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**A NIETZSCHEAN READING OF CORMAC MCCARTHY'S
BLOOD MERIDIAN OR THE EVENING REDNESS IN THE WEST
AND
*THE ROAD***

HAZIRLAYAN

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YÜKSEK LİSANS TEZİ

TEZ DANIŐMANI

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ÖZET

Ahmet Gülsat, Cormac McCarthy'nin *Blood Meridian or The Evening Redness in the West* ve *The Road* Adlı Eserlerinin Nietzsche Işığında İncelenmesi, Başkent Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Amerikan Kültürü ve Edebiyatı, 2021

Takdir edilen Amerikalı Güneyli yazarlarından biri olan Cormac McCarthy, kariyeri boyunca, dünyanın ve toplumun normlarını bozmak adına gotik atmosferler yaratarak ve grotesk unsurlar kullanarak, nekrofil, ensest ve şiddet gibi konular üzerine eserler yazmıştır. Bazı eleştirmenler, McCarthy'nin bazı eserlerinin, yazıldıkları dönemin çağdaş gündemlerinin eleştirisi olduğunu da iddia etmektedir. Aslında Western bir roman olan ve 1800'lerin ortalarında geçen *Blood Meridian, Or the Evening Redness in the West* (1985), Amerika'nın komünist Vietnam'a karşı kapitalist ve yayılcı politikasına bir eleştiri olarak okunabilirken, McCarthy'nin son romanı *The Road* (2006), iklim değişikliği krizinin bir göstergesi olarak kabul edilmektedir. Çalışmaları yakından incelendiğinde, daha yerel meselelerle ve karakterlerinin iç dünyalarıyla derinlemesine ilgilenen çoğu Amerikalı Güneyli yazarın aksine, McCarthy'nin Güneyli köklerini ve tarzını normları daha küresel ölçekte yıkmak için kullandığı sonucuna varılabilmektedir. Bu tez, aralarındaki üstü kapalı bağlantıyı vurgulayarak, yukarıda bahsedilen iki romanın esas olarak Nietzsche'nin ebedi dönüş fikrine dayanan Nietzsche ışığında bir incelemesini sunmaktadır. Nietzsche'ye göre zaman, her şeyin sonsuza kadar kendini tekrarladığı dairesel bir şekil içinde hareket eder. Bu felsefe, tüm normlarını doğrusal bir zaman çizgisi üzerinde inşa eden dini öğretilere karşı çıkar. Doğrusal bir zaman çizgisi kavramı dinlerin ödül ve ceza kavramlarına hizmet eder çünkü zamanın yatay hareketi sayesinde, insan geçmişteki eylemlerinden sorumlu tutulabilir ve gelecekte ödüllendirilebilir veya cezalandırılabilir. Bununla birlikte, Nietzsche'nin döngüsel zamanında, geçmiş de gelecekte bir noktadır, oysa gelecek zaten geçmişte gerçekleşmiştir. Nietzsche'nin felsefesini dikkate alarak, *Blood Meridian*'da McCarthy, yalnızca ABD'nin işlediği şiddeti eleştirmekle kalmamakta, aynı zamanda savaş ve yıkımın insanlık tarihinde her zaman var olduğunu ve her zaman galip geleceğini ortaya koymaktadır. *The Road*'un yerle bir olmuş dünyası *Blood Meridian*'da insanın dünyayı yönetmek adına gerçekleştirdiği şiddet eylemlerinin sonucudur. Her iki romanda da, varoluşun yıkıma olduğu kadar yaratıma da bağlı olan kararsız doğasının temsili, Nietzsche'nin

ebedi dönüş fikrine dayanmaktadır. McCarthy, tarihteki ebedi dönüşün karasız doğasını vurgulayarak, aynı anda yaşam döngüsü içinde hem hapsolmuş hem de özgürleşmiş insanlığı tasvir etmektedir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Cormac McCarthy, *Blood Meridian*, *The Road*, Nietzsche, Ebedi Dönüş

ABSTRACT

Ahmet Gülsat, A Nietzschean Reading of Cormac McCarthy's *Blood Meridian* or *The Evening Redness in The West* and *The Road*, Başkent Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Amerikan Kültürü ve Edebiyatı, 2021

Through his career, as an appreciated American Southern writer, Cormac McCarthy has written on issues such as necrophilia, incest and violence by creating gothic atmospheres and employing grotesque elements to disrupt the norms of the world and the society. Some critics also assure that some of McCarthy's works are the critique of contemporary agendas of the time in which the works were written. While *Blood Meridian, Or the Evening Redness in the West* (1985), which is indeed a western novel set in the mid-1800s, can be read as a critique on America's capitalist and expansionist policy against communist Vietnam, McCarthy's recent novel *The Road* (2006) is considered as a signifier of the crisis of climate change. This thesis offers a Nietzschean reading of the two novels mentioned above, mainly based upon Nietzsche's idea of eternal return, by emphasizing the implicit connection between them. According to Nietzsche, time moves in a circular shape in which everything repeats itself eternally. This philosophy opposes religious doctrines which construct all their norms on a linear time line. The concept of a linear time line serves religions' reward and punishment notions because owing to time's horizontal movement, man can be held responsible for his actions in the past and be rewarded or punished in the future. However, in Nietzsche's circular time, the past is also a point in the future, while the future has already occurred in the past. Taking Nietzsche's philosophy into consideration, in *Blood Meridian*, McCarthy does not only criticize the violence the U.S. committed, but also reveals that war and destruction are ever-present in human history and they will always prevail. The cauterized world of *The Road* is the consequence of the violent acts which man performed to rule the world in *Blood Meridian*. In both novels, the representation of the ambivalent nature of existence that depends on creation as well as destruction is based on Nietzsche's idea of eternal return. By emphasizing the ambivalent nature of the eternal return in history, McCarthy portrays humankind simultaneously entrapped and liberated within the cycle of life.

Keywords: Cormac McCarthy, *Blood Meridian*, *The Road*, Nietzsche, Eternal Return

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INTRODUCTION

1. Aim of the Study

The aim of this study is to provide a Nietzschean reading of Cormac McCarthy's *Blood Meridian or The Evening Redness in the West* (1985) and *The Road* (2006). McCarthy, in both novels, presents a pessimistic view of the relationship between man and nature and of their ambivalent power of creation and destruction. He also focuses on mankind's tendency to violate and exploit nature in the name of building a civilization, his taking advantage of religious beliefs for his financial interests and to claim authoritative power on communities, and his adoption or denial of social and individual morals and values. In order to discuss these issues in detail, this study focuses on three main themes present in both novels: nature, religion and time. The reason why this thesis particularly selects these two novels of Cormac McCarthy is that there is the implicit connection between these two novels which renders *The Road* a sequel to *Blood Meridian*. Although there is a 20-year time span between the publications of these novels, this study observes that McCarthy bridges this time span by depicting how the predatory ideology set forth in *Blood Meridian* results in a self-destructive apocalypse in *The Road*. That is, starting with the invasion of the Americas by the Europeans and their massacring the natives to possess the land, the greedy exploitation of all the resources specifically presented in the setting of the 19th century Americas in *Blood Meridian* lead to an apocalypse in the 21st century United States in *The Road*. In this respect, *Blood Meridian* can be regarded as a foreshadowing for the "barren, silent, godless" (McCarthy, 2006, p.2) world that is illustrated in *The Road*. If *Blood Meridian* is about the exploration of the American West, then, *The Road* is the "reversed story of the conquest of the American West" (Ibarolla-Armendariz, 2011, p.2). This study presents an alternative way of interpreting these novels by defining them in relation to one another and detecting a continuation of philosophical and ideological ideas plot-wise. In addition, within the framework of Nietzsche's philosophical concept of eternal return/occurrence, which will be discussed in detail later in this chapter, *Blood Meridian* and *The Road* are connected to one another in a circular bond. *The Road* can be regarded as a sequel to *Blood Meridian* because the destruction and exploitation of nature portrayed in *Blood Meridian* will eventually bring the world to a dystopian end as is depicted in *The Road*. In the same vein, although it had been formerly published, *Blood Meridian* can be regarded as a sequel to *The Road* because if a new utopian world is to be established after the apocalypse, it will be presumably like the one in

Blood Meridian. The pessimistic worldview that human nature is inclined to self-destruction is dominant in McCarthy's oeuvre.

This study aims to pursue Nietzsche's concept of eternal return in *Blood Meridian* and *The Road* and to emphasize McCarthy's nihilistic approach that observes humankind caught up in a vicious circle of continuously destroying what he creates. In this respect, this thesis argues that by treating grand narratives of religion and history as the manifestation of predetermined, cyclical, repetitive enactments of evil rather than narratives that celebrate life and heroic victories as is seen in the mythical storytelling of Genesis and the historical storytelling of the grand battles, McCarthy demonstrates that grand narratives, constructed by the dominant ideology, rely on a collective amnesia. That is, humanity does not learn much from the lessons of history; people continue to act out the same destructive mistakes and evil deeds. Thus, the violence of the historical frontier past of the United States in *Blood Meridian* is reflected on the near-future as a mass destruction in *The Road*. In doing so, the novels strongly demonstrate that apocalypse has never been an issue of the future but it is always already related to the present in a world where grand narratives dictate destructive repetitive behavioral patterns to the human who has already become the monster himself.

McCarthy has composed his works in different genres such as the Western, crime thriller, and dystopia but he is commonly identified as an American Southern writer. Dorson (2017) claims that "McCarthy's prose style is among the most idiosyncratic in contemporary literature" (p.1) and adds that he has a wide influence on other contemporary writers. Scholars argue that he is, as an American Southern writer, mostly influenced by Flannery O'Connor and William Faulkner. This influence can be traced especially in his early works. In addition to this influence, McCarthy also benefits from his experiences related his Tennessee roots (Hage, 2010). His novels dwell on issues like murder, necrophilia, incest and violence in all forms that take place in sublime settings. Through employing such themes that create horror and terror, McCarthy disrupts the norms of society and criticizes the dominant ideology of the historical period his novels are set in. For instance, *The Orchard Keeper* (1965) and *Child of God* (1973) are claimed to be "critique[s] of Agrarian philosophy" (Walsh, 2009, p.11). The former is about "a failed subsistence farmer who, nonetheless, clings to a distinctly Appalachian dream of an isolationist existence that will never be realized" (Walsh, 2009, p.12) and the latter is about a "serial-kill[er] necrophiliac Lester Ballard, whose descent into madness is initiated by his displacement by the mechanisms of rampant finance capitalism and exacerbated by the community at large" (Walsh, 2009, p.12). Another example can be *The Border Trilogy*, which

is published in the 1990s and set in the 1940s and 50s. This trilogy is regarded by many critics as a denouncement of the Reagan presidency and the Gulf War with Iraq. The novels this thesis focuses on also reveal such political criticism. While *Blood Meridian* (1985) is an anti-Western novel set in the 1840s in the Mexican American borderlands and exposes violent frontier history, it criticizes the United States' capitalist and expansionist policy against the communist Vietnam. The other novel entitled *The Road* (2006) presents an apocalyptic disaster that has destroyed every living thing on earth apart from human beings. Luce (2017) states that *The Road* is in fact McCarthy's response to 9/11 terrorist attacks that caused great anguish worldwide.

In his work, *Cormac McCarthy and the Writing of American Spaces*, Estes (2013) claims that McCarthy's oeuvre can be categorized in three periods. He defines McCarthy's early literary career as "the early Tennessee period" (p.89), in which his works mostly display Southern Gothic features. The next period is called the "southwest period (starting in 1985 with *Blood Meridian*)" (Estes, 2013, p.89), in which he also wrote *The Border Trilogy* which deconstructs the ideologically constructed Western myths just like *Blood Meridian*. Finally, with his latest work, *The Road*, it is clearly observed that McCarthy totally leaves his southwest period behind. In Estes' (2013) opinion, *The Road* "can be seen as a return to the earlier Tennessee period" (p.89) or can be perceived as the beginning of a totally new period for McCarthy's writing style. Nevertheless, whether the latter opinion is valid or not *The Road* will be identified with McCarthy's future writing.

McCarthy's *Blood Meridian* relates the story of an unnamed kid who leaves home and joins a gang of scalp hunters named after their leader, Glanton. However, it can be claimed that the protagonist of the novel is Judge Holden who is an influential member of the gang. In fact, McCarthy is inspired by real events and historical records of the wild Southwest of America and bases his novel on real historical figures such as Glanton and Judge; real villages and towns of the Southwest that still exist; historical events like the gang's continuous attacks on the Indians. By blending history with fiction, McCarthy reveals the violence in America's heroic and mythical frontier past, which is in fact a grand narrative constructed by the dominant ideology. McCarthy rewrites history from a postmodernist view and disrupts this grand narrative particularly by the portrayal of Judge, the embodiment of the Western Enlightenment Ideals, who claims to bring civilization to the savage people of wild lands but who is a real savage himself. By presenting binary oppositions like civilization versus savagery, rationality versus madness, knowledge versus ignorance, and good versus evil and blurring the boundaries

between them through the use of grotesque elements, McCarthy presents “an anti-myth of the frontier” in *Blood Meridian* (Spurgeon, 2009, p.96). The grand narrative that depicts European invaders as saviors and Native Americans as wild beasts to be tamed is completely destroyed by McCarthy’s portrayal of the so-called saviors as the representatives of savagery who deploy a massacre. Through detailed horrific descriptions of such violence, McCarthy exposes the repressed past of the US hidden behind the frontier myth. He demonstrates that it is in fact the Western invaders who are the real savages.

McCarthy’s most recent novel *The Road* is set in a world that is “cauterized” (McCarthy, 2006, p.13) by an unknown human-caused catastrophe that happens in near the future. At an unknown date, the whole world is set on fire, burnt down, covered with ash and all the life forms in it have gone extinct. The whole landscape, even the lands, rivers, water, and sky are grey. Throughout the novel, by giving no reference to another color, McCarthy emphasizes the colorlessness of this world. In *The Road*, there are an unnamed father and an unnamed son referred to as the man and the son throughout the novel. They are travelling from the North to the South with the hope of finding a life-sustaining place after the unidentified catastrophe as well as a familial catastrophe: the wife’s/mother’s suicide. The story is based upon the father and the son's struggles with nature and the other people they meet on the road to be able to survive. At the end of the novel, they reach their destination, the shore, but what they find is again nothing. The land is still dead and even the sea has lost its blue color and is gray like the sky. Soon after, the father, who has been ill for a while, dies and the child is found by a man who is married, has two children and even a dog. The boy joins this family, but the rest of the story is left ambiguous.

In *Blood Meridian*, McCarthy underlines the idea that violence, cruelty and wars have always existed in the world, and they will continue to exist until the end; a perspective which emphasizes that history is repetitive. The question that resides in the twisted mind of Judge in the novel is also the question that occupies man’s mind through history: “If God meant to interfere in the degeneracy of mankind would he not have done so by now? Wolves cull themselves, man. What other creature could? And is the race of man not more predacious yet?” (McCarthy, 1985, p.146). Unlike *Blood Meridian*, in which the representative of evil, Judge, triumphs over goodness, in *The Road*, McCarthy ends the story in a more ambiguous way. He highlights the importance of a new world and new order apart from capitalism, but McCarthy himself can still not imagine this new world without the capitalist ideology yet. However, the boy, like a prophet, can imagine a new world because he was born into the end of the world and

he has not grown up in the capitalist world with its values. From a Nietzschean perspective, while, in *Blood Meridian*, McCarthy depicts Judge's urge to destroy as serving his will to rule and establish his own order, in *The Road*, he portrays a child who does not carry the burden of the past because he is not informed by it and he presents this child as the savior of mankind. However, inevitably, the child is doomed to inherit the knowledge of the past from his father and he is not able to offer a new future.

2. Nietzsche's Philosophy of Eternal Return

Nietzsche is one of the greatest philosophers of the 19th century and well-known for his famous declaration: "God is dead". His main philosophical concerns are related to the meaning of life, the concept of time, the ideas of Enlightenment, the hypocritical values of the modern world and the corruption of religion, mainly Christianity, because he grew up by Christian doctrines. Living in the age of reason, he questioned the human mind, the use of science and skeptically approached the term "progress". He is also considered as the founder of the philosophy of nihilism. His ideas shook the ground when they first appeared in the late 19th and early 20th century, and they still keep their importance in the 21st century and receive new interpretations by contemporary scholars.

Nietzsche answers the question of what nihilism is by claiming "that the highest values devalue themselves" (Nietzsche, 1901/1968, p.9). The definition and function of these high values are essential to understand Nietzsche's argument. Values generate an order in every aspect of human life such as spiritual, moral, as well as physical and constitutional. The whole world around man is ordered by values and values themselves are also ordered. Thus, according to Nietzsche, some values are regarded as lower, some as higher values. When the higher values lose their importance in forming a social order, they lose their reality and they no longer put any obligations in front of humanity. This is why nihilism is the only thing left in man's hands (Michalski 2007/2012). Nietzsche believes that the twentieth century man is incapable of living in a social order because there is not a meaning to hold onto with the age of Enlightenment. Therefore, any successive attempts to construct an order in the light of any institutionalized philosophy such as Christianity, socialism or the like, are doomed to be a failure. According to Nietzsche, the reason of this failure is that man lives in a world of becoming which means the world is constantly changing. He also adds that "becoming aims at nothing and achieves nothing" (Nietzsche, 1901/1968, p.12) However, this does not mean that the whole world, history and even life are aimless because of this nothingness. Nietzsche comments on this nihilistic description of the world as follows:

Waste, decay, elimination need not be condemned: they are necessary consequences of life, of the growth of life. The phenomenon of decadence is as necessary as any increase and advance of life: one is in no position to abolish it. (Nietzsche, 1901/1968, p.25)

Hence, the things that are described negatively in life are essential because without them no positivity can emerge. Decay, destruction, pain and suffering exist and they are also necessary just like regeneration, growth, and happiness. All this negativity –so nihilism as well– is an inseparable condition of this world (Michalski, 2007/2012). Nietzsche explains the necessity of this negativity by saying: “what is evil, absurd, and ugly seems, as it were, permissible, owing to an excess of procreating, fertilizing energies that can still turn any desert into lush farmland” (Nietzsche, 1882/1974, p.328). In Nietzsche’s eyes, negativity and positivity are two sides of life and one is impossible without the other. Understanding life is only possible “when we learn to deal with this pain, when we discover its power” (Michalski 2007/2012, p.14).

The appreciation of decay is not the ultimate solution for nihilism, and the devaluation of the highest values is not adequate to be able to define Nietzsche’s nihilism. It can be claimed that what Nietzsche means by announcing the death of God is the corruption of the ideal values such as belief in the goodness of human beings, preserving an ethical stance in life, and progress through the values of enlightenment. In this respect, the consequences of God’s death move beyond the religious framework because before having died, “the notion of God had been the warrant for all sorts of cultural constructs in moral, philosophical, even scientific domains” (Hatab, 2014, p.36). Being the cause of existence, God was the meaning of life and the ultimate purpose for mankind. However, Nietzsche criticizes that considering the consciousness as the highest value rather than an element of existence, and desiring an omniscient knowledge, which he calls a spirit and God, is a great mistake and this understanding “turns life into a monstrosity; that a ‘God’ and total sensorium would altogether be something on account of which life would have to be condemned” and he adds “[o]ur greatest *reproach* against existence was the *existence of God*” (Nietzsche, 1901/1968, pp.376-377). Nietzsche (1901/1968) claims that the notion of spirit, as defined by Plato and also in Christianity, is “a life-endangering, life-calumniating, life-denying principle” (p.342). In the light of these arguments, it can be asserted that according to Nietzsche, God is an impediment to man’s progress. God’s death should be praised and man should not be pessimistic anymore. However, for human beings, God’s death means that man has lost the meaning of life, the core element of life is gone and this leads man to nihilism.

Nietzsche, in the absence of God, creates the overman as a goal, a purpose for mankind in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1883/1976). Zarathustra announces himself as the teacher of the overman. Since man has lost the origin of his life as a result of God's death, Zarathustra points out to the material life as the meaning of life. Zarathustra says "I beseech you, my brothers, *remain faithful to the earth*, and do not believe those who speak to you of otherworldly hopes!" and continues by adding:

Once the sin against God was the greatest sin; but God died, and these sinners died with him. To sin against the earth is now the most dreadful thing, and to esteem the entrails of the unknowable higher than the meaning of the earth. (Nietzsche, 1883/1976, p.125)

Zarathustra tells the crowd who are listening to him that God has abandoned them and they should not struggle for any spiritual meaning or believe in any other metaphysical world. He thinks that man should regard the material world as the center of his life. According to Nietzsche, man can make progress in the absence of God, therefore God's death is not a thing to be grieved over. It should be also noted that because man's life is founded upon this world instead of otherworldly notions that God offered once, Higgins (1987) claims that man should be in contact with other men on earth in order to fulfill his desire for the overman. This explains why Zarathustra aims to spread his ideas to other men and to his disciples. Higgins (1987) expresses that Zarathustra announces his optimistic message with the idea of the overman. Zarathustra points out that becoming the overman should be the aim to achieve in life for man. The cause of the overman's existence is to create and proceed. Higgins (1987) explains it as follows: "The overman's mode of being is continuously creative; the overman's present being and all that he carries over from the past are squandered in acts of creativity toward the future" (p.81). In a sense, the overman is the highest kind of man, according to Nietzsche; and Nietzsche sets the overman for man as a goal to be reached. Nevertheless, Zarathustra defines the overman as follows:

There it was too that I picked up the word 'overman' by the way, and that man is something that must be overcome—that man is a bridge and no end: proclaiming himself blessed in view of his noon and evening, as the way to new dawns—Zarathustra's word of the great noon, and whatever else I hung up over man like the last crimson light of evening. (Nietzsche, 1883/1976, p.310)

In the light of the quotation above, it can be stated that it is not possible to achieve this goal for man because it is an endless journey and there is no point man can reach and stop. As Nietzsche (1883/1976) states "[m]an is something that shall be overcome" (p.124). In addition to announcing himself as the teacher of the overman, Zarathustra is told by his animals that "For

your animals know well, O Zarathustra, who you are and must become: behold, *you are the teacher of the eternal recurrence*—that is your destiny” (Nietzsche, 1883/1976, p.332). Now, Zarathustra is the teacher of two things: the overman and the eternal recurrence. To be able to understand the significance of the eternal recurrence and its relation to the notion of the overman, Nietzsche’s time concept should be taken into consideration.

Time is another abstract concept that man tries to understand and describe with various concrete symbols such as an arrow, a river or a wheel. For Nietzsche, time is a constructed concept by man, a concept that includes past, present and future. Nietzsche (1876/1997) explains the concept of time and its meaning with an example. He states in his work entitled *On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life* that cows “do not know what is meant by yesterday or today, they leap about, eat, rest [...], fettered to the moment and its pleasure or displeasure” (p.60). Without the concept of time, cows live in the moment and this makes them happy because they remember nothing. For Nietzsche, attaining a concept of time indicates having memory and memory brings “a burden, a chain, a phantom” (Michalski 2007/2012, p.16) that prevents man from living the moment. Memory causes a space for nostalgia by thinking the things that do not belong to this moment anymore (Michalski, 2007/2016).

Nietzsche assumes that children are blessed in the same way like the cows. They are also not aware of the difference between past and present. They live the moment without realizing what the things were and what they will be. In other words, they are not trapped in nostalgia or in any worries about the future; they just play their games in the present moment and Nietzsche (1876/1997) defines this as a “blissful blindness” (p.61). The situation of children playing games is “both foreign and familiar at the same time” (Michalski, 2007/2012, p.17). It is familiar because every man had been a child once and played games without being aware of time concept. Such a phase of life, devoid of the rule of time, was pure happiness. On the other hand, it is foreign because every grown-up man is aware of the past, present and future; and it is now impossible to go back. There is no way of playing games without realizing that time is passing. Now, that happiness is like a utopian state that man will never reach again. However, this game does not last forever and is disturbed by an external factor such as a call to meal by a parent. At that point, the child replies and says later or soon and the game is buried in the past, which implies the end of the happiness. Nietzsche believes that this disturbance is inevitable and also necessary at the same time. Just like the relation between positivity and negativity in life, this disturbance cannot be separated from the play and they are parts of a whole. Without

disturbance, the play has no meaning and it would be “incomprehensible” (Michalski, 2007/2012, p.18).

