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Western, or Thriller? Genre Blending in Cormac McCarthy's *No Country for Old Men*

Master's Thesis

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Prohlašuji, že jsem bakalářskou práci vypracoval samostatně a uvedl úplný seznam citované a použité literatury.

V Olomouci, dne

Mé vřelé poděkování patří, především, Profesoru, PhDr. Michalu Peprníkovi, M.Phil., Dr., který už podruhé měl tu odvahu stát se mým vedoucím a číst moji práci, hledaje v ní chyby a nabízeje pomoc. Také bych se rád poděkoval své rodině a přátelům, kteří při mně stáli, v dobrém i ve zlém, podporovali mně, emočně i finančně, a nechali mně psát, ať už se dělo cokoliv.

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Introduction

It is often difficult to write an introduction to an author that is both tasteful and truthful, and that captures the essence of them and their writing. It is all the more difficult to do so in a manner palpable to people who may not, for whatever reason, be familiar with the author or their work. This is often due to the fact that, more often than not – and in academic circles, especially – one does not personally *know* the author. This predicament, in a way, puts the researcher in the same position as their audience, in that, for both of them, the author in question is, to a degree, an unknown entity. That is not to say, of course, that the researcher knows nothing of the author, or that their audience already knows all there is to know about the author and has no need for the researcher or their work. Rather, it is to say that the researcher, like their audience, will often only know the author from their work, while being oblivious to the exact "how" and "why" of it.

Furthermore, if the author is someone who does not lead much of a public life and is reclusive – someone like Cormac McCarthy – one must make do with repeating what has already been said before.

The American author Cormac McCarthy (1933 – Present), is often cited as one of the greatest living writers, and is possibly the greatest living author of the American South. His work, which is deeply rooted in America, not only the American South, has gathered substantial accolades over the years, ever since the publication of his first work of fiction, *The Orchard Keeper*. His work first earned him a traveling fellowship from the American Academy of Arts and Letter, that even before the publication of *The Orchard Keeper*, when all he published were short stories, followed by a Rockefeller Foundation Grant in 1966, the Guggenheim Fellowship for Creative Writing in 1969, and in 2006, the Pulitzer Prize for his novel, *The Road*. The man himself, however, remains a bit of an enigma, and aside from a sparse biography to be found on his official website, the inner workings of the author remain a mystery to anyone, with the plausible exception of his personal circle.

This is not a bad thing.

The quote of Ernest Hemingway, which he said while receiving his Nobel Prize in Literature, "a writer should write what he has to say, not speak it," can be perfectly applied to McCarthy. He is one of the authors whose work can seem larger than life. As already mentioned, America is a major theme for McCarthy. But scarcely have I seen

America depicted in such an array of way as I did with McCarthy. His America is, at the same time, strictly regional and all-encompassing. It moves from the plains of the American South to the Appalachian Mountains, from the Mexican border to Middle America (in *The Road*) and New York (in *The Sunset Limited*). His aesthetic varies from realistic to dream-like, from absurd to logical. He provides musing on the worst, most vile aspects of human nature, but finds space for the humorous, the everyday, the ordinary. His language is succinct, yet poetic, layered with metaphor and rich visual imagery. And the genres he works in are equally as varied.

McCarthy has written novels, short stories, drama, film scripts, as well as non-fiction. His novel, *No Country for Old Men*, has been brought to the big screen by the Ethan and Joel Coen in 2007, and brought McCarthy to if not the masses, then at least the more niche-oriented movie goers. On *The Sunset Limited*, which was filmed as well, he worked as both the main writer and script supervisor. However, the genre that is, perhaps, the most easily associated with McCarthy, is the genre of western. *The Outer Dark*, *Child of God*, *All the Pretty Horses*, *Cities on the Plain*, and *No Country for Old Men* can all be categorized as westerns. Whether it be their setting, from the time period when these novels take place to the geographical setting of them, or the characters that McCarthy uses, he seems to gravitate strongly to the genre. And yet, none of his novels is as pure a western as it may seem.

More often than not, McCarthy can be found tinkering with the notion of genre, and the western genre itself. He often introduces elements into his work that are taken from genres outside of western, from horror, thriller, non-fiction, etc. In *Child of God*, this element is in the character of Lester Ballard, who is about as far removed from the traditional western hero as possible, as Ballard is a vile, horrific creature who would be at home in maybe a H. P. Lovecraft story, but not in a western, neither traditional nor revisionist.

But how does one know this to be the case? How can one tell whether there is any genre blending present in McCarthy's work, and no just wishful thinking on part of book reviewers and audiences? That, alone, is the subject of my thesis. In it, I will first look at the subject of character, namely protagonist and villain, from the point of view of archetypal analysis as written on by Joseph Campbell. Later, I will discuss the topic of genre, with focus on the genre of western, thriller, and horror, in order to determine what makes these genres what they are, what are their main features and how are these features native to the characters that appear in these genres. Then, in the analytical

section, I will apply my findings to the novel *No Country for Old Men* by Cormac McCarthy, to show that there are, in fact, elements of genre blending present in the novel, and will try to assess the reason the author may have had for utilizing it, from a reader's perspective. To achieve this goal, I will often refer to works by Joseph Campbell, Carl G. Jung, John G. Cawelti and David Glover, along with Rosemary Jackson, Paul Cobley, Marcel Arbeit, and others.

Body

1. Preface

"Show, don't tell" is a phrase often use in creative writing courses, and in relation to good writing. The idea behind the phrase is that, in order to produce (or recognize) good writing, the author must *show* the reader whatever it is that is taking place, rather than simply describe it. It is paramount that, instead of providing only a transcript of the action, the author allows their characters to breathe, so to speak; to carry out the action that they are meant to carry out, experience the emotion that they are meant to experience and live through the events that they are meant to live through. It is believed that by doing so, the author not only makes it possible for their readers to view the characters in their work as living, breathing human beings, but also to carry out, experience, and live through these works as if they themselves were the characters.

"Showing, not telling," however, is easier said than done. It is probably most easily done via drama, which is a form that – even for plays that are not very good and are mired in exposition and clumsy stage direction – is bound to *show* the audience exactly what it is that is going on; to show the story play out, not tell it.[1]

In fiction, on the other hand, it would seem like the most difficult task for an author to show, not tell. As we know, literary fiction is a form that – aside from, perhaps, being read out-loud – does not require any sort of performance, any kind of showing to feel "complete," to be "whole." It is made out entirely of text, and if the text cannot show us what it is that the author has envisioned, there is little that can be done to save it. As such, the form of fiction is wonderfully paradoxical, as in order to "show, not tell," a good author must "tell" by "showing." It is a difficult thing to pull off, and becomes even more difficult when one is working in the field of Genre Fiction, where the characters are bound by genre conventions and tropes, and must act accordingly, sometimes even unnaturally.

Yet, when properly executer, "showing, not telling" can produce writing of tremendous strength and effect, especially, I would argue, in Genre Fiction. For, when paired with the kind of creativity that can embellish a well-known character with interesting, new features, good writing[2] can make even the most over-used characters

[1] Even a bad script or a play can be saved in production by good direction and acting.
[2] That which *shows* and does not *tell*.

feel exciting and new, despite their familiarity. And – if we consider the "convention" that these characters in Genre Fiction are bound by to be the very stories that they appear in – by making the characters feel exciting and new, a skilled author also makes the stories *themselves* feel exciting, and new, as it must be assumed that if certain character is native to a particular story, the story is, also, native to them.

But who are these characters that carry their stories "within them?" That are as much a part of their respective stories as the stories are a part of them?

They are, for instance, the hard-boiled, substance-abusing detective, dressed in long, leather coats who, while awaiting their next big case, sit silently pondering in an empty, New Jersey bar. Or the chivalric knight, whose heart is pure and aim true, prepared to slay the dragon and rescue the princess, and inherit half the kingdom as reward for their decisively heroic acts in an otherwise questionable logistic act. Or, perhaps, the space marine, sent to a distant moon on a mission to find bountiful resources and an alien treasure, in hopes of saving humanity from an insipient, consumption-induced collapse. And who could forget the outlaw with a heart of gold, who will rob a bank only to give the proceeds to the poor and, while at it, deal with the corrupt sheriff and their equally as corrupt posse. Or, in short, they are *archetypes*.

2. The Archetype

A great body of literature has been written on the subject of (not only) literary archetypes. That much should stand to reason, as there is an entire field of literary criticism based around the idea of archetypes, i.e., archetypal criticism. However, the very idea of archetypes – as it was used through the 20th century – can be traced back to C. G. Jung who, in turn, based his version of the idea on the works of Plato and Kant, and whose work would later be used by Joseph Campbell, as basis for his idea of the monomyth.

Campbell's work, namely *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* and *The Masks of God*, were a major influence on the Fantasy and Science Fiction genre in the 20th century. His idea of the monomyth and the hero's journey were, rather famously, adopted by George Lucas in creating his space-Fantasy epic, *Star Wars*. It was this particular instance of inspiration that, among several others, led Campbell's work becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy, rather than it being an irrefutable piece of academic writing. As a matter of fact, Campbell's work had several issues, including – but not

limited to – the author's stubborn insistence on the monomyth's presence across all possible cultures, along with certain outdated views on race and gender, outdated even by the 1940s standard. Yet, it was through Campbell's association with the *Star Wars* franchise that the author became a household name in the 1980s and, possibly, even something of a trend. This, however, leads to a bit of a conundrum.

It can hardly be said that Campbell's work is the be-all, end-all piece of academic writing, or even that Campbell himself is the ultimate authority on all archetype- and genre-centric studies. The issues that Campbell's work has are hard to ignore, especially in this day and age. Nevertheless, there are instances in the world of Genre Fiction where Campbell's work is more applicable than any other, namely due to the fact that the genre works in question were either produced with Campbell in mind, or are entirely based off of his work. Furthermore, as one moves further into post-modernism and the advent of television, it becomes all the more difficult to tell original ideas apart from those unoriginal, to know which structures came from where, what literature inspired which film and so on. The matter could get so overwhelming as for one to find themselves with the bizarre simulacrum of Campbell without Campbell on their hands, or the hero's journey without the hero's journey.

In order not to end up with a self-sustaining loop of what came from where, it would be for the best to simply accept that Campbell's work is and has been quite influential on both the page and the silver screen, and to recognize the hero's journey as a recurring structural motif for many a film and novel, especially in American entertainment from the 1950s onward. Accepting that much, one can then move on to discussing the major concept behind Campbell's writing, i.e., the archetype.

2.1.Inspired to Inspire: Campbell and Jung

The simplest possible way to define what an archetype is, is to say that it is always some kind of a model. And while Jung called these the "universal images that have existed since the remotest times,"[3] the word model might serve as a better term. After all, the term "image" can be rather vague. What exactly is meant by "image"? Is it a symbol? An icon? A painting? Or what? This, however, can get tricky, especially considering that both a *prototype* and a *stereotype* are also models of sort, and that

[3] C. G. Jung, *Collected Works of C.G. Jung*, Vol. 9, Part 1, trans. R. F. C. Hull (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1980), 19, Kindle.

archetype and *prototype* can be found used with the same connotations. In semantics, for example, we find the term prototype being used in exactly the same context as it is used in literary studies, in prototype theory, where it is used as a concept in the human mind that is the perfect representation of any real-world object, or a thing. Think, for instance, of a piece of furniture, such as a chair. Any real-world chair would be compared to the perfect model of a chair that is stored in our minds, and people would evaluate the "chairness" of every chair based on this model. In literature, however, the term archetype is used for this very sort of model-object relationship, with the term prototype being more closely related to something like a draft, i.e., an early, yet unfinished version of something, or the first version of something.

Still, if one were to settle for the kind of distinction where the archetype would mean "a model for something," and the term prototype a "first-of-a-kind" for something, one would still be faced with the issue of differentiating between archetypes and stereotypes. Both express some characteristics tied in with some object or a thing. According to Jung, an archetype "designates […] those psychic contents which have not yet been submitted to conscious elaboration and are therefore an immediate datum of psychic experience."[4] What this means is that an archetype, in Jung's understanding, is a model contained within the human unconscious, not dependant for its existence on any kind or form of an external stimulus, i.e., a model that is innate, untouched by culture or convention, primordial and, it would seem, eternal.

However, the same cannot be said of stereotypes. In fact, stereotypes are born out of "conscious elaboration" (that is, if we take Jung's claim of archetypes being innate at face value, which also may not be true, but for the purposes of this thesis, let us assume that it is). Stereotypes are defined by Erin Beeghly, an Associate Professor of Philosophy at the University of Utah, as "concepts or as psychological items related to the formation or use of concepts,"[5] and as "mental representations with generic content."[6] This means that stereotypes are not innate, but learned, and that their content is not fully representative of an individual, or a group. They often present information about individuals with bias, with prejudice, and can only be likened to archetypes

[4] Jung, *Collected Works*, Vol. 9, Part 1, 20.
[5] Erin Beeghly, "What Is a Stereotype? What Is Stereotyping?" *Hypatia* 30, no. 4 (2015): 677. http://www.jstor.org/stable/24541975.
[6] Beeghly, "What is Stereotype?" 678.

superficially, in that both terms deal with a number of characteristics that are appointed to an individual, or a group.[7]

Hence, the difference between archetypes and stereotypes as it should be used in this thesis seems to be clear. Archetypes are models which present the ultimate version of a thing or a concept, yet they present these completely, accounting for every facet of what they present. They are universal, at least according to Jung, in their pure, untainted form, and are then appropriated according to the culture using them and the purpose of their use. Stereotypes, on the other hand, are learned and learned *only*, generic beliefs about an individual or a group of people that serve as a model only in so far as the individual who is using stereotypes is concerned, in so far as their categorization of a thing or a concept goes.

