

Recovery from Psychological Trauma in American Post-Apocalypse Novels:

A Study of McCarthy's *The Road* and DuPrau's *The City of Ember*

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ABSTRACT

This research investigates two major American post-apocalypse novels which are Cormac McCarthy *The Road* (2006) and Jeanne DuPrau *The City of Ember* (2003). In order for the study to go beyond a mere representation of characterizations or motives, the research integrates Judith Herman's psychoanalytic theories into the various layers of both texts. First, employing Herman's theoretical framework of hyperarousal, intrusion, and constriction, which are three symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder, the study argues that the main purpose of *The Road* is the manifestation of parental love, but the main purpose of *The City of Ember* is survival. Second, the paper draws on Herman's critical notions of safety, remembrance, mourning and reconnection to represent the possibility of achieving recovery in a post-apocalyptic world. Even though the nameless boy in *The Road* is exposed to an ashen, senseless world and the father asserts that everything has died, the son is shown as the hero of his father's stories. Symbolically, the son is associated with light and as the source of his father's power. Likewise, Lina and Doon's collaboration in *The City of Ember* signifies that there is value to human life and friendship when an entire population are about to descend into total inferno. The study argues that even though both novels share some basic similar themes such as recovery from traumatic experiences, their approaches differ concerning the orchestration of language, symbols, settings, narrative voices and conflicts.

KEY WORDS: Apocalypse, Cormac McCarthy, Dystopia, Jeanne Duprau, Trauma, Utopia

1. INTRODUCTION:

The Road and *The City of Ember* are major representative novels of post-apocalypse, a sub-genre of science fiction. They deal with characters living in post-apocalyptic territories where there is a constant clash between traumatic experiences and survival instincts. Both novels are trauma-based responses to the disturbing ramifications of technological progression. According to American Psychological Association, trauma is defined as "an emotional response to a terrible event like an accident, rape, or natural disaster. Immediately after the event, shock and denial are

typical. Longer term reactions include unpredictable emotions, flashbacks, strained relationships, and even physical symptoms like headaches or nausea. While these feelings are normal, some people have difficulty moving on with their lives." McCarthy's *The Road* exhibits the fragility of human supremacy in the face of catastrophic events. It presents a stirring relationship between a father and son in a world dominated by traumatic memories, horrendous events, and an uncertain future. *The City of Ember* by Jeanne DuPrau follows Lina Mayfleet and Doon Harrow's escape from the underground city of Ember; where the infrastructure is outdated and is about to utterly disintegrate. Their quest is to find a way out of the darkness and rescue their fellow citizens. The message is one of friendship and survival in a realm where values are overlooked as danger, fear, terror and degeneration are dominant.

Whereas the world represented in *The Road* has collapsed and the father and son cannot even make a fire to keep themselves warm, and for the most part they are hungry, the paper argues that it is love that keeps them alive and recover temporarily from their wounds. *The*

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City of Ember, on the other hand, depicts the drive to survive which is sufficient not to utterly lose hope and to recover at some point during the journey. What makes *The Road* more distinguishable from *The City of Ember* is the father's dependability on his son for emotional warmth. Like the nameless father in *The Road*, Lina and Doon sometimes have sleeping problems. In fact, all three live in a post-apocalyptic world where they have to fight against the 'bad guys'. In *The Road* the father and son have to continuously escape and be on the road in order to survive the constant threats and they have to protect each other from unspeakable trauma. Their endeavours to survive and to recover are personal, while Doon Harrow and Lina Mayfleet's struggle is collective. They have to search the corners of the underground city and investigate the vast networks of storerooms beneath Ember's streets in order to find a way out for everyone to recover and to possibly discover a new source of living.

Literatures of trauma as Laurie Vickroy (2002, p. x) argues in *Trauma and Survival in Contemporary Fiction* are "personalized responses to this century's emerging awareness of the catastrophic effects of war, poverty, colonization, and domestic abuse on the individual psyche". The novels depict the necessity of not only raising individual and collective awareness regarding the perils of polluting the planet but also their contribution to at least prevent humanity and the cosmos from sliding into a quagmire. The reasons that make this research possible to be studied based on Herman's trauma theories are: McCarthy's selection of words reflects the psychology of the characters and the sterile world. His narration seems to go nowhere and the father and son walk horizontally. Nevertheless, DuPrau's word choice is meticulous and she pays great attention to punctuation marks. Her narration tends to go upwards and is vertical. Alongside concentrating on illustrating similarities between both novels, the paper focuses on highlighting the importance of making use and sense of how a male and a female novelist's perceptions differ regarding life after a post-nuclear catastrophe.

The study demonstrates that although there are similarities between both novels in depicting a barren world and the character's psyche, McCarthy's poetic style, diction and narrative structure in *The Road* is greatly distinguishable in comparison to DuPrau's *The City of Ember*. The objective of the research is an in-depth study of the similarities of various literary devices, world views, settings, symbols, images, tones, language, themes and motives of both novelists on how to prepare, confront, survive, and have hope to rebuild life after an almost total annihilation of the planet. Hundreds of works are available on McCarthy's novels in general, but a few have been published on DuPrau's. There is no

scholarly research examining the differences and similarities between McCarthy as a male novelist and DuPrau as a female novelist in one single research. Therefore, this research is based on the application of Judith Herman's theoretical conceptualizations of traumatic experiences in these two post-nuclear works in order to fill in that scholarly gap.

Although both novelists depict a sense of loss of purpose, the texts are moving forward and the characters are always in search of something lost. McCarthy's world is darker; his portrayal of the character's traumatic experiences and the setting of the novel are even more devastating; Where as in *The Road* it is so dark that the darkness hurts eyes and ears and the trees have turned into ash, in *The City of Ember* the generator is still, at least, working and there seems to be enough food for people to survive yet another day. McCarthy avoids providing answers to how to rebuild the ashen land. He rather depicts a "pregnant woman" (McCarthy, 2006, p. 208) in the company of three bandits. People who grow up experiencing and suffering from traumatic symptoms and events become victims of excruciating physical injuries, repressed emotional abuse and may feel stigmatized to address them publically or in front of the psychiatrist. This aspect of *The Road* is supported by Herman when she states:

Some patients resist the diagnosis of a post-traumatic disorder. They may feel stigmatized by any psychiatric diagnosis or wish to deny their condition out of a sense of pride. Some people feel that acknowledging psychological harm grants a moral victory to the perpetrator, in a way that acknowledging physical harm does not. (Herman 2015, p. 158)

The paper claims that the ultimate theme of *The City of Ember* is survival and safety. Darkness unites the dwellers collectively in that they do not question the authorities of Ember. Blackouts and fear shatter them individually as they are passive labourers. They have become unquestioning. The Builders' eventual purpose in the construction of Ember is to save humanity from an unspecified apocalypse and not political corruption or social stigma. Survival is in the heart of the narration and a special box for the protection of the document is created for the same purpose with full guarantee that the box will remain secure even though it gets misplaced and some parts of the paper are distorted. The construction of Ember under the surface is based on hope to survive disasters. However, only Lina seeks connection with the past to know about the present and the future. She is not disappointed as she finds a piece of paper helpful. She does not look nostalgic but she realizes this document must contain some useful information about how to rediscover natural light which she imagines in her drawings.

