

The Philosophy of Violent Characters: A Look at Cormac McCarthy's Judge and Chigurh

by

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This thesis was prepared under the direction of the candidate's thesis advisor, Dr. Andrew Furman, Department of English, and has been approved by all members of the supervisory committee. It was submitted to the faculty of the Dorothy F. Schmidt College of Arts and Letters and was accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

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Abstract

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This thesis paper is an in-depth look at two of Cormac McCarthy's novels: *Blood Meridian* and *No Country for Old Men*, and more specifically, the villains of each story seen from a level of violence paired with philosophy. The dialogue and actions of Judge Holden and Anton Chigurh hold precedent over the novels, storylines, and other characters so much that I place a greater importance on the philosophies and actionable scenes without emphasis from outside ideals or quasi-religious sects. By looking at dialogue and philosophy, previous comparisons to both works never hold the characteristics of each villain as the centerpiece for discussion. Without the reliance of outside precepts, the Judge and Chigurh function as essential placeholders in their novels. Aspects relating to violence become the result of actions proven by speech. Consequently, the Judge and Chigurh are greater than other villains that I explore in detail with this work. I can only hope this paper sheds light on the significance of both characters.

The Philosophy of Violence: A Look at Cormac McCarthy Judge and Chigurh

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Introduction

“Who or what he was no one knew but a cooler blooded villain never went unhung...”— Chamberlain.

“You’re asking that I make myself vulnerable and that I can never do”—
McCarthy.

In Cormac McCarthy’s novels, *Blood Meridian* and *No Country for Old Men* the main antagonist characters embody a meta-violence where they become something new and multifaceted from their abilities to enact extreme chaotic traits. Hereafter, novel titles are abbreviated with (BM) and (NCFOM). Through violence and philosophy, these novels explore something of a different type of villain. One question becomes, can a novel be based around the violence of a character? In *BM* and *NCFOM*, the reader sees violence from the mindset of Judge Holden and Anton Chigurh. McCarthy’s characters come from a place of determined thought and assurance from an ambiguous underlying order. Their dialogue and speech give unusual depth to their characters where interactions of violence become more than bloodshed, and this significance has meaning beyond the surface level

of barbarism. What the Judge and Chigurh embody is a multi-sided villain that engulfs the stories.

McCarthy's inspiration for Judge Holden comes from an autobiography about the Mexican/American war. The Judge's character is loosely based on Samuel Chamberlain's *My Confessions, Recollections of a Rogue*. A man named Judge Holden was a real-life character in his autobiographical journey, and the Judge was developed from Chamberlain's account of his character. Chamberlain describes the Judge with: "His desires was blood and women, and terrible stories were circulated in camp of horrid crimes committed by him..." (Chamberlain 271). Similarly, in *NCFOM*, Chigurh encompasses many similarities to the Judge in terms of actionable violence and character traits marking his philosophy around murder and existence. Aspects of Chamberlain's Holden connects to McCarthy's characters on a timeline whereby the real-life Holden, *BM*'s Judge, and Chigurh all confront the realities of war and chaos. The dialogues and actions become a folkloric hallmark for the overall theme of the story. What each villain represents is something distinct from traditional "bad guys" in literature. The importance of philosophy around violence/evil echoes throughout each story. In this paper, I hope to show a different side to Cormac McCarthy's antagonists where the importance of a philosophy inside violence is their key feature. The portrayal of antagonists creates the placeholder to be greater than their storylines, and emphasis on character intelligence gives meaning to their actions creating a super villain.

In *BM* and *NCFOM*, the amount of violence seems ubiquitous and excessive. Each scene jumps from one chaotic circumstance to the next, and in most cases, the amount of violence overwhelms the reader. In *BM*, where the audience could wonder what McCarthy

is doing, but also why do these two characters stand apart from all other minor characters? McCarthy uses dialogue to give a deeper meaning to the chaos, and the writing gives the characters a morality and reasoning for their heinous acts where the irrationality of actions becomes explained through dialogue. As a result, the novels become constructed around barbarous scenes. The Judge and Chigurh are representations of these ideas and actions with a toggling between the violent acts and the dialogue. The theme of violence is unavoidably connected when seeing the common thread between characters and novels, whereby dialogue becomes a relief between character traits and actions. The uniqueness of McCarthy's writing becomes a mega representation between brutal violence and specific philosophical explanations of character ideals.

Characters such as Herman Melville's Captain Ahab and Cormac McCarthy's Cornelius Suttree are compared to the Judge and Chigurh in ambiguous ways that reflect McCarthy's works of *BM* and *NCFOM*. Additionally, the storyline and setting of McCarthy's *The Crossing* relates to these novels with a similar negative sentiment. In character and philosophy, aspects of McCarthy's works are comparable to other works because his ideas around chaos and violence are synonymous with human nature. The relationships from Søren Kierkegaard's *Fear and Trembling*, and the biblical story of Abraham explore modalities of violence in *BM* and *NCFOM*. As a result, many other works compare to the Judge and Chigurh in that they are greater and more significant than the average villain.

Violent Character Spaces

The character traits of the Judge and Chigurh surpass everything in their stories. In order to create such massive characters, a certain amount of space is required to accommodate settings, secondary characters, and audience. In *BM*'s epigraph, McCarthy quotes the *Yuma Daily Sun*: "...a 300,000-year-old fossil skull found in the same region earlier shows evidence of having been scalped." This shows the eternal recurrence of violence starts before the story begins creating that space. The progression of the storyline in terms of the specified antagonist introduction creates a gap for the reader, and the characters become unique in that McCarthy brings them into the novel with an understanding of violence.

Introducing them without the proper setting would shock the audience, and both novels share a bleakness with intense violent circumstances before McCarthy begins to describe their power. The skeleton story in *BM* and *NCFOM* is brought further into detail and shape from McCarthy's supreme antagonists. The dialogue and subsequent philosophy separate the main villains from the other characters. In Slavoj Žižek's book titled *The Parallax View*, he writes about the idea of space being seen from different angles of thought inside text or even art. Žižek shows this between a painting and its frame: "The pivotal content of the painting is not communicated in its visible part, but located in this dislocation of the two frames, in the gap that separates them" (29). The gap between painting and frame exemplifies the same reasoning for creating a similar space for McCarthy's

villains. Philosophy becomes one way to create that space. Without the ideals from the Judge and Chigurh, the novels represent more in the genre of horror than a western which causes an amalgamation of both by including philosophical depth.

If you introduced the Judge and Chigurh without a precursor to later examples, the novels would become unbalanced. Žižek writes: “Once introduced, the gap between reality and appearance is thus immediately complicated, reflected-into-itself: once we get a glimpse, through the Frame, of the Other Dimension, reality itself turns into appearance” (29). Similarly, once we see the importance of the Judge and Chigurh inside their stories or “frames” the story begins to feel authenticated or in unison. Without the spacing, the story and character would be disorganized. Additionally, before the Judge and Chigurh reach full potential, their characters are introduced into a setting of lawlessness against other characters like Llewelyn Moss and the kid. The gap or character space serves that purpose.

Likewise, *NCFOM* starts with Sheriff Bell recounting the arrest that resulted in state execution. The beginning descriptions of violence starts to distance the audience and creates a durability of expectation in relation to antagonist/protagonist characters. The main protagonist in *BM* (the kid) is told from a journey of that exact chaos and violence. The early focus on the boy gives significance to what he represents in storyline space. McCarthy introduces the boy with the loss of his entire family and writes, “He watches, pale and unwashed. He can neither read nor write and in him broods already a taste for mindless violence” (3). Additionally, we see Llewellyn Moss’ discovery of the botched drug deal in *NCFOM*. His monetary circumstances show his temptation towards the drug money. The introductions of unbalanced protagonists exist between the characters and preempts the

novel's association with their villains. The un-homing of characters creates a void or gap to be filled.

The democratic interest of landscape plays into the Judge's ideals about murder. The men are collecting scalps, but for the Judge, the murder takes precedent over the price of their labor. In Diane Luce's article, "The Bedazzled Eye: Cormac McCarthy, José Ortega y Gasset, and Optical Democracy," she writes about McCarthy's use of perception from Gasset's term "Optical Democracy," which shows the biases from the audience viewing artistic works. Luce writes, "The ocular field is homogenous; we do not see one thing clearly and the rest confusedly, for all are submerged in an optical democracy. Nothing possesses a sharp profile; everything is background, confused, almost formless" (66). In *BM*, the term Optical Democracy is used when describing a desert scene after the Judge's account of his ledger book. The term amalgamates humans and inanimate objects linking the Judge's view about humankind to those that he keeps in his book. Although living things are not left out, Holden's ledger book acts at the cost of a human life. McCarthy writes:

The very clarity of these articles belied their familiarity, for the eye predicates the whole on some feature or part and here was nothing more luminous than another and nothing more enshadowed and in the optical democracy of such landscapes all preference is made whimsical and a man and a rock become endowed with unguessed kinships. (258-9)

However, Luce goes away from setting and art to include the discrepancies. She describes where the Judge would stand with, "... , then the ability to distinguish between good and evil is compromised" (Luce 68). The onus being the Judge's thoughts about their

existence, and his example of expunging all things via ledger book is one area of his biases. Optical democracy is paired with violence in that Holden's philosophy includes the leveling importance between the gang's actions and what is deemed righteous. Žižek's gap reinforces Luce's ideas around the displacement of a scene from observational placement. The frame and painting may not exist in a two-dimensional plane, and as the line-of-sight changes with position, so does the field of perception. The same becomes true for the philosophy and violence of the villain. What is optical democracy or parallax gap exists only in their current states of chaos that keeps violence as an unfocused background (or the book itself) which begets the need for the philosophy.

While in the Judge and Chigurh's sharpness, the settings and backgrounds become blurred, and yet still the space must be created for their characters. This gives an aura to antagonist characters, and it sets them into an environment where their traits are held above the already desolate circumstances. The pre-violent setting makes them resilient where the audience realizes their importance, and the setting matches the villain. For example, in *BM*, we have a description of a kid who has experienced nothing but violence and degradation, but the boy having seen the Judge previously develops a mysteriousness about the Judge.

In Claudio Murgia's book titled, *(Beyond) Posthuman Violence, Epic Rewriting of Ethics in the Contemporary Novel*, he showcases the Judge and kid as acting witnesses to their stories in *BM*. Murgia cites Harold Bloom regarding the kid as an elliptical character that fades in and out of the story: "Bloom, however, appears to be underestimating the fact that McCarthy starts the novel with the kid, giving the reader all the information she needs, making of the kid's story a frame in which the Glanton gang's story sits" (40). Murgia is correct in that during specific scenes the boy seems to fade away, especially those with

violence. The reader understands they are participating, but the absence of his descriptive actions shows the importance of including his meager beginnings. This also places the emphasis of scenes where the Judge and kid are watching one another. Murgia writes, “This fading out of the kid makes of him the perfect elliptical character, elusive not because cryptic, but because he has a tendency to disappear from the scene” (40). Murgia sees them as acting witnesses to their stories, but also in how they physically watch one another. The boy’s silence gives way to Holden’s overarching speeches.

In contrast, the Judge’s character space, according to Murgia, is used to create mysteriousness as non-elliptical. He writes, “To increase the mythical status of the Judge, McCarthy takes him outside time and space. Holden in fact seems not to age and even more than the kid, he is a man without origin...” (Murgia 38). I would argue that while his history is more vague, another reason for McCarthy’s sparseness in writing is to create the necessary space for such a violent character to exist. Even the boy’s background is minimal, but what the reader learns is a vulnerability that Holden does not possess, but both the kid and Holden have a placeholder with the audience. Murgia writes, “The kid, in other words, always leaves a trace of himself in the mind of the reader,” and yet, I would argue the audience is always trying to understand the Judge more (34).

Other villains are never distanced enough from the storyline or characters because they do not possess a philosophy of singularity like Holden and Chigurh. Switching between characters signifies the importance of a villain that must include a certain amount of space for the novel to work. We also see this requirement of space in *NCFOM* with Chigurh’s dialogue. If the protagonists are not learning from their rivals (through dialogue)

then the emphasis can be subjectively placed on any willing character. The villains need quiet minor characters to prove their theories.

