

Suttree Study Guide

Suttree by Cormac McCarthy

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Plot Summary

Cormac McCarthy's "Suttree" is a reading experience that stretches far beyond ordinary plot, structure and literary flow. With words that ebb, flow, tumble and roll—some valid and some concocted—McCarthy takes his reader through the moods, dreams, and dark inner life of his protagonist, Bud Suttree, as well as the inner life and underbelly of Knoxville, Tennessee. The despair of a small community of broken people living haphazardly without hope for the future is exaggerated by the unimaginable filth, corruption, and pollution of a river town that takes no pity on poverty, but perpetuates it with constant reminders of lack and the lure of alcohol.

Cornelius "Bud" Suttree lives in a broken-down houseboat on the river where he fishes for carp and catfish to make a meager living. As poor as his circumstances are, he lives better than some of his friends, with a little heat and a bed. A conversation with his uncle reveals that Suttree's father married "beneath" his station, Suttree's mother being a housekeeper. He is estranged from his family entirely, and part of his mental anguish is rooted in his knowledge that his identical twin died at birth. He grew up as a privileged child in a large house, now abandoned, that he occasionally returns to at different times in the story.

Suttree spends some time at the "workhouse," or county jail, and breaks down when his mother comes to visit. He meets a dim-witted boy in jail named Gene Harrogate, who will re-enter Suttree's life more than once through the course of the story. Rowing himself down the river, Suttree spends some time camping near a poor family with whom he becomes acquainted. The young daughter begins to visit him in the night, and Suttree, perhaps, falls in love with her. But, a rockslide takes her life and that of her mother, and Suttree quietly rows away. During this period of time, Suttree meets identical twins who can read one another's thoughts and whose lives are always in sync, even when they are not together. This is significant because Suttree's life is an enigma. He is well-spoken and kind, but associates with drunks and thieves, and lives a sad, aimless life. Reference is made several times to the loss of his twin at birth and it is clear this has affected his life.

After the death of his young son, Suttree's brave attempts to avoid alcohol fail. He gets seriously injured in a bar brawl but leaves the hospital.

Alcoholism and depression send him on a lonely retreat into the mountains where he almost perishes from exposure and hunger. Returning to his houseboat he returns to his old ways, passing time with his friends in the bars, doing a little fishing, and simply existing. He gets involved in a relationship with a prostitute, who regularly leaves town and brings money back to him. They buy a car and, although saturated with alcohol, they spend some time in some semblance of a routine in a rented apartment. The woman is not mentally well and they part ways, with Suttree returning to his houseboat.

Suttree has several encounters with family members, including a derelict uncle, his father, his mother, and a kind old aunt. In his own way he tries to piece together the



puzzle of his pain. However, it seems that there are many elements and, in the end, too many for him to sort through. After coming close to death from typhoid fever, Suttree goes back to McAnally Flats, which is being torn down and destroyed to make way for urban development. In his usual, detached manner, Suttree walks away from what has been his home.

A true "slice of life" story, this novel is poignant, sad, and oddly comical. Jumbling his copious words, omitting punctuation, using obscure terms, and often writing more in the manner in which a human brain thinks, McCarthy gives us a glimpse of meaning behind the lives of people who seem to waste their time on earth with substance, despair, and drama, and one man's choice to join them, at least temporarily.



Pages 1—62

Pages 1—62 Summary

The most disgusting, sewage-clogged, filthy, polluted and disrespected river is where Suttree casts his lines and pulls out carp and catfish, which he sells for a meager living. Everything about this area is congested with filth. Suttree sees a rescue boat pulling a rotting corpse out of the water, a suicide jumper, but he retrieves his fish and takes one to an old ragpicker who lives in a cavern. Back on his cot in the houseboat he bought after being released from jail, Suttree contemplates his heart, which he describes as being in the right place but "weathershrunk and loveless. The skin drawn and split like an overripe fruit." Suttree recalls his grandfather's death, and recalls enjoying his grandfather's company. Suttree's father warned him that real life takes place where people are taking responsibility, not in the streets. He seems to remember his dead twin, although it is more likely his imagination.

Suttree's uncle, his mother's brother, pays him a visit. The reader learns that Suttree's father married beneath him by marrying a housekeeper. Suttree feels that his wealthier father has contempt for all relatives on that side of the family, and Suttree seems to question his father's right to live the way he does. He and his uncle part on an unpleasant note. Suttree goes to see his friends. Jimmy Smith, who drinks whiskey and has rotten teeth, runs a bar in a building that once was beautiful but is now in ruins. Suttree finds his friend, J-Bone, and they discuss the slimy caves that exist under Knoxville, left over from the Civil War. A friend named Nigger visits and they share homemade whiskey. Suttree goes out into the town, which is shabby, with flooded gutters and homeless alcoholics in the alleys.

An unknown woman is visited by her lazy son, who refuses to help her with household chores. He makes a trip out to the watermelon fields and uses them for sex. Again, waiting for dusk, he sneaks out into the field, but the farmer who owns the field has guessed why his watermelons are being destroyed, and shoots the young man with buckshot. The young man, Harrogate, now in jail, has never seen a shower, much less taken one. The jailer sprays him for bugs, Harrogate is clearly a little boy and is even too small for prison clothes. He meets Suttree, who shares some tobacco with him and calls him Gene. Harrogate says he was caught for stealing watermelons. His naivete gets him into trouble with the other prisoners and he gets assigned to kitchen duty, which he hates. Eventually the inmates find out about the watermelons. Harrogate steals some fermented orange juice, vomits on the table and a fight gets started, involving the scrappy Red Callahan and a man named Slusser. Harrogate decides he has to escape, even though Slusser's attempt brought him back with a pick attached to his leg.

Suttree's mother comes to visit him in jail and she begins to cry. He is unable to talk to her because he is crying so hard. He gets released a few days later and sees Harrogate being brought back to prison with a pick on his leg.



Pages 1—62 Analysis

It is noticeable in this chapter that Suttree is not quite like his friends. He calls people by their first names, washes his hands before eating, and his language is more casually polished. For example, he calls his uncle a "maudlin sot." More than once there are allusions to clocks, or time ticking away, which reminds him of his grandfather's clock. Also repeated is the phrase, "Come back." Suttree recalls a dream that features his father with a knife, but turns out to be his son.

The detailed, minute descriptions of the town tells the reader that, at some level, Suttree is quite alive and conscious but his thoughts are dark and he primarily notices the uglier aspects of the town. However, passages such as, "Life in small places, narrow crannies. In the leaves, the toad's pulse. The delicate cellular warfare in a waterdrop" reveal his intricate thinking and the sensitivity of a man who is hurting. A telling passage says, "Wrap me in the weathers of the earth, I will be hard and hard. My face will turn rain like the stones."

One knows that Suttree is broken-hearted from the descriptive contemplation of his heart, but one only has clues as to why. The river water, with roiling condoms and rotting corpses, represents life at several levels in this story. It provides nourishment, but is also full of ugliness and destruction.

The young man who is violating the farmer's watermelons is a pathetic figure, as illustrated by the farmer's seeming regret over shooting him. He is not very bright and Gene Harrogate is headed for trouble without a doubt. He befriends Suttree, who obviously feels sorry for him. Suttree has a big heart, but he does not try to stop the boy from his planned escape.

Seeing his mother, her aging hands and the sadness about her, completely breaks Suttree down emotionally. It is implied that her hopes and dreams have been dashed as well, as he sees her as the "anguish of mortality." What causes his sadness over his mother is not quite clear, but it may be guilt.



Pages 63-86

Pages 63-86 Summary

Suttree finds his boat half sunken and his traps full of fish. After cleaning them, he goes to a water spigot on the side of a warehouse to shave and bathe. He comes back and confronts a stray cat who is trying to steal his fish. He goes to busy downtown Knoxville and sells his fish to two different vendors, earning a little more than two dollars. Joining his friends, J-Bone (Jim Boneyard) and Hoghead for lunch, the group goes together to another place called the Huddle which is frequented by whores, homosexuals, and a blind man named Richard. Red Callahan has been released from jail and asks if Worm can be readmitted to the establishment.

After some crude exchanges they engage in bowling, and then go on to stop at other taverns, getting drunker as they go. Suttree gets sick but there are two others at the vomit trough, so he vomits in the corner. There are comments made about Suttree's womanizing and a prostitute tries to entice him; he studies her, but is not interested in her offer. They move on to other bars. He ends up in the home of Hoghead's black family, having thrown up everywhere. He goes in and out of consciousness.

Someone walks him to a car and he finally awakens on the ground which is weedy and trashy, with the sun having baked his vomit on him. Suttree makes his way through the slums of Knoxville in search of his friend, Jimmy. Telling the policeman his name is Jerome Johnson, he is taken to jail. He uses the alias of Jerome Johnson and claims his identification has been stolen. When Suttree finally comes around enough to ask the jailer to call his friend Jim, he finds out that Jim and his younger brother, Junior, are in the same jail in cells right behind him. After a nightmarish night in jail, crying out in his sleep, Suttree continues to have hideous daydreams and visions. He sees a man, perhaps himself, flayed and skinned, and perhaps the most frightening part is that he perceives the perpetrators, or surgeons, to be freely moving about the world.

Pages 63-86 Analysis

McCarthy imparts an ambiance of the docks in summer

and the busy, industrial dirty part of the river where Suttree lives that is somehow not altogether unpleasant. Knoxville's main street on a warm morning is colorful and interesting, full of a variety of people, smells, and sights.

Suttree's friends are all he has, but they are not helpful to him in the sense that they continue to encourage him to drink. Their coarse and disgusting sense of humor and language are a source of humor and pleasure for Suttree, who knows little of pleasure. They are the people he considers his friends even though they are not necessarily concerned with his well-being, being too drunk themselves.



This section of the books is a nauseating journey through a binge. In his dreamlike state, Suttree again imagines being blessed in church (shriving), and the reader feels his regret. The images in Suttree's inebriated mind are gory and frightening, and his level of alcoholism is severe at this time. He repeats snippets of poetry in his stupor, again reminding the reader that he comes from an entirely different world and has somehow ended up with this lifestyle of despair. In his mind there are words such as "unto my death," and "sweet nothingness betide me." A vision which symbolizes his hopelessness is when he meets with a bent cobbler who tells him that his soles "are far too far gone," and that he must "forget these and find others now," McCarthy cleverly interchanges "sole" with "soul."

His final vision in this section is disturbing, since the flayed, peeled man is obviously him and he can see the demons responsible for his condition. This terrifies him more than his butchered condition. McCarthy uses a real scene Suttree had noticed—a hawk nailed to a wall—to segue into this vision of a flayed man. This stream of consciousness kind of writing mimics the way our brains work, moving from one thought to the next.

It is interesting how McCarthy starkly describes the smallest details, such as the bucket that clangs to the floor in the jail. It is not clear whether Suttree is in a heightened state of consciousness, or whether it is just McCarthy's descriptive style that makes the small details seem harshly real.



Pages 87 - 106

Pages 87 - 106 Summary

Suttree had poured kerosene on a patch of tar on the road and has returned to scrape up the resulting pitch that he uses to mend his boat. His friend, Daddy Watson, is a railroad employee who wears a pocket watch. Suttree agrees to use any remaining tar to fix the leaking caboose roof. Suttree studies the moths and asks one what it wants.

The filth of this polluted river, including garbage, soap, and sewage, is contrasted with the elegant sounds of a riverboat passing, its occupants living at an entirely different level, but one that Suttree seems to recognize.

Gene Harrogate is out of prison and wandering. He comes across Daddy Watson, who does not tell him where Suttree is. Another of Suttree's friends, a junkman, refuses to tell him where Suttree is, but offers him a job taking apart a vehicle in which people were killed in an accident. After finding a human eyeball in the car, Harrogate sets off again, finding his way to Suttree's neighborhood where he meets the old ragpicker, who also refuses to tell him where Suttree is. Harrogate travels on past the end of the paved roads, and into the black slums where he can see the university and nice homes as if through a "bunghole." He remains, poking through the alleys and empty buildings of Knoxville, reading graffiti, playing with a diseased rat, and observing the poor people, who tend to leer at him and suspect him. There is a stark contrast for Harrogate, being in a black neighborhood, and his fear of and prejudice against blacks has already been revealed. The sad and downtrodden sights are interesting to Harrogate, since he is like a child seeing new things for the first time. He scavenges some dropped food and sleeps in the lawn of a church. He is beaten on the head for trying to steal a peach, and bitten on the leg by a beggar with no legs. He uses gum on the end of a stick to steal a blind man's coins. He finally gets some information at a pool hall, and after being cursed by an crazy evangelist, seems to be making his way closer to Suttree's houseboat when he meets Suttree's one-eyed friend, Ab.

