

UNIVERZITA KARLOVA – FILOZOFICKÁ FAKULTA

ÚSTAV ANGLONNÍCH LITERATUR A KULTUR



**Between Nostalgia and Pragmatism: Cormac McCarthy's Border Trilogy**

DIPLOMOVÁ PRÁCE

**Vedoucí diplomové práce (supervisor):**

Prof. PhDr. Martin Procházka, CSc.

**Zpracoval (author):**

Bc. Zdeněk Polívka

**Studijní obor (subject):**

Anglofonní literatury a kultury

Praha, srpen 2019

I declare that the following MA thesis is my own work for which I used only the sources and literature mentioned, and that this thesis has not been used in the course of other university studies or in order to acquire the same or another type of diploma.

Prohlašuji, že jsem tuto diplomovou práci vypracoval samostatně, že jsem řádně citoval všechny použité prameny a literaturu a že práce nebyla využita v rámci jiného vysokoškolského studia či k získání jiného nebo stejného titulu.

V Praze, dne 21. srpna 2019

.....  
(Zdeněk Polívka, podpis)

This thesis would not be possible without the invaluable commentary and advice from my thesis supervisor, Prof. PhDr. Martin Procházka, CSc., and the astute proofreading skills and support from Bc. Eva Rösslerová. Thank you for everything.

Souhlasím se zapůjčením diplomové práce ke studijním účelům.

I have no objections to the MA thesis being borrowed and used for study purposes.

## THESIS ABSTRACT

This thesis deals with the problematics and the role of American frontier and American West in Cormac McCarthy's border trilogy consisting of *All the Pretty Horses* (1992), *The Crossing* (1994) and *Cities of the Plain* (1999). The reading proper focuses mainly on the second novel of the trilogy, making frequent references to both the other two volumes of the trilogy and to *Blood Meridian* (1985), a novel directly preceding the trilogy itself.

The main goal of the thesis is to demonstrate that the trilogy not only critically engages with the American nationalist ideology represented by a nostalgically conceptualized myths of the American frontier, but that it also offers its own alternative vision of the concept of the frontier and of American national identity. The thesis further claims that McCarthy's critical approach to the mythical representations of the American history bears strong resemblance to the philosophy of American pragmatism as defined by a French philosopher Giles Deleuze in his works dedicated to American thinking and culture. In his pragmatic view of American identity the frontier ceases to function in its traditional, nationalistic sense as a line of separation that divides the social and political space into binary categories, and instead it is understood as an open and constantly permutating process which precludes the possibility of a stable, essentialized historical identity.

The thesis itself is divided into four distinct parts, namely: the introduction to the theoretical and historical background, two main chapters dedicated to the reading of the primary text, and a conclusion. The introductory part presents the historical problematics of the American frontier and American West and contextualizes McCarthy's work. The introduction also presents Deleuze's conceptualization of American pragmatism and discusses its relevance for McCarthy's work in the trilogy. The two main chapters provide a detailed historical, stylistic and narrative analysis of the central primary text, *The Crossing*. The first chapter this focuses on the complex relationship

between the protagonist and the she-wolf, which is considered in the context of Deleuze's concept becoming-animal. The second chapter subsequently focuses on the protagonist's relationship with the American frontier tradition. The goal of both main chapters is to demonstrate, that the aesthetics and narrative technique employed in the novel intentionally work to disrupt the notion of a stable, rooted identity, both individual and national, and that the concept of the frontier ceases to function in its established nationalist sense, becoming an open space for encounter with the new. The conclusion of the thesis summarizes its finds and places them in broader historical context, hoping to provide a new perspective on the significance and direction of McCarthy's artistic project in this creative period.

KEYWORDS: Cormac McCarthy, Border Trilogy, The Crossing, Cities of the Plain, All the Pretty Horses, frontier, American West, Giles Deleuze, rhizome, Manifest Destiny

## ABSTRAKT

Tato práce se zabývá problematikou a zobrazením americké hranice a amerického západu v takzvaně prostředním tvůrčím období amerického autora Cormaca McCarthyho. Konkrétně pak pojednává o tzv. Hraniční trilogii sestávající se z románů *Všichni Krásní Koně* (1992), *Hranice* (1994) a *Města na Planině* (1999). Samotná analýza se pak soustředí především na čtení románu druhého, *Hranice*, s četnými odkazy jak ke zbylým románům trilogie, tak i ke *Krvavému Poledniku* (1985), románu, který trilogii bezprostředně předchází.

Práce si za prvé klade za cíl ukázat, že autor se na stránkách trilogie nejenom kriticky vyrovnává s americkou nacionální ideologií založenou na nostalgicky pojatém mýtu o západní hranici, ale rovněž tu čtenářům předkládá vlastní alternativní pojetí pojmu americké hranice, potažmo americké národní identity. Práce následně tvrdí, že autorův přístup k americké hranici vykazuje značné podobnosti s hodnotami filozofie amerického pragmatismu, tak, jak ji ve svých dílech věnované americké kultuře a myšlení definoval francouzský filozof Giles Deleuze. V jeho pragmatickém pojetí americké identity přestává hranice fungovat v tradičním nacionálním a ideologickém smyslu jakožto bariéra uměle rozdělující politický a společenský prostor do ustálených binárních kategorií, a namísto toho je pojímána jako otevřený a proměnlivý proces, který možnost historicky ustálené identity vylučuje.

Práce samotná sestává ze čtyř hlavních částí, kterými jsou: teoreticko-historický úvod do problematiky, dvě hlavní kapitoly věnované čtení románu a shrnující závěr. Úvod práce představuje problematiku americké hranice a amerického západu skrze odbornou literaturu k tématu a následně uvádí danou problematiku do kontextu McCarthyho díla. Úvod dále zahrnuje představení Deleuzova pojetí amerického pragmatismu a nastiňuje jeho relevanci pro čtení McCarthyho díla. Dvě hlavní části práce se zaměřují na stylistickou, narativní a historickou

analýzu románu *Hranice*. První část se zaměřuje především na komplexní vztah protagonisty románu a vlčice, který je pojímán jako příklad Deleuzova konceptu stávání se zvířetem. Druhá část se potom zaměřuje na vztah mezi protagonistou a historickou tradicí Americké hranice. Cílem obou částí je ukázat, že autorova narativní technika a estetika záměrně rozrušují koncept ustálené a předem dané národní identity, a že pojem hranice zde přestává fungovat v ustáleném nacionalistickém smyslu, a stává se spíše otevřeným prostorem pro střetávání se s novým. Závěr pak shrnuje celou práci a vsazuje ji do širšího historického kontextu s cílem přinést nový pohled na význam a směřování autorovy tvorby v daném tvůrčím období.

KLÍČOVÁ SLOVA: Cormac McCarthy, Hraniční Trilogie, Hranice, Města na planině, Všichni krásní koně, hranice, americký západ, Giles Deleuze, rizom, Zjevný úděl

TABLE OF CONTENTS

**1 General Aims and Structure** ..... 10

    1.1 Note on Structure ..... 10

    1.2 Overview of General Aims ..... 10

**2 Introduction**..... 15

    2.1 The Westward Turn of Cormac McCarthy’s Work: *Blood Meridian* and the Border Trilogy  
    ..... 15

    2.2 Between Nostalgia and Pragmatism..... 17

    2.3 Genesis of the Trilogy: *The Crossing* as a Line of Escape ..... 18

    2.4 Pragmatic Turn and Becoming..... 24

    2.5 The Rhizomatic West: Mobility, self-transformation and the American West..... 29

    2.6 Minor and Major language ..... 36

    2.7 Note on the Setting: Borders and Borderlands..... 39

**3 Part I: Becoming Animal**..... 45

    3.1 Imagining the Wolf ..... 45

    3.2 Wolf and Manifest Destiny ..... 48

    3.3 Deframing: Charting other Movements ..... 52

    3.4 Thinking the Animal: from Domestic to Demonic ..... 56

    3.5 Alliance with a Demon..... 61

    3.6 Wolf as Multiplicity ..... 72

**4 Part II: Becoming Anomalous** ..... 77

    4.1 Aesthetics of Disappearance ..... 77

4.2 Narrative Mapping .....	79
4.3 Critique of Representations of the Past.....	83
4.4 Fiction and a Line of Flight.....	95
4.5 Narrative: Rhizome .....	98
4.6 Storytelling.....	103
4.7 The world as Telling .....	104
4.8 Epilogue .....	105
<b>4 Conclusion: Borders, Frontier and American History.....</b>	<b>108</b>
<b>Bibliography .....</b>	<b>111</b>

# 1 General Aims and Structure

## 1.1 Note on Structure

The thesis commences with an extended introductory part dealing with the general context of McCarthy's work and the reasons behind the choice of limiting the present analysis mainly to the middle novel of trilogy, *The Crossing* (1994). The reading and analysis proper of the selected novel will then be divided between two extended thematically connected parts which will be followed by a conclusion and summary of the finds.

## 1.2 Overview of General Aims

The thesis starts with the discussion of McCarthy's shifting orientation to the problematics connected with the concept of the American West which commences with the publication of *Blood Meridian* (1985)<sup>1</sup> and is fully developed in the subsequent Border Trilogy. The discussion will attempt to account for some of the most marked differences and developments in McCarthy's treatment of the grand-narratives of American history, such as the frontier and Manifest Destiny that can be seen between *BM* and the later novels of the trilogy.

It will be claimed that the chief formal development lies in the fact that in the trilogy McCarthy traces the historical transformation and rewriting of the horrors of frontier expansion described in *BM* into a nostalgia for the American frontier past, now transposed onto the modern borderline between U.S. and Mexico. As will be seen, doing so allows McCarthy to underline the insupportability of American identity based on the concept of the frontier and the connected notion

---

<sup>1</sup> Further to be referred to only as *BM*.

of westward movement following the effective disappearance of the physical frontier dramatized at the conclusion of *BM*.

The thesis will further conclude that this shift between *BM* and the trilogy is accompanied by McCarthy's increased interest in epistemology and the role of language in both mediating the cultural reality and heritage of the West but, importantly, also in its ability of disrupting the established monolithic representations. For reasons elaborated upon in section 2.1, the thesis focuses mainly on reading the second novel of the trilogy, *The Crossing*, with only occasional recourse to *All the Pretty Horses* (1992)<sup>2</sup> and *Cities of the Plain* (1999).<sup>3</sup> The main reason for choosing this approach is the fact that the second novel successfully embodies both above approaches to language while also trying to elaborate a possible line of escape from the violent heritage of the national past.

The subsequent discussion will argue that McCarthy's emphasis on the pragmatic role of language and fiction dramatized in the selected texts yield intriguing similarities between McCarty's work in this period and what Giles Deleuze identified as an American proto-pragmatist literary tradition in his writings on the topic of Anglo-American literature such as the *Dialogues II* (1977) or *Essays Critical and Clinical* (1993). To connect Deleuze's thought about American writing to the concept of the West, the thesis will utilize Neil Campbell's appropriation of Deleuze's term the 'rhizomatic West.' In attempting to see American Western history on the frontier as a rhizomatic process instead of a rooted, essentialized identity, Campbell will supply the thesis with a productive framework for reading the second book of the trilogy which in comparison with the other two

---

<sup>2</sup> Further to be referred to and cited in parentheses only as *Horses*.

<sup>3</sup> Further to be referred to and cited in parentheses only as *Cities*.

volumes presents a most complete and successful realization of what will be called McCarthy's rhizomatic, minor aesthetic.

Part one of the thesis (Chapter 3) will almost entirely coincide with the first part of *The Crossing* (which spans the first 127 pages of the book) centered around the relationship between the main protagonist and the she-wolf. The argument will see this encounter as McCarthy's way of thematizing and exploring the problem of pluralism which lies at the core of the pragmatic tradition as seen by Deleuze. Pluralism will be considered in the broadest possible manner, that is, not only as problem of the organization of social life of the majoritarian American culture, but rather as a metaphysical encounter between an individual subject and its outside, that is, the encounter with the otherness of other subjects, histories, perspectives and forms of life. The fact that McCarthy chooses an animal to explore this problem makes his approach particularly well suited to be conceptualized in the framework of becoming-animal which constitutes an indispensable part of Deleuze's reading of American literary tradition.

For Deleuze, animal will be seen to represent a philosophical and literary concept, a mode of thinking about otherness, rather than a strict biological organism. Becoming-animal is read as a process of attempting to reach beyond the cultural limits and divisions between individual bodies, a process of imagining otherness without culturally inherited modes of thinking about the other. In the case of McCarthy and the wolf, the analysis will thus include a consideration and subsequent critique of the common ways of conceptualizing the wolf in American culture with special emphasis on the ethos of the frontier and Manifest Destiny. The discussion will conclude that McCarthy uses the relationship with the animal to investigate and critique the majoritarian, rooted way of thinking about otherness connected to American national identity seen through the prism of the West.

The later sections of part one will subsequently explore McCarthy's own conceptualization of otherness and pluralism. By focusing on McCarthy's depiction of the wolf as well as on its relation to the protagonist it will be seen that McCarthy is well aware of the anthropocentric epistemological limitations of any attempt at arriving at the truth of the animal, and that the novel finally rejects the notions of stable identity or essence altogether. Discarding the notion of pre-existent truth or stability of reference, McCarthy will be shown to treat the animal as an anomalous, polyvalent sign whose identity is provisionally displaced among an irreducible multiplicity of differing perspectives and tales.

The protagonist's curiosity for the animal can then be read as a process of experimentation with perception which leads him away from the dogmas of his paternal, western culture, allowing him to experience the American borderland as a multiplicity of practices and processes. Part one will thus conclude by showing that McCarthy rejects the notion of rooted, organic and pre-established identity, arguing instead for mobile, pragmatic and finally rhizomatic concepts of identity.

Part two (Chapter 4) will shift its focus on McCarthy's narrative technique describing the protagonist's multiple crossings of the international borders and his multifarious wanderings through the U.S.-Mexican borderlands. Section one will pay close attention to the aesthetics of disappearance and divestment of the protagonist's identity and history which will be conceptualized as a continuation of the process of becoming initiated by the encounter with the wolf. The following section will then focus on the narrative structure of the novel proper, connecting McCarthy's narrative technique with the process of becoming of the main protagonist. The narrative technique will be identified to follow the Deleuzian concept of the rhizome, a narrative that valorizes passages and movements instead of starts and destinations. Just as there is no identity to the wolf, there is no essentialized identity to Billy and therefore also to his narrative

itself. It will be argued that what McCarthy attempts to achieve is a repudiation of the concept of narrative as an organic progress toward completion, instead valorizing a story as a line of flight, that is, as a constantly developing and transforming process.

The last section of part two will subsequently deal with McCarthy's valorization of storytelling and fiction-making in relation to his critique of majoritarian, rooted modes of thinking. It will be seen that McCarthy associates storytelling and writing with open-ended activities undertaken not just by individuals but by whole communities. Creative fiction will thus finally be seen as a process of individual and collective interpretation, re-description and performance of the world, continually sending historically rooted identities into flight.

The conclusion of the thesis will finally claim that through his narrative technique, McCarthy rejects not only the notion of stable identity but also the notion of a self-contained work of art, emphasizing the need for collective acts of witnessing which open up the possibilities for future outside of nostalgic and dogmatic conceptualizations of history.

## 2 Introduction

### 2.1 The Westward Turn of Cormac McCarthy's Work: *Blood Meridian* and the Border Trilogy

The publication of *Blood Meridian* (1985) marks a significant shift in Cormac McCarthy's oeuvre, representing a move from his novels set in the Appalachian south to the American-Mexican borderline. Accompanying this geographical change there is a distinct thematic and stylistic transformation, which John Rothfork describes as "shifting focus from metaphysics to epistemology, from looking for causes [...] to becoming more concerned with epistemological processes[...]."<sup>4</sup> As Rothfork adds, this turn has strong affinities with the approach of American pragmatism. Instead of probing the innate metaphysical or gnostic nature of good and evil, McCarthy starts exploring the pragmatic processes concerning the role of language and representation in perpetrating human relation to history. These two shifts finally converge on McCarthy's increased interest in the nationalistic and mythic narratives connected to the American West and its historical and symbolic role in structuring and defining the perception of American identity and history in general.

Already in *BM*, this southwestern literary project takes the shape of a severe critique of the mythological meta-narratives of American identity connected to the concept of the West, especially those of the Frontier and Manifest Destiny.<sup>5</sup> The overarching theme of this and the

---

<sup>4</sup> John Rothfork, "Cormac McCarthy as Pragmatist," *Critique: Studies in Contemporary Fiction*, Vol. 47, No. 2 (Winter, 2006): 201-214 < [https://oak.ucc.nau.edu/jgr6/Mccarthy\\_pragmatist.htm](https://oak.ucc.nau.edu/jgr6/Mccarthy_pragmatist.htm)>.

<sup>5</sup> Steven Shaviro is perhaps the most prominent proponent of this reading saying that *Blood Meridian* above all else explodes "the American dream of manifest destiny, of racial domination and endless imperial expansion." Steven Shaviro, "A Reading of *Blood Meridian*," *Southern Quarterly* Vol. 30, No.4 (Summer 1992): 112.

following southwestern novels can be seen as an attempt at countering a pernicious type of historical nostalgia connected to the West. Namely, the deeply engrained vision of the West and the westward movement as the birthplace of the American national identity; that is, as a space of self-transformation and freedom from oppression associated with the Old World which gave rise to a superior brand of American democracy and egalitarianism. As a number of influential commentators on the meta-narrative of the American West note,<sup>6</sup> the Western narrative has two inextricably related functions and manifestations: it provides a representation of a glorious birth of a stable, national identity, but this identity is effectuated only by establishing racially, geographically and religiously motivated binaries between the American pioneers and their cultural others. Neil Campbell cites this movement as a species of internal imperialism wherein the Western narrative effectively valorizes the homogeneity and univocity of the U.S. interior by suppressing all possible alternative narratives<sup>7</sup>. *BM* has often been rightly read in similar light. It provides a critique of the monolithic perspective on American history by depicting the conquest of the West as a brutal, proto-fascist annihilation of the Native Americans and the Mexican populations, embodied mainly in the character of Judge Holden. The Judge effectively imposes a univocal representation of history seen from the perspective of the privileged or chosen individual, thus recasting the complexity and multiplicity of the U.S. history into a single, exclusivist, quasi-religious narrative. The chief function of *BM* in McCarthy's engagement with the American West could then be described as the unearthing of the violent corollary of such mythic views and

---

<sup>6</sup> Most notorious in the critique of American West and its political and racial ideology is Richard Slotkin whose work on the concept of American frontier, most importantly his *Regeneration through Violence: The Mythology of the American Frontier* (1973) and *Gunfighter Nation: The Myth of the Frontier in Twentieth-century America*. (1992) will be dealt with in more detail below.

<sup>7</sup> Neil Campbell, *The Rhizomatic West: Representing the American West in Transnational, Global, Media Age* (Lincoln; University of Nebraska Press, 2008) 2.

criticizing their role in actively erasing the alterity and multiplicity of American space and its historical project in favor of a single privileged viewpoint.

The following novels of the trilogy could subsequently be said to explore the manifestations of the pernicious nostalgia after the closing down of the physical frontier symbolically enacted at the end of *BM*. Specifically, the main topic of the trilogy are the consequences of transplanting the ethos and nationalistic discourse underlying the frontier expansion onto a modern geopolitical borderland between the U.S. and Mexico. Connected to this development, McCarthy also shifts his thematic concerns from depicting and critiquing the violence accompanying the actual physical expansion of the frontier in the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the exploration of the extent to which the mythical, nationalistic discourse and imagery connected to the national frontier past influence the possibilities for imagining the present and future of individual and communal identities.

## **2.2 Between Nostalgia and Pragmatism**

The trilogy itself can be said to contain two differing attitudes to the national past, which may be termed nostalgic and pragmatic. The nostalgic attitude is mainly associated with the character of John Grady, the protagonist of *Horses*. John Grady can be seen as a victim of historical nostalgia, caught in the discourse of the glorified national past at the frontier. Through his narrative and character, McCarthy dramatizes the pernicious influence of language and culture on an individual's sense of identity and his attitude to his present reality. Billy, the protagonist of the second novel, although too largely steeped in the discourse of the national frontier past, can then be seen as McCarthy developing the problematics of the national past outlined in the first novel, representing a turn towards pragmatic attitudes towards language and discourse. What McCarthy achieves in the second novel, as opposed to the first one, is that he moves away from criticizing the manner in which the nationalistic discourse itself perpetuates the nostalgic and ideological

attitudes to the national past and instead he explores the possible liberating, pragmatic capacities of language and narrative. The second novel and its main protagonist thus ultimately represent McCarthy's peculiar line of escape from the nostalgic clinging to the national past, an invention of a different narrative line that offsets the totalizing function of the grand-narratives of American history.

This is not to say that the division between the novels is clear-cut, as both novels attempt to navigate the nostalgic indebtedness to the national past while trying to find pragmatic lines of escape. The problem of the first and third novels is that their pragmatic tendencies seem to appear only in their germinal, undeveloped form, and it is only in the second novel where they are properly expanded to become a very topic of the novel itself, governing its aesthetic and narrative structure. For these reasons, this thesis focuses predominantly on the reading of the second novel. The following section will provide brief summary and reading of the first and last volumes of the trilogy, further elucidating upon the crucial developments of McCarthy's theme throughout the trilogy and the pivotal importance of *The Crossing* as a direction of escape from the violent heritage of *Blood Meridian* and the nostalgic impasse of *Horses*.

### **2.3 Genesis of the Trilogy: *The Crossing* as a Line of Escape**

To understand the problematic relationship to the national past dramatized in the individual novels it may be useful first to focus on the last novel of the trilogy, *Cities of the Plain*. Although the novel itself was published last, in 1998, in terms of the genesis of the entire trilogy<sup>8</sup> the basic structure and idea for the novel actually predates the first two volumes in a form of an unpublished

---

<sup>8</sup> For more information on the publication process, see the introduction to *A Cormac McCarthy Companion*, eds. Edwin T. Arnold and Dianne C. Luce (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2001) VII-VIII.

film script which roughly contained the plot of the final novel, but more importantly, which introduced the trilogy's two main protagonists and their tragically conflicted views of the national past. The subsequent two volumes of the trilogy, *Horses* and *The Crossing* would then be written as ways of exploring and expanding the protagonists and main themes from the script, with the last novel being a novelistic reworking of the original script itself with added extended epilogue for the whole trilogy.<sup>9</sup>

The initial script for *Cities* centers around the story of John Grady with Billy Parham featuring as a minor character. The relatively straightforward plot sees John on an ultimately fatal nostalgic quest to save a prostitute named Magdalena, John's love interest, from a Mexican gang leader over the international border in Ciudad Juarez. Billy's role in the story is of a survivor and witness to Grady's tragic downfall at the hand of the gang leader. The structure of a doomed quest is a typical motif for the entire trilogy, but it is in connection to John Grady, much more so than in Billy, where the quest manifests in its tragic nostalgic clarity. For as the readers learn in the first novel, Grady's attempt to save Magdalena in the last novel is essentially only a symbolic attempt to bring to successful conclusion a similar endeavor of ten years before discussed in *Horses*. Grady's story in the *Cities* is therefore revealed merely as a burlesque repetition of the past events, signaling to the reader that Grady was in fact unable to learn from his mistakes, unable to extricate himself from the deadening influence of the past, both personal and national, on his present and future.

