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The Influence of Herman Melville's Moby-Dick on Cormac McCarthy's Blood Meridian

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THE INFLUENCE OF HERMAN MELVILLE'S *MOBY-DICK* ON CORMAC
MCCARTHY'S *BLOOD MERIDIAN*

by

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Bachelor of Arts in English
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

Master of Arts – English

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THE GRADUATE COLLEGE

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The Influence of Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick* on Cormac McCarthy's *Blood Meridian*

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Abstract

While many works exert an influence on Cormac McCarthy's 1985 novel *Blood Meridian or the Evening Redness in the West*, I argue in this thesis that Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick* stands above them all in importance. I examine some areas where Melville's influence on McCarthy's work can be most notably located. I argue that Melville's importance to McCarthy can be seen in the latter's use of several characters from *Moby-Dick* in his own novel. I also examine the parallels that arise when one examines the confluences between the two novels' structures, vocabularies, and settings. I also consider how Melville's violent aesthetics influence McCarthy's graphic depictions of bloodshed. The conclusion discusses the benefits of thinking of the novels as complementary texts.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

In recent years, interest in the authorial influences on Cormac McCarthy's *Blood Meridian or the Evening Redness in the West* (1985) has grown considerably. Timothy Parrish states that "among the books that the discerning reader may find in *Blood Meridian* are works by Homer, Herman Melville, William Faulkner, Joseph Conrad, James Joyce, William James, Friedrich Nietzsche, Martin Heidegger, and even the *Beowulf* author" (81). In *Understanding Cormac McCarthy*, Steven Frye asserts that *Blood Meridian* "is an arresting novel that blends all the author's influences, recalling Shakespeare, Melville, Faulkner, and Dostoyevsky, echoing the tone of the King James Bible and Dante's *Divine Comedy*" (66). While these authors and their works exert an influence on *Blood Meridian*, Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick* stands above them all in importance. Given that McCarthy calls *Moby-Dick* his favorite book (Woodward), one reasonably expects to find reverberations of Melville in his writing. Indeed, McCarthy has been "likened to Melville for his prosaic forays into the mythic and metaphysical" (Mayne 4), but these forays only scratch the surface of Melville's influence on McCarthy. Melville's *Pequod* crew greatly informs many aspects of McCarthy's characters, both individually and collectively. Some of *Moby-Dick*'s most memorable scenes and textual features appear in modified forms in *Blood Meridian*, thereby creating salient structural parallels between the novels. When reading McCarthy's novel, one often comes across Melville's vocabulary and also sees parallels between the settings in each text. Most important to McCarthy's gruesome novel, *Blood Meridian*'s ubiquitous bloodshed has its roots in Melville's depictions of violence.

There are many risks in ascribing influence to a novel. One must first know that an author is familiar with the influential text, which in this case has been publicly

acknowledged by McCarthy. From there, one must look at other possible influences and then try to find analogues and correlations. Even then, suggestive parallels may be entirely coincidental. In such cases aesthetic presentation must serve as the most important foundation on which to base one's analysis. Melville and McCarthy, for example, describe occurrences of St. Elmo's fire, but so does Shakespeare in *The Tempest*, where Ariel states:

I boarded the King's ship; now on the beak,
Now in the waist, the deck, in every cabin,
I flam'd amazement: Sometime I'd divide,
And burn in many places; on the topmast,
The yards and boresprit, would I flame distinctly,
Then meet and join. (1.2.196-201)

Melville was undoubtedly familiar with this passage, and one can locate some of Shakespeare's influence on *Moby-Dick's* St. Elmo's fire scene. While one can also find Shakespeare's voice in *Blood Meridian* owing to his enormous influence on Melville, when one looks at the aesthetic treatment of the event, *Moby-Dick's* scene appears to serve as McCarthy's prime source for his own St. Elmo's fire passage. Looking at how the authors present each scene in its respective work makes the line of influence clearer. In "The Candles," Melville presents a far more elaborate scene than Shakespeare and describes the light that comes off of Ahab's harpoon as "a levelled flame of pale, forked fire" (418). Melville's scene is theatrical, vibrant, and detailed. In *Blood Meridian*, McCarthy writes:

They ascended through a rocky pass and lightning shaped out the distant shivering

mountains and lightning rang the stones about and tufts of blue fire clung to the horses like incandescent elementals that would not be driven off. Soft smelterlights advanced upon the metal of the harness, lights ran blue and liquid on the barrels of the guns. Mad jackhares started and checked in the blue glare and high among those clanging crags jokin roehawks crouched in their feathers or cracked a yellow eye at the thunder underfoot. (186)

In cases such as this one, a reader can only make a judgment about how each author portrays the event and then judge whether or not a line of influence exists.

John Sepich notes that a “reader may make an intuitive connection between the presence of St. Elmo’s fire in *Blood Meridian* and in *Moby-Dick*, in which it clung to the mastheads and harpoons . . . but, the reader who assumes only a direct allusion to *Moby-Dick* in *Blood Meridian*’s scene of St. Elmo’s fire will be interested in the historical verification that [Frederick Adolphus] Wislizenus provides” (Notes 113) of such an event in his account of the Mexican-American War. Since *Blood Meridian* is not just an amalgamation of historical sources but a text that self-consciously situates itself among the great works of the Western canon through its unabashed displays of influence, one may say that Wislizenus’ inclusion of the scene in his work provides McCarthy with a historical foundation for inserting St. Elmo’s fire in his novel, but the aesthetic influence over its depiction comes from Melville. Furthermore, historical authorities are often not the most important sources when an author transmutes a factual account into a literary representation. Given that McCarthy not only modifies his historical sources but also creates characters and scenes that are not included in any of his consulted works, one might reasonably assume that because McCarthy knows that the reader will make an

“intuitive connection” between his St. Elmo’s fire scene and Melville’s, its inclusion in the text offers a reasonable suggestion of influence in and of itself.

Tracing McCarthy’s authorial influences is often a far more straightforward task. In some cases McCarthy directly borrows the language of his sources without making any alterations. For example, McCarthy writes: “In the smoking dawn the party riding ragged and bloody with their baled peltries looked less like victors than the harried afterguard of some ruined army retreating across the meridians of chaos and old night, the horses stumbling, the men tottering asleep in the saddles” (163). Some of the language of this passage comes directly from Book I of Milton’s *Paradise Lost*: “A shout that tore Hell’s Concave, and beyond / Frighted the Reign of Chaos and old Night” (1.542-43). The phrase “chaos and old night” also appears in other variations in line 970 of Book II, line 18 of Book III, and line 477 of Book X of *Paradise Lost*. McCarthy’s adoption of sources is rarely as clear as it is in this case, but this example shows that he does not balk at openly borrowing what he finds relevant in the works of other authors.

In his interview with McCarthy, one of the few that the private author has granted, Richard B. Woodward writes:

McCarthy's style owes much to Faulkner's—in its recondite vocabulary, punctuation, portentous rhetoric, use of dialect and concrete sense of the world—a debt McCarthy doesn't dispute. “The ugly fact is books are made out of books,” he says. “The novel depends for its life on the novels that have been written.” His list of those whom he calls the “good writers”—Melville, Dostoyevsky, Faulkner—precludes anyone who doesn't “deal with issues of life and death.”

One can infer from McCarthy’s statements that he would not go to great lengths to

attempt to conceal Melville's influence, or any other author's for that matter, on his work. There is no anxiety of influence for McCarthy, as Harold Bloom suggests in his discussion of McCarthy's adaptation of *Moby-Dick*'s "The Prophet" chapter (Josyph 78-79). McCarthy's creative uses of Melville's novel do not require elaborate theoretical readings to locate. While such readings may reveal hidden and interesting aspects of *Blood Meridian*, they nevertheless often reveal the underlying assumption that when an author borrows from a source he or she must do so antagonistically or surreptitiously, all while engaging in a complex struggle between influence and originality. Just as the "influence of Shakespeare on Melville was fundamentally a profound and pervasive act of fertilization" (Sedgwick 85), Melville provides McCarthy with the imaginative foundation for his novel. Through it all, McCarthy displays Melville's influence on him proudly and openly.

Chapter 2: Characters

The *Pequod* Crew and the Glanton Gang

Through descriptions of his murderous anti-heroes, the Glanton Gang, and the destruction they unleash upon Mexico and the borderlands of the United States, McCarthy repeatedly hearkens back to *Moby-Dick* in *Blood Meridian* as he depicts his group of scalphunters in terms similar to those Melville uses to present the whalers of the *Pequod*.

In *Blood Meridian*, white men, Delaware Indians, a Mexican scout, and a black man ride together with tacit equality, and each man judges another by his willingness to commit murder without compunction or hesitation. In this regard, the Glanton Gang resembles the multi-ethnic *Pequod* crew (Hage 95). In “Rewriting the Southwest: *Blood Meridian* as a Revisionary Western,” Robert L. Jarrett writes:

As in *Moby-Dick* (1851), death unites all, although McCarthy’s killers are viewed far less romantically than Melville’s whalehunters. In his “Knights and Squires” chapter, Melville compares the *Pequod*’s democratically and racially egalitarian crew to medieval knights of chivalry. The allegiance by his troop to Glanton’s code of killing makes all members of equal standing, whatever their race. (76)

Members of the Glanton Gang hold racist beliefs, but they frequently express these ideas only in words since their murderous quest erases notions of racial supremacy. Glanton says that he despises seeing white men without their wits (226), but he finds no shame when he steals their property or murders them in cold blood.

After the scalphunters meet a group of Mexican soldiers traveling their way, the commanding sergeant of the unit becomes interested in Jackson, a black scalphunter. The

judge sketches “for the sergeant a problematic career of the man before them, his hands drafting with marvelous dexterity the shapes of what varied paths conspired here in the ultimate authority of the extant” (84). He offers “for their consideration references to the children of Ham, the lost tribes of Israelites, certain passages from the Greek poets, anthropological speculations as to the propagation of the races in their dispersion and isolation through the agency of geological cataclysm and an assessment of racial traits with respect to climatic and geographical influences” (84-85).

For all the racism verbally expressed by the white members of the Glanton Gang like the judge, the majority of the scalphunters do not discriminate against any of their fellow killers in their actions. At an eating-house, Glanton’s company encounters a bartender named Owens who will not serve Jackson unless he sits at a separate table: “Gentlemen, he said, we dont mind servin people of color. Glad to do it. But we ast for em to set over here at this other table here. Right over here” (234). Bemused, one of the company responds, “What in the hell is he talkin about” (234)? Glanton tells the bartender, “Mr Owens, if you was anything at all other than a goddamn fool you could take one look at these here men and know for a stone fact they aint a one of em goin to get up from where they’re at to go set somewheres else” (235). Asserting the equality that violence bestows upon the members of the gang, the scene concludes with one of the scalphunters, Davy Brown, handing the bartender “a small fiveshot colt from his belt” (235) and ordering him to shoot Jackson. Brown and Jackson give Owens time to shoot first, but he hesitates for too long and Jackson kills the bartender. Retrieving his gun from the dead man, Davy says, “Most terrible nigger I ever seen” (236). Through this violent spectacle, McCarthy contrasts the racist language of the scalphunters with their

overriding belief that the willingness to murder anyone who stands in his way defines a man's worth.

People who did not live by this implicit code pay with their lives. Earlier in the novel, a white man also named Jackson refuses to accept the black Jackson as a member of the gang. McCarthy writes:

In this company there rode two men named Jackson, one black, one white, both forenamed John. Bad blood lay between them and as they rode up under the barren mountains the white man would fall back alongside the other and take his shadow for the shade that was in it and whisper to him. The black would check or start his horse to shake him off. As if the white man were in violation of his person, had stumbled onto some ritual dormant in his dark blood or his dark soul whereby the shape he stood the sun from on that rocky ground bore something of the man himself and in so doing lay imperiled. The white man laughed and crooned things to him that sounded like the words of love. All watched to see how this would go with them but none would caution either back from his course and when Glanton looked to the rear along the column from time to time he seemed to simply reckon them among his number and ride on. (81)

The black Jackson later sits down at the same fire as the white Jackson. McCarthy writes that "there were two fires in this camp and no rules real or tacit as to who should use them" (106). After the white man notices that "the Delawares and John McGill [a Mexican] and the new men in the company had taken their supper" at another fire, "with a gesture and a slurred oath he warned the black away" (106). The white Jackson threatens to shoot the black man if he does not move to the other fire. After this warning,

"the black looked once more across the flames at Glanton and then he moved away in the dark" (106). A few moments later he steps out of the darkness and beheads the white man with a single stroke of his knife. McCarthy concludes the event with a depiction of the overarching equality that governs the gang's unwritten code. No one speaks a word in defense of the white Jackson or tries to punish his killer after witnessing the murder. McCarthy matter-of-factly writes that "Glanton rose. The men moved away. No one spoke" (107). When the riders "set out in the dawn the headless man was sitting like a murdered anchorite discalced in ashes and sark. Someone had taken his gun but the boots stood where he'd put them. The company rode on" (107).

Melville's scenes that emphasize the sense of equality among the whalers do not contain the bloodshed that McCarthy's invariably possess, but they still affirm the same sense of a man's ability to do his job as a measure of his worth. Just as in the Glanton Gang, a sailor's value comes through in his willingness to complete a given task. Characters profess prejudicial beliefs, but these affirmations fall away in the face of monetary gain. The owners of the *Pequod*, Bildad and Peleg, originally refuse to allow Queequeg to sail on board their ship unless he shows papers that confirm his conversion to Christianity. Upon seeing him strike a drop of tar floating on the water with a spear, they immediately change their tone. Peleg shouts, "We must have Hedgehog there, I mean Quohog, in one of our boats. Look ye, Quohog, we'll give ye the ninetieth lay, and that's more than ever was given a harpooner yet out of Nantucket" (84). Like the racism expressed by *Blood Meridian's* scalphunters, possessing the skills to perform one's duty erases all pretense of prejudice. Furthermore, the authoritarian presence of Ahab and Glanton ensures that the characters in their respective texts adhere to rigid

codes of conduct.

McCarthy and Melville both devote a lot of attention to the savage aspects of their characters. Ishmael reflects that the "harpooners, with the great body of the crew, were a far more barbaric, heathenish, and motley set than any of the tame merchant-ship companies which my previous experiences had made me acquainted with" (109). After learning of Ahab's purpose for the *Pequod*, Starbuck grieves, "Oh, God! to sail with such a heathen crew that have small touch of human mothers in them! Whelped somewhere by the sharkish sea" (148). Like the scalphunters who seem to have been imbued with a propensity for violence at birth, the whalers on the *Pequod* appear to have come into this world with the most terrifying aspects of the sea in their blood. Melville describes Ahab as a "grey-headed, ungodly man, chasing with curses a Job's whale round the world, at the head of a crew, too, chiefly made up of mongrel renegades, and castaways, and cannibals" (162). This description of Ahab "contains the same contradictory blend of savagery and refinement that characterizes Judge Holden" (Hage 44). Melville's emphasis on the barbaric nature of the members of the *Pequod* appears in McCarthy's own representations of the scalphunters. McCarthy uses "heathen" exclusively to refer to the Apache and Yuma Indians, but this usage appears more absurd to the reader as the number of atrocities committed by the Glanton Gang increases.

Like McCarthy, Melville frequently describes the *Pequod* sailors in relation to physical and moral darkness. Melville's attitude toward darkness sometimes differs from McCarthy's since McCarthy is not troubled by darkness within the world (Phillips 438). Aesthetically, however, their use of darkness often coincides and creates similar effects. Ishmael admits that "as touching all Ahab's deeper part, every revelation partook more of

significant darkness than of explanatory light” (386). He says that “no man can ever feel his own identity aright except his eyes be closed; as if darkness were indeed the proper element of our essences, though light be more congenial to our clayey part” (55).

