Suttree: Spiritual Emergency to Spiritual Emergence

by Nic Schuck

Cormac McCarthy's fourth novel, *Suttree*, is a never-ending search for purpose of existence, for acceptance of death, for some grain of truth to attach to the lonesomeness of life. Although there are many other questions that are expounded upon – such as the encroachment of the modern world onto the primitive or the idea of escaping one's born-into social class or even misogyny in 1950's alcoholic underworld of Knoxville – these issues seem to only be side notes when dealing with Suttree's existential dilemma and his battle with the "thing" that has beset upon the city in which the "murengers have walled the pale" and shut the gates (4). Suttree must first overcome his fear of death and his feeling of loneliness before he can move onto other things like love or raising a family or a need for a career, milestones modern society has attributed to as rites of passages. Throughout the novel, Suttree attempts in numerous ways to settle his anxieties – books, drinking, solitude in the woods, witchcraft – but it is not until his near-death experience during a bout of Typhoid Fever that he begins to emerge from the journey of self awareness. Ultimately, it isn't one experience that leads to enlightenment; instead, it is a culmination of forever traveling along "the road," a constant seeking in every aspect of life.

In American society, most people Suttree's age are presumably expected to either have overcome this philosophical roadblock or suppressed it enough with either work or drugs or some other form of distraction so it is no longer at the forefront of their dysfunction. But for Suttree, no matter how he attempts to mask it, it is something he must take on directly. Joseph Henderson tells us in "Ancient Myths and Modern Man" that "the novice for initiation is called upon to give up willful ambition and all desire and to submit to the ordeal. He must be willing to

experience this trial without hope of success. In fact, he must be prepared to die […] the purpose [is] to create the symbolic mood of death from which may spring the symbolic mood of rebirth" (Henderson 124). Suttree has given up ambition and desire and is working on his preparation of death, assuming the role of a hero so we the readers may continue through life cathartically experiencing his journey in order to make ours less fearful. It makes it once removed and through rationalization, less scary. The reader gets to embark on a rite of passage without having to leave the comforts of daily lives. With *Suttree*, McCarthy recreates an initiation myth or a spiritual quest not from one source in particular, but from a variety of myth structures – from the Native American vision quest to Joseph Campbell's "Hero's Journey" to Arnold van Gennep's *The Rites of Passage* to Christina and Stanislav Grof's transpersonal psychology text *The Stormy Search for the Self*.

According to Joseph Campbell, the "hero's journey" begins with a call to adventure and if the hero refuses that call "one is harassed, both day and night, by the divine being that is the image of the living self within the locked labyrinth of one's own disoriented psyche" (Campbell 50). This is the stage in which we find Cornelius "Bud" Suttree, a fisherman witnessing a suicide victim pulled from the waters. His disoriented psyche is introduced when, of all things about the dead man, he "noticed with a feeling he could not name that the dead man's watch was still running" (10). The feeling he couldn't name seemed to be sparked by Suttree's realization that his time, as is everyone's, is coming. Death's watch doesn't stop ticking when one person dies, it continues on, and like it says in the prologue, no matter that walls have been put in place, it is already inside. Two pages later, when talking about suicide with his friend the ragpicker, Suttree isn't so sure he wouldn't do the same. The ragpicker says with certainty "I wouldn't do it," but when he brings that question to Suttree, Sutrree's response is not as sure, "I hope not" (12).

Throughout the novel, the reader is now questioning if Suttree will be able to break from the labyrinth of his psyche or end in the river of his livelihood, a river whose image as a "sluggard ooze" (4) makes it seem alive and possibly murderous like a 1970's B-movie.