Conversely, it is possible to assert that *Horses* offers an extended version of the basic plotline of *Cities* in which McCarthy elucidates upon the nature and historical context of John Grady's

---

<sup>9</sup> McCarthy would later replicate similar process with his next southwestern novel, *No Country for Old Men* (2005), which also originally appeared as a film script before being expanded into a novel.

character and attitude. In the first novel then, the reader follows the story of Grady's forage to Mexico in search for a western frontier paradise which he finds untenable in the post-WWII U.S. As he reaches the Hacienda de la Purisima Concepcion in northern Mexico, the novel becomes dominated by a romantic plot with strong pastoral and biblical features. Mostly focalized through Grady himself, the ranch appears as a vision of pastoral paradise complete with wild stallions, endlessly receding pastures and most importantly the Hacendando's forbidden daughter, Alejandra, with whom Grady unsuccessfully attempts to elope. For Grady, northern Mexico thus essentially serves as a space for projecting his nostalgic views of the national frontier past. The international south-western border consequently appears to function as a mock western frontier line, which holds its traditional promise of unconstrained movement and the possibility of regeneration of the present ills by the contact with unspoiled landscape.<sup>10</sup>

The chief aspect that characterizes John Grady as a protagonist of the main plot of the *Horses* and *Cities* and that subsequently differentiates him from Billy Parham in *The Crossing* and in the epilogue to the trilogy in the third novel is Grady's virtual inability to sidestep from his nostalgic viewpoint of the national past, and to see his present outside of the frame afforded to him by the past. In McCarthy's rendition Grady seems to see all events solely through the prism of the national western myth, effectively converting all present and future into mere copies and repetitions of the imaginary past. This aspect is aptly signaled by the circular nature of Grady's story in the trilogy, as the basic plot of search for a frontier paradise and subsequent attempt at an elopement dramatized in *Horses* is effectively repeated in the *Cities*. Grady thus ultimately emerges as a

---

<sup>10</sup> This aspect of the frontier is discussed extensively for instance in Henry Nash Smith's *The Virgin Land: Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth* (1978).

character caught in a recurring cycle of desire for the idyllic past and factual impossibility of fulfilling this desire due to the complexity of actual historical conditions.

Grady's inability to see beyond the vicious loop of libidinal investment into fabricated images of the frontier past also finally seem responsible for the relatively straightforward, traditional narrative structure of both *Horses* and the main text of the *Cities* (excluding the epilogue dedicated to Billy). For both novels centered around John Grady are in their core linear adventure plots seeing Grady cross the international border in search for an ill-defined frontier paradise which he subsequently projects onto the figure of a beautiful woman who is ultimately found unattainable. The relative linearity of the novels' plot, especially that of *Horses*, can also be the reason why the first novel lends itself to such massive popularity (especially compared to the second one), becoming a *New York Times* bestseller and being graced by a glorified Hollywood film adaptation which is arguably complicit in perpetrating the very images and mythology that it was McCarthy's aim to criticize.

This all is not to say that the first novel is a mere story of nostalgia or a linear celebration of the Old West, as it is apparent that McCarthy indeed conceived of the novel as a critique of similar nostalgic attitudes toward the past, but the novel is ultimately (and perhaps intentionally) short of viable alternatives to the deathly nostalgia that Grady is caught up in. This seems to be the reason why Grady is finally left to die at the end of both the film script and the last novel. McCarthy's original main protagonist ultimately seems to be an impossible character to maintain, one for whose viewpoint there is no imaginable future and whose attitude to the world is not conducive to the forces of becoming and life.

To illustrate this conflation between Grady's doomed desire and the national clinging to the frontier ideal one needs only look at the concluding pages of the main text of the *Cities* where the

pimp, Eduardo, seems to succinctly summarize Grady's predicament. For Eduardo, contrary to Grady's beliefs, his quest to save the prostitute is not an individuated act of personal heroism but rather an acute symptom of national nostalgia. For him, Grady is an embodiment of an American cliché, one of many farmboys "of whom there is no end" who "drift down of your leprous paradise seeking a thing now extinct among them. A thing for which perhaps they no longer even have a name. Being farmboys [...] they think to look is in a whorehouse." The pursuit of the thing now extinct finally clouds their minds, disabling them from seeing the "simplest truths" about whores, which is that "they are whores." (*Cities*, 250) Apart from making a rather clear allusion to the national frontier fascination, the passage (occurring mere pages before Grady's death) underscores Grady's inability to vary his perspective, to see the complexity of the historical, economic and social conditions at the Mexican borderland (here ironically termed as 'simple truth' as opposed to Grady's idealized vision), instead constantly tinging them with a nostalgic desire for an inaccessible object of libidinal investment.

It seems as though in order to find an antidote to the indebtedness to the pernicious nostalgic views of the national past, McCarthy needed to invest what was originally his minor character, Billy Parham, with a powerful deterritorializing force which gave rise to an entire new novel of his own, whose narrative complexity, scope and strength of philosophical conviction far exceed both other volumes of the trilogy centered around John Grady.

For if the filmic, nostalgic structure of the first novel can be partially attributed to the limitations of its main protagonist, then it is also possible to say that the narrative complexity of the second novel is a function of a protagonist for whom a conventional western adventure narrative is too small, a protagonist whose world is always in excess of the imagery and narrative devices that are used to capture him. Through the character of Billy Parham, McCarthy takes a line of flight from

the oppressive images of the national past adherence to which finally sentences John Grady to his death. As a result, *The Crossing* emerges as the longest, most narratively complex and aesthetically opulent novel of the trilogy. Unlike Grady whose motivations and personality are always relatively transparent due to his naïve frontier moral compass, Billy Parham's motivations are often entirely withheld from the reader or they appear only after the fact as retrospective rationalizations and containment strategies he employs to ward his existence against the forces of chaos that infringe upon his identity. As the sole survivor of the trilogy, Billy bears witness to a world that seems to elude univocal historical representations, a world which rejects the notion of continuity with the images and discourses of the national frontier past. In the epilogue to the trilogy, the reader gets the impression that Billy has indeed witnessed too much, seen the chaos of the world in its unfolding and foregone all sense of identity and belonging, becoming an eternal orphan and wanderer.

As a witness, however, Billy is endowed with a quality that is all but lacking in Grady, his one singular feature in otherwise similar-seeming western character, that is, his curiosity and inclination (albeit momentary and eclectic) for the outside. That is, the peculiar inclination of his thought for that which lies outside of the purview afforded to Grady by his cultural-historical environment, system of values, perceptions and representations that he inherits from the past. In rare enlightened moments of his journey, Billy is willing to experiment with the ways he views the world, experiment with trying to image the otherness of foreign bodies and lands without *a priori* viewing them through the prism of his culture. This curiosity, openness and experimentation associate Billy with what the next chapter terms American pragmatic tradition. Unlike Grady, Billy is in the crucial moments of his narrative capable of refuting the monolithic view of the national past and he perceives life in its processual, multiple unfolding. Throughout the novel, Billy

becomes immensely interested in otherness and alterity, in changing the inherited conditions even though he repeatedly falls back onto the familiar imagery to anchor his existence. Where there is mostly a relentless pursuit of the frontier ideal in Grady, there are moments of encounter with otherness which affect raptures and silences in Billy's cultural view of the world. It is precisely this mixture between willingness to experiment and the harkening back to paternal order, between nostalgia and pragmatism, that make up the complexity of the protagonist and of his novel.

To sum up and conclude the preliminary discussion of the trilogy as a whole, it is possible to assert that through his two protagonists McCarthy explores two varying modes of relation to the national past in the 20<sup>th</sup> century: a craving for nostalgic frontier roots on one hand, and an inclination towards taking on the pragmatic road of experimentation on the other. Through John Grady, McCarthy depicts the desire to rewrite the horrors depicted in *BM* into a nostalgic image of home, while through Billy Parham he attempts to move beyond the familiar imagery, creating a mobile, non-essentialized identity for his protagonist. This way, McCarthy's project in *The Crossing* seems to reject the violent heritage of American frontier history which was brought to its grueling limit in the ruthless individualism of Judge Holden in *BM*, and which was subsequently idealized and thus unknowingly perpetuated by John Grady in *Horses*.

## **2.4 Pragmatic Turn and Becoming**

As suggested above, it is the contention of this thesis that in contrast to *BM*, the central question of McCarthy's western project ceases to be that of critique and deconstruction of the American western identity, moving toward exploring the possibilities of historical representation beyond the traditional, nostalgic notions of the American West. The central question of *The Crossing* can therefore be formulated as follows: how to imagine the American experience without presupposing privileged historical perspectives and narratives and how to escape the idea of an essentialized

national identity that produces unbridgeable divisions between subjects and ultimately promotes violence such as the one described in *BM*.

McCarthy thus attempts to navigate a problem which is twofold. He attempts to dislodge the ruthless individualism that marked the national westward expansion while also being aware that there is no possibility of appeal to some higher, primordial unity or ideal state of American identity as it was historically precisely such appeals that led toward the valorization of individual violence in the first place. So put, this thesis claims that McCarthy taps into what Giles Deleuze identified as the fundamental problem of American literature and thinking, that is, how to represent the scale and multiplicity of human organization in the New World without valorizing ruthless individualism or without reducing the multiplicity by presupposing an essentialized, preexistent historical identity of the entire nation. According to Deleuze, the ongoing solution to this problem took the shape of what he loosely termed the American proto-pragmatist project which “will fight ceaselessly on two fronts: against the particularities that pit man against man and nourish an irremediable mistrust; but also against the Universal or the Whole.”<sup>11</sup> In Deleuzean reading, this focus against universals and particulars takes the form of lines of flight and of becomings which work toward deterritorialization of traditional division and identities. It entails an increased emphasis on experiments with perception, on what is sometimes called the ‘spirit of the laboratory,’ which imagines the social field as a co-functioning of various points of views and beliefs, emphasizing the roles of process and fiction as instruments of minoritarian conception of language and thinking which destabilize the unproductive essentialized identities and concepts.

---

<sup>11</sup> Gilles Deleuze, *Essays Critical and Clinical*, trans. Daniel Smith and Michael Greco (London: Verso, 1998) 80.

For Deleuze, the process of becoming, unlike that of transformation which is individual and subjective, concerns itself with overcoming social and experiential binaries enforced by interiorized identities and historically inherited modes of perception by attempting to trace a social organization that can be described as a co-functioning or assemblage of heterogeneous terms which are not bound together by obligation or customs but by what Deleuze sometimes terms as sympathy. Sympathy in Deleuzian reading figures as a force of attraction that enables individuals to “go beyond themselves to form larger communities,”<sup>12</sup> however, unlike in David Hume’s theory of sympathy,<sup>13</sup> which bases the faculty on the notion of unchangeable and immobile nature of personal property (seen both as physical possession and historically determinate identity), Deleuze sees the core of sympathy in the lines of flight and mobility. This is why his reading of the American tradition postulates a community of universal immigrants who are constantly willing to throw down their culturally inherited ‘traits’ and pursue an experimental line of inquiry, understanding the formation of community as a continuously unfolding process without a preestablished goal or model.

Perhaps most importantly for the purposes of this thesis, Deleuze localizes the pragmatic processes of becoming and lines of flight into the realm of the arts and fiction. As Gregory Flaxman succinctly summarizes: “long before it was so named, Deleuze argues, pragmatism took flight in a series of writers (Emerson, Thoreau, Hawthorne, Poe, Whitman, and above all Melville) who were already busying themselves with the problems and possibilities of pluralism,” facing the great challenge of “how to congregate so many particularities without recourse to totality or

---

<sup>12</sup> Ronald Bogue, “On the Superiority of American Literature,” *Deleuze Studies*, Vol. 7, No. 3 (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013) 307.

<sup>13</sup> David Hume in Bogue, 307.

universality.”<sup>14</sup> It is therefore in creative fiction where the lines of flight and becomings<sup>15</sup> can be most powerfully felt and where they can be brought to work on undoing the essentialized forms of thought and social organization.

Here finally comes the uniqueness of the narrative line of *The Crossing* and of its protagonist’s journey. In the space of the novel, it is Billy Parham who we see being caught up in a peculiar process of becoming. The opening part of the novel witnesses the protagonist as he gradually realizes the intolerable extent of violence that underscores the paternal culture, slowly abandoning the laws of his community and disobeying his father’s orders, first by helping a native American drifter and later by rescuing a pregnant she-wolf fleeing across the border from Mexico. His fateful decisions trigger spontaneous series of events and alternations to his sense of belonging and identity, sending him on a journey across the border during which he loses his family and figuratively also his nationality. Billy’s inexplicable attraction to the she-wolf and his choice to flee across the border manifest as a refusal to repeat the attitudes and practices of his community and as a willingness to imagine and experiment with different concepts of relationships with the natural world and others, ones that sharply vary from those held by Billy’s community according to whose laws all wolves are to be seen as pest and a threat to the domestic stability. The boy’s complex relationship with the wolf gradually emerges as an intricate process of becoming-animal,

---

<sup>14</sup> Gregory Flaxman, “A More Radical Empiricism,” *Deleuze and Pragmatism* (New York: Routledge, 2014) 188.

<sup>15</sup> “writing is inseparable from becoming ... it is in writing [that] one becomes-woman, becomes-animal or vegetable, becomes-molecule to the point of becoming imperceptiblez” (*Essays Critical and Clinical*, 1)

a process which will gradually define the entirety of the novel, informing its pragmatic, anti-essentialist view of history.<sup>16</sup>

Another crucial quality of Billy's journey that connects it to the Deleuzian pragmatic project is its peculiar reversal of a traditional western coming of age story. As Alan Bourassa notices,<sup>17</sup> McCarthy offers the reader no factual maturation of his protagonist's character as he progresses on his journey: the episodes of his story refuse to accumulate or add up into experience, nor is there any resolution offered that would see Billy coming in terms with laws of his community. Instead, his journey appears as a road without any privileged destination or direction, diffused as it is into a series of seemingly random wanderings and encounters which never add up into a coherent narrative. Crucially, the way the narrative develops is by a peculiar method of subtraction<sup>18</sup> wherein the reader sees the protagonist's life gradually stripped away from him. This seems to happen in strict contrast to the traditionally understood narrative arc of a bildungsroman which is concerned with recounting the process of a journey along which isolated happenings are transformed into an experience and enclosed narrative. Billy's journey is marked by a gaping feeling of loss of any possibility of establishing similar cumulative narrative line. Instead, McCarthy seems to dramatize the epistemological impossibility of maintaining a unified point of view and the connected ethical necessity of valorizing the fluidity and multiplicity of experience

---

<sup>16</sup> For Deleuze, the process of becoming "always involves a pack, a band, a population, a peopling, in short a multiplicity." *Thousand Plateaus*, 239. Becoming is thus a movement which opens the social field toward an indeterminate future, leading toward the creation of new people by means of unmaking and deterritorializing the images and discourses of the past that condition the possibilities of the present. See, Giles Deleuze, Felix, Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, trans. by Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987) 232-309. Further to be referred to only as *Thousand Plateaus*.

<sup>17</sup> Alan Bourassa, *Deleuze and American Literature* (New York: Palgrave) 83-84.

<sup>18</sup> Bourassa, 83.

as the only positive corollary of a journey. What initially appears as a linear story of apprenticeship and maturation gradually turns in on itself and becomes a non-linear story where the protagonist's gestalt is violently unlearned and the protagonist himself is taken far from the limited worldview represented by his community.

Instead of coming to a positive knowledge about his position in the world and his relation to other beings within his community, the protagonist's limited world view opens up to a continuously unfolding multiplicity of stories and conceptualizations of the world where the notions of fixed knowledge and identity become impossible.

## **2.5 The Rhizomatic West: Mobility, self-transformation and the American West**

According to Ronald Bogue, although the Deleuzian pragmatic 'open road' of American sympathy by definition has no privileged direction, in its literary historical manifestation it has most often been the road to the West.<sup>19</sup> However, it is necessary to sharply differentiate between the pernicious tradition of the westward movement and the Deleuzian concept of the West as a line of flight, that is, we must recognize the West in its official capacity as a function of European colonization and American imperialist aspirations summed up in the doctrine of Manifest Destiny and implicitly upheld by nationalistic historical narratives such as F. J. Turner's Frontier Thesis, and what Deleuze and Guattari in *Thousand Plateaus* called the "rhizomatic West, with its Indians without ancestry, its ever-receding limit, its shifting and displaced frontiers."<sup>20</sup> Seen in its rhizomatic capacity, the road west is one of deterritorialization of language and thought, where the

---

<sup>19</sup> Bogue, 307.

<sup>20</sup> *Thousand Plateaus*, 37.

hegemonic majoritarian pretensions of American history are constantly disrupted by minor expressions and multiplicities. McCarthy's complex investment in the mythology of the American West in his border novels can thus finally be read as an attempt to affect a change in the symbolically and politically overcoded space of the American national identity. Brining American West into a process of variation, recreating it as a fluid creative concept that overflows its traditional representations, allowing for new connections and organizations to germinate, and thus redefining the borders and limits connected to the traditional geographical and cultural perspectives on the American West and its role as a marker of American historical identity. For it is precisely the insupportability and porosity of borders, straight lines and limits that emerges as the dominant characteristic of McCarthy's border novels which can be seen as a direct challenge to the notion of U.S. as a settled, politically and territorially homogenous entity, a vision which is all too often directly valorized by the popular conceptualizations of American West.

Neil Campbell in his Deleuzian book on the subject aptly entitled *The Rhizomatic West* (2008) provides a useful concretization of the problem of the American West. For him, the West can be viewed both as a homogenic, and (in some cases) imperialist movement but also as a plurality of diverse practices that accompany the majoritarian expression of the concept and constantly elude its totalizing power. Campbell thus begins his book by identifying an important paradox inherent in the concept of the American West. Namely, the tension between its ethos of mobility, freedom and self-transformation on the American frontier, and the simultaneous desire for fixity, stability and identity that underlines most official, mythic and ideological representations of the concept. On one hand, the West can be viewed to valorize "lines of flight" with the connected concepts of "mobility and migration existing both as ideas and as the material conditions," and on the other hand, it seems to recast these tendencies into a mythic quest for "rootedness, settlement, and

synthesis” which is “often accepted as the outcome, the final point, and the essential identity of this fluid movement.”<sup>21</sup> In short, the corollary and factual meaning of the western mobility often turns out to be the nation-building process, one that translates American history into a closed system of organic evolution and progress toward a united, rooted American identity.

Campbell’s paradox is useful because his reading of the West as a concept sheds interesting light on the task that Deleuze identified as the core of pragmatic tradition, that is, the opposition to dogmatic, unificatory visions of history. In Campbell’s critical reading thus conceptualizes the West as a hegemonic unity, a fusion of diverse particular perspectives into an idealized, national whole, but also as a plurality of practices, mobilities and beliefs that transcend the totalizing view, yet which are nonetheless constantly threatened to be subsumed by it.

It is Frederic Jackson Turner and his Frontier Thesis of American history which Campbell identifies as the most prominent symbol of the hegemonic formulation of the American West. Turner embodies the western paradox by describing the settlement of the West as an organic progress of American settlers whose traditional corollary is the birth of the unique American self. The peculiar hegemonizing function of the thesis is that it postulates the multiplicity, uncertainty and fluidity of the frontier experience only to simultaneously perform it as a rooted organic identity giving rise to what Richard Slotkin called a mythic origin narrative of the American history, whose “function is to reconcile and unite [...] individualities into a collective identity.”<sup>22</sup> The psychological and social function of the myth thus effectively undermines its own ethos of mobility and self-transformation in favor of a settled national identity represented by land

---

<sup>21</sup> Campbell, 10.

<sup>22</sup> Richard Slotkin, *Regeneration through Violence: The Mythology of the American Frontier* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1973) 8.

ordinances, property maps and the grid division system of the American territory. Such conceptualization of the mobile experience subsequently creates an illusory idea of movement, making the concept of mobility itself to be firmly associated with sedentary, rooted lifestyle. The mobility valorized by Turner is paradoxically no longer about the discovery of new ways of organization of multiple perspectives but about affirming the domestic borders, the interiorized identity and the many binaries that these concepts entail. The West as a myth and practice is thus endowed with a powerful interiorizing and unificatory function which is simultaneously engaged in the process of creating external differences which include the dichotomies of nationality, race and descent. This way the Mythic West represents both the image of liberated humanity as well as actively instigating the divisions between man, pitting the privileged member of the new American nation (typically white and male) against its cultural others, be it the Native Americans, Mexicans and ultimately the American landscape itself (often perceived as in need of culturing and taming).

Campbell will finally proceed to identify his double view of the West in Deleuzian terms as two inclinations or images of thought, the rooted and rhizomatic types, this way linking his reading of the paradoxical meaning of the West to Deleuze's thinking about the central problem of American experience, that is, its search for finding ways of resistance against essentialized, rooted structures that produce violence and limit the possibilities for freedom. The rooted or dogmatic image of thought thus represents; "a whole apparatus that is planted in thought in order to make it go in a straight line and produce the famous correct ideas." It typifies a "point of origin, seed, or centre; it is a binary machine or principle of dichotomy. . . [...] a system of points and positions that fix all of the possible within a grid, a hierarchical system or transmission of orders. . . a future and a past,

roots and a peak, a whole history, an evolution, a development . . .”<sup>23</sup> For Campbell, in order to offset this inclination of thought embodied in the traditionally accepted meta-narratives of American history, it is necessary to think the West as a “restless”<sup>24</sup> term, one whose structure is rhizomatic, constantly eluding the rooted and settled forms of thought.