From this point of view, man is distinguished from cows and children with his ability to remember. However, this does not mean that man lacks the ability to forget. As it is impossible to go back to child’s playing time, that lost paradise, it is also unthinkable to be able to remember everything, every single event and moment in life. If it were so, this situation would cause a great burden for man and he would feel trapped in nostalgia all the time. Time becomes a flowing river that cannot be captured. He loses *the moment*, everything becomes exactly the same and a total repetition. Thus, forgetting, as a skill, is not something negative or a deficiency. Nietzsche (1887/2000) states that this ability to forget or not to remember everything is “no mere *vis inertiae*” (p.493), which means a lack of activity or interest. On the contrary, it is “rather an active and in the strictest sense positive faculty of repression” (p.493). These two opposite forces, and also two parts of a whole, are the basis of human life and enable man to distinguish past and future from each other. As a consequence, time is not a river which man can jump into or get out of anytime he wants. Time is the man who creates it with his power to differentiate past, present and future (Michalski 2007/2012).

While defining time through man, Nietzsche defines man by his actions. He believes that a man can only be defined through his actions and relations with the world and other people. As is mentioned earlier, Nietzsche claims that human life cannot be understood without pain, suffering and conflicts that exist along with joy and happiness. In a similar way, he asserts that man defines himself through other men. For instance, he believes he is good because he does not behave like a worse man and this indicates that his goodness is a result of his relation with the other. To be able to define himself, man needs other people who do not behave like himself. However, the definition of goodness and evil comes from a belief system that is called morals and according to Nietzsche, these definitions can turn upside down depending on the person or institution that creates these morals. According to Nietzsche (1887/2000), morals are actually illusions and therefore man has no proper ability to define himself (Michalski 2007/2012).

In a world that is constantly moving and changing, man’s actions are also changing and each action contributes to that change and implies a new beginning. As a result of the constant change and instability, Nietzsche argues that attainment of certain knowledge is not possible. Zarathustra is the the embodiment of the concept of the overman. He has this wisdom and claims that the only certain thing is that nothing is certain. Each experience that a man has brings innumerable possibilities and creates innumerable lives and worlds. Zarathustra states that the

only certainty is that all things “dance on the feet of Chance” (Nietzsche, 1883/1976, p.278). That is, in life, nothing is predetermined and successive, everything exists in a chaotic state because it is subject to chance. The chaos mentioned is not an expression of a negation. On the contrary, it indicates numerous possibilities of becoming. As Zarathustra claims “one must still have chaos in oneself to be able to give birth to a dancing star” (Nietzsche, 1883/1976, p.129). Such an approach implies that the established order should be challenged, questioned and demolished if one wills to transgress the boundaries that surround him. In this respect, chaos has the potential to create anew.

Nietzsche associates this creativity in chaos with the will to power. The overman, who has the will to power, has an ambivalent stance. He simultaneously destroys and creates. As Hatab (2014) states “[v]arious motifs in Nietzsche’s texts can be read as anti-nihilistic attempts to rethink truth, meaning, and value in naturalistic terms, in a manner consistent with conditions of becoming” (p.37). In other words, destroying turns into a new way of becoming. In the section entitled “The Will to Power as Knowledge” in *Will to Power* (1901/1968), Nietzsche states that knowledge is actually an instrument which serves for power. He underlines the direct relation between the desire for knowledge and the will to power because, according to Nietzsche (1901/1968), a species who possesses both of them “grasps a certain amount of reality in order to become master of it, in order to press it into service” (p.267). If knowledge is power, then any living being who has knowledge can rule the ignorant others, and take advantage of them. Similarly, in another section entitled “The Will to Power in Nature”, Nietzsche (1901/1968) explains the concept of will to power “as an insatiable desire to manifest power; or as the employment and exercise of power, as a creative drive” (p.333). He defines the enactment of power also as a creative instinct. Thus, will to power attains an ambivalent nature. Hatab (2014) comments on this ambivalence as follows: “Will to power depicts in dynamic terms the idea that any affirmation is also a negation, that any condition or assertion of meaning must overcome some ‘Other’, some obstacle or counterforce” (p.37). Will to power is not only the clash of forces, but a mutual reversal change of positions. Although the struggle between two forces end up by announcing the victory of one of them, this position may change in time. Will to power is a dynamic state and represents the essence of life. While one wins, the other one loses. Such a struggle is necessary to sustain life.

In fact, this struggle between forces does not aim to destroy the other one completely. Neither of the sides intends to make the other one disappear, the struggle is only about overcoming the other. It can be understood that the existence of one power is possible only with

the existence of a counter-power and if the latter is perished, the former is not a power anymore and it also dies out (Hatab, 2014). Thus, Nietzsche (1901/1968) describes power as overcoming the other, but not by totally devouring it. “[T]here is no annihilation in the sphere of spirit” (p.588). Nietzsche believes that life is completely based upon the notion of force because every living thing has an innate power. Ignoring will to power would also mean ignoring existence, as “[a]ll scientific, moral, and intellectual developments began as elements of dissatisfaction and impulses to overcome something, whether it was ignorance, worldliness, brutality, confusion, or competing cultural models” (Hatab, 2014, p.38). Therefore, resistance is an inevitable outcome and it is essential for survival. Resistance exists even in the case of obedience. “There is in commanding an admission that the absolute power of the opponent has not been vanquished, incorporated, disintegrated. ‘Obedience’ and ‘commanding’ are forms of struggle” (Nietzsche p.342). When one of the sides obey and the other commands, this means that neither of the sides disappears completely, so it is possible to speak about a struggle, still.

Having discussed the notion of power in the concept of will to power, the notion of will in the term should also be explained. Nietzsche (*The Will to Power* 1901/1968) defines the act of willing as follows:

“Willing” is not “desiring”, striving, demanding: it is distinguished from these by the affect of commanding.

There is no such thing as “willing”, but only a willing *something*: one must not remove the aim from the total condition—as epistemologists do. “Willing” as they understand it is as little a reality as “thinking”: it is a pure fiction.

It is part of willing that something is commanded (—which naturally does not mean that the will is “effected”). (p.353)

Nietzsche states that willing does not mean having or possessing something, rather it means to govern and assert power over the target object. In order to experience willing, one needs a counter object to command and bend it to his will. Willing, different from desire, is not just a mental process or an attained insight, it demands action and struggle for power. The will to power becomes the meaning of life and may even replace the idea of God after his death. One needs an opponent to live whether that opponent is a person, an idea, an institution, a belief or an order. One’s struggle for having power over his opponent gives him a purpose in life. He takes action overcome his opponent to establish his own order or values. Therefore, the urge to destroy the previously established order and founding a new one on the individual’s own principles can be carried onto the level of countries, nations, ideologies and religious beliefs.

Destroying the current order and creating completely a new life is, obviously, the definition of an apocalypse. This definition of apocalypse is given in similar versions in many religious scriptures. For instance, the Apocalypse in the Bible is also “The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to show unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass” (King James Version Bible, 1987, Revelation 1:1). One interpretation of these religious apocalypse stories is that one day or at a moment, whole life will come to an end and men do not have any idea about when or how this end will occur. However, religious apocalypse tales mostly offer another possibility of life, a fresh new beginning and serenity. The end of the world will come sooner or later and man should get prepared for the apocalypse as if it may arrive at any moment. On the other hand, these tales can be read symbolically. Every catastrophic moment in history can be regarded as the end of the world and after the catastrophe there comes the new order. In this respect, there is no need to expect a cosmic catastrophe to destroy the world. On an individualistic level, human life also starts with birth, with new experiences and hope and then it ends. The end of the world will not happen later or in the future, it is happening right now, and man is creating a new world in each step he takes and he is responsible for everything that he creates (Michalski, 2007/2012). Thus, it can be concluded that, in fact, the end is also the beginning.

In all of these apocalyptic tales and philosophies, fire is the element that constitutes the basis of all these beliefs. It symbolizes both the end, with its consuming and destructive power, and the beginning, with its creative aspect that refers to the mythological story of Prometheus and the creation of civilization. Heraclitus, who is a pre-Socratic Greek philosopher, puts fire in the center of the universe and defines it as the divine ruling order like Zeus. He claims the world is not created by man or God but by an “everliving fire” (Michalski, 2007/2012, p.108). Stoics, who devote themselves to a school of Hellenistic philosophy called Stoicism, believe that ‘fire’ spreads through the whole universe and the world is like a volcano that erupts and destroys everything around it but mounts again from its ashes. A Stoic believes that one day the world will be destroyed completely but only the good things that deserve to be eternal will be left. This expectation can be interpreted as suggesting that “the apocalyptic fires will purify the world and restore it to its primal innocence that it might then arise again from the ashes” (Michalski, 2007/2012, p.108).

Also the role of fire in scriptures can be interpreted from this perspective. Fire has the power to purify and when man burns in flames, what is left behind is eternal innocence. However, Hegel (1825/2006) assumes that the fire that Heraclitus mentions is a metaphor for

life itself. Fire devastates itself as well as others and it is not stable or predictable. Fire is constantly becoming and passing around just like life and the world around man. In a very similar Nietzschean perspective, which assumes man is the creator and also the destroyer of the world, Hegel claims that man himself is the fire that is simultaneously himself and the world around him (Michalski, 2007/2012). In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1883/1976), Zarathustra descends from the mountains to bring fire to people and he calls himself the fire. However, his aim is not to enlighten people with his own fire. He only wants to make people realize their own fire inside them. In other words, Zarathustra's purpose is to set people's souls on fire, as he believes that everybody has their own fire in themselves. Thus, man is the fire that destroys and creates at the same time by becoming and passing onto the others and Borges concludes that "Time is the substance of which I am made, time is a river that sweeps me along but I am the river; [...] it is a fire that consumes me, but I am the fire" (as cited in Michalski, 2007/2012 p.332). To conclude, Michalski (2007/2012) claims that Nietzsche does not say fire is a "structure" or "the order of the world" (p.123). On the contrary, he says that "the metaphor of fire is supposed to teach us that everything I do, each moment of my life, conceals a lightning bolt that burns everything I know", which means man's life is "unconditionally creative" (p.123).

However, it should be noted that what is created after destruction is, although new, does not bring anything new. That is, although every new order has the potential to change the ways of the world, it cannot. Hegel (1825/2006) states that "changes in the world of nature—ininitely varied as these might be—reflect nothing more than an eternally repeated cycle" (p.57). Life is based on repeating cycles; history repeats itself with all its catastrophic events, but people do not learn their lessons from these experiences. Arthur Schopenhauer (1819/1969) claims that past and future are not different from each other or situated as opposite concepts, rather they are the parts of a whole and he describes the concept of time, metaphorically, as "an endlessly revolving sphere; the half that is always sinking would be the past, and the half that is always rising would be the future" (p.279). In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Nietzsche (1883/1976) defines time as a circle and writes that one should not be afraid of the destruction of time or the abolishment of future, because everything will be renewed when they are totally destroyed. Different from Schopenhauer's sphere, in Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1883/1976), the animals tell Zarathustra that "[e]verything goes, everything comes back, eternally rolls the wheel of being" (Nietzsche, 1883/1976, p.329). For Nietzsche, the present is like a point on this constantly rolling wheel which means that the point is both the beginning and the end of a

moment; and every moment performs a never-ending repetition: Eternal return. However, Michalski (2007/2012) notes that this eternal return is “not the repetition of some content, of some form, of one situation or another, but always anew, infinitely, on an unending time line” (p.189).

Like the death of God announced by Nietzsche, this idea of eternal recurrence also may lead man into nihilism, therefore it is not an idea which can be easily grasped. When Zarathustra, the teacher of eternal recurrence, realizes this idea, he calls it the “abysmal thought” (Nietzsche, 1883/1976, p.327), and finds himself in great agony, because this means that all the mistakes and devastating events in life also recur eternally. Thus, Zarathustra arrives at the conclusion that “all life is pointless and disgusting” (Higgins, 1987, p.153). While Zarathustra feels sick with the idea of eternal recurrence, his animals tell him to celebrate the idea and enjoy life. The reason why Zarathustra regards eternal recurrence as a damnation is that he does not have the ability to forget, unlike his animals. As is mentioned earlier, forgetting is a positive ability, rather than, as commonly believed, a negative one. However, human beings cannot erase their memories and therefore they suffer. Yet the animals can just enjoy the present without having the notion of past and can appreciate the idea of eternal recurrence while Zarathustra cannot (Vincenzo, 2018). However, Nietzsche explains how one can accept the idea of eternal recurrence and get rid of its burden in *The Will to Power* (1901/1968) as follows:

To *endure* the idea of eternal recurrence one needs: freedom from morality; new means against the fact of *pain* (pain conceived as a tool, as the father of pleasure; there is no cumulative consciousness of displeasure); the enjoyment of all kinds of uncertainty, experimentalism... (pp.545-546)

Nietzsche claims that one should set himself free from the present moral values and also welcome the pain as pleasure. According to him, pain is a deeper feeling than joy and also both pain and pleasure are parts of the same whole. They belong to each other and one cannot exist without the other. The point that Nietzsche wants to emphasize is the unity; that passing and becoming, so past and future are not different or separate parts. On the contrary, these fragments belong to each other. In other words, they are the pieces of a whole. Nietzsche claims that “everything has two faces, one that of passing, the other of becoming” (as cited in Michalski, 2007/2012, p.184). Thus, as is described in Christianity, the end of the world is not the end of the current order and the old world is not replaced by a new one; and the arrival of Christ as a savior does not mean he is bringing ultimate happiness and eliminating all the sadness and ugliness in the world. It will be just a revolution in which current concepts are unsettled and that savior will be a child totally new, “without a past, without expectations of the future,

beyond the succession of instants” (Michalski, 2007/2012, p.206). Thus, Nietzsche implies that man should strip himself of the values to be able to get out of this repetition. This cycle may seem pessimistic and can turn one’s life into a meaningless process, so one can seek to break that circle but Nietzsche (1901/1968) states that “[e]verything becomes and recurs eternally—escape is impossible!” (p.545). Nevertheless if everything is recurring eternally and everything is repeating itself, what is left to man to live on this earth? Nietzsche (1901/1968) answers this question as follows: “*This world is the will to power—and nothing besides!* And you yourselves are also this will to power—and nothing besides!” (p.550). As such, Nietzsche concludes that the will to power is the meaning of this life and one must overcome even himself constantly. This is man’s goal on earth and this is the way to become the overman.

McCarthy reflects these Nietzschean ideas in *Blood Meridian* (1985) and *The Road* (2006). While, in *Blood Meridian*, he depicts Judge Holden’s destructive acts as his goals for establishing his own order and fulfilling his will to power in America’s frontier period which is already full of atrocity, in *The Road*, he narrates the story of a father and a son who are trying hard to find a livable place on earth and sustaining life toward future in a demolished world where nearly all of the species have gone extinct and the human race is endangered. However, within a Nietzschean framework, these novels can be read as two different historical periods which follow one another within the framework of Nietzsche’s vicious circle of time. This discussion will be pursued in the following chapters under three main headings. Chapter 1, “Nature”, focuses on the complicated relation between man and nature. It demonstrates that due to the interdependent relation between man and nature, man destroys himself while he is trying to master nature and destroy it. Even though it seems as if McCarthy depicts the world in *The Road* as the end of nature, it simultaneously implies a new beginning. Chapter 2, “Religion”, deals with the issues such as morality, existence of God, the use of religion in both novels and the attempt to overcome it. However, it ends with the denouement that man will fail in this attempt again. Chapter 3, “Time”, is based on the discussions about the Nietzschean notion of time as represented in these novels. This chapter depicts how McCarthy reflects the cycle of time through both novels and how man is trapped within it. It is claimed that although these two novels represent two historical periods afar, they follow each other on an endlessly recurring circle. Finally, “Conclusion” arrives at the argument that everything on earth, all violence, destructions, institutions like religion will recur over and over again; and any attempt, any savior, even an innocent child without a past, as Nietzsche suggests, will eventually fail in breaking this circle.

CHAPTER 1

NATURE

Nature always plays a crucial role in Gothic literature. It is even depicted as an animate force with supernatural traits that develops the plot. Therefore, in Gothic, “the natural world is dominant both as setting and character” (Parker & Poland, 2019, p.2). Although there are lyrical representations of nature in Romanticism as can be observed in Wordsworth’s poems which define nature as a place that people return to for salvation or to find one’s self, nature in Gothic fiction is “a space of crisis” (Smith & Hughes, 2013, p.3). Landscapes are described in detail to highlight the characters’ isolation from civilization and to emphasize pure wilderness without human life. Geographical features such as enormous mountains, dark forests, spectacular waterfalls and deep chasms boost the dark, sinister, ambiguous and disoriented atmosphere of Gothic texts. In other words, nature is not a welcoming place in Gothic and it represents a force that cannot be tamed. This uncontrollability creates fear because man is frightened of the things that he does not know about and cannot control (Botting, 1996).

No matter how his works are categorized, as Southern gothic, Western or Appalachian, the common feature of McCarthy’s novels presents detailed descriptions of the natural environment where the plotline takes place. McCarthy provides compelling landscape descriptions which create “a vivid sensation of what it is like being there under those circumstances and of nothing—no essence or inference or idea—being truer or mattering more” (Bell, 1988, p.4). Fertile, uncorrupted and savage nature is employed to present a Gothic landscape that embodies evil force because the violent characters commit atrocities in such a setting. Nature is presented both as a victim and a perpetrator in McCarthy’s novels and this ambiguity creates terror. That is, nature can be destructive even by its absence.

The representation of nature in *Blood Meridian* and *The Road* bear similarities. Through *Blood Meridian*, McCarthy offers a detailed portrayal of nature with all its sublime and grotesque descriptions and he also narrates the power struggle between man and nature. In the novel, there is a complex interaction between these two, nature and man, but at the end, the main character of the novel, Judge Holden, a huge, bald, beardless, scary man who has neither eyebrows nor lashes but is “surprisingly petite” (McCarthy, 1985, p.166) at the same time—also represented as the god of war—becomes victorious in all his destructions and abuses against both man and nature. Considering the end of *Blood Meridian*, it could be claimed that the dead nature of *The Road* is the consequence of Judge’s bloody victory. This time, in *The Road*, McCarthy (2006) creates a gothic atmosphere through the absence of nature—as a

consequence of an unnamed incident—which does not provide any sustainable life chance to humans, in contrast to *Blood Meridian*. Even though *Blood Meridian* and *The Road* seem different from each other (while the first one is considered mostly as Western set in the 1800s, the latter is a post-apocalyptic novel which takes place in near future), reading both novels as two parts of the same whole, a circle, can be meaningful to be able to understand McCarthy's nihilist philosophy. Thus, the Nietzschean point of view will be useful to claim that, in the repetitive destructive history of mankind in McCarthy's works, nature might be vanished but it will be reborn again in its own way.

In Nietzsche's philosophy, nature is one of the essential elements that shapes the concept of eternal recurrence. In his autobiographical work, *Ecce Homo* (1908/2000), Nietzsche describes the moment when he first contemplated on the idea of eternal recurrence. He was not working behind his desk but walking in “the woods along the lake of Silvaplana; at a powerful pyramidal rock” (p.751). He felt that he was “6000 feet beyond man and time” (p.751). Such a remark suggests that Nietzsche had formed the greatest idea of his philosophy, the eternal recurrence, only when he was in nature, isolated from man and time. In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1883/1976), the animal imagery is also very important because as is discussed earlier, Nietzsche makes these animals speak like the animal characters in a fable and supports the idea that while all the living and non-living forms in nature are in harmony with nature, it is only human kind which cannot acknowledge eternal recurrence. The animals cannot understand the reason why Zarathustra himself cannot internalize this philosophy and celebrate the world around him while he is preaching eternal recurrence. In fact, Zarathustra is overwhelmed with the idea that everything returns eternally because, unlike animals, human beings do not have the ability to forget their past. The animals can celebrate the moment without remembering the specific moments in the past as is evident in the metaphor of cows discussed in the Introduction.

According to Vincenzo (2018), *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1883/1976) is mainly based on the theme of “faithfulness to the earth” (p.2). Vincenzo (2018) adds that the philosophy of eternal recurrence leads man to that faithfulness “by instilling an appreciation of the natural environment as it appears in the present moment of lived experience in the one conceiving idea” (p.2). Putting all these together, it can be inferred that man should strip himself of the inorganic life he constructed, and the concept of time is one of those elements he should get rid of. Only then is it possible to live the moment without the burden of the past by celebrating the moment and being in harmony with nature. The civilization human kind had built brought to him destruction and extinction. If human beings can comprehend what eternal recurrence is, then they will be reconnected with nature where they really belong. By embracing the idea of eternal

recurrence, they liberate themselves from its nihilism. Thus, they will be closer to reaching the ultimate awareness of the overman.

To be able to attain an insight into the relation between man and nature within a Nietzschean framework throughout *Blood Meridian*, the historical background of the story should be taken into consideration. McCarthy's *Blood Meridian* portrays a bloody and a violent period in American history concerning the Mexican-American borderland. Most of the novel takes place in 1849 and 1850, just after the Mexican-American War which was fought from 1846 to 1848. That borderland was under the influence of a political crisis due to the U.S. President James K. Polk's policies of the expansion of the country's borders towards Texas and also John O'Sullivan's idea of Manifest Destiny. Especially in the year of 1847 when the bloodshed in the area reached its top level, loads of horrifying incidents, which were committed by both Americans and Mexicans, were reported from the area. The loss of children and women more than the soldiers proves the aimless violence of the war and exhibits the real face of the slaughter, not the war. After the war was over, some American mercenaries had deals with Mexican government officials to protect the lands from Native Americans by hunting them. The Glanton gang of scalphunters was one of these groups during that period (Shaw, 2008). Samuel Chamberlain, who was an American soldier then, wrote about his experiences across those lands after he left the army, in his work *My Confession* (1996)¹, and he mentions the Glanton gang and also Judge Holden. Thus, McCarthy not only portrays the period following the Mexican-American war, but also constructs his story mostly on historically documented characters.

Apart from the Americans' battles against Mexicans and Native Americans to explore and expand their borders, the struggle between the wilderness of the New World and civilization makes up the American experience, that is, the frontier myth. Turner defines this period as the "Golden Age" and this myth has become the "origin myth" for Americans (as cited in Mogen et al., 1993, p.18). They identify themselves with this myth, but at the same time, they keep their distance from it because the problem with this myth is that it ignores the violence and destruction in that period and claims the innocence of the frontiersmen by glorifying their so-called heroism in the wilderness (Mogen et al., 1993). While *Blood Meridian* is considered a counter-myth, that is, an attempt to deconstruct the American myth that is believed to be constructive and heroic, it is also regarded to be a denunciation of the Vietnam War due to its striking depiction of the imperialist violence of the United States in its history by focusing on

¹ The given date is the publication date of that edition of the book, because there is not an exact date for Chamberlain's work.

mainly the frontier era (Dorson, 2013). Bringing all that violence, which was committed against both Mexicans and Native Americans, from America's most romanticized era to list like a historical document with real names of the places and some real characters, McCarthy aims to highlight the relationship between America's origin myth and the contemporary agenda. Even though most Americans got shocked by the atrocity that occurred during the Vietnam War, none of them happened for the first time in America's history. Within this framework, McCarthy's gothic tone serves his purpose because, as Goddu (1997) asserts, American gothic targets the "national myth of new-world innocence by voicing the cultural contradictions that undermine the nation's claim to purity and equality" (p.10).

