare's ending is her beginning:

> He was not for an age but for all time! Ben Jonson, 'To Memory of…Mr. William Shakespeare'. But to the cold war generation and the post war are world, King Lear seems like a prescient vision of the present moment...It was not so much because of the pathos of its title character…but because of the worldview the play seemed to body forth a bleak, bombed-out landscape of nihilism. (241)

In declaring him for all time, fellow playwright Ben Jonson expressed sentiments that linger residually to the present day that Shakespeare's art is universal and transcendent loosed from time, place, and epoch that he captures the unchanging essential spirit of human nature that he reaches the highest aesthetic while sounding both the warning voice of conscience and a clarion call to our noblest nature. In the 18th century, the mantle of bardolatry fell to Samuel Johnson. He writes about Shakespeare's characters as, "are not modified by the customs of particular places or by the accidents of transient fashions or temporary opinions." Rather, "they are the genuine progeny of common humanity, such as the world will always supply and observation will always find" (11–12).

Shakespeare industry has gathered up its full cultural capital by the 19th century and while its claim of universalism continued its cultural dominance began shifting from timeless classic to modernist. The so-called 'Shakespeare industry' is a complicated web of performance and commodification that encourages the veneration of Shakespeare as a cultural hero and the production of his characters. It also includes 'intellectual tourism' to the locations where the playwright lived, worked, and developed his masterwork as well as those of his well-known characters. In America, it was Ralph Waldo Emerson who announces the new Shakespeare, "It was not possible to write the history of Shakespeare till now", declares Emerson in 1850.

"Now literature, philosophy, and thoughts are Shakespearean. His mind is the horizon beyond which, at present we do not see" (194-95). In sum, "he wrote the text of modern life" (201). Since Emerson's assertion of Shakespeare's modernity, it has become increasingly customary to retain the plays of William Shakespeare firmly rooted in history albeit in a prescient manner as is seen in particular in the works of *King Lear*. His works immerse readers in the social, political, philosophical, psychological, existential, and cultural realities of early modernism and the cultural forces he unleashes in his plays are those that were developing at the time. Even while some of the same energies have shifted to being more 'residual', many still 'dominant' the current era.

Shakespeare's quarto version of *King Lear* was first published in 1608 which is four centuries ago. The Western culture has gone through numerous stages of modernity during these centuries, transitioning from theocracy to secularism, religious certainty to epistemological scepticism, feudalism to the nation state, horses to jumbo jets, waggons to steam engines, and steam engines to cyclotrons. Mandel's literature can be classified as postmodernist in terms of when and how it was produced if Shakespeare is an early modernist. Their work serves as bookends to the magnificent epoch of modernism when considered in these time parameters.

After the Second World War, Western intellectuals and artists experienced a crisis of self-reflection. And through that introspection they begin to understand that a fully human history could take the place of the previous cosmic order. The material world could be 'mastered' and changed by experimental research, that the environment will change culturally into the cityscape of a megalopolis forming an urban ethos. Additionally, politics of a European bent would promote nationhood as the identity and destiny components of racism and colonialism. The modernist pieces

like an explosion over Hiroshima and the opening of the gates of Auschwitz and other concentration camps where up to 100,000 living bones emerged with the bodies of about 6,000,000 more having been burned and their ashes dispersed throughout the surrounding countryside serve as their climax. In this context, *King Lear* was written in the middle of the 20th century. According to Maynard Mack in 1964, "after two world wars and Auschwitz, our sensibility is significantly more in touch than our grandparents' was with the play's jagged violence, its sadism, madness, and processional of deaths, its wild blends of levity and horror, selfishness and self-lessness" (25). Modernism's technological, political, social, and psychological forces had gathered over Hiroshima and Auschwitz like storm clouds. These kinds of disasters belonged to the generation that experienced both the Great Depression and World War II and in that generation's reaction to such disasters the seeds of postmodernism were sown. *Lear* can be related with Edgar, the blinded Gloucester's son, whose final words seem to refer to this generation and its struggles.

> EDGAR
>
> The weight of this sad time we must obey;
>
> Speak what we feel, not what we ought to say.
>
> The oldest hath borne most; we that are young
>
> Shall never see so much nor live so long. (5.3.329-332)

The play shows the howling of the victims but its conclusion leaves the audience in the dark about what happens next. It teaches how to be angry and how to be depressed but not how to move on or how to endure.

Shakespeare and Mandel also have a second text in common, *The Book of Revelation*. This is a book of providential history in which the Christian God has written the last unfinished chapter. It is not yet to be performed. In this end-of-the-

world narrative the planet is destroyed and then rebuilt. However, despite its references to Scripture *Lear* achieves something that few previous English-language works dared to do. It asks, 'Where is God when the Holocaust comes?' and contrasts raw nature with divine justice. In the end, evil will be exposed and punished while the righteous despite their suffering will receive their reward according to literary medievalism. Shakespeare's *Lear* dismantles that pretty notion by creating characters whose innocent suffering mocks all claims of divine justice. Bloom is correct when he says, "For those who believe that divine justice somehow prevails in the world, King Lear ought to be offensive…. You have to be a very determined Christianizer of literature to take any comfort from this most tragic of tragedies" (493). It serves as an Auschwitz rehearsal in this particular way:

> The death of Lear cannot be an atonement for us, any more than it serves as an atonement for Edgar, Kent, and Albany. For Edgar, it is the final catastrophe, his godfather and his father both are gone, and the contrite Albany who has much to be contrite for abdicates the crown to the hapless Edgar, Shakespeare's most reluctant royal successor. …The remorseful Albany and aged Ken, soon to join his master Lear in death, do not represent the audience: Edgar the survivor does, and his despairing accents send us out of the theatre unconsoled. (507)

The gods are not yet dead in this play rather what perishes is the belief that heaven has any desire to dispense mercy or justice. Humanity must appeal to nature straight after *Lear*. It is not as an immortal soul made in God's image but rather as a rational animal that humanity must seek its identity and work out its salvation.

Mandel accepts the play's secularism while rejecting its apparent nihilism. The concept of a God-governed providential universe is viewed as a type of insanity in *Station Eleven*. Tyler, the son of Arthur and Elizabeth his second wife reads from the *Book of Revelation* after learning how to do so from his mother. Of the survivors who seek refuge in the New Severn airport are the only one who interpret the pandemic in apocalyptic terms:

> Right now, he's over the quarantined plane, Clark said, "reading out aloud to the dead from the Book of Revelation" "Oh" Elizabeth smiled and resumed her knitting. He is a very advanced reader. "I think maybe he picked up some strange ideas about, well, about what happened." He still has no words for it, he realized. No one spoke of it directly… "he thinks the pandemic happened for a reason," Clark said… "everything happened for a reason," she said. She did not look at him. It is not for us to know. (260-61)

Tyler did a good job of learning his mother's catechism as well:

> Everything happens for a reason, Tyler said…"That's what my mom said…" he added when everyone stared at him. "Yeah, but that's because Elizabeth's a fucking lunatic," Garret said… "In front of the kid?" Annette was twisting her Lufthansa neck scarf between her fingers. That's his mother you are talking about. (253)

Years later, after starting his doomsday cult at St. Deborah by the Water, Tyler delivers the following sermon to the traveling symphony:

> My people, the prophet said, "earlier in the day I was contemplating the flu, the great pandemic, and let me ask you this. Have you considered the perfection of the virus?" … There was the outbreak of

> 1918, my people, the timing obvious, divine punishment for the waste and slaughter of the First World War. But then, … then came a virus like an avenging angel, unsurvivable, a microbe that reduce the population of the fallen world by, what? … Shall we say ninety-nine-point ninety-nine percent? … I submit, my beloved people, that such a perfect agent of death could only be divine. For we have read of such a cleansing of the earth, have we not. (59–60)

Tyler sees himself as a part of this cleansing according to his distorted interpretation of Revelation. His preaching has left the Symphony shaken. So, they immediately packed their things and left.

Mandel completely and categorically dismisses divine action as the origin of the pandemic. Yet another area of disparity between *Station Eleven* and *King Lear* can be seen in the way her characters react to human misery. The play instructs its audience on how to grieve and hate but not how to survive. And the absence of rage distinguishes Mandel's characters from those in Shakespeare. It drives *Lear*, who cries out, "Howl howl! howl!" (5.3.262). Nobody in Mandel expresses anything even quite similar. As characters in *Station Eleven* learn to refer to 'the collapse', their reactions include dread, bewilderment, perplexity, and most of all sadness. Clark Thompson, an old acquaintance of Arthur's is one of the New Severn survivors. He wasn't very unhappy when he turned 70 in the year nineteen after the pandemic yet he was always conscious of his death. Mandel's characters learn to accept the circumstances they are in and resolve to live their lives as best they can with art taking the place of religion as solace for life's unrelenting suffering. Except for a few insane and blatantly wicked Tyler's supporters who think the virus is 'an avenging angel'.

The collapse signifies the failure of postmodern techno culture whose expert systems had propelled humankind into realms of the posthuman by bringing it to the verge of biological extinction. Mandel correctly predicts the future. The defeat of technology by an avenging nature may very well come with the impending tragedy of the twenty-first century. It starts with a particular flu strain in *Station Eleven*. But the virus is not the only factor that makes medical science worthless. There is another calamity that strikes the throbbing electronic body of the global energy grid the centre of postmodern techno culture. While the Black Plague wiped out much of mediaeval Europe's population, it did not eradicate its existing technologies. In Mandel's universe, the eradication of techno culture is what reduces people to Hobbesian 'states of nature'.

Mandel imagines a viral pandemic that kills the majority of the world's inhabitants as the real cause of the entire social collapse. It is also a result of the postmodernist expert system division of knowledge which rendered human survivor's incapable of fixing or restarting the black-boxed technologies they relied upon. In the airport next to the village of New Severn, this is vividly displayed. When the Georgian flu first appeared, technicians departed the airport for their homes leaving the travellers in charge of the emergency generators. The growing complexity of postmodernism's techno culture is both its strength and its fatal flaw. A completely postmodern society would benefit its human citizens, but it shouldn't be dependent on them to run. Mandel's work shows the aftermath of the postmodern condition's catastrophic failure rather than the postmodern condition in its technoscientific fullness or fulfilment.

The ultimate outcome of the movement from medievalism to modernism to postmodernism which is transition from divine providence to human reason to

artificial intelligence is a technology whose computing processes evolve independently of human consciousness and human behaviour. The remaining populace of Mandel is brought back to a pre-modern era rendering the modernist technologies useless. This is how Clark got to the airport. He boarded a vehicle and was shot a mile above the earth at a high rate of speed. He had informed Miranda Carroll about the passing of her ex-husband in this manner. He had pressed a series of buttons on a gadget that instantly connected him to a device on the other side of the planet and Miranda who was standing barefoot on a white beach with a ship fleet shining in the distance in the dark had pressed a button that instantly connected her to New York via satellite. These were the wonders that had endured all around them and were taken for granted.

The pre-pandemic items from the Museum of Civilization can be displayed as art after their purpose or energy supply is destroyed:

> BY THE END OF Year Fifteen there were three hundred people in the airport, and the Museum of Civilization filled the Skymiles Lounge. In former times, when the airport had had fewer people, Clark had worked all day at the details of survival. … But there were many more people now, and Clark was older, and no one seemed to mind if he cared for the Museum all day. There seemed to be a limitless number of objects in the world that had no practical use but that people wanted to preserve: cell phones with their delicate buttons, iPads, Tyler's Nintendo console, a selection of laptops. There were a number of impractical shoes, stilettos mostly, beautiful and strange.…Traders brought things for Clark sometimes, objects of no real value that they knew he would like: magazines and newspapers, a stamp collection,

> coins. There were the passports or the driver's licenses or sometimes the credit cards of people who had lived at the airport and then died. Clark kept impeccable records. (258)

Mandel's survivors are left to find the power supply required to reconstruct their information systems and technology after being plunged into a dark period that is worse than anything Shakespeare's plague-ridden world would have known or imagined.

The topic of the apocalypse highlights the difference between Mandel's book and Shakespeare's play. In that sense *Station Eleven* starts with catastrophe whereas *King Lear* concludes with complete devastation. Shakespeare promotes a life without comfort, but Mandel emphasises living. The tragic-nihilistic vision that Kott, Mack, Foakes, and other post-war critics identified in *Lear* is absent from Mandel's novel. And this explains why their literary styles and worldviews are different. *Lear* portrays an early-modernist vision of the apocalypse whereas *Station Eleven* starts with a crisis and progresses to melodrama. According to Mandel, the genre of *Station Eleven* is neither sci-fi nor dystopian. She has referred to it as 'hopeful,' and her choice of closing sentence supports this idea:

> I know you're tired, Clark said. "But there's something I think you'd like to see." …Kirsten wasn't in the habit of following strangers, but he was elderly and moved slowly and she had three knives in her belt. "Where are we going?" "The air traffic control tower." On the ninth landing, Clark rapped a pattern with his cane on a door and they were admitted in to an octagonal room … James may we borrow the telescope? …"The telescope's focused," he said. "Don't move it, just look through." Kirsten looked, but at first, she couldn't comprehend

> what she was seeing. She stepped back. “It isn’t possible,” she said. “But there it is. Look again.” In the distance, pinpricks of light arranged into a grid. There, plainly visible on the side of a hill some miles distant: a town, or a village, whose streets were lit up with electricity. (311–12)

In the end, the electricity is restored. This preserves civilization. Thus, the three characters Jeevan, Clark, and Kirsten, who carry the majority of the story have hope for a happy conclusion in the novel *Station Eleven*.

The contrast between *Station Eleven* and *King Lear* is the relationship between Tyler, Arthur’s biological son and Kirsten, his stage daughter. Since a young girl selected to be Tyler's fourth wife ran away and stowed away with the Traveling Symphony as it passed through St. Deborah by the Water, Tyler’s cult has been pursuing the orchestra. Thus, Kirsten and Tyler finally connect some twenty years after the pandemic. In a pivotal scene, Arthur’s stage daughter kneels on the floor and the son stands over her aiming his rifle towards her head. A disgruntled young kid and other members of Tyler’s cult can be seen standing nearby with their guns up. Shakespeare had Edmund, the bastard son of Gloucester who murdered Cordelia the cherished wife of *Lear*. In Mandel’s work, the son passes away. In Tyler’s cult, an anonymous boy who was unhappy kills Tyler and then commits suicide. The boy gives Mandel her scapegoat by killing himself. He does what Shakespeare’s Gloucester attempted to accomplish when he killed himself. He frees himself from what seems to be pointless agony and bloodshed. Mandel deviates from Shakespeare by allowing the stage Lear’s daughter to live while the actor’s real son perishes whether humorously or accidentally. Kirsten is onstage in the opening scene of the novel portraying a phantasm of *King* Lear’s memories of his daughter as a little

girl. The daughters in Shakespeare's play all pass away as adults Cordelia by hanging, Regan by poisoning, and Goneril by taking her own life.

Shakespeare's own rewriting process is where the bigger irony lies. Shakespeare, according to Samuel Johnson's famous quote, "has suffered the virtue of Cordelia to perish in a just cause contrary to the natural ideas of justice, to the hope of readers, and, what is yet more strange, to the faith of chronicles" (161). Johnson's sense of decorum caused him to favour Nahum Tate's 1681 adaption over the 1608 original, calling it a play "in which the wicked prosper, and the virtuous miscarry" (161). Saving the lives of Cordelia, Lear, and Gloucester whom he marries off to Edgar. Tate's rendition dominated the Restoration and 18th century stages. As stated by Tate in his *Epistle Dedicatory*, he claims 'racked with no small fears for so bold a change, till I found it well-received by my audience.' And Johnson added himself to that appreciative audience:

> In the present case the public has decided. Cordelia, from the time of Tate, has always retired with victory and felicity. And, if my sensations could add anything to the general suffrage, I might relate, that I was many years ago so shocked by Cordelia's death, that I know not whether I ever endured to read again the last scenes of the play till I undertook to revise them as an editor. (161–62)

Cordelia is reunited with her father and arrives with a force from France to vanquish her evil sisters and reinstates *Lear* to the throne in *Holinshed's Chronicles* (1586). The story and its conclusion which Shakespeare rewrites would have been familiar to Shakespeare's more educated audience. Shakespeare's revision also rejects the conventional exemplary literature's tendency for moralising. Justice presupposes that when evil manifests in the world its measure will be measured and the price it

exacts will be neither less than an equal measure of good nor should it be greater. Until the good pay that price evil will continue to exist unchecked. In *King Lear*, it appears that the good suffers more than the evil that Goneril, Reagan, Cornwall and Edmund let out. Shakespeare's play invites reflection on pure evil and the suffering it causes the innocent far more than Mandel's novel does.

An apocalypse in Judeo-Christian tradition describes both the end of the world and its rebirth. Despite the terrifying journey the apocalypse paradoxically has a pleasant ending. Apocalypse reduces to only destruction as predicted by Shakespeare and demonstrated in the middle of the 20th century by Hiroshima and Auschwitz. Literary dystopias according to Riven Barton, "signify a continuation of life after the catastrophe has actually occurred", in contrast to apocalyptic literature. For, "regardless of how horrible it may be, dystopia is not an end, but a struggle for continuation. They are shadow projections of current society, hyper-exemplifying problems and potential fears that already exist" (6). In contrast, Heather J. Hicks sees post-apocalyptic and dystopian as 'essentially synonymous' terms:

> In some respects, dystopian content is symptomatic of the distinction between the Christian apocalyptic tradition, which culminates in the utopian New Jerusalem, and the secular post-apocalyptic genre, which, without fail, imagines the destruction of modernity as leading to a state of at least provisional suffering and oppression. (5)

Station Eleven and Hicks' list of post-apocalyptic genre fiction conventions are similar. As Carmen M. Méndez-Garcia suggests, the term post-apocalyptic suits Mandel's novel:

> There is often, in the postapocalyptic genre … a promise of reconfiguration, of resetting and rebuilding a society unencumbered by

> the problems of the world that was destroyed that is certainly present in Mandel's text. *Station Eleven* is a fantasy mostly about goodness and decency in human nature, and the possibility of communal creation of little cells of camaraderie, a kind of preservation of the best of culture, society, and previous models of civilization. Even the mandatory evil cult leader, the Prophet, seems clichéd, in a move that I would argue does not only adhere to generic rules, but is also intentional as it emphasizes the optimism of the text. (113–14)

In addition to demonstrating how a modern novelist like Mandel doubts the bard's continued relevance into the twenty-first century, the interpretive history of *Lear* demonstrates how the play came to represent the problems of mid-twentieth century post-war, post-Holocaust intellectual culture. Mandel's portrayal of a postmodern, post-pandemic world informs that the repertoire is insufficient. Shakespeare is hardly the only example of posthumanism.

The work of Mandel reveals what is hidden within the corrupt core of our current societies recognising what is valuable to hang onto while being open to the potential of thinking things differently and salvaging what satisfies, supports and nourishes individuals back to their best selves.

The next chapter explores how *Station Eleven* offers hope by imagining the future in which the conventional lines and bounds of relationships, principals, identity and community might be rebuilt in another world rather than by reviving a tired past.

Chapter Four

Envisioning Real Utopia

A utopia typically describes a hypothetical community or society with very desirable or nearly flawless characteristics. It is a society that appears without any imperfections in which everyone is happy and conflict and strife are unheard of. The phrase was made well-known in 1516 by Thomas Moore's novel *Utopia*, which depicts one such idealised society. Cooperation, democracy, a just division of labour, and the satisfaction of everyone's needs are characteristics of utopian society.

A conflict between memory and imagination is at the core of *Station Eleven*. The emphasis of St. John Mandel's novel is on the imaginary and utopian possibilities that could come along with disaster in contrast to most post-apocalyptic texts that value their modern civilization by inspiring a sense of nostalgia for the present. The Travelling Symphony's productions of Shakespeare plays serve as a means of remembering and the patriarchal violence committed by the Prophet offers an unpleasant re-enactment of the religious fanaticism that has marred history. A number of useless objects that Clark collected for the Museum of Civilization also serve as aesthetic links to the past in the novel. But the objects and beliefs of the past provide a constant draw back into a nostalgic appreciation for a life that can never be recaptured. It is Miranda's self-published comic book, *Dr. Eleven*, suggests the importance and primacy of imagination over remembrance in the wastelands of the future. The comic's ability to survive the consequences is what gives the novel its positive tone.

Miranda's comic *Dr. Eleven* forms a metafictional subtext of Mandel's *Station Eleven*. The characters in Miranda's fictional world are mirrored in the

characters of the novel's larger framework narrative. She writes, "There are people who, after fifteen years of perpetual twilight long only to go home" (83). This nostalgia which is quite literal longing for home is derived from Greek words 'notos', which means return home and 'algos', which means pain. The similarity is that, *Station Eleven*'s storyline likewise takes place approximately fifteen years after the time of collapse when a pandemic kills 99 percent of North American citizens. At this point, the survivors begin to think back on a world that is lost. Chapter six in the novel is titled as, 'an incomplete list', evokes a world of darkness where the loss of the electric grid indicates that there is, "no more diving into pools of chlorinated water lit green from below. No more ball games played out under floodlights. No more porch lights with moths fluttering on summer nights" (31).

Station Eleven appears to follow a general pattern in post-apocalyptic literature wherein modern civilization is evaluated in light of its absence creating a sense of 'nostalgia' for the present through the invocation of loss. Dereck Daschke asserts that "apocalypse is … decidedly nostalgic." "Traumatic events", he argues as "force the past to remain in the present, no future is possible until they are recognised, understood and integrated in to a new life" (464, 465). Thus, letting go of the past becomes the most important stage in the establishment of any new life after disaster. However, it can be quite challenging when one is continually reminded of what has been lost. As Clark remarks the whole world has become, "a place where artefacts from the old world are preserved" (Mandel 146). Newness is no longer produced so in order to survive only reminders of the past are used such as planes for food storage facilities and gas stations as a place to live. It would seem that *Station Eleven* is laced with nostalgic memories.

Emily Allen in *Designing Worlds: The Big Read*, highlights a 'melancholic' tone in the novel which she locates in the stylistic devices Mandel uses and the beauty of the language which evokes an incredible longing for the world that has passed. Allen also points out the utopian dimension of the novel since she contends that while the novel romanticises the lost things of our world it also imagines that with them economic disparity and racism have also been displaced. By emphasising the imaginary and utopian possibilities that might surround a worldwide catastrophe, the novel's many characters are continuously drawn back into a nostalgic admiration of a life that can never be recovered by objects and beliefs from the past. The author provides a chance to recreate themselves in the present by creating a space for hope. The self-published comic book *Dr. Eleven* by Miranda, from which John Mandel also takes her book's title serves as the focal point for this reinvention.