Continuing with the Joseph Campbell quote from above, Suttree is also haunted by a divine being, a "mirror image" or a "gauche carbon" (14), in the form of his stillborn twin brother which contributes to his already fragile state of mind. At this stage of the journey, Suttree is not confronting his demons, but instead trying to keep them from surfacing with the help of alcohol, which has the opposite effect he is hoping for. Alcohol brings him, nearly face to face with the divine being on his way home from a night of imbibing. His mirror image in the window of the trolley depot's door "come[s] up from life's other side like an autoscopic hallucination, Suttree and Antisuttree" (28). [1] According to Steven Foster's *The Book of the Vision Quest*, "As the protagonist moves through the plot of the story, he finds himself in a 'double-meaninged' universe. An animal is both animal and spirit" (Foster 115). Suttree's "double-meaninged universe" is what contributes to his fear of death and as we move through the plot of the story Suttree is unable to hide from his call to adventure and instead is hovering between the two worlds of the living and the dead. After the image in the window, we are again reminded of Suttree's possibility of suicide by drowning as he is walking along the river in a drunken stupor and seems to contemplate it at that moment, imagining what it would be like "to fall through dark to darkness. Struggle in those opaque and fecal deeps, which way is up. Till

[1] Early in the novel, we are introduced with a motif: hallucinations. A quick note – the setting is littered with hallucinatory foliage in the form of nightshades, datura, and jimson. It is worth looking into, but not in the scope of this paper.

lungs suck brown sewage" and then the image of a "cheshire clock hung in the void" (29) as if death is mocking him and following his every movement.

Getting back to the journey that Suttree has embarked on, all quests begin with the separation of the protagonist from the family and *Suttree* is no different. Arnold van Gennep divided the journey into three phases, the first being separation. This is very similar to that of Campbell as well, although he has broken the journey up into many parts, but the first is still departure. Suttree is not only estranged from his parents, but from his wife and child as well. His father's last words to his lost son said, "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" (14). Suttree's father's advice to his son is to work, to take on responsibility, to become too busy to be bothered by philosophical questions. But Suttree has tried that and it didn't fulfill his need, "From all old seamy throats of elders, musty books, I've salvaged not a word" (14). Suttree's father could not keep his son from becoming a seeker as it is what Suttree is meant to do and as Robert Torrance says in *The Spiritual Quest* the "business of seeking, of setting off in determined pursuit of what we are lacking and may never attain, is no more incidental theme of our literature and thought, no bypath of history, but a fundamental activity that contributes in no small measure toward defining existence *as* human" (Torrance 3). The existential journey Suttree has embarked is not something that could be learned from books, it can only come from within as part of what Jung called the collective unconscious, which is "best understood as the sum of all the behavior we inherit with our DNA" (Leeming 159). The collective unconscious, or to use another Campbell reference, the monomyth, because it does not matter what we call it, it is in each of us including Suttree. The truth, the missing piece that could fill whatever is lacking is elsewhere, not in the

world of a professional career as his father suggests, but out there, in the world and in the streets of McAnally Flats.

We are unaware what has sparked Suttree's separation from his family, but we can safely assume it is a period of anxiety for him. Campbell convincingly asserts that "all moments of separation and new birth produce anxiety" and that "the same archetypal images are activated, symbolizing danger, reassurance, trial, passage, and the strange holiness of the mysteries of birth" (Campbell 44). We are never given a reason why Suttree leaves his wife and son, but it doesn't matter. For the purpose of storytelling, we just need to know that Suttree is struggling with conforming to domesticity and social norms. Christina and Stanislov Grof agree with this idea that whatever caused the need for a journey is less important than starting the journey, "The wide range of seeming triggers of spiritual emergency clearly suggests that the individual's readiness for inner transformation is by far more important than external stimuli" (Grof 33). To give Suttree an exact moment when things begin to shift in him would diminish the transformation, the reader would focus more on the cause than the journey. The important part of the journey is the transformation, not what caused it. This allows for a more believable change instead of a Hollywood-esque moment of clarity or epiphany as Jay Ellis points out, "McCarthy avoids epiphanies that are followed by a character changing too soon. As in real life, McCarthy's characters have transformative experiences that take longer to work a changing in actions than we are accustomed to in less complex narratives, such as Hollywood films" (Ellis 18, 327, n34). Suttree's quest is during his moment of "spiritual emergency" which is defined by Grof as "stages of profound psychological transformation that involves one's entire being" and "these episodes often revolve around spiritual themes; they include sequences of psychological death and rebirth, experiences that seem to be memories from previous lifetimes, feelings of oneness

with the universe, encounters with various mythological beings" (Grof 31) – all of which take place through the course of *Suttree*: Death and rebirth during the Typhoid Fever; memories from previous lifetimes during the vision with Mother-She; feelings of oneness during the time in the woods; and encounters with mythological beings again during the time with Mother-She. And this journey must take the "hero" from "within his pale of society to a zone unknown" (Campbell 48). In other words, our hero, Suttree, must leave his societal ambitions and enter into the unknown world of McAnally Flats.

