

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Research

Literature often becomes a space where the contradictions of society are reflected and dramatized. Through narrative and character, literature exposes how human beings are shaped by the systems and ideologies surrounding them. Cormac McCarthy's *Child of God* (1973) stands as a brutal yet profound representation of this dynamic. Set in the rural mountains of Sevier County, Tennessee, the novel tells the story of Lester Ballard, a socially outcast man who descends into isolation, violence, and necrophilia. Ballard is written by Cormac as a: "*Child of God* much like yourself perhaps," yet he exists outside every moral and social boundary that defines humanity.

Lester Ballard's degeneration cannot be seen merely as an individual psychological anomaly. His moral and psychological collapse reflects the failure of the society that rejects and alienates him. Abandoned by his mother, traumatized by his father's suicide, and later dispossessed of his family home by local authorities, Ballard becomes the residue of the social and ideological system that denies his existence. McCarthy's portrayal of Ballard thus raises questions about the relationship between individual pathology and the ideological structures that define what it means to be human.

This research reads *Child of God* through the combined lens of Terry Eagleton's Marxist literary theory and Julia Kristeva's concept of abjection. Eagleton's idea that literature functions as a form of ideology reveals how the novel encodes social and moral values that determine inclusion and exclusion within a community. Meanwhile, Kristeva's notion of abjection, as developed in *Powers of Horror* (1982), explores how identity and order are maintained by expelling what is considered impure or disturbing. Combining these frameworks allows this research to view Lester Ballard as both a product of ideological oppression and a figure of abjection, someone who embodies what society rejects in order to define itself as civilized.

Through this approach, *Child of God* can be understood not simply as a tale of individual madness, but as a critique of the ideological and moral mechanisms that produce "monsters" like Ballard. His exclusion from social life, his alienation, and his grotesque acts become signs of how ideology shapes subjectivity and determines who is considered human and who must be cast out.

1.2 Identification of Problems

From the novel, the writer has identified several problems which are intriguing to be discussed. Some of the problems are:

1. Lester Ballard's deviant behavior is rooted not only in his personal trauma but also in his social alienation and economic dispossession.
2. The local community and authorities in the novel operate under an ideology that defines normality and morality while dehumanizing those who fall outside its boundaries.

3. Ballard's relationship with death, corpses, and isolation reflects the process of abjection, in which society sustains its purity by rejecting the "impure".
4. McCarthy's narrative functions as a critique of the ideological order that creates and then condemns figures like Ballard.

1.3 Scope and Limitation of the Problems

To maintain focus, this research limits its analysis to the following aspects:

1. The study will analyze how ideological structures (represented by local authority, religion, and social morality) contribute to Lester Ballard's alienation and moral collapse, using Terry Eagleton's Marxist perspective.
2. It will also examine Lester's identity and his interaction with abjection, especially his attachment to corpses and his life in isolation, through Julia Kristeva's concept of abjection.
3. Other elements such as stylistic analysis or intertextual comparison with McCarthy's other novels will not be discussed.
4. The focus remains on the psychological and ideological formation of Lester Ballard and how *Child of God* critiques the social system that defines and rejects him.

1.4 Research Questions

According to the limitation of the problems that has been stated in the problem limitation section above, the questions that will be answered through this study are:

1. How does *Child of God* represent the ideological structures that shape and marginalize Lester Ballard?
2. In what ways does Lester Ballard's character embody the concept of abjection as defined by Julia Kristeva?
3. How does the combination of Eagleton's and Kristeva's theories reveal the interrelation between ideology, abjection, and the construction of humanity in the novel?

1.5 Research Objectives

This study aims to answer the questions that has been stated above to serve as a reference for processing data sources. The research objectives are:

1. To analyze how *Child of God* reflects the operations of ideology in defining morality, normality, and exclusion through Eagleton's Marxist framework.
2. To explore how Lester Ballard's psychological and physical degradation represents Kristeva's concept of abjection.
3. To demonstrate that McCarthy's novel critiques the social and ideological system that produces its own abject figures, revealing the inseparability of ideological and psychological forces in human identity formation.

1.6 Significance of Research

In connection with what the writer have described in the previous sub-chapters, it can be concluded that this study yields both theoretical and practical benefits.