Viewing darkness as an innate quality in mankind, McCarthy describes his characters in terms similar to those Melville uses. As *Blood Meridian* progresses and the number of dead grows, the darkness envelops the Glanton Gang further. McCarthy writes that the scalphunters “seemed remote and without substance. Like a patrol condemned to ride out some ancient curse. A thing surmised from the blackness by the creak of leather and chink of metal” (151). Like Melville’s characters, the scalphunters appear inseparable from the darkness. In McCarthy’s novel “darkness marks the desert landscape itself as a place of threat, savagery and death,” (Edwards 36) and gives form to characters by offering up their true representations. McCarthy writes: “The shadows of the smallest stones lay like pencil lines across the sand and the shapes of the men and their mounts advanced elongate before them like strands of the night from which they’d ridden, like tentacles to bind them to the darkness yet to come” (45). Tethering the characters to the external blackness, McCarthy combines images of shadows and darkness with terms of bondage.

Melville and McCarthy use the contrast between fire and darkness in order to present depictions of their characters in their true forms. McCarthy writes that the scalphunters “watched the fire which does contain within it something of men themselves inasmuch as they are less without it and are divided from their origins and are exiles. For each fire is all fires, the first fire and the last ever to be” (244). In a passage with echoes of Melville, McCarthy writes: “Glanton had ordered the fires built up and they rode out

with the flames lighting all the grounds about and the shadowshapes of the desert brush reeling on the sands and the riders treading their thin and flaring shadows until they had crossed altogether into the darkness which so well became them” (163). Melville describes the *Pequod* crewmates “looking into the red heat of the fire, till their eyes felt scorched in their heads” (353):

Their tawny features, now all begrimed with smoke and sweat, their matted beards, and the contrasting barbaric brilliancy of their teeth, all these were strangely revealed in the capricious emblazonings of the works. As they narrated to each other their unholy adventures, their tales of terror told in words of mirth; as their uncivilized laughter forked upwards out of them, like the flames from the furnace; as to and fro, in their front, the harpooners wildly gesticulated with their huge pronged forks and dippers. (353)

In this scene, the crew is transformed into a hellish and diabolical group. McCarthy presents a similar scene. After killing Glanton and most of the scalphunters, Yuma Indians create a bonfire and use the bodies and goods of the murdered to stoke the flames. McCarthy writes:

All else was heaped on the flames and while the sun rose and glistened on their gaudy faces they sat upon the ground each with his new goods before him and they watched the fire and smoked their pipes as might some painted troupe of mimefolk recruiting themselves in such a wayplace far from the towns and the rabble hooting at them across the smoking footlamps, contemplating towns to come and the poor fanfare of trumpet and drum and the rude boards upon which their destinies were inscribed for these people were no less bound and indentured

and they watched like the prefiguration of their own ends the carbonized skulls of their enemies incandescing before them bright as blood among the coals. (276)

Melville's language pervades this passage. The Indians recognize themselves in the fire, the element that brings out unvarnished images of man. The stacking of conjunctions that the reader finds in this scene and throughout *Moby-Dick* appears in another passage related to fire and darkness. Judge Holden, the devil in the flesh, appears to rise out of the fire after a fortune teller's predictions infuriate Glanton:

The judge like a great ponderous djinn stepped through the fire and the flames delivered him up as if he were in some way native to their element. He put his arms around Glanton. Someone snatched the old woman's blindfold from her and she and the juggler were clouted away and when the company turned in to sleep and the low fire was roaring in the blast like a thing alive these four yet crouched at the edge of the firelight among their strange chattels and watched how the ragged flames fled down the wind as if sucked by some maelstrom out there in the void, some vortex in that waste apposite to which man's transit and his reckonings alike lay abrogate. As if beyond will or fate he and his beasts and his trappings moved both in card and in substance under consignment to some third and other destiny. (96)

As in Melville's passage, people surround an animate fire that appears to contain and reveal their inner selves. The final simile provides closure to McCarthy's urgent expression and ponders the question of what agency controls the fate of men, which Ishmael also considers when he wonders if "such a crew, so officered, seemed specially picked and packed by some infernal fatality to help him [Ahab] to his monomaniac

revenge” (162).

McCarthy transmutes the language of several passages from *Moby-Dick* and applies it to his characters in intriguing ways. In Chapter 3 of *Moby-Dick*, Ishmael arrives at the Spouter-Inn. After several moments of pondering the meaning of an oil-painting, he decides that it depicts an "exasperated whale . . . in the enormous act of impaling himself upon the three mastheads" (20-21) of a Cape-Horner. To supplement this violent picture, he describes the wall facing the painting. Ishmael states:

The opposite wall of this entry was hung all over with a heathenish array of monstrous clubs and spears. Some were thickly set with glittering teeth resembling ivory saws; others were tufted with knots of human hair; and one was sickle-shaped, with a vast handle sweeping round like the segment made in the new-mown grass by a long-armed mower. You shuddered as you gazed, and wondered what monstrous cannibal and savage could ever have gone a death-harvesting with such a hacking, horrifying implement. Mixed with these were rusty old whaling lances and harpoons all broken and deformed. Some were storied weapons. (21)

McCarthy takes the language of this ekphrasis and personifies the terror and sense of horrible mystery that Ishmael puts into his description of the weapons on the wall.

The influence of this passage on *Blood Meridian* emerges in a scene where McCarthy gives a description of the kid's first observation of the Glanton Gang. After being let out from prison, the kid stands in the street with his fellow prisoners. McCarthy writes:

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 bared 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. (78)

McCarthy presents the Glanton Gang as personified forms of the death-implements hanging on the Spouter Inn's walls. The scalphunters dress themselves in the human parts that decorate the weapons Ishmael observes, and the cannibalistic dress of the riders inspires the same fear as the implements of whaling do in Ishmael. The kid and Ishmael also witness these things at similar points in their journeys, when neither character has yet to experience his trade in any substantial way. A further image in *Moby-Dick* conjures up a picture of the cannibalistically dressed scalphunters. Ishmael describes the *Pequod* as:

A cannibal of a craft, tricking herself forth in the chased bones of her enemies. All round, her unpanelled, open bulwarks were garnished like one continuous jaw, with the long sharp teeth of the sperm whale, inserted there for pins, to fasten her old hempen thews and tendons to. Those thews ran not through base blocks of land wood, but deftly travelled over sheaves of sea-ivory. (67)

The *Pequod*'s "helm is *reverend*, as, indeed, she must be in her resemblance to these massive, revered, and ancient structures dedicated in some way to murder and death" (Robillard 78). McCarthy's description of the scalphunters bedecked in the horrible carnage of their trade aligns with Melville's descriptions of his "cannibal of a craft."

In addition to these features, the Glanton Gang's movement across the desert landscape often reads like the sailing of the *Pequod* across the ocean. McCarthy's hypnotic repetition of "they rode on" contains reverberations of Melville, who often writes of the *Pequod* "sailing on," "moving on," or "tearing on," using different variations to emphasize the continuous movement of the ship. In "The Spirit Spout," Melville describes the migration of the *Pequod*: "and the silent ship, as if manned by painted sailors in wax, day after day tore on through all the swift madness and gladness of the demoniac waves" (202). During the second day of the hunt for Moby Dick, "the ship tore on; leaving such a furrow in the sea as when a cannon-ball, missent, becomes a plough-share and turns up the level field" (454). As with McCarthy, Melville uses variations of "they rode on" as an afterthought that marks the end of a digressive thought or passage, as when he writes: "But Ahab heard nothing; for his own voice was high-lifted then; and the boat leaped on" (463). In a description with language similar to many of the battle scenes in *Blood Meridian*, Melville states that "the burning ship drove on, as if remorselessly commissioned to some vengeful deed. So the pitch and sulphur-freighted brigs of the bold Hydriote, Canaris, issuing from their midnight harbors, with broad sheets of flame for sails, bore down upon the Turkish frigates, and folded them in conflagrations" (353).

Although the two crews pursue vastly different targets, Melville's descriptions of

the *Pequod* crew and the ship's movement influence McCarthy's depictions of the Glanton Gang's murderous journey across the Southwest. As will be shown, Melville's influence extends to several individual characters in *Blood Meridian*.

Ishmael and the Kid

McCarthy uses *Blood Meridian's* opening sentence to establish a forthright relationship between the kid and Ishmael. In order to associate the kid with another character who embarks on a great, perilous journey, McCarthy imitates Ishmael's famous introduction, where Melville writes:

Call me Ishmael. Some years ago—never mind how long precisely—having little or no money in my purse, and nothing particular to interest me on shore, I thought I would sail about a little and see the watery part of the world. It is a way I have of driving off the spleen, and regulating the circulation. Whenever I find myself growing grim about the mouth; whenever it is a damp, drizzly November in my soul; whenever I find myself involuntarily pausing before coffin warehouses, and bringing up the rear of every funeral I meet; and especially whenever my hypos get such an upper hand of me, that it requires a strong moral principle to prevent me from deliberately stepping into the street, and methodically knocking people's hats off—then, I account it high time to get to sea as soon as I can. This is my substitute for pistol and ball. (12)

Beginning his novel with a direct allusion to *Moby-Dick*, McCarthy provides his readers with a description of his main character's abject origins, all while developing an unambiguous association between Ishmael and the kid through an introductory three-word imperative sentence:

See the child. He is pale and thin, he wears a thin and ragged linen shirt. He stokes the scullery fire. Outside lie dark turned fields with rags of snow and darker woods beyond that harbor yet a few last wolves. His folk are known for hewers of wood and drawers of water but in truth his father has been a schoolmaster. He lies in drink, he quotes from poets whose names are now lost.

(3)

The kid's squalid upbringing sets into motion the chain of events that influence his violent adventure through the Southwest. Having no substitute for pistol and ball, the kid embarks on a journey that calls for such instruments of death.

In both novels, neither character intends to take part in his fateful journey.

Ishmael says, "As most young candidates for the pains and penalties of whaling stop at this same New Bedford, thence to embark on their voyage, it may as well be related that I, for one, had no idea of so doing" (17). Despite the kid's violent nature, he too has no intention of leaving on his murderous quest. The kid gets involved with Captain White's filibusters only after a soldier approaches him. The soldier visits the kid after the latter kills a Mexican bartender, telling the lamentably ragged youth that the captain wants to "sign that feller up" (29). The soldier asks him, "You ready to go to Mexico?" to which the kid responds, "I aint lost nothin down there" (29). After being promised a horse and ammunition, the kid agrees to meet the captain and decides to join White's outfit.

The kid is an Ishmael who is haunted by his actions, an unlettered traveler who does not glorify his trade through long discourses like Melville's character. Yet, McCarthy does provide the reader with scenes that give the reader tremendous insight into the kid's heart. In *Blood Meridian's* penultimate chapter, the kid stands over a

massacre of penitents, and seeing “a woman kneeling in a faded rebozo with her eyes cast down” (315):

He spoke to her in a low voice. He told her that he was an American and that he was a long way from the country of his birth and that he had no family and that he had traveled much and seen many things and had been at war and endured hardships. He told her that he would convey her to a safe place, some part of her countrypeople who would welcome her and that she should join them for he could not leave her in this place or she would surely die. (315)

The kid asks her, “No puedes eschúcarme?” only to discover that “she weighed nothing. She was just a dried shell and she had been dead in that place for years” (315). Instead of a rhetorically complex passage like a reader would expect from Ishmael in a similar situation, McCarthy offers this brief scene in which the kid tries to purge himself of his actions. In this paragraph, one sees something as spiritually and philosophically deep as Ishmael’s musings on whales. As Timothy Parrish argues: “The passage is beautiful and moving unlike any other in the book. This is the only moment when the kid is revealed as someone who hurts because of what he has done; it is the only moment in the book when a character is portrayed as psychologically vulnerable” (111). McCarthy gives his readers a scene every bit as incisive into the psychology of his character as Ishmael’s ponderings. This moment, however, is not the only one in the book when the kid’s troubled conscience is revealed. The kid gets arrested shortly before he addresses the dead woman, and while “in his cell he began to speak with a strange urgency of things few men have seen in a lifetime and his jailers said that his mind had come uncottered by the acts of blood in which he had participated” (305).

The kid's relationship to Toadvine, McCarthy's Queequeg, further aligns him with Ishmael. With the bond between Ishmael and Queequeg as his model, McCarthy develops the friendship between the kid and Toadvine more than any other in his novel. After their violent first encounter, the kid and Toadvine appear alongside one another in several scenes that emphasize their bond. In a terrible gunfight in Nacori, McCarthy depicts the two scalphunters as "standing back to back with their pistols at port like duellists" (180). Later, the kid receives an arrow in his leg, but Toadvine refuses to leave him. McCarthy writes that "the kid's leg had stiffened and he hobbled after with a section of wagontongue for a crutch and twice he told Toadvine to go on but he would not" (278). Aside from the kid's three acts of kindness toward Sproule, Tate, and Tobin, Toadvine is the only other character in the novel who acts in such a compassionate manner (Sepich *Notes* 136). Toadvine's resemblance to Queequeg in this deeper regard stands out in a novel in which wounded scalphunters are often murdered by their comrades without compunction.

Critics have made similar attempts at displacing Ishmael and the kid from their positions as the main characters in their respective texts. While these attempts possibly have more to do with literary trends than with Melville's influence on McCarthy, they nevertheless suggest a shared uneasiness about the role Ishmael and the kid perform in *Moby-Dick* and *Blood Meridian*, an apprehension that may arise from some form of influence. In *The American Novel and Its Tradition*, Richard Chase says that Ishmael himself all but disappears as a character and as the observer becomes hardly more than the voice of the omniscient author" (94). Given that nearly every chapter of *Moby-Dick* ends with an idiosyncratic reflection of Ishmael's, not an omniscient author's, this

assertion is not correct. To say that these reflections turn Ishmael into “hardly more than the voice of the omniscient author” detracts from Melville’s elaborate construction of his multi-faceted narrator. From the very beginning of *Moby-Dick*, Melville presents Ishmael in such a way as to make the reader scrutinize his narrator’s statements, and one should be even more vigilant when Ishmael appears all-knowing.

Willard P. Greenwood claims that “like Melville’s Ishmael, the kid is essential to the narrative at the beginning and end of the novel, but he is felt as an absence in the middle of the book” (52). The kid certainly gets subsumed into the Glanton Gang, but *Blood Meridian* nevertheless remains his story. Even when McCarthy does not mention the kid individually, readers are unlikely to forget that he partakes in the massive amount of violence that occurs during his perceived “absence.” Dana Phillips calls the kid “a remarkably reduced version of Ishmael” who cannot be called “the main ‘character’ in *Blood Meridian*, since McCarthy seems to have largely dispensed with the concept of character in fashioning his material” (440-41). Given Ishmael’s complexity, any version of him will be remarkably reduced. Furthermore, it is also not accurate to say that McCarthy largely dispenses with the concept of character in *Blood Meridian*, especially with regard to the kid. As Diane Luce argues, “McCarthy is subtler and more reticent about his characters’ psychology than many modernist and contemporary novelists, but the psychological dimension is always a significant factor, even when it is not foregrounded” (ix). Attempts to attenuate Melville’s influence on McCarthy’s main character do not take into account this subtlety, and critics instead try to argue that the kid’s silence distances him from Ishmael. Yet, the two authors have different visions and purposes in mind, and one reasonably expects incongruities between the two characters to

exist. What remains in McCarthy's text, however, is a main character whose identity is interwoven with the wandering, troubled Ishmael.

