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INTERTEXTUALITY IN THE FICTION OF CORMAC MCCARTHY

by

Benjamin J. Burr

A thesis submitted to the faculty of

Brigham Young University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

Department of English

Brigham Young University

August 2006

BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE COMMITTEE APPROVAL

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As chair of the candidate's graduate committee, I have read the thesis of Benjamin J. Burr in its final form and have found that (1) its format, citations, and bibliographical style are consistent and acceptable and fulfill university and department style requirements; (2) its illustrative materials including figures, tables, and charts are in place; and (3) the final manuscript is satisfactory to the graduate committee and is ready for submission to the university library.

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ABSTRACT

INTERTEXTUALITY IN THE FICTION OF CORMAC MCCARTHY

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The moral and aesthetic complexity of Cormac McCarthy's fiction demands sophisticated theoretical reading paradigms. Intertextuality informed by poststructuralism is a theoretical approach that enables one to read the moral and aesthetic elements of McCarthy's work in productive ways. McCarthy's work is augmented by its connection to the works of other great artists and writers. As a result, McCarthy's work forces us to read his precedents from a different framework. An examination of the conversation between Martin Heidegger, Meyer Schapiro, Jacques Derrida, and Frederic Jameson about Van Gogh's *A Pair of Boots* creates an intertextual framework for examining the connection between Cormac McCarthy's *Outer Dark* and William Faulkner's *Light in August*. This examination demonstrates that Cormac McCarthy provides a sophisticated aesthetic and moral critique of Faulkner. This application of intertextual theory can also be applied to better understand the intertextual connections that exist within McCarthy's own canon of work. The same discussion of

Van Gogh's painting can be used to understand the significance of a pair of boots in McCarthy's *No Country for Old Men*. This analysis demonstrates that McCarthy has moved from a privilege of postmodern aesthetics in *Outer Dark* to a privilege of more modern cinematic aesthetics in *No Country for Old Men*. This shift in aesthetics also informs the moral universe in each novel. Understanding this shift in aesthetics also provides a useful framework for understanding the connection between *All the Pretty Horses* and its film adaptation directed by Billy Bob Thornton. The adapted film of McCarthy's novel enables a productive reading of the tensions between modernism and postmodernism in McCarthy's work.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank Gloria Cronin for inspiring me to begin this project and for pushing me to finish. I appreciate the comments and advice of Steve Walker. I am also grateful for Phil Snyder's willingness to "show me the ropes" of writing about McCarthy. I would also like to thank my wife for encouraging me along the way. My mom has also always been a loyal fan of everything that I do.

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It's very interesting to see an animal in the wild that can kill you graveyard dead [...] the only thing I have seen that fits that description was a grizzly bear in Alaska. And that's an odd feeling because there's no fence, and you know that after he gets tired of chasing marmots he's going to move in some other direction, which could be yours

- Cormac McCarthy

“There's no fence”: An Argument for an Intertextual Approach to Cormac McCarthy

As my adrenaline launched me five feet backwards, the four-foot western rattler retreated warily beneath the branches of juniper tree. My wife had to restrain me from taking a closer look. The instinct, one I would call spiritual, that motivated me to look at this snake is the same instinct that draws me to Cormac McCarthy's writing. Something about the snake, and I would argue something about the snake's connection to its environment, forced me to reevaluate my own life. The comfortable tourist who believed the natural world existed to be consumed by his camera had to acknowledge his vulnerability to a vast, indifferent, and violent natural world.

As the sky darkened, we followed the faint outline of the trail without the aid of natural nor artificial light. Every scurrying desert rat and every root protruding from the ground caused us to stop in our tracks. Rattlesnakes are nocturnal, and their ability to navigate the darkness transcended mine. Experiences such as this excursion through darkness and desert accompany my reading of McCarthy with resounding presence. Although McCarthy's fiction is replete with wild animals and wilder landscapes, I believe McCarthy's moral universe, an echo of his natural world, is the most compelling

part of his writing. His evil and violent characters have their own nocturnal prowess that enables them to navigate the dark moral universe of his fiction. Just as my encounter with the snake led me to reconsider my connection to the natural world, McCarthy's unflinching presentation of evil and moral degeneracy causes me to reevaluate my connection to my moral universe. McCarthy's treatment of morality demands my attention like a rattlesnake shaking its tale. The purpose of this study is to construct a paradigm, the literary equivalent of a fence, that will provide a productive and protected space from which I can understand what McCarthy has done to my simplistic and naive moral universe.

I have chosen intertextual analysis as my method for examining McCarthy's moral universe; and this introduction will outline why I have chosen this approach, the advantages of intertextuality, and I will discuss which critics and theorists have been important to my understanding of McCarthy's work and intertextual theory. Once I have provided a genealogy of my critical influences, I will designate the specific limitations of my critical approach.

An intertextual approach is exciting to me because I don't think McCarthy's impact on my moral universe was a single-handed accomplishment. McCarthy admits his debt to other authors, "The ugly fact is books are made out of books. The novel depends for its life on the novels that have been written" ("Venomous Fiction" 31). An intertextual approach permits the conversation McCarthy is having with other authors to become a boundary that can frame otherwise boundless questions. In her article, "An Intertextual Approach to Teaching Shakespeare," Hannah Scolnicov identifies two other advantages that come from intertextual analysis. First she says, "Intertextuality reverses

the traditional perception that a text can be said to be influenced only by its antecedents. The older text can now be filtered through a later text; the very idea of anachronism becomes anachronistic” (213). Since I read McCarthy before reading Faulkner, I was intrigued by how I was filtering Faulkner through McCarthy. Since most critics have filtered McCarthy through Faulkner, my approach to intertextual analysis will strategically position me to add a new dimension to McCarthy scholarship. Scolnicov also says, “Radical intertextuality also extends textual space across media boundaries, disregarding disciplinary compartmentalization” (213). Painting, film, and theory, three of the disciplines that I will be bringing into my discussion of McCarthy’s moral universe prove particularly illuminating because they should add interdisciplinary depth to my project.

I will focus on three of McCarthy’s novels: *Outer Dark*, *No Country for Old Men*, and *All the Pretty Horses*. I will first discuss how intertextuality informs the aesthetics and moral universe of *Outer Dark* and William Faulkner’s *Light in August*. I will then examine how similar connections exist between the aesthetics and moral universe of *Outer Dark* and *No Country for Old Men*. An intertextual comparison of *No Country for Old Men* and *Outer Dark* suggests a shift in McCarthy’s aesthetics that I will use to frame an analysis of the adaptation of *All the Pretty Horses* into film. These texts interest me because they provide productive terrain for intertextually exploring aesthetics and morality.

Every time a critic starts a conversation about an author it is like a fence-post is driven into an open range of intellectual thought created by the author. When other critics participate in the conversation, more posts are driven and connected by the barbed

wire of interlinked argument. An arguable amount of McCarthy scholarship can be considered intertextual analysis. However, I am indebted most to the ideas of four scholars for their contributions to my understanding.

Since they connect McCarthy's work to its modern antecedents, the following three sources are significant: Matthew Guinn's *After Southern Modernism*, Richard Gray's *Southern Aberrations: Writers of the American South and the Problems of Regionalism*, and Robert H. Brinkmeyer Jr.'s *Remapping Southern Literature: Contemporary Southern Writers and the West*. I am interested in these critics because they all discuss Faulkner's influence on McCarthy. More importantly, these critics have helped me understand the key threads of modernism and postmodernism in McCarthy's work. I feel that McCarthy's moral universe is inextricable from the shift of modernism to postmodernism, so the ideas of these three critics are important fence posts in my reading paradigm.

If works of literary criticism are like fence-posts, then I would imagine that my work on McCarthy would be closely tied to Dana Philips's article, "History and the Ugly Facts of *Blood Meridian*." Philips provides an excellent intertextual analysis of the connection between *Moby Dick* and *Blood Meridian*. The following passage from Philips demonstrates the intertextual logic that I believe connects McCarthy to his antecedents: "Because his 'philosophy of composition' is not the same as Melville's, McCarthy's novel realizes some of the unfulfilled potential of *Moby-Dick*" (24). Instead of assuming that Melville's writing determines McCarthy's, Philips is willing to admit that McCarthy's writing forces us to encounter Melville differently. In other words, Philips recognizes the first advantage of intertextuality identified by Scolnicov. I am interested

in this critical move by Philips because my research indicates that most intertextual analyses of McCarthy use the past to understand the present.¹ This historical privilege neglects many of the advantages gained from intertextual studies.

Just as authors can open new intellectual terrain with their work, theorists also open new terrain for the fencing project of literary criticism. In the past forty years, poststructuralists have pioneered the biggest breakthroughs for intertextual studies, and I am indebted to their ideas. However, I am also troubled that new historicists have built the most fences in the terrain opened by the poststructuralists. Because of this appropriation, several dimensions of poststructural intertextuality remain largely unexplored. This unexplored territory is exciting to me, because in their rush to wed deconstruction to the political agendas of Marxism, the New Historicists have ignored the issues of morality and aesthetics. Since deconstruction is the lifeblood of current theories of intertextuality and since deconstruction informs Cormac McCarthy's work, I will first provide a background of the connection between poststructuralism and intertextuality. I will then establish morality and aesthetics as the boundaries of my project.

McCarthy's admission that "books are made out of books" was made in 1992 when the idea of intertextuality was changing from an item of theoretical discussion to a theoretical practice for literary criticism. Roland Barthes and Julia Kristeva have provided the most direct definition of intertextuality for contemporary literary theory; a discussion of their insights provides a relevant foundation. In one of his important works on textuality, "The Theory of the Text," Barthes says:

¹ Vereen Bell, Georg Guillemin, and John Sepich all use texts from the past to understand present aspects of McCarthy's fiction.

[A]ny text is an intertext; other texts are present in it, at varying levels, in more or less recognizable forms: the texts of the previous and surrounding culture. Any text is a new tissue of past citations. Bits of codes, formulae, rhythmic models, fragments of social languages, etc. pass into the text and are redistributed within it. [...] Epistemologically, the concept of intertext is what brings to the theory of the text the volume of sociality. (39)

From this statement two insights can be identified that set apart poststructural intertextual studies from other methods of studying influence. First, for Barthes, signifiers are like caverns through which other signifiers pass. Barthes's notion of intertext derives from this deconstructive logic. In other words, a text is seen as a space through which other texts pass, and the text's meaning derives from this process of text passing through text. It is important to note that this intertextuality is a product of both authorial intent and chance, for the author brings other texts into the text automatically, subconsciously, and in McCarthy's case, deliberately. More importantly, Barthes sees the writing and reading of a text as an interrelated act of production. The text isn't finished until the reader intertextually incorporates a new set of texts into the original. I am interested in this aspect of intertextuality because by it readers are empowered to build their own fence or paradigm for understanding a text. Most readers do this anyway, but intertextuality's greatest strength comes from suggesting we admit and acknowledge our constructedness, and then make our constructedness productive. McCarthy's work is an interesting site for exploring intertextuality, because the intentionality of his intertextuality complicates the text/author/reader relationship.

The second insight that needs to be addressed from Barthes' statement is that a "volume of sociality" is brought to the text by means of intertextuality. Julia Kristeva's most valuable contributions to a definition of intertextuality relate to the intertextual presence of the social. In "Bypassing Intertextuality," H.-P. Mai writes a useful analysis of certain passages from Kristeva's essay, "The Bounded Text:"

The literary scholar's intertextual task would be to define 'the specificity of different textual arrangements by placing them within the general text (culture) of which they are a part and which is in turn, part of them.' The intertextual procedure would, 'by studying the text as intertextuality, consider it as such within (the text of) society and history.' Kristeva's notion of intertextuality here resembles very closely a sociological theory of literature. The important difference is that Kristeva no longer conceives of society/history as something *outside* the text, some objective entity over against the text, but partaking of the same textuality as literature. (40)

Kristeva sees society and history as texts that function in the same way as other texts. Intertextuality becomes the means by which society and history are filtered through texts. Kristeva's contribution to intertextual studies is important to me in two ways. This shift in perspective enables my own archive of experience to be an important part of a literary text. Interdisciplinary artifacts can also be incorporated into a literary text. Where intertextuality was previously a tool for writing literary history, after poststructuralism intertextuality is a tool for studying textual ontology. In light of Barthes' and Kristeva's ideas, the terrain of textual ontology consists of authorial influence, a reader's constructedness, and social/historical influence.

Hanna Scolnicov claims that Barthes' and Kristeva's ideas about intertextuality are the genesis of a field of study that has yet to move forward. According to Scolnicov, "These two theorists as well as their many interpreters and popularizers have provided a theoretical framework and a methodology for the discussion of literary intertextuality. There are still relatively few intertextual studies, however, or actual examples of how to use the theoretical framework as an interpretive strategy" (212). Scolnicov's comments were made in 1995, ten years before this study and roughly fifteen years after Barthes' and Kristeva's comments on intertextuality, and certainly intertextual studies have increased in popularity since her article was written. However, I still believe that fields of intertextual studies haven't been fenced. I have already indicated that my approach to analyze Cormac McCarthy's work intertextually will be limited to a discussion of aesthetics and morality that is informed by deconstruction. An analysis of how the New Historicists have approached poststructural intertextuality demonstrates why my approach's limitations are important.