McAnally Flats serves an important role in Suttree's quest, not just because it is where his transformation takes place, but that because according to some myth structures it represents a "territorial passage" or "crossing of a threshold." The Joseph Campbell idea of crossing the threshold seems clearly visible when Suttree goes into the woods and that could be a sort of crossing of another threshold once already inside the quest. I will discuss that later. However, looking at McAnally Flats as a whole it seems to fit better with Victor Turner's idea of *communitas*. Victor Turner took van Gennep's idea of the transition period during rites of passage and developed the idea of an unstructured community that serves as a transient period to self-awareness –

> What is interesting about luminal phenomena for our present purposes is the blend they offer of lowliness and sacredness, of homogeneity and comradeship. We are presented, in such rites, with "a moment in and out of time," and in and out of secular social structure, which reveals, however fleetingly, some recognition (in symbol if not always in language) of generalized social bond that has ceased to be and has simultaneously yet to be fragmented into a multiplicity of structural ties […] It is as though there were here two major "models" for human interrelatedness, juxtaposed and alternating. The first is of society as a structured, differentiated, and often hierarchical system of politico-legal-economic positions […] The second, which emerges recognizably in the luminal period, is of society as an unstructured or rudimentarily structured and relatively undifferentiated *comitatus*,

> community, or even communion of equal individuals who submit together to the general authority of the ritual elders (Turner 95-96).

Suttree has left the structured society of family and economic bonds and moves through a less structured community whose ritual elders take the form of bartenders, a homeless ragpicker and a witchdocter.

The ritual elders of McAnally Flats have formed their own authority and it is not the authority of the first society he has left: the police. If coming from the structured society it would seem that the denizens of McAnally Flats are anti-authoritarian, but that is not the case. They very much respect their own authorities. Take for instance when Suttree and his friends go to Mr. Hatmaker's tavern and Worm isn't allowed in, "Is Worm barred? The barkeeper nodded dourly that he was" (73). Mr. Hatmaker lets Worm back in but they respected the barkeeps decision and Worm stayed away until the elder Mr. Hatmaker had made the decision that Worm, whatever he did to get barred, had done enough penance and was allowed back into his house of ritual, "He stood looking toward the door, weighing the bill in his hand. All right, he said. You can tell him he's not barred anymore" (73). Not wanting to upset the ritual elder they ask if some other friends are barred as well, just to make sure before they step into the establishment, "What about Cabbage and Bearhunter?" and the elder Mr. Hatmaker says, "They ain't barred that I know of" (73). [2] There are two other characters that seem to play a more important role as ritual elders to Suttree and they are Abednego Jones, another bartender, and the old man known as the ragpicker. Abednego Jones seems to play the most important role and has been called by some as Suttree's surrogate father (Jarret 61) and introduces him to another elder, Mother-She, the witchdoctor. Thomas Young says, "Some of [Suttree's] finest moments occur as a result of his friendship with

[2] I want to bring to the reader's attention the name's given to the characters: Bearhunter, Cabbage, Worm and in the same scene we are introduced to Tripping through the Dew. These names seem similar to names given to those who partake in a Vision Quest. Steven Foster discusses this in *The Book of the Vision Quest*.

the black tavern-owner" (Young 111). Suttree sits with Ab Jones and watching Ab's hands and listening to him speak, Suttree has turned to Ab in a hope to make some sense out of life, "Suttree could see the huge veined hands in the gloom […] They were moving as if to shape the dark to some purpose" (203-204). Ab's Dionysian rituals include the use of alcohol in an attempt to understand the mystery; however this doesn't prove sufficient for Suttree.