In *Blood Meridian*, McCarthy narrates the story of an unnamed kid who lost his mother while giving birth to him and leaves home at the age of fourteen. After he leaves home, first, he joins Captain White's army of filibusters, but his journey with this army does not last long because most members of the army, including Captain White, are killed in an attack of Comanches. After a little while, he becomes a member of the Glanton gang which is led by Judge, actually, rather than Glanton. During their long journey, full of violence and blood, on the vast lands of the Southwest, nature has a significant role throughout the novel. McCarthy enriches his narrative with detailed descriptions of nature, most of which are sublime (Vieth, 2010). For instance, at the very first moments of the kid's journey, he is wandering around the port all alone and "[t]he air smells of salt and newsawn lumber" (McCarthy, 1985, p.5). A week later, he goes on

walking the sand roads of the southern night alone... Earthen causeways across the marshlands. Egrets in their rookeries white as candles among the moss. The wind has a raw edge to it and leaves lope by the roadside and skelter on in the night fields. (McCarthy, 1985, p.5)

McCarthy draws a portrayal of the kid's situation, not only mentally but also physically. Besides his feeling of loneliness, McCarthy describes the scent that the kid smells and also the soil. Portraying both the landscape and the air with other supportive details forms a holistic view. In this scene, it is also seen that egrets seem like decorative objects like white candles, but the wind is portrayed as an inconsistent character moving slowly on the road but fast on the fields at night. As is mentioned earlier in this chapter, using nature both as a setting and a character in action is one of the things that makes *Blood Meridian* a gothic text. While setting the scene throughout nature rather than man-made objects, McCarthy employs nature as a character which acts sometimes against and sometimes for man, as well.

When nature is used as the setting for the plot and character development, it is represented as the locus of destruction and death in *Blood Meridian*. The views described through the gang's journey are mostly furnished with dead bodies of men and animals or piles of bones on the ground. For instance, before the kid joins the Captain White's filibusters, he tries to travel alone and follows some riders or wagons across the vast lands. He crosses many towns with them and one of those places is Castroville "where coyotes had dug up the dead and scattered their bones" (McCarthy, 1985, p.42). Here it is not clear if the dead is either man or animal, but rather than offering nature as the symbol of life, McCarthy prefers using nature like a canvas upon which he can draw hideous images of death and destruction, as a background for the story. To give an example, among many others, to McCarthy's vivid portrayals of his grotesque world, when the kid arrives at a town with the Glanton gang, they walk down the streets of the town. Besides grotesque descriptions of people in the street such as "maimed beggars sad-eyed in rags," "lepers moaning through the streets," "old women with faces dark and harrowed" and "small orphans... like irate dwarfs" (McCarthy, 1985, pp.72-73), dead bodies of wild animals described in depth sets the scene:

the waxy smell where racks of guts hung black with flies and flayings of meat in great red sheets now darkened with the advancing day and the flensed and naked skulls of cows and sheep with their dull blue eyes glaring wildly and the stiff bodies of deer and javelina and ducks and quail and parrots, all wild things from the country round hanging head downward from hooks. (McCarthy, 1985, pp.72-73)

By providing such scenery throughout the novel, McCarthy aims to exhibit how "the myth of the garden and the land as fruitful mother began to fray" (Spurgeon, 2009, p.91), and the lands once believed to be the paradise on earth turn into a hostile place. Despite miscellaneous descriptions of nature throughout the novel by many symbols and metaphors, this richness does not signal any fruitfulness or an exhilarative nature. Instead, as McCarthy (1985) himself states in the novel, "death seemed the most prevalent feature of the landscape" (p.48). This cruelty of man and the landscape with its deadly features echoes Zarathustra's words: "Man's earth turned into a cave for me, its chest sunken; all that is living became human mold and bones and musty past to me" (Nietzsche, 1883/1976, p.331). In an earlier part of the story, Zarathustra comes across a soothsayer and in his prophecy, the soothsayer describes a gloomy and depressing world where everything is about to disappear completely. According to Zarathustra, this world which is full of bones, tombs and decay is the place where "the small man", who cannot excel himself and is also weak, "recurs eternally" (p.331). On the other hand, the animals tell Zarathustra that he should go out of his cave because there is a world outside waiting for him

“like a garden” (Nietzsche, 1883/1976, p.328). They add that “to those who think as we do, all things themselves are dancing: they come and offer their hands and laugh and flee—and come back” (Nietzsche, 1883/1976, p.329). In this quotation, by saying “those who think as we do”, the animals refer to the ones who can accept the idea of eternal recurrence. In his article, Shapiro (2013) asserts that the conversation between the animals and Zarathustra underlines “the contrast between the wasteland earth prophesied by the soothsayer... and the earth as a garden announced by the animals and affirmatively welcomed by Zarathustra” (p.73). From this point of view, it can be suggested that the world which McCarthy (1985) portrays in *Blood Meridian* contrasts with the one which is once commonly believed to be the New World as the garden of Eden.

Rather than a life promising nature, nature grants nothing but death. For instance, in *Blood Meridian*, the kid travels with the Captain White’s army across a desert in the South. After going through nothingness for two days, they start to encounter some “bones”, “cast-off apparels” and “half buried skeletons of mules” (McCarthy, 1985, p.46). When the sky is about to get dark, “[t]hey watched storms out there so distant they could not be heard, the silent flaring sheetwise and the thin black spin of the mountain chain fluttering and sucked away again in the dark” (McCarthy, 1985, pp.46-47). However, although it is silent, the storm on the horizon can be read as a signifier of the bloodshed waiting for the kid ahead. Also, the disappearance of huge mountains into darkness after a short fluttering symbolizes the fate of men in the world. They live, appear for a short time in the world and then get lost into nothingness. The kid travels towards his inescapable fate first with Captain White’s army and then with the Glanton gang. He witnesses many massacres of every kind of men, women, children, and animals. After most of the members of the Glanton gang, including the gang leader Glanton, are slaughtered by an Indian tribe, the Yumas, the kid manages to survive and runs away. Judge Holden chases after the kid and wants to take the kid back with him. Yet, the kid does not want to go back to the wilderness, into the bloodshed again. In the last chapter of the novel, the date is 1878, nearly 20 years after Judge and the kid’s last encounter. The kid is working as a guide in the north plains of Texas and helps the travelers across the wild lands of the South during their journey. However, Judge finds him at a bar, all those years later and Judge tries to persuade the kid to go back to their previous life one more time but the kid is determined not to go back. Judge leaves the kid and the kid stays at the bar for a while. Later on, he goes towards the toilet outside the bar. The moment freezes and McCarthy gives a full detailed description of the environment around the kid, almost a page long. The things are going motionless and the sounds are fading away into the darkness slowly.

The rain had stopped and the air was cold... Stars were falling across the sky myriad and random, speeding along brief vectors from their origins in night to their destinies in dust and nothingness... He stood outside listening to the voices fading away and he looked again the silent tracks of the stars where they died over the darkened hills. (McCarthy, 1985, p.333)

Just after these lines, the kid opens the door of the toilet and sees Judge; naked, smiling and waiting for him. Judge takes the kid in his arms and shuts the door. McCarthy does not give any details about what happens inside; he only narrates that two men arrive after Judge leaves the scene and when they open the door they get shocked by the view they see. McCarthy, for the first time in the novel, leaves the scene ambiguous without giving direct information or details about the incident. Rodríguez (2008) states that while most critics describe the scene as the death of the kid, others think that the kid is raped by Judge, not murdered². According to Rodríguez (2008), it does not seem possible to know exactly if the kid is murdered or only raped and left alive. However, the point is that the kid's life can be read as a journey towards "maturity and goodness" (Rodríguez, 2008, p.45) and a fight against evil which ends in the ultimate victory of evil. Rather than reading the struggle between Judge and the kid as the clash of good and evil in a Nietzschean framework, it is possible to infer that, all these descriptions of nature indicate the inevitable disappearance of the weak against the strong on the earth.

This power struggle is not only among men, but also between man and nature. If this discussion is taken into consideration within the story of *Blood Meridian* in a more specific way, it should be noted that the Americans' struggle with nature began in the very first days of their arrival at the continent. When Puritans first arrived on the coast of the New World, they encountered totally wild and vast lands. According to the Puritan belief, order is a necessity in the eyes of God and Puritans associated wilderness with chaos and also the Devil, the supernatural and the monstrous (Vieth, 2010). For this reason, Puritans regard the land as something that has to be tamed and controlled. This aim of bringing civilization to the wilderness is the major justification of the westward expansion and the frontier ideology. They believe all the violence and exploitation that have taken place are done in the name of God to bring order and civilization to those savage people and lands (Plumb, 2013). The struggle "between civilization and nature, between the mental landscape of European consciousness and the physical landscape of the New World" (Mogen et al., 1993, p.15) is one of the most essential struggles that forms the American experience. This frontier ideology that initiates the American

² Rodríguez (2008) gives a list of critics who comment on the incident between the kid and Judge in different ways. The ones who claim the kid is dead are Bell (1988, p.134), Pilkington (1993, p.317), Sepich (1993, p.16), and Bloom (2002, p.3). On the other hand, Shaw (1997) believes that the kid is not dead, only raped by Judge.

identity can be observed in both *Blood Meridian* and *The Road*, even though these two novels may seem totally different from each other in terms of time and setting. As a result, the characters' interaction with nature and their attitudes toward it, in both novels, can be interpreted in this framework.

In *Blood Meridian*, Judge Holden can be identified as the embodiment of destruction and civilization, at the same time. Also, he is the symbol of Western rationality and intellectual capacity. Throughout the novel, Judge exhibits his great knowledge in law, music, art, language, geography, biology, history, architecture and even paleontology. His claim is to bring order to the savage lands and wilderness (Pughe, 1994). While he is wandering around, Judge shoots birds, stuffs and keeps them. He also collects leaves of trees, butterflies and many other things. When Toadvine, a member of the Glanton gang, asks why Judge does all these things, Judge replies:

These anonymous creatures, he said, may seem little or nothing in the world. Yet the smallest crumb can devour us. Any smallest thing beneath yon rock out of men's knowing. Only nature can enslave man and only when the existence of each last entity is routed out and made to stand naked before him will he be properly *suzerain* [emphasis added] of the earth. (McCarthy, 1985, p.198)

In his speech, by choosing the word *suzerain*, Judge underscores his desire to rule everything around him. He wants to be the ruler of even the other rulers. The reason of this desire is that he regards everything that he cannot control as a threat for himself. He says: "The freedom of birds is an insult to me. I'd have them all in zoos" (McCarthy, 1985, p.199). As a representative of Enlightenment ideals, Judge believes in the power of knowledge and reason. He states "there is no mystery" (p.252). According to Judge, if a man believes in mysteries, he is condemned to be defeated by nature and this is a sign of weakness. However, his desire to control and to have the knowledge results in in endless violence and destruction. For instance, Judge encounters a boy who has two puppies for sale. Judge gives a coin to the boy for the dogs and he buys them. After buying the dogs, he throws them into the river over a bridge. Here, this may seem as if Judge has no point and, as Glasgow (1935) identifies, as a dominant feature of Southern Gothic genre, this is just "aimless violence" (p.3). However, Judge's violence and destruction are on purpose, his acts are not a tour de force. He destroys animals, rocks and plants because his desire is to build his own order by destroying the present one; and his tool is violence. As Judge mentioned before, man is vulnerable to nature. Shaviro (2009) states that Judge's announcement on becoming the "suzerain of the earth" is an indicator of "the self-transcending project of Enlightenment" (p.13). Shaviro (2009) also adds

whereas all the other characters kill casually and thoughtlessly, out of greed or blood lust or some other trivial cause, only the judge kills out of will and conviction and a deep commitment to the cause and the canons of Western rationality. (p.13)

However, Judge's intentional killings and his desire to rule can be explained by Nietzsche's will to power concept. Nietzsche believes that in nature, there is always an ongoing conflict between various beings and forces; and man is a part of that conflict. In his article, Drenthen (2005) suggests that according to Nietzsche, "nature is a struggle of wills-to-power" (p.324). Apart from the critique of his destructive and violent acts, Judge's desire to rule and his instinct to have power over everything around him are the necessities of his existence. Nietzsche's definition of nature results in an ambivalent conclusion on Judge that Judge is in a war against the things around him but at the same time this is a necessity of the environment around him. Rosen (2004) states that

[n]atural forces require to act, and so to spill over, to act on what is outside themselves. This is often called the will to power. Note that the effect of the will to power need not to be destructive; it can be invigorating or fructifying. (p.24)

Rosen's statement explains Judge's violent and destructive acts to create in the light of the concept of will to power.

Americans have always regarded nature as a female image, either as a "fruitful mother" that provides life, or as an "untouched virgin" which appeals to "penetration and conquest" (Spurgeon, 2009, p.86). However, McCarthy distorts those myths in *Blood Meridian*, and it is clearly observed that nature is merciless for humans (Spurgeon, 2009). In spite of all the attempts to dominate nature, nature has always found its own way to exist. Although Judge aims to be the suzerain of everything, once again, McCarthy puts emphasis on the fact that nature has always been unknowable and uncontrollable for man. Throughout the novel, McCarthy (1985) portrays the gang's and nature's movements side by side to demonstrate the relation between man and nature. It can be clearly seen that while man is trying to have power over nature, nature always determines man's steps. To give an example, while describing one of the journeys of the gang, McCarthy (1985) states: "They were gone before sunrise and the dawn found them on the plane again" (p.57). Throughout the novel, the gang members begin or end their journeys in accordance with the movements of the sun or the moon. They need their guidance and light to be able to move on; and they have nothing to do if they do not appear in the sky. In another scene, when the kid escapes from the gang and travels across the waste lands of the south, there is snow on the ground and the weather is cold. Besides his struggle to escape

from Judge, the kid also has to struggle with the harsh conditions of the weather and the landscape. McCarthy (1985) narrates: “He’d been without food for almost two days and he’d little rest... He clopped on woodenly, half frozen, his feet senseless” (p.214). The kid is in a difficult situation because of nature and he has to survive. To interpret the attitude of nature towards man within a Nietzschean approach, Rosen (2004) claims that “[n]ature is ruthless, extravagant, indifferent to our perception of excellence, and fundamentally hostile to permanence and hence to the survival of humanity” (p.57-58). In the light of this suggestion, McCarthy reveals in both novels that man cannot control nature and has to adapt himself to the circumstances of nature.

The struggle between nature and human is always in the foreground in gothic texts. Nature is the source of horror and terror for mankind because man is despondent before nature’s power and uncontrollability. In addition to Judge’s attempts to rule over nature, McCarthy narrates the troubles that the kid has during his journey after he leaves the gang. The kid tries to survive in the snow and cold while travelling day and night. It could seem like neither Judge nor the kid is able to change the harsh conditions of nature and like every man, they have to fight against nature or adapt and protect themselves. However, this does not mean that man surrenders to nature. Although nature may seem to have absolute power over man at the beginning of *Blood Meridian*, this balance changes as the story progresses. Man extends his assaults on nature and even abuses “the sacred myths” that belong to the relationship between man and nature (Spurgeon, 2009, p.97). The most blazing example of the assault on nature in *Blood Meridian* is the scene where Judge leads the gang to the mouth of a dormant volcano. First, Judge finds some brimstone which contains sulphur. He takes out some charcoal and nitre from his wallets. After he mixes them, he pours the sulphur. It is like a preparation for a religious ceremony at the mouth of a dormant volcano. Tobin, one of the gang members, narrates:

I didn’t know what we’d be required to bleed into it like freemasons but it was not so. He worked it up dry with his hands and all the while the savages down there on the plain drawin nigh to us and when I turned back the judge was standin, the great hairless oaf, and he’d took out his pizzle and he was pissin into the mixture, pissin with a great vengeance and one hand aloft and he cried out for us to do likewise. We were half mad anyways. All lined up. Delawares and all. Every man save Glanton and he was a study. We hauled forth our members and at it we went and the judge on his knees kneadin the mass with his naked arms and the piss was splashin about and he was cryin out to us to piss, man, piss for your very souls cant you see the redskins yonder, and laughin the while and workin up this great mass in a foul black dough, a devil’s batter by the stink of it and him not a bloody dark pastryman himself I don’t suppose (McCarthy, 1985, pp.131-132)

The scene that could be easily described as a religious ritual by portraying the mouth of the volcano as an altar and the men ready for sacrifice suddenly turns into an outrageous act. Just before they reach that mountain, Judge tells the gang members that “our mother the earth... contained all the good things within her” (McCarthy, 1985, p.130). Putting Judge’s definition that refers to the earth as mother and his barbarous act together, Spurgeon (2009), in her work, states that this incident is the men’s “gang-raping the great vaginal hole in ‘our mother the earth,’ spewing piss instead of semen” (p.96). Throughout the novel, men, especially Judge, perform every possible atrocity not only against nature to master it, or sometimes aimlessly, but also against his own kind. Among innumerable examples, the scene just after pissing into the volcano can be highlighted. The gang meet some Indians approaching and they kill about seventy of them. Under the leadership of Judge, the gang shoot all of those redskins and in all its details, the scene is a total butchery. As Judge mentions before, all atrocity and destruction against everything is a matter of having the power to rule. To give another example of the power struggle between nature and human in *Blood Meridian*, in Chapter XI, a bear attacks the gang and takes one of the members. No one can stop the bear, even the bullets. They follow the bear in order to rescue their friends but “[t]he bear carried off their kinsman like some fabled storybook beast and the land had swallowed them up beyond all ransom or reprieve” (McCarthy, 1985, pp.137-138). However, towards the last scene of the novel, another bear appears but this time it wears a crinoline, is dressed like a 19th century woman and also dancing. It has an owner. McCarthy allegorically illustrates how men become superior to nature by employing these two totally different bear images. While the first bear represents the wilderness that cannot be tamed or controlled, the one in the last scene, symbolizes the defeat of nature which is now controlled and destroyed by man. The murder of the dancing bear in a costume “is a meridian and a nadir, the final mastery of man over the wilderness and the prophetic embarkation of his decent” (Spurgeon, 2009, p.99).

In *Blood Meridian*, it may seem as if man has absolute power over nature and he is dominating it. However, man can only destroy nature and it is not possible to claim that man manages to control it. Humankind in *Blood Meridian*, even Judge Holden, is unable to master nature. Throughout the novel, in spite of all their violence and destruction, all the humans have to adapt themselves to nature or resist it to be able to survive. It can be also added that man is in need of nature and the things that nature offers him. For instance, the kid manages to survive in a battle against the Indians. Later on, another member of Captain White’s army, Sproule, finds the kid away from the battlefield. Sproule is wounded and both of them are thirsty. They find very little water that comes from the rocks and drink it. To put it in a striking way,

McCarthy (1985) describes the kid and Sproule, who are leaning and drinking water in turns, “like devouts at a shrine” (p.57). McCarthy highlights the importance and the holiness of nature for man. Even though men see nature as an opponent or a thing to conquer, they also need nature to be able to survive because men are not self-sufficient and without the sources of nature they are weak and hopeless in the world. McCarthy creates this duality of nature by characterizing it as man’s opponent and his life source at the same time. This idea is also presented in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1883/1976). Nietzsche refers to animals to reflect this duality and in addition to the ones who help Zarathustra, Zarathustra also encounters the animals that pose danger to men, such as the adder and tarantulas. Throughout the story, an eagle and a serpent help Zarathustra to discover himself and reveal his aim in life, which is to teach the eternal recurrence. These two animals are described as “Zarathustra’s animals of honor” (Nietzsche, 1883/1976, p.431). On the other hand, nature and animals are not always welcoming men and they can be threatening. During his journey, while Zarathustra is asleep, an adder bites him and poisons him. In another part of the story, this time Zarathustra encounters tarantulas whose bites are poisonous. All of these instances are open to deeper discussion when they are allegorically read, but still it can be claimed that by portraying an ambivalent nature, Nietzsche aims to depict it as a place where “the creative or life-enhancing consequences of the will to power are balanced by the destructive or decadent consequences” (Rosen, 2004, p.215). Thus, while McCarthy’s characters are in a continuous struggle with natural forces during their journey, they also depend on natural sources for their survival at the same time. McCarthy constructs that power balance in nature within a Nietzschean framework. While nature can be a counter-force and threaten man’s life, it is also a life provider for mankind with its resources. This also indicates how creation and destruction are the inseparable parts of the universe.

Although as Bell (1988) states in his work that man is a “protagonist and the natural world another” (p.133) in *Blood Meridian*, Phillips (1996) repudiates Bell’s suggestion that nature and man are two separate characters in the novel and claims that McCarthy does not describe humans and the natural world as protagonists, but as “parts of the same continuum” (p.446). According to Nietzsche, morality in modern times is problematic and this is directly related to the relationship between man and nature. Regarding the natural world apart from morality is a common notion of modern times. For instance, according to Kant’s moral philosophy, there are two separate worlds; the world of nature where natural laws rule and the world of freedom and reason from where morality emerges. However, Nietzsche believes that modern science proves that these two worlds are not independent from each other (Drenthen, 2005). On the contrary, “humans are part of nature in every respect. We are not just natural

beings in the physical sense; our so-called morality is just as natural as the rest of us” (Drenthen, 2005, pp.320-321). In *Blood Meridian*, it is possible to find examples where McCarthy hints at the idea of wholeness of man and nature. Towards the end of *Blood Meridian*, after the Yumas’ attack on the Glanton gang, the kid, Toadvine and the ex-priest manage to survive the attack and run away. Judge chases them across the desert to catch them and reunite the gang, but they do not want to hang out with that crazy savage anymore. When they see him far away and hide from him, to prove he is not afraid of Judge, the kid says “[m]en are made out of the dust of the earth” (McCarthy, 1985, p.297), which also implies the equality of men because they are all parts of the same whole. In another scene, where the gang members ride their horses and travel through the dusty lands, McCarthy (1985) portrays the men as “paled slowly in the rising dust until they assumed once more the color of the land through which they passed” (p.160). Here, McCarthy depicts how the men are intertwined with the land where they originally belong. There is no doubt that allegorically, these scenes and also other similar expressions have religious connotations of the creation myth but they are not the focus of this chapter. Throughout the novel, in addition to his emphasis on the relation between men and nature, McCarthy also highlights the connections among other objects in the universe. While describing a setting by saying “the sun whitehot and the moon a pale replica, as if they were the ends of a common bore” (McCarthy, 1985, p.86), McCarthy strengthens the idea that everything in the universe is part of the same whole. In another part of the novel, while the Glanton gang are travelling across arid lands of the Southwest, they see “a crude wooden cross where Maricopas had crucified an Apache” (McCarthy, 1985, p.247). McCarthy underlines the strange equality in violence by deploying an Indian tribe’s savagery on another Indian tribe. Hage (2010) explains this situation from a broader perspective and claims that *Blood Meridian* is not only the story of violence in a specified area in a definite time; McCarthy “takes an egalitarian view of violence and posits it as a condition of humanity, not race or culture” (p.39). In addition to this strange equality in being responsible for the savagery, in the next lines that follow the quotation above, McCarthy (1985) sets the scene as:

In the neuter austerity of that terrain all phenomena were bequeathed a strange equality and one thing nor spider nor stone nor blade of grass could put forth claim to precedence. The very clarity of these articles belied their familiarity, for the eye predicates the whole on some feature or part and here was nothing more luminous than another and nothing more enshadowed and in the optical democracy of such landscapes all preferences is made whimsical and a man and a rock become endowed with unguessed kinships. (p.247)

Besides sharing the responsibility of the violence committed on earth, McCarthy underlines the fact that animate or inanimate, every single object in the world is equal to each other. None of them has an advantage or disadvantage over the other. In other words, McCarthy emphasizes the wholeness of the universe.

However, in *Blood Meridian*, McCarthy portrays men, especially the gang, as enemies of both nature and other people. Throughout the novel, Judge tries to master nature and commits violent acts with the gang that he leads. Rather than embracing this equality, McCarthy depicts how mankind attempts to distort this balance and to have power over nature. Even though, from this perspective, it may seem as if the gang members are disconnected “from the wilderness” (Spurgeon, 2009, p.97), Shaviro (2009), strongly claims that Glanton’s riders “always remain in intimate contact with the superficies of the earth, with the elemental forces of the ground and sky, snow and hail and lightning, water and wind and barren rock” (p.11). Also he adds “[f]or there can be no alienation when there is no originary state for us to be alienated” (p.11). As is clearly seen, Shaviro (2009) defends the idea that all the elements in the universe; the landscape, sky and other people apart from man, are the parts of the same whole. So, why is man killing each other and destroying nature? In other words, what happens if man gives damage to the other parts of the whole which man also belongs to? The answer is simple: Self-destruction. When a man kills others or destroys nature, he actually devastates himself. Folsom (1993) expresses the idea that man is not struggling against others or nature but himself; he quotes from the famous comic strip *Pogo*: “We have met the enemy and they is us” (Kelly, 1970, as cited in Folsom 1993, p.40). Neither wilderness, nor wild animals or beasts are the enemies of humans. Man is the real enemy of man and it is man who destroys the world around himself.