Louis A. Montrose, Jean Howard, and Edward Pechter are three literary scholars who make connections between New Historicism and intertextuality. In her article, "New Historicism in Renaissance Studies," Jean Howard identifies several aspects of new historicism that seem to be echoing in the same cavern as Kristeva's and Barthes' insights regarding intertextuality. Howard writes:

I take, then, as starting points a new historical literary criticism assumes two things: (1) the notion that man is a construct, not an essence; (2) that the historical investigator is likewise a product of his history and never

able to recognize otherness in its pure form, but always in part through the framework of the present. (23)

Howard's two assumptions derive from the poststructuralist conclusion that signifiers can only be signified by referring to other signifiers. For a study of textuality, the next logical step in this line of thinking is to grant a text the same properties as a signifier. Therefore texts only generate meaning as they refer to other texts. Howard takes this line of thinking to the level of an individual when she says that "man is a construct, not an essence." For Howard a human is just a collection of archives, whose identity changes as new information is incorporated into a "framework of the present." According to this definition, one's identity isn't a fixed essence, but a production. Just as Barthes defined reading as productivity, Howard defines her brand of literary criticism as a production where a constructed investigator explores the various textual constructs that bear on another text. It is arguable that what Howard is defining as New Historicism is really just a translation of what Barthes and Kristeva described as intertextuality. If Howard's definition of New Historicism is a translation of intertextuality, what sets Howard's brand of New Historicism apart from intertextuality is its privilege of Marxist critique. The definition of identity as productivity certainly echoes Barthes and Kristeva; however, this definition is also relevant to Althusser's definition of ideology "as any one of those practices by which one imagines one's relations to the actual conditions of one's existence" (28). By identifying her definition of New Historicism with Marxism, Howard is able to make the following statement about intertextuality:

In fact, I would argue that a new historical criticism attempting to talk

about the ideological function of literature in a specific period can most usefully do so only by seeing a specific work relationally – that is, by seeing how its representations stand in regard to those of other specific works and discourses. A work can only be said to contest, subvert, recuperate, or reproduce dominant ideologies [...] if one can place the work – at least provisionally and strategically – in relation to others. And, as I have argued above, the most illuminating field of reference may not be just other literary works. (30)

In this passage it is apparent that Howard understands the importance of poststructural intertextuality. However, she appropriates the project of intertextuality into a framework that overprivileges Marxism without critically addressing her own constructedness. She assumes that the purpose of reading literature is to uncover the ideological function of literature, and intertextuality is a method by which a work “contest[s], subvert[s], recuperate[s], or reproduce[s] dominant ideologies.” Howard astutely recognizes that intertextuality is very much a process of creating strategic and provisional boundaries. However, she also demonstrates by creating an unexamined Marxist boundary for intertextuality that this process of creating strategic and provisional boundaries can lead to entrenchment. Indeed, the tendency of intertextual studies to become entrenched in reductive modes of analysis is one of the greatest obstacles of intertextual studies.

The reductive mode of analysis that is privileged by New Historicism is identified by Edward Pechter. As one of the most pointed critics of New Historicism, Pechter says of the New Historicists, “Their whole endeavor is to situate the literary text in social

history and thus to see it in a determined or secondary position” (295). It is arguable that if one insists that the purpose of reading literature is to uncover its ideological function, then this purpose leads to a traditional marxist reading strategy where social context is privileged over the literary text. This reading strategy suggests that despite an acknowledgment of a poststructural theoretical base, new historicism can’t resist working with enclosed texts that are determined by their context. The privilege of social context also ignores the other factors that are relevant to intertextual studies: authorial influence and the reader’s agency.

Where Edward Pechter identifies the problem New Historicists have in privileging social context, Louis Montrose suggests solutions to this problem, and his solutions provide relevant implications for intertextual studies. In his essay, “The Poetics and Politics of Culture,” Montrose suggests that determining the ideological function of literature is a problematic purpose for New Historicism. He says, “I am describing the text’s status as a discourse produced and appropriated within history and within a history of other productions and appropriations. In such a textual space, so many cultural codes converge and interact that ideological coherence and stability are scarcely possible” (22). If ideological coherence doesn’t exist in the space of the text, then determining the ideological function of a text appears to be a bankrupt purpose for textual analysis. Montrose provides the following guidelines:

Thus, the practice of a new historical criticism invites rhetorical strategies by which to foreground the constitutive acts of textuality that traditional modes of literary history efface or misrecognize. It also necessitates efforts to historicize the present as well as the past, and to historicize the

dialectic between them – those reciprocal pressures by which the past has shaped the present and the present reshaped the past. (24)

Montrose creates a space where authorial influence and reader agency can be reincorporated into intertextual studies. By recognizing that the present can also reshape the past, Montrose resists the tendency of New Historicism to privilege historical social context. The transportation of intertexts into a text by an author or reader are acts that take place in the present, and these acts reshape the past of the text being studied and all of the texts on the intertextual chain. The basic tenets of New Historicism don't provide an intertextual approach for examining this dynamic relationship between the present and the past.

It is clear to me that social context is an important factor in intertextual studies, but the terrain opened by the process of filtering literature through a social context has been adequately fenced. I believe that the fields of authorial intent and the reader's agency have few, if any, critical fencing projects. Since Cormac McCarthy is an author who intelligently creates complicated intertextual networks within his novels, it makes sense for me to focus on author-influenced intertextuality. Where New Historicists focus on social texts and history to fuel their project, I am going to use aesthetics as a way to focus on authorial intent. A focus on aesthetics provides a site where the author has a sustained and recognizable presence. I will also focus on the connection between aesthetics and morality, because it is the effect of McCarthy's moral universe on my own moral universe that is the most compelling aspect of his work to me. I also believe and will demonstrate that McCarthy's moral universe is intricately connected to his aesthetics.

The next chapter of this thesis will develop a reading paradigm for understanding the intertextual aesthetic relationship between Cormac McCarthy and William Faulkner. I will then use this paradigm to closely read the connections between *Outer Dark* and *Light in August*. The third chapter will apply the same paradigm to examine the intertextual relationships within McCarthy's canon, focusing on the connection between *Outer Dark* and *No Country for Old Men*. The fourth chapter will look at the field of film adaptation studies and examine the connection between *All the Pretty Horses* and its adapted film. These chapters will plant three small fenceposts in the vast terrain opened by an intertextual approach to McCarthy. My conclusion will discuss other horizons that are illuminated by my approach but have yet to be explored.

“How will ye trade boots”: The Intertextual Connection between Faulkner’s and
 McCarthy’s Aesthetic, Metaphysical, and Moral Universes

In reference to the image from *Absalom, Absalom!*, Michel Gresset compares intertextuality to a rock falling into a pool. He writes, “The intertextual impact can be said to ripple across the stagnant waters of our literary memories almost without end” (6). Where Gresset compares intertextuality to a rock falling in a pool, this image can also act as a metaphor for the artistic and critical enterprises of early-twentieth century modernism. At the center of the modernist project is an ontological system that has a center or transcendental signified whose presence ripples through the whole movement. This centered ontological system enabled various reading paradigms that rely on a transcendental signified to perform their critical work. New Criticism, psychoanalysis, Marxism, and historicism are among the many critical paradigms that arose from early-twentieth century modernism. The types of intertextual studies conducted in *Intertextuality in Faulkner*, the collection where Gresset’s study is found, also reflect the metaphor of a rock causing ripples. These are studies that look at an intertextual antecedent, or center, to determine the meaning of a later text. Therefore, *Intertextuality in Faulkner*, is just another example of modernism devising one more way to talk about itself according to its terms.

In his novel, *Outer Dark*, McCarthy provides another metaphor for thinking about intertextuality. This metaphor comes from an image of Rinthy Holme crossing a bridge. As she crossed, “She nudged pebbles through the cracks and watched them diminish with slow turnings into sudden printed rings upon the river that sucked away like smoke” (53-

54). The image of ripples being sucked away can be seen as a metaphor for the change that occurs between modernism and postmodernism: the centered ontological system gives way to a more dynamic, decentered system. An examination of the philosophical implications of McCarthy's metaphor creates new possibilities for intertextual studies. The result is a new hermeneutic process, or reading paradigm, that enables an important critique of the intertextual conversation between *Outer Dark* and *Light in August*. Hopefully, this critique will shift the horizons of intertextual studies and provide a productive context for examining the shift from modern to postmodern aesthetics in American fiction.

In order to analyze the intertextual conversation between *Outer Dark* and *Light in August*, intertextuality needs a viable theoretical ground to provide a method for reading. Aesthetics is a field that resists entrenchment. McCarthy's novels occupy a liminal space between modern and the postmodern aesthetics. His first novel, *The Orchard Keeper*, maintains many vestiges of the modern Southern tradition of which Faulkner was a key participant. Beginning with *Outer Dark* and continuing through the border trilogy, McCarthy's work becomes increasingly critical of the ontological project espoused by modernism (Guinn 94). McCarthy's critique of Modernism, and Faulkner in particular, is violent and iconoclastic and has therefore merited the disdain of formalist and New Critical scholars of Southern literature.² However, the disdain that these critics have for a writer like McCarthy is a symptom of the very reason why they should be reading him. Their disdain for McCarthy has its source in their modernist beliefs in a teleological (working towards some transcendent, Utopian, or messianic purpose), linear (progressing

² Walter Sullivan's lecture, "A Requiem for the Renaissance," treats McCarthy's critique of modernism with hostility.

chronologically from past to present), and positivist (believing that one can learn from the experience of precedent) narrative of literary history. A passage from Theodor Adorno's *Draft Introduction* indicates why these critics should be more open to a writer like McCarthy despite the threat he poses:

For art and artworks are exclusively what they are able to become. In that no artwork is capable of resolving its immanent tension fully, and in that history ultimately attacks even the idea of such resolution, aesthetic theory cannot rest content with the interpretation of given artworks and their concept [...] The principle of method here is that light should be cast on all art from the vantage point of the most recent artworks, rather than the reverse. (359)

In light of this passage from Adorno and McCarthy's assault on the humanist inclinations of the old guard of Southern literati, a theory of intertextuality is needed that isn't dependent on a teleological, linear, positivist narrative of literary history. In other words intertextuality shouldn't merely be seen from the modernist paradigm of using the past to understand a determined present. Based on this theoretical premise, a methodology that works transhistorically is needed. Aesthetics is a field that allows for a critique that isn't historically entrenched. Once McCarthy's intertextual conversation with Faulkner is connected with his postmodern vision, intertextuality becomes a way to see not how Faulkner influenced McCarthy's aesthetics but how McCarthy uses this influence to create a new paradigm for reading Faulkner's aesthetics.

Where the passage from Adorno outlines the basic need for an aesthetic model of intertextual studies, a productive theoretical grounding for McCarthy's intertextual

strategy surfaces after an examination of the intertextual critical reception of Van Gogh's, *A Pair of Boots*. As the critical reception to this painting ripples into a conversation from Martin Heidegger to Meyer Schapiro and Jacques Derrida to Frederic Jameson a useful context is created for looking at the presence of an old pair of boots in *Light in August* and *Outer Dark*. The aesthetic theories of Heidegger and Schapiro work to contextualize Faulkner's brand of modernism. Derrida and Jameson provide the postmodern context for McCarthy's critical engagement with Faulkner and modernism.

Heidegger uses *A Pair of Boots* to elaborate the thesis of his seminal work in aesthetics, "The Origin of the Work of Art." His critique of the painting recalls the image of Faulkner's rock falling into water. He sees an inherent depth to the painting.

According to Heidegger, in the shoes "there vibrates the silent call of the earth, its quiet gift of ripening corn and its enigmatic self-refusal in the fallow desolation of the wintry field" (87). The ontological truth of what the shoes *are* is unconcealed as they evoke their lived context. In other words, the ripples on the water's surface unconceal a depth at the bottom of which lies the fallen rock. It is on this process of determination/cause and effect that Faulkner's modernist aesthetic hinges. His characters, narratives, mythopoetic bricolage, microcosmic regionalism, and symbols all rely on the validity of the ontological model described by Heidegger.

Faulkner also relies on the validity of Meyer Schapiro's reading of the painting, even though Schapiro critiques Heidegger's meditation. Schapiro still looks at the shoes and finds meaning through attributing them to an owner. His argument is that Heidegger attributes them to the wrong person ("Restitutions" 282). Schapiro discovered convincing evidence to indicate that the shoes were worn by a city dweller instead of a

peasant. According to Schapiro's critique, the reliability of Heidegger's ontological model is dependent on historical accuracy. Heidegger was attributing ripples to the wrong rock. It is in this context of casting stones that we can attribute Faulkner's pastoral regard for history.

In Derrida's reading of the painting, he recognizes that a key problem presented by Heidegger and Schapiro lies in their process of attribution. Derrida claims, "That the desire for attribution is a desire for appropriation [...] To say: this is due to X, comes down to saying: it is due to me" ("Restitutions" 283). Derrida also sees the boots as a ghost story (279). As soon as we start naming the ghosts and attributing rocks to ripples we establish a center or transcendental signified. Through this process of centering the impulse to nostalgize history or fetishize the other is encouraged. Questioning this privilege of the center is at the heart of deconstruction. Regarding the boots Derrida says, "There is persecution in this narrative, in this story of shoes to be identified, appropriated, and you know how many bodies, names, and anonymities, nameable and unnameable, this tale is made up of" (294). This deconstructive context enables us to read the passage in *Outer Dark* where the pebble and the ripple are sucked away by a new metaphor: the river, flux, the trace, or freeplay. Derrida's reading of the painting enables a breakdown of meaning. He doesn't allow the lived context/history to become the center for determining meaning. This denial of the center recalls his famous passages in *Structure, Sign, and Play* where he says, "The surrogate does not substitute itself for anything which has somehow pre-existed it" (879). As a surrogate to their lived context, the boots can never really mean anything outside of a fluctuating system of differences.

