

# THE ROAD

*Cormac McCarthy*

*-Part One -*



## Works

The Orchard keeper

Child of God

Suttree

Blood Meridian

All the Pretty Horses

Cities of the Plain

No Country for Old Men

The Road

## CORMAC MCCARTHY

- McCarthy won the 2007 Pulitzer prize for his novel The Road which was ranked first on The Times list of 100 best books (2000-2010).
- Literary critic Harold Bloom named McCarthy as one of the four major American novelists of his time, alongside Don DeLillo, Thomas Pynchon, and Philip Roth.
- Cormac McCarthy has written bleak and rather pessimistic novels with characters who manifest a disbelief in the inherent goodness of human beings.
- McCarthy has spent his talent shedding light on the darker sides of existence. Death and apocalyptic stirrings are very noticeably present in all of his novels, but nowhere more so than in The Road.





“When he woke up in the woods in the dark and the cold of the night he’d reach out to touch the child sleeping beside him. Nights dark beyond darkness and the days more gray each one than what had gone before. Like the onset of some cold glaucoma dimming away the world...Tolling in the silence the minutes of the earth and the hours and the days of it and the years without cease...”

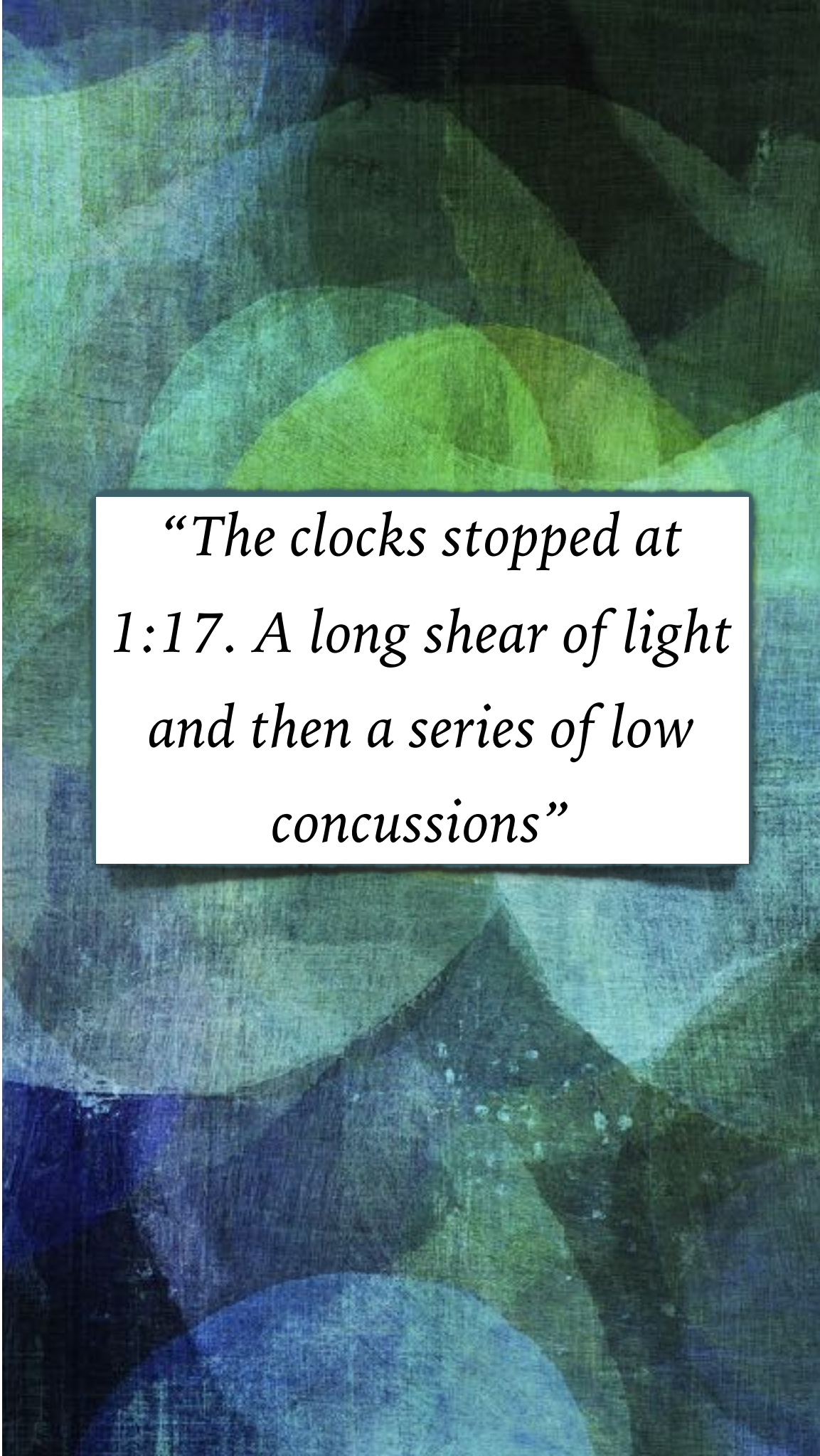
*-The Road*

# SYNOPSIS

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An unnamed man and his son are on a desperate journey of survival across a gray, cold, and devastated landscape, some years after an unnamed cataclysm or catastrophe has obliterated all signs of civilisation and society from the face of the earth.

The landscape is peopled by scavengers, marauding bands, cannibals, and corpses. Beauty of the natural world has disappeared.



*“The clocks stopped at 1:17. A long shear of light and then a series of low concussions”*



# POST-APOCALYPSE

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*“The ashes of the late world  