Pages 87 - 106 Analysis

This is a rather calm segment of time for Suttree, as he mends his boat and observes the filthy river going by. The elegant, polished, and civilized lifestyle of the riverboat passes Suttree, leaving behind only a murmur of wind, implying that this is a life he has left for good, but one with which his is familiar. The question posed to the moth is really a question he poses to himself. He does not know what he wants, but there is a definite sense that Suttree has chosen this down and dirty lifestyle as opposed to the more refined and elegant one. The reference to the moth's "ermine shako" connotes something military, but the reader does not know what.



Harrogate is a wandering child, fascinated by the dark side of life and seemingly without much of a conscience. He is referred to in this chapter as "country mouse," and when he works for the junkman, McCarthy calls him "small apprentice." He is truly no more than a boy who is going down the wrong road, but whose curiosity and lack of morals are his guiding forces. His wandering trip through Knoxville on foot is an opportunity to see many aspects of life, but if he is confused or amazed by any of it, the reader does not know. Harrogate is somewhat simple. What frightens him the most in this chapter is the evangelist, who accuses him of being a spawn of the devil.



Pages 107 - 136

Pages 107 - 136 Summary

Suttree's friend who owns the neighboring bar, a black woman named Ab Franklin, may have syphilis. There is a reference made to falling in the street, Jena, and another time. It is not clear whether Suttree might have syphilis as well, since he seems to know the technical terms for Ab's condition. Suttree leaves Ab's and runs into Hoghead, who discusses a recent incident of a black woman shooting at him. He visits a store and sees his friend Oceanfrog and Trippin' Through the Dew, both transvestites, as well as Gatemouth and Jabbo. They discuss the crazy evangelist, who has supposedly cut off his own testicles, and Trippin' Through the Dew comments on how attractive Suttree is as he leaves to spend some time at Ab's.

Suttree is obsessed with uniqueness, and still sees his tiny brother's dead, swaddled body in his dreams.

Harrogate has arrived and is wearing a pair of boxer shorts as a shirt and pastry-cook's white stiff trousers, cuffed almost up to his knees. Suttree gives him some clothes. Harrogate makes a home for himself under the viaduct, stealing a mattress, some construction lanterns, and some food. He traps pigeons for stew, and plans to sell them to "niggers," who he thinks will buy anything. Harrogate is proud of his new living space and plans to fix it up.

Suttree is boating downriver and studies the fine homes on the north side, remembering his childhood. After recalling a childhood conversation with a turtlehunter, Suttree spots the old mansion and gets out of his boat, following a footpath. He talks with a man whose fourteen-year-old grandniece, among others, is being baptized in the river, and who tells Suttree that his baptism was not valid.

He travels on, finally reaching the home of his aunt Martha, who calls him Buddy. Suttree looks through family photos and asks his aunt about the people. Seeing a photo of himself as a baby, he is shaken when his aunt tells him that his mother wished she had all boys. He sees himself as an artifact of prior races. Suttree recalls his mother's funeral and his inability to cry. Suttree pays his uncle Clayton twenty dollars he has owed him, and Clayton offers him a job, which he declines. Clayton is a drinker, like others in the family. His aunt and uncle offer to give Suttree a ride to his boat, but he insists on walking.

Later, after accepting a ride from a stranger, Suttree goes into the huge old house, apparently where he was raised. It is deteriorating and vandalized. He has a poignant memory of his aristocratic grandfather saying that they had witnessed something against which time would not prevail. There are images of huge formal meals and hunts, and an invasion and perhaps a slaughter, but it is not clear. He sees himself as a

"reprobate scion of doomed Saxon clans," and sees the "keep out" sign turned backward.

Pages 107 - 136 Analysis

This chapter is filled with symbolism and implications, but is difficult to piece together. McCarthy lets us know that Suttree has come from a background that is half aristocratic and half commonplace. Although Suttree is consumed with understanding his family and his heritage, he is confused as to who he is and what lifestyle he really wants to choose. He is well-spoken compared to everyone he meets, including his maternal aunt and uncle. He seems to have a dignity about him that the reader does not see in the people who surround him. He is searching for something and is consumed by something that keeps him from finding it; perhaps the guilt over his stillborn twin brother and wondering why it was not him, instead. His interest in uniqueness is a puzzle—he knows that there was someone who had the potential to be exactly like him but who didn't make it.

Harrogate is a somewhat dim-witted young man, although slightly clever as well. Having no awareness, even of how he looks, he naively goes through the city like an observant rascal. References in this section are to flowers blooming; Harrogate does not seem to see the filth and corruption of the city as Suttree does. When he finally finds him, Suttree treats Harrogate well, giving him decent clothing so that he won't look like a clown. Harrogate has had no guidance as a child, and therefore is not terribly principled. Since Suttree was kind to him in prison, he wants to connect with him and goes to great lengths to find him.



Pages 137 - 161

Pages 137 - 161 Summary

Harrogate's home is becoming more established and he has begun to find clever ways to survive. He has a hot wire rigged up to fry pigeons when they touch it, but Suttree points out to him that it could kill someone. Harrogate steals a loose "shoat," or wild boar, perhaps as he has done as a child, after a harrowing chase. He recklessly butchers the hog and begins trying to skin it. When the pig's owner confronts him, he tells Harrogate he wants him to work off the price he would have gotten for the hog or he will "law" him. He works off his debt and stays on at the small farm, reading comic books and eating diner, hoping to see the two young black neighbor girls. Visiting with Suttree, he confesses he burned down a house at the age of ten. Harrogate says he was always mean, even when he did have a father.

Fall has come, bringing bitter memories of old times and dead year to Suttree. The old ragman asks Suttree to set him on fire if he comes and finds him dead, to which Suttree agrees. The ragman admits he always figured there was a God but just "never did like him."

Suttree meets his friend, J-Bone, who tells Suttree his father has been trying to reach him. J-Bone tells Suttree that his little boy has died. Suttree is devastated and boards a train, wondering what the boy's mother and her parents will say to him. He remembers taking his child to a carnival. When he arrives at his "abandoned" wife's home, she asks him to go away. Her mother attacks Suttree and her father hits him on the head with a shoe. When the man comes back out of the house with a shotgun, Suttree runs, hitching a ride with a stranger. He washes up his wounds at a pool hall and finds out where his son will be buried. He finds the cemetery and, hiding, watches the pallbearers carry his son's small coffin; his son was apparently named after him. He feels someone touch him, but no one is there. When everyone leaves, he kneels at his son's open grave. Instead of waiting for the tractor, Suttree gets a spade and fills the grave himself.

As he leaves the cemetery he is picked up by the local sheriff. The sheriff mentions that Suttree is not liked by anyone there, and he wants to give him \$5 to get on a bus, noting that Suttree is supposed to be real smart. The sheriff is a friend of Suttree's former father-in-law and wants him to have some peace. He warns Suttree not to come back. He mentions that he has learned something from Suttree and would never send his daughters to the university because of it.

Suttree gets as far as Stanton, Tennessee. He buys whiskey and finds a church with an open cellar to drink and sleep in. On the road again, he has a chance encounter with another hitchhiker, who jumps him for money, but Suttree escapes and continues walking down the road.



Pages 137 - 161 Analysis

Harrogate is a reckless kid, newly on his own, with no common sense. He is surely headed for more trouble with his interest in the young girls, his careless inventions, and his propensity for taking whatever he wants.

The reasons for his son's death are not made clear in this chapter, but Suttree is clearly heartbroken over this. There is an implication that Suttree may have been a professor at some time, based on the sheriff's comments about the university and the fact that Suttree is supposed to be "real smart." The sheriff will never send his daughters to the university, which implies that perhaps Suttree did something inappropriate with a student; however, this is not clear. But, he is clearly so broken that something terrible had to have happened to cause him to abandon his wife and children. He seems to know that everyone in town, especially his in-laws, hate him and he feels he deserves it.

The Sheriff, although he also hates Suttree, shows some compassion for him by not locking him up, by giving him bus money, and by expressing sympathy over Suttree's son. Suttree's sorrow is palpable, and there appears to be nothing he can do to rectify whatever has taken place in the past.



Pages 162 - 194

Pages 162 - 194 Summary

The old black coal man comes to collect his money from Suttree's houseboat and delivers some coal. It is six degrees below zero and his eggs are frozen, so Suttree sets out for the little store on Front Street, and runs into Jabbo and Bungalow warming themselves by the stove. It is Thanksgiving. Jabbo, who has been taking pills, accuses Suttree of not wanting to drink whiskey after a black man has drunk from the bottle. Suttree goes on to a restaurant and borrows a dime for coffee from his friend, Blind Richard. Suttree goes to check on Gene Harrogate, who is blue with cold. Although they have no money, Suttree takes Gene to Walgreen's for turkey dinner and sends him on to Rufus's. Suttree finds the ragman and arranges for a room for him so he doesn't freeze to death, and goes on to Rufus's, only to find Harrogate very drunk. Suttree continues to refuse a drink and leaves. He finds a streetcar token on the ground and boards the streetcar, riding it to the end of the line. On his streetcar ride he observes the seamy, sad lives of the poor and sees his own reflection among them. Not having money or a token to get back, he begins a long unhappy walk home in the bitter cold.

Stopping to visit with Daddy Watson, Suttree listens to exaggerated tales of train wrecks, most of them imagined. Comical Daddy Watson seems to have a penchant for scary train stories and tells them with relish.

Suttree, J-Bone, Sharpe, and Cabbage are sleeping in a car for warmth, having lit a fire in the back floor. Waking up around five, they go to the Signal Cafe for a beer. More friends joined them from McAnally flats, and they end up at a roadhouse that night. Billy Ray Callahan steals from purses of girls who are dancing, and a huge fight breaks out between those from McAnally Flats and everyone else. The bouncer knocks McCulley out, and someone hits Suttree over the head with a floor buffer. Bleeding from his eyes and ears, he makes his way to the door, seeing a dead body on his way. Someone hits Suttree again and he wakes in the hospital with a broken finger, three broken ribs, and missing and broken teeth. Suttree feels he is dying and can see himself from some other perspective as he lay with the doctor stitching his head. He is moved to a ward of elderly patients and dreams of his friends watching him from a boat. He learns his skull is fractured and becomes friends with a flirtatious nurse, who lets him know the nurses are all attracted to him. Suttree gets up, finds some orderly clothing, and leaves the hospital. He goes to the Corner Grill tavern to be with his friends.

Daddy Watson visits Suttree at his boathouse, asking Suttree if he couldn't see the floorbuffer coming. Suttree notes, again, that Daddy thinks a lot about death, just like the ragpicker. The next morning Suttree goes out to the river to run his fishing lines, which were full of dead fish. He cuts them loose and rebaits the lines. The sky is gray and the river is always the same.



Pages 162 - 194 Analysis

The coldness of the winter affects everything, including the need for the McAnally Flats men to drink. The reader can assume that Suttree is in incredible physical shape given that he walks long distances and holds up under some extremely hard circumstances. His physique might also explain the nurses' attraction to him. Suttree has tried not to drink since returning from his son's funeral, but cannot sustain it. Daddy Watson is hilariously in another world that consists of train wrecks, spectacular danger, and dramatic death. He and Suttree are close, checking on one another's well being.

Suttree's attempts to abstain from alcohol are met with by ridicule by his friends and he is offered a drink everywhere he goes. It seems true that even though these people cannot afford a way to stay warm, they are able to manage a way to keep enough liquor around to stay consistently drunk as a way to emotionally offset their poverty.

One might say that Suttree is influenced by his derelict friends, but they also rely on him, perhaps because he is intelligent and he is one of them, in spite of his background. Although it is disgusting, there is something endearing about the relationship among the McAnally Flats drunks, most of whom go to jail over the fracas that lands Suttree in the hospital. The fact that Ulyss jokes on page 170 about another person falling victim to employment tells us that there is a culture here of unemployed people who perhaps do their best to stay that way.

It is interesting that Suttree will not stay and allow his injuries to be treated in the hospital, but it is implied that he returns to his houseboat because the river does not change, which gives him a sense of stability.

McCarthy lets us see, in Suttree's weaker moments, that Suttree has a rich literary education, since in times of distress he recalls passages and descriptions that he has either read or written in the past.



