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Deconstructing a journey full of boundaries: History of Man in Cormac McCarthy's *Blood Meridian* and *The Crossing*

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I dedicate this dissertation to all Cormac McCarthy's fans, who are transported to another dimension and feel inspired, moved, intrigued and amazed every time they open one of his books.

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Everything has its own source and is always determined by certain influential aspects. Although this dissertation's ideas and structures came from my own mind, I could have never written it the way I did if it weren't for some special people, who inspired me and contributed to my perspective in their own unique way. Therefore I would like to thank:

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Abstract

Keywords: Cormac McCarthy; Blood Meridian; The Crossing; Journey; History of Man; Landscape; Narrator; Dissenters; West; United States of America.

Is history just simply what we read in books and what we take for granted? Literature has been through many changes over the years, but if there is one thing that we can't deny, is its power to preserve culture and critical judgment—all in all, our heritage. Literature is, therefore, the memory of Man. Whether people hate or love Cormac McCarthy's novels, they are unmistakably bold and unique, having countless cultural and historical roots, and approaching timeless and controversial issues. I argue that *Blood Meridian* and *The Crossing*, his most complex and insightful works up to date, aren't neither empty of meaning nor negative novels. The purpose of this dissertation is to gather information by examining the character's journeys, their interaction with the Other (such as people, animals and landscape) and the narrator's role, which, conjoined, will lead to a fruitful overview of mankind's history in these two novels.

Resumo

Palavras-chave: Cormac McCarthy; Blood Meridian; The Crossing; Viagem; História do Homem; Paisagem; Narrador; Rebeldes; Oeste; Estados Unidos da América.

Será que a história é simplesmente aquilo que lemos nos livros e tomamos por garantido? A literatura tem sofrido muitas mudanças ao longo dos anos, mas se há algo que não podemos negar é o seu poder de preservar a cultura e o juízo crítico—em suma, a nossa herança. A literatura é, então, a memória do Homem. As obras de Cormac McCarthy podem ser detestadas ou adoradas, mas são também claramente arrojadas e únicas, possuindo inúmeras raízes históricas e culturais, e abordando problemáticas intemporais e controversas. A meu ver, *Blood Meridian* e *The Crossing*, as obras mais complexas e profundas de McCarthy, não são nem vagas, nem negativas, e têm um significado próprio. O objectivo desta dissertação é recolher informações, analisando as jornadas das personagens, as suas interacções com o Outro (que podem ser pessoas, paisagens ou animais) e o papel do narrador, que combinadas irão resultar numa perspectiva produtiva sobre a história da humanidade nestas duas obras.

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Life's pretty damn good.

—Cormac McCarthy (2007)

INTRODUCTION

The journey in American literature: the origins

In order to discuss the theme of the journey in McCarthy's *oeuvre* one needs to understand how this topic came into being and became so central in the American experience. What was its foundation? Which events marked it in American culture? Lastly, how did this theme spread throughout History and what were the consequences? There is a need, thus, to go back not just to the origins of American literature, but of America itself.

There are three main historical events, more specifically movements, which introduced the centrality of the journey in the USA. The discovery of the American continent, by Christopher Columbus in 1492, was a result of a journey by ship. Secondly, the movement of Europeans towards the New Continent was encouraged by the hope of starting again, searching for a new life in a new place without boundaries or restraints. In the image of America these Europeans, known as Puritans, saw a virgin land which would receive them with unlimited new opportunities. This whole vision was later analyzed by experts on American culture and history, who then considered it utopian, a dream of a good or better place[1]. It was in this virgin land that the Puritans would regenerate themselves and achieve salvation. Lastly, the journey is strictly connected to the American myth, that of an unlimited geographic frontier.

This notion of the frontier was eloquently theorized by Frederick Jackson Turner, who demonstrated why this was uniquely an American conception. The westward expansion was distinct due to its far-away distance from the coast, where the first settlements were established, and to its later development: "…the frontier promoted the formation of a composite nationality for the American people. The coast was preponderantly English, but the later tides of continental immigration flowed across to the free lands" (Turner 1996: 22). Therefore, there was a stronger American identity being established in the free lands of the west. Plus, this physical movement towards the

[1] The word *utopia* is formed by the word *topos*, which means place, and by two prefixes: *ou*, which refers to non-existence, and *eu*, that means good. Joining these two meanings, utopia came to mean "a good place that doesn't exist".

west, to the interior of the Continent, meant a "steady movement away from the influence of Europe, a steady growth of independence on American lines" (Turner 1996: 4). Not only were Americans becoming more distant from the English settlements, they were also further from Europe as a continent. Besides, the way of living in the frontier developed singular features of its own: "… to the frontier the American intellect owes its striking characteristics. … that dominant individualism, working for good and for evil, and withal that buoyancy and exuberance which comes with freedom - these are traits of the frontier, or traits called out elsewhere because of the existence of the frontier."(Turner 1996: 37) In brief, frontier life created a new space, with different people, customs and beliefs, but most importantly, an exclusively American community. However, the physical place for expansion and exploration eventually ran out. It is at this point that the most important idea behind all this is revealed: movement. According to Turner, "[m]ovement has been its [American life's] dominant fact, and, unless this training has no effect upon a people, the American energy will continually demand a wider field for its exercise. But never again will such gifts of free land offer themselves." (Turner 1996: 37) On the whole, Americans will always be on the pursuit of something more, something that goes beyond the simple idea of exploring physical land. This is their constant desire and dream.

The discovery of the American continent was a striking event in History, but the journey as a central American issue was above all a consequence of the European travels towards America. This craving for a place to start anew led to the creation of mythic conceptions of America, such as The Garden of Eden, the Eldorado, or the Promised Land, and later the concept of the Frontier and the Myth of the West. The creation of myths is a result of Man's desires and dreams, hopes and projections. It is possible to argue, then, that myth and journey condition each other; the myths are built because of a movement or quest, and a quest is made in order to use these myths and turn them into reality. Connected to the physical journey is the quest of the Self and the inner-realization or discovery. Puritans lived a life of isolation and their culture was mainly interior. The concern with salvation transformed them in powerful cultivators of individualism, and from this, solitude and otherness would outflow (Avelar 2008: 15-16, my translation). To travel or to make a journey means to move from one place to another or from one familiar place to a whole different one. Journeys can either be denotative, meaning only a movement through space and time; or they can be connotative—to overcome the notion of movement, to depart and to arrive, in order to

include an interior journey of growing and learning. This implies that the initial Self who sets off will be completely different from the one who arrives. Consequently, to understand the act of travelling one needs to bear in mind the American conceptions of place.

What did Puritans think of the American continent? What did they find most attractive? First of all, it was the idea of a completely fresh and uncivilized place, which is not supposed to be mistaken with the idea of wilderness as a good thing—something cherished by the English Romantics, in opposition to the Victorian age. In fact, it was the other way around; the idea of a new place to civilize and transform into one of their own pleased the settlers. This was also due to their fear of the untamed and wild nature. Furthermore, Leonard Lutwack noted that "[s]eizing and developing the land occupied the hands of the settlers, but their minds were exercised by the renewal of individual, family, and society in America." (1984: 142) The process of civilization of this land was important, but the real motive of their endeavor was the idea of a completely new society, with new rules. They were trying to fulfill their utopian dream and to make their mythic conceptions real.

Secondly, and still related to the notion of an uncivilized place, is the fact that an unconquered and wild space offers no obstacles—at least not lawful ones—and the settlers have nothing that can stop their moving through the land: "[t]he prime hero of American literature is the man in motion, and he moves best through the wilderness because is no stopping-place there…" (Lutwack 1984: 181) In brief, the theme of the journey is deeply rooted in the American experience.

However, the high significance of the journey in the United States of America does not lie only in its origin, but also through its History until the present: from the discovery and (greedy) exploration of the west, to movements from farms to towns—as industrialization intensified—to migrations towards the USA and movements inside its own land. Moreover, the puritan way of life—individualist and interior—also influenced the American attitude, namely as far as artists and writers are concerned. Consequently, artists would write about fictional individuals who would travel to different places, that would change them and their perspective. This would make the journey metaphysical, psychological and interior. The literary perspective would turn from the outer physical world to the inner world of the Self. Accordingly, writers could create a whole new concept: the inner journey. Lutwack declared that "[i]t may be that movement across seemingly unlimited space, more than attachment to place, expresses

the American's relation to his land" (Lutwack 1984: 180), referring to physical space. However, unlimited can also be a word used to describe the human mind. Thus, the American's relation to his land is an articulation between the movement across unlimited places and the immeasurable mind and spirit of the human being.

By looking at the wide range of the American literary tradition, one may argue that the main *topoi* are the journey, the frontier, inner pilgrimage, the protagonists' solitude and orphanhood, their relationship with the Other; to sum up, the construction and development of identity. Among many outstanding American novels, there are four examples that make evident how the authors approach the theme of the journey: *Moby-Dick* (1851) by Herman Melville, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1865) by Mark Twain, *The Great Gatsby* (1925) by F. Scott Fitzgerald and *On the Road* (1957) by Jack Kerouac.

In *Moby-Dick*, the characters travel by sea, a completely wide and unconquered space. Here, the sea is a whole new frontier. In the same way, Huck Finn goes down the Mississippi river, which was considered a sort of frontier, during many years. Regarding *Huckleberry Finn*, the final stop is the West. Despite having no family, it is important to note that these two characters belong to different age groups. Huck is an innocent child and his is a journey of initiation. Ishmael is an adult, and his journey is something he needs to accomplish. However, both characters experience an inner journey, they travel inside their selves. On the one hand, Huck feels imprisoned by "sivilization", therefore, his escape represents liberation. The former Huck Finn dies in a pseudo-assassination faked by himself, and remains dead to society's eyes throughout the whole journey down the river. On the other hand, Ishmael feels suffocated by his own self, from which he tries to escape. His main goal is to search or pursue, not to find. He doesn't care whether he catches the whale or not, because his quest hasn't got a final meaning or destination. All in all, there is a departure and arrival directed to the self: the journey is for journey's sake. It is through this inner and physical quest without a specific destination that these characters will learn more about themselves and grow spiritually. Further examples are Nick Carraway's road travel from the Midwest to the East Coast in *The Great Gatsby* and Sal Paradise's road trip from the USA to Mexico in *On The Road*. Most characters are accompanied by someone functioning as the Other, someone who questions and complements the protagonist. Although the main characters are usually lonely and sometimes orphans, we should refer to pairs or doubles: Ishmael and Queequeg, Huck and Jim, Gatsby and Nick, Sal Paradise and Dean Moriarty, and in

Cormac McCarthy's fiction, the kid and Holden, Billy Parham and the wolf, Boyd and the Mexican girl, constituting one of the aspects to be discussed in this thesis. These companions will influence the protagonists' path and perspective throughout the narrative.

Along with the characters' quests, that will eventually become interior, greater issues regarding their own epochs will come to being: the nineteenth century puritan and tragic legacy in *Moby-Dick*; slavery and dealing with the Other at the end of that same century, in *Huck Finn;* the Jazz Age, the Roaring Twenties and the American dream in *The Great Gatsby;* post-war and counterculture in *On the Road.* Cormac McCarthy approaches not only issues of his own times but of universal concern. For instance, the image of a pastoralism destroyed by industrialization and Man's violence towards planet Earth is recurrent: "McCarthy implicitly and consistently attacks the myth of the pastoral in all its forms, Southern, American, Western. … McCarthy recasts myth to attack what he sees as the false and destructive cultural constructs of American Exceptionalism in particular." (Cant 2007: 7) However, this thesis will focus on the history of Man: the characters' different beliefs, perceptions and development throughout their journeys[2].

The journey in Cormac McCarthy's *oeuvre*

"McCarthy doesn't write about places he hasn't visited", writes Richard B. Woodward in the article "Cormac McCarthy's Venomous Fiction" (1992), a thought-provoking text that unveils a tiny bit of McCarthy's personality. Indeed, this writer is a well-traveled man and claims that luxury or a life in intellectual academic circles doesn't interest him. He uses every small and insignificant detail from the landscape to build the background of his narratives, while creating characters with mysterious paths and cruel fates. It is safe to say that most of his novels are "journey-centered". The settings of his fictional pieces can belong to the South, the West, or to a post-apocalyptic and sterile Earth. To affirm that the main theme of his work is the human condition can be adequate, but too simple and vague. A journey always brings about questions about the human nature and spirit, because journey and self cannot be separated. Plus, as mentioned earlier, a novel about a physical journey ends up being an inner journey too.

One of the aims of this thesis is to explore what kind of issues can be found in two of this author's literary works regarding the human condition and nature. For this

[2] The main focal points of this thesis will be given later in this introduction.

purpose, the analysis of the paths chosen by the kid, Billy Parham and Boyd Parham, the connection between the characters and the landscape, and the narrator's point of view and techniques of narrating are essential aspects to be discussed.

McCarthy's writing details are highly developed and his landscapes extremely real—the way they look, the way they smell. One of the most striking features of McCarthy's writing is how real the character's path and roads are "marked by intense natural observation, a kind of morbid realism" (Woodward, 1992). In fact, this evidence transforms the plot in a much more serious experience. His narratives aren't simple and straightforward, having a structure that is often circular. The characters never get what they want, and throughout their journeys they witness terrible murders and cruel acts. They also witness, however, kind acts of various people and families that give them food and shelter—a Mexican tradition—and learn about the mystery of nature and animals, namely horses and wolves. The types of characters vary: they can be 13-year-old youngsters, older teenagers or mature adults, but always males. What they all have in common is a damaged background of dead or murdered relatives, drunken fathers, and dysfunctional families. In short, they are characters struck by orphanhood and solitude. But what impels them to start a journey is the desire of a different life, or simply to escape their former one. For instance, John Grady Cole starts off with his friend Rawlins in *All the Pretty Horses* (1992) with a pastoral dream in his mind—living a free cowboy life in a ranch; in *The Road* (2006) the father and the son travel South in order to find a safe and warm place to survive the post-apocalyptic terror. Even Lester Ballard, the deviant and bizarre protagonist of *Child of God* (1973), who may be one of Cormac McCarthy's least insightful characters, starts a life as a fugitive, stealing, killing and raping corpses in order to live outside the social order, until he finds a cave where he lives the rest of his decadent life. All of these examples belong to different times and stages regarding the author's life. Nevertheless, whether the characters are moral or immoral, young or old, intelligent or idiotic, there is always a quest. The character's pursuit will mingle with the different events along the narrative, which in turn will lead to their final destiny and fate. This fate is always a cruel and hopeless one, and their quests for freedom "in an American context is another name for solitude" (Bloom 2009: 8). Therefore, they are stuck in a never-ending circle of pursuit, loneliness and alienation.

Concepts of journey in *Blood Meridian* and *The Crossing*

It is a fact that all of McCarthy's works tell the story of a woman, man or youngster who escape their lives and make a journey. However, this work will focus on *Blood Meridian* and *The Crossing.* Steven Frye claimed that *"The Crossing* emerged as the most densely complex volume in the trilogy, rivaling *Blood Meridian* in its philosophical intensity" (2009: 97) which is one of the main reasons for my choice of these novels. The content of both texts is so complex and has so many different perspectives that it calls out for a detailed research. Another reason is the fact that these two novels are very different in terms of background, and in feelings experienced by the readers. Although of a very intense philosophical value, *Blood Meridian* is dominated by slaughter and by the acts of adult and cruel men. In the case of *The Crossing*, the background is full of dreamscapes and mystery, which is emphasized by the youth and innocence of the main characters. However, by exploring these two novels in parallel, we will collect an amount of elements that, conjoined, will help us understand mankind and its condition.

In *Selves at Risk: Patterns of Quest in Contemporary American Letters,* Ihab Hassan eloquently examines the theme of the quest, its motives, spaces and contexts. Accordingly, to consider and analyze Cormac McCarthy's *Blood Meridian* and *The Crossing* as travel or journey novels one must bear in mind Hassan's concepts: the seeker, the motives, meaning and existence, the Other, and lastly autobiography. Who are the travelers, seekers or adventurers? What compelled them to start a journey and what are their motives?

First of all, one needs to establish who the real seekers are. In *Blood Meridian* there are two protagonists: the kid and judge Holden. They are very distinct. The former is defined by actions, silence and laconic replies, the latter by highly coherent and wise words. Their motives for travelling are also different. The kid is a peculiar character, who leaves his decadent home at the age of thirteen and starts a quest marked by violence and blood, joining various groups, which have only one thing in common: to kill. It seems that his quest is mainly motivated by the desire of fleeing. Although his mind and behavior are difficult to analyze or even to understand, he has an important role to play. Most readers will probably identify with him, because of his merciful acts, in which he helps or tries to save his comrades. He also serves as Holden's nemesis, and vice-versa. The judge's motives in this quest are blurred. He belongs to a gang, led by

Glanton, who kills Mexicans and Indians, and collects their scalps for money. Holden gives endless speeches, which show his eclectic knowledge and unmask different truths about the world. The only thing he seeks is to become the God of war, violence and carnage and manipulate everyone. He follows rites of ceremony and is submitted to a divine order of war in order to achieve this status. In the end he is the one who triumphs. Trying to completely understand these two characters may be a complex task. Nonetheless, together, they contribute to the analysis of the journey in *Blood Meridian*, being each other's nemesis, with very different perspectives, and who will change each other's journeys

In *The Crossing*, the protagonist Billy Parham makes three crossings. The first one is made in order to search and capture a she-wolf, and then return her to Mexico, her homeland. The second is to go look for his family's stolen horses, now accompanied by his younger brother, the only alive relative, Boyd, who leaves him later; the third is to try to find his brother, and then to return his bones to his homeland. Finally, Billy only wanders and drifts. He has no more tasks to accomplish, nor a place to go, and inside him lies a broken heart and a devastated spirit. As we can see, Billy has many motives to travel. Throughout his journeys he also encounters many individuals who teach and tell him strange philosophies, truths and stories, and some of them even give him mysterious premonitions and advices about his own future. Moreover, this character is always in danger: he travels through Mexico, a godless and cruel place without justice, with a wolf in possession, and with no papers of his own identity. Here, the non-existence of documents that can prove his identification can symbolize an unknown identity: Billy isn't sure of who he is and what he is supposed to do. But there is something inside him that makes him move without fear and hesitation, something that makes him a unique and peculiar character. He has, in fact, his own microcosm or reality, where the background's events and rules vanish. It is possible to affirm, then, that Billy is the seeker defined by Hassan: "The seeker … is not characterless or faceless. He is certainly self-reliant, tolerant of risk. He is mobile. H seeks meaning, even if danger must attend his pursuit; he intuits that individuals need and consume meanings far more than products." (Hassan 1990: 13) His quest implies discovering many truths about himself, about Man and the world. Therefore, his quest isn't only individual; it affects the world and the truth of human existence. The other two young characters, the kid and Boyd, may not have these specific qualities, but they have a vital role in the plot, which will be explored later.

Inherent to the quest is the search for meaning and understanding of existence**:** **"**The exploration of human violence and depravity, as well as the search for meaning, are central to McCarthy's novels…" (Kunsa 2012: 147). This is why not only Billy, but also the kid and Boyd are the true agents of the concept of quest. Despite being a strong character who acts and travels without hesitation, Billy is more a listener and a collector of theories and truths. He does not participate in the actual discussions or speeches, serving, thus, as a means for the readers to receive and learn new philosophies and points of view. Even though the kid is silent most of the narrative, his acts speak for himself, something that leaves the readers curious and wanting to understand this character. Boyd, who is the only character that doesn't achieve any transformation, contributes to our understanding of the notion of truth. Lastly, Judge Holden, the master of words, unveils in all of his speeches the mysteries of the world. However, his strong ability to express himself through enigmatic stories and principles can be used against him, and consequently, used to deconstruct him. There are also minor characters like gypsies, priests or opera singers, who give powerful speeches about notions such as the tale, the road, war, nature, and who contribute to the meaning of these quests. These three characters encounter other characters and those circumstances help not only them, but also, in terms of reception, the reader to create something meaningful, imbuing the characters' journeys with intellectual, philosophical and life-changing discussions. According to Hassan, "…although they [the seekers] may never find what they seek, and may forsake their hope, they leave behind them a verbal trace of some inner pain or radiance to make our journey in this … universe more right." (Hassan 1990: 14) Here, the critic means that it is not the ending that matters, whether the characters fail or die, live or triumph. The seekers who influence the journey will always influence the reader too, making the whole adventure unforgettable, and contributing to a different perspective on life. This kind of narrative and plot is one of Cormac McCarthy's literary traits.

The artist's work is always a projection of his own inner world, and creative mind. Inspiration and creativity have its origins in the "I", the individual or best known as "the self". Hassan affirms that "American literature … is largely autobiographical, a literature of the Self, enacted most often on the margins of society… It is also… a symbolic, visionary literature, less social than metaphysical, with a prepossession for myth and romance." (1990: 5) And Cormac McCarthy is no exception. Very humble, simple and not so interested in wealth or comfort, he made—and is probably still

making—excursions to Texas, Arizona, Chihuahua and to many other places in the American Continent. An attentive reader can find through his line of work a collection of deep introspective theories and eloquent remarks, in English or mixed with Spanish, presented by different characters from wise old ladies to brute and mysterious Indians, but most importantly by the narrator himself. Due to the writer's rare appearances in public, there are few readers or critics who actually have heard him explain his novels or give opinions about them. This is not a negative aspect at all, because the sense of mystery is not only important in a piece of fiction, but also in our own lives and mind. Or as Barcley Owens puts it, "we must answer this question ourselves." (2000: 10)

The existence of an individual or self implies the existence of the Other. This Other can be one or several persons, an animal, a landscape or a whole society. It is "everything the self perceives as alien to itself" (Hassan 1990: 39). In addition, it can be good or evil, or both. Because it is an important issue concerning the theme of the journey, one must deduce what is the Other in the two novels under scrutiny in this thesis. In *The Crossing*, since Billy Parham was a child, he feels an enigmatic connection with the wolves and a craving to observe and to understand them. He even gets to travel with a real and female one. The time he spends with this mysterious and wild creature helps him create new feelings towards nature and wilderness, and makes him grow fearless of what may come. This she-wolf can, therefore, be one of the Others to Billy. The animal is considered by all men something unreachable and mystic, or as John Cant puts it, "unreachably other" (2007: 196) and although the protagonist tries hard to understand her, save her and communicate with her, he isn't successful. Nevertheless, this failure does not happen without leaving a strong mark on this character and on the readers. The she-wolf, as the eternal Other, is something positive and productive to both narrative and protagonist. On the other hand, there is always evil. And the evil Other is the Mexican society. It is in Mexico that the wolf is stolen away from Billy and imprisoned in a fair, where she must fight endlessly with all kind of ferocious dogs. It is also there that Billy is forced to kill her. Lastly, Boyd dies in Mexico and is buried there. This evil Other is the most powerful obstacle for Billy.

In *Blood Meridian*, the kid and the judge are each other's evil Other. The kid resists and provokes Holden by replying with silence or with short answers, and the judge insists in manipulating and transforming him in a perfect coldblooded war lord. The only difference between them is that the kid befriends some of his comrades from Glanton's band, such as the expriest and Toadvine. These two characters are the good

Other for the kid, who help him and fight by his side. Even though Holden has power over both Glanton's gang members and outsiders—performing trades and speaking with cordiality—, everything and everyone that is his Other fears him, is against him and wants him dead.