For Joseph Campbell, it can be said that, in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* and *The Masks of God*, he is in complete agreement with Jung. His conception of the archetype is very much the same as Jung's, in all the important aspects of the idea: like Jung, Campbell considers archetype also as a mental model, existing in the collective unconscious, which people use to categorize entities in the real world.[8] He is also in agreement with Jung in the belief that it was through these images, stored inside the collective unconscious, that the early man first began creating mythological motifs and that it is only through their usage that these images get "tainted" by culture and by individual experience.

There are many thinkers who would disagree with this. The French Existentialists, like Sartre and Camus, for example, believed that there is no such thing as a human being with preliminary images stored in the mind. Their ideas were that the existence preceded essence, and that a human being was born without anything imprinted on them. Nevertheless, as this thesis does intend to look at genre from the archetypal standpoint, let us lay the other theories to rest for the time being and, instead, focus on Jung and Campbell.

Yet, while there are more than traces of Jung's work in Campbell's magnum opus, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, there is a reason why we are not bypassing him

[7] For an example of such a "group archetype," think of examples such as "the wild horde" (or "the wild bunch") in westerns, or "the army of the dead" in fantasy and horror.

[8] Take, for instance, the archetype of the mother. The archetype of the mother is an image, found within the mind of a child and defined by characteristics one would associate with motherhood, that the child tends to attach to a "motherly figure," which is a figure that expresses/fulfils the characteristics of the mother archetype. Needless to say, Jung's treatment of the idea would later be refined by scholars to follow.

completely and only focusing on Jung. That reason is that for all his being inspired by Jung (sometimes, it could be argued, even to the point of plagiarism), Campbell does, in fact, bring something new to the table, and it is in form of elaborating on Jung's ideas and expanding on them, as well as applying them to mythology and folklore in a way that Jung only mentions, but does not write on extensively. This is the area in which Campbell's work can be used as a valuable source, if only for defining terms and as a segue into the topic of genre archetypes, and genre as such. Let us, then, move on into how Campbell defines the hero archetype.

For Campbell, the quintessential archetype in all myth is that of the hero. This is an archetype pulled directly from Jung as well, that Campbell describes as follows:

> The hero […] is the man or woman who has been able to battle past his personal and local historical limitations to the generally valid, normally human forms. Such a one's visions, ideas, and inspirations come pristine from the primary springs of human life and thought. Hence they are eloquent, not of the present, disintegrating society and psyche, but of the unquenched source through which society is reborn. The hero has died as a modern man; but as eternal man – perfected, unspecific, universal man – he has been reborn. His second solemn task and deed therefore […] is to return then to us, transfigured, and teach the lesson he has learned of life renewed.[9]

Campbell, in all his being inspired by Jung, brings something new to the table, in the form of what has later been known as "the hero's journey" (or, "the adventure of the hero," to use Campbell's actual words from *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*). He also does other things, such as expand the portfolio of Jungian archetypes to fit his own field of interest (introducing, for example, archetypes such as the King, the Queen, the Tyrant-Monster and pretty much every major character trope at home in fantasy and mythology), but the hero's journey seems to remain his most remembered idea, and the concept that – while it may be surprising – is still in use today.

Campbell based his entire thesis of the hero's journey on the different myths, legends, folklores of different kinds. He mentions the Arthurian legend, the Arabian Nights, Scottish and Irish folklore, Middle Eastern folklore, etc. To an untrained eye, this may seem like a confirmation of Campbell's claim that the monomyth does, in fact, apply to all stories across all cultures. It is not so. While Campbell is pushing forward a

[9] Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2004), 18.

theory that behaves as a universal, his choice of examples is such that he only chooses those that support the theory, and is silent about others. Even so, if we were to analyse the theory of the hero's journey on the examples Campbell provides, we would never hear the end of it; there are too many and appear too scattered for us to cohesively combine them into a whole that is not as long as Campbell's own work. Rather, it would be better to look at someone who used Campbell's theories in their own work an analyse what Campbell considers to be a hero from there. The best person for this seems to be the aforementioned George Lucas.

George Lucas, in his epic space-adventure, *Star Wars*, based his quintessential hero, Luke Skywalker, on Campbell's work, namely *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* and, more specifically, the hero's journey. The hero's journey is a formula that, to Campbell, must really have been more of a discovery, that relates the journey of the hero from the beginning of a work to the end, and divides it into several stages. There are three "main," or "superordinate" stages, to be clear, that being the departure, the initiation, and the return. It is easy to spot that the three stages correspond to the popular three-act dramatic structure, as well as story structure in general, where it is said that a story is something with a beginning, a middle, and an end. This should not come as too much of a surprise, given that story structure is exactly what Campbell is talking about in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, with the slight difference of not looking at story at large, but focusing only on the role of the hero.

Each of the said stages holds within itself a number of sub-stages. Campbell divides these as follows:

In the section/stage of *Departure*, Campbell identifies the sub-stages of "the call to adventure," "the refusal of the call," "supernatural help," "the first threshold," and "the belly of the whale." The stage of *Initiation* includes "the road of trials," "the meeting with the goddess," "the woman as the temptress," "the atonement with the father," "the apotheosis," and "the ultimate boon." The stage of *Return*, finally, includes "the refusal of the return," "the magic flight," the "rescue from without," "the crossing of the return threshold," "the master of the two worlds," and "the freedom to live."

I believe that if one were to look at the original *Star Wars* trilogy – that being *Episode IV* through *VI* – as one film, it would be possible to divide them into these stages as easily as it is with the first one, *A New Hope*. However, for the sake of convenience and clarity, I choose to only use *Episode IV* as illustration of how the perfect "Campbellian hero" acts. After all, it is not the purpose of this thesis to discuss

neither Lucas nor *Star Wars*, which is why I believe a brief mention of one film in the series will be more then sufficient, before we move on.

2.2. The Monomyth in George Lucas' *Star Wars*

George Lucas's *Star Wars* has been an unprecedented phenomenon since the day of its release. In 1977, when the original movie was originally released, is sparked a bona fide *Star Wars*-mania, and shot near everybody associated with the film into celluloid heaven. Since then, it amassed two sequels, a prequel trilogy, and – most recently – a sequel trilogy, along with a host of assorted television shows and games, video games, books, comic books, and pretty much everything else capable of telling a story (or not).

Star Wars is such a staple in the world's cultural consciousness that it requires almost no introduction. Nevertheless, for the purposes of this thesis, I will provide a brief overview of the first instalment of the original *Star Wars* trilogy, *A New Hope*. This will allow me to, rather succinctly, provide an overview of what the Campbellian hero is, for as it is widely known, Joseph Campbell's *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* was used indiscriminately by Lucas as a blueprint when creating *A New Hope*. The main hero of the original trilogy, Luke Skywalker, is, after all, a dead ringer for Campbell's hero, and his journey could be – and, as far as I know, *has* been – compared to those of Frodo Baggins in J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*, or of Harry Potter J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series. In this chapter, I will try to present sequences from *A New Hope* and link them to their respective stages in Campbell's hero's journey.

In the beginning of *A New Hope*, Luke Skywalker is living with his uncle and aunt on a farm. It is no ordinary farm but a moisture farm, located on the desert planet, Tatooine. Luke has lived there his whole life. He has never ventured out far into the unknown, as it would his uncle forbade him from doing so. As a result of this, Luke finds his life unsatisfactory. All he wants to do is become a pilot, possibly to join the Rebellion. The entire galaxy is, in fact, ruled over by an evil Galactic Empire and the Rebellion is fighting for the galaxy's independence. Luke's uncle, Owen, forbids Luke to do so. Shortly after the movie begins, Luke and Owen go shopping for droids, which are helpful, robotic creatures used for, it would seem, any kind of purpose, any kind of chore. When a droid the two originally planned on buying explodes, Luke convinces his uncle to buy a pair of droids that, unbeknownst to Luke, will kickstart his heroic journey.

Luke's home on the farm corresponds to "the ordinary world" in Campbell's work, the world where the hero resides before embarking on an adventure. It is not until one of the droids, R2-D2, goes missing that the adventure truly begins. The droid's disappearance and Luke's going out to find him corresponds to what Campbell called "the call to adventure," a part of the hero's journey where the hero is, by some outside force, an external impulse, forced to leave the ordinary world he has known so far and embark on what will become his adventure. No sooner does Luke find the robot than he is attacked by a group of "Sand People," a nomadic, tribal race that scouts the deserts of Tatooine, killing and looting. He is saved by Obi-Wan, a wise, old stranger, who takes Luke to his hut to heal him. Obi-Wan represents "the supernatural help." He is a mentor figure, similar to that of Merlin in the King Arthur story, or to Gandalf in *The Lord of the Rings*. At his home, Obi-Wan tells Luke of the Force, and of his father, a Jedi knight killed by the evil Darth Vader.

It is then revealed that R2-D2 belongs to Princess Leia Organa, a royal and a high-ranking member of the rebellion. A message plays that was left in R2-D2 by Princess Leia, where she asks for Obi-Wan's help in fighting the Galactic Empire. Obi-Wan decides to help Princess Leia, asking Luke to join him. Luke, however, cannot bring himself to leave his aunt and uncle behind and hurries home, "refusing the call" to adventure. Upon his return to the moisture farm, Luke "crosses the first threshold," finding his home destroyed and his relatives dead. There is no turning back for him. He joins Obi-Wan on his quest and the two soon set out for "the belly of the whale," the space-port Mos Eisley. They do so in order to secure a ship that can take them from Tatooine to the planet Alderaan, Princes Leia's home-world.

Luke and Obi-Wan's arrival at Mos Eisley concludes the section of *Departure* and opens the *Initiation*. In Mos Eisley, Luke and Obi-Wan meet with Han Solo and Chewbacca, a space-pirate slash cowboy slash smuggler and his co-pilot, a bear-like, anthropomorphic alien. The four agree on the price and leave for Alderaan on board of the Millennium Falcon, a legendary spaceship. Once on board, Obi-Wan starts teaching Luke the ways of the Force, guiding him on "the road of trials." When the crew of Millennium Falcon reaches the coordinates of the planet Alderaan, they are distraught to find that the entire planet has been destroyed. Their ship is soon captured and brought on board of the Death Star, a space station built by the Empire, capable of destroying a planet.

At this point in the story, the matters get a little more complicated with respect to how *A New Hope* relates to *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. This is mainly due to the fact that the second segment of *Initiation*, "the meeting with the goddess," can be interpreted in several ways with respect to *A New Hope*. Specifically, the part of "the goddess" can be assigned to a number of candidates, at least at first glance. After all, the point at which Luke first begins to believe in and understand the Force is near simultaneous with the point at which the Death Star is first revealed, and they both shortly precede the first on-screen appearance of Princess Leia; therefore, and rather understandably, the most straightforward candidate for the position of "the goddess" is the Force, the godly space-force that flows through and connects everything in the *Star Wars* universe.

The second candidate is the Death Star, namely due to its ability to destroy a planet, which to me certainly seems a godly undertaking. Unfortunately, the Death Star's position as "the goddess" is undermined by a line in *A New Hope*, in which Darth Vader, the evil lord who resides at the Death Star, says of it: "[d]on't be too proud of this technological terror you've constructed. The ability to destroy a planet is insignificant next to the power of the Force." If the Death Star is inferior to the Force, it could hardly make a proper goddess, could it?

The third and, by far, the weakest of the candidates is the princess, Leia. She is the weakest candidate because, especially in *A New Hope*, Leia's abilities are nowhere near a godly level, as her true status is not revealed until the third instalment, *Return of the Jedi*. Also, Leia's role in the story is more akin to be part of the next stage in Campbell's monomyth, "the woman as the temptress." Thus, let us settle the matter with acknowledging "the goddess" of Campbell's monomyth to be Lucas' Force, and move on with the analysis.

Upon boarding the Death Star, the crew of the Millennium Falcon hides. With the Imperial forces failing to find them, the four later scatter across the Death Star, with Luke, Han, and Chewbacca going after Princess Leia, and Obi-Wan after Darth Vader. Once Princess Leia is saved, she quickly takes over the leadership of the group. Being "the temptress," she acts as the catalyst for Luke, encouraging him to push beyond his limits and to act more heroically. Admittedly, this portrayal of Leia is not exactly what may come into one's mind when the phrase "the woman as the temptress" is heard, nevertheless, it does serve the story and the aesthetic that Lucas is going for in *A New Hope*. Being a far cry from temptress in the sexual sense, Leia's "tempts" Luke by

making him feel emasculated in her presence. To avoid this, Luke is "tempted" – or, in other words, incentivized – to become a more "manly," more heroic version of himself.