This research displays that both novelists are more occupied with the transformation of the mental and psychological statuses of the characters than with the cause of the catastrophe. The reasons for the cataclysm are not mentioned in both novels. The main characters do not have any sense of time as time lost its value in both novels. Victims of post-traumatic disorder do not have a coherent sense of time because when the victim looks ahead, "the future lacks structure; it is not ordered in terms of meaningful projects, and so a coherent sense of long-term duration is absent" (Ratcliffe and Ruddell, 2014). In *The Road* the sky is mostly grey and suffocating. Similarly, in *The City of Ember*, the sky is always dark and there is neither sun nor moon. The choking conditions of both novels obscure the characters' perceptions to make sense of and track time.

The implication of the research is that whereas McCarthy is preoccupied with recording day-to-day living conditions of the father and his son, their personal reactions to environmental changes, physical and psychological traumas, scarcity of food and fear of the cannibals, DuPrau is concerned with the workings of institutions, personal rebellion, and hopefully social and political revolutions against the Mayor. But none of the novelists deal with technological advances, reasons for and causes of the calamity in both novels, and details of nuclear annihilation.

2. METHODOLOGY

Judith Lewis Herman (born in 1942) is an American psychiatrist whose researches concentrate on the treatment of trauma victims. She was a professor of Classics at City University of New York. In an exchange via email with the researchers, she mentioned the importance of applying trauma theories "to many peoples who have been driven from their homes or forcibly assimilated over centuries, including our own Indigenous peoples here in the U.S." She is currently working as a professor of psychiatry (part-time) at Harvard University Medical School. She is considered as one of the pioneers of modern trauma theory. Alongside integrating ideas from other scholars to cement the theoretical background, the paper primarily depends on Herman's most significant book which is *Trauma and recovery: The aftermath of violence--from domestic abuse to political terror*.

The paper proposes a descriptive study of Cormac McCarthy *The Road* and Jeanne DuPrau *The City of Ember*; hence, no quantitative findings is provided. The research is divided into several parts to systematically combine a psychoanalytical and interpretive approach and to practically investigate and to apply Herman's major trauma theories of the three symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder, on both novels, which are

hyperarousal, intrusion, and constriction. In order to earn the point of contextualization, definitions and characteristic features of these three key symptoms are elucidated in the content of the research.

Herman's theories regarding stages of recovery from trauma, which include notions of safety, remembrance, and mourning, are applied in the hope of making use of them if ever humanity descends into the abyss in the future. The futuristic vision of both novelists, despite their substantial similarities in subject matters and aims, provide implications that are in line with Judith Herman's theories on trauma. Her theoretical framework of trauma befits McCarthy's representation of a nameless father and son travelling through a post-apocalyptic land; likewise, her ideas suit DuPrau's depiction of the rotten city of Ember and its beleaguered and traumatized people.

3. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The significance of the research is based on the possibility of World War III and the necessity of taking precaution measures in order to minimize emotional wound and physical harm. The literature of dystopia and post-apocalyptic narrative originate from the calamities of the past that haunt imaginations, the fears of the present time that are stressful, the apprehensions of the future that will be devouring, and societies that have not been established yet. In his dissertation, Brett Samuel Stifflemire argues that "the post-apocalyptic genre is set in a world that exists after civilization has collapsed as the result of an acute, traumatic catastrophe that destroys the infrastructure of the characters' entire world and before new overarching social and governmental orders are established." Moreover, scarcity of natural resources, increase of incurable diseases and plague, threats of terror, nuclear war, hegemony of capitalism and the mechanization of humans have become universal warnings intimidating environment, humanity, animals, birds, cosmos and the probability of total obliteration of civilization and collapse of the planet. As a result, people react to these crises through expressing hopelessness, aggressiveness, suicidal thoughts and attempts, depression, fear, boredom, disorder, loss of concentration and sleeplessness, all of which are considered as symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder.

4. REPRESENTATION OF HYPERAROUSAL ELEMENTS IN *The Road*

Herman demonstrates that a patient who suffers from hyperarousal symptoms "startles easily, reacts irritably to small provocations, and sleeps poorly" (Herman, 2015, p. 35). *The Road* portrays a world in which there is

no life. The story is concerned with a starving man and boy struggling to find food to survive another day, walking a road that leads nowhere. Try to survive these dreadful and traumatic conditions, the father and the son find themselves threatened. The narration takes place after the world has ended, though the ending is not clear. There is no hope for the future. These appalling circumstances force the father to be in a state of permanent alertness, anger, and sleeplessness which are three major symptoms of hyperarousal. The father and the son wake up to a world that is darker than darkness. The unknown atmosphere is grey and the unidentified environment is colourless. Their sinisterness consumes them. Darkness devours everything in the sky and on earth. "Wrapped in the blankets, watching the nameless dark come to enshroud them" (McCarthy, 2006, p. 8). The father is continuously vigilant. He is regularly angry, watchful, and sleepless and as a result is overprotective.

The father's fear of losing his son affects his sleep. He sleeps poorly - a symptom of hyperarousal elements. "When he woke in the woods in the dark and cold of the night he'd reach out to touch the child sleeping beside him" (McCarthy, 2006, p. 1). The novel starts with the father waking up from a nightmare reaching out to his son to make sure he is still breathing. The bleak weather is menacing and hostile and can kill them at any moment. They both pass "through the ruins of a resort town and took the road south. Burnt forests for miles along the slopes and snow sooner than he would have thought" (McCarthy, 2006, p. 29). The darkness is so sharp it hurts their eyes, forcing the father to use a plastic cover to hide their eyes when they sleep. "No sign of life...everything covered with ash and dust" (McCarthy, 2006, p. 10). Everything is threatening apart from the boy's innocence and the father's instinctive love for him.

