

Tribhuvan University

**Faded Green and Raged Red: Human Dignity in the Dystopian World in Cormac
McCarthy's *The Road* and Agustina Bazterrica's *Tender is the Flesh***

**A Dissertation Submitted to the Central Department of English for the Fulfillment of
Requirement for Degree of Master of Philosophy in English**

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Approval Letter

This research work entitled “Faded Green and Raged Red: Human Dignity in the Dystopian World in Cormac McCarthy’s *The Road* and Agustina Bazterrica’s *Tender is the Flesh*” submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University by Peshal Kumar Luitel has been approved by the undersigned members of the Research Committee.

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Declaration

I hereby declare that this dissertation entitled “Faded Green and Raged Red: Human Dignity in the Dystopian World in Cormac McCarthy’s *The Road* and Agustina Bazterrica’s *Tender is the Flesh*” submitted to the office of the Dean, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Tribhuvan University, is an entirely original work. I have made due acknowledgments of all ideas and information borrowed from different sources in the course of writing. The results presented in this dissertation have not been presented anywhere else for the award of any degree or any other reason. No part of the content of this dissertation has ever been published in any form. I shall be solely responsible if any evidence is found against my declaration.

Peshal Kumar Luitel

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Abstract

The value of human dignity based on epistemological dominance establishes self and other between humans and non-humans. This anthropocentric comprehension of the human-nature relationship neglects the possibility of consensus between ecology and nature and establishes a perennial bias in human beings against natural entities.

Against this backdrop, this research paper explores human dignity in two dystopian novels, namely, Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* (2006) and Agustina

Bazterrica's *Tender is the Flesh* (2017) from an ecocritical perspective. Investigating human values and desires in the dystopian world, the study unravels the pathetic predicament of humans on the verge of ecological crisis and their unconditional love to return to the pre-apocalyptic world. In so doing, the study focuses on three specific questions. Firstly, what purpose does the novel serve in articulating a dystopian world where humans crumble for survival? Secondly, why do these novels disfigure the conventional (anthropocentric) notion of human dignity, presenting the characters haunted by the lost world? And thirdly, how do the characters in the novel offer the instinctual need of nature and restructure the conception of human dignity? To answer these questions, this research embodies Val Plumwood's concepts of 'anthropocentrism' and 'ecological crisis of reason' to investigate the human fallacy in understanding humans and non-humans in relation to human dignity and claims that human dignity is not an autonomous and isolated quality but rather a product of ecological exchange between humans and nature. Human beings have to cultivate dignity in a cordial consensus. However, the moment humans brutalize the harmony, not only is dignity confiscated but also propel them into a regime where they suffer from lamentation and are haunted by nostalgia.

Keywords: Ecology, environment, harmony, anthropogenic, apocalyptic, brutality

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I. Introduction: Locating Human Dignity in McCarthy's *The Road* and Bazterrica's *Tender is the Flesh*

The value of human worth irrespective of loathing and hostility depends on human dignity, which is the touchstone of determining humanity. However, the essence of dystopian fiction strives to jeopardize the common, defenestrating humans into ecological rupture, environmental degradation, societal foundering, and ethical erosion. Thus, in such a faded scenario, the notion of the human as a superior being with inherent dignity and their value system is questioned. Against these backdrops, the proposed research probes the perilous condition of human dignity in two different disturbing dystopian novels, namely Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* (2006) and Agustina Bazterrica's *Tender is the Flesh* (2017).

By painting a bleak picture of a “wasted country,” possibly post-apocalyptic America, McCarthy's *The Road* underscores the dreadful scenario of human beings devoid of vegetation and sunlight. The depiction of the world is so dreadful that “Nights dark beyond darkness and the days more gray each one than what had gone before. Like the onset of some cold glaucoma dimming away the world” (1). In such horrific conditions, the unnamed man and his son traverse this desolate terrain, haunted by memories of a lost world and the constant threat of starvation and violence. Their struggle for survival is a brutal one, forcing them to confront the ethical boundaries that have crumbled alongside civilization.

The novel does not reveal the cause of the devastation but shows the scornful picture of the world in the absence of ecological harmony. Far beyond the human possession, “The country as far as they could see was burned away, the blackened shapes of rock standing out of the shoals of ash and billows of ash rising up and blowing down the country through the waste. The track of the dull sun moving unseen

beyond the murk” (13). These happenstances question the values of the characters and crumble them into the face of devoid soldiers, who have lost the battle against the untamed force but yet, survive.

Bazterrica’s *Tender is the Flesh* depicts a world where human society is transformed into a horrifying world of institutionalized cannibalism. The moral decay in the social sphere consequently leads to human farming where the superior creature humans are the prey of dominant humans. The protagonist, Marcos, is a caretaker at a Special Breeding Facility—who is also involved in human slaughtering. Marcos’ narratives reveal the brutality of his society and more importantly, his stand on humanity in the age of institutional dehumanization not only challenges his dignity but also debunks the conception of human dignity. As the novel begins with a description of the sound that comes across the street as an everyday noise heard by Marcos, the process of human slaughtering, the dreams that scorn Marcos, and the daily routine he has to accept as a fate have been described in the novel in the following ways:

Carcass. Cut in half. Stunner. Slaughter line. Spray Wash. These words appear in his head and strike him. Destroy him. But they’re not just words. They’re the blood, the dense smell, the automation, the absence of thought. They burst in on the night, catch him off guard. When he wakes, his body is covered in a film of sweat because he knows that what awaits is another day of slaughtering humans. (11)

At first, the passage seems to be narrating a process of slaughtering, but not sure what is being slaughtered. The line respectively unravels the sound being heard by someone, who seems to be gloomy because of these scenarios in the middle part of the passage. At last, it is revealed that though the character is fearful of the works,

he—certainly Marcos, is involved in human slaughtering. In this backdrop, the start of the novel depicts a world where human slaughtering has become a business.

Comparatively, McCarthy's *The Road* imagines a world where humans have to struggle against the harsh atmosphere because of environmental collapse and most importantly, against humans because the only living creatures that could seize the life of humans are humans. Contrarily, although Bezterrera's *Tender is the Flesh*, sheds light on the absence of vegetables, which leads them to depend on flesh, the dominant class of the society purposively legalizes this scarcity for their benefit. In such a condition, the setting of the novel reveals that "humans bred as animals for consumption" (11). The reason behind this brutality is because of the emergence of the GGB virus in animals which leads to the scarcity of meat since the animal flesh is inedible. The government has declared the situation as "Transition" and it has also legalized the consumption of human flesh. Moreover, "In some countries, immigrants began to disappear en masse. Immigrants, the marginalized, the poor. They were persecuted and eventually slaughtered" (14). The medical associations have concluded that vegetables are insufficient to supply an adequate amount of protein for the human body, and there are dark sides to vegetables in media and papers.

Both novels depict humans' extremity in consuming things and developing survival skills in a heart-tendering society, where humans are either prey or the only enemy of humans. A remarkable difference between the novels is McCarthy represents America as a microcosm of the world in itself whereas Bezterrera's novel takes the world in totality. Nevertheless, both novels question the very notion of human dignity because the way humans are dignified as superior and rational qualities are portrayed in a degraded form. For example, in *The Road*, when the father and the son meet a man who "was as burnt looking as the country, his clothing scorched and

black. One of his eyes was burnt shut and his hair was but nitty wig of ash upon his blackened skull” (51), because of lightning struck, instead of helping him the injured man is left alone in the road. When the son says “Can't we help Papa?” (51), consoling his son the father says “The burned man had fallen over and at that distance, you couldn't even tell what it was. I'm sorry . . . But we have nothing to give him. We have no way to help him. I'm sorry for what happened to him but we can't fix it” (52). These dialogues reveal that humans in the novel are not born with inherent dignity; they are respected based on the conditions they are going through. Similarly, in *Tender is the Flesh* the concept of dignity is reflected through the act of defiance. Marcos's internal struggle reflects the human suffering ingenerated by the suspended human life in the lack of green necessity. More than a sustained human life, “There are no clouds or humans. It had been his cot and then it was his son's. Products with sweet, innocent animals on them are no longer sold. They've been replaced by little boats, dainty flowers, fairies gnomes” (35). Moreover, The government has given “human meat the name ‘special meat’. Instead of just ‘meat’, now there's ‘special tenderloin’, ‘special cutlets’, ‘special kidneys’” (16). The point is that how the spectrum of humans is fabricated with the gruesome fact that people have started human businesses. Is this what human dignity is? Does human dignity mean the consumption of humans?

Etymologically, as Oscar Schachter puts it, “We do not find an explicit definition of the expression ‘dignity of the human person’ in international instruments or (as far as I know) in national law. Its intrinsic meaning has been left to intuitive understanding, conditioned in large measure by cultural factors” (849). Nevertheless, “An analysis of dignity may begin with its etymological root, the Latin ‘dignitas’ translated as worth (in French, ‘valeur’). One lexical meaning of dignity is "intrinsic

worth” (849). If human dignity is grounded on humans’ intrinsic worth, then why are the characters in both novels striving for their value? Why human brutality against humans has become a major survival skill? In depicting such a scenario, what purpose do these novels serve? Answering these questions, this study claims that ironically, humans who were supposed to have been able to master the consequence of what they did, had to beg for their life when ecology revenges back. The fundamental values of humans and their code of conduct that prove them to be humans no longer function in the disarray of environmental rupture. Humans have to pay blood against humans when green fades away. The dignified human no longer succeeds in defining what it means to be human but does not fail to prove their animality. McCarthy's *The Road* and Bazterrica's *Tender is the Flesh*, thus, is a projection of human dignity in the loss of ecology, where humans are the only enemy of humans. Moreover, *The Road* and *Tender is the Flesh* is a literary alarm that evokes a sense of urgency in conserving the environment, showing the brutal consequence of its decay. To undergo these observations this study particularly focuses on the following specific questions. How do McCarthy and Bazterrica deal with humanity in an ecological rupture in their selected novels? How do they reveal the interconnection between human dignity and nature? What is the consequence of ecological devastation and why is it necessary to conserve nature for human dignity? And what are the elements used in McCarthy and Bazterrica’s novel to articulate the loss of human dignity?

To answer these questions, there could be a variety of possibilities; however, this study embodies an ecocritical perspective to answer the question subtly.

Basically, dealing with Val Plumwood's concept of anthropocentrism, the study argues that humans have rationalized the dichotomy between humans and non-humans, procreating and admitting humans to be superior to any other non-human

forms. Against these backdrops, they have formulated a certain regime of truth that ascertained humans as dignified characters because of their inherent worthiness.

However, this study shows that even abstract values like the dignity of humans are an ecological byproduct and constructed by natural harmony. When the balance between humans and nature deteriorates and when ecology surrenders to human encroachment, humans themselves will be the greatest and the sole enemy of humans because of the lack of alternatives. Moreover, as in Bazterica's novel when nature vanishes from the human diets they have to start human farming and consume humans, this will be the real effect in the human sphere. Being based on ecological parameters, this research confines this statement to be an argument under investigation, advocating for the fact that the only worthwhile feature of human beings will be to survive in the faded world, where nature fails to correspond and serve human interests.