Here, yet another difficulty arises, i.e., a discrepancy between Campbell's writing and the episodic nature of *Star Wars*. With the question of Luke's parentage not being honestly answered until the second instalment, "the atonement with the father" section can prove difficult to pinpoint with respect to *A New Hope*. The reason for this difficulty is how Campbell approaches the atonement; in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, atonement is rewritten as "at-one-ment," suggesting, rather opaquely, that this stage is much less about the hero confronting the sins of the father than it is about the hero "becoming" the father.

In his book, Campbell divides the figure of the father into two opposing images – the God, and the Ogre. The God aspect of the father figure is rather self-explanatory – it is the entity that shelters the hero (or the child), from evil, and helps them on their path. The Ogre, on the other hand, is the aspect of the father that is meant to be overcome by the hero, the one that prohibits the hero to become their true, heroic self. In this sense, Campbell evokes Freud, for whom the father figure was also that of a protector and an adversary, as well as an image of a future task to be assumed by the son, the hero. Campbell writes:

> When the child outgrows the popular idyl of the mother […] and turns to face the world of […] action, it passes, spiritually, into the sphere of the father […], for his son, the sign of the future task […]. Whether he knows it or not, […] the father is the initiating priest through whom the young being passes on into the larger world.[10]

Having said that, I believe the role of the father can, in the context of *A New Hope*, be attributed to the character of Obi-Wan. While much more the God than the Ogre,[11] there is an element of "overcoming" written into *A New Hope*, although not in a way one might expect. Luke's overcoming of Obi-Wan's influence, treated with more agency on Luke's part in the following instalments, comes with Obi-Wan's death at the hands of Darth Vader.

Having rescued Princess Leia, the group prepares to leave the Death Star, at which moment Luke is able to witness a duel between Obi-Wan and Vader. Obi-Wan

[10] Campbell, *The Hero*, 125
[11] It is Obi-Wan who shelters, helps, and guides Luke through his many trials and tribulations.

loses, knowing that witnessing his death will push Luke into wanting to avenge his master, thereby assuming Obi-Wan's responsibility of defeating Darth Vader. Through Luke's assuming of Obi-Wan's responsibility, Luke achieves "the apotheosis," i.e. becoming godlike, and receives "the ultimate boon," a true connection with the Force. Campbell's words on the topic of apotheosis might help clarify this section further:

> [The] godlike being is a pattern of the divine state to which the human hero attains who has gone beyond the last terrors of ignorance. 'When the envelopment of consciousness has been annihilated, then he becomes free of all fear, beyond the reach of change.'[12]

Having witnessed Obi-Wan's death, Luke is left to realize that there is no hope for the galaxy other than for him to become Obi-Wan's successor, i.e., to master the Force and destroy the Death Star. For, as far as Luke can tell at this point in the story, Obi-Wan's death was not merely the death of his mentor – rather, it was the death of the God, which has left the entire galaxy in danger. And yet – quite paradoxically, to say the least – it is by coming to this realization that Luke absolved of all fear, as the stakes he now faces are so dire that they dwarf all of Luke's fear of death, of failure. Having assumed Obi-Wan's role, Luke sets out on a path to becoming godlike himself.

The *Initiation* section is concluded via Obi-Wan's death, giving way to the *Return*. At first, the Luke "refuses the return," opting to join the resistance fleet instead of returning to Tatooine. Han Solo and Chewbacca, having no one to pay them now that Obi-Wan is dead, leave. It is then revealed that R2-D2, the droid belonging to Princess Leia, has had the plans to the Death Star hidden in it the entire time. With this newly gained knowledge, the resistance is ready to attack the Death Star. Luke joins, accomplishing "the magical flight" with a squad of resistance fighters. The resistance fighters fight bravely but are no match for the forces of the Empire. Soon, Luke spacecraft is the only one left. Darth Vader, having joined his troops in fight against the rebellion, prepares to destroy Luke's spacecraft as well, but is stopped by Han Solo and Chewbacca, who come in in the last minute as "the help from without." Luke destroys the Death Star using the Force and him, Han Solo, and Chewbacca, are commended for their bravery by Princess Leia, now a leader of the resistance.

[12] Campbell, *The Hero*, 139.

Luke's return from the flight marks "the crossing of the return threshold," which is also treated with more detail in the subsequent instalments; for, as Campbell puts it, "the crossing of the return threshold" consists of:

> […] coming back out of that yonder zone. […] The values and distinctions that in normal life seem important disappear with the […] assimilation of the self into what formerly was only otherness.[13]

In other words, the hero's return from their adventure marks a change in the hero. He possesses new abilities, new skills that, to the people around him, seem alien. His task, once he returns from the adventure, is to tech these skills to his brethren, the people he is now bound to protect, and aid in their growth. So, while Luke is hailed as a hero at the end of *A New Hope* for destroying the Death Star, he must still master his connection with the Force. This is hardly traditional, with respect to both Campbell and myth, but given that the original *Star Wars* saga is meant to function as a trilogy, it is permissible. Both Luke's mastery of the Force and his becoming "the master of the two worlds" is achieved, albeit in the future instalments of the franchise.

To summarize, the Campbellian hero is one that begins their journey as an ordinary being in an ordinary world. An extraordinary event then forces the hero to embark on an adventure, leaving the ordinary world behind. Over the course of the adventure, the hero meets their mentor – a wise, spiritual figure – who guides them through their trials and helps them become their true self (as well as a host of friends and companions). On his journey, the hero is faced with obstacles that he gradually learns how to navigate. He comes face to face with the divine and is given a gift, be it knowledge, magic, or a weapon of sorts. Using this gift, the hero then faces against the ultimate evil, a skewed version of themselves/their father figure. The hero defeats the evil being, achieves apotheosis, saves the world, and returns to his home, spreading his newly gained knowledge even further.

Now, does this mean that, if the hero does not follow the steps outlined for them by Campbell in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, that he is no hero at all? Not quite. The Campbellian structure, although well-known and substantially used, is based only on a very small sample of stories with a very small – if any – genre distinction. That is not to say that the way Campbell outlines the hero's journey does not work, or that it is

[13] Campbell, *The Hero*, 201-202.

inapplicable to modern stories. In fact, there are plenty of stories one can find nowadays, in both film and literature, that follow Campbell's formula more-or-less beat-by-beat, partially because the formula is easy to understand, easy to use, and satisfying to experience. Also, given the continuous popularity that myths and folktales seem to enjoy, it seems only logical for us not to be throwing Campbell out of the window just yet, as his work provides valuable insights into the structure and form of many western stories.

Yet, there is an issue with the work's outdatedness and the fact that, in many modern genre stories – be it pulp, popular literature, genre cinema, etc. – Campbell's storytelling formula is not quite as popular as it once were. To this, a particularly cynical individual might say something along the lines of, "Well surely, then, there is no use in working with Campbell anymore, is there? There are, after all, many other, more recent books on the topic of archetypal stories, aren't there? Why not use *those*?" Such an assessment may be perfectly justified, but I believe that it misses the point. Not only because of the influence that Campbell's work had in the 20th century (though it was rather influential), but because of the influence that the *stories* that Campbell wrote about themselves had on the 20th century fiction. From that perspective, I would argue that Campbell is still quite useful, at least as a point of reference.

And, as luck would have it, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* has been used as a point of reference at least once, when on the basis of Campbell's monomyth, John Shelton Lawrence and Robert Jewett formulated their prototype of the "American monomyth," and the "American hero," in their 2002 publication, *The Myth of the American Superhero*. Then, if the Campbellian monomyth can be summarized as the tale of a hero who, through a series of trials and tribulations, achieves apotheosis and the ultimate knowledge, thereby saving and enriching the world, the "American monomyth" can be summarized as one where:

> [a] community in a harmonious paradise is threatened by evil; normal institutions fail to contend with this threat; a selfless superhero emerges to renounce temptations and carry out the redemptive task; aided by fate, his decisive victory restores the community to its paradisiacal condition; the superhero then recedes into obscurity.[14]

[14] John Shelton Lawrence and Robert Jewett, *The Myth of the American Superhero* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2002), loc. 102-104, Kindle.

Though it may seem inconsequential on the surface, the formation of the "American monomyth" marks an important step for the American culture *away* from its European roots. Portrayed time and again in both literature and cinema, the "American monomyth" shows the abandonment of initiation rites, the abandonment of flawed protagonists who overcome their shortcomings and become heroic figures, and the abandonment of a sort of equilibrium between the hero and the villain in the favour of redemption storylines, morally unambiguous heroes and the armies of evil, threatening the tranquil existence of unsuspecting, innocent onlookers.

2.3. The American Monomyth

Nowadays, the American monomyth is probably best known to audiences worldwide through American blockbuster cinema and superhero comic books. Anything from *Die Hard* to *The Fast and the Furious* franchise, from *Batman* to *Spider-Man* has, at one point or another, made use of the American monomyth, or has been originally based on it. Yet, despite its modern-day popularity, the American monomyth has, in fact, been the go-to storytelling formula of American fiction and screenwriters for over a century now, and has appeared in (pretty much) every form of American entertainment to date, from popular to pulp fiction, Genre Fiction, comic books, movies, and more.

Still, as with many other, decidedly American formulas and motifs, the American monomyth also has its roots in the 19th century. According to John Shelton Lawrence and Robert Jewett's *The Myth of the American Superhero*, the origins of the American monomyth can be traced back to William F. Cody who, under the stage name Buffalo Bill, laid the groundwork for what would later become the inherently American tale of a morally unambiguous hero who "struggles for law and order against the forces threatening civilization."[15]

It is a formula that near everyone in today's entertainment world has either heard of or knows by heart, and one that is, for the most part, almost entirely factually false. Cody, or Buffalo Bill, as he came to be known, was, above all, a showman, and the tales that he told that helped amass his great fortune were, by his own admission, mostly made up. It mattered little, however, as the stories were, rather indiscriminately, adapted by the fiction writers of Cody's time into fully-fledged dime novels, often in collaboration with Cody and with Cody's personal supervision. What resulted were

[15] Lawrence and Jewett, *American Superhero*, 640.

stories in which the good-looking, athletic, morally unambiguous Buffalo Bill, rode his trusty steed around the prairie, fighting hordes of savage Indians and saving helpless, God-fearing maidens, rescuing them but never taking advantage of them.

Needless to say, the truth behind the myth of Buffalo Bill was much more complicated than this. Cody, aside from being the basis for the hero he portrayed, "standing with a firearm between threatening savages and innocent damsels,"[16] was a man of his time, which brough with it an array of period-appropriate highs and lows. His life was, indeed, an adventurous one, but it was also violent and, at times, unhappy. Yet, the persona that Cody created continued to live on, proving that there was a lucrative business behind character of Buffalo Bill, or any other character that bore resemblance to him.

Hence, after Cody's death, numerous authors emerged who looked at the Buffalo Bill stories and reverse-engineered from them a working formula. The archetypal formula of the American monomyth, while reminiscent of its Western-European counterpart, either changes or outright omits a number of features found in the "classical monomyth" as laid out by Campbell. The reasons for this are several. Cultural appropriation can certainly be cited as a factor, given the American monomyth's having "arisen on American soil,"[17] and the primary function it had in strengthening the American cultural consciousness. This reason also ties into the omission (or, the exchange) of many of the paganistic elements found in the "classical monomyth" for more Christian ones, where the very arc of the hero – their redemptive quest to save a community from the forces of evil – is reminiscent of the Christian mythology.

Another factor might be the "classical monomyth's" limited availability, for as useful as Campbell's formula might be in writing archetypal stories of ancient, Western-European origin, it is hardly applicable to other kinds of stories. In fact, I find it that the transition from the "classical," Campbellian monomyth to American monomyth might also have been linked to the changing tastes of the American reading public. While classical European literature was popular in America in the 18th and 19th century, the advent of the 20th century saw a departure from all that was European, and a penchant for American storytelling more-so than ever before. Stories began to appear of cowboys other than Buffalo Bill riding into town, encountering the local bandits, fighting them and winning, and then riding off to the sunset, leaving the town saved.

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[16] Lawrence and Jewett, *American Superhero*, 639-640.
[17] Lawrence and Jewett, *American Superhero*, 105.

In the 1940s, when the United States joined the war effort, there appeared a new archetypal hero, aptly named Captain America, who fought against the powers of Nazi Germany. Around the same time Superman, arguably the greatest of all American superheroes, was also created. What the two have in common, and what links them both to the Buffalo Bill stories, is that they all portray a hero that is – in a sense – one-dimensional. What this means is that the hero has no other characteristics or reasons for doing what he does, other than that he is the hero. Both Captain America and Superman save people because that is what heroes do; they both fight evil because that is what heroes do. They are morally unambiguous, meaning that they have no dark or unsavoury characteristics. They are perfectly good, perfectly capable individuals who do the right thing because it is the right thing to do.

