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**Ethics and Survival in Cormac MCCarthy's *The Road*
(2006) and Yeon Sang-ho's *Train to Busan* (2016): A
Comparative Study**

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to our families and friends who have been a constant source of support and encouragement during the hardships and struggles we faced through the graduation process.

Abstract

This work addresses the ethical issues in Cormac MCarthy's *The Road* (2006) and Yeon Sang-ho's *Train to Busan* (2016), associated with the theme of survival in the context of the apocalypse. The main focus of this dissertation is to draw parallels and direct comparison between MCarthy's and Sang-ho's representations of the apocalyptic/post-apocalyptic genre, while considering survival as a fundamental element when studying ethics in both *The Road* and *Train to Busan*. This study adopts Verharen's *Survival Ethics Theory: To Be Good Is First to Be*, as it accompanies the major part of the analysis. Other theories derived from Survival Ethics are used to conduct this research; namely Charles Darwin's *Survival of the Fittest*, Greg Garrett's *The Ethics of the Zombie Apocalypse* and Stefan Klein's *Survival of the Nicest*. The one important finding in this work consists in the fact that all the characters in the two works have one ethical responsibility that is: surviving while maintaining their morality, because maintaining their morality allows them to survive as a species. Thus, based upon these theories and the comparative analysis of the two works, this dissertation concludes that survival cannot be dissociated from the study of ethics in the two works, and vice versa, since both of them are interrelated.

Keywords: MCarthy, Yeon sang-ho, The Road, Train to Busan, Survival, Ethics.

General Introduction

Introduction:

The subject of our dissertation revolves around the theme of survival in apocalyptic narratives, and the study of ethics in relation to it. In order to study this subject, we are going to compare two apocalyptic works belonging to two different genres (novel and film), timelines (2006 and 2016) and cultural backgrounds (United States of America and South Korea), and demonstrate how the study of ethics in both Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* (2006) and Yeon Sang-ho's *Train to Busan* (2016) is intrinsically related to the humans' survival instinct. Indeed, according to Greg Garrett, stories of the apocalypse, in which the theme of survival is central, all intend to reveal one thing: "ethical standards matter. Perhaps they matter even more when we face the choice of abandoning them." (165).

The apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic genre focuses on picturing the world, as we know it, suffering from a cataclysm that would eventually bring the downfall of humanity. Therefore, the constant danger present in these stories is at the origin of survival being its central theme. By survival here we imply, the human instinct that dictates people's behavior in times of great danger, in order to ensure the perpetuation of their own genes. Since survival instinct is what governs people's behavior, and ethics being "the branch of inquiry devoted to exploring questions about how we live and about what is good" (Garrett 156), suggests that the study of ethics cannot be completed without considering survival as its fundamental motif.

Through our comparative study of both *The Road* (2006), a novel set in post-apocalyptic America exploring the survival journey of a father and his son, and *Train to Busan* (2016), a Korean zombie movie in which the characters struggle for survival, we are going to unravel their differences and similarities concerning the subject of our dissertation, in order to determine the strongest comparative idea between them. In doing so, we are going to break down our study into three chapters; each one explores the two works and puts them into

juxtaposition only to discover how these stories of the apocalypse reflect heavily on the theme of survival when considering ethics.

Review of the Literature:

Several studies have been conducted in relation to Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* (2006) and Yeon sang-ho's *Train to Busan* (2016), addressing the issue of human ethics in the context of the apocalypse. Given that they are both survival tales that address human behavior in times of great danger, they incited researchers to ponder upon issues like capitalism, violence/ethical behavior and the future of humanity, as they are the most common themes discussed when studying the apocalyptic/post-apocalyptic works of the twenty-first century literature. Going through our chapters and the previous studies that have been performed on these subjects, we have found out that researchers have already considered these themes while studying *The Road* and *Train to Busan*.

According to Simon Schleusener, the apocalypse in *The Road* is an imagination of a world in which capitalism is no longer the ruling system, while taking into account the detrimental consequences that neoliberalism holds on the planet as it is not "in favor of more 'market-friendly' solutions" when it comes to the ecological crisis (Elhefnawy, 2020), which would eventually result, in this reading of *The Road*, to a future apocalypse. In another study concerning *Train to Busan*, Keith B. Wagner (2017) explains that when the neoliberal mentality meets the survival context of the apocalypse, people fall into the "individualistic notion of survival" and forget about the ethical notion of prioritizing the interest of a group over self-interest.

When it comes to the chapter *Violence, Survival and the Ethics of Non-violence*, the researcher Josiah R Johnston (2014) discussed these themes concerning *The Road* concluding that the majority of human beings lose the very characteristics that people believe make them

human such as the use of violence, once they leave the boundaries of social restrictions. He also adds that “it is possible for human morality to survive the rigors of the violence contained within the natural order and come out intact.” Regarding *Train to Busan*, Claire Low (2021) suggests that characters in a Korean zombie apocalypse function so to transform from pro-self behavior (violence) to a prosocial behavior (ethical behavior) as is the case of the character Seok-Woo. She suggests that this “moral transformation” as she puts it, can still happen, which means that, ethical behavior is still possible even in the context of the apocalypse where “citizens no longer have to follow social norms”.

Finally, going through the themes discussed in the last chapter that are primarily centered on the future of humanity, Rick Elmore and Jonathan Elmore (2018) have discussed its relation to *The Road*, explaining that the only thing that can give hope in the perpetuation of humanity consists in changing our ethical behavior, “a change that privileges community over goods”. On the other hand, Schleusener (2017) argues that although there seems to be no sign of futurity in *The Road*, the existence of the boy offers “a sense of futurity” to the novel and a “glimmer of hope”. As regards to *Train to Busan*, Keith B. Wagner suggests that what offers hope in a better future or “redemption for this contagion-stricken country can be seen in the female survivors who presumably become the future of an unknown Korea.”

Issue and Working Hypothesis:

The one essential element in our dissertation that is missing in the previous literature is the fact that *The Road* and *Train to Busan* have never been studied together. It is also clear that all the studies undertaken on these two works are not in the exact alignment with our subject matter; they did indeed discuss human ethics in the context of the apocalypse, however, they did not consider survival as a fundamental element when studying ethics in the two works.

They first discussed capitalism being the cause of the apocalypse and the reason behind the breakdown of ethics, but they did not consider the struggle for survival related to capitalism, which is the legitimate reason behind the deterioration of ethics. Likewise, the researchers did not discuss violence and ethical behavior in the two works in relation to the human's survival instinct; they are rather presented as the natural consequences of the disappearance of social norms and ethical standards. Finally, researchers have not succeeded to associate the future of humanity in the two works with the survival of ethical behavior, that is to say, the grand purpose of ethics is the survival of humanity, which brings us again to our argument which claims that the study of ethics in both works cannot be dissociate from survival, and vice versa.

Considering all those research gaps in the previous literature, we are going to demonstrate that ethics and survival are complementary in the two works. For this, we will juxtapose the study of ethics in *The Road* (2006), a post-apocalyptic novel set in the United States, with *Train to Busan* (2016), an apocalyptic zombie movie, set in South Korea. The comparison of these two distinct works will uncover their differences and similarities, in order to demonstrate that the historical backgrounds and settings surrounding the two works are not taken into consideration when studying ethics from a survival-wise perspective.

Research Outline:

In order to carry out our research, whose objective is to show how the above-discussed survival ethics theory can be applied to both *The Road* (2006) and *Train to Busan* (2016), so as to demonstrate how the study of ethics in both works yields to the same findings, we divide it into three chapters entitled: *Capitalism, the struggle for survival and apocalypse* (chapter one) *Violence, survival and the ethics of non-violence* (chapter two) and *Self-sacrifice, survival and hope in humanity* (chapter three). Each one discusses themes that can be found in the two works, and at the same time related to the subject matter of this research; which

explains the presence of the key word “survival” in the middle of the title of each chapter, as to show that, the medium to studying ethics is through considering survival.

The first chapter aims at revealing how capitalism as a system can be the cause of the apocalypse in the two works. We will shed light on how the dark facets of Capitalism, such as competition and individualism, which are fueled by a survival mechanism, contribute to the decline of ethics. The second chapter focuses primarily on how people act when their survival is at risk; although some resort to violence, others overcome their fears and maintain their morality even during dire situations. In the third chapter, we are going to disclose the importance of morality during the apocalypse and how it contributes to the survival of humanity; in the first section we will discuss the motives of sacrifice and how it contributes to the perpetuation of ethics in the two works. In the second section, we will reveal how children represent the hope for a promising future, being the carriers of morality in the two works.

Methods and materials:

1. Methods:

Before embarking on the analysis and comparison of Cormac McCarthy’s *The Road* (2006) and Yeon Sang-ho’s *Train to Busan* (2016), we must first establish the theoretical foundations upon which we will base our arguments in the chapters. This dissertation is about revealing the why, and how, survival functions as an important factor when considering human ethics. The two key words here are survival and ethics; that is why we rely on Survival Ethics theory, more specifically a work performed by Charles C. Verharen (2011) entitled *Survival Ethics Theory: To be good is first to be*. The theory suggests that all the values that constitute any ethical system ought to be “justified by their direct survival utility” (1). Meaning that, ethical values should be in favor of the survival of human species.

As explained by Verharen, “there are two basic values in this *survival ethics system*. The first is survival itself: To be good is first to be.” (1) All the ethical values come from this one, “because no other values exist in the absence of life itself”. If humanity does not survive, no one would be there to perform ethical values, which means that, ethics cannot exist without survival. The second value is flourishing. It means that “survival is better achieved when life flourishes”, and life does not flourish without ethical values (one of them is community bonding), which again, suggests that survival cannot be achieved without ethics. These two values of survival ethics imply that ethics and survival are interrelated; one cannot exist in the absence of the other.