1.1 Research Methodology

This research is a qualitative study of the proposed selected texts, namely, Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* and Agustina Bazterrica's *Tender is the Flesh*. It adopts ecocritical reading as a research framework to observe the dualistic relationship between humans and nature. More specifically, to reflect upon human hypocrisy—the rational concept of humans considering themselves to be the superior creature among ecological entities who deserve to rule and dictate the non-humans, I will be dealing with environmental studies and to show the interconnection between nature and human values, especially, dignity I will be adopting ecocritical reading because as Arne Naess points out, “The expression 'ecology' is infused with many meanings. Here, it will mean the interdisciplinary scientific study of the living conditions of organisms in interaction with each other and with the surroundings, organic as well as inorganic. For these surroundings, the terms 'milieu' and 'environment' will be used

nearly interchangeably” (36). Although environmental studies and ecocritical studies do share a broader space of commonalities, as Cheryll Glotfelty remarks, there are subtle differences in their very essence. Glotfelty in her book *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*, especially in the introduction, points out, “In its connotations, enviro—is anthropocentric and dualistic, implying that we humans are at the center, surrounded by everything that is not us, the environment. Eco—in contrast, implies interdependent communities, integrated systems, and strong connections among constituent parts” (xx). In this sense, both aspects: *enviro* and *eco*, essentially facilitate discovering the underlying reality of human nature and its vehement connection with abstract values like dignity. Thus, since ecocritical reading has become one of the burning apparatuses in studies to investigate the global issue of humans in general and the ecosystem in particular, this research purposively undertakes its necessity for the analytical approach.

Besides, the issues of both novels are concentrated on ecological disharmony and its consequences, this study finds ecocriticism as the most relatable and relevant way of approaching the text and their issues. Specifically, for analytical purposes, the study embodies Val Plumwood’s notion of “ecological crisis of reason” and “anthropocentrism” to explore the interrelationship between humans and non-humans and excavate the necessity of ecological harmony in establishing human dignity. For Val Plumwood, ecological crisis of reason means the human incapability to consider nature in their rationalistic understanding of the ecology in totality because as she affirms:

Rationalism and human/nature dualism have helped create ideals of culture and human identity that promote human distance from, control of, and ruthlessness towards the sphere of nature as the Other, while minimizing non-

human claims to the earth and to elements of mind, reason, and ethical consideration. Its monological logic leads to denials of dependency on the Other in the name of a hyperbolised autonomy, and to relationships that cannot be sustained in real world contexts of radical dependency on the Other.

(4)

For Plumwood, humans rationalize their significance by creating a dichotomy between self and other which confines humans as superior and non-humans as inferior. It is a monological comprehension that refutes the significance of non-humans and denies the interrelationship across ecological elements. Moreover, she stresses that humans have declared themselves to be higher than the non-humans which is a hyper sensation that has caused a serious problem in locating the relationship between humans and nature. For Plumwood, this human incapability to understand the density of human relationships with others is the ecological crisis of

In its literal comprehension, Plumwood seems to advocate for human-centredness; however, her philosophical observation exposes how humans and nature intricately cooperate to sustain their existence. In her words, “The key issue of situating humans ecologically, the part of the framework of human-centredness and human/nature dualism that has the most direct bearing on the environmental crisis, is neglected when human-centredness is identified with instrumentalism and with the issue of applying ethical concepts to non-humans” (123). The way we have been observing humans has shrouded the instrumentalized notion of a dichotomy between nature and humans. In fact, “Arguments about the nature and ethics of human-centredness do enable us to draw conclusions about what it is prudent for us to do, and about the general nature of prudential rationality and its mistaken rationalist identification with egoism” (124). Defending humans, she argues, “The objections to

deep thinking are based on a false dichotomy assumed on both sides; we do not have to choose between basing our resistance on human concerns or basing them on non-human ones” (124). Thus, as a solution she prefers: “Counter-centric ethics enables us to advance both arguments based on our own species welfare and on that of the other, taking account of prudence but also giving the good of our planetary partners meaning and weight as reasons for acting differently” (124). The point here is that if humans are to be understood in a prudential way they are the benefactors but with the lack of ethical reasoning they are committing irreconcilable mistakes.

The relevance of the matter here is human dignity demands certain recognition even in association with nature and the fact is that humans also need to rectify the errors they have committed so far. Plumwood’s concept of anthropocentrism is appropriate here to unearth the issue of human dignity. More precisely, since the study is ecocritical reading, it seems to tilt towards human-centredness but to illustrate the relevance of humans in ecology and environment, Plumwood’s notion of humans is deliberately used to foreclose the significance of humans and their moral decay, which is the crisis of ethical reasoning, in face of ecological rupture. It is not to deny the critics like Jhan Hochman, who criticizes environmental studies:

Environment is not inclusive of all plants, animals, and elements, and furthermore the term has increasingly come to mean a nature tangibly important only to human health or livelihood. We thereby cease to pay as much attention when nature is destroyed by manipulation, development, consumerism and dumping as long as our environment stays intact. This merely anthropocentric brand of environmentalism would be fine if nature were not simultaneously precluded as important in itself, for itself, outside human considerations. (88-89)

As Hochman centralizes the issues on green cultural studies blaming any other forms to be merely anthropocentric, respecting such contradictory ideas, this research paper marches towards the relevance of Plumwoodian notion by negotiating and taking Hochman's assumptions as a counter-argument.

Moreover, in dealing with human dignity, this study slightly touches on Giannozzo Manetti and Giovanni Pico dellaMirandola's notion of human dignity, though does not embrace it totally, and investigates how their dignified value is a corollary to nature and ecology. Indeed, as a passing reference, the study employs the understanding of the relationship between humans and nature by Aldo Leopold, and Arne Naess, the locus of the study remains, theoretically, in Plumwood's definition of anthropocentrism. The research might seem lopsided; however, it is a deliberate attempt to consolidate the space of humans in the burgeoning debate of man against nature. Moreover, this research has taken both anthropocentric and ecological perspectives to address the issue of contestation to balance its lopsidedness. Significantly, the purpose of the study is not to underscore human superiority but rather to inform the audience about the cordial relationship between humans and non-humans, observing human dignity and the consequences of ecological disruption.

This research pertinently deals with two basic human instincts: dream and hunger, to unravel the human instinctual demand of nature. It shows how their instinctual behavior demands the presence of nature to perpetuate human dignity and the essence of humans in itself. It also highlights the consequences of ecological disbalance and the extremity of environmental crisis in human dignity. In doing so, the study focuses on close reading of the text and gathers substantial evidence from the text itself. Thus, since the study is based on a particular genre of literature, it adopts a constructivist approach, a way of investigating the issue and generating a

new idea out of the corpse—denying the existence of fixed meaning, to form a new set of knowledge out of the text itself and proceeds ahead concerning certain delimitations.

Since the study is a comparative study of the selected texts, it acknowledges the fact that there are several novels, stories, memoirs, travel writing, and poems, which might be useful for pursuing the objective of this research. However, it will centralize its analysis in the chosen novel. Other texts might be considered secondary materials or appear as passing references. Similarly, although the issues raised in the study are contestatory and certainly demand interviews and a broader field of study, the research particularly stands on the premises of the textbooks and relevant pieces of literature. Moreover, though the study deals with humans and nature in totality, the focus of the study remains on the dignity of humans in the loss of ecological harmony. Because of methodological plurality, the study may seem diverse and scattered; nevertheless, it uses methods for a specific purpose regardless of its impact in totality. For the terminological clearance, the titles evoke contrasting imagery – “Faded Green” suggests a lost natural world, while “Raged Red” hints at violence and rage. Thus, this study centers on these two premises despite explicitly not repeating these terminologies recurrently.

The broader interpretation of the texts is divided into two subheadings: Dystopian World: The Loss of Nature and The Values of Humans, and The Instinctual Repercussion: Dream and Hunger. The first section deals with human values in the dystopian world, and the second section deals with the exposition of instinctual reflection that valorizes the need for ecological harmony. These two portions deal with three diverse issues; however, they rely on the textual framework without dismissing the possible alternative meanings.

1.1.1 On the Dignity of Man: Philosophical History and Issue in Context

Human dignity has always been interpreted and understood in the domain of the human sphere, which has neglected the non-human aspects that play a crucial role in formulating and sustaining its perpetual regime. Margaret L. King in his book, *Renaissance Humanism: An Anthology of Sources*, discusses Giannozzo Manetti and articulates Manetti's defense of human dignity: "The human body is inherently both mortal and immortal, he maintains. It is only because Adam sinned that it's immortal destiny is set aside until the ultimate moment of resurrection. Bodily weakness, therefore, derives from sin, and not from the body itself, which is the wholly good creation of God" (45). From Manetti's point of view, the human body has nothing to do with impurity unless it sins. Thus, since humans are the wonderful creatures of God, they must be dignified for what they are.

Indeed it is not to argue that human dignity has always got a universal and static definition. Undeniably, the exegesis of dignity in itself has got voluptuous space as the world marched toward the age of reason. Reflecting upon the Kantian notion, for instance, Rachel Bayefsky remarks, "Dignity for Kant is not merely unconditional human worth of a kind that grounds a right to respect from others. Rather Kant emphasizes people's duties to conduct themselves in such a way that they maintain their dignity . . ." (812). From Bayefsky's point of view, Kant's understanding of dignity does not revolve around the inherent quality of humans but as a behavior that shapes one's dignity by dignifying others. In this sense, Kant was offering a two-way relationship of dignity, but in between human circles. Undoubtedly Kant was shaping a noble definition; nevertheless, it was, yet, circumscribed in the compass of human attributes. More precisely, Beatrix Himmelmann points out, "In Kant's and Schiller's classical accounts, the notion of dignity is closely connected to the human capacity for

reflective and practical reason, revealing human freedom because of its normative import” (185). Thus, in its very essence, the Kantian notion of dignity is purely based on the human ability to reflect upon behaviors that are imported.

The definition of dignity takes a turning point with Nietzsche's catalog of human beings. For Friedrich Nietzsche, “Man is a rope fastened between animal and Superman – a rope over an abyss” (43). In the Nietzschean sense, since man is always on the verge of transition that could lead him either as a beast or savior, he does not inherently reflect dignity but encapsulates devilish and angelic qualities within. More specifically, Himmelmann describes Nietzsche’s definition of dignity in the following ways.

He argues that it [dignity] is an empty concept, a concept insinuating meaning and worth where there actually is no meaning and worth. He claims that it is an invention the modern slave mentality has produced. It is of service to those whose lives have been reduced to the struggle to preserve a miserable existence. To hide this emptiness, they resort to a code suggesting the exact opposite of emptiness, trying to bestow meaning and value on their worthless ado by attributing “dignity” to it. (183-184)

For Nietzsche, dignity is a mask that covers the banal reality of those who lack the will to power to establish self. It is a delusive attribute of human beings just to excuse and cover their weakness, showing the universal quality of humans. More specifically, dignity is a demand of weaker people to protect themselves from their vulnerability. Although Nietzsche seems to devalue human dignity, in a deeper sense, he appreciates individual dignity with the will to power what he calls Superman. In his book *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* he writes, “In truth, man is a polluted river. One must be a sea, to receive a polluted river and not be defiled. Behold, I teach you the Superman: he is

this sea, in him your great contempt can go under” (42). These lines show Nietzsche’s loathing towards the common man especially those who are victimized by passive nihilism. However, for Superman, he writes, “The Superman is the meaning of the earth. Let your will say: The Superman shall be the meaning of the earth!” (42). In this regard, Nietzsche’s definition of dignity depends upon the catalyst of human society who dares the challenges to transform the society without hesitating about the consequences of deeds, if done for social welfare. Thus, Nietzsche’s notion of dignity is rooted in human aspiration, audacity, and will rather than any other external forces.