Suttree's alcohol intake, along with the other citizens of McAnally Flats, is not merely an attempt to mask the feeling of despair and desperation, but one that gives them a sense of divinity. Some find it in religion, but unfortunately for Suttree, religion does not cure his inquisitiveness. During the baptism scene there is a chance for Suttree to have a connection with religion, but it doesn't hold his interest. As he watches from the hillside a young girl being baptized, he seems more interested in her than the religious experience, "The girl had nothing on beneath her thin dress and it clung wet and lascivious across her cold nipples and across her belly and thighs" (122). When the old man sitting next to him asks if he has been saved, Suttree replies no although having been raised presumably Catholic[3] and instead he watched "the girl clamber out of the river" (122). It seems safe to suggest that Suttree has taken the stance that "religion is less a manifestation of the individual quest than an alternative to it; it says not 'Seek!' but 'Seek no further!'" (Torrance 4). Suttree is not satisfied with what others have to tell him about the truth, and this idea reflects back to his college days and his father's last words in the letter to him. Suttree must search and find the truth himself. And this has led him to the bars and taverns of Knoxville.

[3] For the sake of this paper I will assume all readers agree Suttree was raised Catholic and not spend too much time in an attempt to defend that statement. There are plenty of suggestions in the language used: "limbo" (14), the ending to the "Glory Be" prayer on page 381, "As it was then, is now and ever shall" and the most convincing "The only words I know are Catholic ones" on page 251.

At first, Suttree seems to think the truth hides at the bottom of a whiskey bottle or beer can, but that seems to only give him a false hope of finding the peace and transcendence he is looking for. Terrance McKenna says that with an alcoholic cult we experience "the abandonment of the original psychosymbiotic mystery […] In this situation, the substitutes […] are really no more than symbols of the former power of the mystery" (McKenna 122). At this point of Suttree's journey, alcohol seems to be the closest he can come to reaching that point of ecstasy that he is lacking elsewhere. However, with alcohol, psychoactive plants are out of the picture[4] and when that is the case, "in their place are esoteric teachings and dogma, rituals, stress on lineage, gestures and cosmogonic diagrams" and "the complete abandonment of even the pretense of remembering the felt experience of the mystery" (McKenna 122). Suttree has involved himself in these substitutions in an effort to reach the mystery.[5] Suttree partakes in this alcoholic cult, "this fellowship of the doomed," that inhabits McAnally Flats and when he sips his beer "life pulsed obscenely fecund" and the "Sunday lonliness seeped away" (23). This is his church, his liquid Eucharist, but like McKenna has said it is only symbols. As Suttree tries harder to experience it, it takes him further from it[6]. This can be seen in a vision during one of his over-indulgent episodes shortly after being released from the workhouse, which ironically he ended up in because he was passed out drunk in the back seat of a car during a pharmacy robbery:

> A curtain fell […] Amorphous clots of fear that took the forms of nightshades, hags or dwarfs or seatrolls green and steaming that skulked down out of the coils of his poisoned brain with black candles and slow chant. He smiled to see these familiars. Not dread but homologues of dread. They

[4] I will come back to the idea of psychoactive plants, in particular psilocybin, when discussing Suttree's trip into the woods.

[5] For a good reading about the stress on lineage refer to Thomas D. Young, Jr.'s "The Imprisonment of Sensibility: Suttree" in *Perspectives on Cormac McCarthy*.

[6] I use the term "it" because I don't know what else to call it. Some may call it God, some ecstasy, some nirvana. Ultimately, it is an experience that transcends language, so to call it something other than "it" seems to diminish it.

> bore a dead child in a glass bier. Sinister abscission, did I see with my seed eyes his thin blue shape lifeless in the world before me? Who comes in dreams, mansized at times and how so? Do shades nurture? As I have seen my image twinned and blown in the smoked glass of a blind man's spectacles I am, I am (80).

He is again confronted with his double and wonders if he had witnessed his dead brother's birth before his own. Could this be a confrontation with origins? A revisiting of life before existence? This is something I will discuss more of when we get to the sojourn into the woods and his visit with Mother-She. But during this vision from alcohol intoxication, instead of being filled with the ecstasy that comes with encountering the mystery, he is filled with clots of fear and dread. For Suttree though, "a false adumbration of the world of the spirit is better than none at all" (21). As for now, this is the closest he can come to experiencing the mystical.

