



## The Bare Life in Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*

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### Abstract

Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* explores human life in apocalyptic scenarios through the depiction of bare life. Bare life in Agamben's philosophical perspective is created through ancient and modern anthropological machines. Humans in a state of nudity in the end times are a special kind of bare life that allows itself to be redeemed by dressing. Through these elements, McCarthy explores how humans, having lost the shelter of civilization, come to terms with their own nature and other people's lives. *The Road* reveals how McCarthy incorporates the philosophy of bare life into his work, giving readers a deeper understanding of human nature.

Keyword : Cormac McCarthy, *The Road*, Agamben, bare life

### I. Introduction

Contemporary American novelist Cormac McCarthy (1933-2023) was a highly acclaimed American author who won the Pulitzer Prize, the National Book Award, the National Book Critics Circle Award, and other literary awards, making him one of the most influential American novelists. He is known for exploring themes such as the dark side of human nature, violence, morality and survival. Much of McCarthy's work focuses on the American South and Western frontier regions, as well as post-apocalyptic scenarios. Cormac McCarthy's place in American literature is

pivotal, and his work is not only highly regarded within the literary field, but has had a profound impact on modern culture and thought.

*The Road* is Cormac McCarthy's tenth novel and is considered one of the most important literary works of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The Earth in the story has been reduced to a ruin, on top of which most of the survivors are in a desperate situation of cannibalism among their own kind, while a few are struggling to survive alone. In this desolate and desperate situation, a father and his son embark on a journey of survival, and they resolutely

head towards the southern coast in order to escape the bitter cold. As a work of post-apocalyptic literature, *The Road* has had a significant impact on the genre, creating a world that is both real and bloody. It gives readers a sense of the fragility of human civilization and the ruthlessness of the natural world. In addition to the Pulitzer Prize, McCarthy won the James Tait Black Memorial Prize and the National Book Critics Circle Award for *The Road*.

*The Road*, Cormac McCarthy's masterpiece, has been favoured by many critics. Research in recent years has been conducted mainly on existentialism, apocalyptic ecocriticism, trauma, object-sense crisis narrative, religious chalice and consumption metaphor, violence and ethics, post-apocalyptic narratives, spatial values and perceptual geography. This paper interprets the novel from the perspective of Agamben's "bare life". The text is set in a post-apocalyptic world full of corpses, and there are numerous depictions of "bare life"-like human existence, such as naked slaves and cannibals. Cormac's depiction of "bare life" leads to an in-depth exploration of apocalyptic themes, the human condition, human nature, and moral choices.

McCarthy's depiction and interpretation of "bare life" in *The Road* is highly compatible with Agamben's philosophical concepts. This paper focuses on the creation of "bare life" in the apocalyptic world through anthropological machines, and the nudity is more of a kind of "bare life". At the same time, "nudity" and "dressing" are in a dichotomy. On the one hand, Cormac McCarthy writes about "bare life" in the state of nudity, and on the other hand, he writes about life in the state of "nudity". Cormac McCarthy exposes the miserable state of mankind in the doomsday by writing about the "bare life" in the state of "nudity", while he also shows that mankind can regain the "clothes of grace" through "dressing" in order to obtain salvation in the doomsday. Although the main characters of the story, father and son, are also "bare life" in the state of

doomsday, they stick to the civilization of human beings and avoid becoming "bare life" by achieving redemption through "dressing".

## II. Theoretical Framework

In his book *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and bare life* (1995), Agamben introduces the concept of "bare life", which refers to lives that are politically deprived of all rights and privileges and that can be killed arbitrarily without breaking the law. In Armageddon, politics and law have collapsed, and the "bare life" of political relations has been simplified into "naked" life. All societies are judged by the rule that "to be clothed is good, decent and civilized; to be naked is bad, indecent and barbaric" (Pang, "Nudity and Animal Life" 32). The dichotomy of dressing and nudity leads to differences in social status and hierarchy, with the non-naked civilized people dominating the naked savage slaves. Agamben's "bare life" implies a relationship between "nudity" and "power".