In a similar light, Martha Nussbaum, a twentieth-century American philosopher, discusses humans and their values as a product of human efforts. In her words, “The core idea seems to be that of the human being as a dignified free being who shapes his or her own life, rather than being passively shaped or pushed around by the world in the manner of a flock or herd animal” (130). For Nussbaum, human beings are not benevolent recipients but rather active creatures who can segregate information and receive the best qualities to improve themselves. “But human beings don’t automatically have the opportunity to perform their human functions in a fully human way,” Nussbaum further stresses, “Some conditions in which people live — conditions of starvation, or of educational deprivation—bring it about that a being who is human has to live in an animal way” (130). Although humans are capable of evaluating situations and molding themselves according to their surroundings, they are in some circumstances obliged to dissociate themselves from their route and enmeshed in the regime of animal behavior. Even this reality reconstructs an additional quality of humans, which is to say they are flexible and can liquify themselves as per their needs.

Contrary to Nietzsche and Nussbaum, Donna Haraway criticizes human

beings and relegates them to the animal domain. For her, “People in the twentieth century have become no exception. We find the themes of modern America reflected in detail in the bodies and lives of animals. We polish an animal mirror to look ourselves” (37). Haraway questions human values in totality and neutralizes their values with non-human qualities. She equates humans with animals which reflects her dissatisfaction with the supremacy of human values and acceptance of non-human substances as equally important to humans. In a similar light, Rosi Braidotti argues, “the humanist image of thought also sets the frame for a self-congratulating relationship of man to himself, which confirms the dominant subject as much in that he includes as his core characteristics as in what he excludes as ‘other’” (67). Braidotti’s point is that humans conceive the world in such a way that they define everything in the parameter of their perspective without striving to interpret the world objectively. No matter what they define either humans or non-humans everything gets human attributes. Holistically, from Haraway and Braidotti’s point of view, humans themselves create such a world where their interpretations are commendable for themselves and their values ever substantiate themselves as superior creature. They must be dignified because they perceive that they deserve dignity not they inherently possess dignity per se. Human dignity, in this sense, is based on the hypocrisy of humans and their dogmatic understanding of their supremacy, regardless of their meek realization of their vulnerabilities. The course of othering, including nature, allows them to accentuate themselves in a dignified stand, which bestows a sense of dignity in themselves. From Van Plumwood’s point of view:

The logic of Othering suggests that it is not the primitiveness and the unworthiness of the Other but our own species’ arrogance that is the main barrier to forming ethical and responsive relationships with Earth others. To

defeat this logic, we must adopt a counter-hegemonic program to restore planetary balance and establish dialogical and carefully negotiated relationships with our planetary partners of the sort that could enable us to survive in the long term. (167)

There is a constant possibility of revaluing others on the earth; however, the real problem with human dignity is in dignifying themselves they devalue others. Since for Plumwood, human dignity resides in human conception and psychology, it can be rectified and reconstructed with a new way of approaching humans themselves. As Plumwood points out: “An important corollary for knowledge-gathering orientation is that the rationality of Othering our planetary partners must be countered by an alternative self-critical rationality of ‘studying up’ to find the source of our problems and difficulties with nature” (167). In this sense, human dignity is undeniable but so is the dignity of ‘others.’ Thus, unless humans cultivate themselves to recognize the dignity of non-humans, their dignity shatters, fragments into slices and pieces, and ultimately ruptures not only humanity but also humans themselves. It shows the interconnection between human and non-human dignity, which is correspondent and corollary to one another. There is a perpetual exchange of dignifying process between them and the absence of one leads to the destruction of the other.

This research is significant for two specific reasons: Firstly, as Masashi Soga and Kevin J Gaston contend: “Over recent decades more and more people worldwide, and especially children, are interacting less and less with nature” (95), the transition has made a greater impact in consolidating the consensus between humans and nature. More specifically, “This shift is not simply limited to a loss of engagement with pristine areas or wilderness environments but also involves changes in a wide diversity of activities and experiences, including time spent in urban greenspaces and

observing urban wildlife” (95). In this relevance, this research works as a mechanism to bridge the tormented gap between the new generation of youngsters and the ecological significance which would ultimately assist in breeding a perpetual connection between the humans and the non-humans. And secondly, in the words of Plumwood, “The epistemic and moral limitations and dualisms associated with human-centredness are . . . harmful and limiting, even in their subtler and weaker forms” (99). Moreover, as she further asserts:

People under their influence, such as those from the Western cultural traditions in which anthropocentrism is deeply rooted, develop conceptions of themselves as belonging to a superior sphere apart, a rational sphere of exclusively ‘human’ ethics, technology and culture dissociated from nature and ecology. This self-enclosed outlook has helped us to lose touch with ourselves as creatures who are not only cultural beings but also natural beings, just as dependent on a healthy biosphere as other forms of life. (99)

For Plumwood, the anthropogenic comprehension of ecology and environment is derailing humans from their real objective. Disrupting the possibility of a sustained coalition, this epistemic propensity not only accelerates the pace of ecological destruction but also carves a horrible future for humans. Thus, if humans fail to realize their mistakes on time, their future is no better than the fate of the characters in McCarthy's *The Road* and Bazterrica's *Tender is the Flesh*. Moreover, if they continue brutality against nature, the only way through which they observe is nostalgia and lamentation, degrading themselves into filthy creatures who rarely understand who they are.

II. Literature Review

With the Publication of McCarthy's novel *The Road* in 2006 and Bazterrica's *Tender is the Flesh* in 2017, both novels collected audiences worldwide. The reviews of these novels not only attained critical acclaim but also made a significant landmark in the field of literature. For instance, in the review of the novel, Alan Warner in *The Guardian* describes, "The Road is a novel of transforming power and formal risk. Abandoning gruff but profound male camaraderie, McCarthy instead sounds the limits of imaginable love and despair between a diligent father and his timid young son, 'each other's world entire'" (4). Beyond any other effect, "The initial experience of the novel [*The Road*] is sobering and oppressive, its final effect is emotionally shattering" (4). Whereas in *Times Magazine*, Siobhan Murphy writes, "Grimly engrossing, with a sucker-punch ending" (3). Both the novels, *The Road* and *Tender is the Flesh* are oblique and disturbing; however, the same quality of the novel is their strength that represents their breakthrough which not only popularized them but also justified their grip in the hearts and minds of the audience.

Since both novels revolve around the circumstances of human life in the course of natural dilapidation, the transparency of human decadence is magnified in such a way that they engross fear within. In other words, to put it more subtly, McCarthy's *The Road* and Bazterrica's *Tender is the Flesh* depict humans with a gruesome and scornful picture in the aftermath of natural calamities. This horrific scenario, where the faith of humans shatters and remains the ashes of hopes, has been observed by different scholars from different perspectives. Reflecting the words of the unnamed father protagonist of McCarthy's *The Road*, Erik J. Wielenberg, for instance, writes, "The man does not declare his son to be the word of God; instead, his utterance is hypothetical in nature. He declares that his son is the word of God or God

never spoke” (1). The character here defines himself to be the creation of nature rather than the god. His declaration exemplifies the loss of human faith and their affinity towards their struggle in constructing themselves. In another way, that could also be an alternative way to acknowledge the life of humans concerning nature and the environment. As H. B. Alexander notes, “our human nature is set in the midst of engulfing outer nature” (677), in this ground, the character hints at human nature which is occupied by the elements of nature that work as an apparatus to shape and remold humans.

Beyond the limits of human nature relationship, thematically speaking, Tim Edwards evaluates the scenario of McCarthy’s *The Road* as oblique and gloomy. For him, “On one level, then, McCarthy's landscape resists interpretation, for the landscape itself is largely mute, darkened, clouded, its color palette stripped of beauty and diversity and reduced to variations of gray” (56). Not merely from the atmospheric outlook, but even from the perspective of inward vision, Edwards reflects, “The visionary clarity of Emerson's nature is notably absent from the blasted environment of McCarthy's world in *The Road*. Nevertheless, the opening sequence of the narrative establishes several image motifs that return in one form or another throughout the novel. One such motif is that of darkness” (56-57). For Edwards, the novel is the articulation of human despair through the projection of a melancholic world. Indeed Edwards does not fail to observe the tension, which is gloomy and full of sadness. He rightly points out the fallacy of natural harmony between humans and nature; nevertheless, he struggles to unearth the causes behind this disarray of sequences. This distorted inversion of consequences, I argue, is the result of moral rupture because of humans’ hypocrisy against nature. Indeed as Stephanie Mills argues, “Human spirituality was a poetic engagement with Nature; an attempt to

express respect for, and conviviality with, all that lives” (2). However, in the historical progression, “Human beings began to cajole and attempt to control Nature, to bribe and appease. We began to project human character, and its new social hierarchies, on Nature, to imagine Nature’s awful powers as wielded by inscrutable, ultra human persons, often gendered, often male” (2). Consequently, as humans overtook nature humans themselves became the victim of their own deeds. This bitter reality is projected in the novel through the narration of the struggle, confronted by the father and son. The vulnerabilities of these two characters are so subtle that they end with a constant hope of natural assimilation. Perhaps this could be the reason for Arne Naess which evoked a sense of human rebirth on the verge of environmental collision. Thus, he claims, “The crisis of life condition on Earth could help us choose a new path with new criteria for progress, efficiency, and rational action” (26). And importantly, Naess’s traces of awareness can be observed in the last part of the novel when the father dies and the son has to move on with a new beginning. Perhaps, it would likely suggest the birth of new morals and values of humans in a new dimension.

Beyond such projection, the novel has been evaluated from the issue of hospitality by Phillip A. Snyder. In his article “Hospitality in Cormac McCarthy’s *The Road*,” Snyder argues, “no one but the father and son speaks or acts within the divine rituals of hospitality which had defined the pre-apocalyptic world” (78). The point here Snyder is making elucidates a deep concern of human despair in the post-apocalyptic world. His serious attention regarding hospitality is more palpable in the following lines:

The Road possesses a certain repetitious monotony of action and setting and conversation, punctuated only by the high drama of each human encounter the

father and son experience on their journey south, all of which bear a certain ritualistic resemblance to each other. Such encounters do not portend what Sorensen calls the 'sacred rites of hospitality, however; these seem to belong solely to the pre-apocalyptic world that has disappeared, along with anyone able to function as a host within Sorensen's model of hospitality. This post-apocalyptic world features a different set of meeting rituals that mock this model of mutual responsibility. (78)

For Synder, the novel does not follow Sorensen's notion of hospitality but rather projects the post-apocalyptic world where mutual understanding shapes the reality of the existing world. More importantly, the survival of an individual depends upon the inherited quality rather than performing sacred rights. For Synder, the post-apocalyptic world does not follow the moral codes of the pre-apocalyptic world. The social codes rupture with the invasion of apocalyptic thunder over humans. In this sense, Synder is hinting at the irreparable ethical damage endorsed by the apocalypse. To put it more precisely, Synder, discussing the ethical dimension, contends: "The boy, who has known no other world because he was born just after the nuclear destruction, represents the ethical center of the novel, not just as the face of the Other but also as the receptacle of his father's previous teaching" (75). In this sense, the ethical dimension of humans in the ravaged world is a continuous shift of comprehension rather than sacred practice. Synder's interpretation makes a significant space in understanding the distorted version of truths in the novel; nonetheless, what he fails to incorporate is literary awareness in realizing the metaphorical gravity of textual explication. My point is that Synder minimized the intensity of the monotonous actions of the characters while proving the conventional notion of hospitality. He is deeply rooted in confirming the ethical disruption in a post-

apocalyptic world but receded himself from the most important evidence. The projection of repetitive actions in monotonous screens, I argue, is to show the meaninglessness of human actions in environmental discomfort. This is not to be understood merely as an action followed by the difference between (pre) and post-apocalyptic world but also a human suffocation in the astray of ecological imbalance.

