

# Nature as a symbol of human resilience in Fahrenheit 451 and The Road

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**Karlo Culjak**

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Nature as a symbol of human resilience in Fahrenheit 451 and The Road

Diplomski rad

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Zadar, 2024.



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Zadar, 26. rujna 2024.

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## 1. Introduction

This paper deals with the topic of nature in dystopian literature and its connection to human resilience on the example of two dystopian novels: *Fahrenheit 451* (1953) by Ray Bradbury and *The Road* (2006) by Cormac McCarthy. The paper is divided into two major parts: the first part, titled *Ecocriticism and dystopia in Fahrenheit 451 and The Road*, describes the concept of ecocriticism and dystopia through the lens of the two novels. Ecocriticism encompasses a wide range of subjects and problems, reflecting the intricate interactions between literature and the natural world. To elaborate, ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and the natural environment; it examines how literary works represent, reflect, and influence environmental issues, attitudes, and values. This chapter will also mention relevant authors who contributed to the area of ecocriticism and apply its ideas to the two novels. The following chapter is the analysis of the two dystopian novels: *Fahrenheit 451* by Ray Bradbury and *The Road* by Cormac McCarthy. *Fahrenheit 451* by Ray Bradbury is a dystopian novel which takes place in a society where books are banned, and firefighters burn them to suppress knowledge. The protagonist, Guy Montag, begins questioning society's anti-intellectualism, leading to his rebellion against the oppressive regime. On the other hand, *The Road* by Cormac McCarthy is a post-apocalyptic novel following a father and son as they journey through a bleak, desolate landscape. Struggling to survive, they seek hope in a world where nature has been devastated and society has collapsed. At the end of this paper, the ideas elaborated in the analysis will be summed up in the conclusion.

To be more specific, the first part provides an overview of ecocriticism and dystopia based on examples from the novels and connects these two concepts with their representation in *Fahrenheit 451* and *The Road*. This chapter will also contain descriptions of theories that are of value for the thesis, such as Freud's theory of "death drive" and splitting human psyche (as well as natural forces) on Eros (reproductive force, "mother nature", creative spirit) and Thanatos (destructive force, chaos, hazard), since it will be use to portray the binary role that nature has in these two novels. The connection between ecocriticism and dystopian literature is also elaborated. Both the exterior and interior nature play a major role in achieving resilience against oppressive dystopian systems: the nature acts as a source of renewal and freedom, whereas the human nature, i.e. a person's traits such as survival instincts or sets of moral values motivate him or her to fight against the oppressor. The first part therefore serves as an

introduction to the main points of this paper's thesis, and will be followed by a more specific analysis in the second part, where the role of nature is analyzed in both of the novels.

The analytical part features close reading of *Fahrenheit 451* and *The Road*, where several relevant excerpts that mention nature are taken out and discussed. The theory of ecocritical analysis will be applied to the works. The context behind these situations in the narrative where nature plays a role are provided for better understanding. The analytical part applies the theories elaborated in the theoretical part in order to achieve the main objective of this paper, which is to show the importance of nature in dystopia and the way it helps the protagonists resist and survive. For the analysis of *Fahrenheit 451*, the journey of Montag, the main character, towards resilience is discussed and the role of nature is closely analyzed. The analysis of *The Road*, given that it is a post-apocalyptic novel, puts more focus on analyzing the devastated nature and its impact on characters, as well as displaying how they achieve resilience and self-preserve when survival is not guaranteed.

The conclusion will then sum up the ideas that were presented in the analysis in order to give a clear understanding of what role the nature plays in these two dystopian novels.

## 2. Ecocriticism and dystopia in *Fahrenheit 451* and *The Road*

A vast range of topics and issues are included in ecocriticism, which reflects the complex interrelationship between literature and the natural world. Scholars can learn how literature both reflects and shapes ecological concern by looking at these themes. Here, a few of the fundamental ideas and issues of ecocriticism are examined, supporting the points with thorough analysis and specific examples based on the analyzed novels. This is done due to the importance of defining and understanding ecocriticism for making an efficient analysis of nature and resilience in the chosen works.

### 2.1. *Ecocriticism*

The interdisciplinary area of ecocriticism, usually referred to as environmental literary criticism, examines the interaction between literature and the natural world. By combining ideas from literary theory, ecology, and environmental studies, it became a separate critical field in the late 20th century and examined how texts interact and portray the natural world (Garrard 1). Ecocriticism, to quote Cheryll Glotfelty, one of the field's pioneers, is "the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment" and it looks at how human culture and the environment are intertwined (Glotfelty 18). Moreover, Lawrence Buell, who maintains that it tackles the „questions and issues that arise from the intersection of literature, culture, and the environment“, highlights ecocriticism's wide range and interdisciplinary character (Buell 2).

Ecocritics share a belief that nature represents a historically and culturally produced term rather than a universal, static one. That means that individuals and civilizations can greatly differ in their conceptions of what constitutes “nature” and the way it should be perceived. Ecocritics also argue that “nature” is not a static or universally defined concept but rather a complex and contested idea influenced by historical and cultural contexts (Garrard 2004). Garrard (23-45) also analyzes the way through which different societies define and interpret nature through their unique cultural frameworks and historical contexts. For example, Indigenous culture often see nature as a complex web of relationships where humans are integrated into natural systems, sharply contrasting with Western views that historically separate humans from wilderness.



Also, this point is not used as a counterpoint to the aforementioned ecocritical view in the paper, but as an added point to the ecocriticism agenda. This paper claims that nature also transcends cultural and historical views, as a force that precedes any human perception, an entity that exists for itself, as well as a spiritual entity that drives natural processes and has primacy above any form of human activity. In the mentioned novels, the nature is thus represented as such, in spite of it being perceived differently by various characters in the novels and the authors contemporaries. In short, if the way humans perceive nature affects it as such, then there must exist a fixed entity affected by our perception – in order for our perceptions to affect the way we act towards nature, there must be a nature, a fixed entity to suffer the consequences, as well as one for us to draw our perspectives from. This means that, on a subconscious level, people usually perceive the objective meaning of “nature” the same. For example, if an embodiment of the oppressive, industrial machinery, such as Beatty in *Fahrenheit 451* who sees nature as a bunch of resources for the system to extract in order to keep the machinery going, and Clarisse sees it as a place for playfulness, tranquility, peace and creation, it is evident that the ecocritical line of different perspectives affecting people’s behavior towards nature is correct. In other words, Clarisse will act kindly towards her natural surroundings, while Beatty will exploit it and drain its resources until there is nothing left; however, this also confirms that nature is always a fixed entity, despite the way it is perceived – they both have to act in the material world, and they are, despite their perceptions, acting in the same material plane, on the same “subject”. That means our perspective influences the way we act towards nature, but it is not nature itself – nature, in our subconscious, is always connected to the same entity, and we all see it as our natural environment. This paper presents nature as a continuous entity, fixed in its continuity, sometimes being changed by human influence (and the way we perceive it, as the ecocritics claim), but never changing its fixed fluidity, which is its main, most concrete driving force, which can also be seen in the novels and will be analyzed in the next part of the paper. In the novels, this can be seen as the persistence of the characters surroundings, always subtly pushing the time forward, as well as motivating characters and giving them hope in their endeavors.

Therefore, ecocritics believe that the representation of nature in literature is one of ecocriticism's main issues. Analyzing representations of ecosystems, animals, plants, and landscapes can help us understand how cultural views toward the natural world are reflected in these representations. For instance, in the first analyzed novel, *Fahrenheit 451*, nature stands more concretely as a binary opponent to the destructive industrial system embodied in its main

enforcer – the character of Beatty. Beatty represents the force of destruction, and a parasitical way of draining nature's resources in order to feed the machinery of an industrial (economical) and political system. As a character of a destructive and oppressive force, Beatty's role is twofold – as a political oppressor (member of the “firemen”, a crew burning books; executioner for the system) and a chaotic, destructive agent that thrives in hazardous acts of destruction (burning books and owners' houses satisfies Beatty, making him the agent of chaos). His ecocritical role is, therefore, also twofold: in himself he represents a view of nature that is possibly shared by the industrialists of his age (mid-20<sup>th</sup> century) – he is the exploiter, an agent of an economical system that drains natural resources in order to sustain the system financed by industrialists. For him, nature is just a set of resources for the system to exploit. On the other hand, he is a political and cultural oppressor, making sure that people's spirits (which can also be seen as creative energy or “pure thought”) stay numb. This is also an act of keeping the machinery going – people then become clogs in a system, robotic individuals that serve its reproduction (the pure example is Montag's wife, Mildred). Clarisse also represents nature in two ways: her playfulness, eeriness, adventurous spirit and a peaceful, quiet confidence in the beauty of life represents the “material” manifestation of nature (quiet rivers, valleys, creeks and similar scenery representing peace and blissfulness opposed to everyday movement of the industrial machinery). On the other hand, her inquisitive spirit and a positive wish to question the current realities makes her the representation of a more philosophical, creative force that can be deemed as “pure thought”. In a general ecocritical sense, nature as a surrounding is represented as a contradicting force to the mechanical, polluted, repetitive binary force of the industrial system – it is a peaceful haven where men can find relief and tranquility. On the other hand, representations of nature in modern and current literature could be more nuanced or conflicting. For example, the post-apocalyptic landscape in Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* is portrayed as a hostile and desolate place, echoing current concerns about ecological collapse and environmental degradation (Clark 45). Ecocritics can investigate how environmental values and concerns influence and are influenced by literary texts by looking at these diverse portrayals. The role of nature in the mentioned novels will be analyzed in a more direct manner in the second part of the thesis.

