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¹K. Nishanthi, ²Dr. V. Gnanaprakasam, Existentialism and Bad Faith in Cormac McCarthy's *Child of God* , - PalArch's Journal Of Archaeology Of Egypt/Egyptology 17(9). ISSN 1567-214x

Keywords: Sartre, Nihilism, Necrophilia, Abandonment, and Bad faith.

Abstract

This paper discusses Cormac McCarthy's *Child of God* work and defends against the argument that McCarthy's writing is nihilistic because it reveals a desolate universe. By way of this study, McCarthy's novels have been found not to be nihilistic; instead, McCarthy's novels have clear references to existentialism and the doctrine of renunciation and bad faith of Jean-Paul Sartre. One of his deadliest protagonists, Lester Ballard, is written in this book. Ballard is denied by society and, therefore, perspectives a form of existential abdication. In a society where we find ourselves isolated and without reason, Sartre claims that we are doomed to being free without parents or a sense of culture. But where Sartre argues that our liberty demands that we assume accountability for both our decisions and acts, Ballard avoids his freedom with what Sartre describes as bad faith. Ballard stays in the forest alone and survives in psychosis, assassinating and preserving the corpses of his victims to build a twisted family. Ballard utilizes necrophilia to feel affection. The madness of Lester Ballard is close to the principle of life in bad faith of Sartre. I may end by pointing out that McCarthy's practice is not pointless but rather that the person is making significance as Sartre, Nietzsche, and Kierkegaard's existential philosophies argue.

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Introduction

Cormac McCarthy's initial four paperbacks are generally related to McCarthy's "Southern," "Appalachian," or "Tennessee " novels because of its settings. These novels left McCarthy as a writer in relative uncertainty. Their plots' explicit nature, the horrific tales of brutality done by the

characters, and their dramatic portrayal of culture's most controversial topics, such as assassination, lewdness, and sex with dead bodies, these initial novels baffled critics and academics. For these same purposes, several reviewers have been left to conclude, "The paperbacks of Cormac McCarthy are as reliable of the tune, and ethical evidence of the plot" (Bell, Unclear 31). In matching McCarthy toward Faulkner, Royden Winchell in "Inner Dark: or, the Place of Cormac McCarthy" records:

Faulkner was a moralist at heart who trusted in a pillar of human integrity that was irreducible. His thesis has a spiritual heart that criticizes the world's bad and depravity, either overt or implied. The core either seems not to exist in McCarthy's universe or can not hold it. (294)

McCarthy's third book, *Child of God*, attracted many reviewers' wrath, causing them to illustrate the assumptions as mentioned above, thus marking McCarthy's works as anarchic. Erik Hage notes, "Taken at a purely thematic level, *Child of God* (1973), is certainly McCarthy's most shocking novel" because of the gratuitousness of Lester Ballard's acts (55). "As with his earlier novels, the hysteria of the *Child of God* has guided many to guess that it is "lacking in... point," or that it is "prevalingly barbaric and rebellious (1). The work of McCarthy is nasty for Brickner and "strives to be terrible but is never more than morose" ("Rev. *Child of God*"). According to the critic Brickner, the *Child of God*'s hopelessness is purely an outcome of Ballard's irredeemable depravity and McCarthy's inability to provide such a personality with spiritual justice.

Essence usually applies to a thing's existence. In existential theory, therefore, a human's essence is the appearance of an entity described by behavior. No fixed fact remains. For example, because people are truthful (a decided nature), it is not the case that a person tells the truth; instead, they are trustworthy because they have determined moments (actions defining essence). McCarthy's early writing, similar to *Child of God*, provides scholars with an inessential universe.

Child of God reveals Ballard's narrative, a psychopath living in Tennessee. Who "violates the most sacred spiritual limits and sinks into horrible psychological amnesia" (39). McCarthy informs us Ballard is "small, unclean, unshaven...

maybe a child of God similar yourself" (4). In McCarthy's comment, there is a negative trace of irony. He does not look for readers to scorn Ballard, but to pity him; Ballard's character represents each of us as descendants of Heaven. We live not just sociopathic murderers, but we are emotionally similar to Ballard in that approach; we experienced abandonment.