Not beyond the apocalyptic envisions, Lydia R. Cooper also observes the novel as a post-apocalyptic depiction. She argues, “The motifs of the Waste Land, the dying Fisher King, and the potentially unattainable healing balm in the cup of Christ provide particularly apt metaphors through which *The Road* examines pervasive apocalyptic fears in order to explore if and how the human project may be preserved” (219). In other words, “The apocalypticism of *The Road* seems to be a response to an immediate and visceral fear of cataclysmic doom in the United States after the terrorist attacks on 9/11” (221). Cooper contextualizes the issue with real incidents in America and observes it with real-life effect. Metaphorically, Cooper hints at America in general but the human world in particular. The microcosmic representation of American tragedy during the 9/11 attack really encapsulates the bombing atmosphere which questioned the existence of humanity and problematized human values at the cost of human life. Significantly, Cooper, taking this incident into account, interpreted the novel from the same perspective. Any literary piece can be related to multiple issues as far as the exegesis of an interpreter is concerned. In this sense, Cooper’s parallel understanding of the novel’s shrouded world and American suffering during 9/11 cannot be undermined because it has given a broader spectrum to observe the issue with subtleties of human specificities, basically regarding catastrophes. Thus, this research interprets the novel not as a microcosm of a real-life incident but as a world in itself, where a new way of understanding nature is necessary.

Contrary to Cooper, Bill Hardwig understands McCarthy's work more like aesthetic work far from real incidents. Describing the terminological intensity—repetitive use of a particular word in the text, Hardwig defines the novel in the following ways:

McCarthy's intense treatment of human-made things in *The Road*, the proliferation of his use of the term 'thing, in the novel, and the tender treatment of these things by the book's narrator, so different from McCarthy's desire to shed his narrative of frivolous objects of civilizations, can best be accounted for by thinking about the aesthetic choices he makes when imagining the future. (39)

Hardwig shows the contradictory implications of McCarthy's intention of representation and the things that are represented. To be more precise, Hardwig's analysis reveals the difference in the motif of the articulation and the difference in being articulated. For Hardwig, McCarthy has deliberately chosen certain terminology, 'things'—for instance, to imagine and to create intensity in the reader, while representing the future of the human world. For Hardwig 'thing' is a representation of the human species in the novel that is terminologically used to replace the better humans as human society ideally describes. However, Hardwig reinforces, "In *The Road*, these trappings become filled with a radiant power, as McCarthy imagines the disappearance of the world and considers the world that will never be" (39). Although McCarthy has made a significant move in bonding the audience with the incident closest to reality, he yet projects an impossible view of the future. Hardwig's observation of the novel is crucial in this point because he considers the impractical dispersion of the human world in McCarthy's novel but this study takes the issues depicted more seriously with philosophical observation. The

environment of the novel captures the tension between human values and natural calamities. Since, as John Visvader argues, “In the first place, ecology, in its study of the relationship between organisms and their environments, represents a new kind of contextualism. As such it has become a model for all those who have been critical of atomistic and isolationist investigations in the sciences and the humanities” (125). The novel, in this relevance, blends the context of humans and nature in the booming fascination of technological advancement, which can be a breakthrough in observing human ecology from a distinct perspective. Secondly, “the scientific findings of ecology provide us with new information concerning the consequences of human actions and their impact on the natural world” (125). As a consequence, “This information leads us to re-evaluate the significance of certain of our behaviors and to question many of our goals and practices. The perception of the need to change is the beginning of politics, and thus ecology has lent its name as well as its findings to the causes of various political movements” (125). In these parameters, the novel serves as a projection of humans’ distant future, where human starves for harmonious ecological necessity.

Where McCarthy’s *The Road* deals with the post-apocalyptic world and the loss of human pervasiveness when ecology is effaced, Bazterrica’s *Tender is the Flesh* deals with the issue of cannibalism and dehumanization. However, what integrates these two different novels is the issue of human vulnerability in the environmental blowout. Specifically, Bezterrica’s novel rarely deals with environmental crisis; however, I argue, that the way the novel depicts the condition of the protagonist, Marcos, who is in dilemma whether to accept the transition or to remain intact with the social go, resonates with the condition of human state in the environmental ruination. This is the position of human beings when ethics is punctured by human

fallacy while deteriorating the purity and presence of nature. Thus, as a moral creature, the inhuman scenario of the novel is the result of criminality against the ecological wrecking. As David Tierney, reviewing Bazterrica's *Tender is the Flesh*, brings one of the most pertinent questions into account, which is quite pivotal, he writes, "What is the difference between eating an animal and eating a human?" (1), and in response, he claims, 'What's wrong with eating people?' and 'What's wrong with eating animals?' are essentially the same question. It just comes down to the words we use" (4). Indeed, his answer is based on Bazterrica's novel; however, the difference is Tierney has explicitly written the promises of the novel, unlike Bazterrica. His question and answer are far from our general comprehension and so is the story of the novel. However, Tierney's analysis responds to human society and literary depiction of social practice and assumption in its backdrops. I do not mean to say that Tierney's question regarding eating human and eating animal has no difference and the variation between these two conditions is merely based on linguistic use. The point here is that the depiction of the brutality is so horrible that the humans have lost their sensibility in differentiating between humans and non-humans in the novel. Indeed it is true that after the collision of humans and nature, there is a high possibility of vanquished on one side; however, if humans triumph over nature as Arne Naess argues, "We [humans] need types of societies and communities in which one delights in the value-creative aspects of equilibrium rather than the glorification of value-neutral growth; in which being together with other living beings is more important than exploiting or killing them" (26). This imagination is conceptualized in the novel and Tierney has wonderfully captured the essence without distorting it.

Moreover, Tierney's review provides a disturbing picture of the novel but the

question is does the cannibalism in the novel literally mean human butchery? Or, does it really correspond with consuming human flesh? In this regard, Daniel Kraus has come up with different comprehension. He believes, “Though one can imagine cannibal culture being the apotheosis of capitalism, Bazterrica’s families, shackled by orthodoxy, can’t exist without the who-eats-whom hierarchies positioning some people as the property of others. A worse barbarism forever waits in the wings” (2). Kraus seems to be indirectly hinting at a capitalistic consumer culture where one consumes the other while exchanging. Perhaps, Kraus is more concerned with the connotative meaning of human butchery rather than its denotative meaning. His understanding leads to the reflection of human society where humans are brutally slaughtered in everyday life, without being compromised to be human. The only relationship between them is producer and the consumer, which shapes the hierarchical social order disorderly. Kraus has rightly pointed out the possible metaphoric meaning of butchery in the premises of the novel. More importantly, he undeniably represented the problems of the social sphere and society in totality because, “A society is not at liberty to remain young,” as Friedrich Nietzsche says, “and even at the height of its powers a society still produces refuse and waste. The more bold and energetic its progress, the more prolific it is in failures and defectives — and nearer its destruction” (33). In this relevance, the society that Bazterrica imagines corresponds with the very essence of human society where butchery in itself is its byproduct. Elasticizing its issue, a very pertinent question emerges from this cusps. What impact does it imply on nature and what consequence it leads to human dignity? Perhaps, as Gordon H. Orians explains:

Human responses to nature are biased in certain directions by our evolutionary history, by the ways that people lived and the problems they had to solve. Who

we are today has been molded by our intimate interactions with the physical and biological components of the natural world, including that component formed by our fellow humans. Therefore, the increasing isolation of people from nature poses serious problems for our attempts to live sustainably on Earth. (48)

For Orians, humans observe nature from their perspective and for their purpose, which ultimately has made an exterior agency to solve human problems by converting nature merely as a secondary resource. Their concentration on human values and their significance has isolated them from the circle of ecological unity, which proliferated the necessity of humans and disregarded nature. In doing so, they breed the disease to kill themselves and exterminate the medicine from nature, resulting in being a victim of self-victimizer.

Beyond these premises, however, in a similar light to Kraus, Justine Jordan enforces reading the novel, taking language as the vantage point instead of corresponding words to words meaning. She argues, “. . . if this is a fable about the inadequacy of language in the face of darkness, it also resonates with sadness at the prospect of the silence humans can expect when we are alone in the world, in the wake of mass extinctions” (4). She slightly deals with the inadequacy of language and the impact of linguistic deficiency that leads to humans’ silence in the noise of human supremacy. She further argues, “This provocative, sorrowful novel expertly wields a double-edged cleaver: when Marcos points out that “in the end, meat is meat, it doesn’t matter where it’s from”, it’s a statement of both dystopic extremity and banal everyday fact” (4). Jordan is not merely accepting the metaphoric use of language but she is also interested in shedding light on the novel’s proximity to unraveling the dystopic immensity and the daily practice of human life. What Jordan significantly

does is she while reflecting on the issue of the novel which is surely the problem of language, she also relates language in the novel to human society which is full of lapses and omissions. In doing so, what comes into visibility is the issue of social problems. However, what do I mean by social problem? Is it all the problems that humans suffer in the social sphere? Is it societal discourses that cause social disharmony? Indeed I stress what it can be rather than what it is. I mean the fundamental value of human beings to be human is based on human dignity. Thus, it is the pervasiveness of dignity as a moral principle that establishes social problems and resolves them. Thus, the social problem lies in the essence of humanity itself. If humanity is the problem, then what it has to do with the novel? I argue that the conventional notion of human dignity is based on a human-centric approach, believing humans serve humans. This supposition lacks firm ground to understand humans in totality. Human dignity does not remain static in the human sphere nor it is an independent aspect of human beings but rather a physiological phenomenon that cannot be separated from ecology and environment. This research, therefore, fills this research gap and aims to cover a portion left out. Dealing with human dignity in the dystopian novel when ecological dismantling prevails, the study observes how humans efface themselves from the instinctual centrality of humans, which is to say how humans redefine humans concerning the behavior they reflect upon such difficult situations and unearth the premises that necessitate nature for their sustained human values.

III. Dystopian World: The Loss of Nature and The Values of Humans

McCarthy's *The Road* and Agustina Bezterrica's *Tender is the Flesh* depict a dystopian world where nature is horribly devastated and the values of humans are shattered into pieces. Both novels take place in the aftermath of horrible transitions, whereas *The Road* depicts the world ravaged by nuclear disposal, leading to the environmental crisis and *Tender is the Flesh* portrays a society inflicted by the virus, resulting in legalized cannibalism. McCarthy's projection of the world reverberates the sound of silence and the absence of a human crowd whereas Bezterrica's world is full of shouts, screams, and wails where humans are thronged in human butchery. More specifically, McCarthy's dystopian world is described in the following ways:

On the far side of the river valley, the road passed through a stark black burn. Charred and limbless trunks of trees stretching away on every side. Ash moving over the road and the sagging hands of blind wire strung from the blackened light poles whining thinly in the wind. A burned house in a clearing and beyond that a reach of meadowlands stark and gray and a raw red mudbank where a roadwork lay abandoned. Farther along were billboards advertising motels. Everything as it once had been save faded and weathered.