Ahab, Moby Dick, Fedallah, and Judge Holden

Of all the characters in *Blood Meridian* to have drawn attention from scholars due to a resemblance to a figure in *Moby-Dick*, McCarthy's Judge Holden has received the most scrutiny. Interpretations of exactly who in *Moby-Dick* acts as a model for the judge have also been the subject of the most divergent discussions of anyone in *Blood Meridian*. The judge has been described as McCarthy's Ahab, Fedallah, Queequeg, and Moby Dick. While such diffuse parallels may suggest that Melville's text has no clear influence on McCarthy's in this regard, the incorporation of so many of Melville's characters' features into the judge shows the creative and adaptive ways that McCarthy uses *Moby-Dick*.

Attempts by critics to pin down the literary forebears of the judge have led to the offering of multiple comparisons. Rick Wallach avers that:

American literature has produced few figures as memorably bizarre and commanding as *Blood Meridian*'s Judge Holden. Along with Charles Brockden Brown's Carwin, Melville's Ahab, Flannery O'Connor's Tarwater and Nabokov's Kinbote, Holden ranks among those great literary scoundrels who combine cunning and malignity with scene-stealing charisma and defy our efforts to explain their currency by reference to their origins. (125)

Susan Kollin sees Holden as "a pastiche of imperial figures such as Joseph Conrad's Kurtz and Herman Melville's Ahab" (568). For Vereen Bell, the judge is "a more terrifying figure than either Ahab or Kurtz because his madness is wholly under control

and because he rather than justice—divine or social—prevails” (119). The judge clearly lends himself to various interpretations, but it is the traits that he shares with Melville’s Ahab, Moby Dick, and Fedallah that have inspired the most interesting criticism on how Melville’s characters exert an influence on McCarthy’s.

The kid first sees the judge at a tent meeting in Nacogdoches. McCarthy writes: “He was bald as a stone and he had no trace of beard and he had no brows to his eyes nor lashes to them. He was close on to seven feet in height and he stood smoking a cigar even in this nomadic house of God and he seemed to have removed his hat only to chase the rain from it for now he put it on again” (6). After the judge creates a mob that erupts in violence after it is told that the reverend to whom they have been listening is a dissolute fraud, the judge somehow reaches a saloon before the kid, who leaves the tent as soon as violence erupts, does. McCarthy writes: “The bar was that tall not every man could even get his elbows up on it but it came just to the judge’s waist and he stood with his hands placed flatwise on the wood, leaning slightly, as if about to give another address” (8). The bartender tells the kid that the judge has paid for his drink, giving the first indication of Holden’s interest in him (8). As *Blood Meridian* unfolds, Judge Holden develops into a loquacious, violent, intelligent, and terrifying man, one who resembles several characters from *Moby-Dick* at different times.

While the enigmatic nature of the judge inspires different readings with regard to his relationship to Melville’s characters, some of these interpretations are clearly stretches that bear little relation to either text. For example, Joshua J. Masters sees Judge Holden as an adaptation of Queequeg, Melville’s harpooner from Kokovoko. Masters states that:

Although critics often compare the judge to a more deranged version of Captain Ahab, none has picked up on his uncanny relationship to Melville's bald giant Queequeg. The judge can be read as a strange inversion of Queequeg's tattooed arabesque, for rather than bearing the mark of history's inscription, he is instead ever-reborn like a bizarre infant in swaddling clothes. (29)

Masters does not go on to define this "uncanny relationship" further, and one wonders how, aside from their mutual baldness (though one would not want to deny Queequeg his "small scalp-knot"), any serious comparisons between the characters could be made. The judge, who eventually murders the kid, is a despicable sadist who stands in utter contrast to Queequeg, the caring savage who remains Ishmael's loyal friend and companion.

One steps onto firmer ground when one proposes that Ahab serves as a model for McCarthy's Judge Holden. One recognizes Ahab in the judge's attempts to gain mastery of the world through knowledge, violence, and self-assertion. Neil Campbell views Holden as "a desert Ahab chasing life-in-death embodying the terrifying, but often ignored, contradictions of the West" (221). Vereen Bell asserts that "to point out that one articulate spokesman of this novel, Judge Holden, is a direct descendant of Melville's Captain Ahab is to summon up an American tradition—the compulsion to make war upon the unknown, to challenge destiny itself—that helps us make sense of it" (119). This aspect of Ahab is the most important parallel between him and the judge. For Holden, the unknown challenges his dominion over the world and hinders his determination to stand suzerain over it. When Toadvine asks the judge why he constantly makes notations and sketches in his journal, Holden responds:

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. But that man who sets himself the task of singling out the thread of order from the tapestry will by the decision alone have taken charge of the world and it is only by such taking charge that he will effect a way to dictate the terms of his own fate. (199)

The judge dictates the terms of his own fate by gathering artifacts with the purpose of destroying them. After he draws the likenesses of cave paintings into his ledger, “with a piece of broken chert he scappled away of the designs, leaving no trace of it only a raw place on the stone where it had been” (173). After sketching a footpiece, “he crushed it into a ball of foil and pitched it into the fire. He gathered up the other artifacts and cast them also into the fire ... then he sat with his hands cupped in his lap as if his counsel had been sought at its creation” (140). Webster, one of the scalphunters, “asked the judge what he aimed to do with those notes and sketches and the judge smiled and said that it was his intention to expunge them from the memory of man” (140). By destroying artifacts, the judge reshapes the past to which he resents being inextricably bound. Ahab, who refers to himself as “the Fates' lieutenant” (459), also seeks to impose his own order upon the world. His reminder to Starbuck that “this whole act's immutably decreed. 'Twas rehearsed by thee and me a billion years before this ocean rolled” (459) is his attempt to force a rational order upon events, from his dismemberment to his quest for revenge, and thereby gain a sense of control over his destiny. The judge is more certain in his claims, and more destructive, but both characters attempt to establish their own mastery over the world through sheer force of will.

McCarthy injects Ahab’s oratorical style into the judge’s many speeches about

topics as wide-ranging as warfare, geology, history, and fate. For Erik Hage, Holden's "high oratory and inscrutability calls to mind Ahab" (44). Dana Phillips notes that when they are compared alongside of Ahab's, "the judge's speeches are more than lawyerly in their expansiveness: they are also nihilistic" (450). One hears the judge particularly in Ahab's speeches that display the captain's hubris, malice, and monomania, as when Ahab states:

Hark ye yet again,—the little lower layer. All visible objects, man, are but as pasteboard masks. But in each event—in the living act, the undoubted deed—there, some unknown but still reasoning thing puts forth the mouldings of its features from behind the unreasoning mask. If man will strike, strike through the mask! How can the prisoner reach outside except by thrusting through the wall? To me, the white whale is that wall, shoved near to me; he heaps me; I see in him outrageous strength, with an inscrutable malice sinewing it. That inscrutable thing is chiefly what I hate; and be the white whale agent, or be the white whale principal, I will wreak that hate upon him. Talk not to me of blasphemy, man; I'd strike the sun if it insulted me. For could the sun do that, then could I do the other; since there is ever a sort of fair play herein, jealousy presiding over all creations. But not my master, man, is even that fair play. Who's over me? Truth hath no confines. (144)

McCarthy adopts this speech of Ahab's where the captain claims that he would "strike the sun if it insulted" him, and he writes of the judge:

He'd long forsworn all weighing of consequence and allowing as he did that men's destinies are given yet he usurped to contain within him all that he would

ever be in the world and all that the world would be to him and be his charter written in the urstone itself he claimed agency and said so and he'd drive the remorseless sun on to its final endarkenment as if he'd ordered it all ages since, before there were paths anywhere, before there were men or suns to go upon them. (243)

The judge is an Ahab with an even grander object of hatred, one whose contempt is not restricted to a single, animate being but to a world that has yet to submit to his demands. Holden claims that “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” (198), and like Ahab the judge seeks to destroy the inscrutable things that haunt him.

Melville and McCarthy express Ahab and the judge's attempts at waging war on the world through depictions of them standing above others, especially during the night. This aesthetic choice emphasizes their mastery, real or perceived, over their subordinates. An early example occurs when Ahab, who begins to resent the confinement of his quarters, starts to pace alone on-deck at night when the other sailors are sleeping (112). Toward *Moby-Dick's* conclusion, Ishmael states:

When in working with his hands at some lofty almost isolated place in the rigging, which chances to afford no foothold, the sailor at sea is hoisted up to that spot, and sustained there by the rope; under these circumstances, its fastened end on deck is always given in strict charge to some one man who has the special watch of it ... [lest] if, unprovided with a constant watchman, the hoisted sailor should by some carelessness of the crew be cast adrift and fall all swooping to the

sea. So Ahab's proceedings in this matter were not unusual; the only strange thing about them seemed to be, that Starbuck, almost the one only man who had ever ventured to oppose him with anything in the slightest degree approaching to decision—one of those too, whose faithfulness on the look-out he had seemed to doubt somewhat;—it was strange, that this was the very man he should select for his watchman; freely giving his whole life into such an otherwise distrusted person's hands. (440)

Aside from the way Melville elevates Ahab over his subordinates, this scene is important because Ahab's surrender of his safety to Starbuck also acts as an assertion of his mastery over him. Ahab knows that despite the captain's having called him a dog, Starbuck will not compromise his safety out of duty and love for him. Even when Starbuck stands outside of Ahab's cabin and ponders murdering him, one wonders just how close Starbuck actually comes to committing the act. The depiction of Ahab standing, walking, or working above his crew functions as an illustration of his physical, spiritual, and mental domination over his subordinates. Melville includes another scene that shows Ahab hovering over his men. When the whalers first catch sight of Moby Dick:

The men on deck rushed to the rigging to behold the famous whale they had so long been pursuing. Ahab had now gained his final perch, some feet above the other look-outs, Tashtego standing just beneath him on the cap of the top-gallant-mast, so that the Indian's head was almost on a level with Ahab's heel. From this height the whale was now seen some mile or so ahead, at every roll of the sea revealing his high sparkling hump, and regularly jetting his silent spout into the air. (446)

When the men reply to Ahab that they have yet to spot the whale again, he orders “them to lift him to his perch. In this way the day wore on; Ahab, now aloft and motionless; anon, unrestingly pacing the planks” (452).

As one might expect, examples of McCarthy depicting the judge as standing high above everyone else are more imaginative and fanciful since the judge is not confined to a ship. McCarthy writes that “someone had reported the judge naked atop the walls, immense and pale in the revelations of lightning, striding the perimeter up there and declaiming in the old epic mode” (118). McCarthy later writes: “Farther along the ridge and slightly elevated on a ledge of sandstone squatted the judge, pale and naked” (148). One “night a caravan passed, the heads of the horses and mules muffled in serapes, led along silently in the dark, the riders cautioning one to the other with their fingers to their lips. The judge atop a great boulder overlooking the trail watched them go” (McCarthy 199). Shortly before reaching the Colorado River, the scalphunters “climbed up through a low range of barren granite hills to a stark promontory where the judge, triangulating from known points of landscape, reckoned anew their course” (251). The night before the Yuma Indians slaughter the Glanton Gang, “the judge was standing on the rise in silhouette against the evening sun like some great balden archimandrite” (273).

Similarities between Holden and Ahab continue when one examines their “adoption” of younger characters of abnormal mental states not long before each novel’s conclusion. Judge Holden’s relationship with James Robert, most often referred to as “the idiot” in *Blood Meridian*, has parallels with Ahab’s bond with Pip, the young black cabin boy who loses his wits after his shipmates abandon him in the sea. While Pip undergoes his transformation after a traumatic experience, James Robert is reported to have “just

been born that way” (239). Even at his peaks of lunacy, Pip possesses the ability to talk and communicate, whereas Robert, an imbecile covered in his own filth who croaks “hoarsely after the sun like some queer unruly god abducted from a race of degenerates,” (251) appears more animal than human. Melville’s Pip, despite his insanity, possesses the ability to communicate his adulation of Ahab to the captain himself, something that Robert is unable to do. This ability lends a dimension to their relationship that is nonexistent in that of the judge and the idiot. The dialogue in "The Log and the Line" between Pip and Ahab imbues their bond with transcendent qualities, whereas the Judge's relationship with the idiot never moves out of the carnal realm.

In a scene that establishes the judge as kind of savior to the idiot, Holden encounters Robert when he sees the young man drowning in a river. McCarthy writes:

Now the judge on his midnight rounds was passing along at just this place stark naked himself—such encounters being commoner than men suppose or who would survive any crossing by night—and he stepped into the river and seized up the drowning idiot, snatching it aloft by the heels like a great midwife and slapping it on the back to let the water out. A birth scene or a baptism or some ritual not yet inaugurated into any canon. He twisted the water from its hair and he gathered the naked and sobbing fool into his arms and carried it up into the camp and restored it among its fellows. (259)

The judge’s fascination with Robert is certainly pedophilic, and his sexual interest in the boy is confirmed when Yuma Indians enter the judge’s quarters and find “the idiot and a girl of perhaps twelve years cowering naked in the floor. Behind them also naked stood the judge” (275). Despite the differences in these relationships, a strong enough parallel

exists to suggest that McCarthy borrows from Melville in his depiction of the judge's adoption of the idiot.

Critics have also noted Holden's affinities with *Moby-Dick's* eponymous whale. The White Whale provides McCarthy with the inspiration for many of his physical descriptions of the judge. Erik Hage writes that "the seven-foot leviathan of a judge has unmistakably Ahab-like qualities, and beyond his apparent immortality there is also compelling enough imagery to support the judge's kinship to the whale itself" (47). Dana Phillips states that "given Judge Holden's bulk, his hairless white skin, and 'pleated brow not unlike a dolphin's' (93), it seems appropriate to view him as a refiguration not of Ahab, as some readers have done, but of the great white whale himself" (458). This description of the judge's brow initially suggests a direct influence from Melville's description of Moby Dick. Ishmael says that in the whale's head "you see no one point precisely; not one distinct feature is revealed; no nose, eyes, ears, or mouth; no face; he has none, proper; nothing but that one broad firmament of a forehead, pleated with riddles; dumbly lowering with the doom of boats, and ships, and men" (292). At one point, Moby Dick shoots "his pleated head lengthwise beneath the boat" (449) and pushes "his pleated forehead through the ocean" (457). As Petra Mundik notes, Holden not only "evokes the sinister whiteness and monstrosity of Moby Dick; at one stage the judge is even described as a manatee" (80). McCarthy writes:

He shone like the moon so pale he was and not a hair to be seen anywhere upon that vast corpus, not in any crevice nor in the great bores of his nose and not upon his chest nor in his ears nor any tuft at all above his eyes nor to the lids thereof.

