

### Essay Question:

*Many people are still up for stories that don't have easy answers, that don't have completely likeable characters, but that do represent things that go on in life. Respond with reference to texts that you have studied.*

The uses and gratification theory is an approach to understanding why and how people actively seek out specific media to satisfy specific needs. Instead of questioning what media does to people, it questions what people do with media, taking into account the ability of a text to represent aspects of contemporary life. Cormac McCarthy's post-apocalyptic novel The Road (2006) explores American eschatological myths relating to 'the end of days' (or the end of the period of time we live in currently and the beginning of a successive period of time), to examine what will remain of humanity when all ties of civilisation and culture are eliminated, questioning what ideologies will survive in a post-apocalyptic world. The text depicts the journey of a father and his son over a period of several months, across a landscape blasted by an unspecified cataclysm that has destroyed most of civilisation. The boy's mother, pregnant with him at the time of the disaster, committed suicide shortly after giving birth. Although The Road does not have completely likeable characters and lacks an obvious conclusion, readers respond to the recognition of features of the novel that represent things that go on in life. Audiences are therefore positioned to react resistantly to the themes and ideas portrayed throughout the novel that represent undesirable aspects of life, and encouraged to accept the relativity of these ideas in both a historical and contemporary context. McCarthy's eschatological influences further a resistant reading for those who value realism and who can recognise the arrogance in the author's suggestion that humans will survive an apocalypse – this being a very anthropocentric attitude. Whatever the novel's artistic or philosophical qualities, a text based on the future can interest readers only if its prophecies look as though they may conceivably come true, whether it be a representation of the negative aspects of society or the positive. In accordance with the uses and gratification theory, The Road influences a resistant reading based on the lack of conventional grammar and the simplistic style of the text that exaggerates the chaotic and unlawful post-apocalyptic setting, but creates a sympathetic characterisation of the father and his son within a primarily inhumane civilisation (which can then be linked to Immanuel Kant's views on moral intent), together with the religious symbolism that reflects the theological values of human nature.

Cormac McCarthy's minimalistic style in The Road disregards conformity, ignoring the 'classic' approach but adding a depth to the novel that forces the reader to examine the unspoken and the mundane. The style therefore helps to build an angle to which the reader can respond. The way McCarthy's style deviates from the technological language typical of the dystopian genre leads to a resistant reading, as well as readers becoming more aware of the post-apocalyptic setting. Just as the boy and his father survive on the bare minimum, the reader must survive on a very basic use of punctuation - "Can I ask you something? He said. Yes. Of course. Are we going to die? Sometime. Not now. And we're still going south. Yes. So we'll be warm. Yes." Contrastingly, Aldous Huxley's "Brave New World" is rich with scientific and futuristic prose in order to emphasise the totalitarian state in which the novel is based. In a deeper sense, the lack of punctuation in The Road may contribute to the novel's sense of chaos and lawlessness. In writing, grammar serves as a rule, almost as a law. Without punctuation, McCarthy may be attempting to exaggerate the anarchic setting of the novel, a setting which is created to be read resistantly. This parallels with the two main characters remaining civilised despite there no longer being laws that exist to protect or restrict them. The gaps and silences used by McCarthy allow readers to place their own values and conclude the meaning of the text, and therefore the resemblance to contemporary society within The Road becomes important. This, along with the bleak tone McCarthy employs as he describes the "blackened" post-apocalyptic wasteland, likening the city to "a charcoal drawing", elicits a resistant reading on account of the idea that the

world as we know it will eventually end. The seemingly insignificant content makes the reader far more aware of the struggle and how time becomes less relevant; and so the pace slows again. The boy and his father have no energy for long conversations or discussions of things of academic merit, and McCarthy's simple style heavily reflects this. The way The Road differs from the typical style usually associated with dystopian literature leads to a resistant reading and, additionally, exaggerates of the undesirable aspects of the society depicted.