In *Nudities*, Agamben resumes his study of "bare life" under the control of sovereign power. "Agamben proposes an archaeological investigation of the theological apparatus (dispositivo) of nudity. He is not concerned with politics or life, but, rather, with art and theology" (Salzani 2). Agamben argues that the view of nudity in Western culture is grounded in the Christian "theology of dressing", "In this sense, it can be said that in Christianity there is no theology of nudity, only a theology of dressing" (Agamben, *Nudities* 58). In the Biblical story of Genesis, before Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit, the husband and wife were naked, but they weren't ashamed; they didn't yet have the concept of "nudity". "Though they were not covered by any human dressing before the Fall, Adam and Eve were not naked; rather, they were covered by dressing of grace, which clung to them as a garment of glory" (Agamben, *Nudities* 57). The "garments of grace" given to them by God covered their nuditities.

However, after Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit and lost God's "garment of grace", their naked flesh was revealed, and Adam and Eve discovered their "nudities". Adam and Eve found themselves in a state of nudity, and thus the concept of "nudities" came into being. The disappearance of the "garments of grace" exposed the human nature that was covered by the "garments of grace": the "fallen nature". Under this logic, there is no original "nudity" in Western culture; "nudity" has always been dependent on the "garment of grace". "But for this very reason it also means that the addition of grace constituted human corporeality, originally, as naked and that its removal always returns anew to the exhibition of nudity as such" (Agamben, *Nudities* 62). This theological device "presupposes a dichotomy between nature and grace, naked and clothed" (Pang, "Nudity and Animal Life" 41). While "nudity" is a state of being of "bare life", "dressing" is a cultural and social construct. "Dressing" is not only a physical covering, but also a spiritual and moral self-modification.

When they were in the Garden of Eden before the "garment of grace" was taken from them, Adam and Eve did not know sickness, death or desire, and even when they were "naked", they did not feel shameful. However, since Adam and Eve ate the "forbidden fruit", "a new impudence was awakened in the urges of their bodies. The consequence was that their nudity became indecent" (Augustine 615). Thus "nudity" is often associated with eroticism. Agamben follows the thread of "eros" and finds a connection between the question of the nude and "Sadeism" in Sartre's *Being and Nothingness*.

In Sartre's view, eroticism directly makes the "nude" visible in the other. Desire is the "detachment of the body from movement" and the attempt to "appropriate the Other's flesh" (Sartre 457). Desire, the possession of another's body through a form of "Sadeism", is an expression of power; the "abused" loses control over the freedom of his or her own body and loses free will. "Sadeism" is a form of sexual

violence that implies the operation of power between the abuser and the abused. "Nudity" causes desire which leads to "Sadeism" as a form of "power". "Power" is manifested in "nudity". "Nudity", "desire" and "power" are organically combined.

Driven out of the "Garden of Eden", Adam and Eve lost their purity and sinlessness because they lost their "garments of grace" and fell. Since then, mankind has experienced old age, sickness, death, labour and moral struggles. The fall of Adam and Eve is a metaphor for human's searching of human identity—to be animal or to be human being. Human beings have to choose between their animal identity and their human identity. According to Agamben, human beings can be redeemed through the theological device of dressing or they can be reduced to animal life through the anthropological machine.

The anthropological machine establishes a standard of distinction between humans and animals, which itself creates bare life. If the Sacred Human series explores the logic of supreme power in the production of bare life from antiquity to the present day, Openness explores the complicity between the systems of knowledge constructed in various disciplinary fields and supreme power. (Pang, "Anthropological Machine" 100-101)

Armageddon is a God-forsaken world, and with the destruction of the world comes the collapse of society. Consequently, society regresses to its primitive state when people driven by instincts fight for food and struggles for survival like animals. Human beings in this primitive state can no longer be called simply human beings, and a large number of "bare life" similar to "inhuman beings" have been created in this state. In his book *The Open: Man and Animal*, Agamben proposes two kinds of anthropological machines that create the non-human: the ancient anthropological machine, which contains the external space in order to obtain the internal space, and the "animal

human being", which is created through the animal human being. The other is the modern anthropological machine, in which the exclusion of the internal produces the external and is produced by means of the "animalization of man" (Agamben, *The Open: Man and Animal* 37). In the novel *The Road*, "bare life" is created by a combination of two mechanisms.

### III. Bare life: the prevalence of doomsday

Agamben states that "the cultural cornerstone of the production of bare life is the humanistic distinction between animal and human life" (Pang, "Anthropological Machine" 99). The anthropological machine creates the criterion of the distinction between human and animal, which itself creates "bare life". Thus, in short, what the anthropological machine actually creates is "bare life".