The transition from *Blood Meridian* to *The Road* is not sharp. Even though they serve to create a grotesque atmosphere, McCarthy employs fruitful and colorful images and descriptions through *Blood Meridian*. However, after the power balance between nature and man is disturbed and seems to be on man’s side, as is mentioned in this chapter earlier, there are indications that hint at a change into a world like the one depicted in *The Road*. For instance, in *Blood Meridian* the kid arrives at a place where he has never been before and McCarthy (1985) illustrates a grotesque scenery: “The plains were sere and burntlooking, and the small trees black and misshapen and haunted by ravens and everywhere the ragged packs of jackal wolves and the crazed and sunchalked bones of the vanished herds” (p.317). Instead of those enormous mountains, landscapes full of color and amazing geographical features, McCarthy portrays a colorless landscape, “black and misshapen” (McCarthy, 2006, p.1) trees. In the quotation from *Blood Meridian* given above, it seems as if McCarthy (2006) signals a world

such as the one in *The Road* where “[n]ights dark beyond darkness and the days more gray each one than what had gone before” (p.1). Moreover, this description of the landscape in *Blood Meridian* can be seen as a foreshadowing of *The Road* because the burnt-looking plains in *Blood Meridian* become the land that covers the whole earth in *The Road*. However, unlike *The Road*, there are still living beings such as ravens and jackal wolves. Therefore, while this scene can be interpreted as a foreshadowing of the world in *The Road*, the scene where the dancing bear is shot can be considered as the beginning of *The Road*, or the end of nature. It is possible to read the bear in *Blood Meridian* allegorically as the representative of nature. At first, it appears as a strong, wild and unstoppable creature very much like nature in gothic texts. It attacks the Glanton gang, takes one of its members away and men are desperate in front of it. Later on, the bear appears as a tamed pet dancing in 18th century woman’s clothes. It is controlled, exploited by man and it seems like mankind finally achieves his aims. He has absolute power and control over nature and it is not a scary phenomenon for him anymore. Finally, in the middle of a bar fight, a man takes his pistol and shoots the bear. The bear, which the Glanton gang could not stop and kill even with their bullets, cries “like a child” (McCarthy, 1985, p.326) and dies. To conclude, in *Blood Meridian* (1985), McCarthy reveals the philosophy that man and nature are, indeed, connected to each other as the parts of the same whole, but in the name of willing to rule it, man destroys nature. This means also the destruction of man himself and such a heedless act brings the apocalypse portrayed in *The Road* (2006). McCarthy (2006) does not mention the event that brings the world to an end in *The Road*, but an allegorical reading reveals the moment where the end presented in *The Road* begins in *Blood Meridian*. To sum up, McCarthy (1985), through the story of the bear, aims to narrate the history of nature: first, scary and uncontrollable, then tamed and exploited, and finally destroyed.

While *Blood Meridian* is considered an “American apocalyptic novel” (Bloom, 2000, p.254), which criticizes America’s ever-present imperialist policies by unveiling the violence in America’s past, *The Road* highlights a contemporary global crisis: climate change. In this respect, both novels can be considered as apocalyptic texts that focus on the close relationship between man and nature. While in the former it is narrated that man exploits both human and non-human beings, the latter reveals a climate crisis due to the exploitation that takes place in the former. Stark (2013) claims that

[t]he representation of the environment can be read literally as a depiction of climate change, the results of which are brought into our immediate future by a cataclysmic event, or, more convincingly, as an allegorical projection of the anxieties present in the cultural zeitgeist, filtered through climate change discourse. (p.73)

In *The Road*, McCarthy narrates the story of an unnamed father and an unnamed son, just like the unnamed kid in *Blood Meridian*. The story starts when the father wakes up in the dark woods and he is on the road with his son to look for a life-sustaining place on earth without knowing if there is any place left. After an unidentified catastrophic event, the world burnt down, and now it is covered in ash and some savage groups of people appear on the roads killing people and taking their stuff to be able to survive. In the father's flashbacks through the novel, it is depicted that the mother committed suicide thinking that the best and the only way to manage to escape from all the atrocity in the world is death. Following her death, the father and the son set out on their quest with the hope to find a place to live where nature has not died. Unlike *Blood Meridian*, McCarthy does not mention the exact place or exact date in which the story takes place. As a consequence of an unspecified catastrophic event, the world has been demolished, everything has burnt down and there are nearly no living beings left on earth except for a few people trying to survive including the father and the son. Even though McCarthy does not name the catastrophic event that brings the world to an end in *The Road*, many critics have tried to find clues to be able to name it. For instance, while Edwards (2008) mentions a bomb that "leaves behind a cauterized world, frozen in nuclear winter" (p.56), another critic Johns-Putra (2016) maintains that climate change is a very strong candidate for being the reason of this cauterized world among many others. Whatever the reason, it can be easily inferred that it is a man-made catastrophe and in a world where "[n]ights dark beyond darkness and the days more gray each one than what had gone before" (McCarthy, 2006, p.1), the father and the son set out on their quest. Like he does in *Blood Meridian*, McCarthy (2006) gives vivid descriptions of the environment through the father and the son's journey. In the very first pages of the novel, he gives hints about the world that is depicted throughout the novel:

When it was light enough to use the binoculars he [the father] glassed the valley below. Everything paling away into the murk. The soft ash blowing in loose swirls over the blacktop. He studied what he could see. The segments of road down there among the dead trees. Looking for anything of color. Any movement. Any trace of standing smoke... he just sat there... watching the ashen daylight congeal over the land. (McCarthy, 2006, pp.2-3)

Compared to *Blood Meridian* in which death wreathes the landscape, in *The Road*, McCarthy portrays a completely dead nature including the land itself. While decorating the setting, in *Blood Meridian*, with various natural elements such as animals both dead and alive, in *The Road*, the father and the son travel through nothingness. In other words, nature is dead itself, besides being a face of death. Three words at the very beginning of the novel dominate the rest

of the story: “Barren, silent, godless” (McCarthy, 2006, p.2). The world is barren because no plants or trees grow on those lands anymore. The only ones that are left behind are either falling down in great noise or their leaves are crumbling away and disappearing in the father and the son’s hands. It is silent because there is nothing left alive, no animals or many people. Furthermore it is godless because there is no hope or faith; and no god to help people. Thus, unlike *Blood Meridian* in which death appears in the presence of things such as dead bodies and piles of bones, *The Road* offers a monotonous atmosphere in which death is implied in the absence of things.

In addition to differences in descriptions of nature and landscape between the two novels, McCarthy’s mapping and naming strategies also differ from each other. *Blood Meridian* seems like a documentation of the past, with all the characters’ names and the towns and the villages mentioned in the novel, rather than fiction. By giving the names of places where the atrocity takes place or which are already ruined in the American southwest and northern Mexico such as Carizal, Santa Cruz, Tubac and Tuscon, McCarthy tries to make these places and the violence that takes place on those lands unforgettable and also to reveal the ugly facts under the so-called heroic past of America (Kunsa, 2009). On the other hand, in *The Road*, there are only a few names of places but none of them is useful to identify the exact place where the characters are. The only information about the route which the father and the son take is that they are moving towards the South. The reason of this difference between the two novels is that while in *Blood Meridian*, McCarthy aims to highlight the facts and the violence covered by the constructed history and American myth, in *The Road*, his goal is to highlight the already-present climate crisis and its possible near future outcome, which is a natural apocalypse. In the former, naming is so crucial to be able to keep a record of that atrocity. However, in the latter, the names of the people, places and even the event which caused that post-apocalyptic world are not more important than the result itself. As Kunsa (2009) puts forward, they are all “left in the past” (p.64). Leaving the things unnamed throughout the novel can be read as an attempt to strip the characters out of the burden of the past. Zarathustra underlines the importance of leaving the past behind by saying: “To redeem those who lived in the past and to recreate all ‘it was’ into a ‘thus I willed it’—that alone should I call redemption” (Nietzsche, 1883/1976, p.251). Nietzsche believes that man should create innocently without thinking of the act of creating, without planning it beforehand, because if he destroys to create, like Judge, this means it is a planned action and it carries the traces of the past. In other words, it “is therefore tainted with the decadence of the past” (Rosen, 2004, p.169). Before creating the future, man should free himself from everything that comes from the past. Thus, McCarthy sets the atmosphere as an

opportunity to create for the father and the son by leaving them in an already-destroyed world of nothingness. McCarthy also underlines the significance of the idea that whatever happens and wherever the father and the son are do not matter. The only thing that does matter is that man has caused all that destruction and now man himself is suffering in that world while seeking a new beginning.

If time and setting in both *Blood Meridian* and *The Road* are taken into consideration, and *Blood Meridian* is treated as a prequel to *The Road*, it can be clearly put forward that all the attempts to control nature and the violence committed against nature in *Blood Meridian* within the setting of the historical period between the 1830s and the 1870s and Southwestern United States and Northern Mexico cause the apocalyptic destruction of the world depicted in *The Road*. McCarthy again underlines that humans can destroy, consume and abuse nature but they do not have the power to control it. In *The Road*, the father and the son meet an old man, called Ely, on the road and during their chat, Ely tells them that he knew this apocalyptic event or something like that would come. The father asks Ely if he got ready for it, Ely replies “No” (McCarthy, 2006, p.179). Here, McCarthy emphasizes the idea one more time that, even if man has the knowledge or knows what will happen, he still cannot stop it or escape from it. Even if it is very different from the one in *Blood Meridian*, nature is still cruel and terrifying for humankind in *The Road*. Rather than trying to control nature or having power over it, man is trying to survive in this cauterized world and is also in search of the old world, unlike *Blood Meridian* where man is in search of a new world. The father and the son’s struggle to survive in the dead but still harsh nature, like post-apocalyptic frontiersmen who find themselves between wilderness and civilization, makes it possible to classify *The Road* as an American Frontier Gothic genre (Smith & Hughes, 2013, p.136). Like the gang in *Blood Meridian*, the father and the son in *The Road*, try to survive in nature and fight a running battle against the dead nature’s harsh conditions. For instance, one night, while the father and the son are sleeping on the hills, an earthquake happens and the son is scared because it is an unknown and terrifying incident for him. “The ground was trembling. It was coming toward them” (McCarthy, 2006, p.27) like an enormous, noisy monster in darkness. However, instead of using supernatural descriptions for natural phenomena, McCarthy employs definitions that belong to modern world such as “like an underground train” (p.27). It is clear that McCarthy does not want to cause an alienation from this post-apocalyptic world but to warn about it and to demonstrate how close such a catastrophe is.

In *The Road*, nature has died and there is no other living thing except for human beings but still nature continues to endanger human lives. The dead trees on the roadsides and on the

mountains are falling down in great cracking noise. The father and the son have to be careful not to be smashed under them during their journey or camping at nights. At this point, again the fear comes from the unexpectedness and the uncontrollability of nature. The father tries to calm his son by saying “all the trees in the world are going to fall sooner or later. But not on us” (McCarthy, 2006, p.35). Here, to give relief to his son, he wants to demonstrate that he has the knowledge and wisdom so, everything is under control. However, when the son questions how his father could know that the trees would not fall on them, the father cannot explain: “I just know” (McCarthy, 2006, p.35). Later on, McCarthy reveals that also the father is afraid of the falling trees. When the trees start to fall down, the father and the son have to leave the land and try to escape. At this point, it is possible to draw a connection between McCarthy’s image of trees and Nietzsche’s. When Zarathustra arrives in a city, he encounters a tightrope dancer and while he is performing his art, he falls down and dies. Zarathustra takes his corpse with him while he is leaving the city. He carries it for a while and then, he decides to bury him into a tree: “And you, my first companion, farewell I buried you well in your hallow tree; I have hidden you well from the wolves” (Nietzsche, 1883/1976, p.136). While the tightrope dancer’s burial into a tree can be interpreted as a return to nature where he belongs, it also indicates that “the tree stands for enduring nature as modified by burial, or the human interpretation of death” (Rosen, 2004, p.74). In this point of view, when the falling of trees is viewed as the death of a living thing, the father is right to say that every tree will fall eventually. However, when those trees are regarded as the embodiment of death, like in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, then he is lying to the son intentionally when he says the trees will not fall onto them, because the father himself knows there is no escape from death.

Throughout *The Road*, nature, with all its components, causes trouble for the father and the son. Sometimes with its existence, such as falling trees, earthquake, lightning, sometimes with its lacking, such as darkness at night caused by the lack of moon light, nature stands as an enemy to fight against for the father and the son. Even if it has been destroyed by humans, nature is still uncontrollable and has its own way. McCarthy (1985) clearly draws a portrait of human’s desperation against nature, just like Judge says in *Blood Meridian*: “Only nature can enslave man” (p.198).

It seems like nature is finally overwhelmed by men and McCarthy deploys ruined nature throughout *The Road*. It becomes very hard to find resources, such as food or water, on the earth, and there is no species left except for a very limited number of men. Man exploits the earth and in order to make use of everything to his own advantage, he destroys everything in his way, no matter if it is his own kind or a non-human, just like presented in the actions of the

gang in *Blood Meridian*. Calling such an act as the triumph of man or the defeat of nature is not appropriate because nature does not disappear completely and it will find a way to sustain its own existence. It is also possible to claim that man does not aim to destroy nature; he just wants to use nature's source until the end and takes advantage of it by exploiting nature. However, in the end, man finds out that while exploiting nature, he, in fact, not only destroys nature but also himself. As a result of this destruction, McCarthy depicts that nature is in agony and mourning. One of the most significant expressions of nature's mourning is the part where McCarthy (2006) depicts the days and the nights: "Dark of the invisible moon. The nights now only slightly less black. By the day the banished sun circles the earth like a grieving mother with a lamp" (p.32). The moon is fading away and the sun is not able to lighten the world anymore because it is too weak "like a grieving mother" who lost her children. Nature is in extreme grief. Like the destruction of nature, also the tiredness of the world begins in *Blood Meridian*. While travelling across a desert, the kid "met with men who seemed unable to abide the silence of the world" (McCarthy, 1985, p.313). There are no storms, no thunders or any other dangers for men that come from nature but nature's silence is also a challenge that men have to cope with. Man knows that this silence refers to death. In fact, allegorically, this silence of nature is directly related to grief. In his book *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, Benjamin (2003) states that "[i]n all mourning there is a tendency to silence" and adds "[b]ecause it is mute, fallen nature mourns. But the converse of this statement leads even deeper into the essence of nature; its mournfulness makes it become mute" (p.224). Therefore, it is not inconceivable that McCarthy portrays a grieving nature through all its silence in both *Blood Meridian* and *The Road*.

It can be interpreted that all these atrocities in *Blood Meridian* result in the "barren, silent, godless" (McCarthy, 2006, p.2) world of *The Road*. To keep the main focus on the importance of the results, not just one last reason, McCarthy does not name the destruction. Whatever the reason is, it can be easily inferred that man causes this catastrophe. Throughout the novel, McCarthy highlights that there are no animals, green trees or plants. Even the sun is not able to shine or lighten the ash covered lands due to the grey clouds that cover the sky. Only few men are left in the world and they are in a great struggle for survival. It can be clearly inferred that while man demolishes the world around him, he also impairs himself. The question then arises: Why does only man exist while all the other things go extinct? As a Southern writer in whose works the traces of Southern Literature can be easily found, McCarthy leaves only man behind as the witness to this apocalyptic end of the world because "without witnesses an event never was" (Monk, 2011, p.43). There should be witnesses and these witnesses ought to record and transform the event. Besides the struggles that they experience, being witnesses to

their own kind's slow extinction in all those horrors and terrors is also a damnation for these men.

Pouring two novels into a bowl with the aim to construct cause and effect relationship between them, reading them as a critique of capitalism which is dominant all around the world can give hints about McCarthy's critical stance. The frontier ideology of the United States can be considered as the representation of the capitalist ideology. Within this perspective, *Blood Meridian* reveals the system of exploitation during the frontier period. People who think and behave like the members of Glanton gang damage the earth by exploiting its resources and also humankind by using, abusing and even killing them. As a consequence, mankind finds himself trapped in the destroyed world of *The Road*. McCarthy (1985) narrates the story of scalphunters who sell scalps in exchange for money in America's westward expansion days. Indeed, Glanton gang was supposed to kill Indians and sell their scalps but the gang sometimes kill the whites and sell theirs as if they were Indians'. This clearly portrays Pirro's (2017) definition, "the dog-eat-dog world of capitalism" (p.2), to describe the world in *The Road* by referring the cannibalism in it. During their journey, the father and the son first see a group of men and a pregnant woman at a distance but do not want to interact with them and hide. After a while, the father and the son go into the woods and see smoke ahead. As they approach, they begin to smell something cooking when they arrive at the area where somebody camped a little while ago. While checking out the area, the boy sees "a charred human infant headless and gutted and blackening on the spit" (McCarthy, 2006, p.212). Even though it is not directly stated, it can be inferred that the group with a pregnant woman whom the father and the son saw before they arrived at the woods, cooked and ate the new-born baby. One's eating his or her own child can be read allegorically as the critique of the present global policies which mean "the older generation, by appropriating all the resources, 'eat' the next one by destroying its chances of thriving and, in some cases, even surviving" (Liénard-Yeterian, 2016, p.153). This relation between destruction and capitalism is expatiated in *Capitalist Realism* by Mark Fisher (2009). As Fisher (2009) sets forth;

capitalism is in fact primed to destroy the entire human environment. The relationship between capitalism and eco-disaster is neither coincidental nor accidental: capital's 'need of a constantly expanding market', its 'growth fetish', mean that capitalism is by its very nature opposed to any notion of sustainability. (pp.18-19)

The concrete deserted roads and rusty billboards on the road sides can be interpreted as the signals that demonstrate the end of capitalism. Yet, the most striking scene is the one where the

father and the son find a can of Coca-Cola. While he drinks it for the first time, the son also thinks it is the last time that he drinks a coke. Considering Coca-Cola can as the most iconic symbol of mass consumer culture in today's capitalism, this last can of Coca-Cola in the world definitely refers to the end of capitalism itself (Schleusener, 2017, p.6). To put it in another way, capitalism does not only consume the sources of the world, but also devours itself eventually. Like everything, it also has an end and the reason is capitalism itself.

Considering the issues which are mentioned in this chapter, it is still not appropriate to define *The Road* as an ultimate end to nature, or even to the world. Zarathustra also declares that “where there is perishing and a falling of leaves, behold, there life sacrifice itself—for power” (Nietzsche, 1873/1976, p.227). It may seem like life on earth has come to an end but McCarthy provides clues that nature is finding its own way for regeneration. To give an example, although McCarthy (2006) states that every night is darker and every day is “more gray” (p.2) than the one before, later on, he expresses that some days “the ashen overcast thinned” (p.107) and there are slight shadows of the trees on the ground. This can be a clue that nature is healing itself and the conditions are not getting worse anymore. Furthermore, the mushrooms, seeds from some bales of hay and the apples the father and the son find can be interpreted as the indicators of hope for agricultural activities. By referring to these evidences and more, Hermanson (2017) claims that this novel is not the story of the end of either nature or human. He defines *The Road* as a story which “begins with a catastrophic asteroid strike but concludes on the edge of an organic rebirth” (p.7). From this perspective, it can be concluded that in life, as Michalski (2007/2012) claims; “decline, degeneration, aggression and destruction are all, in degree and kind, as positive phenomena of life as growth and bloom” (p.13). He also highlights that destructions or endings are not supposed to bring a better future. In other words, all this negativity does not indicate any positivity to come.

When *Blood Meridian* is considered as the beginning of America's capitalism and expansionism, it should also be kept in mind that it is an end of another time, moment, period or what it is called. In the preface of *Blood Meridian*, by giving an extract from a newspaper that states a 300,000-year-old skull is found and it has signs that it had been scalped, McCarthy emphasizes that violence and destruction have always existed and will always exist. As these ends and beginnings follow each other, life and nature as representatives of the cycle of life turns not as a vicious circle that repeats itself constantly, but every end and every beginning is “anew” in “*eternal return*” (Michalski, 2007/2012, pp.188-189). To conclude, wild, threatening but also colorful and vivacious nature which is presented at the beginning of *Blood Meridian* was once a new world and a heaven for humans, even if it was full atrocity. However, this new

beginning is very likely to be an end of another moment. Similarly, the death of nature in *The Road* will be the rebirth of another.

CHAPTER 2

RELIGION

Cormac McCarthy's contribution to the Southern Grotesque tradition is mostly compared to Flannery O'Connor's. Guinn (2000) claims that the fictional worlds McCarthy portrays in his novels are very similar to O'Connor's: "fallen, absurd, painful, violent, and grotesque but without the promise of escape" (p.101). However, McCarthy's characters are corrupted and he presents this corruption as the essential nature of man and indicates that there is no salvation for him. While attacking the grand narrative of Christianity as an institutional religion, he also deploys how the concept of Christian God and religion itself do not mean anything in his characters' lives rather than symbols which are almost extinct. In this sense, rather than writing about the Bible and discussing its morality, in *Blood Meridian*, McCarthy writes "like a scripture, tempts one to read (for metaphysical structures) as if one were reading scripture, and yet withholds all but the aesthetic and sentimental effects of scripture" (Hungerford, 2010, p.95). Owing to its biblical language, references to religious narratives and images through the novel, he highlights the violence and destruction on earth; and their relation to religion and religious doctrines. As a successor of O'Connor in Southern literature, *The Road* (2006) is also imbued with religious themes. One of O'Connor's (1984) widely quoted descriptions of the South is as follows: "while the South is hardly Christ-centered, it is most certainly Chris-haunted. The Southerner, who isn't convinced of it, is very much afraid that he may have been formed in the image and likeness of God" (pp.43-44). Here, she means how man is scared of being the reflection of God on earth when he observes his own corruption and flaws. Within this framework, considering the father figure in *The Road*, Lake (2017) describes *The Road* as "beautiful because it is Christ-haunted, afraid that man may have been made in the image of God after all" (p.7).

McCarthy's representation of violence in *Blood Meridian* implies how religion and belief in God have lost their importance for mankind. He emphasizes that these values cannot turn humankind into better beings, prevent the suffering or save their lives. He depicts Judge's attempts to exploit and destroy his environment as an attempt to replace the existing religious order with his own. If the apocalyptic world of *The Road* is regarded as an outcome of Judge's victory in *Blood Meridian*, it can be claimed that McCarthy presents the son as a hope and a savior for mankind in *The Road*. This chapter aims to describe how Judge attacks human values

and morals to create his own belief system. Judge believes in destruction because he declares that war is god. However, in *The Road*, McCarthy portrays a child without a past, a symbolic emphasis on the child's prophetic role and reveals the impossibility of breaking the eternal recurrence of the same in terms of religion and how mankind is doomed to create the same order again and again.

In *Blood Meridian*, the kid begins a journey and finds himself as a part of westward expansion. This national movement is accepted as a Holy mission even from the beginning and all the violence committed on those lands is justified by Puritan philosophy. McCarthy (1985) attacks this frontier myth of America and offers a different history full of violence instead of heroic stories. Thus, this seemingly Western story *Blood Meridian* "has metamorphosed into a piece of Frontier Gothic" (Vieth, 2010, p.67). On the other hand, Walsh (2008) states that *The Road* also presents a dystopian and futuristic frontier story in a dead wilderness. The father and the son are on an exploration to build the civilization again and struggling against nature like the Puritans when they first came to the New World. Within this framework, they are on a quest both for the sake of God, as a holy quest, and the humanity. McCarthy brings back the spirit of the American frontier myth in a different way on a cauterized planet in *The Road*. However, in this story, the heroes do not move towards the West, but they carry their fire into the South to sustain life, to establish an order again and to bring light to those lands like their ancestors did in the West (Walsh, 2008). McCarthy (2006) also enables critics to make allegorical religious readings by telling the story of "the father" and "the son" who are "carrying the fire" and think that they are chosen by God.