(6)

The observation of the scenario reveals that the source of human existence is turned into ashes. The crowded city has been converted into abandoned hollow sites where everything lost its grip and weathered like a grey bizarre meadow. The devastation is so intense that any form of existence could hardly succeed in sustaining its presence. Along with life, the hope of being alive is suspended on the verge of despair. In such conditions, to search for human survival, the father and the son use 'binoculars' which grapples two different meanings. Firstly, the lack of human presence at a distance or

the depletion of human closeness, and secondly, the inability to see the world from a human perspective or human incapability to observe the dilapidated world from the naked eye. No matter how hard they try the vastness of the empty city is so pervasive that there is “Nothing to see. No Smoke” (7), which suggests the fecundity of lives.

Contrary to McCarthy’s world, Bazterrica’s projection of the human world is loud bloody, and raged, where “humans bred as animals for the consumption” (11). Narrated through Marcos’ life, the world is exposed through his mental state. What has corrupted society and what people are obliged to coercively follow are a major tension that haunts the protagonist so often. For instance, “he wants to erase the distant images, the memories that persist. The piles of cats and dogs burned alive. Scratch meant death. The smell of burned meat lingered for weeks. He remembers the group in yellow protective suits that scoured the neighborhoods at night, killing and burning every animal that crossed their paths” (13). Marcos’ life represents humans in the fermented extremity of barren humanity, where ethics fail to define humans and morality crumbles to set the path for humans for moral action.

Both novels, while depicting an imaginary society, correspond with dystopian resemblance. As Michelle Pretorius, in a conversation with Maggie Messitt, claims, “The dystopia or anti-utopia could therefore be seen as a commentary on the failure of the idea of an ideal society . . .” (50), McCarthy and Bazterrica are analyzing the expected world from dystopian spectacle because both the world view shows the loss of ideal society. Moreover, as Margaret Atwood says dystopia is the opposite of “the imagined perfect society, . . . where unpleasantness prevails” (65), *The Road* and *Tender is the Flesh* discusses a society where humans grieve for happiness and suffer from detested gallop of sadness. Indeed it is conspicuous that the reason behind the human failure and cause of dystopia is the loss of ecological impairment. The point

here is the suffering of the characters in the novel, I argue, is rooted in the ecological crisis. As they delink themselves from the firmness of ecological dependence, they gradually lack the fundamental ground to stand and as a result, fall from anthropogenic superiority to the rupture of humanness. The characters in both novels are morally degraded and intoxicated by survival necessity but in doing so they are defaced from moral principles, which derail them from their moral trail. Human dignity has become a subjective choice and ethical notions are based on circumstances, no firmness in human life—full of violence and brutality. For instance, distinguishing between the good and bad people, the father reflects upon the brutality of the bad guys: “Sooner or later they will catch us and they will kill us. They will rape me. They will rape him. They are going to rape us and kill us and eat us and you won’t face it you’d rather wait for it to happen” (58). In this sense, the instinctual humanness has nothing to do with the human in itself. This is to say the corresponding vanquish of nature has mobilized humans in such a way that they are incapable of distinguishing between good and evil. The disappearance of ecological harmony triumphs in impacting human values so intensely that they cannot sustain their existence in a moral compass. Thus, as a result, they embark on animality, by proving their inhuman qualities.

In Bazterica’s world, the spread of the virus seems to be the cause of a dystopian world; however, I argue, that although the virus had impacted the flesh of animals, the cause of human institutionalizing cannibalism is because of media violence against vegetables, claim its insufficiency in providing necessary protein to the human bodies. Specifically, the connotative meaning of rejecting vegetables is to negate human dependency on nature and the consequences are the result of distancing humans from the natural resources. The magazines’ warranted claim and “published

articles on the dark side of vegetables” (15), reveal the human dissociation from nature which apparently leads to the situation: “meat consuming meat.” Thus, as the novel exposes the scenario, “Group of people had started killing others and eating them in secret. The press document a case of two employed Bolivians who had been attacked dismembered and barbecued by a group of neighbors” (13-14). This very representation of human behavior refutes the notion of dignity and establishes a new value for humans. However, as Gan Shaoping and Zhang Lin argue, “Any human being is entitled, naturally, to dignity, and this so-called dignity refers to that king of nobility which is particular to human beings and which surpasses that of other species” (373), when humans are enjoying human flesh the dignity transforms into delicacies. Indeed as Gordon H. Orians proclaims, “humans differ fundamentally from other animals in that environmental influences so soundly trump genetic influences on the development of human behavior that genes can safely be ignored” (42), if Bazterrica’s world is considered they are no better than animals who are unknown for their own species.

Perhaps, since both novels imagine a dreadful situation where survival matters rather than dignity, it is unjust to critique the acts of characters who are self-victimized by their fate and undone crimes. However, the point here is that these characters and the society where they are residing are an infinitesimal representation of the human world after their incorrigible mistake. And possibly an imagined distant future community if humans continue exploiting nature. The totality of excess access to nature and human hubris in taming the environment and ecology will lead to the world imagined by McCarthy and Bazterrica, which is not only ruptured naturally but also impacts human abstract values like dignity, ethics, and morality. In this sense, the picturesque of the novel is dystopian, and dystopian is the characters who are

penalized by the natural revenge. Thus, a cordial relationship between humans and non-humans is equally crucial while discussing human dignity. As Sung-Uk Hwang asserts:

An abstract theorem of the man-nature relation is nothing more than an aesthetic abstraction with little relationship to the nature of a real ecosystem. The outwardly admirable wisdom, while reclaiming a retrospective submission to the innocent self, undifferentiated from nature, does more to serve the needs of the social order than to address the problem of physical reality that persists in our everyday lives. The problem is not an ontological reciprocity that humanity has with nature, but a specific violence—the rapacious violence that inheres in capitalism—concrete enough to rapidly cause ecological destruction. (141).

Hwang's dissatisfaction lies on the premises of human incompetence in dealing with man-nature relationships. He reveals the consequence of abstract understanding which leads to the further destruction of the ecology. The fallacious knowledge deludes humans, which entraps them in the realm of natural disruption rather than preserving it. Hwang's core idea relies on human problems in comprehending the necessary bond between humans and nature. His proposition matters because the delusion of knowledge provokes them to relegate themselves to the regime of brutality but they assume to be superior for their own sake. However, in doing so, humans conspire against the fall of humans but realize merely after they confront suffering from their own deeds. These happenstances are ostensible in both novels.

Firstly, McCarthy's *The Road* shows the world where the environment has become so infertile that human has to face an ecological crisis and depend upon what is resting on the earth because the possibility of bearing food has become almost

impossible: “The city was mostly burned. No sign of life. Cars in the street were caked with ash, everything covered with ash and dust. Fossil tracks in the dried sludge. A corpse in a doorway dried to leather. Grimacing at the day” (11). Not only environment fail to prove its existence instead, but humans are also depleted in this situation. The horrible deaths of humans are depicted as “The mummied dead everywhere. The flesh cloven along the bones, the ligaments dried to tug and taut as wires. Shriveled and drawn like latterday bog-folk, their faces of boiled sheeting, the yellow palings of their teeth. They were discalced to a man like pilgrims of some common order for all their shoes were long since stolen” (23-24). These dreadful imageries are the outcome of certain devastations which distorted the life of humans and changed the color of the world. The significant event that takes place in this course is the degradation of human dignity. The most superior creature has converted into a ‘mummied dead’ because of intolerable suffering. This parodizes Aurel Kolnai’s understanding of dignity. As he writes, “With its firm stance and solid immovability, the dignified quietly defies the world though, like everything else, it would have no significance whatever outside the context of the world” (254), the dignified humans are now turned into an immobile object without a sense of being objectified.

Indeed *The Road* does not disclose the cause of devastation but the loneliness that the characters endure especially the father and the son, is because of ecological breakdown. Reflectively, “No sign of life anywhere, It was no country that he knew. The names of the towns or the rivers” (216), these lines show the loneliness of the characters who are wandering for the sake of survival. The dignified human ones are now broken down and searching for an alternative to rescue themselves. Is this what human dignity is? As Aurel Kolnai contends: “Yet the 'intangibility' or

'invulnerability' inherent in Dignity as a Quality is a peculiar quality rightly and reasonably apprehended as such by the valuer who recognizes its guarantee of future behavior and accords it 'credit' and 'implicit trust'; it is not a fact vouched for by some immutable 'law' of nature or super-nature" (271), human dignity in this sense could have been the remedy for curing the difficulty of the humans but the situation in the novel is so pathetic that nothing could work as an apparatus to overcome their predicament. Thus, as Arne Naess valorizes, "Human nature may be such that with increased maturity a human need increases to protect the richness and diversity of life for its own sake. Consequently, what is useless in a narrow way may be useful in a wider sense, namely satisfying a human need. The protection of nature for its own sake would be a good example of this" (177), humans might have progressed in their own way and refuted the necessity of nature but the gradual passing of time necessitates the essentialities of nature and revamps its energy which obliges humans to surrender in front of the nature itself. The point here is that for the betterment of humankind, the only way to sustain their life is to make a cordial relationship between humans and non-humans especially with ecology. In this relevance, human dignity has value unless humans proceed with ecological harmony, as soon as they start negotiating and devaluing ecological significance they rupture their lives themselves.

The relationship between human dignity and ecology is constantly foreshadowed by the narration of the story in the novel. For instance, the world before the apocalypse enters into the story as nostalgia and haunts the father repeatedly. The novel distinguishes the world before and after the devastation through the experience of the father. As the novel narrates, "There was a lake mile from his uncle's farm where he and his uncle used to go in the fall of firewood . . . They walked along the shore while his uncle studied the treestumps, puffing at his pipe, a manila rope coiled

over his shoulder . . . This was the perfect day of his childhood. This the day to shape the days upon” (11-12). Now this place has turned to ashes where the possibility of happiness vanishes. With the delapidation of the greenery, the city has converted into a “desolated country. A boarhide nailed to a barn door. Ratty. Wisp of a tail. Inside the barn three bodies hanging from the rafters, dried and dusty among the wan slats of light” (16). Indeed this dreadful picture stimulated a sense of sudden apocalypse but this process was steady. The narratives of the story expose the gradual destruction of the ecology and the subsequent depletion of human presence in the country. This process of deterioration is sequentially described in the novel in the following ways:

In those first years the roads were peopled with refugees shrouded up in their clothing. Wearing goggles, sitting in their rags by the side of the road like ruined aviators. Their barrows heaped with shoddy. Towing wagons or carts. Their eyes bright in their skulls. Creedless shells of men tottering down the causeways like migrants in feverland. The frailty of everything was revealed at last. Old and troubling issues resolved into nothingness and night. The last instance of a thing takes the class with it. Turns out the light and is gone. (28)

Before the transition took place the world was normal and even after the incident people did not vanish at once but gradually the effect took place. In fact, “The country went from pine to live oak and pine. Magnolias. Trees as dead as any” (209). This gradual transmogrification not only changed the environment but also impacted the entire scenario including humans and non-humans. The distinction is that “In the past when he [the father] walked out like that and sat looking over the country lying in just the faintest visible shape where the lost moon tracked the caustic waste he’d sometimes see a light. Dim and shapeless in the murk. Across a river or deep in the blackened quadrants of a burned city” (200). Moreover, “ In the morning sometimes

he'd return with binocular glass the countryside for any sign of smoke but he never saw any" (200). These changes are so terrific that the father no longer escapes from the cruelty of the situation. The father, from the very beginning of the story, seems to be the hope of human proliferation; however, at last, he surrenders and gives up. Thus, he says to his son, "You need to go on. I can't go with you. You need to keep going. You don't know what might be down the road. We were always lucky. You will be lucky again. You'll see. Just go. It's all right" (297). The death of the father suggests that humans may delay but cannot deny their destiny. The evolutionary process has taught them to survive in harsh conditions but in the face of the environment; but, when nature itself becomes the enemy of humans, the only thing humans can do is surrender. In the words of Arne Naess:

If mankind is to avoid being replaced then the struggle against nature must cease. Some kind of 'back to nature' attitude must be nurtured. This does not imply that lifestyle and society will become too simple in relation to our great intellectual capacity. On the contrary, the relationships in a mature ecosystem are more composite than any mankind has mastered. With increasing understanding, increasing sensitivity towards internal relations, humans can live with moderate material means and reach a fabulous richness of ends.