Frederic Jameson also looks at *A Pair of Boots* and compares them to Andy Warhol's painting, *Diamond Dust Shoes* in order to add another postmodern dimension to intertextuality. From this comparison Jameson concludes that one of the main differences between high-modernism and postmodernism is "the emergence of a new kind of flatness or depthlessness, a new kind of superficiality in the most literal sense" (9). Van Gogh's painting allows Heidegger, Schapiro, Derrida, and Jameson to arrive at some degree of hermeneutic closure, even if this closure is more of an act of opening for Derrida. According to Jameson, "There is therefore in Warhol no way to complete the hermeneutic gesture and restore to these oddities that whole larger lived context of the dance hall or the ball, the world of jetset fashion or glamour magazines" (8-9). From this statement, Jameson and Derrida make a similar move. They both deny exchange between the historical/ lived experience context of the signified and the signifier as a means of achieving signification. The depth implied by a rock causing ripples is no longer there. "Depth is replaced by surface, or by multiple surfaces (what is often called intertextuality is in that sense no longer a matter of depth)" (12). In other words, ripples are caused by other ripples, and the rock is a ghost. Despite the fact that a center no longer provides meaning for a signifier, Jameson proposes that artificial boundaries can be traced onto the surface of signifier. The purpose for constructing these boundaries isn't to provide access to ontological truth. These boundaries become a means by which aesthetics can act as a site of critical thinking. Intertextuality becomes an aesthetic critical act for creating these types boundaries.

Ultimately, the work of Derrida and Jameson creates a new method for reading intertextuality. In this method, history no longer exists, so it no longer provides a

meaning endowment for the meaninglessness of materiality. Jameson reiterates this death of history when he says, “We are now, in other words, in ‘intertextuality’ as a deliberate, built in feature of the aesthetic effect and as the operator of a new connotation of ‘pastness’ and pseudohistorical depth, in which the history of aesthetic styles displaces ‘real’ history” (20).

Critics who have studied the connection between *Outer Dark* and *Light in August* tend to ignore this pseudohistorical depth identified by Jameson. Many of the studies that have made intertextual connections between *Outer Dark* and *Light in August* make some general observations about the similarities and move on to a close reading of McCarthy’s text without acknowledging the conversation with Faulkner. David Holloway admits that “One of the problems that McCarthy criticism has traditionally had to engage is a suspicion that the elegant Gothicism of these novels is too close to Faulkner for serious consideration in its own right” (Holloway 81). Holloway identifies the source of this neglect as a reluctance to think historically. It is probably also true that Faulkner’s style is playing the same role in McCarthy’s fiction as Southern history plays in Faulkner’s fiction. Other than noting a casual connection between Rinthy and Lena or the novels’ two titles, the intertextual conversation between the two novels remains largely uncharted. In light of the new critical paradigm that I have established for studying intertextuality, it is precisely because of the closeness of McCarthy’s and Faulkner’s styles that this connection should be examined in more detail. Although this move creates historicizing boundaries, they are productive boundaries for enabling critique. A closer examination of the connection between McCarthy and Faulkner reveals that

despite their closeness in style the two authors are separated by a dramatic difference in their metaphysical foundations.

Derrida and Jameson establish productive metaphysical boundaries for looking at intertextuality in *Outer Dark*. An analysis of the movement throughout the novel of the boots that Culla Holme steals from the squire is an effective intertextual space to examine the metaphysical boundaries of McCarthy's novel. It is clear from the conversation about the boots in Van Gogh's painting that attributing them, or not attributing them, to an owner is the primary way that the boots are given meaning from their historical context. The first owner of the boots in *Outer Dark* is the squire who hires Culla to chop wood. A Heideggerian reading of the attribution of the boots to the squire would allow the lived experience of the squire to signify the boots. As the boots assume the aura of the squire's lived experience, they symbolize a provisional boundary between the squire and Culla. Culla first notices the boots when he asks the squire for a saw to cut the wood instead of an axe. The class division that the boots signify is clear from this passage:

The squire watched him as if awaiting some further explanation.

Holme looked down at his feet. Across the doorsill in the rich aura of cookery the squire's figure reared silently out of a pair of new veal boots.

Just a little old bucksaw or somethin, Holme said.

They ain't no saw, the squire said. It's broke.

Well.

I thought you hired out as a axe-hand. (44-45)

It is evident from this passage that there is a distinction between Culla and the squire. When Culla looks at his feet in shame from the question he asked, he sees the

boots that represent the difference between the two characters. This distinction is exaggerated beyond class difference when the boots are associated with the morality of the squire's world. After asking Culla if he is married, the squire defines the boundaries of his moral universe. "It's a sacred thing, a family. A sacred obligation. Afore God. The squire had been looking away and now he turned to Holme again. It ain't no crime to be poor, he said. That's right. But shiftlessness is a sin, I would judge" (47).

Although the boots aren't mentioned in this context, they are aesthetically related to the lived experience of the squire. They therefore demarcate a moral boundary and a class distinction between the squire and Culla, for Culla certainly doesn't share the squire's belief in the sanctity of the family.³ This interpretation of the boots would satisfy Heidegger and Schapiro in that the boots' meaning comes from attribution to a larger context, and the boots seem to be attributed to the right context. However, the stability of this signification is decentered and the initial boundaries that the boots create are provisional indeed. While the squire is preaching his morality to Culla, the triune of marauders are stealing the gardening tools from his barn that they will eventually use to kill him (47). The squire wakes up the next morning to find Culla has stolen away, and he immediately asks his black servant, "Where's them boots" (48). While hunting for his boots, the squire is brutally murdered by the triune.

While the violence in this scene is literal, and the squire seems motivated by a sense of justice more than anything; there is an underlying sense of metaphysical

³ It is clear from his incestuous relationship with his sister and from his abandonment of his child that Culla doesn't share the squire's moral beliefs. However, Culla does feel guilty for both sins. He asks to be cured in his dream at the beginning of the novel (5). In the scene where he abandons his child there is evidence that he is psychologically and morally traumatized by the decision (17-18).

violence that recalls Derrida's and Jameson's critique of Heidegger and Schapiro. Since the boots are so suddenly removed from the lived context that gives them meaning, the Heideggerian reading is dislodged. The center, the squire's being, vanishes like the ripples in the river. This vanishing of the boots' center sets them up as a site for one of the primary deconstructions of the novel. Since, Jameson's theory depends on deconstruction, it isn't until after the boots lose their signifying center that his influence can be identified. Where an application of Derrida's critique denies any depth to the boots in their context of the squire's life, Jameson's critique forces us to look at the surface. The surface in this case is the artificial boundary that boots create in regard to morality and class between Culla and the squire. Throughout the rest of the novel these boots and others continue the work of serving as access sites to the metaphysical foundations of the novel.

The next part of Culla's narrative where the boots play a prominent role is when he meets the unnamed traveler on his way to Cheatham. It isn't very long after the two meet that the unnamed traveler notices Culla's boots and desires to trade:

How will ye trade boots? he said.

Holme recoiled. He looked at the boots and he looked at the boots the man wore. I don't believe we could work up no trade hardly, he said. I just come by these.

They look to be sout'ns, the man said. What did ye have to give for em?

I don't know. I traded work for em.

I guess a man'd have to put in a few days to come by such boots as them wouldn't he? (79)

This is the passage that makes it clear that Culla is the one who stole the boots from the squire. It is clear from a previous passage that Culla already had shoes, so his motives for stealing the squire's boots are somewhat ambiguous (27). The interchange between Culla and the nameless traveler provides a clue for the semantic role that the boots play for Culla. As with the squire, the boots represent a class demarcation between Culla and the traveler. Obviously, the traveler admires Culla's boots. This admiration is justified after the traveler's boots are described. "The leather was dried and broken and the backseam of one was split and mended with bailing wire at the top. When he stepped the gash opened and closed rhythmically and his calf winked from the rent in time to the dull thump of the bottle against his back" (80). There is a Heideggerian truthfulness to the connection between this man and his boots. The image of boot blending with flesh recalls René Magritte's painting, "Le modèle Rouge," where boot blends to foot. The boundary between this man and his boots is blurred. This blurriness creates a Heideggerian coherence that emphasizes incoherence of the squire's boots on Culla. This emphasis reveals the Heideggerian lie that a pair of boots can refer to one lived context to give them meaning. The possibility of this lie validates Schapiro's critique of Heidegger. Nevertheless, despite the fact that Culla doesn't match his boots, his lived context becomes the new center that determines the meaning of the boots.

Where the boots were associated with the squire's moral universe, on the feet of Culla the boots become associated with his moral degeneracy. It is already evident that they create a false boundary of class between Culla and the traveler. The absurdity of

this boundary is evidenced by the lie that Culla “traded work for em.” Where the class boundary is present, McCarthy is more concerned with the ambiguity of moral boundaries of which the class deception is just an example. As the boots are signified by Culla’s lived experience and history, they become metonymic of his moral degeneracy. It is important to note that this degeneracy isn’t a result of Culla’s sins, but rather his attempt to enclose them in a whited sepulcher. He lies about stealing the boots. He lies to Rinthy about the death of their child (25). When she literally uncovers this lie, Culla’s reaction provides valuable insight to his moral universe:

But he was the one: kneeling in the dark earth with his writhen face
 howling at her, saying Now you done it. Now you really went and done it.
 And her own face still bland and impervious in such wonder he mistook
 for accusation, silent and inarguable female invective, until he rose and
 fled, bearing his clenched hands above him threatful, supplicant, to the
 mute and windy heavens. (33)

In this passage Culla’s rage is directed at the mute and windy heavens, which reveals the paradox of his moral universe. The transcendental center of this universe is absent. However, despite this lack, Culla still feels accountability. This sense of accountability is haunted by the dream he has at the beginning of the novel, where his desire to be cured causes the sun to be eclipsed and reveals the sham of moral healing (5). Culla’s hypocrisy isn’t a result of his failure to adhere to a moral code as much as it is a desperate attempt of avoiding accountability in a world where salvation has failed. Perhaps this blurring of the boundary between salvation and hypocrisy is illustrated best by the passage where “[Culla] sat on a stone by a road and with a dead stick drew

outlandish symbols in the dust” (27). The center that determines the moral bearings of this image in the Bible vanishes as McCarthy makes an absurd intertextual comparison between Culla and Christ. Indeed it would have been more coherent to connect Culla to the woman taken in adultery rather than Christ. However, this connection becomes more clear as the center to the novel’s moral universe is deconstructed as boots are transferred from one owner to another.

What seems like a simple change of ownership with the pair of boots becomes symbolic of the postmodern logic that pervades this novel. As the boots switch owners, the attribution of meaning that comes from connecting the boots with their lived context becomes decentered. If a painted picture of these boots were subject to our gaze, we wouldn’t know how to assign meaning to them. Their attribution to the squire creates access to a lived context that allows for a coherence that could be called meaning. There is a center in the squire’s world acknowledged in his simple statement, “The Bible reckons” (47). The attribution of the boots to Culla connects them to a world where what seem to be the stable signifiers in the Bible are conflated with his lived context that is defined by a pervasive sense of moral ambiguity. The system of differences that is created by these two attributions creates the context for what Derrida refers to as a ghost story. The tension created by the opposing moral universe’s of the squire and Culla creates a context where the ultimate ghost in this story is god, or the center, or the transcendental signified. As the boots lose their center, they become the metaphor or site of access for understanding the chaotic moral universe that is the real subject of this novel. In the terms of Jameson, they become the site where strategic boundaries can be established to enable the possibility of critical thinking that is disabled by the loss of a

center. They become one of the vanishing ripples in the river that give a small trace for understanding the chaos of constant flux.

The closing scene of the chapter where the nameless traveler asks Culla to trade boots validates the deconstructive reading of the meaning of the boots as they switch owners. The chapter ends with the town of Cheatham in an uproar over someone digging up and stealing from the graves at the church. As the defiled coffin is brought into town its contents are described:

The box was lined with cheap quilted satin, the figure within wore a white shirt and a necktie but no coat or trousers [...] Across the desiccated chest lay a black arm, and when Holme stood on his toes he could see that the old man shared his resting place with a negro sexton whose head had been cut half off and who clasped him in an embrace of Lazarous depravity. (88)

Later passages in the novel indicate that it was the group of three marauders that robbed the grave. The bearded leader wears the dead man's clothes, and in the clothes he is mistaken for a minister (130). This image contains pertinent similarities to Culla's boot swapping. There is the obvious connection of the attribution of the suit to the minister, which in Heideggerian terms would be signified by his lived context of an ecclesiastical authority. The suit is attributed to a figure whose lived context is typically associated with a centered moral universe. However, this attribution is complicated by the fact that this lived context is characterized by homosexual miscegenation. Once again, clothes function as a means to cloak moral degeneracy, and this is only revealed as they switch owners. Once again, a biblical referent is destabilized by its placement within a context of moral depravity. Since this depravity is carried into the space of the

grave, McCarthy seems to be closing off any possibilities of a salvation narrative.

Bringing the group of marauders into the deconstructive dynamic through this scene, sets up the next instance in the novel where the boots play an integral part as a site of access to the deeper metaphysical underpinnings of the novel.