The father disregards his son's requests to help a ninety-year-old man, which emotionally disconnects him. This shows that a father's love is sometimes expressed oppressively and violently, though always selflessly. He narrates stories of courage and justice to preserve his son's goodness and innocence. "In the stories we're always helping people and we don't help people" (McCarthy, 2006, p. 287). The boy is sceptical of his father's stories and challenges his credibility, which shows his spiritual and moral growth. The father's system of self-preservation is hyperactive and he is so traumatized that he even counts his son's every breath. He has no option but to be cruel in the face of the unknown enemy. A nameless and recurring darkness endangers their psychological and physical well-being: "The cold relentless circling of the intestate earth. Darkness implacable. The blind dogs of the sun in their running. The crushing black vacuum of the universe"

(McCarthy, 2006, p. 138). Thanatophobia, which is fear of death from unexpected or unknown sources, traumatizes their psyche system of self-preservation and endangers their physical health. This is a fundamental reason the father does not allow his son to bond with anyone.

The father's overprotective nature of his son is due to the uncertainty and fear that surround them. Furthermore, the mother's vision of the futureless world of *The Road* is extremely bleak. Both the father and the mother are in a state of hyperarousal. The mother surrenders, but the father carries on for yet another day to protect the boy. This is a testament that the father is not utterly hopeless. He is always cautious even when he takes a quick nap. This is ironical because people take naps to work efficiently. Nightmares and danger might return at any moment. The blackness "he woke to on those nights was sightless and impenetrable. A blackness to hurt your eyes with listening. Often he had to get up. No sound but the wind in the bare and blackened tress" (McCarthy, 2006, p. 14). Worse, the mother is completely hopeless and ceases her attempts to help her family. As a result, she commits suicide. She even prefers killing their son rather than leaving him behind for the cannibals. These instances indicate the overwhelming dominance of fear, despair, and uncertainty in a world where killing is justified as an act of protection. This is asserted by Herman when she says:

Chronically traumatized people no longer have any baseline state of physical calm or comfort. Over time, they perceive their bodies as having turned against them. They begin to complain, not only of insomnia and agitation, but also numerous types of somatic symptoms. Tension headaches, gastrointestinal disturbances, and abdominal, back, or pelvic pain are extremely common. Survivors may complain of tremors, choking sensations, or rapid heartbeat. (Herman 2015, p. 86)

According to Herman (2015, p. 86), the repetition of trauma amplifies all the "hyperarousal symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder. Chronically traumatized people are continually hypervigilant, anxious, and agitated". She states that the worst fear of any traumatized person is that the moment of horror will recur, and this fear is realized in victims of chronic abuse. The father is overprotective of his son due to constant panic and anxiety. "The land was gullied and eroded and barren. The bones of dead creatures sprawled in the washes" (McCarthy, 2006, p. 189). Even the sun has become "alien" (McCarthy, 2006, p. 189) and cold.

5. INSTANCES OF INTRUSION IN *The Road*

Herman demonstrates that “long after the danger is past, traumatized people relive the event as though it were continually recurring in the present. They cannot resume the normal course of their lives, for the trauma repeatedly interrupts” (Herman, 2015, p. 37). Wherever the man goes, things are left that remind him of something that once was. Useless objects that are scattered around instigate traumatic memories. The country “was looted, ransacked, ravaged. Rifled of every crumb” (McCarthy, 2006, p. 137). Likewise, the idea of a post-apocalypse, disappearing world is observed in the abandoned houses, decamped bodies, uninhabited streets, ruins of libraries and empty supermarkets. The depiction of apocalyptic imagery hints at the possibility of reliving traumatic events, which is an instance of intrusion elements.

What is that, Papa?

It's a dam.

What's it for?

To make lights.

Yes. To make lights.

Can we go down there and see it?

I think it's too far.

Will the dam be there for a long time?

I think so. It's made of concrete. It will probably be there for hundreds of years. Thousands even.

Do you think there could be fish in the lake?

No. there's nothing in the lake. (McCarthy 2006, pp. 18-19)

The descriptions of tangible resources remind the reader of a life that once was, but no longer exists. The destruction of unimportant physical objects signifies transience of life although small, seemingly insignificant “reminders can evoke memories, which often return with all the vividness and emotional force of the original event” (Herman, 2015, p. 37). McCarthy seems to argue that the only thing that cannot be harmed at least with regards to the boy and the man is kindness, love, generosity, passion, and compassion. For the father, the boy embodies hope, virtue and benevolence. When they enter abandoned houses and find food, he starts to thank those who have left the food. He even asks his father to help a stray dog and feels sympathy for burned bodies. When the father returns to consciousness at the very beginning of the novel, he immediately searches for his son. The boy, in other words, is his father's conscience and keeps his humanity alive. Only the memories of the pre-apocalyptic world remain in the man, but these too will disappear. Nothing will remain as it was especially touchable items.

Moreover, the “old newspaper” and the “old magazine” (McCarthy, 2006, pp. 28-46) connect the father with a lost past. Time has lost its value and “the days sloughed past uncounted and uncalendared”

(McCarthy, 2006, p. 292). The newspaper is strange and charming: a reminder of what people were occupied with. The involuntary practice of reliving the experience of the newspaper creates intense psychological distress because in the pre-apocalypse period, reading reiterated hope, vision and invention. It also represents the father's attempts to impart knowledge, though its contents are trivial and obsolete. On the one hand, McCarthy seems to argue that industrial, technological and material items are destined to be destroyed, but deeds, values and attitudes are not easily destructible. On the other hand, McCarthy engages readers in a number of questions regarding nature and the ecosystem. Gabrielle Agnes Vasso, in *An Environmental Critique of American Post-Apocalypse Narratives: Ecocriticism and Ethics*, argues that mass media neglects promoting discussions regarding environmental morality. She questions human morality: “Should rocks, trees, and streams have rights or should rights only be given to organisms with a heartbeat or consciousness? Is it possible for society to adopt ecocentric values or is anthropocentrism inherent to humanness?” She argues that culture is tied with nature. She asks: “what do humans do when the environment and society fails. If the most integral part of humanity is nature, then its failure is humanity's end.” *The Road* is an examination of human stance about the importance of establishing a moral code to acknowledge, as Gabrielle states, all that makes up the ecosphere has intrinsic value.