Pages 195 - 219

Pages 195 - 219 Summary

It is finally spring time. A comical goatman brings his wagon and entire flock into town and is asked to leave the area by a policeman. Suttree wakes to the sound of the goats' bleating and goes to see the goatman, who is apparently an evangelist. Suttree is curious and wants to touch the goats; he visits with the goatman, who is camped out with his wagon around a small fire. Suttree asks the goatman why Jesus wept, and the goatman tells him it was over folks who work on the sabbath, like Suttree, but then says he thinks Jesus wept over bringing Lazarus back from heaven to this vale of tears. Suttree promises to bring him some catfish, and the goatman invites him his Sunday afternoon sermon.

At Ab and Doll Jones's place, a derelict named Smokehouse discusses the settlement he might get for getting hit, deliberately, by a bus. Ab is laid up in bed, having been beaten up by policemen. He tells Suttree he has a good heart and to look out for his own, but Suttree says he has no "own." Ab talks about people who forget their friends once they feel they have made it, and tells Suttree about being shot by a white man who gets killed by someone else. Ab was accused of the murder and beaten by the police, his first "acquaintance of the wrath of the path." He got out of prison because the man's head was in a shoebox, being shown off by its murderer. Ab says he never killed anyone on purpose.

Suttree makes good on his promise to bring a fish to the goatman, offering to take six postcards featuring a photo of the goatman in lieu of money. The goatman tells Suttree if he got a goat he would never be lonely, but Suttree denies he is lonely.

Oceanfrog describes a crazy man, probably a murderer, running into a barbed wire fence and disappearing by the river. It is not clear who the crazy man is.

Harrogate notes that the dogs who are eating dead bats are being taken to the gas chamber, and learns the Board of Health is paying a dollar for every dead bat brought in because they think the bats are rabid. Gene devises a plan to use rat poison to kill bats, and buys two car hoods to weld together to make a boat. He uses it also as a shelter with young friends called the Vestal boys, with whom he roasts stolen chickens and shares lies.

Harrogate paddles his boat to Suttree's, but Suttree won't ride in it. Harrogate is having visions of great wealth, as he waits for evening and tries to shoot bats with his slingshot. When this doesn't work, he goes to a local chemist who refuses to sell him strychnine, so Gene asks Suttree to buy it for him. Suttree reluctantly buys the poison. Later that evening, as Harrogate floats out on the river, bats begin dropping everywhere. Harrogate scoops them from the surface of the water and leaves with his boat half full of them, putting them in a sack. He carries the sack of bats to the hospital the next day,



and is eventually told that they are not paying for bats that have been poisoned. Gene explains that he shot poisoned meat into the air, and charges the doctor \$1.25 to tell him the secret.

When Suttree goes to see him, Harrogate is planning a scheme to use the underground tunnels to rob a bank, and wants Suttree's help.

Pages 195 - 219 Analysis

In this section McCarthy provides his readers with a few laughs. The goatman is endearing, even though he may be a bit crazy. Harrogate, whom the reader knows is crazy, is always scheming, his imagined rewards growing larger all the time.

What one sees about Suttree in this section is that he is interested in human beings, accepting them at face value and showing respect to them, regardless of how misguided they may be. Although he does not attend the goatman's sermon, he does not judge him, but shows a simple curiosity about him and his beliefs. Goatman tells Suttree that "man doesn't always get what he fishes for," a symbolic reference to Suttree's restless pursuit of something unknown. Goatman's explanation that Jesus wept over bringing Lazarus back to this vale of tears seems to satisfy Suttree.

Although Harrogate lives his life independently, Suttree, in his own way, has taken Gene under his wing. He does not want to buy the poison for him, but respects his need to try these little schemes. He also sees the ridiculous boat and does not want to ride in it, but notes that it moves pretty well in the water. As Ab reminds him, Suttree has a good heart. Harrogate's hilarious quest for big money makes him not only a humorous character, but clearly portrays him as not very bright. The reader can assume, since Suttree is very bright, that this is another way of showing Suttree's ability to accept everyone, regardless of their personal deficits.



Pages 220 - 240

Pages 220 - 240 Summary

It is summer and there is a new Indian fisherman on the river named Michael. Suttree sees at Turner's stall an eighty-seven-pound catfish and stops one day to find out how Michael had caught such a huge fish. The Indian gives him a jar of foul-smelling bait that he eventually throws out because it is so rank. Paying a visit to Suttree, the Indian tells him that his boat was lost while he was in jail in town. He tells Suttree of a large black man who was in jail being beaten by cops (whom the reader might assume was Ab), and who did some damage himself to them. They find Michael's boat and they part. As Suttree rows along, he is hit on the head with a rock thrown from the shore, throwing him backward into his boat and causing him to lose an oar.

Suttree goes to Ab's house, concerned about his condition. Ab is holding a grudge against one cop in particular, named Quinn. He tells Suttree that Gene has been by trying to sell dressed pigeons, calling them "scobs." They agree Gene is a crazy mess. Ab asks Suttree to bring a woman called Miss Mother to him. Making his way through the country, Suttree finds the home of Miss Mother, a black dwarf. Her darkened shack contains vases, candlesticks, and other ornate objects, as well as photos of ancestors. She gets him some ice for his injured head and tells him that Ab only wants to kill his enemies. She refuses to go to Ab, but agrees he can come to see her.

Suttree returns to tell Ab she won't come. When Doll serves Suttree a hamburger before she serves her other customers, they complain, to which she responds that Suttree works for her. Doll tells him not to bring that witch, Miss Mother, around.

Michael summons Suttree to his boat the next day where he has caught a turtle. Michael beheads, skins and prepares the meat for a stew to share with Suttree, who has said earlier he doesn't even like fish. Suttree goes to a pool hall where he tries to speak in sign language to some deaf mutes who are playing checkers. He talks with someone named Jake, who apparently tried to rob an excursion boat the previous night. Jellyroll Kid is playing pool with Jake, using pills to track their points.

Suttree returns to Michael's camp, where Michael has a kettle on the fire. Suttree spends a pleasant evening with Michael, who gives him a good-luck pendant to keep with him. Michael wears a pair of plastic doll eyes around his neck, which he found inside a fish.

Pages 220 - 240 Analysis

Suttree's new relationship with Michael is interesting since Michael has presented him with some stiff competition in the sale of his fish. Suttree does not feel resentful, but only wants to get to know him. When Michael tells him about Ab's experience in jail, Suttree dabs at his eye, a clue that he loves Ab and is concerned for him.



Suttree is clearly a sociable person. He has many friends and does not exclude anyone from his life. His friends are apparently aware that he is educated; when Leonard, who has just tried to rob a boat, asks Suttree what a "yegg" is, he knows Suttree will know. Suttree often drinks milk throughout this story and, in this section, drinks chocolate milk. He drinks milk when he is not drinking alcohol, but the symbolism may be that he is nourishing himself through these encounters with his friends. Suttree grinned over the comment that high school boys were taking the pills at the pool hall. He is an observer of life, but certainly not a judge.

Miss Mother is perhaps clairvoyant, but strange, at the very least. The reader does not know if she practices voodoo or healing, but her refusal to help Ab is curious.



Pages 241 - 255

Pages 241 - 255 Summary

Suttree feels sure that Leonard was involved in the attempted robbery of the River Queen, since Leonard was reading the article and asked Suttree a question about it. Leonard says he didn't do that, but wants to discuss another matter. Leonard's mother draws welfare and medical benefits for Leonard's whole family, and his father draws unemployment benefits. However, his father has died and, since his mother stands to lose half her income, she has kept his father's body in the back room. The man died last December, and Leonard is worried about the warm weather coming on. Leonard once sold his mother's refrigerator to someone for \$15 for drinking money. He wants Suttree to help him dispose of his father's body in the river, but Suttree refuses.

Walking down Vine Street, he sees the body of a Negro woman washed up on the bank of the river. He is growing numb to the repeating scenes of the city, and feels as much a ghost as anything he sees around him. In the B&J he picks up a disgusting prostitute and takes her to his houseboat. In the middle of the night, Leonard appears with his father's body in the trunk of a "borrowed" car. Feeling he has no choice, Suttree tells the girl to either wait for him or walk home, and he leaves to meet Leonard so they can get the body into the boat. Out on the river, Leonard has locked chains around the corpse, and Suttree thinks they should say something religious, but instead they push the corpse off into the water.

Suttree goes to church in a state of drunkenness. He watches in his memory a scene of the priest casting holy water on people; the nuns holding candles, singing. He remembers setting a little boy's hair on fire, and remembers the little girls' "fraudulent piety." He thinks about his current life and doomed friends and smoke and coffee, and then about communion bread. He thinks about the people he has known here who live in a world of order, who moralize while black servants wait on them, and who, after eight years, had taught only primitive reading and writing to their students. The priest asks him if he wants to confess, but he says he was only resting. The priest vaguely recognizes him; Suttree tells him this is not God's house.

Pages 241 - 255 Analysis

Suttree truly does not want to become involved in this ugly business, but Leonard leaves him no choice. As in other circumstances, Suttree comes through and is a good friend.

In this section Suttree has slept with a wanton woman and helped dispose of an old man's body. His analytical mind is not religious, but his deeper subconscious is wracked with guilt, which is why he ends up in church. However, the reality of church and all its entrapments only push him further into his rejection of it. Suttree obviously has a



religious background that torments him when he gets involved with an awful scheme like Leonard's. In his mind, he weighs the value of the derelicts in their dirty, smoky cafes with the roaches, and compares it with the stiff, orderly, smug moralizers who scare children in the name of religion. He has spent plenty of time in this church, a thousand hours, but has not ever found it to be his home. Suttree was a "viceridden child, heart rotten with fear," who was terrified of his sins. He is a bitter renunciant of the church and yet is unable to break his bond with it, or let go of his guilt.



Pages 256 - 277

Pages 256 - 277 Summary

The old ragpicker starts his day looking through garbage bins in the alley to salvage anything he can eat or make into kindling. He finds bottles to redeem and anything he can sell. He tells Suttree that he came down this river in 1901 with a carnival. He saw a man be hanged for something he didn't do, and cyclones that picked up the river and set whole houses down where they didn't belong. He is sick of living and wants to die. Suttree asks him if he believes in God, but the ragpicker has no reason to think God believes in him. Suttree presses him, asking what he would say to God, and the ragpicker answers that he would ask God why he put the ragpicker down in this crapgame, since he "couldn't put any part of it together." He does not believe God will have an answer for that.

Harrogate has begun plans to tunnel into the city's underground vaults, where he thinks he will find the buried treasure of bank vaults. When a truck falls through the pavement, he comments that the whole city could cave in to the network of caves underneath. Suttree finds himself interested in the maps and geometrics of the plan. Harrogate has a stolen boy scout compass and is trying to chart the underground to determine what is above him. He finds lots of leaks and openings, one which allows him to see the sky. He tries to figure out where he is, but ends up sticking the map up into the hole and outside, still unable to locate what he saw through it, unable to account for the "disparity" between being below and being above.

The caves have bats and rats and dripping water and fluids. Harrogate finds a bone and assumes there was a murder. He continues to explore and finally comes to a wall of wood. Pulling away the soft wood, he finds a barricade of cement. He does not know if it was built to wall something in or out, and decides to use dynamite. The next time Suttree visits Gene, there are boxes of dynamite which he plans to detonate with a shotgun. Suttree warns Gene that he will blow himself up, but that just proves to Gene that it will blow up the barricade.

Harvey, the junkman from whom Harrogate bought his hoods, appears at Suttree's place very drunk and talking about finding his brother Dubyedee, and shooting the thieves who keep taking things from him. He is angry and bent on getting more alcohol. He finally makes his way to his brother's house and junkyard. The brothers apparently are in the same business. Harvey's nephew, Clifford, tells him that his Dubyedee no longer lives there. Clifford offers him coffee, but won't give him a drink, and Harvey is rude and belligerent toward him. Clifford offers to let him sleep in the shed, but Harvey is too drunk, saying that his own brother robbed him blind.

Suttree hears what sounds like an earthquake, but goes back to sleep. He stops at Harvey's and finds him passed out. He sees Harvey as "One among a mass of twisted shapes discarded here by the river."



Harrogate is seriously injured in the blast he created, and a broken sewer main has let its contents out on him. On his way to find Harrogate, Suttree helps Rufus get a drunken dog out of his mashbarrel, pulling it out with a rope around its neck. Sitting on Rufus's porch, Rufus mentions that he usually can see lights where Harrogate stays but they are not on now. Harrogate has lost the use of his flashlight and burned a candle all the way down. Lowering himself through a cistern, Suttree searches for the boy but cannot find him. On the fourth day of searching, Suttree finds Harrogate, covered with sewage and thinking he is going to die. He claims he saw people down there, and Suttree tells him he is seeing things. Suttree leads the city mouse out of the cave.