The scene where the group of marauders saves Culla from the river is the final scene where the boots play a central role. In this scene the leader of the group demands that Culla give him his boots after several exchanges of admiration from the leader. After Culla gives up the boots the other two members of the group change their boots in hierarchical fashion, and Culla is given the boots of the silent one who carries a rifle. Culla's new boots "were mismatched, cracked, shapeless, burntlooking and crudely mended everywhere with bits of wire and string [...] Holme looked at the boots again, then took one up slowly and pulled it onto his foot. A sour reek welled out of the top" (180). If the previous shift in the boots' owners caused a crisis in Heidegger's model of ontology that furthermore represents the breakdown of a centered moral universe in *Outer Dark*, this scene solidifies this philosophical movement in the novel.

This scene is complicated by the role that the triune plays in the novel. In William C. Spencer's article, "Cormac McCarthy's Unholy Trinity: Biblical Parody in *Outer Dark*," he discusses how the triune in the novel is a parody of the Holy Trinity. In Spencer's article the bearded leader who gets Culla's boots is a parody of the Father or God. According to Derrida one of the names related to the center is God. God is a name related to the center because he is a source of constant presence ("Structure" 879). As the boots are taken by the bearded leader of the triune, they become surrogate to a moral universe that has a center validated by a constant presence: the triune and their

metonymic connection to evil. Where the attribution of the boots to the squire and to Culla created a deconstructive context that caused an ontological breakdown of the boots' meaning, the attribution of the boots to the leader of the triune corrects this breakdown. However, this isn't a movement to revalidate Heidegger and modern aesthetics. The attribution of the boots to the leader of the triune creates a resolution to the incoherence caused by the attribution of the boots to Culla. This coherence could be seen as a result of the confirmation of a center that wasn't present in Culla's moral universe. However, the association of this center with the evil and chaos personified by the triune, makes this a dark confirmation indeed. Where McCarthy uses the first two cases of attribution to deconstruct the possibility of a transcendental center, the final case of attribution aligns the idea of a center with evil and chaos. In this sense, McCarthy is using the tools of postmodernism and modernism to inform his postmodern project of revealing the persecution and violence inherent in the process of attribution. Ultimately, the object of McCarthy's metaphysical assault isn't morality, or a transcendental center, or god, but how a blasphemous process of attribution affects these concepts.

Where a documentation of the boots journey through the moral universe of the novel is an important site to document the critique of attribution, the commentary on naming that accompanies the boots on their journey provides the clearest indication of the violence of the process of attribution. It is relevant that the reader is never informed of the squire's name. The traveler that asks to trade boots is also unnamed. In the conversation that Culla has with the leader of the triune before giving up his boots there is a discussion of naming. In reference to himself and the one who carries a rifle and after refusing to give his name to Culla the leader of the group says, "Some things is best

not named” (*OD* 175). In the scene where the leader kills Culla’s son the leader expounds his philosophy of naming to Culla. Before the conversation, “the bearded one was tunneling gouts of mud from the welt of his boot with a stick” (232). In reference to Culla’s child, the leader begins the following conversation:

What’s his name? the man said.

I don’t know.

He ain’t got nary’n

No. I don’t reckon. I don’t know.

They say people in hell ain’t got names. But they had to be called somethin to get sent there. Didn’t they.

That tinker might of named him.

It wasn’t his to name. Besides names dies with the namers. A dead man’s dog ain’t got a name. He reached and drew from his boot a slender knife. (136)

The leader identifies a name as a prerequisite of getting sent to hell. Notions of heaven and hell depend on a moral universe that has a clear transcendental center. It is naming or attribution that allows this center to exist. It is Culla’s final boot exchange that allows his moral universe to center the triune, and so the boots become an extension of a moral universe centered by violence, evil, death, and destruction. They also become the symbol by which Culla aligns himself with the triune. Consequently the leader murders the child with a knife that is kept in his boot.

This critique of attribution adequately demonstrates the implications of Derrida on McCarthy’s postmodern context. It is also evident that the boots are a site where multiple

boundaries are created to encourage critical thinking. These boundaries indicate morality as one of the primary subjects for critical thinking. The dismal moral landscape of *Outer Dark* doesn't seem to suggest a moral model worthy of emulation. It is also more complicated than just a nihilistic rendering of the moral failures of humanity. Through the deconstruction and parody enabled by the boots, McCarthy is exploring the violence caused by a centered moral universe. Where moral depravity is the result of this deconstruction and parody of a centered moral universe, moral depravity isn't McCarthy's solution. It would be fair to say that McCarthy doesn't offer solutions to the complex problems that his work addresses. Where McCarthy's concern with morality in this novel does lead to a possible critical engagement with morality, the intertextual presence of Faulkner's *Light in August* suggests that this critical attitude towards morality is directed more at modernism than at morality itself.

A closer look at Faulkner demonstrates how a critique of morality is really a path by which McCarthy critiques modernism. An application of the theoretical implications of Heidegger's, Schapiro's, Derrida's, and Jameson's intertextual conversation about Van Gogh's boots to the transient pair of boots in *Outer Dark*, reveals a critique of centered metaphysics. This critique of the center leads to a critique of a centered moral universe. Another pair of boots in *Light in August* act as site of access to the moral universe of Faulkner's novel. An application of the same theoretical framework indicates that the moral universe connected to these boots operates under a different metaphysical logic. An analysis of these boots and their metaphysically determined moral universe suggests that the most important Faulknerian intertextual referent in McCarthy's work isn't Faulkner's characters, symbols, or style, but rather it is Faulkner's cosmos. McCarthy

transports Faulkner's metaphysical foundations and their determinant moral universe into his corpus and subjects them to critique. In this sense, Rinthy Holme isn't just a character study of Lena Grove. If a comparison of these two characters or of Faulkner's and McCarthy's styles doesn't provide access to the metaphysical shift occurring between these two authors, then such an analysis isn't really doing justice to the artistic vision of either author.

The boots in Faulkner's novel don't show up as frequently as the boots in *Outer Dark*. The frequency of the boots' presence in McCarthy's novel is necessary to validate the deconstructive movement. Since the boots don't show up as frequently in *Light in August* it is more productive to begin with an analysis of attribution in *Light in August*. An analysis of attribution in *Light in August* will eventually culminate into a discussion of how the attribution of the boots is connected to Faulkner's artistic vision. Once the boots are placed in this context, it is possible to analyze why they become important intertextual referents for McCarthy.

One of the best sites to examine how attribution functions in *Light in August* is in the discourse of naming that runs throughout the novel. This discourse becomes the most relevant as it bears on Joe Christmas and his name. After Christmas is hired at the mill, the workers discuss his name:

“His name is Christmas,” [the foreman] said.

“His name is what?” one said.

“Christmas.”

“Is he a foreigner?”

“Did you ever hear of a white man named Christmas?” the

foreman said.

“I never heard of nobody a-tall named it,” the other said.

And that was the first time Byron remembered that he had ever thought how a man’s name, which is supposed to be just the sound for who he is, can be somehow an augur of what he will do, if other men can only read the meaning in time [...] But as soon as they heard [his name] it was as though there was something in the sound of it that was trying to tell them what to expect; that he carried with him his own inescapable warning, like a flower its scent or a rattlesnake its rattle (*LIA* 33).

What is remarkable in this passage is Byron’s belief that a man’s name is so closely related to the man. This passage recalls Heidegger. Where Heidegger looks at the boots and sees the life of the peasant, Byron hears the name of Joe Christmas and connects the sound to the man’s lived context. Where Schapiro is interested in citing the correct historical lived context, Byron believes that the man’s entire identity, past, present, and future, is determined by his name. For Faulkner, Heidegger’s boots don’t just tell who wore them, but they tell who will wear them. The boots are associated by a constant/immanent source of presence of which any act of historical location would be reductive. The lived experience of Joe Christmas is the immanent center that enables his name to prophetically signify him.

Where it is clear that Faulkner relies on Heideggerian ontology to connect Christmas to his name, the connection between the name and its ambiguous referent is related to the moral universe of the novel. The moral universe of the novel is one that is threatened by chaos, but by virtue of its transcendental center, it is able to withstand and

order the chaos. Although this center is evident in the development of all of the characters, Christmas' relationship to his name is a good place to examine how Faulkner's use of attribution upholds a centered moral universe. While McEachern is adopting Christmas, he says of the child, "From now on his name will be McEachern [...] He will eat my bread and observe my religion" (145). The assumption allowed by this passage is that by naming the boy McEachern, attribution becomes a way of connecting a person to something like religion. However, Christmas' response to McEachern's gesture of attribution provides insight into how attribution functions in this novel. "[Joe] didn't even bother to say to himself *My name aint McEachern. My name is Christmas* There was no need to bother about that yet" (145). In a novel where several of the characters change their names, Joe's response to his new name is revealing. According to this response we find that a name cannot escape from its transcendental center. Where the name-changing could be a deconstructive tool for denying a center, much like the boot switching in *Outer Dark*, Faulkner only includes name-changing to demonstrate that the center can't be ignored nor denied. No matter how far they spread, the ripples are always going to be associated with the rock in Faulkner's novel.

The novel makes it quite clear that Joe Christmas is inseparable from his name, or that his name is inseparable from his lived context. When Doc Hines recounts the conversation he had with God we find out how much Joe Christmas' name really is associated with a center. According to Hines, God said, "Do you think it was just chanceso that the Madam should have been away that night and give them young sluts the chance and call to name him Christmas in sacrilege of My son?" (383). In this passage we find that Christmas' name was divinely sanctioned. As such, the name

becomes associated with the divine entity that is the center of Faulkner's moral universe. It isn't clear from the novel that Faulkner is upholding the idea of traditional Christian God, since Doc Hines, who lacks reputability, makes the connection between Christ and Joe Christmas. However, it is clear that since Christmas' name was divinely sanctioned and he can't escape this name, that there is a constant source of presence that indicates a center to a moral universe.

This example of a Heideggerian attribution between Christmas and his name and between a signifier and its center marks a profound difference between the metaphysical worlds of McCarthy and Faulkner. In McCarthy's novel, a signifier, like the pair of boots, is transported into various lived contexts. Consequently, there is no fixed center to give them meaning. The boots mean whatever their context indicates. When they are finally associated with a center, that center is chaos and violence. If there is a teleological narrative to these boots it is that they function as a site of immanent meaninglessness. The boots in *Light in August* follow a different narrative. These boots enter the scene when the sheriff and his posse are hunting Christmas and they encounter a negro woman. "She told them about the white man on the road about daylight and how he had swapped shoes with her, taking in exchange a pair of her husband's brogans which she was wearing at the time" (329). Initially, trading boots looks like a strategy for Christmas to cloak his identity and lead his pursuers astray. However, subsequent passages indicate that the boots actually connect him to an identity from which he had been running for thirty years:

Looking down at the harsh, crude, clumsy shapelessness of them, he said
'Hah' through his teeth. It seemed to him that he could see himself being

hunted by white men at last into the black abyss which had been waiting, trying, for thirty years to drown him and into which now and at last he had actually entered. (331)

He thinks quietly, sitting on the seat, with planted on the dashboard before him the shoes, the black shoes smelling of negro: that mark on his ankles the gauge definite and ineradicable of the black tide creeping up his legs, moving from his feet upward as death moves. (339)

From these two passages, the boots mediate the racial ambiguity of Christmas' characters. They connect Christmas to a racial center from which he had previously been alienated. Just like he couldn't escape from his name, he couldn't escape from the racial lived context to which the boots provide access. Where McCarthy's boots call into question the idea of a center, Faulkner's boots are signifiers that connect with their appropriate lived context or transcendental center. After Joe connects with his alienated racial identity, there is moral resolution and he turns himself in. When he went to Mottstown in hopes of getting caught, "He went into a white barbershop like a white man, and because he looked like a white man they never suspected him. Even when the bootblack saw how he had on a pair of second hand brogans that were too big for him, they never suspected" (349). Where the boots should have suggested incoherence in his identity, Faulkner makes it clear that the boots matched the lived context of their wearer. This movement of signifiers to their appropriate context is followed throughout the novel. Lena returns to the cabin of Lucas Burch. Lucas Burch returns to his bastard son. The virgin Byron runs away with a woman. Hightower intercedes for Christmas. Percy

Grimm castrates the nigger who violated the white woman. *Light in August* is ultimately a novel about restitution of the center through attribution. It is a novel about how through the dark cloud of moral depravity a transcendental center can be found.

After intertextually filtering Faulkner's moral universe through McCarthy's, it is clear that despite the similarities style these writers work from a completely different metaphysical paradigm. Ultimately, this reading strategy demonstrates that McCarthy's privilege of a decentered aesthetics places his artistic project at odds with high modernism. When modernism is filtered through McCarthy's decentered aesthetics, the centered aesthetics of modernism ripple from an increasingly disturbed center. As a result, we are forced to rethink a deconstructed modernism from terrain enclosed by McCarthy's postmodern boundaries.

Die with Your Boots on and Kill with Your Boots Off: An Intertextual examination of Annihilators, Moral Codes, and Boots in *Outer Dark* and *No Country for Old Men*

In his analysis of the intertextual connection between *Outer Dark* and *Light in August*, Georg Guillemin says:

The narrative intention of *Outer Dark* must be to dismember Southern pastoralism as such, and this out of a melancholia so profound that it constructs a sinister parable on the demise of a myth out of the very iconography of the myth itself [...] This argument is elucidated by instances of direct intertextuality of *Outer Dark* with antecedent Southern fiction, specifically with *Light in August*, because these suggest McCarthy's continuation of an older pastoralism for the purpose of destroying it. (68)

Guillemin's response to the connection between McCarthy and Faulkner is a sophisticated look at one of the ways these authors are connected: the presence/anti-presence of Southern pastoralism in their work. However, Guillemin's assumption that McCarthy's purpose for this intertextuality is destruction can arguably be considered misguided. In light of my paradigm for reading intertextuality, it seems more appropriate to say that McCarthy's intertextual conversation with Faulkner is deconstructive rather than destructive. It would be pretentious to assume to know McCarthy's intentions for destroying an older Southern pastoralism; however, it would be reasonable to identify what is gained from such a move. It is for this reason that I claim that McCarthy's intertextual relationship with Faulkner is deconstructive. Deconstruction does imply

destruction, but it also implies an assumed and immanent reconstruction of everything that it destroys. Reconstruction in this context would mean that McCarthy's violence towards Faulkner's brand of pastoralism enables a reader to approach Faulkner with a different reading paradigm. The new paradigm is the product of reconstruction. Nevertheless, identifying McCarthy's deconstruction of his pretexts as inherently productive is a claim that has its weaknesses.