The religious symbolism within The Road highlights, not only the values of McCarthy, but reflects the values of human nature also. This encourages the audience to respond positively to the idea that, although the setting within the text may be undesirable, the journey the characters go on (in a theological sense) may apply to them in real life. Links can be made between McCarthy's text and 'Everyman', a representative medieval morality play that aims to convey moral lessons allegorically by presenting abstract qualities as characters in a play. Everyman's journey from life to death is allegorically every Christian's journey from life to death. The overall message is to inform people that they need to remember their maker (God) and be fearful of what will happen if they lead an ungodly life. The name "Everyman" aims to resonate with readers as it could be relevant to any one of them, and it is because of this that The Road elicits are dominant reading; the religious connotations directly reflect the values of the majority of readers. Within the Everyman analogy lies a simple message in that good deeds are the only thing that matter morally, and readers are forced to react positively to this as morality would be the only acceptable thing in a world such as portrayed in the text. McCarthy applies this idea in the symbolism of "carrying the fire" – the fire represents everything that is morally good about human beings, and it becomes of utmost importance to the characters on their journey: "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." Points of intertextuality can also be evoked from the symbolism of the journey – the pilgrimage itself is important, hence the symbolism of the title. It is an act of realisation and rebirth. While the destination (heaven) is important as the reward for spiritual growth, it is the journey that enables this growth and reassessment of sins committed. McCarthy places emphasis on the importance of the journey by rejecting the notion of a final destination – he implies that there may be no heaven, no utopia, or no Promised Land (as is expected in eschatological beliefs). It is this that elicits a resistant reading, as McCarthy challenges similar religious symbolism can be found in Alfonso Cuarón's dystopian film "Children of Men"; the group name "Fishes" carries religious connotations because of what the fish has been said to represent in Christian theology, and the links to renewal and rebirth in Christianity. McCarthy's use of religious symbolism aims to reflect the values present in theology and in human nature, and therefore appeals to readers as a result of the recognition of relevant ideological trends.

The way the father and his son are characterised as sympathetic within an inhumane system appeals to readers, as the characters may represent the way that readers hope they would act in such a situation. As in the large majority of dystopian and post-apocalyptic texts, the protagonists resist against the dominant way of living or ideology, as is evident in George Orwell's '1984' in the character of Winston Smith, and Ray Bradbury's 'The Pedestrian' in the character of Leonard Mead. The characterisation of The Man and The Boy as the protagonists may also correlate to the reader's own perception of the place of humans within society and can be linked to anthropocentric beliefs. The post-apocalyptic setting and the description of the events in the book leads readers to conclude that there are no 'good' people left on the Earth, with the exception of The Boy and The Man. However, even the father kills a man that poses a threat to the life of his son. It could be said, though, that the man and the boy are still the protagonists as a result of the boy's innocence, on one hand, and because of the man's motives on the other. This appeals to readers as it brings some comfort in the idea that although a person's actions may be considered unacceptable, it may not be immoral if the original intent was moral. This can then be linked to Immanuel Kant's view on morality – to Kant, morality is based on the intent, not on the action or outcomes of those actions. Acting with good will is acting with duty to others, through, of course, the reasoned conclusion that this duty is moral. According

to Kant, this was the foundation of overall good. The father doesn't kill a man because of selfish reasons. His life doesn't improve upon the end of another – he doesn't get more food, better health, warmer clothes, or a longer life. He kills the man so that the child can be safe. The characterisation of The Boy has religious connotations – the father believes that his son could be the embodiment of God himself; he is the one thing left uncorrupted by humankind. This closely aligns with McCarthy's personal relationship with his son, and as a result readers are given insight into McCarthy's own values. At the very beginning of the novel, the man thinks, "If he is not the word of God God never spoke." The son's virtuous aspects can be associated with Aristotle's 'ethos', as the author aims to persuade readers to consider the Boy's character as infallible: "Golden chalice, good to house a god." In comparison, Ursula Le Guin's dystopian text "The Ones Who Walk Away From Omelas" elicits a dominant reading based on the idea that humans are capable of rejecting an oppressive ideology or wide-spread value, as the characters reject the 'immoral' social norms by choosing to walk away from the society altogether, much like the Man and the Boy, who choose not to disregard the basic values of humanity. The way McCarthy characterises the father and his son as sympathetic protagonists within a corrupted civilisation positions readers to respond positively, as they recognise their own values in the behaviour of the characters. Readers may also respond to the moral intent of the characters reflecting their own theological values.