Before joining Glanton's men, the boy witnesses the gang traveling through a Mexican town. The Judge stands apart from the barbarous men when he looks at the boy and seems to recognize him. The brutishness of the gang juxtaposes Holden's attention to the kid, which foreshadows their interactions, but it signifies the extent of their following and what's to come:

...and they saw one day a pack of viciouslooking humans mounted on unshod Indian ponies riding half drunk through the streets, bearded, barbarous, clad in the skins of animals stitched up with thews and armed with weapons of every description, revolvers of enormous weight and bowieknives the size of claymores and short twobarreled rifles with bores you could stick your thumbs in and the trappings of their horses fashioned out of human skin and their bridles woven up from human hair and decorated with human teeth and the riders wearing scapulars or necklaces of dried and blackened human ears and the horses rawlooking and wild in the eye and their teeth barred like feral dogs and riding also in the company a number of halfnaked savages reeling in the saddle, dangerous, filthy, brutal, the whole like a visitation from some heathen land where they and others like them fed on human flesh. (McCarthy 82)

A similar introduction of violence occurs in *NCFOM* through the botched drug deal. Chigurh's psychopathic ways are introduced with the strangulation of a police officer, and Moss encounters a scene with multiple dead bodies in the desert. Moss says this to himself when searching the scene, "Nothin wounded goes uphill, he said. It just dont happen"

(McCarthy 16). The emphasis is on the actions of Moss, and his discovery of a large sum of money, yet Chigurh rises up as something darker than the mass casualty scene in the desert. This becomes the moment where McCarthy places emphasis on a villain like Chigurh. In Lydia R. Cooper's book, *No More Heroes, Narrative Perspective And Morality In Cormac McCarthy*, she talks about characterizations of violence in relation to setting: "Certainly the violence in *No Country for Old Men* is contextually relevant. But even more importantly, ... examining universal human crises in the location and in the lore of a specific and deeply troubled region" (Cooper 128). The region and the scene have everything to do with Moss taking the money; but more importantly, it sets the novel with a character whose violence takes a more philosophical ideal that transcends the desert scene and the stolen money: it becomes a villain chasing setting or vice versa. McCarthy's writing critiques the villain because Moss represents the non-psychopathic individual despite his willingness of risk. What Cooper shows as a love and troubled region becomes the place where a character of Chigurh's violent status aggregates the importance of setting and villain. Thus, the spaces where Chigurh and Holden travel, the level of chaos fluctuates between low dialogic scenes and extreme physical fighting.

McCarthy creates psychopathic killers that surpass the chaotic scenes they encounter because of their ideals. Character conflict becomes internal for the audience and understanding what the Judge and Chigurh are thinking. In NCFOM, Bell's thoughts about the indifference from the young man on his execution preempts the dialogue. There is a philosophical distance created between the characters but also the audience. This sets the example that he will begin to encounter from Chigurh. Bell states, and the question can be continually asked by audience and characters alike, "What do you say to a man by his own

admission has no soul?” (McCarthy 2). Cooper mentions the flattening of scenes to establish a quasi-hope, particularly from Bell’s monologues. “By flattening the narrative into a series of prescribed events, McCarthy restricts the possibilities to those ontological questions at the heart of the novel, questions about identity formation and the critical possibility of hope...” (Cooper 131). The progression of scenes for Bell provides a rare cathartic effect in the novel ending in retirement. Opposingly, Chigurh continues after the car accident suggesting his series of events is ongoing, whereas Bell’s retirement by the novel’s end further signals a retreat showing a complete absence of retribution. Any hope inside the stories is associated with survival, and in most cases, the flattening of scenes expresses the degradation of protagonist reality not the villains.

There is a mimesis between Chigurh and the rest of the story by the flattening of scenes bringing together character interactions, albeit even through dialogue and thought. Bell’s morals begin to conflict with the way McCarthy writes his villains, “I thought I’d never seen a person like that and it got me wonderin if maybe he was some new kind” (McCarthy 1). Chigurh and the Judge are superior antagonists, and their violence carries the storyline further because they are exactly what Bell is worried about—they are of a new kind. The Judge in *BM* is distanced from the kid, which explains why McCarthy has them glancing at each other throughout. Places where their characters interact or touch becomes significant scenes of change for the audience, and this shows the importance of McCarthy’s villains. Chigurh and the Judge are so powerful that they reflect onto the settings what they are in terms of violence.

What McCarthy includes as his main antagonist characters puts each novel in connection with the minor characters such that what the Judge and Chigurh represent

becomes a violent puzzle piece holding the shape of the novel. Without the Judge or Chigurh, the novels themselves become an empty shell of a storyline. We see this with Bell's understanding of the criminal actions in his town, and alongside questioning his uncle Ellis about his family's history in law enforcement. His uncle Ellis (a former police officer) was shot in the line of duty resulting in him being disabled. McCarthy gives Bell no reprieve when Ellis states that he is no longer upset at the criminal responsible. The cycle of violence reinforces the figure of the Judge and Chigurh. The more violent actions occur; the emphasis on violent philosophy bolsters their behaviors and powers the tragedies that accumulates for the better characters. The space is then shown from the perspective of protagonists.

What the settings and minor characters do acts in accordance with the philosophy and dialogue. What is explained by action or via speech is showing the audience the latent power of the Judge and Chigurh. The novels, being violent, require a character with some reasoning powers to define why. Without this, the stories are grotesque and confusing to the reader. The audience struggles much like Bell and the silent kid in terms of their character descent or growth, and the unharmonious actions use antagonist dialogue to "flesh-out" villains, thereby making his novels complete. The speeches given by Holden and Chigurh add to their mystery, and yet all other characters must deal with what is said along with the audience. The accounting for the protagonists comes from the growth or understanding of the villains. This analyzes violence in a humanistic way with a total absence of any Deus ex machina or peaceful resolution.

Ledger Books and Detail Orientation

With Chigurh in *NCFOM*, his character's attention to detail is shown through actions based on or related to violence. Comparable to the Judge, he has the same intellectual "otherness" of violence, but it is more subtle and different due to circumstances and setting. McCarthy writes in what seems like a vulnerability in Chigurh's character, but it only highlights his willingness to survive. When the protagonist (Moss) and Chigurh finally meet face to face, both men are wounded. The assumed vulnerability of Moss is highlighted to Chigurh dealing with what appears as only an inconvenience. Moss shoots Chigurh in the thigh with his improvised shotgun while he is wounded in his torso. Moss's life is saved at the hospital, but Chigurh is left to perform surgery on himself, let alone, find the medical supplies to even treat a gunshot wound. This acts as a test of Chigurh's intellectual characterization to his philosophy but from the interpretation of the reader. His wound signifies: How is Chigurh going to handle this situation now? Much like his conversations about coins and bullets, his wound travels in accordance with fortune, and now he has to deal with repairing his injury.

While these scenes are devoid of apparent philosophical dialogue, the actions of the characters' chaotic mindset of violence translate directly into characteristics associated

with their speech during and carrying through the novel. Some critics account Chigurh as a lesser version or even a minor continuation of the Judge mostly because his philosophies and circumstances are less intricate. Jay Ellis in *Fetish and Collapse in No Country for Old Men*, discusses Chigurh's basic characteristics, and he thinks of him as more of a basic character opposed to the Judge. Ellis writes, "He is himself a fetish of a villain, boiled down to a few villainish characteristics." (137). Žižek mentions the conditions of fetishizing a figure based upon preconceived notions and actions. He writes, "...the point, however, is that the 'fetishist illusion' which sustains our veneration of a king has in itself a performative dimension—the very unity of our state, that which the king 'embodies,' actualizes itself only in the person of a king" (Žižek 108). Chigurh's better use of technology opposes the Judge as it relates to setting and time: "And ultimately, Chigurh's dependence on technology (not only weaponry, but on medicines, for instance, or on a telephone bill to track his victims) increases the distance between him and Holden" (Ellis 137). It is not that Chigurh is more resourceful than the Judge, but both characters fulfill the necessities of driving the storyline. For example, the Judge's dialogue comes to the Glanton gang, while Chigurh has a smaller audience of just his victims.

What the characters need to influence directs their actions, and McCarthy creates his villains in the sense of necessity for the surrounding storyline and setting. Chigurh in a separate way actually does what he embodies in *NCFOM*. While his actions are less than the Judge, he is still viewed in a manner people naturally respect as that of a violent king. In *BM*, the Judge also proves his aura with the ability to make gunpowder in the mountains. The quiet moments, along with opposing character perspectives, institute a provable void for McCarthy's villains.

Steven Frye in *Understanding Cormac McCarthy* talks about the blending of violence and philosophy in the novel concerning the Judge's monologues. Frye writes, "Each character becomes an interlocutor in a deadly verbal battle, one in which ethics and their absence frame the interchange, and even death stands pale against the potential decimation of human souls" (70). The Judge and the kid both escape towards the end of the novel where they again face a verbal battle against each other. The kid is incarcerated, and Holden confronts him with: "You came forward, he said, to take part in a work. But you were a witness against yourself. You sat in judgements on your own deeds. You put your own allowances before the judgements of history and you broke with the body of which you were pledged..." (McCarthy 319). Accusations are made against the boy, but he resists the temptation to acquiesce to him. Frye also mentions the philosophical force of the Judge as a balance between the metaphysical and the evilness. "...He represents, connotes, even manifests a mysterious force beyond the physical world, a force that ranks as the primary energy that drives the engine of material nature" (Frye 78-9). The ability of each character to willfully manipulate their circumstances acts as an actionable philosophy, not concerning survival, but with furthering their concepts around violent actions.

McCarthy gives the Judge and Chigurh intricate dialogue related to violent acts as a distinct example of precision and thought. As I have mentioned earlier about the philosophy of violence guiding their characters and storyline, one aspect of this is with Chigurh's careful attention to details concerning murder, and the Judge's ledger book of things he encounters during his travels. In *BM*, the gang camps in a valley of ancient ruins, and the Judge begins to search for artifacts that he sketches into a ledger book. "This the judge sketched in profile and in perspective, citing the dimensions in his neat script, making

marginal notes” (McCarthy 146). The audience sees the meticulousness of the Judge’s character, but he is asked by Webster, a fellow rider, about the purpose of the notebook to which McCarthy writes, “...and the judge smiled and said that it was his intention to expunge them from the memory of man” (147).

Their conversation turns more philosophical, and the Judge remarks about what is randomly drawn/sketched. Webster declines his likeness being sketched in any book. The Judge replies, “Whether in my book or not, every man is tabernacled in every other and he in exchange and so on in an endless complexity of being and witness to the uttermost edge of the world” (McCarthy 147). There is a dichotomy between Holden’s sketching and evil taking place in the novel. The sketching and documenting of artifacts requires a degree of intimacy and care, so much that these scenes describe the Judge as a type of artist but of obvious evil intent. The Judge’s intelligence becomes counterpart to the way in which he manipulates and fights. In the jail scene, he asks to physically touch the boy: “He reached through the bars. Come here, he said. Let me touch you” (McCarthy 319). The kid refuses his dialogue advance because later, the reader understands the Judge wants to murder the boy.

The physical aspects of the Judge’s book acts as a physical tool. Steven Shaviro’s article recounts the purpose of this violent sketching in, “The Very Life of Darkness A Reading of *Blood Meridian*,” Shaviro writes about this scene with the same thoughts about violence. He writes, “But the more that is drawn or written and that hence becomes known, the more that is thereby subjected, not to human agency or adjudication, but to ‘war,’ whose stake is at once the game and the authority and the justification” (Shaviro 155). The ledger book becomes a philosophical prop; consequently, the Judge uses the book as an example

of his destructive ideals. The sketching becomes his own witness (like keeping a book of numbers or facts) showing what Holden thinks. The ledger becomes an account of the men, and a physical reference of his actions and artistry.

The Judge thinks that all living things should be kept in his ledger and taken from the physical world. This makes the Judge in the form of a God-like artist, but also the importance of being the person in control of such a book. What scares Webster is the violence associated with the finiteness of his ledger book or a certitude of death. The Judge speaks about a man (who was painted by him) who went to the mountains and buried the painting to calm his fears. Webster's concern is real, and the Judge's philosophy of what is inside his ledger is of his control, and his choice to rid the world of. The expunging is the violent gerund associated with his point. The drawing and notetaking are manifestations of his character that relate to a greater evil such that he can eradicate things from the world. The sketching of objects does not fit with the traveling scalp hunters in Mexico, yet McCarthy's Judge has those capabilities that defines him to the gang and audience. It is the meticulousness of keeping a ledger book given their circumstances that adds to him, and the fact of Holden continuing with the ledger in terms of being the only character able to create and destroy such things.

In *NCFOM*, Chigurh acts in a less creative but more physically meticulous way. This is shown in the style McCarthy includes when Chigurh is going to kill another character in the story. "He's a peculiar man. You could even say he has principles. Principles that transcend money or drugs or anything like that" (McCarthy 153). Chigurh becomes methodical and precise when he is in that violent state of mind. For example, after he locates the stolen money, he goes to murder the rival drug cartel members staying at the

motel. Before he makes his attempt, Chigurh maps out his motel room. McCarthy writes, “He took the measure of the room and looked to see where everything was. He measured where the lightswitches were. Then he stood in the room taking it all in once again” (McCarthy 103). The intricacies of his plan are premeditated; likewise, so are his philosophies with the conversations of his victims. Chigurh’s actions become directed to his victim’s questions where sparse but meditated replies are given to explain his actions.