To sum up, all of these elements—seeker, motive, meaning, autobiography, the Other—influence the conclusion towards what kind of journey we are examining Subsequently, these journeys—whether of blood, violence and war, or of innocence, boyhood and suffering—are "life-defining and life-changing for the fiction protagonists, and the experience of travel is central rather than incidental to the plots." (Varvogli 2012: xxiv)

The first chapter of this thesis will, as I have noted earlier, focus on the analysis of the kid's, Billy's and Boyd's journeys, having in mind their crucial role in the plot, their inner-development and their symbolic value. The second chapter will explore the connection between characters and the landscape, while focusing on the concept of control. Lastly, the third chapter will be dedicated to the narrator's role in the novels, where I will categorize McCarthy's techniques of emphasis—firstly in small words, then in larger expressions of comparison, and finally in complete and longer remarks—which reveal a personal tone. On the whole, these three chapters will make evident how the history of man is constructed.

CHAPTER ONE

Three innocent dissenters

Blood Meridian and *The Crossing* have been, and are still being, exhaustively analyzed and re-analyzed by many critics and experts on the matter. Examples of these readings are themes such as naturalism, "existentialism, ancient Gnosticism, traditional Christianity, Platonism and nihilism" (Kunsa 2012: 146) and background contexts such as the Vietnam War or the Mexican revolution. Historical and theoretical issues aside, the development and the ending of these two novels depend on the journeys that the protagonists take, on their personal background and the events they witness, their connection to different types of Others (physical, spiritual, emotional and psychological), and finally on the boundaries they cross, or don't cross. Despite the almost ten-year gap between the two novels and the drastic change of theme and foreground—*The Crossing* is a much more dreamy and romantic novel that doesn't focus so much on the practice of violence and bloodshed, and its protagonists are more humane than *Blood Meridian*'s—, they both have young protagonists, and can be examined in parallel. The reason for a different reading and study of these two novels, bearing in mind the three young characters, Billy and Boyd Parham and the kid, is the way their narratives develop, the fact that they have different personal backgrounds, personalities and different roles. Elizabeth Andersen notes that the "key thematic question is sometimes explicitly stated in the opening pages of the novel or implied by its title" (Andersen 2008: 6). Accordingly, *Blood Meridian*'s opening pages are dedicated to the kid—whom the readers, at a certain point of the novel, don't consider to be the real protagonist—and in fact, this is one of the evidences that confirms the kid's paramount function in the story; it tells about his ragged state, his early taste for violence, and his universal importance. The title of this work points to a story drenched in viciousness, which will be the necessary background to reveal the kid's ultimate role.

The Crossing's opening pages, on the other hand, are dedicated to Billy and Boyd, who are very young (Boyd is only a baby). The narrative of these opening pages suggests a story embedded in innocence. Even though Billy will eventually grow more mature, as we will see later, the issue of innocence, its loss or protection, is always

present—mainly in the dialogues between him and his brother. The title points to the passage of barriers or boundaries, that won't be just physical.

Worthington claims that "[i]n the Border Trilogy, McCarthy creates orphans who, like Huck, embark on journeys in search of a home. In these quests, they enlist the aid of guides or mentors. They seek assistance from surrogate parents, lovers and brothers, but still find no place where they belong, no country of their own and no hopeful frontier in the territory beyond." (2012: 23) The analysis of these characters will prove otherwise. Steven Frye talks of "the distinctive manner in which characters are made round and dynamic, embodied in human terms" (2009: 120) in McCarthy's novels. Considering this a starting point, I will make evident that the kid, Billy and Boyd have a place where they belong and a very special purpose and role in the novels: to resist the main authority, or in Boyd's case, to resist truth.

1. The kid: the silent one

The kid, as one of the oddest characters in American literature, has been leaving many readers and critics anxious about an explanation for his enigmatic actions such as deliberate beatings, slaughters, merciful acts and a puzzling immunity to judge Holden's prophetic speeches. Having a drunken father and no mother, and leaving his home at the age of fourteen, this character could turn out to be a cold teenager, possibly with a violent behavior and a traumatized mind. Some of these aspects turn out to be true. Even so, why does he help characters throughout the novel? Furthermore, his laconic or silent replies to the judge's provocations could commonly be explained by his lack of education—he doesn't even know how to read—and due to his naivety. However, there is much more to that. What if Holden's magnificent and cruel theories about Man and the world aren't the true focus? Perhaps the judge symbolizes the modern, extremely pragmatic man, who tries to explain and give a purpose to everything he sees. He can also be considered a phony man, who talks too much, doesn't listen to anyone else's opinions and doesn't care about anyone. If so, maybe the kid is one of the few people who can protect himself against this deceiving and hollow character, and plays, thus, a major role in the narrative. An analysis regarding his background, his relationship with the Other and his actions will help to specify what kind of role he plays.

Blood Meridian's beginning belongs to the kid—the one and true protagonist[3]—offering a description of this character's physical state and family background:

> SEE THE CHILD. He is pale and thin, he wears a thin and ragged linen shirt. He stokes the scullery fire. … His folk are known for hewers of wood and drawers of water but in truth his father has been a schoolmaster. He lies in drink, he quotes from poets whose names are now lost. The boy crouches by the fire and watches him.
> He can neither read nor write and in him broods already a taste for mindless violence. All history present in that visage, the child the father of the man. (McCarthy 1985: 3)[4]

Right at the beginning of a soon-to-be-read novel, the readers are introduced to a young character in a miserable physical state, whose only family is an alcoholic father that didn't even teach his son how to read and write. In addition to this whole vision of misery is the fact that this young boy has already an unconventional and unusual craving for violence. The last line of this quote creates a sense of universality, both connecting to and symbolizing this child as the whole human race and its history. This character, thus, will have an important role to play since the beginning of the narrative, and, apparently, a dark fate.

Throughout the kid's affected quest by violence and hanged, mutilated and violated corpses he meets different characters. Among hermits, drunken men at bars, Manifest Destiny idealists (Captain White), he sticks throughout most of the narrative to Glanton's gang. In that gang the readers get to know characters that bond with the kid: an earless man named Toadvine and an expriest named Tobin. Since they both are members of Glanton's band, one can already conclude that they are men of violence and war.

He meets Toadvine after fighting with him and ending up in the mud, all beaten up and dirty, as if their fight was some kind of ritual that made the beginning of their acquaintance, and later, relationship possible[5]. The kid, then, starts hanging out with this

[3] Although the judge's point of view is the main focus at some point of the novel, I believe that the kid is the only real protagonist. The novel begins and ends with him; he is the main focus regarding not only the action and narrative, but also the relationships between the characters, such as Toadvine, Sproule and the expriest.

[4] Subsequent references to this novel will be given using the abbreviation BM followed by the respective pages.

[5] It is difficult to safely claim that Toadvine and the kid become actual friends. In a world like *Blood Meridian's*, betrayal seems a very natural word. Plus, Toadvine isn't by the kid's side all the time. After

character and helps him committing arson and beating a man. This scene, where Toadvine says to the kid "Kick him … Aw, kick him, honey" (BM 13) already shows some kind of affinity between these two characters; what's more, Toadvine uses the expression "honey", just like Jim in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* does to address Huck in a sweet and loving way. Furthermore, during one of the quarrels provoked by Glanton's gang, Toadvine and the kid stand back to back shooting their enemies, like "duelists" (BM 189). Lastly, after the Yuma's attack and gruesome victory, the kid gets badly injured and Toadvine is the one who stays by his side. The kid's role is reversed[6]: now he is the one who is wounded, and who has someone trying to help him: "and twice he told Toadvine to go on but he would not" (BM 293).

The other character who bonds with the kid is the expriest Tobin. Like Captain White[7], this character, too, sees something in the kid:

> The expriest shook his head. Oh it may be the Lord's way of showin how little store he sets by the learned. Whatever could it mean to one who knows all? He's an uncommon love for the common man and godly wisdom resides in the least of things so that it may well be that the voice of the Almighty speaks most profoundly in such beings as lives in silence themselves.
>
> He watched the kid.
>
> For let it go how it will, he said, God speaks in the least of creatures.
>
> The kid thought him to mean birds or things that crawl (…) (BM 131).

While looking at the kid, Tobin affirms, almost directly, that the kid possesses "godly wisdom" and hears "the voice of the Almighty", something that the protagonist doesn't understand. Despite his active participation in acts of war and violence, he is still a child, innocent and naïve. His intellect isn't fully developed, so there are many things that he doesn't understand yet. In addition, Tobin mentions the word silence and refers

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their first encounter, the kid continues his quest. The kid himself values his life and is capable of running and leaving his comrades behind; take the episode with Tate in the desert, for instance. Nonetheless, it is safe to say that Toadvine and the kid create a real bond; when the kid gets his leg hurt, Toadvine does not leave him, and implicitly shows preoccupation with him.

[6] Before this scene, there is an episode where the kid tries to help Sproule, who is badly injured.

[7] The captain addresses the kid with two affirmations that emphasize his important role in the narrative: "I see it [something worth saving] in you" (BM 32) and "But I don't misread you. I'm seldom mistaken in a man. I think you mean to make your mark in this world. Am I wrong?" (BM 37), to which the kid replies "No.". Whether the kid was being honest or not, we readers will never know for sure. Nevertheless, these two lines spoken by White still highlight the boy's importance.

to “lives in silence”, which definitely applies to the kid. Additionally, “the learned” and “the one who knows all” may be a discrete way of talking about the judge, and of saying that knowledge isn’t everything; there are more important things in life.

In the last encounter (before the last scene) with the judge, in which the kid is accompanied by these two characters, the expriest encourages him: “The expriest whispered encouragement at his elbow and the kid thumbed back the hammer and the expriest adjusted the hat to shade gunsight …” (BM 295). Both Tobin and Toadvine express their admiration for the kid’s ability to shoot, saying that he is “a cool one” and a “dead eye”. When the judge, accompanied by the imbecile, approached the characters to “share this meat”, the kid and his friends “didn’t move”, standing their ground all together, in a formed allegiance. Due to the need of water, the kid stands up to go and fill in the flask, and the expriest “stood by him” (BM 299). Once again, the expriest openly shows that he is supporting the kid, and ready to protect him. He won’t leave him. Leslie Harper Worthington affirms that

> [t]he kid has three potential fathers, but none who is good or caring. They are not instructional in any positive way. Toadvine, after fighting with the kid, involves him in murder and arson. The ex-priest, Tobin, is somewhat caring and stays by his side but he is more interested in using the kid as a weapon against the judge than in guiding the boy. Most scholars see the judge as the kid’s surrogate father, but a horrible father he will be, far worse than the kid’s biological father. (2012: 134-135).

This statement would be adequate if *Blood Meridian*’s background and environment wasn’t war, bloodshed and cruelty. One must bear in mind that in a narrative such as this, certain human qualities and issues are blurred, such as moral, ethics, and human relationships. Every man in this novel is corrupted, in a way or another. The kid gets involved in every violent event that he encounters, showing no fear or reluctance. And the events concerning the expriest and Toadvine aren’t an exception. One thing is certain: the kid establishes a distinctive connection with these two characters, who relate with him in their own different ways. They may not be the “potential fathers” mentioned by Worthington, but they are the closest thing to that condition. As far as the judge is concerned, who will be analyzed later, he doesn’t establish any kind of emotional or friendly bond with the kid. His main interest is to convert him to his beliefs and principles of war and power. Although he convincingly claims that he would have loved the kid “like a son” (BM 323), the readers learn, as the plot unfolds, that he

could never love anyone like a son, especially the kid, who is the only character to reject his speeches and provocations.

The explicit scenes of mutilation, visions of scalped victims and the cruel— and sometimes comical—attitudes of the members of Glanton's gang shock fresh new readers and leave deep marks of atrocious memories on older ones. For many critics, the novel's narrative of violence has absolutely no trace of moral, human feelings or meaning. However, by closer observing not only the protagonist's but other characters' attitudes, encounters and acts, one might think the opposite.

The first encounter to show this possibility is the one with Sproule. With this encounter the readers can attribute to the kid elements of mercy and sympathy, due to the kid's insistence in trying to help him (BM 65, 69). Moreover, the kid's reply to Sproule about the appearance and disappearance of the lake, "People see what they want to see" (BM 66) and the statement during Sproule's agony, "I know your kind, he said. What's wrong with you is wrong all the way through you." (BM 70) reveal some kind of critical judgment and understanding, and "his disdain for fear, as it is a sign of weakness" (Owens 2000: 53). He isn't so empty-minded or apathetic as many critics say. He is aware of people's inside contents.

Secondly, there is the scene with Glanton's band when Shelby is severely wounded and is going to be executed by one of the members:

> The Mexican … would die anyway but Shelby had had his hip shattered by a ball and he was clear in his head. He lay watching the kid. He was from a prominent Kentucky family and had attended Transylvania College and like many another young man of his class he'd gone west because of a woman. He watched the kid and he watched the enormous sun where it sat boiling on the edge of the desert. (BM 218)

Through the narrator's observations about the Mexican's and Shelby's physical state, it is possible to assume that this part belongs to the kid's point of view. He is weighing what would be more painful to do, to kill a dying man or a man who was "clear in his head". In addition to this situation is the description of Shelby's background. The fact that he went to College and belonged to an important family emphasizes the sense of tragedy and the difficulty that the kid is having on making up his mind. Not only is the situation sad for the readers, it also elevates the kid's sense of morality and kindness. In spite of Shelby's provocations, the kid still tries to help him by filling his comrade flask with water from his own. In the end the kid leaves Shelby hidden, not being capable of

killing him. Even while he was preparing to go away, "he mounted up and looked back at the wounded man." (BM 220), perhaps feeling guilty and miserable for leaving one of his comrades behind.

A further proof of the kid's compassion is the episode in which he takes off an arrow from Brown's thigh, when "no one would touch it". He is always the one who isn't able to ignore people who are in need of help. To this merciful act the expriest reacts, warning the kid that "God will not love ye forever" (BM 171). He fears that the kid may be exposing too much of his heart to the judge, who is always watching him with great attention.

Last but not least is the episode with an "abuelita" whom the young protagonist finds during his journey. He feels impelled to help her, for the vision of a fragile old lady alone in the desert is a painful and worrying one:

> He told her that he was an American and that he was a long way from the country and that he had no family and that he had traveled much and seen many things and had been at war and endured hardships. He told her that he would convey her to a safe place, some party of her countrypeople who would welcome her and that she should join them for he could not leave her in this place or she would surely die.
>
> Abuelita, he said. No puedes escúcharme? (BM 332)

After his deepest and most honest confession regarding his own personal background and gruesome experiences, and after promising her that he will help her out, he realizes that he is talking to a dried corpse. Although this speech is useless for the old lady, it shows, once again, that the kid has a kind heart. Owens defends that "the kid's acts of mercy, or, as the judge calls them, "clemency", are considered as misplaced loyalty, a less natural sign of weakness, an unwillingness to participate in the violence of the gang" (2000: 29). In fact, the kid performs these acts and doesn't care if the judge considers them a "flaw in the fabric of his heart", for he doesn't fear him. The kid is able to follow his own will. To conclude with, but not relevant to this work's part, there are other characters who contribute to *Blood Meridian's* compassionate and humane side, such as Glanton[8] or Toadvine[9].

[8] In opposition to the judge, in the presence of "idiots", he claims "I don't like to see white men that way ... Dutch or whatever. I don't like to see it. [imbeciles]" (238). Watching people who were born disformed incites something in Glanton.

Every great novel must have a rebel or dissenter protagonist in order to make people aware of society's flaws and, consequently, to develop their critical judgment. And *Blood Meridian* is no exception. Even though the kid is young, naïve, in a certain way innocent, and an extremely quiet character, he is the only one who openly defies judge Holden. He may not be the classical stereotypical hero[10], but while he is alive, the kid leaves subtle traces of defiance, which many critics have refused to notice. Although there are many episodes where the kid defends himself, refusing to be abused by other characters or to show fear, these traces of defiance are, of course, especially linked—and directed—to the judge. According to Worthington, "[u]nderstanding Huck Finn requires an understanding of the relationship between Huck and Jim. The same is true of the two principal characters in *Blood Meridian*" (2012: 135) and "McCarthy creates the kid and carries the idea of the impassive observer to the extreme. The kid barely speaks. McCarthy, then, juxtaposes the kid who does not judge against THE judge ..." (2012: 133). Here, the main reasons to analyze the two most important characters are explicit: their strange "liaison" and the fact that they are the opposite of each other. The judge is THE man of words, persuasion and eclectic knowledge. He is, undoubtedly, the most powerful character of the narrative. He manipulates everyone and everything around him out of his own interests, creating shocking lies and giving transcendental sermons about war, the nature of Man, and many other philosophical aspects. He even has the knowledge and precision enough to manipulate nature.[11] Such achievements and such

[9] Even Toadvine, the earless joker reveals moments of weakness, when he realizes what Holden did to an Apache child. He points his gun to the judge's head, extremely frustrated, to which the judge responds calmly "You either shoot or take that away. Do it now." (BM 173) Moreover, after another Indian slaughter, "Toadvine and the kid conferred together and when they rode out at noon the day following they trotted their horses alongside Bathcat. They rode in silence. Them sons of bitches aint botherin nobody, Toadvine said." (BM 183) He is able to understand when there are innocent people suffering and being brutally murdered.

[10] Having the same opinion, Josef Benson claims further: "The kid's weakness proves to be the defining characteristic of his heroism. One does not need to be a demigod to be a hero. In this case, one needs only to reject the destructive philosophies of the judge, even if the rejection proves limp and unsuccessful". (2013: 241)

[11] While being hunted by a band of Indians, the judge is able to make gunpowder out of urine and other compounds. He calculates calmly every step that needs to be taken in order to perform this recipe. (BM 139-141)

attitudes call automatically the attention of every reader and critic. However, the focus of this work will not be on Holden's amazing theories and teachings, but rather on his extremely secure and empowering bearing, which will serve to emphasize the kid's importance and to enlighten his acts of defiance.

Leslie Worthington offers a very curious perspective on Holden: "The judge, in particular, could possibly suffer from Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD), and his personality and behavior, his truly evil nature, can be explained as symptoms of the disorder. He is centered on self to the point that no one else matters" (2012: 136). These words, once again, could be extremely plausible if *Blood Meridian* was a realistic novel with an ordinary narrative. The fact is that this novel is a mixture of historical events and figures, philosophical and theological—among other—influences, and cruel, comical episodes; all of this, of course, wrapped in McCarthy's magnificent genius and imagination. But most of all, *Blood Meridian* is a mystical narrative, involved in a mysterious aura: the Indians have nightmarish and epic descriptions; Glanton's gang's journey is marked by strange events and otherworldly prophecies; Holden, as we know, possesses godly features[12]; the kid has an enigmatic personality, and survives many fatal events in a peculiar way. Therefore, Holden's possible NPD doesn't quite fit in this type of narrative; he cannot be considered a normal person with such a diagnosis as this. In the same way that Barcley Owens claims that "[a]n appeal to historical validity does not satisfy our deeper horror in the here and now about the awful fictional rendering of historical violence. *Blood Meridian* should not be reduced to the historical romance …" (2000: 17), an attempt at a "psychological validity" won't satisfy the reader's astonishment about this enigmatic narrative either. In fact, it will end up diminishing the final impact of the story.

Nonetheless, the judge succeeds in his manipulations, whether directed to his own men, or to foreign ones, and "[t]he more they will listen, the more he can control them." (Worthington 2012: 138) The kid's significance steps in, because he is the only one to deny and reject these manipulations. Holden wants "the power of corrupting

[12] For example, when the expriest narrates his first encounter with the judge, he says that he came "upon the judge on his rock there in that wilderness by his single self", as if he would be expecting them. This narration shows that this encounter is ultimately strange, as if Holden was inhumane and ghostlike. (BM 132-133) A further example is the tarot-reading episode, when Glanton draws his revolver, preparing to shoot the lady-prophet: "The judge like a great ponderous djinn stepped through the fire and the flames delivered him up as if he were in some way native to their element" (BM 102).

someone. Through that process of corruption, he then owns his victims, has penetrated their hearts" (Worthington 2012: 138). The kid resiliently resists Holden's attempt at corrupting him, and is, in fact, immune to it.

The first example of the kid's defiance and immunity to Holden is the episode in which Shelby is terribly wounded, with an arrow stuck on his thigh. Glanton's men must choose a shaft in order to know who is going to kill the wounded man: "the kid selected among the shafts to draw one he saw the judge watching him and he paused. He looked at Glanton. He let go the arrow he'd chosen and sorted out another and drew that one. It carried the red tassel" (BM 216). His reaction to the judge's watching him proves that he tries to control his own actions, without the judge's empowerment. He defies him, by choosing another shaft. Unfortunately he finds out that he is the one who must kill Shelby.

After another violent episode, one of the gang's horses is hurt. The judge calls Glanton's men in order for someone to help him kill the animal. No one answers his call except the kid. Seeing this, "the expriest placed a cautionary hand upon the kid's arm."(BM 231), worrying again about the kid's exposure to the judge. The reason why the kid answers Holden's call is also a form of defiance. He wants to prove Holden that he isn't afraid of him. With this demonstration of defiance the kid becomes once more the spectator of a shocking bloody scene, where Holden "took up a round rock weighing perhaps a hundred pounds and crushed the horse's skull with a single blow" (BM 231).

Moreover, the judge calls the kid "Blasarius" (BM 99), referring to his ability to excite quarrels. This can also be connected to the kid's rebellious attitude towards Holden. The definition as regards to the area of law—incendiary—, can also link the kid to the issue of Prometheus and fire, something that can be read "between the lines" of the epilogue. What's more, fire symbolizes passion, strong feelings and attitudes, which are all notions that belong to the word defiance.

Lastly, when the kid is hiding from Holden, together with Toadvine and Tobin in a well, they are found and the kid is the one to get up to go fill his flask with water:

> The judge followed him with his eyes. The kid circled the floor of the well, *no part of which was altogether beyond the judge's reach*, and he knelt opposite the imbecile and pulled the stopper from the flask and submerged the flask in the basin. (BM 300, my italics).

He boldly positions himself almost within the reach of the judge to show that he is not afraid, once again, and that he won't stop challenging him—even if he is in a dangerous and critical situation like this.

In addition to all these episodes is the kid's natural gift for shooting, "as if he'd done it all before in a dream" (BM 116). It is universally known that every hero has a gift. The kid is not a classical hero, as mentioned earlier, but he possesses traits which make him the closest thing to that status. Not only is he uniquely silent, he is also a great gunman. This helps emphasizing his warrior and dissenter spirit.

