

No country for old men research paper essay sample

[Law](#), [Crime](#)



Cormac McCarthy's novel, *No Country for Old Men*, enlightens the life of Llewellyn Moss, a welder and Vietnam veteran, who happens to stumble upon several murdered bodies, a sufficient supply of cocaine, and two million dollars of cartel drug money. Moss decides to seize the money and consequently sets off a chase for his life against the old hand sheriff Ed Tom Bell and hired psychopathic killer Anton Chigurh. However, McCarthy essentially exploits Moss' and Chigurh's escapade only as a subplot and ultimately conveys a deeper meaning. The novelist heavily relies on Bell's failure to reconcile his morals of the approach crime used to take years before. Through analyzing the characters, moral relativism, and the apocalyptic theme, Bell's grievances begins to seem more agreeable as the novel progresses. Symbolically, Chigurh represents destruction that may soon overcome a current society. With the obsession of worldly items, people begin to lose all sense of integrity with the strong demand for desired wishes. Shipali Sharma justifies with, " the Greed of possessing materialistic things and the intense desire to have a luxurious life by any possible means leads a person to follow this track of crime" (Sharma).

As for Chigurh's character, he will execute a ruthless killing spree just for the return of the stolen money. In addition, Chigurh's yearning for control ignites his motive for the countless murders. According to a recent article about criminal psychology, " The criminal usually attacks weak victims who are unarmed in order to be in control and to feel superior" (Radwan). For instance, the " Coin Flip" scene shows the mercifulness killer Anton Chigurh put the life of a gas station owner up against a flip of a coin. The reader can easily see how McCarthy sets up Chigurh as a warped world view that

remains consistent throughout the entire novel. This profoundly dialogued scene opens with the gas station owner asking an innocent question about the weather; however, Chigurh quickly twists the exchange into a struggle for life or death. After a short swap of words, the owner realizes the simple conversation is starting to become chilling. As the scene progresses, the proprietor answers a question with, " Proprietor: This [gas station] was my wife's father's place.

Chigurh: You married into it" (McCarthy 54). Chigurh is offended from the lack of control the owner has over his own life by the owner marrying into a money orientated item, the gas station. While Chigurh is aggressive of gaining what he wants from life, the owner sits back and takes advantage of other people's hard work. As Chigurh grows weary, he takes a coin from his pocket and flips it and allows destiny to decide his life. The proprietor calls the coin correctly and unknowingly wins every possible aspect in his life in that single moment. Yet, Chigurh believes he is not the decider of life or death, but instead an instrument of fate. The fate people brought upon themselves for the lack of power, a fate that leads the gas station owner to an inevitable conference with Chigurh. This scene spurs the debate between free will and predestination. Chigurh's coin flipping settles what the victim will come across next, whether it is life or death. It can now be assumed there are factors, in which it cannot be avoided because it is predetermined.

On the other hand, his encounter with Carla Jean Moss contradicts predestination. Carla Jean Moss swears, " You dont have to do this" and, therefore, does not call the coin (McCarthy 257). This does not deter Chigurh

and he shoots her, showing in some cases, someone still has a choice on how a commodity will finish. Moral relativism, the philosophized notions that right and wrong are not absolute values, but instead personalized according to the individual and his or her circumstances or cultural orientation, crafts Bell as an eyewitness of crime's evolution. The novel questions if the man who murders without remorse, but does so with a moral code, or drug dealers, whose only interest is drugs and money, or the theft, who thieves the money, more evil.

When people feel the need to use moral judgment to answer such questions, they face many conflicting dilemmas. As stated in Steven Lukes' Moral Relativism, "One is the thought that there are actions and modes of behavior that are right and others that are wrong universally..." (Lukes). Yet, those right or wrong values can differ from person to person. Chigurh even creates a philosophy for himself, as evil as it seems, which transcends money and drugs into some sort of creed. As well, Bell frequently recalls past experiences, which makes him believe crime has been distorted over the years. One observation was a survey on the complications a number of schools faced around the country in the 1930s:

And the biggest problems they could name was things like talkin in class and runnin in the hallways. Chewin gum. Copyin homework. Things of that nature. So they got one of them forms that was blank and printed up a bunch of em and sent em back out to the same schools. Forty years later. Well, here come the answers back. Rape, arson, murder. Drugs. Suicide. (McCarthy 196)

The clear-cut answer shocked Bell and made him accept that the world will fall to ruin sooner or later. Theories also conspire regarding the reason criminals commit crimes. Some fault genetics, such as Cesare Lombroso, "... who in 1876 promoted the theory of ' anthropological determinism' that essentially stated that criminality was inherited and that someone ' born criminal' could be identified by physical defects..." (Bryant). Nevertheless, the examination of the most infamous names in history, such as, Adolf Hitler or, more-recently, James Holmes, both demonstrated promising futures. Until the death of a loved one or the failure of meeting a brilliant academic expectation they suddenly snapped into the heartless murderers the public currently perceives the two. The callous and coldblooded acts the two took upon their victims are distinguished as the most horrid deeds an individual can commit to another. However, through the killers' eyes, in order to purge the populace, their proceedings were to rescue humanity from what they considered appalling. Therefore, their interpretation of moral code is a great deal diverse than the conventional behavior.

Countries as well have dissimilar sets of legislature within their boundaries. Some laws are shared within all countries, for instance, murder and theft, although the meaning may differ from country to country. As said by Alex Woolf, "...there are other types of activities, such as drug use, gambling, and prostitution, that are crimes in some countries but not in others" (Woolf 5). Ultimately, people vary by morals.

McCarthy demonstrates another theme, in which, if given the chance, humans are capable of doing evil acts and the freedom to do what they wish.

The general idea is that the evils of human nature are much more prevalent in current society than first considered. With the words of Robert E. Howard, "Civilized men are more discourteous than savages because they know they can be impolite without having their skulls split, as a general thing" (Howard).

In addition, Nihilism, or the rejection of all religious and moral principles, often in the belief that life is meaningless, is reoccurring throughout the novel since it exists in Chigurh. The reader is presented with a character that has the will to kill anyone who inconveniences him, Chigurh, while the other, Moss, is willing to sacrifice a peaceful life in order to obtain material gain. Chigurh carries his role flawlessly, he obliterates everyone who stands in his way, gets the money and vanishes; Moss not so much. Lastly, each character represents a different evil in the world, an evil that can effortlessly be identified and another that is being acceptable within a society. A country swarmed with crimes and with citizens breaking fixed laws without hesitation, it creates a catastrophic prediction of what future societies will come to endure.

No matter what happens, the cycles of violence will never cease to exist - it cannot be killed or put away by means of action. The fact that Chigurh lives and cleanly escapes law enforcement, represents the repercussions of crime and the good does not necessarily win in the end. Bell remarks how the world has drastically evolved into a dark and frightening place that is dangerous and impulsive and he cannot be a part of it anymore. This epiphany is Bell's ultimate reason for retirement. The world is not what it

used to be, hence one meaning for the title No Country for Old Men, and Bell witnessed the statement first-handed.