The person that measures a hotel room layout is also the same villain that McCarthy gives a violent moral code. The minute details are always in a relationship to destruction which adds to their evil motif. Ellis mentions Chigurh as a counterpart of the Judge, “Chigurh can extend his thin line of philosophical argument regarding free will so as to extend Holden’s (and McCarthy’s) larger arguments on this” (137). Chigurh may not be philosophizing about a ledger book, but he is in control of his violent actions. When searching for penicillin, “He couldn’t find it but he found tetracycline and sulfa” (McCarthy 163). Chigurh shows resourcefulness and intelligence. What the Judge wants to prevent the world from having is also what Chigurh wants to achieve with control and pursuit to some evil purpose. Each comparison of the Judge and Chigurh is an active philosophy that bends towards violence; in fact, each character’s purpose is derived from such actions so that the audience has no question about what their purpose is inside these stories. The Judge and Chigurh are so intrinsically violent that instead of comparison, they stand alone in their respective stories. It becomes less about the result and more about their reasoning philosophies for their actions.

The Judge says this regarding his ledger book, “Only nature can enslave man and only when the existence of each last entity is routed out and made to stand naked before

him will he be properly suzerain of the earth” (McCarthy 207). Holden is questioned about the meaning of “suzerain” which relates to his desire to control the world. However, nature enslaving man relates to the literal combination of Holden concocting gunpowder from natural elements, and his foreshadowing of men’s desires for war and violence. What he deems as enslaving is exactly what he ushers into the novel—unremitted violence against everything and everyone. Holden tells the men, “The man who believes that the secrets of the world are forever hidden lives in mystery and fear. Superstition will drag him down. The rain will erode the deeds of his life” (McCarthy 208). The rain eroding the fearful individual enlightens his thoughts of belief where he can manipulate elements of his world, so that he becomes a ubiquitous villain character. The only acceptable superstition is one that he gives through what he understands about their existence. McCarthy proves this with no character that significantly challenges the Judge and Chigurh. Consequently, the ledger book and self-surgery constitutes a level of fear and detail from the protagonist characters in that through expression of the villains we see the same level of violent philosophy.

Gnostic Visions and Enlightenment

The amount of horror and violence lends comparisons of Gnosticism between *BM* and *NCFOM*. Gnosticism as an underlying evil order to the world in *BM* and *NCFOM* relates to the desolate and unremitting consequences of setting and character. *BM*, more so than *NCFOM*, lacks a character that produces any optimistic actions whereby even the Judge's prophecies end in a futile result. Some critics argue the kid fulfills a positive role with his defiance of the Judge. I would argue that while Gnosticism relates a religious component to each story, the major characters themselves are powerful enough to surpass any religious ideal from their actions of violence. In short, if violence were a religion onto itself, the Judge and Chigurh would ascribe to such precepts where both stories would surpass any Gnostic claims.

In Steven Frye's *Cambridge Companion to Cormac McCarthy*, Frye relates Gnosticism to the Judge and his plethora of evil: "Apprehension of the immaterial...is achieved only through *gnosis*, the experience or knowledge of God. Evil, then, is the dominant force in the world," in addition to, "But Gnostic figurations are most fully observable in *Blood Meridian* through the character of Judge Holden" (Frye 5-6). The immaterial Frye speaks about would be the dialogue in philosophy both novels employ, and the questions audiences must ask is how, but more importantly, why? If Chigurh and

Holden did not exist inside the novels, the component of evil and Gnosticism would not pervade their world. Readers could assume other characters would fulfill their place, but the minor characters give the audience perspective to the peculiarity of the Judge and Chigurh.

Petra Mundik writes about Gnostic themes as relating to *BM* in her book: *A Bloody and Barbarous God, The Metaphysics of Cormac McCarthy*. she explains the underlying theme of evil. “In *the Gnostic Religion*, Hans Jonas explains that according to the Gnostic cosmology, the entire manifest cosmos ‘is the creation not of God but of some inferior principle’ known as the *demiurge*” (Mundik 3). Mundik’s definition fits into *BM* and *NCFOM*, however the importance McCarthy places onto the Judge and Chigurh is beyond order, and their involvement in the storyline with the philosophy of violence and character resiliency makes them somehow greater than any religious sect. For example, both characters have little to no change through their storylines. Even though Chigurh is wounded twice, he seems to become more of his character after both injuries. Chigurh and the Judge are impervious to the actions of the other characters. Because no emotional changes have been brought about, the audience would assume that the characters themselves have not evolved nor regressed other than into something more evil or meta evil.

In one scene, Chigurh captures an assassin hired to murder him (Carson Wells), and Chigurh explains undue risk taking at the beginning of the story. “...I was pulled over by a sheriff’s deputy outside of Sonora Texas and I let him take me into town in handcuffs. I’m not sure why I did this but I think I wanted to see if I could exercise myself by an act of will” (McCarthy 174-5). Earlier Chigurh confesses that getting shot changed him:

“Getting hurt changed me, he said. Changed my perspective. I’ve moved on, in a way” (McCarthy 173). Any character growth has not changed his character to assume Gnostic fate was underlying his escape instead; Chigurh does enact his will and continues committing murders by his own volition of philosophy. If underneath everything lies the demiurge, then reasoning or speaking to other characters becomes pointless because no other outcome should work in the victim’s favor. However, the store clerk does survive his encounter with Chigurh, alongside Chigurh describing his willing arrest as vanity, and such manipulation of the scenario shows control over the outcome at the police station. The audience sees the eventuality of choices and outcomes, but what stays constant is dialogue and violence. Chigurh’s actions test his own logic that makes him greater than any other character in *NCFOM*.

In *BM*, the Judge remains unattached to any religious sect. Gnosticism aside, the Judge speaks with unapologetic reasoning behind his actions and the Glanton Gang. Mundik quotes this Gnostic vision with Leo Daugherty’s article on *BM*, “Daugherty points out that while ‘most thoughtful people have looked at the world they lived in and asked, How did evil get into it?, the Gnostics have looked at the world and asked, How did good get into it?’” (Mundik 4). The answer to Daugherty’s question would be Judge Holden and Anton Chigurh, in addition to each villain’s unawareness of neither good nor bad in existence. They are not powerful enough to introduce evil into existence, yet they are ambiguous enough to represent something larger than what their stories portray. It is possible they are above any religiosity that typecasts a specific ideal—good or bad—onto their stories.

Mundik focuses on the Gnostic theme in *BM* in her chapter titled, “*Terra Damната*”, *The Anticosmic Mysticism of Blood Meridian*: “Perhaps the most shocking aspect of *Blood Meridian* is that the narrative voice continually reminds the reader that there is nothing unique about the behavior of the Glanton gang,” and while that is correct, this point signifies the importance of the Judge against any specific sect. The gang and the Judge work in a particularly violent symbiosis where they act in a group, but there is no empathy for helping another member of the gang, including the Judge (Mundik 17).

A specific example of this is the gang’s ability to leave behind wounded men, and it becomes a signaling point for resistance from the kid. McCarthy writes dialogue between the kid and Shelby. He shatters his hip while fighting and must be left to fend for himself: “Will you leave me a gun? You know I caint leave you no gun. You’re no better than him. Are you? The kid didnt answer back” (217). Shelby is concerned Glanton is going to come back and murder him, but his real worry should be more on the Judge because of his association with the kid and any empathy he has gained from that moment.

It is also worth noting, in a Gnostic realm, Shelby tried to take the boy’s gun from his belt for which the reader could assume he would have shot the kid for trying to help. From a Gnostic perspective, Shelby trying to take his gun represents the demiurge inside *BM*, but McCarthy describes him crying. Shelby’s fate is decided, and yet there is understanding of his actions, or a fear of dying. Regardless, his crying, while minimal, shows a resignation that things could have existed differently for him either in regret or in remorse. That moment stands out against any Gnostic example by the acknowledgment that Shelby’s story could have been different, or that any peace could exist inside the novel.

Another Gnostic example Mundik points to relates with the gang. “The depraved men of Glanton’s gang, utterly devoid of spiritual or even moral values, seem to embrace such evil as their natural element” (Mundik 23). Glanton’s gang and the surrounding scenes show a broad expanse of evil. The landscape and the characters all show a desolation in *BM* and *NCFOM* that fits a Gnostic viewpoint. One scene with the kid and a hermit expresses this idea, “The Gnostic idea of creation being flawed is discussed through the words of the hermit: ‘God made this world,’ he announces, ‘but he didn’t make it to suit everybody did he?’” (Mundik 23). The hermit’s conversation sets the Judge’s power later, and what the kid witnesses is the hardness of his reality where no other character can overcome the Judge.

The hermit’s words and Sheriff Bell’s self-examination are congruent in assessing the amount of evil that one world can tolerate. Bell continually struggles with the idea of morality and a righteous type of evil that confuses him, whereas the hermit, along with other parables, speaks his truth about the underlying harshness of *BM*’s world. Both characters act as supreme evil individuals; as a result, Mundik relates Buddhism to facilitate the quality of dialogue Chigurh and Holden have that carries throughout McCarthy’s writing. “In both Buddhist and Gnostic traditions, insight into the nature of the world involves the realization that earthly existence is characterized by illusion and impermanence” (Mundik 27). This realization, while accurate, is one factor Chigurh and Holden explain to their co-characters. Chigurh is alone, and his dialogue reads in a negative Buddhist ideal because of complacency in the belief there is no problem he cannot overcome. While listening to his victims’ arguments, Chigurh says, “You can say that things could have turned out differently. That they could have been some other way. But

what does that mean?” (McCarthy 260). Chigurh’s confidence becomes advantageous where he overpowers the minor characters in both speech and action, and yet he quizzically responds to their pleas in that he cannot understand their reluctance to accept his ideals.

The Buddhist and Gnostic characterizations fit the outline of a fated determined outcome, “Judge Holden seems to articulate this Buddhist-Gnostic vision of illusory and sinister nature of the world...” (Mundik 28). Scenes where Holden is speaking to the gang as a whole showcase his idea of some cosmic reality with a violent laded core. “Thus, by comparing the world to a ‘fevered dream,’ the judge is inadvertently pointing to the existence of an Absolute Reality that transcends the illusions and deceptions of the manifest cosmos” (Mundik 30).

The concept of suffering, what possibly Buddhism is trying to alleviate but Gnosticism includes is underneath the veil of existence on a basic level, “Both the Gnostics and the Buddhists taught that suffering lies at the very core of undesirable state that is existence, but being soteriologically focused, both systems offered a way out” (Mundik 26). Holden and Chigurh accept both sides of existence, yet what the Judge and Chigurh must admit is that there are no “ways out” from dying of violent actions. The suffering cannot be avoided or abolished. Assuming that Holden can be killed, having a peaceful death is at odds with the world Chigurh exists in, and McCarthy references the arbitrariness of the car accident because Chigurh is not going to repent or ask forgiveness of his world. For example, McCarthy writes, “Chigurh never wore a seatbelt...” which aligns with his indifference at violence but more importantly dying (260). Chigurh is more of a player in that game opposed to Holden, yet he understands the world better. Mundik writes, “In other words, if human beings were to understand the nature of the dance—that is, the nature of

the cosmos as the Gnostics saw it—they might refuse to participate in existence” (45). At the end of their stories, the antagonists carry on. However, most of the minor characters either die, or exist in a lost state such as Sheriff Bell where his retirement acts as forfeit against Chigurh. The side of evil in these works are beyond a Gnostic order, and as Chigurh and the Judge dominate, the singularity of their characters makes any organized ideal difficult to implement because it becomes greater than evil and more like a natural order.

McCarthy’s Southern works show instances that relate to *BM* and *NCFOM*. Lydia Cooper’s chapter titled, “McCarthy, Tennessee, and the Southern Gothic,” outlines McCarthy’s other novels that share a similar thread of fate and evil, but also one that explains the Judge and Chigurh more. Cooper writes:

There is furthermore no simplistic antidote to human evil, only the profound realization of its existence. At the same time, however, realizing that all individuals are alienated, lonely, and corrupted by this pernicious reality permits the reader to experience the elusive grace found in empathy, in creating bonds of understanding and compassion, however impermanent. (50)

What the Judge and Chigurh are in the beginning of Cooper’s quote is the fundamental permanence of evil in specific characters and worlds, however, the grace found in empathy is questionable because the philosophy with dialogue in *BM* and *NCFOM* ends with murder or the foreshadowing of chaotic events. In other words, the violence never stops. Cooper is not referencing those novels, but McCarthy’s other works like *Suttree* and *Child of God* which express violence, but at a smaller rate and without the intellectually demanding characters of Holden and Chigurh.