1. Theoretical Significance

- 1.1 It offers a new interdisciplinary approach to McCarthy's *Child of God* by combining Marxist literary theory and psychoanalytic criticism;
- 1.2 It contributes to the study of ideology and abjection in literary works, particularly how social and psychological dimensions intersect in constructing identity and otherness;
- 1.3 It expands the discussion on American Gothic and Southern literature by interpreting monstrosity as a symptom of social ideology rather than mere deviance.

2. Practical Significance

- 2.1 For students and scholars of literature, this research provides a model of critical reading that integrates social, ideological, and psychoanalytic perspectives;
- 2.2 It encourages readers to reflect on how societies create their own "abject others", those who are excluded yet necessary to sustain the illusion of order;
- 2.3 It enhances understanding of Cormac McCarthy's thematic concerns, particularly his portrayal of alienation, morality, and the collapse of civilization.

1.7 Previous Studies

After the writer reading several earlier written theses, the writer found several theses related to the focus of this study. The first is a study from Mădălina Larisa Kimak (2018) entitled "The grotesque in Cormac McCarthy's *Child of God*". This paper aims at analysing Cormac McCarthy's novel *Child of God* through Mikhail Bakhtin's perspective on the grotesque. Bakhtin's theory is used as a bond between the text and the context, namely the story of the horrific murderer Lester Ballard and the Southern Gothic genre. The purpose of this endeavour is to illustrate that the combination between a synchronic and a diachronic approach to the novel reveals that the text focuses not so much on framing the social tensions of the South, but on creating a tale about humanity's capacity for evil in general. This way, the analysis shows that the novel can be integrated into the Southern Gothic genre, but it is in no way limited in its interpretation by this classification.

The second study conducted by J. Elmore (2019) which entitled "You reckon there are just some places the good lord didn't intend folks to live in?: The Absence of Community in McCarthy's *Child of God*". This study focuses, almost exclusively, on Lester and his mistreatment by both the community and social institutions like the state. Yet if Ballard's behavior stems from victimization by large-scale social forces, it follows that every resident of Sevier County must be victimized by these same forces. Hence, this paper offers an analysis of the novel focused on the community of Sevier County as a whole. More specifically, the writer argue that *Child of God* asserts a devastating

critique of the possibility of community, Lester being an extreme reaction to what is, in actuality, the widespread loss of community brought about by the systematic violence of deindustrialization, individualism, patriarchy, and so forth. Hence, *Child of God* proves less a tale of the murderous perversions of Lester Ballard and more a horror story of the inability for humans to flourish under existing social relations.

The third study conducted by Tereza Richtrová (2016) entitled “Southern Gothic: Macabre Heroes in Toole's Neon Bible and McCarthy's *Child of God*”. This study aims to compare the protagonists of two novels which are classified as Southern gothic writings: *Child of God* by Cormac McCarthy, and *The Neon Bible* by John Kennedy Toole. Although the pivotal characters appear dissimilar, the comparison and analysis of the novels might demonstrate common features and motifs. Studying of Southern gothic phenomena constitutes a background for the analysis, and also the initial part of the thesis. It is focused on a basic characteristic of the genre on the basis of the development of Southern literature. There is an introduction of the most important authors, genres, and typical motifs. The analytical part is prefaced by a reference to the life and work of the writers, as their nature and literary production vary. There is more attention paid to the texts by McCarthy because he has published a larger quantity of books in comparison with Toole. Southern gothic elements are therefore observed and compared in the analysed short novels, and also in other McCarthy's texts. The comparison corresponds to the theoretical ground.

Based on the three previous studies above, it can be concluded that there are similarities and differences between previous studies and this study. The similarities are the object of this study is the focus on Lester and his mistreatment by both the community and social institutions like the state. While these studies provide valuable insights, few have examined the intersection of ideology and abjection as a structural mechanism within the novel. Most analyses treat Ballard's acts as symptoms of personal pathology or moral decay, overlooking how his monstrosity is socially produced and ideologically necessary. By synthesizing Eagleton's concept of ideology with Kristeva's theory of abjection, within a genealogical framework, this study contributes a more comprehensive reading of Ballard as both the product and critique of ideological power.