Furthermore, the emergence of these unambiguous heroes also marks a point in the American cultural consciousness where the American public strives to make peace with their national history. The genocidal reality that is the formation of the United States is supressed and focus is put on the fight against oppression and injustice, rather than on what truly happened. This, also, is a facet of the Buffalo Bill stories, as one of the way that they were used was to spread the myth "that it was always the Indians who attacked the whites first and that Buffalo Bill was merely redeeming the innocent by killing the aggressive."[18] The only difference, in this respect, between the Buffalo Bill stories and the Captain America stories is that, in contrast to Buffalo Bill, Captain America wages a righteous war against a developed superpower, rather than "savages."

Now, to avoid any sort of misunderstanding regarding the use of terminology in this section, is should be pointed out how exactly it is that Campbell's work ties in to the work of Lawrence and Jewett, on a temporal level. Understandably, it may seem strange that, while in the first chapter of this thesis – the chapter dedicated to Campbell's monomyth – I date *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*' publication to the 1940s, while also claiming that the American monomyth is an evolution of it, despite dating it to the 19th century. One may find it impossible for such a thing to occur, and to that I must say that while the American monomyth does date all the way back to the 19th century, the stories that Campbell uses in his publication are even older than that, dating all the way back to Antiquity. In that sense, it is more than possible for the "Campbellian monomyth," as I refer to it here, to be an stepping stone for the

[18] Lawrence and Jewett, *American Superhero*, 745-746.

"American monomyth," for not only are the stories it analyses older than those analysed by Lawrence and Jewett, but the publication itself is also older than *The Myth of the American Superhero*, itself published in 2002.

That being said, let us return to the American monomyth for one, final stretch. The American hero archetype, or "the Buffalo Bill template," as I believe it can be called, saw a magnificent amount of utilization throughout the 20th century. It was particularly prominent in pulp and popular fiction, as well as in Genre Fiction; the spy novel, as popularized by Ian Fleming, is a good example. So is the kind popularized by Tom Clancy. Though, it needs to be said that the way the American hero archetype is described in *The Myth of American Superhero* is just that – an archetype. Furthermore, the way I describe the archetype in this thesis, using the Buffalo Bill persona as an example, is highly prototypical at best, and one cannot expect every hero character inspired by the said archetype to be portrayed in exactly the same way as the next.

It is important to remember, I believe, that what Campbell and Lawrence with Jewett described, respectively, are simply formulas that, indeed, are used in crafting stories, but which must often be changed and tinkered with in order to make the story that they are used to produce enjoyable. Hence, the same thing applies to the American hero archetype that I already wrote of the Campbellian archetype; just because a hero does not act in precisely the same way as determined for them in the archetypal formula, it does not make them any less of a hero. Especially in modern fiction, there is always an element of "the other" written into the character of the hero, be it a set of dark characteristics, a personal problem, or an inclination towards evil, all of which work to make their journey more engaging and less easily predictable.

2.4. The Villain

Speaking of evil inclinations, it is only fair to move away from heroes at this point in the thesis and focus, instead, on the villains. Unfortunately, in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, Campbell does not pay much attention to the villains. There is a brief instance in "the atonement with the father" that does, to some extent, try to analyse the role of a villain in the hero's journey but, for the most part, the entire publication is focused solely on the hero. This is, nevertheless, a strange predicament, especially since the Campbellian monomyth formula *requires* the presence of a villain in order for the hero's journey to be completed. Luckily enough, the very fact that Campbell did base

his hero archetype on the work of C. G. Jung gives me the opportunity to use Jung's work as means of deriving a prototypical villain character from Campbell's hero archetype. In other words, I will use this chapter to see what a prototypical, Campbellian villain might look like, were he to be the evil counterpart to the hero.

Let us consider, for a moment, the hero's journey as described by Campbell. On this journey, the hero act in an altruistic manner, overcoming their many trials and tribulations not for personal gain, but for the betterment of the world entire. The strength that he gain is not meant to only benefit the hero – it is meant to benefit the whole kingdom, the whole world, the universe. As such, it can be said that the hero does not act of his own volition, but is guided by what Sigmund Freud, in *The Ego and the Id*, called the Superego. This is supported by Valerie Estelle Frankel who, in *The Villain's Journey: Descent and Return in Science Fiction and Fantasy*, echoes Sharon Packer's statement that "the superego [is] the superhero's outstanding trait."[19] The villain, on the other hand, is not altruistic. He sets out on a journey similar to that of the hero, but instead of trying to gain power in order to save the world, he does so in order to destroy it, or at least to leave it in worse shape than he found it. The villains, in fact, again according to Packer, "possess incomplete superegos or superegos lacunae,"[20] which allow the villains to "have affection for family and friends," but to also be "morally depraved enough to commit crimes."[21]

But what *is* the Superego?

The Superego (or, the Ego-Ideal, as referred to in *The Ego and the Id*), as Freud understood it, is an aspect of the personal unconscious, as is the Ego and the Id. It exists for every human being and was believed by Freud to be the product of the Ego's attempt to control the Id.[22] For him, the Superego functioned as a moral compass of sorts, by the guidance of which the Ego stirs the Id; Freud believed that "[w]hereas the Ego is essentially representative of the outside world, […] the Superego stands […] as counsel of the inner world, the Id."[23] And while Freud found the capacity for the Superego to be human specific and innate, the Superego itself is anything but innate; for

[19] Valerie Estelle Frankel, *The Villain's Journey: Descent and Return in Science Fiction and Fantasy*, (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2022), 16, Kindle.
[20] Frankel, *The Villain's Journey*, 16.
[21] Frankel, *The Villain's Journey*, 16.
[22] In the context of Freud, the Ego can be said to correspond to one's personality, the version of ourselves that we show the outside world. The Id, on the other hand, is the animalistic instinct related, in Freud's terms, to one's sexual desire – the "I want, I deserve, I desire …" aspect of our unconscious.
[23] Sigmund Freud, *The Ego and the Id*, trans. Andrea Jones Berasaluce (New York: Skyhorse Publishing, 2019), 26, Kindle.

Freud, the formation of the Superego begins in the earliest stages of human post-natal development, as a reconciliation between the Oedipus Complex and reality. In other words, the Superego is a set of learned, moral presuppositions that an individual attains and according to which he then behaves – that is, if he wishes to behave morally.

The villain, however, is not a moral being. At his most prototypical, the villain is the amoral counterpart to the hero's morality. As such, his Superego is either incomplete, as pointed out by Packer, allowing for the villain to commit horrendous crimes, or it is entirely skewed so that, even if the villain does horrible things, he believes that what he is doing is right. Frankel also comments on this, stating that "[v]illains often have a darker past"[24] than the heroes:

> Their parents may be abusive or neglectful. Other times, they have happy childhoods before a tragedy reveals the world's brutality. When these children are mistreated badly enough, they turn into monsters and accept society's burden to prove it right. They become the Phantom of the Opera, Frankenstein's monster, beasts in numerous fairytales.[25]

Now, if the Superego is truly a segment of the unconscious that comes into being and forms while a person – or, in the case of literature, a character – develops, it should stand to reason that an unhealthy upbringing could result in an equally as unhealthy Superego. Considering this, there are several conclusions that can be reached. The first is that it does, indeed, seem possible to apply the concepts of the Superego and the Superego Lacunae to the hero's and the villain's journeys, respectively. The second is that it seems impossible – in the Campbellian model, specifically – to have a truly one-dimensional villain. While there is a place for a villain who appears one-dimensional on the surface, but who – under closer examination – must always be revealed as (at least) two-dimensional in the Campbellian monomyth, a truly one-dimensional villain seems to be prohibited in this structure. What this means is that, instead of being evil just for the sake of being evil, the Campbellian villain will conduct themselves in an evil manner due to some deep-seated, personal flaw.[26]

[24] Frankel, *The Villain's Journey*, 17.
[25] Frankel, *The Villain's Journey*, 17.
[26] In the case of Darth Vader (in *The Original Trilogy*), for example, this flaw corresponds to the character's inner conflict over becoming evil in the first place.

At this point, it is impossible not to mention Frankel's own model of the villain's journey, which she constructed as a reply to Campbell's model of the hero's journey. For Frankel, the villain's journey is, indeed, very similar to the hero's journey; it is, however, not identical to it. The first of its main distinctions is that, while in the hero's journey, the hero leaves the ordinary world rather intact with respect to their psychological well-being, the villain is already psychologically scarred before even encountering "the call to adventure." Furthermore, once on an adventure, the villain also meets with a mentor, only not the kind of mentor that the hero meets with. In contrast to the hero, the villain's mentor will further indulge the villain in the world of evil, playing to their emotional/psychological scarring, urging the villain to embrace the darkness. In entering "the belly of the whale," which may be their master's stronghold, they do so.

The obstacles that the villain faces on their journey are the opposite of the hero's; the villain does not fight evil – rather, they embrace it, fighting against their (or the society's) notions of what is good. Upon meeting "the goddess" (or "the woman as the temptress," as Luke Skywalker does in *Star Wars*), the villain – like the hero – is seduced by the female and shown a new world, new possibilities. However, while the hero is willing to sacrifice their life to save the female, "[t]he villain […] is willing to sacrifice [the female] in order to achieve his vision."[27] Such is the fate of the villain's "father," as well. In order to become their most powerful self, the villain will sacrifice their father figure, i.e., their mentor, in order to prove that they have outgrown him.

Following the death of the father, Frankel's villain is faced with a choice: they either fully embrace their evil side and defeat the hero, thereby ending the hero's journey, or they have an "epiphany."[28] The epiphany, in Frankel's estimation, marks the beginning of the villain's redemption arc, i.e., the point at which the villain realizes the error of their ways and dedicates the rest of their journey to mending what they broke. This is a structure fairly common to many a Fantasy and Science Fiction novel, and can also be found in the aforementioned *Star Wars* where, by the end of Episode VI, the evil Darth Vader is redeemed by his son, Luke, forsaking his evil ways and becoming one with The Force.

As for the American monomyth, the "American villain" is not far too removed from their "classical" counterpart (after all, the American monomyth *is* based on the "classical," Campbellian monomyth). There are differences, however. As with the

[27] Frankel, *The Villain's Journey*, 12.
[28] Frankel, *The Villain's Journey*, 120.

American hero, the American villain is a more simplified version of the "classical" villain. Also, the prototypical American villain seems to be allowed to appear as a one-dimensional character, as opposed to its classical counterpart. In Genre Fiction and genre cinema, especially, the one-dimensional villain appears to be one of the more widespread. Take, for example, the Slasher sub-genre of horror cinema – in it, there is often no other motivation for the villain to be evil other than they are the villain, and they are meant to be evil. Or take, for instance, the early James Bond novels. In *Dr. No*, the titular character seems to have little by ways of internal motivation for their evil deeds other than, again, their being the villain.

Still, this one-dimensionality is hardly nonsensical. After all, it is only proper for the "absolute hero" to be confronted by the "absolute villain," a villain who is evil simply because they are the villain. This is also a rather prototypical distinction. In a whole lot of other genre works, the authors tend to tinker with both their heroes and their villains, introducing characteristics that, in the prototypical sense, would be unbecoming of either. The protagonists of these works can often be labelled as "antiheroes," i.e., the "good guy[s] who [do] bad things for the right reasons,"[29] as Michael Spivey and Steven Knowlton regard them in "Anti-Heroism in the Continuum of Good and Evil," or "antivillains," who are the opposite of antiheroes and who do good for some evil ulterior motive.

There is also a cultural aspect at play in the development of heroes and villains over time. A changing cultural landscape changes fiction as well, and calls for a new kind of heroes to help in shaping a nation's cultural consciousness. The 1940s war effort, for example, called for a hero that could stir the public in a patriotic, perhaps even a nationalistic direction; it called for Captain America. The Cold War called for a similar kind of hero, and found him in John le Carré's George Smiley. But while the heroes changed and adapted, the villains changed also. From Russian generals to Middle Eastern terrorists, there is arguably no other genre that has seen as much diversity in terms of its villains as the Thriller. With the groundwork for it having been laid down by Edgar Allan Poe himself, the Thriller has grown massively popular in the 20th century, in both fiction and film. In the following chapters, I will be looking more

[29] Michael Spivey and Steven Knowlton, "Anti-Heroism in the Continuum of Good and Evil," in *The Psychology of Superheroes*, ed. Robin S. Rosenberg and Jennifer Canzoneri (Dallas: BenBella Books, Inc., 2008) 52.

closely at how different genres affect the portrayals of heroes and villains. For now, however, let us move on to John G. Cawelti and find out what exactly is a genre.