In conclusion, a resistant reading is evoked from McCarthy's novel based on the themes and characters that are deemed unacceptable in today's society, and also on McCarthy's suggestion that these qualities are part of human nature. However, the text appeals to readers on some levels as it represents values and beliefs that are highly relative in our contemporary society, and despite the unlikeable setting and the lack of detail in the conclusion, the audience is drawn in by the theological themes and ideas portrayed. McCarthy incorporates aspects of relevant ideologies through the use of techniques and conventions. The prosaic style of the text reflects the post-apocalyptic and chaotic setting while also creating depth by varying the classic approach to the dystopian genre, the religious symbolism reflects theological values in humans, and the characterisation of the father and his son aligns with the typical depiction of a dystopian protagonist.

## Threatened Identity within the Road

Henri Tajfel's theory of identity stated that, "it is through one's social class, field of work and other forms of social grouping, that one formulates a sense of identity and gains self-esteem and pride", and so when the elements that make up one's identity are changed or removed, one's identity is therefore threatened.

This posteriori threatening of identity through environmental and social alterations is evident in the 2006 dystopian fiction by Cormac McCarthy, *The Road* in that the characters sense of identity is so greatly abstract from that which is socially archetypal. *The Road* portrays a reality that is a possible eventuality which is alien and autocratic in comparison to our contemporary society, within which the identity of characters' is threatened via McCarthy's removal of idiosyncrasy and eccentricity, which is the sub-structure of identity in itself. The characters in question are a father and son who are travelling south along a desolate road after a cataclysmic event has ravaged the Earth, during their travels their morality is questioned and the concept of identity is threatened. *The Road* conveys a critical scrutiny of patriarchy and the role of women, a psychoanalytical inquest of the characters and an exposition of the frivolousness of capitalism and consumerism in a post-apocalyptic setting.

Abraham Maslow's levels of personal fulfillment within his hierarchy of needs correlate to the poverty and discrepancies that impinge upon McCarthy's dystopia, also the principles that underpin identity are dissipated within. *The Road* which challenges Henri Tajfel's theory of social identity. As a text that maintains a form of segregation from contemporary society *The Road* challenges many progressive ideologies that pertain to egalitarianism including patriarchy and feminism whilst also removing consumerist and capitalist concepts that allow a superiority complex within society. This acts as an allusion to McCarthy's context as white male, in addition *The Road* controls a symbolic link to hallowing roads across the globe in particular highway 80 or the highway of death. The text is concentric to many Christian beliefs, in particular the book of revelations which is a prophetic end of days that is concurrent to the themes within *The Road*. Due to McCarthy's construction of socially dominant belief systems and characters that induce sympathy, modern identity is perceived as irrelevant and detrimental as it holds no place within the animalistic principle that encapsulates the survivors of humanity, leading to a resistant reading of the text. Literature that acts foreshadow traumatic potential crisis are often similar thematically and structurally; *The Island* directed by Michael Bay engenders a protest to the ethics of the future, *The Pedestrian* written by Ray Bradbury questions the dominant socio-political homogeneity of humanity and Shepard Fairey's *Peace* Propaganda image works to appeal to the pathos of humanity in an attempt to enlighten. All of these Works are apparent in their challenging of humanity's sociological principle and identity which is aligned to the purpose of McCarthy's threatening of identity within *The Road*. Studious conformity to inherent human instinct of intuition is often the downfall of analog society which is what McCarthy predicts as a factor of humanities inability to evolve; this is shown in *The Road* through McCarthy's utilisation of characterisation, values and attitudes and reading which work in tandem to maximise the threatening of contemporary conceptual identity.