McCarthy's writing, notwithstanding the nihilistic tag, applied to his paperback, provides the scholar with a universe in which morality and nature rely on a moral order produced preferably than a moralistic order determined by God or by universalized ethics. While McCarthy's early prose is undoubtedly his worst work, with *Child of God* probably featuring his writing's most horrific and wicked scenes. Eric Carl Connection writes, "A grim atmosphere is not ever a world out meaning" (158), and as beforehand mentioned, "[Child of God's] grim vision does not... degenerate into nihilism" (159). In his literature, McCarthy introduces that the universe is not meaningless but rather shows the existential perspective that value does not depend on creating a pre-established; instead, meaning relies on a moral order formed.

The concept of abandonment is a principal element of existential theory. In reality, for atheistic existentialists like Jean Paul Sartre in *Existentialism is a Humanism* says that abandonment is the condition in which we see ourselves in a society where God does not function. And when we talk about "abandonment," Sartre argues, "we simply mean to say that there is no God and that we must bear the full consequences of that assertion" (27). According to the theory of Sartre, we are abandoned not by the lack of Almighty in the insight that God once was and no longer remained, but in that there is no longer any good priori, a good that occurs outside of reality as a fact. Similarly, his parents leave Ballard, and as a consequence, he is forsaken without a parental reference to teach him any of the world's "truths."

What Lester desires is permanence, especially death, Edwin T. Arnold in "Naming, Knowing and Nothingness: McCarthy's Moral Parables," remarks "but what he finds in his time is transition in the episodes of desertion, denial, and failure" (56). Ballard is gone parentless; he was only ten years old, a boy disowned by his family after his mom leaves; Balder's dad kills himself as a result. He learned only isolation

at this time. Ballard is portrayed as an infant neglected and parentless by McCarthy. McCarthy needs us to see his protagonist as a sympathetic person.

Isolation and Radical Changes

Child of God begins on the field of Ballard. In the meantime, Ballard is "straddle-legged," peeing on the terrain of the shed he resides. Because of Ballard's Isolation, decent social knowledge has not been given to him and, subsequently, remains in a situation of alienation and anomie. Outside the shed, the peoples of the village have joined in the selling of his property. Ballard attempts to break up the exchange and violently threatens the people as he reaches his rifle. Yet, with the blunt side but he cannot handle the crowd, so he gives up the fight, Ballard, now homeless, a refugee from his house and community. He roams the wilderness and often seeks approval in stores, churches, and neighborhood houses.

Jean Paul Sartre would reject the determinism that Ellis means that Ballard is a butcher. In explaining the underlying realities of existence (Ballard's environment and history), Ballard's "facticity," the word Sartre, is not liable for deciding who he is. Instead, we are both accountable for our thoughts and behaviors and thus can create our essence. He then created his essence; Ballard is accountable. Ballard does not specify its definition under the circumstances suggested by Ellis. However, Ellis acknowledges that Ballard's abandonment left Ballard without any good a priori, near Sartre's existential meaning of abandonment. Ballard does not beget the best talents as a functioning aspect of the group without parental and social guidance. Ballard's abandonment and societal isolation also encourage emotional destruction through his endeavors to create a society, leading him to take terrible steps. Those blatantly deterministic ideas Sartre may again be ignorant of. As I will explain later on, Sartre's "bad faith" theory correlates with the mental turmoil and subsequent actions of Ballard's crazy.

The Frog Mountain Turnaround is haunted by Ballard, where lovers fornicate. Ballard takes to voyeurism, masturbating while observing the unconscious lovers and his oncoming necrophilia's first manifestations. Ballard encounters an abused prostitute on a particular morning. His efforts at

sympathy and supporting the young woman are faced only with allegations of derision and fake abuse, facilitating Ballard's alienation by the community and stimulating his already emerging psychological break from reality.

Raise of a Sociopath

The second segment of the novel slid into a case of folly to Ballard. Ballard found a young pair who died of asphyxiation. McCarthy in *Child of God* seized the young girl and carried her behind to his cabin, "unbuckled his pants and laid down beside her" (92). It is simple to view this as a clear act of necrophilia; nevertheless, McCarthy is not evident. As Ballard continues with the bodies, he desires to get rid of his abandonment; he takes solace from his isolation. "To assume that he is raping her," Arnold writes... McCarthy himself writes: 'He has pouted everything he can ever think to tell a woman into the wax ear.' Who may suggest he can't be able to comprehend it?" (88-89). The wish of Lester is misinterpreted, for he does not intend the misuse but the companionship.