One of the most relevant episodes that emphasizes the kid's spirit of dissent is the one with the tarot cards reading. The characters must choose a card that is then interpreted by a woman with a blindfold on her eyes. Among the cards "La carroza" and "El tonto", there is the "quatro de copas" which was the one picked by the kid. This card's picture is a very curious one: a boy is sitting next to a tree and close to him there is a cloud with a hand reaching to him, holding a golden cup. By his side there are three more cups. This image is associated with William Wordsworth's poem "My heart leaps up" and with the Book of Genesis, 9:13. A rainbow is mentioned in both pieces. In the latter, there is also a reference to a cloud, which is connected to God's promise of showing mercy. The cloud and the rainbow are symbolic and serve to remind us of God's covenant with men. An immediate reading would consider the kid as the ultimate symbol of "mercy" in *Blood Meridian*, which could be also the reason why he does not kill Holden. However, the boy from the tarot card is not paying attention to the hand that is offering him a golden cup. This can mean that the boy, who is in a state of contemplation, doesn't want to give in to the outside world and to receive easily the knowledge and power that are being offered to him. In *Blood Meridian*, the judge is the only authority and source of knowledge. Therefore, this hand offering a cup could be read as the judge himself, who is trying to reach the kid, in order to corrupt him and manipulate him; an attempt that is rejected. Moreover, Wordsworth's poem also mentions "The child is father of the Man" (1971: 160), which are the opening words of *Blood Meridian*. This statement can mean that children, in general, are the future of mankind. They, and therefore, the kid, can be considered Man's guide, due to his connection to the word "father" that implies guidance and teaching. They are the ones who possess an innocent and pure soul, thus being able to change the world.

1.1 Judge Holden: an epitome of Man's arrogance

The judge, this mesmerizing, powerful and mystical character hasn't been and will never be left unnoticed. His hairlessness, white and out of proportion figure leaves readers astonished as much as his speeches do. He is made of words, theories, knowledge, agility and power. He is invincible: "he says he will never die". He is the "machine" mentioned by a hermit, at the beginning of the novel: "[a] creature that can do anything … And evil that can run itself a thousand years, no need to tend it."(BM 20) Critics have interpreted him as God, Satan, Christ, as the source of McCarthy's voice, among many others. However, this extreme and constant presentation of—and focus on—himself can lead us to a completely different direction. The focus ends up being no focus at all, and the smallest, unnoticed things can make the difference. Therefore, instead of analyzing thoroughly Holden's theories as Man's darkest nature and celebration of war, this thesis will expose this character as a symbol of the contemporary man: highly intellectual and phony, that tries to explain the world's and the universe's existence, and who wants to control everything including nature. In short, judge Holden as a symbol of Man's arrogance.

Although there is already a gap of twenty-nine years between *Blood Meridian*'s publishing date and today's time, it is impossible to deny that it addresses timeless issues. The human race has always tried to manipulate everything to its own standards and interests. Nowadays, there are cures for most of diseases or, if not, ways of improving one's life; information flows easier and easier as time goes by; technological development provides comfort and accommodation… People are used to have everything at their reach. Human race has everything under its control—or at least so men think. At the same time, contemplation, questioning and nonconformity are disappearing.

The judge is the novel's authority. He imposes his own laws and re-creates the world's fragments[13]. His notebook is considered by Owens "the story of man" (2000: 57). Holden, like mankind, wants to be "suzerain" of the world; and, indeed, "[i]t is in our nature to discover and catalog the farthest reaches of the universe since understanding may lead to control" (Owens 2000: 56). Many characters try to contradict the judge, whether members of Glanton's gang, during a discussion, or members of the

[13] One of Holden's attempts to control the way of the world is to draw everything he sees on his notebook, and then to destroy it. In short, he is re-creating reality to his own likeness.

law, who are only trying to do their jobs. One of the best examples that exposes the judge's extreme deception, phoniness and absolute control occurs after the episode in which Glanton's gang is mistaken with a band of Negroes in a cantina (BM 248 – 249). The waiter is shot and police officers appear to arrest the culprits, to which Holden responds:

> Kindly address your remarks to me, Lieutenant, said the judge. I represent Captain Glanton in all legal matters. I think you should know first of all that the captain does not propose to be called a liar and I would think twice before I involved myself with him in an affair of honor. Secondly I have been with him all day and I can assure you that neither he nor any of his men have ever set foot in the premises to which you allude (BM 250).

The lieutenant's reaction shows it all: he "seemed stunned at the baldness of these disclaimers". The judge is so deceiving and fake that his lies become the truth itself. The outcome, as expected, is the officer leaving the place. All characters, facing scenes like these or witnessing Holden's sermons, haven't got the courage and boldness to address him in a defiant way. All characters except one.

Man's soul, profoundest thoughts and ways are never black and white. It is never possible to completely explain and understand him (meaning us). The same happens with *Blood Meridian's* narrative, that can be described with only one word: unconventional. Its protagonist is unconventional as well, having no normal or common life experiences. Thus, many critics find it hard to tell whether the kid reaches maturity or experiences some kind of inner-development. In short, considering the kid's quest, is this novel a *Bildungsroman*? His miserable familiar background and his quest marked by war have already been examined. Now, the answer to this question lies on *the man*'s path and attitude towards it.

After escaping the judge, the protagonist wanders aimlessly. He has no comrades left, he witnesses Toadvine's hanged corpse, and in spite of his effort to look for the expriest, he has no success doing so. His appearance incites something in the people whom he encounters:

> He was treated with a certain deference as one who had got onto terms with life beyond what his years could account for. By now he'd come by a horse and a revolver, the rudiments of an outfit. He worked at different trades. … In his dark frugal clothes some took him for a sort of preacher, but he was no witness to them, neither of things at hand nor things to come, he least of any man. (BM 329)

Possessing now a more "stable" and calm life, he is regarded by everybody with esteem and awe, as if he'd looked like a wise and experienced man. Besides, he is mistaken for a minister because of his outfit, which is ironic. He is exactly the opposite of someone who gives sermons, of someone such as the judge. The fact that he can be in no way witness "to them" is due to the role the kid plays in the narrative. He is the opposite of a free and loud speaker; his purpose is to resist order by ways of silence, not to be a witness of events.

He also travels "with no news at all, as if the doings of the world were too slanderous for him to truck with, or perhaps too trivial." (BM 329) This sentence seems ambivalent due to the author's use of the words "slanderous" and "trivial", which can almost be opposites to describe the same thing. Rather, these two adjectives both define the kid as someone who witnessed extremely traumatizing events, that made him invulnerable to everything and without interest in the world's happenings.

His last wandering is, thus, one of defeat. The protagonist finally reaches his limit and his will begins to fade away. When he is arrested, he begins to "speak with a strange urgency of things few men have seen in a lifetime and his jailers said that his mind had come uncottered by the acts of blood in which he had participated." (BM 321) If we look closer, the plot goes through a progressive line, beginning with the first appearance of the kid, and reaching a *crescendo,* whenever he rejects the judge's teachings and statements. After the tragic events that make the kid a lonesome wanderer once again, he too goes through a changing process. Firstly, he reaches a state of despair, where he tries to transform in words everything he went through, that "few men have seen in a lifetime". The next stage is resignation. He knows that his comrades won't come back and that he hasn't got a purpose or a final destination anymore. So, "[i]n the spring of his twenty-eighth year he set out with others upon the desert to the east… Seven days from the coast at a desert well he left them. They were just a band of pilgrims returning to their homes, men and women, already dusty and travelworn." (BM 330) He isn't even capable of going on a quest as he did years earlier. There are no more countless wars and violent, random assaults to innocent people, nor bonds to create with travelling companions. He is aware that his time for violent journeys and new adventures is over.

The episode when he has an encounter with "violent children orphaned by war" (BM 340) mirrors the kid's own experience of orphanhood, alienation and of a life embedded in violence and horror. We can find implied traces of nostalgia when the man

claims that he "knowed the man that docked em [apaches' ears] … and rode with him and seen him hung." (BM 338) The fact that he mentions this man, Brown, is a piece of evidence that the kid was able to bond with other characters, and felt that he belonged, that he had other people by his side.

The young brother of the child who was murdered by the kid intensifies the sense of tragedy and misery: he was dressed in "large clothes" and stared at the kid "woodenly". Equally important, "[h]e was maybe twelve years old and he looked not so much dullwitted as insane." (BM 340) This is probably another child who will have a similar destiny as the kid's. The fact that he is "not so much dullwitted as insane" reminds the readers of the kid's early "taste for mindless violence". The circle will never be broken, there will always be orphaned children living in misery, and people who stand higher, that are phony and deceptive. All in all, it is possible to say that the kid went through a development because he is able to feel nostalgia, and to acknowledge that he can't repeat his earlier experiences any more.

1.2 "You think I'm afraid of him?"- why the kid didn't kill the judge

The kid's silence, laconic replies and his constant refusal of the judge's sermons and considerations shake and unbalance the narrative and lead it to a tragic outcome. But before moving on to this outcome, one needs to go back to the desert episode, where the kid doesn't kill the judge—an attitude that continues to confuse readers and critics up to the present.

Bearing in mind that Holden symbolizes the pragmatic, extremely scientific and arrogant society that tries to analyze and explain everything, and at the same time the phony and convincing man that gets everything he wants, not caring about the people who he hurts, the kid never gets to kill him for one reason only: there will always be persons and systems like him, he can't fight against it. The expriest, standing by his side and trying to persuade him to kill the judge, gravely says

> You'll get no second chance lad. Do it He is naked. He is unarmed. God's blood, do you think you'll best him any other way? Do it, lad. Do it for the love of God. Do it or I swear your life is forfeit. (BM 301)

Tobin doesn't realize that his young comrade did already "best" the judge in his own way. Murder will not do, it won't change a thing. Just like the narrator's describes the judge in the kid's last dream, he couldn't be divided into his origins "for he would

not go" (BM 326). Worthington affirms that the kid "does not have the strength to change the world he finds, but he does have enough to resist it. (Worthington 2012: 143). He succeeded in defending himself against his mesmerizing words and callings, but he can't do nothing more against it. In this matter, the kid is, indeed, a hero. His life, however filled with misery, murder, disappointment, madness and alienation, was spent in a genuine and honest way, in which he never gave himself to the judge's evil intentions. His role was to resiliently stand his ground against a major and invincible force, and he succeeded in doing so.

1.3 The judge's victory and the kid's shocking demise

Finally, all events lead to this last moment—the kid's death. Before he joins Glanton's gang, he sees the judge for the first time, in a different place. Joined with other premonitions along the novel, this serves to prophesy the kid's fate[14]. Later, bit by bit, the gang begins to disperse due to different episodes of Indian attacks or fights incited by the gang itself. Even when the kid is alone in a prison, the judge is still able to track him down and tries one more time to seduce and persuade him to join his "cause".[15] Later, after the kid's release, he enters a bar and meets the judge one last time.

In this last scene the judge preaches another long sermon to the kid, trying to undermine him and to justify his masked intentions to kill him. He is well aware of the fact that the kid never missed a chance to reject him and defy him, and asks "For even if you should have stood your ground, he said, yet what ground was it?" (BM 324); he tries to make the kid see that there is no hope, and that any attempt of resistance is useless. Besides, he makes clear that men only have a false sense of control and free will, by pointing to another man in the room as a random example. (Owens 2000: 60). Ultimately, "[t]he judge cannot exist if the group contains even one dissenter, negating his illusion" (Worthington 2012: 142), therefore he must eliminate him. The kid, Holden's ultimate Nemesis, is the one who figures him out. Not only is the judge the man of words, he is JUST a man of words. He is defined by his use of language that

[14] The kid is marked by the judge as soon as he gives him the "Cheshire" cat smile

[15] The existence of quotation marks is due to the fact that the judge's only purpose and cause is to control everyone around him. He feels amused whenever he manipulates situations, such as the one at the beginning of the book with the priest. He ends up convincing the spectators that the priest is not only a fraud, but also a pedophile and an animal abuser. Therefore, his cause is having no cause.

produces powerful speeches and, consequently, controls the others. He may be an excellent historian, philosopher, gunman and warrior, but he is no more than that. He hasn't got any sense of truth, honesty, and sensitivity. And the kid, possessing these features and being "the father of man", succeeds in unmasking him. He firmly asserts "you are nothing". To be all means to be nothing, and even the dominant color of the judge's physical aspect is white, which means absence of color, or blankness. Earlier in the narrative, Tobin too is aware of this fact when he claims "Whatever could it mean to one who knows all?"(BM 131); he is referring to the judge, claiming that maybe it doesn't mean nothing to know everything. In short, the kid succeeds in protecting his identity from corruption, even though he is murdered by Holden. Worthington rightly claims that "[j]ust as society attempts to eliminate the nonconformist, the judge stamps out the kid. The judge is a false prophet, just as civilization is an illusion of meaning and comfort." (2012: 145). It is not the survival that matters, as the judge may think, but the preservation of one's will, soul and identity.

Blood Meridian or The Evening Redness in the West is not an ordinary novel. Its characters are all spiteful and vicious and the standard characteristics of the novel's background are blood, misery, murder, rape and cruelty. The constant violence is a common element, almost as natural as eating. It is important to have this in mind, because an environment of endless bloodshed reveals certain aspects that otherwise would be ignored. Furthermore, the characters' thoughts are almost non-existent and their dialogues aren't as fruitful as the ones delivered by the judge. In fact, Cooper observes that "[w]hat is missing draws attention to itself" (2011: 19). In the same way, the kid's silence, his apparently insignificance and lack of control end up drawing attention and becoming relevant. For that reason, by observing his actions, one may conclude that he embodies ultimately concepts such as truth, purity and mercy, while at the same time he "provides a hope for humanity" (Benson 2013: 244). He also epitomizes the importance of preserving the essence of one's soul, negating, thus, Worthington's affirmation, that "[m]ost scholars see *Blood Meridian* as a look into man's soul. If that is so, then it is a very dark soul indeed. McCarthy is showing his readers the un-noble savage." (2012: 128) In opposition to what many readers and critics might say, this novel has, in fact, many examples of humane feelings and a hidden appeal to preserve one's own identity—even if it is in a "sociedad de guerra" such as this.

2. Billy: the pastoral one

Billy Parham, the protagonist of *The Crossing*, is not as enigmatic and peculiar as the kid, and he is not a so talkative character either. He comes from a normal family, has a mother that cares for him and for his brother, and a father who is a rider and a cowboy. This novel, which belongs to McCarthy's Border Trilogy, has got a completely different setting than *Blood Meridian*'s. It is not ruled by violence and murder, the only mutilated or wounded corpses that we see are the ones from animals; the Indians who the protagonist meets are not bloodthirsty killers[16]; and there are many episodes where people offer hospitality and help strange riders—a Mexican tradition of the poor people. However, Billy Parham deserves a closer observation because of his melancholic and lonesome journey. His role is yet to be established. Throughout his journey he faces a great variety of complicated situations and he is determined to fulfill his own will. Why does he insist on returning the she-wolf to the Mexican mountains? After his family is murdered, why does he want to get back his stolen horses? And lastly, why does he insist on returning his brother's bones to his country? At first sight, Billy seems to be a common sixteen-year-old cowboy who doesn't understand the way of the world and who is not in any way ardent or heroic. However, an analysis of his pathway having in mind the surrounding Others such as the Mexican society, the she-wolf and his brother, and the people he encounters along his journeys, will prove the opposite.

2.1 Idyllic moments: the shewolf

Billy's first major adventure is the wolf's hunt[17]. When Billy was young he had a marking experience with wolves; after leaving his house in the middle of the night, he literally squatted in the snow very close to them and watched their movements:

> He could see their almond eyes in the moonlight. He could hear their breath. He could feel the presence of their knowing that was electric in the air. They bunched and nuzzled and licked one another. Then they stopped. They stood with their ears cocked. ... They were looking at him. He did not breathe. They did not breathe. They stood. Then they turned

[16] There is only one reference to a violent tribe, the Yaquis. (TC 136)

[17] This story was the first excerpt from *The Crossing* to be published in the magazine *Esquire*, in July 1993, volume 120. It was entitled "The Wolftrapper".

> quietly and trotted on. When he got back to the house Boyd was awake but he didn't tell him where he'd been nor what he'd seen. He never told anybody (McCarthy 1994: 4-5) [18].

In this ephemeral moment Billy has the chance to experience a feeling of harmony and connection with these creatures. This shows the intense attraction that this character feels towards them, and that is why Owens claims that "*The Crossing* plays out the primitive-pastoral myth" where "the hero discovers paradise in the wilderness" (2000: 66, 67). It is important to note that this experience belongs to Billy's childhood, a phase where the human-nature interaction is still easier and stronger due to the child's innocence. Plus, this introduces the subsequent adventure that Billy has with the she-wolf.

The she-wolf, the short-term protagonist of this first chapter, is herself a lonesome creature. She painfully witnessed her partner's trapping and refused to leave him, whining and flattening her ears in a despairing way, until riders showed up (TC 25). She was also separated from her pack, which forced her to move out of the country. In face of this, Frye states: "As a social animal, the wolf has an instinctive need for the pack more powerful than hunger, for when she finds herself alone she leaves an area of abundant game in search of companionship." (2007: 49) Her lonesome journey is filled with hunger, solitude and pain, "and she wore a hunted look" (TC 26) while travelling.

While the shewolf carries on with her sorrowful journey, Billy tries not only to trace her down because his father told him so, but he also follows her obsessively, trying to imagine her and other wolves. Beginnings are always fresh and pure, without contaminations. Likewise,

> They [Billy and the horse Bird] looked new born out of the hand of some improvident god who'd perhaps not even puzzled out a use for them. That kind of new. The rider rode with his heart outsized in his chest and the horse who was also young tossed its head and took a sidestep in the road and shot out one hind heel and then they went on. (TC 31)

This optimistic passage clearly resembles a fable, or a fairytale. A young rider and a young horse overflowed with high hopes start a quest, where they will face many

[18] Subsequent references to this novel will be given using the abbreviation TC followed by the respective pages.

adventures[19]. As the readers will later see, the adventures are not so innocent and easy, and the concept of tale will turn out to be a very different and a much more complex one. Apart from this, the passage above needs to be highlighted because of its purity, innocence and freshness. Later, the readers will witness the stark contrast between Billy's spiritual development and this beginning.

Parham learns what the wolf means to an old and sick man he meets:

> El lobo es una cosa incognoscible…El lobo próprio no se puede conocer. Lobo o lo que sabe el lobo. Tan como preguntar lo que sabem las piedras. Los arboles. El mundo. … He said that the wolf is a being of great order and that it knows what men do not: that there is no order in the world save that which death has put there. … He said that men wish to be serious but they do not understand how to be so. Between their acts and their ceremonies lies the world and in this world the storms blow and the trees twist in the wind and all the animals that God has made go to and fro yet this world men do not see. They see the acts of their own hands or they see that which they name and call out to one another but the world between is invisible to them. (TC 47)

According to this description, the wolf is as enigmatic as the world; it has the ultimate knowledge of life and of the world itself. This passage clarifies the importance of the animal's symbolism, while opposing it to human race and its perception. There are two realities: human and animal. They are strongly separated and can never meet. The natural world is "invisible" to men, and they will never understand the true order of things. Henry Nash Smith also claimed that "[c]ivilization is pernicious also because it interposes a veil of artificiality between the individual and the natural objects of experience." (1971: 72) The only hindrance between human kind and nature is, thus, the world created by Man: full of machinery, comfort, convenience and materialism.

Billy has an irrational feeling, and "[t]wo days later riding down the Cloverdale road he turned off for no reason at all and rode out …" (TC 50) It is as if something was pulling him in a specific direction. From now on his journey and his path are traced. Besides, at this particular moment, Billy doesn't feel excited in hunting the wolf anymore. He was preparing the traps, but "his heart was not in it" (TC 51). His instinct and feelings predict what is to happen, and his plans are starting to take another shape.

[19] Throughout this narrative there will be many other elements that belong to the classic notion of tale: saving a young fragile girl, walking through beautiful and magical landscapes, fighting against a villain, among others.

There is something behind Billy's obsession with the wolf: he wants to live a natural and translucent experience, or as Cant writes, an "unmediated apprehension of reality" (2007: 8). In view of what the old man said, it seems that Billy wants to see what the rest of humankind can't. He wants to go beyond the line that separates Man from nature, to be a part of the natural world and embrace it.

His thoughts are only directed to the wolf's path and experience: "He tried to see the world the wolf saw. … He wondered at the world it smelled or what it tasted. … He wondered had the living blood with which it slaked its throat a different taste to the thick iron tincture of his own" (TC 53) It is at this moment that Billy turns his back on his home forever. When he finds the wolf with her leg stuck in the trap, "the wolf stood up to meet him" (TC 54). Strangely, this was not a one-way encounter; the wolf seemed to be waiting for him too. As a result, and according to Owens, "Billy repudiates his heritage and chooses to become a primitive-pastoral Adamic hero. He will protect nature from encroachment and, in so doing, deny the progress of his own pioneering heritage" (2000: 78). This serves only to emphasize what the old man previously said to Billy about the wolf. There is an "invisible" world out there and the young cowboy will pay the price of rejecting his human heritage. After making up his mind and going back to the wolf, Billy finds a way of catching and holding the animal with a handmade leash and muzzle. During this tough performance, he sits on the floor "with the *living* wolf gasping between his legs" (TC 57, my italics), which resembles a love scene. The use of the word "living" is not a random choice: it serves to stress the fact that Billy is embracing one of the most mystical creatures of the world, and this creature is overflowing with life. More than a physical embrace, Billy tries to grasp the essence of the wolf, while observing at the same time all her beautiful traces: "… the eye so delicately aslant, the knowledge of the world it held sufficient to the day if not to the day's evil" (TC 57). Moreover, in many attempts to calm her down, Billy tries to speak to her and he strokes her head in a loving way. However, the wolf doesn't react the way he expected, only trembling and wincing. She isn't receptive to Billy's soothing words. Later, the wolf begins to get used to Billy's presence, and whenever he approached her, preparing his canteen, "she would dip slowly to the ground like a circus animal and roll onto her side waiting" (TC 78). Here she resembles a dog waiting for her master to feed her. In addition, she never tries to bite him. Boy and wolf begin to establish a connection. However, this connection will never be more than this.

The shewolf resembles a mystic creature with strange powers. Every time Billy's eyes fall on her, she feels it and opens her eyes; at the middle of the night he wakes up and finds her watching him like some kind of guardian (TC 85). Moreover, the wolf's symbolism increases as soon as the readers and Billy himself acknowledge that she is pregnant (TC 90). Not only is this creature the embodiment of nature, wilderness and otherworldliness, but also of life-giving and motherhood. According to Frye, "The wolf is thus simultaneously a wild, ferocious animal inhabiting the natural world and an evocative romantic symbol, like Melville's white whale or Hawthorne's scarlet letter." (2007: 51)

After the wolf is stolen away from Billy and imprisoned in a carnival circus to fight against all kinds of vicious dogs, Billy enters the fair and calls out to her. To this, the shewolf surprisingly reacts: "she rose instantly and turned and stood looking at him. With her ears erect" (TC 108). Even in a situation like this, the protagonist doesn't give up and keeps talking to her, projecting his own dreams and wishes on the animal:

> He made her promises that he swore to keep in the making. That he would take her to the mountains where she would find others of her kind. She watched him with her yellow eyes and in them was no despair but only that same reckonless deep of loneliness that cored the world to its heart. (TC 108)

However, the wolf will always be unreachable and lonely, and Billy doesn't accept this. Later, after entering the arena where the wolf had been fighting incessantly, Billy holds the creature and utters to the crowd "Es mia" (TC 121). For the first time he claims out loud what he always wanted. It is a fact that he had a long journey with the wolf, and that the animal reacts to his voice. However, Billy fails to really possess what he desired deep inside: to "know nothing of boundaries" like the wolf.