Resisting the majoritarian view of the West thus seems to follow and correspond to the project that Deleuze initially assigned to American pragmatic writers. For this reason, it is no coincidence that apart of the metaphors of organic growth and glaciation, Turner himself frequently uses the image of a book to describe the general movement of the American history and experience. In his view, the history of America figures as an “open book” and “a huge page in the history of society” that should be read “line by line from east to west.” (Campbell, 35) Turner’s metaphorical usage here of course harkens back to the dogmatic, religious status of representation which prefigures the book as the absolute image of truth, an essentialized order of god. Turner thus establishes the history of U.S. as a necessary, unidirectional linear movement and effectively as a product of a univocal writing style, a universalizing inscription of space that is prefigured as being blank, waiting to be made into a representation of order. This way the westward movement also represents a single totalizing perspective on the continent that erases the possibility of other alternative viewpoints and types of inscription, subsuming the space of America under one overarching hegemonic usage and representation.<sup>25</sup>

---

<sup>23</sup> Giles, Deleuze, Claire Parnet, *Dialogues II*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (London: Continuum, 2002) 25. Quoted by Campbell in *Rhizomatic West*, 34. Further to be referred to only as *Dialogues*.

<sup>24</sup> Campbell, 33.

<sup>25</sup> In the context of McCarthy’s western works, this aspect of Turner’s thesis is strongly reflected in *BM* whose chief theme arguably is the violent erasure of alternative histories of the continent by means of one

Against this rooted style of inscription, Deleuze poses the rhizomatic model of writing, thinking and moving. In his reading, the Turnerian origin story entails a false, didactic concept of a journey associated with the coming of age story, concerned with teleological questions of origins, directions and destinations. In contrast, the rhizomatic reading of the West entails “another way of travelling and moving, proceeding through the middle [...]”<sup>26</sup> This rhizomatic mode of thought does not entail some middle, neutral way, rather, it means the state of radical liminality and variability which resists the rooted in all forms, “neither beginning” in the many, nor “the end” in the One, “but always a middle from which it [...] overflows...,” operating solely by “variation.” (ibid. 20) It is precisely this variation which resists the univocal readings of history that is embodied in Deleuze’s concept of American pragmatist tradition as the spirit of the laboratory, enabling him to think the West as a multiplicity of perspectives and writings without falling into the pitfalls of grand metanarrative such as the frontier (thus avoiding its inherent dichotomization, violence and exploitation that typically accompanied it).

It is for this reason, says Campbell, that Deleuze and Guattari reject the metaphor of a book as a unitary, ordered “image of the world”, arguing instead that in a book, the multiple must be made [...] all the more total for being fragmented,”<sup>27</sup> thus opposing Turner’s unidirectional writing style whose purpose is to turn the multiple and varied into a constant. The task for American western writing is therefore to search for a strange version of fragmented totality, for a symbiosis of

---

totalizing representation, combining positivist individualism with quasi-religious imagery. In *BM*, these sentiments are most pertinently voiced in the scene where Judge Holden makes sketches of the remains of the Anasazi people. There McCarthy shows Holden’s manipulation and destruction of the historical records of the nation that occupied the continent before the arrival of the first settlers. See Cormac McCarthy, *Blood Meridian or the Evening Redness in the West* (London: Picador, 2010) 147.

<sup>26</sup> *Thousand Plateaus*, 25.

<sup>27</sup> *Thousand Plateaus*, 27. Quoted in Campbell, 35.

heterogeneous parts and bodies coming together without ever forming a unified abstract image. Instead of presenting us with an image of world as cosmic order, the writing that Deleuze and Campbell call for could be termed the ‘chaosmos:’ no longer a world moving along a single, necessary linear axis of history but a world where divergences and alternative paths and points of view co-exist. The individual or subjects occupying this world, being present in its writing, are likewise no longer stable, self-contained wholes. Rather, they are pulled outside of themselves, being continuously disturbed in their settled ways and taking on the road. Consequently, for Campbell, the passage from the rooted to the rhizomatic mode of thinking about the West necessitates a wide-ranging re-reading and re-writing of the West as an open, ambiguous and “complex text”<sup>28</sup> made of multiple ways of inscription that exist alongside the mythical one, showing how the American meta-narrative qua the West contains multiple minor narratives and points of view which are otherwise glossed over by the majoritarian reading.

To think the West as an open, multivalent text ultimately necessitates thinking it outside of its “function as a national unifier,”<sup>29</sup> returning the West into a state of a multivalent process in a continuous variation. As such, Campbell calls for and attempts to identify a new aesthetic of shifting boundaries for which there can be no preexisting map, division or definite representation. It is a process which goes “beyond all the mechanism that contain, enframe and delimit possibilities”<sup>30</sup> and that abandons the notion of stable identity, thinking it instead in terms of lines of flight. The space for such a conception of processual identity is finally made out of forces and people in motion, of migrants and minorities that traverse the surface of the earth.

---

<sup>28</sup> Campbell, 7.

<sup>29</sup> Campbell, 18.

<sup>30</sup> Campbell, 8.

## 2.6 Minor and Major language

What is implicit in Campbell's use of the concepts, but what he sadly nowhere properly expands upon, is Deleuze's attitude towards language which directly informs the concepts of the image of thought. A proper discussion of these attitudes seems all the more necessary since it has utmost salience for the project of rhizomatic reading of the southwestern work of Cormac McCarthy. Deleuze and Guattari employ what may be called a pragmatic view of language.<sup>31</sup> The main property of language is thus not to identify or represent reality but to create and perform it. In this respect their view is close to pragmatics and the theory of speech acts, wherein language does not merely denote identities but actively creates and performs them depending on the specific socio-cultural context. Consequently, language is never neutral but always interested. For Deleuze the basic unit of language is an order-word, that is, a mode of dispensing orders to impose stable forms and constants. Moreover, the primary relation constituting the order-word is not between word and fact, but a relationship of "saying to saying."<sup>32</sup> This means that language effectively means "saying what another said" (father, priest, god); it expresses an "economy of authority and obedience."<sup>33</sup> Consequently, the role of language among political majorities can be conceived of as a transmission of orders and constants wherein language establishes "the economy" and linages of

---

<sup>31</sup> Most of the above discussion comes from Barry Allen's essay on the intersections between the philosophy of Deleuze and Richard Rorty. In the essay Allen not only provides a succinct summary of Deleuze's view on language, but perhaps more importantly, he discusses these notions in direct relation to concepts related to American pragmatic tradition represented by Richard Rorty, dealing with problems of anti-representationalism, perspectivism and nominalism and finding remarkable similarities between Deleuze's and Rorty's thinking on language and experience. This way the paper provides an interesting recontextualization of Deleuze's own pragmatic inclinations expressed in the *Dialogues or Essays Critical and Clinical*. See, Barry Allen, "The Rorty-Deleuze *Pas de Deux*," *Deleuze and Pragmatism*, (New York: Routledge, 2014) 163-180.

<sup>32</sup> *Deleuze and Pragmatism*, 168.

<sup>33</sup> *Deleuze and Pragmatism*, 168.

politically and “pragmatically organized”<sup>34</sup> order-words. The world ‘man’ for example is not merely descriptive but imperative (be a man, take form), denoting an order transmitted by the political praxis.<sup>35</sup> Language can thus be said to express and actively perform power relations within a given concrete system, imposing form on content.

It can then be said that when Campbell talks about the rooted, mythologized meta-language that upholds the national self-representation such as the frontier or the West, he implies this Deleuzian conception of majoritarian language. The West as a frame and univocal vision of American history thus promulgates symbolic and linguistic constant that controls and standardizes conversation about the American history and works toward maintaining a closed, homogenic view of the U.S. identity. This is what Campbell implies when he talks about Turner and the way his powerful metaphors transformed and bounded the disparate, varied cultural strands of the American West into a univocal national-building narrative. In the Deleuzian reading, the American identity in Turner’s usage can be viewed as being marked by a powerfully rooted writing style, an authoritative writing performance, which quickly became the dominant, majoritarian thesis, being repeated, re-performed by politicians, books and movies until it subsumed the America itself under its powerful imagery which valorized mobility and expansion but paradoxically lead to interiorization, standardization and repetition. The West in this majoritarian articulation can thus be seen as an organic, rooted and domestic writing which strives to displace relative variations into definitive constants. The powerful mythopoetic effect of Turner’s writing style that Campbell outlines can thus be considered an extraordinarily successful majoritarian usage of language.

---

<sup>34</sup> *Deleuze and Pragmatism*, 168.

<sup>35</sup> “Language is not life; it gives orders.” *Thousand Plateaus*, 76.

Against the major, order-based usage of language Deleuze and Guattari juxtapose the minoritarian language. In their conception minority does not denote a quantitative or extensive value. Rather, it is an intensive quality and “virtual potency.”<sup>36</sup> Major and minor languages are thus not so much two different languages (say English and Spanish) but precisely two ways of using one language. As opposed to majoritarian usages which always seek for constants and stoppages in order to impose powerful frames on experience which exclude alternative perspectives, the minor languages are situated on the limits and borders, displacing the limits and overflowing the representational and topographical frames. The transmission between major (constant) and minor (variation) finally takes the form of becoming which deterritorializes expression, moving the subject away from self-identity and stability, dispelling the order imposed on it.

The concept of minor language allows us to see Campbell’s initial paradox of the westward movement in a different light. We can say that the West as a desire for fixity and rootedness associated with Turner’s reading of the westward march is a product of a majoritarian, totalizing usage of language: a totalizing representation effectively arresting free variations. The majoritarian articulation of the West Campbell mentions is an imposition of a limit on thought and movement, a representational violence of sorts which closes down the space for conversation. Similarly, the central problem McCarthy deals with in his western works starting with *BM*, that is, the violent basis of the unidirectional perspective on American history afforded by formulations such as Turner’s can also be cast as problem of major and minor usage. The Border Trilogy in this respect follows the line of Campbell’s critique, looking for ways to affect movements and passages within the seemingly stable, monolithic representation of American West by means of developing

---

<sup>36</sup> *Deleuze and Pragmatism*, 169.

increasingly deterritorialized, minoritarian expression. McCarthy's project can thus be viewed as a call for mobilizing minoritarian type of writing and for imagining the possibilities of change within the current nationalistic power relations connected to the Western metanarratives. It is a project that fights the debilitating effects of nostalgia for the majoritarian national past on the frontier by valorizing minoritarian and pragmatic lines of escape.

## **2.7 Note on the Setting: Borders and Borderlands**

The very borderland setting of *The Crossing* thematizes the problem of pluralism and multiplicity of American experience in the broadest possible way. As previously mentioned, Campbell states that the idea of stable, immutable and impervious national borders has a crucial representative and symbolic value and it is a necessary corollary of the symbolic discourse of American West. In his reading, the myth of the westward movement itself, especially in its Turnerian frontier modality, can be seen to function as a symbolic and later literal border, delimiting the national identity and drawing a line of separation between the American national identity and the other national or ethnic identities occupying the western part of the continent. Borders thus constitute the outer edge of the representative frame of American historical project and they function as instruments and manifestation of the present power relations, as well as important vehicle of control and standardization of space. On a deeper level, borders represent a challenge to thinking plurality and fluidity of experience. In its nationalistic modulation, border is an ontological line of separation, an outermost expression and an outline of the rooted image of thought.

McCarthy's choice to situate his novel to the culturally and linguistically contested space of American southwestern borderland, with its mixed and competing Spanish, English but also native traditions, seems extremely pertinent here as it can in itself be viewed as a disruption of the Western orientation of American history. As aforementioned, Frederic Jackson Turner in his

famous westward frontier thesis of American history described the American nation as an open book which has to be read from East to West. Doing so, Turner evokes the mythical vision of American identity as the empire of the West, defined by its relentless pursuit of its Manifest Destiny to occupy the whole continent from East to West. McCarthy's decision to situate his entire project in the border novels on the American southern-western border can thus be read as an important challenge to Turner's unidirectional and univocal reading of American history. Instead of proceeding to the West, both literally and symbolically, McCarthy's book gets caught up in the middle and forges an alternate line down south, inviting us to consider other orientations of the American project. By eschewing the traditional western perspective on the national history, McCarthy's book is on its way outside from the national Western teleology such as the Manifest Destiny or the Frontier. This "practice of the outside,"<sup>37</sup> as Campbell terms it, is not to be understood merely as a change of geographical location or direction but rather as a rhizomatic line of escape from the historical East-West binaries of the American project. As Giles Deleuze reminds us in his comment on the concept of going south: "there will always be someone to rise up to the south . . . a direction which is different from that of the line of segments. But everyone has his south—it doesn't matter where it is—that is, his line of slope or flight. Nations, classes, sexes have their south."<sup>38</sup> For Deleuze, this is the true meaning of the American "frontier, through which everything passes and shoots on a broken molecular line of a different orientation."<sup>39</sup> Conceptually speaking, McCarthy's book seems to follow similar line of slope, rejecting the vision

---

<sup>37</sup> Campbell actually borrows this term from the poet Jack Spicer, according to whom the perspective of the outside emerges whenever "an other than the reasonable is said to enter the real" that "disturbs our settled relation to language," introducing "some path that you've never seen on a map before." Campbell, 14.

<sup>38</sup> Deleuze, *Dialogues*, 131.

<sup>39</sup> Deleuze, *Dialogues*, 132.

of a linear progress of history, instead populating his book with alternative perspectives, different orientations and ways of life.

Against this majoritarian modality of the border, we may contrast the historical role of the border not as a line of binary divisions but a border as a unique space of its own which seems partially captured by the term borderlands. As Borderlands historically tend to exert a conflicted and paradoxical status; simultaneously marking the concrete binary divisions between cultures and nations while also continuously disrupting such divisions by acting as a type of ‘no-mans-land’ where multiple traditions and perspectives meet and mix together to create new assemblages.<sup>40</sup> In Deleuze’s reading, borders are no longer to be understood as limits and separations between bodies and concepts but rather as “zones of indiscernibility where experiments with forms of life can be developed and put into play.”<sup>41</sup> It is thus precisely on the border where the idea of an ordered, homogenic system of power emerges at its most contested and where its indistinct, minor capacity for variation can be most potently felt. Borderlands can thus function as the opening of the fixed discourses and modes of thinking. They are site of becoming and mixture which conflate or cancel the traditional binaries.<sup>42</sup>

---

<sup>40</sup> Campbell cites especially Donald Pease, ed., *Revisionary Interventions into the Americanist Canon* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994), who contrary to official clear-cut conceptualizations shows “the U.S.-Mexico border zone as a paradigm of crossings, intercultural exchanges, circulations, resistances, and negotiations.” Campbell, 75.

<sup>41</sup> Gerald L. Bruns, “Becoming-Animal (Some Simple Ways),” *New Literary History*, Vol. 38, No. 4, *On Change and Exchange in Literary Studies* (2007) 17. <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/20058035>> 12 March 2019.

<sup>42</sup> In his intriguing book, Thomas Nail develops a theory of the border which is in many aspects similar to the Deleuzean framework developed by Campbell and consequently this thesis. Like Deleuze and Campbell, Nail views the border not as a stable extensive entity but as an intensive process of bifurcation, multiplication and circulation which is never reducible to the terms that it divides, see Thomas Nail, *Theory of the Border* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016) 3. What especially connects Nail to the theory

McCarthy's southern New Mexico, where he sets the opening part of the novel, is depicted precisely as a site where the majoritarian and minoritarian modality of the border meet and form a complex problem for thinking the pluralism of American experience. From the opening lines McCarthy presents us with an intriguing transformation of the borderland space which reminds us of the paradox identified by Campbell. McCarthy starts following his protagonist his family as they travel down south to the newly-formed Hidalgo county, letting the reader experience the paradox of the apparent openness and heterogeneity of the actual lived space of the borderland. The new country is "rich and wild," barely "older than" Billy's baby brother, "you could ride clear to Mexico and not strike a crossfence."<sup>43</sup> The very first paragraph of the novel sees Billy Parham split between two linguistic and cultural heritages describing the landscape to his brother in both "Spanish and English." Later on, when he sets toward the Mexican mountains, Billy sings "a soft corrido in Spanish from his grandmother." (*Crossing*, 129) McCarthy depicts the border area of New Mexico as a place suffused by Spanish cultural traditions. He emphasizes the seamlessness of this cultural mixture by letting Billy fluently switch between English and Spanish without providing any translations. The important distinctive factor of this meeting between American and Mexican traditions is the inherent instability of the English cultural tradition and its view of the

---

developed in this work is his view of a border as a deeply engrained historical phenomenon, functioning within all social formations, whose role is the organization, division and control of the social movement. This approach is thus close to Deleuze's view of the border as an expression of the 'rooted image of thought' or the 'binary machine' which ceaselessly seek to control the free flow of social power and mobility. Both approaches further seem to agree that border itself is not to be defined as a stable entity or a barrier but as a constantly shifting process which is defined by its leakages, inner instability and porosity. Consequently, borders are never capable of capturing and sanctioning the totality of movements passing through them. McCarthy's approach in the novel is unique because it seems to be interested equally in the binarizing and sanctioning modality of borders, but also importantly in the numerous leakages and unexpected multiplications that the shifting of American historical borders allowed for.

<sup>43</sup> Cormac McCarthy, *The Crossing* (London: Picador, 2011) 3. All further references are to this edition and will be cited in parentheses as *Crossing*.

border itself. McCarthy exposes the fallacy of the majoritarian concept of the borders as a cultural line of separation. The Spanish language as well as the Mexican travelling songs, the corridoes, suffuse the border space of New Mexico, disrupting the view of a stable, culturally homogenous identity.

As if wanting to underscore the rapidity of the changes, McCarthy lingers on this idealized frontier space only for several opening pages before he abruptly lets the story jump thirteen years forward. The change is at first barely noticeable, but gradually the reader realizes that the open plains are securely partitioned by fences, that the wild antelope now step “among the cattle” (*Crossing*, 5), which is ubiquitous on the newly requisitioned grazing lands, and that the wolfs had been all but extinct becoming a stuff of macabre stories. It is then that Billy and his brother, Boyd, meet a threatening Native American drifter who Billy later realizes may be responsible for the murder of his parents. Yet even at the outset the reader is made to realize that the question of responsibility is as contested and recondite as is the status of the land which both the native and Billy’s community occupy. For the very fact that the man is an outcast shows how the seeming homogeneity of the American interior was historically maintained only by means of violence against the indigenous populations and its forceful removal and enclosure. Interestingly, Barry H. Lopez<sup>44</sup> also makes an explicit parallel between the role and fate of the native Americans and the wolfs.<sup>45</sup> Both groups were subjected to violence and loss of habitable land and their continual presence in the newly requisitioned territories was considered as an act of renegade and a threat to the social order. The native’s state of dispossession and violent inclination can be just as easily

---

<sup>44</sup> Lopez’s work on the representations of the wolf in North America will be dealt with in greater detail later on.

<sup>45</sup> Barry Holstun Lopez, *Of Wolves and Men* (New York; Scribner, 1978) 171.

historically attributed to Billy's paternal culture whose grazing land was often won over to be a part of the American territory by very similar acts of theft and murder which the native later directs against Billy's family. McCarthy thus subtly points out that the transformation of the Hidalgo county in just over a decade reenacts in miniature the national experience with the West, transferring the frontier mobility into a closed territory driven by the demands of the cattle industry, built on the increasingly fixed national borders and identities.

It would nonetheless be a misreading of McCarthy's achievement in the novel or the trilogy itself to assert that he merely depicts the corrupting influence of American national, or even imperial, tendencies on the American landscape and psyche. Such reading would imply that there is some better, prior state before the corruption to return to. As will hopefully be made clear from the following analysis, it is precisely the idea of return to some nostalgic or essentialized state of nature of freedom that McCarthy criticizes through his protagonist's engagement with the she-wolf. What he emphasizes is the fact that the tendencies toward mobility and fixation are always to be found in perpetual mixture, that the fixity provided by the national Western narrative is only relative and that no matter the apparent stringency of the law there are always forces of deterritorialization and becoming to be found. The presence of the Indian drifter, the continuing fluidity of the linguistic exchanges between Billy and the Mexican characters, and most importantly the crossing of the migrating wolf are all powerful indications that the fixity of the national borders is a question of degree or of prevailing tendency instead of pre-given absolutes. The problems connected to the concept of borders finally converge on the main event not only of the opening section but, as this thesis claims, of the entire novel which is the coming of the wolf across the American border and the varying attitudes toward the foreign entity that its crossing eventuates.

## 3 Part I: Becoming Animal

### 3.1 Imagining the Wolf

It is virtually impossible to start the discussion on the wolf in American environment without making at least initial recourse to Barry Lopez and his seminal ethnographic work on the depiction of the wolf in American culture *Of Wolves and Men*.<sup>46</sup> The usefulness of Lopez's approach lies in the fact that he is predominantly interested in the roles the wolf played in American imagination through history, focusing especially on the 19<sup>th</sup> century's westward expansion and the process of solidification of the national identity.

According to Lopez, the wolf has preoccupied the national imagination from the early settlements, corresponding to the biblical type of the beast of waste and desolation which was popularly displaced into the hostility of the American wilderness toward the early settlers. In popular imagination, the wolf thus became a symbol of ill fortune and a symbolic representation for various types of injustices and tragedies that happened to the community in the course of their settlement, prompting the activity of wolf-hunting as a symbolic act of resistance against the inclemencies of the new world.<sup>47</sup>

The origin of the mass-extirpation of the wolf in northern America, similarly to those of the buffalo, or, for that matter, the native Americans, came much latter with the increasing speed of America westward expansion, the emergence of the mass-scale livestock industry and of the rapid

---

<sup>46</sup> This thesis is not the first work to bring up Lopez's account in relation to *The Crossing*, both Dianne C. Luce in *The Vanishing World of Cormac McCarthy's Border Trilogy* and Chris Powici in his *Witnessing the Wolf: The Human and the Lupine Cormac McCarthy's The Crossing* utilize Lopez's theory to elucidate the historical context of wolf hunting in the U.S.

<sup>47</sup> Lopez, 170.

growth of American market both at home and overseas. Wolf pelts gradually became and a sought for article, and wolf themselves later became to be perceived as the main threat to the livestock, becoming as Lopez put it “an object of pathological hatred.”<sup>48</sup> Although the wolf was hunted in Europe as well, Lopez adds that due to the size of the land and the rapidity of the American westward movement “no other wolf killing ever achieved either in geographic scope or economic or emotional scale the predator-control war waged against wolves in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in the United States [...] Dead wolf was what Manifest Destiny cost.”<sup>49</sup> The unparalleled momentum of these changes finally results in the professionalization of the wolf-hunting and the rise of an entire new-class of commercial wolfers often hired or subsidized by the local or federal governments. It is one of these government contracted wolf-killers that McCarthy memorably captures in the character of Mr Echols.