Vereen Bell does not interpret Ballard's mental collapse analogous to Sartre's existential philosophy, resulting from his solitude and abandonment. Instead, the sources of Ballard's activities, isolation, and abandonment are seen by Bell as rejecting McCarthy's Nihilism, brutality, and perversion. Vereen Bell in *The Ambiguous Nihilism of Cormac McCarthy* states, "Risking portentousness, McCarthy's nihilism could be characterized as not merely ambiguous, but dialectical... There are the helpless loneliness and hunger of Lester Ballard for love and the remains of the victims of it" (37). Ballard needs to find a house and a community of people to share with. "McCarthy always provides the reader with an inverted pacification of Ballard's desires. McCarthy lets Ballard build his world through his depravity victims rather than giving Ballard affection and approval ability" (38).

Inappropriately, Ballard melts down his hut to compromise his love and maintain the young girl's body warm and distorted. He murders a local woman and destroys her house to ensure her body has been carried away before anybody notices. He uses Frog Mountain Turnaround to destroy lovers; Ballard brings them through his cave to create a group to support him to ease his isolation, where his family has

surrounded him. He has obtained recognition, love, and society once a leader, isolated from the one "Ballard," is exiled. It is ultimately inextricably separated. In his isolation, Ballard sinks back into his folly. In observing Greer, an individual who robs Ballard's home, he wandered through the woods dressed in victims' clothing. McCarthy in *Child of God* writes, "He will be wearing the panties of his female victims for a prolonged time, but he must now still dress in their outerwear" (140). Ballard proceeds to prepare for Greer's assassination and take his house because of his former properties.

Cause and Effect

The house that Ballard left plays a crucial part in the development of Ballard's folly. Although its initial displacement from his residence resembles only a passing plot to drive the book, which ultimately became Ballard's necrophilia, it has major significant speculation. The connection between Ballard and his childhood home acts as a metaphor for his emotional suffering. The locality of his parents' original rejection and the location where he was excluded from his identity.

Jean Paul Sartre states that the consequence of our abandonment is liberty. We have our morals, beliefs, and advantages left to determine when moral facts, values, and goods are no longer accessible a priori in the system. We are nevertheless prone to agony in this. We decide who we are to be, Jean Paul Sartre in *Being and Nothingness* and *Existentialism is a Humanism* says. "That is what falling entails. Such a renunciation is anguished" (Existentialism 34). "We are free, Sartre says, because of not just our decisions, but behavior "without justification or reasons, and without excuse" decide the significance and the essence of the cosmos that we recommend to ourselves what Sartre called a "past man" (Being 39). What we are doing is what we're, not what we intend. Because of this freedom, though, we suffer torment because today we dictate the cosmos' existence and our essences. "In a situation of rage, I get the prospect to explore myself like perfectly secure the defining purpose of nature unless coming from me myself," Sartre refers, he notes, as he states" (Being 40). "condemned to be free," Sartre says (Existentialism 29). This condemnation stems from the belief that we cannot create ourselves, and yet we are free because we owe the world

meaning. But anguish continues as the decisions we make regarding the world are to be blamed. As a consequence, independence is fear. Because independence is our source of meaning, our freedom is distressed because there is no foundation, because we decide what is essential, since we have no intrinsic purpose or intent (Being 38).

The house from which Ballard is pushed is the right place where he first feels lost. Ballard is trapped, lonely in this home, a poor child, after his mom's departure and his father's death. When we first see Ballard and is forcibly driven from his house, his house is being auctioned. Ballard was sentenced to freedom in his society. Ballard is left to validate what aspect of the system should be and what life should be without a dwelling, without a family, and with a wish to determine. As in Sartre's agony theory, Ballard's emancipation has a feeling of anguish. It must share the burden of who it is and the value of destiny. Since the house is the origin of Ballard's abandonment and the resulting deprivation of liberation, it is also the center of his anguish. David Holloway says "Lester's relation to the home is governed by an existential anguish which forces him to look with despair over and over at the root of his alienation," (129). Ballard returns home repeatedly, hoping that he wishes, by moving home, somehow reverse the distress he feels of his deliverance. Sartre would refer to it as bad faith. Sartre writes: "It follows that the one who has the lie to expose and the person who lies in the same entity means that I have to know the truth that is withheld from me as one who is misled as a deceiver. I will see the truth very specifically to cover details much more tightly" (103).