The immense and gleaming dome of his naked skull looked like a cap for bathing

pulled down to the otherwise darkened skin of his face and neck. As that great bulk lowered itself into the bath the waters rose perceptibly and when he had submerged himself to the eyes he looked about with considerable pleasure, the eyes slightly crinkled, as if he were smiling under the water like some pale and bloated manatee surfaced in a bog while behind his small and close-set ear the wedged cigar smoked gently just above the waterline. (167-68)

Yet one should not discount the consideration that Holden is a reconfiguration of Ahab, as Phillips suggests, based on descriptions that compare the judge's brow with that of the whale. After all, the brow is an important physical feature in Melville's novel, and it is frequently used as a physical marker to describe Ahab. During the whale hunt in "The Grand Armada," Ahab's brow is described as being "gaunt and ribbed" (321). Shortly before Starbuck confronts Ahab about his mad pursuit of the White Whale, the captain stands over his charts "wrinkling his brow" (393), and afterwards "with an iron brow he paced to and fro in the little cabin; but presently the thick plaits of his forehead relaxed" (394). The light of a lamp is described as throwing "shifting gleams and shadows of lines upon his wrinkled brow, till it almost seemed that while he himself was marking out lines and courses on the wrinkled charts, some invisible pencil was also tracing lines and courses upon the deeply marked chart of his forehead" (171). Other examples exist of Melville's tendency to describe Ahab and Moby Dick alike by their brows, but those given here suffice to show that one might easily view the judge as a reconstruction of Ahab if one decides to use the similarity of physical descriptions as the basis for locating influence.

Two additional features that align Moby Dick with the judge are the characters'

apparent immortality and ubiquity. Ishmael notes that some sailors claim that Moby Dick “had actually been encountered in opposite latitudes at one and the same instant of time”

(158). Ishmael also says:

Forced into familiarity, then, with such prodigies as these; and knowing that after repeated, intrepid assaults, the White Whale had escaped alive; it cannot be much matter of surprise that some whalemens should go still further in their superstitions; declaring Moby Dick not only ubiquitous, but immortal (for immortality is but ubiquity in time); that though groves of spears should be planted in his flanks, he would still swim away unharmed; or if indeed he should ever be made to spout thick blood, such a sight would be but a ghastly deception; for again in unensanguined billows hundreds of leagues away, his unsullied jet would once more be seen. (158-59)

Just as the White Whale appears capable of being in all waters at all times, the judge seems to be everywhere always. In addition to their ubiquity, suggestions of immortality surround the judge and Moby Dick. In “The Town-Ho’s Story,” Don Sebastian asks Ishmael, “Sir sailor, but do whales have christenings? Whom call you Moby Dick?” (221). Ishmael responds, “A very white, and famous, and most deadly immortal monster, Don;—but that would be too long a story” (221). Melville contrasts Moby Dick’s inability to be vanquished with Ahab’s hubristic belief that he cannot be destroyed by the White Whale after Fedallah delivers a prophecy stating that only hemp could kill him. Responding to Fedallah, Ahab shouts: “The gallows, ye mean. — I am immortal then, on land and on sea ... Immortal on land and on sea!” (411).

Harold Bloom states, “As another white enigma, the albino Judge, like the

albino whale, cannot be slain” (259). On the second day of the battle in the desert with the judge, the kid tells Tobin that Holden “aint nothin. You told me so yourself. Men are made of the dust of the earth” and that “the judge was a man like all men” (297). Tobin responds, “Face him down if he is so” (297). This passage gives further expression to the idea that judge is immortal. In stating “he aint nothing,” the kid unknowingly affirms the judge’s immortality and ubiquity since Holden appears by all accounts to encompass everything and to be immune from physical harm.

After he murders the kid in an outhouse, the judge reenters a saloon where not long before the two had been conversing. In the final chapter’s last paragraph, McCarthy writes:

And they are dancing, the board floor slamming under the jackboots and the fiddlers grinning hideously over their canted pieces. Towering over them all is the judge and he is naked dancing, his small feet lively and quick and now in doubletime and bowing to the ladies, huge and pale and hairless, like an enormous infant. He never sleeps, he says. He says he’ll never die. He bows to the fiddlers and sashays backwards and throws back his head and laughs deep in his throat and he is a great favorite, the judge. He wafts his hat and the lunar dome of his skull passes palely under the lamps and he swings about and takes possession of one of the fiddles and he pirouettes and makes a pass, two passes, dancing and fiddling at once. His feet are light and nimble. He never sleeps. He says that he will never die. He dances in light and in shadow and he is a great favorite. He never sleeps, the judge. He is dancing, dancing. He says that he will never die. (335)

Like the “huge and pail and hairless” Moby Dick, the judge appears by all accounts to be incapable of dying. The “man progressing over the plain by means of holes which he is making in the ground” (337) in *Blood Meridian*’s epilogue may be the judge’s ultimate enemy, but over the course of the novel the judge’s assertion that he will never die is not farfetched. When the kid sees the judge in the final chapter several decades have passed, yet Holden “seemed little changed or none in all these years” (325). He does not even appear to be vulnerable to any serious harm. A strange force surrounds Holden, as on two separate occasions two scalphunters cannot kill him when an opportunity arises. The first opportunity appears after the scalphunters sack a camp of Apache Indians. They discover a young child alive, and during the night “some of the men played with it and made it laugh and they gave it jerky and it sat chewing and watching gravely the figures that passed above it. They covered it with a blanket and in the morning the judge was dandling it on one knee while the men saddled their horses” (164). Toadvine returns to find the child scalped. Threatening Holden with a gun against his head, Toadvine simply states, “Goddamn you, Holden” (164). The judge tells him, “You either shoot or take it way. Do it now” (164). Toadvine holsters his pistol and the judge smiles at him as he cleans the scalp on his pants. In a novel where violence is unrestrained and men are rarely hesitant to kill one another, Toadvine’s reluctance to kill Holden suggests that the judge has some kind of control over him.

A similar scene occurs with the kid. During the three-day gunfight with the judge in the desert, a battle that recalls the three-day pursuit of Moby Dick in Melville’s “The Chase” chapters, the kid finds himself unable to shoot the judge. Tobin urges the kid to murder Holden while he stands unarmed at a well. The priest implores the kid, “Do it for

the love of God. Do it or I swear your life is forfeit” (285). The kid hesitates, and the judge escapes only to return again for two more days of conflict. On the final day, the judge tells the kid, “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. I’ve passed before your gunsights twice this hour and will pass a third time” (299). Whether the kid does not kill the judge out of fear or because something external makes it physically impossible to kill Holden, the judge leaves the conflict unharmed.

Reading the judge as Moby Dick has its limits when one moves beyond the judge’s paleness, size, timelessness, and pervasiveness. Willard P. Greenwood asserts that Holden “is a mythic creature, much like Melville’s white whale. He is a seven-foot, hairless albino with a powerful intellect. He is fluent in many languages and has a comprehensive knowledge of history, science, religion, and philosophy. He is a human embodiment of the white whale itself” (51). How many of these qualities and traits can one realistically apply to Moby Dick? Ultimately, the whale is “an antagonist without knowledge of the plot; a great creature, innocent, blind, unaware of its name, its role, its past transgression, and finally, in the field of battle, perhaps a mistaken White Whale, knowing only the indifferent harpoons flashing out from the hostile, death-eager boats” (Hardwick 96), and as such does not entirely align with the conflict-seeking judge. Calling Moby Dick an antagonist is difficult in itself. As William Ellery Sedgwick notes, although Moby Dick represents absolute evil to Ahab, “unless the word is so denatured as to be synonymous with harmful or dangerous, he cannot be called evil. If a man sees evil in him, then it is his own evil which is reflected back at him” (101). The judge, who is evil incarnate, has some of Moby Dick’s traits, but to call him the human embodiment of

the White Whale is to push aside crucial fundamental differences between the two characters.

It is the influence of another of Melville's characters on Holden that is the most cohesive to the spirit of both novels. The reading of the judge as Fedallah is the most intriguing and convincing one to have been offered. John Sepich argues that *Moby-Dick's* "Fedallah 'the Parsee' (462), the 'fire worshipper' (362), who follows his captain to his death, stands as analog to Glanton's men in their arcane universe" ("Dance" 26). In *The Pastoralism of Cormac McCarthy*, Georg Guillemin limits Sepich's suggestion and argues that "if anyone, the judge resembles the diabolic figure of the Parsee Fedallah in *Moby-Dick*" (154). Holden is the verbose Fedallah, an incarnation of the prophetic Parsee let loose upon the deserts of the Southwest to sow destruction.

Although Melville gives the reader a full account of how Ahab met Fedallah, one assumes the initial encounter was as strange as or stranger than the report of how the Glanton Gang first came upon the judge. Ishmael does tell the reader:

... that while the subordinate phantoms soon found their place among the crew, though still as it were somehow distinct from them, yet that hair-turbaned Fedallah remained a muffled mystery to the last. Whence he came in a mannerly world like this, by what sort of unaccountable tie he soon evinced himself to be linked with Ahab's peculiar fortunes; nay, so far as to have some sort of a half-hinted influence; Heaven knows, but it might have been even authority over him; all this none knew. (199)

Tobin, the expriest, delineates the origins of Glanton and the judge's relationship in far more detail than Melville explains Fedallah and Ahab's. The scalphunters first

encounter the judge while they are on the run from a pursuing group of Indians. Tobin says, “There he [the judge] set on a rock in the middle of the greatest desert you’d ever want to see. Just perched on this rock like a man waitin for a coach” (124). Tobin continues:

And there he set. No horse. Just him and his legs crossed, smilin as we rode up. Like he’d been expectin us. He’d an old canvas kitbag and an old woolen benjamin over the one shoulder. In the bag was a brace of pistols and a good assortment of specie, gold and silver. He didnt even have a canteen. It was like ... You couldnt tell where he’d come from. Said he’d been with a wagon company and fell out to go it alone. (125)

Tobin gives an indication of Holden's immediate sway over the scalphunters' leader when he tells the kid that:

Glanton just studied him. It was a day’s work to even guess what he made of that figure on that ground. I dont know to this day. They’ve a secret commerce. Some terrible covenant. You mind. You’ll see I’m right. He called for the last of two packanimals we had and he cut the straps and left the wallets to lay where they fell and the judge mounted up and he and Glanton rode side by side and soon they was conversin like brothers. The judge sat that 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, as if everything had turned out just as he planned and the day could not have been finer. (126)

Glanton does not possess the loquacity of Ahab, but he is still the leader of the scalphunters’ murderous expedition. As the person in charge of the gang, Captain

Glanton naturally assumes the authoritative role of Captain Ahab.

In *Moby-Dick* and *Blood Meridian*, the leaders of the quests suffer debilitating physical episodes that allow for characters such as Fedallah and the judge to insinuate themselves into the captains' lives and manipulate them. Ahab's thirst for revenge leaves him raving above-deck, but his nights appear even more fraught with violent images and passions. Dough-Boy tells Starbuck "that of a morning he always finds the old man's hammock clothes all rumpled and tumbled, and the sheets down at the foot, and the coverlid almost tied into knots, and the pillow a sort of frightful hot, as though a baked brick had been on it" (113). As Starbuck waits outside Ahab's cabin while he debates whether or not to murder the captain while he slumbers, he hears Ahab shout in his sleep, "Stern all! Oh Moby Dick, I clutch thy heart at last!" (423). Ishmael then states, "Such were the sounds that now came hurtling from out the old man's tormented sleep, as if Starbuck's voice had caused the long dumb dream to speak" (423). Although these fits are not restricted to the captain's sleeping periods, McCarthy also describes Glanton as being prone to depressive episodes. The day after the feast of Las Animas, McCarthy writes that:

Glanton in his drunkenness was taken with a kind of fit and he lurched crazed and disheveled into the little courtyard and began to open fire with his pistols. In the afternoon he lay bound to his bed like a madman while the judge sat with him and cooled his brow with rags of water and spoke to him in a low voice. Outside voices called across the steep hillsides. A little girl was missing and parties of citizens had turned out to search the mineshafts. After a while Glanton slept and the judge rose and went out. (191)

Not long after the judge leaves Glanton's tent, the captain enters the street as though possessed and ties the Mexican flag on a donkey's tail, riding the animal around until the flag is covered in filth. A bullet from somewhere kills the animal, which results in a firefight that kills four of Glanton's men.

Glanton and the judge's relationship is inspired by Ahab and Fedallah's vague, supernatural communion. Melville makes it clear that there is something malicious connecting the two characters when he writes: "Fedallah was calmly eyeing the right whale's head, and ever and anon glancing from the deep wrinkles there to the lines in his own hand. And Ahab chanced so to stand, that the Parsee occupied his shadow; while, if the Parsee's shadow was there at all it seemed only to blend with, and lengthen Ahab's" (278). Right before the first day of the chase for Moby Dick, "Ahab crossed the deck to gaze over on the other side; but started at two reflected, fixed eyes in the water there. Fedallah was motionlessly leaning over the same rail" (445). Just as the judge's relationship with Glanton contains an air of mystery about it and one wonders whether they have indeed made some "secret pact" as Tobin suggests, Ahab and Fedallah's relationship seems forged in some kind of Faustian pact.

In one scene, "the judge like a great ponderous djinn stepped through the fire and the flames delivered him up as if he were in some way native to their element. He put his arms around Glanton" (96). In a passage filled with similar fire imagery, Ahab goes so far as to acknowledge the heathenish nature of his relationship to Fedallah when he shouts:

Oh! thou clear spirit of clear fire, whom on these seas I as Persian once did
worship, till in the sacramental act so burned by thee, that to this hour I bear the

scar; I now know thee, thou clear spirit, and I now know that thy right worship is defiance ... Oh, thou clear spirit, of thy fire thou madest me, and like a true child of fire, I breathe it back to thee. (416-17)

Just as the Parsee is associated by his religion to the “clear spirit of fire” of which Ahab speaks, McCarthy’s judge is bound to the flames at nearly every campfire. McCarthy frequently portrays him as sitting half-naked by the fire, a primordial being whose very essence resides in the flames. In another suggestive passage, the judge sits “upwind from the fire naked to the waist, himself like some great pale deity” (92).

Like Ahab, who sees Fedallah’s “two reflected, fixed eyes in the water” when he leans over the deck shortly before the whalers catch sight of Moby Dick, Glanton and the judge often appear as a collocation. “Glanton and the judge” appears thirteen times in *Blood Meridian*. In addition, a subsection of Chapter X called “Glanton and the Judge” is devoted to the Glanton Gang’s discovery of the judge in the middle of the desert. The opposite arrangement, “the judge and Glanton,” never appears. The absence of this pairing suggests that one should consider reading Glanton as Ahab with the judge as Fedallah, the spiritual presence who seemingly lurks behind Old Thunder at every turn.

The judge also shares Fedallah’s divinatory abilities. Holden tells Davy Brown that he will not remove an arrow from the latter’s leg, but that “I’ll write a policy on your life against every mishap save the noose” (161), a prophecy that immediately calls to mind Fedallah’s divination to Ahab that “hemp only can kill thee” (411). In Chapter XXII, the kid sees the prophecy come true when he views the hanged body of Brown in Los Angeles (311). Holden’s sibylline talents are shown again when he tells the black Jackson that a fortune teller means to tell him “to beware the demon rum” (93). Tobin

objects, “That aint no fortune,” to which the judge replies, “Exactly so” (93). John Sepich recognizes that because “Jackson is the first man, of all the hungover gang, to die at the crossing [Yuma’s Ferry], we see again that the judge possesses a remarkable, intuitive grasp of the tarot” (*Notes* 107). Like the Parsee, whose prophecy to Ahab that “ere thou couldst die on this voyage, two hearses must verily be seen by thee on the sea; the first not made by mortal hands; and the visible wood of the last one must be grown in America” (410) comes true before Ahab’s eyes on the final day of the chase for Moby Dick, the judge appears able to predict the future accurately.