The theoretical implication of this approach is twofold. First, it situates McCarthy's novel within the broader discourse of power, morality, and exclusion, revealing how literature functions as a site of ideological production. Second, it demonstrates how abjection operates as the affective underside of ideology: the emotional and bodily experience through which social order sustains itself. In doing so, the study not only extends the critical conversation around *Child of God* but also underscores the continuing relevance of Marxist and psychoanalytic theories in reading the politics of identity and otherness in modern fiction.

1.8 Theoretical Background

This chapter consists of outlines of the theoretical framework that grounds this study of Cormac McCarthy's *Child of God*. The analysis employs a dual-lens framework that combines Terry Eagleton's conception of ideology with Julia Kristeva's notion of

abjection. These frameworks enable an exploration of both the social and the psychological dimensions of Lester Ballard's descent. Ideology, as theorized in the Marxist tradition, reveals how the social world produces and defines its subjects. Abjection, as elaborated by Kristeva in psychoanalytic terms, exposes how identity depends on the expulsion of what must be excluded in order for the self to exist.

The structure of this chapter follows a genealogical method rather than a purely thematic one. The term "genealogy" here is used in the Foucauldian sense, not as a linear history of ideas, but as a critical inquiry into the conditions of emergence of certain concepts and their relations of power. As Foucault explained in *Nietzsche, Genealogy, History*, genealogy does not seek to discover the roots of identity, but to record the singularity of events outside of any monotonous finality. In this sense, the genealogical approach traces the becoming of theoretical concepts, revealing how each stage of thought arises in response to the limitations of the previous one (Foucault, 1977).

In this chapter, two genealogies are outlined: the genealogy of ideology and the genealogy of abjection. The first traces the transformation of the idea of ideology from Karl Marx's materialist conception of social consciousness, through Louis Althusser's structuralist redefinition of ideological apparatuses, to Terry Eagleton's application of ideology to the realm of literature and culture. The second genealogy follows the psychoanalytic development from Sigmund Freud's structural model of the psyche, through Jacques Lacan's linguistic reconfiguration of the unconscious, to Julia Kristeva's formulation of abjection as a border phenomenon between self and other.

The reason for using a genealogical structure is threefold.

First, it demonstrates the continuity and transformation of ideas, how Eagleton's and Kristeva's theories emerge from and respond to their intellectual predecessors. Second, it constructs a coherent and historically grounded framework that situates the study's analytical tools within a clear conceptual lineage. Third, the genealogical method reflects the very logic of McCarthy's novel, where identity and morality are not fixed essences but products of historical, social, and psychic forces.

By adopting this genealogical framework, the study reveals that the ideological expulsion of Ballard from society mirrors the psychic expulsion of the abject from the self. Both processes operate through mechanisms of exclusion and repression. Thus, ideology and abjection are not opposed but coextensive: one functions at the level of social order, the other at the level of subjectivity. The chapter therefore proceeds as follows: Section 1.8.1 discusses the genealogy of ideology from Marx to Eagleton; Section 1.8.2 traces the genealogy of abjection from Freud to Kristeva; Section 1.8.3 synthesizes both frameworks to form a unified analytical lens; and Section 1.8.4 summarizes the theoretical implications for reading *Child of God*.

1.8.1 The Genealogy of Ideology: From Marx to Eagleton

The term ideology occupies a central place in Marxist theory, functioning as a bridge between material conditions and systems of meaning. In *The German Ideology*, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels define ideology as the illusion that ideas exist independently of the social and material life that produces them (Marx & Engels, 1947).

They write, "Life is not determined by consciousness, but consciousness by life." (1947:47). This concise statement overturns idealist philosophy: thought does not generate the world, but the social relations of production generate thought.

Louis Althusser later reinterprets Marx in structuralist terms. In *Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses* (1971), he distinguishes the Repressive State Apparatus (police, courts, prisons) from Ideological State Apparatuses (church, school, family, culture). For Althusser, ideology functions not merely as false belief but as a material practice that represents the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence. Through repeated ritual and discourse, subjects are "interpellated", called into being, as social identities (Althusser, 1971).

Terry Eagleton inherits this lineage but re-situates ideology within literary and cultural production. In *Literary Theory: An Introduction*, he argues that literature is one of the chief sites where ideology achieves a sense of the natural. What appears to be purely aesthetic often conceals the social conditions that give rise to it. He writes, "Literature is a form of ideology precisely because it produces the illusion that it stands apart from it." (Eagleton, 1996). In *Ideology: An Introduction*, he argues that ideology is not simply mystification but the medium in which social agents make sense of their world (Eagleton, 1991).

