

Utopian and dystopian communities: A comparative Study in Cormac McCarthy's the Road and David Brin's the postman

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Abstract:

For a long period of time and different ages, humans were attracted by the idea of imagining how the world would really be, particularly after a disaster that resulted to planet destruction. The notion of the end-of-the-world has religious connotations. Likewise, the apocalyptic idea implies the possibility of future disasters. People are generally interested in whether or not the humankind can endure. Natural catastrophes, nuclear war, human overpopulation, destruction of the environment, God's vengeance, alien invasion, or strange and unknown powers are all instances of the apocalyptic notion in literature. Essentially, apocalyptic stories involve a dreadful occurrence that is revealed in such a disturbing manner that it is not for the development of the story, but rather to represent people coping with humanity's disintegration. Some apocalyptic tales occur unexpectedly and create anguish. Both of the novels discussed in the article have one thing in common. *The road* for one hand, the reader is unaware of an unclear catastrophic event that has struck. On the other hand, *The postman* has a traumatizing trait. Even when the cataclysmic event occurs as a result of a terrible conflict, no one believes that glorious America has collapsed. The characteristics of this type are that it reveals what individuals do when all of the previously defined structures of society are eliminated. As a result, the main purpose of this paper is on both authors' drawn utopian or idealistic societies. There are various themes that run across both novels. Nevertheless, this research reveals that the idealistic aspect in the post-apocalyptic narrative should be investigated, as well as how the writers seek to utilize the disaster in order to spread optimism and hope.

Key Words: (Utopian and dystopian communities, Natural catastrophes, Nuclear war, Apocalypses, Pessimism, Optimism).

مجتمعات اليوتوبيا والبائسة: دراسة مقارنة في كورماك مكارثي الطريق وديفيد برين ساعي البريد
مصعب ناطق ابراهيم
الجامعة العراقية كلية التربية
قسم اللغة الإنجليزية / بغداد / العراق .

الملخص:

لفترة طويلة من الزمن وعلى مدى عصور مختلفة ، انجذب البشر لفكرة تخيل كيف سيكون العالم ، خاصة بعد كارثة تؤدي إلى دمار الكوكب. ولكون فكرة نهاية العالم لها دلالات دينية. على سبيل المثال ، فإن نهاية العالم تعني إمكانية حدوث كوارث في المستقبل. يهتم الناس بشكل عام بما إذا كان يمكن للبشرية أن تتحمل ، الكوارث الطبيعية ، والحرب النووية ، والاكتظاظ البشري ، وتدمير البيئة ، وانتقام الله ، والغزو الأجنبي ، ام لا .

القوى الغربية و الصراعات الغير معروفة الاسباب كلها أمثلة على فكرة نهاية العالم في الأدب. في الأساس ، تتضمن القصص المروعة حدثاً مخيفاً يتم الكشف عنه بطريقة مزعجة بحيث لا تتعلق بتطور القصة فقط ، بل لتمثيل الأشخاص الذين يتعاملون مع تفكك البشرية. تحدث بعض الحكايات المروعة بشكل غير متوقع وتسبب الحزن. تشترك كلتا الروايتين اللتين تمت مناقشتها في البحث في شيء واحد وهو الحدث الكارثي و تفكك المجتمعات .

ما يخص (رواية الطريق) القارئ غير مدرك للأسباب الكارثية الذي وقعت. أما من ناحية أخرى ، فإن (رواية ساعي البريد) لديها سمة مؤلمة ومروعة والقارى لديه فكرة عنها منذ البداية. تتمثل خصائص هذا النوع في أنه يكشف عما يفعله الأفراد عندما يتم تدمير جميع الدعائم الأساسية في المجتمع. نتيجة لذلك ، فإن الغرض الرئيسي من هذه البحث هو محاولة كلا المؤلفين إنشاء مجتمعات مثالية أو فاضلة. بالإضافة الى موضوعات مختلفة تتخلل كلتا الروايتين. ومع ذلك ، فإن البحث يكشف أنه يجب التحقيق في الجانب المثالي في رواية ما بعد نهاية العالم ، وكيفية سعي الكُتاب إلى الاستفادة من الكارثة من أجل نشر التفاؤل والأمل.

الكلمات المفتاحية: (مجتمعات فاضلة وبائسة، كوارث طبيعية ، حرب نووية ، كوارث ، تشاؤم ، تفاؤل).