3. Literary Archetypes, Formulas, and Genres

Cawelti's book *Adventure, Mystery, and Romance: Formula Stories as Art and Popular Culture* discusses several topics. One of these is the use of archetypal structures in specific cultural contexts, which is how – as Cawelti puts it – literary formulas and, later, literary genres, are created. In *Adventure, Mystery, and Romance,* one can find a description of the formation of literary genres similar to the one I outline above where, from a "classical" monomythic structure, the American monomyth is formed, by bringing the "classical monomyth" into a specific, cultural context:

> Formula and genre might be best understood not as denoting two different things, but as reflecting two phases or aspects of a complex process of literary analysis. […] In most cases, a formulaic pattern will be in existence for a considerable period of time before it is conceived of by its creators and audience as a genre. For example, the western formula was already clearly defined in the nineteenth century, yet it was not until the twentieth century that the western was consciously conceived of as a distinctive literary and cinematic genre.[30]

It is my understanding that Cawelti's approach to genre is not too different from how I approach the different monomythic structures in the previous chapters. In talking about the "classical" and the American monomyth, I try to avoid referring to them as "genres," opting, instead, for the term "formula," as I find it a more appropriate term in referencing the monomythic structures. For, while a formula can be used in any kind of a genre story, and even be used as a vehicle for multiple genres to appear within a single story, there is likely no restriction for specific genres to appear only alongside a specific formula. A horror story, for example, can be structured as an adventure, and so can a thriller, a western, fantasy, and others.

For Cawelti, however, a literary formula is not just a single, monomythic structure. In his view, literary formulas constitute the unique fusion of the archetypal and the cultural, i.e., of the narrative structures that we, as people, find appealing on an

[30] John G. Cawelti, *Adventure, Mystery, and Romance: Formula Stories as Art and Popular Culture* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1976), 7-8.

unconscious level and the specific, cultural contexts in which these structures are used. Think, for example, of the 1981 movie, *Excalibur*; were the movie *not* based on the Arthurian legend and, instead of King Arthur, followed the adventures of a random, low-born plumber setting out, no less, on a heroic journey, the film's reception would have surely been different. For, and in Cawelti's view, also, a culture – such as the English, for the sake of the argument – would not accept a story, following the heroic deeds of a character the culture does not see as heroic. Or, in Cawelti's words, "[o]ne cannot write a successful adventure story about a social character type that the culture cannot conceive in heroic terms."

To put it simply, the way that Cawelti approaches literary formulas requires the archetypal and the cultural to work in tandem – that is, if one actually wants the formula to work as intended. The hero of an adventure story must, in a specific cultural context, be perceivable as "capable of being adventurous," the villain as "capable of being villainous." What this achieves, Cawelti believes, is the formation of a literary formula that is easy to grasp, familiar, and enjoyable. As such, it could then be argued that, if an author was to tamper with the familiarity of a formula – to introduce new forms into the archetypal structures, or to uproot the cultural aspects of it – the enjoyability of that formula would then falter.

Well, would it?

In a very specific way, working with genre requires adapting the literary formula. Cawelti invites his readers to "think of genres not simply as generalized descriptions of a number of individual works but as a set of artistic limitations and potentials."[31] This would mean that while one can create a perfectly fine, archetypal story using literary formulas, to create within a certain genre the author must, to an extent, tinker with the literary formula. And whether this means introducing unusual characteristics to archetypal characters, or creating specific plot points that a story *should* follow in order to be considered part of a specific genre, it appears clear to me that the very notion of "genre" is that of a literary formula evolved, enhanced.

But why enhance? Well, when it comes to entertainment, there appears to be an ever-present penchant for novelty on the part of the audiences, wanting to be entertained. If there is a formula that an audience is particularly fond of, the most lucrative – albeit the least intuitive – way to capitalize on that particular formula is to

[31] Cawelti, *Adventure, Mystery, and Romance*, 7.

introduce a novel element into it. For, as people seem to enjoy experiencing "new stuff" through familiar means, the best way for an author to consistently attract new readers is by crafting formulaic stories with unusual elements. It must be said, however, that these elements cannot be so unusual as to break the known, formulaic pattern. Imagine coming across an adventure story that has no adventure in it. As such, while there is an extreme creative freedom in Genre Fiction, the changes made can never be as large as to break the audience's presuppositions concerning the genre.

There is also a cultural reason for the enhancement of literary formulas, namely that "literary formulas assist in the process of assimilating changes in values to traditional imaginative constructs."[32] This can be seen in many modern sub-genres of fiction and cinema, where there will often be literary prizes awarded for "the best African-American science fiction novel," and the such. In essence, when a substantial change happens within a culture that produces formulaic works, the culture is quick to incorporate the said change into those works and, if consistently popular with the audiences and the creators alike, the changed formula might soon come to constitute its own genre.

Yet, the matter is not as straightforward for Cawelti as for him, the adventure story does not constitute a stand-alone formula. Rather, as Cawelti puts it, the adventure story is but one of "five primary moral fantasies under which all the formulas [he is] familiar with can be subsumed."[33] These "moral fantasies," then, are "Adventure; Romance; Mystery; Melodrama; Alien Beings or States."[34] However, for the purposes of my thesis, I believe it possible to refer to Cawelti's "moral fantasies" as literary formulas, i.e., to talk of "adventure" and "romance" stories not as mere fantasies, but as specific formulas, particularly because of how Cawelti approaches the notion of a "literary formula" in *Adventure, Mystery, and Romance*. With the necessary fusion of the archetypal and the cultural that makes out a literary formula being applicable to the very narrative structures that Cawelti lists as "moral fantasies," I believe one can bypass the term "moral fantasy" and refer to these structures altogether as, simply, formulas; for, while a particular story may constitute an adventure story in one culture, it just as well may not in another. Also, if one takes into consideration Cawelti's own comments about the adventure story, specifically that "[t]he true focus of interest in the adventure

[32] Cawelti, *Adventure, Mystery, and Romance*, 36.
[33] Cawelti, *Adventure, Mystery, and Romance*, 39.
[34] Cawelti, *Adventure, Mystery, and Romance*, 39.

story is the character of the hero and the nature of the obstacles he has to overcome,"[35] it is hard not to think, instantly, of the Campbellian monomyth, a structure that perfectly corresponds to the archetypal aspect of the adventure story, as described by Cawelti.

It is important to remember, however, that using a specific literary formula does not, in fact, restrict a work of literature to one, specific genre. No – in fact, it is through the introduction of additional structural and thematic elements that two – with respect to the formulaic pattern that they utilize – similar works, can be said to differentiate. Think, for example, of *The Lord of the Rings*, or *The DaVinci Code*. They both have the structure of an adventure story, due to the underlying pattern of a hero overcoming innumerable obstacles and, ultimately, saving the world. Yet, they both act as vehicles for different genres: *The Lord of the Rings*, with its magic and fantastical creatures, is a fairly straightforward fantasy novel, following a group of friends on their quest to save the world from an evil cult. *The DaVinci Code*, on the other hand, is a story that is one-part *Indiana Jones* and two-parts *Foucault's Pendulum*, with semi-historic, semi-fictional elements, following an academic on his quest to save the world from an evil cult. This, too, is a bit of an oversimplification, however, as it is not always this easy to categorize a literary work with respect to its genre.

Some genres, it would seem, are more restrictive with respect to their "necessary" features than others. Rosemary Jackson, in her book *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion*, considers the term "fantasy" as "[having] been applied rather indiscriminately to any literature which does not give priority to realistic representation: myths, legends, folk and fairy tales, utopian allegories, dream visions, surrealist texts, science fiction, horror stories, all presenting realms 'other' than the human."[36] Apparently, she is not far off, as especially in popular media anything that ties in with this definition goes. It would seem, however, that the more niche a work is with respect to genre – think of, for example, many post-modern works where there is not only one, but several genres at play simultaneously – the less permissible it is to tinker with specific genre elements; for, in order to successfully communicate a given genre to the audience, the authors must often stick closely to what *makes* the particular genre. A neo-noir, murder mystery, with elements of cyberpunk and a space opera will, likely, have to be more tightly knit, than a straightforward fantasy epic will. In this respect, it is interesting to think of the practice of genre-blending as a puzzle of sorts, where different

[35] Cawelti, *Adventure, Mystery, and Romance*, 40.
[36] Rosemary Jackson, *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion* (London: Routledge. 2009), 9.

aspects of specific genres must be applied and distributed in an extremely meticulous, some might say even robotic, manner, in order to make the finished product work as intended.

3.1. The Western

In "What's Authentic about Western Literature? And, More to the Point, What's Literary?" an article published in 2007 in *Postwestern Cultures*, Lee Clark Mitchell refers to the American Western as a genre that is "the […] most characteristically regional"[37] of all the popular American genres. And while, usually, referring to any given genre as the "most" anything might just be a gross over-exaggeration, Mitchel's take has considerable merit *specifically* due to its referring to the Western.

Above, I already mentioned the Western while discussing the archetype of the American hero. Specifically, in linking the origin of the American hero archetype to the character of Buffalo Bill, I brushed over some generalized notions of the Western genre, ones that, in this chapter, I shall try to address in more detail. First and foremost, it should be said that the Buffalo Bill novels – while they certainly did a lot to popularize the genre – can hardly be said to originate the Western. In Cawelti's estimation, and even as noted by Mitchell, the Western genre has its roots in the work of James Fenimore Cooper, the author of many a seminal American novel, most famously the *Leatherstocking* saga. Let us, then, move on and see what exactly constitutes the genre of Western and how, if at all, the genre developed since its conception.

The aforementioned regionalism is the Western's first major strength, its first major feature. After all, it is the American landscape that the very name of the genre is derived from, and it was the American landscape that, in the early 19th century, inspired Cooper's first venture into the world of *The Pioneers*. Held in high regard by Cawelti, the marriage of the adventure formula along with Cooper's specific take on regionalism is credited, in *Adventure, Mystery, and Romance*, with giving birth to the Western genre:

> The western formula probably came into existence when James Fenimore Cooper made a particularly felicitous combination of fictional materials dealing with the

[37] Lee Clark Mitchell, "What's Authentic about Western Literature? And, More to the Point, What's Literary?" in *Postwestern Cultures*, ed. Susan Kollin (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2007), 97.

> settlement of the American wilderness and the archetypal pattern of the adventure story.[38]

Now, as concise and as comprehensible as this definition is, it does have a problem. Namely that, if it was only the American landscape paired with the adventure story formula that made the Western what it is, then any adventure novel set on the American soil could, technically, be considered a Western. Needless to say, this is not the case. Thus, while being a good stepping stone for finding out what exactly constitutes a Western, this definition is far from ideal. However, in staying with Cawelti's mention of Cooper's *Leatherstocking* saga for a moment longer, one is quick to realize that, just like *The Pioneers*, the rest of the saga's instalments are *also* adventures and through that realization, two further elements of the Western are revealed – the hero and the villain.

Given that the Western is an inherently American genre, it should stand to reason that the hero and the villain will also have their roots in the American monomyth, rather than the Campbellian one. The hero, true to the tradition of the American hero, is situated between two plains of existence – the plain of savagery and lawlessness, i.e., the wilderness, and the plain of peace and lawfulness, i.e., civilization. Yet, unlike the American hero, the prototypical Western hero is not morally unambiguous. In fact, what differentiates the Western hero from their American counterpart the most is the Western hero's blurred notion of good and evil. For, as Cawelti writes, the Western hero is often "a man of the wilderness who comes out of the old 'lawless' way of life to which he is deeply attached both by personal inclination and by his relationship to male comrades who have shared that life with him."[39] This could mean that, while the Western hero *is* compelled to live their life as the protector of the innocent, there is always an element of uncertainty as to where their true sympathies lay.

The key word here is the hero's "lawlessness;" Natty Bumppo, the hero of Cooper's *Leatherstocking* saga, is a lawless man. So is Butch Cassidy. Yet, the stark difference between the two comes from the fact that while both men are "lawless," only Butch Cassidy is truly an outlaw. Natty Bumppo, for all his lawlessness, is still a heroic figure whose lawlessness stems from his preference to live outside of civilization and outside of its norms – it does not come, as with Butch Cassidy, from actively lashing

[38] Cawelti, *Adventure, Mystery, and Romance*, 192.
[39] Cawelti, *Adventure, Mystery, and Romance*, 193.

out against it. And, if one were to bypass the heroicness of a character and simply focus on who can and cannot be a protagonist, they would be quick to find that lawlessness does not detract from a character's protagonist-ability in the slightest. As a matter of fact, one of the genre's most despicable characters, Lester Ballard, did fairly well as the protagonist of McCarthy's *Child of God*, despite being a far cry from a hero.

As for an example of the villain, I opt for *The Last of the Mohicans*' evil Huron, Magua. Arguably one of Western's most well-known antagonists, Magua's villainy stands in direct opposition the novel's hero's, Uncas', heroicness; for, whenever Uncas pushes the boundaries of interracial relationships, Magua is there to reinforce the stereotype and, whenever Uncas acts trustworthy and honest, Magua is cold and calculating. It should be noted, however, that this dichotomy between the hero and the villain is not unique to *The Last of the Mohicans*. In fact, in one of the most famous cinematic Spaghetti-Westerns of all time – Sergio Leone's *Once Upon a Time in the West* – the villain's motivations also mirror those of the heroine, for while she tries to protect the piece of land that she inherited from her deceased husband, the villain tries to steal and exploit it.