Svetlana Boyn (2001) and Helmut Illbruck (2012) considered nostalgia as a disease when the term was first coined by a Swiss medical student Johannes Hofer in the late seventh century. "Nostalgia in 1688", writes Illbruck "as a new name for displacement, denoting not a sentimental longing but a deadly disease caught by and consuming those of cut off from their homeland" (3). In *Station Eleven*, Mandel thinks of nostalgia as the illness that persists after the Georgian-flu virus has been defeated. Nostalgia is also a form of fictional intervention. It is not as easy to distinguish between remembering and imagining. When it comes to nostalgia, we only remember a portion of it and make up the rest as we go. Because of this, nostalgia is often non-political. These references can be found in chapter six specifically like the football game, the lit pool, and the moths in the porchlight. Mandel's novel however resists the overwhelming force of such nostalgia and criticises those who would surrender to its comforting embrace. The novel's structure

is crucial in this regard since it allows readers to see the true past with all of its defects rather than just characters recalling it vaguely as in the popular flashback trope. Through this narrative technique the novel serves continually to remind the constructed nature of such nostalgia. Thus the key binary is drawn not simply between those who remember and those who imagine but between those who imagine through memory and wish to return to the past and those who use imagination to forge new pathways and invoke the spirit of discovery that is typically associated with earlier forms of utopian fiction.

A fascination with the now-worthless items that will litter a future devastated Earth has been seen in several post-apocalyptic works of fiction in the twenty-first century. This is certainly logical given the prominent place that apocalypse occupies in modern culture where it serves as one of the few realistic means remaining for imagining a society free of consumerism. Fredric Jameson once wrote that "it is easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism" (199). As a result, the prevalence of items and the fetishization of them in apocalyptic writings serves as a constant reminder to characters of the loss on the basic foundation of reality beyond which imagination is limited. One can frequently encounter artefacts at *Station Eleven* that have been handled in a similar way. There are other instances of now-useless items in the novel such as paperweights, cell phones, credit cards, computers, and passports that have been preserved as aesthetic links to the past. The ordinary character of these items which in the scary post-apocalyptic scene lose their usefulness or purpose. It helps in illustrating both their superfluity and the decadence of the era in which they were valued. For instance, Kirsten claims that the paperweight she retained in her suitcase is "nothing but dead weight" and that she only kept it because "she found it beautiful" (Mandel 66). Perhaps the paperweight is

a beautiful object that can be appreciated in prelapsarian civilization purely for its aesthetic worth.

Mandel's writing on the question of remembering is more perceptive and fascinating when it is abstracted. References to memory are found strewn throughout the excerpts from Miranda's *Dr. Eleven* comic books which act as a mirror for the action taking place in the rest of the novel. The titular and fantastical *Station Eleven* may be the setting for Miranda's comic but it frequently serves as a stand-in for the desolate landscape of post-apocalyptic America. More than that, the divide between those who want to move forward and create something new and those who want to remember the past in the larger narrative is reflected in the division between those who live on the islands above and those who live beneath the sea:

> On Station Eleven's surface it is always sunset or twilight or night … and the only land remaining is a series of islands that were once mountaintops. There has been a schism. There are people who, after fifteen years of perpetual twilight, long only to go home, to return to Earth and beg for amnesty, to take their chances under alien rule. They live in the Undersea, an interlinked network of vast fallout shelters under Station Eleven's oceans. … All they want is to see sunlight again. Can you blame them. (83)

The fact that Kirsten's discussion with Diallo occurs fifteen years after the disaster is not a coincidence. It is also no coincidence that individuals of the Undersea, like those who had to rely on candles following the Georgia Flu pandemic, "live out their lives under flickering lights" (86). The comic argues that it is reasonable for some people to "want merely to go home" after fifteen years of struggle in perpetual darkness. "We

weren't made for this world", they said. An undersea assassin left a letter that says, "Let us go home" (105). Indeed, Boym claims that nostalgia is "no longer just a passing sickness but rather the incurable modern condition" (2). Mandel touches on this by noting the strong and backward sway of nostalgia that individuals experience in the wake of calamity. Mark Fisher's *Ghosts of My Life* published the same year as *Station Eleven* notes:

> While twentieth-century experimental culture was seized by a recombinatorial delirium, which made it feel as if newness was infinitely available, the twenty-first century is oppressed by a crushing sense of finitude and exhaustion. It doesn't feel like the future. Or, alternatively, it doesn't feel as if the twenty-first century has started yet. (8)

Thus, the current emphasis on nostalgia in all spheres of life academic, artistic, and political seems to be a sign of the present time, a time that is exhausted and devoid of imagination. Indeed, Mandel seems to be most troubled by the ability of this nostalgia to limit perspectives. "They are always waiting, the people of the Undersea. They spend all their lives waiting for their lives to begin" (Mandel 86), writes Miranda in *Dr. Eleven.* She also describes these individuals with a certain air of sympathy:

> For years Dr. Eleven had been the hero of the narrative, but lately he'd begun to annoy her and she'd become more interested in the Undersea. These people living out their lives in underwater fallout shelters, clinging to the hope that the world they remembered could be restored. The Undersea was limbo. (213)

Like the people of the Undersea trapped in limbo between a world that has passed and a world they are yet to come to terms with Clark and the others who make their residence at the Severn City Airport are also left stranded in what Marc Augé described as one of "the real non-places of supermodernity" (96). In an effort to convey the feeling of spending the remainder of one's life in such a transient setting Clark comments, "The entire history of being stranded in airports up to that moment was also a history of eventually becoming unstranded" (Mandel 231). Such people, Mandel emphasises are blind to the essential beauty of the modern world. They 'sleepwalk' through this new existence by only thinking about the past just like they used to do in the previous one.

Station Eleven clearly laments the loss of some aspects of modern life. Mandel frequently draws attention to the suffering and pressures of the present in the passages that take place before the Georgian Flu outbreak such as the failed marriages and relationships, the strain of work, the lack of fulfilment, the lawyers, and the outright fakery. While preparing for her role in a twilight production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Kirsten constantly conveys the surprise magic of a world devoid of people. Mandel writes "What was lost in the collapse: almost everything, almost everyone, but there is still such beauty" (57). Indeed, Kirsten perceives a dazzling world, "in the morning light there was beauty in the decrepitude, sunlight catching in the flowers that had sprung up through the gravel of long-overgrown driveways, mossy front porches turned brilliant green, a white blossoming bush alive with butterflies" (296). As Miranda writes in *Dr. Eleven*, in a line repeated throughout the larger narrative, "I stood looking over my damaged home and tried to forget the sweetness of life on Earth" (42, 105). The real challenge the novel suggests is not in remembering the old world but in trying to forget it.

The desire to return home that associates with nostalgia and which of course can never be fulfilled is complicated by pain in the novel. Kirsten tells Diallo "the people who struggle the most with this current era are the people who remember the old world clearly … the more you remember, the more you've lost" (195). Indeed, Mandel criticises the effect of nostalgia on the present through the common history of Arthur and Miranda rather than simply assuming it to be a natural response to a post-collapse society. Their individual migrations from the idyllic island of Delano where they were both born to Toronto and then Los Angeles reflect the transition from a past pastoral utopia to the urban modernism that consumes everything in its path. The night before he dies Arthur visits Miranda since she is familiar with his origins:

> Once we lived on an island in the ocean. Once we took the ferry to go to high-school, and at night the sky was brilliant in the absence of all these city lights. Once we paddled canoes to the lighthouse to look at petroglyphs and fished for salmon and walked through deep forests, but all of this was completely unremarkable because everyone else we knew did these things too, and here in these lives we've built for ourselves, here in these hard and glittering cities, none of this would seem real if it wasn't for you. (207)

Rather than simply reminisce about this imagined past in nostalgic revelry, Arthur is able to look beyond since for him it is these 'glittering cities' that have enabled his success. As Arthur tells a journalist of Delano, "It was the most beautiful place I've ever seen. It was gorgeous and claustrophobic. I loved it and I always wanted to escape" (74). So, it is this escape from the past that becomes important for Arthur just as Miranda escapes too through the imagined world of *Station Eleven*. But both of these characters pass away before experiencing the post-Georgian Flu world. These

characters also serve as inspiration for Kirsten to re-imagine her own world as a happier place and enables her to move on from the past.

The optimistic tone of *Station Eleven* is one of its most unique features. According to Philip Smith, "the destruction of the apocalypse, in certain incarnations of the genre, offers the promise of reconfiguration, of resetting and rebuilding a society unencumbered by the problems of the world that was destroyed" (291). This is a major motif in *Station Eleven*. The apocalypse from a Christian perspective has historically been portrayed as preceding a period of rebirth and renewal, a complexity which sometimes is overlooked in popular culture depictions of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries which have a tendency to focus instead on the moment of destruction. In *Black Mass: Apocalyptic Religion and the Death of Utopia* John Gray highlights that "in common speech apocalyptic denotes a catastrophic event, but in biblical terms it derives from the Greek word for unveiling, an apocalypse is a revelation in which mysteries that are written in heaven are revealed at the end of time, and for the Elect this means not catastrophe but salvation" (5). Similarly, in *Station Eleven*, Mandel investigates how the Georgian Flu pandemic can provide a type of salvation from what can be perceived as the modern condition. Kirsten in particular is a child saved by the apocalypse. When the novel flashes back to the moment Miranda meets Kirsten in Arthur's dressing room a short time before the Georgian Flu outbreak. She describes the child as 'like a China doll', "she looked like someone who'd been well-cared for and coddled all her life. She was probably someone who would grow up to be like Miranda's assistant Laetitia like Leon's assistant Thea, unadventurous and well-groomed" (212–3). Miranda imagines the life Kirsten might have been leading in this brief but significant chapter, a life that would have been as hollow as the corporate friends that Clark interviews for a job. However,

Kirsten's cultivation of her imagination as well as the tabula rasa of the apocalypse both free her from this empty existence. In addition to giving Kirsten the *Dr. Eleven* comic that she will use to fuel her escape fantasies for the next two decades, Miranda and Arthur also give Kirsten the confidence to let her imagination run wild. For example, when Kirsten mentions that another child has told her she can't colour the princess dress with stripes, Arthur responds that he thinks stripes are perfect and once she has finished both adults remark on how lovely the picture. "A creator who isn't grabbed around the throat by a set of impossibilities is no creator. Rather, a creator is someone who creates their own impossibilities, and thereby creates possibilities" (133), writes Giles Deleuze. As a result, *Station Eleven* still has that essential element of hope due to its commitment on creation. It is the imagination of impossibilities that ultimately transforms the possibilities of survival into revival.

The novel's insistence on literary history can be perpetuated through the ongoing performance of Shakespeare which implies the dominance of historical patterns of white male patriarchy. However, *Station Eleven* can also be seen as following a pattern Susan Watkins observes in women's postapocalyptic literature from Atwood and Winterson to Lessing namely that these works of fiction, "rather than regretting the loss of the world's literature and aiming for complete recovery of 'logos', these works of fiction appeal to the idea of palimpsestic accretion, or a gradual process of rewriting and reinvention" (131). While Shakespeare has been chosen as it is told by Dieter, "people want what was best about the world" (Mandel 38) also told that clarinet hated Shakespeare, "Survival might be insufficient, … but so was Shakespeare" (288), she argues. While Dieter insists on the parallels between North America post-Georgia Flu and plague-affected England in Shakespeare's day, the clarinet wants to write something more 'modern' to reflect the specifics of their

time. She desires importantly not just to remember or relive the past but to instead interpret the new world around her.

The choice to stage *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is also instructive because it is an upbeat play when compared with the more obvious choices of *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, even *King Lear*. As Smith suggests, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, "is not a play about the end, … but about revival and … new beginnings" (294). Smith reads the decision to perform Shakespeare as a sign that the group is moving forward rather than being stuck in the past:

> In Station Eleven characters have not only been flung backward to a pre-civilized state, but have since progressed and rediscovered fragments of early modern culture. Modernity has been wiped out; air travel is gone, gasoline has gone stale, and the only means to create light is burning candles. Shakespeare, however, has survived. Indeed, Shakespeare is in high demand … The Travelling Symphony do not simply go back, they also go forward, they have progressed from primitivism to a lifestyle on the cusp of modernity. (292)

The novel does suggest that the society has improved since the early days following the collapse. The early year when survival was difficult and the world was a frightening place are commonly mentioned. A new rhythm is emerging in the world. In the new world 'remembering' is clearly a contentious act. During her interview with François Diallo, Kirsten tells him that in some towns the Symphony has visited "they want to talk about what happened, about the past, but there are other places where discussion of the past is discouraged" (115). Kirsten dismissively counters Diallo's confident claim that, "the more we know about the former world, the better

we'll understand what happened when it fell" by saying, "But everyone knows what happened, in essence, what good does suit knowledge really do" (114). Later in the novel, Michael a character and Jeevan are discussing the topic of remembering and Michael laments, "maybe it's time we stopped telling our children these crazy stories. Maybe it's time to let go" (270).

Station Eleven implicitly criticises those who would choose to live in the past. The prophet Tyler Leander whose brand of patriarchal and religious fanaticism sees him and his followers engage in a violent restoration of the female servitude and polygamy of earlier ages is the embodiment of this criticism in its most vivid form. The evidence before him contradicts his mother's mantra, a history major herself that 'everything occurs for a reason'. Tyler maintains that he and his followers are the ones who deliver the 'light' which is a gross violation of morals in the twenty-first century. The risk of sticking to old attachments is illustrated by his connection to the *Book of Revelations* taken entirely out of context by a boy-become-man who has grown up without supportive parental figures.

Station Eleven finds its creative release not through traditional literature but through the descriptions of scenes in a comic book. Hilary Chute asserts that "through its spatial syntax, comics offer opportunities to place pressure on traditional notions of chronology, linearity, and causality as well as on the idea that 'history' can ever be a closed discourse, or a simply progressive one" (4). Unlike the novel, the history of which is tied to the seeming immutability of the canon, the comic offers Miranda an escape from historicity itself. According to Chute, the comic book format resists the draw of the grand narrative because of its vast spaces which represent the malleability and artifice of historical accounting. This makes it the perfect vehicle for Mandel to push aside sentimental nostalgia in favour of limitless creativity. It is potential to use

the gutter space which exists between the dialogue and the image that gives comic book readers and creators the imaginative freedom to actively engage in utopianism. The comic's survival in the aftermath of the destruction contributes to the novel's optimistic tone much as the comic offers Miranda an escape from the dominance of the male forces in her life, her first boyfriend Pablo then actor-husband Arthur Leander before the Georgian Flu outbreak.

The medium of comic books according to Chute, is also particularly useful for articulating trauma:

> The spatial features of comics, such as its activation of the space between word and image and its erection of literal drawn frames alongside its breaking and violation of them, presents a grammar that can inscribe trauma not just thematically … but also powerfully at the level of textualization in words and images. (35)

The comic form not only provide a way to let go of traumatic memories but it can also instil hope that in the spaces between images the impossible can be both imaginable and achievable. These texts also allow the transformation of the real world by incorporating it into a new fictitious world-space. This is precisely what occurs in *Dr. Eleven* as Miranda redraws elements from her daily life into the imagined landscape of *Station Eleven*. During a conversation between Miranda and Arthur concerning the reasons behind her decision to use the comic form this functionality is alluded to. Miranda acknowledged that the character *Spaceman Spiff* from the Calvin and Hobbes comic strip from the 1980s had served as her primary source of inspiration. Like Calvin, who frequently transforms the people and environments around him into the romanticised and more thrilling fictitious world of the

interplanetary explorer *Spaceman Spiff* in his daydreams as a way to escape the tedium of life, Miranda also fantasises about escaping by changing her surroundings into those of the wonderful *Station Eleven*. However, this role also lends the comic form a particularly personal allowing the oppressed female character in *Station Eleven* in particular to escape the confines of a strong patriarchy through the possession of an alternate world of one's own creation. Pablo, who is in charge accuses Miranda of working on *Station Eleven* half-heartedly and declares, "I don't even understand your project" to which Miranda responds, "You don't have to understand it... it's mine" (Mandel 87).

The sense of ownership is also evident in Arthur's choice to give the comic books away, as he admits to Tanya, he "never really understood the point of it either" (320). Similarly, when first countenancing the idea of ending her relationship with Pablo, Miranda experiences a peculiar giddiness with thoughts of freedom and imminent escape. The source of these feelings however is not her potential escape into a life with Arthur, but rather an escape into *Station Eleven* as she continues, "I could throw away almost everything … and begin all over again. *Station Eleven* will be my constant" (89). The world of *Station Eleven*, Miranda's ability to imaginatively allow the space to reconfigure her actual surroundings and the sense of ownership the project brings liberates her. Unlike Arthur who, as an actor performs at the expense of today in order to generate legacy, echoing the sentiment expressed by the celebrity philanthropist for which Frank writes, "first we only want to be seen, but once we're seen, that's not enough anymore. After that, we want to be remembered" (187). The purpose of the comics for Miranda is simply personal. At the dinner party Tesch asks Miranda, "what's the point in doing all that work … if no one sees it?" to which Miranda responds, "It makes me happy. It's peaceful, spending hours working on it. It

doesn't really matter to me if anyone sees it" (95). It undermines Smith's assertions about the comic book when he claims:

> The slogan of The Travelling Symphony is 'survival is insufficient' … from which we might expound that survival means more than just continuing to live, to survive one must maintain a past. … In one profound moment of the text, Clark encounters a comic book depiction of a dinner party he attended. Recognizing the author's hand, he wonders, 'What became of Miranda?'. In this sense, Miranda, the author of the comic, survives through the capacity of the written text to attest to its author and its subject's existence. (297)

The phrase survival is insufficient implies that the comic's survival is only significant as it enables Kirsten to start redoing her own world in a more optimistic manner. The slogan implies that merely existing is insufficient. For these texts and objects to survive to become collections does not help people to live in the new world. The comic book is the key, but not because it allows Miranda to survive after all she is already dead and Kirsten and Tyler, who both worship her writing don't even know who the author is. Miranda's slogan, "I repent nothing" (89, 107, 206, 307), is repeated no less than four times throughout the book indicating that *Dr. Eleven* is not a way for her to be remembered but rather a way for her and future readers to forget the past and move on with no regrets. Miranda is able to start directing her own fate due to the empowerment that creation gives. As a result, it is stated conclusively in one line that "in the next version of her life, she decides, she will be entirely independent" (103). In a similar fashion, the idea that drawing might be used to alter the path of one's existence also appears early in the novel when Jeevan imagines that

the Georgian Flu pandemic will be “the divide between a before and an after, a line drawn through his life” (20).

In *Station Eleven*, characters are portrayed as being trapped in the past haunted by the ghosts of a life that will never be recaptured and destined simply to survive in the next life just as they did before the Georgian Flu, a survival that is as the text states ‘insufficient’. But there are also important characters like Kirsten, Jeevan, and Miranda, who seem to demonstrate the existence of an alternative possibility that one can escape an unproductive nostalgia through the power of one’s imagination. The extract from *Dr. Eleven* attests to this power. As Miranda lies dying on a Malaysian beach, she thinks back to an image of *Dr. Eleven* as he is visited by the ghost of his friend Captain Lonagan. Eleven asks the Captain the obvious question, “what was it like for you, at the end?” Lonagan’s replied “It was exactly like waking up from a dream” (330), showcases the utopian outlook of the novel. In her last moments Miranda imagines a way out of death, if life is like a dream then to die is to wake up, to live again. Miranda’s imaginative escape from death is to wake up and start afresh leaving the old world behind like a dream that slowly fades from memory and vanishes into thin air as one’s eyes adjust to the light of a new dawn.

Utopia historically has frequently been found in the past. In *Searching for Utopia: The History of an Idea*, Gregory Claeys points out that “many societies have creation myths that go hand-in-hand with the idea of a past golden age of purity, harmony, and virtue” (17). The Garden of Eden and the concept of Original Sin are the most prominent examples of this in the Christian Creation narrative, but it is also found in Roman and Greek mythology. Finding utopia in the future is more of a modern occurrence mainly due to science fiction's escalating dominance and appeal in the twentieth century.

The inclination of past to deceive is precisely why one should avoid looking for answers there. Because of nostalgia one tends to focus solely on the positive aspects of the past and ignore the difficult journey. It is important to remember that exploration has always been a crucial component of classic utopian literature, from Sir Thomas More's text which popularised the term in 2016 to Jonathan Swift's masterful satire *Gulliver's Travels*, published in 2001 to twentieth-century incarnations like Aldous Huxley's *Island* published in 2005 and even science-fiction television programme *Star Trek*, which debuted shortly after in 1966 and from which Kirsten draws the line survival is insufficient.

Station Eleven characters who choose to live in the Severn City airport reside in the Departure lounge rather than Arrivals. They are always looking for a way out in order to catch their next trip or to return of the old, long-gone world. The characters might have been able to overcome their nostalgia by feeling at home in the Arrivals lounge. When asked about the appeal of post-apocalyptic literature immediately after the release of *Station Eleven*, St. John Mandel rejected popular theories about how such works may respond in order to highlight the idea of exploration in her interview with Scott Simon in National Public Radio:

> A suggestion that I hear quite often is that our interest in post-apocalyptic fiction is a natural expression of the anxiety we feel. We always seem to think the world's ending. … Someone suggested to me that it has to do with economic inequality. That we secretly desire a situation in which this entire apparatus is blown up and we all start over again on perfect equal footing. The theory that I found the most interesting was suggested to me by a bookseller in England last year: she thought perhaps our interest in these futuristic narratives had to do

> with the fact that there are no more frontiers. You know, it's no longer possible to set out as a pioneer and stake a claim and start a new life. Now that that's all mapped and charted out and there are no more frontiers that's left us with a certain restlessness, that I suppose gets channelled into our interest in this futuristic, speculative fiction.

The novel's conclusion gives a significant nod to the notion that *Station Eleven* is about exploration and the mapping of not only new places, physical locations but also of new ways to exist. The imaginatively driven exploration is about finding a better way to live as it is about any specific location. The way in which these issues contribute to creating the background for the text's discussions of utopia is best encapsulated in *Station Eleven*'s concluding paragraph. The future and the resurgence of an adventurous spirit cross Clark's mind as he sits studying the pages of a *Dr. Eleven* comic that Kirsten gave him. The elderly Clark is standing and gazing sadly out at the end of the known world with his candle flickering in the glass. "Is it possible that somewhere there are ships setting out?" he wonders, continuing, "If there are again towns with streetlights, if there are symphonies and newspapers, then what else might this awakening world contain?" (Mandel 332). Clark imagines vessels steered by sailors armed with maps and knowledge of the stars embarking on intrepid journeys towards another world just out of sight. In this moment the metaphor seems to shift. The departure that Clark hints at in the final lines of the novel isn't a form of longing for the past for home but rather an imaginative departure into the future and the prospect of re-establishing civilization.

Oscar Wilde writes that, "a map of the world that does not include Utopia is not worth even glancing at, for it leaves out the one country at which Humanity is always landing. And when Humanity lands there, it looks out, and, seeing a better

country, sets sail. Progress is the realisation of Utopias". Even in the most hopeless circumstances humanity has looked for utopia as a way to provide hope. Kirsten and the other members of the Travelling Symphony continue to move around hoping each time they land somewhere new that they will find an improving world which demonstrates the progressive possibilities of a utopian imagination even when such an idea might seem impossible.