It is difficult to pin down all of Melville’s influences on McCarthy’s enormous villain. Ahab’s oratorical style and hubris provide McCarthy with fodder for the judge’s attempt to achieve complete mastery over the world. McCarthy gleans physical traits from Melville’s descriptions of the White Whale in order to create an imposingly large and ever-present character. Fedallah’s prophetic abilities and subversive control over Ahab act as the greatest influence on McCarthy, as on several occasions he emphasizes the judge’s divinatorial powers and his manipulation of Glanton. McCarthy’s incorporation of these qualities from several of Melville’s characters shows his talent for internalizing influence and using it for new and creative purposes. In analyzing the judge, each reader peers “directly into the heart of darkness. The center of most all analyses of the book, the judge engenders many interpretations. Interpretations vary; few agree” (Worthington 135). Like Ahab, Judge Holden is also the doubloon personified, an ever-changing, confounding mystery, whose roots lie in so many of Melville’s memorable characters.

Chapter 3: Structure, Style, and Setting

Blood Meridian and *Moby-Dick*'s structural similarities point to Melville's enormous influence on McCarthy's novel. Several shared structural features emerge as one reads through the texts. These structural features operate on the surface and narrative level. *Moby-Dick*'s extracts and epilogue inform their counterparts in *Blood Meridian*, and McCarthy also modifies *Moby-Dick*'s opening line in order to develop an immediate association between his narrator and Melville's. He also adapts three particular scenes of Melville's: Ishmael's wandering into Father Mapple's chapel; Ishmael and Queequeg's two encounters with Elijah; and the three "The Chase" chapters.

Melville and McCarthy's novels both contain prefatory material. Although Melville's extracts and McCarthy's epigraphs explore different subject matters, they still perform comparable functions within the text. Melville's eighty extracts attempt to convince the reader of the whale's perennial importance in Western culture and work "to establish the epic stature, formidableness, and inexhaustibility of Ishmael's subject ... and place the reader in an appropriate mood of awe or wonder" (Sten 138). The whale acts as a nexus from the past to the present, and the extracts make the great leviathan appear as a vehicle through which one can pursue the origins of mankind's struggle with nature and death.

Of all McCarthy's novels, only *Blood Meridian* contains epigraphs. While Melville's extracts are "factual report combined with fanciful fiction; poetry and history together" (Hilbert 829), McCarthy's are factual report combined with philosophical reflections on death and darkness. In contrast to Melville's eighty extracts, *Blood Meridian* contains three epigraphs that alert the reader to the violence that permeates

McCarthy's novel. The epigraphs read:

Your ideas are terrifying and your hearts are faint. Your acts of pity and cruelty are absurd, committed with no calm, as if they were irresistible. Finally you fear blood more and more. Blood and time.

Paul Valéry

It is not to be thought that the life of darkness is sunk in misery and lost as if in sorrowing. There is no sorrowing. For sorrow is a thing that is swallowed up in death, and death and dying are the very life of darkness.

Jacob Boehme

Clark, who led last year's expedition to the Afar region of northern Ethiopia, and UC Berkeley colleague Tim D. White, also said that a reexamination of a 300,000-year-old fossil skull found in the same region earlier shows evidence of having been scalped.

The Yuma Daily Sun

June 13, 1982

The first epigraph gives the reader an indication of the relentless, reflexive violence that he or she will come across throughout the course of the story. The second epigraph points to the unforgiving universe of *Blood Meridian*, one in which acts of love, kindness, and friendship are subsumed in darkness. As Robert H. Brinkmeyer argues in *Remapping Southern Literature*, the final epigraph's "significance for a novel about marauding scalp hunters in the nineteenth century is clear: violence lies at the heart of humankind; it always has, it always will" (39). This epigraph also lends the judge, for

whom warfare and murder is man's most noble pursuit, an atavistic quality. Just as Ahab's pursuit of Moby Dick often appears as an attempt by him to reach back to a primordial state of being, the judge's quest for scalps gives his existence a primitive and eternal essence.

While these epigraphs may not immediately suggest affinities with *Moby-Dick's* extracts, they do perform a similar function. Just as Melville's extracts connect the practice of whaling to the beginnings of Western society, McCarthy's seek to situate the practice of scalping and the barbarity of man beyond recorded history. They move the tale beyond a restricted time period and situate it in a continuous narrative, one unaffected by changes in societies and civilizations. Ishmael states that "to produce a mighty book, you must choose a mighty theme. No great and enduring volume can ever be written on the flea, though many there be who have tried it" (379). The extracts and epigraphs in these novels demonstrate that the authors are not dealing in trifling ephemeral subjects.

One sees Melville's influence materialize again as soon as one reads *Blood Meridian's* first page, where McCarthy models his opening paragraph on the famous beginning to *Moby-Dick*. After the chapter subheadings, McCarthy begins the novel with "See the child" (3), a simple imperative that comes straight from Melville's "Call me Ishmael" and establishes the novel's relationship with *Moby-Dick* and the kid's relationship with Ishmael. In *Blood Meridian's* introductory paragraph, McCarthy expands upon how the kid's origins play an ultimate role in his destiny: "The mother dead these fourteen years did incubate in her own bosom the creature who would carry her off. The father never speaks her name, the child does not know it ... He can neither

read nor write and in him broods already a taste for mindless violence. All history present in that visage, the child the father of the man” (3). As with Melville’s opening imperative, “this beginning literally fixes the reader to the kid and alerts the reader that she or he should be ready to confirm or reject any judgment that any other character might make of the kid in the course of the novel” (Parrish 90). “All history present in that visage, the child the father of the man,” an allusion to Wordsworth’s “My Heart Leaps Up When I Behold,” also gives the reader insight into McCarthy’s views on the role that origins play in the construction of one’s personality and character. Although the opening paragraphs read very differently in regard to style and tone, they nevertheless contain intriguing parallels that appear to be willfully set up by McCarthy. The confluence of the opening passages presages the other structural parallels to come.

Another narrative concordance develops not long after the opening of each book. Melville and McCarthy both have their main characters meet their closest companions at similar points in the novel and in almost parallel ways. In Chapter 3 of *Moby-Dick*, Ishmael wants to get a room at the Spouter Inn, but he is told by the landlord that no spare rooms are available, although Ishmael may share a room with a harpooner who is wandering about trying to “sell his head” (25). Initially confounded by this response, Ishmael calms down after the landlord explains that he meant that the harpooner is trying to sell a shrunken head, and he agrees to accept the room. Resting in bed as the harpooner enters, Ishmael peers at him through the darkness of his room. When Ishmael’s eyes become adjusted, he describes Queequeg:

Such a face! It was of a dark, purplish, yellow color, here and there stuck over with large, blackish looking squares. Yes, it's just as I thought, he's a terrible

bedfellow; he's been in a fight, got dreadfully cut, and here he is, just from the surgeon. But at that moment he chanced to turn his face so towards the light, that I plainly saw they could not be sticking-plasters at all, those black squares on his cheeks. They were stains of some sort or other ... There was no hair on his head—none to speak of at least—nothing but a small scalp-knot twisted up on his forehead. His bald purplish head now looked for all the world like a mildewed skull. Had not the stranger stood between me and the door, I would have bolted out of it quicker than ever I bolted a dinner. (28-29)

After Queequeg discovers Ishmael in bed, the cannibal shouts, “Speak-e! tell-ee me who-ee be, or dam-me, I kill-e!” (31). McCarthy modifies this scene in *Blood Meridian* when he introduces the reader to Toadvine, a tattooed, branded, and earless murderer who serves as McCarthy’s adaptation of Queequeg.

In the first chapter of *Blood Meridian*, the kid encounters Toadvine before the two get into a fight. While walking to the outhouse, the kid sees him staggering drunkenly toward him. Toadvine tells the kid, “You better get out of my way,” but “the kid wasnt going to do that and he saw no use in discussing it. He kicked the man in the jaw. The man went down and got up again. He said: I’m goin to kill you” (9). As the violent struggle increases in intensity, Toadvine’s mutterings are gradually transformed into Queequeg-like utterances. Toadvine’s threats morph from “you better get out of my way” to “I’m goin to kill you,” and become “kill your ass,” and finally turn into a slobbering “kill kill” (9). Instead of a harpoon, Toadvine takes out “an immense bowie knife from behind his neck ... and he had codified his threats to the one word kill like a crazed chant” (9). Instead of a landlord’s interceding on anyone’s behalf, a man, possibly

the judge, knocks the kid out with a shellalegh. Covered in blood and mud, the two wake up in an abandoned lot. McCarthy describes Toadvine in a manner that recalls Ishmael's description of Queequeg in the Spouter Inn:

The kid looked at the man. His head was strangely narrow and his hair was plastered up with mud in a bizarre and primitive coiffure. On his forehead were burned the letters H T and lower and almost between the eyes the letter F and these markings were splayed and garish as if the iron had been left too long.

When he turned to look at the kid the kid could see that he had no ears. (11)

As with Ishmael and Queequeg's alarming first meeting, a friendship develops between the kid and Toadvine out of their inauspicious introduction to one another. In both books, the characters become friends because of, not despite, their fraught first meetings.

McCarthy does not attempt to create a copy of Melville's cannibal harpooner and his friendship with Ishmael. Instead, Melville's portrayal of an unlikely relationship between a novice and an experienced killer, whether of whales or of men, with a barbaric appearance influences McCarthy.

In both texts, the main characters are driven by inclement weather into a religious meeting of some kind in an early stage of the narrative, and the sermons they hear give crucial hints about themes that the authors explore later in the story. In Chapter 7 of *Moby-Dick*, Ishmael, "shaking off the sleet" (40) from his person, enters Father Mapple's chapel. He describes Mapple as a former "sailor and a harpooneer in his youth ... [who] was in the hardy winter of a healthy old age" (42). Mapple proceeds to give a theatrical sermon on God's ubiquity, terror, and grace. Mapple "warns the would-be adventurer to stay within the confines of the known world and to flee all fearful encounters with the

great powers beyond” (Sten 144-145). Mapple rails against human hubris, telling his congregation that “if we obey God, we must disobey ourselves; and it is in this disobeying ourselves, wherein the hardness of obeying God consists” (45). Mapple suggests that man’s desires and God’s will are in conflict with one another, and that the human and spiritual realms have a perpetually antagonistic relationship.

At a similar point in his novel, McCarthy includes a scene where the kid wanders into a tent meeting to escape incessant rain shortly after he arrives in Nacogdoches.

McCarthy writes:

The Reverend Green had been playing to a full house daily as long as the rain had been falling and the rain had been falling for two weeks. When the kid ducked into the ratty canvas tent there was standing room along the walls, a place or two, and such a heady reek of the wet and bathless that they themselves would sally forth into the downpour now and again for fresh air before the rain drove them in again. (5-6)

In imitation of Father Mapple, who chides Jonah for thinking that “God is everywhere; Tarshish he never reached” (50), the Reverend Green proceeds to give a discourse on the inability of a man to “get shed” of Christ. McCarthy writes: “Neighbors, said the reverend, he couldnt stay out of these here hell, hell, hellholes right here in Nacogdoches ... Dont you know that he said I will foller ye always even unto the end of the road?” (6).

Whereas in Melville’s scene no one disrupts Father Mapple, in McCarthy’s the judge enters the tent and everyone falls silent. The judge accuses Green of being an illiterate preacher who partakes in acts of pedophilia and bestiality. Chaos ensues, and the kid flees the tent. McCarthy takes Melville’s scene and adapts it to foreshadow the moral

wasteland that is the world of *Blood Meridian*.

The two scenes have their differences, but their thematic parallels as well as their similar placement within the text suggests a direct influence. A particular reading of Father Mapple's sermon aligns the two scenes even further. In *Melville's Quarrel with God*, Lawrence Thompson suggests that Melville wrote Father Mapple's sermon about Jonah and the whale "with tongue in cheek, for ultimately ironic and sarcastic and satirical purposes" (10). Thompson posits "that perhaps the devout and sincere Father Mapple had been permitted to preach that sermon, in a novel, so that the sermon itself could serve Melville as a way of testing the discrimination of his readers; as a further way of separating the sheep from the goats; even as a stylistically contrived sheeptrap or mousetrap" (10). McCarthy's openly humorous Father Green scene requires no such suggestion of ironical intention, but if one chooses to go along with Thompson's reading of Father Mapple these parallel events in the texts appear even more similar to one another. McCarthy plays a similar trick on his first-time readers, but he instead tests the moral discrimination of his audience. Like the bar patrons who laugh when they ask the judge, "Where did you know him to know all that stuff on him" to which he replies, "I never laid eyes on the man before today. Never even heard of him," (8) the first-time reader of *Blood Meridian* readily comes to view Holden as a humorous character at this point in the narrative. Even though the judge's words lead to a brawl replete with gunshots in the tent and certainly ruin the Rev. Green's life, the new reader (and even the returning one) understandably comes to like the judge at this stage. McCarthy toys with the reader's moral compass here as he foreshadows the large-scale terror that the judge comes to wreak upon all those whom he comes across.

In both novels, the priests are right: Father Mapple accurately predicts the tragedy that Ahab's hubris and monomania unleash upon his crew and the Rev. Green correctly warns his listeners that the devil stands in their presence. John Sepich points out that despite the judge's never having heard of Green, Holden might still be correct in his allegations because he repeatedly reveals that he "knows things he reasonably cannot know" (*Notes* 13). Sepich argues that "McCarthy's scene is meant to emphasize the credulity of the church members as well as the judge's 'intuitive' understanding of Green" (*Notes* 13). If this is indeed the case, this reading coincides with the argument that Thompson makes about Father Mapple's sermon and develops another parallel between the texts.

"The Prophet" chapter of *Moby-Dick* also appears in another form in *Blood Meridian*. In this chapter, Elijah, a seemingly crazy prophet, confronts Queequeg and Ishmael after they sign up to set sail with the *Pequod*. After Ishmael responds affirmatively that he and Queequeg have signed the articles to join the ship, Elijah asks, "Anything down there about your souls?" (86). Through a series of opaque questions and responses, Elijah gives vague hints to Ishmael and Queequeg about the background and personality of Captain Ahab. He tells them:

Step and growl; growl and go—that's the word with Captain Ahab. But nothing about that thing that happened to him off Cape Horn, long ago, when he lay like dead for three days and nights; nothing about that deadly skirmish with the Spaniard afore the altar in Santa?—heard nothing about that, eh? Nothing about the silver calabash he spat into? And nothing about his losing his leg last voyage, according to the prophecy? Didn't ye hear a word about them matters

and something more, eh? No, I don't think ye did; how could ye? Who knows it? Not all Nantucket, I guess. But hows'ever, mayhap, ye've heard tell about the leg, and how he lost it; aye, ye have heard of that, I dare say. Oh yes, *that* every one knows a'most—I mean they know he's only one leg; and that a parmacetti took the other off. (87)

Elijah appears again two chapters later. This time he offers them another hesitant caveat: “Oh! I was going to warn ye against—but never mind, never mind—it’s all one, all in the family too; —sharp frost this morning, ain’t it? Good bye to ye. Shan’t see ye again very soon I guess; unless it’s before the Grand Jury” (91). They dismiss the man as crazy and still cast off on Ahab’s ship.

A corresponding scene occurs at a similar point in *Blood Meridian*. In *Moby-Dick*, the prophet arrives shortly after Queequeg and Ishmael sign their contracts with Bildad and Peleg. In *Blood Meridian*, the prophet emerges not long after the kid agrees to join Captain White’s filibusters, a group of Americans who plan on raiding Mexico. While at a bar with two other soldiers in Captain White’s unit, the kid is observed by “an old disordered Mennonite ... a thin man in a leather weskit, a black and straightbrim hat set square on his head, a thin rim of whiskers” (39). McCarthy writes:

The recruits stand sideways along the bar with their thumbs in their belts and watch the room. They talk among themselves of the expedition in loud voices and the old Mennonite shakes a rueful head and sips his drink and mutters.