In *Blood Meridian*, McCarthy (1985) tells the story of the kid which begins in 1849, just after the Mexican-American War and the story takes place in vast lands around Mexican borderlands. The kid first joins the Captain White's group of soldiers and then continues with the Glanton gang. Both groups allegedly claim that they protect American lands and serve for America's manifest destiny. From the very beginning, Americans believe that they are the servants of God and they bring law and order to those lands and to savage people living on it in the name of God. Captain White explains their mission to the kid as follows:

What we are dealing with... is a race of degenerates. A mongrel race, little better than niggers. And maybe no better. There is no government in Mexico. Hell, there's no God in Mexico. Never will be. We are dealing with a people manifestly incapable of governing themselves. And do you know what happens with people who cannot govern themselves? That's right. Others come in to govern for them. (McCarthy, 1985, p.34)

Captain White tries to justify what Americans perform on those lands. He humiliates African American people and Mexicans at the same time by comparing them with each other. Moreover, he accuses Mexicans of not being able to govern themselves and Captain White sees himself as the savior and protector of other people. In this sense, McCarthy portrays Captain White as the representative of the West's imperialistic philosophy. Even though it is a fictional story, most of the characters in *Blood Meridian* such as Glanton and Judge are based on historical records mentioned in Chamberlain's famous work, *My Confession* (1996), in which Chamberlain writes about his experiences in the Mexican War and its aftermath (Jillet, 2013). Yet, according to Douglas (2003), McCarthy portrays his characters, especially Judge, as the embodiment of Western and Christian modernity, which will be discussed in detail later in this chapter. From a broader perspective, Douglas (2003) claims that *Blood Meridian* reveals the Christian God's inertia without intervening in the atrocity committed by the imperialist frontiersmen in the name of the same Christian God.

As representatives of the Frontier Gothic, both novels reflect the Frontier ideology that hinges on Puritan values. Among these values, one of the most prominent is individualism which constitutes the basis of the American Dream. Especially in this New World, the Garden of the Lord, a man can become successful through his own efforts and this success needs heroic action. Stark (2013) states that American individualism consists of "self-reliance, resourcefulness, and independence" (p.81). However, this individualism can result in cruelty, particularly at a time of crisis or chaos as a consequence of the survival instinct. For instance, when the kid and Sproule, in *Blood Meridian*, escape from the Indians' attack, they find themselves alone in the desert. Sproule is hurt and when he announces a problem with his arm, the kid offers help but Sproule rejects. The kid replies "You suit yourself" (McCarthy, 1985, p.61). Beginning from that moment, the kid transforms into an American frontiersman. The kid gives signals of this transformation after a short while by refusing to help Sproule when they are trying to drink water from a hole in the sand even though Sproule asks for help (pp.66-67). Later on, the kid and Sproule are caught by some soldiers and their hands are tied. The soldiers show the kid a human head in a jar, which belongs to Captain White, to detect if the kid is related to that atrocity or knows anything about it but "he spat and wiped the mouth. He aint no kin to me, he said" (pp.69-70). Although Captain White helped the kid and the kid loved him before, the kid does not feel any emotion or at least show any reaction. Apart from some exceptions throughout the novel, the kid turns into a cruel American man who thinks of only himself. On the other hand, the same individualism can also be traced in the world of *The Road*.

McCarthy (2006) portrays a world that was destroyed by an unknown catastrophe. In the first days after the catastrophe, people were helping each other. Yet, within a year murders begin, people start to kill each other and steal goods to survive and this vandalism reaches even the point of cannibalism. Everybody takes care of only themselves except for the father and the son. Surely all this atrocity is not the individualism that emerges from Puritanism, but it can be easily put forward that this individualism with the survival instinct results in a terrible destructive mass behavior. Unlike this point of view, the father holds onto his son with a religious aim and claims: “My job is to take care of you. I was appointed by God” (McCarthy, 2006, p.80). Cant (2009) defines this caring relationship between the father and the son as the most significant difference that separates *The Road* from the previous novels by McCarthy. To sum up, McCarthy employs religious references, values and symbols as one of the most prominent characteristics of American/Frontier gothic, mostly to criticize and to deconstruct them.

In *Blood Meridian*, McCarthy (1985) portrays violence that dominates the vast lands of the Southwest and lays bare how violence lies deep in human nature. As an epigraph to the novel, McCarthy uses an extract from the newspaper, *The Yuma Daily Sun*, dated June 13, 1982, which states a 300,000-year-old scalped fossil skull has been found in Ethiopia (p.1). Thus, at the very beginning of the novel, McCarthy announces that the differences between countries, nations, ruling governments, races and historical events do not matter; violence is as old as mankind. As this piece of news implies, *Blood Meridian* reveals atrocities committed by nearly all the characters in the novel. Judge expresses the very question that arises in everybody’s mind: “If God meant to interfere in the degeneracy of mankind would he not have done so by now?” (McCarthy, 1985, p.147). So, even Judge, the devil incarnate himself, acknowledges the existence of a god, but what kind of a god is it? Daugherty (1999) claims that *Blood Meridian* is set in a Manichean Gnostic framework. He explains that this world “is, and has always been, a world of killing” (p.165). Also, McCarthy himself supports this approach in one of his interviews by declaring that “there’s no such things as life without bloodshed” (Woodward, 1992, para. 35). According to Daugherty (1999), the Gnostic belief that *Blood Meridian* promotes states that God exists but it does not have an active role in the human world. In other words, he implies that god takes no responsibility for humans’ actions and mankind is all alone in this world of terror which is created by the man himself. However, Douglas (2003) discusses this issue from a different perspective. According to him, in *Blood Meridian* (McCarthy, 1985), the existence of god “is not a cause for hope for McCarthy, but a cause of terror” (p.14). To

give an example, when the gang camp in an old town, Santa Rita del Cobre, they see “a Mexican or halfbreed boy maybe twelve years old” (McCarthy, 1985, p.116), watching them from a distance in fear. Judge asks who he is but nobody answers. They go on camping and chatting without caring about the boy but he continues watching the gang. When the night is over, just before the gang leaves the town, the halfbreed boy’s dead body is found naked on the ground: “His neck had been broken and his head hung straight down and it flopped over strangely when they let him onto the ground” (p.119). It is not directly mentioned but it can be inferred from the context that Judge is responsible for this violent act. Some men stand “about the corpse in silence” and begin to talk “senselessly about the merits and virtues of the dead boy” (pp.118-119). In this scene, the silence of the men around the dead boy’s body is, indeed, God’s silence. If God has the ultimate power, why did not God save the boy’s life but let that savagery happen? While those men are taking care of the boy’s corpse, the gang is about to leave the town. In the background, McCarthy (1985) writes about a man who is shot and about to die: “Within the doorless cuartel³ the man who’d been shot sang church hymns and cursed God alternately” (p.119). By singing hymns and cursing God at the same time, the man reveals the anger within him against God and the hymns lose their aim among the curses that the man utters, and do not celebrate the existence of God anymore. God that does not stop or prevent all this violence and killing cannot be defined as an indifferent god anymore. This is a god who is indifferent to the world he created. This concept of God is incongruous with the concept of the Christian God. In McCarthy’s works, god’s silence despite all the misery and violence that man has to bear is the sign of a malicious god (Douglas, 2003).

In *The Road* (2006), which is set more than 150 years later than *Blood Meridian* (1985), McCarthy presents an already destroyed world and it is evident that god has still not revealed himself to human beings or at least attempted to help them. For instance, the father has been sick for a long time and one night he wakes up and walks away from his son into the trees. He coughs severely for a while and then he angrily speaks to god: “Are you there? He whispered. Will I see you at last? Have you a neck by which to throttle you? Have you a heart? Damn you eternally have you a soul? Oh God, he whispered. Oh God” (p.10). As Lake (2017) points out, the father knows that he will not get a response but it is also clear that he believes in the existence of God. However, the father thinks that God is cruel and mean because even in this harshness and chaos in which all the living beings, except for a limited number of humans, go extinct and people steal from each other and kill or even eat each other, god still does not

³ In Spanish, cuartel means barracks. A building where soldiers stay.

interfere, as Judge has pointed out before. Thus, the father begs god for help and at the same time he is angry with god thinking he let mankind down. The son also has a similar feeling about god. When he is with his father on the beach and the dark comes, the father loads their flarepistol. The son asks questions about the pistol and how far it can be seen when they shoot it:

THE SON They couldnt⁴ see it very far, could they, Papa?

THE FATHER Who?

THE SON Anybody.

THE FATHER No. Not far.

THE SON If you wanted show where you were.

THE FATHER You mean like to the good guys?

THE SON Yes. Or anybody that you wanted them to know where you were.

THE FATHER Like who?

THE SON I don't know.

THE FATHER Like God?

THE SON Yeah. Maybe somebody like that. (McCarthy, 2006, p.263)

The son does not have the same Christian God concept like his father, but he knows that there is a god or “somebody like that” and he completely neglects mankind which feels helpless and alone on the miserable earth. The son wants to make themselves visible to god so that he could see and help them. Wielenberg (2010) argues that some “hints of divine activity” (p.2) can be found in the novel but these are only hints. This does not mean that there is a god in the world of the novel. For example, he gives the name of the Spanish sailboat, which the father and the son find on the coast, “Pajaro de Esperanza” (McCarthy, 2006, p.236) which means bird of hope. Wielenberg (2010) considers this name as a reference to the Old Testament but he also adds that the message which the sailboat gives is just hopelessness because the father and the son understand that the whole world is cauterized, not only their own land. As such, various discussions have been made on the issue whether god is cruel or indifferent to humankind. However, McCarthy presents another point of view. At the end of the story, when the father dies, the son is found by a stranger wearing a parka and carrying a shotgun. The son asks the man if he is one of the good guys and the man “looked at the sky. As if there were anything to be seen” (McCarthy, 2006, p.302). Two possible meanings can be inferred from these

⁴ Throughout the novel, McCarthy intentionally avoids using apostrophes in the contractions of negative grammatical structures. In his article, Banco (2010) claims that the missing apostrophes reproduce “visually disavowal at the heart of much of McCarthy’s fiction and thus help underscore a broken, fragmented, and ultimately empty world” and he adds “[t]he occasional inclusion of an apostrophe in certain contractions, however, reveals a counterpoint to what is often read as unrelenting nihilism” (p.276).

sentences. The first one is that the man looks at the sky instinctively but he already knows that he will not be able to see god. The second one, and the more possible one, is that after all those pains and sufferings both throughout the novel and human history, McCarthy implies that the man looks at the sky in vain because there is no god to see, to beg, or to cry out against. In addition to his famous declaration of the death of god, Nietzsche depicts god in a state of inertia. While wandering in the woods, Zarathustra comes across a man lying on the ground. Zarathustra wants to help him to stand but he cannot pull himself together and starts to moan and deliver a very long speech:

Why this torture
With blunt-toothed arrows?
Why dost thou stare again,
Not yet weary of human agony,
With gods' lightning eyes that delight in suffering?
Thou wouldst not kill,
Only torture, torture?
Why torture *me*,
Delighted by suffering, thou unknown god? (Nietzsche, 1883/1976, p.365)

In the quotation above and in the rest of his speech, this man blames god and he thinks god is responsible for all the agony that the man himself and the mankind have experienced. He regards god as a cruel and torturing power. In another part where he meets an old pope, Zarathustra defines god as “equivocal” and “indistinct” (Nietzsche, 1883/1976, p.373). As the man in the parka in *The Road* who looks at the sky but sees nothing, Zarathustra implies that man cannot see or hear god when he needs him and this is god's fault. He complains about god by saying:

How angry he got with us, this wrath-snorter, because we understood him badly! But why did he not speak more cleanly? And if it was the fault of our ears, why did he give us ears that heard him badly? If there was mud in our ears—well, who put it there? (Nietzsche, 1883/1976, pp. 373-374)

Zarathustra thinks that if there is a god, then he should be blamed for the lack of true communication between man and god. As Nietzsche does, McCarthy also leaves this issue controversial. According to him, either there is no god or if there is one, then he is indifferent to man. Both Nietzsche and McCarthy emphasize that man is left alone with all this pain and suffering in the world.

The only character with a name in *The Road* is Ely who is an old man on the road trying to survive. The father and the son follow him from a distance for a while and then the son wants to help him and share their food with him. They meet and spend some time together. When the father asks his name, he says Ely, but later he confesses Ely is not his real name. The old man does not share his real name with them not only because he does not trust them, but also he implies that it does not change anything. Just like all things in the world, names do not have meaning anymore. However, Ely is not just a regular name that he makes up. McCarthy chooses the name Ely on purpose because of its religious reference. It is the name of a prophet from the Old Testament and also a signifier of the end of the world (Stark, 2013). However, McCarthy successfully deconstructs this prophet from the Old Testament. In his conversation with the father, Ely accepts his prophecy but at the same time he ignores that God exists: “There is no God and we are his prophets” (McCarthy, 2006, p.181). Here in fact, Ely means that man is responsible for that catastrophe and also Ely himself achieves to survive without the help of God. While blaming man for everything, at the same time he underlines the fact that God does not exist because if he did, he would help people. Thus, “he and all the other survivors of the catastrophe are prophets of atheism, bearing witness to the absence of God from the universe” (Wielenberg, 2010, p.3).

In terms of reading *Blood Meridian* (1985) in a religious framework, Judge has a crucial role throughout the novel. He is considered not only as the embodiment of violence and destruction, but also as the representative of science, Enlightenment and “the future mind” (Feng & Zheng, 2019, p.2). In this sense, Judge stands apart from all the other characters in the novel because nearly all the other characters have Christian values and beliefs which are mostly considered as the other of Enlightenment (Feng & Zheng, 2019). Alongside his giant and scary but at the same time “childlike” (McCarthy, 1985, p.79) and “petite” (p.167) appearance, which makes him a grotesque figure, Judge has great knowledge on various subjects. For instance, in his conversation with a sergeant, Judge makes

references to the children of Ham, the lost tribes of Israelites, certain passages from the Greek poets, anthropological speculations as to the propagation of the races in their dispersion and isolation through the agency of geological cataclysm and an assessment of racial traits with respect to climatic and geographical influences. (McCarthy, 1985, pp.84-85).

His broad knowledge is not limited only with the ones mentioned here. It is also possible to see Judge talking about music and language, architecture, law and paleontology.

However, the other characters in the novel mostly demonstrate religious behavior in some cases when they are compared to Judge. For instance, at the beginning of the novel, while the kid is travelling with Captain White's army on vast lands of Southwest America, they spend long days without water. Thus, a soldier from the army, named Hayward prays for rain and the rest of the soldiers join those prayers. Moreover, to make Judge stand sharper and more visible, as if he needs it, McCarthy employs a member of the Glanton gang, named Tobin who is an ex-priest, as a foil to Judge. Tobin was a priest but later on he joins the Glanton gang and becomes a practitioner of crime and violence. Undoubtedly, if Judge is the representative of Enlightenment, Tobin can be considered the representative of Christianity. To give an example, in Chapter XVII, the gang members camp at night and sit around a fire in silence. Soon after Judge stands up and walks away into the darkness and a member of the gang breaks the silence by asking the ex-priest about a myth which related that there were two moons in the sky before. The ex-priest looks at the sky and replies:

it may well have been so. But certainly the wise high God in his dismay at the proliferation of lunacy on this earth must have wetted a thumb and leaned down out of the abyss and pinched it hissing into extinction. And could he find some alter means by which the birds could mend their paths in the darkness he might have done with this one too. (McCarthy, 1985, p.244)

Here, the ex-priest responds to the question by referring to the Christian God and tells a mythical story about two moons and how one of them had disappeared. This narrative does not provide any scientific or reasonable explanation. Judge joins the discussion of the group and gives an answer to the question whether there were any living beings on Mars or on any other planet in the universe by saying that there is no life in the universe except for on earth. His answer comes definitely out of religious inferences. McCarthy (1985) describes this scene by using a kind of biblical language: "All listened as he spoke, those who had turned to watch him and those who would not" (p.245). McCarthy presents Judge as a prophet who declares the birth of a new religion by indicating that some will follow him and some will not. (Feng & Zheng, 2019).

Among many others, geology is only one of the branches of science that Judge has expertise in. One day, while camping on a hill with the gang, Judge starts to break one of his rock samples, called feldspar which contains red oxide, and also gives a lecture on geology to the gang members. Judge breaks that rock into pieces in order to "read news of the earth's origin" (McCarthy, 1985, p.116). Some members among the group, who are listening to him, quote some phrases from the Bible to confuse Judge's mind but Judge replies:

Books lie, he said
God dont lie.
No, said the judge. He does not. And these are his words.
He held up a chunk of rock.
He speaks in stones and trees, the bones of things (McCarthy, 1985, p.116)

According to Douglas (2013), here Judge praises the natural world and considers all the things on earth as the words of god. That is, Judge is in the attempt of reading the designer's, or god's, intentions through his words. This shows that Judge is trying to understand the designer. However, Spurgeon's (2009) claim seems to be different from Douglas's. According to her, in the quotation given above, Judge first seems to accept the Christian belief on nature and humans and their existence, but later on, he deconstructs it. The listeners around Judge begin to question their beliefs in nature and Christianity. After Judge's speech, they get confused; and also Judge increases his charisma in the eyes of his listeners with his knowledge and rhetoric. Spurgeon (2009) concludes her claim by saying: "the judge is laying groundwork, gathering 'proselytes', participants in the ritualistic myth he is enacting" (p.89). The word "proselyte" (p.116), which means a person who is convinced to change his/her religious belief, is used by McCarthy (1985) in that scene to describe the gang members who are listening to Judge. Like Zarathustra, who defines himself as "the teacher of eternal recurrence" (Nietzsche, 1883/1976, p.332) and aims to spread his teaching, Judge also seeks companions for his new order which he wants to create. Zarathustra declares: "... companions I need, living ones... Companions... Fellow creators, the creator seeks—those who write new values on new tablets" (Nietzsche, 1883/1976, pp.135-136). Zarathustra's purpose is to teach his idea of eternal recurrence to people and by gaining companions, he will be able to spread his teaching to more people with the help of his companions. Within this framework, it can be claimed that Judge is in search of proselytes to be able to create his own god, which is war, and to sustain the order and values which he aims to establish (La Shot, 2009). Another example of Judge is that during their journey, a man and his mentally ill brother join the gang. The man has to take care of his brother who is called "the idiot" throughout the novel. This man tells his brother's story to Glanton and Judge in a bar. One night, while the gang is camping in a town, the idiot walks into the river and he is about to drown. At that moment, Judge appears naked and

he stepped into the river and seized up the drowning idiot, snatching it aloft by the heels like a great midwife and slapping it on the back to let the water out. A birth scene or *baptism or some ritual not yet inaugurated into any canon* [emphasis added] (McCarthy, 1985, p.259).

As Spurgeon (2009) points out, Judge already starts acting out his own rituals that has never been staged before.

From a similar perspective, Feng and Zheng (2019) reject Douglas's (2013) claim that Judge tries to understand the profile of the designer by examining nature, and they assert that Judge "actually longs to be the designer" (p.6). Throughout the novel, Judge collects the dead Indians scalps and genitals (McCarthy, 1986), keeps the birds that he shot after stuffing them, presses "the leaves of trees and the plants into his book" (p.198), chases butterflies and writes notes in his notebook about "whatever exists" (p.198). Judge is wondering around as if he is collecting data from every creation in the universe in order to create his own. The scene in which the gang camps in Hueco tanks, located near the town of El Paso, exposes Judge's desire:

The rocks about in every sheltered place were covered with ancient paintings and the judge was soon among them copying out those certain ones into his book to take away with him. They were of men and animals and of the chase and there were curious birds and arcane maps and there were constructions of such singular vision as to justify every fear of man and the things that are in him. Of these etchings—some bright yet with color—there were hundreds, and yet the judge went among them with assurance, tracing out the very ones which he required. When he had done and while there yet was light he returned to a certain stone ledge and sat a while and studied again the work there. Then he rose and with a piece of broken chert he scappled away one of the designs, leaving no trace of it only a raw place on the stone where it had been. (McCarthy, 1985, p.173).

Here, Judge tries to make inquiries about the ancient times, mankind, their fears, desires and everything that he can get. However, he is not content with this. He writes down his knowledge about every archaeological or art object he sees and then he destroys them. He does not want other people to have the knowledge he has because he knows that knowledge is power. As Feng and Zheng (2019) state Judge aims to replace everything in the universe and to be the ruler of the earth, as he declares. In his conversation with Toadvine, Judge expresses that if a man does not have knowledge about anything, then that thing can defeat man (McCarthy, 1985). However, if a man becomes successful at attaining knowledge about every little thing in the universe, then he can be "properly suzerain of the earth" (McCarthy, 1985, p.198). When Toadvine asks what the word suzerain means, Judge defines it as a "keeper", an "overlord" and the one who "rules even where there are other rulers. He also adds a suzerain's "authority countermands local judgements" (p.198). Thus, Judge keeps things from animals to plants, drawings to parts of human bodies. At the same time, he also makes them disappear in order to be able to create his own religion, order or whatever he calls it. To do so, he has to destroy the present ones. Considering Judge's violent acts as a cycle of destruction and creation, like a

snake biting its own tail, it is possible to explain Judge's performance in the light of Zarathustra's sayings: "And whoever must be a creator in good and evil, verily, he must first be an annihilator and break values. Thus the highest evil belongs to the highest goodness: but this is creative" (Nietzsche, 1883/1976, p.228). At this point, it can be claimed that, besides many other metaphors used to define him, Judge is a creator in Zarathustra's perspective. Moreover, Zarathustra adds that this creator is the most hated one among all because a creator is at the same time a "lawbreaker" (Nietzsche, 1883/1976, p.324). Within this context, Judge is a destroyer of both concrete things such as rocks, animals and even men, and abstract concepts such as values and religion.

In addition to his interest in analyzing creatures on earth and then destroying them, Judge also criticizes morals. In one of his long speeches to the gang members, Judge tells the men around him that war had existed even before man and it will always be on earth. After stating the necessity of war, he concludes his speech by saying: "War is the ultimate game because war is at last a forcing of the unity of existence. War is god" (McCarthy, 1985, p.249). Here, Judge claims that war gives meaning to life and value to everything, especially man, which can only be understood in times of war. Thereon, Irving, a member of the gang, says that winning a war or a fight does not prove someone's righteousness "morally" and Judge replies: "Moral law is an invention of mankind for the disenfranchisement of the powerful in favor of the weak" (p.250). His point of view about morals can be best explained through Nietzsche's philosophy. According to Nietzsche, morality means "a negation of life" (Michalski, 2007/2012, p.41) and morals distort reality. Indeed, Zarathustra claims that the weak want equality to be able to survive among the stronger ones. However, Zarathustra states that their "most secret ambitions to be tyrants thus shroud themselves in words of virtue" (Nietzsche, 1883/1976, p.212). This means that also the weak want to rule, but they do not have power over the strong, so by inventing moral law, as Judge states, they establish their own order which is advantageous for themselves. They make the world seem a better place and owing to morals, the weak can survive on earth. In other words, without morals which are all constructed by humans, especially by the weak, only the strong, the real practitioners of war like Judge, could live on earth. Those, the ones like Judge, do not need a spirit, which is thinking before acting, and considering in detail all the possibilities and consequences. The weak need a spirit and morals to be able to sustain their lives on this planet (Michalski, 2007/2012). Zarathustra, like Judge, declares that he is not one of those who demand equality and adds that men cannot be equal. This equality is also against the idea of overman who has will to power—which is the

struggle against another in the name of creation and survival. Thus, Zarathustra concludes that, sooner or later, “war and inequality shall divide” (Nietzsche, 1883/1976, p.213) those men, who invent moral laws and want equality, as well.