The picture of a utopian future is frequently much harder than escaping into a comforting nostalgia. Levitas stated that "the reconstitution of society in imagination and in reality, is a pressing need" (xi), and that both climate change and the financial crisis have contributed to this. However, the difficulty of the global situation has also made it more difficult to envision 'the Imaginary Reconstitution of Society' in the twenty-first century. To some extent, the Georgian Flu in *Station Eleven* is a wholly unpreventable disaster in contemporary terms. That characters more easily slip into nostalgia and lamentation. Despite Tyler Leander's claims that the Georgia Flu is a divine apocalypse the text suggests that there is no one to blame for the destruction. However, in the alternate universe of Miranda's *Dr. Eleven* comics, a recognisable apocalypse is found a scenario brought on by a climate change disaster in which *Station Eleven*'s residents are left stranded either on tiny islands that were once mountain tops or living in underwater bunkers.

Isavella Vouza describes the discovery of a town on the horizon that has re-established power approaching the novel's conclusion:

> I have my reservations that Station Eleven will construct a better world by restoring technology. However, when the existent world crumbles into pieces, the human potential to experiment in creating something

> anew cultivates a spirit of hope and establishes an interdependent future with fellow humans. (4)

The novel is fairly ambiguous toward technology locating the magic in its rediscovery rather than its restoration. One instance that highlights the distinction between remembering and imagining occurs when Travelling Symphony members encounter an entrepreneur who has invented a way to use an electrical system to power a laptop to access the Internet. August, who could clearly recall a time when such technology was common had peered at the screen with a lost expression, in contrast to Alexandra, the youngest member of the group, who "had been enraptured, the screen a magical thing with no memories attached" (Mandel 39).

Station Eleven seeks not a return to the past but rather a simple and direct restoration of technology, a nostalgic vision of the present eulogised in a post-apocalyptic nightmare, a dream of an imagined utopian future in which society might harness the magic of technology in a progressive manner. The protagonists are filled with this enthusiasm as they look "in the distance at the pinpricks of light organised in a grid" (311). Finding utopia is not simple, it requires imagination and is undoubtedly more challenging than recalling some half-forgotten nostalgic past. According to Mandel, humanity possesses a depth of imagination, a determination to not only survive but also to envision a better future. While *Station Eleven* may not provide a blueprint for a utopian society, it does give the impression that such a civilization exists and that with enough exploration both physically and personally people may be embarking on the ship bound for "another world just out of sight" (333).

Despite being a tale of a pandemic that kills the majority of humanity and depicts the hardships the survivors face in the years that follow, *Station Eleven*'s

postapocalyptic imaginary is one of hope where the possibility of electric light twenty years after the end of the world symbolises the vision of a new beginning, of a world that is reawakening. The novel offers an exceptionally upbeat and cheerful outlook on what would otherwise be a grim future.

The next chapter summarises the entire thesis.

Chapter Five

Summation

Emily St. John Mandel's *Station Eleven* (2014) is a successful and compelling post-apocalyptic story that differs significantly from the majority of earlier representatives of this genre. It addresses the potential and necessity of cultural expression in a post-apocalyptic context rather than focusing on survival, struggle or conflict, highlighting the significance and worth of art and remembrance even in difficult conditions. The Georgian Flu pandemic and life twenty years after are both depicted in the novel, which is described as "an ambitious, multi-genre examination of the human power to create and to pursue meaning via art, fiction, and shared community" (Tate 133). The Travelling Symphony, a troupe of actors and musicians who wander through a devastated North America to perform Shakespeare for the survivors and the Museum of Civilization which gathers and displays artefacts from the pre-collapse world that are now useless except as nostalgic reminders of the lost past are examples of plot devices. *Station Eleven* delivers an exceptionally optimistic and hopeful outlook of an otherwise bleak future.

The majority of the distinctive components of the postapocalyptic genre may be found in *Station Eleven*. These include the occurrence of an apocalyptic event, the portrayal of a post-collapse civilization and a narrative structure that ties and connects the pre-apocalyptic past with the post-apocalyptic present. The first requirement of the genre is an apocalypse which in *Station Eleven* takes the shape of the Georgian Flu, a highly lethal and contagious virus that appears essentially overnight, a "flu that exploded like a neutron bomb over the surface of the world" (Mandel 37).

The onset of the flu is experienced mainly through the perspective of two characters Jeevan Chaudhary and Clark Thompson. A friend alerts Jeevan early on about the quickly spreading disease giving him time to stockpile food and other supplies before hiding out in his brother's apartment in a Toronto tower. From there he observes the pandemic's destruction which causes the city to become quiet. When the calamity finally reaches Clark, it has already done significant damage. Fortunately, he avoids coming into contact with the virus when he flies to Toronto and his flight is diverted to Severn City Airport, a location that is immune to the flu and subsequently becomes Clark and the other stranded passengers' permanent home. In their protected spaces Jeevan and Clark survive the Georgian Flu and the collapse of society.

The consequences of the events are clearly mentioned in the novel and the characters are aware of how their lives will alter even though they are not yet able to imagine how profound those changes will be. Jeevan knows early on that the Georgia Flu "was going to be the divide between a before and an after, a line drawn through his life" (20). This notion of a before and an after also occurs to Clark even before he knows what exactly has happened. He realises the fact that there must be a serious situation when he sees the large crowd of people gathered beneath the airport TV screens. But he first pours himself some tea before feeling ready to face the news, "This is the last time I'll stir milk into my tea without knowing what happened, he thought, wistful in advance for the present moment, and went to stand with the crowd beneath a television that was tuned to CNN" (233). After rendering the apocalypse, the narrative jumps ahead twenty years to create a convincing and effective picture of a depopulated world in the wake of a pandemic. As a result, *Station Eleven* fits a second requirement of postapocalyptic fiction, namely the portrayal of environments

marked by deterioration, catastrophe, and devastation. Gridlocked streets, abandoned and overgrown resorts and the pervasive presence of artefacts from the old world are just a few examples of the postapocalyptic imagery that is used to partially create this depiction.

Narrative structure is a third key component of the post-apocalyptic genre. Three different time periods are represented in *Station Eleven*, the Traveling Symphony's and the airport's events in twenty year after the apocalypse, the night of the flu's arrival and its immediate aftermath and glimpses into Arthur Leander's life in the decades before his passing, particularly his relationship with his ex-wife Miranda. The flu hits America on a stormy winter night, the same night the actor Arthur Leander dies of a heart attack during a production of *King Lear* in Toronto. This event is the frame narrative for the other events in the novel which dominates the first and the last chapters and are referenced throughout. The Arthur Leander character serves as the thread that unites all the different narrative strands. His heart attack at the beginning of the novel starts the exploration of events in the past and future of characters that are more or less closely associated with Arthur. Through the character of Arthur, the years after the flu are narratively linked to the pre-collapse world whose events are otherwise unrelated to the later catastrophe. These connections between the pre and post-apocalyptic setting are typical for the genre. The post-apocalyptic mode is incorporated into the novel's narrative structure because it simultaneously evokes the end of the world and ushers in a drastically altered future.

The post-apocalyptic genre which Andrew Hoberek labels as the genre turn of contemporary fiction has become so widespread that Frederick Buell refers to it as a 'cultural dominant'. *Station Eleven* is set among what Heather J. Hicks refers to as an

"unprecedented outpouring of fully developed post-apocalyptic narratives by major, critically acclaimed anglophone writers" (5-6), in her study of the twenty-first-century post-apocalyptic novel. Contrary to Hicks, the contemporary post-apocalyptic literature does as such to analyse development rather than to save it and explicitly to study the apocalyptic understanding of time that underlying Western advancement through what is termed Critical Temporalities. Rather than analysing the present apocalyptic imagination one should instead consider how it relates to the harms and hazards of the current socio-historic conjuncture, particularly the ecological threats. In order to comprehend the current post-apocalyptic fiction, one should consider time which is the actual core of the apocalyptic imagination. Three main elements that form its core are *Station Eleven*'s basic allotment of strict religious apocalyptic logic which is compared to Douglas Coupland's *Player One* (2010) second, the portrayal of the Georgian Flu's effects and *Station Eleven*'s assessment of utopian teleology which is compared to Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* (2006) and third is *Station Eleven*'s non-straight account structure which is compared to David Mitchell's *Cloud Atlas* (2004).

The goal of traditional apocalyptic logic is to organise time and make it accessible by showing that the entire sequence of human experiences is moving toward a final goal that will put an end to all that has happened before. *The Book of Revelation,* the final book of the *New Testament* and the main text of strict apocalypticism, ultimately does not describe the horrifying end of the physical world but rather the revelation of an idealistic new world, the New Jerusalem, the heavenly realm which foreshadows the committed toward the end of history. Tragic events frequently occur in modern dystopian scenarios. This distinction between

conventional and modern apocalyptic imagination is brought forth in self-reflexive manner in *Station Eleven.*

The recent surge of post-apocalyptic novels highlights the critical tension between the modern and historical understandings of the apocalypse by appropriating apocalyptic tropes to subvert them from within and more profoundly by being fundamentally concerned with time and history, a concern that is frequently embodied in their structural narrative features. The current post-apocalyptic discourse is about critical temporalities and developments of time that examine a hegemonic temporality.

The traditional apocalyptic discourse and its models of history are important to contemporary post-apocalyptic fiction. Mandel's *Station Eleven* and Coupland's *Player One* emphasises this testimony. These novels challenge the distinction between the elect and the non-elect exposing the pretentious savagery of apocalyptic discourse and demonstrating how both this distinction and the apocalyptic historical theology it establishes are narrative constructs that serve the interests of those who articulate them. The prophet Tyler, a character that Mandel self-reflexively appropriates religious apocalyptic motifs through, serves as the best example of *Station Eleven*'s critique of conventional apocalyptic logic. He considers Georgian Flu to be a divine intervention and the survivors as the elected ones who are responsible to spread the light of god. Very much like Tyler, Bertis in *Player One* accepts that the pre-apocalyptic world is dying and corrupt. He considers himself to be the prophet of the new world. Bertis comprehends his murders as participating in a divinely-sanctioned separation between the elect and non-elect. Both Tyler and Bertis display characteristics of what Catherine Keller distinguishes as the 'apocalypse pattern', the belief in verifiable determinism, the tendency to see good and evil as

inherently opposed and the ability to distinguish between facts with decency that purges evil from the old world and merits the inevitable utopian renewal of the new world.

The apocalyptic distinction between the elect and the non-elect fuels the ruthless actions of the prophet and his followers from killing to raping and enslaving which they commit because they see themselves as the only rightful interpreters and agents of the apocalyptic goal of history, the utopian renewal of the new world. In *Player One*, Bertis justifies his murders through a similar self-righteous moral dualism and teleology. As a sniper he believes that he is clearing the way for god's new utopian order. Both *Station Eleven* and *Player One* emphasise how the teleological determinism and moral dualism of apocalyptic logic are self-referential narrative constructs which legitimise the oppressions and violence of those who articulate these narratives.

Station Eleven's more nuanced and hopeful version of the aftermath is contrasted with *The Road*'s unmistakably ravaged and hopeless post-apocalyptic world. *The Road* gave many literary writers to approach the concept of post-apocalyptic fiction. But Mandel was deliberate in the timing as her novel is set mostly fifteen to twenty years after the collapse and not the immediate aftermath. This deliberate timing allows Mandel not to dwell on the horror and mayhem brought about by the Georgian Flu, horror and mayhem which are instead at the core of *The Road.* The narrative moves literally and metaphorically away from the road, the actual road of the first post-pandemic years as well as McCarthy's *The Road*.

The only descriptions of the immediate aftermath that Mandel gives are through Jeevan, a paramedic who tries to help Arthur when he has a stroke on stage

the night the pandemic begins. The things Jeevan sees vividly recalls *The Road*, "almost everyone was moving south in a silent landscape. Snow and stopped cars with terrible things in them. Stepping over corpses" (193), a description that echoes the snowy wasteland of *The Road*, "barren, silent, godless, strewn with cars in which people were burnt alive" (McCarthy 4, 273). However, *Station Eleven*'s post-apocalyptic scenario is very different from McCarthy's novel. They express a critical temporality that challenges the utopian theology of apocalyptic logic.

The narrative structures of the contemporary post-apocalyptic novel articulate critical temporalities that encourage to conceive of narrative and history beyond the sense of an ending. In this regard *Station Eleven*'s narrative structure is compared with that of Mitchell's *Cloud Atlas*. *Cloud Atlas* consists of six narratives' set between the nineteenth century and a distant post-apocalyptic future. The peculiarity of the novel is that all the stories aside from the sixth, a post-apocalyptic tale in the middle are put to hold to make a way for the next one in chronological order and are then picked back up in reverse order in the second half of the book. This structure articulates a critical temporality that undermines the apocalyptic sense of an ending and more specifically foreshadowing its view of the present as the harbinger of an already determined future which is at the core of the temporality of traditional plots and apocalyptic history alike. *Station Eleven*'s structure similarly articulates a critical temporality that complicates the sense of an ending. Both texts complicate the teleological linearity of apocalyptic narratives to make space for unwritten futures which are key to agency. *Station Eleven* leaves with the sense of possibility an open and unwritten future that challenges the closure and determinism of the sense of an ending and that like the gaps in the fictional history of *Cloud Atlas* allows space for human agency.

An epochal analysis of Shakespeare's early modernism drawing points of comparison with Mandel's postmodernism springing from the views of Raymond Williams is discussed. Both offer representations of world-shattering catastrophe through different literary-cultural lenses. It explores Mandel's appropriation of Shakespeare which in turn is celebratory, nostalgic, and critical. *King Lear* strikes as modern in questioning the feudal order, cosmic hierarchy and divine justice. William's Marxist analysis takes class-consciousness as its focus but the present focus is on the post-modern techno culture which breaches the distinction between technology and nature. William could not have known how technology would restructure the 21st century lifeworld, including the very category of the human and neither could Shakespeare and the Georgian flu as described in Mandel's *Station Eleven* shows what a post-pandemic, post-Shakespearean world might look like. Mandel picks up where the bard leaves off, Shakespeare's ending is her beginning.

Shakespeare's quarto version of *King Lear* was first published in 1608 which is four centuries ago. The Western culture has gone through numerous stages of modernity during these centuries, transitioning from theocracy to secularism, religious certainty to epistemological scepticism, feudalism to the nation state, horses to jumbo jets, waggons to steam engines, and steam engines to cyclotrons. Mandel's literature can be classified as postmodernist in terms of when and how it was produced if Shakespeare is an early modernist. Their work serves as bookends to the magnificent epoch of modernism when considered in these time parameters.

Shakespeare and Mandel also have a second text in common, *The Book of Revelation*. This is a book of providential history in which the Christian God has written the last unfinished chapter. It is not yet to be performed. In this end-of-the-world narrative the planet is destroyed and then rebuilt. Mandel accepts the play's

secularism while rejecting its apparent nihilism. The concept of a God-governed providential universe is viewed as a type of insanity in *Station Eleven*. Mandel completely and categorically dismisses divine action as the origin of the pandemic. And yet another area of disparity between *Station Eleven* and *King Lear* can be seen in the way her characters react to human misery. The play instructs its audience on how to grieve and hate but not how to survive. The absence of rage distinguishes Mandel's characters from those in Shakespeare.

The topic of the apocalypse highlights the difference between Mandel's book and Shakespeare's play. In that sense *Station Eleven* starts with catastrophe whereas *King Lear* concludes with complete devastation. Shakespeare promotes a life without comfort, but Mandel emphasises living. *Lear* portrays an early-modernist vision of the apocalypse whereas *Station Eleven* starts with a crisis and progresses to melodrama. According to Mandel, the genre of *Station Eleven* is neither sci-fi nor dystopian. The interpretive history of *Lear* demonstrates how the play came to represent the problems of mid-twentieth century post-war, post-Holocaust intellectual culture. Mandel's portrayal of a postmodern, post-pandemic world informs that the repertoire is insufficient. Shakespeare is hardly the only example of posthumanism.

Station Eleven appears to follow a general pattern in post-apocalyptic literature wherein modern civilization is evaluated in light of its absence creating a sense of 'nostalgia' for the present through the invocation of loss. A conflict between memory and imagination is at the core of *Station Eleven*. The emphasis of the novel is on the imaginary and utopian possibilities that could come along with disaster in contrast to most post-apocalyptic texts that value their modern civilization by inspiring a sense of nostalgia for the present. The Travelling Symphony's productions of Shakespeare's plays serve as a means of remembering and the patriarchal violence

committed by the Prophet offers an unpleasant re-enactment of the religious fanaticism that has marred history. A number of useless objects that Clark collected for the Museum of Civilization also serve as aesthetic links to the past in the novel. But the objects and beliefs of the past provide a constant draw back into a nostalgic appreciation for a life that can never be recaptured. It is Miranda's self-published comic book, *Dr. Eleven*, suggests the importance and primacy of imagination over remembrance in the wastelands of the future. The comic's ability to survive the consequences is what gives the novel its positive tone.

Mandel thinks of nostalgia as the illness that persists after the Georgian-flu virus has been defeated. Nostalgia is also a form fictional intervention. It is not as easy to distinguish between remembering and imagining. When it comes to nostalgia, we only remember a portion of it and make up the rest as we go. Because of this, nostalgia is often non-political. According to Mandel, finding utopia is not simple. But it requires imagination and is undoubtedly more challenging than recalling some half-forgotten nostalgic past. Humanity possesses a depth of imagination, a determination to not only survive but also to envision a better future. While *Station Eleven* may not offer a blueprint for a utopian society, it does create the idea that such a civilization exists and that with enough investigation on both a physical and personal level individual may be boarding the ship headed for "another world just out of sight" (333).

Station Eleven is an engrossing book because of the shifts between the character's lifestyles and the post-apocalyptic world destruction and humanity's extinction. However, the story describes the design for a glimmer of optimism even during the end of the world. Additionally, the structure of the work suggests that when it comes to artistic output, restrictions shouldn't be imposed because there are

countless opportunities for the author to push textual bounds. The book offers a new perspective on humanity, the arts, and the creative possibilities of writing. Mandel ultimately succeeds in her wager on borderlessness by allegorizing a hopeful future.

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Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*: A Study of the Reminiscence and the Existential Quest in the Post-Apocalyptic World

A Dissertation submitted to

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Thoothukudi

affiliated to

MANONMANIAM SUNDARANAR UNIVERSITY

in partial fulfilment of the requirements

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SEPTEMBER 2022

CONTENTS

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled **Cormac McCarthy's *The Road:* A Study of the Reminiscence and the Existential Quest in the Post-Apocalyptic World** submitted to St. Mary's College (Autonomous), Thoothukudi, affiliated to Manonmaniam Sundaranar University in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the Degree of Master of Philosophy in English Literature is a work done by Virgin Pratheepha P. during the year 2021-2022, and that it has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma or similar title.

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the dissertation entitled **Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*: A Study of the Reminiscence and the Existential Quest in the Post-Apocalyptic World** submitted to St. Mary's College (Autonomous), Thoothukudi, affiliated to Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the Degree of Master of Philosophy in English Literature is my original work and that, it has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma or similar title.

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PREFACE

Cormac McCarthy is one of the most renowned American authors. He is a novelist, playwright and screenwriter. He is well known for his graphic depictions of violence and his unique writing style. The purpose of this dissertation is primarily to study the significance of existential crisis in McCarthy's *The Road.* **Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*: A Study of the Reminiscence and the Existential Quest in the Post- Apocalyptic World** is an attempt to analyses the unwavering, heroic commitment of the protagonist in their journey through a seared, post-Apocalyptic wasteland amidst hostile humans.

In the **Introduction** a brief outline of the prominent American Writers, the author's profile and the characteristics of his works are discussed.

The second chapter, **Luminous Reminiscence** throws light on the features that distinguish a man from a boy with a particular focus on memory, experience, and language. It analyses the father and the boy's relationship that places a special emphasis on how they communicate in the post-apocalyptic environment and how important it is to know that the past and the present are connected.

The third chapter, **Existential Consciousness** addresses the novel's central themes of transience, existentialism, priority of reality in storytelling, and trans-generational commitment. These themes are still relevant today and serve as helpful standards for assessing both the private and the public aspects of our life, particularly the value of hope and persistence.

The fourth chapter, **Relocation in the Post- Apocalyptic World** focuses on the protagonist's ongoing battle for survival in the midst of the environmental and the social catastrophe. It also shows how the characters respond to the disaster and how they take measures to overcome it.

The fifth chapter, **Summation** concludes the entire dissertation.

The researcher has consistently referred and resorted to the guidelines prescribed by MLA Handbook 8th Edition for the preparation of the dissertation.

Chapter One

Introduction

Literature is writing that shows creative form and expression, and it is considered to be valuable. Literature has been used to describe creative poetry and prose in the earlier times which is distinguished by the intention of the writers and recognize the aesthetic quality of their execution. Present-day literature hypothetically depicts current events, as well as technological advancements and a society with both refined and unrefined activities. Literature is a way for the people to express their ideas and thoughts but everything cannot be expressed in words. These writings are informative and not all critics would exclude the text which is essentially helpful in literature. However certain forms of literature are considered as an art. The central aspect of literature is universality and the characteristics are imagination, meaningful expression, good form and writing technique. It also teaches, instructs, entertains, and conveys one's personal joy and sorrow.

Literature represents religious devotions, glorifies nation and educates the readers to mould their views on certain political, social, and aesthetic perspectives. The term literature traditionally refers to such works as poetry, drama, novel and short story. It occurs in the evolution of culture and the society which has already developed a complex system of stereotypes and archetypes. The fundamental symbols represent essential facts of the human condition including some kinds of symbolic realities that are embodied in religion and myth. Also literature may directly employ such symbols but all the great literary works are in way distinctive and unique myths. The themes are infinitely varied but remain consistent.

American literature refers to the collection of works that are produced in the English language in the United States. American literature is influenced by the history of the country that produced it. For nearly a century and a half America is nothing more than a cluster of colonies along the North American continent's eastern seaboard colonies from which a few brave souls travelled Westward. By the end of the nineteenth century it positioned itself as one of the world's great powers and they linked with other nations through its trades, cultural, commercial and societal ties. The conflicts of which eventually led to two global wars, the one is Crises of Europe and the other is East Asia. Meanwhile the advancement of Science and Industry as well as changes in people's attitudes and feelings resulted in numerous changes in their lives. The literature of the United States is shaped by all of these aspects which resulted in the country's growth.

Contemporary American literature is defined as subversive, containing surrealism, odd names and narratives and biting commentary. Contemporary American literature not only raises issues about cultural contradictions but also permits them to flourish within the plot. It is important to note that the most acclaimed modern literature is adapted for other media such as film and theatre. According to western conceptions, the contemporary literature refers to works published after World War II. Contemporary literature has a reactionary tendency. Most of the time, the writers react on what is going around them and sometimes they even oppose it. Despite the anti-social belief of the west, contemporary literature ironically reflects a society's political, social, individual viewpoints and critique the status of current living, the cultural and the fashion trends among the other things. As these contributory factors are rapidly changing, the flow of the contemporary literature is

fluid as well. It also has an impact on other forms of media such as theatre, film, music, dance and arts etc.