(183)

No matter how hard it is to harmonize the relationship between humans and nature, for Naess, to substantiate humans' position or to specify them, they must discontinue their rapacious deeds against nature. It is because the relationship between humans and nature is so intense that the violation of one destroys the other. For Plumwood, "The idea that human life takes place in a self-enclosed, completely humanized space that is somehow independent of an inessential sphere of nature that exists in a remote

space ‘somewhere else’ is of course a major expression of culture/nature dualism”

(51). As a result, she assesses:

Its variant, human/nature dualism, has told us that there are totally separate narratives here with totally different casts of characters. The ecological crisis is forcing us to see that our apparent human immunity from the Heraclitean ecological narrative of nature is an illusion – that we too are positioned equally and along with the whole cast of non-humans in the drama of the ecological world of populations, species, and the flows of the food chain. (51-52)

For Plumewood, humans should not exist in the illusion of self-enclosedness. The apparent falsity of human totality leads to the further destruction of the world, including humans. In this sense, humans are dependent beings and so is their dignity. Since humans fail to stand against nature, human dignity takes a similar turn.

Secondly, Bazterrica’s *Tender is the Flesh* revolves around the story of Marcos who is entrapped in the world of savagery. Humans have become human-eating animals and society has transformed into a market where human flesh is traded without hesitation. Human flesh has a dignified terminology which they call ‘special meat,’ and dignified are those people who consume it. However, it is not to argue that society accepted the transition easily. In fact, “After GGB, the world changed definitively. They tried vaccines, antidotes, but the virus resisted and mutated . . . articles that spoke of the revenge of the vegans, others about acts of violence against animals, doctors on television explaining what to do about the lack of protein . . .”

(12). The distortion of social agitation is described in the novel in the following ways:

There were massive protests, hunger strikes, complaints filed by human rights organizations, and at the same time, articles, research, and news stories that

had an impact on public opinion. Prestigious universities claimed that animal protein was necessary to live, doctors confirmed that plant protein didn't contain all the essential amino acids, experts assured that gas emissions had been reduced, but malnutrition was on the rise . . . The protest centers began to disperse and the media went on reporting cases of people they said had died of the animal virus. (15)

The transition was a difficult process; nevertheless, it was naturalized by the authority by necessitating the need for flesh. The ultimate solution for human survival became the flesh of humans. Since the animal was infected by the virus, they could have chosen vegetables but when vegetables were outcasted because of their insufficient nutritious value, human existence came into stake. This consequence seems to be a human problem beyond the influence of nature; however, I argue that this is a metaphoric representation of human hubris against nature. Specifically, "Ethology, the general study of the behavior of living beings, suggests that the violence found within modern industrial societies is more malignant and self-destructive than that found in almost any other mammalian society" (Naess 170). Moreover, "The methods other mammals use to avoid and reduce violence appear to be more effective and less brutal than our own. These animal societies are worthy of study and in some limited respects worthy of being used as models for human behaviour. This does not imply a lower evaluation of mankind and our future possibilities" (170). In this sense, the representation of the human condition itself is a depiction of human innate brutal behavior and the severity of their desire to commit inhuman crimes. Moreover, this brutality shows to what extent humans can behave inhumanly when they lack ecological ethics. For Aldo Leopold, "An ethic, ecologically, is a limitation on freedom of action in the struggle for existence. An ethic, philosophically, is a

differentiation of social from anti-social conduct. These are two definitions of one thing. The thing has its origin in the tendency of interdependent individuals or groups to evolve modes of cooperation. The ecologist calls these symbioses” (172). From Leopold’s perspective, the fetishized cannibalism in the novel ruptured the existential limitation and subsumed the nexus of humanity, which resulted in the disruption of human conscience and led to the fatality of human violence.

The violence confirmed the uncertainty of human life and disfigured them in their own face. They could mirror their animality and fear against themselves. This fear resembles when Spanel, one of the butchers who sell special meat, says, “I know that when I die somebody’s going to sell my flesh on the market, one of my awful distant relatives. That’s why I smoke and drink, so I taste bitter and no one gets any pleasure out of my death . . . Today, I’m the butcher, tomorrow, I might be the cattle” (45). Indeed, there is human farming and the farmed humans are called FGP, First Generation Pure; however, the ravaged society is devastated in such magnitude that there are poor people, scavengers, and suspicious neighbors who either because of economic crisis or because of the tenderness of the natural flesh consume humans. More specifically, “The special meat sold at butcher shops isn’t affordable, which is why there’s a black market, to sell a cheaper product that doesn’t need to be inspected or vaccinated, that’s easy meat, with a first and last name. That’s what illegal meat is called, meat obtained and produced after the curfew” (41). Not only these meat are cheaper “it’ll also never be genetically modified and monitored to make it more tender, tasty and addictive” (41). In this scenario, the novel reveals the human flesh of two types: edible and inedible. Edibles are also called heads, farmed humans, and inedible are those that are not industrial products. These heads are human too and the only difference is they are not bred biologically but manufactured. The other

difference is that “domestic females should be virgins. Having sex with head, enjoying her, is illegal and the sentence to death in the Municipal Slaughterhouse” (168). However, the protagonist, Marcos not only involved in sexual intercourse with FGP but also impregnates her. In fact, he was gifted an FGP, whom he calls Cecilia, by GI Gringo. His infatuation grows so strong with her that he fails to resist his libido. He cares for her and seems to be loving her. However, when she gives birth to a baby boy, he “drags the body of the female to the barn to slaughter it, he says to Cecilia, his voice radiant, so pure it wounds: ‘She had the human look of a domesticated animal” (219). Marcos is an animal in a human face. He reflects the human arrogance that to see any other creature resembling humans is to be effaced from the history of existence. Perhaps, Marcos’ attempt to brutalize the scenario might be a new way to establish the human world. As Arne Naess contends: “The environmental crisis could inspire a new renaissance; new social forms for co-existence together with a high level of culturally integrated technology, economic progress, and a less restricted experience of life” (26), since there is a gap between humans and FGP, to perpetuate the relationship between humans and non-humans Marcos might have committed such action. However, his attempt destabilizes the stability of human dignity by reinforcing the inhuman qualities he encapsulates. Violating the ethical criteria of human legacy, Marcos, in totality, renounces the possibility of human conundrum. As Leopold argues, “An ethic may be regarded as a mode of guidance for meeting ecological situations so new or intricate, or involving such deferred reactions, that the path of social expediency is not discernible to the average individual” (173). Moreover, “Animal instincts are modes of guidance for the individual in meeting such situations. Ethics are possibly a kind of community instinct in the making” (173). In this connection, to achieve humanness, Marcos is involved in revaluing human atrocity by

taking animal instinct. In doing so, what it explicates is the humans' intricate connection with brutal desire and a sense of supremacy which makes them responsible for ecological rupture and indignant creatures.

Marcos is one of the representative characters who defy the value of human dignity while proving the supremacy of humans. Besides, the other significant character is Guerrero Iraola, a human trafficking merchant. A whisper of hunters reveals that, "the stunning blonde was in fact a young virgin of fourteen who needed to be tenderized and that Guerrero Iraola destroyed her in bed, raping her for hours. The man says he was there and that the child was half-dead when they took her away to be slaughtered" (159). Iraola's infliction over the fourteen-year-old child reflects the act of dehumanization. If his act is taken into consideration, human dignity as such has no value in its essence because, as Divine Fuh asserts:

At the individual level, human dignity refers to a sense of pride over one's self-worth and value, often operationalized by development agencies and national governments as a cultivation of individual capabilities. Collectively, it is a moral obligation embedded in an ethics of care that spells out the conditions through which people get processed as valuable humans deserving of recognition—that is, the terms by which a person gains recognition as a full and equal human being. (87)

While defining human dignity, the root of Fuh's arguments relies on the worth of humans and their recognition. For Fuh, the definition of human dignity situates every human in equal rights regardless of any physical or non-physical barriers. However, Marcos and Iraola stand in such a zone where the grip of human dignity no longer prevails. The only thing that absorbs them is the animality and their brutal resemblance of insanity. The mentality that Marcos and Iraola adopt inculcates the

loss of human rationality, tilting towards the advancement of humans in the world of magnified humans. However, as Plumwood points out: “If our dominant concepts of technoscience and economic rationality are ones that treat nature as a nullity, it is small wonder that the outcome of their enormous growth and progress as a force for remaking the earth is a progressive nullification and decline of nature” (61). Indeed, to recapitulate, these consequences are the result of the delinking humans from the natural bond with nature. It shows the ramifications of human dignity in the dystopian world where nature vanishes and leaves humans to understand its significance.

Moreover, Annika Gonnermann contends: “Especially dystopias seem to express most aptly the zeitgeist of the 21st century, a way of life conditioned by existential fears such as the global financial crisis of 2008 or the impending disaster of climate change, resulting in a pessimistic outlook to the future” (27), Bazterrica’s characters are dispelled from the distant future of humans, who in the process of rectifying themselves happen to make a blunder.

IV. The Instinctual Repercussion: Dream and Hunger

Human beings dream and starve; they are their instinctual behaviors.

However, the way they dream and starve differs when the world is engulfed in the apocalyptic atmosphere. McCarthy's *The Road* and Bazterrica's *Tender is the Flesh* articulate these two behaviors as the instinctual demand of ecological harmony.

Specifically, *The Road* deals with dream as a utopian nostalgia and hunger as natural stimulation whereas *Tender is the Flesh* dispenses dream as dreadful vision and hunger as hunger for desire. Although, in their literal observation, these two novels differ in terms of representing these two trends, the ultimate resemblance of those behaviors envisions the similar purpose that humans in the dystopian world either dream or starve, they imagine the world where ecology fulfills the need for their existence.