The difference between the representation of nature in these two novels opens up a space for debating their different connections to ecocriticism. Also, as mentioned before, it opens up the question of nature being a fixed term, or a historical construct, influenced and defined by the way we perceive it. According to ecocriticism, humans live in an age of environmental

crisis. This makes us obliged to, with certain urgency, reassess our way of living in the world. Along that, there exists a general agreement about these modes of living being, to a large degree, culturally determined. First formulating the environmental crisis, Buell identified it as a “crisis of the imagination the amelioration of which depends on finding better ways of imaging nature and humanity’s relation to it” (Buell, *The Environmental Imagination* 2). His belief is that the ways in which we perceive ourselves and our relationship with the environment have greatly contributed to our destructive impact on the planet. Therefore, Buell claims that ecocritics’ main task is unravelling and critiquing the concepts that have cause so much damage and identifying traces of those “better ways of imaging” where we find them. This is the case for most ecocritics, even in their most recent formulations of the movement.

The aforementioned differences and the historical context of ecocriticism that will partially be disputed in this work was created with the development of environmental awareness and movements throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This also represents the origin of ecocriticism which will be briefly described. During this time, Rachel Carson's seminal book *Silent Spring* (1962) was published, revealing the detrimental effects of pesticides and inspiring the current environmental movement (Clark 3). One of the main themes of ecocriticism, as demonstrated by Carson's work, is the connection between ecological and human health (Clark 3). Other significant publications from the same era, such as E. F. Schumacher's *Small is Beautiful* (1973) and Barry Commoner's *The Closing Circle* (1971), emphasized sustainable living and brought attention to the ecological challenges brought on by industrialization. The importance of having a comprehensive awareness of the environment was stressed in these writings, and ecocritical scholarship would subsequently adopt this approach (Garrard 5). The development of literary and cultural theory in the late 20th century also gave rise to new instruments for text analysis. The creation of ecocriticism was made possible by the rise of critical perspectives such as deconstruction, feminist criticism, and postcolonial critique. Academics started using these theoretical frameworks to investigate how literature both reflects and shapes our perception of the natural world in relation to environmental challenges (Garrard 7).

*The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology* by Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm, published in 1996, is widely regarded with popularizing the word "ecocriticism" and establishing the topic as a separate field of study (Garrard 5). This anthology highlighted the significance of comprehending the cultural aspects of environmental challenges by bringing together essays that applied ecological themes to literary study (Garrard 5). Ecocriticism is "the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment,"

according to Glotfelty, who provided an interdisciplinary description of the topic in the volume's introduction (Garrard 6). Ecocriticism incorporates ideas from environmental history, philosophy, and science in addition to literary studies. It takes into account how literary depictions of the environment influence and are influenced by historical occurrences, societal norms, and scientific findings. For example, ecocritical studies frequently address the industrial revolution and its tremendous effects on society and landscapes. Academics study how this era's literature portrays the conflicts between environmental degradation and technological advancement (Clark 4). In short, throughout history, nature has been portrayed in literature in a variety of ways, acting as a reflection of cultural values and environmental awareness, a mirror of human emotions, and a symbol of heavenly power.

Another classic in the field of ecocriticism is Timothy Clark's *The Cambridge Introduction to Literature and the Environment* (2011). For both students and academics, Clark provides an easy and comprehensive introduction to the main ideas and arguments in ecocriticism, making it a vital resource. He looks at how writing may both reflect and influence environmental consciousness, highlighting the impact of narrative on how we see ecological problems (Clark 4). Clark's work is noted for its engagement with modern environmental concerns, such as climate change and species extinction. He talks about how reading can give us a place for introspection, criticism, and creative discovery while we work through the complexities of these problems (Clark 6). He examines, for example, how dystopian and speculative fiction frequently functions as a medium for examining the possible ramifications of environmental degradation, emphasizing the genre's ability to elicit thought and motivate action (Clark 8).

It is evident that nature has been portrayed in literature in a variety of ways, that act as a reflection of cultural values and environmental awareness, a mirror of human emotions. To this, as mentioned before, we add nature as a symbol of heavenly power, or a transcendental force that precedes human perception and understanding. As demonstrated in works like Homer's *The Odyssey*, where the gods manipulate natural processes to affect human fate, nature frequently represented divine will and cosmic order in ancient literature (Branch 2). This also highlights the point about nature being a constantly moving, but fixed surrounding – this can also be described by the word cosmic order. The way in which nature in *The Odyssey* manipulated natural processes in order to affect human destiny, can also be found in *Fahrenheit 451* and *The Road*, which will also be analyzed in the next part.

As mentioned before, this paper will also use the work of Sigmund Freud to represent the binary opposition of some of the novels' characters in their relation to nature. Sigmund Freud, the father of psychoanalysis, identified two primary groups of instincts: the life instincts (Eros) and the death instincts (Thanatos). Eros represents the reproductive instinct, a maternal instinct, responsible for, among others, survival, creation, reproduction, and pleasure. Life instincts encompass both the libido (sexual drives) and self-preservative drives (Freud 1920). The character of Clarisse in *Fahrenheit 451* can be partially perceived as an agent of creation, or one that motivates the creative spirit in Montag, which then awakens his numbed desires for creation, self-preservation (in the sense of preserving his spirit that was long oppressed by the system) and even reproduction (as he tries to awaken his love for his wife, Mildred). The need for self-preservation is also seen in *The Road* in the father's desire to survive and provide for his son despite its dystopian surroundings. In both of these cases, Eros has awoken their resilience as well. On the other hand, the spirit of Thanatos in *Fahrenheit 451* is embodied in Beatty, who is the embodiment of the destructive, chaotic force, a being that relishes in chaos, which is manifested in him enjoying burning books and the houses of their owners. These two forces (Clarisse/Montag – Beatty, which is Eros – Thanatos), according to Freud, awaken each other and keep each other alive, and are in constant conflict in the spiritual and the material world, the result of their conflict, in this case, being the various forms of nature created as a result of their clash. The difference between the two novels is that in *Fahrenheit 451* we don't see the conflict (Montag and others never face "the system" directly), while in *The Road* we see nature post-conflict, a desolation of what once was. Thanatos can also be used to describe a force whose constant manifestation can result in a creation of a dystopian setting. For the sake of understanding the dystopian construct in analyzed novels, dystopian settings in literature will be briefly defined.

## 2.2. *Dystopia*

In dystopian settings, protagonists frequently follow the reality principle, postponing instant enjoyment in order to ensure their long-term survival. Guy Montag in Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* first conforms to the social conventions of book burning but progressively turns rebellious in search of a greater understanding. The reality principle guides his development as he realizes that in order to truly obtain freedom, he must carefully negotiate his repressive culture.

Environmental literature and media frequently feature apocalyptic themes, which represent anxieties about societal breakdown and environmental collapse. These stories frequently function as alerts regarding the dire repercussions of disregarding the environment and the pressing need for action. Apocalyptic literature, like Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*, which imagines a post-apocalyptic world devastated by environmental calamity, is studied by ecocritics to learn how it influences public opinion and legislation about environmental issues (Garrard 93). The emphasis is on the ways that apocalyptic visions can either inspire environmental activism or, on the other hand, result in apathy and passivity (Garrard 95). The difference between this novel and *Fahrenheit 451* is that in *The Road* both characters and the atmosphere are more apathetic, which results in “dwelling”, while in *Fahrenheit 451* Montag fights its “destiny” in a more active, almost revolutionary way. In ecocriticism, the idea of dwelling refers to how people live in and engage with their surroundings. This covers the analysis of environmentally friendly lifestyle choices as well as the cultural importance of location.