Contemporary literature expresses the viewpoint of the author and it questions the facts, historical perspectives and shows alternative ideas side by side. The world begins to view things differently after World War II. As a result, contemporary literature has a different viewpoint on the situation. The writers became convinced that life has no purpose. They find it difficult to convey this strange reality through their writings. But today the modern literature reflects these ideas and continues to evolve in response to how the world changes in the twenty first century. It is built on the character, the emotions and the diversity of people. The issues of contemporary society are economic colonialism, climate change, neo-imperialism, transnational terrorism, poverty, filth, LGBT, racial, ethnic, community, crime and corruption. These are the few problems which need to be resolved.

Contemporary writing gives equal importance to the concept of the 'Other.' The subaltern concept is also addressed in the contemporary literature. It also takes a number of 'isms' into account such as communism, capitalism, socialism, magic realism, the new journalism, feminism, womanism etc. The contemporary American literature deals with the lives of the immigrants and their descendants, the technological issues and the way how American culture is deeply rooted. Some of the famous American writers of the contemporary era are Thomas Pynchon, Philip Roth, Don Delillo and Cormac McCarthy who wrote some of the greatest works in the history. In 2014, these four authors were nominated for the Noble Prize for Literature.

Thomas Pynchon is an American author of novels and short stories who uses black humour and fantasy to portray human alienation in the chaos of contemporary

life. Pynchon received the Faulkner Foundation Award for his first book named *V.* It is a whimsical and cynically absurd story of a middle-aged Englishman's quest to find 'V.' And it is a dark magical adventure that appears in many guises at the critical periods in European history.

Gravity's Rainbow by Pynchon was published in 1973 which is a masterpiece of the twentieth century Literature. The plot revolves around the wanderings of an American soldier who is one of many odd characters searching for a secret V-2 rocket that will supposedly break through the earth's gravitational barrier when launched. The story takes place in a region of Post World War II Germany called 'the zone' and it explores the dilemmas that people are facing in the modern world. The narrative is filled with descriptions of obsessive and paranoid thoughts, absurd and unnatural imagery, and complex mathematical and scientific language. Pynchon was honored for his work with the National Book Award.

Philip Roth is an American novelist and short story writer whose works are distinguished by an acute ear for language, a concern for Jewish middle class life and the traumatic entanglements of the romantic and the familial love. Later years, his works are influenced by direct preoccupation with morality and the failures of the aging body and the mind. In 1959, he published *Goodbye, Columbus* which is later made into a film in 1969. In this story, a wealthy Jewish suburban family's arrogant materialism is openly depicted. It won a National Book Award for its complicated structure of plot. In 1995, Roth published *Sabbath's Theater* a book about the aging and immoral Mickey Sabbath, a former puppeteer. It won the National Book Award. And he also received a Pulitzer Prize for his subsequent piece *American Pastoral* (1997). It is the first book in the American Trilogy series all the three series were

narrated by Zuckerman and focuses on the middle class couple whose daughter becomes a terrorist.

Roth received the PEN/ Faulkner Award for fiction twice before *For Operation Shylock, The Human Stain*. His book *Everyone* in 2006 examines about the disease and death. Roth became the first author to win the Faulkner Award three times for *Operation Shylock, Everyone and The Human Stain. Everyone* also signaled the beginning of a phase in Roth's writing career when the author wrote a lot of short books with morality themes. Then he also received the Man Booker International Prize in 2011. American author Don Delillo's postmodernist writings depict the alienation of a country that is spoiled by material excess and astonished by meaningless mass culture and politics. The novel *White Noise* in 1985 won the National Book Award for fiction and it is about a professor of Hitler studies who experiences an airborne toxic event. Later he received the Library of Congress Prize for American Fiction in 2013 and the National Book Award Medal for distinguished contribution to American Letters in 2015.

One of the most renowned authors of the present day is Cormac McCarthy. His work has inspired a wide range of literary parodies, film adaptations, music tributes, and other forms of homage. His position as one of the most influential current voices in American fiction clearly states that he has been accepted throughout the cultural spectrum from Hollywood to Harold Bloom. Though McCarthy is widely regarded as one of our greatest authors on a cultural level, the same cannot be said for the growing scholarly field that focuses on his work. His work appears to have the remarkable ability to remain interesting and mysterious no matter how critically people analyse it. It is fruitful and expressive as to adapt new and varied critical approaches.

The way that McCarthy's fiction combines and crosses over several themes and genres contributes to some of its slickness. With every absurd metaphor and story his writing challenges realism while relying on scientific language. However, it also has characters that are as innocent as they come, such as John Grady Cole in the *Border Trilogy* and the youngster in *The Road*. This brutality threatens individualist myths of racial virtue. His literary settings are made up of myths and stories as well as facts from natural history and historical accounts, frequently evoking conflicting intellectual, theological, and scientific beliefs and views. He moves back and forth between vast lyricism and restricted minimalism in his work. McCarthy clearly succeeds in his own interpretation of the novel as a framework suited to include all the various disciplines and interests of humanity. He firmly believes that writing is a subconscious process that should be allowed to flow naturally from inspiration.

Cormac McCarthy was born in Providence, Rhode Island. His father Charles Joseph McCarthy worked as a lawyer for the Tennessee Valley authority. Therefore the family moved to Knoxville, Tennessee in 1997. In 1951, McCarthy enrolled in the University of Tennessee as a liberal art major after graduating from Knoxville's Catholic High School. He joined in the US Air Force in 1993 and spent four years there in Alaska. In 1957 McCarthy returned to the University of Tennessee and there he published two stories, *The Phoenix* under the name C.J. McCarthy in the student's literary magazine. He received Ingram Merrill Award for the two stories, *Wake for Susan* and *A Drowning Incident* which were published in 1959 and 1960 respectively.

Wake for Susan is about Young Wes who decides to take a detour past the old graveyard on his way home through the deserted woods after trying in vain to shoot a squirrel. Once there, he visits the tomb of Susan, a young woman who passed away in 1934. He imagines what she is like and that he is courting her. The gravestone doesn't

mention how she passed away, and he weeps for her and the other people who pass away without being consoled. Later, he left the institution and moved to Chicago in 1959. McCarthy's writing frequently addresses violence, tragedy, pandemic and other problems that ordinary people face while trying to survive.

The writing of Cormac McCarthy includes novels, short stories, screenwriting and plays. He writes in the Southern Gothic genre with independent characters located in the rural South of America. Additionally, there are dark violence, dense prose and stylistic complexity. McCarthy wrote ten novels, two screenplays, three short stories and two plays. Western, post-apocalyptic and south gothic are the three main genres that the author deals within these works. *The Orchard Keeper* (1965) is the first book introduced to the readers with the difficult narrative style. It is an early classic story that takes place in a small isolated town in rural Tennessee in the years between the two world wars. It portrays a little boy named John Wesley Rattner and a bootlegger named Marion Sylder, who unknown to either of them had murdered the boy's father. A lost American era and an American landscape are magnificently evoked in Cormac McCarthy's debut book. His work received the William Faulkner Foundation Award in 1966.

Outer Dark, the second novel which is published in 1968 is a novel about a social outcast, a lonely man's fall into corruption. Although the time and setting are unclear it can be assumed that they are somewhere in Appalachia and sometime around the turn of twentieth century. Rinthy gave birth to her brother's child. The brother, Culla abandons the unnamed child in the wood to die, but he tells his sister that the child died of natural cause and has to be buried. When Rinthy discovers this lie, she sets out to locate the child on her own.

Child of God (1974) focuses on the life of violent, dispossessed Lester Ballard whom the narrator refers to as a Child of God. Ballard's life is a disastrous attempt to live outside of society. He has been successively separated from his parents, houses and few other ties, literally and symbolically falls to the level of a cave dweller as he descends into crime and degradation. He starts killing people in the neighborhood with sexual motives which gradually raises the suspicion of the locals from whom Ballard hides from his cave. This story takes place in the 1960s in Tennessee's rural Sevier County.

In *Suttree* (1979), the protagonist overcomes his obsession on death. It is a semi-autobiographical book which takes place over a four year period beginning from 1950 in Knoxville, Tennessee. The novel follows Cornelius Suttree, a former privileged man who became a fisherman on the Tennessee River. The book's structure is uneven with numerous flashbacks and changes in the third person. It is a departure from McCarthy's earlier book being much lengthier, more complex in structure and possibly his most humorous and it is written over a twenty year period.

Blood Meridian by McCarthy is a violent frontier tale published in 1985 which caused a sensation among critics and it is regarded as his masterpiece. It narrates the story of fourteen year old kid who joins an outlaw group which hunts the native Americans. The story takes place in the early 1840s between the United States and Mexico border. In *Blood Meridian*, he explores the nature of good and evil through the actions of the gang which is headed by an antagonist known as the Judge. He leads the gang in a sequence of brutally immoral deeds.

All the Pretty Horses is published in 1992 and the film adaptation of it in 2000 brought McCarthy wider recognition and popularity to its romanticism in contrast to

McCarthy's earlier novel *Blood Meridian's* bleakness and is the cause for McCarthy's huge public attention. It is a best- seller and the author honoured with the National Book Critics Circle Award and the U. S. National Book Award. The first book of *The Border Trilogy* narrates the coming of age story of Texan John Grady Cole who visits Mexico. The second book in the series, *The Crossing* in 1994 focuses on Billy's three round trip adventures between south western New Mexico and Mexico. The story setting is before and during World War II and it depicts the occasional adventures of brothers Billy and Boyd Parham. The final book in the trilogy *Cities of the Plain* is published in 1998 and it connects Billy Parham's and John Grady Cole's lives through their work in the New Mexico ranch.

Cormac McCarthy's later work *No Country for Old Men* is published in 2005. This story takes place in 1980 close to the border between Mexico and United States. The main theme of this novel is the violence linked to the drug trade close to the border between Texas and Mexico. Llewelyn Moss finds a case full of cash for drugs at the beginning of the novel. Murderous psychopath Anton Chigurh is hired to find Moss and get the money. Moss and Chigurh play a lot of cat and mouse race with each other throughout the story and Chigurh is happy to kill anyone who tries to stop him from doing the task that he is paid to accomplish. Sheriff Ed Tom Bell wants to keep Moss, a local welder safe. But he soon came to know that he is fighting against real evil in the form of the murderer Chigurh. The author's simple and direct writing style sets it apart from other books of McCarthy as it's initially a screenplay. The novel is adapted into a movie in 2007 which received four Academy Awards, including the Best Picture.

The Stonemason, a five-act drama is first staged in 1995. It is written in the late 1980s. It concentrates on a black family in the South that McCarthy worked with

for months. The play is rarely performed. The struggles of the Telfair family during a three year period are the main subject of this drama. The narrative is presented through the monologues of the character Ben Telfair, a third-generation stonemason who is thirty two years old. Two acts are used to convey background information about Ben's decision to join the family stonemasonry business instead of enrolling in college.

The Gardener's Son, is published in 1996. The original screenplay, focuses on the story of two families the rich Greggs, who run the nearby cotton mill, and the McEvoys, a group of unfortunate mill employees. Robert McEvoy's leg is removed after an accident two years ago. He left his job at the mill after being overcome with bitterness and rage. Robert returns home now after learning of his mother's terminal illness. What he discovers upon his return fuels the burning rage he holds within him, a fury that eventually consumes both the McEvoys and the Greggs. It is the first screenplay that McCarthy has written with a crisp, engrossing drama. It is produced in 1976 as a two-hour movie under the direction of Richard Pearce, and it is nominated for two Emmy Awards. The film script has never been published before in book form in the UK.

The Sunset Limited (2006) is a perceptive and philosophical drama by Cormac McCarthy. It is full of rich dialogue and explores the most fundamental issues surrounding human existence. Two strangers have an unexpected interaction on a New York City subway platform, which brings them to a rundown tenement and forces them to make a life or death choice. The two men, referred to as Black and White, start a discussion in that tiny flat that takes each man back into his own history. By exploring the beginnings of two completely different worldviews, they launch dialectic redolent of the best of Beckett. Professor White has a life that appears

to be wonderful and is quite easy, but he is nonetheless depressed. The more optimistic of the two men is Black, an ex-con and ex-addict, though he is just as eager to convince White of the validity of faith as White is to reject it. Their ultimate goal is to find the meaning of life. It is written skillfully, consistently thought-provoking, and is an intensely intimate work by one of the most perceptive authors of their time.

The Counselor (2013), original screenplay narrates the story of a lawyer who undertakes a dangerous drug-smuggling business to satisfy his desire to become wealthy and impress his fiancee. The mysterious Reiner, who is almost certainly corrupted, and the attractive Malkina, who preferred exotic pets, the two cheetahs and his connections in this high-stakes cocaine trafficking and are depicted in a realistic manner. Things get darker, more brutal, and more profoundly unpleasant than he could have ever imagined as the action crosses the border into Mexico. This compelling story about risk, consequence, and the treacherous balance between the two was written by Cormac McCarthy at his finest.

Cormac McCarthy's fame is based on his distinctive style which includes fewer punctuation and graphic violence in his writing. He becomes one of the remarkable American writers because of these features. After beginning his literary career with great success, he travels to South west America to earn more fame for his literary works. He currently works for the Santa Fe Institute which contains a number of different academic department research facilities. And this institute published his article *The Kekule Problem* in 2017. It traces the history of human consciousness and language. He is also listed as one of the four greatest living writers by the literary Critic Harold Bloom and his writing style has been compared to William Faulkner. Then he receives Saul Bellow Award by the PEN American Center in 2009.

Cormac McCarthy's unique style is characterized by the way he creates gothic and graphic pictures of violence. Additionally, he focuses himself on using only the required punctuation. His biographical experiences have a major influence on his writing. Since he believes that they are unnecessary and he doesn't use punctuation or pauses in his sentences. The term 'Polysyndeton' refers to the use of conjunctions in place of punctuation. McCarthy claims in an interview that he does not use semicolons and prefers the short, assertive sentences. He also utilizes capital letters, colons and periods. Because he believes that these punctuations leave strange little marks on the paper so he avoids using punctuation entirely even when separating dialogues with the quotation marks.

In most cases, McCarthy's dialogues typically lack consistency because there are no punctuation marks to divide them but they still make sense. He is a confident writer who avoids using the traditional writing style in favour of being straightforward and uses vivid language to express his ideas. As a result, he speaks clearly that he prefers colloquialism to formal language. He does not enslave himself to spelling, grammar, punctuation or other norms. And also he doesn't exercise any limitation for using the word categories. In 2012, he is elected to the American Philosophical Society. *The Passenger* and *Stella Maris* are the two upcoming books which will be released on 25th October and 22nd November respectively in 2022.

Post-apocalyptic is a literary genre which explores how individuals react to a global disaster that causes numerous deaths and destruction in the society. Although the specific nature of the disaster might take different forms, this kind of massive disaster is the most typical apocalypse definition used in post-apocalyptic fiction. The setting of the post-apocalyptic fiction can be the consequence of a nuclear conflict, a deadly virus, a zombie uprising, a natural calamity or an alien invasion. Often the

survivor's ability to adopt to their new lives in the world that has changes more crucial than the disaster's actual cause.

The most common themes that are addressed in the post-apocalyptic fiction are the breakdown of morality, the survival, the importance of human connection and the inevitability of death. A famous example for the post-apocalyptic novel is *The Road* which is originally published in 2006 for which McCarthy received the Pulitzer Prize in 2007. It is adapted into a film in 2009. The story is set in an unidentified location somewhere in the US at some point after what is implied to have been the nuclear war. It focuses on an unnamed father and his son who are travelling together and fighting to survive. The man is aware of his death, so he wants to make sure that his son is safe before he dies. Like many post-apocalyptic novels, *The Road* contains several elements that are reminiscent of Christianity though these are not directly discussed. The novel *The Road* is about the bonds between people and the extent that people will go for the one they love, even when the society is unable to rebuild during that time.

The novel *The Road* was inspired by a trip McCarthy took to El Paso, Texas, in 2003 with his young son. He visualised fires on the hill and imagined what the city may look like in fifty to one hundred years while thinking about his son. He made some initial notes, but he didn't come back to it until he was in Ireland a few years later. After that, he instantly had the idea for the novel which he finished in about six weeks and then dedicated to his son John Francis McCarthy.

The Road takes place after an unidentified major disaster that nearly destroyed the earth. Everything is dead and burned in the landscape, the sun is covered by ash and the majorities of the people either walk alone or live in cannibalistic communes.

Both the protagonist of the story who is a man and his son are unnamed. They are somewhere in the Southeast of the United States and when the plot begins they are heading to South on the way that leads to the coast. They drag a cart, two knapsacks and a pistol through the pitch blackness. McCarthy narrates:

> He did not take care of her and she died alone somewhere in the dark and there is no other dream nor other waking world and there is no other tale to tell. On this road there are no godspoken men. They are gone and I am left and they have taken with them the world. (32)

The boy keeps seeking comfort and reassurance as the man often coughs up blood. As they move along the road and look for food in abandoned buildings, they suffer from cold, exposure and frequent starvation. The man often has good dreams about his wife and the past. His wife killed herself in an attempt to avoid what she feared to be impending rape and murder.

The man and his son struggled through snowstorms as they cross a mountain range. While travelling they observed a truck of bad guys or the street gangs who abuse, kill and eat other people.

> You wanted to know what the bad guys looked like. Now you know. It may happen again. My job is to take care of you. I was appointed to do that by God. I will kill anyone who touches you. Do you understand? Yes.
>
> He sat there cowled in the blanket. After a while he looked up. Are we still good guys? He said. (80-81)

One of these people unintentionally crosses paths with the man and his son. The stranger reaches out to grab his son but the man shoots the stranger in the forehead. And they both escaped the boy wonders whether they are still the good ones. Soon they run out of food and they are rushed to find a large, obviously inhabited plantation house. They come across a basement filled with prisoners who are being kept as livestock. The man and his son are horrified and started running as soon as the evil people show up again.

As they proceed, they follow the man's map and when the man discovered an apple orchard they are once again on the point of hunger. Whenever the food runs out, they are starving and they find a bomb shelter that is stocked with supplies and canned food. They spend few days there taking showers getting haircuts and stocking up. Then they continue their journey and encounter an old man who spends their night with him. And they find a home with more canned food after travelling a long distance and starvation. Later they reached the coast but they are disappointed to discover that the ocean is equally as dull and lifeless as land. Then the man noticed a wrecked boat on the offshore where he finds more food and a flare gun. They fire the flare pistol one night feeling abandoned by God and the good guys.

The man is in despair and refuses to leave the boy's side when he suffered from fever. After he recovered they explored the beach and they return to find their cart and supplies which have been taken away by the thief. Then they are chasing the thief on the road and the man pulls his gun to threaten him. The thief shivers in the road by seeing the gun and the man took their cart back, meanwhile his son begs and cries to stop him saying that he should not kill the thief. Later they continue travelling to South on the road and as they pass a village the man got shot in the leg with an

arrow. Then the man uses the flare pistol to shoot the attacker, but it left him with serious wound and a limp.

The man and his son travel towards the island and as it is an extremely cold weather their journey become more painful. The man's wound got worse and he started coughing up more blood. And then he finds out that he is unable to stand up for one more night.

> I can't. I can't hold my son dead in my arms. I thought I could but I can't. You said you wouldn't ever leave me. I know. I'm sorry. You have my whole heart. You always did. You're the best guy. You always were. If I'm not here you can still talk to me. You can talk to me and I'll talk to you. You'll see. (298)

To protect the boy from the harsh world, his father has intended to kill his son if he himself are to die. But he realizes that he cannot carry out that plan. And then he tells the boy to continue his travel to South down the road carrying the fire. Later the man passes away with his son by his side. The boy stays with his father's body for three days before leaving on his own. Then he comes across a group of good guys that include a man, a woman with a young boy and a girl. The boy accepted their invitation to become a member of their family and they left together. Through this novel McCarthy conveys the importance of father son relationship and the struggles they face to survive in the land. And it also shows that it is not only about bodily survival but also the survival of human kindness and generosity.

Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* highlights the fundamental concepts of language, memory and experience which are the interconnected factors that help the humanity comprehend the post-Apocalyptic reality. The existential consciousness of

the protagonist during their turbulent journey of survival after witnessing the destruction of the world prepares them to face the challenges lying ahead in their physical and mental spheres of relocation.

Chapter Two

Luminous Reminiscence

A father and his son are lost in a gloomy and unsettling environment. The known world has been destroyed by an unidentified disaster, and from its ashes a new, evil one has arisen. They are totally dependent on one another, yet they are also alone in the brutal and terrible post-apocalyptic world. The boy born after the disaster, and the man born before it, is able to recognise the huge differences between them that are the result of their various pasts. They both make an effort to understand the post-apocalyptic world despite the fact that none of them are actually familiar with it.

> He tried to think of something to say but he could not. He'd had this feeling before, beyond the numbness and the dull despair. The world shrinking down about a raw core of parsable entities. The names of things slowly following those things into oblivion. Colors. The names of birds. Things to eat. Finally the names of things one believed to be true. More fragile than he would have though. How much was gone already? The sacred idiom shorn of its referents and so of its reality. (93)

The Road by Cormac McCarthy takes place after the end of the world. The language McCarthy chooses to describe the universe in the novel, that is a place in which the entire world that recognize so well has been reduced to mere requiring multiple elements, show the ashes of a catastrophic event. Language, memory, and experience are crucial for understanding the complexities of the post-apocalyptic world because of their complicated connections and significance. With a focus on *The Road*, it describes the man and the son while placing a strong focus on memory, experience,

and language. The man and the boy's relationship are examined with a particular emphasis on how they communicate in the post-apocalyptic world. Afterward, it analyses the novel's basic aspects and looks at the ways that it belongs to minimalism and the ways that it departs from the norm for the style. The post-apocalyptic world is finally explained in terms of how language and memory become paradoxical. A vital and inevitable part of understanding the paradox of language and memory is the novel as a whole, not only the kid and man, who are important for knowing the connections between the past and present.

When Ernest Hemingway outlined his literary minimalism concept, "If a writer of prose knows enough about what he is writing about he may omit things that he knows and the reader, if the writer is writing truly enough, will have a feeling of those things as strongly as though the writer had stated them. The dignity of the movement of an iceberg is due to only one-eight of it being above water" (Ammary 53-54). He explained further, comparing it to an iceberg, "This was omitted on my new theory that you could omit anything if you omitted and the omitted part would strengthen the story and make people feel something more they understood" (54). As stated clearly, omissions are the defining features of minimalism as a literary writing style. Omissions are made in order to achieve a specific effect.