When you apply Cooper's thoughts about McCarthy's Tennessee novels, the significance of Holden and Chigurh accounts for more power than the blanket Gnostic idea that fits well enough. Additionally, Holden and Chigurh, in a Gnostic or even Buddhist world, are more likely to hold superior positions in places where evil underlies everything, or that violence and murder are accessible as the elimination of suffering. The desolation is gone, not from the characters but from the settings and instances of evil. McCarthy's Tennessee works are softer in terms of places and minor characters, inversely *BM* and *NCFOM* express harsh environments where all characters must deal with those facts.

In Patrick O'Connor's book titled *Cormac McCarthy, Philosophy and The Physics Of The Damned* discusses character types concerning the Judge and the kid in terms of active or passive nihilism influenced by Nietzsche. O'Connor sees the Judge in a deterministic sense whereby his philosophy is fixed towards nihilism around his ideas of violence and war. O'Connor writes, "Friedrich Nietzsche's characterization of active and passive nihilism illuminates the moral states of *Blood Meridian's* core characters" (66). O'Connor remarks about Nietzsche's concept of "The Death of God" with Holden acting as a false prophet, "For Nietzsche, the death of god tempts us with false prophets, false truths and idols that anaesthetise our ability to discern our own possibilities. And when it comes to false prophets, there are none more terrifying than Judge Holden" (67).

The Judge's thoughts on war, as told to the Glanton gang, separates him from the idea of a higher power other than war. The Judge's fixation around war, according to O'Connor, is crystalized into passive nihilism: "One can do good as well as evil beyond good and evil. This point firmly separates Nietzsche from Judge Holden since for Holden, a universe beyond good and evil only obliges us to do evil" (O'Connor 68). What the death

of God represents in *BM* can be seen in war making the Judge its orchestrator. O'Connor is correct in that Holden supersedes the conventional western God; however, what Holden describes to the Glanton gang is active in terms of an existence inside of war.

For example, Holden remarks that these violent actions are nothing more than games, and the admonishment of nihilism becomes the world itself existing in this state. It is not that the world became nihilistic, but more so that the world has always existed in a gamified state of violent interactions between humans. O'Connor is correct about the inherent static nihilistic themes against any hope of reprieve: "The Judge rejects civilized virtues yet replaces them with his own external set of principles" (O'Conner 71). The epilogue in *BM* states a news article of a historic remnant of violence suggesting how long these actions have occurred; Consequently, *BM*'s world, according to Holden, has always existed in violent and sometimes ambiguous ways, "The truth about the world, he said, is that anything is possible. Had you not seen it all from birth and thereby bled it of its strangeness it would appear to you for what it is, a hat trick in a medicine show, a fevered dream, a trance bepopulate with chimeras..." (McCarthy 256). Nietzsche's "death of God," suggests that there was a God at one time, or a belief that held major significance for human beings, and what Holden's philosophy states is that war was always God. In some sense, it becomes a deeper level of nihilism regarding a gamified or child-like existence of war where violence is an integral part of human nature.

Opposingly, O'Conner uses the kid's character as an example of active nihilism for his resistance to the Judge. "The kid's rejection of Judge Holden 'poisons' the sealed totality of Holden's metaphysics, simply by the persistence of his resistance and capacity for survival" (O'Conner 83). He sees the kid as a participant in violence but not a prophet

like Holden, thus the kid begins to drift away from the Judge further along the storyline. O'Connor writes, "The kid carves out some things of temporary value despite his violent predispositions, such as his loyalty to Tobin, random acts of mercy and his disruption of Judge Holden's invocation of the necessity of violence" (77). Considering the kid's journey towards the end, his eventual death from Holden suggests the active state of nihilism as temporary while the juxtaposition to Holden being correct in the measurement of their world.

In O'Connor's book, the Judge wins in terms of a static violent nihilism. The boy's resistance being but a few moments could be understood as fated chaotic eventuality growing Holden's mystic powers. O'Connor says this about the kid's actions overall, "Whether the kid develops morally is beside the point. The kid cannot be sequestered from the actions and carnages of the Glanton Gang even if he exhibits signs of mercy throughout the novel" (79). In the desert scene, the kid and Tobin hide from the Judge as he walks by. With the element of surprise, the boy is unable to shoot or engage Holden in this vulnerable state. It is not a lack of violent capabilities from the kid, but a fear of the Judge that prevents him from shooting. The active nihilism becomes overshadowed by Holden's philosophical grip upon the kid and Tobin—their fear of the Judge prevents their violence. "No assassin, called the judge. And no partisan either. There's a flawed place in the fabric of your heart. Do you think I could not know? You alone were mutinous. You alone reserved in your soul some corner of clemency for the heathen" (McCarthy 311-12). However redemptive the kid appears, neither he nor Tobin have the strength to overcome the intellectual prowess of the Judge even when he is most vulnerable.

Character Arcs of Violence

McCarthy's villains have a synecdoche representation inside the novels, and like narrative arcs where readers notice patterns of U-shaped plots, the novel's minor characters exhibit similar patterns around the chaotic violence primarily with actions, but I also think philosophy and dialogue. In *BM* and *NCFOM*, even distinguishing between the antagonist/protagonist is blurred if not for the superfluous evil characters of the Judge and Chigurh. The kid, ex-priest Tobin, Sheriff Bell, Llewellyn Moss, and Carla-Jean Moss, are flawed examples of human nature in that they act in ways to facilitate their circumstances. For example, what makes the kid travel around committing murder, or why did Moss decide to take known drug money? What caused Carla-Jean's willingness to follow her husband despite his unusual circumstances of new money? McCarthy shows protagonist character flaws that make each novel unique but ambiguous as to who the good characters are. Each set of characters can be seen in U-shaped arcs of action and dialogues of violence that showcase their differences as individual characters.

For example, the Judge goes through stages of dialogue and action that crescendos in terms of violence/chaos. In the beginning, Holden sees the kid at a religious tent ceremony and incites a disruption where the patrons mob the reverend Green. The Judge says, "Ladies and gentlemen I feel it my duty to inform you that the man holding this

revival is an imposter” (McCarthy 7). The citizens chase the reverend with threats to his life, and the kid witnesses the Judge’s actions in a non-violent but oratory form. The lower part of his arc, being more chaotic and violent, would be when Holden is murdering children among many other evil actions. After killing Apache Indians, the Judge takes a young boy with him, only to murder the child later. “The judge sat with the Apache boy before the fire and it watched everything with dark berry eyes and some of the men played with it and made it laugh...” (McCarthy 170). This marks Holden’s zenith of evil in terms of physical action. Even Glanton’s men threaten Holden for his actions, “Toadvine put the muzzle of his pistol against the great dome of the judge’s head. Goddamn you, Holden” (McCarthy 170). Now past the arch, the Judge no longer commits crimes of that magnitude. The Glanton Gang becomes fractured by an attack from the Yumas, and the Judge is stripped down, wandering the desert with an intellectually disabled man. “It was the judge and the imbecile. They were both of them naked and they neared through the desert dawn like being of a mode little more than tangential to the world at large, their figures now quick with clarity and now fugitive in the strangeness of that same light” (McCarthy 294).

In the article by Wei Feng and Xianqing Zheng, titled, “The Judge, the Future Type of Mind, and Negative Entropy in Cormac McCarthy’s *Blood Meridian*,” they compare *BM* through the lens of physics. Their article talks about the Judge’s grasp on the novel where violence relates to control in comparison to thermodynamics, which they refer to as “Entropy.” Feng and Zheng write, “Both perceptions suggest that to keep his order level constant, the judge must leave a greater chaos behind, or devour more than his fair share of negative entropy” (111). This aligns to his character arc whereby the more violent he is the greater and broader his arc appears. However, by losing his influence over the kid his

entropic locomotion declines whereby the Judge becomes less evil and violent. Although he murders the boy at the end, the desert scene and arc show a decline in his violent actions, while Holden breaks apart before reconfiguring towards the end of the novel.

Conversely, the kid's journey and resistance follow an inverse character arc opposing the Judge. In the beginning, the boy is said to have "mindless violence," and that he is mentioned fighting before joining Glanton's men. Interestingly, the kid has already interacted with Holden before, and both the boy and Holden have moments of interest with each other. The Judge is seen watching the boy and smiling, and the kid enquires about Holden's history from Tobin. However, both characters are most violent together or as a group. His arc is less entropic without the violence, but when he parallels, disorder begins to take him over. This intersection of the kid and Holden happens to be where the Judge's oratory becomes most prevalent with his ideas around war and violence, and where his influence tries to reshape the boy's future.

In this passage, Holden explains the arcs in terms of a chaotic life, "His spirit is exhausted at the peak of its achievement. His meridian is at once his darkening and the evening of his day" (McCarthy 153). The kid's meridian (at its most violent) could be seen when they come across a tree of dead babies. O'Connor writes about his commitment to Holden. "Both Sproule and the kid are left stunned by this chilling vista, which marks their desensitization at a point in the novel when they are most under the Judge's influence" (O'Connor 81). Their arcs are converse parabolas, and they are nearest together or parallel at this point in the novel. The tree becomes the kid's lowest point and the Judge's strongest whereby witnessing and dialogue conjoin between physical actions.

After the mid-point or meridian, the kid and Judge begin to pull apart in relation to violent actions and philosophy. At this point, the Judge has made his accounts about war and noting in his ledger book. The kid, opposingly, has shown some minuscule acts of kindness when he helps a fellow rider. John Dudley in his chapter titled “*McCarthy’s Heroes*” *Revisiting Masculinity*, describes the kid as a “Peter Pan” boy who never grows up. Dudley writes, “McCarthy offers variations on this character both before and after *Blood Meridian*, but the ‘kid’ in *Blood Meridian* serves as the archetype for all of McCarthy’s male protagonists...and whose descent into violence and depravity has no clear objective, with no end in sight” (179). The kid is never referred to as the man, however by pulling away from Holden he shows agency whereby his stunted growth changes, or at best, readers could say the kid has grown disproportionately in a violent landscape.

The kid, acting as an arcing protagonist, slowly moves away by being less violent than the Judge. In the beginning of *BM*, McCarthy writes, “See the child. He is pale and thin, he wears a thin and ragged linen shirt.” (McCarthy 3). This shows the beginning child-like innocence from a lack of detail concerning what would normally be some modicum of strength or hope. The boy’s beginning as a kind of blank slate shows his deviation away from the Judge. Otherwise, the Judge would have total control over his decision making.

One scene shows this with a rider (Davy Brown) who has an impaled arrow in his leg. No one wants to help him, and the Judge tells Brown, “I’ll write a policy on your life against every mishap save the noose” (McCarthy 168). Eventually, the kid decides to push the lodged arrow through, helping Brown, “Some watched, some did not. The kid rose. I’ll try her, he said” (McCarthy 168). After the arrow is out of his leg, the gravitas of his situation becomes apparent from Tobin when he says, “Fool, he said. God will not love ye

forever. Dont you know he'd of took you with him? [...] He'd of took you, boy. Like a bride to the altar" (McCarthy 169). Tobin's warning relates to Brown, but more importantly as a warning from the Judge. Considering Holden's thoughts around war, the boy's aid acts in defiance of Holden's ideals bending his arc apart from him.

Finding any positive attributes to Holden is difficult, but his weakness in the storyline is noticeable while walking through the desert. Tobin and the boy have the upper hand of concealment and firepower, but neither Tobin nor the kid can violently engage Holden at his weakest point. Ironically, the kid now has an arrow stuck in his leg without the ability to remove it. He breaks the arrow shaft leaving the tip inside him. Likewise, Holden is in possession of Brown's earlier shotgun. At this point, the kid and the Judge are moving in opposition to one another and continue until they meet again at the end. The Judge calls out, "The priest has led you to this, boy. I know you would not hide. I know too that you've not the heart of a common assassin" (McCarthy 311). Tobin's account of the Judge relates to his comparison of God.

While the Judge calls out to the kid and Tobin, they argue about his capabilities. The kid faces the violent question of whether he can be defeated, while at the same time, Holden's remarks about the boy's heart being flawed instigating his ideals around chaos and violence. Calling him "no partisan," and asking, "Do you think I could not know," shows the encompassing nature of Holden's knowledge and almost telepathic reasoning to understand the kid during this scene, a balancing of its characters. Linda Woodson's chapter titled, *McCarthy's Heroes and the Will to Truth* points out this scene in terms of philosophical fatherly language. Woodson writes, "The judge can be seen as language, law, the father, in Freudian/Kristevan terms, in his interest in the kid, and, although the kid has

studied the judge throughout the novel, he cannot kill him in the desert” (17). Holden’s fatherly language and his oratories throughout are to influence his arc, and still the boy never rejoins his path.