The most intriguing aspect of Lopez’s book in relation to McCarthy’s treatment of the wolf is that his project is not simply to oppose the demonizing image of the wolf in American thought by overemphasizing an opposing benevolent image of the wolf as a nurturing mother or a spirit of wilderness. Similarly to McCarthy, Lopez is well aware that both images are equally fictions and cultural constructs. His aim is much more radical, it is to show wolf not so much as any particular image in the popular thinking but rather as an ambiguous sign with inherent potential to differ and exceed any standardized knowledge about it. If there is a call for restoration and return in Lopez’s writing of the wolf it is only as a process of deterritorialization, of freeing the animal from its culturally imposed contents. In Lopez’s book, the wolf emerges above all else as an epistemological problem and a challenge to the common sense and internalized ways of thinking

---

<sup>48</sup> Lopez, 172.

<sup>49</sup> Lopez, 169-184.

and representation. As Lopez emphasizes again and again in his study of the animal from a variety of often competing points of view, “no one – not biologist, not Eskimos, not backwoods hunters, not naturalist writers - knows why the wolf does what it does,”<sup>50</sup> instead the wolf emerges as an enigmatic sign about which nothing can be said with certainty and which always seems to elude a holistic explanation; “to be rigorous about wolf – you might as well expect rigor of clouds.”<sup>51</sup> Statements like these become increasingly important as one delves deeper into McCarthy’s depiction of the wolf. Lopez’s words are perhaps still only words of caution against overgeneralizations and prejudice, but in McCarthy’s appropriation similar ideas are invested with remarkable aesthetic and mythopoetic power. As we shall see, in McCarthy’s treatment Lopez’s thinking about the wolf becomes an ethical and artistic attitude towards being that suffuses his entire novel and informs his thinking about the problem of pluralism.

The conflict that McCarthy seems to deal with in the beginning of the novel is a very similar to the one outlined by Lopez, that is, how to think and imagine the animal. McCarthy deals with this question mainly through his protagonist’s complex engagement with the wolf. As will be seen, Billy’s hunt for the wolf is equally an inquiry into the proper mode of thinking and representing the otherness of the animal as it is an exploration and critique of the American historical practices in relation to wolfs.

From the opening lines of the novel, McCarthy describes Billy as an apprentice of sorts, a curious student of nature in the habit of naming, classifying and mapping his surroundings for his brother, a propensity and curiosity for the outside which is captured in his occupation of a tracker. In this

---

<sup>50</sup> Lopez, 4.

<sup>51</sup> Lopez, 4. The second statement further finds an interesting echo in McCarthy’s text when in a thematically very similar passage Don Arnulfo likens a wolf to a snowflake.

regard it is interesting that McCarthy early on also depicts two guide figures to whom Billy goes for an advice in his hunt for the wolf, these being Mr Echols, a government contracted wolf-hunter, and Don Arnulfo, an aging Mexican hunter and storyteller. As becomes evident from the discussions that Billy has with Don Arnulfo, the two characters represent vastly different conceptualizations of the animal in western culture that roughly correspond to Lopez's discussion while also moving it forward in interesting ways. Let us first consider the character Mr Echols.

### **3.2 Wolf and Manifest Destiny**

Based on a historical wolf-trapper, W.C.Echols, who had been operating in the Hidalgo County until 1943,<sup>52</sup> Billy's father presents Mr Echols as the ultimate authority on the subject of wolf, he is even referred to as a half-wolf on several occasions. Significantly, the reader never sees Echols himself as he said to have left the county some time before the events of the novel (presumably because all wolves were extinct in the county by then). The information about Echols's world-views come partially from Billy's father but most of what we learn about Echols comes from McCarthy's description of his hunting cabin and his wolf-trapping equipment: "The cabin when they opened it was dark and musty and had about it a waxy smell like freshkilled meat" (*Crossing*, 17)." As they venture inside Billy and his father discover "a strange basilica dedicated to a practice as soon to be extinct among the trades of men as the beast to whom it owed its being" (*Crossing*, 17). The little room is lined with "chemic glass" and rows upon rows of "fruit jars and bottles with ground glass stoppers and old apothecary jars all bearing antique octagon labels edged in red upon which in Echols' neat script were listed contents and dates. In the jars dark liquids. Dried viscera.

---

<sup>52</sup> Dianne C. Luce, "Vanishing World of McCarthy's Border Trilogy", *A Cormac McCarthy Companion* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2001) 175.

Liver, gall, kidneys. The inward parts of the beast [i.e., the wolf]" (*Crossing*, 17). McCarthy combines a religious imagery (the basilica) with the reification of positivist science, thus subtly referencing the transformation of the religious providential narrative of the American westward movement into the positivist narrative of Manifest Destiny which, though retaining the surface appeal of a religious mission, is driven by economic and proto-imperialist goals. The animal no longer holds a status of an indivisible, god-made entity, instead, it is dissected and separated into organ-jars labeled, dated and catalogued in a "neat script" (*Crossing*, 17). The internal organs of the animal are moreover kept mostly for utilitarian purposes - Mr Echols uses them to create his scents he uses to mask wolf-baits like the "matrix no.7" (*Crossing*, 17) which Billy's father hands to Billy.

The last thing that Billy and his father find in the cabin are the wolf traps themselves: "Number four and a half Newhouse," an enormous-looking contraption that Billy initially mistakes for a "beartrap" (*Crossing*, 18). The specific reference to the brand, type and size of the trap is significant. As Lopez claims, the Newhouse trap was not only considered the principal tool in extinction of the North-American wolf,<sup>53</sup> but Seawell Newhouse himself in his *Trapper's Guide* referred to the trap as "a symbol of civilization and recommended that it be incorporated into the state seal."<sup>54</sup> For Newhouse, the trap in its historical importance preceded even the "ax and the plow," forming an "ironclad" prow by which "civilization is pushing back the barbaric solitude."<sup>55</sup>

Interestingly enough, similar symbolic function of the wolf trap appears in one of the pivotal scenes of the novel. In the scene following shortly following the visit to Mr Echols's cabin, Billy's father

---

<sup>53</sup> Lopez, 189.

<sup>54</sup> Lopez, 189.

<sup>55</sup> Lopez, 191.

demonstrates to his son the proper way of setting up a wolf trap, thus effectively imparting Echols's vision of the wolf onto Billy. The intriguing aspect of the rendition is that McCarthy turns the activity into a meditation on the human relationship to the world, drawing a surprising analogy between trapping and cartography: "holding the trap at eyelevel against the morning sky he looked to be trying some older, some subtler instrument. Astrolabe or sextant. Like a man bent at fixing himself some way in the world. Bent on trying by arc or chord the space between his being and the world that was. If there be such space. If it be knowable" (*Crossing*, 39).

Here the father symbolically assumes a role of an ancient cartographer or navigator. The setting of the trap is linked to the attempts of imparting a geometrical measure onto the world (by 'the arc' or 'the chord'), and of coordinating human existence in relation to it, bestowing a degree of permanence to his being in the world. The technique of trap-setting symbolically carries the charge of transforming the world into a measurable, quantifiable space of culture represented by the technologies and tools of measurement. The trap is not only an instrument for catching the wolf but a way of demarcating the human territory and of defining human presence in it. The analogy with the trap however also importantly reveals the violent basis of this project, connecting it to Newhouse's remarks about trapping and state power. Here the space can be possessed and mapped only at the cost of trapping the wolf and killing it, an act that Billy will later importantly reject and with it the world view held by the paternal culture. The father in relation to the wolf symbolically assumes a role of a western land surveyor, "a silent arbiter of power," and trapping here becomes a sort of cartography that "controls and orders the world, disciplines and normalizes it."<sup>56</sup>

---

<sup>56</sup> Campbell, 10.

The last paramount aspect that the analogy reveals is the relation of mapping to knowledge. To know and describe the space is predicated on the ability of a cartographer or a trapper to arrest the object of his inquiry in motion. The trap as an instrument is literally used to pin the animal down and to prevent it from free movement just as the role of a map is to arrest the space in motion. To know and possess thus means thinking that valorizes stability and roots. Here Billy is not being shown merely the technique of wolf-trapping but rather a majoritarian mode of thinking about the world.

William L. Fox points out that the American westward movement was often synonymous with the vocation of mapping and map-making, stating that the national cartographic imperative can be considered as a direct “corollary to the doctrine of Manifest Destiny” which claimed “that the land was ours for the taking” and that America’s “higher purpose” was to utilize and take possession of the land.<sup>57</sup> Interestingly, Fox symbolically locates the roots of the 19<sup>th</sup> century positivist cartographic imperative to the ancient Greece and to the early natural philosophers who named the world “the cosmos,” literary meaning an “order,” thus establishing the universe as an extensive, causal and measurable entity. In this relation, Fox also mentions Ptolemy’s observation that map is no mere record of spatial relations and extensions, but that it importantly functions as a powerful “pictorial representation.”<sup>58</sup> Map is thus an image of order, a framing device which separates and orders both geographical and imaginary spaces. As such, map is always biased in favor of its maker’s vision of reality, reflecting the power relations valorized by the master vantage point it affords. What Fox is effectively describing is the map as the expression of the historical binary

---

<sup>57</sup> William L. Fox, *The Void, The Grid & The Sign: Traversing The Great Basin* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2005) 62.

<sup>58</sup> Fox, 61.

machine and an image of thought, dividing spaces into the inside of the frame and that which this frame excludes. In the context of the American West, the vantage-point historically took the form of a grand-narrative wherein the supreme American subject proceeds from the old-world East to the new-world West whilst pushing the ‘inferior’ species beyond the border of the American dominion.

### **3.3 Deframing: Charting other Movements**

While admitting the importance of map as an instrument of framing and controlling the space, Deleuze also importantly notes that every map, frame or limit imposed on experience is always simultaneously subject to immanent “power” of “deframing” which “opens up” its space onto the outside.<sup>59</sup> In the context of McCarthy’s analogy between mapping and trapping it thus appears crucial to note that it is precisely the Newhouse trap that leads Billy face to face with the she-wolf and that through the trap, an instrument of framing the world, the borders of Billy’s world begin to dissolve. Instead of giving the sense of security, fixity and permanence the trap breaches the frame of Billy’s experience and opens the protagonist toward the cosmos of differential forces, perspectives and multiplicities.

John Rajchman in this regard appropriates Deleuze’s concepts of becoming and deterritorialization for purposes of imagining an alternative, minoritarian concept of cartography.<sup>60</sup> For Rajchman, the problem with the majoritarian, ordering expression of cartography is that it permits only “a geometry of horizontals and verticals within which to chart or locate all social ‘movement,’”<sup>61</sup> thus

---

<sup>59</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?* (London; Verso, 2003), 188.

<sup>60</sup> John Rajchman, *The Deleuze Connections* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2000) 99. Quoted in Campbell, 8.

<sup>61</sup> Rajchman, 99. In Campbell, 8.

failing to account for all alternate, minoritarian movements and becomings which “work instead with ‘diagonals’ or ‘transversals.’”<sup>62</sup> The task for a new, minoritarian cartographer of space is consequently “to expose such diagonal lines and the possibilities they open up,” and this way bring attention to “other spaces and other movements”<sup>63</sup> that cannot be accounted for by standard mapping models.

McCarthy’s very first rendition of the wolf’s crossing to Hidalgo county from Mexico seems to emphasize the contingent, transverse nature of the animal’s movements spoken of by Rajchman, putting the animal’s path in sharp contrast with the official, geopolitical markers of the border space;

The wolf had crossed the international boundary line at about the point where it intersected the thirtieth minute of the one hundred and eighth meridian and she had crossed the old Nations road a mile north of the boundary and followed Whitewater Creek west up into the San Luis Mountains and crossed through the gap north to the Animas range and then crossed the Animas Valley and on into the Peloncillos as told. (*Crossing*, 25)

With characteristic detachment, McCarthy records a series of the animal’s erratic movements as it crosses the international border, emphasizing the incompatibility of its migratory body with the modern demarcations of space. Indeed, as becomes apparent from Echols’s conception of the wolf, the U.S. has no more space to accommodate not only the material body of the wolf but perhaps more importantly the very idea of the wolf, that is, the idea of unsanctioned movement. Here the foreignness of the migratory animal which transgresses the set boundaries and taxonomies seems

---

<sup>62</sup> Rajchman, 99. In Campbell, 8.

<sup>63</sup> Rajchman, 100. In Campbell, 8.

to challenge the territorial stability of the ranching system, and consequently incite violent reaction against the animal in the name of the protection of the flock and the American territory. The wolf's risky and desperate passage over the American border thus resonates with the fate of the indigenous population whose ambulant mode of existence was perceived as a threat to the interior stability of the U.S., occasioning periodic upsurges of violence and forced removal.

What is crucial, however, is that McCarthy accentuates the fact that the wolf is a stranger and an aberration in the land solely because of the existence of the divisions and lines, indeed, her "ancestors had hunted camels and primitive toy horses on these grounds" (*Crossing*, 25) for centuries. The wolf's perspective also critically resonates with the fate of the Native Americans whose existence is now too decreed as a thing of the past which McCarthy subtly hints at by letting the wolf cross the "old Nation's road". The use of the place name is a succinct example of the power of mapping being used to rewrite the history of the space in favor of the majoritarian point of view. As it is only from the perspective of the American West that the indigenous inhabitants appear as 'old nations' in contrast to the putative 'new nation' represented by the modern U.S. The wolf is also one of the last witnesses of its own nation that is being hunted to extinction, its habitats; "cut to feed the boilers of the stampmills at the mines"<sup>64</sup> (*Crossing*, 25).

McCarthy's depiction of the wolf also reflects critically on the position of the dominant order represented by Billy's father and the cattle farmers, as their history on the continent now also emerges not as something fated or organic but as something contingent, spreading its maps and

---

<sup>64</sup> Lopez also points out that since colonial times the popular imagination often fused wolf and the native American together into a symbol of the threatening wilderness beyond. This symbolic fusion escalated during the mass killing of wolves which coincided with the military efforts against native Americans; "By the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the argot of the Indian wars was the argot of the wolf wars." Lopez, 171.

grids over a space that has been occupied in profound ways well before their establishment, and one that still remains in constant motion. This aspect is seen in the interesting difference between the transitory and domestic animals seen in McCarthy's depiction of the wolf and the cattle who now occupy the land. The wolf is depicted in constant transition, adapting to the "new protocols" of the land; "she would not return to a kill. She would not cross a road or a rail line in daylight. She would not cross under a wire fence twice in the same place." The cattle, on the other hand are marked by puzzling ignorance of their own surroundings, "stumbling through the mountain meadows [...]" in "confusion [...]" bawling and floundering through the fences and dragging posts and wires behind" (*Crossing*, 25). The cattle here are much more limited by the boundaries and fences than the wolf, unable to cross the boundaries in any meaningful ways, destroying their bodies by the artificially setup borders. Seen from the perspective of the wolf, the farmers, similarly, to their cattle, can now be thought of as strangers foreign to the land they attempt to represent as their own.

The example suggests that the American culture of the West is strangely out of place here, being only one in many perspectives on and ways of navigating the space of the continent. For McCarthy, the improvisational and transgressive wandering of the wolf emphasizes a fundamental lack of any definite order to the land occupied by Billy's community. It is an anomalous, elusive movement which is incompatible with the geometrical gridding of spaces and borders. It foregrounds the fact that the very concept of intruder or a migrant is a matter of perspective here and therefore a matter of representation and power relations within the system. It is precisely the elusiveness, uncontrollability and multiplicity of the wolf which seems to be the topic of Don Arnulfo's idea of the wolf, one that appears to be consistent with McCarthy's own aesthetics in the novel.

### 3.4 Thinking the Animal: from Domestic to Demonic

When he comes to see Don Arnulfo to discuss the wolf later on, Billy importantly identifies Echols's methods with a certain way of thinking about the animal; "el señor Echols es medio lobo el mismo [...] él conoce lo que sabe el lobo antes de que lo sepa el lobo" (*Crossing*, 46). Echols here effectively represents what may be called a dogmatic version of becoming animal, that is, becoming by forming a copy. The reason why Echols is so effective as a wolf-hunter is presumably his near absolute knowledge of the animal. He can think like a wolf and the wolf itself thus becomes something given and known in advance, a form imposed on the animal which sanctions its movements and orders the affects the animal is capable of. Echols's approach thus presumes that there can be an exact, well-defined idea of the wolf, one which can be utilized at the leisure of the hunter, precisely like the Matrix no.7, which is nothing else but utilitarian notion of the essence of the wolf.

Interestingly enough, Deleuze and Guattari in *Thousand Plateaus* recognize three types of animals; the domestic, symbolic and the demonic.<sup>65</sup> The domestic and the symbolic form a same group of animals that are, broadly speaking made in the men's image, that is, animals as a something familiar, pre-conceived in advance and therefore controllable, much like the life-stock which replaced the wild animals of the plains. Mr Echols's notion of the wolf, although not strictly domestic, also emerges as something controllable, it is a symbol of the wilderness that is being transformed and subdued by the "iron-clad prow" of the positivist cunning, something that no longer holds any real secret. The demonic animal, on the other hand, is an animal that gives itself

---

<sup>65</sup> *Thousand Plateaus*, 240.

to us only as difference and a multiplicity: “demonic animals, pack or affect animals that form a multiplicity, a becoming, a population, a tale.”<sup>66</sup> Unlike the familiar animal which is associated with a copy, the demonic animal is an anomalous body<sup>67</sup> whose affects can never be known in advance and that always surprises and shocks us.

Reacting to Billy’s words about Mr Echols, Don Arnulfo presents the reader with his own vision of the wolf, a vision where the wolf lies beyond knowledge and containment, “the old man said that no man knew what the wolf knew. incognoscible, he said. Lo que se tiene en la trampa no es mas que dientes y forro. El lobo propio no se puede conocer. Lobo o to que sabe el lobo. Tan como preguntar to que saben las piedras. Los arboles. El mundo” (*Crossing*, 47). Arnulfo’s animal is beyond cognitive grasp and, as becomes evident later in the conversation, it gives itself as a pure difference. In his vision, copying and possessing the animal is impossible.

The conversation between Billy and Arnulfo about the wolf importantly emerges as an epistemological problem, a question of proper thinking about the animal. Mr Echols’s opinions here represents what may be termed a thought of the wolf, that is, an imposition of a definitive form of thought on the animal. It is a conceptualization of the animal as something of pre-established nature which can be known, possessed and utilized. For Echols the wolf is known and recognized in advance, it is a product of the utilitarian reason which cancels the animal’s difference

---

<sup>66</sup> *Thousand Plateaus*, 241.

<sup>67</sup> Deleuze frequently uses the term anomalous alongside the term demonic. ‘Anomalous’ has to be differentiated from the ‘abnormal’ which “can be defined only in terms of characteristics, specific or generic,” the anomalous, on the other hand, “is neither an individual nor a species; it has only affects,” and no “specific or significant characteristics.” (*Thousand Plateaus*, 244,266). Finally, “It is always with the Anomalous [...] that one enters into alliance to become-animal.” (*Thousand Plateaus*, 244). Don Arnulfo’s insistence on the primary unknowability of the wolf also configures the animal not as something identifiably abnormal, but as an anomalous, without stable specific or generic characteristics.

and reifies it into an object or a commodity. Don Arnulfo's wolf, on the other hand, is inimitable, a pure exteriority, the outside of thought. His wolf occupies a space, as he puts it, where "the storms blow and the trees twist in the wind and all the animals that God has made go to and fro" (*Crossing*, 47) and which importantly lies outside common language and senses; "yet this world men do not see. They see the acts of their own hands or they see that which they name and call out to one another but the world between is invisible to them" (*Crossing*, 47). What should be noted is the peculiarity of McCarthy's usage here. The speaker does not differentiate between a world of men and a putative world of nature, rather, the world 'in-between' that the animal occupies is already withdrawn from all naming and categorizations, including the concept of nature, which, as McCarthy well realizes, is also a name and a linguistic construction. The world of the animal is treacherous and uncertain realm, populated by dynamic forces and unpredictable events. It lies beyond the familiar knowledge and it eludes the skills of a conventional hunter or thinker; "you want to catch this wolf [...] Maybe you want the skin so you can get some money [...] You can do that. But where is the wolf? The wolf is like the copo de nieve. Snowflake [...] You catch the snowflake [...] but before you can see it it is gone. If you want to see it you have to see it on its own ground. If you catch it you lose it [...] Wolf cannot be held" (*Crossing*, 47). As the argument develops, it becomes increasingly clear that Arnulfo's refutation of the world view of the hunter is also a rejection of a certain way of thinking, that is, the traditional view of thought as something that searches for essences, identities and stable coordinates.<sup>68</sup> In Don Arnulfo's speech there is no

---

<sup>68</sup> McCarthy's notion of the wolf and of all phenomena in the novel is thus very close to Deleuze's view of history as a semiology and symptomatology, a notion which he appropriated from Nietzsche. As Deleuze claims, it was Nietzsche who first dispelled the "duality between appearance and essence" in favor of "sense and phenomenon." What is crucial in this shift is the pluralist realization that "we will never find the sense of something if do not know the force that appropriates it." Giles Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, Trans.

place for an identifiable nature of the wolf, for an essence of wolfness that could be arrived at. The ground that the animal occupies seems to mark a boundary between the individuated human world of custom and language and the nameless, deindividuated world of Deleuzian intensity and multiplicity. This world is not a world of pure nature that would stand in opposition to the corrupt human world. McCarthy here seems to formulate a philosophical view that, similarly to that of Deleuze and Guattari, could be said to argue against nature, a rejection of all nature as essence and self-identity, a movement so to speak against nature prefigured as the rooted, fixed or organic. In Deleuzian view, which seems largely to correlate with Arnulfo's remarks, the animal represents a border between language and non-language, a space of radical difference where language of preestablished identities disappears and with it the false binary differences such as nature and culture.

This concept of an animal as the radical difference is precisely the point where Arnulfo's animal is the closest to Deleuze's concept of the demonic.<sup>69</sup> The demonic animal is one who constantly surprises us, an animal that is always different from the linguistic grounds upon which its species are customarily met. For this reason, the demonic animal cannot be strictly speaking found or hunted down by a voluntary act of the hunter or thinker. Rather, it must be met on its own ground of radical difference. As the demonic, the animal can thus be said to defy the human will for truth,

---

Hugh Tomlinson (London: Continuum, 2002) 3. Consequently, no phenomenon can be understood by its appearance but only as a sign or a symptom invested by a certain force. McCarthy's approach to history could thus also be described as symptomatological, showing the different permutations of the sense of varying phenomena depending on the historical force that invests them.