Terry Eagleton's critical project situates literature squarely within the domain of ideology. In *Criticism and Ideology*, he asserts that there is no such thing as a literature which is not ideologically determined. For Eagleton, literature is not a reflection of universal human values but a material practice shaped by the ideological conditions of its production and reception. The aesthetic is not neutral; it is a mode through which ideology naturalizes itself as taste, beauty, or morality (Eagleton, 1976).

Eagleton's reading of ideology, influenced by Althusser, moves beyond the notion of ideology as mere distortion. Instead, it refers to the structures of meaning that make reality intelligible in the first place. Literature, as one of these structures, participates in the ideological reproduction of social relations while also providing space for contradiction and critique. This is what Eagleton calls the "ideology of the aesthetic": the process by which culture translates historical and political conflicts into aesthetic categories of the beautiful, the tragic, or the sublime.

In *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (1996), Eagleton elaborates that literature is not a transcendental category, but a construct of particular historical formations. The canonization of certain texts and the marginalization of others reflect the ideological interests of dominant groups. Hence, to analyze literature is to interrogate the ideological assumptions that underpin its production, form, and interpretation.

This Marx-to-Eagleton trajectory is crucial for reading *Child of God*. Lester Ballard's dispossession is not only psychological but ideological: the social world that expels him constructs him as an other, a remainder necessary to sustain the community's illusion of normalcy. The sheriff, the church congregation, and even the gossiping townspeople operate as Ideological State Apparatuses that reproduce social order by defining what lies outside it. Ballard's descent into isolation and violence thus dramatizes the moment when ideology ceases to mask alienation and becomes visible in its brutality.

1.8.2 The Genealogy of Abjection: From Freud to Kristeva

If ideology explains how societies produce subjects, the concept of abjection explains how societies maintain purity by rejecting what threatens the symbolic order. The genealogy of abjection begins in psychoanalysis. Sigmund Freud, in *The Ego and the Id* (1927), describes subject formation as a process of internal division: "The ego is first and foremost a bodily ego; it is not merely a surface entity, but the projection of a surface," (Freud, 1927). Identity thus emerges from boundaries, between self and other, inside and outside, clean and unclean. When those boundaries fail, anxiety arises.

Jacques Lacan radicalizes Freud's insight through his notion of the mirror stage. In *Écrits* (1977), he writes that the infant, upon recognizing its reflection, misidentifies the image as a coherent self: "The mirror stage is a drama whose internal thrust is precipitated from insufficiency to anticipation," (Lacan, 1977). Subjectivity is founded on misrecognition, sustained by the symbolic order, the network of language and law that structures desire. The "Name-of-the-Father" becomes the principle that regulates access to meaning.

Julia Kristeva extends these psychoanalytic insights in *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (1982). For Kristeva, the abject is what must be expelled for the subject to exist, yet it continually returns to unsettle identity. She defines it as that which does not respect borders, positions, rules. The abject is the in-between, the ambiguous, the composite. The corpse, excrement, or any sign of decay provokes horror because it recalls the subject's own material contingency, the collapse of distinction between life and death, self and other.

Abjection, then, is simultaneously a psychic and cultural mechanism. Societies produce abject figures, criminals, the insane, the diseased, to secure the boundaries of the communal self. Kristeva notes that this process is a hatred that smiles, an operation by which social order maintains coherence through exclusion (Kristeva, 1982). The abject must exist so that the pure may believe in its purity.

Kristeva situates abjection within a psychoanalytic framework derived from Freud and Lacan but inflected by semiotics. She distinguishes between the semiotic, the pre-symbolic realm of drives and rhythms associated with the maternal body, and the symbolic, the realm of language and law dominated by the paternal function. The subject is born through the violent separation from the maternal semiotic and entry into the symbolic order. Abjection marks this threshold: the moment when the self must cast off what threatens to dissolve it back into undifferentiated being.

In social terms, abjection manifests in the mechanisms through which communities maintain their cohesion by designating certain figures or behaviors as impure, sinful, or monstrous. The abject body becomes the site upon which the law reasserts itself. This process is both psychological and political, for what society calls abject often corresponds to what it fears within itself.