The nihilist branch of McCarthy's critics argue that the destruction in McCarthy's novels has no telos.⁴ It follows that this lack of a telos is the point of the destruction, and the nihilist's claim it does fall in line with McCarthy's aesthetics to claim that he is destroying Faulkner's achievement for the pure sake of destruction. However, based on McCarthy's comments in his first interview with Richard Woodward about his respect for Faulkner, it seems more likely that McCarthy would be more likely to destroy the achievement of a writer like Henry James for the pure sake of destruction. In light of McCarthy's professed preferences for what makes good writing, it seems that his intertextual conversations with his precedents would be motivated by an interest in promoting growth, survival, and productivity. This motivation is confirmed if McCarthy's intertextual conversation with himself is subjected to analysis. As of yet there have been few sustained efforts to document and analyze the intertextual web that spreads within and throughout McCarthy's own canon of work. There have been critics who narrativize McCarthy's writing career. Examples of this include Robert Jarrett's discussion of the progression from modernism to postmodernism in McCarthy's work.

⁴ Vereen Bell was the first critic to read McCarthy as a nihilist. Many other critics have followed Bell's lead to use nihilism for understanding the violence and destruction in McCarthy's novels.

This progression is also discussed by Matthew Guinn in *After Southern Modernism*.

Many critics have discussed the shift in McCarthy's career from a Southern to a Western writer. Many studies have been conducted that examine the relationships between the texts of the Border Trilogy. Nevertheless, the intertextual connectivity that exists within McCarthy's work is still an open field for discussion.

In my analysis of *Outer Dark* I emphasized that what set McCarthy apart from Faulkner is McCarthy's abandonment of a centered metaphysics. This centerlessness is the result of a wholesale participation in deconstruction, and since it penetrates to the level of sign exchange, it pervades every aspect of the text in the same way that a centered metaphysics informs every aspect of Faulkner's work. The position of *Outer Dark* in McCarthy's career indicates that the centerlessness of the novel was an important move away from the high modernism of William Faulkner. *Outer Dark's* centerlessness also demonstrates an important aesthetic move for McCarthy that culminates in *Blood Meridian*. Many critics have elaborated the role that centerlessness plays in *Blood Meridian* in the conversation about optical democracy; however, as of yet no critics have connected the centerlessness of the optical democracy in *Blood Meridian* to the more immanent centerlessness of *Outer Dark*. Nevertheless, *Blood Meridian* is the culmination of an aesthetic and metaphysical project that has its roots in *Outer Dark*. After *Blood Meridian*, several critics identify a shift in McCarthy's approach to writing. Robert Jarrett sees the Border Trilogy as a manifestation of a full-blown postmodern aesthetic, which has evolved from McCarthy's earlier, more modern works. It is true that the Border Trilogy does emphasize a whole new set of categories of postmodernism. However, it is problematic to claim that McCarthy's work has followed a linear path

from modern to postmodern. Clearly the privilege of centerlessness is closely identified with deconstruction and poststructuralism, both of which are inherently connected to postmodernism.

Another factor that affects the thesis of a linear development of style is that the publication dates of McCarthy's work don't tell us much about the genesis and development of his novels. In a recent interview for *Vanity Fair*, McCarthy admits that *No Country for Old Men* was one of seven novels that could be considered ready for publication. It is also widely known that a screenplay for *Cities of the Plain* was completed before the other two books of the Border Trilogy. These details of McCarthy's writing procedures suggest that a chronological narrative of McCarthy's writing career is problematic.

McCarthy appears to be an artist who sets problems to solve, and he then uses various aesthetic strategies to provide answers. He adjusts the size of his canvas depending on the aesthetic scope of each work. His works then appear to be connected based on the problems that they are addressing. In this regard *No Country for Old Men* seems to be more connected to *Blood Meridian* or *Outer Dark* instead of *Cities of the Plain*. Certain elements of *Suttree* resonate well with the Border Trilogy, but according to the aesthetics of the prose and the size of the canvas, *Suttree* can also be seen in close connection to *Blood Meridian*. Connecting McCarthy's canon in other ways besides chronological development opens many possibilities for intertextual studies.

In order to maintain focus in what can be considered a broad field, the same paradigm that was used to examine the intertextual relationship between *Light in August* and *Outer Dark* will be used to examine the intertextual relationship between *Outer Dark*

and *No Country for Old Men*. The basic premise of this analysis will be that *No Country for Old Men* forces us to re-examine the way that we read *Outer Dark*. In my analysis of *Outer Dark* and *Light in August*, boots were used as intertextual sites of access to the metaphysical and aesthetic aspects that inform the moral universe in each novel.

Coincidentally, boots serve in a similar function as sites of intertextual connectivity in *Outer Dark* and *No Country for Old Men*. Both novels operate under different metaphysical and aesthetic principles, and the boots in each novel are sites where these differences can be excavated. Once these differences have been identified, the relationship between destruction and morality can be assessed. This assessment will ultimately inform the initial conversation of this chapter regarding intertextuality as a deconstructive process.

One of the more obvious intertextual referents that *Outer Dark* and *No Country for Old Men* share is the question each novel intends to explore: What is at the core of pure evil? Anton Chigurh is intertextually connected to the outlaw triune in *Outer Dark*, and these characters act in each novel as sites where evil is explored. However, the most interesting part of each of these novels isn't the actual nature of evil but rather the effect that the encounter with pure evil has on the moral codes of the other characters. In my analysis of *Outer Dark* and *Light in August*, I examined how boots acted in each novel as sites of access to a moral universe. The role of boots in *No Country for Old Men* can also be examined to provide access to the novel's moral universe. The same dynamic that exists between evil and the testing of moral codes within these novels is abstractly paralleled by intertextuality and the testing of aesthetic codes between these novels. Evil doesn't destroy morality in these novels – Evil deconstructs morality. Destroying

morality accomplishes nothing. Rendering morality meaningless is the most violent and the most redemptive consequence that can come of morality's encounter with evil.

Identifying the intertextual connections between *Outer Dark* and *No Country for Old Men* demonstrates how McCarthy has been engaged in the deconstruction of morality throughout his writing career.

In *No Country for Old Men*, Chigurh provides a metaphysical context for examining how intertextuality/boots function in the novel. After conducting one of his existential coin tosses with a convenience store clerk, Chigurh makes the following statement: "Well, you say. It's just a coin. For instance. Nothing Special there. What could that be an instrument of? You see the problem. To separate the act from the thing. As if the parts of some moment in history might be interchangeable with the parts of some other moment" (57). This statement is important for initiating a conversation about the role of boots in the novel, for it indicates a belief in a transcendental signified. Chigurh also subscribes to Schapiro's brand of transcendental signified that emphasizes the importance of historical accuracy in connecting the right acts to the right things. Chigurh claims that a thing or artifact can't be separated from its historical context. Like Heidegger, Chigurh believes in the interconnectedness of the material and the social, where the social is the center that determines the meaning of the surrogate artifact. As in *Outer Dark* where the triune functions as a centerless center, Chigurh provides a similar center in *No Country for Old Men*. His character is a site where evil, chaos, and violence act as a center for the moral universe of the novel. An analysis of Chigurh's connection with his boots is an example of a surrogate artifact that is signified by its social context;

therefore, this analysis is a valuable site for understanding the centered nature of the novel's moral universe.

The narrator of *No Country for Old Men* pays particular attention to the boots of the characters. Brand names and exotic leathers are generally identified. Boots are emphasized as survival equipment in the same way that guns are. The narrator also pays particular attention to reasons why characters would be without their boots. One of the most interesting aspects relating to Chigurh and his boots is when he takes them off. When Chigurh finally tracks Moss to the Hotel Eagle, the narrator provides a description of his boots. While Moss is observing from under the bed the narrator says:

The next thing he heard was the key in the lock. Very softly. Then the door opened. He could see out into the hallway. There was no one there. He waited. He tried not even to blink but he did. Then there was an expensive pair of ostrichskin boots standing in the doorway. (111)

If Heidegger's process for reading Van Gogh's *A Pair of Boots* is applied to this passage, it would make sense to say that Chigurh's expensive, exotic ostrichskin boots are ontologically connected to his character. This connection between man and boot is emphasized by the cinematic narration of this passage. This description of Chigurh's boots is couched in what feels like a cliché suspense/thriller cinematic convention. There is certainly coherence between Chigurh and his boots. In other words, Chigurh's boots can be seen as artifacts that are signified by the center of Chigurh's experience. In Chigurh's words, the thing is intimately connected to the act. If this is the case, then these expensive ostrichskin boots evoke the brand of evil that McCarthy is exploring through Chigurh's character.

Indeed the brief section of the novel where Chigurh tries to shoot a bird perched on a bridge for no apparent reason strengthens the connection between Chigurh's boots and evil (99). Where the presence of the boots is enhanced by the cinematic effect that frames them, it is important to recognize that they are ostrichskin boots. In an interview with Alice Ellison, a Western Wear enthusiast, I asked what assumptions can be made about one who wears ostrichskin boots. Ostrichskin boots are worn mostly as a status symbol, since they are very expensive. Boots made from exotic leathers reached a peak of popularity during the 1980s in what can be considered a golden age for the boot industry. Recently there has been a backlash against exotic leathers by animal rights activists. Ostrichskin boots are especially controversial; for in order to achieve the full-quill look, the bird must be plucked alive (Ellison). There is obviously a connection between Chigurh, who is pretty much pure evil, and the industry of wildlife consumption. This connection enhances the ontological coherence of his character, which enhances the cinematic effect that is achieved during Moss's first encounter with Chigurh.

What sets *No Country for Old Men* apart from McCarthy's other books, especially *Outer Dark*, is its shift in aesthetics to privilege cinematic effect. The privilege of aesthetic deconstruction that is so pervasive in *Outer Dark* is gone. The result is the return of a centered aesthetics, which lends itself to a cinematic style of writing. Understanding how *No Country for Old Men* reinstates a centered aesthetics to privilege cinematic effect leads to an understanding of how McCarthy is exploring evil differently in this novel. *No Country for Old Men* appears to be an illustration of the contemporary face of evil.

It is problematic to assert that *No Country for Old Men* is an analog to its historical context; however, the novel's historical context in the wake of the September 11 terrorist attacks is hard to ignore. The most significant difference between the September 11 terrorist attacks and other acts of evil was the dramatic staging of the event. The most disturbing thing about the September 11 attacks wasn't just that thousands of people were senselessly killed – much like the victims of violence in McCarthy's novels – but that the event of the destruction was aesthetically glorified – much like the events of destruction in McCarthy's novels. However, evil's ability to stage itself for dramatic effect is only a way to emphasize what evil is: the desire to cancel moral agency, which is done primarily by voiding the moral codes of all that it encounters. In *No Country for Old Men*, evil only has presence in the presence of morality, and evil can only be defined relationally. In the same way that Chigurh's boots evoke their lived context, Chigurh as a character evokes the abstract essence of evil. This privilege of centeredness allows for the dramatic staging of the conflict between Chigurh and Moss. Other passages that refer to Chigurh and his boots indicate that McCarthy is certainly paying attention to the connection between evil and dramatic effect.

The scene where Chigurh kills the man who hired Wells is the next scene that contributes to the connection that exists between the essence of evil and dramatic effect. As Chigurh enters the room of his victim, the narrator says, "He took off his boots and stood them by the elevator door and went down the hallway in his sockfeet, walking slowly, favoring his wounded leg" (198). In the previously mentioned scene, the suspenseful cinematic effect of the narrative depended entirely on the fact that a pair of ostrichskin boots could signify to Moss and the reader the entire character of Chigurh.

On a metaphysical level, these boots signified the essence of evil prior to the encounter between evil and Moss's moral code. In the scene where Chigurh kills Wells' employer, the boots are removed. The boots in the previous scene evoked a presence of evil, and this presence was a result of and can only exist by a centered metaphysical universe.