Ecocriticism and dystopian literature intersect profoundly, as both fields interrogate the relationship between humanity and the environment, often highlighting the catastrophic consequences of ecological neglect and exploitation. Ecocriticism, with its focus on environmental awareness and the critique of anthropocentric attitudes, provides a framework for analyzing dystopian narratives that envision bleak futures resulting from environmental degradation. The examples of *Fahrenheit 451* and *The Road* show that, nature plays a big role in dystopian fictions. It acts usually as a setting, a metaphor, or can even sometimes be seen as a character itself. The fact that nature acts as a setting in dystopian fiction is in this paper used as an argument for this thesis of nature being, besides a result of historical and cultural context – a fixed entity in and of itself, which serves as a basis for characters to create their perspective about it and then act in a way that influences it and may change its material appearance, but never its moving, continuous creative force.

Researchers have looked at the complex relationship between nature and dystopia, providing information about how environmental themes are used to both depict and critique dystopian societies. Ecocriticism is one of these. According to Buell, one should analyze the representation of nature, non-human characters as well as landscapes in literary works. He maintained they are depicted as active agents, passive settings, or in another way (Buell, *The Environmental Imagination* 34). This representation in *Fahrenheit 451* and *The Road* differs in

the way mentioned before (one being active and the other more passive) and it will be described in more detail in the next chapter.

Furthermore, human-nature relationship comes into play: Buell notes that it is important to examine how people connect with their surroundings. He suggests determining if depictions of people show them as stewards, dominators, or as being in a symbiotic relationship with the natural world (Buell 102). He emphasizes how critical it is to recognize and respond to ecological challenges raised in literary works. These could include species extinction, pollution, deforestation, and climate change (Buell 78). Literary devices and techniques should also be considered in analysis of how nature is described (e.g. which metaphors is it associated with), and taking into account the cultural and historical setting in which literary works are created. The text's historical environmental difficulties can be better understood by taking into account the period and its environmental context (Buell 45). It is also important to consider how readers might be influenced by the text's ecological messages and its relevance to contemporary environmental concerns (Buell 156).

Apocalyptic scenarios are frequently used in dystopian literature to illustrate how society and ecosystems collapse (Buell 280). This story element acts as a sobering reminder of the possible long-term effects of unrestrained environmental damage. Buell (285) asserted that “apocalypse is the single most powerful master metaphor that the contemporary environmental imagination has at its disposal” (Buell 285). This assertion reflects the idea that apocalyptic imagery is a central and compelling way to conceptualize and communicate the urgency of environmental crises (Buell 285). It serves to dramatize the potential consequences of ecological degradation, making abstract or distant issues immediate and visceral for readers and audiences. This is more evident in the novel *The Road* than in *Fahrenheit 451* since the first represents an almost post-apocalyptic society.

Besides warning the reader of environmental issues, nature can also play other roles in dystopian literature. A dystopian world is arguably a highly unnatural one; firstly, often because inhabitants of a dystopian world are usually subjected to technology. This is seen in novels like *Fahrenheit 451* where people are encouraged to consume media such as television in order to become distracted from reality. Moreover, making people distracted from reality is what the dystopian systems usually attempt to achieve because people who are unaware of their surroundings due to preoccupation with the media are easy to brainwash. Not to mention the media that rules the dystopian society is usually used to spread propaganda and give people a false sense of what is real and what is not.

In contrast to the exterior nature, i.e. the environment and natural forces that transcend it, another major topic of this paper is the human nature, i.e. the nature from within, and its role in the dystopian genre. The importance of Freud's work was already mentioned, since his division of desire and natural forces on Eros (the reproductive, self-preserving principle) and Thanatos (the destructive, chaotic force) represent well the binary concept of nature, human as well as environmental. Montag and Clarisse (*Fahrenheit 451*) and The Father in *The Road* represent the principle of self-preservation, while Beatty from *Fahrenheit 451* could stand for the principle of destruction and chaos.

What is important for dystopian novel is that human nature and resilience are usually the key for surviving a dystopian system. This is especially true for dystopian setting where there is no abundance, i.e. where access to fundamental needs such food or water is limited, as well as situations where characters are exposed to constant danger in a society that has, in a way, collapsed. This is again evident in Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* through the example of two main protagonists.

In the end, this paper states that, although it is a concept heavily influenced by historical and cultural perception, which then determine the way we act towards it (ecocriticism's main thesis), nature still does represent a fixed entity, in the sense that it represents a constant continuous reproductive and creative force that changes according to outside influence, but still remains fixed in its continuity. Resilience itself is the best example of this – in spite of everything, their reproductive, creative and self-preserving nature moves Montag and The Father forward in their action, one striving for survival and a hope for his son, while other on his desire for freedom and enlightenment. It also represents the material view of nature as our surroundings (such as trees, rivers, and mountains), which is also a fixed entity, upon which we base our perceptions and therefore act upon them. It is also represented as a spiritual force, a universal creative energy or “pure thought” that it as the core of people's creativity and individuality and is being suppressed by what is called “the system”.

As examples for representing nature as a constant creative and reproductive force, we will use the characters' surroundings in *Fahrenheit 451* and *The Road* paired with the timeline moving forward towards a new form of existence – it is a concept that can be seen in both novels. Also, the way in which this force manifests itself through the characters will also be analyzed (in *Fahrenheit 451* it is Montag's desire for enlightenment and experiencing nature, while in *The Road* is the Father's survival instinct; both of these give birth to resilience in characters). The difference between natural surroundings in these novels will also be analyzed,



as well as the way in which characters represent different kinds of perspectives on nature, along with the way this perspective makes them act in the material world and influence nature itself.

### 3. Nature in Fahrenheit 451

Written by the American writer Ray Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451* is a dystopian novel that was published in 1953. The novel takes place in America in a society where books were banned a long ago. The so-called "firemen" are employed with the task of burning all books that they can find. Reading books is considered unnecessary in this society, and people are encouraged to consume other media, which spreads the government's propaganda. One of the firemen that burn books is Guy Montag, the central character of the novel. This chapter will analyze the role of nature in the novel.

In the beginning, Montag does his job without questioning it too much, but he eventually starts having doubts about the concept of book burning. The novel essentially tracks his journey from being obedient to the system to finding a way out of it and rejecting the set of values promoted in this society. This process of Montag's awakening, according to statements that were mentioned before, is twofold: first, it represents the awakening of Montag's resilience, motivated by him meeting a mysterious girl – this is the Freud's Eros concept of self-preservation we mentioned earlier; second – the girl also triggers Montag's spiritual awakening, since his mind and "soul" start desiring an enlightenment, or a manifestation of his creative, spiritual self, as well as his connection to nature as a haven of tranquility. This means that Montag developed both a desire for a spiritual rebellion, as well as material or political.

The journey began when one evening, he met a mysterious young girl named Clarisse, who was his neighbor. What is interesting about Clarisse that upon her first appearance in the story, she was immediately described as connected to nature, i.e. to the environment around her. When Montag saw her, he noticed how the motion of the wind and leaves carried her forward. This could also be used as an argument for one of the theses of this paper, namely the fixed slow continuity of nature as a force that is undeniable and beyond perspectives. She was in harmony with the nature and this is why Montag was, in a way, mesmerized by her; she appears as some sort of a mystic creature that comes from the world Montag is not aware of.

The autumn leaves blew over the moonlit pavement in such a way as to make the girl who was moving there seem fixed to a sliding walk, letting the motion of the wind and the leaves carry her forward. (Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451* 3)

When he met her, she described herself as being seventeen and crazy. Throughout the novel, the reader could quickly tell that Clarisse was different, someone who does not fit into the dystopian world of censored society that has to follow strict oppressive rules. Clarisse can

therefore be perceived as pure spirit, a being that possess the potential to bring forth new ideas, purposely hidden from people and suppressed by the system. In the sense of Clarisse representing the aspect of nature as a pure spirit or creative energy, the nature is thus seen by its binary opposition, “the system” (Eros – Thanatos) as a target. Furthermore, if she is looked upon in another sense, as the beauty of our natural surroundings, she can be perceived as the victim of the system. The statement is that Clarisse here represents some form of a transcendental guidance, or divine intervention, whose goal is just to inspire the creative and positive nature of other characters (and readers), namely Montag.

It is too basic to say that her “connection” to nature was what made her free. What is most likely the case is that Clarisse here, besides from being binary opposition to the oppressive system, stands as a motivator for nature’s positive force, a trigger for Montag’s (or all oppressed souls, since he represents them) deeply buried natural instincts for creation, spiritual self-preservation, meaning and enlightenment (Eros). With the help of Clarisse, Montag realized that he lost his connection to nature, and therefore, to himself, his own individuality, the process of becoming something more than just a clog in the system. As a representative of nature, Clarisse awakened Montag’s innermost desires for freedom and individuality, which can later be seen in his rebellious actions.

