

| Text | Analysis |
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| <p>“Finally what he saw in his dream was that the order in the horse's heart was more durable for it was written in a place where no rain could erase it.” (pg. 280)</p> | <p><u>Re: The Horse's Heart</u></p> <p>Like Grady's dream, throughout McCarthy's story the presence of horses brings stability and order from which McCarthy was able to tell his tale. John Grady travels to Mexico to herd horses and tame the wild ones and along the way and back his journey unfolds in a sort of “coming of age” story.</p> |
| <p>“For me the world has always been more of a puppet show. But when one looks behind the curtain and traces the strings upward he finds they terminate in the hands of yet other puppets, themselves with their own strings which trace upward in turn, and so on.” (pg. 231)</p> | <p><u>Re: Tracing the puppet strings</u> (adjacent to the story)</p> <p>Actually, when the quote is taken out of the political-actor theoretic context, this sentiment has been replicated throughout mathematics and has been known since the 1930s as Gödel's incompleteness theorems which state that there is no “ultimate puppet.”* Usually it is phrased as this: no model or system can completely represent itself- there is always an external further context.</p> <p>* Whether or not this applies to religion/theology is unimportant here- only politics per the quote.</p> |
| <p>“He slept and when he woke he'd dreamt of the dead standing about in their bones and the dark sockets of their eyes that were indeed without speculation bottomed in the void wherein lay a terrible intelligence common to all but of which none would speak.” (pg. 205)</p> | <p><u>Re: The “terrible intelligence”</u></p> <p>What is this “terrible intelligence?” Is it the knowledge of death? Perhaps the intelligence cannot be known by the reader and McCarthy is making a general appeal to his readers and their secrets of “terrible truths” not shared with others.</p> <p>(There is also a mention of “terrible things done to him there” but this too is vague.)</p> |
| <p>“The prison was no more than a small walled village ... and within this [village] ran a constant struggle for status and position. Underpinning all of it like the fiscal standard in commercial societies lay a bedrock of depravity and violence where in an egalitarian absolute every man was judged by a single standard and that was his readiness to kill.” (pg. 182)</p> | <p><u>Re: The prison village</u></p> <p>The prison village presents an interesting challenge for Grady because he is used to being judged by his ability to train, break and ride horses- not by how ready he is to kill.</p> <p>The “bedrock of depravity” seems to be a universal depravity shared by all prisoners:</p> |

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| | depravity of their freedom, of possessions, and most importantly of their safety and livelihood. |
| <p>“There were storms to the south and masses of clouds that moved slowly along the horizon with their long dark tendrils trailing in the rain. That night they camped on a ledge of rock above the plains and watched the lightning all along the horizon provoke from the seamless dark the distant mountain ranges again and again. The grasslands lay in a deep violet haze and to the west thin flights of waterfowl were moving north before the sunset in the deep red galleries under the clodbanks like schoolfish in a burning sea and on the foreland plain they saw vaqueros driving cattle before them through a gauze of golden dust.” (pg. 93)</p> | <p><u>Re: More poetry disguised as writing</u></p> <p>McCarthy writes about the waterfowl swimming in the sky as if schoolfish “in a burning sea.” This could have quite a gruesome interpretation. The red-colored galleries in the sky could be like blood and the burning sea could be wounding the fish or the birds and driving them even madder with the background of lightning.</p> <p>This is an ecology of vivid color and organisms: even the clouds are animated with their long tendrils flying through the sky and the rain clouding the landscape with the vivid colors describing the scene: violets, reds, golds, all in the foreground of the eerie gray of the night.</p> |
| <p>“You're just a deadhead, Rawlins said. He shook his head and spat and looked out across the river. Tell me just one thing. What the hell would we want you with us for?” (pg. 45)</p> <p>“The sound of the pistolshot vanished almost instantly in that immense silence. Rawlins walked out across the grass and bent and picked up his billfold and put it in his pocket and came back. We better get goin, he said.” (pg. 48)</p> <p>“You aint never goin to get that horse back, said Rawlins. We hit a town down here somewheres you better see if you can trade that pistol for some clothes and a bus ticket back to wherever it is you come from. If there are buses. Your buddy yonder might be willin to haul your ass all over Mexico but I damn sure aint.” (pg. 74)</p> <p>John Grady: “Nothing. Get the plates. Let's go. Put them in the bag and get your ass up here ... he wanted to buy you. That's what he wanted.” (pg. 77)</p> <p>Rawlins: “They caint just walk him out there and shoot him, he said. Hell fire. Just walk him out there and shoot him.” (pg. 178)</p> | <p><u>Re: Change of heart? (and Rawlin's tendency to be wrong)</u></p> <p>As soon as on page 45 we can see that Rawlins was in significant dispute with Blevins. And yet later in the story he becomes much more concerned with Blevins' well being: “They can't just shoot him. Ah, hell, damn it all.” (unreferenced). It was through the time that Rawlins and Blevins spent together that Rawlins softened up to the point of caring about the poor kid's death. Especially after the weird thunderstorm incident that showed Blevins having a few psychological problems.</p> <p>Rawlins also has this interesting tendency to be completely dead wrong. For instance, he was wrong when he thought that Blevins would not be able to shoot anything that he tossed up in the air. Additionally, he was also wrong when he said that the police officers couldn't just walk Blevins out and shoot him: in the end they most certainly did.</p> <p>John Grady was somewhat of a father figure to Blevins during the story such as in the incident when Blevins was nearly “bought” by the Mexican workers. At this point in the story Rawlins was still against dragging Blevins all the way through Mexico.</p> |