Bad Faith

Lester Ballard seeks to avoid his liberty by thinking he is merely his material existence (his being in himself), solely marked by his past and the truth of his life. He claims to be liable for his conduct in this context. He acted severely by rejecting his freedom to select and associate with himself and his future.

Bad faith is not a condition for Sartre; he maintains that initial intent is at the center of bad faith. Simultaneously, that looks to contradict my argument that Ballard is symbolic of lousy faith for his insanity and the subsequent behavior; the

reverse is real. McCarthy's image of Ballard as a man deeply misled by his psychosis is just a sign of Sartre's bad faith. Although a free citizen, Ballard dissociated himself from reality and refused a change to the rights he was under conviction. In this context, his psychosis takes away the weight of his independence. It relieves him of the responsibility to decide what to do with himself when the principles of the role prescribed by him, the criminal and the necrophilia, are set in stone in his acts. Jean Paul Sartre in *Existentialism is a Humanism* states, "If we define the situation of man as one of free choice, then every man who takes refuge in his passions, every man who produces a certain deterministic theory, works in bad faith" (47). If Sartre refers to the "deterministic theory," he believes that we are governed by a collection of rules and definitions that encapsulate what is in us. In Ballard's case, his dissociation from the truth is a role he takes, which compelled him first to become a voyeur, then a killer, and necrophilia to quench his misery of abandonment liberation and isolation.

Motive and Fall

The third section of the *Child of God* continues with the Sheriff's named Faith of Ballard's assassinations in Sevier County. At the start of the spring, Ballard's items left are discovered in the winter snow. Although the facts might condemn it, it is Ballard himself who triggers his loss. Ballard is searching for intervals of clarity in his madness blasts. Later he dreams he is gone. He daydreams of wearing a dried scalp like a scarecrow on his back come home in the skirts of his victims, conducting his plans to take him home and attempt to kill Greer. However, Ballard's attempt fails, and he has critically hurt himself. He is arrested in a hospital by the police, and a limb is lost. Like Sartre, McCarthy points out in this idea that anguish cannot be disguised or thwarted, correctly speaking. Our independence allows us to decide what importance we bring to the world and describe our identity. Ballard attempts to prevent this decision, but it is impossible to select, as Sartre suggests. If I do not choose, it is still an option.

Equally, bad faith is an effort to split the individual. Stirred up and alienated from the society, Ballard seeks to hide from the environment itself that does not accept him, from its abandonment and torments. Yet his ability to become part of civilization causes him to create his community in the sense of

low consciousness. Since he always flees his rights, he must choose for himself. Jean Paul Sartre in *Being and Nothingness* says, "I will be able to use bad faith later to hide... but bad faith is also a confession because it is an effort to escape the being I am" (261). However, one may live in a deep state of conscience, almost as Ballard lives in his folly; yet there are times of knowledge and relaxation.

Angry city-goers who scold him before saying where he has his victims would be kidnapped by Ballard. After taking them to the caves, five days underwater until emerging out of the ground, Ballard escapes them in the extreme darkness. Cooper understands that Ballard was born from the cavern, but she concludes that it is the genuine terror born in such shelters. By contrast, Ballard's regeneration is best adapted to being emblematic of an epiphany when he believes that he lost his psychosis. Ballard stumbles on the lane in the darkness, watching children wait in their seats on the church busses. When Ballard saw the faces of kids, McCarthy in *Child of God* says: "fix the child's facial image to the boyhood of him in his mind. This got him the fidgets" (191). At this time, the bottoms of Ballard experience his loneliness.

Sartre is concerned with a theory he named the "Look" of Living and Nothingness. We also realized that we are discarded in the cosmos and, therefore, doomed to our freedom by being capable of producing a definition that we want in the environment. Still, even others are involved in the world. As a consequence, I am not only the revealer of nature but also the revealer. Via their lives, I am introduced to everyone. However, I am not the focus of my being; instead, I focus on another's consciousness. Essentially, the world as a human being I am emotionally conscious of.