For Chigurh to kill without his boots on allows him an ontological invisibility. After entering the room, Chigurh sees the man's shadow, of which the man is not aware. Chigurh reads the shadow in a similar way that the reader and Moss can read Chigurh's boots in the previous scene. After shooting the man Chigurh says to the man who is trying to stop the blood from flowing from his dismembered throat, "The reason I used the birdshot was that I didn't want to break the glass. Behind you. To rain glass on people in the street" (200). This passage provides a hint of the moral code by which Chigurh operates. The fact that he doesn't want to rain glass on people in the street tells us that he is very selective about who he intends to kill. This also indicates to the reader that one should pay particular attention to those who are on his hit-list. The other thing that this passage indicates is that when Chigurh does kill, he always takes the right measures to increase the dramatic effect of the killing. It is also important to recognize that this dramatic effect is achieved, because it is complicit with a centered metaphysical universe. In order to have principles, which Chigurh clearly does, there must be a transcendental center that determines the principles. In *Structure, Sign, and Play*, Derrida claims that role of a transcendental center is typically filled with god (879). In a telling passage, Chigurh associates himself with god in a way that emphasizes that he does operate through principles that are determined by a transcendental center – himself. In the dialogue he has with Carla Jean before killing her, Chigurh says, "Even a nonbeliever

might find it useful to model himself after God (*NCFOM* 256). The center for Chigurh's moral code can be determined by answering what the evil that he embodies desires. Like Judge Holden, Chigurh understands that his moral agency comes by laying to waste the agency of every other autonomous being. Chigurh's boots are a symbol of autonomy that comes from a dramatic and tortuous act of canceling the agency of another living thing. Since the idea of moral autonomy is connected to the idea of subjectivity, when Chigurh shoots people in the face their agency is cancelled in a very symbolic and dramatic way. The boots, the pneumatic stun gun, and the shotgun loaded with birdshot are all metonymically connected to Chigurh in the same way. These signifiers represent the center of Chigurh's evil: the desire to confirm agency through an act of canceling the agency of another. This brand of evil is not new to *No Country for Old Men*; nevertheless, the aesthetic dramatization of this evil in a cinematic style is a recent development in McCarthy's style. A comparison between the scene where Chigurh kills Wells' employer and the scene where he finds Moss reveals that the tension that exists between Chigurh's and Moss's moral codes is what really propels this novel. An examination of this tension can uncover the logic that governs the moral universe of this novel. However, in order to fully examine this tension, a closer look needs to be paid to Moss's character and the relationship that he has with his boots.

The first image of Moss in the novel draws attention to his boots. "Moss sat with the heels of his boots dug into the volcanic gravel of the ridge and glassed the desert below him with a pair of twelve power german binoculars" (8). The resonance between this scene and the previously discussed scenes with Chigurh associates Moss with Chigurh on an aesthetic and metaphysical level. The hermeneutic gesture by which the

reader associates Chigurh's boots with Chigurh's lived context is enabled by the cinematic aesthetics that emphasize the boots' role. The way that Moss's boots are emphasized in this passage is similar. It is important that in both scenes, the boots are the first signifier that the reader encounters for deciphering the characters who wear them.

As Moss's initial scene continues, his boots, like Chigurh's, are emphasized by their removal. "He wallowed down the scree and pulled off one boot and laid it over the rocks and lowered the forearm of the rifle down into the leather and pushed off the safety with his thumb and sighted through the scope" (9). This scene parallels the scene where Chigurh kills the man who hired Wells. Both Moss and Chigurh take off their boots prior to killing. In both scenes, the removal of boots was practical, but the removal also symbolizes each character's attention to detail when it comes to killing. After removing their boots, each character methodically divines the vulnerability of their prey. Chigurh's boots and weapons associate him with the killing of animals, and Moss is engaged in the act of hunting. Moss's connection to the killing of animals is emphasized by "[t]he boar's tooth that he [wears] on a gold chain" (9). This similarity in each character's killing process demonstrates the means by which an aesthetic rendering of boots makes a larger connection to the moral codes embodied by the characters that wear them. The removal of footwear evokes Biblical images of prophets who remove their shoes to enter sacred spaces. When Chigurh and Moss remove their boots to kill, the connection to Biblical precedent indicates that killing is a sacred ritual for these men – a ritual that is predicated on adherence to a strict code of moral principles. Both men have entered into a moral contract that is symbolized by the killing of animals. The sacrifice of animals also has Biblical referents, which solidifies the connection between these men, their

boots, and their centered moral universe. Since both characters operate within a clearly defined moral universe, it is also true that each character exists in a moral universe that has a transcendental center. However, the center that determines Chigurh's moral code is fundamentally different than the center that determines Moss's moral code. A further examination of Moss's boots creates a context for determining what differentiates Chigurh's moral universe from Moss's.

The cinematic effect that is achieved from encountering Chigurh's boots from Moss's point of view underneath the bed is an effective way of connecting Chigurh to the ominous evil that is the center of his moral code – an evil that is defined by its desire to cancel the agency of other autonomous beings and a desire to impose order on the universe. Product placement is another cinematic effect that McCarthy uses to connect Moss to the center of his moral universe by his boots. While browsing the shops in Ciudad Acuña to kill time, “[Moss] went into a boot shop and looked at the exotics – crocodile and ostrich and elephant – but the quality of the boots was nothing like the Larry Mahans that he wore” (85). It is clear from this passage that Moss's boot preference is at odds with the boots that Chigurh prefers. The difference between these preferences is an important indicator of what sets these two apart. Where Chigurh's boots can be associated with the violent practice of killing Ostriches, Moss prefers Larry Mahan boots.

The ontological coherence that exists between Chigurh and his boots isn't available to Moss because of Moss's preference for brand name boots. Several brand names are mentioned throughout the novel from gun brands to Coca-Cola. When Carla Jean recounts the story of how she met Llewelyn, she emphasizes that they met at

Walmart (132). This emphasis on brand names clearly sets *No Country for Old Men* apart from McCarthy's other novels. The emphasis on brand names resembles the product placement that became a persistent cinematic convention in the 1980s, and this cinematic convention was partly responsible for the resurgence of the popularity of Western wear in the 1980s. We can safely assume that McCarthy isn't getting kickbacks from Lucchese, Larry Mahan, Coca-Cola, and Walmart; so although his use of brand names resembles cinematic product placement, the effect of the presence of brand names in the novel differs from an advertisement effect.

Frederic Jameson compares Van Gogh's *A Pair of Boots* to Andy Warhol's *Diamond Dust Shoes*. A similar comparison can be made between Chigurh's ostrichskin boots and Moss's Larry Mahan's. According to Jameson, modernist aesthetics allowed the kind of hermeneutic gesture made by Heidegger, and postmodernist aesthetics foreclose the hermeneutic gesture because postmodernism lacks depth. Warhol's soup can series reiterates this difference and makes the issue of brand names relevant. The depthlessness, identified by Jameson and immanent in Warhol, is symptomatic of the centerlessness that is one of the primary aesthetic characteristics of postmodernism. Warhol's soup can series relocates what could be considered a center to the brand name. Where Heidegger looked at Van Gogh's painting and read the social context of the boots, one cannot look at Warhol's picture of a soup can and read the social context. The center that was the social context for Heidegger is replaced by the presence of a brand name in postmodernism. Chigurh's boots evoke their lived context, and Moss's boots evoke a lived context until their brand name is mentioned. The connection between Moss's identity and his boots disappears and is substituted by the connection between Moss's

boots and Larry Mahan's identity. Moss's boots therefore act as a symbol for an absent subjectivity that has been subsumed by the cultural capital associated with brand names. This absence can be extended to signify an absence of agency. If Moss lacks agency, then it wouldn't make sense that Chigurh pursues him with such determination since Chigurh is motivated by canceling agency.

Although Moss's preference for Larry Mahan boots indicates that he is a colonized subject of bourgeois capitalism whose identity is a vacuum and so therefore lacks agency, Chigurh pursues him because Moss transcends these limitations. The tooth of a wild boar that Moss wears around his neck is the first indicator that Moss has transcended his absence of subjectivity. Just as Chigurh's boots testify that agency is the result of the voided agency of the other, Moss's boar tooth implies that Moss has entered into a contract with Chigurh's brand of evil. The tooth signifies for Moss what his boots do not – that through an act of pure agency Moss has cancelled the agency something else. When Moss finds the money, he also acts with agency when he decides to take the money. Although no one's agency is directly cancelled by this act, Carla Jean's agency is seriously compromised. However, the text indicates that Chigurh doesn't pursue Moss for the money. Wells' conversation with Moss demonstrates that money is not the point for Chigurh. Wells says, "You could even say that he has principles. Principles that transcend money or drugs or anything like that" (153). Moss's availability of moral agency aligns Moss with Chigurh, and Chigurh seeks to destroy Moss for not living up to the contract.

Although Moss does make decisions from a space of agency, he also makes decisions that privilege the agency of others over his own. These acts of moral weakness

are what summon Chigurh to pursue Moss. Examples of these acts include bringing water to the dying Mexican at the caldera, not killing Chigurh when he had the chance, and putting down his gun to save the girl he picked up. As the dramatic tension of the novel pits Chigurh's moral universe against Moss's, Moss's moral code is rendered impotent. The presence of evil depends on this dynamic where morality is deconstructed by an encounter with a more perfect evil.

Although Chigurh and Moss only meet once in the novel, Chigurh's psychological presence for Moss is immanent. Derrida asserts that presence is the result of a transcendental signified or center. Chigurh's psychological presence informs all the bad choices that Moss makes. The result is a process whereby Moss's moral code is tested like a piece of equipment. The constant by which his code is tested is the metaphysically and ontologically unified evil embodied by Chigurh. This process where a morally ambiguous character is tested against a centered, morally certain character can be used as a model for understanding the intertextual connections between McCarthy's works.

Many of McCarthy's works have characters like Chigurh or the band of outlaws from *Outer Dark* that function in the novel as annihilator's whose purpose is to test the moral codes of those they encounter. Each of McCarthy's novels operates according to its own logic or set of aesthetic and philosophical codes. When McCarthy's novels are placed in an intertextual web, an experiment is enabled by which the codes and logic of one novel can be tested against another. *Outer Dark* and *No Country for Old Men* demonstrate an author with a wide range of aesthetic skill and philosophical comprehension. If *No Country for Old Men* is seen as an aesthetic filter for reading

Outer Dark it is clear that both novels participate in similar projects of examining the connection between aesthetics and morality. Both novels enable similar deconstructions of morality, but the aesthetic codes of each novel vary. *No Country for Old Men* exhibits an author who has shifted his aesthetic codes to favor cinematic signification practices. I have discussed how this change in aesthetics provides a filter for understanding McCarthy's previous work. In the next chapter I will discuss how intertextuality translates to the field of adaptation studies. I will focus on the film adaptation of *All the Pretty Horses*. The result of this analysis will provide a different perspective for understanding why McCarthy seems to have changed his aesthetic preferences.

Intertextuality and Adaptation: An Examination of *All the Pretty Horses* and Its
Adapted Film

The intertextual exchange that occurs in the process of film adaptation can be compared to John Grady's conversation with Don Hèctor about breeding horses in Cormac McCarthy's novel *All the Pretty Horses*. After proclaiming his intention to breed an exceptional thoroughbred stallion with his mares, the following dialogue occurs:

How much importance do you give to the mare?

Same as the sire. In my opinion.

Most breeders place more confidence in the horse.

Yessir. They do.

The hacendado smiled. I happen to agree with you.

[...] You don't have to agree with me (115).

It is typical for critics to assert that film adaptations of great novels are like the outcome of breeding superior stallions to average mares. It is lamentable that a field as intriguing as film adaptation studies is generally reduced to value judgments based on structural fidelity where privilege is given to the novel. I believe that a lot can be gained by placing as much confidence in the value of film adaptations of novels as we do in the novels themselves. Whereas film adaptations are generally held up to the golden standard of the novel, ultimately, I believe that the film can serve as a filter for understanding the novel from a different aesthetic paradigm. The film adaptation of *All the Pretty Horses* has received a significant amount of negative criticism. However, there have been no in-depth studies made to analyze the connection between the novel

and the film. Where the novel and film can be compared on many levels, here I will focus on the different aesthetic paradigm that governs each work. Walter Benjamin's and Jacques Derrida's discussions on translation provide a useful critical paradigm for exploring the aesthetic differences between the novel and film adaptation of *All the Pretty Horses*. The application of this paradigm to this particular adaptation creates a valuable site for exploring the intersection of McCarthy's postmodern aesthetic and the modernist aesthetics of Billy Bob Thornton's film.

Brian McFarlane, a prominent adaptation theorist, recognizes that "Modern critical notions of *intertextuality* represent a more sophisticated approach, in relation to adaptation" (10). However, McFarlane doesn't offer a paradigm for approaching adaptation through the more sophisticated intertextual theory. The study of translation provides a sophisticated means of applying intertextual theory to adaptation studies.

In his key essay on translation, *The Task of the Translator*, Walter Benjamin's assumption of modernist aesthetics enables him to make several revealing statements regarding translation. At the beginning of the essay, Benjamin says, "But do we not regard as the essential substance of a literary work what it contains in addition to information – as even the poor translator will admit – the unfathomable, the mysterious, the 'poetic,' something that a translator can only reproduce only if he is also a poet?" (70). Benjamin's reference to "the essential substance of a literary work" is one of the fundamental premises of his theory of translation. This essentialism is connected to the modernist aesthetic paradigm laid forth by Heidegger that claims that the essential meaning of the sign exchange process can be determined through a hermeneutic reading of the sign. For Heidegger, the meaning is there to be recovered by the astute critic. For

Benjamin, the skilled translator is also able to recover and reproduce that meaning. This assumption of Benjamin's is reiterated when he says, "The task of the translator consists in finding that intended effect [*Intention*] upon the language into which he is translating which produces in it the echo of the original" (76). Once again he assumes that a text contains an essential meaning that is recoverable and translatable. For the purpose of establishing the parameters of my own critical paradigm for approaching adaptation, Benjamin's essentialist assumptions lead me to assert that essentialism is a vital part of the framework for approaching adaptation from the vantage of aesthetics.