Within *Child of God*, Lester Ballard embodies this dynamic. His exclusion from property, community, and symbolic recognition drives him toward a state of radical abjection. His fascination with corpses, those ultimate abject bodies, reflects a desperate attempt to reclaim intimacy and belonging in a world that has expelled him. Yet each act

of transgression deepens his exclusion. Ballard's existence at the margins of language and law illustrates Kristeva's insight that the abject has only one quality of the object, that of being opposed to I (1982). He becomes the abject not only of society but of humanity itself, a mirror held up to the ideological purity his community seeks to preserve.

1.8.3 The Intersection of Ideology and Abjection

At the core of both Terry Eagleton's theory of ideology and Julia Kristeva's theory of abjection lies a shared concern with the production and maintenance of boundaries, whether social, moral, or psychic. Ideology, in Eagleton's view, functions to naturalize social relations and maintain power structures by defining what is legitimate, normal, and intelligible within a given culture. Abjection, in Kristeva's psychoanalytic vocabulary, performs a similar role in the psychic domain: it marks what must be expelled for the subject to sustain its sense of coherence. When these two mechanisms are examined together, they reveal how the same forces that construct the subject also determine who or what must be cast out of the social body.

Eagleton's (1991) *Ideology: An Introduction* argues that ideology is not simply a collection of doctrines but the process whereby social life is converted to a natural reality. Ideology transforms historically contingent values into moral common sense. This transformation depends upon exclusion, those who fall outside the accepted symbolic framework become the other, whose existence is necessary to confirm what is normal. Kristeva's notion of the abject extends this logic inward. In *Powers of Horror* (1982), she writes: "The abject confronts us, on the one hand, with those fragile states where man strays on the territories of animal." The abject is therefore both psychic and political, for the same logic that expels bodily filth also expels social impurity.

Through this intersection, ideology and abjection can be understood as two aspects of one system of exclusion: ideology organizes social meaning, while abjection enforces the affective and bodily borders that sustain it. As Kristeva explains, "The abject is what disturbs identity, system, order," (1982). In ideological terms, what disturbs order is recoded as deviant or criminal. Eagleton (1991) notes that such ideological labeling is integral to power, for the most effective ideological systems are those which are least perceived as such. The abject thus becomes ideology's hidden foundation, the unacknowledged remainder that must persist outside the social to guarantee the illusion of internal harmony.

When applied to *Child of God*, this synthesis illuminates how McCarthy's novel operates as both a social allegory and a psychic drama. The citizens of Sevier County maintain their moral coherence by defining themselves against Lester Ballard, whose dispossession and isolation make him a literal embodiment of the abject. In the opening chapters, Ballard's eviction by the county authorities represents an ideological act of purification: society reasserts its order by expelling its waste. Yet, as the narrative unfolds, Ballard's degradation exposes the fragility of that order. His violence and necrophilia do not merely scandalize the community; they mirror its own suppressed brutality.

This relationship between ideology and abjection can be described through what

Kristeva calls the “return of the repressed.” The abject never disappears; it returns to haunt the borders that exclude it. In McCarthy’s prose, Ballard’s cave filled with corpses functions as the material manifestation of this return—a hidden repository of what society denies but continually produces. The sheriff’s repeated attempts to hunt him down echo ideology’s need to reassert its purity by re-expelling the abject. Eagleton (1996) reminds us that literature is not a reflection but a production of ideology; McCarthy’s narrative does not simply portray social exclusion but dramatizes the very mechanisms by which ideology and abjection sustain one another.

Hence, Ballard’s descent is not solely a psychological unraveling but a social symptom. His necrophilic acts can be read as grotesque parodies of social reproduction: in seeking intimacy with the dead, he exposes the sterility of the ideological order that has banished him. The novel’s repeated imagery of dirt, decay, and bodily corruption underscores Kristeva’s argument that the abject is edged with the sublime (1982). That horror and fascination coexist at the border where meaning collapses. McCarthy’s Tennessee landscape becomes the ideological terrain itself, one that produces its monsters to preserve its myths of purity.

Therefore, the intersection of ideology and abjection allows us to see Ballard not merely as a deviant individual but as the necessary byproduct of ideological purification. The abject body is where ideology externalizes its contradictions. Ballard’s abjection is society’s mirror: by casting him as “less than human”, Sevier County confirms its own humanity, just as the subject defines itself through the exclusion of what it cannot bear to recognize as part of itself.