Then through my consciousness, I demonstrate the world. But since I am only a target of other citizens' consciousness, they disclose factual information about me without respect to my desire. Ballard is unreflectively engaged in the *Child of God* path in the cosmos. He is fascinated with his world, viewing himself only from the first person's point of view. They are all connected to Ballard, and they just matter in the light of what he does. The Look to which Sartre refers, though, is a time in which I understand that my own subjective life has become a part of someone else's being. I am sure of

myself and what I do when this happens. I do not experience myself as someone until the other person looks at me. Jean Paul Sartre in *Being and Nothingness* says: "But it only suffices if the Other sees me that I should be what I am" (262). We can only identify ourselves and embrace ourselves as what we are from another human. "I can only look at myself as a third party when there are people in the universe", says Steven Crowell, but it shows how disconnected I am from the component of my being: who I am in an empirical context can only initially be revealed by the other.

Redemption

He feels the look in the bus windscreen when Ballard recognizes the boy's profile. He not only sees the appearance of the boy, but he still sees himself. Ballard is conscious of himself from a third person, not merely as an imaginary and disconnected cause of his being, but as an entity accompanying him in the environment. Ballard is prepared because Ballard feels the Look, to know himself with what he is. Because he looks like himself, he also has remorse, like I mentioned, the resurrection of Ballard from the grotto epiphany, instead of horror. Sartre writes "Shame today... It is self-shame; it remembers that I am the person the Other looks at and judges... It is me. That is me. My mistake is a compromise. I do not believe I want it to refuse for a moment" (97).

Therefore "shame is a near bond between herself and myself," according to Sartre. By this, he suggests that an object recognizes a component of its existence by fault. However, shame is not an inherent reflection mechanism, part of a being cannot be grasped, and shame may be experienced through self-reflection. In the lonely forests, Ballard does not experience much guilt as he copulates with the victims of his insanity. He should not evaluate himself or condemn himself for his conduct. He stays in his deeds instead. In this case, watching the Other makes an intercession between Ballard and himself. Ballard might feel remorse as he looked on, but that is because he gave fidgets. Jean Paul Sartre in *Being and Nothingness* notes, "As I appear to the Other, I am ashamed of myself" (222). Ballard evaluates himself as being an individual regardless of another's becoming an item against the other.

When a boy's face comes across from the windshield of a church bus, we will see a change from Ballard's psychoticism

and how generous he has achieved. Hereabouts we understand that Ballard wakes from his bad faith. In fact, Ballard's lousy faith does not mean that Ballard does not have the opportunity to move to the condition in good faith. A person could lie in terrible faith, writes Jean Paul Sartre in *Being and Nothingness*, which does not imply he has an abrupt awakening to cynics and good faith (50). After seeing the boy on the bus, Ballard reverts to the hospital with marks of his wellbeing, risen from nature, "swaddled in outsized overalls and covered all over with red mud" (192). He describes the nurse he will be there successfully, delivering himself to the officers. He is brought to a state mental facility where Ballard never gets convicted. He dies of pneumonia. Ballard's body is transferred to a medical hospital, and there he is, deafened, removed, dispersed, cut together. After his body was finished, the students were taken his body to a cemetery outside of the town and gradually became a part of the society he longed for; Ballard was "scraped from the table into a plastic bag."

Conclusion

The *Child of God* is not, although bleak, exuding nihilism, as McCarthy critics say. Instead, McCarthy presents the student with an incredibly detailed knowledge of the existential philosophies of abandonment, sovereignty, anguish, and unfaith. Although the novel does not offer moral options or provide a point on what morality should be, it is not nihilistic. Instead, *Child of Heaven* leads readers to McCarthy's analysis of existential theory. McCarthy introduces a villain to the scholar that can be viewed across both accounts as reprehensible. We would like Lester Ballard because we are lost, like him, without a warrant or reason in a universe. Similarly, the consequence of our abandonment causes us agony, and we are doomed to being free. It is like Ballard that we are in constant torture, and we need to decide the purpose and value of the world. Our strong responsibility to construct meaning and importance on our shoulders is beyond any other foundation but our freedom. When his folly punishes Ballard to deepest depravity, McCarthy uses the madness of Ballard as an explanation of how we should take our liberties in poor conscience knowingly and freely. Whether that is a response from McCarthy, it is unique when we are alienated by reality and are distinct from us and all of humankind that we obstruct our freedom, as we live with a bad conscience. This idea will

impregnate McCarthy's book *Blood Meridian*; likewise, McCarthy would include a more thorough study of the ethics developed by Sartre's protagonist existential philosophy.

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