"... and he said that the souls of horses mirror the souls of men more closely than men suppose and that horses also love war. Men say they only learn this but he said that no creature can learn that which his heart has no shape to hold. His own father said that no man who has not gone to war horseback can ever truly understand the horse and he said that he supposed he wished that this were not so but that it was so. Lastly he said that he had seen the souls of horses and that it was a terrible thing to see. He said that it could be seen under certain circumstances attending the death of a horse because the horse shares a common soul and its separate life only forms it out of all horses and makes it mortal. He said that if a person understood the soul of the horse then he would understand all horses that ever were." (pg. 111)

"I wanted very much to be a person of value and I had to ask myself how this could be possible if there were not something like a soul or like a spirit that is in the life of a person and which could endure any misfortune or disfigurement and yet be no less for it. It had to be a quality that could not change. No matter what it was this: that all courage was a form of constancy. That it was always himself that the coward abandoned first. After this all other betrayals came easily." (pg. 235)

"He lay on his back in his blankets and looked out where the quartermoon lay cocked over the heel of the mountains. In that false blue dawn the Pleiades seemed to be rising up into the darkness above the world and dragging all the stars away, the great diamond of Orion and Cepella and the signature of Cassiopeia all rising up through the phosphorous dark like a sea-net. He lay a long time listening to the others breathing in their sleep while he contemplated the wildness about him, the wildness within." (pg. 61)

"By early evening all the sky to the north had darkened and the spare terrain they trod had turned a neuter gray as far as eye could see. They grouped in the road at the top of a rise and looked

Re: Souls and horse/man relations

Taking both of these passages as dogma sheds light on the events of the story. The first passage describes a horse and his rider almost as if an inseparable soul that compels itself to ride and to do its duty. It is during battle and stress that the soul of the horse might be seen- that or during death. The second passage describes a constancy of soul that forms courage. It describes the coward as one who abandons himself the quickest. If indeed the souls of the horse and rider are bound in such a way as first described then abandoning one's horse is like abandoning one's self.

This could be used to explain why Blevins eventually went back to the town to take back his horse from the man who found it after the thunderstorm that took Blevins' gun, belongings, most of his clothing, and one boot (rendering the other useless). Had he not gone back for his horse, would he not be a coward by these definitions?

The first passage also describes horses as being "molded" from some universal "Horse Spirit" that brings to life the mortal horses for men to ride. To see the death of the horse then is to see the death of the species of horse overall and to peak into horse-humanity relationship.

Re: Pain, suffering and the stars

The first passage seems to contrast John Grady with the stars that are being blanketed and dragged away from the sky. The stars are giant fiery (passionate?) entropic production engines blazing through the night sky shining so brightly that most of them can be seen anywhere in the galaxy. Those that are wild will not be silenced- John Grady is such a person because he has gone off on his own adventure and left his previous life behind. And yet, the stars that are silenced in the night, are they so wild in this instance?

But this same night sky which brings thunder throughout the story also holds other secrets than the stars ... such as the foundry smoke where it

back. The storm front towered above them and the wind was cool on their sweating faces. They slumped bleary-eyed in their saddles and looked at one another. Shrouded in the black thunderheads the distant lightning glowed mutely like welding seen through foundry smoke. As if repairs were under way at some flawed place in the iron dark of the world." (pg. 67)

"He looked deep into those dark eyes and there were deeps there to look into. A whole malign history burning cold and remote and black." (pg. 200)

"He slept that night in a field far from any town. He built no fire. He lay listening to the horse crop the grass at his stakerope and he listened to the wind in the emptiness and watched stars trace the arc of the hemisphere and die in the darkness at the edge of the world and as he lay there the agony in his heart was like a stake. He imagined the pain of the world to be like some formless parasitic being seeking out the warmth of human souls wherein to incubate and he thought he knew what made one liable to its visitations. What he had not known was that it was mindless and so had no way to know the limits of those souls and what he feared was that there might be no limits." (pg. 256)

"When the wind was in the north you could hear them, the horses and the breath of the horses and the horses' hooves that were shod in rawhide and the rattle of lances and the constant drag of the travois poles in the sand like the passing of some enormous serpent and the young boys naked on wild horses jaunty as circus riders and hazing wild horses before them and the dogs trotting with their tongues aloll and foot-slaves following half naked and sorely burdened and above all the low chant of their traveling song which the riders sang as they rode, nation and **ghost** of nation passing in a soft chorale across that mineral waste to darkness bearing lost to all history and all

was "as if repairs were under way at some flawed place in the iron dark of the world." Why must the world be "flawed"? Presumably this flaw is pain—as exhibited in the next passage.