At the end, Billy has the chance to taste the wolf's blood, something that he wished for a long time (TC 129). He realizes that it tastes the same as his blood, that every living creature, human or animal, is physically the same on the inside. They are all connected in this way. Still, there will be always something that separates the human race from the animal race. In the same manner, Billy can't hold and reach the essence of the wolf:

> He took up her stiff head out of the leaves and held it or he reached to hold what cannot be held, what already ran among the mountains at once terrible and of a great beauty, like flowers that feed on flesh. What blood and bone are made of but can themselves not make

> on any altar nor by any wound of war. What we may well believe has power to cut and shape and hollow out the dark form of the world surely if wind can, if rain can. But which cannot be held never be held and is no flower but is swift and a huntress and the wind itself is in terror of it and the world cannot lose it. (TC 131)

All in all, *The Crossing*'s first chapter is an attempt at entering the natural world. With Billy's first adventure the readers are able to witness a side of the world that is, and will always be, unknown to Man: Nature[20], or in Steven Frye's words, "naturalism's deterministic world, where identity constitutes itself through the survival impulse and free will evaporates in a dry atmosphere defined by instinct." (2007: 49) Billy's first journey is undoubtedly a failure but he learns with it that there are other things out there, without boundaries or corruption, and that life is not only eating, sleeping and working. This last passage teaches the readers that Billy's obsession, the shewolf, embodies the extreme wilderness and freedom that men will never experience, "suggesting nature itself in all its beauty and savagery and the principle of divine agency that even in death lives on in dreams." (Frye 2009: 117) At the same time, this essence of wilderness and otherworldliness will never disappear and is an essential aspect to the world.

The episode with the she-wolf was a life-changing experience for Billy and introduced him to the phase of manhood. He went on his first journey alone, trying to save a wild animal and return it to its home; he learned that there are many dangers in Mexico and that it is impossible to fight against them. But in the second chapter, Billy's maturity and perception change when he sees the primadonna, an actress and opera singer, naked on the river: "He took off his hat and stood with his heart laboring under his shirt. …as he watched he saw that the world which had always been before him everywhere had been veiled from his sight. … She turned and he thought she might sing to the sun…. but nothing was the same nor did he think it ever would be." (TC 226-227) He had never had such an intense moment like this, neither had he ever seen a naked woman. This "prima donna" is sensual, arrogant, an apologist of art and intelligent in her statements. Therefore, she draws attention to herself and can't be ignored by Billy since the beginning of their encounter. And then Billy has this "voyeur" episode, which is a marking moment for his sexuality. He acknowledges a reality that he didn't know it could exist, the image of a beautiful woman, naked, in complete harmony with nature, bathing in a river by the moonlight. He tried to reach

[20] Through the perspective of the she-wolf and through Billy's obsession with wolves.

this harmony with the shewolf, but after this scene, Billy will never see the world the same way.

The novel's end is still very far, and so is Billy's transformation. However, these two episodes with the she-wolf and the primadonna are two meaningful moments in the male rite of passage. With the she-wolf Billy had to face difficult and painful situations, which were "an opportunity for Billy to test his manhood, his ability to save nature" (Worthington 2012: 168). The pastoral features of this first adventure also contributed to this "test". After secretly watching the primadonna bathing on the river, another side of Billy's masculinity came to life: his sexuality. Furthermore, when Billy finally returns to his country after his first journey, the sheriff asks: "You didn't learn no manners down there while you was gone, did you?" to which Billy responds "No sir. I guess not. I learned some things but they sure wasn't manners" (TC 173). This is another proof that this character has changed because of what he went through.

After experiencing an adventure in the wilderness and interacting with a wolf, Billy has other moments of pure harmony and tranquility in nature throughout the narrative, that resemble *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*:

> …. Billy would throw down the saddle and bedrolls … he'd take the horses downriver and strip off his boots and clothes and ride bareback into the river leading Boyd's horse by the reins and sit the horse naked save for his hat and watch the dust of the road leach away in a pale stain downstream in the clear cold water. (TC 241)

Although Billy isn't accompanied—like Huck is by Jim—we can see that he is strongly connected with nature. He is capable of reaching harmony and serenity whenever he has moments like this. Another example, though it belongs to a much more melancholic part of the novel—after Boyd is shot and taken to a safe place—, is:

> …he'd [Billy] walk out over the grasslands and lie on the ground in the world's silence and study the burning firmament above him. (TC 392)

The main difference between this passage and the first one is the fact that Billy is already in a phase of sadness and grief. Here, he lies on the ground and contemplates the landscape, thinking about past events—a moment of nostalgia and meditation.

As mentioned earlier, *The Crossing* possesses the tone of a fairytale. When Billy starts the first journey, he and his horse are overflowed with optimism, bearing traces of noble heroes. Secondly, Billy meets various kinds of people who give him strange advices and tell him enigmatic stories. Thirdly, there are moments when the landscape

is described as possessing living or magical features. And lastly, at one point Billy and Boyd save a Mexican young girl from being raped and murdered, who then joins their "crew". Like every other tale, there has to be a villain, or something evil that holds back the protagonist. In this case, the main and most powerful evil Other is Mexico: "Old Mexico has always been viewed as badlands, an empty space, a rough place of bandits and criminals and the evil, foreign Other" (Owens 2000: 65). It is in Mexico that the shewolf is imprisoned and used to fight against violent dogs, that Billy and Boyd are disturbed by the gang of the *manco*, and where Boyd is shot, among other episodes. Moreover, Owens rightly observes that "Old Mexico serves as a primitive setting where boys may be tested by wilderness experiences." (2000: 70). This is the place where Billy reaches maturity and achieves a different perspective of the world.

The vicious background of Mexico may be dangerous and have a lot of difficult obstacles, but the protagonist has to face an even worse problem: the dangers of exaggerated wandering. Danger can be, thus, exterior or physical, and interior or spiritual. Parham meets a band of wild Indians, and an old man tries to warn him of these dangers:

> He told the boy that although he was huérfano still he must cease his wanderings and make for himself some place in the world because to wander in this way would become for him a passion and by this passion he would become estranged from men and so ultimately from himself. He said that the world could only be known as it existed in men's hearts. For while it seemed a place which contained men it was in reality a place contained within them and therefore to know it one must look there and come to know those hearts and to do this one must live with men and not simply pass among them. He said that while the huérfano might feel aside for he contained within him a largeness of spirit which men could see and that men would need him even as he needed the world for they were one. Lastly he said that while this itself was a good thing like all good things it was also a danger. (TC 137)

The man knows that Billy's parents were murdered, without Billy himself knowing it yet. This long warning anticipates the young boy's following path. He is already stuck in a state of "apathetic" wandering, marked by what has happened with the shewolf. Jay Ellis goes even further by saying that "Billy becomes the representative echo of every McCarthy orphan" (2006: 291). He must stop wandering and return to men's community, otherwise he will be an outcast both to the exterior world and to his own inner world. Later, this indeed will happen. In this passage we also learn that Billy has a "largeness of spirit". He may not understand the tales and theories told by the different

people he encounters throughout his quest, and may seem more a listener than a speaker or "ill equipped to understand" them (Cant 2007: 197), but his resilient spirit helps him grow and achieve maturity. For this purpose, the faculty of listening the others is very important, or as the blind man said, "[d]ebemos escuchar" (TC 300).

One of the other warnings comes from the primadonna:

> Long voyages often lose themselves.
>
> ….
>
> You will see. It is difficult even for brothers to travel together on such a voyage. The road has its own reasons and not two travelers will have the same understanding of those reasons. If indeed they come to an understanding of them at all. Listen to the corridos of the country. They will tell you. Then you will see in your own life what is the cost of things. Perhaps it is true that nothing is hidden. Yet many do not wish to see what lies before them in plain sight. You will see. The shape of the road is the road. There is not some other road that wears that shape but only the one. And every voyage begun upon it will be completed. Whether horses are found or not. (TC 237)

She foresees what will happen: the two brothers will continue separate journeys. This passage needs to be borne in mind because it highlights the personalities of Boyd and Billy, which are clearly very distinct. This is the main reason why each brother follows a specific path and plays a different role in the novel. Whatever they do or plan to do, the path of the road is already predestined and they can't escape it.

Billy listens to each warning and nods, but he still rides on. He seems not to be aware of the dangers of the road. However, it is quite the opposite. He has the true spirit of a rider and this has consequences. First of all, in the second chapter Billy is completely changed. He absorbs the wilderness around him and becomes himself a "wild child": "He wandered on into the mountains. He whittled a bow from a holly limb, made arrows from cane. He thought to become again the child he never was." (TC 132) After his first adventure he wanders as if he lived in the wild and natural environment of the mountains; he even builds weapons out of raw and natural materials. His desire of returning to childhood shows that he is no longer innocent. Furthermore, he learned at his own expense and now he no longer fears what he might find in Mexico (TC 136). His home and family are drifting away from his mind, "remote and dreamlike" and sometimes "he could not call to mind his father's face." (TC 139) When he returns to his country for the first time, while he was walking

> people passing in the street turned to look at him. Something in off the wild mesas, something out of the past. Ragged, dirty, hungry in eye and belly. Totally unspoken for. In that outlandish figure they beheld what they envied most and what they most reviled. If their hearts went out to him it was yet true that for very small cause they might also have killed him. (TC 174)

For the people of the town he embodies ultimate wilderness and freedom, something that resembles the wolf. It is as if he succeeded in absorbing the wolf's essence and now has no boundaries or limits. Jay Ellis raises interesting questions regarding domesticity and living in the wild:

> One vital aspect of The Border Trilogy arises from its development of an already existing anxiety in McCarthy regarding civilization. How much refinement can be allowed human life without losing an honest relationship with the natural world? How much distance can be allowed human beings from their natural conditions as animals? And further, how close can a man live to other people without losing his authenticity? (2006: 201)

This physical and spiritual state, in which Billy is in, is both despised, ostracized and envied by people. It is what everyone wants but is afraid to reach, because this type of freedom can't be accepted in society. After all, Billy managed to become almost as otherworldly as the wolf. But he has to suffer the consequences: alienation.

After Boyd's silent departure with the Mexican girl, Billy wanders alone until the end of the narrative. He begins to become aware of his "estrangement" from men and his fixation on the road. His reality begins to dim, a consequence of endless wandering and journeying: "…he wondered if what at last he'd come to was that he could no longer tell that which had passed from all that was but a seeming." (TC 335) Furthermore, it is clear that his motives begin to fade in the same way: "For the enmity of the world was newly plain to him that day [Boyd's departure] and cold and inameliorate as it must be to all who have no longer cause except themselves to stand against it." (TC 340)

Billy is a victim of all these consequences. His personality and spirit change. By now his journey, as a whole, is made of repetitions: starting out with a specific purpose, facing the obstacles and failing to overcome them. His constant ridings begin to be acknowledged; he crosses the border many times, comes back and goes away again: "He passed … settlements through which he'd passed before and where his return was remarked upon the poblanos so that his own journeying began to take upon itself the shape of a tale." (TC 341) His path is an endless circle with repeated trips, which are

mainly embodied in the constant use of the phrase "he rode": "...and he rode the sun up and he rode all day and rode it down again and rode on into the night." (TC 352) All of this transforms Billy's quest into a tale, something transcendent and distant from reality, where "[d]omesticity of any kind is simply absent." (Ellis 2006: 218)

Apart from Billy's role as a pastoral character, he also takes on the role of the "pragmatic older brother" (Worthington 2012: 168). Since the beginning of the novel, Billy reacts to Boyd's observations or questions in a very practical way. When his little brother tells him about his dream, he says that it's nothing important and probably something he ate; when they encounter a mistrustful Indian before they get home, Billy innocently gives him food and keeps talking to him, while Boyd feels that something isn't right and that the Indian is suspicious; even when Boyd asks Billy if he thinks that horses know where they are, he answers as if he didn't understand or didn't want to understand.

He does not want to worry his little brother. For example, after finding one of the horses, Billy "knew that they wouldn't have the horse back until they crossed the border with it and that nothing was easy but he didn't say so" (TC 199). Billy's behavior towards his young brother is puzzling because he himself is a dreamer; for instance, he stays up at night in the kitchen watching the moon and dreams about wolves. If he is like this, why does he act differently towards Boyd? This is one of the main motives that lead to the tragic outcome of Boyd getting shot and consequently to their separation. At the beginning, Boyd seems to follow his older brother and wants to learn with him. However, as the narrative progresses, the distance between them grows more and more. As soon as he meets the young Mexican girl, he becomes definitely independent from his brother, and the wall that was being built between them is complete. Billy could have paid attention to Boyd's observations and could have known him better, but he refused to do it.

The protagonist starts to acknowledge that he failed as Boyd's elder brother. He feels the distance between them growing, reaching its peak when Body gets shot. Then Billy spends again some time riding alone, until he finds where his severely wounded brother is. After the doctor had taken care of the wound, Billy asks Boyd "I didn't take much care of you did I?" (TC 315), to which there is no reply. On his last moment with Boyd, Billy tries desperately to talk to him. However, Boyd is already unreachable, and he is now the one who says that there is nothing to worry about. The roles are switched:

> What is it? He said.
> Talk to me.
> Go to bed.
> I need for you to talk to me.
> It's okay. Everything's okay.
> No it aint.
> You just worry about stuff. I'm all right.
> I know you are, Billy said. But I aint. (TC 339-340)

Billy finally confesses that he needs to get closer to his brother, but it is too late. Once again, the protagonist fails in the same way that he had failed with the wolf. The animal was born unreachable and would always be wild, but Boyd is a young boy who needs attention and guiding, and Billy didn't understand it.

2.2 Maturity and confession

John Cant states that "…Billy's tragedy lies in the fact the he is not «ardenthearted»... He is reflective without being perceptive, a dreamer who wishes to run with the wolves ..." (2007: 201-202). As discussed earlier, Billy goes through a transformation provoked by his experiences and adventures. He is able to conclude that life is complex and can never be separated in black and white:

> …he knew that he would not be buried in this valley but in some distant place among strangers and he looked out to where the grass was running in the wind under the cold starlight as if it were the earth itself hurtling headlong and he said softly before he slept again that the one thing he knew of all things claimed to be known was that there was no certainty to any of it. Not just the coming of war. Anything at all. (TC 356)

He deeply and sadly concludes that nothing is simple, and becomes aware of his own fate. Therefore, Cant may be wrong when he claims that the cowboy protagonist is "reflective without being perceptive"; Billy is both insightful and understanding. Even if it is not possible to understand all the enigmatic anecdotes that he listens throughout his quest, he has his own perception and point of view. A further proof of Billy having his own resistant opinion is a conversation he has with Quijada. He claims that there is only one life and one reality and that people must live it (TC 390). This is a very significant passage and one of the rare occasions in which Billy gives his honest opinion. Furthermore, he admits that he didn't know anything about his brother, and that Boyd knew more about him (TC 397). Billy had earlier replied to the young

Mexican girl that she didn't know anything about him. But at this point, he is able to admit that he was wrong. At this point, Billy is reaching the level of acceptance.

Before the burial of his brother's bones, Billy meets a rider on the road. This rider takes on the role of the listener, while Billy, now the speaker, tells him his tragic experiences. Until now every other character had the chance to tell his story and theories, but now it is finally the protagonist that narrates and reveals his own regrets. He tells the rider "This is my third trip. It's the only time I was ever down here that I got what I come after. But it sure as hell wasn't what I wanted." (TC 427) He then says that, according to his experience, most of what a man hears is not right (TC 429). Later he tells his whole "record" of losses: his brother, his father, even his young sister that died when he was only seven. To all of this the rider (implicitly) begins to feel uncomfortable, saying that he has to "get on." In due course Billy concludes wisely:

> I just got to jabberin. I been more fortunate than most. There aint but one life worth livin and I was born to it. That's worth all the rest. My bud was better at it than me. He was a born natural. He was smarter than me too. Not just about horses. About everthing. Daddy knew it too. He knew it and he knew I knew it and that's all there was to say about it. (TC 431)

Even though he went through all those grievous and miserable incidents he still asserts firmly that there is only one life for him and that that is his destiny. This shows clearly that Billy achieved maturity and has now a more developed perception of the world. He could have concluded that life is hard and the world a terrible place to live in, but he didn't. Consequently, Cant's remarks are not accurate when he says that Billy "listens, even if he does not understand. He tells no tale of his own." (2007: 214) He has his own story. Besides, clayming "I just got to jabberin" suggests an urgent need to talk to someone; finally he tells his story out loud.

The Crossing's section regarding the burial of Boyd's bones is pivotal, because it starkly emphasizes the state of Billy's spirit and heart. Here, it is as if the landscape was a personification of his own feelings. It is gray, and this image is repeated along the narrative. But before the burial scene, it is important to pay attention to Billy's physical state. After another attempt to join the army and without any place to go to, Billy spends the night "on the tile floor wrapped in the filthy serape with his warbag for a pillow and the stained and filthy hat over his face" (TC 343). Later, he passes a wedding where the bride blesses herself when she sees him, as if he was some "pale witness of ill

omen" (TC 381). In another reflective moment, Billy thinks the he looked like "a person with no prior life. As if he had died in some way years ago and was ever after some other being who had no history, who had no ponderable life to come." (TC 392). His physical state is wretched and, at the same time, the sense of timelessness and motionlessness haunts him. The countless journeys and border-crossings have made him a wiser and more mature boy, but this is the price.

When Billy arrives at the cemetery, the narrator describes the place and the landscape as "a thing exquisite" (TC 400). At this point, misery and desolation are considered beautiful and sublime, which makes this narrative even more melancholic and poetic. The fact that everyone who supposedly worked at the cemetery ("sepulturero", "encargado del cementerio" and "sacerdote") is gone also stresses the "gray sky, gray land" (TC 398). Even when Billy wants to nobly and properly bury his brother, there is no one to help him and the scenery is a typical "wasteland". Instead of riding on, Billy now digs on.

2.3 The end - despair and alienation

Like the kid, Billy's psychological and emotional development goes through different phases. In this case, as we have seen, they take the form of a circle: he has a wish or a dream; he tries to accomplish it by making long and adventurous journeys; something tragic happens and he fails to fulfill his will. Due to his constant failure his spirit reaches a state of weariness and barrenness, just like the dusty landscapes he passes by. Therefore, as the reader gets closer to the end of the novel, he begins to discern an increase in Billy's hopelessness. After the death of his parents, of the shewolf and of his brother, he has the misfortune of being robbed by a gang of Mexican riders and of seeing his last horse being stabbed in the chest. His misery seems to have no end. In this episode, Billy "put his arms around the horse's neck and held it and he could feel it trembling and feel it lean against him and he was afraid that it would die and he could feel in the horse's breast a despair much like his own." (TC 408) The despair of his wounded horse develops in parallel with his own despair, deepening the sense of tragedy in Billy's journey. Luckily, a band of "world wanderers" (TC 421) finds them and heals the horse, while they tell Billy three stories about airplanes. These enigmatic tales are not relevant to this thesis, but at a certain moment something is said that subtly points out to Billy's own condition: "He said that in any case the past was little more than a dream and its force in the world greatly exaggerated. For the world was made

new each day and it was only men's clinging to its vanished husks that could make of that world one husk more." (TC 422)

Why and how did the *güero*[21] protagonist come to this situation? Could he have avoided all the tragic incidents that made him lose his loved ones? Although nothing is certain, the answer to these questions lies in the passage above. Billy is one of the men that cling to the "vanished husks": the unreachable wolf, the stolen horses, Boyd's bones. He is still stuck in the past and cannot move on. He may be a resilient and adventurer rider with a "largeness of spirit", but there are downsides to those qualities as well. With self-discovery comes the loss of innocence and the awareness of hardships. This in turn leads to pain and desolation.

In his final stage Billy wanders aimlessly, just like the kid: "Days to come he rode north to Silver City … He worked for the Carrizozos and for the GS's and *he left for no reason he could name* and in July of that year he drifted south again to Silver City… "(TC 433, my italics) He lost all his motives to ride, so he drifts. He has become spiritually dull. Hence, when a misshapen dog enters his shelter because of the rain, Billy is completely frustrated and furious. He unfairly and cruelly shouts at the dog, throws him stones until he runs away. But as the readers already know, Billy is not a naturally vicious and cruel person like *Blood Meridian*'s gang of filibusters. So he regrets his doing

> …and called for the dog. He called and called. Standing in that inexplicable darkness. Where there was no sound anywhere save only the wind. After a while he sat in the road. He took off his hat and placed it on the tarmac before him and he bowed his head and held his face in his hands and wept. He sat there for a long time and after a while the east did gray and after a while the right and godmade sun did rise, once again, for all and without distinction. (TC 437)

At this point the landscape is not an amalgam of desolation and decay, but of absolute silence and darkness. The journey of Billy Parham ends in stillness, loneliness, and with the rising (and renewal) of another day.

The journey of *The Crossing*'s protagonist seems to end in hopelessness just like the one from the kid. But in the same way that the kid leaves an unforgettable trail of defiance towards the invincible and monopolizing judge Holden, Billy is able to reveal an indestructible way of living and facing life. He follows his dreams since the

[21] *Güero* means redhead in Spanish. In this novel it is used to describe Billy or Boyd.

beginning. He believes that there is something more, something that he sees in the wolves and in the wilderness. Authority is ignored and defied, as Billy moves on his journey to return the shewolf to the mountains, as he rides on with Boyd and gets back his horse, and finally as he digs his brother's bones and returns them to his home country. Owens correctly defends that "he remains true to himself" (2000: 86) and Frye concludes: "In three crossings, Billy comes of age through a series of confrontations with incarnate evil and a set of encounters with people who have been tempered by experiment" (2009: 118) and "Billy emerges as a remarkable blend of character types: the young hero of the traditional *Bildungsroman*, the mythic frontier American in the making, the outcast cowboy who lives in the vain hope that the land will survive." (2009: 120)

Billy is a strong warrior that defies the materialist world while defending the world of wild and living things. His obsession with the past may be a painful and, at first sight, useless way of living, but it is a noble act in memory of the ones who died unfairly, and a moving way of restoring hope and trust in the human heart. John Cant defines this as "emotional depth that is the constant but paradoxical accompaniment to the [The Crossing's] text's literary and philosophical concerns" (2007: 214). In the end, Billy turns into something more than a rider with a tragic life. His heroic acts and large spirit transform him in his own journey and time, "[f]ugitivo. Inescrutable. Desapíadado" (TC 424-425), or in other words, mythical. In brief, *The Crossing* is in the tradition of the American historical romance through a character distinctly human but configured as mythic through his heroic acting and his tragic encounter with a changing world.

3. Boyd: the popular and legendary one

Billy and the kid draw the reader's attention, first of all, because they are the main characters, and then due to their roles in the adventures they go through. Billy's younger brother is in no way the protagonist of *The Crossing*, but he is equally important. Although the focus on him is brief[22], his appearance, heroic actions, and youthfulness blend with the notions of myth, and question the world's reality, which demands a thorough analysis of his own quest.