<sup>69</sup> It is also significant that Don Arnulfo is also commonly called "el brujo," i.e. a sorcerer. Deleuze in *Thousand Plateaus* too associates the process of becoming-animal with the figure of a sorcerer, occupying "the anomalous position, at the edge of the field or woods," (*Thousand Plateaus*, 241) representing the intensive borderline between the common sense and the intensive, animal pack where the common forms of thought come undone and where the animal-becoming of men takes place.

that is, the desire for identity, naming, and fixity. Instead of being hunted, the animal must be followed to the realm of the unexpected, disruptive and often violent events where the traditionally held views of the world disappear. To become animal in this sense is to engage in the act of genuine creation.

Contrary to Mr Echols for whom becoming animal is a mere process of utilitarian imitation, Don Arnulfo's animal exists in the realm of the non-imitable. To reach the animal, the human world has to be abandoned and, as is the case with Billy, betrayed, rejected and consequently created anew. This is apparent from Arnulfo's concluding remarks. As he relates to Billy, the wolf can only be found where the "acts of man and the acts of God are of a piece," a place where they conspire "in the destruction of that which" they have "been at such pains to create" (*Crossing*, 48). The animal can thus be met only in conspiracy against the extant and created world, in destruction or betrayal of the images of the world.

Arnulfo's remarks seem very apt commentary on the complex interaction between Billy and the wolf, which bears strong resemblance to the Deleuzian concepts of becoming animal as the encounter with the demonic.<sup>70</sup> When he encounters the wolf, the world passed down by his father starts to melt away, opening up an intermediate space for other visions of the world and other, non-rooted ways of thinking it. By the same token however it will be also possible to show that through Billy, it is the vision of an authored literary world itself which begins to fall apart. Starting with the encounter with the wolf, McCarthy the author also begins to conspire at the unmaking of the world he outlined, betraying his own narrative line and the reader, breaking Billy's journey apart and abandoning the conventional, inherited view of the West.

---

<sup>70</sup> *Thousand Plateaus*, 240.

### 3.5 Alliance with a Demon

Because the animal in Arnulfo's treatment no longer refers to something familiar or given, it loses its historically engrained function in the semantic system of American culture spoken of by Lopez. For Arnulfo, the wolf signifies only its difference from the commonly accepted conceptualizations, always standing beyond the fully explicable and identifiable. For this reason, the wolf in McCarthy's treatment is very close to Deleuze's view of the animal as the demonic and anomalous. Instead of denoting the familiar, culturally conditioned entities that are as if already part of cultural knowledge, the demonic animals emerge as interceptors and sites of disturbing encounters that disrupt the common sense, forcing thought into reimagining its relation to the world. For the purposes of this thesis, the most vital characteristic of the Deleuzean demonic animals is that they always manifest as a problem for thought and consequently a problem for writing and representation,<sup>71</sup> necessitating experimentation, speculation and fabulation with ways of thinking and seeing, effectively forcing thought into abandoning the preestablished knowledge of the world. As will become apparent from the following analysis, the wolf in the novel finally appears to function in similar capacity of a demonic interceptor. Through Billy's complex liminal engagement with the wolf, McCarthy engages with the animal as a problem posed to thought and senses, a problem of thinking the difference without reframing it into familiar categories and divisions associated with the American western identity.

---

<sup>71</sup> For the discussion of the animal as a problem and the becoming-animal as a problem solving see "BECOMING-INTENSE, BECOMING-ANIMAL, BECOMING-IMPERCEPTIBLE" in *Thousand Plateaus* (232-309).

The viewpoints of Mr Echols and of Don Arnulfo can be seen as representing two different aspects of Billy's personality at the beginning of the book. Billy's personality that stems from the world view of Mr Echols creates a series of points that outline a traditional, majoritarian view of the world of the American West. Here Billy is his father's son, an apprentice wolf-hunter and tracker whom McCarthy immediately associates with the faculties of mapping, naming and planning. His legacy is to perpetuate the law of the land and to function as a surrogate father-figure to his brother. This movement toward standardization and paternal function is expressed in the very first scene of the novel where Billy assumed the role of a mapper and dispenser of names. On the other hand, the second scene with Billy that McCarthy shows a very different, singular quality of Billy's, that is, his propensity and inclination for Don Arnulfo's realm of the animal, a strange attraction and even curiosity for the wild animal represented by wolves. It can be said that from the beginning of the novel, Billy's imperative to classify and name is equally matched by his inclination to reach beyond what is classified.

In the second scene of the novel, we see Billy wake up in the middle of the night "to hear the wolves in the low hills" (*Crossing*, 3). Drawn outside by the sounds of the hunting wolf pack, Billy decides to sneak out of the family house and follow the animal calls into the night. His decision is a first small betrayal of his father, precipitated by his attraction for the wolf. After describing in some detail Billy's search for the source of the sounds that woke him, McCarthy suddenly interrupts the description of Billy's actions by a startling image:

They were running on the plain harrying the antelope and the antelope moved like phantoms in the snow and circled and wheeled and the dry powder blew about them in the cold moonlight and their breath smoked palely in the cold as if they burned with some inner

fire and the wolves twisted and turned and leapt in a silence such that they seemed of another world entire. (*Crossing*, 4)

The first encounter with the wolf thus takes the form of a powerful, sublime vision. The passage emphasizes the otherworldly ‘nature’ of the animal, as the pack appears as something distant and unreachable, as if from “another world.” The heavy use of asyndeton effects a paratactic structuring to convey a sense of the impossibility of an immediate comprehension of the image. What we are left with is a species of amazed seeing, a series of bare statements arranged by the method of addition and cumulation of images. Moments later, McCarthy surprisingly cancels the seeming distance between Billy and the animals and stages a scene of powerful resonance between the two worlds, what Bourassa calls a “great moment of becoming.”<sup>72</sup> The animals emerge from the dark near Billy’s shelter: “He could see their almond eyes in the moonlight [...] He could feel the presence of their knowing that was electric in the air [...] They stood with their ears cocked [...] They were looking at him. He did not breathe. They did not breathe. They stood. Then they turned and quietly trotted on” (*Crossing*, 4-5). McCarthy willingly voids the scene of all personal affect, effectively erasing the difference between Billy, the human experiencing subject and the wolf, the natural object of contemplation. This seems to be an encounter between ontological equals, yet also meeting of incommensurate worlds. A meeting between language and non-language, “not a moment of imitation but of conjunction [...] The boy and the wolves. Each is intensified, amplified by the other.”<sup>73</sup> The starkness and brevity of the paratactic clauses draws attention to what passes between or beneath the words and for a moment, there seems to be a presence of a kind of ‘knowing’ which comes into being not from any one individual side or subject

---

<sup>72</sup> Bourassa, 111.

<sup>73</sup> Bourassa, 111.

but from the conjunction of the two, from the empty, unspeakable caesuras between bare statements.

The encounter with the wolf pack and the imagery that accompanies it come off as a problem and challenge for understanding, something as if beyond or between words. This is emphasized by the fact that after Billy returns home, the encounter and the wolf itself becomes a “secret.”<sup>74</sup> Billy, as the reader learns, “never told anybody” about “where he’d been nor what he’d seen” (*Crossing*, 5). By becoming a secret, the animal is made to stand outside of the common discourse and formalized world. It manifests as a problem that urges further exploration, forcing Billy to try and investigate it, and thus to unfold the intensive and rhizomatic world where “trees twist and animals roam to and fro” (*Crossing*, 47) that it occupies.

The full force of the experience and resonance between Billy and the animal starts unexpectedly unfolding thirteen years later when the lone, pregnant she-wolf crosses the international border and impinges on the domestic order of Billy’s community. If in the first encounter the wolf is clearly a part of a pack engaging in a hunt, the conditions of the she-wolf are quite extraordinary and the animal itself therefore becomes something anomalous. Separated from other wolves, the lone pregnant female itself is in a state of transition, wandering the liminal spaces of the U.S.-Mexico borderlands. No longer part of a putative wolf-world as the pack in the first sublime depiction of the wolf, the she-wolf is crossing between worlds, clearly not strictly belonging to either, her own world and kind being just about extinct. In her traversals she has to abandon “the old protocols” of behavior and invent new ones. It is in the condition of liminality and anomalousness that Billy and the animal intercept each other, both on their way away from their

---

<sup>74</sup> Bourassa, 111.

respective 'packs' and communities, forming a new strange alliance in which both the animal and the boy start to disappear.

When the first signs and tracks of the animal's presence in Billy's county appear, Billy too gets caught up in the process of abandoning the old protocols of his community, pursuing the wolf on his own while trying to comprehend its anomalous appearance outside of the pack. The tracks left by the wolf attain mythopoetic significance for Billy, they are no longer simple markers of the animal's presence which could lead the hunter to its prey, rather they are traces by which the secret of so many years before starts unraveling, exciting Billy's cognitive and imaginative faculties. On one occasion when studying the wolf's tracks in the snow Billy "closed his eyes and tried to see her. Her and others of her kind, wolves and ghosts of wolves running in the whiteness of that high world as perfect to their use as if their counsel had been sought in the devising of it" (*Crossing*, 32). Here the wolf's arrival and Billy's subsequent hunt are conceptualized as Lopez's process of imagining the animal, of trying to interpret its nature and its puzzling significance. Billy's chase for the wolf is as much epistemological one as it is physical and in accordance with Don Arnulfo's words, Billy's visions, such as the one cited above, always seem to fall short of the animal which continuously eludes Billy's cognitive grasp.

Despite his attempts to interpret the tracks left by the animal, his actual encounter with the wolf is more a matter of accident than of careful planning. When faced with the wounded wolf caught in a trap<sup>75</sup> buried in an old fire pit ("where God conspires at the destruction of the what he has been

---

<sup>75</sup> It is intriguing to note that the trap in this scene is also revealed to be a symptom which depends entirely on the forces that take hold of it and utilize it. Deleuze deals with the topic of weapons and tools extensively in *Thousand Plateaus*, showing that weapons and tools too are nothing outside of the organization they are bound up with. *Thousand Plateaus*, 420. In the context of the novel, McCarthy first used the specific

at such pains to create” (*Crossing*, 48)), Billy realizes that his training and his visions of the animal finally made him “in no way prepared for what he beheld.” Failing “to remember what his father had said” (*Crossing*, 55), Billy seems to realize that his father’s knowledge about wolf-trapping is as inadequate for the encounter as are his own sublime musings. Instead, what the reader is witnessing is the seed of a different world being made here, the world that springs into being between Billy and the wolf in the intensive moment of the encounter: “[he] rose and walked back and scabbarded the rifle and took up the reins and mounted up and turned the horse and headed out to the road. Halfway he stopped again and turned and looked back. The wolf was watching him as before. He sat the horse a long time. The sun warm on his back. The world waiting. Then he rode back to the wolf” (*Crossing*, 55). The penultimate clause recalls Deleuze’s and Guattari’s observation that in opposition to language whose domain is giving orders (that is, in its majoritarian formulation), the main property of life, or in this case the world, is to wait and listen.<sup>76</sup> McCarthy’s world here lies in wait in the intermediate space between Billy and the animal. As in his initial encounter with the pack, Billy’s subjectivity and the psychological process of his decision are markedly withdrawn here. The moment of decision and the subsequent act of betrayal of Billy’s community is something that passes between the paratactically arranged elements of the

---

example of the Newhouse wolf-trap to point out the unique historical organization and assemblage, that of the American frontier and the West, which both gave rise to and were enabled by the invention of this piece of trapping equipment. In the present scene between Billy and the she-wolf, the trap starts emerging as a very different instrument: no longer serving the purposes of the paternal assemblage, the trap brings the two actants together, thus giving rise to an anomalous assemblage of a man and a she-wolf whose aims will be contradictory to the ones originally given to the trap by his father or Mr Echols. The trap thus moves from being an expression of the bordering and dichotomizing power of the frontier, and instead opens up a zone of indistinction between Billy and the wolf, complicating the frontier binarism.

<sup>76</sup> “Language is not life; It gives life orders. Life does not speak; it waits and listens.” *Thousand Plateaus*, 76.

scene, between the boy, the wolf and the heat of the morning sun. What lies in wait here is the virtual potential of the unarticulated spaces between words, the secret of the animal about to unfold.

McCarthy's rendition of the interaction between Billy and the animal also puts particular emphasis on the wolf's stare. For Lopez, the wolf's stare "exerts a powerful influence on human imagination. It takes your stare and turns it back to you,"<sup>77</sup> causing a sudden plethora of mixed and contradictory feelings such as "fear, hatred, respect and curiosity."<sup>78</sup> For Lopez, the eyes of the wolf do not merely return a mirror copy of our own image, affirming our own picture of ourselves, rather, they disrupt the image and return it with a difference. The difference registers as the overwhelming affect of the stare which gives rise to numerous emotions, exciting imagination and making us question what we know or consider for granted. In the scene with the wolf, Billy gradually ceases to recognize himself as he contemplates the wolf, surprised as he is at his own decision, his own body soon performing a complicated series of tasks as he engages in freeing the wolf from the trap and consequently binding it down without having a definite plan to follow.

On a later occasion, Billy contemplates the wolf's stare directly, "her eyes burned out there like gatelamps to another world. A world burning on the shore of an unknowable void" (*Crossing*, 75). This time the wolf's stare prompts not only a powerful affect but a peculiar idea of transience: "when those eyes and the nation to which they stood witness were gone at last [...] there would perhaps be other fires and other witnesses and other worlds otherwise beheld. But they would not be this one" (*Crossing*, 76). Interestingly, what disappears with the wolf is not the unique

---

<sup>77</sup> Lopez, 4.

<sup>78</sup> Lopez, 4.

individual wolf itself, but a whole nation, a multiplicity, a perspective or a way of seeing. Billy does not empathize with the fate of the individual animal, instead, what is emphasized is the irretrievability and inaccessibility of the animal viewpoint as such.<sup>79</sup> What Billy intuits here is the importance not of being able to see the world as the other, as the animal, but the pure need for bearing a witness to the multiplicity, to differing perspectives. Contemplating the wolf's eyes emerges as a strange process of education for Billy. It is not so much a process of cumulation of facts, of coming to useful knowledge that his father or Mr Echols try to impart, but rather an education about the process of thinking itself, about the engagement with difference.

The pair's subsequent perambulations seem to mirror the process of Billy's coming to terms with the elusive significance of the wolf. It is a makeshift journey whose goal seems to be formulated on the go. In a relatively quick succession Billy gives several varying rationalizations for his actions (he initially claims that he simply wishes to deliver the wolf himself to his father and later he expresses concern about collecting a bounty for the animal) before he settles on returning the wolf to the Mexican mountains. His vacillations concerning the meaning of his decision share a common function of being narrative strategies for gaining control over the unfolding event, restoring, both for the protagonist but also for the reader, a sense of understandable purpose and telos to Billy's actions. On a physical level, this is underscored by the fact the Billy's first set of actions towards the wolf is a complicated process of tying the animal down, trying to take control of the animal. His final goal of returning the wolf to the wilderness, which seems to be the most

---

<sup>79</sup> Chris Powitchi's reading of this scene reaches similar conclusion when he comments that "to lose the wolf from the world is not just a matter of the annihilation of a particular species, but primarily the loss of a narrative, the effacement of a certain kind of history." Chris Powitchi, "Witnessing the Wolf: The Human and the Lupine in Cormac McCarthy's *The Crossing*," *Postgraduate English: A Journal and Forum for Postgraduates in English*, 0.1 (2000) 7., 20 August 2019.

consistent with Billy's earlier sublime vision, increasingly appears as a symbolic resolution to the contradiction posed by the wolf. Inherent in this quest is a rather naïve ecological vision represented by the idea of restoring the animal to its natural habitat away from the spoils of civilizations, thus symbolically effecting a return to the putative purer historical time before the mass extermination of the wolf on the continent.

It is the rejection of this ecological quest as an imaginary resolution to the problem posed by the animal that appears to be one of McCarthy's chief concerns in this part of his novel. What Billy's doomed endeavor gradually reveals is the observation also made by Lopez, that is, that there is no nature to return to, no prior idealized state of repose and rooted or organic life, neither for the wolf nor for the hunter. McCarthy's critical attitude of the traditional ecological view of nature and the animal is best seen in the scenes following the wolf's death. When Billy is forced to kill the fatally wounded wolf, his act is a testament to the untenable position of the concept of wilderness and of the possibility of communion between wolf and man. After he finally carries the wolf to the mountains it is quite clear that the symbolic closure to his quest is impossible and that the idea of 'natural' home is wholly untenable. McCarthy makes it apparent for the reader that there is nothing natural or essential about his world and about the mountains of Mexico. On the contrary the mountains have become uninhabitable for the wolf and her transition and migrations appear as the only way the wolf can exist.

The manner in which McCarthy depicts the burial of the wolf itself then purposefully eludes representation of the animal's death in any strictly categorical, factual manner. It is important to notice that the burial or parting scene is composed of two points of view. The first point of view is deeply personal, focusing on Billy's imagined view of the wolf's death which shows signs of a strongly romanticized image of wilderness: Billy "closed his own eyes that he could see her

running in the mountains, running in the starlight where [...] the sun's coming as yet had not undone the rich matrix of creatures passed in the night before her. Deer and hare and dove and groundvole all richly empaneled on the air for her delight" (*Crossing*, 131). Billy's vision is a very traditional ecological account of the communion between beings. The last figure of speech effectively turns the whole view into a painting or tableau ('all richly empaneled) and the last couple of words seem like a direct projection of a human view onto the wolf, that is the idea of nature existing out there for the animal's or man's 'delight.' The first part of the burial scene is thus an emotional elegiac vision compensating for the loss of the animal. As the closing paragraph continues and gradates it is possible, however, to observe a change in tone into an impersonal point of view occupied by the narrator:

He took up her stiff head out of the leaves and held it or he reached to hold what cannot be held, what already ran among the mountains at once terrible and of a great beauty, like flowers that feed on flesh. What blood and bone are made of but can themselves not make on any altar nor by any wound of war. What we may well believe has power to cut and shape and hollow out the dark form of the world surely if wind can, if rain can. But which cannot be held never be held and is no flower but is swift and a huntress and the wind itself is in terror of it and the world cannot lose it. (*Crossing*, 131)

Here the passage starts by echoing the opening of Billy's vision which depicts the wolf running in the mountains but as the passage progresses it introduces an increasingly complex view of the wolf that differs from the rather conventional aestheticizing of wilderness in Billy's vision. The passage does not paint a picture of the wolf in communion with the wilderness, instead, the wolf emerges here as an unrepresentable force equally capable of destruction and creation ("cut and shape and hollow"), something which subsists with the world but at the same time cannot be simply held and

reduced into any of its concrete manifestations. The passage can be read as a rewriting of Echols's conceptualization of a hunt where hunting was analogous to the imposition of a stable form of thought on the animal. Here, however, McCarthy gives us the wolf as something that eludes stable conceptualization, an animal huntress with its own agency which flees the power and control of the male hunter.

Perhaps the chief paradox of the final image of the wolf in relation to the aesthetics and narrative structure of the novel is the curious reversal of the significance of death itself. Instead of a final signifier and some closure of the signification process, i.e. representing an end to Billy's journey and yielding some definitive knowledge or meaning, the animal's demise manifests as vertiginous series of loose ends and negations of stable meanings. The anaphoric clauses beginning with 'what' effectively negate the basic type of question connected with the platonic notion of essences because the 'what' here no longer refers to a stable identity of the wolf. If the passage can be said to reveal anything, it is the non-identity and difference of the wolf from all predicates used to describe it. The passage can thus be said to extract a strange playfulness and liveliness from the moment of death, from the vanishing of the wolf and the world it bore witness to, opening up a space for endless questioning and problematization of the world.

McCarthy seems to realize the Deleuzean lesson that in order to do the wolf justice, to free it from the system of oppression represented by Billy's community, the animal itself must disappear. McCarthy refuses to speak for the animal, to engage in an anthropocentric act of imposing stable form and meaning on it. Rather he decides to speak with the animal, accepting its inscrutability and letting its elusiveness infuse his narrative which likewise never seems to settle for one definite

meaning.<sup>80</sup> McCarthy's wolf ceases to be an animal in the majoritarian sense, no longer possessing its individuating qualities ascribed to it by the U.S. culture, and becomes something else. For McCarthy, it is no longer possible to receive a positivist answer to 'what' the wolf is, as the animal no longer occupies a fixed place in the semantic system of the given majoritarian language. Rather than asking about the putative truth of the wolf McCarthy will suggest a pragmatic and antifoundational solution to this problem, making the wolf into a polyvalent symbol whose identity becomes a matter of perspective, both geographical and cultural. In other words, McCarthy's animal starts moving from a single rooted identity into an identity that is multiple and rhizomatic, one that finally becomes a matter of telling and fiction.

### **3.6 Wolf as Multiplicity**

McCarthy points to the indefinite and multiple status of the animal by giving the reader plethora of alternative conceptualizations and viewpoints of the wolf which also reflect the variety of cultural and geographical environments that Billy and the animal traverse along their journey. Many of the conceptualizations follow in vein of the traditional negative image of the wolf but in the course of their travels McCarthy actually shows a remarkable variety of permutations of the wolf's meaning. Sometimes the wolf is seen as a threat and a commodity (Billy is frequently asked about the cost of the animal and being offered money for it), yet at other times, it is seen as a nurturing mother (two Mexican women entreat Billy to un-nozzle the wolf should she give birth so as to be able to lick the pups). Over the course of their wanderings, the wolf assumes a quality of a polyvalent symbol, enabling an increasingly proliferating number of perspectives. This quality is perhaps most noticeable toward the end of the first part of the book when the wolf is captured

---

<sup>80</sup> See section, 4.5 below.

and brought to a country fair. Here, the wolf is made into a popular attraction, “a sign at the front [...] gave her history and the number of people she was known to have eaten” (*Crossing*, 108), and thus effectively into a form of spectacle and tale. What is emphasized is the wolf’s ability to capture imagination and facilitate storytelling; “the spectators watched with the attention of those who might be called upon to tell what they had seen” (*Crossing*, 102). The problem, which seems characteristic for the animal in the novel, turns out to be that no one seems to see the same thing when confronted with the wolf; “an old woman said that the wolf had been brought from the Sierras where it had eaten many schoolchildren. Another woman said that it had been captured in the company of a young boy who had run away naked into the woods. A third said that the hunters who had brought the wolf down out of the Sierras had been followed by other wolves who howled at night from the darkness [...] and some of the hunters had said that these wolves were no right wolves” (*Crossing*, 105). The question of the right or true wolf is precisely what seems to be increasingly devoid of meaning here. What we learn from contemplating the people called upon to testify about what they saw is that there can be no witness to the wolf as such. McCarthy gives us only a multiplicity of diverse acts of witnessing which converge on the ambiguous sign of the wolf.