The father and son find several people in a basement with limbs missing. Later on, they come across “a charred human infant headless and gutted and blackening on the spit” (McCarthy, 2006, p. 212). *The Road* could be interpreted both as a warning against future technological wars and as a reminder of the calamities of the two World Wars. Furthermore, Malcolm Bradbury (1992, p. 3), in his seminal book, *The Modern American Novel*, argues that apocalyptic feelings in the United States as a transcontinental stemmed from an unprecedented “technological innovation”. *The Road* could also function as an ethical narrative and a moral tale of how to keep basic human values intact when killing becomes reality. But most importantly, it is a tale of parental love in a paralyzed world.

6. EXAMPLES OF CONSTRICTION ELEMENTS IN *The Road*

The mother in *The Road* is a prime example of a patient who suffers from constriction. Herman concludes that “when a person is completely powerless, and any form of resistance is futile, she may go into a state of surrender. The system of self-defence shuts down entirely” (Herman, 2015, p. 42). The mother is numb. She is disoriented and detached from her surroundings. Her

detachment, pain, and a sense of loss altogether change her perceptions of ordinary life. Herman affirms that victims suffering from symptoms of constriction stop struggling to survive:

Perceptions may be numbed or distorted, with partial anaesthesia or loss of particular sensation. Time sense may be altered, often with a sense of slow motion, and the experience may lose its quality of ordinary reality. The person may feel as though the event is not happening to her, as though she is observing from outside her body, or as though the whole experience is a bad dream from which she will shortly awaken. These perceptual changes combine with a feeling of indifference, emotional detachment, and profound passivity in which the person relinquishes all initiative and struggle. (Herman, 2015, p. 43)

McCarthy uses the landscape as psychological and mental manifestations of the characters. His language is sparse and he does not use quotation marks. The characters do not use unnecessary words or lengthy descriptions underlining the unresolved trauma of their encounters in the journey and their inability to communicate their feelings. Sometimes conversations between them are unclear. It is not clear who is speaking. McCarthy uses abnormal language to describe an abnormal world. This abnormality reconfirms the disruption of cognitive and emotional potentialities. The father oftentimes avoids answering some of the questions his boy asks demonstrating the third symptom of post-traumatic stress disorder which is constriction or numbness. Kristjan Mavri's observation is in line with this aspect of the novel when she demonstrates:

The relationship between the world and the language that renders it is ruptured, since language can no longer adequately codify the barren and blasted physical and psychological landscapes of the wasteland the protagonists navigate. Memories of things, culture, religion, goodness are all buried beneath the ashes of a vanished world. The end of the world is also the end of the word. A new language must emerge—one that would mirror the desperate situation humankind has found itself in. (Mavri 2013, pp.0-0)

McCarthy quite paradoxically observes the heroic role of a father and portrays his strength manifesting biographical inspirations. Although the father keeps telling stories, he has difficulty recalling names of things. Difficulty recalling names of objects and items is a symptom of constriction trauma. This impenetrable feature of the text fits the atmosphere and mood of the post-apocalyptic land. *The Road* follows a man suffering from traumatic experiences, feeling confused and insecure, but also depicts his unchanging parental love for his son.

McCarthy breaks certain rules of punctuation in order for the readers to feel the frailty of everything. The

father is so anxious and desperate that he thinks of killing his son when the time comes. Will the father use his last bullet to kill the boy? "Can you do it? When the time comes? Can you?" (McCarthy, 2006, p. 28). Moreover, characters' names are not mentioned except for one character, Ely, which is not his real name. This makes their fears and sufferings both universal and impersonal. The end suggests yet another paradox: the boy is going to be adopted by the 'good guys' and is going to carry the torch. This reverses in the narrative hints at a new beginning out of the colourless scene. The man and the boy never encounter good guys but when the man dies the boy is taken in by an apparently decent wife and a hunter which is quite unexpected and to a certain degree paradoxical taking into account McCarthy's previous, uninviting descriptions of the land. Cathy Caruth explains this paradox when she states:

It is not by recognizing traumatic experience as a paradoxical relation between destructiveness and survival that we can also recognize the legacy of incomprehensibility at the heart of catastrophic experience. (Cathy Caruth 1996, p. 58)

McCarthy uses repetition to reinforce the sense of continuous fear and life threatening events. He uses short words to describe the setting and character's emotions and thoughts: words like 'grimacing', which denotes a facial expression of pain, and 'creedless', which means faithless. "The lost sun,", "the banished sun," (McCarthy, 2006, pp.31-32), "huge dead trees," (McCarthy, 2006, p. 40), "the standing dead trees... a dirt road... the unseen sun...no wind...dead silence,", "dried blood dark in the leaves" (McCarthy, 2006, pp. 71-73), "dead limbs and branches scattered over the ground,", "no smoke, no movement of life" (McCarthy, 2006, pp.75-82) are all signs of a world that has already died. Christopher J. Walsh (2009, p. 252) *In the Wake of the Sun: Navigating the Southern Works of Cormac McCarthy* argues that McCarthy's style and linguistic range in *The Road* have not merely "reminded us of the capacity language retains to surprise and excite, but it offers a startling critique of the culture and the history". Despite its universal warnings, McCarthy's literary techniques and representation of language are essential tools through which application of traumatic experience, symptoms and neurosis are manifested. The father's choice of word and his struggles to remember and describe things in detail reconfirm symptoms of constrictive pericarditis.

In addition, the father's body is covered in bruises and he continuously coughs up blood. These physical injuries reflect constriction elements. Likewise, the father has hurtful memories but he fails to remember the details of his dreams and this demonstrates that his memories are lost. "You forget what you want to

remember and you remember what you want to forget" (McCarthy, 2006, p. 11). This psychoanalytic mode of observation validates another constrictive symptom which is difficulty in recalling traumatic events. Herman states "the past, like the future, becomes too painful to bear, for memory, like hope, brings back the yearning for all that has been lost" (Herman, 2015, p. 89). Even when the boy is having a dream the father does not want him to narrate the details, indicating that the father is very sensitive about remembering the old days where everything existed.

He woke whimpering in the night and the man held him. Shh, he said. Shh. It's okay.

I had a bad dream.

I know.

Should I tell you what it was?

If you want to.

Okay.

It was a lot scarier in the dream.

I know. Dreams can be really scary.

Why did I have that scary dream?

I dont know. But it's ok now. I'm going to put some wood on the fire. You go to sleep.