They’ll stop you at the river, he says.

The second corporal looks past his comrades. Are you talking to me?

At the river. Be told. They’ll jail you to a man.

Who will?

The United States Army. General Worth.

The hell they will.

Pray that they will.

He looks at his comrades. He leans toward the Mennonite. What does that mean, old man?

Do ye cross that river with yon filibuster armed ye'll not cross it back.

Dont aim to cross it back. We goin to Sonora.

What's it to you, old man? (39-40)

In an ominously cryptic tone reminiscent of Elijah, the Mennonite concludes by telling them: "The wrath of God lies sleeping. It was hid a million years before men were and only men have power to wake it. Hell aint half full. Hear me. Ye carry war of a madman's making onto a foreign land. Ye'll wake more than the dogs" (40). After a night of revelry and violence, "the kid and the second corporal knelt over the boy from Missouri who had been named Earl and they spoke his name but he never spoke back" (40). As they hover over their dead comrade, the Mennonite returns to them, just as Elijah revisits Ishmael and Queequeg to give them forebodings of Ahab's "five dusky phantoms" (187) who later appear right before the first lowering for a whale, and tells them, "There is no such joy in the tavern as upon the road thereto" (41). It does not take long for the Mennonite's prophecy to be proven accurate, as in the very next chapter Captain White and his soldiers are massacred by Comanches. The kid survives the assault, only to be thrown in jail after he is shown the head of White floating in a carboy (70).

The Mennonite's prophetic words come to fruition, as do Elijah's. Both prophets also appear at similar points in each novel, right before the setting off on a voyage, and each reappears a second time. Each offers cryptic prophecies that make no sense when they are first uttered but end up coming true. In an interview with Peter Josyph, Harold Bloom correctly states that the parallelism of these two scenes "is almost precise, down to some deliberative verbal echoes," but he incorrectly attributes McCarthy's retelling of Melville's scene to his "own defiance of his indebtedness" (Josyph 78-79). Bloom's choice of words here is typical of the kind of language used in discussions of Melville's influence on McCarthy. McCarthy adds "deliberative verbal echoes," yet somehow is recalcitrant about it. The clear connections between these two encounters evince not just Melville's influence on McCarthy but McCarthy's open acknowledgement of it.

The final three chapters before *Moby-Dick's* epilogue, which describe the *Pequod's* sighting of and three-day pursuit for the White Whale, have an influence on McCarthy's depiction of the three-day stand-off between the judge and the kid toward *Blood Meridian's* conclusion. In Melville's "The Chase" chapters, the *Pequod* hunts Moby Dick until the whale destroys and kills the entire crew save Ishmael on the third day. *Blood Meridian* contains a three-day fight among the kid, Tobin, and the judge in the desert near the novel's conclusion, a scene that begs comparison to the concluding pursuit of Moby Dick. Instead of the White Whale, the kid and Tobin come up against their leviathan of a foe, Judge Holden.

Whether or not one reads the judge as the human embodiment of Moby Dick, the three-day confrontation in *Blood Meridian* parallels the three "The Chase" chapters in

Melville's novel. In both novels, these chapters deal with the main character's coming up against a seemingly immortal and powerful foe, and each protagonist is eventually defeated. The kid manages to survive this encounter, but he is murdered, and probably raped, by the judge in the final chapter.

The novels' epilogues provide a final parallel. *Blood Meridian's* epilogue begins with "a man progressing over the plain by means of holes which he is making in the ground. He uses an implement with two handles and he chucks it into the hole and he enkindles the stone in the hole with his steel hole by hole striking the fire out of the rock which God has put there" (337). Melville's epilogue is far more lucid and simply concludes the story of Ishmael, the one whaleman who "did survive the wreck" (470). Perhaps some thematic parallels could be teased out of the two epilogues, but it is the very inclusion of an epilogue in *Blood Meridian* that suggests an influence from Melville. Of course, Melville is neither the first nor the last author to include an epilogue in his work, but given all the structural parallels that have thus far been examined the existence of an epilogue in *Blood Meridian*, something that no other book by McCarthy contains, suggests a possible desire by McCarthy to develop one last parallel to *Moby-Dick*. *Blood Meridian* certainly is not McCarthy's only novel that could use an epilogue to add extra dimensions to a book's conclusion. Whatever the narrative reasons for putting it there, a possible additional reason for McCarthy's placement of the final scene within an epilogue and not within the final chapter or within a brief separate chapter is that Melville, from whom McCarthy borrows so many other structural features, includes one in *Moby-Dick*.

Vocabulary

From law dictionaries to historical documents, the vocabulary of *Blood Meridian*

comes from a diverse body of texts. Given that McCarthy draws his language from diffuse sources, it is often difficult to pinpoint every instance in which he directly borrows words from *Moby-Dick* or other works by Melville, but it is clear that some of *Blood Meridian*'s vocabulary comes at least indirectly from Melville.

In *A Reader's Guide to Blood Meridian*, Shane Schimpf points out that McCarthy uses vocabulary that one finds in Melville's works. For example, Melville's use of "filibustiers" in *Mardi* (1849) to refer to people who take part in illegal and guerilla warfare is one of the earliest known occurrences of the word in this context (Purcell 806). Filibuster specifically refers to "an American who in the mid-19th century took part in fomenting revolutions and insurrections in a Latin American country. Also, an irregular military adventurer; specifically, an organizer or member of a hostile expedition to a country with which his own is at peace" (Schimpf 93). In *Blood Meridian*, the prophetic Mennonite warns the kid that "do ye cross that river with yon filibuster armed ye'll not cross it back" (40). The word does not appear in McCarthy's other novels.

When the kid enlists with a militia he sits on "a kind of settle made from some dark wood" (31). Schimpf notes that "this somewhat unusual word also appears in *Moby-Dick*" (84) when Ishmael sits "down on an old wooden settle, carved all over like a bench on the Battery" (Melville 22) in the Spouter Inn. McCarthy's inclusion of this word certainly does not mean that he directly borrows it from *Moby-Dick*, but it nevertheless suggests the possibility. A settle does not feature in any other McCarthy novel.

While walking past a meatstall in a market the crew sees "the flensed and naked skulls of cows and sheep...hanging head downward from hooks" (73). The use of

“flense” here is an “allusion to the quintessential whaling exercise made famous in *Moby-Dick*” (Schimpf 120). “Flensed,” which *Webster’s* dates to 1880 but was used by Melville in 1851 (Purcell 800), is today known outside of the fishery, but it nevertheless directs the reader back to *Moby-Dick*, when Ishmael states that “circumstances require that the harpooneer shall remain on the whale till the whole flensing or stripping operation is concluded” (270). It is likely that McCarthy knows the literary origin of this word and consciously uses it in his own text in order to allude to *Moby-Dick*. McCarthy does not use this word in any of his other novels.

Melville's usage of the word “awash” to mean refer to something being moved about at the bidding of the waves “antedates the earliest historical evidence recorded in the historical dictionaries” (Babcock 163). Although surprisingly enough this word does not appear in *Moby-Dick*, it does appear in *Mardi* (1849), where Melville writes:

The wounded man paddled wildly with his hands; the dead one rolled from side to side; and the Cholo, seizing the solitary oar, in his frenzied heedlessness, spun the boat round and round; while all the while shot followed shot, Samoa firing as fast as Annatoo could load. At length both Cholo and savage fell dead upon their comrades, canting the boat over sideways, till well nigh awash; in which manner she drifted off. (63)

In a scene that almost exactly recalls this passage from *Mardi*, McCarthy uses the word in the same way and in the same context in *Blood Meridian*. After massacring a camp of peaceful Gileños, McCarthy reports: “The dead lay awash in the shallows like the victims of some disaster at sea and they were strewn along the salt foreshore in a havoc of blood and entrails” (157). The likelihood of McCarthy’s writing this scene and recalling

Melville's use of "awash," a relatively common term in literature, appears too small to be conclusive, but the possibility that the lexical concordance between the two passages arises not from a conscious adoption but from the deep internalization of a literary idol's language seems probable. McCarthy uses "awash" in other novels, but it does not appear in the same context. In *The Orchard Keeper*, McCarthy writes: "The sun was high now, all the green of the morning shot with sunlight, plankton awash in a sea of gold" (54). In *Suttree*, "awash" is usually used in connection with the title character's skiff, but McCarthy uses it once to describe clouds that "lay remote and motionless across the evening sky like milt awash in some backwater of the planet's seas ..." (291). *Blood Meridian* is the only McCarthy novel that contains a usage similar to that found in *Mardi*.

Although many of these examples could be explained away by the entrance of Melville's vocabulary into the American literary vernacular, most of the words presented here do not appear in McCarthy's other works, and when they do, they do not show up in the same contexts. In their existing uses in *Blood Meridian*, they create parallels between McCarthy's work and Melville's. Melville's vocabulary and language abound in McCarthy's *Blood Meridian*, and subtler instances certainly await discovery.

Setting

Although nearly all of *Blood Meridian* takes place in harsh and unforgiving deserts, McCarthy occasionally transports the readers to wetter settings through similes and metaphors that direct the reader to *Moby-Dick*. In addition to these brief conveyances, as monotonous environments that permit no records, the settings of each novel contribute parallels between the texts.

In both *Moby-Dick* and *Blood Meridian*, the settings are not relegated to the

background, but instead play an integral role in the narrative and function like characters themselves. Robert L. Jarrett argues that in Melville's fiction "the ocean supplies a series of mimetic, symbolic, and mythic landscapes for his drama" (139). He writes: "Ishmael suggests that the decision to go to sea is a suicidal repudiation of normal existence on 'land' in order to quest after the oceanic mysteries in the psyche. McCarthy's characters wander, like Ishmael, from their homes, relinquishing the safety of American normalcy of the highway and town for ... a lonely death in the Southwestern desert (Jarrett 139). James Dorson notes that "like the oceans of *Moby Dick* (1851) or the jungles of *Heart of Darkness* (1902), the deserts in *Blood Meridian* contain an un-reckonable silence against which we continue to thrash and flail to no avail" (115). Similarly, Charles Reagan Wilson describes the landscape of *Blood Meridian* as "desolate and uncaring, an appropriate setting for that tale of a youth going on a violent trip into northern Mexico. McCarthy invests places with harsh meanings, exploring the savage potential of human nature by looking at life in environmentally and socially specific locales" (157). The psychological dimension of both settings plays an important part in the construction of each text by allowing for the author to contrast the openness of physical space with the narrowly focused pursuit of whales or scalps. When Toadvine asks the kid, "You wouldn't think that a man would run plumb out of country out here, would ye?" (285), he confronts the paradoxical restriction of expansiveness.

McCarthy uses sea imagery on several occasions. "Crossing those barren gravel reefs in the night," he writes of the scalphunters' journey across the Mexican border, "they seemed remote and without substance" (151). Shortly after the scalphunters kill a group of Indians, Glanton turns his horse and observes that "the dead lay awash in the

shallows like the victims of some disaster at sea and they were strewn along the salt foreshore in a havoc of blood and entrails” (157). They eventually ride “through a region where iron will not rust nor tin tarnish. The ribbed frames of dead cattle under their patches of dried hide lay like the ruins of primitive boats upturned upon that shoreless void ...” (246). Like Melville’s sea, the settings of *Blood Meridian* are destructive and destitute. McCarthy writes: “Sparse on the mesa the dry weeds lashed in the wind like the earth’s long echo of lance and spear in old encounters forever unrecorded” (105). The landscape, not memory, preserves the ancient conflicts that form the history of man.

The recording of history is a recurring theme in *Blood Meridian*, and the desert’s callousness toward the desire of mankind to place things in order makes it a proper setting for McCarthy’s tale. Melville’s sea also cares little for preservation. Shortly before he and Queequeg journey to Nantucket, Ishmael remarks upon “the magnanimity of the sea which will permit no records” (60). The sea simply rolls “on as it rolled five thousand years ago” (469) after it swallows the *Pequod*, leaving only Ishmael alive to record the events. Like Melville’s ocean, McCarthy’s deserts quickly erase all evidence of destruction. In *Blood Meridian*, the desert permits no records not out of magnanimity, but out of its destructive capacity. From its high cliffs to its scouring sands, the topography of the landscape quickly acts to swallow up the memory of the once-living. When a mule falls down a canyon wall, McCarthy writes that it turned “in that lonely void until it fell from sight into a sink of cold blue space that absolved it forever of memory in the mind of any living that was” (147). When a group of women return to their village after the scalphunters decimate it, McCarthy alerts the reader to how the natural forces of the desert corrode physical remains and, therefore, any chance for the

dead to remain in the memory of man. Focusing on an old woman, McCarthy writes:

All about her the dead lay with their peeled skulls like polyps blueely wet or luminescent melons cooling on some mesa of the moon. In the days to come the frail black rebuses of blood in those sands would crack and break and drift away so that in the circuit of few suns all trace of the destruction of these people would be erased. The desert wind would salt their ruins and there would be nothing, nor ghost nor scribe, to tell to any pilgrim in his passing how it was that people had lived in this place and in this place died. (174)

In addition to their destructive qualities, McCarthy and Melville's settings are also monotonous. These two particular traits are inseparable in *Moby-Dick* and *Blood Meridian*'s environments. McCarthy's desert becomes much like the sea that Peleg asks Ishmael to observe, about which Melville's narrator reflects that the "prospect was unlimited, but exceedingly monotonous and forbidding; not the slightest variety that I could see" (70). However austere beautiful, McCarthy's desert exists as a seemingly endless gathering of switchbacks, canyons, kerfs, and cholla, a landscape that exists as living confirmation of Edward Abbey's warning that "everything in the desert either stings, stabs, stinks, or stings. You will find the flora here as venomous, hooked, barbed, thorny, prickly, needled, saw-toothed, hairy, stickered, mean, bitter, sharp, wiry, and fierce as the animals. Something about the desert inclines all living things to harshness and acerbity" (14). This monotony is misleading, however, in both works. Ishmael asks his audience to reflect on the contrast between the surface appearance of the serene sea and the terrible reality that exists underneath its facade:

Consider the subtleness of the sea; how its most dreaded creatures glide under

water, unapparent for the most part, and treacherously hidden beneath the loveliest tints of azure. Consider also the devilish brilliance and beauty of many of its most remorseless tribes, as the dainty embellished shape of many species of sharks. Consider, once more, the universal cannibalism of the sea; all whose creatures prey upon each other, carrying on eternal war since the world began.

(235-36)

This passage perfectly describes McCarthy's deserts, which are landscapes of ancient, modern, and eternal war.

In a brief passage in *Blood Meridian*, McCarthy describes the landscape in such a way as to make an allusion to *Moby-Dick*. After the judge delivers a speech about the nature of the universe to the scalphunters they see that "far to the south beyond the black volcanic hills lay a lone albino ridge, sand or gypsum, like the back of some pale seabeast surfaced among the dark archipelagos" (251). It is difficult not to conjure up an image of the White Whale after imagining the hump of a "pale sea beast" resting on a white ridge. It is one of the many nods to *Moby-Dick* that McCarthy creates through descriptions of his settings.

Chapter 4: Aesthetics

Violence

Although McCarthy's novel stands far above Melville's in the sheer amount of brutality it presents, Melville's depictions of violence greatly influence *Blood Meridian*. By adopting Melville's aesthetics of violence and his use of the fragile dichotomy of serenity and savagery, McCarthy draws unsettling aesthetic parallels between the pursuit of whales and the destruction of the Native American community in Mexico. While one cannot necessarily read individual scenes of whaling in *Moby-Dick* and find strict parallels in *Blood Meridian*, the two authors' use of language and aesthetic principles lends power to their depictions of violence, in turn creating scenes that reveal a sublime, unnerving aspect of bloodshed.