carried on the bleak and  
temporal winds to and fro in the  
void. Carried forth and scattered  
and carried forth again.  
Everything uncoupled from its  
shoring. Unsupported in the  
ashen air. Sustained by a breath,  
trembling and brief.”*

## POST-APOCALYPSE

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### ➤ *What is the Apocalypse?*

The Bible: *The Book of Revelation*

*“The end of time”*

### ➤ *What is the Post Apocalypse?*

- After the end of time -



Perhaps in the world's destruction  
it would be possible at last to see  
how it was made. Oceans,  
mountains. The ponderous  
counterspectacle of things ceasing  
to be. The sweeping waste,  
hydroptic and coldly secular. The  
silence.

*-The Road*

“The end itself, the moment of cataclysm, is only part of the point of apocalyptic writing. The apocalypse as eschaton is just as importantly the vehicle for clearing away the world as it is and making possible the post-apocalyptic paradise or wasteland.

*- James Berger*

# POST-APOCALYPTIC WRITING

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*Apocalyptic anxiety is a recurrent historical pattern. By the end of the second millennium, fear and fascination of imagining the end of days has ingrained itself into artistic imagination.*

“Temporal sequences become confused. Apocalyptic writing takes us after the end, shows the signs prefiguring the end, the moment of obliteration, and the aftermath. The writer and reader must be both places at once, imagining the post-apocalyptic world, then paradoxically “remembering” the world as it was, as it is”

- James Berger

## WHY POST-APOCALYPTIC WRITING?

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- There is a strange pleasure in the catastrophic cleansing of the world and the reassuring division between the righteous and the damned.
- Ideological Origins of the renewed post-apocalyptic anxieties and imagination:

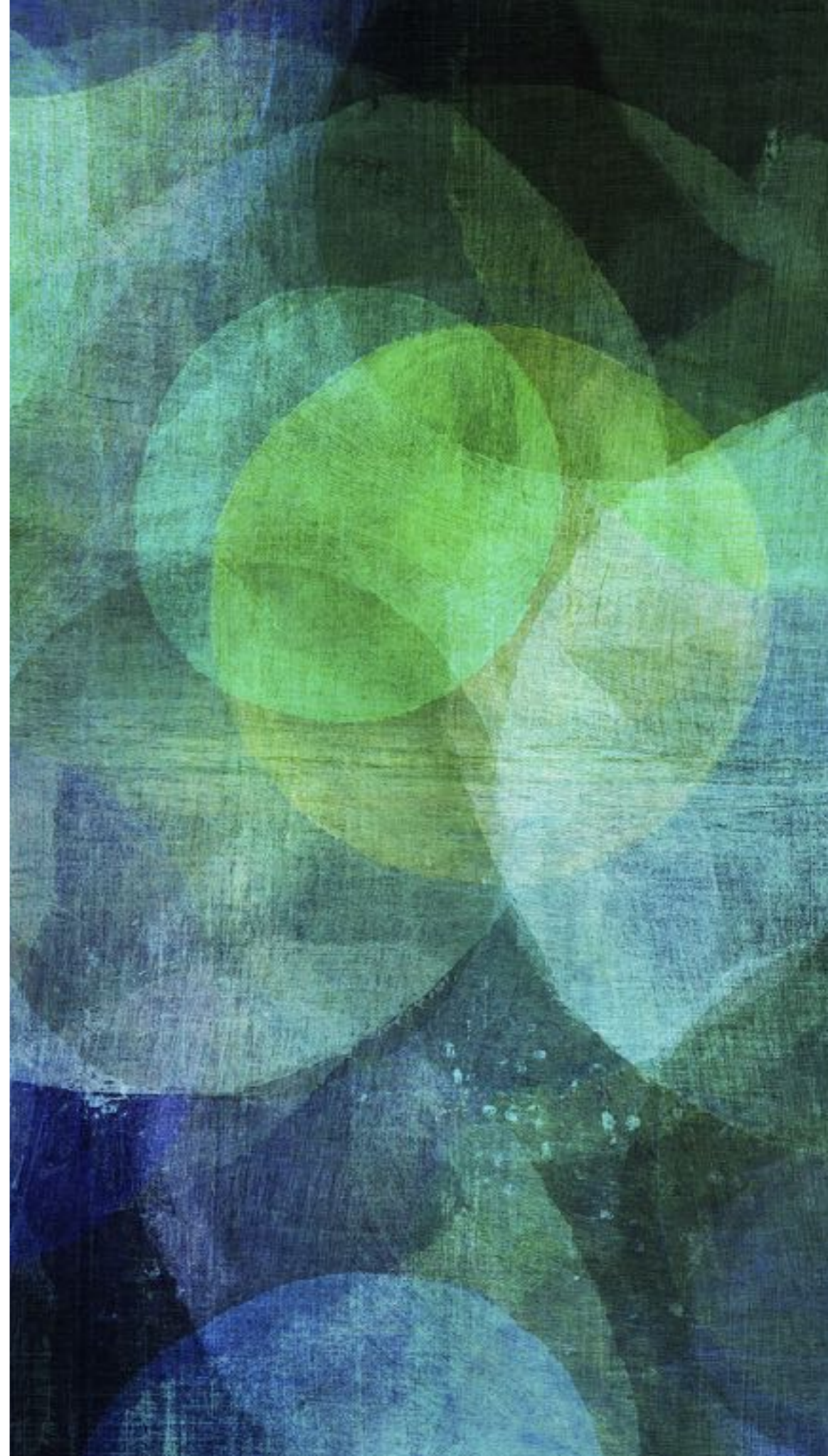
- 1. Aftermath of September 11*
- 2. The Iraq War*
- 3. Global warming*
- 4. Impending ecological disaster*



# NATURE AND LANDSCAPE

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- McCarthy's novel challenges transcendental and romantic visions of nature.
- Nature is hostile, indifferent, and man seems extremely insignificant in comparison.
- Nature is dying: the biosphere is disappearing from the earth.
- Ecocriticism and Anthropomorphism



“They were days fording that cauterized terrain... Where all was burnt to ash before them no fires to be had and the nights were long and dark cold beyond anything they'd yet encountered. cold to crack the stones. to take your life.

*- The Road*

“ He woke to the sound of distant thunder and sat up. The faint light all about, quivering and sourceless, refracted the rain of drifting soot... If they get wet there'd be no fire to dry by. If they got wet they would probably die.

- *The Road*





# NATURALISM

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## ➤ *Technique*

- Slow motion camera
- Short/declarative sentences
- Repetition (emphasizing the conflict)

## ➤ *Theme*

- Nature hostile and indifferent
- Insignificance of Man
- Vague ending
- Human fellowship

# ROAD AND JOURNEY

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“He watched the boy and he looked through the trees toward the **road**. This was not a safe place. They could be seen from the **road** now it was day...An hour later they were on the **road**. He pushed the cart and both he and the boy carried knapsack... Clamped to the handle of the cart was a chrome motorcycle mirror that he used to watch the **road** behind them. He shifted the pack higher on his shoulders and looked out over the wasted country. The **road** was empty.”

- *The Road*

# THE JOURNEY MOTIF

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## ➤ *Pattern of the Journey motif*

1. *The Call to adventure*
2. *Wise Old Man*
3. *Obstacles: Material and psychological \_ Triumph*
4. *Return Home: treasure or knowledge and wisdom*

## ➤ *Subverting the pattern*



# SUGGESTED ASSIGNMENT

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*Compare and contrast Ralph Waldo Emerson's transcendental vision of nature and Cormac McCarthy's apocalyptic vision of nature.*