The boy didnt answer. Then he said: The winterwasn't turning. (McCarthy 2007, pp. 36-37)

The father never gives a full description of the things that existed before or his experiences of the pre-apocalyptic world hence repressing every positive idea. Since they are traumatized, optimism could become their weakness. The father is forced to detach himself and his son from people as well as avoid recalling traumatic memories. The father's anxiety is due to the fact that his son is forced to live life without the comforts of the pre-apocalyptic period and this urges the father to be practical, resourceful and sometimes cruel. He regularly makes fires and fixes the cart and is very watchful of his son. When the son sees a dead body, he wants to help him but there is no place left in this harsh world for the son's goodness; they have to be ruthless in order to survive. They feel terrorized and fatigued: two symptoms of constriction elements.

7. RECOVERY THROUGH STORYTELLING IN *The Road*

American Psychology Association defines *recovery* as a "consistent progress in the measurable return of abilities, skills, and functions following illness or injury and as a state of on-going sobriety following long-term substance abuse." In *The Road*, neither the father nor the son achieve full recovery because the world of *The Road* is a lawless one, without systems or institutions which makes it difficult for the father to find a secure place for the son to at least not feel marginalized. Herman thinks that for a successful process of recovery from traumatic experiences, the survivor should be empowered, feel

connected, and protected because "the core experiences of physiological trauma are disempowerment and disconnection from others. Recovery, therefore, is based upon the empowerment of the survivor and the creation of new connections. Recovery can only take place only within the context of relationships; it cannot occur in isolation" (Herman, 2015, p. 133). Moral principles and social mores do not exist or are grossly violated. Houses are devastated and the whole environment is contaminated. Even when they find a bunker, which is full of food, they must leave it quickly because it looks like a death trap. But the only tangible thing that cannot be destroyed is the road itself indicating the father's determination to fight for survival. He attempts to secure a safe shelter for his son's emotional empowerment and spiritual strength, though realizes that they are not progressing physically. He is not delusionary and his senses are not disordered when it comes to the real toxic repercussions of the fatal cataclysm.

Storytelling keeps his son's moral values intact, which is shown in his sympathy for others. Storytelling is such a powerful tool that contributes to the son's goodness and offers him psychological stimulation and momentary recovery. Furthermore, the son provides a reason for the father to remain alive yet another day. The son is carrying the fire, embodies the goodness the father wants him to embody and he is the symbol of hope. The father and the son depend on each other for survival, but the son is too young to feed himself. The son depends on his father practically, while the father depends on his son emotionally. When they find coca, the son wants the father to have a sip. He selflessly wants to watch over his father. "He looked at his father and then tilted the can and drank. He sat there thinking about it. It's really good, he said. Yes, it is. You have some Papa. I want you to drink it. You have some. He took the can and sipped it and handed it back" (McCarthy, 2006, p. 23). The boy forces his father to quench his thirst and this makes him sound like an adult hence the risk of losing innocence. Although there is no source of survival apart from the leftovers of the past and all the trees are dead, the two cannot be separated, "each the other's world entire" (McCarthy, 2006, p. 4). One cannot live if the other dies.

In *The Road*, there is some sort of free movement but they do not enjoy it because the father and the son are busier struggling for recovery. In addition to the sinister setting, there are "bloodcults, roadrat, roadagents" (McCarthy, 2006, p. 183) and murderers on the road that can harm them. In this lawless world, people can get punished despite their innocence. It is this very aspect of the novel that reveals McCarthy is more concerned with the psychology and reaction of the characters than with the tales of nuclear war. McCarthy dismisses to focus on

the causes of the apocalypse. He is more interested in their moral decisions. *The Road* poses this question: what will happen if humans allow this catastrophe to happen? The father has the ability to defend his son for some time, to guide him through the hardship, but he will never be able to provide cure if the son is cut by the bloodcults or the cannibals. Herman confirms this when she states “others may offer advice, support, assistance, affection, and care, but not cure” (Herman, 2015, p. 133).

References to food scarcity, death camps, rape and cannibalism echo historical trauma. Much as James Berger argues in *After The End: Representation of Post-Apocalypse* (1999, p. 95), the study confirms that the literature of dystopia is “a manifestation of social and historical events” and disasters. Furthermore, characters are either afraid of the murderers or the environment or both. Death and savagery are always present. The father trains the son how to kill himself if they are caught by the cannibals. Their lives are constantly threatened and there seems to be the only way to survive is to be on the road, a road that is threatening and apparently leads to nowhere.

The father and the son are the only survivors in the ravished setting for most of the narration, which is why they do not need to distinguish from each other. If the son were not alive, the father would have killed himself. “The boy was all that stood between him and death” (McCarthy, 2006, p. 29). Though he sees atrocities committed, his resilience not to surrender is remarkable. Not knowing the source of the trauma makes it even harder to initiate a healing process or find a cure; thus, the recovery is temporary. Even if the recovery processes are effective and the treatment is well-organized, the survivor will never be able to return to a pre-apocalyptic state. That is to say, complete recovery is neither accessible nor achievable. Since the text suggests that physical repair is sometimes beyond human ability or control, it is storytelling that helps to recover the wounds transitorily. Although the father dies, the son in the final pages of the novel meets a family which seems to represent McCarthy’s scant of hope that the boy might recover. However, the earth is still grey and the air is suffocating. There is no sign of prosperity and there seems to be no return to a sustainable life. In *Hopeless Decade: Post-apocalypse Literature in the Wake of 9/1*, Elizabeth Hageman argues that the novel’s “plot takes place after the point-of-no-return and as such never gives the opportunity for hopeful recovery.”

In a post-apocalyptic land where hope is almost obliterated, law is non-existent, institutions are wiped out, society has vanished and everything has become ash, it is impossible to construct a healthy setting for people to remember and mourn and reconnect with the surrounding. “...Everything paling away into the murk. The soft ash blowing in loose swirls over the blacktop”

(McCarthy, p. 2006, 2). *The Road* does not have chapters or sections and it is like one long sentence. Bleakness and violence devour the grey sky, the dead environment and shattered people. In fact, it defies an absolute conclusion and the text is impenetrable. “Even if it stopped snowing, the road would be all but impassable” (McCarthy, 2006, p. 101). The ending of the novel is not conclusive and it has no exit.

8. HYPERAOUSAL ELEMENTS IN *The City of Ember*

The City of Ember is located “at the bottom of a hole” (DuPrau, 2003, p. 269). The city’s exact location is unknown for the reader as well as for the characters. The story is concerned with two teenagers, Lina and Doon, fighting to find a way out of the city in order to escape the blackouts and discover a new source of life; to find a way to possibly rebuild a world that has already ended. Their trails are hindered by Mayor Cole and the people of the city who are psychologically conquered. To revolt against the corrupt mayor of the city, it initially and primarily needs psychological preparedness because people’s potentialities are limited through threats and fear and they also “feel unsafe in relation to other people” (Herman, 2015, p. 160). The city dwellers experience physical mutilation and psychological limitations. Although people are psychologically defeated by both the darkness and the mayor, their trepidation and anxiety cannot be controlled. They have vents of frustrations, symptom of hyperarousal, which are unconsciously expressed. Lina’s grandmother, for instance, has difficulty concentrating and forgets where Poppy is. DuPrau portrays a post-apocalyptic site where blackouts consume the black sky.