Introduction

When the earth has become a wild land of broken houses and society falls, a thousand dead are scattered around, the environment is silent and gloomy, the electricity system is down, and all looks to be lifeless. When we hear about an apocalypse narrative, this is the image that comes to everyone's mind. People have been fascinated by stories about the end of the world throughout the history of mankind, with the most contentious question being how humankind could endure. As a result, science fiction and all apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic stories give readers a realistic vision of the future. Most of the apocalypse writings, including those that address climate change, are apocalyptic. In other respects, this genre is known as climatic fictional, yet climatic fiction books can also be idealistic and instil hope in people. This is the area that this research aims to illuminate. It cannot be questioned that current human impacts pose a severe threat to the earth's natural existence. As a result, the evaluation of negative beliefs is on the rise. Changing climate is a genre that presents creative issues between humans and nature. It also takes into account the impact of human beings on this planet and other creatures [1]. Furthermore, the terms apocalyptic and idealistic should really be described so that they can be recognized. Because Thomas More is the father of the utopian concept, it could apply to a fictitious place that he created in his book of the same title, which paved the way for contemporary utopias. One of most widely held belief is that a utopia is just a perfect environment, a kind of earthly paradise. While dystopia is frequently assumed to be the absolute antithesis, mankind confronts nothing but suffering, and the planet has entered a period of darkness. Furthermore, the notion of the term is not restricted to a location; it can also refer to an attitude or a viewpoint. Both principles have a practical influence on the human beings. They can be found in a variety of works of literature, particularly those in the apocalyptic type, which are characterized by a dystopian mood rather than a utopian mood [2]. The most of apocalypse stories typically focus on the

environmental issues and natural catastrophes, as this is a big threat to human civilization. When it comes to a natural issue like global climate change, it has the potential to ruin the earth in the future. Global climate change could result in massive tragedies such as a refugee problem as a result of Caribbean floods. Scientists predict that as a consequence of climate change, agricultural productivity would decline, resulting in a global food scarcity. These are the fundamental hypotheses concerning the effects of global climate change on the world. Nonetheless, the elements that contributes to climate change are not lessened or eliminated. It is unavoidable that a disaster will happen in the future [3]. Human race has destroyed the environment as a result of his actions. Humans are also aware of the concept of the apocalypse; David Brin outlines the human desire to know about the end of the world or catastrophe in his novel Existence.

He describes men's interest in learning about all the apocalypse scenarios, as well as the belief that the past is always better than the present and that it is better to the coming days. As a result, he claims that a sense of Pessimism motivates the attraction of apocalyptic stories, that people enjoy envisioning horrible events happening even if it isn't occurring to them:

Men and women have always been lured to tales about eventual catastrophe, from the Chronicles of Daniel and Prophecy to Ragnarok, from Ancient periods to Doomsday, and from Dr Strange love to Dealing with Others. There may be an aspect of Schadenfreude, or conceptual: joy obtained from the misery of others, even if those everyone else is your children. Other individuals, on the other hand, maybe motivated to enjoy what they have right now, particularly if our livelihoods and comforts appear to be borrowed from a fickle cosmos. The assumption that the past has always been greater and preferable to the prospective fascinates millions and millions of people [4].

The Road and the Utopian Aspects

For a long period the viewpoint of utopia has existed in culture when we go back through history we can see that the utopian

legacy began with Plato in his masterpiece the republic and spread to a large group of writers who debated the very same ideas al-farabi a Muslim thinker added to this topic by writing the ideal city or the utopian community which discusses the ideal community from his viewpoint and establishes several regulations for the city's administration in his perspective the ideal society might be realized if the governor of the city followed specific principles and the utopian community would finally be realized creating ideal democratic arrangements is a crucial feature of the utopian community according to Plato's work in fiction a utopian community is a flawless civilization in another location where righteousness reigns supreme people are pleased and misery sorrow and suffering is eradicated. This can be seen in both novels; in the road, we can see that the novel's characters are seeking to start a live in a new culture and area because their present community has become entirely damaged [5]. As a result, the book's title relates to the adventure of discovering a new location. It might be argued that the title and the content of the novel have no connection other than the symbolism of utopian world. A symbol indicating there is a path that leads to improved location. On the other side, after just a horrible war that devastated everything, the hero has confidence in his ability to rebuild community and restore human civilization. There is a vision for constructing a utopian community once more. In generally, utopian stories involve fictitious personalities; they tend to dominate personas who are not based on the actuality on which they are predicated. Utopias with one of the most thorough explanations and a belief that the desired state would be realized without difficulty or scarcity. Additional characteristic of the protagonists in the utopia novel is that they are fiercely critical of their contemporary society and, at least in language, have plans for an entirely new nation. They have a tendency to alter certain aspects of society in order to stand out from the other protagonists in the novel [6].

