

REVIEW FOR POSTING TO *ROADTRIP*

Emory Black's new novel, "Road Trip," is a plain spoken ride through **perdition, a trip wide in scope, tumbling toward a certain kind of redemption.** When first encountered by the reader, and it must be said, for a long stretch afterward, **the main protagonist, Josh Schiffler, appears to be a lost soul. He is a young man/child only half aware of what and who he is.** Betrayed by a brother, in what can safely be described as a biblical way, he makes a fateful decision. Thereafter, many things are pressed upon him in the course of the novel, horrible, often close to unbearable things. **Tossed into the dark soul of an ugly world, he is also often his own worst enemy.** Booze is a factor as well as the pre-conditioned attitudes of the self-destructive kind.

On more than one occasion, you will be tempted to look away, perhaps to close the cover over and lament the whole sordid happening with a sigh. However, in all likelihood, **the compelling nature of Mr. Black's storytelling** will not allow you to do so. **From the opening pages, his prodigious talents--- for narrative, for subtle description, for dialogue that rings patently true---allow you to see things differently.** Blood and sorrow make themselves known, **as if conjured by some left handed Elmore Leonard. Ribald, oddball characters, with names such as Speedy, and Silent, and Switchblade, arrive, formed in a mold E. Annie Proulx might have used in her modern classic, "Brokeback Mountain," if she'd decided not to play so clean.**

There is a savior, of sorts, in "Road Trip," a good soul, a lustful being, full of right direction clamoring up out of his heart. This character's name is Mark Harper. He arrives first and last. He yearns and leads.

You will like him. And, if you have lived any kind of conflicted days ever in your life, you will know much of him. The key, I think, in reading this swift moving, two hundred and forty-nine page tale, is to simply not be afraid. Instead, allow yourself to sink in as it unfolds.

The author is in charge of his craft. Humor coating certain passages is welcomed. There are sly winks as well. The story, alas, is ugly and mean and pretty and knowing. At its core, it is probably a love story, a thing of discovery, of growth, and yes, of steel boned menace. Its end is tender though, sublime. Read on through the well wrought mire and you will be glad to have gotten there.