While some characters resort to deception to survive, Lina and Doon use their imagination and initiative to find a cure. Children are born into a world that is under the earth’s surface and knowledge of Ember’s existence is unidentified. Lina feels ashamed when she buys coloured pencils for herself while she is supposed to buy a coat for her Granny. Sense of guilt entangles her. She sometimes sleeps badly. Doon also has trouble sleeping and anger “gets hold” (DuPrau, 2003, p. 88) of him. Granny always feels confused and lost. Lack of concentration, feeling guilty and lost, and sleeping problems are symptoms of hyperarousal elements.

The giant generator that provides electricity is about to completely collapse and the storehouses are running out of food. Fixing the electricity “...was the most important job in Ember, and more people worked at it than at anything else” (DuPrau, 2003, p. 10). The darkness is dismal and menacing and it forces people to wear blindfolds to protect their eyes. Lina learns that some of the crops have “a new disease” (DuPrau, 2003, p. 61) and are mysteriously dying. Street lamps have

already begun to decline. Blackness surrounds the city from all directions. The city dweller's destiny is in the hands of a gluttonous mayor and the fear of losing light and food is amplified by the passage of time. Beyond the trash heaps "there was nothing at all- that is, only the vast Unknown Regions, where the darkness was absolute" (DuPrau, 2003, p. 58). The mayor is hypocritical and dishonest, stealing Ember's resources for himself. The city dwellers are unremittingly anxious and are on permanent alert. These are the main symptoms of hyperarousal elements. Unsurprisingly, the opening paragraph of the novel starts two hundred and forty years before the construction of the city with the Builders and the assistant builder exchanging ideas articulating their anxiety about the future of the city.

There is a lot of uncertainty due to ever-increasing poverty and supply shortages. The blackouts are now getting sporadic and last longer, subjecting the city dweller to further trauma. Ember's colours "were all so much the same- grey buildings, grey streets, black sky; even the colours of people's clothes were faded from long use into mud-green, and rust-red, and grey-blue" (DuPrau, 2003, p. 77). The air is suffocating, the infrastructure of the city is shaking, and people have no idea how to leave the darkness.

Forests, mountains and animals do not exist in Ember. Even fire is rare: when there "was a fire, it was because there had been an accident- someone had left a dishtowel too close to an electric burner on a stove" (DuPrau, 2003, p. 117). There are only five Greenhouses in the suburbs providing fruit and vegetables. There is uncertainty, danger and threat everywhere. When Poppy is lost and the lights go out, terror sweeps through Lina. The darkness seemed "to fill not just the city around her but the inside of her head as well" (DuPrau, 2003, p. 78). Lack of food, light, and fire create sense of constant fear and sense of paranoia which plunge them into despair. There is "shortage of everything! If no one does anything about it, something terrible is going to happen" (DuPrau, 2003, p. 13). Fear "had settled over the city. Lina felt it like a cold chill...Ember was in grave danger" (DuPrau, 2003, p. 83). There is rumour about the possibility of a sustained life beyond the Unknown Regions, but citizens are discouraged by the Mayor and his followers to "penetrate" (DuPrau, 2033, p. 66) them. As Lina trudges through Otterwill Street, she sees Sadge Merral shouting slogans about the dangers of the Unknown Regions. Citizens then are apprehended and their psych, thoughts, and actions are controlled. As Sadge Merall wails out a stream of words, a crowd of people gather.

There's nothing, nothing, nothing there. Did you think something out there might save us? Ha! There's only darkness and monsters, darkness and terrible deep holes, darkness forever. The rats are the size of houses!

The rocks are sharp as knives! The darkness sucks your breath out! No hope for us out there, oh no! No hope, no hope! (DuPrau 2003, p. 73)

9. INTRUSION ELEMENTS IN *The City of Ember*

Neither the old nor the young have memories of the past. They do not know how the generator works. They lack information about a world that has ended; even the words from it have become obsolete. Additionally, the government is dysfunctional, oppressive and tyrannical. These haunt the townspeople and remind them of the possibility of reliving traumatic events which is the main feature of intrusion symptoms. Moreover, blackouts have become normal because they are predicted all the time. Yet fundamental questions have to be asked: what if the lights go out forever? What should they do when the giant generator stops working? What if food runs out? People are hopeless and helpless and they cannot go to the Unknown Region. No one had "ever gone far into the Unknown Regions-or at least no one had gone far and returned. And no one had ever arrived in Ember from the Unknown Regions, either. As far as anyone knew, the darkness did go on forever" (DuPrau, 2003, p. 26). The city has no past, its present moment is traumatic and its future is uncertain and city dwellers are brainwashed by the Mayor not to go to the outer border of Ember.

Jeanne DuPrau seems to argue that hope can be found in children since the Believers are busy chanting empty slogans and accepting the status quo of Ember and the politicians are hoarding stockpiles. Adults are distracted by their struggle for survival. This could be why children are forced into employment as young as twelve. Lina and Doon's rebellion starts from inside and spreads out and are transferred to and directed against the Mayor's corrupt policies that have turned the city to trash heaps. Not only "were the lights about to fail and the supplies about to run out, but the water system was breaking down. The whole city was crumbling, and what was anyone doing about it?" (DuPrau, 2003, p. 45). Lina and Doon's inner self is the place that the mayor cannot control. Finding "a way to explore the Unknown Regions was the only thing" (DuPrau, 2033, p. 118) they could think of to do. They are cautious of the mayor, but they are not afraid of his defiled policies. This is asserted by Herman (2015, p. 199) when she states: "the goal is not to obliterate fear but to learn how to live with it, and even how to use it as a source of energy and enlightenment". Although the educational structure is designed to serve the strategies of the mayor and prolong his rule and the status quo of Ember, Lina imagines the existence of other places and refuses to bury herself, her sister and her society in the darkness of Ember.

