



## POST-MODERNISM IN CORMAC MCCARTHY'S OUTER DARK L. Mahalakshmi\* & Dr. M. Leelavathi\*\*

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### **Abstract:**

Outer dark (1968), McCarthy's second novel is brutal and violence which makes every reader wonder about the description of evil that is exposed in the extreme level. Postmodernism has a major knock on traditional ideas about literature art and culture with its playful approach and rebelliousness when it comes to the line between high or low cultures. McCarthy as a post-modern writer exposes his literary talent in the extreme of human sufferings which everyone experiences in the world. Rinthy travels to find her baby and herself to wash out her sin, Culla moves in search of his sister and want to find the menial job for his basic amenities. In the meantime, Culla meets the evil creatures and escapes from the evil cleverly. Thus in *Outer Dark* McCarthy deals with the dark side of the characters as the representation of nihilism and realism which extends in the world and consequently the author pushes the story into reality to the extreme to reveal the nature of instinct and luck. The author of this paper tries to expose the innocent evils and human experience in the darker side of the world.

### **Introduction:**

The Postmodern literature is characterized by dependence on narrative techniques such as fragmentation, paradox and the unreliable narrator and is defined as a style or a trend which is emerged in the post world war –II era. Postmodern literature is commonly defined in relation to a predecessor. In particular post, modern writers are soon as reacting against the precepts of modernism. Several themes and techniques are indicative of writing in the postmodern era. McCarthy as a postmodern writer exposes the nihilism after the instinct both the brother and sister separated from each other.

McCarthy's works tend to reflect postmodernism more than any other literary school and he proves to be an absolute postmodernist by giving postmodern thoughts. In his second novel, he drives reality to the extreme and reveals the nature of instinct and luck. McCarthy illustrates a situation in which brother and sister have a child, the brother leaves the child die in the woods but the sister goes on to find the child. This extreme and improbable situation leads the reader to consider whether the mother of the child is better off without the Child or whether an incestuous family is still to be revered in some sense.

In the works, McCarthy Postmodernism is mingled with varieties of situations and themes like good and evil, dark and light. In *Outer Dark*, the metaphorical usage of darkness is represented in two ways. One is the illegal relationship between the brother and sister and another one is not finding the solution until the end and grail narrative is defined here. In the very beginning of the novel itself, the author makes the readers stunning by showing the birth of a boy baby without the help of the midwife. Culla as a brother doesn't want to earn the bad name in the society, but he fulfills his desire knowingly or unknowingly. Both the brother and sister knew what they did is wrong. It is a god given duty that every parent has to look after their kids but because of the incestuous relationship between the brother and sister they fail to succeed in their duties. Culla does not invite a midwife cuts his sister's umbilical cord and takes the baby out but immediately he lies that the baby is sick and he takes the newborn baby deep into the forest and leaves in the woods. He tells that the baby has died and it's in the grave. Rinthy wants to keep flowers on the grave." I could see it...and maybe put some flowers or something.... (31)"Culla takes his sister to the woods and leave the sister came to know that her brother is telling lie after digging the grave. She then enquires Culla and asks him to reveal about the baby and came to that the baby is alive and it may take by the tinker. Culla moves from the cabin without informing his sister to find a job and Rinthy collects all her meager belongings from the cabin and starts her quest of finding her baby inside the woods. Both the brother and sister don't want to reveal they're true identity as they have made such kind of sin that they feel guilty to expose what happened actually.

Both the characters want to maintain their self-esteem after losing their self-restrain. Culla as a male tries to escape from his sin and Rinthy as a female has the sensitivity of motherly touch and search her kid with the bleeding and leaking of milk in her breast. Rinthy while searching the kid hesitates to tell what she wants actually and says that she is in search of something which belongs to her when finds the tinker and the other members on her way, to get help and sympathy from others she moves quietly, and wants to pamper her baby boy. McCarthy portrays the horror of the human being through the evil people. The incestuous relationship of

the brother and sister is the root cause of this horror and this kind of portrayal is uncompromising and the conclusion of the novel ends on a sad note. In Contemporary Literary Criticism, Vol .1 Steven Birkerts in his review on 11 July 1994, comments the fate of characters in *Outer Dark* and *Child of God*. In *Outer Dark* a baby born of incestuous coupling and left to die in the woods is rescued; it lives long enough to draw its, brother and sister into a web of horrifying consequence. Thus the evil of horror through pain and displeasure spreads in the entire novel. McCarthy as a postmodern writer views the realistic world with unimaginable horror.