In a similar way, Judge claims that all those morals are useless for deciding between life and death. In other words, they do not determine who will go on living and who will die. Judge exemplifies this by saying: “A moral view can never be proven right or wrong by any ultimate test. A man falling dead in a duel is not thought thereby to be proven in error as to his views” (McCarthy, 1985, p.250). Therefore, both for Judge and Nietzsche, labelling something as good and bad or pure and impure in the light of morals is for the weak. At that point, Nietzsche indicates another problem. In his work *Genealogy of Morals*, Nietzsche (1887/200) states that when priests become the highest class, the concepts of good and bad are distorted and are not decided upon a context anymore, and this makes everything more dangerous. He adds that especially in war the priests are a big threat and he explains this as follows: “Because they are the most impotent. It is because of their impotence that in them hatred grows to monstrous and uncanny proportions, to the most spiritual and poisonous kind of hatred” (p.469). Possibly for this reason, after finishing his lecture on moral law, Judge’s eyes search for Tobin, the priest, to ask his opinion on this issue:

The judge searched out the circle for disputants. But what says the priest? He said.

Tobin looked up. The priest does not say.

The priest does not say, said the judge. *Nihil dicit*⁵. But the priest has said. For the priest has put by the robes of his craft and taken up the tools of that higher calling which all men honor. The priest also would be no godserver but a god himself. (McCarthy, 1985, p.250)

As the defender of war and the enemy of morals, Judge attacks the priest’s ideas because the priest claims certain privileges for himself. Judge indicates that the priest does not serve god but selfishly himself. The things he does and the morals he constructs are all for himself, not for god’s purposes. For that reason, the priest does not give an answer when he is asked about morals, because those morals are protecting him. Nietzsche (1887/2000) points out that “political superiority always” ends up with “superiority of soul” especially “when the highest caste is at the same time the *priestly* caste” (p.467). That is the point which Judge wants to highlight by saying the priest is “a god himself” (McCarthy, 1985, p.250).

⁵ In legalese, *Nihil dicit* means refusal or neglect by a defendant to plead or answer. Here, it is seen that law is one of the numerous subjects that the judge has knowledge of.

As is stated earlier in this chapter, Judge aims to have the ultimate power over the universe. Thus, to be able to create his own order, he has to first destroy the present one. Yarbrough (2012) explains this state of Judge by saying: “Like Loki, like Lucifer, the judge is at war with the authority of the universe” (p.49). He also adds the fact that Judge “is this primary, initial kind of trickster, the rebel, with the self-serving cause” (p.49). It should also be noted that this trickster, Judge, is described as an unearthly being by McCarthy, even the character is based upon historical documents. In addition to his grotesque physical appearance, one hint that creates suspicion about his mortality is the name of his rifle inscribed on it: “*Et In Arcadia Ego*⁶” (McCarthy, 1985, p.125). This Latin phrase can be translated as “Even in Arcadia, there am I” (Munteanu, 2018, p.371). Here, the subject I can be interpreted as death and the message of this saying is that death exists even in Arcadia, which is a utopian place (Munteanu, 2018). In this framework, it is possible to mention that Judge himself is death or Judge is only a practitioner of war and this means he brings death to the world, so he is omniscient. Another clue which may indicate that Judge is immortal is that he never ages. After the kid escapes from the Glanton gang and starts a new life, Judge finds him at a bar approximately 10 years later but “he seemed little changed or none in all these years” (McCarthy, 1985, p.325). This expression arouses the question whether Judge is immortal. At the end of the novel, Judge kills the kid and the novel ends with the following sentence: “He [Judge] says that he will never die” (p.335) because Judge is death himself, as it is written on his weapon.

In contrast to the mythic character of Judge, in *Blood Meridian*, a nameless boy, who is called the kid throughout the novel, appears as one of the main characters. His mother dies when she gives birth to him, his father never speaks of her name and the kid has not ever met his own mother. It is also stated that the kid has a sister. When he is fourteen, he runs away from his house and begins a long adventure which will last until he dies. After a long journey, he first attends Captain White’s army and then he becomes one of the members of the Glanton gang which Judge leads, indeed. When the novel is analyzed from the kid’s perspective, it is observed that he grows up during his journey and the novel exhibits his transformation from childhood to adulthood. Reading the novel from an allegorical point of view, it is possible to define the kid’s journey as a religious pilgrimage as McCarthy (1985) himself puts out at the beginning of the novel by describing the kid as “a pilgrim among others” (p.5). The reason why

⁶ This phrase is also the name of a classic painting in French Baroque style. Judge is the only one who gives his weapon a name from the classics while all the others prefer female names.

his journey can be defined as a pilgrimage is that McCarthy narrates the kid's transformation throughout the novel. First, he begins his journey as a runaway child and then he reaches maturity in the Glanton gang where he becomes a part of all the atrocity and barbarous acts that the gang commit. All his experiences are told in a religious tone, such as defining him as "a pilgrim" (McCarthy, 1985, p.5) or "devout" (McCarthy, 1985, p.57), and this tone leads to an allegorical reading of the text. In this allegorical reading, despite the kid's weird character, he can be read as "a modern Everyman" (Rodriguez, 2008, p.32). He is just a regular person and his name is not mentioned through the novel. As a result, one can put himself in the kid's place and this arouses the feeling of anxiety, horror and terror, which is also one of the main aims of a gothic text.

Daughtery (1999) underlines the kid's good nature and his difference from the other characters in the novel. One night, the Yumas, a tribe of Indians, attack the camp of the gang and kill most of the gang members including their leader Glanton. However, some of them manage to survive including the kid, Toadvine, the ex-priest, Judge and the idiot with him. Toadvine, the ex-priest and the kid begin a long run in the vast lands of the Southwest fearing that Judge will kill them. At some point, the kid has the chance to shoot Judge but he does not pull the trigger. Upon this, Judge tells the kid that

I know too that you've not the heart of a common assassin. I've passed before your gunsights twice this hour and will pass a third time... / No assassin, called the judge. And no partisan either. There's a flawed place in the fabric of your heart. Do you think I could not know? You alone were mutinous. You alone reserved in your soul some corner of clemency for the heathen. (McCarthy, 1985, p.299)

Judge describes the kid's goodness as a flaw and he also knows that the kid does not always stand for the savagery that the gang commit by defining him as a rebel. Also, when Judge finds the kid in a prison and visits him, the kid blames him for all the atrocity and calls him "crazy" but Judge tries to convince the kid that all the violence that the kid committed took place by the kid's own will. Judge also declares that he loves the kid "as a son" (McCarthy, 1985, p.306) and tells the kid that he should rejoin Judge and go back to their previous life. However, the kid refuses to return to that "mythic order" (Spurgeon, 2009, p.102). Another example for the kid's good heart is that after leaving the gang, the kid encounters an old woman sitting in a small place on the rocks. He approaches the woman and tells his story and wants to take her to a safe place. Unfortunately, the woman is already dead. However, this exhibits the transformation that the kid has as a result of his pilgrimage journey. At the end of the story, McCarthy sets the scene in late 1878 in North Texas, which is approximately 10 years after the kid's and Judge's

last encounter. It seems like the kid has completed his transformation and McCarthy never mentions him as the kid anymore. He becomes the man. He works as a guide for the travelers and tries to protect them from all kinds of danger such as nature, Indians or savage gangs like the Glanton gang. He also carries a Bible which he found at the mining camps. However, the kid, the man now, is illiterate and he cannot read it. He hopes the Bible will protect him or give him some power but this is a vain attempt. Rodriguez (2008) discusses this issue as “grotesque allegory” and explains: “none of the sufferings, trials and chastisements experienced by the protagonist [the kid] seems however to grant him salvation” (p.35). McCarthy underlines how Christianity as a religious institution cannot function anymore by describing a ruinous church at the beginning of the novel and the people who shelter in the church from the Glanton gang. However, in the latter example, the people cannot escape being killed barbarously by the gang. Just like the churches, the Bible is only “a mute emblem of a fallen system, for the kid” (Spurgeon, 2009, p.102).

Even though Judge asserts that the relationship between him and the kid is like a father-son relationship, if the kid is considered as the representation of goodness and Judge of evil, it can be claimed that at the end of the story the evil becomes victorious over goodness. After all those years, Judge never stops following the kid and finally he finds the kid at a bar. When the kid goes to the toilet which is outside the building and opens the doors, he sees Judge sitting naked inside. Judge smiles, takes the kid in his arms, presses him to his body toughly and closes the door. McCarthy does not narrate what happens inside. The only thing known is that when a man opens the door, he witnesses a terrible scene inside. Then, the story ends with Judge’s dancing naked and shouting “he will never die” (McCarthy, 1985, p.335). The ending of the story is not much obvious about the kid’s fate. It is possible to mention two alternatives; the first one is that the kid is definitely dead and the other is that he is not dead but raped by Judge. Still in both ends, it can be concluded that the kid’s journey was a pilgrimage that turns the kid into a mature and better man (Rodriguez, 2008, p.45).

Despite the victory of Judge, who is pure evil, McCarthy ends the novel with an epilogue. In this epilogue, it is dawn and there is a man who uses a steel tool and “*enkindles the stone in the hole with his steel hole by hole striking the fire out of the rock which God has put here*” (McCarthy, 1985, p.337). McCarthy describes the scene in full detail and he ends the epilogue with the following line: “*Then they all move on*” (p.337). Bloom (2009) comments on this epilogue and states that even though the novel ends with Judge’s victory, that does not mean the darkness defeats the light forever. Judge may seem invincible and immortal but in this

epilogue McCarthy gives the message that “a new Prometheus may be rising to go up against him” (Bloom, 2009, p.7). 22 years after *Blood Meridian* (1985) was first published, in one of his recent novels, *The Road*, McCarthy (2006) presents a young Prometheus who is carrying the fire for the sake of mankind, as Bloom (2009) asserts.

Fire is a widely used metaphor since the ancient times. Fire represents the beginning of human civilization and also the most prominent element that causes the destruction of the world. In this sense, Nietzsche (1873/1962) describes it as the eternal flame of life: “[i]t constructs and destroys, all in innocence” (p.62). In *Blood Meridian*, Judge triumphs, the kid probably dies although not mentioned overtly and also the symbol of nature, the bear, dies. In *The Road*, there is the chance to observe the consequences of the destruction that takes place in *Blood Meridian*. Moreover, McCarthy (1985) brings back the man who tries to strike the fire out of the rock in *Blood Meridian*, as the son who carries the fire in *The Road*. In this novel, McCarthy (2006) portrays a “burntlooking country” (p.51) and the landscape is getting grayer each day. Even though McCarthy (2006) does not name the event which causes the apocalypse, in the first days of it, the city is on fire and it seems like fire is the main reason of total destruction. Yet, McCarthy (2006) tells the story of an unnamed father and a son who carry the fire to save humanity and civilization. Throughout the novel, the father ensures the boy that despite all the struggles they have, they all will be fine and explains the reason: “Because we’re carrying the fire” (McCarthy, 2006, p.87). The only reference to the myth of Prometheus is not the symbol of fire; the sufferings and struggles that the father and the son experience through the novel are reminiscent of those that Prometheus had (Wielenberg, 2010, pp.4-5). In this framework, it can be claimed that McCarthy creates a modern Prometheus myth in a dystopian future world.

Hence, the fire destroys the world and at the same time it is the hope for humanity and the civilization. Yet, the question is what fire it is and how the son carries it. Hegel (1825/2006) defines the metaphor of fire as life, it is nothing other than life itself and adds that just like life, fire also depletes itself. Hegel (1825/2006) also underlines the constructive feature of fire and states that when the whole planet is set on fire, this does not mean the end of it, instead it is “the general life of the universe as a whole” (p.80). The explanation to the question of how the son achieves to carry the fire can be done from a Nietzschean point of view. In Nietzsche’s work *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1883/1976), after he leaves the mountains and arrives at a valley, the old man asks Zarathustra “would you now carry *your fire* [emphasis added] into the valleys?” (p.122). Here, there is no physical fire, of course, and Zarathustra carries his own fire that consists of his own life. He does not give his own fire to people, instead he lights up the fire

inside people “to liberate the life within us” (Michalski, 2007/2012, p.114). In *The Road*, McCarthy (2006) has a Nietzschean approach to the concept of fire. In the novel, the father has been sick from the beginning of the story and when he is about to die, the son feels scared and wants to die with him. The father replies:

THE FATHER You cant. You have to carry the fire.

THE SON I dont know how to do.

THE FATHER Yes you do.

THE SON Is it real? The fire?

THE FATHER Yes it is.

THE SON Where is it? I dont know where it is.

THE FATHER Yes you do. It’s inside you. It was always there. I can see it. (McCarthy, 2006, p.298)

Here, the father implies that the son is fire itself and if fire is life, so the son is the one who will sustain life in the future by going on living. Thus, the father says the son cannot die with him.

Even though at first it seems like the son is confused, throughout the novel the father expresses how the son is important for both the father and also for mankind, and he addresses his son by employing different religious identities. For instance, at the very beginning of the story, the father defines the son as “the word of God” (McCarthy, 2006, p.3). After all these impregnations of the father, towards the end of the novel the son says “I’m the one” (p.277). He starts to believe that he is the chosen one. He implies that he is chosen to save mankind and civilization, and also to sustain life. Estes (2017) claims that the boy is the symbol of “Adamic innocence and vulnerability” (p.417), and all that agony he suffers indicates the beginning of a new world. Similarly, Kunsu (2009) asserts that the boy represents “a hopeful Adamic or messianic figure” (p.65). However, it is not possible to define him as Christ at this point because unlike Christ, the son was born after the apocalypse began, which means he belongs to a totally new world. The boy has no perception of things that belong to his father’s world. For instance, while they are moving on their way to the South, they find a ruined train and climb into the locomotive. The father acts as if he is driving the train and makes noises but none of them makes any sense to the boy because he does not know the concept of a train. He has never seen any and also will probably never see one again. From another point of view, as the father himself states in a previous part of the novel, in this ruined world the father is “an alien” to his son (McCarthy, 2006, p.163). In this sense, the boy is at the beginning of a new world and he is totally a new person, who is pure and an innocent like Adam.

This innocent Adam, surely, has some moral values and he names this set of morals as being a good guy. That phrase is mentioned for the first time when the son asks the father “Are we still the good guys?” (McCarthy, 2006, p.81), after the father, by a survival instinct, kills a man who tries to steal their items. The son divides people into two groups in his mind: the good guys and the bad guys. Wielenberg (2010) gives a list of the rules that the good guys have to follow in *The Road*: “1-Don’t eat people. / 2- Don’t steal. / 3- Don’t lie. / 4- Keep your promises. / 5- Help others. / 6- Never give up” (pp. 5-6). Throughout the novel, the boy asks the same question whether they are good people or not at critical moments because his biggest fear is to be one of the bad guys. While the father and the son are trying to be loyal to these rules, McCarthy (2006) depicts a world in which nearly all people perform the opposite. Among these rules, the first one is the most prominent one; not to eat people. On their journey, the father and the son find a house and when they open the door of a storage-like room, they see a terrifying scene:

Huddled against the back wall were naked people, male and female, all trying to hide, shielding their faces with their hands. On the mattresses lay a man with his legs gone to the hip and the stumps of them blackened and burnt. The smell was hideous. (McCarthy, 2006, p.116)

Those people are locked up in a storage and eaten one by one, part by part like meat in a fridge. They cry for help but the father and the son try to escape from there immediately. On the run, they also see “four bearded men and two women” (McCarthy, 2006, p.117) watching them from the window. McCarthy (2006) increases the feeling of terror which he already creates in the storage scene by the cannibals watching the father and the son out of the window. After this incident, the father and the son walk through the woods. What they find in those woods is “a charred human infant headless and gutted and blackening on the spit” (McCarthy, 2006, p.212). Here, McCarthy depicts how far people can go in order to manage to survive. Morality, rules and ethics, like everything, all lose their meaning and importance in that dystopian world. For that reason, when they cannot find anything to eat and they are starving, the son asks the father “We wouldnt ever eat anybody, would we?” (McCarthy, 2006, p.136). The son is sensitive about this issue because he knows that people can have trouble in following good guys’ code in times of crisis like the father does when he shoots the man who threatens them or finds the man who steals their belongings and then takes literally everything that he has and leaves him for dead. However, the son always protects his stand as a pure Adamic figure. For instance, while they are drinking cocoa, the son insists on not drinking more than the father. Even sharing the food with his father, the son wants to be fair because consuming anything unequally is also

a kind of cannibalism which is against the good guy code (Stark, 2013). Allegorically, McCarthy underlines consumerism in the modern world and draws a portrayal of a world that this modern world's cannibalism may lead to.

The father and the son's morality reminds Judge's following lines in *Blood Meridian* (McCarthy, 1985): "Moral law is an invention of mankind for the disenfranchisement of the powerful in favor of the weak" (p.250). Throughout *The Road*, McCarthy (2006) relates the father and the son's struggles to survive and they are relatively weak when they are compared to the bad guys. Thus, the father tries to hold on to the concept of being a good guy and teaches it to the son by trying to convince him they will be victorious because they are good guys and they carry the fire. However, as Judge claims above, being good or bad is a controversial issue from a Nietzschean approach. Nietzsche asserts that people are described in terms of their actions (Michalski, 2007/2012). According to Nietzsche, good and evil cannot be separated from each other because people identify themselves as good by comparing themselves to others whom they define as evil. In other words, if somebody is not like the evil others, that means they are good (Michalski, 2007/2012). This is what exactly the father and the son do. By avoiding being like the others, they try to be good guys.

Thus far, this chapter has discussed religious references and their allegorical readings of them that McCarthy employs in both *Blood Meridian* (1985) and *The Road* (2006). While in *Blood Meridian* Judge's aim is to establish his own order by destroying the existing one and the kid struggles to hold on to Christianity for salvation in vain, in *The Road*, the father and the son believe that they are chosen by God and hope to be victorious by sustaining life. However, Michalski (2007/2012) interprets Nietzsche's ideology by claiming that "[s]uccessive attempts, successive projects to order the world in this way—in the guise of 'Christianity' or 'faith in progress' or 'socialism'—inevitably fail" (p.4). From this point of view, it is possible to observe how Christianity, which is supposed to establish an order and grant peace to men, fails in both novels. As is discussed earlier in this chapter, in *Blood Meridian* (McCarthy, 1985), neither carrying a Bible grants salvation to the kid, nor do the churches protect people who shelter from the savagery in the church. Similarly, in *The Road* (McCarthy, 2006), no god or religion helps or saves people from destruction. McCarthy (2006) expresses this annihilation of religion in the following lines: "A single gray flake sifting down. He [The boy] caught it in his hand and watched it expire there like the last host of christendom" (p.15). Besides melting and signifying the dissolution, the color of the snowflake, gray, also has a significant meaning. It not only indicates the polluted weather and the sky, but also signifies the corruption and the decay of

both the world and religion (Squire, 2012). In other words, McCarthy indicates that just like the world, Christendom is also contaminated and doomed to disappear.

By defining Christendom as a melting snowflake, McCarthy implies religious beliefs are also vanishing at that point where the world comes to an end. In other words, while everything is dissolving, religion has no privilege of continuing to exist. In one of the flashbacks that the father has, he argues with his wife and his wife states death has arrived and “[t]here’s nothing left to talk about” (McCarthy, 2006, p.58). She does not want to talk or to even exist. Thus, she commits suicide and before she dies, she tries to convince the father to do the same and also to kill the son because, from a Nietzschean perspective, as Michalski (2007/2012) expresses, when death arrives “all known concepts, all words, lose their meaning, are no longer useful” (p.vii). McCarthy emphasizes these fading meanings by not giving any names to any characters. While not giving a name to only one character, the kid, in *Blood Meridian*, McCarthy leaves all the characters, except for Ely, nameless in *The Road*. This puts the characters, the father and the son, in the role of American Everyman, as it puts the kid in the same position, and enables one to put himself in the father and the son’s place (Stark, 2013).

To conclude, in *Blood Meridian*, Judge, portrayed as the representative of rationality and knowledge, attacks Christian doctrines. He destroys everything, both animate and inanimate, because they are the reflections of god on earth. By observing and collecting the things he tries to understand the mysteries of life and then he destroys them to be able to construct his own order. His bloody victory at the end of the novel upholds Judge’s establishment of war and destruction. However, Judge’s established religion in which “[w]ar is god” (McCarthy, 1985, p.249), is doomed to end up in a world like the one in *The Road* (McCarthy, 2006) where all the things and concepts have lost their meanings and they are about to disappear. In terms of being a savior of mankind, Michalski’s (2007/2012) interpretation of Nietzsche can be useful in understanding why McCarthy creates a character like the son who has no past and was born into the end of the world. The transformation of the present order and its replacement by a new world is not possible by the appearance of Christ. It can become achievable only by “a child, without past, without expectations of the future” (Michalski, 2007/2012, pp.205-206). At the same time, Nietzsche also states in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1883/1976): “A new child: oh, how much new filth has also come into the world!” (p.403). It is because that child has his father’s sins and follows his father’s path in terms of virtues and values. In other words, the child inherits his father’s filth and he is filthy even from the beginning. Thus, there is no use of expecting anything new or different from the past because

no child is born pure. Zarathustra also criticizes men by saying: “You still want to create the world before which you can kneel” (Nietzsche, 1883/1976, p.225) and adds “[b]ut wherever I found the living, there I heard also the speech on obedience. Whatever lives, obeys” (Nietzsche, 1883/1976, p.226). Nietzsche asserts that no child can offer a totally new order, a new beginning or freedom; eventually man will create a similar order for himself in which he can worship an object, a notion, a power or a god. According to Nietzsche, this is the consequence of the fact that man is not able to think beyond the thinkable; which means that man cannot think anything which has not been thought before. Towards the end of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Nietzsche criticizes man’s way of thinking in a satiric way. Some companions of Zarathustra, who want to follow his teachings, get together in Zarathustra’s cave and wait for him while Zarathustra is away and seeking the sound which he thinks comes from the overman. Even though Zarathustra has talked to them about the overman and his ideas on eternal recurrence, when he comes back to the cave, he finds them worshipping the king’s donkey. Zarathustra gets angry and criticizes them harshly. Considering Zarathustra’s claim on the death of god, it is clearly seen that those men have created a god to worship, even if it is a donkey, and they try to replace the dead god with another god immediately. They are very far away from thinking, imagining or creating something new. In *The Road*, McCarthy (2006) puts Nietzsche’s innocent child theory into practice through the son. However, this theory fails because no child can exist without inheriting anything from the past (Michalski, 2007/2012). At the beginning of the novel, the father describes his son as “the word of God” (McCarthy, 2006, p.3). Then, the father goes one step further and in his dialogue with Ely, he implies that the son is God. However, as the novel proceeds, the relation between the father and the son ends up with the Christian doctrine. First, the son declares that he believes in his father because he has to. This can be interpreted as the father taking the role of God and, as his child, the son believing his father because there is no other way. Later on, the father declares his son a prophet and asserts that the son is privileged and different from all the other prophets because he is witnessing the end of the present world and will be the only prophet who will be able to witness the creation of a new world. After a while, the father dies and a man, who has been following the father and the son for a while, finds the son on the beach and invites him to join his family. There is a woman in that family and she sometimes talks to the son about God. Under the influence of these talks, the son tends to talk to God “but the best thing was to talk to his father and he did talk to him and he didnt forget” (McCarthy, 2006, p.306). This leads men to the point which Zarathustra foresees: “Good and evil, and rich and poor, high and low, and all the names of values—arms shall they be and clattering signs that life must overcome itself again and again” (Nietzsche, 1883/1976,

p. 213). In the light of Zarathustra's words, it can be claimed that McCarthy (2006), in fact, confirms Nietzsche's philosophy by putting it into practice, which is that only a child without a past can break the vicious circle of mankind, but existing without having a past or not inheriting values is not possible. As a result, McCarthy (2006) does not offer anything new or a salvation for mankind and depicts that even if the son succeeds in sustaining life and creating a new world, that new world will be constructed on the old norms and values, as well.