Pages 256 - 277 Analysis

The ragpicker is important to this story because he could be Suttree's vision of his own future. The ragpicker is not crazy, but is simply depressed and confused and does not have the ability to live any differently. He doesn't know why he is even on this earth, and is really quite ready to leave it all behind. He gets by with a minimal amount of interaction, doing only the bare minimum to keep himself alive.

Harrogate's adventure into the underground caves and caverns below the city is symbolic of the search for meaning throughout the story. Harrogate takes the dark side, the metaphorical underbelly, to seek his treasures and, like a lovesick soul, becomes obsessed with what he might find. The reader can assume that this insane, nonsensical project of his symbolizes his desperate need for love, and his apparent conviction that he is not capable of finding it in a conventional way.

Harrogate is injured, but he is as dense as ever and still does not appear to see the folly of what he has done.

Harvey the junkman is a sad person, whose alcoholism keeps him from having any kind of orderly life. His accusation that his brother has been stealing from him is an indication that he does not understand why his brother is doing better in business, and shows how he is resentful that his brother is more successful. Harvey's nephew, Clifford, is a nice boy, but Harvey holds them both in contempt for his own failings.



Pages 278 - 297

Pages 278 - 297 Summary

The old woman Suttree is seeing is unknown, although it may be the witch. Ab Jones wants to go see her now, and they set off together for her house. She tells Suttree that, although an old photo he is examining actually included her, her image never comes out except in a ghostly, grayish patch in the picture. The witch has sewn up Ab's injuries in the past. Ab tells her that he only wants Quinn to die, and she suggests a spell she has done on someone else that made him swell and blow up. Ab agrees to that. The witch tosses a collection of bones and teeth on the table, and turns to Suttree. She tells Ab he should have come alone. Suttree sees her later in the streets more than once. Upon his final sighting of her, she looks at him, frightening him so much he runs.

In late October, Suttree takes a bus to Gatlinburg and heads for the mountains on foot. He is in the woods with nature and all its creatures, eating what he can find over small fires, huddled in the cold. Wrapped in a blanket, he wanders through the woods, remembering a story of a horseback rider who was impaled on a steel rod jutting from the highway masonry. going deeper into the woods, he "looked at a world of incredible loveliness." He loses any sense of identity and becomes enmeshed with nature, but he begins to be delirious from hunger, hallucinating and unable to discern reality. He has a conversation with what he thinks is an apparition, but the living deer poacher knows he is crazy. Suttree wants out of the mountains. He continues lost in the woods and the falling snow, starving and and thinking dark, poetic thoughts and nightmares.

Suttree finally goes unconscious and awakes by the side of a road in Bryson, NC, where he goes to a greasy cafe. Looking at the paper, he can "put no part of it together," much like the ragpicker's comment. When he finds the food inedible and the waitress flippant, he is thrown out of the cafe. Suttree is now being treated as a common bum, rejected because of his blanket and crazed appearance. He cries, then gets on a bus to Knoxville.

Finally, sleeping in the bed in the old house on Grand Street, Mrs. Long comes to bring him food every day at noon. Blind Richard comes to visit him. Suttree asks Richard how long he has been blind, but Richard doesn't remember. Suttree notices that the water beaded up on the leaves of the old magnolia tree are bright and clean.

Pages 278 - 297 Analysis

Suttree has gone on something like a vision quest. Surviving unbearable conditions with only a ragged blanket, he becomes part of the natural surroundings and is about to expire in due course, but someone or something saves him. He realizes that he wants out of the woods as soon as he gets lost, but why he goes there in winter with no provisions may be either a matter of desperation or being suicidal. He is searching, as



always, for something he cannot seem to identify. Coming out of the woods, he is in such bad shape that he is treated the way people must treat the ragpicker. His MaAnally Flats lifestyle has apparently not been low enough for him, so he seeks to get to the very bottom of life for some reason. Perhaps he is in search of something different from what he currently has but does not know what or where it is.

In his sickbed Suttree realizes the finality of death and wonders if we will it for ourselves. It is interesting that his only visitor is Blind Richard, who has not had many options in his life and whose life has to be much more difficult than Suttree's has been.

Suttree lives half in a world of abundant and colorful literary images and half in a world of poverty and destitution. Conversations with apparitions in the woods reveal his deep and broad education and his intellect, but he is apparently not in control of his emotional intelligence.



Pages 298 - 316

Pages 298 - 316 Summary

Suttree's friends are bringing him whiskey. The reader knows now that the house he is staying in was destroyed in drunken rages. J-Bone's mother has been caring for him. He receives a letter from his mother with a check from his Uncle Ben's estate. He tosses the letter away and cashes the check, then goes shopping for clothing, giving a blind friend some money on the way. He buys a sportcoat, slacks, and a shirt and has them tailored to fit. He buys new shoes with zippers (like the ones Harrogate dreamed of). He goes to the barber for a shave and haircut and hoping for a manicure, and sees Quinn, the man who beat his friend Ab. His friends tease him about his new looks. He takes J-Bone out for a steak.

Suttree wakes up in the cemetery again, his new clothes dirty and ruined. He has saved a hundred dollar bill in his watchpocket. Writing an IOU for fifteen cents worth of aspirin, he walks to his old big old house on Grand Street and goes in. The next evening he visits his old school and sits in his old desk. Back at the house where he feels he was taught "a sort of Christian witchcraft," he retrieves a child's sculpture of a priest from up inside the fireplace, that is carved from wood and colored with crayon. Setting it up in the baywindow, he is able to look back and see it as he leaves. It looks like a "prophet sealed in glass."

Suttree has new neighbors on the river who have set up a shanty nearby. He makes friends with one of the young girls and gives her a catfish, refusing payment for it. He returns to meet her father the next day and is invited in for coffee. He learns that the man had won big in a poker game and, after having gone to sleep, found himself and his family adrift, and ended up in Knoxville. The man collects mussels in the summer and sells the shells for forty dollars a ton, which are used for buttons and chicken grit. The man tells Suttree that there is more to it, and shows him a handful of pearls. Suttree agrees to go in fourths with him, including room and board. They feed him a big meal. The man's oldest daughter is attractive. The family goes to church dressed in all the same cloth.

Harrogate pays a visit and finds the wife at home alone. She is not impressed with his boat or with him. Harrogate asks Suttree how to get the daughter to take her clothes off, and wants to know how to have sex.

Pages 298 - 316 Analysis

Suttree is going through some kind of catharsis, being ill and almost having died. It is interesting that he would go back to his old house, and that apparently others in the town know that it was his family home, as well. Throwing his mother's letter away is telling, although the reader does not know what his issue with her really is about.



Suttree doesn't just buy new clothes with his windfall money, he buys nice clothes—a camel-hair jacket and mohair pants, and has them tailored. Again, he allows his more refined side to take over for a bit. He also wants a manicure—not the kind of request one would expect from a derelict. However, he goes directly back to the whores and alcohol and finds himself, again, in a field: dirty, cold, and having memories of the past. He seems to remember that he was stumbling in the graveyard looking for some long-dead friend.

His visit to the old house is poignant and symbolic. This is where he knows his life was ruined, but also where he may have once been loved. The religious upbringing has done him no favors and he resents the guilt it has built into him. The house was obviously quite beautiful and maybe even ostentatious at one time.



316 - 363

316 - 363 Summary

The family leaves to go up the river, and Suttree sets out a week later in the blazing southern heat. He finds the family camped under a slate bluff. Reese, the father, has found one pearl in a giant heap of shells. Suttree is regretting this promise he made to Reese, but they decide to outfit Suttree's skiff for mussels. The family has set up a lean-to against the bluff. Suttree and Reese's boy set out downstream.

Suttree tells the boy he was in the workhouse for being in the car, drunk, when his friends tried to rob a drugstore for pills. The boy, Willard, says that Gene has told him Suttree is real smart. They pull up the brail and the boy shows him how to get the mussels off. They go on and get more, and the boat becomes heavy.

Suttree finds an ancient coin, or gorget, and wears it around his neck. There is disappointingly little to eat and no coffee, and Reese admits he has no money. Suttree, angry to have to use the last of his money for food, takes Willard with him to a store. Suttree and Reese go to Newport to cash in on their pearls, only to learn from a jeweler they are worthless. They separate in town, and Reese somehow sells the pearls while Suttree is having coffee; the two go to find whiskey and women. Suttree wakes up in a whore's room and again later in a field. Reese is asleep in a wrecked car. After hours of thirsty hitchhiking, they get a ride and finally return to camp, where Reese's wife is angry that they have brought no food. Suttree decides his life is ghastly.

Willard gets poison ivy, so Suttree has to go mussel hunting with the eldest sister, Wanda. He teases her in the boat with a snake, and they eat lunch together on the grass. Knowing it is trouble, they make love and she begins to come to him night after night and day after day. Suttree's world has become more interesting and he is feeling loved. Willard recovers and begins going on the boat with Suttree again for mussels, but Wanda still comes to him at night. He knows they need to stop doing this, that they could get caught and she could get pregnant. Wanda stops making her visits.

It begins to rain heavily in the third week of August. They try to wait out the rain, Suttree whittling and carving. The river rises and takes much of their catch. Twin possumhunters come to their camp, so identical it is impossible to tell them apart. The twins play a trick to show that their minds are meshed as one.

Later, as Suttree is settling down for the night, the bluff falls in on the family's lean-to and Wanda is killed. Suttree leaves in his boat in the night with no intention of ever telling anyone what he had seen.



316 - 363 Analysis

Suttree has again gotten himself into a situation he does not like because he is too kind to say no and, in this case, thinks there might be some money or adventure involved. Suttree has a deep appreciation for the outdoors and, even though this escapade may turn into nothing, he seems to enjoy being out and sleeping by the river.

It is hilarious that Reese thinks the jeweler has simply "outslicked" himself, trying to convince the men that their pearls are worthless. It is not clear whether or not Reese really did sell the pearls, but he does end up with some money.

The interval with the twin possumhunters is significant because of Suttree's twin who died at birth. Perhaps this is the connection he is missing in his life. There is no hint of this, except that Suttree leaves them to their little games and goes off by himself.

When Wanda makes it clear what she wants, Suttree is helpless because she is so young and he is so attracted to her. It is inappropriate to be with her and he knows this, but, unlike his one-night stands with prostitutes, he is feeling a love that he has needed for a long time.

Her death does not seem to surprise him, and he leaves this family, never to return. He has had too much pain, and heads for his houseboat.



Pages 364 - 374

Pages 364 - 374 Summary

Suttree's houseboat is tilted and has taken on water. He has not seen Harrogate, and goes to see the ragman. The ragman says Daddy Watson was taken away by someone, but he doesn't know who, and if he has kin they aren't making themselves known. Harvey is still alive and drunk.

Suttree goes out on a stormy night and asks the lightning to char his bones, asking whether he is a monster, or if there are monsters inside of him. Wandering around town, he comes across a lawyer who knew Suttree's father, and who had been chief counsel for Scopes, a friend of Darrow and Mencken. The lawyer is dirty and ragged; he assumes Suttree is into commercial fishing and wishes him well. Suttree goes to the trainyard, remembering his aristocratic grandfather stepping down to the platform and the black porter. But the train station has been closed for many years. He has a comical interlude with a war veteran who loves his dog so much he will be buried with him.

Blind Richard goes with Suttree to Ab Jones's shanty, where the men are playing poker. Suttree suggests to Richard that he try to cipher the names that were carved on the bottom side of the poker table. Richard finds that it is a gravestone for someone who died in 1907. They move on so he can read the other tables. Richard buys them another beer and becomes started when the next table he "reads" with his hands says William Callahan.

Reese comes to Suttree's houseboat to give him his share of the mussel money. Reese feels that he and his family have had the worst luck they could possibly have, but Suttree knows there are "no absolutes in human misery and things can always get worse." Reese tells him Willard has run away. Suttree tries to give the money back to Reese, but Reese would not take it. Suttree buys himself a thick sweater and pays on his lunch tab.

He hears Richard calling him from the bridge, but calls out to him to go home, and shuts his door.

Pages 364 - 374 Analysis

Suttree observes that the ragman takes nothing and gives nothing. Suttree's life is relatively quiet during this section. He is depressed, and hopes lightning will strike him, but has not seen Gene Harrogate and has not gotten into any major altercations or binges. He still has memories of his past, and his current friends and party buddies don't seem that interesting in this section. The lawyer who assumes Suttree is in some kind of lucrative fishing profession is an interesting character—one who had a lot of respect and presumably a lot of money at one time.



Reese is an honest man. He is quite ignorant and not bright, but has made a trip to give Suttree his money; neither one mentions Wanda.