The iceberg theory and the idea of omission are intimately related, as Hemingway's explanation shows. Omissions go beyond simply being able to leave out specific elements of the story while writing as a minimalist. The remaining seven-eighths of the iceberg are still there; in the author's mind, they are carefully examined and connected to the story. As a result, the components are assumed however, to the reader, they are buried and need to be revealed. Omissions might be interpreted as particular elements of the plot that are missing, such as the lack of a specific

character's motivation for their actions. They may, also appear as actual textual white spaces. The seven eights leave space that needs to be filled by these empty spaces. As the name suggests, minimalism's language is limited, making it appear simple. The most frequent structure is declarative, parataxic, and subordinating conjunctions are rare. All sentences appear to act as equal components on a list as a result of these very straightforward linguistic qualities. Through this narration, language equality is created, which gives all images clear and warped alike equal conviction and characterization.

In minimalist literature, third person narration is frequently utilised. Third-person narration can naturally put the narrator further away from the action and the characters, leaving more space for reader interpretation as the plot and the characters inevitably get more complicated and challenging to understand. Furthermore, characters are often just very simply portrayed, and personal characteristics are typically revealed mostly through acts and conversation rather than their thoughts and deep inner lives. The only way to express senses is by visual descriptions, which are often very comprehensive, but the connections and meanings underlying them are typically left unexplored. As a result, it performs as an observant and recollection. This wording appears straightforward and basic, it may be difficult to believe that a minimalist writing is simple to read and understand. In view of this, one can claim that minimalist literature can be read in the sense that it is simply read, without being translated or interpreted in any manner. This is because minimalist literature is plain and therefore simple to understand. The minimalist approach highlights the reader's importance as an element by including all of its features. According to Hemingway, the writer must write honestly, but the reader must also read honestly which requires a significant amount of work on their part. As a result, the reader's role becomes crucial

since they must put all the narrative's component parts together and create meaning of them as a whole. As a result, the reader is drawn into the story and is required to actively participate in understanding the relationships between the words. Events build as a result of the connections being put together, giving the impression of being an observer. The use of linguistic democracy contributes to a sense of fragmentation, making this witnessing complicated. The objective, list-like diction causes a lack of linear progression that leads to this fragmentation. As a result, the narrative curve seems to be stagnating, and it is up to the reader to evaluate the significance of each sentence and the connections among them. They must not only assign meaning to the words, but also emotions to them and the emotions that they personally feel when they read the text. As a result, the reader's impression of the story depends on how it is decoded and giving a new perspective.

The literature of minimalism raises some odd issues. It is important to think about whether reading minimalist fiction is generally simple or if it requires more effort than one might first assume. Minimalist literature, according to some academics, simplifies the world down to the point that the essence is lost. To analyse what a reader of minimalist literature is expected to do however, make this perception false. It is crucial that the language is precise because a text provides so little in the way of elaboration. Plot bounces from everywhere, therefore readers who value concentration over absorption are needed. This is a critical thing that demonstrates that less is not always better, that minimalist fiction requires serious monitoring, and that it should be read with the same attention as poetry. Therefore, minimalism employs the interplay between presence and absence, which places the reader in an exciting and unstable balance because interpretation becomes very difficult when a straightforward answer is not given by the text. As a result, alternative interpretations

are essential, which create ambiguity about a text's real meaning. Through the perspective of literary minimalism, the genre's features will be examined in Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*.

The child and the man are the two primary characters of *The Road*. The man will do anything to keep the boy safe since he feels immensely protective of him. "No lists of things to be done. The day providential to itself. The hour. There is no later. This is later. All things of grace and beauty such that one holds them to one's heart have a common provenance in pain. Their birth is grief and ashes. So, he whispered to the sleeping boy. I have you" (56). In a post-apocalyptic world, however, this is no simple task because providing for himself alone in such a terrible and merciless world is difficult enough. Being a parent in the post-apocalyptic world depicted in the book is extreme in many ways; everything is a threat, and everything is alien and unpredictable. The father is under a lot of pressure since he wants to shield the child from all of the danger and terrifying things. "Just remember that the things you put into your head are there forever, he said. You might want to think about that. You forget some things, don't you? Yes. You forget what you want to remember and you remember what you want to forget" (11). In the post-apocalyptic world, memory is a unique and difficult concept to understand.

Throughout the story, the extreme nature of parenthood is portrayed in a variety of ways. For instance, the man killed the road rat then, "He shoved the pistol in his belt and slung the knapsack over his shoulder and picked up the boy and turned him around and lifted him over his head and set him on his shoulders and set off up the old roadway at a dead run, holding the boy's knees, the boy clutching his forehead, covered with gore and mute as a stone" (69). He must then clean the boy following that, "This is my child, he said. I wash a dead man's brains out of his hair.

That is my job. Then he wrapped him in the blanket and carried him to the fire" (77). Both of these examples show normal, everyday routines that have been warped into absurdity. Though typically associated with laughter and happiness, carrying a child on one's shoulders is a need in the novel to avoid a painful death. Along with being fun, cleaning up after a child is a routine that develops intimacy and tenderness between the parent and the child. Thus, in the post-apocalyptic world, situations connected to safety and joys are misinterpreted.

The man's place in a world that has been destroyed demands the awful truths of his own existence. He is forced to reject things that are no longer necessary because he must accept that the world has been reduced to its simplest necessities.

> He'd carried his billfold about till it wore a cornershaped hole in his trousers. Then one day he sat by the road side and took it out and went through the contents. Some money, credit cards. His driver's license. A picture of his wife. He spread everything out on the blacktop. Like gaming cards. He pitched the sweatblackened piece of leather into the woods and sat holding the photograph. Then he laid it down in the road also and then he stood and they went on. (52-53)

But in the post-apocalyptic world, cash, credit cards, and a driver's license are all things that will undoubtedly be useless. But the image of his wife, which depicts a real person with whom he has particular memories, has a different meaning. Readers must use their own emotions to highlight these differences because the narrator does not state them directly.

The man constantly questions who he is, because he exists in both the ancient and the modern worlds. He finds himself in a disastrous situation where he must both

struggle with his memories of the past and accept the harsh reality that it is no more. He feels just as he belongs in none of these worlds, which makes him feel homeless. The old world is only present in his memory and is not physically accessible. The old world still has similarities to the new one, but it is deserted, decaying, and covered in ashes. This makes the new world recognizable. “The weather lifted and the cold and they came at last into the board 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. Machinerolled metal roofs. A log barn in a field with an advertisement in faded ten- foot letters across the roofslope. See Rock City” (20). Although the man notices familiar characteristics everywhere, the post-apocalyptic world seems to be too dissimilar for him to feel at home in.

He has mixed thoughts regarding his memories because of his current circumstances. The man occasionally stuck in his memories, as evident when visiting his childhood home. But occasionally he seems to wish he had no memory at all.

> He slept little and he slept poorly. He dreamt of walking in a flowering wood where birds flew before them he and the child and the sky was aching blue but he was learning how to wake himself from just such siren worlds. Lying there in the dark with the uncanny taste of a peach from some phantom orchard fading in his mouth. He thought if he lived long enough the world at last would all be lost. Like the dying world the newly blind inhabit, all of it slowly fading from memory. (17)

He finds temporary comfort in remembering the past, and he is unable to control his memories. The contrasts between them are also even more evident when his

subconscious returns him to the new reality, making it more difficult for him to accept the realities of his new life. The boy's knowledge of memory acts in a completely different manner. The boy born in the post apocalyptic world has never known what life is entailed before. The boy must accept the world as it is because his father's memories of happier days only provide him a fleeting sense of comfort. There is only the present, as he feels it for him, there is neither the old nor the new world. As a result, he is unable to identify the historical evidence of civilisation that they encounter along the journey. He is deeply uneasy about them since they are incomprehensible. The boy has a strong reaction when the dad finds his childhood house.

> Are we going in?
>
> Why not?
>
> I'm scared.
>
> Don't you want to see where I used to live?
>
> No.
>
> It'll be okay.
>
> There could be somebody here.
>
> I don't think so.
>
> But suppose there is? (24-25)

It's essential to know the boy's memory in order to understand his quick and firm 'no.' Because he recalls that it once served these purposes, the father views the house as a symbol of civilisation and safety. Because this is all the boy has learned about houses from his personal experiences, he views them as frightening hiding places from which dangers may emerge.

The post-apocalyptic world is far less green than the pre-apocalyptic one. Additionally, to more complex notions like ethics, humanity, and language, this also holds true for real, intangible objects. These ideas should be entirely new to the boy, yet some of them aren't. The boy has a strong sense of morality that he constantly uses. He also has a very generous and inclusive personality and worries a lot about the people they encounter on their travels. They run into another boy, for instance, and this occurs:

> I'm afraid for that little boy.
>
> I know. But he'll be all right.
>
> We should go get him, papa. We could get him and take him with us. We could take him and we could take the dog.
>
> The dog could catch something to eat.
>
> We can't.
>
> And I'd give that little boy half of my food. (90)

It is remarkable because there is no evident source for this kindness that appears to be natural. The boy doesn't know how to be virtuous when all he has ever known is the harsh, barren post-catastrophe world where virtue seems to be nonexistent. The boy is only familiar to the man, and he is the only person he knows, he sees himself in him. As a result, the man tries to teach the boy by telling him stories.

The small boy has a strong desire to learn. He is always asking the father questions about everything and everyone because he is unfamiliar with the old world.

> So how many people do you think are alive?
>
> In the world?
>
> In the world.

Yes.

I don’t know. Let’s stop and rest.

Okay.

You’re wearing me out.

Okay. (259-260)

The boy responds by accepting the existing situation right away and without being surprised because he has no memory of earlier circumstances. The father is perplexed by this and attempts to save his son from as much suffering as possible. The young child sees several horrifying events, a man tries to kidnap him, a group of people kill their newborn in order to survive, and a group of people are being held prisoners while waiting to be eaten by the bad guys. Despite this, he manages to continue on, to ask questions, and to attempt to understand the world. “Always so deliberate, hardly surprised by the most outlandish advents. A creation perfectly evolved to meet its own end” (60-61). In perspective of the father’s battles with mortality, the statement perfectly developed to face its own end is very remarkable. The boy’s perspective of life and death is likely simpler because he is not caught between two worlds like his father. This became easier, but still extremely cruel and horrifying. The boy is aware of the ideas of life and death because he lives a life that serves as a continual reminder of them that people are constantly seeking out means of surviving as well as means of avoiding death.

Both the man and the boy explore the past, present, and future in an effort to find purpose, but their efforts are unsuccessful for various reasons. The father tells nothing to the boy about the old world which leaves the boy confused as to where to find purpose as he couldn’t comprehend how the old world had been. If it struck home, he is left in an unbearable state of confusion as he tries to comprehend what is

now there and what that loss means to him. This leads to the brutal realization that the two have very little in common, as is shown by the man's past stories, and which makes the boy feel extremely alone. On the other hand, the man searches for meaning in his past, but recalling the old world makes him feel his loss even more deeply, he feels alienated because he has a history in the pre-catastrophic world.

The boy and his father are really close friends. They are each other's entire world and have no one else. But they are really dissimilar from one another. The narration in the novel takes place in the time period that the man and the boy share in common is their present. In more ways than one, the man represents the past and the boy represents the future. The man tells the son tales of his childhood in an effort to impart knowledge about the past.

> This is where we used to have Christmas when I was a boy. He turned and looked out at the waste of the yard. A tangle of dead lilac. The shape of a hedge. On cold winter nights when the electricity was out in a storm, we would sit at the fire here, me and my sisters, doing our homework. The boy watched him. Watched shapes claiming him he could not see. We should go, Papa, he said. Yes, he said. But he didn't. (25-26)

This moment reveals vital details about both the boy and the man. The man yearns for the past, and in this instance, his desire overcomes the possibility that it would be dangerous for them to enter his childhood house. The boy, on the other hand, is the one who is able to make sense of the situation and says that they should go since he feels frightened in the strange place. The man also mentions Christmas, electricity, and homework, all of which the boy has never experienced and are therefore pointless

remarks. Instead, he feels uncomfortable in their presence and becomes anxious. The boy is distressed but the man is comforted by the house, an ancient symbol of civilisation.

The fact that so many ideas and items in the post-apocalyptic world have no significance makes it difficult for the father to instruct the boy about the previous world. For instance, the man tries to spoil the boy in order to please him.

> He withdrew his hand slowly and sat looking at a Coco Cola.
>
> What is it, Papa?
>
> It's a treat. For you.
>
> What is it?
>
> Here. Sit down.
>
> He slipped the boy's knapsack straps loose and set the pack on the floor…He took the can and sipped it and handed it back. You drink it, he said. Let's just sit here. It's because I won't ever get to drink another one, isn't it?
>
> Ever's a long time.
>
> Okay, the boy said. (22-23)

The Coca-Cola has special significance for the man since it is familiar, comfortable, and has associations with certain events. The boy however, has no connections with Coca-Cola because he is not familiar with many of the concepts, events, objects, or even language that describes modern American society. Coca-Cola is just a treat to him. But for the man, it fizzes with fond memories. The boy is unaware of the meaning that coke once held, and the only reason he knows it is a delight because the

man has informed him about it. As a result, the man's attempt to indulge his son in a world lacking of happiness is largely ineffective.

Additionally, the dad tries to playfully interact with the boy and uses humour to seek to lighten the atmosphere on the road. He does this, for example, by pretending to use a phone. "He crossed to the desk and stood there. Then he picked up the phone and dialed the number of his father's house in that long ago. The boy watched him. What are you doing? he said" (5). Then,

> He made train noises and diesel horn noises but he wasn't sure what these might mean to the boy. After a while they just looked out through the silted glass to where the track curved away in the waste of weeds. If they saw different worlds what they knew was the same. That the train would sit there slowly decomposing for all eternity and that no train would ever run again. (191-192)

The man's attempt is useless because the boy cannot understand the context of a phone or a train, and what is left for them both is a subconscious acceptance of the way the world is gradually vanishing in front of them. Whether he wanted them there or not, memories of the old world are still present in the depths of the man's mind. The boy on the other side has no deeper comprehension or memories of the previous world. This implies that while the boy can hear about the dad's recollections, the boy's lack of recognition leaves the man with a sense of loneliness and alienation.

This lack of understanding occurs not only when the man tries to entertain the boy, but also when explaining what could seem to be very basic information, like "I've got to go for more wood, he said. I'll be in the neighborhood. Okay? Where's the neighborhood? It just means I won't be far. Okay" (100). And "I think we're

about two hundred miles from the coast. As the crow flies. As the crow flies? Yes. It means going in a straight line" (166). The dad must decide whether to attempt an explanation of these concepts to the boy, passing on his memories or to accept the truth that crows and neighborhood will never again exist. Whatever the man decides, he is constantly reminded of his past by the boy's ignorance, which is a constant reminder of his past. The man understands the alienation in their relationship because of how they communicate, which serves as a constant reminder of their separation.

> He'd been visited in a dream by creatures of a kind he'd never seen before. They did not speak. He thought that they'd been crouching by the side of his cot as he slept and then had skulled away on his awakening. He turned and looked at the boy. May be he understood for the first time that to the boy he was himself an alien. A being from a planet that no longer existed. The tales of which were suspect. (163)

The boy's frequent questions reveal his strong desire to learn about the man's past. His responses to them however, reveal a complete misunderstanding because they don't seem suitable to the man. Although his responses appear insufficient, they might not be as approving as they appear.

> Did you have any friends?
>
> Yes. I did.
>
> Lots of them?
>
> Yes.
>
> Do you remember them?
>
> Yes. I remember them.
>
> What happened to them?

They died.

All of them?

Yes. All of them.

Do you miss them?

Yes. I do,

Where are we going?

We're going south.

Okay. (61-62)

It's tragic to lose all of your friends to death, and the boy's response is strange since it suggests two possibly dangerous scenarios. The boy either does not understand what the man tells him, or he is so traumatised by the post-apocalyptic world that he is unable to communicate the suffering he feels when the man reveals more truths to him. He finds it so hard to understand having friends that he cannot understand the man's sorrow. Thus, whatever the situation the man must deal with his memories and his emotions on his own.

The man suffers deeply with his past, but he acts as if it never happened. "Sometimes the child would ask him questions about the world that for him was not even a memory. He thought hard how to answer. There is no past. What would you like? But he stopped making things up because those things were not true either and the telling made him feel bad" (55). The man's claim that there is no past seems to be very contradictory because he himself is completely unable to distinguish between the past and the present. It may be stated that the man is trying to protect the boy from the sorrow and horror that his memories inflict on himself by attempting to convince him that there is no past. However, the boy also experiences pain as a result of the man's memories.

The boy and the man are described in this work through the perspective of literary minimalism, with a focus on memory, language, and experience despite the man's statement that there is no past. In various aspects, *The Road* complies with the concept of literary minimalism. Omissions are used both physically and in terms of content, as mentioned. The pauses, reversals, and changes in direction cause the novel's reader to slow down, reflect, and consider the text's silences. In fact, these spaces make reading the novel feel a lot like reading poetry by forcing the reader to pause, think deeply, and slow down. Throughout this, the major characters actions and words are rarely explained in the story. The boy's use of 'okay' seems to be where the most noticeable one. More than anything else, the boy's excessive usage of this single term, which serves as a reaction to practically everything regardless of the question reflects his instant acceptance of their circumstances.

Although the man paradoxically states that 'okay' implies okay, the ambiguous nature of the phrase allows it to function on a multiple level. The vagueness of 'okay' makes it difficult for readers because they have to stop and consider each one. Furthermore, when it is used to show acceptance of strange circumstances that go against what is typically considered to be 'okay,' it becomes much more difficult to comprehend its meaning. However, that the word is enhanced and also that familiarity with it is required for a sense of security in the post-apocalyptic setting of *The Road*. Third-person narration is frequently used in minimalism to establish distance. However, the narrative of *The Road* is not entirely clear. "He walked out in the gray light and stood and he saw for a brief moment the absolute truth of the world" (138)

The remark at first creates the impression that the reader is seeing the world from the perspective of a man. The man's so-called camera-eyes, on the other hand,

seem to zoom out and watch the boy and the man from a distance, making them look like animals on the road. Thus, there is a merging of the narrator's and the protagonist's points of view, which causes confusion and adds to the overall narrative's sense of fragmentation. As a result, the novel's writing style is not always straightforward; it frequently goes toward incomplete, with common parts of speech omitted and other usage changed, providing sentences an odd rhythm and a sense of immediacy, and even producing strangely twisted meanings. McCarthy's particular combination of apparent minimalism and complexity demonstrates that his style is not purely minimalist. However, both forms demand attention, and there is no explicit discrimination between them due to the lack of an explanation, they become equally important to comprehend the entire story.

The novel's disconnected atmosphere is caused by a combination of minimalistic and more complex parts as well as the manner that McCarthy employs or neglects linguistic elements. It does not contain any quotation marks, only rarely uses commas, and only occasionally use of abbreviations. The apostrophe serves as a reminder of what needs to be remembered and what is most in danger. Thus, the absence of quotation marks adds to this loss by serving as a visual reference to readers that there isn't much of this world remaining outside of these two people and therefore little from which they need to be distinguished. Thus, the novel's minimal use of punctuation reflects its topic of loss while also creating a sense of detachment. It helps to grasp the man's character and the difficulties of the post-apocalyptic world better because not only the man, but the reader, struggles to make sense of the past and the present experiences. They begin to comprehend the man's tremendous sense of loss, and struggle greatly to understand what the dad and son go through.

The novel is primarily written in a realistic and descriptive style. This adds to the sense of absence because, one could say, a novel dealing with such harsh and brutal subjects would seem to demand real deconstruction and helping illumination of its concepts. The concepts of the book seem even more obviously harsh because they don't seem to be clearly represented in the novel. The writing style, in other words, cultivates a strong contrast between form and content. Because the content seems for an explanation or an acknowledgement of the violence that is conveyed, the apparent absence of feeling partially distorts the reading. For instance, when the boy and the man see the road rat, they engage in a brief, hostile conversation. "What are you eating. Whatever we can find. Whatever we can find. Yeah. He looked at the boy" (66). However, the connection is important since the road rat is implying that they consume any humans they find.

The basement with the hostages is another instance of compressed brutality. "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 leg gone to the hip and the stumps of them blackened and burnt" (116). The reason the victims are being held hostage and how a man's limb was severed and burned is not clearly stated. It is necessary to stop reading and consider the text for a while. The impact seems to be very strong when the depressing reality sinks in. When readers put together the meaning, they form strong and genuinely unsettling mental imagery. Additionally, the reader is compelled to spend more time and effort understanding the sentences, which causes them to feel the significance of the novel's meaning more strongly. This demonstrates that, as Hemingway claimed, readers learn to feel more than they comprehend when they display their own feelings over on to narrative.

The lack of explanation for the themes the story depicts creates a false impression. The novel's topic clearly illustrates the constant sense of loss that prevails throughout the novel. Although it may initially appear as though there is a significant disparity between form and content, but they are actually related when it comes to the themes of loss and absence. The novel continuously brings up the past and forces the readers to face it, even though it does so implicitly. There are many instances of the tension between the past and the present. The reader would be confused in the strange post-apocalyptic environment without subconsciously generated illustrations. These kinds of examples are prevalent throughout the novel in fact, the reader's experiences and memories are used frequently. The mentioned scenario in which the boy is carried by the man entirely depends on the reader's familiarity with this specific behaviour. The ridiculousness that the story depicts would be lost if the reader had no memory of what it typically means to carry a child on one's shoulder.

This creates a huge contradiction as understood from the reading of *The Road*. The entire post-apocalyptic genre depicts this contradiction. The post-apocalyptic subgenre depicts what occurs after the end of the world. The terms, objects, and ideas from the period before the disaster are barren in his memory because they don't evoke any memories. It is impossible for him to comprehend what is and what has been lost, leaving him in a constant state of confusion and suffering. The dad feels alone because the boy finds no use in his memories. However, the boy also experiences a tremendous sense of isolation as a result of the man's stories seeming so ghostly and unreal to him. Goodness has left the man, but he makes an effort to hang on to it by telling stories. But for the boy, tales of 'good guys' have no meaning because goodness is not present in the world he is familiar with nothing from the past has any

significance. McCarthy questions the capabilities of language and memory in this way by simultaneously destroying and creating the universe through language.

Thus, the novel's own meaning is only realised when it is encountered by readers. Without readers to understand the story, the novel stands in for the empty signifier that the boy considers the man's stories to be. Because of this, it is appealing to guess as to the boy's actual mental state if his father had not been there to educate him about the past. His stories provide him both the advantages and the disadvantages. In *The Road*, past and present are intertwined because readers naturally and unconsciously interpret the post-apocalyptic reality using their own memories. The basic description of loss that the novel *The Road* deals with would be worthless if readers didn't have their own associations and memories of things to depend on.

The succeeding chapter captures the existential consciousness of the protagonists leads them, throughout their struggle for survival, helps them in comprehending the internal conflicts leads them to the realization that the dreams and the memories of the past are dangerous distractions from the precarious present, to the building of sustainable hope and freedom that are necessary for growth.