One's identity draws great influence from the society which surrounds them, and this concept of societal context, shaping or threatening of a subject's identity holds relevance in the construction of McCarthy's, *The Road*. The text employs complex and deeply rooted characterisation to construct a resistant reading in which audiences recognise the influence and clout the context that a character's society has over the challenging or formulation of their sense of identity. The text is set in an environment without a society in any traditional sense of the word, an apocalyptic wasteland; therefore characters are left lacking the element of a society's context like what values, attitudes or ideologies are socially acceptable, to assist them in developing a sense of identity, and in fact threatening their perception of self. The male adult protagonist had once belonged in another world, a modern western society, so his identity is challenged in that he now finds himself uncertain of his place in the new world. This disorientation is most clearly conveyed to the readers through McCarthy's incorporation of characterisation, highlighting the man's contrasting lives via memories from his past life, "The color of it moved something in him long forgotten. Make a list. Recite a litany. Remember", and his keeping of mementos such as his wife's picture until deciding to move on from her, "He pitched the sweatsoaked 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." Additionally so, the boy, a character uninfluenced by the pre-apocalyptic society continually struggles with comprehending his and his father's place in their world, having never entirely experienced a typical childhood, which ultimately can be perceived as another instance in which McCarthy characterises a subject whom questions their self and their identity, "he sat there cowed in the blanket. After a while he looked up. Are we still the good guys?" Complementary to this is Michael Bay's 2005 action, dystopian film, *The Island* which demonstrates an analogous comparison to *The Road* by reason of their shared exposition of threatened identities held by the characters within. The world of *The Island* is one in which philistine clones of powerful people are kept in a fabricated society until their 'originals' require organs from the clones. When two clones escape and discover the only world they knew was fraudulent, their purpose ratiocinated to spare body parts for the rich, "how much did I cost? - five million dollars," and the existence of an exact copy of themselves in the real world ultimately drive them to have their sense of identity and everything they knew about themselves threatened by societal contexts. Fundamentally, *The Road* consists of characters whose sense of identity is so greatly alienated from the archetypal form held by readers, which have, unlike those in the text, been influenced by societal norms and indoctrination. The effect the context of a society's expectations, systems and structures have on one's personal identity ultimately result in a threatening of identity for characters, and it is through their characterisation that this uncertainty originates and can be conveyed.

Humans as a species wants to sustain any system that is in homeostasis, so when undercurrent uprisings against this homeostasis occur, violent and aggressive tendencies often forefront modern societies reaction to progressive identity. The Pedestrian by Ray Bradbury presents the progressive identity of a gay male within an autocratic dystopian society. This anomaly is treated with immediate removal, "Where are you taking me....To the psychiatric research Centre for regressive tendencies." The critique Bradbury wishes to showcase by this authoritarian display

of power is the hypocrisy and folly of McCarthyism, which is an extreme version of ensuring analogous social identity. A multiplicity of texts present particular threatening of contemporary identity but *The Road* controls this theme by removing humanity's ability to create eccentric identity, through depicting a wasteland controlled by right wing values and attitudes that entice and ensnare the vice of man. Primary human instinct causes values of survival, power, strength and intelligence which all lead to pure 'bad guy' ideals and attitudes, which McCarthy presents as negative through the endangerment of the protagonist, "He dove and grabbed the boy and rolled and came up holding him against his chest with the knife at his throat." Portrayal of the 'bad guys' as hampering the child 'carrying the light' is an implicit instruction from McCarthy to recognise the disposition of religion by the antagonistic flat characters that represent the vice and depravity of humanity. Throughout the text McCarthy challenges these dominant belief systems and their values and attitudes for the purpose of presenting the flaws in our modern pre-apocalypse world, as these values and attitudes concern the intrinsic morality and ethics that stabilise anarchic predisposition of 'bad guys'. McCarthy has presented values of pacifism, humanity, life, family and innocence as non-existent within his dystopia to show how detrimental a lack of ethical morality and pacifist socialisation is upon identity. This identity is shown to be animalistic and corrosive, "consort of catamites ill-clothed against the cold and fitted in dog collars," a catamite refers to a boy kept for homosexual practices. The pure abhorrence depicted in this sentence juxtaposes to the innocence of the boy and leads the audience to ponder the values and attitudes that endorse this persecution of childhood. McCarthy has presented a set of values and attitudes that stem from malicious barbarity to predestine the reader reaction to the ill-treatment and massacre of innocence, this annihilation childhood threatens humanity in the area where it is most sensitive for the purpose of threatening the sociological aspect of moral identity.

