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### **NIHILISM AND DISASTROUS LIFE IN MCCARTHY'S "CHILD OF GOD"**

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#### **ABSTRACT**

Nihilism, the rejection of all religious and moral principles, with that belief defines everything in life is meaningless. So nihilism is the negativity and it shows the pessimistic attitude of any human being, who believes all the customs and beliefs are nothing in the world. In this concept, the people who are being nihilistic attitude behave for their own without concerning about the society. This paper talks about aims at explaining the dark side of the real world how the people change against the moral world when they experience horrors' in their life. Lester Ballard is a protagonist in *Child of God* become the mountain dweller and involves in all immoral activities and violates the moral boundaries. Ballard's abandonment of his ancestral property and it was auctioned by the officials, he tries protecting his family property by fighting with the official people but he could not able to get rid of that and was tackled by the sheriff. Then Lester became an outsider and stays alone in his shabby home and changes his character and obsessed with pedophilia as well as his descent into necrophilia and murderer, throughout the novel he makes everyone to feel annoyed and always corrupted with the thought of looking at the girls and want to have sex with girls and even corpses. This kind of attitude shows how the man psychologically affected and how he loses his self-esteem. Cormac McCarthy a pioneer writer of twentieth century American literature explains the kinds of existent disasters which no author explains in depth in their works. *Child of God* is such a novel and makes everyone to wonder about the horrors and disasters faced by the people.

#### **KEYWORDS:**

Nihilism, Pessimistic, Customs, Abandonment, Pedophilia, Necrophilia, Psychologically, Disasters.

## INTRODUCTION

Every author in literature represents/ portrays the human qualities of moral and immoral values. *Child of God* is McCarthy's third novel carves the dark side of the individual man Lester Ballard, who loses all his properties except his rifle, degenerate from the society with no place to stay and become half mad. His character represents brutality and blunt as symbolisms and his thorough irresponsible lunatic depravities make everyone disgusting. In the novel *Child of God*, the protagonist Lester Ballard experiences no goodness. Even in the beginning of the novel Lester felt anxious about the auction of his property and fight for the right to own his property unfortunately he is not able to achieve his aim of getting back the property. Ballard could not able to get rid of that and was attacked by the sheriff and comes out of his house. The auction takes place. Lester continuously argues but the Sheriff doesn't give up and says,

"You done been locked up once over this. I guess you want to go again. The high Sherriff is standing right over yonder

I don't give a good goddamn where the High Sheriff is at. I want you sons of bitches off of my goddamned property. You hear?

The auctioneer was squatting on the tailboard of the tuck.....

I didn't take your place off of ye. County done that. I was just hired as a auctioneer."

Lester also wastes a lot of time on Frog Mountain. He usually strolls around the mountain chasing dead squirrels and other rodents that he can find to eat. Many important events in the book occur on the mountain. Lester comes across the woman that accuses him of rape here. This is also where he finds the dead couple. He drags the dead girl from the car and down the mountain to his house. After Lester burns down his home, he continues to travel deeper into the depths of the mountain. He takes with him a few belongings and the bodies he has begun collecting. The two caves that Lester inhabits become a cover for his imprudence and obsessions. They shelter him from the rest of the town and the rest of the world. No one knows how to figure out where he has hidden the bodies of the girls. The caves of Frog Mountain are Lester's salvation until the end of the book. When the town men want to find where the girl's bodies are, Lester leads them to Frog Mountain and inside of a cave. He manages to escape into a small hole of the cave. He lives in the cave for a while, surviving on rats and other rodents he can find in the cave. As the caves have hidden his transgressions, they also protect Lester in is time of need.

Then Lester became an outsider and stays alone in a shabby home which is occupied with spiders and bugs, and he shoot the rats near his home regularly and pays a visit to dumb keeper's house. The change of his character starts by seeing the dump keeper's daughter regularly and obsessed with pedophilia as well as his decent into necrophilia and murder. The dark side Lester's life begins not only because of his own fate and intention but the situations in his environment became rubbish and semi-conscious, unaware of his feelings and his immoral activities. Sex plays an important role through Lester and other characters. The immoral activities which cause the protagonist to became murderer and lives with dead bodies and have sexual pleasure with them, he keeps the dead bodies in a series of underground caves and do all sort of daily activities with them. The character of Lester Ballard gives sympathy to the readers because of his innocent and individual struggling that leads him to involve in all the fearless activities.

Lester meets the woman on the mountain. Lester's encounter with her predicts his eventual

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descent into violence towards women and necrophilia. It is interesting to see that Lester is not forceful or mean to this woman. He offers to help her and wake her up. He does not force himself upon her in any way. Because she is confused and frightened, she turns on Lester. He could have been more aggressive with her, but is not. All he does is tear her nightgown from her. While this is not as radical as Lester's behavior will become, it seems as though this triggers his violence and desire to control women. Here the author proves the innocence of Lester and his goodness but the woman's misapprehension makes his survival more complicated and he was caught by the police. The disaster continues not only from Lester but also his only friend and Dump keeper, he has nine daughters and he too has sexually abuses his daughters and their children are taken care of Dump keeper's wife. One of his daughter sleeps with the boy this incident also leads him to misuse that girl. This is a horrible exploit which was inevitable by the fatalities.

Innocently Lester involved in crimes and obsessed with younger girls, he watches them and attempts to tease and flirt and becomes a lawbreaker and searched by the police. But he does not have any success in reaching his aspiration. His interest in the dump keeper's daughters only intensifies because they are young, developing and also sexually active. The immoral activity is not only represented through the character of Ballard but also in the dump keeper's daughter and her sexual relation with a boy, her horrible character triggers his aggressive violence and desire to control women. In the review of contemporary literary criticism vol.101 Madison smart Bell claims that "Ballard remains a human animal, a human figure and looked intently at the posters of wanted in the town post office, perhaps for his own face. He has almost touched his own image.