Suttree is always kind to Blind Richard, who, with the exception of their shared alcoholism, may be one of his better friends. The fact that he refuses to respond to Richard when Richard is calling from the bridge is a sign that Suttree does not want to go out and drink, nor does he want to get involved with helping anyone, at least for now.



Pages 374 - 415

Pages 374 - 415 Summary

Billy Ray Callahan's sarcastic, violent ways have lost him several jobs and involved him in several criminal incidents. At the Moonlite diner, Billy Ray is up to his usual activities of stealing money from purses and drinking people's drinks, and he gets shot in the face. Suttree will not let them cover his face because he is not dead, and he goes with him to the hospital, where Callahan lived for another five hours. Suttree sadly walks back to his home on the river.

Suttree rents a room for the winter so he can have steam heat. It is a drab, cold, and shabby, but he has brought his things and made it a temporary home. He feels like a city dweller, buying groceries and waking the streets. He receives another letter which he throws away. He observes the street people—ministers, beggars that make his "heart desolate," a house fire; Suttree joins his friends for a beer and gets caught up, and learns J-Bone is in Cleveland.

The winter brings much rain and the holidays seem quiet at the local bars. Two women hustlers from Chicago, Joyce and Margie, talk to him. Joyce comes on to him and spends the night in his room, making Suttree feel like a "depleted potentate." The two go on a dinner date and to the movies, and on to her hotel room. She is crude and overweight, but attractive and makes it clear that he is not just a trick for her, although she is under indictment in Chicago for prostitution. They shop with her money and move to another hotel, and Joyce leaves on a bus for Athens to make some money. Suttree's friends have dispersed to other places and he is alone, but she sends him hundreds of dollars. She returns and tells him all of her stories, including the fact that she likes girls. They make a trip to the snow, and they seem to enjoy one another. She buys him more expensive new clothes, and he is living high. She goes to Asheville for ten days and they find an apartment, having money in the bank. While she is in Chicago, he reads that Hoghead has been shot and killed. During this extremely cold February, Michael comes to his door, perhaps for help, but Suttree, sleeping, does not answer.

Joyce is often gone, once arrested in New Orleans. She is heavier, and he notes she is scarred on her wrists and belly. Suttree begins to go out and leave, coming back to drama and tears and is again depressed and bored. He buys a new Jaguar convertible and they take a trip, staying in a nice hotel, pretending to be wealthier than they are. They spend time together in the outdoors, but he is lonely.

Joyce begins to spend rather than earn money, and they drink and argue. One morning she throws some kind of fit, wrecking the inside of the car with her feet, kicking out the windshield, tearing up money and throwing it out. Suttree leaves the keys in the ignition and walks away. After an brief but meaningful interlude with the homosexuals at the store, he finds his houseboat half sunken and vandalized. Over the next few days he repairs the boat, replaces its windows, and gets help from the dredger to get the



houseboat upright. He purchases new fishing line, and is now feeling peaceful. He contemplates what his final words might be if he died now; he decides that he would only regret the vanity of thinking, he could avoid oblivion with a stone bearing his name. He thinks about Joyce and wonders about colors of the aspects of life, deciding that the color of life is water.

Pages 374 - 415 Analysis

Suttree is sad for the loss of his friend, who was doomed to this end because of his temper and attitude. His decision to move into a real room in the cellar of a large building is the beginning of a big change in his life that takes him to a better standard of living, but to unwanted complexities of a troubled relationship. Since most of his partying friends are not around, Suttree is glad to meet Joyce and, although he gets along with her and he fulfills his need for sex and company, she still comes from her whore mentality. He wonders if she ever experienced the innocence of childhood and the excitement of being at a fair.

Joyce seems to want to leave her ways behind and settle down with him, but sadly, Suttree cannot feel any real love for her and she finally becomes aware that he never will. He will always see her as a whore. She has tried to buy him with her hard-earned money, which he has obviously enjoyed. However, their bond is not strong enough glue to hold him when she finally breaks loose in her grief over never really being loved by him. Suttree acts as though he has heard all of this before, leaving the reader to assume that he left his wife in the same way—just walking away when things got tough.

It is interesting to note that when they are stopped by the police, Suttree has his license and registration and title ready to be inspected; a far cry from the bum he was earlier.



Pages 416 - 430

Pages 416 - 430 Summary

Suttree reviews a season of poverty, murder, homelessness, rape, robbery, and a general sense of ugliness. Leonard, who has been in the workhouse, now has gonorrhea and carbuncles, and tells Suttree that his father's body rose up from the river. His mother bought a burial plot, and Leonard is afraid it will be repossessed, corpse and all. Leonard saw Harrogate with a young woman who resembled him.

Harrogate shows up at Suttree's dressed up with a mustache and his black tooth painted white, smoking a cigar. Gene tells him he has been robbing pay telephones all over town. Suttree tells him he is headed for the penitentiary, and cocky Harrogate says he'll be able to buy the place and put Suttree to work there.

Suttree finds the ragman, who has apparently died in his sleep. Suttree sits with him, remembering him from when he was a child and his mother gave him apples and sandwiches. This is apparently a very old friend. He asks the ragman if he asked God the question about the crapgame; he tells him he has no right to represent people this way, that he has no "right" to his "wretchedness."

Visiting the old dwarf witch, Suttree is reminded of a mummified slave he once saw. She tells Suttree that he can't see where he is going. She mixes up a paste out of various things, including spit and a cooked slug, and feeds it to him. She tells him he will be told what to do, and warns him not to "puke." He feels a "door close on all he has been," and has an out-of-body experience, spinning and hallucinating. Pieces of memories of a parade, and perhaps his brother and a nurse; dreams and apparitions of the past, smells of flowers and heavy Victorian furniture, remnants of church memories. He remembers his sister picking up a dead infant in its burial clothes and dropping it to the floor, crying that it was in there all by itself. He finally ends up in his bed on the houseboat, having clairvoyant thoughts about Tarzan Quinn. His experience seems to have scrubbed his mind clean, as he feels like the "first germ of life" and a "formless macule of plasm" and all creation yet to come.

Pages 416 - 430 Analysis

It seems as though Suttree has almost had enough of the violence and rawness of life in Knoxville. It all has become sickening, and even Harrogate is more disgusting than ever. Leonard's situation is sad, and Suttree agrees to help him, but his experience with the ragman seems to bring to a head what has been happening to him. His questions about who he is, why he is here, and what he should be doing are all coming to a head, and there is a terrible amount of negativity around him and within him.

Harrogate is no smarter than he ever was, and Suttree sees that he is surely going to spend his life in prison at the rate he is going.



It is clearly out of desperation that Suttree allows himself to be treated by the old witch, and his experience resembles a psychedelic nightmare. It is difficult to grasp the significance of the memory of his sister holding and dropping a dead baby. Suttree was an infant himself when his brother died, but perhaps he has associated this awful frightening memory with his brother's death. His review of his childhood reveals, again, that he grew up privileged and his present lifestyle is a choice he made somewhere along the way.

The moments Suttree re-experiences in his altered state may have been ones that have affected him his entire life. They are significant, perhaps, in his process of healing.



Pages 431 - 447

Pages 431 - 447 Summary

Suttree goes to the insane asylum to visit his mother's sister, his aunt Alice. It becomes clear that his mother's side of the family was poor and troubled, his great uncle having been hanged. He realizes as he talks to his old aunt and her friend that he has come to take, and has nothing to give them. He sees Daddy Watson, with his big railroad watch, and saying nothing, leaves.

Suttree finds Gene Harrogate hiding out, having almost been caught for robbing pay phones. Suttree suggests he get out of town for a while, but Gene cannot imagine himself being on a bus, not knowing where to go or what to do. His fondest memories seem to be from his time at the "workhouse," racing lizards with people he considered friends. Suttree offers his houseboat for Gene to hide in. Harrogate comes and goes, prowling through the city at night, mingling with the derelicts and homeless around their fires. He finally ends up being caught for robbery and taken to Nashville, by train, seeing sights he had never seen, manacled to another prisoner.

Suttree sees Ab huddled among the trash in the street and tries to walk him home, but a patrol car comes up, and Ab gives the officers attitude. Ab wants Suttree to go on without him, but Suttree tries to talk to the officers. They call for a truck and Suttree knows they are going to beat Ab; Ab gets free from them and runs. Suttree gets into the police car and drives it to the river. Tying the car's linkage back with his shoelace, he puts it in gear and then gets out. The car comes to rest far out in the river and disappears.

After doing considerable damage to the officers, Ab is finally subdued and taken to jail, where Tarzan Quinn waits for him to wake up so he can beat him again. Suttree goes to Ab's house to talk to his wife. She is upset and says that Ab is fifty-six years old and cannot keep doing this. She feels they will kill him.

Suttree gets a room at the hotel where he stayed with Joyce. He goes to the houseboat, cuts his fishing lines loose, gathers up his catch, and packs his belongings to go to the hotel. He learns that Ab is in the hospital and that the cops have been looking for him as well. A few nights later he goes to Ab's house, and Ab's wife tells him Ab has died.

Pages 431 - 447 Analysis

This is a sad section of the novel. Suttree's searching has led him to his aunt, whom he once knew. But he cannot spend any time with her, and then sees his old friend Daddy Watson there, who had disappeared a while back. He cannot help these people.



He tries to help Gene escape his certain doom, but Harrogate seems almost determined to get himself back in prison. Gene's fear of the phone police is a humorous passage, but his ignorance and loneliness is profoundly sad.

He tries to help Ab get home without having another altercation with the police, but Ab is determined to fight with them, knowing they are probably going to kill him this time. Suttree does the only thing he can safely do to hurt the officers as much as possible, which is to drown the patrol car.

In his visit to the madhouse, McCarthy notes Suttree has "never been among the certified"—which is not to say he has not spent time with crazy people. However, the people he has enjoyed keeping company with are going down one at a time and his life of partying and drinking with them is over. Unwilling to allow himself to be arrested, he hides in the hotel where he and Joyce felt safe and where the proprietor is discreet.



Pages 448 - 471

Pages 448 - 471 Summary

Spring has come but Suttree did not go to the river. He has spent his money and is served with an eviction notice. He begins to bleed and develops a fever so high that his vision and mind is unclear. A tenants finds him in the communal bathroom on the floor. He is delirious, vomiting blood and having strange nightmares. J-Bone finds him and tries to get a cabbie to help him into a cab. The cabbie thinks Suttree is terribly drunk and J-Bone does not deny it, but when blood flows from Suttree's backside, the cabbie leaves. J-Bone gets another cabdriver and gets Suttree to the hospital. Having bizarre dreams and half-memories, he thinks he is dying or that he is perhaps already dead. They pack him with ice and give him morphine, and Suttree imagines a court trial wherein he is a dead bird named Tweetiepie. The hanging death of his great uncle is part of the questioning. He is questioned about "lycanthropy," or turning into a wolf. He dreams of meeting a turtlemonger, who has something in his bag that is horrifyingly not turtles. His nightmares go on and on, picking up pieces of his past, dreaming of his dead friends with holes in their heads, drinking and joking friends making abstract references, perverted sexual practices, and even a couple of literary references, such as marbled endpapers. He sees Harrogate making a senatorial-type speech, and a nun scolding him when he was little Cornelius. He hears himself accused of squandering a few years in McAnally Flats and that curfew is up, but he defends himself saying he was drunk.

The hospital staff overhears his insane ramblings as his fever descends from the ice in which he is packed. In one of the dramas Suttree experiences, he sees a city coughed up from the floor of the sea and observes, with witnesses, that "life does not come slowly but rises in one massive mutation." He occasionally hears words about his medical condition and medications, but is mostly in other worlds. He sees a priest giving him last rites, sled dogs, and fish. A priest comes to hear his confession, but Suttree said he did it, and wants some wine. Suttree feels his whole life has been a close call. He tells him God has been watching over him because he very nearly dies, and Suttree tells him he "would not believe what watches," that "nothing ever stops moving."

He calls his nurse, Kathy, Catheterina, and finally has the strength to get out of bed. He goes outside to a phone booth and calls J-Bone and takes off his tag that says his name is Johnson. The buildings of McAnally Flats are being torn down so the area can be rebuilt, and some are forced from their homes. Suttree finds a decaying body in his bed. Gene Harrogate's sister comes looking for Gene to tell him their mother has died, and Suttree tells her where Gene is imprisoned.

Ab's wife Doll has moved away. He sees Trippin' Through the Dew in evening wear, and tells him he has had Typhoid fever. Since he has nothing left but his heart, he leaves without any keepsakes. He sees the ambulance come to take the body from his houseboat.



Setting out hitchhiking in a new shirt, shoes, and pants, he is first passed by. He comes upon a road construction crew where a boy is dipping water out for the workers to drink. The boy comes to Suttree and offers him a dipper of water. A car stops to give him a ride.