Still, according to the thesis, nature has to be considered as our natural surroundings as well. Clarisse also reminds Montag of the beauty he had long forgotten and that has always existed in nature. The following quote perfectly describes how Montag did not even remember to look at the moon or even remember the morning dew on the grass.

There’s dew on the grass in the morning.” He suddenly couldn’t remember if he had known this or not, and it made him quite irritable. “And if you look”—she nodded at the sky— “there’s a man in the moon.” He hadn’t looked for a long time. (Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451* 6)

Also, as a surrounding, nature in *Fahrenheit 451* is represented as something forgotten amongst everyday activities, and spending time in it is considered to be a danger to the system, since it detracts people from robotically practicing their daily activities (work for men and house attending for women). Bradbury’s cliché intention here is evident – we have all forgotten ourselves in our daily activities and do not pay attention to beauties of nature anymore. Still, the meaning of Clarisse visiting nature, watching birds and collecting butterflies has a different meaning in the eyes of “the system” – by doing these things, she becomes a “bad example” to

others and someone that can rattle the ruling ideology if she draws too many ordinary people to the same actions. This is why Clarisse was visiting a psychiatrist. She stated that the psychiatrist is unsure why Clarisse likes to visit the forest, watch birds and collect butterflies. Although psychiatrist is an unnamed character who plays no role in the novel, one could assume that he was there to “fix” Clarisse: “The psychiatrist wants to know why I go out and hike around in the forests and watch the birds and collect butterflies. I’ll show you my collection someday” (Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451* 17). Given the fact that most of the citizens in these systems are encouraged to watch parlor television, spending time in nature was deemed as unwanted. Her personality that stands out from the rest is the reason why she was so interesting to Montag; and people who are different like Clarisse are sometimes deemed crazy – the word she also uses to describe herself. Here we have Clarisse as a target again: the predatory oppressive system (in dystopian settings, Thanatos) senses danger to its tyranny in possible awakening of the Eros – that’s why Clarisse has to be eliminated. Or, in the terms of the general thesis of this paper, the political system aims to delete any manifestation of pure thought as a potential catalyst to enlightenment and possible revolution, even though Clarisse’s intents weren’t revolutionary (she never mentioned anything about the system being overthrown, she just talked about her love for nature and how people have forgotten the beauty of the world).

Because of this, Montag started associating Clarisse with nature. He started to miss her and wonder where she is when he would not see her. The novel thus features several more description of Clarisse, tying her strongly to nature. She also began bringing Montag closer to nature. She would sometimes bring him flowers, autumn leaves or chestnuts. This was the first step that led Montag to rediscover nature, connect with it and regain freedom and a spiritual energy, which is a turning event set to take place later in the novel. This awakened his desires for enlightenment, spirituality, freedom and change. In other words, the character of Clarisse is highly responsible for helping Montag achieve resilience needed to stand up against the oppressive system he lives in.

And as many times he came out of the house and Clarisse was there somewhere in the world. Once he saw her shaking a walnut tree, once he saw her sitting on the lawn knitting a blue sweater, three or four times he found a bouquet of late flowers on his porch, or a handful of chestnuts in a little sack, or some autumn leaves neatly pinned to a sheet of white paper and thumbtacked to his door. (Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451* 21)

After Clarisse’s character influenced Montag, he began thinking more of nature, the injustice of the oppressive system, and himself being an agent of destruction (again Thanatos).

He began questioning the life that he lives; while also watching people around him and realizing they live in a lie, disconnected from their true selves. He noticed how people no longer build gardens to spend time in. This is again highlighting the view of nature as our surroundings. Still, different to *The Road*, in *Fahrenheit 451* the beauty of natural surroundings is also something that needs to be protected, and that Montag is willing to fight and die for. The tone of *Fahrenheit 451* is much more revolutionary than one of *The Road*.

People talked too much. And they had time to think. So they ran off with the porches. And the gardens, too. Not many gardens anymore to sit around in. And look at the furniture. No rocking chairs anymore. (Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451* 50)

This is where Montag started questioning the concept of book burning. He started to feel sorry for one of the women he had to burn together with the books at his workplace. He noticed that she is a human like everyone else, and he started wondering what is it in the books that makes people like this woman want to die for them. Moreover, Montag's journey towards resilience against the system took of even further after he met Faber. Similar to Clarisse, Faber was one of people who were different from the rest of the society. A former English teacher, Faber is an old man who lives in regret for not saving books and for letting the government ban and burn them. Faber was at first very skeptical about Montag because he tried to hide the fact that he stands against book burning and that he values books. However, Faber realized that Montag is serious about deciding to protect books, which was not going to be an easy task. This is where important scenes come to play – Montag receiving Faber's guidance and help he needed to know that he is doing the right thing for opting to protect books. This is where the metaphor of books comes into play. According to Faber, books were not what Montag was looking for. Here again comes the view of nature as pure thought, and Clarisse as a partial representation of it. Of course, in this case books are a metaphor for the spiritual enlightenment, or a way for people to get to know their true potential which would, in some cases, make them able to resist the oppressive system. It could be argued that, in the entire novel, the books being banned stands for suppressing human desire for positive creative action, which is a self-realization principle found in nature also. People usually read books to learn about the world and about themselves and to connect to everything there is around them; by banning books and introducing technology, the state only wanted to control and move the people away from their freedoms. This is why, according to Faber, Montag had gone into not just memories or old friends, but also into the nature where a source of renewal and freedom is hidden.

No, no, it's not books at all you're looking for! Take it where you can find it, in old phonograph records, old motion pictures, and in old friends; look for it in nature and look for it in yourself. (Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451* 63)

Faber continued to make several points of how this dystopian society is heavily disconnected from the nature. Various representations of being “disconnected from the nature” could be highlighted here, which are based on the thesis about various forms of nature and natural human action that exists. First of all, people were disconnected from their innermost principle of self-realization, spiritual progression, enlightenment, individuality etc. This is nature as “pure thought.” Second, people were also disconnected from the beauty of their natural surroundings and with it the positive force it can bring upon them – they never collected butterflies like Clarisse, went to woods, picked flowers, rocked in chairs etc. Also, their reproductive and maternal energies were numbed down, their libido and erotic drives, all of it by constant exposure to everyday needs of the system, medication and propaganda. As for the ecocritical argument, Faber’s perspective of nature here is much different than Clarisse’s. Faber sees nature as hidden in books, a catalyst for spiritual change and enlightenment, more than he sees it as the beauty of our natural surroundings (although he mentions it). He, therefore, represents an element of a spiritual revolution, much more in tune with “pure thought”, if the latter is represented in ideological and philosophical terms.

He said that this type of world is, in a way, backwards, because flowers are trying to grown on flowers instead of rain. This could possibly mean that the “utopian” world that these characters live tries to portray everything as perfect and to purify the world from any “evil” such as books that symbolize freedom and free thinking. He furthermore stated that everything that is pretty in this world comes from nature, even the fireworks that might not be deemed a product of nature. He says that we somehow think that we can live by ignoring the natural cycle; what he most likely tried to emphasize is that nature is always going to prevail over some made-up oppressive systems and rules that try to control humans and take them away from their true selves. This once again highlights the thesis of nature’s transcendental capabilities, of it preceding human activity and proceeding to exist based on its determining principle of continuous movement long after humanity is gone. This realization of the importance of nature is what made Montag resilient towards the system:

We are living in a time when flowers are trying to live on flowers, instead of growing on good rain and black loam. Even fireworks, for all their prettiness, come from the chemistry of the earth. Yet somehow, we think we can grow, feeding on flowers and

fireworks, without completing the cycle back to reality. Bradbury (Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451* 64)

When Montag tried to resist the oppressive system, Beatty, his fellow fireman, stood on his way. Beatty was a smart man who knew a lot about books and was fully supporting them being banned and burned. He called Clarisse nonsense and tried to convince Montag that she is an idiot who has a diagnosis and therefore someone who should not be taken seriously. He specifically attacked nature, saying that all her talk about flowers, butterflies, leaves and sunsets is nonsense: “You weren’t fooled by that little idiot’s routine, now, were you? Flowers, butterflies, leaves, sunsets, oh, hell! It’s all in her file. I’ll be damned. I’ve hit the bull’s-eye.” (Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451* 86). As claimed before, Beatty is a classical representation of the destructive, chaotic spirit, Thanatos, since he derives pleasure from destroying the books and burning the houses of their owners. In a general sense, he enjoys seeing the world burn, not moving forward in a spirited, enlightened manner. In the ecocritical sense, Beatty’s view of nature is simply that it represents a haven of resources to be drained to their maximum, and then used for the industrial system to sustain itself.