In Frye’s chapter, *Blood Meridian, and The Poetics of Violence*, he describes the importance of their conversation. “For all the pervasive violence of the novel, one of the most evocative pieces of dialogue takes place between the kid and ex-priest Tobin. This brief conversation functions as a cornerstone in the thematic architecture of *Blood Meridian*” (Frye 118). Regarding their architecture, Frye is correct; their two linear arcs are where Tobin’s words are heard apart from the Judge. The arc of the boy has passed, and he has not favored Holden’s ideals. Therefore, according to the Judge’s words, he too must be made to withstand the rigors of war being God. The reader can contrast this relationship to Glanton, who like the Judge, involved himself with the same chaotic acts. Both characters have completed enough dialogue and action to this segment showing the audience new boundaries have been taken between the kid and Holden.

McCarthy’s other novels express similarities to *BM*’s character relationship with Holden and the kid. In McCarthy’s novel titled *Suttree*, the main character (Cornelius Suttree) reflects a comparable situation being out casted from his family and surrounding community. “While the kid ambles into an unredeemed world of cannibalism, rape, crucifixion, and mutilation, Suttree finds glimpses of grace through moments of warmth expressed in his relationships with other inhabitants of the slums” (Cooper 54). The novel expresses a bleakness in setting and a similar lost protagonist character like we see in the kid. While there is no Judge Holden to fight against, Suttree’s character arc follows a different path from those around him. “*Suttree* and *Blood Meridian* trace narration with

potentially similar narrative arcs—the doomed wanderings of inherently flawed sons fleeing the religion and identity of their fathers—but the novels impose upon these two potentially similar protagonists utterly dissimilar fates” (Cooper 54). Suttree’s solitary narrative follows a progression similar to the kid except the violent influences from the Judge’s character contrasts everything except Chigurh. *Suttree* as a novel shows similarities to what we see in *BM*.

The character arcs of Suttree and the kid when defined by violence differ because in *Suttree* it lacks a character like Holden and scenes with that level of violence or remorse. Cooper explains this with the absence of responsibility from the characters of *BM*, “...*Blood Meridian*’s narrative refuses its characters any redemption by insisting that they neither acknowledge their sins nor recognize their need for forgiveness” (Cooper 53). Perhaps if the kid verbalized remorse for his actions, the line of his character would be an ending point or sharp turn, none of which happens.

In Jay Ellis’ book *No Place for Home, Spatial Constraint and Character Flight in the Novels of Cormac McCarthy*, he writes about the father/son relationship with emphasis on orphaned sons in terms of structure. “First, we can imagine it as an ordering vertical structure within which the various spaces discussed here can be understood in relation to one another. Second, we can still recall that these novels enact their horizontal power by propelling their protagonist through space” (Ellis 264). Ellis describes a theme around McCarthy’s other novels where there is a lack of mothers, and the emphasis on violence that moves the father and son relationship through the story.

The vertical and horizontal structure for protagonists shows character arcs of violence where the tone of the novel influences the characters and plots in that interactions

serve as a moving force for the stories. Ellis writes, “We might even imagine that this narrative so biblical in tone has more than one narrator slipping in and out of the redacted version of its mythic story, and that at times the judge takes hold of the story in order to use the kid to set you, the reader, up for a final argument that swallows up potential resistance” (152). Ellis reiterates the importance of the Judge’s philosophy when describing the Biblical tone of the novel, and the idea that these stories are for a bigger purpose to be shown at the end. It could be seen that he is trying to explain something to the audience as well as the kid. If *BM* and *NCFOM* are viewed as a Cartesian plane, then the lines of each character form specific but predictable arcs that parallel and veer apart inside each story. In short, the characters can be looked at as multi-dimensional structures in the reading.

Harness makers, Hermits, and Executions

Stories are told to the characters throughout by the Judge and Chigurh. They resemble allegorical parables involving violence to a measured degree and a hidden meaning behind the character's knowledge, or a revelatory experience for the audience. In some cases, like in *NCFOM*, the dialogue acts as a questioning. Much of what McCarthy writes inside character thoughts are dichotomous with points of view: One being the storyteller dealing with the tale themselves and how they think, and two, showing the characters listening to themselves and how they might feel about the stories and audience interpretations inside a larger context. Each story tells more about the main novel, and all characters revolve around one meta-character of violence.

One story in *BM* is the Harness maker's tale. The Judge tells the Glanton gang about a harness maker who invites a traveler to his home after begging him for money. The traveler eventually gives the harness maker and his family some coins but is then murdered by his host when leaving their home. As a result, the actions of both the harness maker and the traveler affect their sons. Holden describes both sons as becoming violent and dangerous because of their father's actions. Holden's story becomes a critique and example of his ideal around the world and violence in it. The tale represents a lack of innocence and the inclination towards violence in human nature.

What is interesting about the tale is the heritability of violence from both sons. The Judge describes the harness maker's son as being jealous of the murdered traveler, "But the boy was not sorry for he was jealous of the dead man and before he went away he visited that place and cast away the rocks and dug up the bones and scattered them in the forest and then he went away. He went away and he himself became a killer of men" (McCarthy 151). Before the father died, he confessed about the murder and asked for forgiveness from his son. The son's jealousy of the dead traveler suggests that the attention to violence is associated with love, and in that sense, what the boy becomes (a killer of men) is a reenactment of a father/son relationship. It is not that the boy wished to be murdered, but that the father's confession makes the boy feel responsible. In a way, the jealousy starts from the father and hallmarks to the Judge's fascination with murder and the kid. The story's insistence on generational violence magnifies how we understand *BM's* kid and those described by the Judge. Further along the Judge's story, he writes about the traveler's son:

There was a young bride waiting for that traveler with whose bones we are acquainted and she bore a child in her womb that was the traveler's son. Now this son whose father's existence in this world is historical and speculative even before the son has entered it is in a bad way. All his life he carries before him the idol of a perfection to which he can never attain. The father dead has euchered the son out of his patrimony. For it is the death of the father to which the son is entitled and to which he is heir, more so than his goods. He will not hear of the small mean ways that tempered the man in life. He will not see him struggling in follies of his own

devising. No. The world which he inherits bears him false witness. He is broken before a frozen god and he will never find his way. (McCarthy 152)

With both sons, the audience sees the heritability of violence in future tense. The traveler's son is born after his death, and he is broken because he cannot witness his father's pain. The harness maker's deceit about murdering the traveler connects both sons, and they share a need to witness this suffering of fathers. What McCarthy describes is a tearing down of the idolized father figure through pain, and the configuration of the Judge is the reenactment of the infallible father figure breaking down the Glanton gang.

Even if the traveler's son never commits murder, his life is permanently altered; consequently, the harness maker and traveler are connected in violence and death through the existence of their sons. In addition, the importance of inherited fate is seen within the dishonesty from the harness maker and the inherited false world of the traveler's son. What is shown would be the underlying Gnostic style of existence, but additionally, the physical violence setting in motion the events that alter both realities forever. The question then becomes, what story is more fitting than this for the Judge? The generations are connected through murder. Both sons share that bond.

In *NCFOM*, Sheriff Bell's inner monologue mentioned earlier talks about the arrest and execution. Bell questions his beliefs about evil and the human soul, "Said he knew he was goin to hell" (McCarthy 3). Bell asks, what does a person do who admits to having no soul? The question ties directly to Chigurh and Holden from their ability to be unwavering in violence and the surety of knowing the world in a way that other characters do not. Both Chigurh and Holden give philosophical reasons why things exist the way they do, but the executed boy in *NCFOM* is a product of someone with nothing but evil and violence. The

audience can assume that the nineteen-year-old boy was evil before the crime, but the violence was an action born from that. Through stories, the Judge and Chigurh answer the sheriff.

Bell sees the evil, but he is unable to face it. McCarthy uses Bell and Moss as sharing protagonists, and Bell's beginning shows his defeat and inability to fight not just Chigurh, but what he represents spiritually. "I think it is more like what you are willing to become. And I think a man would have to put his soul at hazard," and "Somewhere out there is a true and living prophet of destruction and I don't want to confront him. I know he's real. I have seen his work. I walked in front of those eyes once. I won't do it again. I won't push my chips forward and stand up and go out to meet him" (McCarthy 4). The protagonist's fear of these characters creates a theme of no redemptive factor; but overall, there is no opposition to their philosophy because they, like the boy facing execution, admit to having no soul. Mundik hints at this with, "The 'simple life' he leads imbues him with the ascetic austerity of a monk pledged to evil, a satanic reversal of traditional, spiritual roles hinted at by other descriptions of Chigurh as a 'faith healer' and a 'prophet of destruction'" (268). Their superpower is one that negates any positive outcome.

Bell's worry of corrupting his soul causes his inability to face Chigurh which becomes the one thing of the kid that opposes the Judge in *BM*. What keeps the boy and Holden separate is the fact that a piece of soul still resides in him. Bell's internal struggle compared to the harness makers' tale shows the ubiquity of evil to exist in the world. The idea of a soul being absent from our villains, and much like the harness maker's tale, the reader witnesses the attrition of protagonists, and in a sense, we are all their sons.

Mentioned earlier in *BM*, the traveling boy comes across a hermit devoid of civility and living a meager existence in the wilderness, and he lets the kid avoid a storm and stay with him. The hermit shares his history with the boy connecting to Bell's questioning and the Harness Maker's tale. The hermit tells the boy:

A man's at odds to know his mind cause his mind is aught he has to know it with. He can know his heart, but he dont want to. Rightly so. Best not to look in there. It aint the heart of a creature that is bound in the way that God has set for it. You can find meanness in the least of creatures, but when God made man the devil was at his elbow. A creature that can do anything. Make a machine. And a machine to make the machine. And evil that can run itself a thousand years, no need to tend it.
(McCarthy 20)

The hermit's explanation of permanent inseparability between man and evil foreshadows Bell's thoughts. Bell's new unmatched villain is beyond his reckoning, but the hermit's speech represents the reproduction of evil upon human creation, "A creature that can do anything" (McCarthy 20). If Chigurh embodies evolved evil, then the Judge becomes aligned in the hermit's conversation with the boy because, "He can know his heart, but he dont want to" (McCarthy 20). The Judge asks the characters to face the truth of their creation inside themselves. This is why he remarks about knowing the boy's heart.

The Harness maker's story aligns with what the hermit says to the kid for the ambiguous nature of the traveler's murder. The hereditary succession of evil and murder relates to what a person cannot face about themselves. The kid in *BM* acts as an agent in learning about his cruel world, and we the audience must think about characters like Judge and Chigurh in alternative ways to understand the nature of violence from their dialogue.

If nothing else, the hermit foreshadows the events the kid will have to understand in order to exist in the story. In Lydia Cooper's book titled *No More Heroes*, mentioned earlier, Cooper writes about the need to make sense of the moral issues concerning characters and actions. "McCarthy's literary universe is a blighted one, a place where rapists, cannibals, and blood cults wander unchecked, and such a damaged cosmos may cause readers to pause and consider whether such a world is, after all, 'deforming' and 'pernicious'" (3).

Cooper talks about the agency for decision making by characters (in *NCFOM*) questioning whether evil exists independently of the characters, or what Bell or the hermit might remark is interior of the person, "The novel consistently suggests that violence is born in a single human choice, but once born it spreads like a disease and its infection spreads beyond national and temporal boundaries" (Cooper 129). The interactions suggest that evil is introduced by specific characters like the Judge or Chigurh and then is replicated throughout. This makes sense in understanding the philosophy associated with Holden and Chigurh but negates the Gnostic view of the underlying omnipresence of evil. The reader might ask whether the evil or violence associated in *BM* is of a different type than in *NCFOM*, or if the novels did not have such characters, would they remain the same? While *BM* has more physical violence and gore, both Holden and Chigurh share built upon philosophies concerning their nature of violence and war. Cooper's assessment of linking decisions shows a more fate centered narrative in that one action brings results leading to more outcomes and quantity of other choices.

Ahab, Holden, & Chigurh

Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick* is one of McCarthy's books he cites as inspiration for his work. It is no surprise Captain Ahab is comparable to McCarthy's villains, but specific instances inside Melville's novels show that Ahab's maniacal behavior compares to a similar chaotic philosophy. *BM* and *NCFOM* relate to Ahab's dynamic character as an example for the antagonist such that philosophical violence becomes paramount to his role in *Moby-Dick*. McCarthy's characters are physically active in terms of killing, maiming, and executing other characters. However, Ahab's character becomes in line with the Judge and Chigurh, and what Ahab represents in *Moby-Dick*, marks similarities of such a character in *BM* and *NCFOM* in terms of a violent trait with much less actual violence against human beings or unrelated characters apart from the whale. Comparing both villains shows the reader the importance of violence on a singular level as it exists in story and character. To see the broader aspects of the Judge and Chigurh gives more emphasis to how inherently violent they are and those explanations for it.

Mundik mentions the world in which Melville's sea relates to McCarthy's Southwestern novels, "Melville's words—'consider, once more, the universal cannibalism of the sea; all whose creatures prey upon each other, carrying on eternal war since the world

began' (270)—may well be extended to cover the wastelands of Blood Meridian” (Mundik 20). In this ongoing battle of the sea, Ahab’s rage and revenge pushes him and crew beyond the limits of rationality. Ahab represents the same violence in character that surpasses everyone else, thus making Ahab beyond the book. From these traits, his character engulfs the novel.