The story ends with Suttree leaving Knoxville, and a paragraph of prose that the literary-minded Suttree may have born saying to himself as he leaves.

Pages 448 - 471 Analysis

Suttree is as sick as a human being can be. It seems that, starting with the medicine the witch gave to him, he has been forced to re-live his entire past in dreams, memories and nightmares, and cannot be healed until he has covered every detail. This time, he comes close to death and his hallucinations and frightening dreams are his last chance to resolve his demons.

Although he calls J-Bone immediately after he leaves the hospital, he can see that his life in McAnally flats is over. He is not the same person he was and everything tells him so: the corpse in his bed, the destruction of the buildings, the inevitability of being in trouble with the law, the loss of his friends, the violence, and the fact that he has seen and tasted death. It is ironic, though not surprising, that the priest visits him in the hospital. Suttree feels he has already confessed in his delirium, and has paid the price for his sins with his suffering.



Characters

Cornelius Suttree

Suttree is a man probably in his early thirties, who cannot live a life prescribed by society. He has abandoned his family and returned to the city of his childhood, choosing a life of vagrancy and drunkenness. He is probably not as self-destructive as he seems, but is more in desperate search for his true values and what is important.

He has grown up privileged in a family that was no less dysfunctional than any other, in spite of the money. His mother came from humble beginnings and he feels his father has always judged her and all of her relations. However, he sits in judgment of his father, questioning the right of aristocrats to live the way they do. He was raised in a Catholic environment where he saw hypocrisy and lunacy. Although he questions and berates that influence, it continues to have a powerful effect on his life in terms of guilt and trust. Suttree has estranged himself from his family entirely, and, although he is devastated when his small son dies, he is not allowed to openly be with the family since he is hated for abandoning them.

He cannot hold a conversation with his mother and apparently has no respect for his father, who has likely disowned him due to his chosen lifestyle. He has fond memories of a grandfather who has passed on, and is tormented by an identical twin who was stillborn. Perhaps his tormented seeking is associated with the death of his twin, which makes Suttree unsure which dimension he really belongs to—the physical or non-physical. There is definitely something missing for him, and these few years in McAnally Flats, living at the lowest rung of existence, may provide Suttree the opportunity to find himself.

Gene Harrogate

Gene Harrogate is an eighteen-year-old, young for his age, whom Suttree meets at the workhouse. Looking for anyone who will be kind to him, the simple Harrogate latches onto Suttree as a friend and looks him up when he is released from jail. Harrogate's mother is ill and he has lived with his older sister up until the time this story commences. He has never had a shower in his life, and has been arrested for having sex with watermelons.

Harrogate leaves the workhouse with romantic and fantastical ideas about how to get by in the streets. He fantasizes about being rich and plans grandiose schemes, feeling that he can figure anything out. He buys two car-hoods from the local junkman and sticks them together, making himself a bizarre and heavy boat. When he hears that the health department is paying one dollar for every dead bat to try to combat rabies, he figures out a way to kill a sackload of bats with the hope of getting money for them. He plots and schemes to blow up the underground structure of the city of Knoxville, hoping to



find hidden treasure only to end up seriously injured. Finally, getting caught for devising a scheme to lift coins out of pay telephones, Harrogate ends up going to the penitentiary.

Suttree, although not trying to dissuade him, remains Harrogate's friend and looks in on him regularly. Harrogate has not had a happy life and his fondest memories may be those of racing lizards with his friends at the workhouse. Being institutionalized seems like a given for Harrogate, since he is so extremely naive that he will never make it in the streets. Resourceful but dim-witted, Harrogate is his own worst enemy. His ideas about how to make a living have no basis in reality, and he eventually pays the big price for his ignorance.

When Harrogate first arrives in Knoxville, he is referred to as Country Mouse, but later, after having lived there for a while, he is called City Mouse.

Ab Jones

Old Abdonega Jones lives with his one-eyed wife, Doll, in a shanty cafe down the way from Suttree's houseboat. Always welcoming his group of friends in, Ab is a special friend of Suttree's. He is a very large man, and has been beaten, almost to death, by the police more than once. Ab is a good man, but lives in a state of anger toward those he perceives to be his enemies, primarily the law and one particular cop who seems to have it in for him, named Tarzan Quinn. When Ab gets arrested for drunkenness, he does not go quietly, but fights the cops until they are broken and bloody, then pays the price himself. In Suttree's last act of compassion toward Ab, he tries to tell the police that Ab is just drunk and that he is going home, but the police want to take Ab in, and Ab is not going to go quietly. He asks Suttree to go away, knowing what is coming. Ab runs from the police, and Suttree takes the patrol car and sinks in into the river. In this last episode, Ab, presumably, is finally beaten to death by the police.

Ragpicker

This old man is someone Suttree has known since childhood when he used to come to Suttree's mother and be given sandwiches. He lives in a state of complete destitution, searching for small ways to earn enough to sustain himself. He sleeps under debris and newspapers. Ragpicker, whom Suttree checks on and brings an occasional fish to, talks about death every time Suttree sees him. He is quite sane, but is very ready to die and clearly states that he has no idea what life is about or what he was supposed to do with it. When he meets with his God, he will ask him why he ever sent him down into this "crapshoot," but he doesn't think God will have an answer. He is an endearing figure who is valued by Suttree as a friend. The ragman always figured there was a God, but just never did like him.



J-Bone

J-Bone is Suttree's most reliable friend in McAnally Flats. They are close, and J-Bone is the person Suttree calls to help him get out of jail and whenever he truly needs help. J-Bone is one of the more responsible people in McAnally Flats. His wife takes care of Suttree when he comes back from the woods, almost starved to death. J-Bone eventually goes to Cleveland to work at a real job on an assembly line. J-Bone is the one who tells Suttree that his little son has died

Michael

Called Tonto, Wahoo, or Chief by most, Michael is an Indian fisherman who teaches Suttree everything about catching, butchering, and eating turtles. He is a kind man and experiences prejudice for being an Indian. He teaches Suttree the value of wearing a token for luck.

Daddy Watson

Daddy Watson is an old, retired railroad worker who wears a large pocketwatch. He talks as though he is still on the railroad, and probably suffers from dementia. Suttree looks in on him and cares for him. The reader does not know if Daddy is someone he has known for a long time, like the ragpicker. Daddy Watson is taken away from McAnally Flats, but Suttree sees him later in the insane asylum when he goes to see his aunt.

Miss Mother, Dwarf Witch

This tiny black dwarf woman has power and knowledge beyond the average witch. She will not go to Ab Jones to heal him because she feels he only wants revenge against his enemies. But she does want to heal Suttree, and gives him a disgusting concoction that sends him on a hallucinatory episode that changes his life.

Reese, Wanda and Willard

Reese and his family are washed up near Suttree's boat and he goes to meet them. Reese's wife, whose name the reader does not learn, is the strength of the family and makes them march to church, all dressed alike. Suttree goes in with Reese on a trip to collect mussels with the hope of cashing in on the pearls they find. While they are camped, Suttree has an affair with Reese's young daughter, Wanda. When Wanda is crushed by a landslide, Suttree gets in his boat and goes home. Reese returns to pay Suttree his share of the earnings.



Billy Ray

This red-haired hothead is responsible for many fights and scuffles. He makes a habit of stealing money from girls' purses while they are out on the dance floor and drinking their drinks. He is known for making trouble, and eventually is shot and killed by a bar owner.

Blind Richard, Leonard

Blind Richard is a nice man whom Suttree helps out frequently. Blind Richard feels the bottoms of the tables at the cafe and realizes they are carved tombstones. He "reads" the name of William Callahan under one. Leonard is a sad character whose mother collects state benefits to support the family. When his father dies, they don't tell anyone and Leonard gets Suttree involved in sinking his father's months-old body in the river so they can continue collecting benefits. Later, Leonard gets gonorrhea.

Jabbo, Bungalow, Oceanfrog, Ulyss, Sharpe, Cabbage, Rufus, G

These are some of the local characters who hang around in McAnally Flats, drinking and enjoying each other's company. They all get in different kinds of trouble at different times and Suttree cares for all of them since they provide him with companionship and are funny and interesting.

Goatman

The goatman comes into town with an entire herd of goats and a small wagon. He is a preacher, as well, and delivers a Sunday afternoon sermon. He advises Suttree to get a goat to cure his loneliness, but Suttree denies he is lonely.

Harvey the Junkman

Harvey is a sad character. He is trying to run a junk car business, but is a hopeless alcoholic. His brother is in the same business in another part of town and does fairly well, so Harvey is convinced that his brother has been stealing from him.

Joyce

Joyce is a prostitute who has a relationship with Suttree that lasts over a period of months. She leaves town frequently and makes a significant amount of money, which she gives to him. They live together in hotels and eventually in an apartment. This is a time when Suttree is very well-dressed and buys an expensive car, tasting a life of relative privilege again. However, Joyce wants to be loved and Suttree is not able to



love her. She loses her mind, damages the car, tears up money and throws it out and has an emotional breakdown. As usual, Suttree walks away and returns to his houseboat.

Smokehouse

Smokehouse is a white derelict who deliberately gets hit by vehicles in order to get settlement money.

Maggeson

A man who floats around the river collecting condoms.

Trippin' Through the Dew and Sweet Evenin' Breeze

These two are the local homosexuals who hang out in McAnally Flats. They dress, smell, and talk like women. The residents of McAnally Flats treat them with a certain amount of respect and sympathy for their situation at a time in history when homosexuality was not tolerated.



Objects/Places

McAnally Flats

The slum neighborhood where Suttree spends several years, alongside the Tennessee River. The neighborhood consists almost entirely of shanties and old buildings that are rundown and in different degrees of decay, often inhabited by people seeking shelter. The neighborhood is dilapidated and the buildings mostly in a condemned condition but still being lived in. There is a cemetery between the river where Suttree's houseboat is docked and McAnally Flats as well as at least one major bridge that spans the river, under which Harrogate has made a home. There is also a wrecking yard and small businesses, such as cafes and bars in the area. The residents of McAnally Flats find some camaraderie in their poverty and perceived lack of options, as well as their shared alcoholism. McAnally Flats probably went downhill during the depression, and toward the end of the story is undergoing renovation. In the meantime, it is a filthy, dangerous and decrepit area with a high rate of crime and a general sense of despondency.

Workhouse

The workhouse is another word for something on the order of a county jail. The inmates work their time off for minor infractions, such as misdemeanors, or are placed there before being committed to the state penitentiary. Suttree meets Gene Harrogate at the workhouse. Gene is the youngest inmate there. It seems that most of the men in McAnally Flats have served time there since it is familiar to them all.

Tennessee River

During the time of this novel's setting, this river was deadly with pollution. Everything from condoms, gas, oil, dead bodies, sewage, and garbage is thrown in the river. The people, including Suttree, continue to eat fish from the river. Even though the filth roils up the sides of the banks, they do not seem to have much of a reaction to it. Eventually, Suttree contracts typhoid fever, which one can assume is from living in such contaminated conditions.

Trotlines

Suttree makes his meager living by catching catfish on trotlines. A long fishing line with shorter, baited lines attached to it sits in the water and catches fish. He pulls them up, takes the fish off the hooks, rebaits them, and lays them back in the water.



Viaduct

The arches of the viaduct near the river provide a discreet place for Harrogate to set up housekeeping. It has a cement box of pipes and conduits for storage, and Harrogate kills pigeons for food.

Granny & Hazel's, Comers, Regas, The B&J, and the Moonlite D

These are small local pubs, cafes, and diners where Suttree and his friends often eat and drink. Red Callahan is killed in the Moonlite Diner for stealing from purses.

Markethouse

A colorful and strange gathering of a wide assortment of vendors where Suttree sells his fish to Mr. Turner. Filled with poor people and "maimed humanity," it is a collage of depression, at least in Suttree's eyes.

Skiff

Suttree's small boat which he attaches to the houseboat and uses to go out and pull up his trotlines. It is his means of making a living and his means of transportation up the river when he goes on the mussel adventure with Reese.

Grove Park Inn

The luxurious hotel where Suttree and Joyce stay in Asheville after having purchased their new car. They experience living like wealthy, successful people for four days, drinking, dancing, and driving their new roadster.

Redtop and fishbowl

Beers consumed by the men of McAnally Flats.

North Side

The north side of Knoxville was an affluent area of town when Suttree was a child. His childhood home, to which he returns to recuperate, sits on the bank and, although it is dilapidated and vandalized, it apparently still belongs to him or his family. He chooses, for the most part, not to live there, but goes there when he is desperately sick. There is an old bed in the upstairs room, which the reader can assume is his childhood bed.

