

Lit Log #2
12/09/22
College English

Close Reading

He sank down and put his hand on top of his head. God, he said. They could hear the thing rattle and flap to a halt. Then just the silence. He had the pistol in his hand, he couldn't even remember taking it from his belt. They could hear the men talking. Hear them unlatch and raise the hood. He sat with his arm around the boy. Shh, he said. Shh. After a while they heard the truck begin to roll. Lumbering and creaking like a ship. They'd have no other way to start it save to push it and they couldn't get it fast enough to start on that slope. After a few minutes it coughed and bucked and stopped again. He raised his head to look and coming through the weeds twenty feet away was one of their number unbuckling his belt. They both froze.

He cocked the pistol and held it on the man and the man stood with one hand out at his side, the dirty crumpled paintmask that he wore sucking in and out. Just keep coming.

He looked at the road.

Dont look back there. Look at me. If you call out you're dead.

He came forward, holding his belt by one hand. The holes in it marked the progress of his emaciation and the leather at one side had a lacquered look to it where he was used to stropping the blade of his knife. He stepped down into the roadcut and he looked at the gun and he looked at the boy. Eyes collared in cups of grime and deeply sunk. Like an animal inside a skull looking out the eyeholes. He wore a beard that had been cut square across the bottom with shears and he had a tattoo of a bird on his neck done by someone with an illformed notion of their appearance. He was lean, wiry, rachitic. Dressed in a pair of filthy blue coveralls and a black billcap with the logo of some vanished enterprise embroidered across the front of it.

Where are you going?

I was going to take a crap.

Where are you going with the truck.

I dont know.

What do you mean you dont know? Take the mask off.

He pulled the mask off over his head and stood holding it.

I mean I dont know, he said.

You dont know where you're going?

No.

What's the truck running on.

Diesel fuel.

How much do you have.

There's three fifty-five gallon drums in the bed.

Do you have ammunition for those guns?
He looked back toward the road.
I told you not to look back there.

Yeah. We got ammunition.
Where did you get it?
Found it.
That's a lie. What are you eating.
Whatever we can find.
Whatever you can find.
Yeah. He looked at the boy. You wont shoot, he said.
That's what you think.
You aint got but two shells. Maybe just one. And they'll hear the shot.
Yes they will. But you wont.
How do you figure that?
Because the bullet travels faster than sound. It will be in your brain before
you can hear it. To hear it you will need a frontal lobe and things with names
like colliculus and temporal gyrus and you wont have them anymore. They'll
just be soup.
Are you a doctor?
I'm not anything.
We got a man hurt. It'd be worth your while.
Do I look like an imbecile to you?
I dont know what you look like.
Why are you looking at him?
I can look where I want to.
No you cant. If you look at him again I'll shoot you.
The boy was sitting with both hands on top of his head and looking out
between his forearms.
I'll bet that boy is hungry. Why dont you all just come on to the truck? Get
something to eat. Aint no need to be such a hard-ass.
You dont have anything to eat. Let's go.
Go where?
Let's go.
I aint goin nowheres.
You're not?

No. I aint.
You think I wont kill you but you're wrong. But what I'd rather do is take
you up this road a mile or so and then turn you loose. That's all the head start
we need. You wont find us. You wont even know which way we went.
You know what I think?
What do you think.
I think you're chickenshit.

He let go of the belt and it fell in the roadway with the gear hanging from it. A canteen. An old canvas army pouch. A leather sheath for a knife. When he looked up the roadrat was holding the knife in his hand. He'd only taken two steps but he was almost between him and the child.

What do you think you're going to do with that?

He didnt answer. He was a big man but he was very quick. He dove and grabbed the boy and rolled and came up holding him against his chest with the knife at his throat. The man had already dropped to the ground and he swung with him and leveled the pistol and fired from a two-handed position balanced on both knees at a distance of six feet. The man fell back instantly and lay with blood bubbling from the hole in his forehead. The boy was lying in his lap with no expression on his face at all. He shoved the pistol in his belt and slung the knapsack over his shoulder and picked up the boy and turned him around and lifted him over his head and set him on his shoulders and set off up the old roadway at a dead run, holding the boy's knees, the boy clutching his forehead, covered with gore and mute as a stone.

One of the first times I noticed when I put this passage into google docs was the fact that grammerly told me there was a lot of grammatical errors and words that didn't exist. I think it's interesting that Cormac McCarthy decided to have his writing this specific way, and what it say about what the authors intention of this book, especially considering it's set in a post-apogolyptic world. I also think the theme of "good" and "bad" guys is something really present in this specific passage. I think it really shifts the idea of good and bad, what the man has been saying to his son about the people of this world. The man has now killed someone, weather it was for survival or not, does it still make him a good person? Certainly not in the eyes of God, maybe not even in the eyes of his son anymore. He can't say who's good and who's not when the father did what he had to survive, when that's all the other men are doing. The whole concept of good and bad is completely twisted in the book. Something I think about a lot coming from this book is whether or not the people who still believe in God thinks what they do to survive is ok. Wheter or not they care what will happen to them if they die. Through out time people have altered what the meaning of believing in God represents to fit their overall goals. Which I feel like is exactly what is happening in The Road. Which means what the man is telling his son about good and bad people isn't necessarily a good thing, there are no good people in this society. As far as the people that we have met, no one is completely free of having done things for survival. Growing up being shown one side of good/bad isn't going to make the son morally right.

The more deeper we get into this book, the more we learn about the man. Before it was hard to see how he could have survived all this time by himself with a young child. But something we get a glimpse into in this passage is his clear past as some sort of doctor, or at the very least a very well educated person. No one who isn't familiar with medical treatment could take care of a young child in a diseased world the way the man has been for several years. In the beginning of the story, it's essay to assume that the man and his son are the good guys of this narrative, but when we meet the other strangers everyone if just doing what they

can to live in this horrible world. What makes what the man and boy do surviving but the others cruel and unacceptable? There is no right or wrong, but the man is under the impression that what he does is good, which I think stems from his clear past with God. And how in his mind he is only doing what is right for his kid.