McCarthy’s wolf becomes a point of intersection, something which gives rise to a multitude of points of views and stories. The inscrutable creative force outlined in the death scene thus seems to be coextensive with generating stories and perspectives on the world. McCarthy’s animal engages Billy in a simultaneous process of destruction and creation that was previously alluded to by Don Arnulfo: both pulling Billy away from the ordered universe of his father and from the narrative of national unity while opening up a space for multiplicity of differing tales.

This appears to be the subject of the lesson given to him by an old Mennonite whom Billy meets shortly after the death of the wolf. Commenting on the nature of the world that Billy experiences the Mennonite declares, “this world also which seems to us a thing of stone and flower and blood is not a thing at all but is a tale. And all in it is a tale and each tale the sum of all lesser tales and yet these also are the selfsame tale and contain as well all else within them” (*Crossing*, 146). Echoing the description of the wolf as something which eludes stable form and categorization from the death scene (in the scene the wolf is disassociated from flower, rock and blood) the Mennonite urges Billy to accept the multiple notion of the world as a necessary condition of life and experience. The irrepresentable life-force that cannot be lost from the world can finally only be registered as a multiplicity of tales and tellings but never as one truthful vision of the world. Accepting such vision of reality is consequently a “hard lesson” that Billy has to learn in his experience with the wolf; “everything is necessary. Every last thing,” the Mennonite continues, “nothing can be dispensed with nothing despised” (*Crossing*, 146). The Mennonite implies that there is no privileged perspective to be taken at the expense of other possible perspectives. Subsequently, in attempting to impose a single stable meaning on the wolf and in trying to insist on one version of reality bequeathed to him by his culture Billy runs a risk of having a mind of an “injured party,” of holding the world accountable for not conforming to his vision of reality and consequently ending up frozen by deathly nostalgia for the mythic past which finally costs John Grady his life in *Cities*.

Through the mouth of the Mennonite, McCarthy thus finally appears to come back to the critique of the American exceptionalistic vision of the world. The selection of a member of the Mennonite church to voice such vision is certainly not accidental as the Mennonite form of worship historically rejected participation in the state structure of the U.S. and also in the military service.

McCarthy's Mennonite here refutes the notion of a single 'truthful' version of history to be selected at the expense of other histories, tales and worlds. Instead, all of the multiple histories must be selected at once as indispensable parts of the history of the land.

It is such co-existent multiplicity of viewpoints and stories that Billy experiences as he travels with the wolf. For Billy, the line of escape he makes with the wolf intersects and converges with multiple other histories, effectively shattering Billy's limited worldview represented by his community and making his life to be traversed by this multiplicity. The fair, once again, gives an interesting example of the universe of manifold ways of seeing and experiencing the world that open up to Billy,

Among the fairgoers [...] were visitors more alien than even he, families in rags that moved agape among the patched canvas pitch tents and Mennonites got up like medicineshow rubes [...] and Tarahumara Indians and Yaquis carrying bows and quivers of arrows and two Apache boys in deerskin boots with grave and coalblack eyes who'd come from their camp in the sierras where the last free remnants of their tribe lived like shadowfolk of the nation they had been and all of them with such gravity that the shabby circus of their beholding could as well have been the pageantry of some dread new dispensation visited upon them. (*Crossing*, 107)

The fair itself is a miniature space of transitory, wondrous encounters between non-communicating, mutually incongruous cultures, histories of violent conflict, incommensurate perspectives on the continent which are nonetheless made to resonate with the passage of the wolf. As Billy crosses the boundaries of his own county, he also seems to be crossing the boundaries of his identity, increasingly becoming part of the strange, chaotic procession of history that unfolds in front of him. Billy is brought to a world where his own history, and the Western history of his

nation, is only one among many plural histories and ways of seeing the world. Consequently, Billy's encounter with the wolf manifest as a disappearance of a certain model of history. The model that Campbell terms as the rooted, organic and transparent or easily legible one associated with the American West.<sup>81</sup> Contrasting with this model, McCarthy's book and Billy's journey which it depicts does not adhere to such linear model, rather it is a book where frames, straight lines and lineages take flight, a book not modeled on an ordered cosmos, but rather a book as a chaosmos of forces which constantly eludes the instruments of standardization and entrapment.

---

<sup>81</sup> As expanded on in section 2.5.

## 4 Part II: Becoming Anomalous

### 4.1 Aesthetics of Disappearance

The second novel can subsequently be said to be a book composed of two crucial disappearances, those of the wolf in the first part, and that of the protagonist and his world in second part. For if Billy and McCarthy spend the first part learning that the wolf has no stable identity and meaning, the same begins to be valid about Billy himself in the second part. This is the inevitable consequence of becoming animal. By pursuing the wolf, Billy becomes the animal in the strict Deleuzian sense of becoming something intractable, unfixable and in constant transition. As the novel unfolds following the death of the wolf, the reader too starts to realize that the protagonist becomes increasingly inscrutable, devoid of history and identity with no fixed place of origin to return, nor with any ponderable permanent destination. In McCarthy's writing, it is not only the animal that has to vanish to be free from paternal order, the protagonist must follow in the animal's footsteps.<sup>82</sup>

As the wolf disappears as a stable identity, Billy himself gets increasingly lost, wandering the borderlands for weeks to finally discover that his parents were murdered by in all likelihood the same native American drifter he had helped at beginning of the novel. Billy's search for identity, meaning and fixity thus paradoxically unfolds as a precise opposite. The closer he gets to his planned destination, to the supposed essence of the wolf, the more lost he seems to get and the further away from solving the problem of the wolf he is. By the time of the wolf's death, the

---

<sup>82</sup> For Deleuze, the process of becoming always operates by doubling; "becoming is always double, that which one becomes no less than the one that becomes." (*Thousand Plateaus*, 305) As the wolf ceases to be identified with its typical 'traits' ascribed to it in American imagination, so does Billy find himself doubling the wolf, moving away from his received identity and his historical role of a wolf-trapper.

animal becomes a vector of becoming in which Billy Parham is now caught, sending him further and further away from home on the open road.

McCarthy already started gesturing toward this process by partially voiding Billy's subjectivity in the pivotal moments of his story. Following the death of the wolf, McCarthy continues to point out the fallacy of the notion of a stable, articulable presence and identity. As we follow Billy's distraught meanderings through the borderlands of northern Mexico his appearance and mode of existence themselves becomes strangely similar to the descriptions of the starving, injured wolf. During his wanderings Billy is progressively described as "thin and gaunted" (*Crossing*, 132), "ragged, dirty, hungry in eye and belly" (*Crossing*, 174), and finally "homeless, hunted, weary" (*Crossing*, 305). Much like the wolf Billy gradually abandons "the old habits" and detaches from the community of men, wondering in the world devoid of stable domestic emplacement. In the later parts of the book, he is variously called a "huerfano" (orphan) or the "man of the road" (*Crossing*, 137, 425), a figure incongruent with historically accepted notions of identity and belonging; "he seemed to himself a person with no prior life. As if he had died in some way years ago and was ever after some other being who had no history, who had no ponderable life to come" (*Crossing*, 392).

Stepping outside of the temporal coordinates of his own history, Billy's existence itself becomes increasingly puzzling sight for others, becoming something anomalous, "something in off the wild mesas [...] Totally unspoken for. In that outlandish figure they beheld what they most envied and what they most reviled" (*Crossing*, 174). Like the wolf, or the dispossessed native American, Billy's body is foreign, an enigma posed to the common sense, no longer belonging to the world of human history but neither being truly an animal. As such however, his anomalous presence also begins to reveal the hidden paradoxes and contradictions within the American concept of identity.

In the last quoted passage, Billy is not only stepping out of history, but he also reveals the history itself to be built on increasingly unstable ground. Those who witness Billy momentarily experience the paradox inherent in their own constructed identity ('what they most envied what they most reviled' (*Crossing*, 174)): Billy's wandering, liminal figure becomes an object of libidinal investment and nostalgic craving for the American frontier of unconstrained movement, yet, this vision incites a simultaneous feeling of revulsion and dread. What is revealed is the paradox talked of by Campbell, that is, that the national frontier ethos of mobility is indivisibly connected to the idea of rootedness, division and regulation of free movement.<sup>83</sup> Billy's wandering figure thus points out the unthinkability and untenability of the national historical identity, which is necessarily found at an impasse, both nostalgically harkening to the image of past freedom, while trying to protect the stability of national borders and identities in the present. Billy's progress thus functions as a disruptive line of flight, inciting ambiguity and revealing paradoxes wherever he goes, gradually unsettling the traditional markers and coordinates of personal and national identities.

## 4.2 Narrative Mapping

The disruptive progress of the main protagonist is apparent in the changed role of maps and map-making in later parts of the novel. As Billy's movements in the novel become increasingly fortuitous and erratic, so does his journey become increasingly unrepresentable on a map. Once again, the contrast between the opening of the novel and its later parts is telling. When the reader first encounters Billy in the novel, he is engaged in a vocation that has something akin to his father, creating a symbolic map of the newly formed Hidalgo county and its landmarks for his brother:

---

<sup>83</sup> Campbell, 10.

naming “to him features of the landscape and birds and animals in both Spanish and English.” Later he would tell him “about his plans for them and the lives they would have” (*Crossing*, 3). In this capacity, Billy follows the practice of his own father, the trapper and cartographer, as he too relies on the quality of naming and symbolic mapping to anchor his identity in the new county, passing this notion onto his brother for whom he serves as a paternal figure.

Much later on in the novel as he pursues his parents’ murderers, Billy’s desire to inscribe his quest on a map is revealed as a much more complex problem. When Billy asks a Mexican man to draw him a map of the local country to be able to recommence his search for the stolen family horses: the “old man [...] drew for them [...] a portrait of the country they said they wished to visit. He sketched in the dust streams and promontories and pueblos and mountain ranges. He commenced to draw trees and houses. Clouds. A bird. He penciled in the horsemen themselves doubled upon their mount. Billy leaned forward from time to time to question the measure of some part of their route” (*Crossing*, 188). By emphasizing the comical level of superfluous detail (drawing the bird and the tiny horseman) that the maker puts into his map McCarthy reveals the naivety of Billy Parham’s quest in Mexico, a notion that a personal tragedy can be somehow resolved by locating the whereabouts of his parents’ horses and their murderers and thus arresting the chain of events that deprived him of his home and of his future that he symbolically mapped out at the novel’s opening.

Perhaps more importantly, however, the passage can be read to point out the fallacy in any map in its ability to supply “an accurate picture of the world”<sup>84</sup> and human presence in it. This is precisely what is voiced by another onlooker when Billy asks him to comment on the accuracy of the map;

---

<sup>84</sup> Bourassa, 185.

“He said that what they beheld was but a decoration. He said that anyway it was not so much a question of a correct map but of any map at all. He said that in that country were fires and earthquakes and floods and that one needed to know the country itself and not simply the landmarks therein” (*Crossing*, 189). The problem as the stranger goes on to elaborate is that maps are but pictures of “old journeys” and as such they incite a species of “false confidence” (*Crossing*, 189). The stranger’s view of the map is of course one of the many extended parables in the novel which concerns Billy’s and by extension America’s relation to history. The map here functions as a stock image of the past, (“a decoration” (*Crossing*, 189)) which limits and encloses the possibilities of the present, accounting only for those aspects of geographic and cultural space which were already pre-supposed in advance.

In its majoritarian sense, the map emerges as a device that arrests movement, imposing a frame on experience of space. The stranger here suggests that the map ignores the lived actuality of the present, depleting its complexity by referring the traveler to a prior experience. What the map prevents us from seeing is a space as a dynamic, constantly changing process populated by singular events that constantly change the space, making the boundaries fluid and porous. The pictorial nature of Billy’s map echoes the role of cartography as an instrument of containment, knowledge and control seen in the earlier scene with the trap. The problem with Billy’s desire for a map and therefore for containment and representation of his existence is that it reifies experience to a limited point of view. What it ignores is precisely the dynamic nature of spaces and borders which are often far better conceived of as processes and intensities rather than as stable, extensive entities. Billy’s problem is then precisely that of not being able to experience the lived present, instead trying to live in a world not of his own making.

Fox too contends that the great fallacy connected with mapping is that it gives us a false “feeling of understanding where we are,” allowing us to assume a “visual control”<sup>85</sup> of our circumstances. A map is effectively a tool for imparting coordinates, belonging and identifiable presence. Billy’s goal here is effectively to set his own story on familiar grounds, to reenact his personal loss as a western frontier story of crime and redemption represented by catching the murderers and retrieving his family horses, thus restoring his place in the national western history.

The stranger with the map, on the other hand, seems to gesture toward a different concept of a journey for which there is no map. A journey on an unstable, unfamiliar ground which is not something received or lifeless, but something alive that constantly loses its contours due to the unexpected encounters with diverse events that dissolve or radically transform the shape of the journey. The encounter with the wolf discussed above is undoubtedly the most pointed exemplification of this process. When Billy disobeys his father, he temporarily rejects the father’s world, stepping outside the frame of his territory and opening himself for the anomalous encounter with the animal. Billy gets caught up in the process of becoming and for a moment he experiences disorientation, he loses his way and enters somewhere else. It is only later as he gets on the road that he gradually forms the scheme of finding the wolf’s home, restoring it back to wilderness. The violent death of the wolf nonetheless reveals the quest as a nostalgic dream of returning to a simpler, mythical, version of the national past, a desire to mend a sense of identity, belonging and presence which were gradually shattered as Billy came in terms with the extent of violence his home and country are built upon. The pictorial horsemen on the map here have a similar function as they are a way of re-inscribing Billy’s tragedy into a mock quest for redemption and justice.

---

<sup>85</sup> Fox, 61.

The parable told by the old man thus reveals that there is no notion of presence, location and belonging to be restored for Billy, instead of arriving at the set goal of his journey, Billy sidetracks further and further away, losing not only his parents' killers but more importantly his brother too. As he crosses the borders, Billy restores nothing, the flight he has taken from his community's command only intensifies as he goes on until his prior identity is gone altogether.

The scene with the map shows Billy's gradual detachment from the modes of representation associated with the American West. As such, the scene also exemplifies a first important instance of an extended discussion and critique of the representations of the national past that McCarthy presents in the novel. Perhaps the most succinct discussion of this topic together with its relation to Billy himself comes from two closely related scenes toward the end of the novel.

### **4.3 Critique of Representations of the Past**

Every representation was an idol. Every likeness a heresy. In their images they had thought to find some small immortality but oblivion cannot be appeased. (*Crossing*, 424)

These words are spoken by a gypsy, one of the many nomadic travelers that line the pages of *The Crossing*, when he meets Billy during the last in his series of crossings across the U.S. – Mexico borderline. Billy is trying to repatriate the unearthed remains of his brother and thus provide a closure to his wanderings. The gypsy here creates an analogy between Billy's clinging to the bodily remains of his brother and old photographs of strangers which the gypsy used to collect with his father on their wanderings. The gypsy discusses "certain power" and "false authority" (*Crossing*, 422) that the photographs and by extension all representations of the past exert over the living.

This scene is clearly meant to resonate with an earlier episode just before Billy decides to re-cross the border and retrieve his brother's remains. In that scene, Billy finds himself in the house of Mr

Sanders, an old family friend. The office is lined with faded “old photographs and portraits” that look like “artifacts salvaged from some ancient removal” (*Crossing*, 353). The photographs depict images and clichéd scenes from the Old West: “sepia-tinted buildings, the old shake roofs. The people on horseback. Men sitting among cardboard cactus in a photographer’s studio in suits and ties with the legs of their breeches stogged into their boottops and rifles standing upright before them. The antique dresses of the women” (*Crossing*, 353). Besides juxtaposing Billy’s grueling adventures in the borderlands with the nostalgic view of the West, McCarthy’s puts particular emphasis on the staged nature of the photographs with the studio arrangements and stock props points out the construed nature of the popular representations of the American West. The implication is that the photographs are not only incompatible with Billy’s lived reality but that the photographic lens participates in the creation of an artificial framing of reality where the individuals, as the gypsy puts it, are “cauterized in that brief encapture of light within the camera’s closet” (*Crossing*, 353). The Old West is thus literally conjured up and immortalized in a photographic studio.

Moreover, Mr Sanders accompanies some of the depicted personages with names and stories among which figure such stock-sounding characters as John Slaughter or Apache May. As Sanders casually adds, John Slaughter had brought over Apache May from a raided Apache camp that was stealing cattle; “killed some of them [...] brought the little thing back [...] raised her as his own” (*Crossing*, 354). The grotesqueness of the names and the benign, dime-novel simplicity of the frontier family story attached to those photographs bespeaks the falsified history of the West that the photographs enact. For the nostalgic perspective of the tale here certainly skims over the history of violence, colonization and exploitation that the burlesque, nostalgic narrative of the West is

built upon. The violence of the Indian raid and abduction is rewritten as an endearing farce which resonates with the staged perspectives on the past afforded by the photographs on the walls.

To underscore his critique of the representations of the national past, McCarthy inserts an intriguing detail in the form of an ashtray that Mr Sanders carries around. The item is a memento of “the Chicago World’s Fair” with an inscription that reads, “1833-1933. A Century of Progress” (*Crossing*, 354). The inscription and the symbolic power of the memorabilia brings up another rewriting of American history which depicts the period of territorial expansion and conquest in positivist terms of progress and organic growth. McCarthy’s mention of the Chicago World’s Fair is in itself extremely pertinent, because the idea of national exhibitions, most famously represented by the Chicago Columbian Exposition of 1893, emerged at the same time as the Turnerian frontier thesis and the idea of the exceptionalist role of the westward movement and its relation to the American national history.<sup>86</sup> Here then, McCarthy succinctly associates representation of the past with the Turnerian clichés of the American West as the progress of civilization, while also pointing out the fabricated and dysfunctional nature of these representations of history which suppress alternative viewpoints.

The stories and photographs in this scene represent the inherited vision of history of the West, the familiar frontier adventures of search, retribution and reunion that Billy vainly looks for in his wanderings, painfully realizing their artificial, mythic nature. The association of the frontier tales with the staged photographs is also important as it underscores the status of a photography as a medium which is both figurative and narrative. In this respect McCarthy is once again close to

---

<sup>86</sup> Paul Giles, *Virtual Americas: Transnational Fictions and the Transatlantic Imaginary*, (Durham: Duke University Press Books, 2002) 7.

Deleuze who likewise took photography as the example for his critique of representationalism and of the effects of the negative image of thought. For Deleuze, “photograph tends to reduce sensation to a single level”<sup>87</sup> of representation which sets limit onto sensation and creates a preestablished form of what is possible or imaginable. Photographs are consequently “not only ways of seeing” but “what is seen, until finally, one sees nothing else.”<sup>88</sup> Not only a perspective on the world among many others, but rather a pretended essence or identity of the world. In its most mundane manifestation, photography represents a “civilization of the cliché”<sup>89</sup> which operates by standardization, ordering and homogenization of the historical field. Like the maps, they give illusion of presence and continuity, but they are in effect received impositions of form on experience which, as McCarthy’s characters tirelessly repeat, has none.

The critical words of the gypsy when commenting on the photographs and by extension on human relationship with the past apply here as elsewhere in the novel whenever the question of representation is concerned:

The great trouble with the world was that that which survived was held in hard evidence as to past events. A false authority clung to what persisted [...] Yet the witness could not survive the witnessing. In the world that came to be that which prevailed could never speak

---

<sup>87</sup> Giles Deleuze, *Francis Bacon: the logic of sensation*, trans. Daniel W. Smith. (London and New York: Continuum, 2002) 91. Quoted in Stephen Zepke, “‘A work of art does not contain the least bit of information’: Deleuze and Guattari and Contemporary Art,” *PERFORMANCE PHILOSOPHY VOL 3, NO 3 (2017):751–765 DOI. 752* <https://doi.org/10.21476/PP.2017.33145> ISSN 2057–7176

<sup>88</sup> Deleuze, *Francis Bacon: the logic of sensation*, 91. Quoted in Zepke, 752.

<sup>89</sup> Giles Deleuze, *Cinema 2, The Time-Image*, trans. by Hugh Tomlinson and Roberta Galeta (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989) 22. Quoted in Zepke, 752.

for that which perished but could only parade its own arrogance. It pretended symbol and summation of the vanished world but was neither (*Crossing*, 422)

Same as the old daguerreotypes spoken of by the gypsy, the photographs and mementos of the past lining the room are false idols which immortalize the glorious frontier history of the nation, pretending to speak for the whole of its history. The representations of the past pose as 'hard evidence' and symbolic summation of the historical process. At the same time, however, in their staged pompousness they also 'parade their own arrogance,' reducing the complexity of the national history.

Billy's state of lostness is a lived example of the failure of the national imagery and mythology to supply a productive way of relating to the changing world. The photographs' fabricated claim on historical truth weights as an intolerable burden on McCarthy's protagonist who is vainly looking for order and justice in the stories and images of the national past. As another traveler puts it, Billy's impromptu decisions to repatriate his brother's body same as his attempt to join the U.S. army emerge as last vain resorts "to impose order and lineage upon things which rightly have none" (*Crossing*, 301). If it is possible to talk about a lesson of the book, then it must be the realization of the intolerable impasse of the majoritarian concept of national identity. That despite the omnipresent nationalistic imagery, there are no actual productive lineages or roots to return to, only a falsified image of history that entraps life and limits possibilities for the future.