Boyd is the youngest family member in the Parham household, therefore the most innocent and curious. He has some problems with his father—both get "sulled up" with each other and are equally stubborn—, perhaps due to their similar personalities. He lives a normal life, sometimes joining his brother and father on their ridings. But after Billy leaves home to follow the wolf he is left to witness his parent's tragic murder. So, he becomes a traumatized child, as Billy recognizes later, "[a]s if he harbored news of some horrendous loss that no one else had heard of yet. Some vast tragedy not of fact or incident or event but of the way the world was." (TC 181)

Boyd turns fourteen in a very specific epoch:

> The winter that Boyd turned fourteen the trees inhabiting the dry river bed were bare from early on and the sky was gray day after day and the trees were pale against it. A cold wind had come down from the north with the earth running under bare poles toward a reckoning whose ledgers would be drawn up and dated only long after all due claims had passed, such is this history. (TC 5)

The weather is cold, and the environment pale, just like him. And it is not by chance that the narrator claims that the story to follow will be like "this"—cold, and therefore sad and melancholic—, and a marking one: its records will be written and "dated".

The first descriptions of Boyd reveal that he looks like a being from another world, and not a real person living in the physical world. For instance, there is the moment when he looks into the eyes of the Indian:

> He had not known that you could see yourself in other's eyes nor see therein such things as suns. He stood twinned in those dark wells with hair so pale, so thin and strange, the selfsame child. As if it were some cognate child to him that had been lost who now stood windowed away in another world where the red sun sank eternally. As if it were a maze where these orphans of his heart had miswandered in their journeys in life and so arrived at

[22] This is the reason why his subchapter is shorter than the other ones.

> last beyond the wall of that antique gaze from whence there could be no way back forever. (TC 6)

Here, the repeated notion and focal point is the double, or twin, which of course is due to the fact that he is looking at some kind of mirror (the eyes). But the double he sees seems to be strangely lost and in a different world. In this world the sun "sinks eternally", as if time didn't exist there. Besides, this is a realm where no one can go back, and the word "orphan" is already used this early in the novel. As we will see later, Boyd's fate is to belong to this reality, and even Billy has a vision of it (TC 335). This passage is, therefore, a transcendent premonition.

"Boyd is also far more attuned than Billy to the importance of dreams" (2008:135), Andersen tells us. As a matter of fact, Boyd has one dream where "[t]here was this fire out on the dry lake."(TC 36) When Boyd tells Billy about this, he doesn't pay much attention. However, Billy goes later to see Don Arnulfo, and the old man tells him "that the boy should find that place where acts of God and those of man are of a piece. Where they cannot be distinguished."(TC 48) Billy asks what kind of place the man is talking about and he replies: "Lugares donde el fierro ya está en la tierra... Lugares donde ha quemado el fuego." (TC 48) This reminds us definitely of Boyd's dream, and we will see later that this is not a coincidence. Boyd will be the one to find this kind of place.

Every time Billy looks to Boyd, the words "pale" or "thin" are always present:

> He looked up. His pale hair looked white. He looked fourteen going on some age that never was. He looked as if he'd been sitting there and God had made the trees and rocks around him. He looked like his own reincarnation and then his own again. Above all else he looked to be filled with a terrible sadness. (TC 181)

Strangely, Boyd's descriptions are most of times surrounded by a sense of fragility, motionless and transcendence. His image goes beyond himself and his own body. This will help emphasizing his vital role as the embodiment of myth.

In face of Boyd, Billy plays the role of the pragmatic brother who has a very objective vision about things. Boyd is the opposite: he asks questions all the time and worries about everything. His "intuition also makes him more sensitive than Billy is to the presence of evil in their world." (Andersen 2008: 135) When Billy is talking to the Indian in an easy-going manner, Boyd is on the watch and has a feeling that something is wrong. He tells his brother that "[e]verthing you can do it don't mean it's a good

idea" (TC 9). Unfortunately, Billy doesn't realize it, and later their parents are killed by this same Indian.

3.1 Profile of a hero

Boyd is the one with a genuine heroic profile in *The Crossing*. To begin with, he rides his horses bareback, which isn't an easy and comfortable task. Even when Billy asks him if he wants to swap his saddle, Boyd doesn't accept the offer (TC 193). Secondly, in the episode where they rescue the young Mexican girl,

> Boyd came out of the trees at a gallop. He was bent low over Ken's neck and he was holding the bridlereins of Billy's horse in one hand and the shotgun in the other and he carried the reins of his own horse in his teeth like a circus rider. (TC 215)

He easily controls the horses in face of a dangerous situation like this, and he even is the one to come up with the idea of saving the girl. The young *güero* has the spirit and courage of a true warrior. Moreover, when he was waiting for the girl and his brother, he "sat his stamping horse in the starlight" (TC 216), a beautiful and epic image that highlights Boyd's heroism. As a young and innocent child, his mind is still uncontaminated, innocent, and full of idealism. Even the *ganadero* realizes that, and claims to Billy "Your brother is young enough to believe that the past still exists, he said. That the injustices within it await his remedy" (TC 207). This is not a coincidence, and is surely connected to Boyd's incident with the *manco*, that in turn will lead to Boyd's glorifying by the poor people of Mexico. Lastly, Boyd's innocence is stressed when Billy tells him that he saw the primadonna naked on the river. The young boy is shocked and says "You went up and talked to her. Just like you never seen nothing." (TC240). He still has a chaste behavior concerning sexual matters.

Elizabeth Andersen claims that "Boyd will emerge as one of the Border Trilogy's blacksheep brothers, a romantic outlaw whose defiance marks him as exceptional." (2008: 136) And the rescue of the young Mexican girl is no coincidence; her function is to enlighten readers on Boyd's place in the narrative. She immediately bonds with him, but not only because they are both fourteen. She too is a fragile and thin girl, and rides bareback just like Boyd. The narrator even calls her *jinete* (TC 232), which, in Spanish, means someone who skillfully rides horses. Later, when riding only with Billy, she talks about a specific kind of people:

> She said that in every family there is one who is different and the others believe that they know that person but they do not know that person. She said that she herself was such a one and knew whereof she spoke. (TC 332)

As we could see earlier, Billy ends up admitting that he didn't really knew Boyd after all. Truth is never straightforward and everyone has secrets. Boyd had problems with his father and many quarrels with Billy, and now it is clear that he was different from them. The young girl also claims that now she is her twin (TC 333). Boyd's vision of a lost double in the eyes of the Indian comes true and he is not alone anymore. Billy didn't succeed in bonding with Boyd, and the girl took his place. When Billy and the girl meet Boyd, the *güerito* asks "Dónde estabas? ... He wasn't talking to his brother. He was talking to the girl who came smiling through the doorway behind him." (TC 338)

The incident with the *manco* and his subsequent death are the turning point to the embodiment of Boyd as justice and myth, in the eyes of the "pueblo". In *The Crossing*'s narrative the readers witness Mexico in times of war and revolution, and according to Holloway, "[a]t the level of plot, the corrido appears in *The Crossing* as the peasant folktale or song in which acts of political resistance to a landowning class are enshrined and disseminated orally." (2002: 28) People need something to restore their hopes, and the *corrido* has that role. The word itself resembles movement and transmission (from the verb to run) and this *corrido* is an oral tradition. As a result, the incident is known and exaggerated by everyone, and Boyd is praised. Everywhere Billy passes he listens to comments such as "Que joven tan valiente" (TC 307), or that his brother is "hombre de la gente" (TC 325). People even visit Boyd and give him presents. When Billy tries to explain people that the *manco* only fell of his horse and broke his spine, and that his brother is only a fifteen-year-old boy, they ignore it and repeat Boyd's age, with respect and admiration. Their new hero is Boyd and

> [t]hey spoke of his brother lying with the pistol under his pillow and spoke in a high whisper. Tan joven, they said. Tan valiente. Y peligroso por todo eso. Como el tigre herido en su cueva. (TC 326)

They also regard Billy with "great reverence", and think that he and his brother chose to follow the "path of justice". All of these celebrations are moving to Billy. Before he gets on, "one of them stood and steadied himself by one hand on the shoulder of his companion and raised one fist in the air and shouted to him. Hay justicia en el mundo, he called." (TC 327) This moment epitomizes the recovery of hope. Because of this

rumor, of this *corrido*, the spirit of the poor Mexican people was lifted. Boyd is no longer Billy's brother, but the "*güerito* [that] had killed the gerente from Las Varitas … who had betrayed Socorro Rivera and sold out his own people to the Guardia Blanca of La Babícora. "(TC 331)

3.2 The *corrido*, truth and tale: history of Man

During his wandering Billy hears people singing different *corridos*. He asks to a *corridero* who was the young boy of the song,

> but he only said that it was a youth who sought justice as the song told and that he had been dead many years. … and toasted aloud in the memory of all just men in the world for as it was sung in the corrido theirs was a blood which was the world's heart blood and he said that serious men sang their song and their song only. (TC 385)

At first, Billy thinks that the *corridos* he listens are about his brother, but he soon realizes that these songs about brave *güeros* have existed for a long time and aren't about a specific individual. They are about honest and just men whose soul and blood are from the heart of the world itself. They don't just belong to the world. Likewise, Quijada teaches Billy:

> Yes, it tells about him [Boyd]. It tells what it wishes to tell. It tells what makes the story *run*. The corrido is the poor man's history. It does not owe its allegiance to the truths of history but to the truths of men. It tells the tale of that solitary man who is all men. It believes that where two men meet one of two things can occur and nothing else. In the one case a lie is born and in the other death. (TC 396-397) (my italics)

The everlasting truth about the *corridos* is that they aren't true. They are not an illusion or a lie, but a way of making the nobility and courage of men universal and eternal. In this way, the *corrido* is the telling of the history of men's heart and soul. Since the word resembles the verb to run, and Quijada observes that "it tells what makes the story run", this side of history can never be erased; it is always moving from mouth to mouth and ear to ear.

Going back to the episode of the caretaker's storytelling, now it all makes sense. He preaches:

> Things separate from their stories have no meaning. … The story on the other hand can never be lost from its place in the world for it is that place. And that is what was to be

> found here. The corrido. The tale. And like all corridos it ultimately told one story only, for there is only one to tell. (TC 146)

The *corrido* unites all stories, events and men. All men live in the same world. Thus, there can be only one tale to tell: the one about the human condition. Moreover, the *corrido,* as a running story, will never vanish because it is place itself—the world itself. Accordingly, Cant declares that culture and identity are structured by narratives (2007: 200). Myths and tales are the ultimate personification of our heart's desires and as a result Owens also points out that "… McCarthy portrays the chameleonlike ability of myths to transmute into whatever form is most desired by a particular audience."(2000: 85)

Even after his own death, Boyd's presence is felt until the end of the book. The reason why is that he has turned into something more than a memory. Quijada says to Billy:

> Even if the güerito in the song is your brother he is no longer your brother. He cannot be reclaimed. … Your brother is in that place which the world has chosen for him. He is where he is supposed to be. And yet the place he has found is also of his own choosing. That is a piece of luck not to be despised. (TC 397-398)

Boyd's vision of himself "windowed away" in some other unreachable realm comes true. In opposition to his brother Billy, who became time and tale—stuck in eternal wandering—Boyd is in the most transcendent place, in one that both he and the world have chosen. In the end, one of the wild gypsies tells Billy about the dead:

> He said that what men do not understand is that what the dead have quit is itself no world but is also only the picture of the world in men's hearts. He said that the world cannot be quit for it is eternal in whatever form as are all things within it. In those faces that shall now be forever nameless among their outworn chattels there is writ a message that can never be spoken because time would always slay the messenger before he could arrive. (TC 422)

With Boyd's death many truths about reality are unveiled. Billy tried to witness a world that was invisible to men, an unmediated experience in Nature. Yet, with Boyd's story another world is revealed: an eternal world that is not just some picture that men created, or as Cant puts it, "… the illusion lies in our apprehension of the world rather than in the world itself, in our notion that experience is direct rather than culturally mediated." (2007: 207). The people that were lost carry a message that will never be known, but at the same time that is real and everlasting.

This young character reaches a different level of dissent. In this case, the question is not whether Boyd comes of age, like Billy and the kid, but rather about his static symbolism. Through the image of a young, innocent, brave and adventurous redhead cowboy, the poor people of Mexico create a myth in which he saved them from injustices. Boyd passes from a fragile and thin boy to a legendary hero. His role is to prove that truth can be transformed, and that history is not just facts. History comes from the beliefs, dreams, and desires of men. The Mexicans created a new identity for this young character, and consequently a new identity for the world: "Ultimately every man's path is every other's" (TC 160). Because he is considered a "popular figure" (TC 394), he represents a collective identity. Frye informs us about McCarthy's use of the myth and different concepts of truth:

> McCarthy's use of Platonic ideas in his novels emerges from various myths built into Plato's dialogues, particularly those related to the soul's journey in a series of incarnations back toward the Truth and Light that exists in the transcendent realm of the Ideal.(2013b: 6)

And in fact, Boyd is one of the characters to better exemplify these notions. This character "incarnates", without a doubt, Truth—in the shape of Man's wishes and dreams—, and Light—in other words, hope, especially for the Mexican people. In short, Boyd, the *güerito*, is a resistant of reality, who belongs—and belonged since the beginning—to a divine and indestructible realm, where all men are conjoined and one. Or as Don Arnulfo puts it, "where acts of God and those of man are of a piece".

Summing up, identity in *Blood Meridian* and *The Crossing* is built through different experiences and complex situations. Doubt, fear and weakness are natural phases which one needs to experience in order to grasp self-discovery. Subsequently, defiance means to stand one's ground and to affirm one's own identity. In this firth chapter, each "innocent dissenter" had the chance to do both things by going on a quest with various obstacles, hardships and crossings. Barcley Owens asserts that in the Border Trilogy, "young heroes always reject such older voices of wisdom**,** stubbornly defying chance and fate and the authority of society in favor of their own indomitable will." (2000: 91) These wise voices have the role not only of emphasizing the characters' strong will, but also to teach the readers different theories and insights into metaphysical themes. Each character ends up symbolizing a different kind of dissent, but always showing the reader that the self always matters. Firstly, the kid is, at first

sight, the most discrete and weak character in *Blood Meridian*, and "[m]any scholars want to see the judge as speaking for McCarthy, as revealer of the book's meaning, and therefore attempt to deconstruct or decipher his ramblings." (Worthington 2012: 139). However, as we have seen, the kid is the only one who has got enough courage to defy the judge, has the ability to bond with two specific characters and, in a way, has a sense of morality. Besides, after exploring his path, we can conclude that he goes through an inner transformation. Secondly, Billy defies the materialist world in order to experience wilderness and with him we learn that "[d]omesticity blocks a man's ability to define himself, to find his individual identity." (Worthington 2012: 160). And lastly, Boyd is the one to challenge the very notion of reality and truth, proving that what really matters is not historical facts, but rather the history of man's soul, of his inner quest. In short, these characters can be separated in two categories: individual and collective. Billy and the kid belong to the former; it is their own psychological development that is essential to the novel's conclusion and, consequently, interpretation. On the other hand, Boyd doesn't go through any change. Rather, he embodies the collective mind, the beliefs of every man, and the transcendence and mysticism that surrounds it. Rothfork interestingly claims:

> And if we are a temporal performance, what is there to lose? What can death take if life is a crossing from one night to another, from one country to another? The story is lost, but it was never a possession or an objective record. It was simply a performance that was not about truth but beauty. (Rothfork 2006: 209)

Hence, it is not the real victory or survival that matters. Each character failed whether in surviving (such as the kid and Boyd) or in fulfilling his wishes (like Billy). But each one made a journey with different obstacles and outcomes, in which they proved that it is the constant fighting that leaves an imprint in people's hearts. In addition, each dissenter offered moments of purity and beauty to the readers, in their own way. In *The Crossing* those moments are more easily noticeable, but they are also present and even visible in *Blood Meridian*. We may even say that they are more special in a blood-red background such as the latter. The "incarnate Evils" of both novels are just examples to make evident that they will always exist. Take the blind man's statement "Entienda que ya existe este ogro, este chupador de ojos. Él y otros como él. Ellos no han desaparecido del mundo. Y nunca lo haran." (TC 99) (Understand that this ogre already exists, this eye sucker. Him and others like him. They haven't disappeared from the world. And

they never will.) and “no one could speak for the origins of such men nor where they might appear but only of their existence.” (TC 299) Evil will always prevail, whether in the shape of an eclectic, abhorrent and manipulative man like Holden, or in the shape of Mexican thieves and villains. To conclude, these three young boys succeeded in proving that it is possible to stand alone and challenge the *status quo* that otherwise seemed unquestionable and unbreakable.

CHAPTER TWO

Blood Meridian vs. *The Crossing*: control over landscape

One of the main differences between *Blood Meridian* and *The Crossing* is the fact that the former is dominated by manhood and experience and the latter by boyhood and innocence. Although the kid has an important role, as we have seen, he is only a youngster amongst mature, violent and spiteful men. On the other hand, *The Crossing* tells the story of Billy Parham, a young cowboy who will go through different phases until he reaches maturity. The focus is always on this unexperienced character, while in *The Evening Redness in the West* there are other (adult) characters that deserve our attention. By now I have analyzed the role of three important characters—the kid, Billy and Boyd Parham—by examining the paths they choose, their reactions to multiple situations and their inner development.[23] However, their journeys aren't only influenced by the different circumstances and people they encounter. The landscape is not just a static and unchanging element that lies in these characters' background and it has an important role in both novels. In fact, Jay Ellis states that "McCarthy relies more on setting than on plot, or even character." (2006: 1)

The setting of both novels is divided in two types: wilderness and Man-made. The characters pass by many towns, houses, brothels, but they ride mostly through the overwhelming desert. With regard to Man-made settings, there is a passage worth noting. Captain White's crew passes by a place that looked "like the ruins of old walls, such auguries everywhere of the hand of man before man was or any living thing." (BM 52) This statement shows clearly the consequences of "the hand of man" on planet Earth. It also considers that the ruins were already there, before everything else existed, as if the abuse and mistreatment of the Earth by mankind was already predicted**.** This view is recurrent throughout both novels, being represented by old buildings, devastated churches, among others. Besides,

[23] Both Billy and the kid experience the coming of age, although in different ways. That is why it is possible to say that *Blood Meridian* and *The Crossing* are *Bildungsromane*. In Boyd's case there is no self-discovery or development. This character can be considered static and serves only as a symbol, as we have seen.

> … "homelessness" is expressed not only in the mobility of the characters or in their desire for impermanence but also on the level of spatial description. McCarthy does not describe spaces that even sound like homes. The men ride on through middle spaces that exist in some indeterminate place between inside/outside. The effect is a kind of spatial anxiety, a perpetual sense of being unsettled, of never quite being situated in a clearly defined space.[24] (Engebretson 2013: 163)

Not only are the spaces that surround the characters normally devastated and wrecked, they are also indeterminate, never belonging just to the outdoor or indoor notion. As Engebretson makes evident, this enhances the sense of unsettledness and, therefore, of alienation in the characters.

Steven Frye suggests that

> [r]eaders are invited to conceptualize beyond the scientific to ponder the deeper symbolic implications of tactile and sensory experience, since that order is characterized not just by its physical features but is the outer projection of the interior reality of human consciousness in "fear". The natural world defines and constrains, through physical law, all objects, animate and inanimate, that are confined and circumscribed by its indifferent operation and processes. (2009: 81)

Frye uses the concepts "tactile and sensory experience" and "scientific" to address the subject matter of landscape. However, the landscape becomes a much more complex issue instead of being something simple, superficial and materialist: it represents the characters' inner world. Besides, the setting itself serves as a hindrance to the characters' journeys; it keeps functioning no matter what happens, symbolizing, subsequently, an universal indifference towards human kind.

Every story has a specific and distinct scenery. In McCarthy's novels it is common to have a strong and dominating landscape that is described in a powerful and striking way. In *Blood Meridian* the landscape, on the whole, is as vicious and grim as the riders are. With it, the concept of destiny is mingled. Therefore, the landscape functions not only as a modifier of the riders' physical and mental state, and their journey, but also as a dominating factor in their own fate:

[24] For further reading about "liminal spaces", see "Neither In Nor Out: The Liminal Spaces *of Blood Meridian*" by Alex Engebretson, in *They Rode One: Blood Meridian and the Tragedy of the American Wes*t edited by Rick Wallach, pp.157-165.

> … some vortex in that waste apposite to which man's transit and his reckonings alike lay abrogate. As if beyond will or fate he and his beasts and his trappings moved both in card and in substance under consignment to some third and other destiny.
> In the morning when they rode out it was that pale day with the sun not risen and the wind had abated in the night and the things of the night were gone. (BM 102)

This "third and other destiny" transcends everything. All elements and living beings move under it, and are subjugated to it. In the following lines, the next morning is immediately described. It is a morning that doesn't have any light yet, and all the living things, physical and non-physical, of the previous night are gone. Further, the desert's dust covers the riders, ends up blending itself with them, and "the «austerity» of the landscape suggests an equal mental austerity" (Cooper 2011: 70):

> Spectre horsemen, pale with dust, anonymous in the crenellated heat. Above all else they appeared wholly at venture, primal, provisional, devoid of order. Like beings provoked out of the absolute rock and set nameless and at no remove from their own loomings to wander ravenous and doomed and mute as gorgons shambling the brutal wastes of Gondwanalad in a time before nomenclature was and each was all. (BM 182)

Both the dust and the desert heat heighten the riders' phantasmagoric appearance and anonymity. These riders are compared to something temporary and abstract, and throughout the narrative there are many other indications of their hopeless destiny. It is important to pay attention to the fact that they were "provoked out of the absolute rock" and "set nameless … to wander ravenous and doomed". Even their journey's beginning was provoked by a natural element of the landscape ("absolute rock") which also condemned their fate. All of this was already predetermined, "before nomenclature was". Plus, the group is described as "devoid of order", which emphasizes their rapacious quest for scalps.

The wind and dust of the desert erode everything, and history is not an exception: "The desert wind would salt their ruins and there would be nothing, nor ghost nor scribe, to tell any pilgrim in his passing how it was that people had lived in this place and in this place died." (BM 191) Nothing escapes the eradication provoked by the desert. It swallows everything, horse, man and memory. Because of this great power, the riders "seemed fugitives on some grander scale, like beings for whom the sun hungered." (BM 261) In addition, they become an army of "gray-beards, gray men, gray horses" (BM 261), a color that symbolizes emptiness or blankness, boredom and apathy. Frye defends that

> "[t]heir [Glanton gang's] plight is reflected in all they see, even in the sunrise, and while these descriptions involve no doctrinaire pronouncement of scientific naturalism and materialism, it portrays a stark image of struggle and depravation, suffering and death …" (2009: 80).

Apart from being an obliterating entity, the landscape is a vessel where all the troubles and dilemmas are projected.