Beatty thus became another hurdle on Montag’s way to achieving resistance since Beatty actively attempted to turn him against it. In a turn of events, Montag killed Beatty in order to protect Faber, with whom he was collaborating to escape the country. After Montag committed a crime, he had no other choice but to stand behind what he has decided and escape. While he was being chased by the authorities for murder, Faber advised Montag to follow the river and escape the city. While he was escaping, he was also being chased by a mechanical hound, another product of the technocratic world Montag had to resist. In the end, Montag successfully runs away, reaches the river, which still is not the end of his journey. He had to touch the river to make sure that it is real, and that he truly escaped and found the healing quality of the nature: “But he was at the river. He touched it, just to be sure it was real” (Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451* 104).

The river scene can be analyzed in various ways, but is definitely a crucial part of the novel. It could be stated that his resilience was here awarded and that nature gave him back his freedom. Him entering the river therefore can be described as him embracing the nature and rejecting everything he was taught to be true by the system. The aspect of nature as our surroundings that brings us peace and tranquility is highlighted here. The river is described as something that brought him peace, and something that quite literally healed him. He found the solution to all his hardships in the river – because he was finally away from everything: “The

Hound was gone. Now there was only the cold river and Montag floating in a sudden peacefulness, away from the city and the lights and the chase, away from everything.” (Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451* 105)

The river can also be described from the classical dystopian perspective. The scene of tranquillity in the river could represent Montag’s resting before a new beginning that is to come – after escaping the dystopian surrounding he has to wait for a new system of living to establish itself, hopefully a more just one. The duality of Eros and Thanatos can again be brought out here – even though the destructive chaotic force (the city in which he lived in) destroyed itself, symbolizing the death of that particular system, the positive spiritual energy of Eros cannot live without its opposite, so this tranquillity is definitely temporary, even though in the novel it seems like a final destination. Still the following quote can also be read as a temporary rest from everyday struggle:

He floated on his back when the valise filled and sank; the river was mild and leisurely, going away from the people who ate shadows for breakfast and steam for lunch and vapors for supper. (Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451* 105)

The aforementioned quote, as the well following one, highlight the view of freedom as an escape from the everyday system. Looking at it like it is, this quote affirms the basic ecocritical thesis according to which we see freedom based on our perspective – for Montag it was long forgotten, and now it’s a peaceful carefree place in which he can be free and forget about the struggles of everyday and the oppression that the system brought upon him. Still, it can also be looked at from a more idealistic perspective; it could be stated that it represents a heaven worth fighting for, and Montag as one of the fighters. Also, it is a well-known force to all of us, a peace people usually enjoy, if they look at it from a motherly principle, devoid of subjective interpretations – in this thesis, it is claimed that all humans subconsciously share this kind of perception. The river scene is full of many descriptions of how river, i.e. the return to nature gave him a brand-new life and brought him peace he could not have found in the world he lived in before.

The river was very real; it held him comfortably and gave him the time at last, the leisure, to consider this month, this year, and a lifetime of years. He listened to his heart slow. His thoughts stopped rushing with his blood. (Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451* 105)

The following excerpt went more into depth of how large the reward of resisting in dystopia was for Montag. Comparing his life before and after, he knew that he must never again burn in his life. This could mean two possible things: that he should never again be an agent for



a destructive force, and burn books that have the potential of awakening spiritual enlightenment in people, and therefore contribute to a world in which people's spirit and potential is suffocated by the oppressive authorities. It could also mean that he should never "burn things" in the material world, which directly means never destroy the beauty of the natural surroundings.

Burning. The river bobbed him along gently. Burning. The sun and every clock on the earth. It all came together and became a single thing in his mind. After a long time of floating on the land and a short time of floating in the river he knew why he must never burn again in his life. (Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451* 105)

Thanks to resisting towards the old life he once had, he can now live in peace and silence. This only goes to show how much the return to nature is rewarding and healing; to resist the oppressive world and to return to nature comes with a great reward for the ones who do it. He no longer felt empty, and the nature provided everything he needed for his survival. This shows that a person does not need material things and abundance of information such as television and massive media, which the inhabitants of dystopia have to consume, but that it is enough to just exist.

He stood breathing, and the more he breathed the land in, the more he was filled up with all the details of the land. He was not empty. There was more than enough here to fill him. (Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451* 108)

The following excerpt ties the story of Montag's resilience with Clarisse, the character that he met in the beginning of the novel and that inspired him to embark on a journey of rejecting dystopia and finding his true creative spirit and nature. He said that Clarisse had walked here; but this was most likely not meant literally, but figuratively. Clarisse walked "here," with "here" being this world where freedom and peace of mind exists. She might have been Montag's neighbor previously and was located physically in the dystopian world, but she was spiritually in touch with nature, i.e. in touch with what Montag's has experienced once he entered the river: "And he was surprised to learn how certain he suddenly was of a single fact he could not prove. Once, long ago, Clarisse had walked here, where he was walking now" (Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451* 109).

At the very end of his journey to nature, Montag gets to know Granger and other men more closely. They talk to him about the importance of nature and tell him that the dystopian cities are set to fail because of their disconnection to nature. Granger states that these cities lack green and wilderness, an issue that is also a prominent topic in ecology and nature preservation nowadays. In addition, more importantly, inhabitants living in these cities have nature taken

away from them since it gets replaced by technological inventions and other societal rules people have to follow. Taking into consideration the lack of nature and the positive spiritual energy, the possibility to awaken could therefore be understood as the reason why people are unable to stay resilient towards these systems. The dystopian leaders and people who have to fall then think that they are bigger than nature, than they can control it or replace it, but Granger, and now also Montag, know that this is not true.

My grandfather ran off the V-2 rocket film a dozen times and then hoped that some day our cities would open up more and let the green and the land and the wilderness in more, to remind people that we're allotted a little space on earth and that we survive in that wilderness that can take back what it has given, as easily as blowing its breath on us or sending the sea to tell us we are not so big (Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451* 118).

In the end, the idea that nature played a crucial role in *Fahrenheit 451* is clear. The thesis of this paper needs to be mentioned once again; the first appearance of nature in *Fahrenheit 451* is Montag meeting Clarisse; and she is found Clarisse symbolize various aspects of nature. For one, her character can be deemed a symbol of creative energy of life, a positive and reproductive force mirrored in nature's beauty. When putting Montag into picture, Clarisse can be seen as the manifestation of "pure thought" or a man's search for enlightenment, spiritual awakening, and individuality. We can also see Clarisse as a reminder of the simple beauties in life, long forgotten by people forced to work a mind-numbing job, and the system making them lifeless consumers. She can also be seen as a part of a binary relationship of nature and the system, or Eros and Thanatos, the creative and reproductive versus the destructive and chaotic force in the world. From her character we can also extract an ecocritical point of view – she sees nature as simple beauties long forgotten, a haven that contains the simplest of life's joys, very easy to access but still forgotten.

In any case, she was the one to inspire Montag to embark on two kinds of spiritual journeys. One journey was spiritual, individual independence found in knowledge, enlightenment and wisdom found in books he so fervently burnt his whole life, and the other simpler, found in the peace and tranquility that natural surroundings bring away from the everyday material struggles of the world. This is was also the reason Clarisse was given a twofold role in the introduction – because she inspired two different spiritual journeys of the human nature. At the end, Montag sees leaves of the tree are described something that could heal nations; meaning simply that nature heals and helps people reach the strength they need to find the truth and freedom and to escape the hardships everyday life brings:

And on either side of the river was there a tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month; And the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations (Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451* 123).

#### 4. Nature in The Road

The following chapter will analyze nature in *The Road*, a post-apocalyptic novel written by the American writer Cormac McCarthy and published in 2006. The novel takes place sometime after an unnamed extinction disaster that erased almost all life from Earth, including flora and fauna, as well as most of human life. The central characters of the novel are a boy and his father, whose names are never revealed. The novel follows them navigating through cold and dark surroundings in attempts to find food to survive. The boy and his father have nothing but a gun to protect them and a cart with a few blankets and some food and items they find in abandoned houses they visit along the way. The two follow a road with the goal to head south in order to escape the cold. They are always on the run so they can escape the danger of someone finding them.

As opposed to *Fahrenheit 451*, which was analyzed in the previous chapter, *The Road* offers a completely different perspective on nature and its role in a dystopian world. It features a typical apocalyptic setting where almost all civilization built by humans has come to an end. Through the entire novel, Buell's insertion that apocalypse is the most powerful tool of ecocriticism is confirmed, since the reader is provided with an extensive portrayal of how devastatingly horrible life in apocalypse is:

On the far side of the river valley, the road passed through a stark black burn. Charred and limbless trunks of trees stretching away on every side. Ash moving over the road and the sagging hands of blind wire strung from the blackened lightpoles whining thinly in the wind. (McCarthy, *The Road* 4).