The disappearance of continuity between the idealized representations of the West and the complexity of the lived present of the U.S. is perhaps best seen in the concluding scene of the

novel where Billy unwittingly witnesses the Trinity nuclear test.<sup>90</sup> McCarthy's depiction of the event dismantles both the nostalgic pictorial vision of the good old West from Senders's photographs and also the Turnerian idea of organic progress, maturation and gradual consolidation of the American territory and national identity represented by the world exhibitions. Consider McCarthy's peculiar downplaying of the blast itself, which is viewed as if from an outsider's perspective without any knowledge of its origin or meaning, in which the observer, Billy Parham, effectively stands on the same epistemological level as the diverse fauna affected by the event:

He woke in the white light of the desert noon [...] The shadow of the bare wood window sash stenciled onto the opposite wall began to pale and fade as he watched [...]. He kicked out of the blankets and pulled on his boots and his hat and rose and walked out. The road was a pale gray in the light and the light was drawing away along the edges of the world. Small birds had wakened in the roadside desert bracken and begun to chitter and to flit about and out on the blacktop bands of tarantulas that had been crossing the road in the dark like landcrabs stood frozen at their articulations, arch as marionettes, testing with their measured octave tread the sudden jointed shadows of themselves beneath them [...]. It had ceased raining in the night and a broken rainbow or watergall stood out on the desert in a dim neon bow and he looked again at the road which lay as before yet more dark and

---

<sup>90</sup> Here it is necessary to acknowledge the major contribution of Alex Hunt had gone through the painstaking work of reconstructing Billy's movements after he buries his brother's remains by following the numerous temporal and spatial clues that McCarthy hides in the descriptions of Billy's wanderings. Hunt is thus able to localize Billy's whereabouts (down to the weather patterns in the area) on the July 16 1945 in the early morning hours at roughly 100 miles south of the Trinity test site, a position which would afford him a good visibility of the event itself. See, Alex Hunt, "Right and False Suns: Cormac McCarthy's *The Crossing* and the Advent of the Atomic Age," *Southwestern American Literature* 23 (Spring 1998). <[https://www.academia.edu/806292/Right\\_and\\_False\\_Suns\\_Cormac\\_McCarthy's\\_The\\_Crossing\\_and\\_the\\_Advent\\_of\\_the\\_Atomic\\_Age](https://www.academia.edu/806292/Right_and_False_Suns_Cormac_McCarthy's_The_Crossing_and_the_Advent_of_the_Atomic_Age)>.

darkening still where it ran on to the east and where there was no sun and there was no dawn and when he looked again toward the north the light was drawing away faster and that noon in which he'd woke was now become an alien dusk and now an alien dark [...]  
(*Crossing*, 436-7)

The most peculiar aspect of this description is its untimely aesthetics, as the depiction seems to posit a break in the linear flow of organic time. The continuity of the linear historical time represented by the celestial day cycles is suddenly disrupted by the emergence of the artificial, anomalous sunrise in the middle of the night which wakes the wildlife and disturbs the regular patterns of the animals' behavior. Even though the time of the actual explosion can be artificially isolated and mapped with manic precision, the temporality it springs from now becomes a disruptive and unrepresentable discontinuity which leaves Billy stranded and weeping in an "inexplicable darkness" (*Crossing*, 437).

Joseph Masco succinctly captures the aesthetics that McCarthy seems to evoke in the passage: "the purple fireball and glassified green earth created in the deserts of New Mexico at exactly 5:29:45 a.m, on July 16, 1945, can only be narrated as a moment of historical rupture and transformation. For the detonation of the first atomic bomb marked the end of one kind of time, and the apotheosis of another, an uncanny modernity that continually exceeds the language of "national security [...]." <sup>91</sup> Masco's and McCarthy's uncanny aesthetic of rapture reveal the falsity and ineffectuality of the linear representations of the national history at the dawn of the nuclear West. Masco tellingly identifies the nuclear moment as a time of profound national identity crisis – the blast here

---

<sup>91</sup> Joseph Masco, *The Nuclear Borderlands: The Manhattan Project in Post-Cold War New Mexico* (Princeton; Princeton University Press, 2006) 8.

disconnects the American West from the nostalgic narratives and depictions of the national heroic past on the frontier, and discloses a different, vastly more complex notion of nationhood and national history from the officially accepted one. The chief paradox that Masco cites is the fact that although the bomb is developed in the name of national security, thus working to fix the national identity against its putative enemies or others, the factual repercussions of the invention undermine the very concept of the nation itself. For now, with the inevitable distribution of the technology across the globe, the nation, traditionally thought of as an immortal entity, can suddenly cease to exist within a matter of seconds.<sup>92</sup> Nation is thus revealed to be traversed by an inherent contingency and instability, being subject to chaotic forces that lay outside of its control. Similar transformation happens to Billy's home state of New Mexico itself. As Masco reminds us, New Mexico was the American state perhaps most closely related to and transformed by the nuclear power,<sup>93</sup> being the factual space where the bomb was assembled and first tested. Billy's loss of home and family culminates in the contemplation of the nuclear project chiefly developed in his home state, which now actualizes as impossibly alienating presence, underscoring the instability of the identity of places.

---

<sup>92</sup> Masco claims that the notion of de facto immortality of the modern nation is "immediately compromised by the reality of nuclear weapons, the contradiction nuclear arsenals evoke is that as more national-cultural energy is put into generating "security" [...] the vulnerability of the nation to new military technology is ever further revealed." Consequently, "the pursuit of "security" through ever-greater technological means of destruction thus troubles the nation's internal coherence by constantly forwarding the everyday possibility of the ultimate national absence." Masco, 3.

<sup>93</sup> "At the start of the twenty-first century, New Mexico, the perennial frontier space in many North American imaginations, remains most prominently on America's nuclear frontier; it is where the atomic bomb was invented and where the post-Cold War U.S. nuclear weapons complex is being slowly consolidated, and where the legacies of the bomb will be negotiated for generations to come." Masco, 11.

Above all else, McCarthy's depiction of the nuclear moment challenges the straightforward narrative of control and solidification of the national territory and identity associated with the notion of American West. Most notably this rendition denies what Masco describes as the early sublime conceptualizations of the Trinity explosion which attempted to render the invention of the weapon as a continuation and partial completion of the national Manifest Destiny, where the Los Alamos scientist "reinvented both the physical world and international order from the deserts of central New Mexico."<sup>94</sup> Instead of the sublimity and control, McCarthy gives an insidious, uncanny event which exceed any similar attempt at its reintegration into the national symbolic. The final image can thus be read as an answer to one of the opening scenes of the novel where Billy's father is trying to take charge of the space by setting up the trap. In McCarthy's rendition, the technological power of Manifest Destiny can no longer be perceived to stand as a bulwark against the forces of the wilderness, ensuring the fixity and security of the national territory, instead, the traditional western landscape is suffused with an alien light which makes the idea of borders and control increasingly meaningless. Masco once again helpfully summarizes the connection between the traditional national identity and its impossibly complex manifestation in the nuclear moment: "radioactive materials now execute their own uncanny form of manifest destiny, traveling an unpredictable course through ecosystems and bodies, creating new social and biological beings, and with them, new tactile experiences of everyday life."<sup>95</sup> Masco might as well be paraphrasing Deleuze's conception of the rhizome - the nation here is a site of unforeseen effects, encounters and passages producing anomalous bodies and events. The 'uncanny Manifest Destiny' here of course stands in stark contrast to the national conquest and territorialization of

---

<sup>94</sup> Masco, 60.

<sup>95</sup> Masco, 32.

the continent, exceeding the notion of fixed, cumulative course of the national history. Instead, the nuclear explosion figures as an intensifying problematization of the idea of nation and national identity themselves.

Masco's mention of the creation of new strange entities evokes not only the unpredictable effects of radiation on the surrounding fauna and flora (which certainly seem hinted at in McCarthy's depiction) but perhaps more importantly it gestures toward changed modes of social existence. The nuclear power makes the American landscape deeply suspect and it affects a peculiar severance between its inhabitants and the land. It produces social anomalies as much as biological ones.

It thus seems no coincidence that the last scene is also accompanied by symbolic and markedly ironical return of the wolf in the form of a disfigured stray dog that Billy tries to drive away. The dog is notably described as anomalous and without belonging, "something not of this earth," "an arthritic and illjoined thing" (*Crossing*, 435-6). If the wolf was in Billy's mind initially associated with the sublime images of wildness, the stray dog here at the end of the novel seems a monstrous offspring which is effectively found at the intersection between domestic and wild animal. For a dog itself is inherently a body shaped by culture and made in men's image, but here a stray and mutilated dog is a body on its way away from culture, losing the habits learned from man, yet never capable to return to the putative wilderness. For the animal, all belonging or naturality are impossible.

It appears obvious that the figure of the dog is meant to resonate with Billy himself. Billy too belongs nowhere, at the end of the novel he is a mere semblance of an individual body, of a person, which is rapidly losing its inherited form bestowed upon it by culture, an 'illjoined thing.' Billy's experience of history was driven by violent losses, encounters and flights rather than by a linear

accumulation and maturation into a specific form. By the same token, the history and identity of the nation is not something easily representable in linear narratives, images or artifacts, rather it is a history of violent raptures and unexpected consequences and as such it offers no reliable maps or coordinates to anchor Billy's identity.

Here of course it is necessary to point out a marked difference between McCarthy's aesthetic achievement in his western novels and the vision of the U.S. at the dawn of the nuclear era laid down by Masco. That is, that McCarthy seems to suggest that the nuclear moment is not so much directly a cause of this complexity and loss of belonging but rather an effect of an inherent discontinuity of the national history, of a nation that has actually never been united and fixed but is always already becoming something anomalous. The dawn of the nuclear West seems only to reveal the nation for what it has always been - a fictional image whose representations can never keep up with the complexity and speed of its actualizations. McCarthy's choice of the Trinity test as symbol of the complexity of the American national identity is especially intriguing when considered in relation to the figure of William Randolph Hearst, whose name echoes throughout the whole novel. Gray Brechin<sup>96</sup> provides an interesting study of the involvement of Hearst's empire in the financing and development of the nuclear technology that gave rise to the Manhattan Project. According to Brechin, Hearst empire effectively connects the ideology of the ruthless and rapacious frontiersmanship with the symbol of the national technological supremacy represented by the Manhattan Project.

---

<sup>96</sup> See, chapters 5 and 7 in Gray Brechin, *Imperial San Francisco: Urban Power, Earthly Ruin* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006).

Prior to the depiction of the Trinity test, the presence of the Hearst empire in the novel manifests most noticeably in La Babicora, a large ranch owned by Hearst in Mexican state of Chihuahua where Billy and Boyd locate the stolen family horses. Hearst's name as the owner of the ranch is mentioned in passing, but McCarthy's subtle reference to Hearst is hardly accidental as it is indisputable that a ranch of two-million hectares with horse herds counting in thousands creates a vast market for horses from afar, effectively constitutes an easy method for monetizing the stolen animals. Furthermore, Hearst's Media Empire was instrumental in swaying the popular opinion in favor of military intervention in the Mexican Revolution, an event whose echoes are ubiquitous on the pages of *The Crossing*. In other words, through Hearst's empire McCarthy draws a subtle connection between the emergence of the nuclear American and the American ongoing economic and military engagement abroad, especially in Mexico. This way McCarthy finally points out the biased and skewed nature of the national frontier ethos. Here the frontier becomes a story that valorizes imperial oppression and control instead of the Turnerian egalitarian ideal.

The shadowy presence of the Hearst empire in the background of the novel finally underscores the fact that the national space that Billy bears witness to is one where direct causes and connections are increasingly recondite to perceive, let alone disentangle. McCarthy thus appears to suggest that for an individual, the official unificatory narratives of the U.S. history such as the idealized vision of the frontier no longer offer any workable framework for establishing personal identity and for understanding both his present and future. Billy's sense of divestment at the end of the novel is thus also a collapse of the possibility of a transparent and linear vision of history. Instead, history emerges as an ongoing problem which defies any unified historical vision, and which requires constant redescription and re-telling.

#### 4.4 Fiction and a Line of Flight

Before continuing with the discussion of McCarthy's solution to the problem of representing individual and national history in greater detail, it seems necessary to diffuse what appears to be a highly pessimistic conclusion of the novel. For it would be a misreading to close out McCarthy's vision by saying that he ends his novel without hope and or without possibilities for the future. Actually, the opposite seems to be true. Upon closer inspection, McCarthy's vision for the novel is ultimately not a grim one. Billy's anomalous condition, his lostness to history, also opens him up to a species of life and to the future.

The problem of opening up the historical space to future possibilities is the topic that McCarthy implicitly pursues in the final interaction between Billy and the gypsy. For the gypsy, finding a historical truth and direct continuity between past and present is impossible because history ultimately does not "live in any one place" nor is there any privileged "repository for our images" (*Crossing*, 424) to be located and tapped into. Consequently, no picture or representation of history can mediate historical truth as such truth is only provisional and contingent; "what the dead have quit is itself no world but is also only the picture of the world in men's hearts" (*Crossing*, 425). Instead of being subject to totalizing representations, the world is "made new each day" and it is only "men's clinging to its vanished husks that could make of that world one husk more" (*Crossing*, 422). For the gypsy, the world is a process of continuous becoming, and the adherence to the old representations and descriptions of reality, to the 'vanished husks,' effectively reject the world as such, draining life of its possibilities, impoverishing the perspectives that his world can hold. This is precisely what can be seen not only in connection with the photographs of the Old West in Sanders's office but more generally in the situation that Billy finds himself in throughout the narrative: for like the world that the gypsy describes, Billy's inherited world of American West

is also made up from old ineffectual representations and discourses, “bits of wreckage. Some bones. The words of the dead” (*Crossing*, 422). What his father and the likes of Mr Echols leave for him are old representations of the world, which impose a certain order on Billy’s life, an imperative for his life to take the form that they uphold. They ask him to see and do things certain way, to restore order, to find a home and fix his roots. When he is divested of his home and identity at the end of the novel, Billy effectively loses the historical ground that he inherits, and as such he is becoming free from the influence of the words of the dead, from the old histories of the West. His absolute anguish in the last scene is also a form of divestment, a form of passage.

The gypsy sees the past as a great burden, something created from the ‘words of the dead’ that weighs in on the present. In this conceptualization, representations of the past can work as a sort of death sentence in respect to future, that is, as a pretended closure or summation of the historical process. Consequently, the task to be performed in relation to the past is finding ways to let go of these old images and ways of seeing the world, to find a concept of history that “each man makes alone” (*Crossing*, 422) amid the ruins of the past discourses and representations. What the gypsy effectively calls for is the invention of lines of escape from the grasp of history, from its nostalgic influence on the present and its possibilities, emphasizing the need for a different attitude to the world that allows it to be made ‘new each day,’ rather than being simply a copy of the world of the past.

Finally, echoing the aforementioned words of the Mennonite, the gypsy suggests that the truth of the world can subsist in telling only, “la verdad no puede quedar en ningún otro lugar sino en el habla” (*Crossing*, 422), and consequently that the escape from the burden of history will happen only by a creative re-description of the world. The concept of history as a lifeless prison of old ideas paired with the valorization of storytelling as a line of escape can be conceptually viewed as

very close to Deleuze's notions about the relationship between history and fiction. Deleuze often associates the invention of the lines of escape and powers of becoming with the practice of speculative fiction. For Deleuze, fiction and literature are inseparable from becoming, for it is precisely fiction that concerns itself most pertinently with the question of creating new possibilities, where something like life or a world are extracted from the ossified discourses and images of thought. The faculty of fiction-making, which Deleuze sometimes calls fabulation, "always engages "becomings" and "powers [puissances]," metamorphic processes of becoming-other" that challenge "the received truths of the dominant social order," while it "also produces its own truths through its inventions [...]."<sup>97</sup>

It is this association of fictionalizing and story-telling with offsetting the deathly nostalgia for the idols of the past which constitutes perhaps the strongest and most salient point of intersection between McCarthy's work and Deleuze's philosophy of becoming. For McCarthy's narrative technique in the novel can also be described as a process of becoming and of forming a line of flight, simultaneously disrupting the established representations of the West from the inside but also engaged in creating something else, a different way of narrating the history of the nation. His West and borderlands are places of rhizomatic movements and resonances where old identities get lost and where new stories and ways of seeing the world emerge. For McCarthy writes his narrative as a rhizome, a minor narrative which never stops because it reached its promised destination or attained an expected form, but solely in order to initiate further passage and movement. This narrative technique which will become the subject of the following chapter seems

---

<sup>97</sup> Ronald Bogue, *Deleuze's Way: Essays in Transverse Ethics and Aesthetics* (Aldershot; Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2009) 100, 103.

to be McCarthy's answer to what Campbell termed the rooted and dogmatic narratives of American history.<sup>98</sup> McCarthy's western frontier story stubbornly refuses to take root, to shape itself into an easily legible book and to yield an answer to 'what' Billy's story is actually about.

#### **4.5 Narrative: Rhizome**

A closer analysis of McCarthy's narrative technique reveals that McCarthy favors a structure which is much more rhizomatic than it is rooted, a structure where a linear narrative line continuously vanishes to become a rhizomatic line of flight. Alan Bourassa is a crucial commentator regarding McCarthy's narrative technique. In Bourassa's reading, McCarthy's narratives often bear only superficial resemblance to literary narratives proper. Like standard narratives, they are composed of understandable components of adventure stories; they have stock characters and settings as well as journeys full of conflicts and adventure.<sup>99</sup> That is, they are made up of identifiable, causal components and coordinates that can tell us what the narrative is about. A closer inspection however reveals they actually work systematically to deny and undermine these stable identities, constantly vacillating between relative order of (often generic) conventions and the forces of chaos that break the narrative up. In the case of *The Crossing* this aspect manifests on what Bourassa calls a narrative of subtraction<sup>100</sup> where instead of following by way of causal accumulation and additions of events and episodes, the narrative actually constantly disappears and Billy's story is consequently gradually stripped away from him. While this thesis certainly

---

<sup>98</sup> See section 2.5.

<sup>99</sup> According to Bourassa in McCarthy, "We see something that works like a narrative, something that can easily be mistaken for a traditional story that functions as a series of causes and effects. But we see causes that are no quite causes [...], setting off no actions of their own [...]" Bourassa, 85.

<sup>100</sup> "The novel [*The Crossing*] does not progress from a principle of addition but of subtraction" Bourassa, 83.

subscribes to this vision of McCarthy's narrative, it wishes to move this reading slightly further by situating it to Campbell's rhizomatic framework, showing its aesthetics of disappearance as a function of the ongoing continuity and tension between rooted and rhizomatic models in McCarthy's thinking and therefore as a function of his critique of the essentialized narrative of the American West.

For the aesthetics of disappearance can be easily read as a function of the mixture between the rooted and rhizomatic images of thought, that is, as two modes of relation to the world and thus two distinct modes of relating a story of the world in writing. Billy Parham and his story are precisely the virtual site where these two inclinations meet, and mix, creating a dynamic continuum between isolated happenings where the narrative sets its roots and the moments where narrative disappears and the world of the novel is set into flight.

Firstly, let us consider the actual narrative structure of the novel. The novel is essentially composed of a series of crossings of the international border, which are spaced from each other by indefinite stretches of time and whose contents often become undisclosed. Each time Billy crosses the border, it is with a new goal, new attempt to inscribe his journeying onto a symbolic map, giving it structure and order. This way, Billy first crosses the border with the wolf with the aim of restoring it to the mountains only to lose both the wolf and later on his parents. The subsequent crossings see Billy and his brother trying to locate their parents' murderers and retrieve the family horses. Similarly to Billy's quest with the wolf, this journey too dissipates without any resolution. During his search, Billy not only fails to locate the murderers, but he is subjected to further loss as he gets separated from his brother after a chance gunfight. There then follow two more journeys and crossings as Billy first tries to locate his brother and then months later to repatriate what he believes to be his brother's mortal remains. After the last unsuccessful crossing, the novel concludes with

a description of prolonged series of Billy's eclectic wanderings, menial jobs and temporary sojourns through New Mexico that lead him to his chance witnessing of the Trinity test.

Located between these distinct quests whose aims are invariably the restoration of home, family and the execution of justice there are blank spaces, moments of wandering, waiting and silence where the narrative lines disappear and from which new narrative lines arise. The novel itself is effectively composed not of one but of a multiplicity of adventures and goals which never truly connect into one coherent narrative. McCarthy plots points and destinations for Billy only to let each of the numerous journeys that Billy undertakes vanish. It is thus pertinent that the individual storylines and different goals that Billy pursues actually do not constitute a straight line which would mark Billy's narrative progression as a character. Instead of a continuous series of fixed points and positions stemming from a single point of origin which would constitute a map of Billy's narrative, Billy's journey is a discontinuous series of false starts and goals with a distinctly rhizomatic structure. What McCarthy gives us is a narrative composed of seemingly ordered, conventional adventures which are however never allowed to germinate fully before they are made to disappear.<sup>101</sup>

For example, the reader actually seems to know more about Billy's character at the beginning of his journey than towards its end. If McCarthy spends considerable amount of time describing Billy's complex relationship with the wolf at the beginning, albeit he notably withholds Billy's psychological processes in making his decisions, after the end of the first part of the novel, Billy becomes an increasingly distant figure. The subsequent narrative itself does not so much follow

---

<sup>101</sup> Once again Bourassa puts forward a similar idea when he says that Billy's "actions have not added up to a story. Instead his story has been stripped from him episode by episode." Bourassa, 84.

Billy as it periodically leaves him and returns to him each time he is about to cross the international border. Each of his crossings is spaced with a prolonged period of time, weeks to months, during which Billy's actions are mostly withheld from the reader altogether. In consequence, it is difficult to speak about a real development of Billy's character as every time his journey digresses or disappears he is forced to begin a new, coming up with a different mission to set himself back on course and restore his identity. This discontinuous movement leaves the reader in a state of what another of McCarthy's storytellers, a former Mexican revolutionary, likens to a state of blindness as to the narrative and journey ahead. The world for the wandering revolutionary can only be described as a state of "ultimate sightlessness" where nothing ever "announced its approach" (*Crossing*, 302). Similarly, the reader follows Billy without knowing a set course, without having any sort of insight into the destination of the protagonist's wandering. For a man travelling this world, the revolutionary continues, all questions of "origins and destinations are but rumors." Finally, "the world which he [implicitly meaning Billy] imagines to be the ciborium of all godlike things will come to naught but dust" and "he will be required to begin again whether he wishes to or no" (*Crossing*, 302). The disappearance of 'origins and destinations' and the necessity of continuously beginning the journey anew is characteristic for Deleuze's description of the rhizomatic way of travelling and writing from *Mille plateaux*: "proceeding from the middle [...] coming and going rather than starting and finishing."<sup>102</sup> Furthermore, there are no starts or goals to Billy's narrative, only comings and goings as the individual positions on the narrative scheme do not function as anchoring points or markers through which the narrative progresses towards its finale, rather, they seem more akin to relay points which McCarthy temporarily invests only to

---

<sup>102</sup> *Thousand Plateaus*, 46.

leave them behind. McCarthy thus does not really write a story as such. He sets his protagonist on a journey, but he cannot bring himself to let Billy reach his destination, to let the narrative set down its roots, and to impose a final signifier and form on Billy's life and his relation to the world. By producing this excessive narrative structure where a story of boyhood adventures dissipates into winding traversals without end and which is spaced out by equally recondite and prolonged conversations with the strangers on the road, McCarthy effectively writes his story in the 'style' of what Deleuze called the American literary pragmatic tradition. What he appears to share most prominently with this style is his recognition not only of the deathly, ordering capacities of language and narrative, but also their potential as signs of warnings and calls for action, constantly urging him, in Deleuze's words, to "get out" and "make a beeline, don't get stuck on a point."<sup>103</sup> For it is McCarthy's aversion not only to staying on but also to making a point and thus institute closure to his writing that emerge as the most notable qualities of his novel.