Although the desert environment is an impregnable and resilient force, the riders contribute themselves to its modification. They leave a trail: "Those riders [the Americans] seemed journeyed from a legendary world and they left behind a strange tainture like an afterimage on the eye and the air they disturbed was altered and electric." (BM 184) Belonging to a violent and malicious band of filibusters, the riders are also a resilient force. Even if there are no motives for them to ride anymore they keep doing it: "There was no reason for them to stop and no hope in it any more than there was in the riding but as they were riding they rode and the Americans put their horses forward once again." (BM 194)

When the kid is separated from Glanton's gang and finds them again, his horse was uneasy and he realized that it "was their [the gang's] vicinity that was the source of the unrest" (BM 229). The viciousness of the riders is so striking that it alters the air and even animals can feel it. This is the result of a setting that is defined by Frye as a "context through which the human impulse to physical brutality may be explored." (2009: 9). As a matter of fact, "the Americans" explore brutality and bloodshed from the beginning of the novel until its end. Every town they pass by is used not only as a place to spend the night, but is also used in order for the gang to get drunk, destroy everything and leave the place as filthy as it can get; to borrow the narrator's words, "Mejor los indios" (BM 181).

Until now we have seen that landscape controls riders and riders alter landscape. In view of that, there is a character that stands out: John Joel Glanton. This character hasn't been receiving much attention from critics, but he has his own value and is a key-element in the context of the topic concerning control over landscape and destiny. To begin with, Glanton is the band's captain, and therefore the one to guide and instruct[25]

[25] This kind of instruction should not be mistaken with the philosophical and didactical sermons that Holden gives to Glanton's men. Glanton is not an intellectual character as the judge is, but he helps his men by giving instructions on how to perform a defense or attack, or to where they should be heading on their ridings.

the riders. Besides, "the equality among its members is strictly maintained by Glanton" (Williams 2013: 10) and he is a fair and simple man: when a lieutenant invites him to dine, Glanton replies that "he and his men did not keep separate mess." (BM 178) What's more, he justly divides the pile of gold he has collected from the different pillages with every member of the gang, so that "no further ceremony to it" would be given (BM 179).

So far, this character seems normal and not interesting at all. However, I will prove otherwise. In my view, he possesses a profound ability to contemplate situations, and is the only one, not to mention the judge, to obtain a genuine and full control over his destiny, apart from the judge[26].

The tarot-card that is read to Glanton is "la carroza", which will help us to understand how the control over his life is achieved. During the reading of this card, Glanton gets mad and almost shoots the blinded lady, who foresees "La carroza, la carroza. … Invertido. Carta de Guerra, de venganza." (BM 101) In the book *Tarot: os segredos das cartas* it is written that the cart carries someone who had so much success in everything he fought for that he doesn't need to hold the reins in life. His victory is both spiritual and material. Plus, it is Mars' cart carrying a warning sign so that no one gets crossed and hit in the way. In the inverted position this card can lead to envy, greed, undue ambition and scattering or drifting (2000: 22). Evidently, Glanton's personality and quest are characterized by both sides of the card (normal and inverted).

As a scalphunter, Glanton had to leave his former life behind. Although he is as vicious as any other member of the gang, he is surprisingly insightful and contemplative:

> He [Glanton] rode out alone on the desert and sat the horse and he and the horse and the dog looked out across the rolling scrubland and the barren peppercorn hills and the mountains and the flat brush country and running plain beyond where four hundred miles east were the wife and child that he would not see again. His shadow grew long before him on the banded wash of sand. He would not follow. He had taken off his hat for the evening wind to cool him and at length he put it on again and turned the horse and rode back. (BM 181)

[26] My intention is to explore other characters and other issues. This is both because Judge Holden stands out for his amazing speeches and authoritarian figure and receives already enough attention from critics and readers. Besides, there are many other interesting details that deserve our focus.

To begin with, the fact that both him, the horse and the dog are looking across the mountains expresses a communion between Man and animal and suggests that Glanton is not just a cold-blooded killer: he is capable of showing affection for these animals and of forming a connection with them. The several natural elements described (peppercorn hills, mountains, country, running plain) enhance the distance that separates him from his wife and child, attributing a tragic sense to this character's situation. The fact that his shadow is growing "long before him" is not only a visual aspect but a way of showing that he, too, is growing darker and darker. What's more, the new hat that he wears later is black and "became him" (BM 255).

At some point in the novel, Glanton has a crisis of madness. First, there is the scene when the gang enters a town where people were running and crying before them "like harried game": "Their cries to one another or perhaps the visible frailty of them seemed to incite something in Glanton. Brown watched him. He nudged forth his horse and drew his pistol and this somnolent pueblo was forthwith dragooned into a weltering shambles." (BM 191) What this view incites Glanton to think or feel, no one will ever know for sure. It seems that the "frailty" of these people disgusts and enrages him, because as a result Glanton draws his pistol and annihilates them. Furthermore, one day he was heavily drunk and began to shoot everything around him, "crazed and disheveled". In the afternoon of that day he was tied to his bed "like a madman" and the judge sat next to him, cooling his forehead with cold pieces of cloth (BM 202). However, there were times when Glanton could escape from his bed, and then he cut down the Mexican flag, tied it to the tail of a mule, mounted it and rode through the square (BM 203). In this moment of insanity, Glanton shockingly insults the land which had received him. Much later, when the kid meets the gang again, "Glanton's eyes in their dark sockets were burning centroids of murder" (BM 230). As we can see, he reaches the limit of dementia and viciousness, just like the tarot-reading predicted.

According to Andersen, "Glanton's perceptions are subtle, and McCarthy takes great care to characterize him in the occasional scattered sentences that describe him." (2008: 94) It is a fact that before Glanton is murdered, he has one of the most perceptive and contemplative moments in the novel. With this long—but in no way irrelevant—passage, we get to know Glanton's place in the universe of this narrative:

> Glanton stared long into the embers of the fire. All about him his men were sleeping but much was changed. So many gone, defected or dead. The Delawares all slain. He watched the fire and if he saw portents there it was much the same to him. He would live to look

> upon the western sea and he was equal to whatever might follow for he was complete at every hour. Whether his history should run concomitant with men and nations, whether it should cease. He'd long forsworn all weighing of consequence and allowing as he did that men's destinies are given yet he usurped to contain within him all that he would ever be in the world and all that the world would be to him and be his charter written in the urstone itself he claimed agency and said so and he'd drive the remorseless sun on to its final endarkment as if he'd ordered it all ages since, before there were paths anywhere, before there were men or suns to go upon them.
>
> Across from him sat the vast abhorrence of the judge. (BM 256)

Glanton reflects on past events and on the condition in which he and his men are: many men were murdered, lost or wounded. The omens that Glanton may see in the fire don't mean anything to him, because he doesn't care. It is important to stress that he "was complete at every hour" and that, even though he knew every man had his own destiny traced out, he resiliently and admirably "claimed agency". He is the only person to accept reality, and still riding on in the direction of his demise. At the end of the passage, the image of "the vast abhorrence of the judge" highlights, on the one hand, the beauty and grace of Glanton's thoughts and decisions. On the other hand, the well-known perception of Holden as an agile, intelligent and mysterious character is undermined and reduced. In this manner, Glanton is the most genuine character of the gang. Judge Holden may embody the ultimate power and knowledge, and be the only one alive, successfully dancing and fiddling in the end of the novel; the kid may be the strongest dissenter and the only one to defy him, but the ultimate control is achieved by Glanton. Therefore, his triumph is not equivocal as Elisabeth Andersen claims it to be, and he achieves, in fact, transcendence (2009: 106), but not in death. He achieves it in life. In the end he boldly teases Caballo en Pelo to "hack away", embracing his demise.

This character goes through a very intense inner transformation, that was predicted by the tarot-card since the beginning: from a rampage of killing and bloodshed, to a demented and obscure state, and finally to the acceptance of his death, feeling completely whole. Summing up, Glanton's status as the gang's Captain, as a fair and insightful man, and as someone who faces his tragic adventure and, subsequently, death, makes him the character with most control and authority over landscape (and fate). The value of this power doesn't lie in survival, but in the willing and fearless embrace of death, which, in Glanton's case, was reached after he experienced a highly introspective epiphany.

The landscape in *The Crossing* has a similar way of affecting the characters as in *Blood Meridian.* There are many moments in which Billy mingles with the dust from the desert, because of his ragged and lonesome state. However, in this novel the landscape plays other roles. Depending on the moment of the narrative, this "setting imbued in mystery" (Frye 2009: 121) can either represent feelings of alienation and misery, something wholly "dreamy" and unreal, a higher order, a place where Billy's memories are projected, among others.

When Billy crosses the international boundary line into Mexico (State of Sonora) with the wolf, the narrator describes the terrain as "undifferentiated". This is probably due to the fact that there is no physical boundary between America and Mexico—apart from a guard that is always there. In spite of this, boy, wolf and horse were "wholly alien and wholly strange" (TC 74). On the other hand, the young *hacendado* that speaks to Billy in the fair claims that "the boundary stood without regard" (TC 123). It is, thus, suggested that the boundary is both real and non-existent. The protagonist is haunted by loneliness and alienation, and even after crossing the border this state prevails. However, the people of Mexico are very serious about transgressions and crossings, and for them the border will always exist. Even for an otherworldly creature such as the shewolf.

McCarthy's western novels normally depict Mexico as a ruthless and godless country, which has, in contrast, many individuals who offer hospitality to strangers and share their bread. This novel is no exception, and even the narrator describes the late hours in Mexico as "indenominate dark of the Mexican night." (TC 311) In addition, after talking to Billy, "[t]he sheriff shook his head. He looked off out over the country. As if there was something about it that you just couldn't quite lay your hand on. (TC 433) After seeing Billy in such a ragged state and his brother's bones laying near him, he glanced at the country, as if both things were connected—which in fact they are. The narrator observes that there is something in the landscape that is unreachable and untouchable, suggesting its cruel supremacy over everything.

In the final stage of Billy's journey, "people looked back at him through the rolling dust as if he were a thing wholly alien in that landscape. Something from an older time of which they'd only heard. Something of which they'd read." (TC 343) As it was previously demonstrated, Billy reaches the limits of loneliness, pain and wandering, becoming someone transcendent and mystical. By this time he is completely segregated from the landscape (or materialistic world), but now for different reasons. Owens

comments that "[t]he wilderness can serve as various symbolic places. In a primitive-pastoral myth, the hero discovers paradise in the wilderness. Other times, the wilderness becomes a purgatory of loneliness, in which the primate hero must purge his soul and ready himself for mythic battle." (2000: 67) The wild setting has, thus, two sides: a positive (or idealistic) one, and a negative (or harsh) one. At first, the protagonist projects his wishes and hopes in the landscape, but later the landscape becomes a place of survival and pain.

The landscape can also serve as a vessel for premonitions or omens. For instance, in Book II, Billy is contemplating the land, "all of it waiting like a dream for the world to come to be, world to pass. He saw a single vulture hanging motionless in some high vector that the wind had chosen for it." (TC 138) Here the landscape becomes a personified dreamscape, something mysterious and lingering there like something unreal, waiting for further decisions to be made. The vulture, an omen of death, seems to be standing itself in a strange position, without moving, also waiting. Another example of a dreamscape is in one of the sunrises: "….and in the new sun the peaks of the distant mountains to the west beyond the wild Bavispe country rose out of the dawn like a dream of the world." (TC 408-409) Normally this could be just described as "the sun rose". However, it is completely the opposite: it is the landscape (namely the peaks) that rises. We are given a slow, dreamy and, in a certain way, imposing appearance of the peaks, as if they belonged to a beautiful and fantastic world. But more than visions of dreamscapes, McCarthy offers us a collection of dynamic descriptions of this magical and majestic landscape. For example, there is a moment when the night is falling and the darkness passes Billy, the shewolf and the horse in "a sudden breath of cold and stillness", "[a]s if the darkness had a soul itself that was the sun's assassin hurrying to the west as once men did believe, as they may believe again."(TC 74-75) The setting, namely the night, is considered something alive and moving; it even has a "soul". It reminds the narrator of older fears, "as once men did believe", and it makes him think that they will return[27]. Again in the night, Billy "looked out to where the grass was running in the wind under the cold starlight as if it were the earth itself hurtling headlong" (TC 356). Even a simple description of the grass being blown by the wind is treated as a way of showing the earth moving itself

[27] The function and weight of the narrator in the stories will be analyzed in the third chapter of this thesis.

violently, “hurtling”. All things considered, it is not by chance that such a dynamic and vivid landscape has a strong power over the character’s path.

Equally important is the influence of the setting on emotions. The sense of alienation is highly emphasized by the heat and dust of the desert. However, there are other elements that contribute to the protagonist’s state of mind. The narrator, at some point of the novel, describes “[a] half moon [that] hung cocked in the east over the mountains like an eye narrowed in anger” (TC 125). Obviously, the emotion felt here is anger, which is directed to everything that is under this “half moon”. And it is under the pressure of this angry landscape that Billy rides on. As a result, animals can tell if there is something wrong. Right before crossing the border back to his country, Billy realizes that “the horse was restless and stood uneasily. Some scent of old troubles or perhaps just the closeness of the walls.” (TC 165) The readers get to know later that the animal had indeed reasons to feel this way: Billy’s parents were murdered.

The scenery is everything that surrounds and involves the characters. It is not only the desert or prairie where they are, but the world, and the universe. It encompasses everything, even destiny: “As if in the trying of the wood were elicited hidden geometries and their orders which could only stand fully revealed, such is the way of the world, in darkness and ashes. He heard no wolves. Ragged and half starving and his horse dismayed he rode…” (TC 133) In this “trying of the wood” we can find the order of the universe. Everything is contained there, from small elements to larger ones: “tree and rock and the darkening mountains” (TC 238).

Since Billy has a very long and troubling journey and goes through a lot of hardships, he is able to develop feelings of nostalgia. Besides, the places he passes by and the Indian people whom he encounters have themselves their own history and memory. One of the examples belongs to the Tarahumara tribe he and Boyd encounter:

> The Tarahumara had watered here a thousand years and a good deal of what could be seen in the world had passed this way. … And all that was seen was told and all that was told remembered. Two pale and wasted orphans from the north in outsized hats were easily accommodated. (TC 197)

This tribe and its ancestors have a long memory of the world; they have experienced many events and serve as witnesses of the changing landscape. Furthermore, Billy sees his own memories and other peculiar images while he crouches near the lake: “he knew he feared the world to come for in it were already written certainties no man would wish

for. He saw pass as in a slow tapestry unrolled images of things seen and unseen." (TC 335) At this point he is so deeply alienated from the world that he starts doubting his own perception of reality. It is important to note that he isn't dreaming; the narration is occurring, unquestionably, in reality. Therefore, it is in the physical landscape that all of the elements of this strange vision are projected and contemplated.

Although the landscape encompasses everything, it is not the only element that can be seen. The weather and the colors of the land may influence the character's state of mind, but Billy learns that the unseen world is more paramount than what people may think. In fact, he himself had a taste of the unseen and "unmediated" world after his adventure with the wolf[28]. But when he meets a blind man and his wife, he listens to a whole different opinion and perspective on reality.

The blind man was a victim of a terrible act: a German captain in the federal army named Wirtz sucked the eyeballs from his sockets. The act itself was a traumatic experience and he even saw his face from a different angle (TC 285). But the real pain and despair was only felt after he wandered alone for a long time, in a ragged state, talking to no one. He developed a deep understanding about the blackness that was now his own world. After a (comic) attempt of suicide in a lake, he meets a man and together they confer about Man's perception of the world:

> He spoke of the broad dryland barrial and the river and the road … He said that the light of the world was in men's eyes only for the world itself moved in eternal darkness and darkness was its true nature and true condition and that in this darkness it turned with perfect cohesion in all its parts but that there was naught there to see. He said that the world was sentient to its core and secret and black beyond men's imagining and that its nature did not reside in what could be seen or not seen. He said that he could stare down the sun and what use was that? (TC 291-292)

This passage resembles the wolf's world, utterly "sentient" and "invisible to men". The world is still the same even after a person has his vision injured. What men see is nothing but a "distraction" and there is something more, beyond towns, trees and prairies. The world, and therefore the landscape, is perfectly "cohesive" in a reality that

[28] It is not during his adventure with the wolf, but after he kills her, that Billy experiences another world. He tried to feel what wolves feel, in other words, to feel a direct experience without barriers. But only after Billy kills the wolf out of mercy, so that she doesn't suffer anymore, does he feel real sadness, melancholy and that he is slipping away from the materialistic world. As a result, he wanders in the mountains and lives almost the way wild Indians live.

men are not aware of, but that exists either way. The man also claims that "men with eyes may select what they wish to see but for the blind the world appears of its own will. …To move is to abut against the world." (TC 299) The ultimate truth and reality cannot be chosen and movement is a form of defiance against the harsh reality of the world, which was what both the blind man and Billy did. Each of them is "an individual against the indifferent natural world" (Link 2013: 155). When the protagonist asks the blind man if his dreams have become paler, the man replies "No puedo recordar el mundo de luz, he said. Hace muchos años. Else mundo es un mundo frágil. Ultimamente lo que vine a ver era más durable. Más verdadero." (TC 299) (I can't recall the world of light. It has been many years. That world is a fragile world. Ultimately what I had come to see was more durable. More real.) Not only does the visible reality belong to men's eyes, it is also a fragile one. The visible things "are only tracings of where the real has been" (TC 302). To this end, the blind man repeats something that turns out to be a solution or a guiding line on how to live in such a world: "For the world to survive it must be replenished daily." (TC 301-302) and "The world was new each day for God so made it daily."(TC 286) The renewal of each day is important to reality, and it is something mentioned throughout the novel. Billy may have gone through a lot of painful situations and the blind man may see the world in black for the rest of his life. But the world is renewed each day nonetheless, and at the same time contains "within it all the evils as before, no more, no less." (TC 286) In brief, we can deduce that the message implied is the possibility of starting over again every day and not giving up, even though the background that surrounds us is cruel and devastating.

As we can see, the uncertain shape of reality is a very recurrent theme in *The Crossing*. It goes without saying that there are many elements that men cannot see or reach, such as experiences in the natural world and the true essence of it. Living in such an overwhelming place, men have to find a way of surviving and understanding it. Therefore, they create maps. To this, Quijada suggests:

> The world has no name, he said. The names of the cerros and the sierras and the deserts exist only on maps. We name them that we do not lose our way. Yet it was because the way was lost to us already that we have made those names. The world cannot be lost. We are the ones. And it is because these names and these coordinates are our own naming that they cannot save us. That they cannot find for us the way again. (TC 398)

Mapping is just a vain attempt at not getting lost. However, and as the blind man said, the world is still there, and it is nameless. No matter how hard the human race tries to label and analyze the world, there will always be the other unreachable reality, "an incomprehensible realm that exists beyond human perception and reason". (Frye 2009: 81) And that is why "these names …cannot find *for us* the way again" (my italics). This awareness must come from our own Selves and it is achieved throughout our lives.

Blood Meridian and *The Crossing* may almost be the opposite of each other in plot, characters and philosophical content. Still, both have a crushing landscape that haunts the characters, and where the dawn always "finds them". Yet, "McCarthy continually attempts to blend the tactile and experiential with the mystical and sublime" (Frye 2009: 82), creating a transcendent bond between the mind and the physical surrounding. In both novels the landscape functions as a dominating factor of fate or as a vessel for premonitions and omens. The desert dust covers the riders' clothes and eradicates traces of past events. Therefore, we can finally ask: is there control over landscape? If so, who can control it? If not, why? And who is conditioned and controlled? As it has been noted in the beginning of this chapter, since *Blood Meridian* is centered mostly on the actions of adult and highly violent men, we can see an exchange of power between landscape and riders. Most of the times these mature characters are dominated by the external and mystical characteristics of the setting, but they are also able to alter the setting themselves. In this case, Glanton is considered the one to have absolute control over his journey and fate. *The Crossing*'s main characters are two young and innocent cowboys, who go on a journey for the first time in their lives; therefore, we can tell, since the beginning, that landscape has an absolute control over them and their journeys. From the concept of boundary as existent and unreal, to Mexico's ruthless and unreachable air, to the dynamic descriptions that bring natural elements to life, to the influence of the surroundings on emotions, and finally to the concepts of reality and mapping, it is undeniable that the landscape hinders and traps Billy and Boyd in its illusions. In brief, while there is one character in *Blood Meridian*—Glanton (apart from Holden) —that achieves the ultimate control over his life, destiny and, subsequently, over the physical world, *The Crossing* possesses a fully dominating landscape that condemns Billy's journey.

All things considered, whether a silent and violent kid, a contemplating and demented captain, or a cowboy who is obsessed with wolves, the consciousness and spirit of each character is mingled with the surrounding atmosphere, creating a higher

order that goes beyond the universal and scientific power. As a result, McCarthy succeeds in leaving an imprint not only on the readers' mind's eyes—by the process of imagination—but also on their hearts, "always with a focused attention on what makes the world beautiful, in spite of its brutality, indifference, and violence." (Frye 2013a: 10)

CHAPTER THREE

Life and fiction: from author to narrator and reader

When reading a novel, there are various elements that the readers must keep in mind. Firstly, the characters: how they are psychologically and physically described, what their background is and what their value is to the plot, or to the reader's personal conclusions. Secondly, the environment that surrounds the characters, or setting, which has a psychological and emotional weight both on the characters' and the readers' perspectives. And lastly, the way the story is narrated. The first two elements have already been explored, but there is still a missing "ingredient".

In order to discuss the narrative voice in fiction, one must go back to Hassan's concepts regarding quest in literature. As a creative process, writing can never be wholly separated from the writer's identity. Likewise, Hassan defends that "[a]utobiography is … the singular voice of literature." (1990: 29) Equally important, "[t]ravel narratives … are a species of auto-bio-graphy. In them, a first-person narrator serves at the same time as a vagrant, witness, hero, writer. A traveler goes «there», sees, acts, records. … thus raising travel to the condition of verbal performance." (Hasan 1990: 28) Therefore, to write journey novels is to write about one's own Self. At the same time, writing is a way of travelling.

1.1 The author

One of the most striking facts about Cormac McCarthy is that he lived a life of poverty and simplicity for most of his adulthood. Since he was the son of a wealthy Washington lawyer, this is very ironic (Greenwood 2009: 2). I used the word "striking" because it is something very hard to imagine. McCarthy chose deliberately a way of life that nowadays no one would choose if he or she could. Further, Greenwood also tells us that "… McCarthy roamed the surrounding environs of Knoxville, enjoying the wilderness of such places as Brown's Mountain and Red Mountain. … As he grew older, his fondness for the outdoors grew into a deliberate commitment to the more austere aspects of living with nature." (2009: 3). Accordingly, it is not hard to imagine where all the beautiful landscape descriptions of *The Crossing*, for example, came from. Lastly, and adding up to these facts, are McCarthy's extremely rare public appearances—something sad and enigmatic for all the readers and critics of his works. Interestingly, Greenwood claims that "McCarthy has indicated a belief in the power of

the unconscious, especially as it pertains to writing. Constant public interruptions, by implication, would prevent the subconscious from working on the ideas of the conscious mind" (2009: 11), which definitely explains the reason why McCarthy isn't interested in photo sessions, conferences or interviews, and the highly profound and life-changing arguments given both by his novels' characters and narrators. Having this brief piece of information in mind, we can conclude that McCarthy's novels owe the introspective and meaningful content to his background, and to his way of living and thinking. As a result, all that helped this author to become what he is today: one of the best, most insightful and controversial authors of the USA.