The ethicists that first came out with this theory are American pragmatists like William James, John Dewey and Richard Rorty. However, with this theory being the basis of our study, we are going to rely on three other sub-theories for each chapter, and each theory is related to the themes discussed in each chapter, and at the same time all of them are derived from survival ethics.

In the first chapter *Capitalism, the Struggle for Survival and Apocalypse*, we will rely on the theory of “The Survival of the Fittest”, a term coined by Herbert Spencer as an equivalent of Darwin’s theory of evolution. In the second chapter *Violence, Survival and the Ethics of Non-violence*, our study of the two works is based on the theory of “The Ethics of the Zombie Apocalypse” developed by Greg Garrett. Finally, for our last chapter *Self-sacrifice, Survival and Hope in Humanity*, as opposed to the theory of “survival of the fittest” we used in chapter one, we rely on Stefan Klein’s theory of the “Survival of the Nicest”.

Materials:

- i. A Summary of Cormac MCCarthy’s *The Road* (2006):

The Road describes the story of a father and his son traveling on the road towards the south in a post-apocalyptic wasteland that is no other than the United States. With no access to food, supplies, or shelter in the severe weather, the father and his son struggle to live. They have to avoid anyone along the way who might try to rob them or, worse yet, kill them for food. Throughout their journey, the father and mostly the son, reaffirm to themselves that they are “the good guys” and that they “carry the fire”. Although everyone seemed to have fallen into cannibalism or treacherous ways in order to survive, the father and the son remained true to their morals and preserved their humanity. Tragically, the father's condition deteriorates during the journey, and by the time they get at the ocean, he passes away. After that, the boy stays by his side for a few days before being welcomed into a loving family. The boy must bid his father farewell before starting a new journey with this family.

ii. A Summary of Yeon Sang-ho' *Train to Busan* (2016):

Train to Busan depicts the gory and stirring events of a South Korean zombie apocalypse. Within the confines of a train traveling to Busan, the characters fight for their lives while escaping the fast zombies. The main characters, the father, Seok-Woo, and his daughter, Su-an, boarded the train headed to Busan, unaware that it would be their last trip together. Seok-Woo is a fund manager, whose greediness and selfishness have cost him his marriage and the respect of his daughter. However, throughout this journey of survival with his daughter and other passengers on the train, he learned a very valuable lesson; that survival should never cost you your humanity. And one's most precious commodity is the bond they create with other people, not the amount of profit they make out of people's lives. The film was an emotional roller coaster, full of plot twists and heartbreaking scenes, but what most struck the viewers was the climax; the father got infected while attempting to protect his daughter and a pregnant wife, from a zombie.

Results:

Through our analysis and comparison of both *The Road* (2006) and *Train to Busan* (2016) in the light of Verharen's Survival Ethics Theory, we have reached these following findings. In the first chapter we have seen that in order to survive, one ought to put aside their morality, referring to the Survival of the Fittest theory that favors the survival of one's own genes over the survival of a group. In the last chapter however, we have seen that it is the altruists who survive at the end, while here we're making reference to Klein's Survival of the Nicest, who offers data on why selflessness in times of need can lead to the survival of a group. Therefore the ethical behavior seen in the last chapter contrasts the unethical behavior seen in the first one, and the second chapter discussing first unethical then ethical behavior functions as a transitional chapter for the first and the last one, and the three in order offer an evolutionary process from a state of total disaster to a silver-lining for the two works.

As a result, these findings confirm the Survival Ethics theory which explains that survival and ethics are interrelated. First, it states that if humanity does not survive, no one would be there to perform ethical values, that is why the main concern of the characters in the two works, whether the "good" or the "bad" ones, is to survive in order to perpetuate humanity. Second, it explains that survival is better achieved when life flourishes, and life does not flourish without ethical values, which makes ethical behavior, and more precisely community bonding which is the most important ethical value in times of crisis, an essential element to perpetuate humanity. Thus, all the characters in the two works have one ethical responsibility that is: surviving while maintaining their morality, because maintaining their morality allows them to survive as a species.

Chapter 1:

Capitalism, the Struggle for Survival and Apocalypse.

Introduction:

Some years ago, a few prominent Marxist theorists debated on how Capitalism may one day bring the end of the world; they raised the following question: why is it easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of Capitalism? Indeed, according to Mark Fisher's theory of 'Capitalist realism', this question expresses "the widespread sense that not only is Capitalism the only viable political and economic system, but also that it is now impossible even to *imagine* a coherent alternative to it" (08) And saying that it is easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of Capitalism, evokes that Capitalism has a great chance to be the main trigger for a future apocalypse. The question therefore is, how might Capitalism lead to the end of civilization?

In the first section of this chapter we are going to deal with one of the main aspects of Capitalism, which is competition. Private enterprises strive to give consumers with better, faster, and less expensive goods and services, all in order to gain profit. Richard D Wolff (2022) wrote: "They each must do this to survive because competition's winners tend to destroy and then absorb the losers." Here we talk about the human's survival instinct related to competition; in fact, this competition echoes back to the primal stage of humanity, when people had to 'kill' in order to 'stay alive', right then, 'ethics' and 'survival' did not go hand in hand. Thus, competition is slowly becoming destructive, for it neglects the ethical side of business; capitalists are willing to rely on any evil mean in order to achieve profit, 'stay alive' in the market, and 'win' against their competitors, even at the expense of the well-being of society and the planet.

The second section explores another facet of Capitalism, which is individualism; an ideology that emphasizes human autonomy, and liberty. However, many theorists tend to equate

‘extreme’ or ‘rugged’ individualism to selfishness, when some individualists prioritize their self-interests over societal welfare. As F.A. Hayek (2017) writes: “the belief that individualism approves and encourages human selfishness is one of the main reasons why so many people dislike it.” Now consider these extreme individualists in a context where the survival of humanity can only be achieved if people would collaborate, band together and remain unified. The future of humanity wouldn’t be so promising. In fact, based on a study done by ‘Frontiers in Public Health’ (2021), the more individualistic (vs. collectivistic) a country was, the higher the number of COVID-19 cases and fatalities. This offers us a glimpse of what the world would resemble if a worse disaster befalls us.

In this chapter we are going to compare both Cormac McCarthy’s *The Road* (2006) and Yeon Sang-Ho’s *Train to Busan* (2016), with the intention to discover how these two major components of Capitalism have a great potential to be the causes for the apocalypse and the degradation of human ethics in the two works. Both competition and individualism ordain the ‘survival of the fittest’ a term coined by Herbert Spencer as an equivalent of Darwin’s ‘natural selection’, in modern times however, as claimed by Lois Tyson, it is manifested in this capitalist system that forces people to always be ‘the winners’ even when it means ‘putting their self-interests above all’, in order to survive (57). These two apocalyptic works gives us an insightful perspective of how capitalism, due to its struggle for survival and unethical tendencies, can bring the downfall of humanity, confirming the survival ethics theory which claims that in the absence of ethics, survival cannot be achieved.

1.1 Competitive Capitalism and the Struggle for Survival:

Before trying to prove that capitalist competition is what brought the apocalypse in Cormac McCarthy’s *The Road*, we should first identify the cause of the apocalypse in the novel. All we practically know is that the father and his son are on a journey towards the south in a

desolate and lifeless wasteland that has to be, post-apocalyptic America. No other invaluable information is offered regarding the cause of this apocalypse. However, reading through all the theories and critics since the book's release, we can take into account three plausible causes that are: a nuclear holocaust, a meteor collision, and a super volcano eruption.

However, based on an article written by Craig Klein, a nuclear holocaust is what most probably caused the apocalypse in *The Road*. He points at the dead skeletons found everywhere throughout the whole novel, "some of them even still in their cars or sitting on their front porches, almost as if everyone died immediately", arguing that only severe radiation is capable of killing people on the spot. "The city was mostly burned. No sign of life. Cars in the street 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" (McCarthy 7). Klein also suspected that the father's sickness which seems to be a lung cancer is due to radiation.

Another possible cause for the apocalypse in *The Road* is climate change; the excessively cold climate and the absence of even a single sign of life (no animals, no growing plants thus no source of food) strongly suppose that it is the result of environmental degradation, that has ultimately led to the total destruction of civilization. As George Monbiot (2007) claims in his article, the reading of *The Road* is strongly linked with the real-life struggle with climate change, as the novel "considers what would happen if the world lost its biosphere, and the only living creatures were humans, hunting for food among the dead wood and soot". He also believes that McCarthy offers a kind of premonition to what the world would resemble if we don't manage to solve one of its major problems, which is climate change.

When discussing *The Road*, it is important to consider the novel's setting and historical context. It is set in a post-apocalyptic United States; therefore we should look into the US's

implications with both nuclear weaponry and climate change. In fact, in an article written by Elizabeth Eaves (2021), presenting the new American “weapon of mass destruction”, highly developed “to kill hundreds of thousands of people in a single shot”, it was proven that if ever this nuclear missile would attack a particular region, it will very likely “turn the area into a charred wasteland, unfarmable and uninhabitable for centuries to come.”