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Sigmund Freud's theory of personality states that development of personality and therefore identity is dependent on instinct and environment. This correlates to McCarthy's text in the sense that, *The Road*'s environment is so abstract, subverted and alien, "The land was gullied and eroded and barren. The bones of dead creatures sprawled in the washes. Middens of anonymous trash," in comparison to modern western society's environment. That it provokes an inquiry by the reader into the construction of identity, in the liquidated wasteland that the protagonist has developed in. McCarthy has juxtaposed the innocence of the son against the apprehensive sin that encapsulates the post-apocalyptic world, by contrasting the son's elementary lexicon and lack of experience against the constant sprawl of death and abhorrence that exfoliates from mankind. McCarthy often presents inhumane concepts to the son, "What the boy had seen was a charred human infant headless and gutted and blackened on the spit," this induces a resistant reading of the sympathetic character of the boy. These vivid depictions of the son's hellish reality manifest all through the novel, with the purpose of constructing a reality where children no longer control their identity and must conform to particular behaviors and morals to survive. This threatens modern societies concept of innocent identity and how it is cherished by the social majority; which causes a custodial reaction, that McCarthy requires to ensure a resistant reading. This challenging of dominant ideas of identity is concurrent in Shepard Fairey's *Peace Propaganda* image, that depicts a child carrying a gun upon a red background. The deconstruction of the image leads to a critique of countries that

utilise child soldiers and ignore the intrinsic rights of children as innocents in a world of malevolent individuals. Children have an inherent ability of unconditional sympathy which both Fairey and McCarthy use to dispute certain systems and identities that overlook the purity of youth in a world consumed by malign masculinity and overpowering religious consumption. In essence McCarthy has constructed a text that neglects the innocence of children and controls the cultivation of identity, which acts to dispute the principle morality that engenders humanity to preserve innocence. This enforces a resistant reading of the text which aids McCarthy in forewarning the readership of ominous socio-political and technological trends.

Summatively Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* constructs and conveys characters whose sense of identities; through lack of societal infrastructure and influence, barbarism and the values and attitudes associated with this, and construction of a world which is received resistently by audiences, are both threatened and developed. This threatened ipseity stands contradictory to the idiosyncratic thinking and eccentricity that is held with esteem in modern western societies. Texts that employ similar utilities are; the film, *The Island*, in which characters sense of self are challenged via a controversial societal influence; the short story, *The Pedestrian*, whose protagonist's identity is threatened and discriminated against based upon the indoctrinated values and attitudes of that society, and finally in the image *Peace Propaganda*, which forms a resistant viewing by portraying confronting juxtapositions of western society's normalities surrounding the role and identity of children. "Nothing of me is original. I am the combined effort of everyone I've ever known," a quote from transgressional writer Chuck Palahniuk, which supports the central concept that within *The Road* and other texts, identity is relative and without the influences of other people, events, and societies, a character's sense of self is ultimately threatened.