The narrative resists all finality, be it finding a place where the wolfs are still plentiful, where the family is reunited or where the nation still provides a sense of identity and belonging. McCarthy's rhizomatic plotting of his tale intentionally denies images of rootedness and repose. Instead of subscribing to the notions of fixity, identity or narrative progression, each loss of course and continuity seems to constitute a little escape, a flight from the strictures of standard narrative conventions and as such also an escape from the concepts of home, nature, family and the nation itself. In this light, it would be incorrect to posit the last scene of the novel as a putative ending or final word behind the narrative. If there is any type of consistency in McCarthy's technique, then

---

<sup>103</sup> *Thousand Plateaus*, 207.

it has to be his staunch denial of the concept of ending and of the imposition of a final form on life.

## 4.6 Storytelling

McCarthy's valorization of narrative as a line of flight is evident on his prolonged and metafictionally obsessive commentaries on the concepts of storytelling and narrative themselves, thus providing the reader with numerous clues as to how to understand the complex rhizomatic structure of his novel. Earlier in the text, an old Mennonite of Caborca whom Billy meets during his first prolonged wandering after the death of the wolf comments directly on the nature of storytelling vocation, saying "the task of the narrator is not an easy one. [...] He sets forth the categories into which the listener will wish to fit the narrative as he hears it. But he understands that the narrative is itself in fact no category but is rather the category of all categories for there is nothing which falls outside its purview. All is telling" (*Crossing*, 158-9). As a category of categories narrative emerges as the unfolding of the world itself. McCarthy's view of narrative posits it as something that creates no image that could stand in for itself, rather, it is the mode of appearance of all categorization and images while itself standing outside representation. Crucially, narrative is thus always already different from the categories and representations of the world themselves. It is an endless process of differentiation from its categories, constantly eluding stoppage and fixation in representations and instruments of entrapment. In this sense, narrative is a process and never a finished entity, to narrate is a matter of constant passage and redescription. As the Mennonite puts it, "the tale has no abode or place of being except in the telling only and there it lives and makes its home and therefore we can never be done with the telling" (*Crossing*, 147). In the Mennonite's rendition, narrative cannot set roots, it exists solely in the acts and passages themselves. The storyteller is caught up in the constant struggle to express the world which

nonetheless constantly eludes stable representation and subsists only in the indefinite present of the act of expression. This here is of course immensely pragmatic view of the world where action, passage and telling completely replace the notion of fixed truth. There is no ideal space where truth or essence could abide as they can only be performed provisionally in the act of telling.

Now it is perhaps possible to see the challenge that McCarthy's style poses to the traditional visions of the American West as a stable, rooted identity and to the idea of organic historical continuity of American history. The story of Billy's life cannot be represented as an ordered whole with a beginning and an end as it effectively refuses to yield a unified image or provide a sensible map to its own unfolding. Every fixed position or goal in the narrative is eventually undone and in consequence all roots become false and merely provisional. Although McCarthy seemingly ends his novel with a lack of continuity of the national history, his narrative technique itself tells a different story, one where the discontinuity is embraced as a space for creation and constant re-telling.

#### **4.7 The world as Telling**

McCarthy's narrative no longer affirms or reveals identities, telling us about the maturation of the protagonist's character, but rather it invests precisely this lack of unification, the empty spaces that McCarthy's style refuses to fill in, making the narrative and Billy's own identity into a problem and an enigma. By embracing the discontinuity, the state of being lost to the national history, McCarthy opens up Billy's story and his identity to fiction and fabulation. This aspect is best captured in McCarthy's subtle transformation of Billy himself into a complex sign that gives rise to collective storytelling and fiction-making. As he travels, Billy becomes someone that finds truth only provisionally in the act of telling, in the performance of his own inscrutability which gives rise to the numerous narrative strands and journeys that make up the book.

At one point as he searches for his lost brother, we can see Billy retracing his own footsteps, as if trying to reconnect with his own prior life. As he does so, it is possible to see an interesting transformation of his journey into a collective act; “he passed back north through the small mud hamlets of the mesa, through Alamo and Galeana, settlements through which he’d passed before and where his return was remarked upon by the poblanos so that his own journeying began to take upon itself the shape of a tale” (*Crossing*, 341). Upon his return, Billy of course finds no trace of either his previous journey or his brother, but more importantly, we also find him no longer in possession of his own journeying. As Billy disappears from the national history, his life is engaged in the act of becoming fiction. His own journey now intersecting with the perspectives of his observers, something fictional taking on a life of its own. Like Deleuze’s animal which disappears to become writing and fabulation, Billy too becomes a ‘multiplicity, a tale’ – no longer just one individual perspective on the world but a convergence of many perspectives. Moreover, the tale he becomes is also not something finished or definite, it is a process unfolding contemporaneously with his journeying, something open-ended that takes its shape in the intersection between Billy’s anomalous body and the community of witnesses; a minor practice undertaken by the community.

## **4.8 Epilogue**

The transformation of Billy into a tale is significantly also the chief topic of the epilogue to the whole trilogy in the *Cities* which takes place in 2001, nearly fifty years after the events of the trilogy. In the final pages we learn that Billy never truly settles and even in his old age he keeps wandering the borderlands of New Mexico. One winter he spends a night with a family which is captivated by the frontier stories and events from his life. At night, the mother contemplates Billy’s old hand; “Gnarled, ropescarred, speckled from the sun and the years of it. The ropy veins that bound them to his heart. There was map enough for men to read. There God’s plenty of signs and

wonders to make a landscape. To make a world” (*Cities*, 293). In his last appearance of the trilogy Billy Parham becomes a strange kind of a living story, a complex collection of signs to be read and explored by others to yield a sort of landscape, sort of world.

In the last description of Billy, there is an echo of the discussion held by the gypsy concerning the representations of the past. The gypsy not only calls for abandoning the illusions of history made out of old words, representations, maps that entrap life, but he also emphasizes the importance of creating a world that would not be simply a dead copy of the old one, “how make a world of this [meaning the old husks and words of the dead]? How live in that world once made (*Crossing*, 422)?” Unlike the world he inherits from his father, the world that Billy encompasses is not simply a picture of the world, a summation of the history of the West that the woman incorrectly seems to imply when she designates him by his family surname “I know who you are Mr Parham.” Billy’s answer, “I ain’t nothin” (*Cities*, 293) however, fittingly offsets the idea of stable identity and knowledge and it reconnects Billy with the overall rhizomatic, minor aesthetics that McCarthy employs in the novel. For it has arguably been McCarthy’s task in the novel to render a person and a world which are in effect nothing in particular and whose histories are constantly in the making, not the least because they are subject to constant re-description and re-telling.

The description of the protagonist’s body importantly hinges on the definition of the verb ‘read’ which connotes with the future tense of the verb ‘to make.’ The implication here is that reading of the signs is not a passive activity, a reception or recollection of something prior. Rather it is an activity of creation geared toward the future (‘to make a world’). So Billy’s body is not simply a picture of the familiar Old West to be enjoyed and nourished by the family which takes care of Billy but precisely something from which a kind of new West can be made, that is, something not truly present but rather yet to come, yet to be invented.

The last passage finally shows us that McCarthy's technique is not presenting us with a picture of a different world so much as it attempts to outline a mode of thinking about the world. Thinking that is rhizomatic and minor. Billy's life and world are composed of multiplicities, of countless encounters, journeys and losses. The landscape that he embodies in the epilogue is not simply a closed record of the past, but an open form composed of anomalous 'signs' and 'wonders.' There is a great hidden stroke of irony in the passage as the woman inspects the "ropy veins" (*Cities*, 293) that bind the hands to Billy's heart. The image here implies the veins as sort of roots that connect man's actions to their causes, that lead toward the center of Billy's being, allowing us to see the secret of the history he embodies in the woman's eyes. However, at the end of *The Crossing* McCarthy actually reveals that the reason why Billy is not drafted to join the national efforts in WWII and why he is therefore left out of the national history is a hitherto unsuspected heart-murmur which makes him physically unreliable and unfit for combat. Billy's heart is therefore inherently unstable, something which was not known even to Billy himself for most of his life. McCarthy thus implies that there is no easily traceable core or root of Billy's personality and story. Likewise, the thinking about the past and about the West that McCarthy presents us in his book is not a matter of univocal, nostalgic perspective that anchors us in time but something violently unstable, a matter of competing incommensurate perspectives, passages, resonances, experiments with seeing paired with the inevitable feelings of loss and alienation. Like the Deleuze's rhizomatic West, McCarthy's western story is much more of a direction of deterritorialization than it is a destination or a nostalgic attempt at returning to a presupposed prior identity.

## 4 Conclusion: Borders, Frontier and American History

Even twenty years after the publication of the last novel of the trilogy, McCarthy's novelistic work on American frontier, borders and borderlands does not cease to be relevant. The unique aspect that seems to make his work resonate today is the fact that far from taking the frontier and borders as unchanging delimiting categories related to national and personal identities, McCarthy uses them to explore the themes of pluralism, difference and multiplicity that lie at the forefront of American historical experience.

McCarthy's involvement with the past and present problems of American history intriguingly ranges from highly concrete, subtly referencing historical processes, events and even personages (the history of wolf hunting, the role of the American southwest in the Manhattan project and the shadowy influence of modern frontier moguls such as William Randolph Hearst), to approaches that reach to the realm of the abstract and speculative seen in the numerous interruptions of the narrative line filled with the self-referential, allegorical and quasi-philosophical disputations and reflections.

This combination of acutely specific historical detail with McCarthy's inclination toward the speculative, abstract and fictive is what positions *The Crossing* as a novel within the Deleuzian framework of American literature as a pragmatic line of flight and becoming. McCarthy is interested in the specific and essentialized problems, dynamics and tendencies in American thinking about history and space (such as those of the frontier and westward movement), only to locate and invent their dormant, incipient and yet unrealized deterritorializing potential, awakening and investing the powers of becoming that underline the seemingly rooted systems of thinking.

McCarthy's protagonists thus set out on nostalgic search for the glorious, majoritarian frontier outlined by Frederic Jackson Turner and many others, but what they find is the Deleuzian frontier of ever-receding limits and constantly shifting borders where the identities (both their own but also those whom they encounter along the way) constantly destabilize and disappear. On the one hand, McCarthy thus evokes the majoritarian vision of American history governed by the tropes of westward movement and the frontier which valorize the rooted idea of the great unity and continuity of American nation, on the other hand, he also invests the minoritarian frontier seeking Deleuze's pragmatic 'open road' which unfolds as a radical discontinuity, difference and rhizome.

In his unique take on the leading trope of American history, McCarthy transposes the nostalgic vision of the frontier on the modern American-Mexican borderline. Doing so, he reveals not only the untenability of the traditional trope in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but more importantly, the frontier itself is thereby transformed into something else, taking flight and becoming a rhizomatic frontier – the Deleuzian space of creation, experimentation and reinvention.

Likewise, the function of the modern American borderline is no longer limited to control, demarcation and separation of spaces, instead, it becomes a space of its own, a zone of indistinction or the in-between with the capacity to deframe and disrupt territories, spaces and identities. If it was said that for Deleuze, the majoritarian idea of the border is an expression of the rooted mode of thinking, the binary machine that constantly divides and organizes movement, then McCarthy's vision transforms the border from a stable entity and an arbitrary line of separation and containment into a species of intensive motion through which multiplicity enters the world – a line of escape from the essentialized, enclosed expression of border that defines entities and spaces.

This way, the reader meets Billy Parham in search of continuity and lineage, in a role of an apprentice of sorts, learning about his father's world and himself assuming a paternal role. In his

encounter with the wolf, he initially expects to find an idea of the animal valorized by his community, by the frontier code of conduct, which would allow him to establish a continuity with the national past, to find himself his father's son. Instead, McCarthy invests the encounter with the animal with an unexpected, ambiguous and liberating potential which disrupts both the traditional image of the animal and the protagonist's own sense of identity. In crossing the American border, McCarthy lets Billy cross to the realm of the animal, to the zone of indiscernibility, non-identity and difference which force him to rethink his relationship to the national history and his place in it, opening up a space for experimentation with perception that goes beyond the traditional binarism connected with the border.

The rhizomatic journey of the protagonist can consequently be read as McCarthy's vital commentary on American relationship to its own historical identity. With the *The Crossing*, McCarthy makes a case for abandoning the nostalgia for the idealized American West and for embracing the differential potential dormant in its frontiers and borders, treating them as an opportunity for reinvention and pragmatic redescription. Crucially for McCarthy, to see the minoritarian expression of the border necessitates a reinvigoration of the speculative faculty, of the practice of multiplicity and pluralism valorized by the American pragmatic tradition. His view of the Mexican-American borderland as a rhizomatically distributing multiplicity of paths and stories without end shows the nature of the border as a constantly shifting process that is subject to equally constant renegotiation, remapping and retelling. Although formulated in the final decade of the twentieth century, the full import of McCarthy's vision yet remains to be fully embraced and unfolded.

# Bibliography

## Works Cited

### Primary sources:

McCarthy, Cormac. *All the Pretty Horses*. New York: Vintage Books, 2011.

McCarthy, Cormac. *Blood Meridian or the Evening Redness in the West*. London: Picador, 2010.

McCarthy, Cormac. *Cities of the Plain*. New York: Vintage Books, 2007.

McCarthy, Cormac. *The Crossing*. London: Picador, 2011.

### Secondary sources:

Arnold, Edwin T. and Dianne C. Luce, eds. *Cormac McCarthy Companion*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2001.

Bogue, Ronald. "On the Superiority of American Literature." *Deleuze Studies*, Vol. 7, No. .3. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013.

Bourassa, Alan. *Deleuze and American Literature*. New York: Palgrave, 2009.

Bruns, Gerald L. "Becoming-Animal (Some Simple Ways)." *New Literary History*, Vol. 38, No. 4, *On Change and Exchange in Literary Studies*, Autumn 2007. 703-720 <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/20058035>> 12 March 2019.

Campbell, Neil. *The Rhizomatic West: Representing the American West in Transnational, Global, Media Age*. Lincoln; University of Nebraska Press, 2008.

Deleuze, Giles and Felix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus*. Trans. by Brian Massumi. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987.

Deleuze, Giles. *Cinema 2, The Time-Image*. Trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Roberta Galeta. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989.

Deleuze, Giles. *Essays Critical and Clinical*. Trans. Daniel W. Smith, Michael A. Green. London: Verso, 1998.

Deleuze Giles. *Francis Bacon: the logic of sensation*. Trans. Daniel W. Smith. London and New York: Continuum, 2002.

- Flaxman, Gregory. "A More Radical Empiricism." *Deleuze and Pragmatism*. New York: Routledge, 2014.
- Fox, William L. *The Void, The Grid & The Sign: Traversing The Great Basin*. Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2005.
- Giles, Paul. *Virtual Americas: Transnational Fictions and the Transatlantic Imaginary*. Durham: Duke University Press Books, 2002.
- Lopez, Barry Holstun. *Of Wolves and Men*. New York; Scribner, 1978.
- Masco, Joseph. *The Nuclear Borderlands: The Manhattan Project in Post-Cold War New Mexico*. Princeton; Princeton University Press, 2006.
- Powichi, Chris. "Witnessing the Wolf: The Human and the Lupine in Cormac McCarthy's *The Crossing*." *Postgraduate English: A Journal and Forum for Postgraduates in English*. Vol. 0.1 2000. <<http://community.dur.ac.uk/postgraduate.english/ojs/index.php/pgenglish/article/view/5>> > 20 August 2019.
- Rajchman, John. *The Deleuze Connections*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2000.
- Rothfork, John. "Cormac McCarthy as Pragmatist." *Critique: Studies in Contemporary Fiction*, Vol. 47., No. 2, Winter 2006. <[https://oak.ucc.nau.edu/jgr6/Mccarthy\\_pragmatist.htm](https://oak.ucc.nau.edu/jgr6/Mccarthy_pragmatist.htm)>.
- Shaviro, Steven. "A Reading of *Blood Meridian*." *Southern Quarterly*, Vol. 30., No. 4, Summer 1992.
- Zepke, Stephen. "'A work of art does not contain the least bit of information:' Deleuze and Guattari and Contemporary Art." *PERFORMANCE PHILOSOPHY*, Vol. 3., No. 3. 2017. 751–765. <<https://doi.org/10.21476/PP.2017.33145>>.

## Works Consulted

- Allen, Barry. "The Rorty-Deleuze *Pas de Deux*." *Deleuze and Pragmatism*. New York: Routledge, 2014. 163-180.
- Arnold, Edwin T. *Perspectives on Cormac McCarthy*. Mississippi: University of Mississippi Press, 1999.
- Bogue, Ronald. *Deleuze's Way: Essays in Transverse Ethics and Aesthetics*. Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2009.

- Bloom's Modern Critical Views: Cormac McCarthy*. Ed. Harold Bloom. New York: Infobase Publishing, 2009.
- Brechin, Grey A. *Imperial San Francisco: Urban Power, Earthly Ruin*. London: University of California Press, 2006.
- Bull, Malcolm, ed. *Apocalypse Theory and the Ends of the World*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1995.
- Clark, Tim. *Becoming everyone – The politics of sympathy in Deleuze and Rorty*. *Radical Philosophy*. <<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/298990932>> 20 August 2019.
- Deleuze, Giles and Claire Parnet. *Dialogues II*. Trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam. London: Continuum, 2002.
- Deleuze, Giles and Felix Guattari. *What Is Philosophy?* London; Verso, 2003.
- Deleuze, Giles. *Difference and Repetition*. Trans. Paul Patton. New York: Columbia University Press, 1994.
- Giles, Deleuze. *Kafka: Towards a Minor Literature*. Minneapolis: University Of Minnesota Press, 1986.
- Deleuze, Giles. *Nietzsche and Philosophy*. Trans. Hugh Tomlinson. London: Continuum, 2002.
- Giles, Deleuze. *Proust and Signs*. Trans. Richard Howard. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000.
- Deleuze, Giles. *The Logic of Sense*. Trans. Mark Lester. New York: Columbia University Press, 1990.
- Dowd, Ciarán. *Upon Uncertain Ice: Contingency, Being and Witness in Later Cormac McCarthy*. Diss. National University of Ireland Galway. 2014. Web. <<http://hdl.handle.net/10379/5058>> 18 February 2019.
- Ellis, Jay. *No Place For Home: Spatial Constraint and Character Flight in the Novels of Cormac McCarthy*. New York: Routledge, 2006.
- Foucault Michele. *The Order of Things. The Archeology of Human Sciences*. New York: Routledge, 2002.
- Fussell, Edwin. *Frontier: American literature and the American West*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965.

- Gay, Marie-Agnès. "Cormac McCarthy's Aesthet(h)ics of the "Canal-Rhizome." *Suttree, European journal of American studies*, Vol.12, No.3, Winter 2017. <<http://journals.openedition.org/ejas/12372>> 9 November 2018. DOI:10.4000/ejas.12372.
- Hage, Eric. *Cormac McCarthy A Literary Companion*. Jefferson & London: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2010.
- Holland, Eugene W. *Deleuze and Guattari's A Thousand Plateaus*. London: Bloomsbury, 2013.
- Hungerford, Amy. *Postmodern Belief: American Literature and Religion since 1960*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013.
- Hunt, Alex. "Right and False Suns: Cormac McCarthy's *The Crossing* and the Advent of the Atomic Age." *Southwestern American Literature*, Vol. 23, Spring 1998. <[https://www.academia.edu/806292/Right and False Suns Cormac McCarthys The Crossing and the Advent of the Atomic Age](https://www.academia.edu/806292/Right_and_False_Suns_Cormac_McCarthy's_The_Crossing_and_the_Advent_of_the_Atomic_Age)>.<[https://www.academia.edu/806292/Right and False Suns Cormac McCarthys The Crossing and the Advent of the Atomic Age](https://www.academia.edu/806292/Right_and_False_Suns_Cormac_McCarthy's_The_Crossing_and_the_Advent_of_the_Atomic_Age)>.
- Iser, Wolfgang. *The Fictive and the Imaginary: Charting Literary Anthropology*. Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins UP, 1993.
- Josyph, Peter. *Adventures in Reading Cormac McCarthy*. Blue Ridge Summit, PA: Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group, 2010.
- Keller Estes, Andrew. *Cormac McCarthy and the Writing of American Spaces*. Amsterdam & New York: Rodopi, 2013.
- Kuehls, Thom. *Beyond Sovereign Territory: The Space of Ecopolitics*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996.
- Lincoln, Kenneth. *Cormac McCarthy American Canticles*. New York: Palgrave, 2009.
- Luce, Dianne C. "Vanishing World of McCarthy's Border Trilogy." *A Cormac McCarthy Companion*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2001.
- Marx, Leo. *Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- Massumi, Brian. *PARABLES FOR THE VIRTUAL: Movement, Affect, Sensation*. Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2002.
- McCarthy, Cormac. *No Country for Old Men*. New York: Vintage Books, 2006.

- McGinn, Bernard. *Apocalypticism in the Western Tradition*. Aldershot, UK: Variorum, 1994.
- Moorhead, James H. *World Without End: Mainstream American Protestant Visions of the Last Things, 1880–1925*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999.
- Nail, Thomas. *Theory of the Border*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2016.
- Parish, T. *From the Civil War to the Apocalypse: Postmodern History and American Fiction*. Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 2008.
- Pease, Donald, ed. *Revisionary Interventions into the Americanist Canon*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1994.
- Potton, Paul, ed. *Deleuze: A Critical Reader*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1996.
- Poirier, Richard. *Trying It Out in America: Literary and Other Performances*. New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1999.
- Poirier, Richard. *Poetry and Pragmatism*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992.
- Procházka, Martin. *Ruins in the New World*. Prague: Litteraria Pragensia Books, 2012.
- Radford, Rosemary. *Religion and Violence: America, Amerikkka : Elect Nation and Imperial Violence*. London: Equinox Publishing Ltd., 2007.
- Rorty, Richard. *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.
- Slotkin, Richard. *Gunfighter Nation: The Myth of the Frontier in Twentieth-century America*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1992.
- Slotkin, Richard. *Regeneration through Violence: The Mythology of the American Frontier*. Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1973.
- Slotkin, Richard. *The Fatal Environment: The Myth of the Frontier in the Age of Industrialization, 1800-1890*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1998.
- Smith, Henry Nash. *Virgin Land: The American West As Symbol and Myth*. University of Virginia Hypertext. <<http://xroads.virginia.edu/~hyper/hns/home.htm>> February, 1996.
- Turner, J. Frederick. *The Frontier in American History*. Project Gutenberg. Oct.14, 2007.
- Walsh, Christopher J. *In the Wake of the Sun: Navigating the Southern Works of Cormac McCarthy*. Knoxville: Newfound Press, 2009.