As a rule of thumb, perhaps, it could be said that the prototypical Western villain is the exact opposite of the prototypical Western hero; an amoral character of formidable skill who, just like the hero, is the master of several Old West disciplines. From horse-riding to marksmanship, the villain is an expert in surviving on the prairie. Yet, unlike the hero, the villain uses their mastery for evil. They kill, rob, and steal, challenging the hero at every turn, "gradually increasing [their] violence" and "moving toward a climactic confrontation […], the shootout."[40] The final confrontation between the hero and the villain, however, is not only the *moral* climax of a Western, but also the "skilful" climax of one. The hero and the villain face off against one-another and, more often than not, the hero is victorious, proving their skill superior to the villain's. Furthermore, through their confrontation, another important aspect of the Western is brought forth – the violence.

Contrary to popular belief, violence is not a necessary feature of the Western. It is, however, extremely common. In his analysis of *The Pioneers*, Cawelti writes that while "[v]iolence does exist in the world of *The Pioneers*, […] it is largely the result of accident, misunderstanding, or natural forces."[41] This is tremendously helpful, as an

[40] Cawelti, *Adventure, Mystery, and Romance*, 233.
[41] Cawelti, *Adventure, Mystery, and Romance*, 198.

"accidental" feature, as it is referred to in Cawelti's description, can hardly be called necessary. Nevertheless, a question can thereby be raised as to how, if not through violence, does the hero confront the villain in their final stand-off. It is my belief, however, that as far as the Western hero is concerned, it is not too uncommon for them to outsmart the villain in a battle of wits, rather than to outshoot them. It is also possible for the hero to beat the villain in a competition that does not include violence, as is often the case in Karl May's *Winnetou* novels. In fact, Old Shatterhand – one of May's quintessential heroes in the *Winnetou* saga – is exactly the kind of a Western hero who would try to resolve an issue *without* the use of violence first. Yet, there does seem to be a peculiar, unwritten rule to the Western gerne that, if the hero is confronted with violence, they must then respond in kind, lest their heroicness falters.

Another important addition to the gerne, albeit not a necessary one, is the element of romance, i.e., the love interest. It is far too common, in my estimation, for the hero-villain conflict to be centred around the hero's love interest – a fair maiden, mostly – whom the hero must rescue from the villain's evil grasp, or whom they must help take revenge on the villain. It is also fairly common, as far as I can tell, for the conflict to stem from a love interest *shared* by the hero and the villain, as is the case with *Cities of the Plain*, the final instalment of Cormac McCarthy's *The Border Trilogy*. And while I did already mention above that the Buffalo Bill novels, too, would frequently feature a romantic plotlines, it is good to remember that these were generally written as platonic only, which is not the case with McCarthy at all.

3.2. The Thriller

The American Thriller, like many other popular American genres, can have its generic roots traced back to the work of Edgar Allan Poe. And it is easy to see why: many of Poe's most well-known stories, like "The Pit and the Pendulum" or "The Black Cat," are tales of suspense with a terrifying twist, keeping the reader on the edge of their seat. They do not shy away from violence or brutality. Often chilling from beginning to end, the Thriller's main goal is to unsettle its reader. In this chapter, I will look in more detail at how this is achieved, analysing some of the Thriller's more obvious elements.

In keeping with the mention of Edgar Allan Poe, it would seem that the general practice of certain literary scholars regarding the Thriller, is to put it in contrast with the Detective Novel. It is well known that Poe wrote both, and as I will try to show, the two

are, indeed, very similar. For the time being, however, before I follow through with more concrete examples, a general rule of thumb can be made that the Thriller is any work that is grittier, more action-oriented, and more violent than the Detective Novel, without crossing into the domain of the Horror; the Thriller, unlike the Detective Novel, is also less inclined to focus on the solving of a crime and more so on the committing of one, although this is not always the case. Needless to say, this definition is not my own. As written by David Glover in *The Cambridge Companion to Crime Fiction*, one finds that "[b]y the late 1920s […], detective fiction had become a serious business and it was becoming customary to distinguish those stories based upon 'the power of logical analysis and subtle and acute reasoning' from the 'crude and pungent sensationalism' of the vulgar thriller in which 'the writer's object is to make the reader's flesh creep'."[42] In a following statement, Glover writes of the Thriller that it "was and still is to a large extent marked by the way in which it persistently seeks to raise the stakes of the narrative, heightening or exaggerating the experience of events by transforming them into a rising curve of danger, violence or shock."[43]

While somewhat simplistic, I believe this definition gets to the core of what makes the Thriller what it is, namely with respect to the genre's constant desire to shock its audience. Yet, while the Thriller and the Detective Novel may be thematically similar and even contain similar motifs, the way that they are structured and the characters they employ could not be farther from one-another. In a Detective Novel, there are two central, necessary characters – the detective and the villain, or the perpetrator of the crime (three, if one were to count the victim as a character, also). The Thriller, however, requires no detective. In this aspect, the Thriller is closer to the Western in that, just like the Western, the Thriller only requires a hero and a villain, who can then be assisted by a sidekick, or driven by a love interest. Nevertheless, this is not a requirement.

Even in action, the Thriller and Western's characters are similar. Regarding the genre's structure, the author of *The American Thriller*, Paul Cobley, writes that "thrillers are found to have a basic set of structural components – threats to the social order, heroes, villains, deduction, resolution and so forth – which are repeated in

[42] David Glover, "The Thriller," in *The Cambridge Companion to Crime Fiction*, ed. Martin Priestman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 180.
[43] Glover, "The Thriller," 181.

different guises by different texts."[44] In addition, one can also consider Glover's account, namely that "the thriller trades in international conspiracies, invasions, wholesale corruption, *serial killers who threaten entire cities or even nations*."[45] Now, it is to be understood that, in case of the Western, one is likely to find little by way of "international conspiracies." However, given the Western's general use of the motif of Indian invasion, or a corrupt sheriff, a connection between the two can surely be pointed out. And, if one were to consider Cormac McCarthy's *Child of God*, the idea of a serial killer threatening an entire community is no longer too far-fetched for a Western.

Nevertheless, there is a major difference at play between the Western and the Thriller, this being the violence. As I mentioned above, the Western is a genre that does not, necessarily, require violence to be present in it. The Thriller, on the other hand, is ripe with violence. The relationship between the Thriller and violence can be explained, as Glover puts it, through the Thriller's preoccupation with "'plausibility' or verisimilitude.'"[46] In order to motivate the hero – who, usually in the Thriller, is an agent of good hunting the evil mastermind – to continue on their journey, the violence *must* often be graphic, as it is through the sheer brutality of the villain's actions that the hero is prompted to act. It is also a great tool from the author's perspective to petrify their audience and collectively set them against the villain.

Also, in contrast to the Western, the Thriller does not require a particular setting. Glover, in echoing Valentine Williams, mentions Williams' "insistence that the thriller's primary focus is on action,"[47] condensing all of the Thriller's possible necessary features into one, i.e., it needs to be action-packed. As long as there is action, the Thriller does not require the sprawling prairies of the Wild West, nor does it require saloons or the frontier. Thomas Harris' *The Silence of the Lambs*, for all its blood, gore, and pathology, is structurally a fairly regular Chamber Drama, moving from room to room and exceptional only by virtue of its varied cast. And were it not for its violence and a quirky protagonist, Jeff Lindsay's *Dexter* would probably not even exist in the first place. In fact, both *Dexter* and *The Silence of the Lambs* focus on action and violence in such a way that completely sets them apart from regular Detective Novels and Chamber Dramas, respectively, and are focused on the storytelling aspect enough

[44] Paul Cobley, *The American Thriller: Generic Innovation and Social Change in the 1970s* (New York: Palgrave, 2000), 3.
[45] Glover, "The Thriller," 182, italics mine.
[46] Glover, "The Thriller," 181.
[47] Glover, "The Thriller," 182.

still so they do not pass through to the Horror territory. As such, the mass appeal of the Thriller can be summarized by a quote by John G. Cawelti, in that the Thriller is often used as means "to construct alternative worlds into which we can temporarily retreat,"[48] i.e., for the audience to experience all that, in the real world, is inexperienceable.

Another interesting aspect of the Thriller – and one also mentioned by Glover – is the notion that "the thriller is [often] preoccupied with the enormity of what is known but cannot be proved and this leads to an urgent desire for rough justice, an impatience with official procedures, a feeling that 'details don't make much difference'."[49] In Jeff Lindsay's *Dexter*, this notion functions as the central theme of the entire saga, as the novels' protagonist, Dexter Morgan, is, himself, a serial killer, hunting other serial killers whom the government does not know about, or whom they cannot sufficiently punish. For Morgan, the "details" surely do not matter; every other night, he finds himself a new serial killer to murder. And when, at the moment of death, the serial killers question Morgan's morality, he simply refers back to his code, i.e., it is alright to kill a serial killer. Dexter Morgan is, therefore, a textbook example of an antihero, a killer who kills for the greater good. Interestingly enough, Morgan does not see himself as an antihero; in his view, Dexter Morgan is a hero, stating, in the series' second instalment, *Dearly Devoted Dexter*, that "[e]very superhero must have an archenemy, and he was mine,"[50] referring to himself as the "superhero," and to the novel's villain as the "archenemy."

Yet, in spite of what Dexter Morgan might think, from the archetypal point of view, he is still just an antihero.

4. *The Border Trilogy* and Cormac McCarthy's Treatment of Genre

As Marcel Arbeit writes in "No Real Heroes in Cult Novels: Cormac McCarthy's 'The Border Trilogy,'" "Cormac McCarthy is a true American cult novelist."[51] Or, at least, he used to be. Before the publication of *All the Pretty Horses*, the first instalment in what would later become *The Border Trilogy*, Cormac McCarthy was a largely unknown, largely unread author. It is, probably, not difficult to see why: McCarthy's second novel, *Outer Dark*, follows the quest of a mother to find the child she had conceived

[48] Cawelti, *Adventure, Mystery, and Romance*, 13.
[49] Glover, "Thriller," 182.
[50] Jeff Lindsay, *Dearly Devoted Dexter*, 5.
[51] Marcel Arbeit, "No Real Heroes in Cult Novels: Cormac McCarthy's 'The Border Trilogy'" in *Cult Fiction & Cult Film: Multiple Perspectives* (Olomouc: Palacky University Press, 2008), 209.

with her brother, with him in pursuit. His third novel, *Child of God*, follows Lester Ballard, a murderer and necrophiliac, as he finds home in an underground cave system, from where he hunts for couples to kill and mutilate. The works that followed, *Sutree* and *Blood Meridian*, were an absurdist opus and a Wild West magnum opus, respectively, that both failed to attract much readership, except for a dedicated few and despite critical acclaim.

However, with the publication of *All the Pretty Horses*, which "surprisingly and immediately became a huge commercial success, paving the road taken by all McCarthy's subsequent novels so far to the bestsellers list,"[52] everything changed. With *All the Pretty Horses* becoming a bestseller and the subsequent instalments of *The Border Trilogy* following suit, McCarthy became a celebrity of sorts. In 2007, the omnipotent Oprah Winfrey selected McCarthy's novel *The Road*, itself a winner of the 2007 Pulitzer Prize in Fiction, for her Book Club, and throughout the 2000s, several of the author's more approachable novels were filmed.

Yet, while it is true that McCarthy's work has appeared in a variety of different media, it is all the more interesting to think of all the different genres that the author has utilized over the years. For, while McCarthy's earlier work – that preceding the publication of *All the Pretty Horses* – does certainly draw its motifs and themes from the well of Southern Americana, it can hardly be assigned to any one genre. In *The Orchard Keeper*, there are elements of naturalism and regionalism all easily identifiable, but with respect to genre, the work is hard to classify. There are the elements of a coming-of-age novel. There are also the elements of a Southern gothic and of Western, if one considers the novel's treatment of the landscape. It is not, however, a straight genre piece – then again, it could be argued that none of McCarthy's novels are. *Blood Meridian*, while definitely a Western, is far too experimental to ever be considered a "straight" Western.

The closest that McCarthy had gotten to writing a straight genre piece in the 20th century was, arguably, with *All the Pretty Horses*, a novel that does not only take inspiration from Western imagery, but that revels in it. From the moment the novel opens, in fact, McCarthy can be seen giving his readers an overview of the genre, if you will. The key words in the opening passage of *All the Pretty Horses* – a candle; an old, wooden house; the protagonist's hat; the train speeding by; the preacher; the horse; the

[52] Arbeit, *Cult Fiction*, 210.

prairie – are all items reminiscent of the "old west." It is here that *The Border Trilogy* begins, at the end of the "old west" and, in a very, *very* particular sense, at the end of the genre.