Here his heart lays on the edge of the world next to stars in agony (if you happened to misread the ordering of the words). McCarthy mentions "the pain of the world" which is supposedly its flaw embodied as an apparition invading humanity in stealth.

There is also the man who has a "whole malign history burning cold and remote and black." The phrase "burning cold" is a paradox but serves to highlight the conflict within the cuchillero. The phrasing allows a sense of pain or suffering to come over the reader as McCarthy shows Grady attaining a stab wound and his killing of the madman.

Personally I would dispute the "mindless flaws" that McCarthy is suggesting. This is equivalent to saying things are 'wrong' for no reason at all. Does this story really exhibit things being wrong for no reason at all?

Two incidents from the story would suggest that "pain is the flaw of the world" was McCarthy's statement: Blevins' largely unnecessary death and the incidents leading up to Grady's unobtainable girlfriend.

Re: Ghosts

There were three main passages where McCarthy used the word "ghosts." These stuck out at me because of the similar usage of the word.

The first passage strikes me as foreshadowing relating to John Grady's upcoming adventure. In the paragraph there are these giant poles that the nationalists drag behind them making this pattern like a serpent in a sand. Metaphorically, this could be the "seeds that we sow"-- indeed, the serpent should not be trusted to not bite back when the chance is right. Perhaps the story will progress to a point where our main characters, on a similar

remembrance like a grail the sum of their secular and transitory and violent lives.”

“They crossed highway 90 midmorning of the following day and rode out onto a pastureland dotted with grazing cattle. Far to the south the mountains of Mexico drifted in and out of the uncertain light of a moving cloud cover like **ghosts** of mountains.”

“A long rolling crack of thunder went peeling down the sky to the north. The ground shuddered. Blevins put his arms over his head and John Grady turned the horse and rode back up the arroyo. Great pellets of rain were cratering the wet sand underfoot. He looked back once at Blevins. Blevins sat as before. A thing all but inexplicable in that landscape ... The rain was coming down in sheets. Blevins' horse stood in the downpour like the ghost of a horse. They left the road and followed the wash up toward a stand of trees and took shelter under the barest overhang of rock, sitting with their knees stuck out into the rain and holding the standing horses by the bridlereins. The horses stepped and shook their heads and the lightning cracked and the wind tore through the acacia and paloverde and the rain went slashing down the country. They heard a horse running somewhere out in the rain and then they just heard the rain.”

“He rode the border country for weeks seeking the owner of the horse. In Ozona just before Christmas three men swore out papers and the county constable impounded the animal. The hearing was held in the judge's chambers in the old stone courthouse and the clerk read the charges and the names and the judge turned and looked down at John Grady.” (pg. 288)

-- Grady also went to see the judge later that night.

journey, will be bit by their own snake of sorts? And this could then explain why there would seem to be the remnant “ghost of a nation.” Perhaps the nation itself fell to its own design.

The second cited passage pays homage to the view of evil expressed in the story as common to most Mexicans. This personified view of evil is somewhat like a ghost as well- it can move and walk and come into somebody's life and taint a man or woman. Similarly the ghost, something usually associated with evilness or spookiness and bad happenings, and sometimes a form of personified death, is incarnated in the clouds protecting the view of the mountains perhaps as an ominous warning of what is ahead in the Grady-Rawlin journey towards the mountains and beyond.

The third cited passage opens with an interesting description of thunder “peeling down the sky” showing the awesome power of the sound. Ignoring the superstitious aspects of Blevins' character, there is also the mention of Blevins' horse standing “like the ghost of a horse.” Not necessarily his horse but instead “a” horse.

Does the appearance of the ghost of the horse make another prediction to the forth coming events? Blevins' death? His losing the horse to strangers? His disappearance during the thunderstorm?

Re: John Grady ending up at the judge

It is interesting to see that the story practically ends with Grady quitting his journey by finally seeing a judge about the horses.

Was this visit to the judge and especially the 1 A.M. dinner metaphorically Grady's way of 'confirming' his whole trip? To make him feel better about what had happened to Blevins? Or as to what happened to himself? (stabbings, gunshot wound, broken heart, ...)