the road is a post-apocalyptic a famous novel by American novelist Cormac McCarthy that depicts the conflict between right

and wrong as a result it is a portrayal of human condition following a tragedy that poses a major threat to them the narrative takes the reader on a journey with the father and son as they head south through the desolate and burnt environment of the former us exposing humanity's mindset during the disaster when cannibal is observed the plot focuses on the psychological effects of the people almost all of the characters become cannibals in order to survive while some kill themselves in contrast despite the sorrow and adversity they encountered the dad and son preserved their kindness in furthermore the story highlights mankind's primitive and savage nature despite technological growth and sophistication individuals were unable to sustain it and when faced with a disaster they turned to something like a barbarians the kindness is evident in the personality of both the father and the son with the son obviously inheriting the sense of compassion from his dad. [7]

The Situation of Utopian Community after the disaster:

The postman, a post-apocalyptic book authored by American novelist David Brin, is also a post-apocalyptic thriller novel that explores the essence of humanity after a disaster. There are several themes that run across both works. Both of them have been talking utopian communities; nonetheless, the narrative obviously concentrates on the hero, who is travelling across America, which has become a wilderness as a result of a horrific battle; there is devastation and sickness throughout the nation, and humanity has entirely collapsed. Consequently Brian attacks the concept of confidence, demonstrating that no one predicted a component to bring America to its knees. Then there's a scene of lonely towns fighting for survival. In order to perpetuate optimism and hope, the hero feigned to be a mailman and announced to the locals that America is returning. It's a depiction of a falsehood that morphed into a strong form of reality [8]. The primary protagonists in both stories battle to rebuild human civilization and establish a utopian community in a different location away from the wilderness. In terms of the novels' mood, it is dark and dissatisfied in both themes. However, there is a distinction in

depicting essence: *in the Road* the environment is reduced, shadowed, and obscured along the road, its colors pallet emptied of its charm and complexity and relegated to gray shades. The destroyed atmosphere is noticeably devoid of Emerson's spiritual purity. That's how McCarthy creates the novel's universe [9]. Concurrently with the stories overarching theme of frustration, devastation, and despair. As a result, the novel's theme was accompanied with a depiction of nature's dark side. "*Nights that were darker than the night before, and days that were grayer than the one before. As if a case of cold vision had set in, the universe had dimmed.*" [10]

Despite the disaster that has engulfed the country, David Brin makes an effort to use wildlife as a sign of optimism. As a result, there is a disparity between both the portrayals of environment in both novels. Despite the fact that the environment in both of them is dismal and grey, Brin portrays nature as a powerful component capable of giving a living being a new start and a better beginning; nature is a resource on which humankind bases their lives:

Frost and ashes coated the old tree's shattered twigs and charred bark. It hadn't completely vanished yet. Tiny green buds tried to grow here and there, but they failed miserably. The end was approaching. An ancient, wounded creature of the sky slipped into the drifts, as near death as the plant. It started methodically building a nest, a habitation of sorrow, with pinions drooping. It pecked at the ground's damaged wood, piling the pieces taller and greater once it became clear that it wasn't a house at all. It was a cremation pyre, after all. The bloodied, dying beast sat down on the embers and started to sing a wonderful song I'd never experienced before. As a glow formed about him, the monster was quickly wrapped in a vibrant purple ambience. The landscape burst into blue fire. And the trees seemed to respond. Bent, destroyed twigs bent forward towards the warmth like an elderly man caressing his hands. The green spots grew larger, filling the air with the aroma of renewal, but it wasn't the animal on the flame who was replenished, even while asleep, that surprised Him. After the gigantic bird was consumed, just bones remained.

However, when the tree bloomed, each hung limply and flew away from the blooming twigs” [11]

Obviously, there is a difference between these two works when it comes to explaining nature. The first one is described as gloomy and grey, and it is getting darker day by day. This painting of environment could be a mirror of the story's actual situation, as well as a reflection of the character's mentality and viewpoint on the situation. In the second book, on the other side, environment is depicted in a more optimistic light, with flowers and trees blossoming as a metaphor of new life after conflict and devastation. Despite all of the frustrating elements in both works, there are numerous emblems of optimism and generosity. [12]

The parent and child symbolized kindness on *the road*; despite the hardships and struggles they faced, they retained the quality of compassion within them. On the appearance, the story plays the role of the son as being impacted by his father. When his dad adds, "You're not someone who needs to be worried about almost everything," it is a quality of emulation or heredity, and the boy's character shines through. "Yes, I am... I am the one," he responds [14]. He establishes his moral standing, which is a sign of the child's genuine essence. Both stories are focused on hope and positivity; the parent on the road is battling and overcoming hurdles with the prospect of a promising future. Despite the fact that he grows sick and feeble, he survives exclusively to defend his child, and he reacts aggressively to any danger to his son's existence, major or small [15]. The father and his kid have characterized himself as "good people," and they are holding a flame as a symbol of hope and life, as well as to declare that they are good people:

[The Father:] We're almost out of food.

[The Boy:] You said we weren't going to be there.

