

## The Road Determining the Tragedy through the Novel- Cormac Mccarthy

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### Abstract

The novel 'The Road' written by Cormac McCarthy is a saga of a man and his son travelling through an isolate desert in America of course created by humans to destroy humans, thus making the earth come to its end. This has happened as the Scripture says that the Earth will be destroyed by fire as the degree of the sin has gone manifold. This is created by McCarthy in his novel with a hope that only Jesus Christ can save this planet earth from its sins and redeem the people who inhabit this planet.

**KEYWORDS:** Theological issues, death, end of the world, hope, Jesus Christ.

Among the most powerful aspects of human art is the ability of the human being to reveal his emotions appropriately on some of the critical emotional, professional, relational and theological issues. For example, in the literary world of tragedy and its probes, one takes an utmost care to see with how much honesty the human projects his relationship by the very inevitable fact of death. In this regard, I would like to draw this paper on Cormac McCarthy's one of the most powerful novel The Road, as a modern day tragedy trying to find the issue in the same novel. The story of The Road to begin with revolves around a father who is nameless and a son who wanders through post-apocalyptic America, struggling to survive in this American wasteland which is produced by an unexplained cataclysmic event. The Road tries to strike a balance with contemporary Western culture because it presents death as an inevitable episode in one's life, as a way which other literature also describe. The novel The Road focuses and forces the modern day reader to face the totality of death as it intertwines the tragedy of the individual's death with the tragedy of the death of our planet earth.

The novel openly reveals the finitude of creation of God as the sun loses its energy and the earth's vegetation becomes incapable of regeneration thus making time and space and life totally meaningless. The Bible also says in 2Peter 3:7 "That the earth that now exist will be preserved by God in order to be destroyed by fire. In this way, The Road presents a terrible dischord for the reader as the hopes presented in the book – for finding food and searching for shelter, the basic requirement for all humans and most of all, for the son to live on – are all saddened by the fact that the earth is dying and is inevitably dooms the human race; human history will come to an end as the earth sinks into nothingness.

The dissonance that we feel allows us to understand how we realistically incorporate the notion of the tragedy into human life. Ben Quash writes that western literature actually offers *two* different tragic forms:

i) "a cyclical one that represents the perpetual change in the fortune of the world and the human's place in it.

ii) A more linear one representing ultimate and inescapable possibilities of disintegration in individual human lives, and by extension, in the human of the world itself. [1]

In the first mode, life comprises of recurrent reversals of fortune. Tragedy, can then be accepted, because of the marginal consolations that the circumstances can afford. These consolations are inherent in human existence itself, such as upturns in circumstances or fortune, family, love, relations etc.

In the second model, however, life represents a linear or a straight path culminating in death. Tragedy is the human encounter with forces beyond one's control, which inevitably bear one to an inevitable and definite end. There is nothing from within the structures of creation that provide marginal consolation.

I would like to draw the attention to (in line with Quash) the second model of tragedy is more appropriate to the actual experience of human life – and in line with the witness of the Bible and the life of Christ. Human existence is appropriately defined by the revelation of Christ, and the finality of Christ's death at Calvary is completely inexorable; we cannot look at Calvary as a "vicissitude" which will be consoled by something else from within creation. The Road, therefore, engages one into the theological aspect because it prompts the reader to ask whether one can accommodate a linear or straight view of tragedy in human life or whether we desire a more consoling model. Are we looking for things within the current structures of existence to provide one with consolation in the face of death? Or can one face life as an inexorable progression of events to a final disintegrating end? Acknowledging a linear or a straight view of tragedy, however, is not the cause for despair; it merely makes one a Christian volunteer with a more strong hope. The reader is forced to take seriously right now the new resurrection life set into motion by Christ's own Resurrection – as the only means to prevail against death and the structures of the limited creation portrayed by The Road.

Cormac McCarthy's novel The Road encompasses with a big subject: the end of the civilized world, the dying life with the dying planet and the whole view of it. He has created a visually stunning world of how it looks at the end with just two people walking on the road to nowhere. There is no colour left except the colour of blood which is red in colour against the gray which is created because the forest and the cities have been consumed by unknown fight and fire on that land. Similarly on a parallel ground we see in 'Hamlet' how his procrastination ends the whole of his plot into nothingness. Through this one sees that nothing is in our hands, whether one does things in the right way or in the wrong way. Of course God's justice prevails, sometimes it is visible sometimes not.