The process of creating "bare life" by the "ancient anthropological machine" is mainly based on the "exclusion-incorporation" approach. The animal life created in this way consisted of slaves, barbarians and foreigners. "In the city-state life of the classical world, slaves, strangers, and barbarians marked the constructed outsiders of human nature, who could not be members of the city-state as a whole, who could not be animals engaged in political life, but who were included by that whole in the form of exceptions" (Pang, "Anthropological Machine" 102). First of all, the pregnant women, male prostitutes and slaves who follow the group of people encountered by the father and the son are "bare life" like slaves. They lose their identity as free individuals and become objects to be dominated and slaughtered. "Slaves are between animal nature and human nature, and are merely humanoids" (Pang, "Anthropological Machine" 101).

Secondly, Lévi-Strauss has used raw/cooked as a symbol to distinguish human savagery from civilization, and the cannibals who eat each other's flesh, which has been hidden in the narrative throughout the novel,

can be regarded as the same as the savages. The existence of cannibalism can be regarded as that of barbarians. The father and son find traces of cannibals along the way. Pregnant women are depicted several times in the novel, but after reading the whole book there is not a single living baby to be found, except for the boy, who finds in the abandoned camp "a charred human infant headless and gutted and blackening on the spit" (McCarthy 197). This, like the endocannibalism who consume flesh from a member of one's insider group (perhaps kinship or descent), as Goldman refers to them in *The Anthropology of Cannibalism*, becomes, in its apocalyptic extremes, the lowest point of morality and the embodiment of horror (Goldman 14). They have completely lost their morality and civility, degenerated under extreme psychological pressure and moral dilemmas, and have become animal beings like wild beasts.

Finally, the stranger "out of the clan, out of the law, out of the altar fire (no home, no state) is a natural outcast, whose outlier condition is like an idle piece in a chess game" (Pang, "Anthropological Machine" 102). The old man whom the father and son meet on the road is an animal being in the form of a foreigner. He is an outlier without companions or destinations, and at one point he tells his father and son: "I live like an animal. You don't want to know the things I've eaten" (McCarthy 169). Here he indirectly admits that he has engaged in the abominable behaviour of cannibalism and dehumanization, which disqualifies him from joining the father and son, and is seen as a foreigner. They cannot be men in the true sense of the word, nor are they beasts; they live between the two, but are not part of them; they are excluded from them, and become a kind of animal life.

The modern anthropological machine creates "bare life" within the human race by means of the animalization of man. In modern times, the best example of this is the "concentration camp", where "humanity is

easily destroyed and all the inmates are transformed into what Agamben calls bare life" (Dan 54). In the extreme scenario of Armageddon in the novel, the social order collapses, Armageddon is like a huge "concentration camp", and the human race as a whole is included in the exceptional state of Armageddon, and all the surviving human beings are turned into "naked beings" like animal beings. Humanity was destroyed, and almost all of their actions were aimed at the most basic survival - the search for food, water, and shelter. Life was reduced to a struggle for survival, the most basic state of existence, devoid of any political or cultural adornment. In the Nazi concentration camp of Auschwitz, each prisoner was assigned a number, which was usually branded on their body. In *The Road*, no one has a name, just "boys", "old men", "men", "women", all of which are given to them according to their physical characteristics. Human beings are stripped of their personal identities and transformed from individuals with complex social identities into animal beings struggling for mere survival.

The Italian writer Primo Levi describes two types of people in his novels who existed in the camps, whom he names "the drowned" and "the saved". "The former were known in the camps as Muselmann, a group of people whose spirits had been crushed and who were not afraid in the face of death, becoming walking corpses, living dead with no will to live" (Dan 58). The mother in *The Road*, who lives on in the memories of both father and son, was such a being during her lifetime. The mother succumbs to despair, believing that she is "not a survivor, but a zombie strutting around in a horror film" (Dan 54). Faced with constant fear, despair, and pressure to survive, the mother eventually breaks down, loses the will to live, and ends her life by suicide.

The latter, on the other hand, is "filled with the desire to survive, to do whatever it takes to stay alive in the camp and even betrayed the natural solidarity with her fellow

refugees" (Dan 59) in exchange for a few more weeks of survival. The cannibals in the novel, who had to resort to cannibalism in order to survive, and the marauders, who used violence to take food, weapons, and other necessities for survival, belong to this category. They are filled with the desire to survive, "Here, we can apply Charles Darwin's 'Survival of the Fittest' concept. However, these survival instincts are not like a regular world running on principles of morality where people follow the rules" (Mukherjee 125). They stand at the top of the food chain, hurting their own kind like brutal beasts and doing whatever it takes to survive.