The description of the terrain as a "charred and limbless trunks of trees" and a "stark black burn" demonstrates the extreme destruction of the environment. Ecocritically speaking, this imagery depicts the effects of human activity on the environment and might suggest a post-apocalyptic world in which fire has severely devastated nature, maybe as a result of human carelessness or warfare.

He walked out in the gray light and stood and he saw for a brief moment the absolute truth of the world. 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. And somewhere two hunted animals trembling like ground-foxes in their cover. Borrowed time and borrowed world and borrowed eyes with which to sorrow it. (McCarthy, *The Road* 76).

In light of these theses, the natural surroundings in this novel, although it lacks its not-desolate counterpart (Clarisse as a representative of nature, Montag's final journey on the tranquil river surroundings), still represents what is called the leading principle of nature – its constant forward movement in time. Even though a desolation, during reading of the book one can almost sense its forward movement, highlighted by the slower tone of the novel than that of *Fahrenheit 451*. This represents both the resilience of nature and man (again Eros as the force of self-preservation). The resilience is much more highlighted in the character of The Father, who, even though he seems hopeless, keeps on pushing on a hope that he will preserve his kin (his son). This idea of protecting one's offspring will be highlighted later in the analysis.

Morton's concept of "dark ecology" can be applied to this novel. According to Timothy Morton, "dark ecology" means that nature is a complicated, often dangerous force that humans have to learn to live with rather than a peaceful, perfect thing. Morton's conception of nature as an all-encompassing and uncaring force is supported by the descriptions of the surroundings in *The Road*, such as the "cold relentless circling of the intestate earth" and the "darkness implacable" (Morton 5). This dismal depiction depicts the sublime, which, according to Morton, is necessary to comprehend ecological realities beyond idealized notions. This acknowledgment of nature's immensity and our smallness within it. It also highlights the fixed existence of nature as a constant force, indestructible and forever moving forward despite its form.

Even in situations where nature seems unfriendly or decaying, Morton highlights how intertwined and entangled humans are with it (16). This idea is supported by the imagery in the excerpt, which describes humans as "two hunted animals trembling like ground-foxes". It shows humans as a component of the natural order, bound by the same harsh survival rules that apply to other animals. This viewpoint opposes the anthropocentric viewpoint and highlights how all life forms within an ecological system have a common vulnerability and mortality. This also highlights the importance of resilience. Also, it is important to note that this analysis will be focused on the differences between the way nature is presented in *The Road* and *Fahrenheit 451*, with the main focus being set on resilience as the strongest natural force in *The Road*, embodied in the character of The Father. The difference in nature as one's natural surroundings is also going to be highlighted as it was in the beginning. In *The Road*, nature is a classic dystopian setting – a vast and desolate space trying to reinvent itself after a major catastrophe, while *Fahrenheit 451* offers a view of nature as a tranquility away from the oppressive system.

Furthermore, one of the main differences is that *The Road* also taps into the topic of memory and recollection; with the characters sometimes dreaming of a life where the nature is not devastated.

He dreamt of walking in a flowering wood where birds flew before them he and the child and the sky was aching blue but he was learning how to wake himself from just such siren worlds. (McCarthy, *The Road* 9).

The quote highlights a significant component of human nature, namely the capacity for hope and longing for tranquility and beauty under difficult circumstances. This is also a manifestation of the nature's spirit that was embodied in Clarisse in *Fahrenheit 451*. The dream that is being recounted is colorful and beautiful, which stands in sharp contrast to the characters' lonely reality. This demonstrates how people have an intrinsic need for beauty and hope, even in the worst of situations. It implies that people always harbor an inner image of a world that is more lovely and better; and they most likely tap into these daydreams in order to gain strength to stay resilient in a time of difficulty.

The dream's depictions of nature - a "flowering wood," "birds," and a "aching blue" sky - stand for rebirth, resiliency, and life. The depressing, lifeless surroundings the individuals live in every day are starkly contrasted with these pictures. The human spirit is resilient, as exemplified by the father and the kid, and this resilience is mirrored in nature. The dream could represent the idea that beauty and life can persist even in a damaged world—if only in the human heart and intellect. The protagonists' will to live in spite of overwhelming circumstances is what drives them forward.

Nevertheless, the father's capacity to "wake himself from just such siren worlds" suggests a means of survival. Dreams of a better past or an idealistic future can be a deadly diversion in the harsh post-apocalyptic world of *The Road*. The fact that the father had to wake up from these dreams emphasizes how necessary it is to remain vigilant in order to survive. It draws attention to a crucial component of human survival: the capacity to stifle consoling delusions in order to effectively face and manage challenging reality. This also highlights resilience, but in a manner different than in *Fahrenheit 451* – there it represents resisting an oppressive system, while here it represents resilience as a basic human survival instinct.

Later in the novel, the imagery of the sun and birds is also used to demonstrate how the thought of nature as they once knew it motivates the characters to survive: "They went on. In the nights sometimes now he'd wake in the black and freezing waste out of softly colored worlds of human love, the songs of birds, the sun" (McCarthy, *The Road* 167). These thoughts keep

them motivated that the world that they live in now could someday get renewed and that they might experience it again.

Similarly, the following excerpt shows the father's hope throughout hardships:

The boy was looking at the dead roadside trees. It's okay, the man said. All the trees in the world are going to fall sooner or later. But not on us. (McCarthy, *The Road* 19).

The lifeless wayside trees represent the deteriorating environment surrounding them, illustrating the widespread devastation and the end of natural life. The man's assurance to his son in spite of this shows some perseverance. The father's emphasis on survival - "But not on us" - highlights human persistence and the determination to endure, while the trees' ultimate fall represents the greater breakdown of their world. This resistance is both psychological and physical, as the dad works to provide the youngster a sense of stability and hope. In a way, the father is taking care of his offspring because the human nature leads him to do so. This once again highlights Freud's concept of Eros as a force of self-preservation. The father in *The Road* exemplifies this deep-seated attachment, driven by an instinctual need to protect his child from the harsh environment.

The same can be said about the following excerpt from the part of the novel the boy started feeling fear and doubt about their survival chances: "I'm really scared. The sooner I go the sooner I'll be back and we'll have a fire and then you won't be scared anymore" (McCarthy, *The Road* 42).

From an ecocritical perspective, the mention of fire can symbolize humanity's connection to the natural world and the primal instinct for survival. Fire has been a crucial element in human history, providing warmth, protection, and a means of preparing food. In this context, the mention of fire can evoke themes of environmental interconnectedness and the human reliance on natural resources for sustenance and comfort.

The father's survival instincts and his human nature leading him to protect the child also caused the father to kill one of the men they met during their journey: "This is my child, he said. I washed a dead man's brains out of his hair. That is my job" (McCarthy, *The Road* 43).

The father constantly encourages his son and motivates him to not give up. Freud, as mentioned before, in his theory of the unconscious mind, explored the primal instincts that underlie human behavior, including the drive for self-preservation. He posited that the ego, guided by the reality principle, seeks to satisfy basic needs and ensure survival in the face of external threats (Freud 12):

When your dreams are of some world that never was or of some world that never will be and you are happy again then you will have given up. Do you understand? And you can't give up. I won't let you (McCarthy, *The Road* 115).

As the father says, "And you can't give up. I won't let you," he is appealing to the protective impulse connected to Freud's idea of the ego when he says, "I won't let you." The father's innate urge to protect his son in a harsh and merciless world is evident in his unwavering commitment to keep his son from giving up. It is a manifestation of the innate need to safeguard and maintain one's progeny, despite obstacles that appear insurmountable.

Despite the harsh conditions and the constant threat of danger, the characters demonstrate their resilience by prioritizing the basic necessity of water, showing their ability to endure and persevere even in the face of extreme adversity: "Well you don't. It takes a long time. We have water. That's the most important thing. You don't last very long without water" (McCarthy, *The Road* 59).

Living in the world where the food is scarce, the topic of cannibalism, i.e. eating people in order to survive has also come into discussion. This following scene delves into the ethical and moral dilemmas faced by characters in a dystopian world where the boundaries of survival and humanity are blurred:

Just tell me.

We wouldn't ever eat anybody, would we?

No. Of course not.