[The Father:] I told you we weren't going to die. I never said we weren't hungry.

[The Boy:] But we wouldn't.

[The Father:] No, we wouldn't do that.

[The Boy:] Whatever it takes.

[The Father:] No, whatever the case may be.
Because we're the good people. [The Boy:] Yes,
[The Boy:] And we're the ones who are carrying the flame.
[The Father:] And we're the ones who are carrying the flame. Yes.
[The Boy:] All right [16]

Inside the novel, humans do not live; they are separated into different factions, and that some of the people are unable to cope with the disaster; they kill themselves or die. The boy's mother, for example, was among the characters who committed suicide. To keep alive, several of them succumbed to cannibal. The dad and son, on the other hand, opted to continue their adventure as nice guys. In this painting, there is a strong warning that humanity will die if there is no longer any link among humans. There are several small things that hold society together, and most people take them for casually. As a result, when there is a break in the chain, individuals encounter tragedy [17]. Similarly, the postman portrays a civilization that has fallen leading to a shortage of interaction amongst humans. As if the *postman* is the emissary who tries to bring them back together. As a result, the character's true profession is not that of a postman, but when he came upon a postman's outfit, he chose to dress up as one and deliver the great news to folks all throughout Us. Hope and faith are two concepts that are shared by three main characters in the narrative. As a result, they are a representation of kindness, or, to put it another way, they are ideal persons for establishing a perfect society [18].

Conclusion

Catastrophic and post-apocalyptic fiction is a bizarre genre that use imaginary narratives to disclose predictions about the end of society and Armageddon. As a result, post-apocalyptic fantasy explores the issue of human survival following a tragedy. This style of film focuses on the psychological effects of tragedy on people. This style of film focuses on the psychological effects of a disaster on people, along with social attitudes in a wilderness accompanied by ruined buildings, destroyed culture, and a despondent mood. Environment is sometimes depicted as dark and grey to represent the devastation or to convey the idea that with

crumbling nature, everything else will fall as well. Nature is, without a doubt, a vital breath of survival for us. Disastrous and post-apocalyptic fiction is a bizarre style that use imaginary storylines to disclose forecasts about the end of society and Doomsday. As a consequence, post-apocalyptic literature raises the issue of humanity's survival following a tragedy. This genre emphasizes on the mental aspects of mankind after a calamity, as well as cultural perspectives in a wasteland surrounded by collapsed buildings, shattered civilization, and a depressed atmosphere. To reflect the destruction or to communicate the notion that as environment crumbles, anything else would crumble as well, the surroundings is often represented as dark and depressing. Without the need for a question, environment is an essential source of life for humans. They try to adapt in their culture by believing in a positive future. Despite the hardships they have encountered, they continue to live their lives without altering their personalities. The son continues his quest after his dad's passing; yet, the narrative's title announces that, despite all the hurdles, there remains a path to constructing a utopian society. As a result, in the other story, the postman, the actor's decency and trust are noted after humanity crumbled and all crashed. A single individual tries to resurrect civilization and instill hope in the populace. Even though the hero begins with a falsehood, it eventually transforms into a strong reality. Finally, he was able to disseminate optimism. Every one of these representations are symbols of human abilities and capability. The postman, or perhaps a kid, could be the catalyst for creating a utopian world. The collapsing society or the destroyed nature could be rebuilt as long as there is trust and optimism.

Notes

- 1- Michael Schuster, **A Choice of Catastrophes** (New York: Pocket Books, 2011), 33.
- 2- Barry Brummett, **Contemporary Apocalyptic Rhetoric** (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1992), 52.
- 3- David Brin, **Existence** (London: Hachette Digital, 2012), 126.

- 4- Barnard Edward, **Turner Cultural Tropes of the Contemporary American West** (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 2005), 276.
- 5- Ibid, 277.
- 6- Gregory Claeys, *The Cambridge Companion to Utopian Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 19.
- 7- Erik Hage, **Cormac McCarthy: A Literary Companion** (London: McFarland, 2010), 56.
- 8-, M. Keith, Booker, **The Dystopian Impulse in Modern Literature: Fiction as Social Criticism** (London: Greenwood Press, 2009), 43.
- 9-Ibid, 45.
- 10- David N. Cremean, **The Road by Cormac McCarthy** (Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2008), 84.
- 11- David Brin, **The Postman** (New York: Bantam Books, 1985), 71.
- 12- Schuster, 37.
- 13- Cormac McCarthy, **The Road** (Berkeley: Mint Editions, 2015), 115
- 14- Cremean, 87.
- 15- Cormac McCarthy, **The Road** (Berkeley: Mint Editions, 2015), 119.
- 16- Hage, 57.
- 17- Brin, 74.
- 18- Ibid, 75.

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