1.2 The writing

Any reader who had the pleasure of finishing one of McCarthy's books can conclude that his way of writing is everything but simple. John Cant affirms that "he [McCarthy] makes clear his profound love of language, his confidence in its ability to do what he wants it to, and of his willingness to deploy it in many different modes" (2007: 3) and Jay Ellis describes McCarthy's style as "the unusual word that turns out to be the perfect choice, his control of language at the level of sentences and paragraphs…" (2006: 1). Indeed, Cormac McCarthy doesn't care about punctuation rules—leaving the readers with their own reading rhythm—, uses countless archaic and technical concepts, and the certainty concerning who is the character that is talking at the moment is sometimes blurred. As it has been noted, the creative process is always linked to the artist's own personality, or Self. To this end, McCarthy pours his creative talent and inner nature in cruel and dominant landscapes, homeless, alien and complex characters, and in the novels' own narrative voice.

2. The narrator

According to Steven Frye:

> Circumstances both interior and exterior to character are seen from many viewpoints, and there is often the mysterious, omniscient McCarthy persona that intercedes in strange, lyrical, and sometimes italicized passages to complicate and lend ambiguity to the most tactile and visual situations. (2009: 13)

Throughout *Blood Meridian* and *The Crossing*'s narratives there are, indeed, many features that draw attention, being among them the way the narrative voice behaves

when facing diverse situations. The narrator of McCarthy's stories is very specific and unique. First of all, he is omniscient: he gives the readers hints or omens about future events. Secondly, he infiltrates in the characters' perspective and expresses sometimes the doubts that they are experiencing. Thirdly, by using specific comparing expressions such as "like…", "seemed…", "as if…", "he or she "looked…" and all kinds of adverbs, such as "just", "only" and "wondrously", the narrator conveys to the readers more personal and emphasized remarks. Last but not least, the narrator himself is able to comment on different circumstances, offering the narrative a sense of tragedy, melancholy or nostalgia. The aim of this chapter is, thus, to explore and categorize the examples of all of these literary marks, which belong to the narrative voice, and to conclude the function they have in the plot, as a whole.

2.1 Adverbs, adjectives, expressions –the intensifiers

The English language has many ways of emphasizing expressions or to transform a story-telling in something closer and more intimate. Although McCarthy's narrator doesn't use the word "I", and never speaks in the first person, he manages to insert the reader in the narrative[29] by using certain adverbs, adjectives, determiners, among other types of words.

The first example belongs to the opening pages of *Blood Meridian*—the kid's depiction. The narrator tells "All history present in that visage, the child the father of the man." (BM 3) The determiner "that" implies a certain distance between the narrator's point of view and the person who is being "watched". This word might not have been written, and instead we would have only "history present in his visage…", for example. But by using the demonstrative determiner, McCarthy establishes a connection between the narrator and readers, and the character. The narration continues: "Only now is the child finally divested of all that he has been "(BM 5) and "Now come days of begging, days of theft."(BM 16) The adverb "now" introduces the readers in a situation with a specific time. Although no one knows exactly what day and hour the word refers to, clearly something has changed, and the readers can feel as if they were watching all the

[29] This view serves to contradict Cooper's observation that "readers feel as if they were watching the fictional events from the wrong end of a telescopic lens."(2011: 2) By comparing the reader's perception to the vision from the wrong end of a telescopic lens, she means that readers feel highly distant from the novels' scenes, which I will prove otherwise.

events “live”. Later, after the slaughter of Captain White’s crew, “[w]ith darkness one soul rose wondrously from among the new slain and stole away in the moonlight.” (BM 58) In the whole, this sentence seems miraculous and epic. The narrator tells the way this “soul rose"—“wondrously”—revealing some kind of fascination towards the kid. This character was very lucky, survived a horrific slaughter and “stole away in the moonlight”, in a sneaky and agile way while the light of the moon illuminated his way. In the desert scene that was already considered in the first chapter, the kid provokes the judge by filling his flask with water in a place “no part of which was altogether beyond the judge’s reach” (BM 300). Instead of describing the distance in a much more objective way, such as “a place that was very close to the judge”, the narrator uses the word “altogether”, in order to comment both the boldness and danger of this act.

After Glanton’s insane and comic shooting that resulted in cats and birds exploding and vanishing from sight, a sergeant decides to check what is going on and goes talk to Glanton and his men. The judge, obviously, succeeds in manipulating the man, talking in a “warm” way, and gesturing with a “great expansiveness of spirit” (BM 89). The reaction of the soldiers was to squat and watch “each movement in this charade with the same dull interest” (BM 89). In this case, the word “this” doesn’t only approximate us readers from the situation, but it also emphasizes the fact that the judge’s attitude is absolutely a farce. The way the men watch “this charade” also confirms it.

When Shelby is wounded and someone has to kill him, the description of his situation can be divided in two sides. Although the sentence “The Mexican … would die anyway” (BM 218) is not about Shelby himself, it serves nonetheless to compare the condition of both characters. On the one hand, “anyway” can belong to the kid’s opinion and point of view; perhaps he is trying to find an excuse so that he won’t feel so bad about the whole situation of killing a wounded man. On the other hand, the word can belong to the narrator’s perspective, who is also weighing the situation. Lydia Cooper considers that “a third-person omniscient narrator may describe an individual character’s thoughts, but in those cases the interpretation and revelation of the thoughts must be attributed to the omniscient narrator.” (2011: 8) In addition to these two sides, the readers can also experience how difficult this situation is.

Regarding spatial references, by the time the kid finds “the Americans”, the way they appear is described in a playful way: “They’d not been there, then they were there.” (BM 229) Many of the descriptions that concern Glanton’s band are surrounded

by mysticism and the supernatural; consequently, even the way they show up and meet the kid is enigmatic. They seemed to appear out of nowhere, resembling an illusion. In addition, when the riders find the two Delawares, the Vandiemenlander and Gilchrist dead, burnt and impaled, the comment is: "Among their barbarous hosts they had met with neither favor nor discrimination but had suffered and died impartially." (BM 239) Since the murdered characters were all from different places and races, the narrator deliberately says that they weren't treated differently. This can be considered as a very subtle way of affirming that everyone is equal, especially when facing death.

Focusing on the judge, adjectives such as "agile" and "abhorrent" aren't the only ones that offer a clear portrayal of this character. For instance, in one of his first appearances, when he enters a "ratty canvas tent" (which is a synonym for a moving church), "he stood smoking a cigar even in this nomadic house of God and he seemed to have removed his hat only to chase the rain from it for now he put it on again." (BM 6) Once again, the adverb "even" and "only" represent the blaspheming and challenging attitude of the judge, who doesn't care about respecting others. Further, at some point of the story, the riders were so "gaunted" and "lank", with "hollow burnedout eyes" and "[e]ven the judge grew silent and speculative. (BM 261) As it was said earlier, *Blood Meridian's* storyline is progressive, reaching its peak slowly. In this scene, there is a strong feeling of doubt and fear as to what will happen next. And *even* the judge, the strongest and most confident character of the novel, feels the same way. A few pages later they will encounter "Caballo en Pello" and find out the source of this uneasiness.

The adverb "just" is equally important: it is used to express, for instance, disappointment. After the rupture of Glanton's gang, the kid wanders aimlessly and tries to join a group of people. Soon he finds out that "[t]hey were just a band of pilgrims." (BM 330) Again, this word belongs both to the kid and the narrator: the former feeling disappointed, and the latter showing the readers that these pilgrims aren't what the kid is looking for. Lastly, when finding an old lady standing in the desert, the kid tries to help her and tells her all about his experiences. Unfortunately, "[s]he was just a dried shell (BM 332), something that surprises and disappoints the kid.

Although there are also adverbs, determiners, adjectives, and other types of words that highlight various situations in *The Crossing*, they have a different connotation. This is especially due to the intense feelings of melancholia that this novel transmits:

> Expansive, poetic narrative, used so often for surrealistic descriptions in *Blood Meridian*, is still present in landscape passages, although it now [in ATPH[30] and TC] evokes nostalgic beauty and tragic loss, instead of developing *Blood Meridian*'s theme of mindless violence. (Owens 2000: 64)

The narrative starts with: "Boyd was not much more than a baby and the newly formed county they'd named Hidalgo was itself little older than the child" (TC 3). This invokes a sense of freshness and innocence, created by the parallel description of baby Boyd and the recent county Hidalgo. Likewise, but a little later, "[t]hey [Billy and the horse Bird] looked new born out of the hand of some improvident god who'd perhaps not even puzzled out a use for them. That kind of new." (TC 31) At this point, Billy's journey hasn't started yet, and both he and Bird looked untouched and pure. The narrator seems to be stressing this idea, trying to draw attention and speaking directly to the reader by saying "*That* kind of new" (my italics).

"It's very interesting to see an animal out in the wild that can kill you graveyard dead", McCarthy says to Richard Woodward (*New York Times*, 1992). Indeed, the narration of the shewolf's path has a very biased tone, which exposes the writer's own passion about wild animals. The depiction of her decisions, feelings and movements suggest that she is a very intelligent and sensitive animal, almost with human qualities. For instance, when her partner was caught up in a trap, "[s]he'd flattened her ears and whined and she would not leave." (TC 25) Here, the auxiliary verb "would" emphasizes her despair and insistence in staying with the other wolf. Moreover, "she had no way to know the trouble she was in." (TC 25) Animals may have a strong instinct and sense of danger, but this statement ascribes the shewolf with something more: human preoccupations. In regard to her physical descriptions, Billy finds one of her prints, and the vision is portrayed as "In the floors of the little wells she'd stoven in the snow lay her perfect prints." (TC 32) In the whole, the way the print is found—in the "little wells" she had made—, and the adjective attributed to her prints— "perfect"— indicate that the narrator is feeling the same way as Billy: amazed, fascinated, almost in love with the animal. This feeling is found again when Billy is observing her: "…her mouth open and her teeth so white, so perfectly made" (TC 56) or in her reaction to the food offered by Billy: "She sniffed it delicately" (TC 79). In the same way, if the narrator expresses tenderness and care towards the shewolf, he is able to show his pain when the

[30] *All the Pretty Horses*

wolf is cruelly imprisoned in the fair by portraying her cry in an intense manner: "the wolf lunged at her lead and let out a wild sad cry" (TC 104) and commenting, in a very personal tone, on her miserable condition: "the wolf was alone in the pit and she was a sorry thing to see" (TC 125). According to Richard Woodward, McCarthy "discussed a covert operation to reintroduce the wolf to southern Arizona" with the novelist Edward Abbey (1992). Having learnt this, it is not a surprise to read such careful, personified and full-of-awe depictions about an animal that McCarthy himself wanted to reintroduce into Arizona.

Throughout the story we can find other kinds of animals with emphasized descriptions made by the narrator. Already at the middle of the narrative, Billy's horse is portrayed as "so crusted with white salt rime it shone like some prodigy embarked upon the darkening plain." (TC 282) The word "so" has a personal tone, which suggests once again the mingling of the narrator's and Billy's view. The horse was very dirty and was "faltering", looking both a "prodigy" or heroic figure, and weak and tired. The dog in the last scene of the novel possesses also an interesting depiction: "…and it was wet and wretched and so scarred and broken that it might have been patched up out of parts of dogs by demented vivisectionists. It stood and then it shook itself in its grotesque fashion..." (TC 435) The typically McCarthian repetition of the conjunction "and", the use of "so" and the complementing comparative expression that begins with "that it might have been…" all contribute to enhance the miserable condition that the dog is in. It goes without saying that this causes an effect of pity on the readers.

Being the protagonist of *The Crossing*, Billy plays, obviously, a major role and his actions are central to the novel. Therefore, the narrator also pays attention to his attitudes, offering highly detailed remarks. Although Boyd seems to be the most skillful rider in the story, the narrator claims that Billy "rode slowly and turned the horse nicely." (TC 51) Here, the adverb "nicely" implies that Billy is not only a very competent rider, but he is also highly interested and concentrated in doing his task: to follow the wolf. Plus, "[h]e didn't even bother to put on the deerskin gloves" (TC 51), where the adverb "even" functions as an amplifier of Billy's mood and will: at this point, he no longer wants to set the traps. This adverb, which means "to a greater degree or extent", is also used to intensify the state of alienation: "Among the fairgoers in that little park of dried mud and starveling trees were visitors more alien than even he…" (TC 107) This comparative structure suggests two things: there were visitors much

more “alien” than Billy, but Billy was himself highly isolated and alienated, almost reaching the peak of this condition.

As we all know, McCarthy’s writing doesn’t focus much on describing the sadness or melancholy of the characters; it is rare to read that a character is crying, for instance. In this situation, the narrator uses solely the expression “His eyes were swimming” (TC 126) or “he wept” (TC 437). The unusual expression is definitely the former, with the verb “to swim”, which has a completely different meaning in this context, and that is one of McCarthy’s literary marks. A person has to be immersed in water so that he or she can swim. Subsequently, the expression suggests that the eyes are, in fact, full of water (tears). In other words, the person whose eyes are swimming is crying in a very intense and painful way.

Another way of tracking the narrator’s personal perspective is in the hypothetical remarks, which are normally expressed by the word “perhaps”, the verb “must”, or the expression “may well…”. These remarks, being conjectural, only express doubt and their function is to enrich the given information or to offer another perspective. A band of Indians whom Billy encounters “may well have thought him mad for the regard which they treated him.” (TC 136) No one is sure as to whether they really considered Billy crazy, but the fact is that Billy is in a “sorry” state and even the Indians treated him in a different way. When Billy and his wounded horse are found by a band of gypsies at the end of the story, the narrator, and perhaps Billy, speculate about their origin by observing the clothes they had: “Indians or gypsies perhaps by the bright colors of the shirts and the sashes that they wore.” (TC 411) A further technique of expressing speculation is by using the verb “must”. In this case, the narrator provides extra information. For example, when Billy is being robbed by a band of riders, “the horse must have begun to see the loosening of some demoniac among them for he reared and backed in his backing trod among the bones” (TC 406). This episode reminds us of the one with the *manco*, in which the horse sensed something similar. It is impossible to know what really stirred up the animal; but instead of reading only the movements of the horse, the readers get to know the origin of the horse’s reaction. Besides, the phrase “must have begun to see the loosening of some demoniac” adds a comical tone to the scene. In the same way, the narrator explains why Boyd didn’t look back after leaving the Indian: “His brother must have told him not to look back because he didn’t look back.” (TC 8), and later ahead, we also acknowledge why a “woman kept urging food upon” Billy and Boyd: “They must have looked hard used by the road…”

(TC 223) A last example for this category is the uneasiness Billy's horse felt when returning home, that is hypothetically explained by: "Some scent of old troubles or perhaps just the closeness of the walls" (TC 165). Right after this page, the readers get to know that the horse's restlessness is not due to the trail of "old troubles" neither to "the closeness of the walls". It is because Billy's parents were murdered. It is possible to conclude, thus, that the narrator isn't always right about his remarks or suppositions, and they are clearly mingled with the protagonist's own conjectures. In doing this, McCarthy attributes the narrator human and imperfect features, instead of creating a completely all-knowing narrative voice. Besides, colloquial and common expressions also confirm these features. After Billy returns home, his feelings are described as "he knew that something was bad wrong." (TC 167) or when his horse was stabbed, "its breathing had begun to suck and rattle and it sounded all wrong." (TC 408) The use of the phrases "bad wrong" or "all wrong" are not formal at all, and are a way of approximating the readers to the situation, and subsequently, to the narrator's point of view.

"McCarthy appreciates wildness—in animals, landscapes and people…" (Woodward, 1992) This passion is distinctly represented in one of the most personal and direct lines of the novel: "the beautiful Animas Valley" (TC 352), a line that doesn't belong to any character's perspective. It firmly belongs to the narrative voice, or in other words, to McCarthy himself, who is a profound admirer of natural landscapes. Further, when Billy is looking at the night sky, the narrator observes: "With dark a gauzy swarm of stars. He could not guess what they were for, so many."(TC 282) In this sublime description of a "cloud" of stars, we are able to get inside Billy's head and see that a wonderful view like this is as enigmatic for him as it is for the narrator. Woodward has also written that McCarthy spent more time with scientists, physicists and biologists than with any other writers (*New York Times*, 1992). Therefore, the detailed naming of each constellation that McCarthy's characters see throughout the whole *oeuvre* confirms the author's knowledge about the science of astronomy.

Last but not least, temporal and spatial references have also a specific way of being narrated, especially if they are connected to memories or feelings of nostalgia. During his journey and after finding out that Boyd's bones lay in a cemetery, Billy remembers "when he and Boyd had first ridden through the gates there in that long ago." (TC 387) Furthermore, "he often thought about Boyd, thought of him sitting by night at just such a fire in just such country." (TC 392) In both sentences there is a

strong emphasis in the fact that the time spent with Boyd seems very distant, almost unreal ("there in that long ago"). The phrase "at just such a fire in just such country" implies repetition—Billy is travelling for so long that he even passes the same places where he had been with Boyd—and a feeling of sadness and anger towards the cruel and godless country that Mexico is.

2.2 Comparative and hypothetical expressions

The second type of McCarthy's narrative marks is the comparative and hypothetical structure in the form of expressions such as "like …", "as if…" "he seemed…", among others. By using this technique, the author is able to attribute characters, landscapes and animals a deeper symbolic value, and although it seems that these comments are unreal or just mere suppositions, they enrich the novel's meaning.

The first group to be explored is composed by descriptions of various individuals or characters. As we know, Holden is as peculiar as his depictions are. Describing his head, the narrator tells us: "The enormous dome of his head when he bared it was blinking white and perfectly circumscribed about so that it looked to have been painted." (BM 84) The expression "so that it looked to have been painted" makes us imagine immediately and easily the judge's head as perfectly defined and painting-white. In regard to this character's "supernatural" side, in an attempt to keep Glanton from killing the fortune tellers, "[t]he judge like a great ponderous djinn stepped through the fire and the flames delivered him up as if he were in some way native to their element." (BM 102) Surprisingly, the fact that Holden is among the flames doesn't hurt him. Quite the opposite, he seems to belong to the fire element. In the last scene of the novel, the kid encounters the judge and he looked "some other sort of man entire and he seemed little changed or none in all these years." (BM 343) Even the narrator considers the judge a specific "sort of man", who is completely unique, absolute, and without traces of aging.

Although Toadvine becomes one of the kid's closest comrades, the narrative doesn't pay much attention to him or to his depictions. However, there is one passage which is worth noting and that has a very comical tone. At a bar, a drunken Mexican starts talking to Glanton's men and asks Toadvine if they are "sociedad de Guerra" and "Toadvine didn't know. He looked some loutish knight beriddled by a troll." (BM 108) This comical sentence is written in such a formal manner that it ends up mixing itself, and Toadvine, for being so rude and rough, can easily be mistaken with a troll.

Notwithstanding, the picture we get in our minds is a confused and very rude-looking man being approached by an even more primal creature.

Billy's father is one of the few characters to remain untouched by violence, darkness or emptiness. His appearance in the novel is brief, but the narrator compares him to something pure and sublime: "His eyes were very blue and very beautiful half hid away in the leathery seams of his face. As if there were something there that the hardness of the country had not been able to touch." (TC 17) We are told that the eyes are the windows of the soul. If we consider this popular motto, Will Parham's eyes aren't the only thing that is beautiful and untouched by the roughness of the country. His inner-person seems to remain the same way. This is Billy's point of view mixed with the one from the narrator, and it seems that both feel a certain respect and admiration towards this man. While setting the traps, Billy's father is described the following way:

> … he looked to be truing some older, some subtler instrument. Astrolabe or sextant. Like a man bent at fixing himself someway in the world. Bent on trying by arc or chord the space between his being and the world that was. If there be such space. If it be knowable. (TC 23)

The narrator transforms a simple work that requires concentration and a skillful technique into something much more transcendent. Instead of preparing the traps, Will seems to be trying to discover the space between his person (or identity) and the past, "the world that was". The following remarks transmit the doubt of the narrator towards that space; he isn't sure if it exists or if anyone is aware of it. The history of man is complex, and perhaps the past isn't so simple and straightforward as we read it in books.

As we have noted earlier, Billy is a young cowboy, who although failing at fulfilling his wishes and dreams, keeps travelling and absorbing the knowledge that each experience offers him. He is also a fragile boy with a strong will, something that is repeatedly reminded by the narrator. When he has the shewolf in his possession, he looked "[l]ike a man entrusted with the keeping of something which he hardly knew the use of." (TC 81) The image suggested is one of doubt and inexperience because Billy makes decisions without thinking. Likewise, by seeing Boyd's physical state after he is shot and treated, "he turned his eyes away like a man unwittingly made privy to some secret thing to which he was in no way entitled, for which he was in no way prepared." (TC 339) The image of inexperience and innocence is repeated, even at this final stage

of the plot, suggesting that Billy is still very young and pure, although he went through many hardships. What is more, even at this point he still feels shocked by this image. Furthermore, after getting in the ring where the dogs fought with the wolf,

> He looked like a man standing on a scaffold seeking in the crowd some likeness to his own heart. Nothing to come of the looking even though all there might arrive at their own such standing soon or late. (TC 123)

In spite of his weaknesses, mistakes and failures, he succeeds in following his will. Subsequently, he is compared to someone being judged and asking for understanding, something that no one is willing to do. However, the narrator teaches the readers that everyone will go through that experience (eventually).

The similarities or comparisons that the narrator establishes can be divided in two parts: individual and collective. On the one hand, the individual analogies, which were explored above, enrich the plot and our understanding of the characters. On the other hand, the parallels established between collective identities or groups of people offer a more universal view, or in other words, about the human condition. Since *Blood Meridian's* plot follows the quest of Glanton's band, or other groups of characters such as Captain White's crew, most of the situations analyzed belong to this novel.

To begin with, Sproule and the kid are compared to "creatures seeking their own form"(BM 69) and later, the prisoners with whom the kid is, are also categorized as "lifeforms, like wonders much reduced. Rough likeness thrown up at a hearsay after the things themselves had faded in men's minds." (BM 80-81) Both these parallels suggest a lack of form or shape, which in turn imply a drifting. No one is sure about his destiny or to what is happening next. A few pages later, the narrator even says that the men look "like supplicants at the skirts of some wild and irate goddess."(BM 96) Not only is there uncertain wandering, but there is also a journey that is condemned, as if there was a superior being who was angry at the world. During the kid's lonely journey, he ends up in a strange country among the mountains, where "he met with men who seemed unable to abide the silence of the world." (BM 330) It is important to note that throughout *Blood Meridian* we experience hopelessness, emptiness and lack of meaning. In opposition, in this passage the narrator shows us that there are still people who resist and can't accept the fact that the world is only silence and desolation. The kid won't come back to this place, and no one knows how these men are called. But however unknown, they exist, just like their resistance.