Considering that a nuclear holocaust is what triggered the apocalypse in *The Road*, it easy to draw the links between capitalist competition and the cause of the apocalypse. Indeed, the wars that humanity has witnessed till now, are all animated by competition. Thus the very purpose of owning a nuclear arsenal at all, according to the article mentioned above, is not deterrence, but it is rather a matter of competition between the countries, on which of them will gain more power and thus, more money. That is why America is considered the number one force in the world because as evoked by Eaves, “Many consider American deterrence a success, pointing to the fact that no country has ever attacked the United States with nuclear weapons.” Although this may be considered for now as a ‘win’ for the United States, it will sooner or later provoke its own destruction and the doom of human civilization, as it is remarkably envisioned by MCarthy in *The Road*.

Same goes for climate change; the United States is known for being the largest historical emitter since 1750, this was done in part to satisfy America's insatiable need for profit and serve its competitive ideology while totally neglecting its noxious effects on the environment and the planet. In *The Road*, MCarthy imagined a post-apocalyptic America that immensely suffers from environmental degradation. Although the author never mentioned the cause of the apocalypse, his characters throughout the story never faced a single moment without being tormented by the harsh weather, lack of food and pollution, all which indicate that the environment in *The Road* has undergone serious environmental problems, (presumably caused by capitalist competition) which were followed by an apocalypse.

This industrial capitalism that causes such harm for the planet and consequently the future of humanity, is all due to its competitive construct that creates a kind of rivalry between these companies and forces them to always grow bigger and better than their “rivals”. Most of these companies are multinationals; we can count Coca Cola, Amazon, ExxoMobil, ect..., or ones that have grown so large, that they seek out new territories to exploit across the globe while dumping whatever wastes or emissions that they produce into the environment (source: *Our Changing Climate* on YT). In fact, as we referred to the company Coca Cola, This brand was referenced in this novel where not even the main characters’ names are mentioned. Being a widely recognized emblem of capitalism and American civilization, the presence of this brand in a desolate post-apocalyptic wasteland hints at its strong impact on pre-apocalyptic America, alluding that capitalism is what may have caused the apocalypse in *The Road*.

As for the Korean movie *Train to Busan* (2016) we got a different setting, thus different historical and cultural background we should take into consideration. It is well known that South Koreans, due to the capitalist economy that is highly present there, can be fiercely competitive in business. That sets the ground to our subject in this section, which is to prove that the unethical and survival nature of competition is something we should be heedful of, since this competition is starting to go out of hand. According to Capitalism's opponents, competition is a brutal and dehumanizing system that fosters greed and selfishness. ‘Greed’ for always ‘having more’ and ‘getting ahead’ in order to survive in this life-or-death economic system and selfishness regarding other people’s welfare while neglecting basic human ethics. And this movie, through its metaphorical use of zombies, offers us a critique of South Korean capitalism.

But first we have to identify the cause of the zombie apocalypse in order to understand how it is related to capitalist competition. The main character is a fund manager who works for a biotech company. This company created a mutagen that is responsible for the contamination

of natural waters which therefore affected animals, like the deer in the opening scene that was reanimated after being run over by a truck. In the next scene, we see the investor requesting Seok Woo to withdraw his shares (this proves that there was a rumor for the leak spreading around.), after which this latter instructs his assistant to sell the entire stock. It's only on the train that he receives a call from his assistant, who claims that the outbreak may have started because he sold the shares. Seok Woo selling the company's stock even after learning that it had been infected, was either for personal gain or to rescue the market.

The main character in *Train to Busan* embodies all the facets of Capitalism; he is a workaholic who always puts his career and interests above everything, even at the expense of his own daughter. But most importantly he works for a biotech company, where competition is at its finest. Competition can be beneficial because it forces businesses to provide higher-quality goods and services at lower prices. But when it comes to Pharmaceutical companies, this concept can very likely take an unfortunate turn, for it is at the detriment of people's health and lives that these companies make profit. And this is what assumably happened in *Train to Busan*; Seok-Woo's company supposedly made experiments as to create a new, highly improved medicine which developed into a mutagen that later on resulted in the zombie outbreak.

Zombie narratives are the most prominent works written in the twenty-first-century. They gained so much in popularity that they became not only proper to western culture, but a universal symbol of the "twenty-first-century anxieties" They have also become the latest trend in the Korean cinema business, especially with the arrival of Yeon Sang-Ho's *Train to Busan* (2016), since then, zombie movies have known a great success in South Korea, since according to Rachad Chafik Eldrissi, "the zombie outbreak in *Train to Busan* was not merely serving as a bloodbath horror, but as a direct commentary on contemporary fear, a

representative voicing of the worries of a society fearing the next economic crash, epidemic, or political treachery.” (281). In that sense, we are going to explore how zombies in *Train to Busan* can symbolize one of the darkest facets of Capitalism, which is competition.

Zombies are simply animated corpses with an insatiable hunger for devouring others. With this same description, we can compare them with people and their insatiable hunger for always ‘having more’ and more specifically, ‘having more than what the others have’. This competition created by Capitalism, drive people to ‘kill one another’ in this endless life race of who is going to be the first, the best, and the one with more power and riches. Since we mentioned the word race, the fast zombies in *Train to Busan* in this sense represent this race and competition for the mere purpose of ‘getting ahead’. And in the process, just like zombies, people turn into soulless beings, not caring much about one another and even devouring each other, both in the figurative and literal sense, only for the pursuit of what is tangible but devoid of meaning, in this way, they become like the ‘living-dead’.

1.2 Individualistic Capitalism and the Loss of Ethics:

The road is set in a country where rugged individualism is at its highest level. Indeed, as Lois Tyson wrote: “rugged individualism, which, as we have seen, is a cornerstone of the American dream” (57). As we mentioned in the introduction of the chapter, Marxist thinkers tend to equate this individualism with selfishness, as, attested by Lois Tyson: “it puts self-interest above the needs and even above the survival of other people.” (57) Its negative consequences are best shown in times of crisis. The COVID-19 pandemic is the best example for that; since according to several studies, the lack of government support and people's refusal to wear masks, and respecting social distancing are all contributing factors to the pandemic's prolonged duration, and it is all due to America’s excessive individualism. In this way, it not only causes people to harm each other, but it also eliminates even the smallest

chance for this world to become a better place, for in order to do that, individuals must put the world's interests ahead of their own, and this is what we attempt to convey through our reading of his novel.

In *The Road*, humanity is divided into two kinds of people: 'the good guys' and 'the bad guys'. The 'bad guys' in question are the epitome of what it is to be selfish in times of crisis; in this case, the crisis is a post-apocalyptic America where no source of food is to be found. In these circumstances, extreme individualists are left with no other choice but to 'eat' their fellow compatriots in order to survive. Because extreme individualism has nothing to do with compatriotism or any sense of collectivism, people have become as selfish as to feed themselves from other people's flesh and blood, in order to survive. Mccarthy pictures a world where extreme individualism arrived to the point where not only this selfish mentality is ruling, but also where human beings cannot coexist in a community. If *The Road* didn't end with the family rescuing the boy, it would've ended with only one human being left, because that is the final destination of extreme individualism. And if that would happen, no one would want to live in a world on their own:

“Suppose you were the last one left? Suppose you did that to yourself?
Do you wish you would die?
No. but I might wish I had died. When you're alive you've always got that ahead of you.”
(Mccarthy 102)

As for 'the good guys', they also represent the individualism that is embedded in the American culture. They all somewhat lead a solitary life, relying only on themselves without seeking help from others, which is the case of the old man. Even though they are not putting their self-interests above the welfare of other people, they would rather not have any kind of relationships with them, a mindset that drove the father in many occasions to act selfishly, like when the son was begging him to take the 'little boy' with them but he refused:

“I’m afraid for that little boy.
I know. But he’ll be all right.
We should get him, papa.
We could get him and take him with us.
We could take him and we could take the dog. The dog could catch something to eat.
We can’t.
And I’d give that little boy half of my food.
Stop it. We can’t.” (MCCarthy 51)

By the end of the novel, the son was wondering where are ‘the good guys’, he even started to doubt their presence, but mostly he was in need of their presence, because that world is not likely to change if ‘the good guys’ will not band together to change it for the better. So in that sense, this individualistic spirit is restraining good people from doing good actions, which means that these people are in reality ‘not the good ones’ because they bring no positive impact to the world, because “how can you claim to be a good guy if you don’t do good things? As Aristotle once put it, action is character. How can you claim to have virtues when you never demonstrate them?” (Garrett 177).

“There are other good guys. You said so.
Yes.
So where are they?
They’re hiding.
Who are they hiding from?
From each other. (MCCarthy 113)

Unlike the American culture, South Korea is considered to be a collectivistic country. However, according to ‘The Korean Herald’ website (2018), as a result of South Korea's attempts to integrate Western civilization with traditional Korean culture, because of the rapid rise of Capitalism, the Korean people have become confused as a result of their assimilation to western society. Individualism being a pillar of Western culture and Capitalism, their confusion was reflected in their understanding of this philosophy; Koreans are unaware that collectivism is the polar opposite of individualism and frequently confuse it with egotism or egoism. As a result, rather than being individualistic, they have become egotistic. This

reinforces the Marxist belief that individualism can easily take an unfortunate turn and result in people becoming selfish. The characters in *Train to Busan* represent the human selfishness that is strongly present in times of crisis and through our analysis of the film, we are going to associate this selfishness to individualism and discover how this western ideology brought by Capitalism has contributed to the deterioration of ethics in South Korea.