CHAPTER 3

TIME

McCarthy's concept of time reveals itself in most of his novels and his treatment of time is not linear. His representation of time is circular, even spiral like, "a widening gyre" which is "rapidly losing coherence" (Steakley, 2016, p.8). Both in *Blood Meridian* and *The Road*, it is possible to observe McCarthy's perception of time, its movement and how humanity is trapped and dragged in this "widening gyre". In this repeated circle of life, man experiences the same things over and over again through history and the only way to break this circle to gain freedom is to reach an innocence "beyond good and evil' like Adam and Eve in Paradise" (Michalski, 2007/2012, p.ix). The things which entrap humans in this repetition is the notion of time which consists of past, present and future. To be able to be free, one must cut off the continuity between past and future, and strip himself off the concept of time by reaching an Adamic innocence. Thus, this chapter will discuss how McCarthy exhibits the concept of time in *Blood Meridian* and *The Road*, and also how he aims to break this circle and to liberate humanity, from a Nietzschean perspective.

Michalski (2007/2012) examines Nietzsche's philosophical approach to time and asserts that time can only be explained by referring to eternity and only then the flow of time can be explained. In addition, he claims that according to Nietzsche's ideology, eternity is defined as "a physiological notion; the concept that succinctly expresses the temporality of our lives is that of 'the body'" (p.vii). In this temporality, the body is crumbling and fading away. On the other hand, when the body is put aside, as far as death is concerned, all notions become meaningless. Death does not belong to life, it is not a part of it or a different period of it. Death is unknown, unexplainable and "a radical interruption of continuity" (Michalski, 2007/2012, p.vii). Due to this temporality, all meanings are postponed and everything becomes ambiguous. Each moment is a possibility of a new beginning and a creation while, at the same time, it destroys the previous moment (Michalski, 2007/2012).

McCarthy has a similar approach to this concept of time and eternity in terms of Nietzsche's philosophy. In both novels, his characters struggle with nihilism. In both novels, death reigns over earth and man-made conceptions of time begin to fade away. Even though McCarthy (1985) gives some dates in *Blood Meridian*, they do not mean anything to the characters. Instead, nature becomes prominent as an indicator of part of the day or the year.

Different from *The Road*, in which the names of the places and the date are not mentioned, in *Blood Meridian* McCarthy (1985) lists the names of the towns which the gang visits during their journey and also, in some parts of the novel, gives exact dates. For instance, at the beginning of the novel McCarthy states the kid's date of birth, 1833, and the kid's age when he runs away from home, fourteen years old. Moreover, McCarthy (1985) gives an exact date, "eighteen seventy-eight" (p.316), at the beginning of the last chapter of the novel when the kid and Judge meet again after the kid manages to escape from the massacre by the Yumas. McCarthy's aim in naming the places and giving the names is to document all the atrocity in America's mythic frontier history and to create an "anti-myth" (Spurgeon, 2009, p.96). Apart from McCarthy's documentation, at the beginning of the novel, time can be measured and the days can be counted. At the very early stages of the kid's journey, McCarthy (1985) mentions that the kid has spent "[f]orty-two days on the river" (p.4), or "[i]t had been raining for sixteen days" (p.8). However, during the journey that the kid and the Glanton gang take, McCarthy never gives any exact time or date; he only employs nature by describing the gang's movements in accordance with the movement of the sun or the moon. There are no hours which are man-made to measure time. McCarthy's only measurement that he takes into consideration is the sun or the moon, which enlighten the world, or the darkness that covers the world. For instance, in the kid's early journey with Captain White's army, McCarthy (1985) sets the stage as follows:

They set forth in a crimson dawn where sky and earth closed in a razorous plane. Out there dark little archipelagos of cloud and the vast world of sand and scrub shearing upward into the shoreless void where those blue islands trembled and the earth grew uncertain, gravely canted and veering out through tinctures of rose and the dark beyond the dawn to the uttermost rebate of space. (p.50)

In those lands where death is everywhere, the hours and the dates do not mean anything to men. The only thing that matters about time is whether the sun shines or the dark is about to fall. To be able to escape from death, the weather, the features of the land and the movements of the sun and the moon are important to men.

He draws a detailed picture of the scenery by juxtaposing colorful symbols such as blue islands in darkness and owing to his strong language, he defines this eerie scenery in both promising words such as islands and rose, and hopeless implications such as shoreless and darkness. This sublime definition of the scenery evokes admiration while, at the same time, creating a bleak future which is in void. In another scene where the Glanton gang continues their journey after they camp in the desert at night, McCarthy (1985) writes: "When they

resaddled and rode on they went for miles through cobbled ice while a polar moon rose like a blind cat's eye up over the rim of the world" (p.152). Here again, McCarthy never gives an exact time of the beginning of the journey; instead he mentions the moon in the sky to state it is night time. By defining the moon as a blind cat's eye, McCarthy aims to create a grotesque atmosphere to arouse the terror through this weird description. Describing the periods of the day only with the help of the sun, the moon and their movements, McCarthy (1985) implies that there is no meaning in measuring time in those vast lands because "death seemed the most prevalent feature of the landscape" (p.48). This explains McCarthy's Nietzschean perspective which claims all notions are meaningless in the face of death (Michalski, 2007/2012).

McCarthy (2006) employs this nihilistic perspective again in his recent novel, *The Road*, in which he portrays a world destroyed by an unmentioned event and a father and a son who find themselves in the middle of nothingness and struggle to survive and try to find a place to live if there is any. After nearly everything—nature, animals, most of the people, governments, ethics, laws, to name a few—has disappeared, like most of the things, time also loses its meaning. Throughout the father and the son's journey, it is never mentioned what day or what time it is. In one of the father's flashbacks in the novel, McCarthy (2006) narrates the night where that unnamed event takes places and writes "[t]he clocks stopped at 1.17" (p.54). It could be read as that moment was the beginning of the end. After that moment, all notions begin to be meaningless and the father stops counting the days or following the calendar: "He hardly knew the month" (p.29). Like the lands in *Blood Meridian* where death is the most prominent characteristic of the land, in *The Road*, death arrives at the earth and prevails. Everything is about to disappear, such as religion as is discussed in the previous chapter. The relationship between religion and time is that the linear time concept serves religion because in that notion man is responsible for his past actions and they determine his future. Within this framework, religion constructs its reward and punishment conception on this linear timeline which consists of the correlation between past and future. In contrast, Nietzsche's circular timeline stands against Christianity's progressive timeline concept because in eternal recurrence, the past is a point in the future and also the future is another point which has already occurred somewhere in the past (Higgins, 1987). Thus, when religion becomes institutionalized and loses its morals and values, the notion of a linear time, which religion suggests, is also disrupted and becomes fragmented.

In another flashback, the father argues with his wife and the wife explains the reason why they do not talk about death anymore by saying: "It's because it is here. There's nothing

left to talk about” (McCarthy, 2006, p.58). Another part where McCarthy (2006) exhibits the characters’ struggle against nihilism on the earth is the one in which the father and the son meet an old man called Ely on the road. When the father asks him if Ely is his real name, the old man says it is not and adds:

I couldnt trust you with it. To do something with it. I dont want anybody talking about me. To say where I was or what I said when I was there. I mean, you could talk about me maybe. But nobody could say it was me. I could be anybody. I think in times like these the less said the better. If something had happened and we were survivors and we met on the road then we’d have something to talk about. But we’re not. So we dont. (p.182)

Here, the old man emphasizes how pointless names, people and talking about anything “in times like these” are because when the only agenda is death, he thinks, talking and thinking about anything is meaningless. Even though the father seems more hopeful than the old man, at least from time to time, he also knows that everything will vanish from the earth eventually. As is mentioned earlier, all animals and nature die after the unnamed catastrophe, and everything is covered in ash and a gray curtain of smoke blocks the sun and the moon in the sky. On this colorless planet, trees begin to fall down in huge cracking noise. While the father and the son are moving on deserted streets, some trees start cracking and falling down. The son feels scared and the father tries to calm him down and says: “It’s okay... All the trees in the world are going to fall sooner or later” (McCarthy, 2006, p.35). Here, trees are just a symbol of life and the father implies life has an end and everything will disappear. This implication indicates that the father knows the inevitable end but he is unable to express it openly. In later parts of their journey, they enter an empty house to look for some food or goods. While wandering around the house, he suddenly realizes the absolute truth of the world. He says to himself:

The cold relentless circling of the intestate earth. Darkness implacable. The blind dogs of the sun in their running. The crushing black vacuum of the universe. And somewhere two hunted animals trembling like ground-foxes in their cover. Borrowed time and borrowed world and borrowed eyes with which to sorrow it. (McCarthy, 2006, p.138)

In this quotation, McCarthy underlines the fact that everything will end up in nothingness, darkness will capture the universe and time is borrowed, which indicates temporality. Ely presents a more pessimistic idea and claims that when everybody dies, all this suffering will disappear and this is the best for everyone. When the father asks him how this will happen, Ely explains:

When we're all gone at last then there'll be nobody here but death and his days will be numbered too. He'll be out in the road there with nothing to do and nobody to do it to. He'll say: Where did everybody go? And that's how it will be. What's wrong with that?" (McCarthy, 2006, p.184)

Here, Ely takes this nihilism further and expresses that even death will come to an end but the only way of this is the complete vanishing of the living beings.

Ely's notion of time seems more like going straight forward, towards an inevitable nothingness. However, when these two novels are taken into consideration, it is possible to see that McCarthy has a different perception of time. *Blood Meridian* starts with an extraction from the newspaper, *The Yuma Daily Sun* dated June 13, 1882, which states the discovery of "a 300,000-year-old fossil skull... shows evidence of having been scalped" (McCarthy, 1985, p.1). Before telling the story of a famous scalphunter gang throughout the whole novel, by giving this extract, McCarthy tends to underline the ugly fact that all those atrocities that he writes about do not belong to one place, one area or one group. They are universal and, in a way, eternal. Following this beginning, McCarthy portrays a cruel world which is also full of violence. As is discussed earlier in this thesis, the main character of the novel, Judge, who is simply considered as the representative of evil, becomes victorious at the end of the novel. Thus, McCarthy reinforces the idea that mankind is "trapped within an endless cycle of fear and mythical violence" (Dorson, 2013, p.116). Not only the beginning but also the end of the novel supports this idea. McCarthy's narrative also implies this circular movement of time. For instance, while the Glanton gang is wandering around and slaughtering everybody on their way, Indians, Mexicans, and even Americans, they visit a town and kill nearly everybody in the town and they leave. At night, some women of the town who had gone to the riverside and were not in the town during the massacre, arrive in the town. When they see the horrible scene, they mourn for a while. However, after a short time McCarthy (1985) narrates a woman who jabs the coals which are about to fade away, and "[blows] back a flame from the ashes..." (p.174). As is discussed in the previous chapter of this thesis, in this quotation, McCarthy (1985) uses the fire as a symbol of life and implies that life goes on. He also adds: "In the days to come the frail black rebuses of blood in those sands would crack and break and drift away so that in the circuit of few suns all trace of the destruction of these people would be erased" (p.174). The description of time's passing through the sun's circular journey in the sky can be read as time is not moving straight forward as Ely claims above, but it is a circle. In one of his long speeches that he makes to the whole gang, Judge tells a story and the moral of the story is the everlasting violence in human history. In the final part of his speech, Judge says to Tobin: "This you see

here, these ruins wondered at by tribes of savages, do you not think that this will be again? Aye. And again. With other people, with other sons” (McCarthy, 1985, p.147). The shape of circle also indicates that in his journey in time, man is not going anywhere, he is only moving in a circle and follows the same path, which is full of destruction, again and again, as Judge says.

While Schopenhauer (1819/1969) conceptualizes the notion of time as “an endlessly revolving sphere” (p.279), Hegel (1825/2006) calls it “an eternally repeated cycle” (p.57). Like Schopenhauer and Hegel, Nietzsche (1883/1976) describes this circle as an endlessly rolling “wheel of being” (p.329). According to him, on this rolling wheel of time, the present is like a point which indicates both the beginning and the end of the moment. In other words, while each moment is being destroyed, it is also created. After the end of the story in *Blood Meridian*, when Judge, god of war, is triumphant, McCarthy (1985) writes an epilogue. In this epilogue, there is a man who is trying to strike fire out of the rock by digging a hole with his steel digger. Finally, McCarthy (1985) writes “[h]e strikes fire in the hole and draws out his steel. Then they all move on again” (p.337). Dorson (2013) interprets this epilogue, especially focusing on the last sentence, as the indicator of mankind’s hopeless floundering in a self-destructive repetition. Mankind is responsible both for destruction and creation as McCarthy puts forward in *Blood Meridian*. The striking point is that fire is the common tool which mankind uses to destroy and to create at the same time. In this epilogue, the man takes out the fire to create a new world after Judge’s destruction and victory. However, in *The Road*, McCarthy (2006) draws a portrayal of a world that burns into ashes and still the only hope is the father and the son and their journey to sustain life by carrying the fire, which the man takes out in the epilogue of *Blood Meridian*, considering *The Road* as a sequel to *Blood Meridian*.

Like time, which is a circle and does not go anywhere indeed, in McCarthy’s fiction roads lose their meanings, as well. Through history, in American culture, journeys always have positive connotations such as discovery, bravery, freedom, to name a few. Roads are supposed to take people to their destination. However, those roads become meaningful only when the person who starts a journey has belief in himself/herself. Unfortunately, McCarthy’s roads end up nowhere (Bell, 1988). In *Blood Meridian*, McCarthy mainly narrates the kid’s journey and it is his road story. Yet, when the kid sets for the road, he has nowhere to go, no destination. First, he joins the Captain White’s army and then he continues his journey with the Glanton gang. From the beginning until the end, the kid’s journey is full of violence and destruction. He witnesses innumerable atrocities, and his main aim is to be able to survive by fighting against both cruel nature and men’s savagery, though the kid himself takes part in most of those violent

acts. Even though he tries to take himself out of that chaos and mythic order that Judge tries to establish, he cannot manage to stay alive at the end of his road, because death—Judge—finds him. McCarthy highlights the fact that having no destination is true not for only the kid, but for every single one in the novel. For instance, some members of Glanton gang, including the kid, Toadvine and Bathcat, go to a cantina, a bar in the Southwest. They chat with the Mexican bartender and the bartender tells his old stories of when he was a soldier. After they finish their drinks, they leave the bar and Bathcat tells Toadvine that the man who was stabbed while playing cards is the bartender's son. Toadvine asks Bathcat why the man did not leave when the quarrel started and got stabbed. Bathcat states that he asked the same question to the man and “[he] [s]aid where would he go to?” (McCarthy, 1985, p.103). This question operates nearly for each character in the novel, except for Judge. Nobody has a place to go and they are where they are, waiting for their inevitable fate: death.

McCarthy supports this notion of having no home on earth in another striking scene in the novel. While the Glanton gang is drinking in another cantina where there are lots of American soldiers and Mexicans, a funeral is passing by outside the cantina. A juggler is leading that funeral and he fires some rockets as a ritual of funerals. Upon that noise of rockets, some of the American soldiers and the Glanton gang's members rush outside. Just at that moment, a drunk Mexican stands up and stabs one of the gang members, named Grimley, in his back. This is the spark of the chaos and massacre. All the members of the Glanton gang start to kill Mexicans by using knives and pistols, under the leadership of Judge, of course. After they kill thirty-six Mexicans and scalp all of them, the gang leaves the area where all that savagery takes place. The cantina and the street are silent for a while. Later on, McCarthy (1985) narrates,

one of the men from inside appeared in the doorway like a bloody apparition. He had been scalped and the blood was all run down into his eyes and he was holding shut a huge hole in his chest where a pink froth breathed in and out. One of the citizens laid a hand on his shoulder.

A donde vas? / Where are you going? he said.

A casa / Home, said the man. (pp.180-181, own translation)

In this quotation, the dying man claims in his last breath that death is the destination for him and death is the home. McCarthy, one more time, asserts that neither the kid, nor anybody has a home in this world and ultimately everybody will die. Thus, death is, for everybody, the certain destination, the home. Homelessness or the temporality of the home concept belongs

not only to *Blood Meridian*, but also to all McCarthy novels. In his article, Witek (2009) analyzes the notion of home in McCarthy's works and concludes that

Cormac McCarthy does not deny that the spaces we inhabit are metaphors for our collective identity. On the contrary; they match precisely and mercilessly to teach us that no place in the world is home, that everywhere is a potential campsite, that every boy must be the frontiersman of what will turn out to be a grave-sized chunk of earth. (p.29)

Especially the last part of the quotation above summarizes all characters' fate in *Blood Meridian*, except for Judge's. Throughout the whole novel, none of the men is in a search for home or trying to reach a home at the end of the journey. They are all drifting on the vast lands by experiencing or committing savageries which are challenging to the limits of one's mind owing to McCarthy's meticulous portrayal.

Compared to the kid's, the concept of homelessness and the decaying meaning of being on the road is more obvious in the father and the son's journey in *The Road*. The critic Schleusener (2017) underlines the importance of mobility throughout American history and by referring to some of the greatest works from Walt Whitman's (1856) *Song of the Open Road* to Jack Kerouac's (1957) *On the Road*, he also exhibits that being on the road always has an aim and meaning. However, Schleusener (2017) claims that "[i]n the novel's [*The Road*'s] post-apocalyptic setting, mobility has lost all implications of transgression, discovery, and the pleasures of flight, manifesting itself instead as a means of sheer survival" (p.2). In *The Road*, the father and the son are on a journey towards the South, to the sea in the hope of finding a life-promising land without hope. One night, the father and the son spend the night under a tree in the snow. The father collects wood to start a fire but for more wood he has to look around and tells the son not to be afraid because he would be "in the neighborhood" (McCarthy, 2006, p.100). Then, it turns out that the son does not know the meaning of neighborhood and the father has to explain that it means not far away. McCarthy exhibits that the son does not know anything about the concept of home or any term related to home because he was born into a totally destroyed world and there is no home for anybody. He does not know anything about the world before the unnamed apocalypse, except for things that his father tells him. Born into nothingness, the son tries to find a meaning in their journey or some hope for the future or even any clue about their unknown destination. For that reason, like the questions about the existence of a god which are discussed in the previous chapter, he asks some other questions to his father.

As is mentioned above, the son has literally no idea about anything which belongs to the world before the destruction. In one of his conversations with his father, he asks about the crows when the father measures a distance by saying “as the crow flies” (McCarthy, 2006, p.166). First, he asks if the crows could go to Mars or any other planet. Then, he wants to learn if there is any food or matter on Mars, but the father replies: “No. There’s nothing there” (McCarthy, 2006, p.167). In fact, the son is in search of a meaning in their journey or tries to find a destination for themselves. He is seeking a solid reason to go on or any support for the hope which the father is trying to give the son but cannot. As McCarthy (2006) himself narrates in the earlier pages: “No moon rose beyond the murk and there was nowhere to go” (p.70). He illustrates a dark path in front of the characters and implies there is no destination for them. Indeed, the father and the son set out to reach the sea with the hope of finding a livable place. However, towards the end of the novel, they achieve to arrive at the coast: “Cold. Desolate. Birdless” (McCarthy, 2006, p.230). McCarthy (2006) depicts the place in all its details and nakedness:

Out there was the gray beach with the slow combers rolling dull and leaden and the distant sound of it. Like the desolation of some alien sea breaking on the shores of a world unheard of it. Out on the tidal flats lay a tanker half careened. Beyond that the ocean vast and cold and shifting heavily like a slowly heaving vat of slag and then the gray squall line of ash. (p.230)

Their destination for which they have suffered through their journey is not different from the rest of the world. The son tries to find any crumb of hope by asking questions about the possibility if any ships exist far away or there is anybody on the other side of the sea, but all the father’s answers are negative or ambiguous. It is seen that he begins to lose his faith. By giving the characters no target or meaning in their journey, McCarthy demolishes “the concept of future” for them (Schleusener, 2017, p.5). In addition to their physical struggles against hunger and thirst and also all other savageries such as murders and cannibalism, this nihilist approach makes McCarthy’s work more terrifying. In a world where only nothingness prevails, for humans, it becomes more and more difficult to find a reason to sustain his existence.

Observing the characters and their acts in McCarthy’s novels from a Nietzschean perspective reveals McCarthy’s set of mind and also demonstrates how, in fact, *Blood Meridian* and *The Road* are interlinked although they may seem totally different from each other. As is mentioned earlier in this chapter, Nietzsche (1883/1976) defines the notion of time by applying a wheel as a metaphor. The present is a stable point on that wheel and the wheel is in a constant spinning. This also means that the past and the future are parts of the same whole and they are

on a never-ending repetition (Michalski, 2007/2012), just like the kid, the father and the son's actions. In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Nietzsche (1883/1976) writes:

Everything dies, everything blossoms again; eternally runs the year of being. Everything breaks, everything is joined anew; eternally the same house of being is built. Everything parts, everything greets every other thing again; eternally the ring of being remains faithful to itself. In every Now, being begins; round every Here rolls the sphere There. The center is everywhere. Bent is the path of eternity. (pp.329-330)

Nietzsche claims that each moment is both the end for one thing and the beginning for the other at the same time. In other words, every dying means a birth for another and this is the repetition and this is eternal return. However, Michalski (2007/2012) underlines the fact that this process is “[n]ot the repetition of some content, of some form, of one situation or another, but always *anew* [emphasis added], infinitely, on an unending time line” (p.189). Thus, it can be claimed that for a new beginning of a new thing, the old one has to be gone, so the ending of a thing can mean a chance for the new one. Nietzsche (1901/1968) identifies “the concept of decadence” (p.25) as a necessity in life. He believes demolishing does not have a negative connotation because, like the past and the future, death and birth belong to the same whole. In other words, every end leads to a new beginning (Nietzsche, 1901/1968).

In one of his rare interviews, McCarthy himself declares a similar statement to Nietzsche's and claims that a world without destruction, savagery and violence is impossible. He says:

I think the notion that the species can be improved in some way, that everyone could live in harmony, is a really dangerous idea. Those who are afflicted with this notion are the first ones to give up their souls, their freedom. Your desire that it be that way will enslave you and make your life vacuous. (Woodward, 1992, para.35)

He emphasizes that without struggle, violence and destruction, one's existence loses its meaning and although they seem as if they are negative experiences, still they are important parts of life. These words of McCarthy echo in Judge Holden's statement about war in which he affirms war has always been there and it will always exist. According to Judge, war “is the testing of one's will and the will of another within that larger will which because it binds them is therefore forced to select” (McCarthy, 1985, p.249). He adds that war makes one's existence meaningful. Otherwise, as he puts forward in his conversation with the kid while he tries to convince the kid to return to their old life, without war “man is nothing but antic clay”

(McCarthy, 1985, p.307). In the light of Nietzsche's philosophy, the destruction in *Blood Meridian* is, in fact, an attempt to construct a new order and without demolishing the old one, building anything new is not possible. In this framework, it can be easily maintained that "violence becomes creation's springboard" (Hawkins, 2014, p.439). Judge Holden's savagery throughout the novel, destroying the ancient paintings on the walls of the caves after copying them in his notebook, collecting and analyzing rocks, and keeping and taking notes about everything, from birds to leaves, explains his destructive attitude. As is discussed earlier in this thesis, he destroys with the aim of achieving his desire to be the designer and ruler of the world (Feng & Zheng, 2019).

