

From Idyllic Past to Apocalyptic Future: A Painful Reimagining of Disharmony in Cormac McCarthy's *No Country For Old Men*

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No Country for Old Men (2005) by Cormac McCarthy is a fantastical picaresque through the dark side of the contemporary American society. It is a searing indictment of violence and terror with a detailed inventory of man's inhumanity to man and it boldly imagines a dystopian future in which no hope remains and in which there is no way of escape and comfort. In a hugely stunning storytelling style, McCarthy takes the genre of American crime novel and widens its concerns to embody a variety of themes ranging from the Biblical concept of good and evil to an apocalyptic vision of today's American society. Plunging into the dark and desolate realms of the west Texas, McCarthy explores the problem of urban devastation yielding a haunting portrait of moral disintegration and he disturbingly questions man's responsibility for himself and for his community. In the novel, Antoni Chigurh plays the role of an indifferent world with no sense of morality, ethics, and order. His very existence instils disharmony and the decay of social institutions. He shows himself as above the law destabilizing the structures of society. As a sheriff, Bell, on the other hand, represents the idea of law, order, and therefore harmony. The community expects him to deliver justice and social harmony. However, his inability to catch Chigurh shows his desperate confrontation with the limits of his power in the face of a changing society. The criminal justice system has irrevocably collapsed, the rules are arbitrary and man's destiny is tragically at the hands of a malevolent universe. The incessant crimes happening in the West Texas make Bell realize that American society is falling apart and death can come at any moment. In an unflinching tone, McCarthy demonstrates the futility of law to overcome the disharmony in society as the filthy and illegal business world leads to decadence at the level of government and politics.

Keywords: Crime fiction, Apocalypse, Disharmony

Strange New Harmony: a Post-Humanist Reading of J. G. Ballard's *Crystal World*

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J. G. Ballard's novel *The Crystal World* (1966) has been commonly read as a fantastic vision of an apocalypse – the dystopian ending of the human and biological universe precipitated by an unknown and lethal virus that causes climate disturbances and the ensuing crystallisation and freezing of biological life. Read over fifty years after its original publication, the novel seems increasingly less fantastic – given the evident climate change – and, perhaps paradoxically, less apocalyptic.

The planned presentation aims to read Ballard's novel as an example of post-humanist reflection, arguing that the changes it describes may be interpreted as less of an apocalypse and more of a strange new harmony emerging without the decision and influence of man. The shift from decay and putrefaction characteristic of the human world (and best embodied in the novel by leprosy) to the preservation and stability of crystallised nature may be read as a shift from ugliness, disgust and death to beauty, admiration and eternity. The resulting new harmony passes by human beings and establishes an altogether different paradigm, which may be labelled as post-humanist.

Keywords: Nature, New harmony, Post-humanism