From the beginning of the movie we can detect traces of this 'negative individualism' in the Korean context. Starting off with the first zombie scene on the train, people deliberately paying no mind to a girl with visible injuries, shows at what extent the Korean society has shifted from the collectivistic one to the individualistic one. And it is this blind eye that later on allows the zombie outbreak to grow. Following with the main character 'Seok-Woo' who, being focused on business, profits and fending for himself, represent the typical selfish individualist who will ensure his own survival and reckless interests through any means necessary. He even tells his daughter Su-an, after she allowed an elderly woman to take her seat, that she shouldn't have done that and "at a times like this, only watch out for yourself" (*Train to Busan*). He even secretly devises a plan to divert away from the trained survivors to escape individually and avoid quarantine, not until he saw his plan falling apart when the zombies were about to devour his daughter, that he realizes his selfishness is going to cost him his only child, indicating that individualism is not the ideal philosophy to adopt in times of crisis.

While *The Road* has 'the good guys' and 'the bad guys,' *Train to Busan* has a diverse cast of characters that, if we were to categorize them, it would be 'the selfless' and 'the selfish.' The film is a critique of the rising spirit of egoism in a supposedly collectivistic country. Regardless of the circumstances, a character like Yon-suk exemplifies what it means to be selfish; he prioritizes his own survival over the survival of everyone else on the train. In

juxtaposition, we have characters like Sang-hwa and Jin-Hee, who from the beginning of the zombie outbreak to the end, acted selflessly and even worked together in saving strangers on the train from the zombies. While Yon-suk's selfishness created nothing but harm, from the beginning when he sacrificed everyone's lives to save his own, to the end when his own selfishness caused him his own death, the selfless characters worked together in order to save as much people as possible. However, their good actions couldn't save everyone, and that happened because the community was divided instead of being united and that resulted in a clash between the two parties, which cost the lives of both 'the selfish' and 'the selfless'.

This clash between 'the selfish' and 'the selfless' is best shown in the scene when Yon-suk didn't let the others enter the safe side of the train proclaiming that if they will ever reach them, they will definitely put everyone else in danger (since there is a great chance they might be infected). While fear is reasonable at such moments, it was clearly a veil for him to protect himself while projecting his selfishness onto the other passengers. With Seok-Woo's group fighting to enter the safe haven and Yon-suk's group blocking the entrance, this scene offers a perfect image of this 'cultural clash', between 'the collectivistic ones' (the selfless) against the 'individualistic ones' (the selfish). However, at the end of the scene, Jong-gil after watching her sister die as a result of the selfishness in Yon-suk's group, started to reflect on her world views concerning 'collectivism and egoism' while looking back at the panicking society behind her, opened the door for the zombies to enter suggesting that in any kind of situation, including a zombie apocalypse, selfishness brings nothing but chaos and destruction to a society.

Conclusion:

In this chapter we aimed to reveal how Capitalism with its struggle for survival has worked in favor of the demise of humanity and the deterioration of ethics. Since Capitalism is closely tied with survival, the study of ethics in the two works is therefore intrinsically related to this

issue; we cannot discuss Capitalism being the cause for the apocalypse without evoking the struggle for that drives people to rely on all means necessary in order to survive, even if that means renouncing their humanity.

This chapter is divided into the two sections: one that deals with the detrimental outcomes of competition on human ethics since it elevates individual achievement above everything else and encourages humanity to embark in a pointless life-race. The other one unveils the dark facet of individualism and how it works against important human virtues such as compassion, solidarity and altruism, especially in times of crisis when people are in most need of them.

These two major components of Capitalism are strongly related to the human survival instinct; both conduct people to be first and put themselves first. They compete in order to stay alive in this capitalist system that values one's resources over one's life and they prioritize themselves over the community because if they don't do so, others will, and being left behind in this system, may cause one's peril.

Although *The Road* and *Train to Busan* share different settings and plots, it is noteworthy that they both reveal nearly identical perspectives toward the future; the two authors imagined an apocalyptic/post-apocalyptic world on which Capitalism was the ruling system, but also a world where the undesirable aspects of Capitalism are still impacting humanity in a negative way. In addition to that, studying the capitalist aspect in the two works through a survival ethics lens, threw light on the importance of community when studying ethics; as Verharen explains in his study on survival ethics, it is the value of community bonding that allows a community to flourish, not the survival of the fittest.

Chapter 2:

Violence, Survival and the Ethics of Non-violence.

Introduction :

The first chapter has shown that Capitalism with its struggle for survival, is what enkindles the apocalypse in the two works. We have seen how competition and individualism, being two major components of Capitalism, function as ‘violent’ strategies in order to survive in this modern world. In this chapter however, we are going to investigate further on this theme of violence that is very common amongst apocalyptic narratives. However, we will first consider survival as a central theme in apocalyptic narratives, because it is the one causing people to indulge into violent actions. According to Greg Garrett, the previous laws have been abolished with the dissolution of society and people start to make their own life-threatening rules (153-154). Thus, people are left with only two choices: listening to their fears that generate in them the will to survive, and therefore using violence, or listening to their conscience that induce them to do the right thing even when their lives are at risk.

Given that *The Road* and *Train to Busan* are all about survival, it is easy to draw a link between violence and survival; when it comes to survival, all means are welcomed, violence becomes a tool or rather a way of life, as attested by Tim Larkin: “practicing violence is training for survival” (153). According to Greg Garrett, what can cause people to use violence as a mean of survival is fear; “fear of scarcity, fear of violence, fear of consequences, fear of complexity” (178). Fear being a natural biological response to danger, it can result in people making concessions and conduct acts they might not otherwise do (Garrett 179). Fear is at the origin of violence in the world, and wars are a perfect testament to that, since as claimed by Russell: “the one motive that makes the population acquiesce is fear” (10).

While some of these characters in these two narratives opt for violence as a strategy to survive, others make “ethical choices in spite of fear, in spite of their strong drive for self-

perservation” (Garrett 187), in this way we can say that they make the choice to overcome their fears and listen to their conscience instead, and with that being the case, ethical behavior comes to shut down people’s “justifiable fears” making them, according to ethicists and philosophers, more hospitable, more compassionate and more generous but most and foremost, less selfish while making space for a collectivistic community to flourish. As “hate multiplies hate, violence multiplies violence » (Martin Luther King, Jr 53), compassion, generosity and ethical behavior in general, works in the same fashion.

In this chapter we are going to compare the two works regarding the theme of violence in relation to survival while considering its pole opposite which is ethical behavior. In the first section we are going to observe how the characters in the two works use violence as a response to their fears; the fear of death that enkindles the will to survive. However in the second section, we are going to take a deeper look into the characters, who despite their fears, manage to behave ethically in times where the ‘every-man-for-himself’ philosophy is ruling. Although *The Road* and *Train to Busan* offer different plots and settings, our reading of the two works produce proof that the characters in the two works are to all intents and purposes, the same. In doing so, we are going to rely on Greg Garrett’s theory “The Ethics of the Zombie Apocalypse” (87-129) in order to discover whether ethical behavior is still possible in a primitive-like environment.

2.1 Fear, Survival and Violence:

The setting in *The Road* is a key factor when it comes to justifying the strong presence of violence in it; human beings no longer live under a social order and follow no ethical system whatsoever. A world with no rules is synonymous with a world with no constraints, and this is what has systematically led to violence becoming an option, or more like a way of life, again ordaining the survival of the fittest. When humanity descends to a primitive-like state, people

start to resemble animals; ceasing to rely on reason for decision-making, instead they call on their survival instinct which is directly animated by fears. The forms of violence in *The Road* are all animated by fear and they vary between inflicting violence to others by fear of scarcity of food (cannibalism), inflicting violence to oneself by fear of violence (suicide) and inflicting violence to others to protect oneself or loved ones (self-defense), which is also the product of fear.

Cannibalism is a non-justifiable loathsome act. But in the context of *The Road*, a post-apocalyptic world with no source of food to be found, cannibalism becomes an option, because people's actions are solely dictated by their fear of death which may drive them to lose their humanity. However, many critics, such as Greg Garrett, proclaims that the cannibals in *The Road* may be an indication that this monstrosity is something innate and it is part of the human nature, as attested by Josiah R Johnson: "The animal in man is ever-present, and only barely contained by the veil of an invented ethical model". Or when Garrett said: "these monsters, like zombies, kill because they can, because it is their nature" (165). While human evil and monstrosity do exist, in a post-apocalyptic wasteland where no source of food can be found, they may cause people to "lose their minds" out of fear. In that way, fear is the one consuming people alive not the cannibals, which makes it according to Hobbes, "worse than all other calamities" (Garrett 179).

Another form of violence in *The Road*, and it is commonly found in other apocalyptic narratives as well, is suicide. Inflicting violence to oneself is one easy solution to avoid being violated and violating others in a world where survival is only done by using violence. As cannibalism is deemed by everyone as being an unethical act, suicide has always been the big question amongst philosophers, as famously claimed by Albert Camus: "there is but one serious philosophical problem, and that is suicide. Judging whether life is or is not worth living amounts to answering the fundamental question of philosophy" (4). However the point

is not to answer the question whether these acts of violence are justifiable or not, because in apocalyptic narratives, where there is no ethical system, it is people's fears that justify their acts, not moral philosophy.