## Task 10 Essay: Explain how texts you have studied has convinced you that we do or do not have a future.

"For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For in Adam all die, so in Christ all is made alive." (The New Testament- 22 and 23) This optimism that man will always live on, has given an ontological contribution to the post-apocalyptic genre. Humans want to believe that their existence will continue forever no matter what, and Cormac McCarthy channels this in his 2009 dystopian novel 'The Road'. McCarthy's use of style, symbolism, and setting, and ideologies such as anthropocentrism and religion are highlighted to create a dominant reading of the father-son bond and the Christian morals held within the novel. As McCarthy values religion and family, he has positioned 'The Man' within the story to be protective over 'The Boy', who is seen as a messianic character who "holds the fire"; the demiurge of the future. The audience shares McCarthy's values and attitudes towards salvation and morality. Although The Boy is born into the apocalypse, he holds the Christian morals of the old world; he is seen as a protagonist whose innocence and decency evokes sympathy from the reader who question their own future as The Boy lives such a horrible life. In *John Bunyan's* Christian allegory 'Pilgrim's Progress', the main character Christian also journeys to find a better future in the Promised Land under the guidance of religious, redemption and faith. McCarthy's intention in writing the post-modern novel is to show that children are the future of the world and that through faith, humans may see their species as eternal, and can redeem themselves from past sins such as war and corruption. The road itself in the novel is a journey of redemption, as The Man seeks to absolve his sins. In scientific reality, humans surviving a post-apocalyptic environment is illogical, however, McCarthy proposes the idea that mankind needs redemption in order to survive and resurrect a better life.

Stylistically post-modern syntax lacking grammar reflects the lack of luxuries that necessities such as water and food have become in the novel. McCarthy has also used interior monologue in the Man's speech to attempt a post-modern style and reveal the Man's inner most thought. Rather than the basic needs of normal life as according to Maslow's hierarchy of human needs. In the novel McCarthy's style is quite solemn even in the more uplifting moments in the book; he has what would be considered simple writing as he has no sophisticated grammar. This again fits in with the idea that the writing style is related with the content and events in the book. McCarthy reveals an 'End of Days' theme, originating from Eschaton which is a depiction of a period of tribulation prior to the second comings of Christ. "'Can I ask you something? He said. Yes. Of course. Are we going to die? Sometime. Not now. And we're still going south. Yes. So we'll be warm. Yes.'". The lack of complex grammar makes it difficult for the reader to determine who is speaking and when, however this could be it mirrors the difficulties and hardships in the novel. McCarthy tries to create a dominant reading with The Boy's survival; however he implies the struggle the son will face as he is now fatherless, both physically and by principle. In *Alfonso Cuarón and P. D. James' dystopian film, 'Children of Men'*, James highlights the importance of youth by symbolising the messiah of her film as a baby. As most humans have anthropocentric ideologies, the belief that humans will survive anything has become quite common, therefore disbanding the logical conclusion that physically we are not advanced enough to survive radical change in the environment. "I don't think we should go up there. It's okay. It's not safe. We shouldn't go up there. It's okay. We have to go and check." McCarthy uses free indirect speech to give the reader a feeling of unease as they can't know what happens next. McCarthy fails to highlight this in his novel, however, he does resort to the western taboo of cannibalism to create the main antagonists in the novel, this does show the desperate measures humans would take to survive. As McCarthy values family and religion, he has used style to reflect the hardships in the novel and show the importance of faith and religion as he believes humans can survive through the guidance of God and the redemption of their sins.