The father in *The Road* often seems to be haunted by dreams. His dreams are symbolically overloaded and motivated by nostalgic thoughts. For example, "In dreams, his pale bride came to him out of a green and leafy canopy. Her nipples pipeclayed and her rib bones painted white. She wore a dress of gauze and her dark hair carried up in combs of ivory, combs of shell. Her smile, her downturned eyes" (17). The striking element that this dream encapsulates is the revisiting of his wife and the resemblance of greenery. Significantly, his wife and greenery both are absent in his life. On the one hand, her wife committed suicide and on the other hand, the world is so devastated that there are merely ashes and freezing coldness. However, his wife's revisiting his dream and the presence of a green and leafy canopy, I argue, suggest repercussions of the bygone days. Subtly, the father is haunted by the adorable pat which is pleasing and peaceful. Moreover, these resemblances are the manifestation of his inner desire and a symbolic exposition of nostalgia that people

endure while laminating upon the long-lost entities. In Plumewood's words:

To the extent that we distance ourselves radically from nature in conception and action, we are unable and unwilling to situate ourselves back in nature and frame our lives ecologically as embodied beings. We are unable to understand our ecological relationships except in the most abstract terms, the province of the specialist. (120)

For Plumwood, once we rupture the potential of nature it fails to reestablish its destructed forms. Human beings can never pay nature for the devastation it causes against nature. Although human existence principally adheres to natural necessity, they barely realize the immensity of human survival. From this perspective, the dream here symbolizes the realization of humans that since they could not reverse the time and rectify the errors they have committed in the past, the ultimate situation, thus, is to lament those things. Since the cost of rupture cannot be compensated by any sense of human toil, the only thing that humans can possibly do for the bygone days is lamentation. In this scenario, what becomes more scintillating is the vulnerability of human beings and especially their dignity.

The anthropogenic comprehension of human beings relegates themselves to the highest form of standard who deserve to rule others. More specifically, "In anthropocentric culture, nature, and animals are constructed according to the same logic of the One and the Other, with nature as Other in relation to the human in much the same way that women are constructed as Other in relation to men" (Plumwood 107). In this context, humans dignify their existence as superior creatures and subordinate the non-humans. However, the father in the novel seems to realize that humans have to vandalize their hubris and embrace the grandiosity of nature to celebrate the meaningful sustenance of humans. Indeed, "He'd been visited in a dream

by creatures of a kind he'd never seen before. They did not speak. He thought that they'd been crouching by the side of his cot as he slept and then had skulked away on his awakening" (McCarthy 163), which suggests the result of being entrapped in the monstrosity and brutality of the human future if they fail to ensure the security for ecological harmony. For a better convenience, Plumewood suggests:

Through seeing ourselves in terms of mastery as primarily rational, non-animal beings who are 'outside nature', we are subject to illusions of autonomy, service and control, taking the functioning of the 'lower' sphere, the ecological systems which support us, entirely for granted, needing some grudging support and attention only when they fail to perform as expected. (99-100)

Humans cannot tame nature nor can they disentangle themselves from the nexus of ecological interconnection. To compound oneself in the frame of human excellence in mastering ecological immensity is merely a banal illusion that apparently leads humans to be more devastating and destructive. Thus, this destruction of nature paves the way for exacerbated human suffering. Perhaps, in this connection, the father's realization is so intense that he believes that no matter whether he lasts or not the further generation will one day create a cordial relationship between nature and humans which rejuvenates the seed of peace and euphony. Thus, the father suggests to his son, "When your dreams are of some world that never was or of some world that never will be and you are happy again then you will have given up. Do you understand? And you can't give up" (202). These dialogues shed light on hopping for a better future and attempting to consummate the lost world and the possibilities of its recreation.

In a similar light, Bazterrica's *Tender is the Flesh* deals dream with serious

attention, resonating with a fearful future. The dream of the protagonist is concerned with human nature and his dreams become the manifestation of the human future world. Bazterrica describes Marcos' horrible dream in the following ways:

He's naked and walks into an empty room. The walls are stained with humidity and something brown that could be blood. The floor is dirty and broken. His father is in the corner, sitting on a wooden bench. He's naked and is looking at the floor. He tries to go to his father, but can't move. He tries to call him, but can't speak. In another corner, a wolf is eating some meat . . . The wolf is eating something that's alive. He looks closer. It's his son, who is crying but not making a sound. He grows desperate. He tries to shout . . . He cries, but no tears fall, he shouts and wants to climb out of his body, but can't.

(92)

The scornful images in the dream are a resemblance to human brutality in cannibalized society. The 'empty room,' 'stained wall,' 'dirty floor,' and 'his naked body,' indicate the fecundity of human life in the absence of nature and the degraded values of humans which are open and wide, being disrobed of their aesthetic fabric superiority. Moreover, his old father and his little son are at the two sides of the corner, and their different conditions suggest a muted past and an infertile future.

The old father is naked and looking down which means he is incapable of seeing the dreadfulness. He is shrouded with shyness because those colorful pasts have been vandalized by the present and are eating alive like the grandson who could hardly see the unrepeatable past. In this happenstance, one might argue that the evolutionary process never demands the ravaging of the old and the formation of the new. As Robert Ezra Park discusses, "At every stage in the process a more or less stable equilibrium is achieved, which in due course, and as a result of progressive

changes in life conditions, possibly due to growth and decay, the equilibrium achieved in the earlier stages is eventually undermined” (9). Thus, “In such case the energies previously held in balance will be released, competition will be intensified, and change will continue at a relatively rapid rate until a new equilibrium is achieved” (9). Perhaps, the dream that captures three different generations: the grandfather, the father, and the son, symbolically restates Park’s assumption which is based on the natural process of human development. Nevertheless, the changes in the process of evolution in Marcos’ dream are so rapid and immense that the transformation, without reaching a particular point of equilibrium, the process of change vanishes because of extremity. Humans have started slaughtering humans and humans themselves have become their greatest enemy. In this connection, it is not evolutionary changes but rather a march to retardation and gradual nullification.

In another way, Marcos’ dream is a depiction of anthropogenic fear. According to Christof Mauch, “It is important to understand that what we fear today is very different from what we feared in early modern times. We are no longer afraid of the wildness of the mountains, of the torrents of the seas, or of attacks from fierce animals” (12). Moreover, “We have “tamed” our natural environments and we have extinguished wild animals or confined them to small spaces . . . We fear the breakdown of the electric grid, the end of non-renewable resources, the expansion of deserts, the loss of islands, and the pollution of our air and water” (12). Humans have encountered tremendous progress over time; however, their progress itself has become fearful for their survival. More importantly, now the progress itself has mobilized its domain in such a way that it is beyond the control of humans. Marcos’ dream here comes into play. Although he tries to shout, he cannot produce sound; he weeps but there is no tear, which befits the human condition in a progressive society

where the dignity of humans is collapsed in the process of dignification.

Marcos' dream is so ostensible that every element can be inspected without any constraints. The imagery enables the reader to observe things as if they are happening lively. For instance, he dreams of the world before the transition occurs where he meets a man:

This man hugs him so tightly that he can't breathe and he struggles until breaks free. But the man—himself—tries again and comes over to say something into his ear. He runs away because he doesn't want to die. While he's running, he feels the stone in his chest roll around and it strikes his heart. The zoo becomes a forest. Hanging from the trees are eyes, hands, human ears, and babies. He climbs one of the trees to get a baby, but when he reaches it and has it in his arms, the baby disappears. He climbs another tree and the ears stick to his body. When he tries to pick them off, as though they were leeches, they rip up his skin. When he reaches the baby, he sees it's covered in human ears and is no longer breathing. Then he roars, howls, croaks, bellows, barks, caws, moos, cries. (189)

In this dream, he visits the world before the spread of the virus. However, the dream does not fail to incorporate human brutalities after the transition. His struggle in the dream connotes the future of the world and the hardship that humans have to confront after they delink themselves from the association of nature. Perhaps, this might be the reason behind the occurrence of trees in his dream. Human organs hanging on the branches of the tree resemble the substitution of vegetables for special human meat and interestingly his incapability to catch the baby shows the lifelessness of future generations. In these picturesque, the novel tends to motivate the reader to undergo the internal association of humans with non-humans. Humans have declared

themselves as rational creature who can sustain their life without the help of external agency; however, “The feature that makes this human-centered framework of rationality especially dangerous in the case of nature is that it encourages a massive denial of dependency, fostering the illusion of nature as inessential and leaving out of account its irreplaceability, non-exchangeability and limits” (Plumwood 120). The very notion of self-sufficiency in human beings is questioned by Marcos’ dreams because, in his dreams, he is vulnerable and effaced from his dignified position merely making him a soldier who has lost the battle.

The other instinctual behavior that shows the fragility of humans and nature as powerful in the novel is hunger. McCarthy projects his two characters on the road toward the south but with no fixed destiny. They believe that since there are good and bad people, one day they will meet the good one, thus in the entire novel they are always in the movement and in the pace to reach some better place. Interestingly, this movement is energized by food and food is followed by hunger. They starve for a long time and continuously search for food. In their movement, when they discover food, “They sat side by side and ate the can of pears. Then they ate a can of peaches. They licked the spoons and tipped the bowls and drink the rich sweet syrup. They looked at each other” (149). Their pathetic situation deforms the notion of humans’ self-sufficient ability. Essentially, the human-centered consciousness is so rooted in the isolation of humans from nature that they consider other elements of ecology merely as a substitute. In Plumwood’s words, “Rather than according to nature the dignity of an independent other or presence, anthropocentric culture treats nature as Other as merely a refractory foil to the human” (109). Moreover, “defined in relation to the human or as an absence of the human, nature has a conceptual status that leaves it entirely dependent for its meaning on the ‘primary’ human term” (109), this self-

centered notion of human beings is dismantled by the novel. The father and the son have to starve and depend upon minimal food, I argue, because the supply chain between the consumer and the product is terminated. There is merely a consumer but no producer. This shows to what extent human has to suffer when nature stops nurturing humans. Meanwhile, while shattering the hypocrisy of humans the novel interrogates human dignity simultaneously. The dignified humans on the verge of their supremacy no longer provide any substantial clue to reinforce their value or to elevate their position on the cusp of humanity and nature. Thus, what is suggested is “our insensitivity and injustice towards nature is a prudential hazard to us and should be rejected on that ground alone; but we must still place the recognition of injustice first, rather than continuing to prioritize our own interests as suggested in the concept of enlightened self-interest” (Plumwood 115-16), which is to say the primary function of human beings is to create essential relationship with the nature neither there will be unstoppable destruction of ecological balance if humans prioritize their interest.