Even if we were starving? (McCarthy, *The Road* 75)

The father was very clear about what his values were – cannibalism was not an option. However, the subsequent question, "Even if we were starving?" delves into the complexities of human resilience and survival instincts. It challenges the father's initial assertion and forces a consideration of the unthinkable. The novel's dystopian universe is harshly real, as seen by the conflict between moral standards and the primal need to survive. It poses important queries on the boundaries of human resiliency and the sacrifices people would have to make in order to survive. The human nature is torn between staying resilient and surviving and between the morals. This moral dilemma is also one of the only times one can draw a parallel with the spiritual enlightenment that books bring in *Fahrenheit 451*, since this ensuing morality is a representation of the enlightenment of the human mind, a form of natural activity of thought that resists primal survival instinct and upon which a new society can be built.



Moreover, there is the notion of “good guys” through the novel, with the father convincing the child that they are good guys who could not do wrong: “Okay. This is what the good guys do. They keep trying. They don’t give up” (McCarthy, *The Road* 75). This part potentially exhibits resilience and also highlights the moral dimension of human nature. It suggests that resilience is not merely a survival strategy but also a reflection of moral character and integrity. Furthermore, according to Maslow, there is a hierarchy of requirements that drives human behavior, with basic physiological demands like food, water, and shelter serving as the basis. The characters in *The Road* have stronger survival instincts as a result of their struggles to meet these fundamental requirements, which motivates them to keep going regardless how hopeless their surroundings are. Despite the end of the world, they are compelled to persevere and not give up by their innate urge to fulfill these basic requirements.

The protagonists in the novel, especially the father, also sometimes start to lose hope and are thus torn between staying resilient and giving up:

He tried to remember the dream but he could not. All that was left was the feeling of it. He thought perhaps they'd come to warn him. Of what? That he could not enkindle in the heart of the child what was ashes in his own. Even now some part of him wished they'd never found this refuge. Some part of him always wished it to be over. (McCarthy, *The Road* 90).

The father acknowledges that "some part of him always wished it to be over." This desire for their pain to end captures the protagonist's ongoing conflict between survival and capitulation. Even with his innate will to live, he longs to be freed from the never-ending battle to survive. He also regrets that he cannot "enkindle in the heart of the child" the same hope or vigor that he has lost inside himself. This is also one of the main differences between protagonists from *Fahrenheit 451* and *The Road*: the characters in the first novel (primarily Clarisse and Montag) are full of hope and able to rekindle a flame of spirituality in their contemporaries, while The Father, long tortured by the desolation of a destroyed world and, possibly, the lack of natural beauty to provide him positive and creative energy, lacks the resulting hope and is therefore struggling to continue his path fueled only by his primal instinct and a will to protect his child. This shows how deeply concerned he is for the child's welfare and how eager he is to protect him from the harsh realities of their situation. But he understands that trying to instill hope in a world where darkness has taken over is pointless. This also can be used as an argument for the thesis of nature being a concept we all collectively share, despite perspectives and its current state. Wherever one hears the word “nature,” one would most likely

first think of natural beauties such as rivers, trees, forests etc. Even the child, who never saw natural beauty in his life, is eager to see them, which can be used as an argument that humans carry nature as a concept deep inside their subconscious.

The father and the son met a very old man named Ely at some point in the novel. Like the surroundings, Ely is portrayed as a worn-out and tired character. He is characterized as being thin and weak, with torn clothing and a body worn out from the struggles of survival. Like the father and son, Ely has a tenacity that was created out of necessity, even at his senior age. Upon first seeing the father and son, Ely exhibits caution and mistrust. People are wary and distrustful of other people because they have to survive in this world. But in spite of his early resistance, Ely is gradually lets in and earns the trust of the father and the son, sharing tales with them and imparting wisdom from his own travels: "I've not seen a fire in a long time, that's all. I live like an animal. You don't want to know the things I've eaten" (McCarthy, *The Road* 104). Ely compares himself to an animal, implying a loss of humanity and the deterioration of cultural norms. But the reader could sense pride in the way Ely talks about his experience. Despite all his hardships, he stayed resilient towards all of the challenges that the survival brings.

Ely is also in touch with the environment and acknowledges its natural cycle:" When we're all gone at last then there'll be nobody here but death and his days will be numbered too" (McCarthy, *The Road* 104). The quotation also highlights concepts of symbiosis and connectivity that are present in dark ecology. According to Timothy Morton, death is a basic component of life's intricate web rather than an end in and of itself (Morton 5). The end of life is not indicated by the disappearance of humans from this environment; rather, the cycle of birth, death, and regeneration continues. McCarthy's portrayal of "nobody here but death" reflects a deep understanding of how life and death are entwined in the natural world, where death is a sign of impending degradation as well as a source of rebirth.

Towards the end of the story, the father and the son spend some time on a beach and gather things they find in an abandoned boat. Since the mainland nature has given up, the father finds some hope in the fact that there could be life in the sea:

He thought there could be deathships out there yet, drifting with their lolling rags of sail.  
Or life in the deep. Great squid propelling themselves over the floor of the sea in the cold darkness (McCarthy, *The Road* 133).

A ray of hope is provided by the metaphor of "life in the deep" in the midst of the dark. One interpretation of the phrase "great squid propelling themselves over the floor of the sea in the cold darkness" is that life may survive in even the most hostile conditions. It represents the

potential for adaptability and survival in the face of obstacles that appear insurmountable. In a way, the father identified himself with the underwater life in the depths of the sea because he is experiencing the same dark on the mainland. This might also have a psychological factor, giving the father the strength to stay resilient which was encouraged by the thought that he is not alone.

A reward for staying resilient through the entire novel was emphasized by the father as he once again encouraged his son: "What do you think? Well, I think we're still here. A lot of bad things have happened but we're still here" (McCarthy, *The Road* 164) The father recognizes that they are "still here," which is a noteworthy accomplishment in and of itself.

The father passes away at the end of *The Road*, leaving his son by himself. It's not entirely clear how the father died, but it's strongly suggested that he passed away from disease and weariness brought on by the difficult circumstances they had been living in. The father gets ready for life without him in the last scenes, knowing he is on the verge of death. In his parting words, he urges the boy to move forward without him, to establish a community of decent people, and to carry the fire - a symbol of goodness, compassion, and hope - ahead into the future:

Is it real? The fire?

Yes it is.

Where is it? I don't know where it is.

Yes you do. It's inside you. It was always there. I can see it. (McCarthy, *The Road* 170)

It is no coincidence that the fire is used as metaphor of resilience here, because the fire is a product of nature and it is a natural instinct to survive and to self-preserve. The father, knowing this, is sure that the son will be okay even without his help.

To sum up, the analysis of *The Road* by Cormac McCarthy showed how it depicts a dismal post-apocalyptic environment, emphasizing the severe devastation brought about by unknown extinction event, especially through images of dead surrounds and burned landscapes. The image of nature as harsh and uncaring fits well with the idea of "dark ecology," which emphasizes that humans must coexist with nature's complexity rather than try to control it. The characters show resiliency in the face of dire situations because they are motivated by a basic survival instinct which is a part of their human nature, as well as the desire to keep those they care about safe. This tenacity is reflected in nature's capacity to endure destruction. While the nature in *Fahrenheit 451* heals the protagonists of the novel and helps him achieve peace and renewal, the nature in *The Road* is cruel and forces the characters to survive. The notion of resilience also largely differs in these two novels. In *Fahrenheit 451*, resilience is seen as a

man's struggle to achieve spiritual independence and freedom inside of an oppressive industrial system, while in *The Road* it is reduced to a basic survival instinct and a father's attachment to his son.

The novel also examines moral conundrums like cannibalism, highlighting the conflict that arises in harsh circumstances between moral principles and survival instincts. This goes to show that morality is often comprised in dystopian setting because survival is more important than following one's moral values. However, the father and the son resisted the need to compromise their morals and continued being "the good guys", as much as they could. In events where their life was threatened, however, they had to kill, murdering a man who was going to hurt them. The novel thus also shows how attachment and caring for family members prevails over other moral values and distinct itself as the highest moral value there is. The father and the son simply follow their human nature, which leads them towards the survival. They use their human nature that lives within them as a source of persistence and resilience in the face of challenges of a dystopian post-apocalyptic world.