That is until his passage into the woods from page 283-291. Suttree goes with Ab Jones to see Mother-She and she rolls the bones and reads something about Suttree instead. The next page he makes himself a pack of few essentials and sets off on a venture into the woods. This is the moment of crossing into another threshold, taking him further into his quest, "First he left the roads, then the trails" (283). According to Donald Williams when talking about Carlos Castaneda, "Being alone in the forest is one situation in which powerful unconscious forces may emerge. Being alone, separated from one's environment, friends and routines, is equivalent to being stripped of one's shields against the unconscious" (Williams 21). At this point, Suttree can't turn back and what happens is out of his hands, "he uncovered a snake. Soporific, sleek viper with flanged jawhinges. Fate ridden snake" (283-284). He has finally submitted to the ordeal. That afternoon "ravens flew" and he watches "lightening quaking in the dusk like voltage in some mad chemist's chambers" (284). This isn't the only time Suttree encounters ravens: "Below him ravens rode up like things of wire and crepe weightless on the updrafts" (284) and

then again "nothing moved save he and the wind and ravens" (285). In a Native American vision quest, "if a raven came to them, they would probably become farseeing, which in one sense would mean that they would probably become wise people" (Coltelli 187). The idea of wisdom also coincides with the lightening, "In much Native American mythology […] lightening would be interpreted as divine enlightenment. In this view, the sincere vision quester is actually inviting a storm – literal and figurative – and in essence must court the lightening" (Spencer 102). These signs signify that Suttree is on the path to enlightenment.

And then comes a curious scene – he falls into "silent studies" and around him are "scalloped fungus […] with serrate and membraneous soffits […] frangible, mauvebrown kidneycolored" (284-285). Trying to determine exactly what type of mushroom seems to be futile – one possibility is the *panaeolus fimicola*, a psilocybin containing fungus[7]. However, McCarthy never shows Suttree ingesting the mushrooms, "He wondered could you eat the mushrooms […] He broke one in his hands […] He'd forgotten he was hungry" (285). Whether he does or not, does not take away from the fact that he had a transformative vision on the mountains. Maybe McCarthy does not want to create a separation between his readers who have had the experience, whether plant-induced or naturally. By having Suttree ingest the mushroom, he would be marginalizing one group of his readership, talking directly to those who have experimented with psychoactive plants. On the other hand, by making it an all-natural experience, might take away from those who have experienced "it" only through mind-altering substances. It doesn't matter how one gets there; getting there is the only goal. And Suttree gets there, "Suttree went […] deeper into the mountains […] He had begun to be accompanied" (285). His mirror image seems to be making another appearance soon. And then some

[7] There is an interesting discussion in the CormacMcCarthy.com forum that talks more on this and rather convincingly in connection with Amanita Muscaria. The thread title is "Hallucinogens and McCarthy.

hallucinations begin and heightened senses, very different from his alcoholic experiences of dread and desperation:

> Pins of light near blue were coming off the stones […] a world of incredible loveliness […] he could hear footsteps of the dead […] He scarce could tell where his being ended or the world began nor did he care […] giddy vertigo […] over the offside of the planet, hurtling through the high thin cirrus […] a drop of rain sand on a stone. Bell loud in the wild silence" (286).

He is at peace and in the presence of the dead. Suttree seems to be hovering between two worlds and is okay with it. But it could be a third world he has encountered, a mystical world. This third world could be best described as Karl Popper's third world, "a world not of ultimate Truth or absolute Being, but of verisimilitude and becoming […] a perpetually developing world" (Torrance 281). This is the truth that Suttree has been searching for, instead of one with absolutes like in religion or law or business, it is a world that is forever changing and as a result never ending. At this moment he is content with uncertainty even as his double, "some othersuttree eluded him in these woods" (287). Unfortunately, this experience is fleeting and once out of the woods and back from his trip must then be able to incorporate what he has learned. And that proves not an easy task. On his return to society he does not fit in. He is kicked out of a diner and refused service at a bar. When he gets to sleep he dreams the dreams he had in the mountains and "the second night he woke from uneasy sleep and lay in the world alone" and was seized with "a sudden understanding of the mathematical certainty of death" (295). He had a glimpse of transcending his mortal self and just as quick it was gone. He is getting closer, but must still search further.