Melville keeps Ahab hidden and mysterious in the beginning of the novel until the crew is signed and sailing, but his character grows when at sea and his journey of revenge gets stronger. The Judge, while more tactful, stays mysterious through speech and action. What the kid sees is the band of marauders coming into town, and after the kid signs on with Glanton’s men, stories of Holden appear in the dialogue. Ahab’s rage contrasts Holden and Chigurh’s calm demeanor, “Talk to me not of blasphemy, man; I’d strike the sun if it insulted me,” however Ahab’s transparency in hate for the white whale follows a similar internal philosophy (Melville 203). Ahab’s evil is that of a blinding rage. What propels him also causes nightmares, however Holden and Chigurh embody a malicious understanding that they exist in a larger scheme of violence. What McCarthy shows becomes the tactfulness of the antagonist apart from Ahab but not completely devoid from.

Mundik draws physical descriptions to the Judge and the whale, “This gigantic, hairless, albino man—who stands nearly seven feet tall and weighs around three hundred pounds—evokes the sinister whiteness and monstrosity of Moby-Dick; at one stage the judge is even described as a ‘pale and bloated manatee’” (Mundik 31). Additionally, Ahab’s bone-made leg sets him apart in physical description to both Judge and Chigurh, while it is also the painful physical scar that reminds Ahab of his vengeance. Mundik writes a similar description to the association of human form in terms of narrative otherness, “The

narrative voice in *Blood Meridian* continually draws attention to the judge's otherness from the men around him, suggesting that he is no ordinary human being. Descriptions of the judge emphasize his deviation from the average human form..." (Mundik 31).

McCarthy's physical descriptions act on behalf of character development where space of action is made possible and carried forward. For example, Ahab's leg suggests the wound and ship's primitive medicine, along with, a phantom nerve pain that becomes his constant reminder, likewise, Holden's size is not an amputated limb, but rather an odd compliment to his already evil-like intelligence. Ahab's leg is fashioned from the bone that took it, "It had previously come to me that this ivory leg had at sea been fashioned from the polished animal bone of the sperm whale's jaw" (Melville 159). Similarly, Chigurh's body is intact, but he is severely wounded to the leg prompting his self-surgery and reminder for revenge too. Physical descriptions involve character space or scarring (previous violence) for future violent actions to occur. Melville writes, "He looked like a man cut away from the stake, when the fire has overrunningly wasted all the limbs without consuming them, or taking away one particle from their compacted aged robustness" (158). This is present with the Judge's refusal to help Brown's impaled arrow and their introduction in the mountains. The calm demeanor of finding Holden versus the pain of his fellow riders reminds the audience of his philosophy of dialogue. Tobin the ex-priest recounts first meeting the Judge, "The judge sat the animal bareback like an Indian and rode with his grip and his rifle perched on the withers and he looked about him with the greatest satisfaction in the world..." (McCarthy 132). McCarthy's characters act in ways where they encompass their chaotic descriptions which shows with injuries to themselves or otherwise.

Instances of controlling fate from Ahab, the Judge, and Chigurh act inside their stories as a type of determinism. Mundik points out that Ahab is in control of pursuing the whale; yet Melville, along with McCarthy shows an underlying force beneath the characters. “Thus, despite his Ahab-like attempts to control his destiny, Glanton’s path is no different from the paths of all the other ‘moons,’ ‘coins,’ and ‘men,’ all of which are ‘determined by the length of their tether,’ ...” (Mundik 51). However, unlike Ahab, Holden and Chigurh both survive their tales, and Ahab’s control is more prevalent in blindly searching the oceans for a specific cetacean despite being warned by other captains and crew. McCarthy shows almost no warning for his evil characters because doing so would be pointless. What Holden and Chigurh have is their impenetrable thoughts and words, whereas Ahab is chasing a sea creature while enraged or out of control. Chigurh and Holden represent the control Ahab lacks which is shown in his fevered dreams on ship.

While on the ship’s journey, Ahab remarks about Moby Dick being a magnet attracting Ahab. The invisible attraction to the whale shows the unforeseeable fate that readers see within McCarthy’s works. At one point, Ahab comes across an English captain who was also wounded by the whale resulting in a lost arm. The captain warns against pursuing the whale and Ahab says, “But he will be hunted, for all that, what is best let alone, that accused thing is not always what least allures. He’s all a magnet” (Melville 511). The English captain is searching for his lost son, likewise, Ahab leaves his boy at home for his quest of vengeance. McCarthy shows a dichotomous relationship between Holden and the kid. The Judge first sees the boy in the beginning of the novel, and other moments during their travel, and the Judge is smiling and watching the boy in an observational study of him. The evil Holden proposes needs the boy’s participation for the

Judge to be vindicated. In a sense the kid (or Glanton's men) function as the Judge's white whale; as a result, the boy's resistance by the end of *BM* cannot be tolerated as he is the last to be murdered by Holden.

What Ahab leaves behind and the English captain searches for shows exactly the relationship that makes Holden's philosophy real in McCarthy's novel. When the Judge sees the boy in jail he says, "Dont you know that I'd have loved you like a son? He reached through the bars. Come here, he said. Let me touch you. The kid stood with his back to the wall" (McCarthy 319). The boy is Holden's magnet in resisting the pure evil he represents. The Judge's dialogue in accordance with his manipulation shows an opposing relationship to Ahab and other characters. What drives Ahab is the behavior of a philosophy greater than all other characters like Holden. The randomness of magnetism completes this circle.

Melville makes Starbuck question his reasoning for joining the ship from mentioning his father and family: "For, thought Starbuck, I am here in this critical ocean to kill whales for my living, and not to be killed by them for theirs; and those hundreds of men had been so killed Starbuck well knew. What doom was his own father's? Where, in the bottomless deeps, could he find the torn limbs of his brothers?" (Melville 149). *BM's* audience assumes the boy has the same reckoning thoughts, Holden tells him, "What joins men together, he said, is not the sharing of bread but the sharing of enemies. But if I was your enemy with whom would you have shared me? With whom? The priest? Where is he now? Look at me. Our animosities were formed and waiting ever we two met. Yet even so you could have changed it all" (McCarthy 319). The last line gives agency to the kid, and like Ahab and Starbuck's decision to set sail, the underlying Gnostic thread is there, but the philosophy of the characters suggests a fated "free will" that may or may not exist. The

mysteriousness of these villains uses violence and death as a vehicle for proving and testing their theories.

The dialogue between the Judge and the Glanton gang is synonymous with requirements for their crew. Each villain divulges into their philosophical ideals in a sermon-like oration that showcases their maniacal behavior which creates a pact between antagonist/protagonist characters. McCarthy expresses these thoughts through warfare and in one scene, through gunpowder. The Glanton gang is running away from the Delawares into the mountains, while out of gunpowder, they first encounter the Judge sitting on a rock. Holden mashes up bat droppings and ground down stones into forming gunpowder. Tobin recounts the story to the boy, and the ceremony is like that of a contract or promise in evil. Tobin says, "I'd not go behind scripture but it may be that there has been sinners so notorious evil that the fires coughed em up again and I could well see in the long ago how it was little devils with their pitchforks had traversed adventure been spewed up from their damnation onto the outer shelves of the world" (McCarthy 136-7). Tobin, being an ex-priest, already hints at the sinister nature of Holden from a present place looking back. The men are required to urinate on the powder for completion described as a ceremony of evil:

We hauled forth our members and at it we went and the judge on his knees kneading the mass with his naked arms and he was splashin about and he was cryin out to us to piss, man, piss for your very souls for cant you see the redskins yonder, and laughin the while and workin up this great mass in a foul black dough, a devil's batter by the stink of it and him not a bloody dark pastryman himself. (McCarthy 138)

Ahab has a similar oration with his crew when signing onboard the ship acts as an oath. Ahab sees the crew in terms of submission towards finding the whale and in agreement to his rage: “What say ye, men, will ye splice hands on it, now? I think ye do look brave,” and “...The crew, man the crew! Are they not one and all with Ahab, in this matter of the whale?” (Melville 202-4).

What Ahab requires; the Judge also calls upon the men to participate in versions of evil beyond realization. Ahab and Holden become the center force for evaluating but also the promotion to being their leader. The sacrifice from the minor characters comes from the dialogue of antagonistic characters. Whether signing aboard a ship, or running scared without gunpowder, a philosophy union and initiation is created between characters so that what happens later can be explained in part to their journey.

Fated Coins

McCarthy uses coins in both novels creating a connection to fate in terms of character philosophy around the handling and symbolism of coins. In *NCFOM*, Chigurh carries around coins he uses to decide his victim's eventual fate. *BM* has a specific scene where the Judge does a coin trick that relates to his philosophy in terms of violence. In one scene, Chigurh meets a store clerk for whom he tosses his coin to decide his fate. The idea of the coin toss and its personification of traveling plays a part in whether he (the clerk) feels that his murder is justifiable. The coin takes a journey of its own to reach that moment. Chigurh asks the clerk, "I said what's the most you ever lost on a coin toss?" (McCarthy 55).

Similarly, instances with coins are also mentioned in *Moby-Dick*. Ahab rewards the crew for first spotting the white whale, and he uses the coins in a trickster-like fashion that we notice in McCarthy's works. What causes Chigurh to act is the coin's landing, and we see a similar instance of action granted to a coin in *Moby-Dick*. Ahab's actions as a villain show the importance of using a coin to gain significance to chaotic purpose. With the Judge, the audience could ask, who controls the coin if anyone? McCarthy writes in *BM*, "The judge swung his hand and the coin winked overhead in the firelight. It must have been fastened to some subtle lead, horsehair perhaps, for it circled the fire and returned to the judge and he caught it in his hand and smiled" (257). What the coin decides and who controls the coin are important aspects in the philosophy for the Judge and Chigurh.

Timothy Parrish's work in *The Cambridge Companion to Cormac McCarthy*, talks about the store clerk having agency of calling the coin to decide his fate, which absolves the responsibility for Chigurh, even though he would be committing the murder, "Chigurh refuses to call the coin for the man because he insists that, regardless of what happens, the man's fate is his to make," and "His point is that both of them exist in a complex chain of cause and effect that has brought each of them to this moment" (Parrish 73). Parrish's assessment about "calling the coin" relates to an act of fate where victim and coin meet at a reckoning for which the instrument is more important than the act. However, *BM* mentions his manipulation of the coin, "The arc of circling bodies is determined by the length of their tether, said the judge. Moons, coins, men. His hands moved as if he were pulling something from one fist in a series of elongations" (McCarthy 257). The coin being tethered asks the question of who or what can manipulate such an important coin, but also the attachment to the arc of the coin versus Chigurh's coin flip act in ways of the coin's movement deciding the lives in each novel.

Chigurh never mentions a tether that might attach to his coins, and the Judge moves the coin in a trickster like fashion. Chigurh's reach into violence becomes a tether because of his involvement in a specific place and time being the modernity of his setting. Only with Carla-jean do we see Chigurh listening to her questioning the importance of the coin, but it is more so of the violence with the coin. Parrish comments on McCarthy's coin journey, "As he told the gas station attendant, the coin being flipped left the coinmaker's hand in 1958 and traveled twenty-two years through countless exchanges, independent of Chigurh, before arriving with Chigurh to enact this moment" (73-4).

Is there a magical influence on their coins? In the same sense, does that make Chigurh entrusted to a specific coin, and if so, does the coin's flip make it as much an instrument of death as a weapon for both the Judge and Chigurh? The coin's journey is associated with the penalty of a wrong toss, in that without the violence, the coin becomes nothing next to any other coin. Mundik writes about the convergence of the man and coin, "Chigurh wants the station owner to see that he has spent his entire life making seemingly inconsequential decisions, all of which have led to this chilling encounter with death" (267). Chigurh reminds the store clerk not to mix such an important coin with other random change. Chigurh transforms the coin even though the toss is not manipulated. Letting the store clerk keep the coin in some way acts as the acknowledgement of winning the triviality of existence. The whereabouts of the Judge's coin follows a similar path of ambiguity, yet almost all characters lose their lives.

Carla-Jean Moss is Llewelyn's wife, and she meets Chigurh and his coin at the end of the novel. Her situation is different than the store owner's because Llewelyn was given the opportunity to save her life but refused. Parrish writes that the coin's significance becomes associated with Moss' refusal to save Carla, "In Carla's case, Chigurh is the instrument of another's fate who happens to be present at her final accounting" (Parrish 74). Chigurh tells Carla that her husband had a chance to save her, but he and the coin were meant to arrive. "She had believed that Moss was fated to be her husband so it is logical that she should believe that Chigurh is her only possible end" (Parrish 74). Her marriage, like the coin, becomes a series of circumstances where she would inevitably interact with Chigurh and his philosophy.