Frank G. Novak Jr. argues that "a binary opposition between beauty and terror" functions as a consistent trope in *Moby-Dick* (332). Furthermore, "this basic dichotomy of a dark, terrifying underside beneath the deceptive surface of beauty and mildness appears again and again in *Moby-Dick*, especially in descriptions of natural phenomena. It is part and parcel of the basic imagistic and symbolic pattern of the novel" (Novak Jr 334). This dichotomy performs a salient role in Melville's most memorably violent whaling scenes, and it serves to heighten how readers experience his violent depictions. This particular dichotomy also runs throughout McCarthy's novel, and it provides *Blood Meridian*'s violent passages with some of their most unsettling qualities.

While the brutality of the whaling fishery is probably known to most readers, *Moby-Dick* is not commonly regarded as a particularly violent book. Although readers of *Moby-Dick* must recognize that during the course of the novel the *Pequod*'s crew kills a

large number of whales, Melville's artistic approach to these whaling scenes often goes unnoticed. When critics acknowledge the violence of *Moby-Dick*, they generally either assign it another "higher" function, such as offering "massive anatomies over which Ishmael broods" (Bezanson 189) or functioning as an "organizational device" that serves the structural purpose of leading the way for philosophical and natural reflections on the whale (Eldridge 158), or they discuss its extra-textual qualities, such as treating it as a metaphor for the destruction caused by American imperialism and expansion. While these purposes may in fact be crucial aspects of Melville's violence, none suggests that Melville's representations of whale-killing serve a separate aesthetic function, one that reveals his beliefs about the destructive capacity inherent in all nature.

The violence of *Blood Meridian* makes pressing demands on all its readers, leaving many of them unable to finish the novel on their first attempt, and the novel has been appropriately considered "the most violent novel ever written" (Sansom 5). Due to the near-constant presence of violence in *Blood Meridian*, far more scrupulous attention has been given to the aesthetic qualities of McCarthy's violence than to Melville's. James Richard Giles states that *Blood Meridian* contains "unrelenting evocations of social, rather than strictly individual, acts of violence" (22). Wallis R. Sanborn describes the violence as "nearly omnipresent" (64). Susan Kollin claims that in McCarthy's novel, "the representation of violence threatens to undermine the critical sensibilities of the novel, as McCarthy's graphic treatment of Anglo brutality becomes aestheticized to the extent that audiences often experience a strange pleasure in reading these hyperviolent mediations" (563). The violence of *Moby-Dick* does not make such demands on all of its readers, but it still acts as a strong force within the text.

In *Moby-Dick* as in *Blood Meridian*, the potential for chaos always inheres in nature, particularly when nature exists in its most serene states. The more placid an environment is, the more a backlash of terror proves inevitable. This dichotomy is even inherent in the great White Whale, as expressed by Ishmael when he notes that “a gentle joyousness—a mighty mildness of repose in swiftness, invested the gliding whale” (447) right before he states:

No wonder there had been some among the hunters who namelessly transported and allured by all that serenity, had ventured to assail it; but had fatally found that quietude but the vesture of tornadoes. Yet calm, enticing calm, oh, whale! thou glidest on, to all who for the first time eye thee, no matter how many in that same way thou may'st have bejuggled and destroyed before. (447-48)

In *Blood Meridian*, this potentiality primarily gets expressed through action, while in *Moby-Dick* it receives expression through both action and the inner thoughts of Ishmael. When Ishmael reflects on how the sailors are apt to descry portents of the White Whale everywhere they look, he realizes:

These temporary apprehensions, so vague but so awful, derived a wondrous potency from the contrasting serenity of the weather, in which, beneath all its blue blandness, some thought there lurked a devilish charm, as for days and days we voyaged along, through seas so wearily, lonesomely mild, that all space, in repugnance to our vengeful errand, seemed vacating itself of life before our urn-like prow. (201)

Ahab also recognizes this dichotomy when he “connect[s] the ideas of mildness and repose with the first sight of the particular whale he pursued” (237). Something inimical

always lurks beneath the surface of natural beauty. Ishmael develops this idea further when he relates:

Again: as the profound calm which only apparently precedes and prophesies of the storm, is perhaps more awful than the storm itself; for, indeed, the calm is but the wrapper and envelope of the storm; and contains it in itself, as the seemingly harmless rifle holds the fatal powder, and the ball, and the explosion; so the graceful repose of the line, as it silently serpentine about the oarsmen before being brought into actual play—this is a thing which carries more of true terror than any other aspect of this dangerous affair. But why say more? All men live enveloped in whale-lines. All are born with halters round their necks; but it is only when caught in the swift, sudden turn of death, that mortals realize the silent, subtle, ever-present perils of life. (241)

This passage lucidly delineates the terror/peace dichotomy that is prevalent in *Moby-Dick*. McCarthy takes Ishmael's reflection that "all men live enveloped in whale lines. All are born with halters round their necks" and expresses it throughout *Blood Meridian* through sundry representations of natural and manmade violence. As in *Moby-Dick*, the threat of death is a constant companion to everyone and everything in *Blood Meridian*, particularly when nature's façade suggests otherwise.

The rugged settings of *Blood Meridian* provide McCarthy with the perfect environment with which to expand this dichotomy. Whereas Melville is restricted to the sea, McCarthy has the vast expanse of the Southwest, with all its flora and fauna, over which to have his characters roam. At the beginning of Chapter XI, McCarthy offers the reader an idyllic scene:

They rode up switchbacks through a lonely aspen wood where the fallen leaves lay like golden disclets in the damp black trail. The leaves shifted in a million spangles down the pale corridors and Glanton took one and turned it like a tiny fan by its stem and held it and let it fall and its perfection was not lost on him. They rode through a narrow draw where the leaves were shingled up in ice and they crossed a high saddle at sunset where wild doves were rocketing down the wind and passing through the gap a few feet off the ground, veering wildly among the ponies and dropping off down into the blue gulf below. (136)

In a novel as violent as *Blood Meridian*, this image of not just glorious nature but of the rugged Glanton appreciating its splendor is memorable. As one proceeds through the novel, how can one not stop and marvel at this passage? It describes nature in its most beneficent form, as the leaves and birds move about without confines in colorful, flamboyant nature. In McCarthy's novel, however, nature never stays welcoming for very long. McCarthy soon brings the reader back to the unforgiving reality of *Blood Meridian*: "They rode on into a dark fir forest, the little spanish ponies sucking at the thin air, and just at dusk as Glanton's horse was clambering over a fallen log a lean blond bear rose up out of the swale on the far side where it had been feeding and looked down at them with dim pig's eyes" (136-37). The scene transforms from a peaceful reverie into an unrestrained nightmare, as though the natural beauty of the surroundings winds in upon itself until it explodes:

One of the Delawares was next behind him and the horse he rode was falling backward and he was trying to turn it, beating it about the head with his balled fist, and the bear's long muzzle swung toward them in a stunned articulation,

amazed beyond reckoning, some foul gobbet dangling from its jaws and its chops dyed red with blood. Glanton fired. The ball struck the bear in the chest and the bear leaned with a strange moan and seized the Delaware and lifted him from the horse. Glanton fired again into the thick ruff of fur forward of the bear's shoulder as it turned and the man dangling from the bear's jaws looked down at them cheek and jowl with the brute and one arm about its neck like some crazed defector in a gesture of defiant camaraderie. All through the woods a bedlam of shouts and the whack of men beating the screaming horses into submission. Glanton cocked the pistol a third time as the bear swung with the indian dangling from its mouth like a doll and passed over him in a sea of honeycolored hair smeared with blood and a reek of carrion and the rooty smell of the creature itself. The shot rose and rose, a small core of metal scurrying toward the distant beltways of matter grinding mutely to the west above them all. Several rifleshots rang out and the beast loped horribly into the forest with his hostage and was lost among the darkening trees. (137)

Melville's violent scenes also gain much of their intensity through this same contrast between surface calmness and impending chaos. In "The Life-Buoy," Ishmael begins the chapter with this narration:

Steering now south-eastward by Ahab's levelled steel, and her progress solely determined by Ahab's level log and line; the Pequod held on her path towards the equator. Making so long a passage through such unfrequented waters, descrying no ships, and ere long, sideways impelled by unvarying trade winds, over waves monotonously mild; all these seemed the strange calm things precluding some

riotous and desperate scene. (428)

Ishmael paints a picture of steady calmness, one unbroken by sound or disturbance, as the *Pequod* heads toward the meridian. Ishmael detects bad omens in this calm because the very serenity of any idyll contains portents of a coming disruption. Ishmael, who has learned to detect the violence inherent in natural beauty, is shown to be right. In the very next chapter, a cry “so plaintively wild and unearthly — like half-articulated wailings of the ghosts of all Herod’s murdered Innocents” (428) is heard. Although the Manxman claims that the cry came from “newly drowned men in the sea,” Ahab dismisses this claim and attributes the wailing sounds to seals (429). Shortly after, “the first man of the *Pequod* that mounted the mast to look out for the White Whale, on the White Whale’s own peculiar ground; that man was swallowed up in the deep” (429). The sailors view his death “not as a foreshadowing of evil in the future, but as the fulfilment of an evil already presaged” (430). The dichotomy between beauty and terror always exists in nature, and attempts to explain it away, as Ahab tries to, are eventually proven erroneous.

Earlier in the novel, Melville offers an unsettling description of the killing of a whale. As one might by now expect, the scene begins with a serene description:

It was my turn to stand at the foremast-head; and with my shoulders leaning against the slackened royal shrouds, to and fro I idly swayed in what seemed an enchanted air. No resolution could withstand it; in that dreamy mood losing all consciousness, at last my soul went out of my body; though my body still continued to sway as a pendulum will, long after the power which first moved it is withdrawn.

Ere forgetfulness altogether came over me, I had noticed that the seamen at the main and mizzen-mast-heads were already drowsy. So that at last all three of us lifelessly swung from the spars, and for every swing that we made there was a nod from below from the slumbering helmsman. The waves, too, nodded their indolent crests; and across the wide trance of the sea, east nodded to west, and the sun over all. (Melville 241-242)

The final sentence creates an image of the sun as it calmly retreats to the meridian. When Ishmael comes out of his trance, he notices bubbles in the water and sees an enormous whale. When the whalers finally reach it, the violence becomes ubiquitous. Lance after lance is darted into the whale, and Ishmael states:

The red tide now poured from all sides of the monster like brooks down a hill. His tormented body rolled not in brine but in blood, which bubbled and seethed for furlongs behind in their wake. The slanting sun playing upon this crimson pond in the sea, sent back its reflection into every face, so that they all glowed to each other like red men. And all the while, jet after jet of white smoke was agonizingly shot from the spiracle of the whale, and vehement puff after puff from the mouth of the excited headsman; as at every dart, hauling in upon his crooked lance (by the line attached to it), Stubb straightened it again and again, by a few rapid blows against the gunwale, then again and again sent it into the whale. (244)

This scene concludes with a final violent depiction worthy of inclusion in *Blood Meridian*:

When reaching far over the bow, Stubb slowly churned his long sharp lance into the fish, and kept it there, carefully churning and churning, as if cautiously

seeking to feel after some gold watch that the whale might have swallowed, and which he was fearful of breaking ere he could hook it out. But that gold watch he sought was the innermost life of the fish. And now it is struck; for, starting from his trance into that unspeakable thing called his "flurry," the monster horribly wallowed in his blood, overwrapped himself in impenetrable, mad, boiling spray, so that the imperilled craft, instantly dropping astern, had much ado blindly to struggle out from that phrensied twilight into the clear air of the day. (244-45)

Just as in McCarthy's bear scene, absolute carnage emerges out of consummate peacefulness. In this passage, Ishmael also encounters the depravity of some of his fellow whalers. Prone to waxing lyrical and heaping encomiums upon his trade, Ishmael finally comes to experience whaling from another perspective, particularly one which lacks the philosophical bent to turn whaling into an entirely noble practice.

In "The First Lowering," Melville describes the excitement surrounding the *Pequod's* first attempt at capturing whales:

It was a sight full of quick wonder and awe! The vast swells of the omnipotent sea; the surging, hollow roar they made, as they rolled along the eight gunwales, like gigantic bowls in a boundless bowling-green; the brief suspended agony of the boat, as it would tip for an instant on the knife-like edge of the sharper waves, that almost seemed threatening to cut it in two; the sudden profound dip into the watery glens and hollows; the keen spurrings and goadings to gain the top of the opposite hill; the headlong, sled-like slide down its other side;—all these, with the cries of the headsmen and harpooneers, and the shuddering gasps of the oarsmen, with the wondrous sight of the ivory *Pequod* bearing down upon her boats with

outstretched sails, like a wild hen after her screaming brood;—all this was thrilling. Not the raw recruit, marching from the bosom of his wife into the fever heat of his first battle; not the dead man's ghost encountering the first unknown phantom in the other world;— neither of these can feel stranger and stronger emotions than that man does, who for the first time finds himself pulling into the charmed, churned circle of the hunted sperm whale. (193)

Melville conveys the energy of this scene in direct and immediate language. The repeated definite articles and prepositions function like the conjunctions in Melville's other passages. The narrative voice contains an urgency that pulls the readers into conflicting directions. The sea swells, the boat nearly tips, and a sudden dip threatens the crew while noises and vibrations add to the clamor. All the while, "the boat was still booming through the mist, the waves curling and hissing around us like the erected crests of enraged serpents" (194). Melville portrays the first lowering with a frenetic style that packs the scene with an excess of energy "till at last the battles with the whales begin and we feel beneath the book the very pulse of the ocean itself" (Brooks 213).

McCarthy adopts the same style and makes the reader experience the profound internal reverberations of the desert throughout *Blood Meridian*. Describing an Indian attack on Captain White's company, with whom the kid has recently enlisted, he writes:

The ponies had begun to veer off from the herd and the drovers were beating their way toward this armed company met with on the plain. Already you could see through the dust on the ponies' hides the painted chevrons and the hands and rising suns and birds and fish of every device like the shade of old work through sizing on a canvas and now too you could hear above the pounding of the unshod

hooves the piping of the quena, flutes made from human bones, and some among the company had begun to saw back on their mounts and some to mill in confusion when up from the offside of those ponies there rose a fabled horde of mounted lancers and archers bearing shields bedight with bits of broken mirrorglass that cast a thousand unpieced suns against the eyes of their enemies. A legion of horribles, hundreds in number, half naked or clad in costumes attic or biblical or wardrobed out of a fevered dream with the skins of animals and silk finery and pieces of uniform still tracked with the blood of prior owners, coats of slain dragoons, frogged and braided cavalry jackets, one in a stovepipe hat and one with an umbrella and one in white stockings and a bloodstained weddingveil and some in headgear of crane feathers or rawhide helmets that bore the horns of bull or buffalo and one in a pigeontailed coat worn backwards and otherwise naked and one in the armor of a Spanish conquistador, the breastplate and pauldrons deeply dented with old blows of mace or sabre done in another country by men whose very bones were dust and many with their braids spliced up with the hair of other beasts until they trailed upon the ground and their horses' ears and tails worked with bits of brightly colored cloth and one whose horse's whole head was painted crimson red and all the horsemen's faces gaudy and grotesque with daubings like a company of mounted clowns, death hilarious, all howling in a barbarous tongue and riding down upon them like a horde from a hell more horrible yet than the brimstone land of christian reckoning, screeching and yammering and clothed in smoke like those vaporous beings in regions beyond right knowing where the eye wanders and the lip jerks and drools. (52-53)

McCarthy's use of polysyndeton, or the repetition of conjunctions in a passage (Farnsworth 128), adds to the vertiginous sense of movement, and his description of the noise made by the scene all contain the same tumultuous force of Melville's portrayal of the *Pequod's* first lowering. In this scene, the kid stands among the hunted and experiences the action from the perspective of the whales in *Moby-Dick*. The energy moves in a different direction than "The First Lowering," but the same aesthetics of motion appear. The reader detects the same forcefulness when Melville writes:

As the wind howled on, and the sea leaped, and the ship groaned and dived, and yet steadfastly shot her red hell further and further into the blackness of the sea and the night, and scornfully champed the white bone in her mouth, and viciously spat round her on all sides; then the rushing Pequod, freighted with savages, and laden with fire, and burning a corpse, and plunging into that blackness of darkness, seemed the material counterpart of her monomaniac commander's soul. (353-54)

The breathless immediacy that Melville puts into this passage informs much of *Blood Meridian*. His use of parataxis and polysyndeton in this paragraph influences many of McCarthy's intense and chaotic battle scenes. In Melville's above passage, polysyndeton "lends a sense of motion to [the] narrative" and lends "the action a breathless or headlong quality" (Farnsworth 131). Melville offers another similar scene: "and the silent ship, as if manned by painted sailors in wax, day after day tore on through all the swift madness and gladness of the demoniac waves. By night the same muteness of humanity before the shrieks of the ocean prevailed; still in silence the men swung in the bowlines" (202).