Knowing that he still has not found what he is looking for, Suttree goes back to see Mother-She and gets a little closer through the use of divination. He has returned to her after visiting the ragpicker who had recently died under the bridge. Sitting with the dead man, Suttree

recalls an earlier conversation with the ragpicker, "Did you ask? About the crapgame?" And getting no answer he speaks to God, "You have no right to represent people this way, he said. A man is all men. You have no right to your wretchedness […] There is no one to ask is there? There is no…" (422). He stops just short of saying there is no God. But he doesn't give up that there is no one to ask. He turns to Mother-She. Education has not worked. Alcohol hasn't either. And neither did mushrooms or intense meditation and fasting, depending on which view you take about his journey into the woods. Maybe witch-craft will do the trick. She claims she can make people walk again. Suttree doesn't have a problem with walking, he has a problem with seeing, "You can walk, she said. But you caint see where you goin" (423). She then tells him that he has the ability to create his own fate, "To know what will come is the same as to make it so" (423). This brings up a question of determinism versus free-will, a common theme among McCarthy's work. She feeds him a concoction made of "a speckled slug, marked like an ocelot, viscous and sticky" and "Scorpion dust and frogpowder in sowsmilk" (424). [8] This mixture sends Suttree into a hallucination that is more intense than what he experienced in the woods. Suttree needs a guide to help through the next threshold of his quest. The further he goes the more help he needs. Joseph Campbell's hero journey includes supernatural aids and Mother-She serves as a vehicle to take him into another world of his disoriented psyche. Mother-She is the shaman who can take him into unknown realms of his unconscious, "Divination […] serve[s] to open the closure of ritual toward exploration of the encompassing unknown, the wildness that can never wholly be tamed. […] The practitioner, however skilled in a difficult art, may be seen as a receptive vessel rather than a participant in search of knowledge by which she too will be transformed; she remains a vehicle or at best a 'technician' of the sacred rather than the one who

[8] The three things mentioned – slug, scorpion and frog – all could cause hallucinatory effects. Slugs are well known to eat jimson and nightshades which have psychoactive compounds. Ingesting a slug that has fed on these plants could cause a hallucinatory effect. Scorpion venom can have a similar effect. And certain frog skins contain DMT.

takes active part in its discovery or invention" (Torrance 261). She is transformed into a "succubus" and she serves as a technician or vehicle by climbing on top of him and having sex with him until "his spine was sucked from his flesh and fell clattering to the floor like a jointed china snake" (427). This scene brings up the idea of kundalini. Kundalini is Sanskrit for snake and Gopi Krishna says of kundalini, that it brings about "those psychosomatic changes in the body which are essential for metamorphosis of consciousness. A new center – presently dormant in average men and women – has to be activated a more powerful stream of psychic energy must rise into the head from the base of spine to enable human consciousness to transcend the normal limits" (Vardey 181). To some Mother-She being a "geechee" witch seems a far stretch from Indian Yoga and the idea of kundalini, but since we are looking at this from the monomyth stand point, all religions and beliefs are one, whether it is called God or kundalini or it is obtained through psychoactive plants or through religion. And this is just one more stop on Suttree's path to a metamorphosis of consciousness.

Before he has sex with Mother-She, directly after ingesting the potion she has made and as he is about to enter an unknown world of his unconsciousness, Suttree "shuddered in the grip of grue" (424). "Grue" in this sense has two definitions. One definition is that it is a shudder from fear. This would then read "he shuddered in the grip of shuddering," which does not make much sense. The other definition, the one I believe McCarthy was going for, comes from Nelson Goodman's *Fact, Fiction and Forecast*. His definition is a long convoluted idea about emeralds observed before or after a certain time that he uses to discuss the "problem of induction." The problem is summed up as: just because we have observed something over a period of time and it has always been so, doesn't necessarily mean it will continue to be so. It could also be summed up with Kant's idea of all swans are white until we see a black one. So, the definition of the word