Essentialism is the first part of my framework, and Benjamin mentions fidelity as another facet of translation that is relevant to a study of adaptation. Indeed, fidelity has become a common scapegoat in adaptation studies, and most astute critics of the field search for ways to get beyond the issue of fidelity. I don't want to ignore fidelity, and Benjamin highlights dimensions of fidelity that can be productive. Benjamin says, "Fidelity in the translation of individual words can almost never fully reproduce the meaning they have in the original" (78). Derrida explains that when a word with two meanings is translated, part of the word's meaning is lost in translation. In "Roundtable on Translation" Derrida says, "Philosophical discourse cannot master a word meaning two things at the same time and which therefore cannot be translated without an essential loss" (120). For Derrida, all words have multiple meanings. Critics who claim to dislike a film adaptation of a novel because the film didn't live up to the novel fail to take into consideration this built-in weakness of fidelity: the process of translation always results in both the loss and production of meaning at once. In light of this paradox, another passage from Benjamin is relevant: "A real translation is transparent; it does not cover the

original, does not block its light, but allows the pure language, as though reinforced by its own medium, to shine upon the original all the more fully” (79). Where fidelity is generally considered in terms of the reproduction of meaning, in this passage, Benjamin allows fidelity to also refer to the growth of meaning. In this context, fidelity becomes the means by which the assumption that meaning cannot be faithfully reproduced can become the assumption that meaning can still be created. Even though either way of approaching fidelity is based on the assumption of essentialism, fidelity can still be an important category for examining adaptation. For my paradigm I will address fidelity as a process by which meaning can grow from the original instead of as a process by which an adaptation can be measured against an original.

Essentialism and fidelity can both be used to address the role that aesthetics and modernism play in *All the Pretty Horses* and its film adaptation. Once I have addressed this adaptation from this framework, I will discuss Derrida’s response to Benjamin and how this response bears on my reading of the intertextual relationship between *All the Pretty Horses* and its adapted film.

The image of John Grady’s dream about horses is a productive site for examining the role of essentialism in McCarthy’s novel and its adapted film. This image is an example of the kind of sign exchange that tempts essentializing readers. In McCarthy’s novel it is difficult to assign an essentialist meaning to the horse dreams. The first place in the text where the image occurs is when John Grady looks at the oil painting of the horses at his grandfather’s ranch:

There were a half dozen of them breaking through a pole corral and their manes were long and blowing and their eyes wild. They’d been copied

out of a book. They had the long Andalusian nose and the bones of their faces showed Barb blood [...] he'd once asked his grandfather what kind of horses they were and his grandfather looked up from his plate at the painting as if he'd never seen it before and he said those are picturebook horses. (*ATPH* 15-16)

Although this isn't a dream, this painting is certainly intertextually connected to the other two dreams of horses in the novel. It is relevant that this description of the painting appears in a book, and the painting was also copied from a book. The grandfather admits that there is no signified for these horses. They are a link in a chain of simulacra. If these horses are simulacra, then the only meaning that can be accessed from their presence in the text is that no meaning is essentially recoverable. The fact that the painting doesn't represent horses, but rather it is a representation of other signifiers of horses, demonstrates the deconstructive logic that is generally a hallmark of McCarthy's fiction. This deconstructive logic resists essentialist reading, and this deconstructive logic makes McCarthy's work complicated to translate.

Where the painting is an example of the deconstructive logic in the novel, it is also dangerous to assume that John Grady's dream that is a textual echo of the painting has an essential meaning. In his first night in the jail in the town of Encantada, John Grady has the following dream:

That night he dreamt of horses in a field on a high plain where the spring rains had brought up the grass and the wildflowers out of the ground and the flowers ran all blue and yellow far as the eye could see and in the dream he was among the horses running and in the dream he himself could

run with the horses and they coursed the young mares and fillies over the plain where their rich bay and their rich chestnut colors shone in the sun and the young colts ran with their dams and trampled down the flowers in a haze of pollen that hung in the sun like powdered gold and they ran he and the horses out along the high mesas. (161)

This Faulkneresque passage only provides half of the description of the image, but it is an image that begs to be read like Faulkner, from a modernist, New Critic's reading paradigm. It is an image that on the surface seems to offer some kind of meaningful reward for those with the right hermeneutic discipline. However, as an echo of the painting, this dream is just one more link in the chain of simulacra. It is therefore a fallacy to ask what does this dream mean, and the tendency to ask this question is a result of a reading paradigm that is overinformed by modernist aesthetics. Indeed, the critical approaches of modernists Heidegger and Freud encourage the act of deriving some kind of essential meaning from a dream or image. Cormac McCarthy's aesthetics resist this modernist tendency on many levels in every single one of his books. If this is the case, then an application of Benjamin's theory of translation that is dependent on the presence of essential meaning should lead to a counterproductive strategy for translating McCarthy.

The third dream of the horses comes after John Grady heals the bullet wound in his leg. Of the three dreams of horses this dream appears to have the essentialist meaning that could most easily be extracted:

He dreamt of horses and the horses in his dream moved gravely among the tilted stones like horses come upon an antique site where some ordering of

the world had failed and if anything had been written on the stones the weathers had taken it away again [...] Finally what he saw in his dream was that the order in the horse's heart was more durable for it was written in a place where no rain could erase it. (281)

The most significant part of this passage is that it is ultimately about the failure of the system for ordering the world. This failure could certainly be alluding to language, and this inference would make translation, adaptation, and intertextuality extensions of a broken system. However, in this passage, McCarthy does identify a source of meaning that can be essentialized. The idealization of the horse's heart as a site of uncorruptible order seems to suggest a space that transcends the echo chamber of signifiers. However, despite the presence of this essence of meaning, the accessibility of this meaning is still a question. After all the uncorruptible center of meaning only exists in a dream. Ultimately the deconstructive logic of McCarthy's aesthetic is reified by this *dream* where an essential meaning exists.

McCarthy subverts the possibility that an essential meaning might be extracted from his work. However, although McCarthy's aesthetics resist essentialism, it doesn't mean that a director trying to translate McCarthy's work to film won't succumb to the temptation to essentialize. In fact, Billy Bob Thornton chose to open the film with the dream image of horses.

The imagery in this clip is different from either of the images in the novel, but it is clearly a referent to those images. Perhaps the most notable part of the shot is that it is filmed at night. The darkness adds to the dreamlike quality of the clip, and this effect connects the clip to its antecedents in the novel. The camera is located almost on the

ground level, so the viewer is in the middle of the action. Just like in the second dream when John Grady is running with the horses. The soundtrack captures the sounds of falling hooves and the horses' breathing. The remainder of the scene consists of a conversation between John Grady and Rawlins about heaven and hell. There is a brief montage of a very McCarthyesque landscape, and then there is repeat footage of the running horses.

I don't want to argue about what this scene means, but I think this scene provides a good example of what happens when an artist tries to translate another work of art into a medium that is governed by a completely different aesthetic code. By placing this scene in the prologue to the film, Thornton gives the dream an epigraphic status. By giving the horse dream an epigraphic role, Thornton changes the semantic role of the image. As an epigraph the image must become more inherently meaningful, where in the novel this image functioned in an aesthetic role that complicated meaning. As a result, Thornton seems to have unwittingly essentialized a signifier that resisted essentialization. However, in the process he has also demonstrated autonomy as an artist and forced McCarthy's work into a new aesthetic paradigm.

Because he forced McCarthy's work into a new aesthetic paradigm doesn't mean that Thornton is a terrible director and the film is a failure; however, this discrepancy suggests that the aesthetic codes of Hollywood film don't correlate with the aesthetic codes of most Cormac McCarthy novels. Where McCarthy is aware of the deconstructive nature of language, the Hollywood film industry doesn't show many signs of having had a deconstructive awakening. It is clear from the initial shot of running horses in the film that Thornton wants the scene to mean something. The problem is that

he is essentializing an essentially unessentializable image. As a result the film becomes a manifestation of Thornton's reading paradigm. By trying to essentialize Cormac McCarthy, Thornton approaches the novel as a modernist who believes that meaning can be extracted through hermeneutics. Ultimately, this assertion tells us more about Hollywood and the aesthetics of the film industry than it does about the adaptation of *All the Pretty Horses*. However, the effect of this impasse in translation isn't necessarily negative.

Since the meaning of a work is ultimately connected to the aesthetics of the work, changing the aesthetics leads to a change in meaning. Where many adaptation theorists are concerned that a film should reproduce the meaning or effect of a novel with absolute fidelity, the theory of translation suggests that meaning is created by a failure in fidelity. If the film is empowered in this way to create its own meaning, and not be tied so tightly to the novel, the film is then allowed to be the source of a paradigm for re-understanding the novel. Once the film is allowed to become the foundation for a new reading paradigm, the relationship between film and novel becomes much more dynamic and much more interesting for those of us who want to do serious scholarship on film adaptations rather than editorial opinion pages.

A passage from Derrida's response to Benjamin affirms my position. In *Roundtable on Translation*, Derrida says:

The original is indebted a priori to the translation. Its survival is a demand and a desire for translation [...] Translation does not come along in addition, like an accident added to a full substance; rather, it is what the original text demands – and not simply the signatory of the original text

but the text itself. If the translation is indebted to the original, it is because the original is indebted to the coming translation. (152-3)

As the film becomes aesthetically empowered, fidelity becomes a conversation rather than a contingency. Critics are able to recognize that the reason fidelity is impossible isn't because of artistic incompetence, but because signifiers have multiple meanings. As soon as one meaning is reproduced or created through adaptation, several meanings are left out. However, new meanings are also created. Thornton's dream horses force us to encounter McCarthy's horses differently. Fidelity is only important to the extent that we realize that the dream horses from each medium are connected. After the initial connection, it is the difference between the signs that matters.

Another useful site for examining how the dynamics of essentialism and fidelity lead to aesthetic empowerment of the film adaptation and the growth of the original novel is the scene where John Grady, Rawlins, and Blevins cross the Rio Grande. In the film the scene begins with Rawlins asking Blevins, "What in the hell would we want you with us for?" Blevins replies, "Because I'm an American." After this dialogue, an almost patriotic music theme accompanies the riders as they approach a river in broad daylight. As the riders approach the bank, they kick the horses into gear and run across the river. As they cross the river, the characters whoop and holler along with neighing horses. The camera provides a close-up of a horse's chest cutting through the water. As they reach the other side, the music shifts from an Aaron Copeland style theme to a decidedly more Mexican style of music. The riders stop and look back at their homeland, and John Grady holds up his hat and hollers one more time. The cameras switch to a closed-aperture, wide-angle shot that minimizes the presence of the characters in the landscape.

This scene from the film is worthy of focus in this study, because the scene differs significantly from its textual precedent. The following passages describe this scene in the novel:

What in the hell would we want you with us for?

He didn't answer. He sat looking at the sandy water running past them and at the thin wicker shadows of the willows running out over the sandbar in the evening light. [...]

Cause I'm an American, he said.

Rawlins turned away and shook his head.

They crossed the river under a white quartermoon naked and pale and thin atop their horses. They'd stuffed their boots upside down into their jeans and stuffed their shirts and jackets after along with their warbags of shaving gear and ammunition [...].

Midriver the horses were swimming, snorting and stretching their necks out of the water, their tails afloat behind. They quartered downstream with the current, the naked riders leaning forward and talking to the horses, Rawlins holding the rifle aloft in one hand, lined out behind one another and making for the alien shore like a party of marauders.

(*ATPH* 45)

Where the image of the dream horses defies essentialism, McCarthy's imagery of the three cowboys crossing the river seems to be complying more with the cinematic aesthetic that I discussed in my analysis of *No Country for Old Men*. The passage contains several signifiers that could translate effectively into film. However, these

signifiers allude to the gothic style of McCarthy's earlier works; and although hermeneutics can penetrate the signifiers of this passage, the recovered meanings of these signifiers don't fall into line with the philosophy of Thornton's translation. In effect, McCarthy wrote an eminently filmable passage that Thornton chose not to follow because it would undermine the philosophical coherence of the film.

Several signifiers in McCarthy's description of the river crossing indicate a pervasive gothic undertone that is generally overlooked in *All the Pretty Horses*. In the novel the three riders cross the river during the night in the light of the quartermoon. The scene has faint echoes of the river crossing scene in *Outer Dark* where the spooked horse knocks the driver of the ferry into the river. The image of naked riders also evokes various images from *Blood Meridian*. The image of Rawlins holding his gun aloft as the riders cross the river like a party of marauders easily connects this passage to the philosophical universe of *Blood Meridian*. These allusions to McCarthy's gothic precedents problematize a novel that in many regards seems to be moving in a different philosophical direction than some of McCarthy's previous works. Since many of these darker elements of the novel are omitted or consciously changed in Thornton's film, the film creates a useful filter for reexamining the novel.

Thornton's rendering of the river crossing differs greatly from the scene in the novel; therefore, a scene that could have been easily essentialized and reproduced failed to pass the fidelity test. Where the scene takes place at night in the novel, the riders cross the river during the day in the film. Where the novel indicates that this crossing is a violent and dangerous turning point for the trio of naked and vulnerable protagonists, the river crossing in the film is depicted as an adventurous, innocent, and noble undertaking.

As a result of this translation, the aesthetic inclinations of McCarthy and Thornton are revealed once again.

In this scene it appears that McCarthy is using signifiers that could be deciphered by modernist reading strategies. However, Thornton's reluctance to reproduce these signifiers in his film reveals McCarthy's postmodern aesthetic. By changing the key signifiers of the river-crossing scene, Thornton reinforces the philosophical coherence of his film. Thornton's translation of *All the Pretty Horses* focuses on the heroic development of John Grady Cole; and if McCarthy's story grows from this translation process, this growth is a result of Thornton's emphasis of the heroic narrative that is embedded in a narrative that otherwise deconstructs heroism. As Thornton consciously lightens some of the darker moments in the novel, these moments become even darker to the reader of the novel whose consciousness of this incongruity is enhanced by the translation process. As a result, the spotlight of Thornton's aesthetic coherence illuminates McCarthy's postmodern aesthetic.