The delirium of Melville's passages detailing the hunt, particularly his three "The

Chase” chapters, inheres in McCarthy’s language when he continues to describe the kid's first encounter with Indians while serving under Captain White:

Now driving in a wild frieze of headlong horses with eyes walled and teeth cropped and naked riders with clusters of arrows clenched in their jaws and their shields winking in the dust and up the far side of the ruined ranks in a piping of boneflutes and dropping down off the sides of their mounts with one heel hung in the withers strap and their short bows flexing beneath the outstretched necks of the ponies until they had circled the company and cut their ranks in two and then rising up again like funhouse figures, some with nightmare faces painted on their breasts, riding down the unhorsed Saxons and spearing and clubbing them and leaping from their mounts with knives and running about on the ground with a peculiar bandylegged trot like creatures driven to alien forms of locomotion and stripping the clothes from the dead and seizing them up by the hair and passing their blades about the skulls of the living and the dead alike and snatching aloft the bloody wigs and hacking and chopping at the naked bodies, ripping off limbs, heads, gutting the strange white torsos and holding up great handfuls of viscera, genitals, some of the savages so slathered up with gore they might have rolled in it like dogs and some who fell upon the dying and sodomized them with loud cries to their fellows. And now the horses of the dead came pounding out of the smoke and dust and circled with flapping leather and wild manes and eyes whited with fear like the eyes of the blind and some were feathered with arrows and some lanced through and stumbling and vomiting blood as they wheeled across the killing ground and clattered from sight again. Dust stanchd the wet and naked

heads of the scalped who with the fringe of hair below their wounds and tonsured to the bone now lay like maimed and naked monks in the bloodslaked dust and everywhere the dying groaned and gibbered and horses lay screaming. (53-54)

In this brutal scene, McCarthy paints “another ghastly harvest: the tone is at once breathless and brooding, gasping and resigned to the enormity of it all. McCarthy proceeds dutifully through the killing field, arranging his conjunctions as though he were setting out the silver” (Saltzman 243). With the infusion of frenetic movement and disorder, the celerity of this passage hearkens to Melville’s narrations of the various lowerings for sperm whales in *Moby-Dick*.

An examination of Melville’s aesthetics of violence could not ignore “The Grand Armada,” a chapter which contains *Moby-Dick*’s most serene image, as well as its most savage. In this chapter, the *Pequod* comes upon a large herd of whales, and the crew attaches many individual harpoon lines to its members. After doing so, Ishmael reports that the whalemens “were now in that enchanted calm which they say lurks at the heart of every commotion” (324). The boat’s crew witnesses “the forms of the nursing mothers of the whales, and those that by their enormous girth seemed shortly to become mothers” (325), and Queequeg notices a cub still attached by its umbilical cord. This chapter shows Melville at his most idyllic, but like most of his idylls violence eventually disrupts the serenity of the scene. Before interrupting the calmness of the passage, however, Ishmael offers another placid description that heightens the pervasive tranquility of the environment:

And thus, though surrounded by circle upon circle of consternations and affrights, did these inscrutable creatures at the centre freely and fearlessly indulge in all

peaceful concernments; yea, serenely reveled in dalliance and delight. But even so, amid the tornadoed Atlantic of my being, do I myself still for ever centrally disport in mute calm; and while ponderous planets of unwaning woe revolve round me, deep down and deep inland there I still bathe me in eternal mildness of joy. (326)

A scene that rends the fabric of this reverie follows. Ishmael gives an account of a horrific event in language that influences McCarthy in *Blood Meridian*. Ishmael tells of a whale wounded in his tail tendon:

But agonizing as was the wound of this whale, and an appalling spectacle enough, any way; yet the peculiar horror with which he seemed to inspire the rest of the herd, was owing to a cause which at first the intervening distance obscured from us. But at length we perceived that by one of the unimaginable accidents of the fishery, this whale had become entangled in the harpoon-line that he towed; he had also run away with the cutting-spade in him; and while the free end of the rope attached to that weapon, had permanently caught in the coils of the harpoon-line round his tail, the cutting-spade itself had worked loose from his flesh. So that tormented to madness, he was now churning through the water, violently flailing with his flexible tail, and tossing the keen spade about him, wounding and murdering his own comrades. (326-27)

This passage displays the kind of superlative violence that one finds throughout *Blood Meridian*, a novel whose “treatment of violence [is] in no way restrained or confined, but anarchic and pushed to the extreme” (Kollin 562). McCarthy often details his violent scenes more gruesomely and graphically than Melville, but both authors have their

bloody depictions emerge from a tranquil setting and develop into moments of increasing and unremitting chaos.

Blood Meridian contains several scenes of massacres and large battles that often include herds of animals. By having man and animal alike enter into a small space of chaos, McCarthy develops a violent aesthetic that allows the hunting of humans to appear similar to the killing of whales. This conflation creates a disturbing parallel between Melville's "The Grand Armada" chapter and McCarthy's "Slaughter of the Gileños" section in Chapter XII. In this section of *Blood Meridian*, McCarthy once again uses a preceding scene of serenity to amplify the gruesomeness of an event. It begins when the scalphunters see the fires of a Gileños camp in the distance. McCarthy describes Glanton's scouting party as they travel "like migrants under a drifting star and their track across the land reflected in its faint arcature the movements of the earth itself. To the west the cloudbanks stood above the mountains like the dark warp of the very firmament and the starsprent reaches of the galaxies hung in a vast aura above the riders' heads" (154). For all its violence, *Blood Meridian* contains many passages such as this one that present images of calm and peace in poetic language. McCarthy depicts the scalphunters movements as in sync with the earth. The beauty of the stars pervades this scene, and lends the novel one of its many outstanding depictions of natural magnificence. A true disciple of Melville's violent aesthetics, the paragraph following this passage sets up one of the bloodiest scenes in the novel, where McCarthy writes that "two mornings later the Delawares returned from their dawn reconnaissance and reported the Gileños camped along the shore of a shallow lake less than four hours to the south. They had with them their women and children and they were many" (154). With "The Grand Armada" in

mind while reading this passage, one possibly recalls Ishmael's morbid assertion from this chapter that "sperm whales are not every day encountered; while you may, then, you must kill all you can" (323). What follows is one of *Blood Meridian's* most difficult scenes to stomach, as it contains infanticide, rape, necrophilia, and dismemberment. A scene of absolute carnage emerges from the earlier description of the heavens at night. Despite their different subject matters, Melville's voice appears in McCarthy's passage:

When Glanton and his chiefs swung back through the village people were running out under the horses' hooves and the horses were plunging and some of the men were moving on foot among the huts with torches and dragging the victims out, slathered and dripping with blood, hacking at the dying and decapitating those who knelt for mercy. There were in the camp a number of Mexican slaves and these ran forth calling out in spanish and were brained or shot and one of the Delawares emerged from the smoke with a naked infant dangling in each hand and squatted at a ring of midden stones and swung them by the heels each in turn and bashed their heads against the stones so that the brains burst forth through the fontanel in a bloody spew and humans on fire came shrieking forth like berserkers and the riders hacked them down with their enormous knives and a young woman ran up and embraced the bloodied forefeet of Glanton's warhorse. (156)

The scalphunters make no moral distinction between the murder of animals and of children, and the frenzy of the massacre combines the killing of human beings with the stampede of horses. The addition of large groups of animals to the scene creates a welter of chaos in which man and animal alike are killed indiscriminately. This addition dehumanizes the people involved and allows the slaughter to "become general"

(McCarthy 155).

Another important aspect of violence in both works is the cruelty that it reveals in those whose trade requires that they partake in it. *Moby-Dick* contains scenes of violence that question the depths of savageness that reside within men's hearts and reveal answers that are as troubling as those the reader finds in *Blood Meridian*. In "The Pequod Meets the Virgin," the sailors pursue a blind whale with a maimed arm. Ishmael tells the reader that whale's "eyes, or rather the places where his eyes had been, were beheld. As strange misgrown masses gather in the knot-holes of the noblest oaks when prostrate, so from the points which the whale's eyes had once occupied, now protruded blind bulbs, horribly pitiable to see" (301). Melville exposes the reader to the violence of the whalemens shortly after this description, and he offers a contrast between the empathy the sickly whale should inspire with the ruthlessness of how the fishermen treat it:

But pity there was none. For all his old age, and his one arm, and his blind eyes, he must die the death and be murdered, in order to light the gay bridals and other merry-makings of men, and also to illuminate the solemn churches that preach unconditional inoffensiveness by all to all. Still rolling in his blood, at last he partially disclosed a strangely discoloured bunch or protuberance, the size of a bushel, low down on the flank.

"A nice spot," cried Flask; "just let me prick him there once."

"Avast!" cried Starbuck, "there's no need of that!"

But humane Starbuck was too late. At the instant of the dart an ulcerous jet shot from this cruel wound, and goaded by it into more than sufferable anguish, the whale now spouting thick blood, with swift fury blindly

darted at the craft, bespattering them and their glorying crews all over with showers of gore, capsizing Flask's boat and marring the bows. It was his death stroke. For, by this time, so spent was he by loss of blood, that he helplessly rolled away from the wreck he had made; lay panting on his side, impotently flapped with his stumped fin, then over and over slowly revolved like a waning world; turned up the white secrets of his belly; lay like a log, and died. It was most piteous, that last expiring spout. As when by unseen hands the water is gradually drawn off from some mighty fountain, and with half-stifled melancholy gurglings the spray-column lowers and lowers to the ground—so the last long dying spout of the whale. (301-02)

The enormous pathos of this scene is unrivaled anywhere else in *Moby-Dick*. In “he must die the death and be murdered,” Ishmael expresses a fatalism that a reader of *Blood Meridian* will find familiar in McCarthy’s naturalistic world. Nearly every act of bloodshed committed in *Blood Meridian* finds its own reflection in this passage.

McCarthy’s scenes contain more graphic and nauseating violence than anything found in *Moby-Dick*, but he does not exceed Melville in the intensity which the latter develops in many of his passages. McCarthy outdoes Melville in his descriptions of the savage actions of the Glanton Gang, but Melville’s favoring of a superlative aesthetic in his depictions of the whale hunt influences McCarthy’s portrayals of the violent deeds of his characters. Melville violence is not as lurid McCarthy’s, but both authors complement their illustrations of frenetic violence with earlier scenes of serenity.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

In reading *Blood Meridian*, one sees Melville's influence almost everywhere. His *Moby-Dick* inheres in *Blood Meridian's* characters, structure, setting, vocabulary, and aesthetics. Noting *Moby-Dick's* presence in McCarthy's novel, Brian Edwards writes:

Melville's big book is almost everywhere apparent in *Blood Meridian*. It is the primary father-text whose fingerprints mark this oedipal offspring's work, ocean landscape now desert, the fated voyage of the Pequod become the awful wanderings of scalp-hunters, their quarry not the ubiquitous white whale of a demonic captain's tortured imaginings but Indians (Comanches, Apaches, Yuma), and Mexicans, whose scalps bring \$200 a piece. 'Hast seen the white whale?' is now 'They rode on' and the gams, those mid-ocean meetings between ships, each with its own narrative, become chance encounters between strangers in the nightmarish landscape of the south-west desert, a place without love where repetitions and their variations bring not the comfort of recognition but the anguish of continuation. (34)

While it is true that "Melville's big book is almost everywhere apparent in *Blood Meridian*," McCarthy's novel is not an "oedipal offspring," that is, some kind of subconscious product that resents the "father-text's influence" over it or the result of "McCarthy's own defiance of his indebtedness" (Josyph 79) to Melville. McCarthy is "unapologetic in acknowledging his literary forbears" (Frye 6), among whom Melville is the most important, at least with regard to *Blood Meridian*. McCarthy knows *Moby-Dick* inside and out, and he adroitly adopts and adapts *Moby-Dick* for his own novel. Even in areas where McCarthy does not appear to use Melville deliberately, the parallels that

arise among both works add interesting dimensions to the intertextuality of these great American novels.

Moby-Dick and *Blood Meridian* are complementary texts. In *Reading Cormac McCarthy*, Willard P. Greenwood argues that these two works should be read together. He states:

It might seem natural to read *Moby Dick* before *Blood Meridian*, but Melville's novel can also be understood in retrospect after a careful reading of McCarthy. Melville's prose, which at first blush seems antiquated and Victorian, seems much more modern after reading McCarthy. Also, Melville's digressions into the etymological and natural history of whales, as well as aesthetic, religious, and philosophical chapters, seem less tedious and more essential to an unconventional construction of the narrative tension after reading *Blood Meridian*. (131)

While Greenwood's reasons for reading the two texts alongside one another might satisfy some, he ultimately suggests that one should look at *Blood Meridian* and *Moby-Dick* as companion texts if only to make Melville more palatable. If one finds *Moby-Dick's* lengthy digressions on whales, religion, and philosophical matters tiresome, *Blood Meridian's* long descriptions of the scalphunters traveling through the desert landscape will certainly only make matters worse. For those readers who repeatedly return to Melville's great epic precisely because of its digressions on etymology and the history of the whale, which are not truly digressions but the "metaphysical underpinning" (Orr 106) of not just *Moby-Dick* but of Melville's corpus, other reasons are needed.

Put simply, reading *Moby-Dick* and *Blood Meridian* enhances the aesthetic splendor of both novels. On its own, each author's labyrinthine prose offers its own

aesthetic justification for reading. The two novels also confront similar questions about death, violence, and nature, and when taken together the philosophical congruities and differences between *Moby-Dick* and *Blood Meridian* encourage moments of serious reflection. In *Blood Meridian*, one somehow sees the eradication of an entire population of people become congruous with the hunt for whales. In this discomfoting transformation, one must confront difficult questions about the role of historical narratives in shaping one's worldview, the existence of morality, and the consequences of progress. The contemplative rewards of reading both novels together serve as their own justifications for viewing the texts as complementary works.

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CURRICULUM VITAE

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