Ahab promises the men a gold coin to whoever spots the whale first, but he wins the bet, “Not the same instant; not the same—no, the doubloon is mine, fate reserved the doubloon for me. I only; none of ye could have raised the White Whale first” (Melville 625). Chasing the whale is the action or prize won for offering the coin. If McCarthy’s coin traveled in Ahab’s pocket only to be won and killed by his actions, then the fate of the coin is closely tied to the actions involved. Ahab’s doubloon is meant to attract Moby Dick. Since Chigurh murders Carla, his coin has always been fated in his possession the whole time. Ahab’s coin moves the ship towards certain death, but it also resides in fate for an explanation to that violence ideal. Chigurh enacts on the coin/fate’s behalf. The characters in *BM* and *NCFOM* function as witnesses to win the coin’s toss, and all villains use the symbolism of the coin to enact some specific purpose against the characters. In *NCFOM* when the store clerk wins the toss, the trauma associated with the scenario shows how unalterable Chigurh’s reliance is of his ideal. The fated reality hangs in a miniscule balance much like Glanton’s men and Ahab’s crew.

Mundik also mentions the coin as a representation of Gnostic use, “The judge’s coin trick is a metaphor for these inexorable forces, meant to show the members of Glanton’s gang that heimarmene controls the paths of celestial bodies and the motions of earthly objects, as well as the individual destinies of human beings” (41-2). Perhaps underlying the coin’s placement of Gnostic evil hides inside what the coin does or represents in the universe. However, each character controls the coin, and the Judge’s deterministic action regulates what they feel is appropriate for the coin to actually do. Measuring Holden’s other attributes, the coin is some trick that segues into many other horrific wonderments by the Glanton gang. “The judge argues that human beings will

necessary succumb to destinies beyond their control—to the ‘formal agenda of an absolute destiny’—whether or not they are aware of the forces that bind them” (Mundik 44).

The coin’s destiny follows McCarthy’s characters. Mundik mentions their involuntary control of movement, “The idea that there is some other sentience orchestrating these events is suggested when the movements of men are described as being ‘beyond will or fate’ and ‘under consignment to some third and other destiny’” (Mundik 43). The third destiny would be in fact of some evil sort. In almost every chapter of *BM*, there is some degree of violence. The fated path, like the coins, eventually leads to their demise, “The idea that these destinies are predetermined is emphasized yet again when the Yuma Indians burn the remains of the massacred Glanton gang” (Mundik 43). Towards the end of *BM*, the boy and the Judge finally meet again, and the kid’s storyline ends at the hands of the Judge. The progression of the boy’s life is shown through multiple images of violence which tether him to the Judge. At the end, Holden lives and dances, and he is manipulating the story as he did the coin.

In *NCFOM*, the coin proves to be deadly with the murder of Carla-Jean, and Chigurh continues despite his injuries in a car accident. The audience could assume that as new coins travel with him, they are being given the same trajectory of fate, and even though Chigurh offers the coin toss, his actions are fated with the coin in that Chigurh is traveling thus gaining and losing new coins with future coin tosses.

Violent Determinism

Instances of deterministic violence lie specifically in relation to speech. Chigurh and Holden's monologues describe how they view free will and determinism. McCarthy's other novels have aspects of determined outcomes related to a fate-like existence shown through circumstantial traumas. Additionally, the audience begins to participate in the outline of the character to understand or make sense of specific circumstances. For example, in *The Crossing*, Billy Parham returns a captured wolf to Mexico only to come home to find his family murdered. The reader will begin to see fate in a chaotic way apart from character actions; as a result, character agency is limited to a small amount of non-traumatic events. Billy and Boyd Parham travel into Mexico in search of their family's horses, thus creating a new set of choices and deterministic outcomes. As McCarthy's stories unfold, like in *The Crossing*, the characters have made choices reflecting from previous ones, and the Judge and Chigurh's ideologies interplay with fate and/or violent determinism.

In *BM*, Holden sits around with the Glanton gang in an oration about war. In the intro of Lydia Cooper's book, she describes a deranged world where the whole novel acts in accordance with Holden's views, such that while Glanton's men are learning, he becomes mysteriously vaunted. "As first glance, the very inhumanity practiced in McCarthy's novels might seem to suggest that his is a literary universe inhospitable to the practice of empathy" (Cooper 3). When the Judge is asked why he thinks war endures he

states, “Men are born for games. Nothing else. Every child knows that play is nobler than work. He knows too that the worth or merit of a game is not inherent in the game itself but rather in the value of that which is put at hazard” (McCarthy 260). The game is seen in terms of a voluntary fate, yet in response to Chigurh’s coin toss, the path of the coin (and game) comes to individuals on a predetermined journey. The finalized modality of both coin and game is what the Judge says about what is lost in those moments. Mundik applies a separation of fate with Chigurh’s coin toss which multiplies coin and action:

Furthermore, Chigurh believes that there is no sense in distinguishing the object from the event. In other words, the man’s life was won in a coin toss with one particular coin and no other. All the coins in the world were following their own path and fulfilling their separate destinies, as was every other object and entity. (Mundik 267-8)

However, multiple coins do exist, and yet Chigurh explains the ones he uses. Chigurh may not manipulate the toss, but his ambivalence on the outcomes must incur his philosophy of that specific coin and his specific toss, which is why he says, “I got here the same way the coin did” (McCarthy 258). Villain and coin are interconnected so that violence travels through him much like the coin.

Cooper remarks about the assumed arbitrary yet fatalistic theme, “The novel consistently suggests that violence is born in a single human choice, but once born it spreads like a disease and its infection spreads beyond national and temporal boundaries” (129). McCarthy’s writing highlights violence, but neither the game nor coin enacts the killing, however the force behind such “games” is what Holden and Chigurh are. The Judge answering questions of war being God relates to the predetermined ongoing historical

aspects of his philosophy. McCarthy writes, “Seen so, war is the truest form of divination. It is the testing of one’s will and the will of another within that larger will which because it binds them is therefore forced to select. War is the ultimate game because war is at last a forcing of the unity of existence. War is god” (261). The forced interaction of war negates the concept of free will despite the boy’s protest in the desert, but it also represents the force seen from Chigurh and Carla in *NCFOM* because the coin is just a coin. The unity of violence must be administered by characters like Holden and Chigurh.

Most of *BM* and *NCFOM* display an inability to avoid violence. The epigraphs relate a hereditariness to violence and war. The Judge talks about timelessness, “No. It endures because young men love it and old men love it in them” (McCarthy 260). This is evident in Bell’s discussion with Uncle Ellis. Cooper writes, “Retelling stories about his father provides Bell with the means to revivify hope in humanity’s capacity to create, even in a world filled with evidence of humanity’s capacity to destroy” (131). What the Judge foreshadows happens to Bell from the violence of Chigurh and drug cartels. Bell’s monologues not only question fortune, but some meaning behind why he is inside such a particular fate. “...*No Country for Old Men* draws attention to the power of storytelling to create alternate identities and realities and to pose a transcendent meaning that helps to heal the wounds of human violence with images of hope” (Cooper 131). The protagonist’s character thoughts do not compare to the overall favor of Holden and Chigurh. Bell and the kid are discarded, yet Chigurh and the Judge become greater from their ideals.

Sean Braune in his article, “A chaotic and Dark Vitalism: A Case Study of Cormac McCarthy’s Psychopaths amid a Geology of Immorals,” writes, “Chigurh offers meaning in a world that can no longer be read in traditionally deterministic ways. Chigurh says that

‘they pretend to themselves that they are in control of events where perhaps they are not’” (Braune 21). We see this with his conversations with Wells and Carla-Jean. They ask pointed questions to circumvent or understand Chigurh’s actions for which, according to Chigurh, is associated with his coin or a predetermined fate. Likewise, Braune mentions Moss bringing water for a wounded drug dealer, and this act of clemency relates to how these protagonist characters exist inside the philosophy of Chigurh and the Judge. Mentioned earlier, in *BM*, the boy helps Brown’s wounded leg. As a result, the randomness of sympathy weakens the protagonists as violence strengthens Chigurh and the Judge. Braune writes, “McCarthy’s psychopaths have no interest in right and wrong: they are only interested in chance and power” (23). What the Judge and Chigurh discuss to other characters is beyond their doing, but they hold a greater significance in the versions of existence whereby they act according to violence and fortune. Even though McCarthy’s other characters try to escape their philosophies, the supposed “good characters” die just the same reiterating what was explained to them earlier, and because the Judge and Chigurh continue, so does their views about their determined chaotic world.

Philosophy of Weapons

The violence in both *BM* and *NCFOM* occurs through specific weapons that symbolize more than just violent actions but suggests a deeper meaning that connects to the Judge and Chigurh specifically. The way McCarthy portrays weapons of violence specifically aligns with their philosophical ideals. The Judge's rifle with Latin inscription alongside Chigurh's silenced shotgun show details in character where McCarthy fits weapon to character, and the violence inflicted by weaponry adds to the storyline where normal guns and steel would not have the same importance to such characters. The details of weapons and usage, while in different periods, reflect towards major themes of *BM* and *NCFOM*. Character specific weapons show details about the villains and mindset around violence in their stories. The weapons symbolize audience specificity of actionable description enacting what ideals they share about violence.

Besides making gunpowder from natural elements, the Judge carries a short-barreled rifle with the Latin inscription of "Et In Arcadia Ego," which translates to, "And in Arcadia I am." This is mentioned when Tobin (ex-priest) recounts meeting the Judge for the first time. This scene follows the mysteriousness of Holden and his intelligence in all things particularly war related. The significance of the inscription is not about Arcadia, but

more in expectation of encountering the man who wields that weapon. Just as the Glanton gang finds Holden naked sitting on a rock, as so the Judge finds the kid in prison at the end of the novel. The significance is the reoccurrence of Holden to the kid throughout his life. Wherever the kid or his likeness, so is the Judge with his weapon.

Congruently, Chigurh, without engraving, follows the same travel-like existence searching for Moss. At certain points throughout *NCFOM*, Moss cannot escape Chigurh until his eventual murder, but his hotel escape prompts Chigurh's ultimatum towards Carla. Thus, Holden's engraving proves accurate in that Chigurh's words of violence becomes his destination. The weapon becomes an example of a search in *Moby-Dick*. Ahab's affinities for harpoons acts in conjunction with the doubloons as an attractant. Similarly, Melville writes about the construction of a deadly harpoon, "Here are my razors—the best of steel; here, and make the barbs sharp as the needle—sleet of the Iry Sea" (562). Ahab's harpoon harkens the chase and eventual meeting of Moby Dick, "Is not this harpoon for the White Whale?" (Melville 562). What the Judge and Chigurh are chasing is the spiritual equivalent to Ahab's whale, and the symbolic pragmatic weaponry shows the personage behind the weapon.

Chigurh uses a cattle gun to murder his first victims. The strange air tank and quick dispatching of his victims focuses on a practical unemotional side to Chigurh's violence. As mentioned earlier with coins, Chigurh's ideals of randomized occurrence shows in his unemotional presence along with using the cattle gun. The arbitrariness of the gun confuses Sheriff Bell, while at the same time aides in Chigurh's ability to move silently into rooms by punching out the door locks. What the gun symbolizes is the matter-of-fact relationship between what he does and why. Jay Ellis, in Harold Bloom's book *Cormac McCarthy*,

describes the resourcefulness of Chigurh's cattle gun, yet Ellis sees this as a hinderance in his character, "But we must also note that Chigurh's requirement of this tool to accomplish what Holden does with his hands (BM 179), points to his morality (as do his wounds from combat and the car crash)" (Ellis 137). Chigurh, like Holden, is beyond the weapons he uses, they act as a means of accomplishment, and his wounds make him modern but no less lethal. Perhaps Chigurh is less multimodal in variety of violent actions, but his philosophy is strikingly unique in comparison to Holden. How Chigurh acts is in accordance with era and place, it is not what they do, but how Chigurh and Holden interact inside their respective stories. The Judge's engraved gun relates to the action of murder, but more in his philosophy of ideals. The inanimate object of his rifle has the same meaning as creating gunpowder. The gun becomes a way to express himself in a violent fact-like manner in that what dies never returns just like producing gunpowder has a fact-based affect. The gun acts in accordance with the Judge, and wherever the kid goes, there Holden will be. All actionable symbols lead Holden to the boy, and it is not in barbaric murderous actions, but the man, the gun, and the stories, all direct the Judge to him.

Another important scene in *BM* relates to Davy Brown's interactions with a metal farrier in California. Brown is in possession of a beautiful, hand-made shot gun, but Brown inquires about shortening the barrels of the gun from a metal worker. The farrier refuses to augment the weapon because of the gun's attention to craftsmanship and detail: "You can't pay me to butcher that there gun" (McCarthy 278). The gun represents the aesthetic ideal of weaponry against Brown's journey of violence with the Judge and Glanton gang. By shortening the barrels, Brown hopes to increase the lethality and conspicuousness of the weapon, thus making the gun more akin to *BM's* nature.