The signifiers of the river crossing in the novel deconstruct the heroic quest of the riders in a similar way that the narrative of the Glanton Gang deconstructs the narrative of American Exceptionalism in *Blood Meridian*. The presence of this darker undertow in the novel provides evidence that McCarthy is still very much engaged with the project of deconstruction in *All the Pretty Horses*. Where I have argued that deconstruction is implicated in a signifier such as a pair of boots in McCarthy's fiction, in *All the Pretty Horses*, McCarthy focuses his deconstructive energy on the narrative as well as on his signifiers. However, when McCarthy implements deconstruction on the narrative level, he does so through the use of modernist significations. This shift in McCarthy's

exploration of deconstruction becomes relevant as this exploration is lost in Thornton's translation of scenes like the river crossing scene. Nevertheless, Thornton's failure in fidelity is productive since it forces us to focus on the heroic narrative in a way that makes it easier to see McCarthy's deconstruction at work. In this regard, Thornton's translation participates in modernist narrative development, and this privilege of modernism makes McCarthy's postmodern sensibilities more transparent.

The final scene that intersects McCarthy's and Thornton's differing aesthetic is when Alejandra departs from John Grady at the train station. This scene is important because like the river crossing this scene can be easily associated with an essential meaning. Unlike the river crossing scene, Alejandra's departure scene is one of Thornton's shining moments of fidelity. Although Thornton relies on different aesthetics than McCarthy, Thornton faithfully renders this scene in the film. The faithful translation of this scene from novel to film is largely due to an aesthetic compromise on behalf of McCarthy. McCarthy's postmodern tendencies disappear briefly in this scene in favor of a more modern approach of signification. This brief privilege of modernist aesthetics enables Thornton's faithful translation.

In the novel, the narrator precludes Alejandra's departure by saying, "He saw very clearly how all his life led only to this moment and all after led nowhere at all. He felt something cold and soulless enter him like another being and he imagined that it smiled malignly and he had no reason to believe that it would ever leave" (254). This passage provides a hint of the essential meaning that is embedded within this scene in the novel. Like the river crossing, Alejandra's departure is a significant turning point in the novel;

and this passage provides a paradigm for understanding the description of Alejandra's departure that follows:

They stood on the platform and she put her face against his shoulder and he spoke to her but she did not answer. The train came huffing in from the south and stood steaming and shuddering with the coach windows curving away down the track like great dominoes smoldering in the dark and he could not but compare this arrival to that one twenty-four hours ago and she touched the silver chain at her throat and turned away and bent to pick up the suitcase and then leaned and kissed him one last time her face all wet and then she was gone. He watched her go as if he himself were in some dream. All along the platform families and lovers were greeting one another. He saw a man with a little girl in his arms and he whirled her around and she was laughing and when she saw his face she stopped laughing. (254)

Like the river crossing scene, this scene has several signifiers and images that can be essentialized and translated. Thornton reiterates this by translating the signifiers into the film. The approach of the train, the windows curving away, Alejandra crying, and the man with the little girl are all easily translated into the film. Because the signifiers in this scene were easily essentialized, Thornton was able to translate this scene with a degree of fidelity that so far hasn't been identified in this analysis.

Although fidelity is present in this scene, the most notable aspect of this scene is how Thornton uses the aesthetics of film to transcend the scene from the novel. In the novel the train can be seen as a symbol of the modernizing forces that threaten John

Grady's moral universe, and throughout the novel trains function as symbols of modernization. As the train leaves the depot in the film, a reflected glare of Alejandra can be seen in the window of the train as it pulls away. The image then disappears. As the image disappears the musical ensemble changes from Alejandra's theme to a menacing, slow plucking of dark guitar chords. The rest of the scene is shot in slow motion. Matt Damon executes his role, and you can see a literal change in his eyes as the short scene unfolds. There are rare moments in the film where Thornton is able to tap into the underlying darkness that is present in McCarthy's fiction. The orchestration of cinematic effects qualifies this scene as one where Thornton renders the moral darkness that consumes John Grady during this turning point. Where McCarthy's narrator had to explicitly say that something dark had entered John Grady at this moment, the film adaptation executes this change aesthetically in a way that transcends the novel.

Where Alejandra's departure scene is an example of intertextual harmony, the aesthetics and philosophical universes of the novel and the film are dissonant. This dissonance, however, invites intertextual analysis. By placing McCarthy's novel in the context of its adapted film, the film enables a new paradigm for understanding the novel. From the vantage point of the film's paradigm, McCarthy's aesthetics and philosophical universe become more transparent. On an aesthetic and philosophical level, McCarthy is still making artistic decisions that are not friendly to film. However, he is also making certain compromises that are allowing his novels to become more filmable. These aesthetic compromises are increasingly evident in his later works; and as more of his works are translated to film, I believe that much work remains to be done in understanding the translation of McCarthy's works to film.

“Everything’s Interesting”: The Untapped Potential for the Intertextual Approach to
Cormac McCarthy’s Fiction

When I was in Santa Fe, I went to the used-book stores to see if I could find any vintage copies of Cormac McCarthy’s novels. At one of the stores, the store owner had a signed copy of *All the Pretty Horses*. He had it locked inside of a glass cabinet. It was worth \$1700 dollars, yet he pulled it out and let me look at it. He said that Cormac signed it personally for him, because Cormac wanted an original copy of an *Encyclopedia Britannica* from the 1800s. The storekeeper said that it was rare to have something that McCarthy would want, since McCarthy probably has more books than the storekeeper had in his shop. Of course this wasn’t new knowledge to me. In the interview with Bob Woodward in the *New York Times*, Woodward writes that, “McCarthy estimates that he owns about 7,000 books” (“Venemous Fiction”).

After this experience in the bookshop, I was encouraged by the prospects for intertextually approaching McCarthy’s fiction. Certainly many of McCarthy’s thousands of books have intertextual presence in his novels. However, this experience also forced me to realize that my approach can only function with clearly defined limitations. Certainly no study that intends to chart author-intended intertextuality in McCarthy’s fiction can ever truly be complete. Intertextual studies that examine which texts a reader brings to a text make an impossibly finite field infinite. I have demonstrated how to approach intertextuality by emphasizing aesthetics. By focusing on the moral universe of McCarthy’s novels or the philosophical impasse between novel and film, I have been able to demonstrate how certain texts can be used as a basis for creating a reading paradigm

for McCarthy's intertexts. Every time a new reading paradigm is created for an author, new terrain is opened for understanding the literature. In this thesis I have built my own fence in the terrain that I have opened. My conclusion will identify several fences that have yet to be erected in the terrain that I have opened.

Reader response intertextuality is a field that I made no attempt to fence. I acknowledged in my introduction that there are three kinds of intertextuality: social/historical intertextuality, author-intended intertextuality, and the intertextuality that a reader brings to a text. New Historicism has claimed the social/historical brand of intertextuality. I have explored author-intended intertextuality in this thesis. A study of intertextuality where a reader acknowledges the texts they bring to a reading paradigm then critiques a primary text from that paradigm has infinite potential.

Another move that can be made from the vantage of this conclusion is to re-theorize intertextuality. The poststructural influence on intertextuality documented by Barthes and Kristeva was a watershed for intertextual studies. A new watershed in intertextual studies is due. I believe that McCarthy's writing is a textual space where new theoretical models for intertextual studies can be found. In a conference paper at the Cormac McCarthy conference in 2005, Meredith Farmer suggested that complexity theory provided a new paradigm for reading McCarthy. Complexity theory is one of McCarthy's preferred disciplines at the Santa Fe Institute. In fact, McCarthy participated in a forum sponsored by Murray Gell-Mann called "Simplicity and Complexity in the Arts and Creative Processes" (Walker 16). Where Farmer used complexity theory to create a paradigm for reading McCarthy, I believe that complexity theory could also provide a new model for approaching intertextuality. Where intertextuality primarily

draws its theoretical base from linguistic and philosophical theory, Complexity theory, or plectics, draws from a theoretical base of physics, geology, biology, and several other technical fields. In a recent interview by Richard Woodward, Woodward devotes a majority of the article describing McCarthy's involvement at the Santa Fe Institute. In the article Woodward writes, "What McCarthy gains from immersion in this rarefied environment is unclear to some at S.F.I. His books show no sign of being shaped by high-flown scientific thought" ("Cormac Country" 100). I believe that Woodward is fundamentally wrong about the presence of the Santa Fe Institute in McCarthy's writing.

After participating with McCarthy in the forum on simplicity and complexity in the arts, Murray Gell-Mann published an article entitled, "Regularities and Randomness: Evolving Schemata in Science and the Arts." Several passages from this article lead me to believe that McCarthy's involvement with high-flown scientific thought is expertly crafted into his fiction on many levels. It is also clear from the article that McCarthy's brand of intertextuality is informed by complexity theory.

The project of literary criticism can be considered a complex adaptive system, or CAS. According to Gell-Mann, "A complex adaptive system receives a stream of data about itself and its surroundings. In that stream, it identifies particular regularities and compresses them into a concise 'schema' (50). The terms in this passage can be used to describe literary criticism. The stream of data is the texts that are subjected to a theory that identifies regularities in a series of texts and compresses the regularities into a schema or paradigm. Regarding art, Gell-Mann then says:

In the case of the individual work, the regularities can be described by embedding it in a conceptual ensemble. For the oeuvre or the work of

the school, we may describe the regularities by embedding the whole series of pieces in a conceptual ensemble of series. Throughout, we are considering the artist as a CAS, the school or movement as a loose aggregation of complex adaptive systems functioning more or less as a CAS, and the viewer as a CAS learning about the art in question.

The selection pressures on the artist or the school include internal Conceptions of what the art should be like; external pressures from critics, the market, and viewers in general; social and political pressures from the community at large; and the usual pressures on someone learning by making mistakes and then correcting them on the basis of further experience [...].

As selection pressures feed back on the competition among the relevant schemata, evolution takes place and we can picture the evolution of a schema in terms of an ensemble, a conceptual cloud or swarm moving in an abstract space [...].

In the production of an individual work of art, the amount of evolution that takes place in the artist's schema during the creation of a work seems to vary a good deal from artist to artist. [...] In studying the arts, it often pays to track down true regularities, even if at first their significance is not obvious. The same holds true for the sciences. (57-58)

I have quoted this passage at length, because it is very likely that these ideas are a result of discussing the nature of art with McCarthy and other artists. The discussion of the evolution of art and finding regularities within an ensemble echoes my discussion of

intertextuality. Where I haven't actually given the details of how complexity theory works, Gell-Mann's ideas demonstrate that complexity theory and intertextuality resonate. Since McCarthy is implicated in Gell-Mann's ideas, it is productive to assume that complexity theory, intertextuality, and McCarthy's works are all functioning on similar wavelengths. Since McCarthy's involvement in the Santa Fe Institute is not yet a part of mainstream McCarthy criticism, I believe that giving attention to this aspect of McCarthy's career could yield productive results for elaborating new theories for reading McCarthy.

Re-theorizing intertextuality by examining McCarthy's involvement in the Santa Fe Institute would be a complex endeavor but would lead to revolutionary results. Although there is much potential on the theoretical front, there is still plenty of work to engage with the reading paradigm that I have created. There are still several authors that have significant presence in McCarthy's work but receive little attention. Ernest Hemingway, Jack London, Edward Abbey, and Fyodor Dostoevsky are authors that must be read differently because of McCarthy. Many critics reference the Biblical influence on McCarthy's work, but a more in-depth study of the connection between McCarthy and the Bible would be a valuable contribution to McCarthy studies. It would also be productive to find two contemporary authors who share intertextual precedents. Toni Morrison and Cormac McCarthy both write back to Faulkner on several occasions in their work. Documenting the intertextual dynamic of these three authors would open new terrain for critical inquiry.

At the end of my thesis I changed directions to discuss film adaptation. I discussed at length how McCarthy's aesthetics became more cinematic in *No Country for*

Old Men and *All the Pretty Horses*. I believe that McCarthy is a writer who wants his works to be translated into films. I have a gut feeling that he cares deeply about the genre of film; and I believe that behind the mantra of the postmodern novelist is a screenwriter who wants to stretch the film industry as much as he has stretched the novel. As more of McCarthy's novels are translated to films, I believe that critics will begin to see that film has played a major influence on McCarthy's writing career. Intertextuality provides a means by which a large canon of films can be used to create a paradigm for reading McCarthy.

Finally, there is an intricate intertextual network that exists within McCarthy's own canon of work. I have briefly addressed this in suggesting *No Country for Old Men*'s connection to *Outer Dark*. There is still much work that can be done to document how McCarthy's artistic project has developed through the course of his career. He is a writer where each text demands to be read on different terms. Intertextuality is a theory by which the individual terms that each text's demands can be approached.

Near the conclusion of McCarthy's interview with Robert Woodward in *The New York Times Magazine*, McCarthy says, "Everything's interesting. I don't think I have been bored for fifty years. I have forgotten what it was like" ("Venomous Fiction). In the five years that I have been studying McCarthy I have not yet been bored. Everytime I read one of his novels for the third, fourth, fifth... time, I am forced to admire the breadth of his genius. The potential that intertextuality offers for infinitely providing new paradigms for understanding McCarthy leads me to believe that it will be a long time before McCarthy's writing stops intriguing me.

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