The postmodern concept realism is exposed through the behavior of the characters are the hindrance but when they think about the philosophical doctrines they don't want to expose anything to the society. The brother and sister's relationship is a sacred one which is followed in our country like India; however, in the world everything is changing, in the same way, the relationship is also changing. The crime and punishment in the world are proved to be perpetual. Since we are in the postmodern era we feel human optimism of modernity to a pessimistic mood of skepticism and uncertainty. As modernism was confident, post modernity is full of quests.

Cormac McCarthy clearly exposes the mysticism, relativism and the failure in the postmodern world. *Outer Dark* reflects the realistic postmodern characters and their behaviors. In this novel from the beginning to end the characters struggle in different ways. Very beginning of the novel their making of sin and shame creates a kind of sympathy at the same time Culla as a brother did nothing to his sister or the kid this makes the readers annoy and leads everyone to concentrate on his sister Rinthy though she is a victim of horror. Culla and Rinthy suffer individually without telling their identity to anyone. Rinthy doubts her brother's words that the child is sick and died, without bothering her ill health she plans to come out of the cabin and starts her journey to find her child with some hope. Culla with his guilty consciousness moves out of the cabin meets a lot of struggles including food and shelter. Though he was given the job, his misleading behavior leads his life like a devil throughout the novel. Rinthy in search of her kid finds nothing. So both the brother and sister don't want to reveal their true identity whatever struggles they face in their life.

Without any basic amenities, the brother and sister's survival continues for the whole novel. After making sin they don't even think about living together with their baby. This shows their immaturity of finding the solution for the problem and to lead the happy life. Rinthy is persistent in her attitude and never loses sight of her goal. Her love for the child grows as she finds the tinker in the forest, the baby is not there and Rinthy begs the tinker to tell about her baby the tinker denies and Rinthy followed him persistently then the tinker take her there the next day. The tinker questions Rinthy about the baby and accuses her of throwing away it in the first place. She explains that her brother told her he sold it to the tinker. Rinthy finally confesses that the baby is the biological product of her and her brother. The tinker is disgusted with her and leaves from there, warning her not to follow or he will kill her but Rinthy continues her journey with the hope of discovering her child.

However, Rinthy is a pity and lovely person everyone in her way gives food and shelter and her brother Culla finds labor jobs and earns for his living. Unfortunately, Culla also encounters some unpleasant and dangerous situations as well. At one point, for reasons not clear, he is chased by a group of people carrying weapons. He suffers only external wounds and manages to escape. Culla only finishes part of one job, leaving early the next morning and stealing the fine boots of the man who hired him. Culla has to part with those same boots when the Bearded Man forces him to trade his strong boots for the man's worn, mismatched boots. Culla encounters a group of pig drovers who wrongly accuse him of stampeding their herd. A young drover and a large number of pigs fall to their deaths during this stampede. The drovers decide to lynch Culla, but he manages to escape by jumping off the cliff into the river below. At one point, Culla returns to the cabin and discovers that his sister has left. From then onwards, Culla is on a quest not only to find work but to find his sister as well. He fears that word of their incest will come about from his sister's journey to find the baby. Both the characters are in the pursuit of great faith in finding something to lead the future at the end in the world of hyper-reality and in the propagation of new life.

The novel tells the struggle of the alienated siblings and their innocence makes them live in the horrible world without getting any kind of relief from their immoral deeds. The scared relationship is misused by both the brother and sister in the dark world, and the mistake was an unforgettable guilty conscious which represents as a hallmark of great suffering and both the individual's commitment of survival among the evil people from the beginning to till the end. In this novel, the author represents the individual survival as the representation of error and relief finding. Every reader expects the better situation for the characters but Rinthy's search for her kid till the end and Culla mischievous in the entire situation wherever he moves is a kind of vagueness and proves the terms as sufferers will be the sufferer and the sinner will be the sinner always. Thus the novel *Outer Dark* proves the sin and suffering as in postmodern period.

In finding something in their journey both meet an assortment of bizarre characters. Both are destitute and subsist largely on the kindness of strangers. In a novel full of random occurrences and violence, it is notable that people are generally willing to help Rinthy Culla too manages to find some work as well as people willing to give him food; on the other hand, he is often distrusted and bears the mark of Cain that he is fugitive.

**Conclusion:**

McCarthy's dark tapestry is created from many interweaving themes including darkness and blindness sickness the futility of religion and namelessness. These are illuminated by the wealth of biblical and classical allusion. Darkness with the related theme of blindness in a recurring theme, from the "black sun" in Culla's opening dream to blind see walking toward the garden of death on the last page. Culla dream depicts a delegation of human ruin who attended with blind eyes; the author portrays the dark shadow relentlessly in all situations. However, the blindness motif reinforces the theme of darkness in McCarthy's depiction of human condition.

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