Chapter Three

Existential Consciousness

The Road by Cormac McCarthy, written in 2006, centres on four main themes of absurdity and revolt: transience, existentialism, the importance of realism in storytelling, and inter-generational commitment. These themes are still relevant today and serve as helpful standards for evaluating both the private and the public aspects of our life, notably in the context of how we have been enslaved by technology and how it has impacted our interpersonal relationships in an electronic way. *The Road* follows the trip of a father and his child pulling a grocery cart on the road after the technical, the economical, and the political institutions that once surrounded us have been shattered. “They passed through the site of a roadside hamlet burned to nothing. Some metal storage tanks, a few standing flues of blackened brick. There were gray slagpools of melted glass in the ditches and the raw lightwires lay in rusting skeins for miles along the edge of the roadway” (204). The unnamed father and the child are seen wandering through the gloomy grey and black remains of villages, towns, and forests that have been destroyed by fire, along with many dead bodies.

The reasons for the destruction are never stated. The world portrayed in the novel has vanished, and the political, religious, and commercial language that glorified it has been muted. The father briefly notices something while digging through the burned ashes of a damp, rotting house with a corpse floating in the pitch-black water in the basement.

> He walked out in the gray light and stood and he saw for a brief moment the absolute truth of the world. The cold relentless circling of the intestate earth. Darkness implacable. The blind dogs of the sun in

> their running. The crushing black vacuum of the universe. And somewhere two hunted animals trembling like ground foxes in their cover. Borrowed time and borrowed world and borrowed eyes with which to sorrow it. (138)

The father and the child in McCarthy's book, who are not misled by the empty universe but continue their adventure on the road could be viewed as figures in a literary depiction of absurdity and revolt.

The absurdity and insurrection are still important in the twenty-first century, particularly the recent changes in the expanding influence of electronic and digital mass media. The development and wide use of information technologies, especially cable televisions and the internet have correlated with the events of the late half of the twentieth century and the early years of the twenty first century including wars, political crises, and social movements. These technologies have now evolved into the primary channels through which information are received and analysed. New technologies also pose a threat to change human consciousness at the beginning of the third decade. In order to create a false sense of happiness, television uses alternative means like sparkling studio lights, smiling news anchors, and recorded laughter. According to cultural critics, this confuses the distinction between information and entertainment which suppress the people's emotional reaction to the tragedy, barbarism, and death which are exposed in large portions. But in the Internet era, these observations are even more relevant. Experts in the field of communication have frequently voiced their enthusiasm for computer mediated communication techniques that they view as strengthening human characteristics.

The human sense of reality however appears to be weakened by the internet more often than strengthened. In fact, people who blog, chat, tweet, or interact with online friends are satisfying a human need for self-expression and unrestricted communication. But these activities are largely restricted to cyberspace, where context is inhibited by noise, social discourse is dominated by chatter, politics is dominated by public relations, bond is created through electronic communication and consciousness of the absurd by an unending quest for happiness. Internet users may easily be misled to imagine the virtual reality to be the actual reality, although television viewers are typically conscious of the escapist character of the medium, even when viewing reality shows. This makes the internet less suited to a non-illusory comprehension of reality than television. For instance, some of the works of communication experts who are enthusiastic about new media have a redemptive political future promised in them that makes some of their writings resemble early modern ideologies. A democratic public sphere is thought to be represented by millions of people using computers, but new technologies may promote a politics of solitude that is more suitable for dictatorship than for democracy.

The internet is a useful tool for organising support for the essential causes. However, it frequently encourages the false belief that computer-mediated communication between virtual public can replace political activism in the real world, a misconception that allows for the extension of numerous social ills such as wars and horrific acts, inequality and injustice, political corruption, environmental destruction, and many others. McCarthy establishes the rules for the early twenty-first century in *The Road* by turning off the screens, revealing the bloodshed and destruction in the measurable and unknown world. The book does many things in very genuine ways, even though it’s not particularly meant to guide away from the entertainment offered

by the mainstream media or teach us how to lead conscious lives free from misconceptions. It shows the father and the child walking without any illusions about how strange the world appears.

The Road presents the landscape in its barren, dark state, with the lights over supermarkets and gas stations turned off. The dark environment is significant because it deals with transformation, growth, and change, as when the father counts the child's frail breaths and the two of them gaze at bare strands of second growth forest. It contrasts with rapidly hurried looking media images that frequently fail to convey change, progress, or transformation. Electronic and digital media give access to more information than ever had and expose to a wider range of events than ever seen. But the volume of that information and the speed that these events are happening cause to become so absorbed in them. There is little room for the kind of complex and subtle and sensitive analyses that are attributed to the father and the child in this novel.

> Are we going to die?
>
> Sometime. Not now.
>
> And we're still going south.
>
> Yes.
>
> So we'll be warm.
>
> Yes.
>
> Okay.
>
> Okay what?
>
> Nothing. Just okay.
>
> Go to sleep.
>
> Okay.

> I'm going to blow out the lamp. Is that okay?
>
> Yes. That's okay. (9)

The knowledge of the distinctions between warmth and cold, north and south, life and death, and light and darkness is necessary for this simple interchange. These fundamental distinctions have always been important to people, but they are becoming less distinct in the modern world where electronic and digital technologies enable people to enjoy everlasting lights on computer screens without worrying about dawn or sunset, to maintain a constant room or office temperature, to follow a GPS (Global Positioning System) without having a clear idea of where people are going, and to create their own virtual life.

On the other side, *The Road* serves as a warning that no virtual construct or other illusion will be able to free oneself from the limitations of reality.

> In dreams his pale bride came to him out of a green and leafy canopy. Her nipples pipe clayed and her rip bones painted white. She wore a dress of gauze and her dark hair was carried up in combs of ivory, combs of shell. Her smile, her downturned eyes. In the morning it was snowing again. Beads of small gray ice strung along the lightwires overhead. He mistrusted all of that. He said the right dreams for a man in peril and all else was the call of languor and of death. (17)

Some of the father's dreams have white images, but when he wakes up, he discovers that the snow is actually grey rather than white. He wakes up from the siren world appearing in his dreams because he understands that his and his son's life depend on hard effort in the actual world. *The Road* not only shatters illusions but also emphasises the significance of accepting life's temporary nature in a clear and

realistic manner. Humans cannot understand development and growth until they face reality and acknowledge the temporary nature of existence. McCarthy demonstrates how realizing the death is a part of life and makes it better. When people stop trying to prove their immortality by constructing pyramids or making social pages for the dead, they will be able to share in the minutes, hours, days, and years of the planet. The two main characters of the book are travelers who do not believe in eternity. They also don't take politicians, advertisers, or talk show presenters seriously when they claim to make the world a better place. While the father urges the boy, "When your dreams are of some world that never was or of some world that never will be and you are happy again then you will have given up. Do you understand? And you can't give up. I won't let you" (202).

One of the constant characteristics of existentialism is its concern for human existence, especially for the affirmation of freedom and refusal to subordinate personal self-awareness to abstract concepts or dehumanising social structures. It also states that "existence precedes essence" (Sartre 13). It holds that individuals have the power to choose how they will act and must take responsibility for those choices. The protagonist of existentialist literature is an individual who feels estranged from other people and comes to a realisation of the indeterminate nature of being and the falseness of social and intellectual orthodoxies. The father's advice to not give up on life by sacrificing survival for promise and reality for desire has a strong existentialist undertone. Existentialism can be defined and interpreted in many different ways, but *The Road* can be seen as a genuinely existentialist story that emphasises existence above essence.

Existentialism does not see itself as a philosophy primarily devoted to the study of history and society, or as a body of thought with a specific social and

historical origin. With the metaphysical philosophies that preceded it, it offers itself as external truth, but differs for them in not being a "closed" system. Its distinction lies in the question which it raises, seeing this as fundamental and claiming that it alone has raised this boldly, directly and in depth. This is the question of how to answer the absurdity of man's "existence," resulting from his awareness that his "essence" – his consciousness of his "being" – is surrounded by"nothingness" and will dissolve into death. Existentialism asserts that the whole of one's life is shaped by the way one confronts this central question, which takes precedence over all others. In the course of the argument it challenges the knowability of the world which is the foundation stone of any valid concept of human progress. Sidney Frankelstein gives a compressed account of the renowned existentialists and the difference in their views:

> Of course, there is no unanimity among the existentialist writers and thinkers. For example, Gabriel Marcel, a French Catholic existentialist repudiates the "atheism" of existentialist Jean Paul Sartre. Neither Kierkegaard, nor Nietzsche used the term "existentialism," nor for that matter did Sartre and other writers applied it not only to their philosophy, but to that of Kierkegaard and Nietzsche. Heidegger, however, whose thought influenced Sartre, and is accepted today as a central figure in existential thought disclaims the term. (61)

Yet for all this diversity, all existentialist philosophers share certain concepts aside from their insistence on "existence" or "essence" as the central question, and their accompanying death-hauntedness. They all regard this material or outside world as "absurd" or imperious to "reason," are contemptuous of natural science, or at least dismiss it as irrelevant to the "real" or "important" problems, and take a similar attitude toward history, economics and politics, asserting that nothing real or basic can

be learnt from them. The idea that human actions, regardless of the causes they assign to them, have a greater impact on how they are moulded than the actions of God, nature, or society. While individuals interact with the frequently dangerous and hostile surroundings, the fate is something they have control over. McCarthy's characters consistently maintain a realistic perspective on their circumstances. They generally behave without speaking. They proceed despite the lack of a vision to guide them or a lighthouse to enlighten the road in the night. The father and child are going south toward the sea at the beginning of the book but when they get there, they are unhappy to see that the water is grey rather than blue. But the two continue their journey, which has no purpose unless they reach the blue sea or some other destination.

The two locate their own footprints on the ground and decide to follow them in the belief that they will be moving in the proper way and doing what they are doing. Similar to how the father recognises his childhood goals had little chances of coming true as they reach the wreckage of the home he grew up in, life is made up of actions, not of idealistic plans. "This is where I used to sleep. My cot was against this wall. In the nights in their thousands to dream the dreams of a child's imaginings worlds rich or fearful such as might offer themselves but never the one to be" (26). In *The Road*, reality always comes before essence, and even the names of things are taken to be worthless. The fact that people have always given names to the objects they observe has given such things higher features and meanings, such as when some species of birds are referred to as songbirds. In this novel, however, all names fade in the father's memory. "The names of things slowly following those things into oblivion. Colors. The names of birds. Things to eat. Finally the names of things one believed to be true. More fragile than he would have thought" (93).

The author highlights the falseness and pointlessness of trying to give things more meaning by making names disappear. Additionally, when an elderly man they see on the road is questioned about them and the father and child respond that they are not robbers,

> How do you live?
>
> I just keep going. I knew this was coming.
>
> You knew it was coming?
>
> Yeah. This or something like it. I always believed in it.
>
> Did you try to get ready for it?
>
> No. what would you do?
>
> I don't know.
>
> People were always getting ready for tomorrow. I didn't believe in that. Tomorrow wasn't getting ready for them. It didn't even know they were there.
>
> I guess not.
>
> Even if you knew what to do you wouldn't know what to do. You wouldn't know if you wanted to do it not. (179)

The world is only what humans create for it. Humans falsely assume that their environment provide the meanings they perceive. Instead of their visions, they are the results of their actions. And they keep moving forward.

The Road doesn't allow for any other stories to be told besides the creating a memorable experience that is currently being lived. The father only discusses the simple chores of survival in every conversation with his son.

> Are we going to die?
>
> No.
>
> What are we going to do?
>
> We're going to drink some water. Then we're going to keep going down the road.
>
> Okay. (92)

Instead of ignoring the more significant spiritual difficulties raised by the child, the focus is on the menial activities of surviving out of necessity. There is just no tale to be telling other than what is happening right now, unless one is willing to make up lies. The father therefore rejects all fables, visions, and dreams, even his own imaginations about his late wife, which to him constitute a fruitless attempt to escape reality. "In his dream she was sick and he cared for her. The dream bore the look of sacrifice but he thought differently. He did not take care of her and she died alone somewhere in the dark and there is no other dream nor other waking world and there is no other tale to tell" (32). He doesn't know to handle the kid's desire for stories and when he asks him questions about the past incidents. Despite his best efforts, the father cannot come up with a tale to satisfy his son's curiosity.

> He though hard to answer. There is no past. What would you like? But he stopped making things up because those things were not true either and the telling made him feel bad. The child had his own fantasies. How things would be in the south. Other children. He tried to keep a rein on this but his heart was not in it. Whose would be? (55)

The author does not give us the right to create our own tales, like the myths that describe how the earth was created or the scholarly writings of philosophers.

After the tragedies of the twentieth century, it appears that people no longer have this opportunity; if people could recount the true tale of that century, it would not be able to convey the voice of the dead, the odour of the murdered, and the vision of the enslaved. When the father understands that any story about the past would be questionable, it sometimes seems as though the author is expressing his own difficulty in telling the tale of a world that has lost its feeling of life. “He could construct for the child’s pleasure the world he’d lost without constructing the loss as well and he thought perhaps the child had known this better than he” (163). Toward the end of the novel the boy stops asking for stories because he understands that they cannot change his destiny. Life has value when it is lived, not when it is painted pink. He refuses the father’s request to tell him a story.

> Why not?
>
> The boy looked at him and looked away.
>
> Why not?
>
> Those stories are not true.
>
> They don’t have to be true. They’re stories.
>
> Yes. But in the stories we’re always helping people and we don’t help people.
>
> Why don’t you tell me a story?
>
> I don’t want to.
>
> Okay.
>
> I don’t have any stories to tell.
>
> You could tell me a story about yourself.
>
> You already know all the stories about me. You were there. (286-287)

The existence of a superior being who gives individuals a sense of direction and liberates them from the weight of guilt for the harms they do to others is a widespread concept that endures over time and across cultures. Although *The Road* contains many religious aspects, the author does not provide us with this comfort. “On this road there are no godspoke men. They are gone and I am left and they have taken with them the world. Query: How does the never to be differ from what never was?” (32). The strategy corresponds with existentialist thinkers’ rejection to replace human responsibility with God’s will. This point is not brought up by the two primary characters. The elderly man they meet brings it up and informs them,

> There is no God and we are his prophets.
>
> I don’t understand how you’re still alive. How do you eat?
>
> I don’t know.
>
> You don’t know?
>
> People give you things.
>
> People give you things.
>
> Yes.
>
> To eat.
>
> To eat. Yes.
>
> No they don’t.
>
> You did.
>
> No I didn’t. The boy did. (181)

McCarthy maintains uncertainty in God’s position. The father believes that he has been chosen by God to protect his son; hence a supreme power is unquestionably present in the book. The author accepts common religious morals and ideas, but not

the other way around. The descriptions of the end of the world, for instance, resemble apocalyptic warnings but have nothing to do with theological ideas of sin.

> People sitting on the side walk in the dawn half immolate and smoking in their clothes. Like failed sectarian suicides. Others would come to help them. Within a year there were fires on the ridges and deranged chanting. The screams of the murdered. By day the dead impaled on spikes along the road. What had they done? He thought that in the history of the world it might even be that there was more punishment than crime but he look small comfort from it. (32-33)

The father and the son attempt to avoid doing evil, therefore the absence of common religious morals does not eliminate the contrast between good and evil. The father assures them that since they're carrying the fire, they will always be righteous and that they will never be harmed by evil. Here, a man and a child who have not given up on life are depicted in the Promethean myth of the fire stolen for mankind and carried by the torchbearer from generation to generation. Unlike the mother, who depended on predictions of the future, they have no particular skills that had equipped them for the mission except from their endurance on the road. "Sooner or later they will catch us and they will kill us" (58). She said before committing suicide. The fire however is given to those who carry on, even if for no apparent reason. The father and the child wake up the next morning and head out on the road after the mother disappears, never to be seen again. They both understand that while she might have been correct, their existence does not result from calculations about right and evil or discussions about the worth of life held with the enthusiasm of philosophers tied to a mental institution wall. They only posted with it, and this toleration becomes a crucial literary allegory of revolution against the ridiculous.

The Road's central topic is the strong relationship. It may be tempting to draw comparisons between the father and the kid crossing the street and the father and the son in Christianity or the biblical account of Isaac's sacrifice, but the decision to give the boy's life in service of a greater ideal is never presented in the novel. The father's wellbeing is strongly intertwined to his son's health and wellbeing, and it is impossible to describe the son's identity without taking their dependency into account. *The Road* not only stresses dependency but also demonstrates that it is a requirement for survival. Due to the father's love and care, there is still a little chance of survival in the cruel society shown in the novel. Only after the world has been destroyed the relationship's full commitment can be imagined. In the modern world, where we decrease the resources of future generations, destroy the planet on which they will have to live, it is unusual to observe a relationship in which a father moves his hand in time with his child's breathing while the two of them hardly ever speak.

In the novel they found many examples of a father's tender attention. "He woke in the dark of the woods in the leaves shivering violently. He sat up and felt about for the boy. He held his hand to the thin ribs. Warmth and movement. Heartbeat" (123). The boy's father watches him while he sleeps, comforts him when he is hungry and cold, and always stands up for him. They go through a godless, silent, and barren area, yet the boy is a gift from God.

> Looking for anything of color. Any movement. Any trace of standing smoke. He lowered the glasses and pulled down the cotton mask from his face and wiped his nose on the back of his wrist and then glassed the country again. Then he just sat there holding the binoculars and watching the ashen daylight congeal over the land. He knew only that

> the child was his warrant. He said: If he is not the word of God God never spoke. (3)

He views the duty to care for his son as a moral responsibility. “My job is to take care of you. I was appointed to do that by God. I will kill anyone who touches you” (80). When the boy falls ill the father provides the boy with the most loving and caring attention.

> He held him all night, dozing off and waking in terror, feeling for the boy’s heart. In the morning he was no better. He tried to get him to drink some juice but he would not. He pressed his hand to his forehead, conjuring up a coolness that would not come. He wiped his white mouth while he slept. I will do what I promised, he whispered. No matter what. I will not send you into the darkness alone. (265)

The father, however, ages and has illness. The author reminds us that if humans are living in another reality, the child would have already started to distance himself from father. Yet he had no other life. The young child asks his dying father to take him along after realizing that he is dying. The father promises that he will always be there for his child, even though this is impossible because the fire must be kept going. “You have to make it like that you imagine. And you’ll hear me. You have to practise. Just don’t give up” (299). The small boy tries so hard. A blanket is placed over the father’s body as he passes away, and he kneels there sobbing. “He cried for a long time. I’ll talk to you every day, he whispered. And I won’t forget. No matter what. Then he rose and turned and walked back out to the road” (306). At the end of the book, a man and a woman emerge from the woods and take the child under their care as they continue the journey. This unexpected outcome is related with the theme

of transgenerational attachment, which survives the death of a father. The commitment of a mortal person is no less comforting than faith in an immortal being therefore the child is still protected. “He tried to talk to God but the best thing was to talk to his father and he did talk to him and he didn’t forget” (306).

However, the father in McCarthy’s story sees the child as an essential part of himself and does not view him as a work to be completed because it is good and righteous. He merely understands that the boy’s life and his own are connected, and that the boy was the only thing keeping him from passing away. He is aware that their survival is not guaranteed and that the mother may have been correct to choose suicide over the uncertain path ahead, but he continues on the journey because he believes that by sharing a life of complete bond with the boy, life will be fully completed. “He sat the boy down and pulled off his shoes and pulled off the dirty rags with which his feet were wrapped. Everything’s okay, he whispered. Everything’s okay” (222). One of the most crucial aspects to be considered in the setting of the twenty-first century is the theme of trans-generational commitment. Although existentialists and other thinkers have not ignored the importance of love and commitment, and people frequently demonstrate these qualities towards one another. However, people really believe that everything is fine when their existence on this planet results in environmental destruction. Despite the fact that McCarthy does not give us any normative standards, his book restrains from ignoring trans-generational commitment as a crucial aspect of our life.

The Road by McCarthy modernises ideas of the rebellion and absurdity in the setting of the early twenty-first century. A timely reminder that life is worth living is provided by the post-apocalyptic story of a father and a child crossing a road and carrying on despite the futility of transcendental hopes, redemptive philosophies, and

virtual reality. This is a crucial reminder in a time when new forms of mass communication threaten to change how people think. The acknowledgment that life is temporary, the preference for existence over essence, the refusal to substitute spinning stories about reality for reality, and a sincere and real commitment to the next generation are the four fundamental themes of absurdity and revolt in McCarthy's novel. Naturally, human life is too complex to fit into a straightforward classification that distinguishes between conscious and unconscious existence. In addition to the authenticity of the rebel who sees the absurdity of life and the captivity brought about by the new media, which undermines our freedom and privacy and confuses superficial interactions with genuine human devotion, there are many other options to take into account.

However, *The Road* helps us understand the importance of assessing each step that take on the road of life in terms of the level of consciousness retains. It would be safer to expect that the current digital revolution will follow all previous technical revolutions in having both favourable and unfavourable social effects. Therefore, as people experience today's revolution, they must constantly reflect on whether they are truly free, creative, committed people or whether they are being misled by a false rhetoric of happiness. People must also consider whether awareness of the world's problems as a result of the deluge of information in the electronic and digital media involves a real effort to solve them. Finally, people must consider whether political affiliations are founded on true civil unity or on unspecific ties.

The following chapter explains the self-driven and the triumphant instincts for keeping alive that ensured the physical as well as the mindful spheres of relocation amidst the blasted landscapes that frame the hopelessness of existence and necessitate struggles for survival.

Chapter Four

Relocation in the Post-Apocalyptic World

The Road by Cormac McCarthy belongs to the travel literature genre particularly knowing how this tradition has developed in American Literature. Destruction and relocation mark the beginning of a man and his son's adventure. Both are looking for a promised land on an American coast and searching for an unclear Southeastern coast believing that would be warmer and brighter. Joseph Campbell, an American psychologist and a mythological researcher who identified several stages that the majority of the story and the myth heroes pass through. The uniqueness of the heroic quest and adventures is known as the monomyth which is the central idea of his work *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1949). It reveals the hero's true nature and journey which derives from a myriad of myths.

The word monomyth is about one's continuous, unavoidable self transformation and rebirth. The monomyth's recurring themes are death and rebirth which represent the passing away of one's old life pattern and emerging into a new situation. Throughout the history heroes tried to restore fertility, peace and renewal to their desolate home through various adventures. By the same token, *The Road* can be classified as post-apocalyptic, horror and travel literature which focuses on the monomyth that depicts the character's journey.

In the literary and cultural traditions of American writing, the road theme has a deep root in history. It is a journey with metaphorical and mythological elements. Therefore, the term 'travel' serves as a unified term for writers who seek independence, mobility, and exploration in unknown areas. The unnamed characters, incidents, and places in the novel *The Road* provide the work a global significance. It

explains the journey taken by the unnamed man and his son toward the coast which might occur at anytime, anywhere. In the same way, it also represents a journey within oneself in search of understanding and knowledge.