McCarthy's use of symbolism reveals strong religious connotations throughout his post-apocalyptic novel, and gives the reader an insight into values and attitudes. In addition to the metaphorical chosen path of the title, the symbolism of The Boy as a messianic character reveals a religious ideology behind McCarthy's writing. The Boy reminds The Man to stay focused on what's in front of him, their future; their survival, McCarthy also describes The Boy using religious terminology which helps characterise him as a righteous character. At one point, The Man describes his blond head as a "golden chalice, good house to a god". This is also symbolic as The Boy is characterised as liminality as he is on the border of the old and new worlds. To symbolise The Boy as a divine child who can inspire The Man to goodness, and perhaps remind the world of the good it used to espouse and can do so again. Early in the novel, The Man prises a Coke free from a drink machine. The can of Coke is presented as an artefact from a former civilization, as it might as well be the last Coke in the world. This is why The Man wants The Boy to taste the sweeter side of the old world and therefore bring a spark of happiness to the desolate new world in which they currently inhabit. The Coke highlights a number of things for McCarthy: the deprivation of his characters, the disintegration of

a carefree consumer-capitalist society, and the post-modern quality of everyday things in this setting, not to mention a major generation gap because of the danger of children living in an apocalypse. However, it also symbolises the capitalism and consumerism in modern America as in many Coke adverts the saying, "share a Coke and a smile" is mentioned. In *Ursula Le Guin's* short story 'Those Who Walk Away from Omelas', she removes the generation gaps between her characters by participating in the tradition of revealing the city's dark secret to children who become of age, which is the opposite of McCarthy's character of The Boy whose innocence is protected. Through the symbolism of The Boy as messianic, the symbolism of the road as a journey forward, and the symbolism of the Coke as a treat for The Boy to keep his innocence, McCarthy reflects his religious ideology and value for family and human eternalism. This reveals that humans believe redemption will save them from themselves.

The post-apocalyptic setting of McCarthy's novel represents both a physical and mental journey, revealing ideologies such as eternalism and religion. The date and place are unnamed, although the reader can assume it's somewhere in what was the state of Tennessee in the United States, because The Man tells The Boy that they're walking the state roads and passing through various landmarks related to the area. The Man's mind begins to drift and The Boy struggles to keep him sane. Along their journey the characters stop at houses which symbolise pauses in their journey to reminisce, for example The Man remembers his wife who took her own life as she could not cope with the world's current state. As they are travelling south, which religiously symbolises a decline in fortunate events, they are heading towards the sea. On their travels the characters meet a blind man named Ely who is travelling north alone, this man could symbolise the prophet of Elijah from the bible, a man who protected the worship of God and performed many miracles including resurrection. In the film 'The Book of Eli' (2010), the main character who is also named Eli, is a warrior and worshipper of faith, who fights and gives his life for the sake of others and is redeemed of his sins. The boy helps The Man by giving him food and water and he in return subliminally points them in the direction of salvation (the sea). When they finally reach their destination The Man dies, symbolising the last step for The Boy to lose his innocence and truly enter manhood. However, The Boy auspiciously finds a new family to look after him and leaves The Man under a blanket, emulating how they found the blanket in the first place, this represents the handing down of 'the fire' as the son is seen as the demiurge of the future. McCarthy however fails to show that humans are in reality incapable of surviving an apocalypse, and arguably have no right to survive over any other creature. McCarthy reveals his value for eternalism as his main character lives on through an apocalyptic world, he also shows his positive attitude towards family and religion as The Man spends his last days with The Boy, and The Boy finds a new family to care for him, thus redeeming himself, which symbolises the son's salvation.

In conclusion, in Cormac McCarthy's 2009 dystopian novel 'The Road', the comprehensive use of style, symbolism, and setting, highlight ideologies such as anthropocentrism and religion to produce a dominant reading of the father-son bond and the Christian morals held in the novel. This bond described is especially powerful due to its necessity in their journey, and concept of redemption. Through post-modern style McCarthy relates the grammar to the content of the novel. Through symbolism The Boy is dominantly read as a messianic character whose innocence, decency and sympathy will bring about a far more desirable future. Setting shows the religious connotation of the son holding 'the fire' and his survival means a brighter future. McCarthy values religion, family and survival, and humans have the anthropocentric and eternal belief that their existence will live on forever through the guidance of god and the redemption of their sins. Thus McCarthy reflects the values of his audience as he indicates the idea that resurrection of the old world is still possible.