McCarthy says that death is the major concern in this world. Even in the novel billions of people have died, including the animals, birds and sea animals are all dead. What follows is the fire from the sky which has ignited the forest and the cities and hence the whole view is full of fire and smoke. It represents that the world will be destroyed by fire as a lot of sin has increased in the world. To maintain purity of the world God wants it to be destroyed by fire so that it can be cleansed.

A man in his late 40's and his son around 10 who are both unnamed are walking into this desolate road leading to the end. The sun is blocked by the dirt and therefore it is

now getting colder and colder. In search of warmth they are trying to head to the Gulf coast for warmth. The father on their journey tells that how the boy's mother did suicide rather than face starvation and other atrocities. But he takes a role of the leader. He tells his son that he is on a mission. He tells the boy that it is his job to protect him as he is appointed by God to take care of him that is the next generation. If he takes care of his generation, can he save the human civilization on this Earth thus trying to postpone the death of the Earth. The boy on the other hand does not understand how this destruction has happened and what his father wants him to know. McCarthy at any point does not discuss how God chose the two to survive in the world which is fast fading into nothingness. It is a borrowed time, borrowed world and the eyes though their own is meant to see the destruction.

The overreaching theme in this novel basically is of good and evil with evil invariably triumphant over good. But evil becoming victorious is not the theme of this book. McCarthy changes the odds in favour of the boy and his father. McCarthy makes them survive for ten long years by fire and ice, cannibalism which is the most grievous manifestation of evil in the last days.

The Road is a tale which is dynamic, offers an exalted prose that is McCarthy's style but with a less dose as the sentences are short, episodes are only in few paragraphs or a few lines. The novel is a messianic parable, with the father and son walking prophetically by caves, rivers mountains and across wilderness in the same spiritual path which the biblical prophets like Isaiah, Elisha, Elijah, John to name some followed to work for God or to finish his work, as written in the holy Bible that on the Judgement Day Elijah will return with God that is Jesus Christ.

The man believes that the boy is Ely though with doubt he asks whether there is God or not. He understands that in this ruin God can neither survive as humans. God cannot stand the evil ways of man and therefore cannot stay in such a destruction through which earth is going. The end of the world is near, and for this only fire can purify this planet earth as well as the humans.

The father on the death bed ask his son that he saw one boy lost, who will find him in this lost world. The son says that goodness will bring him back. Here McCarthy wants to bring back the idea that how bad things could go, and there will be a day when goodness will prevail. It will be a day when God will rule on this earth with his people who are pure at heart and obeyed his commands.

Brief and mystical the conclusion is that it is a story of pilgrimage. God has sent us in this world to prepare us for the afterlife which we either would be spending in heaven or hell depending upon our way of life that we lived on this earth. It is only our destiny that will decide our fate of heaven or hell. The boy in the novel whether lived or died is not said. But McCarthy tries to say that it is only the messiah or Jesus Christ who can save us from this end days of the world and no human being.

This catastrophe in Cormac McCarthy's novel, thus has disturbed the mankind and its end time on this planet called Earth. This is one of the way McCarthy tries to depict the end of the world. In recent times many predictions of the end of the world have come and gone. These predictions are unsettling and often fill people with fear. But McCarthy as in his novel tries to show some hope as he draws his hope from the Bible. The Bible does refer to the time called "the day of the Lord" when He will return and restore the Earth. It will be a

joyful moment for the people who believe in Christ Jesus. One should look inward and outward so that one is not carried away by the wrong influence of others and has found peace with God. That day should not be fearful day for mankind. As the Bible says in 2 Peter 3:10-17 “That the Day of the Lord will come like a thief. On that Day the heavens will disappear with a shrill noise, the heavenly bodies will burn up and be destroyed, and the earth with everything in it will vanish”.

One should therefore thank God for his patience as the opportunity he has given us to be saved by having peace with Him. Even in the last book of the Bible ‘Revelation’ chapter 18 talks about the fall of Babylon (ie) the earth as all sorts of evil ways has increased on this planet. They have become wicked as they have not followed Christ’s commands and therefore the earth will have to pay for the sins committed by people. But in the end Our King will return to make all things right and to rule forever.

McCarthy through this novel tries to bring the greatest truth of the Bible giving all the readers a hope that if one believes in Christ Jesus he can be saved in these last days of persecution and can bring glory to his name.

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