Now, it should be said that, and especially considering the previous chapter, there is no such thing as the "end" of a genre, not in the literal sense. But, if one were to consider Marcel Arbeit's comments on the topic of the Southern Western, in *Fred Chappell, Cormac McCarthy, and the Metamorphoses of the Novel in the American South*, namely that "it was only by the end of the 1960s that the Southern authors took "a journey to the west," by which time the anti-western was being born […],"[53] it could easily be assumed that, by 1992, when McCarthy's *The Border Trilogy* began, the author's approach to the genre was already influenced by that "anti-western" tradition. And although *All the Pretty Horses* is, still, much more a Western than an "anti-western," it is clear from McCarthy's later work on *The Border Trilogy* that the author was becoming gradually more and more interested not in the genre of Western as such, but in what the genre could be, were it deconstructed, reanalysed and, by the final instalment in the *Trilogy*, reconsidered, its features rearranged. There is an inherently post-modern aspect to *The Border Trilogy*.

Still, *All the Pretty Horses* is, for all intents and purposes, a fairly generic Western, albeit a romantic one. That is not to say, however, that the novel is a romance – it is not, not entirely. *All the Pretty Horses* has, from the very beginning, the structure of an adventure story as I have outlined it above. With the novel's protagonist, John Grady Cole, being forced out of the ordinary world in the beginning of the novel and his returning to it – be it begrudgingly – at the end, Cole's journey is, at the very least, reminiscent of the Campbellian hero's. Yet, in analysing Cole's behaviour, along with his motivations, it becomes clear that he is not, in fact, a straightforward hero in the Campbellian sense, nor is he a true American hero. He is a Western hero, although an uncharacteristically self-absorbed one. In contrast to one of McCarthy's later Western heroes, the sheriff in *No Country for Old Men*, Ed Tom Bell, Cole's actions are not for the greater good of a community, nor for some higher, moral purpose. Instead, Cole's actions are Cole's alone.

This is where *All the Pretty Horses* differentiates from other, more archetypal Westerns, in that the heroes of these Westerns tend to act in ways that are, to at least

[53] Marcel Arbeit, *Fred Chappell, Cormac McCarthy, and the Metamorphoses of the Novel in the American South* (Olomouc: Periplum, 2006), 197.

some extent, altruistic. In *All the Pretty Horses*, John Grady Cole travels to Mexico both in order to escape the United States' rampant industrialization, which is a theme as old as the western genre itself, and out of his own, selfish reasons, i.e., to live his life as he sees fit. Cole, as it is revealed, would like nothing more than to live and work on his family's old ranch, taking care of horses and living as a cowboy. His running away to Mexico at age 16 is motivated not by some great penchant for adventure, but by his longing of doing just that – of being a cowboy. It is this longing, in fact, that functions as the central motivation for all of Cole's actions throughout the novel. His relationship with Alejandra, the young, beautiful heiress to Don Hector's vast ranch with whom Cole has an affair, is closer to being a detriment to his journey, rather than a motivation for it.

There is, however, certainly an element of romance in *All the Pretty Horses*, albeit one that is not allowed to flourish, so to speak. The reason why I am hesitant to categorize *All the Pretty Horses* as a romance novel is that, once the romance between Cole and Alejandra is over, i.e., once Cole is sent to and, later, released from prison, and the romance fails to reignite, the novel does not end, as Cole's heroic quest for self-realization is not finished. Also, if one were to consider Cawelti's take on the romance formula, namely that "[r]omances often contain elements of adventure, but the dangers function as a means of challenging and then cementing the love relationship,"[54] it might prove problematic to argue in favour of the novel as a romance, given that Cole and Alejandra's relationship is challenged, but never "cemented." It makes little sense, I find, for the romance aspect of the novel to have any more say in its categorization than, for instance, the prison aspect, which is also rather prominent. In my opinion, *All the Pretty Horses* is no more a romance novel than it is a prison novel, as is the case with Henri Charrière's *Papillon*, for example.

The later instalments of McCarthy's *The Border Trilogy* treat the notion of genre with more of an ambiguity. *The Crossing*, which is the *Trilogy*'s second instalment, is described by Arbeit as a "metaphysical western."[55] This might be due to the novel's preoccupation with deconstructing the very nature of the Western, rather than telling a believable story. McCarthy, in deconstructing the genre, opts for a protagonist who, in contrast to John Grady Cole, is not a Western hero, nor is he a hero at all: Billy Parham. Instead, Billy is a fool; a sixteen-year-old would-be cowboy who, while out with his

[54] Cawelti, *Adventure, Mystery, and Romance*, 41.
[55] Arbeit, *Fred Chappell*, 209.

younger brother Boyd, unwittingly plays a role in his parents' murder, Billy is the perfect protagonist for the kind of metaphysical novel that *The Crossing* is. Throughout the novel, Billy tries to be – or, rather, tries to *become* – a western hero, by embarking on a journey to Mexico not once, but thrice. Each time, however, his journey ends in failure, with Billy unable to ascend to a heroic status. Yet, by employing a protagonist who does not understand the world they inhabit or is rejected by it, McCarthy is able to deconstruct and comment on the genre.

Billy's journey through the world of *The Crossing* is reminiscent of the one taken by Dante Alighieri in *The Divine Comedy*, in that both Billy and Dante traverse a world that, to them, is entirely alien. And just like Dante, it does not take long for Billy after setting out on his journey to Mexico to find himself "in a dark wood," where "the straight way [is] lost."[56] Yet, unlike Dante, Billy is more than just an observer. He does, in fact, interact with the world around him, only in a way unbecoming of the Western hero. Be it the evil Indians who murder Billy's parents or the good Indians who Billy spends time with, or even the sublime landscape that Billy is forced to cross, he reacts to all of it with utmost sincerity. As a result of this, he is taken advantage of multiple times.

That is not to say, however, that *The Crossing* does not feature a true, Western hero, as it does; the true hero of *The Crossing* – at least, in archetypal terms – is Billy's brother, Boyd, who is two years younger than Billy and has all the skills and instincts of a proper Western hero. He is a better horse-rider, a better trapper and, unlike Billy, recognizes the world he exists in as an unfriendly, hostile one. And when, in the beginning of *The Crossing*, Billy and Boyd come across a rogue Indian, the difference between the two is easily shown:

> The indian stood up. He stood immediately and without effort and looked across the tank where Billy stood holding the horse and then he looked at Boyd again. He wore an old tattered blanketcoat and an old greasy Stetson with the crown belled out and his boots were mended with wire.
>
> What are you all doin out here?
>
> Gettin wood.
>
> You got anything to eat?
>
> No.

[56] Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri*, Vol. 1, trans. Robert M. Durling (Oxford : Oxford University Press, 1996), 27.

> Where you live at?
> The boy hesitated.
> I asked you where you lived at.
> He gestured downriver.
> How far?
> I dont know.
> You little son of a bitch.[57]

Boyd's hesitancy to answer the Indian's questions is a sign that he is suspicious of the Indian, which the Indian recognizes. Angry with Boyd, the Indian sends for Billy, not knowing that Billy – in the first section of the novel – is really Boyd's opposite. He answers all of the Indian's questions, dooming their family and their home. From here on, it is clear that while Billy is the novel's protagonist, it is Boyd who is, truly, the hero. Unlike Billy, Boyd is constantly aware of the danger around him. He does, however, overestimate his skill, which is why in a later section of the novel, he is killed during an unsuccessful confrontation. Billy, on the other hand, is the sole survivor at the end of the novel, which is not due to skill but the ambivalence that he is afforded by the world around him.

Now, while Billy's first venture into Mexico is a *spiritual* quest – returning the wounded she-wolf to her native Mexico is both a literal and a metaphorical search for one's home – the second is, really, a proper adventure. With their family murdered and without a home, Billy and Boyd set out for Mexico once again, trying to find the horses that were stolen from them on the night of their family's murder. They cross the border and traverse the landscape, taking care of one-another and helping each-other survive. Coming eerily close to achieving their goal, Billy and Boyd find themselves in a Mexican standoff, confronted by a group of Mexican cowboys. They manage to fend off the group, accidentally breaking the group's leader's back in the process. In an act of retaliation, Billy and Boyd are then ambushed by the group, with Boyd being shot by a rifle and wounded. He does not die, however, and after he is nursed back to health, Boyd is hailed as the hero who defeated the leader of the Mexican cowboys. Billy, who both helped defeat the leader and saved his brother's life, is given no such salutation. His heroic journey is reduced to that of a squire who stood by the hero while the hero was fighting. His role in the story of Boyd's heroic success is soon forgotten.

[57] Cormac McCarthy, *The Crossing* (London: Pan Macmillan, 2022), 6-7, Kindle.

As such, Billy's journey does not only result in him failing to become a hero, but also in his being rejected by the very structure that he is attempting to follow. Despite playing an important role in the defeat of the leader, Billy does not fit the narrative of the hero as well as Boyd does, which is why he is rejected by it. His meek, careful behaviour is no match for Boyd's brash, confrontational nature. Paradoxically enough, it is only by having Billy embark on an adventure along with Boyd and attempting to fulfil his heroic journey that McCarthy is able to show just how unheroic Billy truly is. His unheroicness is then turned into the theme of the third section of the novel, where Billy is forced to assume the role of an undertaker.

Billy's third venture into Mexico is motivated by the death of his brother, Boyd. Returning to Mexico to retrieve his brother's carcass, Billy's final journey is already a failure. This failure, however, is not Billy's alone – his failure to become the hero of his own story, while palpable through his role as the undertaker here – is only secondary to Boyd's true, heroic failure. Even after retrieving Boyd's body, Billy is unable to properly fulfil his quest, as upon his journey to bury Boyd, Billy is attacked and Boyd's body is desecrated. He is not killed, however, the reason for it being that the "bandolero"[58] who attacked him cannot be bothered to finish the job. In fact, all that is said of the encounter before Billy is left alone is that the bandolero "had killed a good horse for no reason."[59] Billy's life, it is shown, is worth less than the horse's.

While certainly not the *first* instance of genre-blending in McCarthy's work, *The Crossing* is possibly the most important one with respect to the Western. In *No Country for Old Men* McCarthy does the same thing, except with the villain and in a less subtle way. As for *The Crossing*'s Billy Parham, he appears as more of a romantic hero attempting to embark on a Western adventure than as a proper, Western hero. His humanity, kindness, and curiosity, while often detrimental to him, is also what saves him in the end, as it is through his otherness that he is spared in the end. And, rather than by action, *The Crossing*'s Billy Parham is characterized by his inner world, his spirituality. This is an aspect of the character that is also carried over into *Cities of the Plain*, in which Billy is still a spiritual character, however, no longer a hopeful one.

Cities of the Plain, the third and final instalment of Cormac McCarthy's *The Border Trilogy*, sees John Grady Cole and Billy Parham unite for one, final adventure. As Marcel Arbeit points out, however, it is not Cole and Parham's coming together that

[58] McCarthy, *The Crossing*, 395.
[59] McCarthy, *The Crossing*, 397.

is the most striking aspect of this novel, but the "amnesia"[60] that they both appear to suffer from. Neither Cole nor Parham seem to be bothered by their past. John Grady Cole, now working alongside Parham as a cowboy on an American ranch, knows nothing of Alejandra and is not in love with her anymore; Parham, who is older than Cole, has, it would seem, forgotten almost all about Boyd, his brother, and mentions his name only once through the novel. Still, it is not as if they *need* to remember. In fact, by the time that *Cities of the Plain* takes place, both Parham and Cole are already different from how they were at the time of their respective novels. John Grady Cole, for example, is still the type of character who will jump at any occasion to prove he is the hero of the story, albeit more begrudgingly than in *All the Pretty Horses*. Nevertheless, Cole still does act in a heroic manner, as when fighting for the freedom of the prostitute with whom Cole is in love, Magdalena, he does so even against Parham's – and, perhaps his own – better judgement. This is solidified by the speech given to Cole by Eduardo, Magdalena's pimp:

> That is what has brought you here and what will always bring you here. Your kind cannot bear that the world be ordinary. That it contain nothing save what stands before one.[61]

The "kind" on Eduardo's mind is, of course, the Western hero, who will always try to fight injustice, not realizing that the real world has no place for heroes. The confrontation between Cole and Eduardo is the confrontation between the idolized and the real, between Cole's notion of how the world should be and Eduardo's notion of how it really is. Prior to their confrontation, Cole is adamant about beating Eduardo and saving Magdalena. Having bought a cottage, Cole is planning on moving there and living with Magdalena after he had won. Needless to say, he does not win. Instead, Cole and Eduardo kill each-other and, with Cole dead, Parham is left alone once again.

Still, if *All the Pretty Horses* is a romantic Western and *The Crossing* a metaphysical one, then Cities of the Plain is a realistic Western, as neither Cole nor Parham are truly a hero. And while Cole does at least attempt to relive his heroic past, Parham does not, as his arc is less about becoming a hero and more about the futility of dreams. This is even supported by Erik Hage, the author of *Cormac McCarthy: A*

[60] Arbeit, *Fred Chappell*, 209.
[61] Cormac McCarthy, *Cities of the Plain* (London: Pan Macmillan, 2022), 196. Kindle.

Literary Companion, in which he points out that in *Cities of the Plain*, McCarthy "explores a different, more personal kind of myth: the myths we tell ourselves about how our life is or will be."[62] And while, in the previous instalments of *The Border Trilogy*, McCarthy is interested in both the myth of the west and its deconstruction, in *All the Pretty Horses* and *The Crossing*, respectively, in *Cities of the Plain* the author comes to the conclusion that the myths are irreconcilable with the real, true west. To illustrate this, McCarthy has John Grady Cole follow the myth of the Western hero all the way to his death; Billy Parham's dream of owning a ranch at some point result in Parham becoming homeless.