1.8.4 Summary and Analytical Implications

This chapter has established a theoretical foundation for examining *Child of God* through the combined perspectives of ideology and abjection. The genealogical structure traced the evolution of these concepts from their philosophical and psychoanalytic origins to their mature articulations in the works of Terry Eagleton and Julia Kristeva. From Marx’s materialist conception of social consciousness, through Althusser’s structuralist model of ideological interpellation, Eagleton’s theory reveals how ideology operates within cultural and literary forms to naturalize social relations and conceal contradictions. From Freud’s early exploration of the unconscious, through Lacan’s linguistic reconstruction of the subject, Kristeva’s theory of abjection demonstrates how identity is produced through the psychic expulsion of what must not be assimilated.

The synthesis between these two theoretical trajectories shows that ideology and abjection are not merely parallel phenomena but mutually constitutive processes. Ideology structures the collective imagination by producing social norms and assigning moral value, while abjection functions as the affective and bodily mechanism that enforces those norms. Both depend upon exclusion—a defining act that separates the “clean” from the “unclean”, the normal from the monstrous, the human from the inhuman. The excluded element does not vanish; it persists as the abject remainder upon which the ideological order depends. In this way, Kristeva’s abjection operates as the psychic analogue of Eagleton’s ideology: what the subject expels to define the self parallels what

society expels to define its moral community.

When applied to *Child of God*, this theoretical conjunction illuminates how McCarthy's narrative enacts a double movement of expulsion. On the social level, Lester Ballard is cast out by the ideological apparatuses of Sevier County, its legal, religious, and economic institutions, which function to preserve communal identity by producing figures of exclusion. On the psychic level, Ballard's own degeneration manifests the collapse of symbolic boundaries that once sustained his sense of self. His grotesque attachment to corpses signifies not mere depravity but the return of the abject, the eruption of what ideology has disavowed.

The analytical implications of this framework are twofold.

First, it allows the study to interpret Ballard's violence not as innate pathology but as the symptom of a social and ideological process, the material and moral poverty of postwar Appalachia that constructs "monsters" to safeguard its myths of normalcy.

Second, it enables a psychoanalytic reading that understands Ballard's actions as the psychic return of the abject, where repressed desires and exclusions resurface in grotesque form. In combining these approaches, the study resists moral reduction and instead situates Ballard's monstrosity within a system of power and repression that extends beyond the individual.

In sum, the interaction of Eagleton's ideology and Kristeva's abjection provides a comprehensive interpretive tool for reading *Child of God* as a text of social and psychic exclusion. Ideology reveals how the community constructs its boundaries; abjection reveals what is sacrificed to sustain them. Together, they expose the cost of social purity, the human being who must be cast out to secure it. The next chapter applies this theoretical framework to a close reading of McCarthy's novel, examining how narrative form, imagery, and character development embody the ideological and abject dynamics of Lester Ballard's fall.

CHAPTER II RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The third chapter of the thesis is a methodology which consists of research design, source of data, method of data collection, method of data analysis, and research procedure.

2.1 Research Design

This research employs a qualitative descriptive design that integrates textual and interpretive methods within a critical theoretical framework. The study is qualitative because it seeks to interpret and explain meanings rather than to measure variables. As Creswell (2013) notes, qualitative inquiry focuses on understanding the complexity of human experience through contextual and interpretive engagement with texts. The study is descriptive in that it aims to provide an in-depth account of the ideological and psychological processes depicted in *Child of God* without manipulating or quantifying the data (Creswell, 2013).

Within this qualitative orientation, the study adopts a genealogical reading of Cormac McCarthy's novel. This approach, inspired by Michel Foucault's conception of genealogy, examines how power, discourse, and history construct social and moral identities. Genealogy, as Foucault (1977) argues, does not search for linear origins but traces the emergence of values and truths within specific historical conditions. In the context of this study, a genealogical method allows for a critical tracing of how social ideology produces the abject figure of Lester Ballard, how moral and legal orders define and exclude certain subjects to sustain themselves.

Thus, this research design merges literary analysis with theoretical application. It relies on critical textual interpretation grounded in Marxist ideological criticism (Eagleton) and psychoanalytic theory of abjection (Kristeva), viewed through a genealogical lens of power. The interpretive emphasis lies on understanding how ideology and abjection interact to construct meaning and identity in McCarthy's narrative.