Father and son are also "bare life" in the great "concentration camp" of Armageddon, but "It is, however, inherent in the descent of man from the animal world that he can never entirely rid himself of the beast, so that it can always be only a question of more or less, of a difference in the degree of bestiality or of humanity" (Engels 61). They are the closest thing to human. The father and son refuse to join the cannibals or use violence to harm the innocent, and they remain committed to their humanity and their sense of morality. Human beings in the natural selection cannot completely distinguish them from animals, and only through selection can humans truly become themselves. They can rise above their instincts to restrain their selfishness, display their moral sentiments in adverse circumstances, and self-sacrifice for higher ideals and hopes.

#### VI. "Nudities" dominated by "power".

The "bare life" of the Armageddon is directly presented as the state of "nudities", and the relationship between "nudities", "desire" and "power" makes the life in the state of "nudities" dominated by "power".

In *The Road*, the father and his son come across a group of men :

An army in tennis shoes, tramping.  
Carrying three-foot lengths of pipe with

leather wrappings. Lanyards at the wrist. Some of the pipes were threaded through with lengths of chain fitted at their ends with every manner of bludgeon.....The phalanx following carried spears or lances tasseled with ribbons, the long blades hammered out of trucksprings in some crude forge up-country.....Behind them came wagons drawn by slaves in harness and piled with goods of war and after that the women, perhaps a dozen in number, some of them pregnant, and lastly a supplementary consort of catamites illclothed against the cold and fitted in dogcollars and yoked each to each. (McCarthy 82)

The unclothed masochists, who accept positions that completely deprive them of their activity and reveal the inertia of their flesh, display a loss of grace. They follow orders as if they were walking corpses, and surrender their "bare life" to their abusers. Sartre, in *Being and Nothingness*, shows that the body is the instrument of the expression of freedom, and that only by mastering one's own body can one be free. Losing the freedom of movement, one becomes a vessel for the operation of desire and power and lives in humiliation in the last days.

Later, on their way, the father and his son found a house: "Huddled against the back wall were naked people, male and female, all trying to hide, shielding their faces with their hands. On the mattress lay a man with his legs gone to the hip and the stumps of them blackened and burnt. The smell was hideous" (McCarthy 101-102). The house can be seen as a scaled-down version of a concentration camp.

The real horror and evil of the camps was not the killing of people, but the transformation of the Jews from human beings to inhuman beings, and even further to be lower beings than animals, through the deprivation of the prisoners of their bodies, their clothes, (and even their hair), and by stripping them of their

common sense, rationality, and morality, further reduced to a lower order of existence than animals. (Dan 56)

The end of the masochists is to "have definitively lost both freedom and grace" (Agamben, *Nudities* 77). Driven by power, they have become lower than animals and are unable to find a way to live like their father and son, even without the "Sadeism" weapons that force them to do so.

Through power, the abuser intimidates the doomsday being, removes the ability of the latent competitor to resist, and deprives them of their free movement in order to operate with greater impunity in an attempt to achieve salvation in the doomsday.

For Antonio Negri, bare life is therefore a form of ideology, a mystification, because it absolutizes nudity and assimilates it to the horrors of the nazi death camp, thereby iterating its denudation. Sovereign power needs to show us this nudity in order to terrorize us. By taking nudity to represent life, the ideology of bare life neutralizes the potentialities of life and its capacities of resistance. (Salzani 7)

The father and his son travel all the time, and even if they find a perfect shelter with plenty of food and daily necessities, they do not stay long. If they are stranded in the same place for too long, they will do exactly what the dead wife said they would do: "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 wont face it" (McCarthy 48). They are exposed to their potential to become naked, thus losing their physical freedom and becoming masochists. Deprived of their freedom of movement, father and son become captive slaves, like dogs and pigs, and even end up as the leftover skeletons of cannibals in the ruins of the city.