Lina's imagination and inquisitiveness allow her to see other cosmoses. On Assignment Day she "was making her wish in pictures rather than in words" (DuPrau, 2003, p. 6). Doon is more practical and his knowledge of the deteriorating city comes from his tough job as a Pipework's labourer working in the underground. DuPrau argues that the only way to save the city is to combine Lina's brainpower and Doon's practicality. Lina knows the sources of people's fear in her journey in the streets of Ember as a messenger and Doon discovers that the exhausted generator is slowly dying. Furthermore, when Lina tries to persuade Captain Fleery that the document is valuable and it might lead them to somewhere, Fleery is indifferent and ignores her. Captain Fleery is too distracted and traumatized to be able to listen to Lina or to establish communication with her. Herman affirms that intense trauma obstructs victims to think and connect with people successfully: "chronically traumatized patients have an exquisite attunement to unconscious and nonverbal communication" (Herman, 2015, p. 139).

Ember could be seen as a reminder of trauma of the previous generations and is a reflection of a permanent wound of a traumatic event. Captain Fleery and the city dwellers suffer from intrusive symptoms such as endless overtiredness and anxiousness. Captain Fleery has limited understating of Lina's curiosity and she thinks the Builders will return to protect Ember because she has dreamt it. Though characters never have flashbacks or memories of the past, distressing images of the dark environment of Ember relives the traumatic event. Under current circumstances hope for survival is very weak and the future of the city is vague. Furthermore, people are vulnerable, lost and unsafe and they always expect worse. People look like captives and there seems to be no escape in this captivity. Nothing else "was out there but the trash heaps, great mouldering, stinking hills that stood on rocky grounds" (DuPrau, 2003, p. 57). People are not conscious enough to rebel against the mayor's exploitation. The darkness of the city and their traumatic experiences have made most of the characters weak physically. Captain Fleery, for instance, has got pale eyes and most employees are either afraid of not having sufficient food for tomorrow or they are scared Ember might collapse at any moment.

10. CONSTRICTION ELEMENTS IN *The City of Ember*

One of the most apparent and frequent constrictive symptoms in *The City of Ember* is coughing. The seventh mayor of "Ember...had the coughing sickness that was common in the city" (DuPrau, 2003, p. 2). Lina's father dies from the coughing sickness and her mother dies after giving birth to Poppy. Granny also suffers from the

same illness and dies. "...She found her very pale and very still, all the life gone out of her" (DuPrau, 2003, p. 139). Moreover, Lina's Granny is having difficulty recalling the name and the place of something she has lost. Difficulty recalling the traumatic event is another constriction symptom. Granny's mind gets more and more "muddled" (DuPrau, 2003, p. 70). She feels frustrated and rips up a corner of the couch's lining and she thinks she might have put the box somewhere:

What's lost, Granny.

I don't quite recall, said the old woman.

Something important. (DuPrau 2003, p. 54)

Teresa Heffernan (2014, p. 13), in *Post-Apocalyptic Culture: Modernism, Post-Modernism, and the Twentieth-Century Novel*, argues that "part of the fragmentation and meaninglessness of the modern world stems from the anxiety of perspectives in contemporary global culture and from the resulting breakdown of a shared sense of language". Granny's memory and language are distorted similar to the city and the people. While most of the characters are slim and wear ragged, loose clothes due to lack of supplies, Mayor Cole "was a vast, heavy man, so big in the middle" (DuPrau, 2003, p. 7). Like many of the students, Lina and Poppy are orphans and Doon's mother is dead, yet there are not orphanages. People are physically weak, a major constriction symptom. People, like the city, cannot progress. The city is a place outside of time. Moreover, Mayor Cole hurts the city physically and manipulates the city dwellers both mentally and emotionally. He lies about the reality of Ember and hoards the food. The mayor has "a secret treasure room in the Pipeworks" (DuPrau, 2003, p. 185). In this room, food, clothes, cans, light bulbs, are piled high. Likewise, he deceives his own people while asking for their loyalty. "Citizens must be most loyal. Most law-abiding. For the good of all" (DuPrau, 2003, p. 217). Psychological manipulation is worse as it is pre-planned, abusive and destructive.

The city dwellers have become corpse-like shells. Lina's mother, for instance, had "been a dreamy, absent-minded sort of person" (DuPrau, 2003, p. 71). People are brainwashed and believe what the Mayor propagates. Even though the city dwellers feel terrified, they have become numb and detached. The feature of post-traumatic stress disorder that becomes most inflated in traumatized people is avoidance.

When you keep people in fear it is easier to control them. The mayor destroys reason in order to distort reality and he manipulates emotions to make people unable to feel, although he cannot manage to take care of his heavy weight. While he enforces fear during "Town Meeting" (DuPrau, 2003, p. 84) in order to strengthen his position and make people rely on his power, his promises to find solutions never bear fruit. The Mayor and the city are identical in that they are both about to

collapse. People get impatient and chaos erupts. Lina and Doon are morally superior to Mayor Cole; the struggle is between the forces of good and evil. Lina and Doon have good intentions but the environment hinders their chances of being successful in their missions alongside Cole's crooked agenda. Lina knows "there was some place else- the place where the boats would take them" (DuPrau, 2003, p. 206). While Mayor Cole's house is a big contrast to Ember's situation, his behaviour is the exact reflection of the reality of Ember. Ember is an extension of his gluttonous personality. Lina and Doon's trails are not based on society's expectations and it is not a struggle out of pity but rather it is based on vision and practicality. Their identities are not shaped by their school teaching or society. Their psychological support for each other and physical struggle to survive and rescue Ember are the manifestation of the essence of the novel.

11. RECOVERY THROUGH DRAWING IN *The City of Ember*

In *The City of Ember*, Lina draws to overcome her fear and to express her hopes. Even though she has never seen or heard of a place different from Ember, her imagination creates colourful images that permit her to travel and feel the unseen. Her potential is greater than the harrowing darkness of Ember. Lina can be seen as a saviour of the city dwellers. Moreover, her fantasy is like an escape path foreshadowing her attempts to abscond from Ember. Dreams are usually connected to the future and this makes Lina see beyond the darkness. Her imagination and drawing provide a sort of transitory psychological cure for her anxieties. They are like magical powers instigating a kind of curiosity to seek a refuge in order to save Ember, its population, herself and her little sister.

Drawing also makes her curious and adventurous. It sharpens her perceptions and enables her to translate the reality of Ember and transcend the darkness. Lina draws pictures of a shining city called Vegas on the wall of their apartment. It is here that the pivotal role of drawing prevails for not only Lina, but also for the dwellers of the city. Lina can feel people's pain and her emotional intelligence urges her to understand and possibly solve their problems. Herman argues that although trauma robs the victim of a sense of power and control, "the guiding principle of recovery is to restore power and control to the survivor. The first task of recovery is to establish the survivor's safety" (Herman, 2015, p. 139). Whenever Lina is with her drawing materials in her small room which is like her imaginary paradise, her faith in humanity is restored because drawing gives her power.