2.2 Source of Data

The primary data source for this research is Cormac McCarthy's novel *Child of God* (1973), published by Random House. The novel's narrative, character development, dialogue, and imagery provide the textual material for analysis. All direct quotations, narrative sequences, and symbolic references are drawn from this primary text.

Secondary data consist of theoretical and critical works relevant to the study's conceptual framework.

These sources collectively serve to contextualize the primary text, allowing the researcher to interpret *Child of God* within broader theoretical and historical

frameworks.

2.3 Method of data collection

Data for this study are collected through close reading and textual annotation of the primary source. Close reading involves a detailed, reflective engagement with the text, identifying patterns of imagery, characterization, and narrative tension that correspond to ideological and abject themes.

The process of data collection proceeds in several steps:

1. Initial Reading: The novel is read in its entirety to gain a holistic understanding of its plot, tone, and thematic progression.
2. Focused Re-reading: Key scenes depicting Lester Ballard's social exclusion, moral descent, and interactions with the community are identified.
3. Annotation and Categorization: These scenes are annotated for recurring motifs related to ideology (class, religion, morality, property) and abjection (bodily violation, decay, marginality).
4. Thematic Coding: Passages are coded according to theoretical relevance, whether they reflect ideological reproduction, social exclusion, or abject transformation.
5. The collected data are thus not numerical but textual, representing the novel's narrative expressions of ideological and abject experience

2.4 Method of data analysis

The method of data analysis combines textual interpretation and genealogical critique. Textual interpretation involves reading the novel in light of the theoretical frameworks outlined in Chapter II. Genealogical critique, as adapted from Foucault (1977), emphasizes the tracing of power relations and historical contingencies that underlie the novel's depiction of morality and deviance. The analytical process follows these interpretive steps:

1. Ideological Analysis: Using Eagleton's framework, the study examines how *Child of God* encodes social ideology, how values of property, religion, and respectability shape the community's moral structure. Particular attention is paid to how the text reveals contradictions within those values through its portrayal of Ballard's dispossession and ostracization.
2. Abjection Analysis: Applying Kristeva's theory, the analysis explores how the novel dramatizes the psychological and bodily processes of abjection. This includes Ballard's interaction with death, decay, and the violation of social taboos, illustrating how identity and morality depend on the expulsion of the impure.
3. Genealogical Interpretation: The two analyses are integrated within a

genealogical framework to show how ideology and abjection intersect in the historical production of the “marginal human.” Ballard’s degeneration is interpreted as a product of the community’s discursive and ideological mechanisms, not merely individual pathology.

The aim of this combined analysis is not to moralize Ballard’s actions but to understand the novel as a critique of the ideological processes that create moral and social boundaries.

2.5 Research procedure

The theoretical frameworks of Eagleton and Kristeva, supported by a genealogical sensibility, guide the analytical procedure of this study. The procedure operates through the following conceptual applications:

1. Eagleton’s Ideological Criticism in Practice:
Each selected passage is examined for its representation of class structure, moral codes, and economic exclusion. Ideology is treated as the invisible system of values that naturalizes inequality and social hierarchy. The analysis explores how McCarthy’s narrative exposes the contradictions between social ideals and lived reality, particularly how the community defines itself through the expulsion of Ballard.
2. Kristeva’s Theory of Abjection in Practice:
Scenes depicting bodily violation, decay, or moral contamination are read as moments of abjection, where the boundaries of identity and humanity disintegrate. Kristeva’s framework allows the researcher to interpret Ballard’s descent not as insanity but as the psychic manifestation of his social rejection, the repressed returning in grotesque form.
3. Genealogical Integration:
The findings from ideological and abject analyses are synthesized genealogically, tracing how discourses of purity, sin, and humanity evolve within the text as instruments of power. This integration reveals how McCarthy’s novel stages the historical production of exclusion, how societies define what counts as “human” by constructing and banishing figures like Ballard.

The analytical process thus proceeds from textual observation → ideological interpretation → abject deconstruction → genealogical synthesis. This layered reading strategy allows the research to illuminate *Child of God* as a narrative that exposes the mechanisms of moral and ideological power while simultaneously revealing the fragile boundary between civilization and abjection.