However, the indulgence of the abusers turns their delusions into shadows, and they are forever abandoned by the end of time, becoming

lives that cannot be redeemed. The preceding description can be seen as a typical "Sadeism" scenario, where these people can be seen as violent abusers, and the "Sadeism" weapons they wield are symbols of power. The abusers turn the flesh of others into a kind of metaphorical "nudities" that symbolizes "bare life", and continue to take over the bodies of others to indulge in their own desires. Desire "is the technical term in Augustine that defines the consequence of sin" (Agamben, *Nudities* 68). The pregnant women and the unclothed male prostitutes are proof of this shameful lust. The group try to save themselves from the end of the world by indulging in the lust for violence and slavery to power, but the lust strips the group of their salvation and renders all their struggles for survival in the ruins of the end of the world. Although they have more advanced weapons and more abundant supplies than the father and son, what they grasp is only the shadow of the garment of grace, and they are farther and farther away from the grace of salvation, just as Sartre said. The more the abuser is eager to use others as tools, the more he is eager to use them as tools. As Sartre puts it, the more the abuser is keen on treating others as instruments, the more this freedom escapes him (Sartre 496).

In the novel, the father also acts as an "abuser". When a man steals their shopping trolley and they catch up with him, the father forces the man to take off his clothes with a "Sadeism" weapon, a gun: "Take your clothes off. What? Take them off. Every goddamned stitch.....Standing there raw and naked, filthy, starving. Covering himself with his hand. He was already shivering" (McCarthy 258-259). However, the "Sadeism" relationship between the father and the man is not driven by lust, but by the desire to live. The father does not indulge in this behaviour, and both father and son turn back twice in search of the man. Finally they piled the man's shoes and clothes in the road. The man had not lost the will to live, he stand there in the road shivering and attempted to warm himself up, nor waited for death where he

was, and was gone when the father and son went back to look for him.

In the end, they travelled southwards, without knowing what was waiting them, but endeavoured to survive and dress the garments of grace.

#### V. "Dressing": the salvation of the Nudities

"Nudity comes only after original sin" (Peterson 347). "Dressing" is an important means by which human beings cover up their original sin and their shame about being naked (Peterson 347). "Dressing" is an important means of concealing original sin and shame about nudity. "Dressing" has two meanings. "Nudity, naked corporeality, is the irreducible Gnostic residue that implies a constitutive imperfection in creation, which must, at all events, be covered up" (Agamben, *Nudities* 67).

Therefore, the first meaning of the word "dress" is to put on dressing or clothes. This physical "dressing" is a symbol of civilization, a spiritual and moral self-modification. In the novel, every time the father and son enter a house, apart from searching for food, they will also carefully search for clothes, and "dressing" not only hides their sense of shame, but also allows them to protect themselves from the cold. People wear clothes to express their personal and social identities and roles, to keep warm, and to cover themselves due to a sense of modesty, or shame about nudities. "Dressing" is one of the rules constructed by human civilization, even in a world order divorced from real-life experiences, where the norms are subverted on the day of reckoning (Mukherjee 125). Dressing is also a basic human need. In an apocalyptic setting, dressing is not only a physical barrier to protect the body from the outside world, but also one of the last links between father and son and the civilized world. Whether it is a man and a woman oppressed by weapons, or a man and a woman begging for help in a house, they are all "bare life" in a state of nudity, and this "nudity" is like slavery. This kind of naked slave-like human beings have lost

the basic needs of human life, and can only be driven and oppressed.

On the other hand, the father and son are in an apocalyptic situation where humanity is in a state of flames and water, but they can dress, even bathe and wash their clothes. "Bathing is a form of labour in the strict physical sense, and he will use up the few calories that would otherwise be left in his body" (Dan 57). But for the father and his son:

But this was the sense, not forgotten either then or later: that precisely because the Lager was a great machine to reduce us to beasts, we must not become beasts; that even in this place one can survive, and therefore one must want to survive, to tell the story, to bear witness; and that to survive we must force ourselves to save at least the skeleton, the scaffolding, the form of civilization. (Levi 35)

Father and son live with dignity and the will to live, searching for the path of salvation at the end of time.

Agamben's theology of dressing has a strong religious flavour, and another meaning of "dressing" is to wear the "garments of grace". The garment of grace is the embodiment of righteousness, purity, and eternal life, meaning piety, glory, and salvation. The journey of the father and the son in their quest for survival can also be seen as a quest for the garments of grace.

The boy is first baptized, puts on the garments of grace and is saved in the end.