The Indians have a category of their own—they belong neither to the group of individuals nor to the collective identity—because the narrator attributes them distinct descriptions and comparisons. They are also the "primitive" or "primal" part of human kind and the encounters each character has with them is surrounded by enigmatic and fantastic features. Captain White's crew rode with all kinds of people, from Texans and Mexicans to slaves and "Lipan Indians", these last with a "whispered taste for human flesh [that] seemed outrageous presences even in that fabled company" (BM 40). This draws attention because of the high contrast with the "fabled company" that was White's band. In *Blood Meridian* the Indians are presented not only as a violent and murderous people, but also as peaceful, helpful, and sometimes defenseless. This latter side is personified, for instance, in "a band of peaceful Tiguas", which was brutally slaughtered "as if the fate of the aborigines had been cast into shape by some other agency altogether. As if such destinies were prefigured in the very rock for those with eyes to read. No man stood to tender them a defense." (BM 183) This massacre was so random and cold-blooded that it seemed committed by another "agency", and not by Glanton's men. Even the narrator stands terrified and astonished in face of such event, adding that no one was willing to help them.

In *The Crossing* the imagery of violent and bloodthirsty Indians is very rare or inexistent. Instead, every time Billy encounters a band of Indians, he is well-received and without formalities, being sometimes treated as if he was mad, as it has been noted earlier. Billy and Boyd meet the Tarahumaras, a band of Indians who spoke no Spanish and who regarded them with little interest:

> The Indians were dark almost to blackness and their reticence and their silence bespoke a view of a world provisional, contingent, deeply suspect. They had about them a wary absorption, as if they observed some hazardous truce. They seemed in a state of improvident and hopeless vigilance. Like men committed upon uncertain ice. (TC 197)

Probably nor Billy nor Boyd would ascertain all of this by looking at the Indians, which can lead to the conclusion that this entire observation belongs to the narrator's perspective, who, once again, enriches our understanding of the characters. The Tarahumaras' physical description also transmits this reticence and suspicion for they wore no shoes, had no cattle nor dogs, and their entire gear was piled up under a tree, next to some bows and quivers. Equally important to note is that this tribe is completely different from the ones that Glanton's gang (BM 289) or even Captain White's crew

(BM 54-55) encounter. On the whole, this tribe emanates an aura of preoccupation and considers the world an ephemeral and dubious place, an uncommon perspective transmitted by the narrator.

McCarthy's use of comparative structures attributes the animals characteristics with a much more personified tone throughout the novels. Firstly, while the kid was passing by the judge the first time, Holden "turned the horse, as if he'd have the animal watch too" (BM 15). The "as if"-structure, in this case, functions as an emphasizer for the watching. The judge, as we know, is deeply interested in the kid since the beginning. When he passes by, the narrator even observes that the judge wanted the horse to see this "interesting individual". Furthermore, during the episode when Boyd is shot, Billy tries to escape and to take the horses with him. Sadly, the Bailey horse is shot and "[w]hen Billy looked back he was just standing there. As if the heart had gone out of him." (TC 279) This image is much more heartbreaking and sad than watching the horse fall with blood all over his rear hock. Instead, the readers can picture the animal standing while his life slowly fades away. In regard to the shewolf, which is considered an animal of high mystical and otherworldly significance, while Billy was preparing to sleep, she "sat watching with her ears forward and her nose making constant small correction in the air. As if to make acts of abetment to the life in the world." (TC 96) She is an important element for our understanding of *The Crossing* (and of life in general), and in this scene the simple movement of her nose trying the air is connoted with a much deeper meaning. The narrator compares it to an attempt of "abetment", or in other words encouragement to existence. Therefore, she is not only a symbol of extreme wilderness and unmediated experience, but also a helpful element to life and the world. Moreover, when she is imprisoned in the fair, the narrator says that she "crouched by the iron stake where it seemed she'd made her querencia." (TC 117) Animals are known to sense death and to go to a specific place to die. The Spanish word *querencia* suggests that same instinct, and that the shewolf decided to stay in a specific area of the floor to die.

2.3 Personal remarks

Until now there has been an evolution, from small literary marks (or words) left by the narrator such as "so", "perhaps", "must", or "even", which have the function to intensify certain aspects of physical descriptions, situations or landscapes. Then, there has been a crossing to larger expressions such as "as if…", "he looked…" or "he

seemed…" that belong to the category of comparison. By comparing characters or presenting hypothetical situations the narrator is able to illustrate a different perspective, enrich the descriptions and attribute to the narratives, in the whole, a deeper meaning. While White observes:

> Is it the narrator who "sees", who "focalizes", the scene and thus whose subjectivity colors the objects perceived making them appear almost supernaturally or at least preternaturally terrifying? However expressive the prose style (or "narrative voice") becomes in many passages of the novel, nothing in the text seems to encourage readers to think specifically about a potential narrator figure's visual-perceptual experience of objects depicted in the story world (2013: 183),

this final category regarding the narrator's contributions is composed by more extensive observations that, in my view, express an unveiled and personal opinion. For this purpose it is possible to connect, thus, the narrative voice to the author himself.

Contrary to what most McCarthy critics and even readers may think, *Blood Meridian* is not completely nihilistic or devoid of optimism and meaning. To this end, I have chosen different types of comments, among which we can find statements that reveal feelings associated with the sublime or the terrible, with hope, among others. Since *The Crossing* belongs to the *Border Trilogy*, a completely different period concerning McCarthy's thematic choosing, this novel doesn't possess such cruel and striking situations or commentaries. Nevertheless, this novel includes many personal, insightful and critical remarks.[31]

An adequate line to begin this last topic is "Doomed enterprises divide lives forever into the then and the now." (TC 132) This is something that can be applied to both novels since it is a very universal statement about fate. The narrator is trying to warn us that every movement and action counts, and that everything has a consequence which will be fulfilled sooner or later. Indeed, it is what happens in *Blood Meridian* and *The Crossing*. The kid's endless refusal of the judge's calling marks him as a condemned character who will die at the hands of the judge himself; Billy's persistence in trying to belong to the wild and natural world makes him achieve the highest level of estrangement and loneliness; even Boyd's stubbornness in wanting to be a rebellious

[31] It is important to note that the order of quotations is used on purpose so it won't be equal to the narrative line of each book. All these examples regarding the narrator's own personal remarks can be combined and will lead to a complete and more universal conclusion.

cowboy leads him to a tragic death, far away from his own brother and homeland. In addition, all of these characters are haunted by visions and dreams that also contribute to the meaning of the line above quoted.

Furthermore, Captain White's crew—which can be considered a parody of the extremely optimistic and self-righteous white man who believes that his race is the most superior—is armed with expensive gear, and has colorful and clean outfits. This crew inspires not only confidence but also naivety. To this, the narrator comments: "They were in good spirits, scrubbed and combed, clean shirts all. Each foreseeing a night of drink, perhaps of love. How many youths have come cold and dead from just such nights and such plans." (BM 41) This is clearly a lamentation about how sad it is to see innocent and optimistic men ending up dead because of such plans, and even before going to war.

The constant carnage that floods *Blood Meridian* isn't the only thing to suggest oblivion and erasure. According to Barcley Owens, "[t]here are phrases [in McCarthy's novels] … that remind us of the transience of all life, both animal and human." (2000: 80). In fact, after the massacres, the desert contributes to the annihilation of every event: "The desert wind would salt their ruins and there would be nothing, nor ghost nor scribe, to tell any pilgrim in his passing how it was that people had lived in this place and in this place died." (BM 184) In face of the inability to preserve past events, the narrator also transmits a feeling of despair and hopelessness:

> Out of that whirlwind no voice spoke and the pilgrim lying in his broken bones may cry out and in his anguish he may rage, but rage at what? And if the dried and blackened shell of him is found among the sands by travelers to come yet who can discover the engine of his ruin? (BM 118)

There is no way of discovering the causes of such miseries, and the wrath of the dead is useless. The narrator may be proposing that, even though history is written down and saved, there are many happenings and dead bodies who will remain unknown. What's more, while Glanton's men slept among the stillness of the desert night, they heard a cry: "There is hardly in the world a waste so barren but some creature will not cry out at night, yet here one was and they listened to their breathing in the dark and the cold and they listened to the systole of the rubymeated hearts that hung within them." (BM 296) In this passage the narrator tells us of a unique creature that has the courage to "cry out at night", even in a wasteland such as that. This reminds us of the men who were

"unable to abide the silence of the world" (BM 330). For this purpose, both passages imply the narrator's attempt to prove that there is still resistance to the silence and stillness of the world, no matter how desolate or dead the landscape may look.

Despite the feeling of isolation and barrenness, the narrator is also capable of offering the readers some hopeful moments:

> As they [Glanton and his men] rode out they could hear the hymns of their childhood and they could hear them as they ascended the arroyo and rode up through the low junipers still wet from the rain. The dying man sang with great clarity and intention and the riders setting forth upcountry may have ridden more slowly the longer to hear him for they were of just these qualities themselves. (BM 127)

However subtle, this is one of the most positive and surprising passages in the novel. Even though Glanton's men are ruthless and bloodthirsty, they have preserved the feeling of nostalgia and melancholy, being therefore able to react to the singing, and as a result, riding slowly. The narrator underlines that "they were of *just these* qualities themselves" (my italics) so that the readers can understand that what the riders feel is real and genuine. Equally important is a very delicate image that the narrator gives us when Captain White and his men are in Laredito: "They pass in a doorway a young girl whose beauty becomes the flowers about." (BM 42) Probably most readers aren't able to notice such a short and discrete passage. However, it is another rare moment of purity and beauty: the blending of a young girl's beauty with flowers, which means that the girl is as graceful and fragile as them.

When Billy and his father are in Mr. Sanders' house looking for Mr. Echols's traps, they browse through various jars that contain strange dark liquids and dried viscera. The narrator reflects about the condition of the animals whose entrails stand inside these jars:

> The inward parts of the beast who dreams of man and has so dreamt in running dreams a hundred thousand years and more. Dreams of that malignant lesser god come pale and naked and alien to slaughter all his clan and kin and rout them from their house. A god insatiable whom no ceding could appease nor any measure of blood. The jars stood webbed in dust and the light among them made of the little room with its chemic glass a strange basilica dedicated to a practice as soon to be extinct among the trades of men as the beast to whom it owed its being. (TC 17)

This passage clearly reveals a negative judgment directed to mankind. It tells about a god who, in other words, symbolizes Man, and who destroys the home of countless animals and murders their race. This god is "insatiable" and neither surrendering nor bloodshed is enough to calm his hunger. Besides, this annihilation or extinction is stressed by the comparison to a "strange basilica" which was used for something and that will soon be no longer needed anymore. In addition, this critic resembles Captain White's crew passing by some ruins which were said to be "auguries of the hand of man" (BM 52). All things considered, McCarthy's narrative voice definitely transmits a feeling of disappointment towards the human race and its cruel destructive nature.

One of the times when Billy was received in a house and was fed without being questioned, the narration is the following:

> Riding like a young squire for all his rags. Carrying in his belly the gift of the meal he'd received which both sustained him and laid claim upon him. For the sharing of bread is not such a simple thing nor is its acknowledgment. Whatever thanks be given, however spoke or written down. (TC 165)

Since the hospitality of the Mexican people is as frequent as Billy's wanderings, one is already used to reading such moments as this. However, the narrator cautions the readers to the fact that "the sharing of bread" and its acceptance or "acknowledgement" isn't that straightforward. Although this is a recurrent act throughout *The Crossing*, on the one hand it makes people reveal a part of their personal lives, at their home, because a stranger walks in and eats their food. On the other hand, the stranger will be in some kind of debt to that household, even though no one mentions it, and in spite of all the thanks that he gives. To borrow again the narrator's words, the meal sustains and at the same time *lays claim* upon him, which means that although the rider has fed himself and regained his strength, the meal is in possession of him. To sum up, this passage seems a warning but it is, at the same time, a way of describing the connection that exists between people: it prevails and endures even in a small act as sharing food.

As I have shown, McCarthy's narrator expresses various feelings in regards to different situations: lamentations regarding the innocence and naivety of young boys; the erasure of history and memory; the transgression and destruction of nature by Man; admiration for beauty; hope, even if it is represented in cruel bloodthirsty men; the never-ending *liaison* between human beings; and the effect of even the smallest action that may condemn someone to a specific destiny. These examples may belong to

different moments in one novel, or may belong to different novels. Still, conjoined, they approach the imperfect condition of human kind: darkness, cruelty and hopelessness on the one hand, and genuineness, strong will and good-heartedness on the other hand.

One should not forget *The Crossing's* scene where a Mennonite develops long reflections about the narrator's task:

> The task of the narrator is not an easy one, he said. He appears to be required to choose his tale from among the many that are possible. But of course that is not the case. The case is rather to make many of the one. Always the teller must be at pains to devise against his listener's claim—perhaps spoken, perhaps not—that he has heard the tale before. He sets forth the categories into which the listener will wish to fit the narrative as he hears it. But he understands that the narrative is itself in fact no category but is rather the category of all categories for there is nothing which falls outside its purview. All is telling. Do not doubt it. (TC 158-159)

One of the conclusions to draw from these lines is the fact that the narrator must have various factors in mind in order to build his narrative. One can even think of McCarthy himself trying to construe his novels. Indeed, "…that he has heard the tale before" recalls somehow McCarthy's affirmation that "books are made out of books" (1992). Nonetheless, the narrator is, and must be, always aware that someone has already read or heard something somewhere. Moreover, the narrator "sets forth the categories into which the listener will wish to fit the narrative as he hears it", which, to my mind, means that the narrator offers the readers or listeners many paths to follow, according to their taste and thought-scheme. In turn, this can lead to many different interpretations: "…the language presented in various monologues is overtly philosophical, intentionally vague and evasive, inviting multiple readings and considerations." (Frye 2009: 18) The last lines from this quotation lead us to a much more universal range: all in all, narrating or telling encompasses everything, including our reality and our life. Whether McCarthy's intentions were these, or not, there is an implicit message that says that truth and real life are built upon the act of narrating, because a past event, which we try to preserve in our minds will eventually fade away, as time goes by. Then, we will only have one thing left: the act and *art* of telling.

3. The reader

In face of all these elements concerning the narrative voice in Cormac McCarthy's *Blood Meridian* and *The Crossing*, and having in mind the fact that the

narrator clearly and directly addresses the readers, we are only left with one last question: What is the reader's task?

The reader's role cannot be ignored, since all novels, and art in general, are addressed and directed to a specific audience. A work of art is born, firstly, out of someone's creativity and inspiration. Only when it becomes public does the reception become important. And the creation of art doesn't end there. In fact, Ihab Hassan claims that "[t]ravel requires reading the signs and manners of foreign places; and reading itself requires travel or displacement as the eyes move across the page, as the mind flies beyond every word on the page. Travel is also writing." (1990: 28). Hassan uses the process of association, in which travelling is reading, reading is travelling, and travelling is writing. Reading is, thus, an act of writing or creating art. Therefore, the reader's interpretation can be a kind of continuity of the artistic process. Gretlund affirms that "if the narrator, or McCarthy, is addressing anybody, he is addressing the readers" (2013: 46) and John Cant talks about McCarthy's "ability to make the reader «see»" (2007: 11). Lastly and according to Lydia Cooper, "the novels [of Cormac McCarthy] place the reader in the position of the one who finally bears witness" (2011: 22). Hence, we, readers, are almost directly addressed and spoken to by the narrator; McCarthy has a very special way of presenting certain issues and descriptions to us, so that we can absorb them; and finally we have the role of bearing witness to all the events we read. After being spectators to Cormac McCarthy's blazing narratives, we can create our own perspective and meaning, that has no limits. White considers reading "a kind of visionary event"(2013: 177), which highlights the readers value as regards to literature. McCarthy himself told Oprah Winfrey that "you can draw conclusions about all sorts of things from reading a book". In short, readers have not only the possibility but also the right to create their own world by reading a novel.

To sum up, all the elements explored—the use of small words such as adjectives, adverbs, determiners; the use of larger expressions that indicate comparison or resemblance; and the use of even longer and more complex sentences that express the narrator's own personal point of view—all call out to the reader's role, which in turn helps us all reflect about our own reality, or to borrow Cant's words, " the role of fiction in our lives and … the validity of our lives as fictions." (2007: 210)

CONCLUSION

Our journey in deconstructing *Blood Meridian's* and *The Crossing's* own journeys is coming to an end. It has been concluded that the kid, Billy and Boyd have a special place in each narrative, not just as physical characters who interact with the places and people they encounter, but as symbols of dissent and hope. They make many different geographic crossings, but they also overcome barriers such as the ones which separate minority/authority, man/nature, subjective/objective. On the whole, the character who obtains most control over the landscape and his destiny is John Glanton, who has proved to be a surprisingly insightful and genuine character amongst all the bloodshed, rape and mutilation. Finally, the narrator, who infiltrates in the character's thoughts and who sometimes confounds us readers as to whose perspective we are experiencing, provides a much richer, personal and emotional point of view about many different situations.

We arrive, at last, at the final question: what is Man and how is this history built? First of all, being quest the central performance in both novels, it provides the characters a means to build and develop their own identity. Since we have seen that there are characters who symbolize greater issues in the world of Man—even though they are only fictional characters—, we can assume that they represent real concerns in our own real world, or as Hassan puts it, "Quests are horizons of personal desire, but that horizon also circles the world. Put another way, quests, even in narrower focus, ilumine the concerns of men and women in society; they mirror the human universe." (1990:17) Further, these characters, although of the highest significance, die or end up in a miserable condition. It is often thought that this means the end, or that there is no hope. For instance, Ellis affirms "the final word of the novels remains clear: their [the character's] end is death." (2006: 267) and according to Dudley,

> Although McCarthy's narratives draw heavily on mythic archetypes for their themes and structures, the nature of their quests remain elusive not only to the characters who undertake them, but to readers who seek to understand them. The questing narrative itself operates as an empty vessel, a shell with no discernible center. (2013: 184)

But if Boyd's narrative has taught us something, is that the idea of past events, not what really happened, is what keeps mankind dreaming and what makes it preserve feelings of hope. Death is only a fact in the universe, a natural process. It is the mind of each

human being that builds a new reality, a new history. Therefore Dudley may not be quite right when he affirms that these narratives are "empty vessels". Quite the opposite, they are embedded in meaning—different meanings, as a matter of fact, having in mind the reader's role. Stephen Pastore scornfully observes: "…if there is one attribute that virtually every main character in every McCarthy novel has, it is the inability to know when to stop." (2013: 63) It is a fact that the characters of *Blood Meridian* and *The Crossing* keep going on long journeys of never-ending pain and terror. But every time they ride, they encounter and meet new people, go through different experiences and, sometimes, overcome different kinds of obstacles. Every riding is a new chapter, and even though this conjoined quest of *Blood Meridian* and *The Crossing* is immersed in brutal massacres or painful losses, the characters keep going forward. If these characters can still continue their quest, in such backgrounds, everything is possible and we should retain our hope. Accordingly, Steven Frye, one of the most optimistic critics of Cormac McCarthy, appropriately tells us:

> McCarthy is by no means devoid of hope. On the contrary, if genuine hope is found by honest and thoughtful people, it must be found by acknowledging the harshest realities and the darkest of human circumstances. (2009: 5)

and

> In *Blood Meridian*, questions of meaning and nature and possibility of the divine are addressed, not under conditions of benevolence and repose, but under the observable extremes of human violence and the brutal deterministic forces of the natural world. If true hope exists, it must be found amid these conditions, and if revealed, it is a stalwart and lasting hope indeed. (2009: 67)

Therefore, every seemingly useless detail has its value. *Blood Meridian'*s background of violence and mayhem isn't gratuitous, and *The Crossing*'s repeating and failing quests aren't hopeless, but necessary. McCarthy's provides us, thus, deliberately, an environment that is, all things considered, as merciless as our own reality. And it is in that kind of background that humanities' best qualities are revealed. This idea is made evident by McCarthy himself, who declared:

> There's no such thing as life without bloodshed … I think the notion that the species can be improved in some way, that everyone could live in harmony, is a really dangerous idea. Those who are afflicted with this notion are the first ones to give up

> their souls, their freedom. Your desire that it be that way will enslave you and make your life vacuous. (*New York Times*, 1992)

The fact that this is the opinion of the author himself, it underlines the connection between these fictions and real life. Although the books used in this thesis are magnificent poetic fictions with a striking and unusual outcome, they also make us reflect about our own place in the world in regard to issues such as human relationships, war, religion and morality. What's more, they are able to demonstrate that the world isn't easily separated in black and white, and that even the most scrupulous man is more insightful and sensitive than he appears to be. In fact, the role of literature is this selfsame ability of making the readers develop a critical spirit and experience all kinds of worlds: "More than ever we have come to see literature as a powerful force piercing boundaries, linking human experiences, and opening worlds of beauty and pain that had been hidden from us." (Lauter, 2010: 4)

Above all, McCarthy stresses the idea of unity, as we attentively read, for instance, the anecdotes or theories that Billy listens throughout his quest, which imply that the fate of men is intertwined in a narrative or story that encompasses everything. Another example is the kid's enigmatic journey that is traced by the card "quatro de copas", offering a mystical premonition of his role and destiny in the plot, as the one who is merciful and that refuses to be manipulated. To this end, Frye states that "individual lives, all of which have a narrative trajectory, converge in a kind of mystical synthesis in the matrix, the one tale, from which individuals find meaning both existentially in a given moment and in history broadly conceived." and that "History then is in a sense a grand «narrative», a kind of integrated and ordered story." (2007: 53).

The second part of this thesis' title, "history of man", is therefore found in each character's different path, their attempt at following their own will and in their ability of restoring hope. Even the notion of landscape contributes to the history of man. Landscape is a synonym for destiny, and one of the changing factors is how the characters interact with it, if they control it or are controlled, and how this landscape influences each quest. Finally, we should not forget the narrator himself, who although not participating physically in the plot, is a dynamic observer, and whose personal comments offer a different perspective on each situation. History of Man is, thus, shaped by every man's quest in the world, by their obstacles, failures and victories, and

by the impact they leave when they are gone. In face of Rothfork's statement "There is, however, no similar agreement about his [McCarthy's] message or about what his novels illustrate" (Rothfork 2006: 201), it is a fact that each person creates his own interpretation, but one of the themes in McCarthy's novels that can't be ignored is the unity of men and their creation of history through their own desires, perceptions and memories.

To conclude, I would like to use another of Stephen Pastore's statements about *Blood Meridian:*

> I'm afraid that as much as I enjoy *Blood Meridian* and its author's amazing facility with phrasing and rhythms (although the profusion of metaphor and pseudo sermon-on-the-mount rantings can be ridiculous), it simply lacks a raison d'etre. If the world is as horrible and irredeemably violent and hopeless as McCarthy says it is, why write about it? It is McCarthy himself who proves the falsity of the underlying themes of his book. He is a character in his own novel who unknowingly proffers an alert reader that *Blood Meridian* might be second-rate. (2013: 53)

As I have shown, the backgrounds in *Blood Meridian* and *The Crossing* are necessary in order to call attention to very small details—which otherwise would have been disregarded—and that were explored in this thesis. These two novels' *raison d'être*, in specific, is shaped by countless ridings, dead-end situations, surprising *liaisons* and unforgettable outcomes. So, why not write about it?

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