"grue" in this sense is Suttree not only understanding, but beginning to transform his beliefs. He is in the "grip of grue" because he is experiencing what Mother-She had said earlier, "To know what will come is the same to make it so." And it is at Mother-She's house, while taking this inner-journey, that Suttree closes the door "on all that he had been" and "Suddenly he realized that this scene was past and he was looking at its fading reality like a watcher from another room. Then he was watching the watcher" (426). He is having an autoscopic experience. And this one is really happening; it is not just a narrative description of seeing himself in the window like McCarthy used earlier in the novel when talking about his "mirror image." After leaving Mother-She he lies down in his houseboat and as a barge drifts past, "He rocked in the swells, floating like the first germ of life adrift on the earth's cooling seas, formless macule of plasm trapped in the vapor drop and all creation yet to come" (430). Suttree has experienced the origin of life, kundalini, God, whatever it is called and with that is now prepared to take it a step further and experience death.

He experiences death during his bout of Typhoid Fever and is finally freed from his mortal constraints. He crosses that final threshold and emerges from his spiritual emergency. This final hallucination is the one that finally allows him to become what he was seeking. Through death he was being reborn, "He no longer cared that he was dying. He was being voided by an enormous livercolored cunt with prehensile lips that pumped softly like some Levantine bivalve. Into a cold dimension without time without space and where all was motion" (452). He is being erased by the same "cunt" that gave him birth. The visions that come from Suttree's near death experience resemble closely with what Carl Jung has said about his own, "The whole phantasmagoria of earthly existence, fell away or was stripped from me […] Nevertheless, something remained; it was as if […] it was with me, and I was it […] I existed in an objective

form; I was what had been and lived […] I had everything that I was, and that was everything" (Jung 290-291). Suttree has another out of body experience and as he watches from above he wonders, "How does the world mesh with the world beyond the world?" (453) and he then enters a clock shop where the clocks had stopped. He was no longer running from the ticking watch of death. Suttree's vision from 454 - 457 seem best discussed with Jung's own description, "the ecstasy of a non-temporal state in which present, past, and future are one. Everything that happens in time had been brought together into a concrete whole […] The experience might best be defined as a state of feeling, but one which cannot be produced by imagination. How can I imagine that I exist simultaneously the day before yesterday, today and the day after tomorrow? […] One is interwoven into an undescribable whole and yet observes it with complete objectivity" (Jung 295-296). Similar words have been used by Grof, "Although there are individual variations, the experience of people who come close to death seem to follow a general pattern. One's entire life up to that point can be reviewed in the form of a colorful, incredibly condensed replay within seconds of a clock" (Grof 81). Unless one has experienced it, these experiences may seem strange and unlikely, and they are. You can't accurately describe the indescribable, yet Jung and McCarthy do a pretty good job of it. When he comes out of his fever for a brief second he grabs the nurse; he has to tell someone what he has learned on this journey, "I know all souls are one and all souls are lonely" (459). The doublegoer, the antisuttree, the othersuttree are all gone. He later tells the priest, "He [God] is not a thing. Nothing ever stops moving" and that "there is one Suttree and one Suttree only" (461).

J-Bone comes to pick him up from the hospital, Suttree turns down a drink of whiskey, and he learns they are tearing down McAnally Flats. It had served its purpose as had all the people who lived there. It is now time for Suttree to take what he has learned and continue on.

The search isn't over; just one part of the ordeal has been conquered. It was hell, but when all is done, it was worth it. Suttree has emerged from his crisis "to a more expanded way of being that involves enhanced emotional and psychosomatic health, greater freedom of personal choices, and a sense of deeper connection with other people, nature and the cosmos" (Grof 34). More importantly, Suttree has survived. He has escaped the "huntsman" who emerges out of the woods at the closing of the novel. And the narrator has seen the huntsman's hounds that "tire not." His only words of advice for us are "Fly them" (471). For all the debauchery and watermelon fucking and young girls getting killed in landslides, *Suttree* is a heck of an optimistic tale.

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