Madhouse

The insane asylum where Suttree goes to visit his old Aunt Martha, who recounts stories of their relatives to him. Suttree also sees Daddy Watson there, which solves the mystery of what happened to him.

Social Sensitivity

Suttree is a novel that takes a long, hard, detailed look at the basic concepts of society and what we call "civilization." The assumption that civilization represents a positive advance for the human race is questioned and challenged by the very fabric of the narrative.

The main character, Cornelius Suttree, despite his intelligence, education, and middle-class background, decides to live on a houseboat on the Tennessee River on the outskirts of Knoxville. He is a fisherman by profession. His lifestyle of voluntary poverty forces him to engage in a vigorous struggle to survive on a day-to-day basis. He not only sees poverty; he lives it. His friends form the very lowest class of society: They are sympathetically portrayed street bums, criminals, perverts, and other societal outcasts. Like Suttree, readers see the "benefits" of civilization up close and firsthand.

Just as the entire city of Knoxville is described as being precariously perched on top of a honeycomb of tunnels and caverns, the novel subtly insinuates that our entire system of civilization is undermined by its inherent flaws. The social ills dramatized include poverty, alcoholism, pollution, perversion, racism, police brutality, and crime. In the face of these problems, Suttree and his friends form a caring community and achieve an attractive and meaningful brotherhood, wherein perhaps lies their salvation.

Techniques

What readers of Cormac McCarthy are usually most impressed with is the overpowering style he achieves through his virtuoso command of language. Through this style, McCarthy is able to render scenes that would ordinarily be merely disgusting or grotesque or repulsively violent in a somehow beautiful way. In *Suttree*, McCarthy may be at the very height of his verbal powers.

McCarthy's narrative point of view is almost always third person, but *Suttree* is unique. Most of the novel does have an outside narrator, but at certain points *Suttree* addresses readers directly. These lapses into firstperson narration provide the novel with a more personal and intimate tone. This seems to be McCarthy's most autobiographical novel, so perhaps the materials were too personal to handle as objectively as he typically does. Or perhaps because McCarthy wanted to emphasize *Suttree*'s inward journey, he realized that a more intimate point of view was required.

Some readers might feel that the novel has no structure or resolution, but because the story is primarily an unconventional, internal story, the author employs some unconventional structures. Marking *Suttree*'s spiritual progress are many scenes in which he experiences some altered state of consciousness, such as dreams, semiconsciousness resulting from head trauma, hypnosis-like memories, and hallucinations. Of particular importance on *Suttree*'s path to enlightenment are three episodes of visions and hallucinations: the first, brought on by his weeks of deprivation in the Smokies; the second, induced by the drug Mother She gives him; and the third, the result of his near-death experience from typhoid fever. By focusing on these mystical experiences, McCarthy is able to dramatize *Suttree*'s inner, spiritual journey.

Themes

You Can't Judge a Book

Suttree looks, behaves, and lives like a derelict; however, he clearly has a depth and intelligence far beyond average. Looking at this character drunk, in jail, in fights, sleeping with prostitutes, and hanging out with alcoholic friends, one would never suspect that he is a kind-hearted deep thinker, and that his compassion for the less fortunate is so deep that he must become one of them to understand them. Suttree approaches everyone else in that vein as well. The blind, deaf, black, Indian, poor, female, ignorant, old, senile, and crazy are all just as valuable in Suttree's eyes as anyone else.

Suttree's wife and family have judged him with hatred and disgust because of the lifestyle he has chosen. However, they do not realize how deeply he is grieving for his son, and do not understand the dark nature of the demons that torment him daily. When police officers see Suttree, they see a vagrant bum, and assume he is ignorant and inferior. However, Suttree's mind is a finely honed machine; intelligent, creative, and far superior to most who judge him.

In general, McCarthy exposes this theme through the prejudice shown toward all of his characters—blacks, Indians, homosexuals, prostitutes, rich, and poor. McCarthy provides a glimpse into the humanity and depth that lies underneath the surface of individuals who tend to be stereotyped in society.

Life is Cyclical

In each stage of Suttree's life in McAnally Flats, he is moving toward the next. After a time in the workhouse, then living again on the houseboat, selling his fish and carousing with his friends, Suttree shifts into a stage of pure survival when he almost dies in the woods. Returning to his former life he meets Joyce and spends a period of time with her, living a falsely constructed life of being part of a couple who pretends to be normal. That cycle ends and Suttree returns to his boat, only to end up with Reese Upriver and the loss of his love, Wanda. He returns to Knoxville and becomes deathly ill with typhoid, spending many days being nursed back to health. One can assume that he is moving on to another phase in his life when he walks away from Knoxville.

This cyclic pattern is repeated by McCarthy in his emphases on the changes in seasons and the changes in nature. Although the novel is not delineated by chapters and one section flows into the next, the story itself is a series of cycles in Suttree's life that are, presumably, leading him toward some kind of resolution, whether it is an awakening or only his death.



The Power of Nature Dominates

A body of water that bears discarded sewage, condoms, dead bodies, spent fuel, garbage, and filth, the Tennessee River still provides fish that earn Suttree a living, turtles which nourish Michael, and mussels upon which Reese depends. The river provides a constant source of life for the people in this area and there is a sense that it is able to purge itself enough to continue to do so. Suttree, himself, literally lives in the water in his houseboat.

When Suttree walks into the woods and becomes lost during the winter, he is searching for his soul's connection with some kind of God he is unable to find elsewhere. He talks to the trees and sleeps on the ground. Miss Mother's potion that sends Suttree on a psychedelic journey into his soul is made up entirely of elements from nature, including slugs. Suttree's fond memories of childhood include gardens, and his "Saxon" background drives him to talk to the trees.

However, nature can also be indifferent and cruel. Nature showed no mercy to Suttree in his near-death experience from starvation and cold. The rain-soaked cliff that collapses on Wanda is indifferent to the grief of her family. The typhoid that Suttree eventually contracts is a result of the river's filth. The river coughed up the body of Leonard's father even though it was carefully weighted down. The river takes Reese and his family far from their home when someone cuts their houseboat loose, and the river washes away tombstones that are now used in the bar for tabletops.

The beauty of nature is acknowledged throughout this novel, but the indifferent power of nature and its ultimate and indifferent ability to give or take life is a more dominant theme.

Religion is a Mixed Blessing

Although much of young Suttree's refinement and good manners come from being raised in a strict Catholic school, he also suffers from a deep-seated sense of guilt and fear as a result of the fire and brimstone teachings of the church.

Catholicism and its effects on Suttree are raised in many instances throughout this story. Suttree does not have a good feeling about the stiff-starched nuns and their discipline, nor does he respect the hypocrisy of a church structure that provided a comfortable, upper-class living for the Catholic hierarchy while others suffered. His background, of course, has given Suttree a constant consciousness of right and wrong, but the moralizing was so deeply carved into him that he has rebelled against it, and is now tormented by his own actions.

Guilt plays a huge part in Suttree's mental illness. He is a kind and compassionate man who is unable to accept hypocrisy, but in following his heart and not getting caught up in a false societal structure he has deeply disappointed his mother and feels so guilty he cannot even face her. Among his hallucinations, dreams, and visions are grotesque



sexual images that clearly are part of Suttree's deep guilt about his life. His long-buried memory of his sister picking up a dead infant in the funeral home lies at the bottom of much of his fear and guilt, and most of his suffering can be connected directly to his family's religious background. He rejects it and yet it torments him.

Significant Topics

Suttree is a large novel, epic in some ways, and it is densely and richly thematic. One of the novel's most significant thematic clusters concerns Suttree's quest for personal spiritual growth. His search for God makes this a deeply religious novel, one which delves into the profoundest questions of existence on both philosophical and psychological levels. Suttree's estrangement from his mother, aptly named Grace, symbolizes his personal crisis of faith. He is a lapsed Catholic, and the questions he ponders are basic ones: What is reality? Is there a God? If so, is the nature of God malevolent?

Suttree primarily turns inward for the answers to these questions so that from one perspective the novel assumes the form of an interior journey. Although the point has been debated, Suttree does seem to achieve a degree of spiritual progress by the end of the novel.

Various epiphanies reveal to him such insights as "all souls are one and all souls lonely" and "[God] is not a thing.

Nothing ever stops moving." Ultimately, Suttree overcomes his sense of duality and his obsessive fear of death.

Critics have also pointed out that the novel explores a number of existential themes. Suttree's repeated flirtation with suicide shows him to be wondering why he should continue to live in an absurd world. Suttree also rejects one form of authority after another, thereby increasing his freedom and his chances of living an authentic existence. The novel seems to endorse William James's view that the beginning of wisdom is to embrace a tragic vision of life, one which unshrinkingly recognizes the inevitability of suffering, loss, and death. On the streets of Knoxville, Suttree lives authentically because he sees the tragedy of life on a daily basis. It is only when he is temporarily seduced into an affluent, comfortable lifestyle with the prostitute Joyce that he becomes alienated from his true self.

On a sociological level, the novel combines Marxist, Thoreauvian, and Christian thought to attempt to invert the usual bourgeois pyramid of values.

To the casual observer, Suttree may seem little more than a street bum, an unhappy man at the bottom of the hierarchy of success. But according to Christian paradox, "the last shall be first"; according to Marx, the proletariat is exalted over the aristocracy; and according to Thoreau, "a man is rich in proportion to the things which he can afford to let alone." Following Thoreau's standards, Suttree is truly rich and truly successful.



Style

Point of View

Cormac McCarthy writes from an omnipotent view that is able to "see" through the eyes of each of his characters. The reader not only follows Suttree, but is able to see into his mind and "hear" the bits and pieces of thoughts, ideas, memories, and intentions. Of all the characters in the novel, Suttree's is the only mind one is able to read. All others are readable through their actions and dialogues. However, Suttree's mind is an abyss in which McCarthy swims, and the reader is carried along this current, only looking outward as necessary to form the plot of the story. The narrator's point of view is reliable to the extent that he reads Suttree's state of mind at any given moment, but that is not to say that Suttree's perceptions are reliable. McCarthy does a remarkable job of showing us—not telling us—that Suttree is quite disturbed emotionally, but not any more than anyone else he associates with. The difference may be that Suttree's problems are complex, and McCarthy's weaving of Suttree's imagination, hallucinations, memories, dreams, and visions help the reader understand that this is no ordinary bum. The reader only gathers bits of information, cleverly tucked into the prose, to deduce Suttree's background and the likely origins of his problems. Because the author does not reveal everything about Suttree's state of mind, it is somewhat surprising that Suttree leaves Knoxville at the end of the story. There is nothing predictable about the storyline, due to McCarthy's brilliant writing style.

Setting

McAnally Flats by the Tennessee River in Knoxville is an actual place that cannot possibly ever have been as horrible as McCarthy portrays it. The sense is one of pure slime and degradation with no redeeming value with the exception of the occasional cemetery or open field. It is clearly a setting out of the 1950s, since it is so terribly run down and begins to undergo renovation toward the end of the story. By today's standards, the level of filth and pollution described in this story would never be tolerated in any city in the United States. Much of the economically depressed nature of Knoxville is connected with the Great Depression which, although it officially took place in 1939, wreaked havoc for another decade, as illustrated in this story. Some of the beautifully appointed, grand old houses, including Suttree's childhood home, stand abandoned and dilapidated from those who lost their fortunes in the Depression. In Knoxville, Suttree frequents small taverns, cafes, bars, and flophouses where his friends gather, drink, talk, argue, and generally support one another in their hopeless lifestyles. Suttree also frequents the occasional whorehouse.

Primarily, Suttree lives in his small houseboat which, although heated by coal, is a tiny, damp, cold, and shabby atmosphere, reachable from the dock where other shanties are floating on the riverside. Suttree's time with Joyce in various hotels and apartments is



somewhat depressing due to the shabby nature of the rooms, but serve as a warm and secure setting for Suttree for a period of time.

Suttree spends some grueling winter days in the mountains above Gatlinburg, communing with nature and almost starving to death. McCarthy goes into fine detail about the nature of the wilderness in the winter. Upriver with Wanda and her family, the setting seems quite tranquil and peaceful, with Suttree sleeping out on the grass and washing in the river. Every setting explored in this novel is either pleasant or unpleasant depending upon the season, and the seasons tend to blend together at the edges, as they do in real life.

Language and Meaning

Unique in his ability to float the reader through hundreds of words, some of which he cleverly contrives, McCarthy does not just compel his readers to read, but invites them join him in a painting of life, as Suttree observes it. The plot of the story is almost secondary to the experience of the places and lifestyles of its characters. The smells, images, and atmosphere of a city in decay and of people in varying levels of degradation provide McCarthy's reader with what feels like a ride on Suttree's boat down the river, bobbing, churning, turning circles, and bumping along, like life.