The brutishness of the firearm becomes the elevated ideal of the violence so much that the metal worker refuses payment and is threatened by Brown. At this point in the novel, Glanton's gang has been disbanded and the men, those still alive, split into different factions. Brown's character represents the unphilosophical side the Judge brings forth from his men, however, the reader could assume that Holden would persuade the farrier to shorten the gun while maintaining its beauty. The dichotomy of philosophy versus lethality is how Holden carries himself as a character. This explains why he advocates for extreme violence in all living creatures as a disposition for existence. The gun becomes a symbol, not only for the novel, but for Holden himself. The elegance of the tool couples next to intelligence and extreme psychopathic violence.

In *NCFOM*, Chigurh uses a shotgun equipped with a noise suppressing silencer. "The shotgun was a twelve gauge Remington automatic with a plastic military stock and a parkerized finish. It was fitted with a shopmade silencer fully a foot long and big around as a beer can" (McCarthy 103). The silenced gun paired with the air gun, relates to Chigurh's simplistic yet violent philosophy. Chigurh's ideals of fate driven coin tosses that carry the greatest of stakes takes something complex, like life, and simplifies it with a yes or no answer. The audience sees this with his interactions with Carla-Jean and Carson Wells. Both Wells and Carla try to reason with Chigurh, and yet, Chigurh simplifies their murders philosophically and violently. Chigurh remarks that Carson would trade places with him if he could, "I'm here and you are there. In a few minutes I will still be here" (McCarthy 175).

Weapons become tools of interactions between characters, and their importance lie in the potential action that each instrument can inflict. The threat of the firearm or cattle

gun says something about the reasoning behind the owner inside each novel. Weapons are an integral part of the storyline because of the emphasis of violence, and their reliance shows where the power lies in antagonist character traits. For example, what would Ahab be without a special harpoon or the Judge without an inscribed gun? How these characters interact with these things relates to the violence seen throughout each story and representations of all characters and storylines.

Water Troughs and The Anti-Abrahamic Story

Much of what *NCFOM* and *BM* share is a dialogue between characters explaining violence in a voiced tradition to hierarchies of power. Throughout *NCFOM*, Chigurh's sparse but directed speech asks questions of itself. When he gives Moss the ultimatum of his life for (Carla-Jean) his wife, the congruency of his murder compromises his morals making exceptions where previously there were none. The hired assassin, Carson Wells, offers Chigurh money to prolong his life, but Chigurh admits to his respect for what he believes over a desire of greed. Much of what Chigurh describes before each act of violence relates to the ubiquitousness of violence among McCarthy's characters. Chigurh's quiet confidence shows the faith he has in his thinking and action. The premediated calm dialogue from the antagonists gives a specific underlying voice towards how the chaotic sacrifices are created. The audience asks: How is he so calm yet so brutally violent? The loneliness of setting shows the harsh realities of landscape that quietly endure alongside the actions of Chigurh and the Judge.

With Chigurh, he could be looked at as a voice acting on an internal voice, which morphs into Bell's conversation with himself near the novel's end. The voice Bell searches for can be seen in Chigurh's confidence of action because he thinks, says, and acts on his

beliefs. However, Bell's reflection begins to recount seeing a stone water trough, and it forces him to recount the circumstances of Moss, Chigurh's many victims, and eventually Carla-Jean. "But this man had set down with a hammer and chisel and carved out a stone water trough to last ten thousand years. Why was that? What was it that he had faith in?" (McCarthy 307). The reason for Bell's confusion comes from the creator of the stone trough in that they did not have an easier life to carve such a permanent object. The stone carver knew his life would not last longer than his work, and so, what was the *faith* in craftsmanship other than a voice due to a higher belief system? The trough's significance becomes as tangible as the motif that alongside the carving, violence existed then as it does in Bell's world. The voice to carve becomes similar to what Bell seeks and could be what influences Chigurh's amoral actions. Twisting the stone troughs metaphor invites disastrous results if you consider Holden hearing that same voice to create. Additionally, the understanding of the trough's enduring highlights the Judge's views about violence and war. The philosophy of the stone is exactly what each character knows or tries to comprehend about McCarthy's world building. The exception being, only Bell asks the source why.

What is inherent about the stone carving, besides lasting utility, becomes a belief in something greater than the character's self. The Biblical story of Abraham and Isaac not only shows the belief in God's voice, but the immutability of violence as eternal. What the stone trough signifies relates to the murder of the kid in *BM* and the philosophical case for the Judge. In comparison, God produces a son in Abraham and Sarah's advanced age, and to test his faith, the Lord commands him to sacrifice his son (Isaac) on the mountain of Moriah. The immovability of the stone is the insistence of violence in McCarthy's works,

and since the Judge murders the boy, Abraham sparing Isaac is the test *BM* inevitability fails.

The responsibility is put on the aggressors of Abraham and Holden. The quiet sacrifice becomes Isaac and the kid, yet the Judge uses words and actions to coerce the boy to his side. Instead of quietly sacrificing the boy, the Judge asks him to reveal himself, “I’ve passed before your gunsights twice this hour and will pass a third time. Why not show yourself?” (McCarthy 311). The kid and Tobin hide away from inevitable violence, but they are unable to face Holden in that moment. The difference becomes Abraham not disclosing information about his life’s sacrifice to Isaac. Søren Kierkegaard in his book titled, *Fear and Trembling* finds the unethical lack of communication between Abraham and Isaac. He writes, “Unless there is a concealment which has its basis in the single individual’s being higher than the universal, then Abraham’s conduct cannot be defended, since he disregarded the intermediate ethical considerations” (Kierkegaard 109). While not directly threatening the kid and Tobin, circumstances to this point in *BM* around Holden’s philosophy and lack of empathy shows the boy is now in danger from the Judge. Isaac says, “...but where is the lamb for the burnt offering? Abraham said, God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son” (Genesis 22:7). Abraham’s silence is the thread of violence prophesied by the Judge as the exception being a higher order. What will be shown to Isaac is the same ethical conundrum McCarthy’s villains alleviate or hide from the other characters.

In Genesis emphasis is placed on Isaac no longer being fed by Sarah. “And the child grew and was weaned. And Abraham made a great feast on the day that Isaac was weaned” (Genesis 21:8). Similarly, Kierkegaard recounts Abraham’s story with the same lines,

“When the child has grown and is to be weaned the mother virginally covers her breast, so the child no more has a mother” (46). The boy in *BM* is comparable to Isaac in McCarthy’s writing, “See the child. He is pale and thin...,” and “The mother dead these fourteen years did incubate in her own bosom the creature who would carry her off” (McCarthy 3). Isaac’s lack of information relates to the boy’s orphan-like beginnings whereby they are blank slated characters in a larger game of sacrifice. The kid at this stage now becomes what the Judge wants to influence, likewise what Isaac does not know, becomes the basis for Abraham’s faith. The results show Abraham/Holden’s storyline, and what saves Isaac is faith, but what condemns the boy is Holden’s philosophical ideas around chaos.

After the Harnessmaker’s story mentioned earlier, the gang camps in the abandoned ruins of Anasazi people. The Judge sees the ancient stones connecting to the endurance of violence. McCarthy writes, “But who builds in stone seeks to alter the structure of the universe and so it was with these masons however primitive their works may seem to us” (152). Holden remarks that the ancient people are a part of the ruins, “Their spirit entombed in the stone” (McCarthy 152). After describing the setting, their conversation turns to child rearing to which the Judge follows a violent and chaotic mindset, “At a young age, said the judge, they should be put in a pit with wild dogs. They should be set to puzzle out from their proper clues the one of three doors that does not harbor wild lions” (McCarthy 153). Holden replies to Tobin with the fact that wolves control their own population meaning that humans should be indifferent to the survival of their offspring.

The violence proposed by the Judge relates to cyclical violence as shown from the stone. This is the same question relating to Sheriff Bell. Holden says, “This you see here, these ruins wondered at by tribes of savages, do you not think this will be again? Aye. And

again. With other people, with other sons” (McCarthy 153). The Judge answers Bell’s question in *NCFOM* with the reoccurring violence of existence especially concerning sons. Abraham could ask the same question about Isaac whereby he is asked to sacrifice what means the most to him, and in comparison to McCarthy’s writing, God is showing Abraham the significance of what will always occur between humans. Isaac’s would be death becomes like the permanent stone.

Kierkegaard writes about the Greek mythology around Agamemnon’s sacrifice of his daughter Iphigenia in relation to Abraham’s story. He feels that Abraham’s silence towards Isaac creates injustice in his faith, inversely, Agamemnon discloses this information to his daughter thereby exonerating him of some guilt. “The tragic hero demonstrates exactly this ethical courage by, not himself being captive to the aesthetic illusion, taking upon himself to tell Iphigenia her fate” (Kierkegaard 114). Kierkegaard separates the confession from an aesthetic and ethical paradox which is reversed in *BM* and *NCFOM*. The Judge’s philosophy is not from a commanding God, but anti-Abrahamic in that he sacrifices the boy at his due time. Once the kid has separated from the Judge, he is silently marked for death which becomes the unethical violence he talks about throughout and his ideals around children. What Kierkegaard writes about Abraham’s conflicting story becomes the opposite in *BM*, which is why Bell has such a tough time in *NCFOM* with Chigurh’s actions. Bell’s question of why a man would carve a stone water trough to last tens of thousands of years contrasts the knowledge of why recurring violence exists in his world.

The question being, why would anyone think of the existence past the present in *BM*? Kierkegaard, on another side, values Abraham as a man of extreme faith. Sacrificing

Isaac becomes an example of following a positive outcome. Chigurh and Holden look to abolish such faith in supreme beings. Kierkegaard writes about Abraham's faith: "But Abraham believed, and therefore he was young; for he who always hopes for the best becomes old, deceived by life, and he who is always prepared for the worst becomes old prematurely; but he who has faith, retains eternal youth" (52). According to Kierkegaard, Bell has now lost his faith foreshadowing his retirement and growing old. Opposingly, the Judge's faith being in his terms of chaos never grows old. The kid is cemented before a frozen God as told by the Judge's story and is entombed in the ruins of what would be a stone carving. The permanence of the stone symbolizes the violence that the Judge and Chigurh prophesize in their stories.

Conclusion

The purpose of this paper came from the fact that many interpretations of the Judge and Chigurh were juxtaposed to ideas that did not give their overall power and violence due justice, and their characters occupy more significance in actions and speech that compound into what we term as violence and chaos. The Judge and Chigurh become stories onto their own in that they come from some foreign place beyond the text. In many cases, every argument made concerning their characters did not show that the level of philosophy and violence superseded all interpretation, and that while many religious components fit, the significance of their characters inside the novel should not be underestimated. The violence and philosophy itself can be a structure on its own regarding the importance of their characters. This cognitive dissonance in assuming some order apart from McCarthy's writing—and the characters themselves—gives undue credit to any organized ideal that encompasses the character in entirety. What the Judge and Chigurh represent should be explored further.

With Chigurh, his individual character completes the novel so that his dialogues and actions carry over for the audience. Regardless of the movie's success, finding another villain as dynamic as Chigurh would only make sense in a few examples and some that I have mentioned here. To give the antagonist a moral philosophy that explains their evil to the audience goes beyond how we see them, but also in the way they live according to rules

outside of human boundaries. What they represent pushes the ways in which characters influence literature, but it also brings into question how different aspects of individual pieces of writing can become greater than the embodied work.

The significance of Judge Holden beyond typical villains associated with American Western novels comes from their level of intelligence and foresight inside the philosophy of the heinous actions throughout. To question what McCarthy's goal was in creating such individual characters is difficult to imagine. In fact, Chamberlain's novel adds to the lore around someone dynamically evil as the Judge. The real-life character expressing some of the traits seen in McCarthy's work is interesting. *NCFOM*, while different, adheres to aspects readers see in *BM*. The significance of the all-encompassing characters like the Judge and Chigurh evolves in a way that provides plenty of areas to write about in the future.

The enigma of Judge Holden defies all specific character tropes concerning villains. Holden's speeches and actions are a new genre of villain where depth is added to the nature of his violence. To say that the Judge occupies one specific ideal misreads the level of desolation inside the novel, but more importantly, the level which the main antagonist must be to overpower *BM*'s storyline. That is exactly what Judge Holden's character does. Both novels, character arcs, weapons, coins, ledger books, and dialogues all support a continuous chaotic theme. Beyond Ahab and Abraham, Chigurh and Holden according to Sherrif Bell, "are of a new type," and hopefully this paper makes the case for violent characters to exist solely on their actions and philosophy inside stories

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