Before putting on the garments, human beings have always bathed because water washes away the dirt on the human body. In the same way, when putting on the garments of grace, mankind also needs to bathe. "For just as the outer body is washed by water, so the spirit also is purified by the Holy Spirit in a hidden way through the mystery of baptism. [...] [the waters] receive the power of purgation, so that in them both flesh and soul, befouled by sins, may be cleansed. (Isidore 149)

In *The Road*, when the boy and his father finally arrive at the bay after a long and arduous journey, the boy is intent on getting into the water for a swim, despite the coldness of the water, but he does not care. Here, Cormac McCarthy describes the boy's nudity in detail:

He rose and let the blanket fall to the sand and then stripped out of his coat and out of his shoes and clothes. He stood naked, clutching himself and dancing. Then he went running down the beach. So white. Knobby spinebones. The razorous shoulder blades sawing under the pale skin. (McCarthy 218)

The boy is naked under the watchful eye, but he is not ashamed of it, nor is he daunted by the cold, biting sea. Agamben writes in *Nudities*: "In the tradition of the Christian community of the first two centuries, the only occasion in which one could be nude without shame was the baptismal ritual" (Agamben, *Nudities* 71). In this rite, the baptized person disrobes himself as a sign of farewell to his past and his sins, and has no sense of shame even if he is presented as naked in full view of everyone, just as Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden were once clothed in the garments of grace. When the boy comes out of the water, the father wraps his body in a blanket, just as the baptized are wrapped in garment made of white linen after their baptism (Agamben, *Nudities* 72). The boy is the most compassionate and righteous character in the novel, trusting almost everyone he meets on the road and wanting to help them by travelling with them or sharing precious food; despite their hunger and lack of resources, the boy maintains a moral code and believes that it is wrong to steal; he always believes in the existence of God and God's salvation and hope. He is pure and pious enough to qualify for grace again, and so the boy is able to complete his baptism and put on his garments of grace again.

Similarly, the father was baptized, but he did not put on the garment of grace. The father "waded naked into the water and stood



and laved himself wet. Then he trudged out splashing and dove headlong" (McCarthy 223). The scene where he goes to the ship to look for supplies can be seen as the father's baptism, but the father is not re-approved by God. He had shot a man, he had stolen food to survive, and despite the fact that the father had done everything he could to keep his child alive, he was rejected by grace because of the sin he carried. The dying father saw the light in the boy, "he would raise his weeping eyes and see him standing there in the road looking back at him from some unimaginable future, glowing in that waste like a tabernacle" (McCarthy 277). Clarity is one of the characteristics of glory enumerated by theologians, and glorified bodies "are diaphanous like a crystal and impervious to light like gold. It is this halo of light, which emanates from the glorious body, that can be perceived by a nonglorious body" (Agamben, *Nudities* 96). Here the father, who has lost the garment of grace, perceives the light of glory emanating from the boy who has been baptized and put back on the garment of grace.

In the end, after he sacrifices his life to protect the boy, the father completes his baptism, puts on the garment of grace and is saved. When the father is about to protect the boy, Cormac McCarthy arranges for a couple to appear. This post-apocalyptic couple, with their goodness and purity unlike anyone the father and son have ever encountered before, are very reminiscent of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, dressed in their "garments of grace". When a boy asks a man if he is a good man, the man "looked at the sky. As if there were anything there to be seen. He looked at the boy. Yeah, he said. I'm one of the good guys" (McCarthy 285). When the man looks up to the sky, he may be promising God to take the boy back to the original Garden of Eden that he longed for. The boy then asks the man for a blanket to cover his father. "These have been utilized to make religious objects, ceremonial dressing, and sacred symbols in many different civilizations. In many religious contexts, textiles

have generally functioned as a material manifestation of devotion, spirituality, and cultural identity, demonstrating the close relationship between material culture and religious belief systems" (Arora 937). That is why this blanket is the "garment of grace". The father gave his life to protect the boy, the symbol of hope for humanity, and thus atoned for his sins. Finally, he completes his baptism, puts on the Clothes of Grace, and receives eternal life.

## VI. Conclusion

Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* is a post-apocalyptic novel that revisits the human condition through apocalyptic imagery that reveals the multi-layered complexity of human nature. Bare life is created through ancient and modern anthropological machines. Life in a state of nudity in *The Road* is essentially a special kind of bare life, which is the product of the action of power. The abuser and the abused have different tragic endings because of their own behaviour. The bare life can only be redeemed by dressing, which is not only a physical one, but also a spiritual one, that is, wearing the garments of grace. The father and his son in the novel, despite being in the same situation of bare life, find the way of salvation by holding on to the fire of civilization and morality. Their fateful destiny not only demonstrates McCarthy's deep reflection and questioning of human nature, but also affirms the indispensable value of civilization and morality in human.

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