The Road narrates the story of a father and his son on a quest to find the coast while traveling a wasteland. They have a quest across the road, which is focused on the reason for their survival. According to the same idea, the notion of the quest which every hero must complete was the monomyth's central theme. "All in quest for the essence of Truth and Wholeness in life and beyond that, for that which can light the dark again" (Campbell 14). The father's quest will follow this similarity through Campbell's pattern, the adventure of the hero. McCarthy's quest is situated in a modern environment, which may be different from the mythological and the classical contexts.

In this novel, the road signifies a change of the man and his son's daily life in an unknown area. "When he woke in the woods in the dark and the cold of the night he'd reach out to touch the child sleeping beside him. Nights dark beyond darkness and the days more gray each one than what he had gone before" (1). The novel begins with the world of pitch-black streets, desolate waste areas, and barren woodlands. Because the end of the world has already occurred but there is no warning from the before world. As a result, the man's adventure begins in the post-apocalyptic wasteland, where he and the boy have to go through certain steps in order to reach the stage of departure.

The father finds himself unable to withstand another winter in his post-apocalyptic village after the unidentified disaster a nuclear holocaust which caused a nuclear winter on earth. So he travelled to the South for this reason in the hope of

finding a warmer climate that will increase the chance of his family to survive. Campbell outlines the following context, “Typical of the circumstances of the call are the dark forest, the great tree, the babbling spring, and the loathly, underestimated appearance of the carrier of the power of destiny” (47). Campbell also embodies the fatal, the remote, and the dangerous nature of the area. McCarthy’s setting is equally barren, silent, and devoid of spirits and it is known as the wasted region which characterised by the ashen scabland and the barren woods, as well as by the blackness that prevades it on all sides. A man with limited supplies faces difficulties in such situations. In addition to the two bullets he is saving to kill himself and his son if they ever come into contact with the cannibals’ danger. Thus the hero denotes a crucial moment that might either push their journey forward or pull it backward.

The hero faces the harsh realities of the existing circumstance and offers a tough, frequently dangerous opportunity to get out of it. The adventure will either come to an end if he rejects the call, or the hero will only become a target for action.

> Refusal of the summons converts the adventure into its negative. Walled in boredom, hard work, or ‘culture,’ the subject loses the power of significant affirmative action and becomes a victim to be saved. His flowering world becomes a wasteland of dry stones and his life feels meaningless…. (Campbell 52)

In *The Road*, the man remembers his wife’s refusal to travel with them. Instead of being grateful to her family’s continued survival, she seeks for her husband and son to die with her.

> We’re survivors he told her across the flame of the lamp.
>
> Survivors? She said.

> Yes.
>
> What in the God's name are you talking about? We're not survivors. We're the walking dead in a horror film. (57)

The wife not only remembers the days when the disaster occurred, but she also blames her husband for being unable to safeguard the family in the future, saying that he cannot protect them. After stating these words, he became confused since he cannot leave his wife easily. But he has to live to protect and secure the future of his son that is the only thing holding him from death.

The adventure was made constant by the particular reason for the husband and wife's survival. The wife believes that the idea of surviving is a meaningless goal. "Sooner or later they will catch us and they will kill us. They will rape me. They'll rape him. They are going to rape us and kill us and eat us and you won't face it, you'd rather wait for it to happen" (58). She states that she plans to kill herself because she is so terrified of the cannibals. The father is ready to face the harsh situation because he is seeking for meaning and had a quest to fulfill. As a result, the adventure officially starts when the father accepts the call. His refusal to take his own life and his rejection of the call to adventure indicate that he is actively working toward destruction. Campbell addressed:

> The myth and the folk tales of the whole world make clear that the refusal is essentially a refusal to give up what one takes to be one's own interest. The future is regarded not in terms of an unremitting scries of deaths and births, but as though one's present system of ideals, virtues, goals and advantages were to be fixed and made secure. (55)

The phrase ‘crossing the threshold’ can also mean entering the unknown. In this phase, the hero enters a new world full of danger which is the fuel of his adventure. Campbell described this stage as, “The Adventure is always and everywhere a passage beyond the veil of the known into the unknown; the powers that watch at the boundary are dangerous; to deal with them is risky; yet for anyone with competence and courage the danger fades” (82).

The father wakes up in the gloomy woodland just by entering to the strange new world, leaving behind the humanity and morals of the past world, which may never appear again. The lack of food threatened them and could make it difficult for them to survive. They have to travel through mountains but they don’t have sufficient food. According to Campbell's model, the hero has already passed the threshold and he gets more involved in the journey.

> Instead of passing outward, beyond the confines of the visible world, the hero goes inward, to be born again. The disappearance corresponds to the passing of a worshiper into a temple- where he is to be quickened by the recollection of who and what he is, namely dust and ashes unless immoral (84).

Cannibal groups are searching for human meat on the road to feed their hunger. In order to protect himself and his son from the dark new world, the protagonist was armed with a pistol and two bullets. If they discover cannibals, he can use the weapons to shoot the boy and then himself before being eaten by them. The road can easily assume that the man and the boy are both good guys and that they make effort to stay away from the evil guys.

He turned and looked. He looked like he'd been crying.

Just tell me.

We wouldn't ever eat anybody, would we?

No. Of course not.

Even if we were starving?

We are starving now.

You said we weren't

I said we weren't dying. I didn't say we weren't starving.

But we wouldn't.

No. we wouldn't.

No matter what.

No. No matter what.

Because we're the good guys.

Yes.

And we're carrying the fire.

And we're carrying the fire. Yes. (136)

The man and his son were threatened by the bad guys.

Two more days. Then three. They were starving right enough. The country was looted, ransacked, ravaged. Rifled of every crumb. The nights were blinding cold and casket black and the long reach of the morning had a terrible silence to it. Like a dawn before battle. The boy's candle colored skin was all but translucent. With his great staring eyes he'd the look of an alien. (136-137)

They were on the verge of extinction due to lack of water and food. The food supplies that are still available from the old world remain insufficient for survival. As soon as they walked into a deceased grocery, they discovered some old beans, broken soda machines, and coins in the heap of ash that were worthless in the destroyed country. The natural sources of food and water are also no longer able to meet the needs of the individual. There were no living things anywhere and the trees beside the lakes are also found dead.

Further, the man's post-apocalyptic world has memories of his pre-apocalyptic past. The man and his son went to the house where he grew up forty years ago. He recalls spending great Christmas and winter nights with his sisters. The father's home, where he would no longer find his childhood belongings that has fallen to the calamity. He expresses regrets for going to the house saying that they shouldn't visit the house. The old world, which was the only thing in the man's memories, begins to fade from his mind. In addition to forgetting the past, he gives new names to the things he forgets. On the other hand, a father might occasionally remember and share with his son some old stories of courage and justice. Since he did not grow up in the pre-apocalyptic world, the son was preoccupied with the future fantasies. So, the father's struggles to remember the past were bringing back those days before the end of the world that have been lost to time.

The father was generally burdened and confused by his memories and past. This is due to the fact that he combines two different universes. The man compared his childhood saying that was the perfect days when he was happy and free. Now the days will be used to reshape all future days in light of his son's dark days. McCarthy then highlights the passing of the old world through memories. As a result, the past and history have little bearing on how people will survive after the end of the world.

The only things that memories can communicate are confusing facts and absurd visions. After a long travel the father's health condition becomes worse and he is really sick. "All moments of anxiety reproduce painful feelings of the first separation from the mother, the tightening of the breath, congestion of the blood, etc., of the crisis of birth. Conversely, all the moments of separation and new birth produce anxiety" (Campbell 47).

Correspondingly, it revealed that the father is feeling physically low after leaving his hometown. He is most likely experiencing anxiety as a result of leaving his house, his deceased wife behind and travelling down an uncharted path. The father is in the midst of difficulties, to sum up this phase of the adventure. He faces the threatening of the bad guys, the reduction of supplies, the agony of past memories, and the bad health conditions. Due to the combination of these elements, he is forced to choose between swallowing the difficulty and gaining power over it.

The man and his son met an elderly man named Ely in the road. It was the first time the father had his lengthy conversation with someone other than his son. The length of their conversation indicates that the father was trying to build up trust with someone in the wasteland. The father also invites Ely to join them around the campfire and share their meal. His confidence thus represents a turning point in the journey. Ely declares that there is no God in light of the supernatural aid. This statement arouses the man's belief, and his response shows that he does not believe in God. In another case, the father agrees with the boy to share their food with Ely. The elderly man wonders, maybe the boy believes in God. In response, the father said he wasn't sure what he believed in. However, deep within the father's mind, he realises that his son has values which help them survive their life from the dark world.

The boy was seen by the old man as a sign of hope for a better future. Ely never imagined that he would see a child once again. He even believes that the boy is having a blessed character rather than a kind one. The meeting with the supernatural being leads the father to rediscover his faith in God. Additionally, he assures that his son is protected by a moral standard that would allow him to maintain his virtue and survival. The elderly man also reminds that they are not travelling alone in the dark gloomy world.

In *The Road*, the father tries to find a balance between varieties of poles. For example, he is very kind to his son but he will kill him if they came upon cannibals. He might act in this way out of love and duty since his son is his entire world. As a result, the father was forced to face the situation and even go beyond human limitations. Another incident before meeting Ely, the man has never got into a conversation with a stranger. Because he starts to develop trust with someone other than his son, the father changes from the state of an introvert to an extrovert. Eventually, the father attempts to swallow his sorrow and not to bother his son. In front of his son, he acts as though everything is normal considering his difficult health situation. “He woke coughing and walked out so as not to wake the child. Following a stone wall in the dark, wrapped in his blanket, kneeling in the ashes like a penitent. He coughed till he could taste the blood and he said her name aloud. He thought perhaps he’d said it in his sleep” (56). As a result, he has to balance his physical suffering with his inner determination to continue on the path of struggles.

The hero strives for a reward after finishing his quest, which can be a kingdom or the Holy Grail. Knowledge or discovery however, produces the largest growth. In *The Road*, the father’s child serves as both his death warrant and his only lifeline. Therefore the man seeks to survive in order to protect his son, who is believed to be

the word of God. “He said: If he is not the word of God God never spoke” (3). Therefore, the goal and reward must be the boy’s safety throughout the journey. At the end, the father encourages his son to hold onto hope and continue to survive because he is a fire bearer.

> You have to carry the fire.
>
> I don’t know how to.
>
> Yes you do.
>
> Is it real? The fire?
>
> Yes it is.
>
> Where is it? I don’t know where it is.
>
> Yes you do. It’s inside you. It was always there. I can see it. (298)

The boy’s carrying the fire represents a growing civilization and a continuous code of ethics held by him in a wasted land which is a part of emotions and intelligence. Even though the father could not sustain his physical survival he managed to ensure the son’s physical and moral survival before he passed away. The son realises that he carries the fire. In order to fulfill the monomyth standard, the hero must return to his community after completing his adventure. However, *The Road* departs from Campbell’s rule because the father dies before he returns. The guy fulfills his mission in response to his wife’s statement that he cannot survive on his own, and he protects the boy’s life during the journey. In the novel *The Road*, the boy is a positive omen, as he provides hope for a future human existence.

McCarthy provides insight into a world after a catastrophe through the fictional events of the book. Since the nature of the calamity is never specified in the book, it is possible that it is either a divine punishment or a result of human

behaviour. In the disaster, survivors who live inside *The Road* are always looking for food and shelter to meet their most basic requirements. They are also looking for a meaning and a purpose. Each of these characters creates a survival plan while searching. The good characters, the unidentified man and his son, struggle physically and mentally as they seek for better living circumstances. Human cannibalism, environmental changes, and physical and psychological hurdles are all tied to man's desire to live.

One of the major aspects addressed in McCarthy's book is the place of morality in a society where violence, meaninglessness, and social order have vanished and where human mistake, greed, and evilness have risen to dominance. The father in *The Road* represents the values of the old world because he brought those values with him into the post-apocalyptic world. His decision to avoid the cannibal is a method of survival and it is a way of success to upholding the moral norms of the old society. However, in another sense, he struggles to uphold these morals while teaching his child about them.

In the book, the protagonist runs against obstacles that cause him to question his goodness. For instance, they met a man on the way who is about to die. The son wants to help him but his father didn't allow him to help the man who is in critical condition. Then the father explains his son why he is being so rude to him "I'm sorry, he said. But we have nothing to give him. We have no way to help him. I'm sorry for what happened to him but we can't fix it" (52). Later the man told his son "He's going to die. We can't share what we have or we'll die too." (53). Although the man's behaviour appears to be very egotistic and selfish, it is somewhat understandable due to the conditions of the food shortage. However, defending the father's actions might encourage other wrongdoing, which would corrupt the good guys' moral code.

The father and the son would decide whether to accept help or hold onto their supplies in order to ensure their own survival each time they face someone on the road, such as a dog, a little child, an elderly guy, a thief, etc. The father is also forced to decide between his and his son's requests for help from others using their moral ideals and their limited means amidst the harsh realities of the world. The act of providing would be ineffective in their struggle for survival if they continue to uphold the old world's moral codes. It's unclear whether religion plays a role in McCarthy's *The Road*. The father often states that there is a doubt about God's existence. Whether the father's son is the word of God or whether there is no God at all. When he tries to communicate to him, the father's doubt regarding the existence of a Lord is displayed in another scene, "Are you there? He whispered. Will I see you at the last? Have you a neck by which to throttle you? Have you a heart? Damn you eternally have you a soul? Oh God, he whispered. Oh God" (10).

Even if the father continues to distrust God, some of the events show that God not only exists but also supports the father and the son in their struggle for survival. One of these tragedies has occurred when a man and his child are about to starve to death and come across an underground bunker filled with food. Later the child came across a house in the distance that contains food as they were once again facing death by starvation. These incidents reflect God's miracles or they may be the chance or luck. The father sees his son as, "He sat beside him and stroked his pale and tangled hair. Golden chalice, good to house a god" (78). And the man considers his son's survival as the top priority.

The father is aware of the hopeless situation, yet he continuously tries to convince his wife and himself that there is some sort of purpose to their daily difficulties. Though he tells his wife that they are survivors, she finds her life

meaningless. While the father has a different perspective on life that makes him fight to live through his quest for the meaning of life and his enduring bonds with his child, which is another way to express his love for his son. They camped near a waterfall and the father tries to teach his boy how to swim.

> The boy was standing in the pool to his waist, holding his shoulders and hopping up and down. The man went back and got him. He held him and floated him about, the boy gasping and chopping at the water. You're doing good, the man said. You're doing good (39).

In one of his memories, the father insists that life has a meaning that is based on bounded relationships. He recalls the story from his childhood that he and his uncle sail around a lake all day looking for one piece of firewood. They do not communicate. According to the man, it is the best day of his childhood. Even though his uncle barely communicates to him, he considered it as a wonderful day.

The chance allows both of them to share their strong bonds while working on the same task, the uncle is teaching the man all he knows, and the guy is being motivated by his uncle's work which is the secret to their greatness. This is how the perfect day is created and this is how people's lives are built. The father and the son have a strong bond despite the terrible terrors they both experienced. The strong bond gives their life purpose and worth, and it continues to motivate them to fight for survival. For them, every day is a victory, a day when they achieve something meaningful and valuable.

> The day providential to itself. The hour. There is no later. This is later. All things of grace and beauty such that one holds them to one's heart

> have a common provenance in pain. Their birth in grief and ashes. So, he whispered to the sleeping boy. I have you. (56)

Every day the father spends time with his son is like the perfect day he remembers from his childhood.

In his masterpiece *The Road*, McCarthy depicted a civilization in crisis. A wasteland was ruled by the worst aspects of human nature. Selfishness, violence, and the darkest social customs have all made significant contributions to the fictional events in the story. He used the travel narratives and end of the world scenarios in his writing to highlight the violent aspect of human nature, but he has also focused primarily on the positive and the caring side of humanity. “My job is to take care of you. I was appointed to do that by God. I will kill anyone who touches you” (80). The father’s love toward his child is fueled by his main role as a protector, instructor, and life supports provider. His primary responsibility is to maintain safety against the dangers and the brutality of the modern world. Unlike his wife, who chooses to end her life, the father decides to survive so that he can give his child a hope to live. His desire is to protect his son from the threats that the humanity faces and the destruction that it brings. If the child had faced actual danger, according to him, the only option left to him would be suicide.

The father’s love for his son pushes him to ensure the boy’s survival. The power of this devotion is frequently displayed by the father, most visibly in his direct intention to shoot and kill the man who attacks the boy’s life. From the beginning of the journey until the end, the man does not kill to expose harm or for food. He attacked others only when they put his son’s life in danger. It appears that his son’s security is the primary motive for his concern while dealing with others. The man has

frequently shown his son how much he loves him. On one occasion, while he is near death, he instructs him to take his share of the food rather than saving it for himself in the hope of recovering. Another instance is the variety of gifts the father bought for his kid, including a Coke can, a powdered drink mix, and other presents. These small things that the father has given to his son reflect another aspect of the affection he has for him.

The setting of *The Road* is a post-apocalyptic wasteland where the needs justify the action. Some survivors are so desperate that they join gangs of tattooed and bearded cannibals who are looking for human flesh to eat in order to survive. These cannibals have reptilian calculations in their cold, shifty eyes. Eating the flesh of other people is referred to as cannibalism. There are two varieties of cannibalism; the first is necro-cannibalism, which involves consuming a deceased person's corpse. The second kind is homicidal cannibalism, which involves eating the flesh of the living people. The first type is viewed as supernatural and hopeless, whereas the second type is seen as a crime. The father and the son find a house where cannibals are keeping, mistreating, and eventually eating victims, a horrible scene about the behaviour of the cannibals. The terrifying scene shows the futility of the father's attempt to live honestly in a corrupt environment.

According to the boy in *The Road*, he and his father are the good guys. The boy has proposed that he and his father lend help to everyone they meet throughout the novel. The boy has adopted the traditional values that his father taught him through his stories. He frequently offers to help other survivors and showing his belief in human goodness. The child constantly stresses the existence of other good people, but the father appears not to exist in his ethical universe.

> And nothing bad is going to happen to us.
>
> That's right.
>
> Because we're carrying the fire.
>
> Yes. Because we're carrying the fire. (87)

This statement has a lot of meaning. It has motivated the child to continue his quest for survival. By repeatedly telling his son that they are carrying the fire, the father offers his son encouragement. There are numerous ways to interpret the term 'fire.' Literally, the father and the son are carrying the fire or the tools necessary to begin it. The fire cooks their food, keeps them warm, and gives the father light at night so that he can read stories to his son.

From a broader perspective, fire serves as both the foundation of civilisation and the first tool for its destruction in *The Road*. Perhaps spreading the flames is like spreading the seeds of civilization. The boy's effort will be necessary if civilisation is to return to the universe. The boy is the flame-bearer, as shown in the novel's last events, when the father is in deathbed, the son asked him whether the fire was real. The father says yes, and when the boy inquires as to where it is, he said it's inside you. It has always existed and is clearly visible.

According to another interpretation, the fire is life. The fire is life in its full passion to live. The bearer of this fire must have this eagerness to live. It is the father's responsibility to fire the flame of a boy's spirit, according to the Bible. In the book, McCarthy refers God to the father himself. The father who is willing to make the ultimate sacrifice for his son is God. Every individual possesses the spirit of God, which indicates that everyone has fire within them. Cormac McCarthy urges everyone to continue carrying the flame till the world of nothingness prevails.

Every phase of the adventure shows the protagonists' struggle to find the means and purposes necessary for survival. For instance, the father is upset that his wife chooses not to travel with them. In addition, she refuses to live any longer because she believes that surviving means to put an end to her life. Enlightenment is another similarity between McCarthy's travel and Campbell's journey in the monomyth. In other words, the ultimate purpose of each adventure is to expose the darkness that surrounds them, discover purpose in life, and advance one's spirituality. For instance, the father's motivation for undertaking the journey is to create a strong connection with his child and to ensure the safety of his child. Additionally, they are carrying fire on their journey, which stands for the seeds of civilization, fertility, and life. As a result, the fire represents life, particularly the life of the boy who represents the journey's reward.

The final chapter sums up the previous chapters and the entire dissertation.

Chapter Five

Summation

Literature is viewed as valuable writing that shows creative form and expressions. Theoretically, contemporary literature portrays current events, technological improvements and a community with both refined and unrefined behaviours. It shows religious devotions, glorifies national pride, and teaches particular political, social, or artistic points of views. The history of the nation that gives rise to American literature has an impact on it. By the end of the nineteenth century, it has established itself as one of the world's major powers, and its success is connected to that of other countries. Following these battles, it ultimately becomes involved in two world wars, the Crises of Europe and the East Asia Conflict. During this time, major changes in people's lives brought about by advances in science and industry as well as alterations in people's attitudes and feelings. As these contributory factors are rapidly changing, the flow of the contemporary literature is fluid as well. It also has an impact on other forms of media such as theatre, film, music, dance and arts etc.

Contemporary American literature not only brings out issues with cultural inequalities but also allows them to flourish within the narrative. Western concepts define modern literature as writings developed after World War II. Modern literature tends to be reactionary. The writers typically respond to what is happening around them, and occasionally they even take a position against it. Ironically, modern literature reflects a society's economic, social, individual opinions, and commentary, as well as current lifestyle, cultural, and fashion trends. Other mediums, like theatre, film, music, dance, and the arts, among others are impacted by it. The author's point

of view is expressed in contemporary writing, which also challenges historical perspectives and presents alternative viewpoints side by side. After World War II, people start to have various perspectives on the world. As a result, modern literature took a different perspective on the circumstance. They started to think there is no point to existence. A few more problems that need to be overcome in modern society are corruption, poverty, racial and ethnic concerns, and climate change.

Contemporary American literature occasionally discusses immigrants or their descendants, technical challenges, and the ways in which American culture is profoundly established. Thomas Pynchon, Philip Roth, Don Delillo, and Cormac McCarthy are some of the well-known American authors who have contributed some of literature's best masterpieces. Cormac McCarthy's plays, screenplays, novels, and short stories focus on independent people living in the rural South of America, he writes in the Southern Gothic subgenre. Dark violence, subversive prose, and stylistic complexity are also present. He primarily dealt with the western, post-apocalyptic, and south gothic genres in these writings. Some of his famous works are *The Orchard Keeper, Outer Dark, Child of God, All the Pretty Horses, Blood Meridian, Suttree, The Sunset Limited*,etc. And he also received awards such as William Faulkner Foundation Award, National Book Critics Circle Award, U.S National Book Award, Academy Awards, Ingram Merrill Award.