Where McCarthy’s projection of hunger follows scarcity of food, Bazterrica’s depiction of hunger is stimulated by desire. Since people have stopped consuming vegetables, though coercively, they have chosen human flesh as the best diet to supply the necessary supplements for the human body. How they undertake this transition is dispersed in the novel subtly when the church overtakes the law and tries to normalize the issue of cannibalism. In this context, a lady says, “After all, since the world began, we’ve been eating each other. If not symbolically, then we’ve been literally gorging on each other. The Transition has enabled us to be less hypocritical” (153). This evolutionary understanding of human behavior is followed by other statements like, “Because it is. But that’s what’s incredible, that we accept our excesses, that we naturalize them, that we embrace our primitive essence” (152). These characters in the

novel are so trifling that they produce their words so mildly and they are barely audible because when people are practically exercising cannibalism, to talk about human essence is a miserable voice. Neither does it sound rude nor does it make any impact. However, it is necessary to understand that these sorts of micro-narratives holistically incubate the greater physiological movement which is represented as institutional dehumanization in the novel. They are broken in such a way that they have become a colorless entity of humans themselves. To reflect this issue, the protagonist himself is sufficient. How he defines himself can be summarized in the following ways:

‘This is Marcos Tejo, a man whose son died and who moves through life with a hole in his chest. A man who’s married to a broken woman. This man slaughters humans because he needs to support his father, who’s lost his mind, is locked up in a nursing home, and doesn’t recognize him. He’s going to have a child with a female, one of the most serious crimes a person can commit, but he doesn’t care in the slightest, and the child is going to be his.’ (157)

Marcos’ way of life is ruptured by his unconditional dualism between his lamentation of the old bygone days and the harsh reality he is confronting. However, what is true of him is human slaughtering was never his choice, and never did he accept this transition as favorable to humans. Nonetheless, his supple attitude corresponds with the degraded value of humans in terms of mastery over the world, which humans believe to be their property. In this context, Plumwood contends: “The crumbling of human/nature dualism is also making us aware of our relationships with non-humans as subject to ethics as much as ecology” (52). Apart from that, “Both kinds of narratives must now be seen as applying to both groups; all our lives are situated in both culture and nature. We can no longer retain the comfortable human-centered

illusion of separate casts of characters in separate dramas. Our disciplinary structures must reflect that knowledge” (52). Thus, it is beyond the level of imagination, if not impossible, to observe humans in a world where nature surrenders in front of humans and so is true with human dignity.

Moreover, Humans are slaves of their actions; they hardly can reformulate their being in the absence of their behavioral performance. Importantly, as Lee Cronk informs, “Human behaviors are seen as phenotypes that, like all phenotypes, are the combined outcomes of interactions between genes and environments. Our species' remarkable behavioral plasticity and its capacity for culture are seen as outcomes of our evolutionary history” (27). If so, what is not true is the existence of humans in the material absence of nature because, in the evolutionary process, human have always entangled their existential roots with natural entities, including the environment and ecology. Again, if human itself is a byproduct of nature, the possibility of human superiority is merely a delusion because in A. B. Hollingshead’s words:

The temporal and spatial identity of the community, the functional relations of the habitants to each other, as well as important phases in the life history of the individual, may be largely explicable through the observation and interpretation of the competitive relations that obtain between men and their environment as they function within the limits imposed on them by their culture. (358)

Human beings indeed have defined nature and its subcategories but it does not allow humans to consider themselves to be the master of every human and non-human entities of the universe. The natural particles are the shaping factor of human beings and the way they have dignified themselves is the reflection of what they have gone so far from nature. Substituting the role of nature, human beings try to relegate

themselves to the status of nature which ultimately leads to the way to the deformation of the ecology, environment, and nature in totality. Indeed it is not a matter of excuse that human beings commit such mistakes because of their vulnerability in comprehending the necessity of ecological integrity. Humans do not destroy nature unknowingly in fact their rationality is a primary mechanism that modulates them to drown themselves in the assumption of superiority that leads them to undergo such actions. The mentality of human beings confers their ability to distinguish themselves from any other thing that exists in the universe and they do not hesitate to consider themselves the emperor of unavailed territory. Naess, describing these human traits, questions the uniqueness of humans in the following ways:

An important and essential matter for all individuals is one's personal conduct. Each individual has responsibility, each has something to preserve, something to develop. To counter apathy and low self-esteem, moral philosophers have occasionally made the mistake of placing humankind in a unique position in respects incompatible with an open attitude to the rest of nature. In relation to other living beings on our planet, *Homo sapiens* is unique: it is valid to call ourselves unique on Earth. But what is our situation in the Milky Way? (192)

For Naess, human beings are self-centered; they merely starve for what they want. Every individual wills to achieve something but concerning the needs s/he holds. Indeed any creature in the world claims its uniqueness and there is no necessity to prove their difference but what makes them believe that they are independent and capable of sustaining their life in a world where nature nourishes everything that comforts humans, that gives a sense of life, that provides what they need and that supply what they unconsciously want. In fact, human beings are not merely shrouded by the gift of nature, rather they are the byproduct of natural composition. In other

words, perhaps they are different in a variety of ways that prove their peculiarity but this uniqueness itself is a composite boon of nature rather than human's invention. In this regard, what it ultimately brings into visibility is human's anthropocentric reality that makes humans stubborn and a diabolical creature that destines to end his own creature. In the words of Plumwood:

Much of the problem (both for women and nature) lies in rationalist or rationalist-derived conceptions of the self and of what is essential and valuable in the human makeup. It is in the name of such a reason that these other things-the feminine, the emotional, the merely bodily or the merely animal, and the natural world itself-have most often been denied their virtue and been accorded an inferior and merely instrumental position. (5-6)

For Plumwood, the rational concept of human beings relegates them into the regime of falsity deluding them with a sense of complete wholeness in themselves. This rationalist thought incubates a sense of superiority that ultimately charges humans with a thought of uniqueness that implicitly ravages themselves along with nature. "Since a concern with the danger of neglecting or mistreating the environment is the most fundamental of modern environmental intuitions and motivations," as Plumwood stresses, "the inability to confirm or explain such concern is another reason why the cosmic model fails to make a good connection to environmental politics and activism" (142). Thus, for Plumwood, "In its version, ecophilosophy is presented as no more than the optional spiritual icing on the green cake, something of no real practical importance or value a green activist can taste or leave alone, according to taste" (142). What is concerning for Plumwood, in this regard, is the methodology that deals with the real condition of nature in human comprehension. The modern way of perceiving nature and its components are epistemically distorted

and infected with inapplicable methodical hindrances. Since the mistakes are to be rectified before they take a violent turn, Plumwood focuses on the epistemic scope of alternatives to deal with the dangers emerging because of human rationality. In more specific ways, how human rationality dysfunction ecological, environmental and natural harmony, she discusses in the following ways:

The centric structure provides a form of rationality, a framework for beliefs that naturalizes and justifies a certain sort of self-centredness, self-imposition, and dispossession, which is what eurocentric and ethnocentric colonization frameworks, as well as androcentric frameworks, involve. The centric structure accomplishes this by promoting insensitivity to the Other's needs, agency, prior claims, and belief in the colonizer's apartness, superiority, and right to conquer or master the Other. Thus it provides a distorted framework for perception of the Other, and the project of mastery it gives rise to involves dangerous forms of denial, perception, and belief which can put the centric perceiver out of touch with reality about the Other. The framework of mastery does not provide a basis for sensitive, sympathetic, or reliable understanding and observation of either the Other or of the self; mastery is (it would be nice to say "was") a framework of moral and cultural blindness. (141)

Plumwood points out the impact of rationalized episteme that dichotomizes self and the other, perpetuating the cycle of self-centeredness, and distorting the integrity of wholeness. It breeds a sense of self-preservation and deduces sensibility and sympathy to create meaningful and necessary relationships between the structural entities that creates the natural harmony between humans and non-humans.

The discussion regarding human rationality is prioritized in this section because it is the major cause of ecological destruction. What has become humans' fate

today is the gradual formation of rationalized conceptions of human beings. In this regard, McCarthy's *The Road* and Bazterrica's *Tender is the Flesh*, deep down critics of human rationality that paved the way for irreparable destruction which can be observed in the images of the novels. Thus, as an alternative, Plumwood prescribes ecological realization as an epistemic discipline that remains a panacea for every wound humans have created, so far. Thus, for Plumwood, "If human-centredness similarly structures our beliefs and perceptions about the other that is nature, it is a framework for generating ecological denial and ecological blindness in just the same way that ethnocentrism is a framework for generating moral blindness" (142). Hence, to deny ecoconsciousness for ecological harmony is to entertain ecological blindness deluded by human rationalized delusion.

V. Conclusion

In this study, I have explored the indispensable relationship between humans and ecology being based on ecocritical principles. Excavating the essence of human dignity from its root, I have traced its underground principle and revealed its ecological root fundamentally disrupting the conventional notion of human dignity, which was centered on the inherent worthiness of human beings. To explore these issues I undertook *The Road* and *Tender is the Flesh* as a primary text and remarked the similar issues without denying the counter perspective. Since McCarthy's *The Road* and Bazterrica's *Tender is the Flesh* both revolve around the consequence of environmental decay, on the one hand, *The Road* portrays the abandoned American city dilapidated because of nuclear devastation, most probably but not sure; on the other hand, *Tender is the Flesh* depicts human institutional farming to supply necessary protein for humans because the spread of the virus has made animals inedible. The institution has proclaimed vegetables insufficient to provide necessary protein for humans. Consequently, in both novels, the absence of the green has raged the human sphere into a realm of despair and challenged their dignity. There is a constant battle between humans which has made them brutal, animalistic, and barbaric.

The study has shown the impact of ecological disharmony and the consequence of human hubris against ecological essentialities. Human beings, in the process of evolution, have learned to survive but as they acquire abilities to exist in the environmental shifts they delude themselves, believing their supremacy over non-humans. Their hypocrisy allowed them to dignify their value; nevertheless, in the dignifying process not only they generated isolating values but also incubated an indignant gaze over non-humans. As human dignity became the conception rather

than a transcribed testament in rational development, it functioned as an apparatus to dominate non-humans, including nature, ecology, and the environment. The study, against this backdrop, discloses how their dignity as such shatters when nature revenges and stops linking with nature. The father, who is shattered by the coldness of ecological imbalance, in McCarthy's *The Road*, and Marcos, who is psychologically distorted because of the absence of natural integrity between humans and non-humans, in Bazterrica's *Tender is the Flesh* are explicit examples that show the casualty of human defying the fundamental requisite of rectitude between human and nature. In this relevance, the study forecloses the grandiosity of ecology which is not a secondary element for human existence but a primary entity that constructs and reconstructs the definition of humans, including their abstract fundamental values like ethics, morality, and dignity.

Unleashing the individualistic tendency of human beings in the development approach, the study reveals that humans have rationalized their essence, necessity and commitment in negotiating non-humans. But, in doing so, they did not merely corroborate their validation at the same time they also unjustly demarcated humans from any other aspects of the universe, accentuating themselves into the highest form of ecology. They formatted, compartmentalized, and categorized things which delayed their perception and eroded the firmness of epistemic necessity, which ultimately led to the disruption of ecology and nature. As a result, they have to confront the brutality of nature against humans as in McCarthy's *The Road* and Bazterrica's *Tender is the Flesh*.

Both novels reflect humans as effaced by their own deed and their confrontation with their negligence. The novel indirectly hints at the necessity of nature though the major theme of both novels explicitly differs from ecological

ground. When McCarthy imagines a world concurred by coldness—freezing the warmth of human presence, Bazterrica's novel depicts human brutality against humans. What these two novels commonly share fundamentally is the imagined images that could be real one day if humans failed to realize the seriousness of ecological disruption. These two novels are exemplary works of art that work as an alarm to wake humans frequently when they are intoxicated by rationality or drowned by self-centredness.

The study shed light on two critical issues: the burgeoning tendency of delinking humans with nature and its impact, and epistemic negation, which is contributing to disregarding the human-nature relationship. However, a significant portion that any other researcher could undertake could be the human-animal relationship in Bazterrica's *Tender is the Flesh*, and some others can deal with the distortion of emotional values in the ecological crisis in McCarthy's *The Road*. I do not mean to say that these issues remain a cornerstone to undergo for further research, what I meant merely is some of the possibilities not in totality but as a recommendation as a researcher.

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