If Judge is considered as the practitioner of war or destruction himself, at the end of *Blood Meridian*, it seems that the total devastation is complete and Judge prevails. However, the epilogue of the novel in which a man is in an attempt to take out fire out of the rocks can mean an optimistic closure for the novel. This epilogue can indicate "the brief moment between existences, the extinction of one, the ascension of another" (Hage, 2010, p.50). This other world, which is the sequel to the one in *Blood Meridian*, destroyed by Judge Holden, appears as a planet with no sign of life except for few people, burnt down and covered in ash in *The Road*. Moving from the epilogue in *Blood Meridian* to *The Road* where the father and the son carry the fire to retain life is the evidence of the interrelationship between these two novels. While creating a dystopian world, McCarthy also implies the possibility of a new beginning through the son in *The Road*. From this point of view, it is the story of both the end and the beginning which "are inseparable in *The Road*" (Kunsa, 2009, p.67). Towards the end of the novel, while the father wanders around on the coast, McCarthy sets a scene that recalls pre-historic times. There are ice pipes on frozen mud, an old swamp, which seems like an anticave, and also the father can see some ashes left from fires lit by people earlier. Following these descriptions, which seem as if it is just after the very first years of human history, McCarthy (2006) writes: "Perhaps in the world's destruction it would be possible at last to see how it was made. Oceans, mountains. The ponderous counterspectacle of things ceasing to be. The sweeping waste, hydroptic and coldly secular. The silence" (p.293). Even though the novel seems like narrating the story of a father and a son who are trying to survive at the end of the world, McCarthy often evokes the idea that besides surviving, the father and the son are also in an attempt to sustain life into the future. This dead world of *The Road* is like the illustration of Zarathustra's prophecy in which he is talking about the last man. He foretells that "one day this soil will be poor and domesticated, and no tall tree will be able to grow in it" (Nietzsche,

1883/1976, p.129). Thus, with all dead life forms and the falling trees, it could be claimed that the father and the son experience the time that Zarathustra describes. This, indeed, is a chance for the father and the son to create a new world and to witness the creation of the world, as McCarthy (2006) asserts above.

However, the father and the son are seeking different worlds because they belong to different times. Nietzsche (1876/1997) believes time is a man-made notion which any other being does not have, and adds that time consists of three parts: “past”, “present” and “future” (p.61). In this framework, three members of the family, which is not a family anymore, in *The Road*, the father, the mother and the son, represent those three parts of the time concept. Throughout the novel, the mother appears only in the father’s flashbacks because she died. The father remembers the argument that they had about death. It is understood that a few years have passed after the unnamed catastrophic event because the mother tries to convince the father they must all commit suicide by claiming others would find them, rape them, kill them and even eat them. She tells the man there is nothing left in the world to live for or a “stand to take” and adds “[a]s for me my only hope is for eternal nothingness and I hope it with all my heart” (McCarthy, 2006, p.59). Her hopelessness, desire for death and the act of leaving the house and walking into the darkness at the end of the argument with the father indicates that the mother is the symbol of “a lost present” (O’Connor, 2017, p.10).

On the other hand, it could be claimed that the father is the representative of “the brute instrumentalist survival of tradition and the past” (O’Connor, 2017, p.10). In the colorless world, all lands have been covered in ash and the sky in smoke. The only colors that remain are the ones in the father’s dreams or memories from the world before the catastrophe. In one of his dreams, the father dreams of their wedding day and his wife in a nice dress coming “out of a green and leafy canopy”, and her dark hair is “carried up in combs of ivory and combs of shell” (McCarthy, 2006, p.17). Remembering these days from his past as happy and lively memories in his dreams, he wakes up to a freezing world and finds gray snowflakes again falling from the sky. He constantly tries to remember the old days, memories, places and many other things from the past and this indicates that he is missing the old days. Besides his dreams and flashbacks, to give another example, at the beginning of the novel they find a ruined gas station while they are moving on the road. They enter to check if there is anything useful to them and the father sees a phone on the table: “Then he picked up the phone and dialled the number of his father’s house in that long ago” (McCarthy, 2006, p.5). After this incident, the father and the son arrive at the house where the father grew up and spent his childhood. The father wants

to go in, but the son does not because he says he is scared. The son's refusal can be read, as a rejection of the father's past which is the old world, full of violence and destruction, all of which leads to the present world that they try to escape. Even though the son does not want to go in, due to the insistence of the father they enter the house. While wandering around the house, the father shows around the house to the son and tells him stories of his own childhood. Yet, the son feels uncomfortable: "We should go, Papa, he said. Yes, the man said. But he didnt" (McCarthy, 2006, p.25-26). This means that the father still searches for the meaning of his existence in his past and for that reason, he does not want to leave the place and return to the reality where everything has vanished. After they walk around the house a bit more, the son repeats his request to leave the house by saying he is scared, and the father replies: "It's all right. We shouldnt have come" (McCarthy, 2006, p.27). In a way, he accepts that being trapped in the past is a mistake and they should move on. Besides his memories, the father also carries some items in his pockets from his past:

Then one day he sat by the roadside and took it out and went through the contents. Some money, credit cards. His driver's licence. A picture of his wife. He spread everything out on the blacktop. Like gaming cards. He pitched the sweatblackened piece of leather into the woods and sat holding the photograph. Then he laid it down in the road also and he stood and they *went on*. [emphasis added] (McCarthy, 2006, pp.52-53)

Like a ritual, the father first checks everything one by one and then by leaving all of them behind, he tries to move on. As is discussed in the introduction chapter, Nietzsche defines past and memory as a burden by employing the metaphor of cows eating grass and not remembering their past or a child playing games not feeling the passing of time. Thus, according to Nietzsche (1887/2000), the notion of forgetting is not a deficiency, rather a compromising power. He claims: "there could be no happiness, no cheerfulness, no hope, no pride, no *present*, without forgetfulness" (p.494). Realizing this fact from time to time, the father tries to leave his past behind and to forget it even though he constantly remembers. Having this burden of past is the most outstanding feature that separates him from the son. McCarthy (2006) also states that "[h]e could not construct for the child's pleasure the world he'd lost without constructing the loss as well and he thought perhaps the child had known this better than he" (p.163). To be able to build the old world again, he has to build every notion, everything in the world as they were. Everything has disappeared physically and now the father himself is about to forget them totally.

The world shrinking down about a raw core of parsible entities. The names of things slowly following those things into oblivion. Colors. The names of the birds. Things to eat. Finally the names of things one believed to be true. More fragile than he would have thought. How much was gone already? (McCarthy, 2006, p.93)

His memory, his beliefs and the words that he once used, all of them are about to shrivel with the world around him. Even if it may seem painful and the father suffers from nostalgia, in fact, the world he is about to forget and all his memories about his past which he misses are the reasons of the present world. Those are the things that belong to the world of Judge Holden and they lead to a total destruction. As is discussed earlier, Judge Holden creates his own order, the world of science, Enlightenment and becomes triumphant but all the values that Judge constitutes cause a totally destroyed world. Nietzsche defines these values as “*the ultimate goal, the all-encompassing totality, truth in itself*” (Michalski, 2007/2012, p.6) and claims that nihilism begins with them. However, he also adds that these values cannot be used as a tool to be able to escape from nihilism (Michalski, 2007/2012). In other words, one cannot escape from a situation in the light of the things which are also the causes of that situation. To create something new or to reach somewhere new, one needs to leave the burden of the past behind.

Throughout the novel, McCarthy also exhibits how, indeed, the father’s past, his memories, the old world is full of violence. In one of the father’s flashbacks, he remembers a scenery from his childhood, when he is at the son’s age or not younger than him. He is on a rocky area in winter with some rough men. They find hundreds of snakes under a rock.

The dull tubes of them beginning to move sluggishly in the cold hard light. Like the bowels of some great beast exposed to the day. The men poured some gasoline on them and burned them alive, having no remedy for evil but only for the image of it as they conceived it to be. The burning snakes twisted horribly and some crawled burning across the floor of the grotto to illuminate its darker recesses. As they were mute there were no screams of pain and the men watched them burn and writhe and blacken in just such silence themselves and they disbanded in silence in the winter dusk each with his own thoughts to go home to their suppers. (McCarthy, 2006, p.201)

Violence on animals is reminiscent of the world of *Blood Meridian* where, with all its details, McCarthy portrays the atrocity that mankind commits against animals. To name a few among many examples through *Blood Meridian*, McCarthy narrates a small market where all the wild animals across the country are hung with some flies around their blackened meats, or how Judge buys two puppies from a little boy and throws them from a bridge into the river, or one night Glanton comes out of the room, where he stays, into the street and smashes the howling dogs’ skulls into pieces after killing them with his knife. Besides killing and eating them, the members

of the Glanton gang rape animals while they are spending a night in a barn. Combining all these instances together, McCarthy, in fact, demonstrates that the world which the father in *The Road* misses is in fact the same as the one in *Blood Meridian*. It is seen in the quotation above that as the men in *Blood Meridian* ride on after the violence they commit, these rough men in *The Road* are also indifferent to the atrocity that they carry out and they go back home for supper as if nothing has happened. It can be claimed that those savage frontiersmen in *Blood Meridian* are the ancestors of the rough men whom the father recalls.

Regarding the father, McCarthy does not offer a hope for the future or for a new world to be constructed. The father has the values, concepts and the burden of past memories and it is impossible for him to transgress these ideas and to imagine a different world beyond his old experiences. Berardi (2011), in *After the Future*, states that “[f]uture is not a natural dimension of the mind, rather it is a modality of perception and imagination, a feature of expectation and attention” (p.17). In the light of this definition, it can be said that the father feels hopeless sometimes and cannot expect anything from the future. While they are resting at night and the son is sleeping, the father thinks “[n]o lists of things to be done. The day providential to itself. The hour. There is no later. This is later... he whispered to the sleeping boy. I have you” (McCarthy, 2006, p.56). Here it is obvious that time is also vanished with the world and the father cannot find any meaning in life because the future is lost. The only thing that connects him to life is the son; his son is the future. The son does not only mean hope for the father; McCarthy mirrors him as the symbol of faith in general. The following conversation between the father and Ely, can be a meaningful example of this approach: “When I saw that boy I thought that I had died. / You thought he was an angel? / I didnt know what he was. I never thought to see a child again. I didnt know that would happen” (McCarthy, 2006, p.183). By expressing that having no expectation of seeing a child again, Ely implies that he lost his hope for the future a long time ago. In a way, seeing a child after all shocks him because it means for him that there is still hope.

While the mother is represented as the symbol of “a lost present” and the father is the self-destructive past, the son can be read as the figure of “possibility and the future” (O’Connor, 2017, p.10). However, McCarthy does not employ the son as the symbol of hope just because he is a child. He creates a child figure who does not have the burden of memories or the marks of the self-destructive past. The son does not have any idea about the world which the father aims to build again. For instance, during their journey, the father and the son find a supermarket and go in. While wandering around, the father sees two vending machines and finds a can of

Coca Cola. When the son sees the can in his father's hands, he asks what it is, because he has never seen a coke before. He drinks it and also shares it with his father. The father insists that he wants the son to drink it and the son says: "It's because I won't ever get to drink another one, isn't it?" (McCarthy, 2006, pp.22-23). By giving the brand Coca Cola, which is the most prominent symbol of the mass consumer culture of today's world, McCarthy endeavors to imply that the end of the world means also the end of capitalism, or vice versa (Schleusener, 2017, p.6). This scene also indicates how the son is alien to his father's world, the one before the catastrophe. In one of their conversations, the son asks his father if he had any friends in the past, if they were many, where they were now and whether the father missed them, or not. Asking so many questions about his father's friends indicates that he is curious about the notion of friendship and also the relations in his father's previous world because he has never had any friends and through the novel it seems as if he will never have any. He is in the middle of nothingness and all alone. Besides all the savageries, McCarthy employs this feeling of isolation and loneliness in its literal meaning as a tool to create anxiety and creepiness. The son's only connection with the world in the past is his father. Thus, he asks his father to tell or read him stories. It can be inferred that these stories help the son imagine the world before it vanished. Since he was born, he has lived on a dead landscape with no sun light, no fresh air, no colorful nature and no animals. He has nearly no interaction with anybody except for his father. However, in the later parts of the novel, the father offers the son to tell a story but the son does not want to hear them anymore claiming that the stories are not true. During their journey, even if it seems like self-defence, the father shoots a man in the head, who threatens them, and when they first meet Ely on the road, the father does not want to help him, and finally, while they are by the seaside, a man steals the father and the son's goods but later on they find the man and the father takes everything from the man and leaves him naked, without anything even though the son warns his father not to do that. That means the father leaves the man in the hands of death by taking everything from him. By referring to all these incidents, the son does not want to hear any other stories from the father because he says "in the stories we're always helping people and we don't help people" (McCarthy, 2006, p.287). Even though he does not have the chance to experience the world before it demolished or any social interaction with other people, the son can comprehend human nature's selfishness by comparing his father's stories and his reactions in the time of crisis in real life.

After the son refuses to hear a story from the father, the father asks him to tell a story, but the son replies: "I don't have any stories to tell" (McCarthy, 2006, p.287). By stating having

no stories to tell, the son means he does not have a past, or a memory like his father. This child figure without a past can be interpreted in the light of Nietzsche's child metaphor. The only way of breaking out from the circle of time which is moving like a wheel, rolling around, is possible with the arrival of a child of God who has no past and is free from the constant moments because these moments are changing the world and the ones who exist in it. Only a pure child can create something out of this circle of time that repeats itself, a pure child who does not have the concept of time, past or any hope for future. Only that kind of child can carry the fire of a new life, a new world, a new beginning to the future. However, being stripped off of moments, past and future do not seem possible (Michalski, 2007/2012). Even if the son in *The Road* may seem like an innocent child that Nietzsche describes, the moments he has experienced have effects on him. For instance, after the father dies, the son is found by a man on the beach and the son joins that man's family. There is a woman in that family and she talks about God. Listening to her talks, the son wants to talk to God but he, instead, talks to his father. Either way, the son continues a ritual that belongs to his father's world, a world that he has never seen. This is exactly the point that Michalski (2007/2012) describes while explaining Nietzsche's eternal return. By claiming the existence of a child without past is not possible; he also asserts that this return does not mean repeating exactly the same things again and again. Every instant creates something new, the things pass and they are in the form of becoming. However, all these things happen on the same wheel of time which eternally rolls (Michalski, 2007/2012).

To conclude, McCarthy aims to create a pure child figure as a savior for humanity, to carry the fire. One day, while the father is checking a house to find something useful, again, the son sees a boy outside, he calls out to him but the boy hides and watches the son from far away. The son tells his father about the boy, but the father refuses to help the boy because he is anxious that the boy might have others with him and they may attack them. When the father is about to die, the son asks his father if he remembers and has any idea what could have happened to him. The father replies: "Goodness will find the little boy. It always has. It will again" (McCarthy, 2006, p.300). In fact, the father does not only refer to that little boy, but also to his own son. Even though it may seem as the son is the prophet of creation and *The Road* is not the story of an end but the beginning of "the second half of the cycle" (Steakley, 2016, p.9), defining McCarthy's perspective of the future in *The Road* as "already the ancient past" (Kaminsky, 2018, p.12) can be more appropriate because from a Nietzschean point of view, the son is unlikely to break the cycle of eternally rolling wheel of time. From the very first pages of *Blood Meridian* to the last page of *The Road*, violence has always existed, it is as old as humankind;

and Judge Holden's victory and the abuse and the destruction—also self-destruction—of the world ends up with *The Road* where the father and the son seek hope for the future, but in the end it seems even if the son will achieve to sustain life, it will not be very different from the previous ones. Thus, all that violence and destruction will happen again and again. *The Road* is not “the second half of the cycle” (Steakley, 2016, p.9), it is just another part in Nietzsche's wheel of time. To conclude, when all the discussions are put together, McCarthy indicates that there is no beginning, no end, and no destination which humanity is moving towards; mankind is walking along the same paths in the circle of time.

CONCLUSION

As is mentioned in the former chapter, McCarthy gives no chance to the possibility of a completely peaceful world without violence and even perceives this idea as a utopia that can never be fulfilled. Besides, he claims that it is chaos and continuous struggle that give meaning to human life. According to McCarthy, violence is as old as human history and a world without carnage does not seem attainable. Even though it is claimed that *Blood Meridian* (1985) is written as a reaction to the Vietnam War and the United States' policies at the time, and *The Road* (2006) is written as a warning about the contemporary crisis of climate change and its possible catastrophic consequences, in the light of his proclamation above it is possible to assert that McCarthy exhibits the ever-present facts of life: violence and destruction, which can be analyzed within a Nietzschean framework.

In *Blood Meridian* (1985), McCarthy speaks up the repressed past of the U.S. hidden behind the frontier myth. The protagonist of the novel, Judge, depicted as the representative of violence and practitioner of war, performs innumerable atrocities but Indians or Mexicans are not his only enemies. He is also in a fight against nature by trying to understand the mystery behind it and by embodying the urge to wipe off every object in it. Throughout the novel, McCarthy narrates how man attempts to control and master nature. Nature is also consumed and abused by man as a result of his capitalistic behaviors. Both novels reveal how man can be self-destructive in his demand for power over nature; and the New World represented in *Blood Meridian* (1985) can be wiped away as is depicted in *The Road* (2006). In this sense, McCarthy (2006) portrays the apocalyptic world as is stated in Nietzsche's Zarathustra's prophecy (1883/1976) where nothing grows on earth. Rather than employing nature as a frightening antagonist in the novel, McCarthy (2006) creates horror and terror with the absence of a life-sustaining nature because a living nature is necessary for the future of humanity. Even though the world in *The Road* seems as a hopeless dystopia at first glance, McCarthy (2006) plants some positive seeds which demonstrate that nature is in a continuous healing process, and this makes the ending of the novel more promising. From a Nietzschean perspective, annihilation also implies regeneration; destruction calls for a reconstruction. These ideas lie at the core of McCarthy's (2006) *The Road*.

While depicting how man abuses and violates nature, McCarthy also focuses on religion as another destructive inclination of man. In *Blood Meridian* (1985), he depicts how religion deviates from its norms which are supposed to be meaningful and protective for mankind. Throughout the novel, the existence of god and the functionality of religion are questioned.

People have been murdered throughout history and even if they find their Garden of Eden on earth, as is seen in the example of the invasion of America, they live in agony. God is indifferent to mankind's suffering. Portrayed as the embodiment of Enlightenment with its rationality and reason, Judge Holden in *Blood Meridian* deconstructs and destroys these impaired Christian doctrines in order to establish his own mythic order. Just like Nietzsche's Zarathustra, Judge destroys in order to create by performing the art of war, and he even declares war on humanity as Satan declares war on God. This also depicts how Western progressive values, namely rationality and knowledge, serve for self-destruction.

In *Blood Meridian*, the other protagonist is the kid who represents an American Everyman who has his own morals and values. Reading his journey, in which he witnesses various savageries and also takes part in some of them, as a pilgrimage, one can observe his transformation into a better man who wants to take himself out of Judge's violent order. However, as Nietzsche discusses, morals and values are the notions which are made up by the weak in order to gain some privileges and to protect themselves from the stronger; and also, those notions are useless during a war because being a good man proves nothing, only being stronger does. At the end of *Blood Meridian* (1985), McCarthy puts this philosophy into practice by ending the story with Judge's ultimate victory. Judge kills the kid and dances while saying "he will never die" (McCarthy, 1985, p.335). This is the victory of war and destruction against religion and morality. The last part of the story can be read as McCarthy's declaration that war and violence will always prevail, rather than peace and harmony, because, as Nietzsche claims by the concept of the will to power, the struggle to overcome the other is the very essence of life.

Rather than putting a full stop at the end of the story, McCarthy closes *Blood Meridian* (1985) with an epilogue like a riddle in which he portrays a man who is trying to take out fire from the stones. This scene can be interpreted as a possible forthcoming Prometheus who will fight against Judge and his order. This Prometheus appears as the son in *The Road* (2006). McCarthy (2006) portrays the son as an Adam figure who carries the fire in him to the future in order to perpetuate human life on earth. Besides his struggles with his father in order to survive in a completely vanished world, his other main endeavor is being a good guy throughout their journey. While discussing universal morals and values, Nietzsche (1883/1976) asserts that it is the weak who create the binary opposition of good and evil, and they define these notions according to their own experiences. They call the actions that they habitually do as good, and call the ones which they do not practice but the others do as evil. Within this framework, the son can be read as one of the weak which Nietzsche (1883/1976) defines because he holds on

to morals and identifies with being a good guy by not doing the things that the others do such as stealing, killing and eating human flesh. However, as an attempt to free man from the vicious circle of violence and destruction, McCarthy employs Nietzsche's image of the child, who is not bound to the cumulative instants of time that consist of the notions of past and future. According to Nietzsche (1876/1997), this child is the only possibility of breaking the eternally returning circle of time. To achieve this, McCarthy portrays a child who was born into the end of the world, so he does not have any relation with the bygone world or with the future either. However, towards the end of *The Road* (2006), McCarthy gives some clues about the things that the son inherits from his father. First, the son states he believes in his father and just after the father dies, he talks to his father instead of god. Obviously, the son replaces god with his father and, as a consequence, the father and the son metaphor in Christianity is observed. This brings nothing new and in other words McCarthy's (2006) attempt to create a child to break Nietzsche's repeated circle fails.

Besides nature's and also religion's repetitive characters, metaphorically, time is also likened to an eternally turning wheel by Nietzsche (1883/1976), rather than a horizontally moving arrow. Considering the notion of time as a man-made concept, McCarthy represents how the measurement of the units of time lose their meanings in the worlds which he depicts in *Blood Meridian* and in *The Road*. McCarthy also indicates the circular time line, which represents repetition of everything, by employing circular movements of the sun, the moon and the earth to express time, instead of using man-made expressions such as days, hours or years. Even though, in *Blood Meridian*, McCarthy (1985) sets the plotline in definite time zones and places, unlike *The Road* (2006) in which he never gives an exact date or setting, he still avoids writing the time or the day through the kid's journey and expresses the movement of time mostly via the sun and the moon. In this repeated circle of time, McCarthy depicts how the atrocity and the destruction repeat themselves through history and how man is not able to escape from them. In both novels, the journeys which the kid and the son take lead nowhere and lose their symbolic meanings such as freedom, exploration and pleasure. In *Blood Meridian*, the kid does not manage to survive against Judge—the symbol of violent ruling power. On the other hand, the son, in *The Road*, manages to survive at the end of the novel. However, as is discussed above, the son himself is trapped in the repeated circle and offers nothing new for the future. In both novels, neither the kid nor the son can reach a destination or find a home. McCarthy exhibits the idea of temporality and describes men as the campers on earth who do not have a permanent place to stay or to reach.

In this closed circle of time where everything repeats itself, as is mentioned earlier, to be able to create something new, one should destroy the present one. However, Nietzsche (1876/1997) defines memory, the past, as a burden and this burden incarcerates man in nostalgia. The urgency of creating or offering anything new is that man should escape from the past. From this perspective, the father in *The Road* is not a promising character for the future, because throughout the novel, it is obvious that he is trapped in memories and flashbacks. Instead of seeking a new promising future, he misses the old world and looks for it because he is not able to think or imagine beyond that old world. From time to time, the father is aware of this fact himself. Thus, as the father declares in the novel, his only holy mission is to protect the son during the journey. In the light of Nietzsche's philosophy, McCarthy endeavors to portray a child who does not have a past or any relation to the old world; and within a Nietzschean framework, this child can be the one who breaks the repeated circle of history. However, as stated earlier, due to the signs which demonstrate that he inherits the old world's norms, the son also does not offer a better future. Considering the repeated violence and destructions in the past, it seems like the son is about to construct a new world where the previous unfortunate incidents will happen again. This means the son will be unable to break Nietzsche's circle.

To conclude, according to McCarthy, stability can result in an empty and meaningless world for man. Devastation and bloodshed are necessary as much as beauty and peace. McCarthy reflects a Nietzschean approach to the world by defining the destruction and the end as a chance for new beginnings. He also rejects the religious doctrines which suggest the idea that a savior will save mankind and grant an ultimate salvation. On the contrary, McCarthy claims that the world will be destroyed, people will be slaughtered and die, and these will happen again and again in different ways, like Judge proclaims in *Blood Meridian* (1985). Considering both novels as parts of world history in which violence and destruction are ever-present, it is possible to claim that rather than criticizing the Vietnam War, or America's imperialistic policies in *Blood Meridian* and warning mankind about the climate change in *The Road*, like Nietzsche's (1883/1976) Zarathustra, McCarthy, in fact, claims that one must welcome life with all the pains and the sufferings in it and all those wars, destructions and carnage that happened before will happen again.

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