In a scary world, fear becomes the judge; people cannot help but act upon their fears and in that case, the fear of death is not even on top of the list, since they put their lives to an end, because the worst fear is not to die but to be killed, raped, tortured and eaten. That's how fear of violence can lead, mostly "the good guys", to commit suicide, because they are the first victims of such violence. Suicide is a recurrent theme throughout the novel; started with the mother committing suicide as to avoid unavoidable death, to the father teaching his son how to use the last bullet to put an end to his life if ever he is caught by a cannibal. In *The Road*, the fear of being caught by a cannibal is worse than death itself; the mother even considers death as her "new lover" (McCarthy 34) suggesting that the fear of violence is worse than the fear of death itself since death is a milder fate than the suffering that is awaiting her:

"Sooner or later they will catch us and they will kill us. They will rape me. They'll rape him. They are going to rape us and kill us and eat us and you won't face it. You'd rather wait for it to happen. But I can't. I can't." (McCarthy 32).

Another fear that must have stricken her is the fear of losing one's humanity; when the father was trying to convince her that suicide is not the 'right thing to do' telling her that they are 'survivors' and one thing they shouldn't do is succumbing to death, she answered referring to themselves as "the walking dead in a horror film" (McCarthy 32), suggesting that the fear of losing her humanity, of becoming "a walking dead" or an animated corpse, soulless and devoid of any sense of reason, is one of the most scary things that can happen in this kind of stories; being eaten by a cannibal or becoming a cannibal are at the same level of horror, no one really wants to find themselves in a world where humans eat their fellow humans, not even the cannibals, because "It is in what constitutes our humanity—our soul, if there is one

that we find the most obvious ways to differentiate ourselves from these lifelike but unliving monsters.” (Garrett 66).

We talked about ‘the bad guys’ inflicting violence to others, and ‘the good guys’ inflicting violence to themselves out of fear. But what about ‘the good guys’ inflicting violence to others? At what extent can fear dictate people’s actions? In *The Road* we have many instances where the father found himself in a situation where he ought to use violence for self-defense, to protect his son from violence, like when he shoots ‘the bad guy’ who threatened them in front of the boy out of fear he might hurt his son. Later on he reassured the boy that they are still ‘the good guys’ even after committing such an act of violence, telling him: “My job is to take care of you. I was appointed to do that by God. I will kill anyone who touches you. Do you understand?” (McCarthy 44). Having a loved one in such an environment might as well mean constantly living in fear; fear of losing them, losing the last bit of hope in what seems like a hopeless life.

The father has always taught the boy that one can survive without using violence. However, in the scene near the end of the novel when he catches the man who stole their belongings, took everything back and even forced him to undress leaving him with nothing but certain death, shows at what extent one’s fears may turn that person, as good as they are, into a cruel and heartless being. In the conversation between the two men, each one of them tried to justify their unethical behavior with survival:

“Dont do this, man.
You didnt mind doing it to us.
I’m begging you.
Papa, the boy said.
Come on. Listen to the kid.
You tried to kill us.
I’m starving, man. You’d have done the same.
You took everything.
Come on, man. I’ll die.
I’m going to leave you the way you left us.” (McCarthy 159).

Both the father and the man acted unethically in order to survive, but what generates this will to survive is fear; both of them were scared, the man was starving and was scared of death, so he stole the father and son's supplies. The father too was scared, not for himself but for his son, because the fear of not being able to protect a loved one out of all fears is the worst:

“He was just hungry, Papa. He's going to die.

He's going to die anyway.

He's so scared, Papa.

The man squatted and looked at him. I'm scared, he said. Do you understand? I'm scared.” (McCarthy 160).

Since *Train to Busan* is placed in the category of zombie movies, the themes of violence and horror are the dominant ones. Unlike *The Road*, the “monsters” in *Train to Busan* are not human; they were once human before death knocked on their door. However, dead is not the proper adjective to describe them; they are fast, hungry but most of all, violent. They are the living-dead. Like we have mentioned in the first chapter, zombie narratives symbolize the fears and worries of a given society. In fact, according to Rachad Chafik Eldrissi, “the zombie outbreak in *Train to Busan* was not merely serving as a bloodbath horror, but as a direct commentary on contemporary fear, a representative voicing of the worries of a society fearing the next economic crash, epidemic, or political treachery.” (281). In that sense, before even diving into the analysis of characters, we can already deduce that fear is at the origin of the violence in *Train to Busan* since zombies, the most horrific and violent creatures in fiction, are symbols of fear.

Like *The Road*, the forms of violence in *Train to Busan* are the result of fear; characters either inflict violence to others, for their own survival or to protect their loved ones. They also inflict violence to themselves, because suicide is a common motif in apocalyptic narratives. Starting with inflicting violence to others, we take into consideration two major characters in the movie; Yon-suk, the wealthy businessman, who from the beginning of the outbreak until the

end, acts selfishly and does not hesitate to use violence towards the other passengers for his own survival. Then there is the father Seok-Woo, who from his love and care for his daughter, fights against the zombies and even acts unethically at times, in order to protect her from all sorts of violence. We may deem the first character as selfish and the other one as protective, however both of them choose violence as a response to their fears, the one emotion that dictates people's actions in such moments of crisis.

Yon-suk is the main antagonist of the movie; he causes the contamination of a great number of passengers, including the protagonist Seok-Woo. In the ending scene when he is himself contaminated, he used the last bit of his consciousness to utter the following words:

“Mister. I'm Scared.. Please help me.. My mother is waiting for me at home!” (Train to Busan). This shows that fear is what drove the antagonist to act in such a soulless manner; he started to resemble the zombies way before he turned into one. Although he did not appear as a virtuous person at first, one cannot exactly tell if that person is capable of murder. Only in the zombie outbreak, when fear became the motor of people's actions, that we saw what he was really capable of. When that happens, people become just like monsters; letting their fears consume them, just like the zombies consume the living. In that sense, fear is the real zombie in this kind of stories, it is the one thing that we should be scared of, as famously stated by Franklin D. Roosevelt: “The only thing we have to fear is fear itself”.

Like Yon-suk, the protagonist Seok-Woo has the potential to become as violent as him if it is not thanks to his daughter that he regained his morality. Being as selfish as Yon-suk in the beginning, or maybe not as much as him since he was capable of change, acted in a way that put the other passengers in danger, like when Yon-suk yelled at him to close the door for Sang-Hwa and his pregnant wife, and he followed his order at first, before his daughter insisted for him to open it. When Sang-Hwa was about to confront him about this selfish act, his wife stops him by saying that “everyone's just scared” (Train to Busan) which means that

the one thing that pushes him to act in that way was not merely his selfishness but also his fears; the fear to put his daughter in danger. And the fact that it is Yon-suk, a person who is consumed by fears, that ordains him to do that, proves that fear is the main thing that can drive people to do monstrous acts, and listening to it may turn a person into an actual monster.

Like we have already seen in *The Road*, suicide can also be found in *Train to Busan*. Being it “acknowledged as one of the moral choices open to people in the postapocalyptic world of zombie stories” (Garrett 100), the character Jong-gil chose to let the zombies attack and zombify her after she witnessed her sister being infected because of the selfishness in Yon-suk’s group. Being angry, disappointed but mostly scared of the collapsing community in front of her, and because “life outside of community feels like death” (Garrett 100), she chose offering herself to the actual zombies rather than surviving with ‘the human zombies’ who are consumed by fear, because what is the cost of survival if it means losing your humanity? Like the mother in *The Road*, Jong-gil was more scared of the human menace rather than the actual menace (the zombies or the apocalypse), because a monster with consciousness can be more brutal than a brainless zombie.

2.2 The ethics of non-violence:

As we already know, there is two types of people in *The Road*; ‘the good guys’ and ‘the bad guys’. The presence of the good guys in *The Road* actually implies that the possibility of moral values and ethical behavior is still present in a world where violence is the new norm. According to Josiah R Johnston, in his writings, MCarthy used setting (in the case of *The Road*, a post-apocalyptic setting) to demonstrate how, once a person is thrust outside the social order, and ethical boundaries disappear, humanity devolves into a primitive violence that favors the survival of the fittest. However, despite the fact that *The Road*’s portrayal of humanity as a whole has completely lost all morality and ethical principles, the father and his son are still able to convey morality.

Since “ethics is the branch of inquiry devoted to exploring questions about how we live and about what is good; hence the boy’s question ‘are we the good guys?’ is a question about ethics.” (Garrett 156). Thus, in this section we are going to discover how the ‘good guys’ in *The Road* choose ethical behavior instead of succumbing to the brutal ways of post apocalyptic world, suggesting that ‘being good’ can always be an option even in an environment where one’s survival is at stake. Choosing not to act upon our fears is certainly one of the most difficult choices when it comes to survival ethics; be it the one that shapes our decision-making in everyday life, dealing with fear is therefore a necessary component of debating ethics (Garrett 179). However in these stories, we encounter characters, who despite their fears and the violence around them, still manage to sustain their morality by choosing ethical behavior over violence, and when doing so, they contribute in making the world a better place.

The father and the boy are the ones who represent ‘the good guys’ in the novel; he tried his best to teach his son that violence should never be the answer. Although he failed to follow this rule sometimes because of the fear he might lose his son, he still managed to bring him up to have a high awareness of what is good and what is bad. Ethical behavior is symbolized in the novel by the famous phrase “carrying the fire”. In that sense, carrying the fire in a bleak and desolate world might mean, acting ethically in a world full of violence, being the light through the darkness, and the goodness in hell. By the end of the novel, the son started to doubt the presence of the good guys after all the bad guys he encountered. However, the ending suggests otherwise; the family who rescued the boy after the death of his father not only proves that yes, the good guys still exist and therefore ethical behavior is still possible in such world, but it also gives a silver lining to the reader that maybe, humanity is not a lost cause.

When the family invited the boy to come with them, he first asked them a number of questions to make sure that the good guys do exist and they are standing in front of him:

“How do I know you're one of the good guys?