The reason for Cormac McCarthy's fame is his particular writing style, which uses less punctuation and depicts violent scenes in graphic detail. Because of these qualities, he gained fame as an American author. The Santa Fe Institute, which contains a wide range of academic departments and research facilities, is where he currently works. And in 2017, this organization released his article "The Kekule Problem." It explores the development of language and consciousness in humans. In

addition, Harold Bloom, a literary critic named him one of the four finest living authors and William Faulkner has been compared to him in terms of writing style. The PEN American Center then awarded him with the Saul Bellow Award in 2009. Cormac McCarthy's distinct writing style is highlighted by the gothic and graphic violent content he portrays. Additionally, he concentrates on utilising only the necessary punctuation. His writing is significantly influenced by his personal experiences. He doesn't use punctuation or pauses in his sentences since he thinks they are unnecessary. He avoids using any punctuation at all, even when using quotation marks to separate dialogue, because he thinks that these marks leave strange little traces on the text.

McCarthy's conversations generally lack consistency because there are no punctuation marks to separate them, yet they are still understandable. He rejects the traditional writing style in preference of being direct and employing vivid language to convey his ideas. He makes it apparent in his speech that he prefers colloquialism over formal language as a result. He does not make himself a slave to rules of punctuation, grammar, or spelling. He also doesn't set any restrictions on the usage of word categories. He was nominated for membership in the American Philosophical Society in 2012. The two upcoming publications *The Passenger* and *Stella Maris* will be released on 25th October and 22nd November of 2022, respectively.

A global catastrophe that results in widespread death and social damage is the issue of the post-apocalyptic literary genre, which examines how people respond to it. The consequences of a nuclear war, a deadly virus, a zombie uprising, a natural disaster, or an alien invasion all could have an impact in the setting of post-apocalyptic fiction. It is frequently more important for survivors to adjust to their new lives in the altered world than it is to understand what caused the disaster. The fall of

morality, survival, the value of human connection, and the certainty of death were the themes that post-apocalyptic fiction addresses most frequently. *The Road*, a well-known example of a post-apocalyptic book was first published in 2006 and then turned into a movie in 2009. And in 2007, it received a Pulitzer Prize. The novel *The Road* portrays the father and the kid who are travelling together and battling for survival are the primary features of the story. The man wants to make sure that his son is safe before he passes away because he is aware of his death. The book dealt with human relationships and the extent to which people will go for a loved one, even when society as a whole is unable to heal.

A trip to El Paso, Texas in 2003 by McCarthy and his young son served as the inspiration for the book *The Road*. While thinking about his son, he saw fires on the hill and pictured what the city may look like in fifty to one hundred years. He took some initial notes, but he didn't revisit it until he was in Ireland a few years later. Following that, he got the inspiration for the book right away. He finished it in approximately six weeks and then presented it to his son, John Francis McCarthy.

A father and his son move to the southern shore in search of a warmer place to spend the rest of their lives. Catastrophic events that destroyed civilization and burnt the entire world environment occurred and the son has never seen the sun, moon, stars, or actual creatures. Father and son have a strong emotional connection and commitment to one another. Their strategy for surviving depends on their constant movement along the road as they search through the destruction of abandoned homes, farms, and towns for food, clothing, and supplies. The father and son come across people from all aspects of humanity, from the good to the evil, as they travel to south across the cold, gloomy landscape. In a world where the future is destroyed along

with the past, they fight to preserve memories and values that are losing more and more of their significance.

The father and son travel through the mountains dragging a grocery cart that is filled with all of their supplies, including food, tools, blankets, and knapsacks to keep them occupied. The father coughs up blood because of a worsening respiratory problem. Other survivors turn to evil while the father and the son calmly search what is left for food. Due to the lack of technology, crops, and animals, cannibalism has spread widely. Road gangs and cults hunt other travelers and hold women as slaves to produce their babies as food. The father keeps the final two bullets in his pistol for himself and his son, who are continuously on the search for the dangerous barbarians. They fight against danger and hunger to discover the treasures left by those who made future plans. His son sees a plantation house in the middle of large farm fields that produces an abundance of food and hygienic comforts. The house is visible in the ashen mist. A farmhouse with an abundantly stocked underground bomb shelter provides a refuge when most needed. The father's life is saved by a first aid package and a flare pistol found in the sailboat disaster.

The father and the son's characters are shaped by their experiences on the road, which test their toughness. When he senses danger, the father turns shooting a road agent who is holding his son's throat in knife and denying food to the needy individuals they encounter. The son grows in kindness as he becomes aware of other people's needs. He expresses his sorrow for a man attacked by lightning, a prisoner holding facility where individuals are kept as food, a lonely elderly man travelling alone, a deceased child, and a robber with a damaged right hand. The son wants to rescue a small child who is his mirror image when he sees him.

The father's health has been weakened by the travel when the father and son finally arrive at the coast. He makes a promise to his son that he would never leave him, but as he lies dying, he betrays that promise because he lacks the courage to shoot his son while he is still alive with one of the two bullets that are left in his pistol. The son asks the father what he will do without him, lost and alone. In his last words to his son, the father tells him that goodness will find him. The son sits with his father for three days while covering his body with blankets. He then turns around and walks back toward the road holding the gun.

A man approaches him from the opposite direction and kneels down in front of him. The man inquires with the son whether he saw the boy with his father. The son replies, that his father has now passed away. The gentleman extends an invitation to the son to join him, with his wife, and their two kids. When the son inquires about the man's standards, the man responds that they are those of good people who do not harm others. The son grieves for a long time next to his dead father before leaving with the man after the man wraps the father's body in a blanket. The wife gives the boy loving arms as she expresses her happiness that he has joined them.

The study deals with Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*: A Study of the Reminiscence and the Existential Quest in the Post-Apocalyptic World. It has given insight on how Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* portrays memory, experience, and language in the post apocalyptic world, with special attention paid to the perplexing interaction between the man and the boy. The man and the boy are alienated from one another because of their dissimilar pasts. The man is at odds with himself because the boy doesn't connect with his memories of the old world the way the boy does, he clings to the past despite how painful it is and he wants to forget the past. Despite his best efforts, he comes to the realization that he cannot separate the past from the

present. As a result, he is compelled to face his past and all of the things he has lost. The son seems calm with the stories the dad tells him by using the word ‘okay.’ But the world before the catastrophe is blurry and alien to him, trying to understand the meaning of the past makes him feel extremely uneasy and uncomfortable.

The novel’s writing style is remarkable in many ways and strikes a balance between a simple and complex writing style. The novel *The Road* leaves blanks for the reader to fill in, balances simple and complex terminology, avoids some contractions and quote marks, and occasionally has a confused and complex narration. The overwhelming impression readers get is one of profound detachment, which is how both the son and the man feel about everything. In *The Road*, memory and experience are crucial and closely related because the story relies on the reader’s integration of personal memories and connotations to make sense of the post-apocalyptic reality. Thus, the book is transformed into an ironic work that shows the deep relationships between memory, language, and meaning creation, regardless which kind of world readers attempt to construe.

The Road develops a concept of absurdity and insurrection for the early twenty-first century. The post-apocalyptic tale of a father and a child crossing a road and continuing despite the hopelessness of spiritual hopes, healing ideas, and virtual reality serves as a timely reminder that life is worth living. This is an important point to make at a time when new mass communication technologies pose a threat to impact how people think. The four primary themes of absurdity and revolt in McCarthy’s novel are the recognition that life is temporary, the choice for existence above meaning, the unwillingness to take reality for fiction, and a sincere and genuine devotion to the upcoming century. It offers practical guidelines for assessing existing life in both the public and private realms. Naturally, the complexity of human life

limits a simple classification that separates conscious from unconscious existence. There are numerous additional possibilities to consider in addition to the sincerity of the rebel who observes the absurdity of life and the imprisonment brought about by the new media, which compromises freedom and privacy and confused superficial connections with sincere human devotion.

The Road, on the other side, draws attention to the necessity of assessing each step that take on the road of life in terms of the level of consciousness that maintain. A qualifying language that has no resemblance to the language of previous ideologies is used to accompany the massive adoption of communication technologies into society and culture today. The willingness of communication researchers to prematurely attribute social values like freedom, democracy, and civic engagement to new communication technologies is related to that of public intellectuals who serves as fellow travelers of these ideologies. This serves the producers and marketers of these technologies.

It would be safer to expect that the current digital revolution will follow every major technology revolution in the past by having both positive and bad social implications. Therefore, experience of today's revolution constantly reflects on whether they are truly free, creative, committed individuals or whether they are being mislead by a false rhetoric of happiness. People must also consider whether awareness of the world's problems as a result of the deluge of information in the electronic and digital media involves a real attempt to solve them. Finally, it must consider whether political affiliations are found on accurate civil unity or on tenuous ties. By making the readers to think about these themes in the contemporary world, *The Road* shows the contribution of the literary imagination to existentialist thought.

The novel also examines there is a connection between the hero's quest for adventure and the necessity of survival. The protagonists' struggle to discover the means and the purpose for their existence is evident at every level of the trip. For instance, the father feels upset with his wife for choosing not to travel. Her refusal to continue living also indicates how she views surviving and the fact that it means ending her existence in her eyes. Understanding is another similarity between McCarthy's journey and Campbell's journey in the monomyth. In other words, the ultimate purpose of every journey is to illuminate the darkness that surrounds them, discover purpose in life, and advance one's spirituality. For instance, the father's motivation for undertaking the trip is to build a solid bond with his kid and to ensure the safety of his child. Additionally, they are carrying fire on their journey, which stands for the seeds of civilization, fertility, and life. The son queries whether the fire is indeed there during their final discussion. Consequently, the fire represents life, particularly the life of the boy which represents the greatest achievement of the journey.

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ANNEXURE

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Existence in an Unknown Crisis in Cormac McCrathy's *The Road*

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Abstract:

The Pulitzer Prize winning novel, *'The Road'* by American writer Cormac McCarthy published in 2006. It is a post- apocalyptic novel which mainly focused on a global disaster that causes numerous death and destruction of society. The novel, *'The Road'* sets in an unidentified area somewhere in the US at some point after what is implied to have been a nuclear war. It focused on an unnamed father and his son who are travelling together and fighting to survive. The man is aware of his death, so he wants to make sure that his son is safe before he dies. The paper "Existence in an Unknown Crisis" explains the father's love towards his son, struggle they faces while moving towards the coast and how the father endure his son to continue his journey to sustain his life.

Keywords: Survival, Struggle, Post-Apocalyptic, Disaster.

One of the prolific figures among the American writers is Cormac McCarthy, born in Providence, Rhode Island. In 1951, Cormac enrolled in the University of Tennessee as a liberal art major after graduating from Knoxville's Catholic High School. He joined in the US Air Force in 1993 and spent four years in Alaska. In 1957 Cormac returned to the University of Tennessee and there he published two stories, *The Phoenix*

under the name C. J. McCarthy in the students' literary magazine. He received Ingram Merrill Award for the two stories, *Wake for Susan* and *A Drowning Incident* which was published in 1959 and 1960 respectively. Some of his famous works are *Child of God, Blood Meridian, All the Pretty Horses, No Country for Old Men,* etc.

The writing of Cormac McCarthy includes novels, short stories, screenwriting and plays. He writes in the Southern Gothic genre with independent characters located in the rural South of America. McCarthy includes dark violence, dense prose and stylistic complexity in his works. Cormac wrote ten novels, two screenplays, three short stories and two plays. Western, post- apocalyptic and south gothic was the three main genres that the author deals within his works. Cormac McCarthy's fame was based on his distinctive style which includes fewer punctuation and graphic violence in his writing. He becomes one of the remarkable American writers because of these features. After beginning his literary career with great success, he travelled to South west America to obtain more exposure for his literary works. Then he currently works for the Santa Fe Institute which contains a number of different academic department research facilities. And this institute published his article "The Kekule Problem" in 2017. It traces the history of human consciousness and language. He also listed as one of the four greatest living writers by the literary Critic Harold Bloom and his writing style has been compared to William Faulkner. Then he received Saul Bellow Award by the PEN American Center in 2009.

Cormac McCarthy's unique style is characterized by the way he creates gothic and graphic pictures of violence. Additionally, he focuses himself on using only the required punctuation. His biographical experiences having a major influence on his writing. Since he believes that they are unnecessary and he doesn't use punctuation or

pauses in his sentences. The term 'Polysyndeton' refers to a use of conjunctions in place of punctuation. Cormac claimed in an interview that he does not use semicolons and prefers short, assertive sentences. He also utilizes capital letters, colons and periods. Because he believes that these punctuations leave strange little marks on the paper so he avoids using punctuation entirely even when separating dialogue with quotation marks.

In most cases, Cormac's dialogues typically lack consistency because there are no punctuation marks to divide them but they still make sense. He is a confident writer who avoids using the traditional writing style in favor of being straightforward and using vivid language to express his ideas. As a result, he speaks clearly that he prefers colloquialism to formal language. In 2012, he was elected to the American Philosophical Society. *The Passenger* and *Stella Maris* are the two upcoming books which will be released on October 25 and November 22 respectively in 2022.

Post –apocalyptic is a literary genre which explores how individuals react to a global disaster that causes numerous death and destruction of society. Although the specific nature of the disaster might take different forms, this kind of massive disaster is the most typical apocalypse definition used in post- apocalyptic fiction. The setting of the post- apocalyptic fiction can be the consequence of a nuclear conflict, a deadly virus, a zombie uprising, a natural calamity or an alien invasion. Often the survivor's ability to adopt their new lives in the world that has changed more crucial than the disaster's actual cause.

The most common themes that addresses in the post-apocalyptic fiction was the breakdown of morality, survival, and the importance of human connection and the

inevitability of death. A famous example for the post-apocalyptic novel was *The Road* which was originally published in 2006 and later it was adapted into a film in 2009. And it received a Pulitzer Prize in 2007. The story was set in an unidentified location somewhere in the US at some point after what is implied to have been a nuclear war. It focused on an unnamed father and his son who are travelling together and fighting to survive. The man is aware of his death, so he wants to make sure that his son was safe before he dies.

McCarthy provides insight into a world after a catastrophe through the fictional events of the book. Since the nature of the calamity is never specified in the book, it is possible that it is either a divine punishment or a result of human behavior. In the disaster, survivors who live inside *The Road* are always looking for food and shelter to meet their most basic requirements. They are also looking for a meaning and purpose. Each of these characters creates a survival plan while searching. The good characters, the unidentified man and his son, struggle physically and mentally as they seek for better living circumstances. Human cannibalism, environmental changes, and physical and psychological hurdles are all tied to man's desire to live.

One of the major aspects addressed in McCarthy's book is the place of morality in a society where violence, meaninglessness, and social order have vanished and where human mistake, greed, and evilness have risen to dominance. The father in *The Road* represents the values of the old world because he brought those values with him into the post-apocalyptic world. His decision to avoid cannibal is a method of survival and it is a way of success to upholding the moral norms of the old society. However, in another sense, he struggles to uphold these morals while teaching his child about them.

In the book, the protagonist runs against obstacles that cause him to question his goodness. For instance, they met a man on the way who is about to die. The son wants to help him but his father didn't allow him to help the man who is in critical condition. Then the father explains his son why he is being so rude to him "I'm sorry, he said. But we have nothing to give him. We have no way to help him. I'm sorry for what happened to him but we can't fix it" (52). Later the man told his son "He's going to die. We can't share what we have or we'll die too." (53). Although the man's behavior appears to be very egotistic and selfish, it is somewhat understandable due to the conditions of the food shortage. However, defending the father's actions might encourage other wrongdoing, which would corrupt the good guys' moral code.

The father and son would decide whether to accept help or hold onto their supplies in order to ensure their own survival each time they face someone on the road, such as a dog, a little child, an elderly guy, a thief, etc. The father is also forced to decide between his and his son's requests for help from others using their moral ideals and the harsh realities of the world. Then the act of providing would be ineffective, since upholding the old world's moral codes. It's unclear whether religion plays a role in McCarthy's *The Road*. The father often states that there is doubt about God's existence. If the father's son is the word of God or whether there is no God at all. When he tries to communicate to him, the father's doubt regarding the existence of a Lord is displayed in another scene, "Are you there? He whispered. Will I see you at the last? Have you a neck by which to throttle you? Have you a heart? Damn you eternally have you a soul? Oh God, he whispered. Oh God." (10).

Even if the father continues to distrust God, some of the events show that God not only exists but also supports the father and son in their struggle for survival. One of these tragedies has occurred when a man and his child are about to starve to death and come across an underground bunker filled with food. Later the child came across a house in the distance that contains food as they were once again facing death by starvation. These incidents reflect God's miracles or they may be the chance or luck. The father sees his son as, "He sat beside him and stroked his pale and tangled hair. Golden chalice, good to house a god" (78). And the man considers his son's survival as the top priority.

The father is aware of the hopeless situation, yet he continuously tries to convince his wife and himself that there is some sort of purpose to their daily difficulties. Though he tells his wife that they are survivors, she finds her life meaningless. While the father has a different perspective on life that makes him fight to live through his quest for the meaning of life and his enduring bonds with his child, which is another way to express his love to his son. They camped near a waterfall and the father tries to teach his boy how to swim.

> The boy was standing in the pool to his waist, holding his shoulders and hopping up and down. The man went back and got him. He held him and floated him about, the boy gasping and chopping at the water. You're doing good, the man said. You're doing good (39).

In one of his memories, the father insists that life has a meaning that is based on bounded relationships. He recalls the story from his childhood that he and his uncle sail around a lake all day looking for one piece of firewood. They do not communicate. According to

the man, it is the best day of his childhood. Even though his uncle barely communicates to him, he considered it as a wonderful day.

The chance allows both of them to share their strong bonds while working on the same task the uncle is teaching the man all he knows, and the guy is being motivated by his uncle's work is the secret to their greatness. This is how the perfect day is created and this is how people's lives are built. The father and son have a strong bond despite the terrible terrors they both experienced. The strong bond gives their life purpose and worth, and it motivates continue to fight for survival. For them, every day is a victory, a day when they achieve something meaningful and valuable.

> The day providential to itself. The hour. There is no later. This is later. All things of grace and beauty such that one holds them to one's heart have a common provenance in pain. Their birth in grief and ashes. So, he whispered to the sleeping boy. I have you. (56)

Every day the father spends time with his son is like the perfect day he remembers from his childhood.

In his masterpiece *The Road*, McCarthy depicted a civilization in crisis. A wasteland was ruled by the worst aspects of human nature. Selfishness, violence, and the darkest social customs have all made significant contributions to the fictional events in the story. He used the travel narratives and end of the world scenarios in his writing to highlight the violent aspect of human nature, but he has also focused primarily on the positive and caring side of humanity. "My job is to take care of you. I was appointed to do that by God. I will kill anyone who touches you" (80). The father's love toward his

child is fueled by his main role as a protector, instructor, and life supports provider. His primary responsibility is to maintain safety against the dangers and brutality of the modern world. Unlike his wife, who choose to end her life, the father decides to survive so that he can give his child a hope to live. He has no desire to protect his son from the threats that humanity faces and the destruction that it brings. If the child had faced actual danger, according to him, the only option left to him would be suicide.

The father's love for his son pushes him to ensure the boy's survival. The power of this devotion is frequently displayed by the father, most visibly in his direct intention to shoot and kill the man who attacks the boy's life. From the beginning of the journey until the end, the man does not kill to exposes harm or for food. He attacked others only when they put his son's life in danger. It appears that his son's security is the primary motive for his concern while dealing with others. The man has frequently shown his son how much he loves him. On one occasion, while he is near death, he instructs him to take his share of the food rather than saving it for himself in the hope of recovering. Another instance is the variety of gifts the father bought for his kid, including a Coke can, a powdered drink mix, and other presents. These small things that the father has given to his son reflect another aspect of the affection he has for him.

The setting of *The Road* is a post-apocalyptic wasteland where the needs justify the action. Some survivors are so desperate that they join gangs of tattooed and bearded cannibals who are looking for human flesh to eat in order to survive. These cannibals have reptilian calculations in their cold, shifty eyes. Eating the flesh of other people is referred to as cannibalism. There are two varieties of cannibalism; the first is necro-cannibalism, which involves consuming a deceased people's corpse. The second kind is

homicidal cannibalism, which involves eating the flesh of the living people. The first type is viewed as supernatural and hopeless, whereas the second type is seen as a crime. The father and son find a house where cannibals are keeping, mistreating, and eventually eating victims which leads to a horrible scene about the behavior of cannibalism. The terrifying scene shows the futility of the father's attempt to live honestly in a corrupt environment.

According to the boy in *The Road*, he and his father are the good guys. The boy has proposed that he and his father lend help to everyone they meet throughout the novel. The boy has adopted the traditional values that his father taught him through his stories. He frequently offers to help other survivors and showing his belief in human goodness. The child constantly stresses the existence of other good people, but the father appears not to exist in his ethical universe.

> And nothing bad is going to happen to us.
>
> That's right.
>
> Because we're carrying the fire.
>
> Yes. Because we're carrying the fire. (87)

This statement has a lot of meaning. It has motivated the child to continue his survival quest. By repeatedly telling his son that they are carrying the fire, the father offers his son encouragement. There are numerous ways to interpret the term 'fire'. Literally, the father and son are carrying the fire or the tools necessary to begin it. The fire cooks their food, keeps them warm, and gives the father light at night so he can read stories to his son.

From a side perspective, fire serves as both the foundation of civilisation and the first tool for its destruction in *The Road*. Perhaps spreading the flames is like spreading the seeds of civilization. The boy's effort will be necessary if civilisation is return to the universe. The boy is the flame-bearer, as shown in the novel's last events, when the father is in deathbed son asked him whether the fire is real. The father says yes, and when the boy inquires as to where it is, he said it's inside you. It has always existed and clearly visible.

According to another interpretation the fire is life. The fire is life in its full passion to live. The bearer of this fire must have this eagerness to live. It is the father's responsibility to fire the flame of a boy's spirit, according to the Bible. In the book, McCarthy refers God to the father himself. The father who is willing to make the ultimate sacrifice for his son is God. Every individual possesses the spirit of God, which indicates that everyone has fire within them. Cormac McCarthy urges to continue carrying the flame till the world of nothingness prevail.

Every phase of the adventure shows the protagonists' struggle to find the means and purposes necessary for survival. For instance, the father is upset that his wife chooses not to travel with them. In addition, she refuses to live any longer because she believes that surviving means to put an end to her life. The ultimate purpose of each adventure is to expose the darkness that surrounds them, discover purpose in life, and advance one's spirituality. For instance, the father's motivation for undertaking the journey is to create a strong connection with his child and to ensure the safety of his child. Additionally, they are carrying fire on their journey, which stands for the seeds of civilization, fertility, and

life. As a result, the fire represents life, particularly the life of the boy who represents the journey's reward.

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(Re-accredited with A+ by NAAC)

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that **P.Virgin Pratheepha, M.Phill English Literature, St.Mary's College(Autonomous), Thoothukudi** has presented a paper titled **Quest for Identity in Jhimli Mukherjee Pandey's** ***A Gift of Goddess Lakshmi*** in the **National Webinar** on **Literary Research: Approaches and Techniques** organized by the Department of English (SSC), St. Mary's College (Autonomous), Thoothukudi on 29th November, 2021.

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