Ballard is getting diffused and changes his character that is not the destinations that he creates but the environment and people surrounded him are the main cause of changing his character and there is no one to care for him. His loneliness made his character as mad and unconsciously involve in all the unwanted activities, makes life disastrous. The representation of vulgarity and horror symbolizes the dark side of the world and make everyone to wonder about the happenings and the behaviors through Lester Ballard. McCarthy frankly portrays the immorality of the human beings and the dark side of life, if anyone is cornered or left, their life will become a mysterious and disastrous one. Consciously or unconsciously nihilistic attitude will grow in to one's mind and the attitude of particular character will change into pessimistic and this is also one of the great causes for changing the character as disastrous one. Here in this novel *Child of God* is thoroughly a pessimistic one and it starts from the suicide of his father and the auction of his home is an unanswered question. Every time Lester sleeps with one of the corpses he tells it how much she has desired him. Even though he is trying to control the girls, he can never control the fact that they never wanted to be touched by him. This kind mad character and behavior reveals the longingness of companionship and Lester's disastrous life of sleeping with corpses.

In this world we have all kinds of violence; nihilism is the one which is the root cause for all the immoral activities. In our country like, India people follows some religious beliefs and rituals in the same ways people from foreign countries followed some customs and beliefs. But the people who are nihilistic attitude lives in all over the world, this kind of attitude which develops from every person who is alienated from the family or society. If the person experiences the extreme struggling of sufferings get involved into such kind of immoral activities like sex, robbery, murder and etc. in this novel *Child of God* McCarthy portrays an extra ordinary theme which no author can think about this kind of theme. *Child of*

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*God* is a rigid, chilling novel that plumbs the depths of human degradation and its consequences. Lester Ballard a violent solitary and introverted young man dispossessed of his ancestral land is released from jail and allowed to haunt the hill country of east Tennessee preying on the population with his strange lust. McCarthy transforms commonplace brushes with humanity. Wherever the man Lester moves he makes a stunning situation that makes the whole novel grotesque and everyone to feel sympathetic instead of giving the agonistic feeling. But Lester's behavior brings the novel an unforgettable and unforgivable end.

McCarthy doesn't give room for the protagonist to think about which is good, which is bad and he doesn't even think about the society. Whatever the desires he wants to fulfill he can. His desires are silly and does not think about anything, his voyeuristic attitude and having sex with corpses of Lester is a kind abnormal creation of McCarthy that makes the people to think about or feel about the character how the fellow affected psychologically and changes his mind if he is not cared by anyone in the world. Vereen M. Bell, in his article "The Ambiguous Nihilism of Cormac McCarthy" depicts that McCarthy's novels are as innocent of theme and of ethical reference as they are plot. On the other hand, each of them constitutes a densely created world as authentic and persuasive as any that there is fiction. The vivid fact of his novels consumes conventional formulae as a black whole consumes light.

The readers can understand the character's tenuous position as an outsider, the effects of extreme loneliness and lack of communication, the estrangement of the human being from the social world, that plunge into violence. The mystery of life and also the pressure of mind and soul in search of meaning, meaningfulness of existence. At last the man finds nothing. The degradation leads Ballard to involve more and more illegal activities and makes the character dare to face the problems and live beyond the natural world. Ballard doesn't have any mission that he can do this or do that. As a lonely man aimlessly involved in the extreme kinds of inhuman activities that is intolerable in the whole world. Ballard moves into extreme corruption. Gerhard Hoffman in his article the subheading entitled "The Utterly inhuman within the human says that "evil reach their peak in *Child of God*" in Lester Ballard is the *child of god's* necrophilia. He kills women uses their dead bodies perversely for sexual satisfaction while he talks to them lovingly and keeps the corpses in the caves that he lives in. The mystery of the evil is heightened into the mystery of human life.

The individual man's life turns into disastrous not because of his own attitude and ignorance but because of the degradation of the family and the society. Lester's behavior makes everyone to laugh, when he buys clothes including black and red underwear for his favorite corpses. Though Lester is portrayed as half mad his psychic attitude won many prizes in the fair; he is a winner of stuffed animals. It is a kind of modern day parody. Some comic relief includes Ballard winning an enormous stuffed tiger at a carnival, whose unblinking face we then cut to during the numerous scenes of barbarism.

Ballard becomes sole dweller lives in the mountains of Sevier County, wandering in the forests. Since the author represents the nihilism through Ballard he does not have a chance to behave well manner, the situations give him the chance of being erroneous and makes the novel revulsion. He becomes semi-conscious, unaware of his feelings and behaves abnormally. Sex plays important role through Lester and other characters. The immoral activity which causes the protagonist to become murderer and become the person of necrophilia lives with his victims, in series of newspaper reports of such a figure in Sevier county Tennessee. Somehow McCarthy finds compassion depicts the disastrous world which people unaware of it.

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Lester's life from the beginning to end shows the indifferent nature and reflects the evil face of the human being when their life turns into disastrous. Every human being in the world faces the disasters through the death or some kind of horrors. In this novel Lester Ballard is degraded from the society, psychologically affected and unaware of his immoral activities. So everyone in the world or their environment is answerable to the mishappinings and has the less awareness about the causes of being nihilism, the change of attitude and how it will affect the society the victim's helplessness lead to great cause. Ballard's life is a disastrous attempt to exist outside and to defy the social order. Thus the author of this particular paper wants to examine and to give awareness about how the victims of the horrors will change and their abnormal behavior which causes a great disturbance to the society and to the individuals.

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