You dont. You'll have to take a shot.

Are you carrying the fire?

Am I what?

Carrying the fire.

You're kind of weirded out, arent you?

No.

Just a little.

Yeah.

That's okay.

So are you?

What, carrying the fire?

Yes.

Yeah. We are.

Do you have any kids?

We do.

Do you have a little boy?

We have a little boy and we have a little girl.

How old is he?

He's about your age. Maybe a little older.

And you didnt eat them.

No.

You dont eat people.

No. We dont eat people.

And I can go with you?

Yes. You can.

Okay then.

Okay.” (MCCarthy 175)

With the family rescuing the boy, the novel ended on a positive note; we come to understand that ethical behavior pays off at the end, and the world, as dreadful as it is, works in favor to the good:

“Do you think that he's all right that little boy?

Oh yes. I think he's all right.

Do you think he was lost?

No. I dont think he was lost.

I'm scared that he was lost.

I think he's all right.

But who will find him if he's lost? Who will find the little boy?

Goodness will find the little boy. It always has. It will again.” (MCCarthy 173).

While *The Road* has ‘the bad guys’ and ‘the good guys’, in *Train to Busan*, as claimed by Yeon Sang-ho to an interview with ‘The New Indian Express Magazine’ (2020): “There are too many different types of people, and individuals change depending on circumstances. (...) I think what kind of person you end up being depends on the choices you make.” Meaning that, being a ‘good guy’ or a ‘bad guy’ is only a matter of choice; in times when our survival is at stake, people can either yield to their fears while losing all control of their minds and bodies becoming like ‘the living-dead’, or instead, they can choose not to act upon their fears, but rather be more altruist, more generous and more compassionate. It is true that zombie stories are full of violence and horror; however the possibility of ethical behavior is never too slim; because even “in the face of overwhelming danger, human beings still manage to do the right thing” (Garrett 187).

In *Train to Busan* there is a number of characters, that from the start of the outbreak, show a great example of what it is to act ethically in times of crisis. One of them is Sang-hwa, a character who endorses the role of the classic hero in most of American zombie movies; he is physically and mentally strong, fights heroically against the zombies, saves a great number of passengers in the train and even sacrifices himself for the greater good. Unlike Seok-Woo in the beginning of the outbreak, Sang-hwa doesn’t protect his loved one (his wife) at the expense of other people; he managed to protect her while trying as best as he can, and even offering himself as a bait to the zombies to save as much people as possible. The surface purpose for the presence of such a character in a zombie movie is to offer pleasing action scenes that are essential for any good zombie film. However, its hidden purpose consists in restoring some balance in a ravaged world where, without this heroic character, its future would be doomed.

Another character that showed remarkable ethical behavior and heroism despite his young age, is the baseball player Yong-guk. Like Sang-hwa, he is physically strong; he fought

against the zombies and tried his best to save as much people as possible. However, he lacks the mental strength Sang-hwa has which caused his ‘non-heroic’ death at the end. While Sang-hwa died by sacrificing himself for the greater good, Yong-guk died because he lacked the mental strength that would enable him to kill his infected friends (he died while holding his infected friend until she bites him), because for the good-hearted person “a harder choice has to do with killing the infected.” (Garrett 172). Some may think that this good-heartedness is a weakness since it was what caused death to Yong-guk. However, the presence of such a character in a zombie movie reinforces the idea that humanity is not yet lost.

Then we have the protagonist Seok-Woo, who unlike Sang-hwa or Yong-guk, does not represent the ‘hero-like’ figure most of protagonists in American zombie movies do. He is more like a relatable character; despite his flaws and shortcomings, he still was capable of change, capable of acting ethically and choosing the good over the bad. This character gives substance to the fact that ethical behavior is still possible in a world where violence is permitted, even for the person who is least ethical. The character development of Seok-Woo started to happen after he realized that his selfishness and unethical behavior will get him nowhere and it will probably cost him the life of his only daughter. Only then he ceased to be selfish and started to work collectively with Sang-hwa and the others in order to survive. And like in *The Road*, the ones who survived the longest are the ones who chose morality over violence.

Conclusion:

The purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate how both *The Road* and *Train to Busan*, despite their different plots and settings, offer the same perspective regarding the human’s response to danger. In distinction to the first chapter, where we studied the motif of Capitalism taking into account the different settings of the two works (United States and South Korea), in this chapter, the themes we have studied are universal; violence, survival and ethical behavior are

philosophical questions that involves humanity as a whole, not taking into consideration the socio-political, economic or cultural motifs.

In the first section, we aimed to discover how the characters in both works use violence as a response to their fears. We came to understand the real threat in this kind of stories is not the initial threat itself (apocalypse), it is rather the fears that turn human beings into monsters (cannibals and zombies). Fear represents the real danger in these stories; because when people are on panic mode, they are no longer in control of their behavior, as claimed by Hobbes, “fear is at the heart of human decision-making” (Garrett 180). The forms of violence in both works derive from the fear of death, fear of violence, or the fear of losing a loved one. And in *The Road* as in *Train to Busan*, the fear of losing a loved one is considered the worst of them all, since the characters who encounter such fear are faced with no other choice but to use violence in order to protect them. Because having a loved one in a world where humanity is in its worst shape, is the only thing that can preserve a person’s ethics. So losing them, means losing their morality.

Since violence is a choice, then having to choose the opposite of violence (ethical behavior) when our survival is at stake, is not at all impossible. In the second section, we explored the instances where the characters in the two works chose to do the right thing despite the fears and the risks involved. We also came to understand the importance of ethical behavior in these stories; as most people may think, using violence is the only way for them to survive. But what is exactly the cost of this survival? Surviving while losing one’s humanity does not count as survival; the cannibals in *The Road* or characters like Yon-suk in *Train to Busan* cannot be considered as ‘survivors’, because according to survival ethics, to survive, is to stay alive against all odds while preserving our humanity. Thus, the only true survivors in these stories are not the ‘living-dead’ who renounced on their humanity, but the ones who managed

to preserve it. That is why “ethical standards matter. Perhaps they matter even more when we face the choice of abandoning them.” (Garrett 165).

Chapter 3:

Self-sacrifice, Survival and Hope in Humanity.

Introduction :

Since the first chapter deals with the cause of the apocalypse and its outcomes (Capitalism), and the second one explores the humans' behavior facing these detrimental outcomes (violence and ethical behavior), this last chapter takes these human behaviors a step further when addressing the question of sacrifice in the context of the apocalypse, while reckoning with a potential silver-lining for this latter, which is children, and their role in restoring humanity. Sacrifice in this sense may either mean sacrificing our morality to survive, which can also be referred to as selfish sacrifice, or sacrificing oneself to preserve our morality. The second one being considered as ethical, it is done mostly in these stories towards children; to preserve children is to preserve morality, whether in this world or the world of the apocalypse, and when the children “carry the fire” and sustain morality even in the worst of times, there is still hope for “the dead to be revived” and humanity to be restored.

In the first section of this chapter, we are going to delve deeper into this theme of sacrifice in apocalyptic settings; how it is either done against or for morality. Being it the subject of our research, morality is the center of sacrifice; we either sacrifice our morality or we self-sacrifice for moral purposes. Since self-sacrifice leads to self-destruction, one may confuse it with suicide, however the difference between the two lies in their moral intentions; as we previously discussed in the second chapter, suicide is an outcome of fear; fear of violence or fear of a hostile future may drive people into self-destruction. Even though they both lead to self-destruction, sacrifice however, differs from suicide in the sense that, it is done not by fear, but by courage; indeed, it takes courage for a person to throw themselves into the claws of death for the sake of others. It is also animated by love; we self-sacrifice for the people we love, because having a loved one in a world where humanity is in its worst shape, is the only

thing that can preserve a person's ethics. So losing them, would cause them to lose their morality.

In the second section, we are going to discover the reason behind people self-sacrificing for children in the two works. The first word that comes to one's mind while thinking about children, is innocence. Saying that children represent morality does not necessarily mean that they are inherently good, what makes them good is rather their innocence; the fact that they are not yet corrupted by the systems that constitute society nowadays, notably Capitalism and its detrimental consequences on humanity (see chapter 1), as acclaimed by Lyman Abbott, the American Congregationalist minister: "A child is a beam of sunlight from the Infinite and Eternal, with possibilities of virtue and vice, but as yet unstained." The presence of children in the two works can also be for visionary purposes; it offers a futuristic vision of what humanity would resemble if those children are going to survive the apocalypse. In this section we are going to see how children may be considered as a silver-lining to the desolate world they pictured in their works.

This chapter is going to conclude this research by offering a positive note on what the future of humanity would be in a world where ethical systems are falling short. Both the two works indicate that there is continuity to these stories of the apocalypse and that a possibility of change is never too slim. In this chapter we are going to rely on Klein's theory of "survival of the nicest" in order to explore the role of self-sacrifice and children in the rehabilitation of humanity, and prove that it is the altruists who win out in the end. We are also going to explore the role and motives of sacrifice in the two works, in order to prove that, as long as human beings in such contexts are still capable of self-sacrifice, the survival of humanity is not yet a lost cause. Same goes for the presence of children in the two works; the fact that they are the most ethical beings in these stories and they managed

to survive till the end, shows beyond doubt that, they are the ones who can restore humanity.