The underground city, which was designed by the Builders to sustain life for two hundred years, has started to break down. Although people have no knowledge of life outside Ember and their lives are becoming meaningless as they are bound to plummet into a deeper darkness, Lina's endeavours signify hope and recovery. Sealed up in a cavern, people's health and psychology deteriorate but they are not completely annihilated. According to Heffernan (2014, p. 55), "America is neither the site of the revelation of meaning, a 'paradise,' nor the site of the end of meaning, a desert forever". However, the city is associated with renewal and survival as much as it is linked with disaster and catastrophe in that Lina is the light-giver and never surrenders. Even though the cataclysm has happened and people are traumatized, the narrative structure of the text does not undermine hope and recovery. Death is always present, but so is survival and recovery.

The dilapidating atmosphere of Ember on the surface seems to be the end of the narrative as well as the city. Lina and Doon's escape through the river is a promise to end a miserable ending and is an assurance for a new beginning. However, the traumatic experience will always remain as part of identity construction and psychic formation. The source of strength to overcome the darkness of Ember is inspired and consolidated by Lina and Doon's bravery and trust in each other, though at the beginning they are just classmates. Trust is one of the most overarching themes in the novel because without it Lina and Doon cannot move forward. Herman argues that "when trust is lost, traumatized people feel that they belong more to the dead than to the living" (Herman, 2015, p. 52). Though DuPrau seems to be undecided on how to reach a definitive conclusion, the end of the narrative secures a new step. In their exploration through the cave and the pipeworks, Poppy, Lina and Doon see the ground is "alive with insects" (DuPrau, 2003, p. 257) and flowers and streams. They come across drinkable water and "gullies full of shrubs" (DuPrau, 2003, p. 265). Lina sends a message aiming at the heart of the city, far beneath her feet.

Dear People of Ember,

We came down the river from the pipeworks and found the way to another place. It is green here and very big. Light comes from the sky. You must follow the instructions in this message and come on the river. Bring food with you. Come as quickly as you can.

Lina Mayfleet and Doon Harrow (DuPrau 2003, p. 270)

Children of ember are prepared and encouraged from early on to become loyal agents of the city; trained to become Mayor Cole's puppets. Normal human instincts are manipulated. Children are taught that Ember is the only light in the dark world. But friendship keeps Lina and Doon human and the mayor fails to get inside their souls. The mayor lies through education, as no one

expects lies in education and that is one of the many paradoxes. His presence in the Assignment Day is deceptive. The mind forms reality and if it is manipulated from childhood, reality can be controlled easily. The reality of our life is created by our thoughts. Mayor Cole considers lying as the vision of the future. Even though Lina and Doon rescind this vision, their escape at the end does not secure a dreamland.

Although Ember is designed to save humanity, it is a temporary tavern and Lina is aware of this fact when the lights dwindle. Running “out of light bulbs, running out of power, running out of time- disaster was right around the corner” (DuPrau, 2003, p. 48). Lina gives Poppy, her little sister, to Mrs Murdo to look after when she is about to leave Ember with Doon, but when the lights went out, she “suddenly knew: there is not safety in Ember. Not for long. Not for anyone. I couldn’t leave her behind. Whatever happens to us now, it’s better than what’s going to happen there” (DuPrau, 2003, p. 247). Furthermore, the document becomes something mysterious. It is a symbol of hope although it has been scratched and hard to make sense of. DuPrau’s fictional narrative deals with the representation of a lost past and a traumatic present in order to raise awareness about future cataclysms. The beginning of the novel is a testament to DuPrau’s warning regarding life after post-nuclear wars. The exchange between the chief builder of Ember and the assistant builder reveal their anxiety regarding the future of the city and its citizens.

Both of them wear weary, sat down to speak of the future. ‘They must not leave the city for at least two hundred years,’ said the chief builder. ‘Or perhaps two hundred and twenty. ‘Is that long enough?’ asked his assistant. ‘It should be. We can’t know for sure.’ ‘And when the time comes,’ said the assistant ‘how will they know what to do?’ (DuPrau, 2003, p. 1)

12. CONCLUSION

The paper analytically identified that engaging people through art to discuss past traumas would eventually lead to public understanding and hopefully action to recover from cognitive and psychological wound if ever humanity plunges into the abyss. One of the purposes of post-apocalyptic fiction is to represent the future through art in order to comprehend and appreciate the present. *The Road* and *The City of Ember* are modern examples of American post-apocalyptic narratives where the main characters suffer from hyperarousal, intrusion, and constriction, three main symptom of post-traumatic stress disorder, as a result of being exposed to conditions beyond comprehension. Both novelists did not only engage readers in a number of contemporary and prevalent moral and environmental issues such as a lack of resources, threats of nuclear war, and

environmental disaster, but they also presented a slight of hope for recovery through storytelling and drawing. In *The Road*, storytelling was the main source of inspiration for the son to not only morally progress or to help others along the way, but it also allowed him to keep his sense of sanity. More importantly, storytelling did not permit the father’s depression, nightmares and justified violence and other enduring signs of post-traumatic stress disorder to transfer to or be manifested in his son. In the stories the father narrates, the “good guys” (McCarthy, 2006, p. 81) carried torch to illuminate the road. The father wanted to morally prepare his son for a world that values are endangered for the sake of living one more day. Likewise, as *The City of Ember* descends into chaos and mayhem, drawing mentally emancipated Lina and allowed her to imagine a new source of life beyond the darkness of the city. Drawing recovered her sense of delight and curiosity to explore and not to be satisfied with the current conditions of life while the Mayor’s false promises and gluttonous nature, the blackouts, and the exhausted infrastructure of the city posed tremendous amount of threat. It is undoubtedly true that Doon’s companionship enabled Lina to take risks “beyond what was believed to be the limits of her capability” (Herman, 2015, p. 223), but it was drawing from the onset that relieved her and allowed her to engage with her imagination so that she could dream of that which she has not accomplished yet. *The Road* and *The City of Ember*, despite their beleaguered depiction of life and fears of human extinction due to what Herman mentioned in the email exchange ‘forcible assimilation’ (characters in both novels must move constantly otherwise they will be dead), proposed the necessity of staying hopeful so that the probability of recovery from traumatic events and the world the characters remember and the life they want to create remain an option.

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