## 5. Conclusion

To sum up, a wide range of topics and concerns are covered in the complex relationship between literature and the natural environment that is the subject of the multidimensional area of ecocriticism. Fundamentally, ecocritics study how literary works both represent and shape public perceptions of environmental issues. The examination of several theme strands serves as the foundation for this research. The portrayal of nature in literature is one of ecocriticism's main areas of interest. Through close examination of the representations of ecosystems, animals, plants, and landscapes, researchers aim to comprehend larger cultural viewpoints on the natural world. Another major issue raised by ecocriticism is pollution, which represents the harm that humans cause to ecosystems. Examining how pollution is portrayed in literature illuminates the social and environmental effects of pollution, challenging consumerism and industrialization. These themes, which frequently contrast the complexities and disruptions of human civilization with the natural purity, reflect cultural and societal perceptions toward nature and are therefore highly significant within ecocriticism. Within the field of ecocriticism, apocalyptic literature is essential for drawing attention to and amplifying ecological issues since it presents images of a catastrophic breakdown of society and the environment. These stories act as sobering reminders to readers, forcing them to consider the potentially disastrous effects of climate change, environmental degradation, and unsustainable human behavior. Dwelling within ecocriticism is a concept that investigates how people live in and relate to their surroundings while promoting sustainable lifestyles and moral interactions with the natural world. In essence, ecocriticism encompasses a broad spectrum of themes and approaches that illuminate literature's role in shaping and reflecting attitudes towards the natural world. By analyzing these diverse perspectives, ecocritics contribute to broader conversations about environmental ethics, sustainability, and the imperative for societal change.

As it was shown in the analysis, the nature plays a significant role in achieving resilience in both *Fahrenheit 451* and *The Road*. Furthermore, the analysis is, as stated in the introduction, focused on (mainly in *Fahrenheit 451*) supporting the thesis that, besides the ecocritical view of nature being a consequence of our actions towards it, that are again based on our perceptions of the nature itself, nature does represent a fixed identity in our subconscious minds and we connect many things to this. The first argument for this thesis is that one usually thinks of the same thing upon mentioning nature – the beauty of our natural surrounding – one most likely sees it as a manifestation of the same beauty, the same positive and creative force that is, for

example, represented in the character of Clarisse in *Fahrenheit 451*. Also, one's perspectives of nature are based on an shared ideal, or a shared collective vision of a nature as an entity that constantly moves forward through time and encompasses all living things, and that this constant motion is here main functioning principle – it is a fixed continuity, a *perpetuum mobile*. This can also be seen in *The Road*, precisely when The Son senses there was a world more beautiful than the desolation in which they were stuck, which makes him constantly curious and eager to find this “nature” we all dream of. The question is, then, obvious: is there a subconscious ideal of nature that even precedes our understanding, and which we all carry in our subconscious minds from the moment we are born, and which the child is drawing his desire? This is one of the main points of the thesis. Besides that, nature was also analyzed from a perspective of it being “pure thought”, or a force able to inspire spiritual awakening and enlightenment, such that of Montag in *Fahrenheit 451*. The analysis of *The Road* is different, and mainly based on the concept of resilience and its connection towards human nature, as well as drawing differences between this novel and the first one.

In Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451*, Guy Montag initially lives in strong disconnection from nature, utilizing fire—a destructive force—as a tool of repression while burning books. His encounter with Clarisse marks a pivotal shift as she introduces him to the subtle wonders of the natural world, prompting a gradual awakening within him. This awakening sparks Montag's journey towards resilience, inspiring him to challenge the oppressive regime that dictates society's detachment from nature. His pursuit of a life beyond the city walls symbolizes a return to the tranquil embrace of nature, where he seeks solace and clarity amidst the chaos. Bradbury's narrative not only underscores nature's restorative power but also aligns with ecocritical theory, which emphasizes nature's integral role in human renewal and freedom. Montag's transformation reflects a deeper ecological critique of societies that prioritize technology and artificial pleasures over the intrinsic value of natural environments. As Montag reconnects with nature, the novel vividly portrays the healing qualities of natural landscapes, contrasting them with the sterile urban environment controlled by oppressive forces. Moreover, *Fahrenheit 451* highlights nature as more than just a backdrop but as a protagonist in Montag's evolution, shaping his newfound sense of purpose and moral clarity. This highlights the thesis that nature is here also seen as “pure thought,” a force able to awaken individuality and spiritual persistence in men. Through poignant descriptions of natural beauty and its transformative impact on Montag, Bradbury underscores ecocritical themes of environmental stewardship and the ethical imperative to preserve natural spaces. This portrayal challenges readers to reconsider

their own relationship with nature and the consequences of neglecting its importance in sustaining human well-being and societal harmony. In essence, Bradbury's exploration in *Fahrenheit 451* resonates deeply with ecocritical principles by portraying nature not only as a sanctuary for the soul, but as a catalyst for personal and societal change. By reclaiming his connection to nature, Montag embodies a broader call for environmental consciousness and the recognition of nature's profound significance in shaping human identity and resilience in the face of oppression. Thus, *Fahrenheit 451* serves as a powerful narrative that urges readers to reflect on the enduring relevance of ecological values and the imperative to embrace a harmonious coexistence with the natural world.

In contrast to the idyllic portrayal of nature in *Fahrenheit 451*, Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* presents a starkly different view where nature is depicted as a relentless adversary—a bleak and desolate landscape stripped of its former beauty and life. The father and son are protagonists who navigate through this hostile environment where survival is a constant struggle against harsh elements and scarce resources. Despite the grim portrayal, the novel underscores how memories of a once-beautiful natural world serve as a source of resilience and inner strength for the characters. McCarthy's depiction of nature's harshness in *The Road* resonates with ecocritical themes that explore humanity's strained relationship with the environment in dystopian contexts. The novel challenges romanticized notions of nature by portraying it as indifferent and even malevolent towards human survival, reflecting broader concerns about environmental degradation and its consequences for future generations. The protagonists' reliance on their instincts for survival echoes Freud's theory of basic human instincts, illustrating how primal urges for self-preservation become paramount in extreme circumstances. Despite nature's adversarial role, the protagonists in *The Road* find moments of resistance and hope amidst the bleakness. They draw strength from their memories of a pre-apocalyptic world and tap into their innate human capacities for empathy and survival instinct. This nuanced portrayal challenges readers to consider how human resilience and ethical choices endure even in the most challenging ecological and moral landscapes.

All in all, the natural landscape of dystopia as well as the human nature are interesting aspects of the dystopian literary genre. In a world where nature is taken away or where it poses a threat, the characters must find a way to return to and accept it because it is what gives them the strength to resist. Resistance is without any doubt a crucial element of the dystopian narrative, because living in a dystopian society is not something one should desire to stay in. A way out must be found, a way that leads to freedom, and nature is the best source that can

provide the escape and take the characters into a life worth living. In a modern world where technology is rapidly taking over and where artificial values and lifestyles are enforced, one must find its way back into the nature and stay connected to it, because – as Granger said in *Fahrenheit 451* – we are not bigger than nature.



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## **Abstract**

### **Nature as a symbol of human resilience in Fahrenheit 451 and The Road**

The paper deals with the topic of nature and how the characters in dystopian novels Fahrenheit 451 and The Road use it as a source of resilience towards the oppressive system. The paper provides a theoretical overview of ecocriticism, a study of nature and its representation in literature, focusing on theoretical frameworks of important ecocritical authors such as Greg Garrard. In order to analyse the nature in the two dystopian novels, the theory of ecocriticism was mainly applied, as well as some other theories concerning not only the nature as the environment that surrounds us, but also the human nature. Both the environment and the human nature are crucial for the protagonists to achieve resilience. The connection with nature renews, heals and helps the protagonists discover freedom that does not exist in the dystopian system, whereas the human nature entails a set of survival instincts, moral values and psychological and evolutionary traits necessary to achieve resilience needed to overcome harsh dystopian reality.

Key words: dystopia, nature, resilience, ecocriticism

## Sažetak

### **Priroda kao simbol ljudske otpornosti u djelima Fahrenheit 451 i The Road**

Diplomski se bavi temom prirode i kako je likovi u distopijskim romanima „Fahrenheit 451“ i „Cesta“ koriste kao izvor otpornosti prema opresivnom sustavu. Rad daje teorijski pregled ekokritike, proučavanja prirode i njezine reprezentacije u književnosti, s fokusom na teorijske okvire značajnih ekokritičkih autora poput Grega Garrarda. U analizi prirode u dva distopijska romana uglavnom je primijenjena teorija ekokritike, ali i neke druge teorije koje se tiču ne samo prirode kao sredine koja nas okružuje, već i ljudske prirode. I okoliš i ljudska priroda ključni su za postizanje otpornosti protagonista. Povezanost s prirodom obnavlja, liječi i pomaže protagonistima da otkriju slobodu koja ne postoji u distopijskom sustavu, dok ljudska priroda podrazumijeva skup instinkta za preživljavanje, moralnih vrijednosti te psiholoških i evolucijskih osobina potrebnih za postizanje otpornosti potrebne za prevladavanje surove distopijske stvarnosti.

Ključne riječi: distopija, priroda, otpornost, ekokritika