1.1 Self-sacrifice and survival:

Considering the setting of *The Road*, sacrifice comes as a mean of survival; sacrificing one's morals is one part of it. One example would be the presence of cannibals in the story; they were once "normal people" in pre-apocalypse, altruist or not, that is not the question. What matters is that these cannibals, who were once living in a community, came to make the biggest sacrifice, which consists in sacrificing their humanity. To sacrifice any ounce of empathy and compassion in their hearts made them become the monsters in the story. Same goes for the father, although he never killed to serve his plate and his son's, he did harm others in extreme situations where the survival of his son was at risk; as Garrett put it: "the man, the most ethical creature we have encountered on *The Road*, yet a man capable of chilling violence and seeming amorality in service of himself and his son" (204). In times of extreme danger, he put aside his morals and sacrificed his humanity for the sake of his son's survival.

Here we talked about the man sacrificing his morality for survival. But what about the times when he self-sacrificed for the survival of his son? This act of conscience, courage, but mostly love, proves once again, that humanity is not yet lost. In this sense, self-sacrifice is not done necessarily for the survival of that person in question, but it is done to preserve that semblance of humanity that remains in the post-apocalyptic world of *The Road*. When we talk about self-sacrifice, love is an important part of the equation; the man would rather die than to live in that world without his son, actually, "the boy was all that stood between him and death" (McCarthy 17). If the boy is what keeps him alive, then self-sacrifice becomes a way for him to keep a part of himself alive, even after he dies, his boy

stays alive, his love for him stays alive, and most importantly, humanity survives in a world where others sacrifice it to live as the “living-dead”.

When the boy wanted to take the little boy with them and the man refused, he was willing to sacrifice even the small amount of food he gets and share it with him. On the surface, such a sacrifice is only done for the survival of that little boy; indeed, the boy being the virtuous person that he is, wanted more than anything to save another human being, like he did with all the people he encountered on the road. However, this little boy was the only one who lingered in his mind, for he kept mentioning him multiple times in the novel. The boy was ready to risk it all and even self-sacrifice for that little boy because his survival mattered even more than his own survival; knowing that a boy like him survived in that world gives him more drive to survive himself. The survival of that little boy somewhat represents the survival of the boy himself. If a boy like him managed to survive against cannibalism, starvation and harsh weather that means he could too, and that is why the life of that little boy mattered more than his own life when he wanted more than anything to rescue him.

In all the stories of the apocalypse we find characters that make concessions and sacrifices for the sake of their own survival. In *The Road* we mentioned the cannibals who sacrificed their humanity to survive, in *Train to Busan* it is pretty much the same, however the cannibals are depicted as the selfish passengers on the train who used the other passengers as baits for the zombies to ensure their own survival. One character who represents this category of people, who sacrificed their humanity to prioritize their own survival, is Yon-suk. He was dedicated to save his own life no matter what comes across his path; he even offered other passenger to the zombies as sacrifices to escape unscathed from them, not realizing that in doing so, he turned into a zombie himself, soulless with an insatiable hunger for survival, way before he got infected by a real one. To sacrifice one’s morality in these stories of the

apocalypse is the one thing that causes this apocalypse (see chapter 1), and the reason why the situation keeps deteriorating.

Contrary to *The Road*, the father in *Train to Busan* sacrificed his morality for his own interests and survival way before the outbreak started. In fact, he was partly, if not fully responsible for the propagation of the virus (see chapter 1). Later on in the movie, he realized the cost of such a sacrifice; in the scene when he got a call from his assistant telling him that he was responsible for the outbreak, he went to the washroom and started to wash the blood off of his hands, this blood he caused himself as a consequence of his sacrifice of morality. Or when his selfishness almost caused him the life of his daughter, from there on, he became the hero-like figure in zombie movies, fighting against the zombies, saving everyone and self-sacrificing instead of sacrificing others, for the survival of his daughter.

In the heart-breaking scenes when both Sang-hwa and Seok-Woo self-sacrificed to ensure the survival of their loved-ones, the two characters died with a sentiment of peace in their hearts, and that could be deduced by the score, ambiance, acting and the flashbacks used by the cinematographers and screen-writer, to convey the importance and meaning of self-sacrifice in the movie; the characters offered their lives to death knowing that their self-sacrifice is not in vain, they saved the people they love indeed, but they also left the world being a slightly better place, because if it was not with their self-sacrifices, no one would actually survive at the end, because as we have seen in the previous chapters, selfishness brings nothing but chaos and destruction, self-sacrifice however, proved itself to be, a savior to humanity.

Another sacrifice in the movie that is rather unexpected since it is neither motivated by love nor survival, is when the homeless man self-sacrificed to save the daughter and Sang-hwa's wife. This act of pure selflessness comes to reaffirm the possibility of ethical behavior in apocalyptic narratives, but also offers a silver-lining to the viewers that the world has a

possibility to change for the better, since the good still survives even when evil is reigning. The homeless man proved himself to be a person with a high sense of ethical conduct, despite the negative perception the Korean culture has on homeless people. Through his self-sacrifice, *Train to Busan* aimed to break this common belief (brought by capitalism) that a person's value is systematically related to social hierarchy. It is rather what you sacrifice for others that determine your value as a human being.

1.2 Childhood innocence and hope:

The voice of innocence, purity and morality in *The Road* is represented through the character of the boy. He constantly urges his father to do the right thing and be one of the good guys, when it is supposed to be the father's role to teach such morals to his son. As McCarthy himself once said in an interview to *The Wall Street Journal* (2009) when talking about his son John, whom *The Road* was dedicated to: "He is so morally superior to me that I feel foolish correcting him about things". Such was his role in the novel, "As impractical as it might be, the boy is worried—even in this fallen world, where peril lies around every corner—about doing the right thing." (Garrett 189). For this exact reason, the man self-sacrificed for the boy, not only out of his love for him, but also to preserve this pure innocence that is only found in children, in a desolate world in which its future can only shine bright if the boy keeps "carrying the fire".

McCarthy goes even further with this representation of children; in *The Road* the father often refers to his son as not just a morally superior being, but as a divine entity, as if he is some sort of deity watching over him and keeping him sane, and mostly, a good person: "He knew only that the child was his warrant. He said: If he is not the word of God God never spoke." (McCarthy 3). If the word of God (morality), is still manifested (through the child) in a world that seems to be totally abandoned by God, means that hope is not totally lost and it is

in the hands of these children that lay the semblance of morality that still lingers in the desolate world of the post-apocalypse, and as long as these children survive, and still carry this fire (morality), hope in humanity is not yet lost.

The presence of children in apocalyptic narratives also symbolizes hope in the restoration of humanity. The fact that someone as pure, fragile and innocent as a child still manages to survive in an apocalyptic world, with harsh weather, violence and desolation, suggests that the good guys can still survive after all, thus humanity can still be saved, since this child survives against all these odds while maintaining his morality. It was an open ending indeed, however MCarthy ended his novel with an optimistic note concerning the future of humanity; with the last conversation between the father of the other family and the boy, as the boy asked if the little boy is with them and the father responding that not only yes, there is a little boy but also a little girl, and that these children will keep surviving while carrying the fire, indicates that, since the boy now is not alone and has other children and good guys with him, there is a stronger chance for humanity to be restored.

To an interview with Oprah Winfrey, MCarthy confessed that the setting of *The Road* was first imagined while he was on a trip with his son in El Paso, Texas. While his son was sleeping, he began to envision what El Paso may look like in 50 or 100 years, when looking through the window. He said: "I just had this image of these fires up on the hill ... and I thought a lot about my little boy". This shows again that the future of humanity in the post-apocalyptic world of *The Road*, is directly related the son and what he represent in the novel. He indeed represents innocence and morality, but also something positive to hope for in the future. In another interview to The Wall Street Journal, he affirmed that it is up to the parents to preserve the innocence of the children, that is why the father obsessively protects his son from all sorts of violence and urges him to "carry the fire": "There's not much you can do to

try to make a child into something that he's not. But whatever he is, you can sure destroy it. Just be mean and cruel and you can destroy the best person.”

The role of children in *Train to Busan* is kind of similar to the one in *The Road* in the sense that, in both works there is the character of the father who is striving to protect his child from the brutality of the apocalyptic environment and preserve their innocence as it is the only thing left worth surviving for. The daughter in *Train to Busan* was depicted as being morally superior to her father; she is selfless, always helping others and respecting everyone, even the homeless man whom the majority of passengers looked down into. Children in both *The Road* and *Train to Busan* both distinguish the good from the bad and both of them always, opt for the good. As when Yon-suk told her that if she is not doing good in school she will end up like the homeless man, and her responding that her mom taught her that anyone who says that is considered as a bad person, she is here doing the typical thing the boy in *The Road* does, that is, assessing everyone's behavior as morally good or bad.

Children always bring a positive impact to the world; they symbolize the beginning of humanity and its finality. Human beings were all once children, pure and innocent, and thus it is the children's role to restore humanity when it falls short. When the father in *Train to Busan* self-sacrificed to save his daughter's life, in the last moments before losing his consciousness and turning into a zombie, he had flashbacks of him holding his daughter when she was born; we got a close up of her small and frail hands and her soft features, and with these images, Seok-Woo died with a smile on his face, knowing that his self-sacrifice was not in vain, but rather he died protecting the only pureness left in the chaos around them, and that is the innocence of a child. He died knowing that his daughter made him a better man; Seok-Woo did not die an empty suit, it was amongst the chaos and turmoil of this journey on the train that he learned the most valuable lessons in his life and that is thanks to his daughter and the positive impact she had on him, and thus on everyone else.