McCarthy is a master of description. He uses many wonderful words that cannot be found in today's dictionaries, but must be looked up in reference books. In contrast, he repeats simple phrases, loaded with meaning, such as "Come back," and "Well." Suttree looks in many places for answers to the questions that plague him, including the depths of despair, the intricacies of nature, and extremes of substance abuse. His son's death, his own near-death experience in the mountains, as well as his bout with typhoid fever, take him to the outer edges of life where he can, with his imagination and through apparitions and nightmares, look back in at the meanings and try to make some sense of it. Although Suttree eventually manages to get out of the mountains and back to Knoxville, McCarthy, through Suttree, closely examines the indifferent cruelty and profound beauty of nature in the deep wilderness.

Suttree's varied adventures in the workhouse, into the mountains, into town, upriver with Reese, and eventually leaving Knoxville are metaphors for a man who cannot decide who he is, who is confused by his childhood and family, and who cannot be restricted by what seems right or wrong to society in general. Suttree is a split personality: he is educated, highly intelligent and refined, but chooses alcoholism and the life of a derelict over the false constraints of society. Suttree has finally seen both extremes of life—that of wealth and prestige, as well as the lowest level of existence. The reader can assume that he ultimately chooses something in the middle.

Structure

This amazing novel has no distinguishable chapters but is occasionally separated by spaces and all capitalized letters. It is 471 pages of heavy, delightful reading that can be



consuming and even depressing. McCarthy's structuring of this novel, or lack thereof, mimics the flow of the story itself. To divide it into chapters would be to focus on the plot, and McCarthy's plot is no more important than the descriptions and journey of sights, sounds, feelings, and memories that Suttree experiences. This is not to imply that the novel does not have a strong plot: the plot is fascinating and makes the reader want to continue; however, it is not the focal point of the novel.

The events that take place in Suttree's life in McAnally Flats follow a definite sequence and take place over a period of several years in Knoxville, where Suttree grew up. In this period of a few years one learns of his childhood and can guess that this is only a brief but significant interval in his adult life. If one is to assume that Suttree lives on to old age, it is implied that this period of time represents a huge, cataclysmic turning point for him.



Quotes

"The ordinary of the second son. Mirror image. Gauche carbon. He lies in Woodlawn, whatever be left of the child with whom you shared your mother's belly. He neither spoke nor saw nor does he now. Perhaps his skull held seawater. Born dead and witless both or a teratoma grisly in form. No, for we were like to the last hair. I followed him into the world, me. A breech birth. Hind end fore in common with whales and bats, life forms meant for other mediums than the earth and having no affinity for it. And used to pray for his soul days past. Believing this ghastly circus reconvened elsewhere for alltime. He in the limbo of the Christless righteous, I in a terrestrial hell." p. 14

"You think my father and his kind are a race apart. You can laugh at their pretensions, but you never question their right to the way of life they maintain. He puts on his pants the same way I do mine. Bullshit, John. You don't even believe that." p. 19

"A sad and bitter season. Barrenness of heart and gothic loneliness. Suttree dreamed old dreams of fairgrounds where young girls with flowered hair and wide child's eyes watched by flarelight sequined aerialists aloft. Visions of unspeakable loveliness from a world lost. To make you ache with want." p. 50

"Hello Mother, he said.
Her lower chin began to dimple and quiver. Buddy, she said. Buddy...
But the son she addressed was hardly there are all. Numbly he watched himself fold his hands on the table. He heard his voice, remote, adrift. Please don't start crying, he said. See the hand that nursed the serpent. The fine hasped pipes of her fingerbones. The skin bewenned and speckled. The veins are milkblue and bulby. A thin gold ring set with diamonds. That raised the once child's heart of her to agonies of passion before I was here. Here is the anguish of mortality. Hopes wrecked, love sundered. See the mother sorrowing. How everything that I was warned of's come to pass. Suttree began to cry nor could he stop it. People were looking. He rose. The room swam.
Buddy, she said. Buddy.
I can't he said. Hot salt strangled him. He wheeled away." p. 61

Bearing along garbage and rafted trash, bottles of suncured glass wherein corollas of mauve and gold lie exploded, orangepeels ambered with age. A dead sow pink and bloated and jars and crates and shapes of wood washed into rigid homologues of viscera and empty oilcans locked in eyes of dishing slime where the spectra wink guiltily One day a dead baby. Bloated, pulpy rotted eyes in a bulbous skull and little rags of flesh trailing in the water like tissuepaper." p. 306



"The willows at the far shore cut from the night a prospect of distant mountains dark against a paler sky. Halfmoon incandescent in her black galactic keyway, the heavens locked and wheeling. A sole star to the north pale and constant, the old wanderer's beacon burning like a molten spike that tethered fast the Small Bear to the turning firmament. He closed his eyes and opened them and looked again. He was struck by the fidelity of this earth he inhabited and he bore it sudden love." p. 354

"He sat with his back to a tree and watched the storm move on over the city. Am I a monster, are there monsters in me?" p. 366

"On the streets one day he accosted a ragged gentleman going by in an air of preoccupation. Streets filed with early winter sunshine. Suttree had smiled to see him and he tipped an imaginary cap. Morning, Dr. Neal, he said. The old tattered barrister halted in his tracks and peered at Suttree from under his arched brows. Who'd been chief counsel for Scopes, a friend of Darrow and Mencken and a lifelong friend of doomed defendants, causes lost, alone and friendless in a hundred courts. He pulled at his shapeless nose and waggled one finger. Suttree, he said. Cornelius. You know my father. for many years, quite honorably. And his father before him." p. 366

"It ended on the Clinton Highway at the Moonlite Diner. Billy Ray smiling and going among the tables while the band played country music. He had his hands in his pockets when the barman confronted him. Small, vicious, quiet. He said, Red, you been stealin money out of them girls' purses. Callahan rocked back on his heels with his hooligan smile and looked down at his assassin. His pockets were full of the stolen change spoken, he'd drunk their drinks. You're a damned liar, he said good-naturedly. In the act is wedded the interior man and the man as seen. When he was shot he had his hands in his pockets. The last word came out lie. The roar of the pistol in his face chopped it off and the size of the silence that followed was enormous." p. 375.

"He watched her while she sat at the mirror and dried and set her hair, himself consumed in wombly lassitude there in the sagging bed watching her scoop great daubs of cream from a pot and slab it onto her arms and her breasts, her eyes turned to his in the mirror where he lay sipping his drink. She had smeared her face with a sizelike caulking that set up in a clown's alabaster mask, crumbling gently in the lines of her smile, a white powder sifting from the cracks. In this theatrical cosmetic she came to the bed and sat lotuslike clad only in her panties and dressed her heels with a stone, her full thigh arched, she bent intently. He bathed and dressed in his new suit and shoes and the neatly folded silk tie and Suttree and his soiled dove descended the shabby stairwell and stepped into a cab at the curbside to take them to dinner." p. 401

"In the distance the lights of the fairground and the ferriswheel turning like a tiny clockgear. Suttree wondered if she were ever a child at a fair dazed by the constellations of light and hurdygurdy music of the merrygoround and raucous calls of



the barkers. Who saw in that shoddy world a vision that child's grace knows and never the sweat and the bad teeth and the nameless stains in the sawdust, the flies and the stale delirium and the vacant look of solitaires who go among these garish holdings seeking a thing they cannot name." pp. 408-409

"And this was Harrogate. Standing in the door of Suttree's shack with a cigar between his teeth. He had painted the black one and it was chalk white and he had grown a wispy mustache. He wore a corduroy hat a helping larger than his headsize and a black gabardine shirt with slacks to match. His shoes were black and sharply pointed, his socks were yellow. Suttree in his shorts leaned against the door and studied his visitor with what the city rat took for wordless admiration.

What say Sut. How in a big rat's ass are ye?

I was okay. Come on in." p. 418

"Suddenly Suttree sat upright. He saw in a small alcove among flowers the sleeping doll, the white bonnet, the lace, the candlelight. Come upon in their wanderings through the vast funeral hall. And the little girl took the thing from its cradle and held it and rocked it in her arms and Clayton said you better put that thing up. She took it through the halls crooning it a lullaby, the long lace burial dress trailing behind her to the floor and Suttree following and a woman saw them pas in the hall and called softly upon God before she ran from the room and someone cried out: You bring that thing here. And they ran down the hall and the little girl fell with it and it rolled on the floor and a man came out and took it away and the little girl was crying and she said that it was just lying in there by itself and the little boy was much afraid." p. 429

"Someone was tugging at Suttree's sleeve. A small nun with a bitten face, a smell of scorched black muslin and her dead breasts brailed up in in the knitted vest she wore. She tugged with little porcine claws at the bones in his elbow. Cornelius you come away from here this minute.

Mr Suttree it is our understanding that at curfew rightly decreed by law and in that hour wherein night draws to its proper close and the new day commences and contrary to conduct befitting a person of your station you betook yourself to various low places within the shire of McAnally and there did squander several ensuing years in the company of thieves, derelicts, miscreants, pariahs, poltroons, spapeens, curmudgeons, clotpolls, murderers, gamblers, bawds, whores, trulls, brigands, toppers, tosspots, sots and archsots, lobcocks, smellsmocks, runagates, rakes and other assorted and felonious debaruchees.

I was drunk, cried Suttree." p. 457

"In my father's last letter he said that the world is run by those willing to take the responsibility for the running of it. If it is life that you feel you are missing I can tell you where to find it. In the law courts, in business, in government. There is nothing occurring in the streets. Nothing but a dumbshow composed of the helpless and the impotent." p. 13-14



Key Questions

There is much to discuss in this novel. There are scores of interesting characters and many complex psychological, philosophical, sociological, and religious issues to explore. It is a very rewarding novel to study, and it deserves much more attention than it has so far received.

1. What are the humorous elements in this novel, and what are the functions and effects of this humor?
2. In what ways is Suttree heroic? 3. How exactly does Suttree progress spiritually in the course of the novel?
4. Do you admire Suttree for voluntarily choosing a life of rugged poverty?
5. What do Suttree's dreams reveal about him?
6. What does Suttree's relationship to the Indian Michael reveal?
7. Examine how Suttree rebels against parental, governmental, and societal authority without rejecting community.
8. To what extent is Gene Harrogate fated by forces beyond his control and to what extent is he responsible for bringing about his own doom?
9. What are the several symbolic implications of the Tennessee River?
10. What is the significance of all the scatological materials?



Topics for Discussion

Discuss the reasons that Cornelius Suttree has in choosing the life of a vagrant. How is this life serving him?

In what ways is Suttree different from his McAnally Flats friends? What are the reasons he fits in with them socially?

Discuss all the variations of prejudice alluded to in this story. Why are they ironic?

Does reading Suttree open up a different perspective on those who live on the margins of society? In what ways?

Discuss why Suttree's dreams, hallucinations and nightmares are so heavily laced with sexual references. Is he simply a pervert, or are there other factors involved?

Why was the Tennessee River allowed to become so horribly polluted during the forties and fifties? Has it changed? Why?

Is Suttree a sexual opportunist? Discuss his relationship with the young Wanda and compare it to his relationship with Joyce, the prostitute.

Why is Suttree unable to talk to his mother when she visits him in jail? What is it that causes them both to be so upset when they see one another?

Why doesn't Suttree move into the family's large, old abandoned house? Why does he choose to live in the cold, leaky houseboat?

How much of Suttree is autobiographical? Could McCarthy have created this environment simply by researching it?

Literary Precedents

Because a river is central to this novel and because Suttree lives on a houseboat, readers may naturally be reminded of *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884). Suttree indeed participates in the same kind of basic, multiracial community that Huck and Jim achieve on their raft.

Suttree is also reminiscent of *Walden* (1854). Like Thoreau, Suttree chooses to live in natural environs, but on the edge of civilization. Neither repudiates society, and both occupy a middle ground from which they can observe nature and humanity.

With its emphasis on traveling, on altered states of consciousness, and on resistance to the establishment, this novel is also in the tradition of such Beat Generation literature as Jack Kerouac's *On the Road* (1957).

Related Titles

Suttree is a larger, funnier, more ambitious, more personal book than the three McCarthy novels published before it, but it does include some of the same types of outcast characters that appeared in the earlier novels.

Jimmy Blevins as described in Part I of *All the Pretty Horses* (1992) seems to have been cast from the same mold as Gene Harrogate. Both are pitiable but comic troublemakers who test the compassion and loyalty of their companions to their very limits.



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