In the ending scene when the daughter and the pregnant wife finally made it to Busan as the last survivors, the snipers that were at the entrance of the city were ready to shoot when they saw two people approaching at the other end of the tunnel, but what made them hesitate at first even if they were ordered to do so, was the fact that these two people were a woman and a child. This shows the value of a child when the world is undergoing a crisis; they are the glimmer of hope in the midst of darkness and a proof that humanity has not yet come to an end. The fact that it was the daughter and the pregnant wife who survived at the end, suggests none other than the renewal and restoration of humanity. The survival of a child and the birth of another evoke that there is still hope for a better future. That is why Seok-Woo and Sang-hwa made sure the daughter (Seok-Woo's daughter) and the pregnant wife (Sang-hwa's wife) survive, because their survival has much more significance than their own, since as claimed by John F. Kennedy: "Children are the living messages we send to a time we will not see."

Just like MCCarthy, Yeon Sang-ho uses the presence of children in his works for visionary purposes, as he acclaimed it in an interview to the Datebook magazine (2020) when asked why the presence of children is important to him in his works: "Whether it is an apocalyptic or post-apocalyptic film, I think it's all about generations. There is obvious interest in the new generation that will be living in the new world. The world I will be living in will be much different from the world I have lived in in the past. I am always looking for the answer to this in children who will live their daily lives in the new world." The presence of children offers a futuristic vision of what humanity would resemble if those children are going to survive the apocalypse, would their future be brighter than the present? Like MCCarthy, Sang-ho also considers children as a silver-lining to the desolate world they pictured in their works.

Conclusion:

In this chapter, as opposed to what we have discussed in the previous ones, we aimed to reveal how far people can go to save humanity from further destruction (choosing self-

sacrifice over selfish sacrifice), and what would be the last hope for this latter (children). These two themes (self-sacrifice and children) are interrelated in the two works, as the characters in both works self-sacrificed to make sure children survive in the apocalypse. While in the second chapter we explored how one can preserve their morality in the face of danger and fear, the focus of this chapter was oriented towards a greater purpose which is, preserving morality (not just one's own) and thus humanity as a whole, in the world of the apocalypse. In doing so, the characters in both works shifted their will to survive towards striving to keep the semblance of humanity left in the world, alive. For that, they chose to offer their own lives as sacrifices for the greater good, and to preserve the last glimmer of hope in a world submerged by darkness, which is none other than children.

This is how the sacrifices in both works are all done for the sake of survival; some of them cost the people their humanity and other ones (sacrifices) keep their humanity in check. Love is an important motive for it, for it is the one thing that makes us, human. This is why one cannot survive without love, and for this same reason the fathers in the two works did all that is in their power to protect their children/loved ones, because without them, they would be as good as dead. In this sense, survival means having someone to self-sacrifice for. When a person sacrifices themselves for the sake of others, it leaves a positive impact in the world; in some way it implies that ethical behavior would still exist even in a world with no rules of conduct, and with that being the case, humanity would never really cease to exist. As Mahatma Gandhi once said: "Self-sacrifice of one innocent man is a million times more potent than the sacrifice of a million men who die in the act of killing others." (90).

Being so exemplary when it comes to ethics and morality is something that only a person with not a single ounce of corruption in their character can do, because adults, even the morally superior ones, can still falter in the face of adversity and end up acting unethically. This person can only be a child, because children are not yet directly faced with the evils of the

world, thus they have their innocence still unstained and preserved. The fact that we, as human beings, always associate survival in dire times, with the “every-man-for-himself” mindset, is something that is somewhat misleading, because in these stories, the last survivors are always the ones who stayed true to their morals, and children are considered as being the most valuable ones, since they are the only ones who did not contribute to the chaos in the world (notably Capitalism), thus they are the only ones capable of making a change in it.

Although the two works came from different cultural and historical backgrounds, characters in both works face the same problems, same choices and the same solutions. We saw the fathers in both works facing the same risks and struggles for survival, they both had to choose what was best for their children in the moments of imminent danger, and they both come to realize that children are the ones who ought to survive as they are the only hope left in a world of complete chaos and destruction. We came to understand that children in both works occupy an important role when it comes to the future of humanity. Both McCarthy and Yeon Sang-ho stated that the presence of children in their works is not something fortuitous; they offer a futuristic vision of the world if they ever survive the apocalypse: will their good character bring a positive impact to the world, or will they blend into the desolation of the post-apocalypse. Regardless of the faint possibility for positive change, it still counts as a possibility, thus there is still hope for humanity to be restored.

The fact that it is the children, who are the carriers of morality in the two works, who survive in the end, confirms Klein’s theory of the “survival of the nicest” which claims that survival belongs to the altruists, and opposes Darwin’s theory of the “survival of the fittest”, that favors the survival of one’s own genes over the survival of a group. Indeed, this observation comes to reinforce the second value of the survival ethics theory, because life does not flourish, without ethical values, and the one that is very significant in the study of these two works is community bonding. So it goes like this: people self-sacrifice

to preserve humanity, and they preserve humanity through community bonding, and since community bonding is the ultimate motive of self-sacrifice, humanity survives. This is how ethical behavior, like self-sacrifice, works in the second value of survival ethics theory.

General Conclusion

In this humble dissertation, we have attempted to analyze and compare Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* (2006) and Yeon Sang-ho's *Train to Busan* (2016), in order to demonstrate how ethics and survival are intertwined while studying ethics in apocalyptic narratives. We tried to achieve this task by relying on survival ethics; a theory that has two basic values that are survival itself and flourishing. Survival, because ethics cannot be achieved without the presence of life itself, and flourishing, because life does not flourish in the absence of ethics. Going through the chapters, we have come to the conclusion that the study of ethics cannot be achieved without evoking the factor of survival; actually, it won't even be evoked without the survival of humanity. Same goes for survival; one cannot "properly survive" with the absence of ethics, because when one puts aside their morality, they end up losing their humanity, and when humanity is not there, we are considered as good as dead.

In the first chapter, we have discussed the unethical tendencies of Capitalism, with the latter being animated by survival instinct (survival of the fittest), and we have seen with the analysis of the two works, how humanity has perished with the absence of ethics, reaffirming the survival ethics theory that says, survival cannot be achieved without ethics. In the second chapter, through using the theory of Greg Garrett, we aimed to reveal how fear, generated from the survival instinct, functions as to drive people towards using violence (unethical behavior), which obviously has resulted in detrimental consequences. However, some of people choose morality over violence, which brings us to the last chapter, where ethical behavior like self-sacrifice, works in favor of the survival of humanity, which again confirms the survival ethics theory, along with the survival of the nicest theory applied in the last chapter, because survival can only be achieved with maintaining our morality, and children being the carriers of morality in the two works, are the last survivors in both stories.

In the first chapter we have seen that, in order to survive, one ought to put aside their morality. For Klein however, it is the altruists who survive in the end. He offers data on why generosity in times of need can lead to the survival of a group. This has also been explained by Verharen when he wrote: “The fact that survival is the pre-condition for all other values does not mean that survival of self is the most important value. Revered figures like Socrates, Christ, Gandhi and King sacrificed their lives for the sake of duty, love and freedom—and the survival of other members of their communities (Ridley 1998; Axelrod 2006).” (2) The ethical behavior seen in last chapter (self-sacrifice and innocence of children) contrasts the unethical behavior seen in the first one (competition and individualism derived from Capitalism), and the second chapter discussing first unethical then ethical behavior functions as a transitional chapter for the first and the last one, and the three in order offer an evolutionary process from a state of total disaster to a silver lining for the two works.

The one essential element needed in order to perpetuate humanity in the two works is community bounding. Indeed, according to Verharen, it is one of the values that would allow any community to flourish, which would therefore fulfill the second value of survival ethics. In the first chapter we discovered that the individualism created by Capitalism is something that works against the flourishing of humanity, since it prioritizes oneself over community. In the second chapter, we observed that despite the individualistic tendencies of the two countries in the two works, there is still people who are capable of doing the right thing (ethical behavior); and doing the right thing does not involve one’s interests, but the interests of the group. Finally, through our analysis of the last chapter, we have learned that prioritizing community over one’s own interests is the one thing that would get humanity out the apocalypse. In addition to that, it also creates community bounding which as Verharen said, works in favor to the flourishing of humanity.

In the general introduction, we rose the question that is: why and how survival considered an important element within the study of ethics in apocalyptic narratives? To answer the first question “why”, we return to the first value of survival ethics theory that explains survival as being the fundamental element when considering ethics, because ethics would not even exist with the absence of life itself, that is why the “good” characters in the two works strive to survive in those hostile settings, instead of committing suicide, an act condemned as unethical by the survival ethics theory, since it does not respect its first value that is survival. As for the question “how”, we answer it with reference to both the first and the second value of survival ethics together, which explain how ethics does not exist without life and life does not flourish without ethics, meaning that, there is no point to survival, if the world is deprived of ethics, and there is no point to ethics without survival. This is how survival is considered an important element when studying ethics: both survival and ethics are interdependent.

In carrying out our comparative study, we have arrived at one single conclusion concerning the two different works; although they both belong to two different timelines, two different cultural norms and historical backgrounds, their differences, whatever they are, are not taken into consideration when considering ethics from a survival-wise perspective. There is no such thing as being a western or an eastern person; all the characters in the two works were analyzed as being simply human and having human responses towards danger. Even when we discussed in the first chapter the individualistic tendency in America and the collectivistic one in South Korea, in the end of the day, the two countries suffered from the exact same consequences in the two works because of the survival tendency of Capitalism. Thus, all the characters in the two works have one ethical responsibility that is: surviving while maintaining their morality, because maintaining their morality will allow them to survive as a species.

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