I already mentioned Dante's *The Divine Comedy* above when discussing *The Crossing*. *The Divine Comedy*, rather famously, is filled to the brim with religious and biblical imagery. With *Cities of the Plain*, the very title of the novel is a biblical connotation. The phrase itself, "cities of the plain," is a reference to the biblical cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, destroyed by God for being too wicked. Like Sodom and Gomorrah, McCarthy's own cities of the plain, Alamogordo and Ciudad Juarez, are destroyed by the end of the novel. So are its protagonists. Yet, while Cole is killed in a duel, Parham survives long enough to become the staple of the *Trilogy*'s post-modernity. Becoming a homeless man whose last job was acting as an extra in a cowboy movie, Parham's journey ends with his predicament echoing Baudrillard's *Simulacra and Simulation*, whereupon the last, "true" cowboy becomes only an image of his former self, playing out what once he lived.

There is also a poetic element to *The Border Trilogy*'s unheroic ending, in that it gives a fitting end to the genre it explored throughout its whole run. In *All the Pretty Horses*, the myth of the west was presented through the journey of a true Western hero; in *The Crossing*, the genre was deconstructed and viewed through the eyes of an outsider and, in *Cities of the Plain*, the entire history of the West is reduced to a myth, a story to tell one's children to teach them to live "correctly." It is, however, no longer a reality. The cowboys are either dying or dead, and what once was a staple of American masculinity has been turned into a theme-park attraction.

[62] Erik Hage, *Cormac McCarthy: A Literary Companion* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2010), 62

5. A Summary of Cormac McCarthy's *No Country for Old Men*

No Country for Old Men is a novel by Cormac McCarthy, published in 2005. Set in the American South and Mexico in the 1980s, the novel follows the journey of three characters – Llewelyn Moss, Anton Chigurh, and Ed Tom Bell – as they chase after one-another and a case full of money.

In the first chapter of the novel, the reader is first introduced to Bell, an ageing sheriff of Terrell County, Texas. In a soliloquy – a recurrent motif throughout the novel – Bell reminisces about his life as a sheriff, thinking back to when he sent a depraved young man to his death. This experience weighs heavy on the sheriff's conscience. Following Bell's soliloquy, the reader is introduced to Anton Chigurh, a ruthless serial killer. Chigurh, who has been detained by a deputy, murders the deputy, stealing his car. He then leaves the deputy's office and drives away, before stopping a car on the interstate, killing its driver, and stealing his car.

The narrative then moves on to the Texan desert, where Llewelyn Moss – a Vietnam war veteran – is hunting antelope. Moss shoots at the animal, failing to kill it. Climbing down the ridge to look for it, Moss finds what he correctly assumes is the scene of a botched drug-deal instead. There is a man in a car who is dying at the scene, and he asks Moss for water, which Moss does not have. Scouting the area. Moss finds heroin scattered around and a black document case filled with money. Taking the case, Moss returns home to his wife, Carla Jean. The very same night, however, Moss returns to the scene of the botched drug-deal, hoping to help the man he left behind. He finds the man dead, and is soon chased off the scene and into a nearby river by a car on patrol – presumably belonging to the Mexican cartel – leaving his truck behind. Moss jumps into the river and loses the car.

In the second chapter, Bell is informed of the stolen police car by his deputy, Tolbert. Hidden in the car's cargo space is the corpse of the man whose car Chigurh stole. After investigating the car, Bell tells Tolbert to take it to Austin and then go to Sonora, where Chigurh's first murder took place. For Tolbert, the murder of the man in the cargo space is the work of a lunatic.

Meanwhile – having escaped his pursuer – Moss returns home to Carla Jean, asking her to go stay with her mother in Odessa.

At around the same time, Chigurh stops at a filling station. The gas clerk, who is intimidated by Chigurh, tells the killer he is closing the shop. Angered, Chigurh belittles

the clerk. He then takes out a coin and flips it, asking the clerk to call it. The clerk does so, guessing correctly and prompting Chigurh to leave. He drives and, later, meets with two men, who escort Chigurh to the scene of the drug-deal. There, Chigurh executes the men, before setting fire to Moss' truck.

In the third chapter, Moss drives his wife to the airport. Bell, who – by now – is at home, receives a phone-call telling him of a fire. He drives off and, after arriving at the scene, finds Moss' truck burn, and a pile of dead bodies. Searching the scene, Bell finds the heroin. He asks for the money and, then, asks for Moss. Receiving a phone-call from deputy Tolbert, Bell is informed that the man found in the police car's cargo space had been identified. Yet, while able to identify the man, no one is able identify the weapon that he had been killed with.

Meanwhile, Chigurh is shown entering Moss and Carla Jean's trailer. Realizing that the trailer is empty, Chigurh scouts the place, going through the couple's mail, finding a phone bill. He then goes to the trailer park office, where he tries to intimidate the woman working the counter, asking her to tell him where Moss and Carla Jean are. The woman refuses. Chigurh, who respect her for having a code of her own, lets the woman live and leaves. From a café. Chigurh then calls to Odessa and asks about Moss, who the woman on the phone – Carla Jean's mother – tells him is not there.

Instead, Moss is already in Del Rio, which is a city close to the Mexican border. In Del Rio, Moss rents a motel room and hides the case containing the money in an airduct. From Del Rio, Moss then goes to Mexico, where he buys bandages and has dinner. Returning to the motel, Moss notices a gap in the curtains on the window of his motel room and decides to spend the night in a different motel.

In the fourth chapter, Bell, too, investigates Moss and Carla Jean's trailer, realizing they left the town. Bell also correctly assumes that it is Moss who has the money, and that he knows what kind of people are looking for him. Meanwhile in Del Rio, Moss returns to the motel room that he rented originally. At the reception, Moss rents another room that is right next to his original one. There, he undoes the airduct cover, creates a makeshift pole and fishes out the money case. Chigurh, who, in the very moment, pulls into the motel parking lot, appears on the scene. He walks past the rooms and kicks in the door on one of them, finding inside two Mexican men. Chigurh shoots them and, while he does so, Moss escapes with the money. Chigurh then walks away.

On the run, Moss stops at another motel, this time in Eagle Pass. Wondering how it was possible for Chigurh to find him, Moss goes through the money case and

finds a transmitter, an electrical device allowing Chigurh to track him. Expecting Chigurh to appear sooner or later, Moss takes out the transmitter and goes to the motel receptionist, offering him a hundred dollars to call Moss's room if anyone checks in. He then goes back to his room and falls asleep. After a couple of hours, Moss wakes up, realizing the receptionist never called his room. He takes his shotgun and, holding it, hides under the bed. Soon, Chigurh walks in. Moss waits. He then tells Chigurh that he has a gun pointing at him, climbs out from under the bed, presses the barrel against Chigurh's back and questions him. Chigurh does not answer, so Moss picks up the money case and begins to run. Before he can hide, however, Chigurh shoots and wounds him. Moss shoots back, hitting Chigurh in the leg. As he tries to cross the street and get to safety, a car cut Moss off driven by several Mexican men. Armed with machine guns, the men shoot at both Chigurh and Moss. However, Moss is able to get to safety. Buying a coat from a passer-by, Moss crosses the bridge to Mexico, throwing the money case over the railing. He then asks an old man to help him get to a hospital.

Also, while the confrontation between Moss and Chigurh is taking place, Bell is able to identify the weapon that Chigurh used to kill the innocent man on the interstate. Bell finds that the weapon is a bolt gun, used at a slaughterhouse to kill cattle.

In the fifth chapter, Bell travels to Odessa to talk to Carla Jean, hoping to get some information concerning Moss. Bell tries to tell Carla Jean that Moss is on the run from some very powerful people who want to hurt him, and who may even decide to come and hurt her. Carla Jean, however, only tells Bell that Moss can take care of himself, thereby ending the conversation. Bell leaves. He then goes to Eagle Pass to investigate the shootout that took place there the night before. Entering the crime scene, Bell can already tell that Moss and Chigurh were involved.

Also in the fifth chapter, the reader is introduced to another character, the hitman, Wells. Wells is hired by the man for whom the Mexican men Chigurh killed were working and he urges Wells to find and kill Chigurh. Wells accepts and soon heads to Eagle Pass where, like Bell, he investigates the crime scene. He then enters the motel and searches through Moss' room, before heading out to Mexico. Waking up in a Mexican hospital, Moss finds Wells sitting next to him. Wells tries to tell Moss that he cannot defeat Chigurh alone and makes him the offer of killing Chigurh for him, if only Moss can bring him the money. Yet, Moss declines, believing he can handle Chigurh alone.

In the sixth chapter, Chigurh is shown breaking into a veterinary clinic, in order to find bandages and medication and treat his wounded leg. To create a distraction, Chigurh stages a car explosion, then enters the clinic. Meanwhile, Wells follows the blood trail left by Moss, trying find the money he thew over the railing. With his leg taken care of, Chigurh, following the transmitter's signal, returns to the Eagle Motel, where Wells is now staying. When Wells enters the motel, Chigurh is waiting for him in the lobby. The two go to Wells' room where Wells starts to bargain for his life. However, Chigurh dismisses Wells' pleas and tells him, instead, of a rude man he killed who said something to him in a café. He also tells Wells that, when he was detained by the deputy, he allowed himself to be captured, to see if he could "extricate [himself] by an act of will."[63] Wells calls him crazy. Then, Chigurh shoots him. Proceeding to search Wells' car, Chigurh finds a phone.

In the meantime, Moss calls Carla Jean. He does not tell her he is in a hospital and asks her, instead, to go to a motel, which she does not want to. Moss then calls Wells to negotiate the deal, only for his call to be answered by Chigurh. As they talk, Chigurh tells Moss that the only way to save Carla Jean is to bring him the money. Threatening Chigurh, Moss leaves the hospital and heads back to Texas. As he does so, Bell receives another phone call, this time from the sheriff of Eagle Pass, who informs him of another shooting. Following Bell's arriving to Eagle Pass, the two investigate the shooting and find Wells' body, along with the transmitter.

In the beginning of the seventh chapter, Chigurh tracks down the man who hired Wells and kills him. Afterwards, he travels to Odessa. Upon entering the house of Carla Jean's mother and finding it empty, Chigurh searches through it. He looks through the mail and the cabinets, finding Carla Jean's photographs. He keeps them and leaves. Meanwhile, Moss retrieves the money he hid and, with the case in hand, goes to San Antonio. In San Antonio, Moss tries to prepare for his confrontation with Chigurh by buying new weapons and a new truck, with which he then drives away. Driving, Moss spots a female hitchhiker and picks her up, while Carla Jean contacts Bell on the phone. She offers to tell him about the last place Moss called her from, on the condition that, when she does, Bell will leave Moss alone and not come after him, to which Bell agrees. As they talk, the narrative shifts to two men in a trailer, listening in on their conversation with headphones.

[63] Cormac McCarthy, *No Country for Old Men* (London: Pan Macmillan, 2011), 175.

In the eight chapter, the hitchhiker and Moss stop for dinner. They converse together and joke about being outlaws. Afterwards, they leave, stopping at a motel in Van Horn. There, Moss rents two rooms, and the two of them then sit outside and drink beer. When the hitchhiker makes an implicit, sexual offer to Moss, he declines.

Looking for Moss, Bell drives to Van Horn the following day. In front of the Van Horn motel, Bell spots a burning car in the parking lot and the parking lot surrounded by the police. When asking the Van Horn sheriff about what happened, he tells Bell that there was a shootout, and that a woman was killed, and two men were injured. When Bell comes to the hospital, he is informed that one of the men had died and goes to identify him, and finds that it is Moss.

Having waited for the police to leave the Van Horn motel parking lot, Chigurh enters Moss' room, finding the money hidden in the room's airduct. Taking the money, he leaves the motel room. However, before he is able to start his car, Chigurh sees Bell arrive at the scene. Also searching through the motel room, Bell finds the open airduct and realizes that Chigurh was there. When, the next day, Bell goes to Carla Jean to inform her of Moss' passing, she faints.

In the ninth chapter, Chigurh returns the money he got from Moss to a businessman before convincing the man to work with him in the future. He then leaves. After attending he mother's funeral, Carla Jean returns home where she finds Chigurh who, as he tells her, intends to kill her as means of upholding his promise to Moss. They have a conversation about all that has transpired and about Chigurh, and why he does the things he does. He takes out the coin again and has Carla Jean call it. She does and she looses, and Chigurh shoots her. After shooting Carla Jean, Chigurh leaves the house and drives away, only to be hit by a car at an intersection. Chigurh is injured and ask two boys passing by for their clothes as means of mending his injuries. He pays them.

The final chapters of the novel focus on Bell and his thinking about the Chigurh case. As bell believes that he is not an equal to someone like Chigurh, he decides to quit his job as the sheriff and settle for a tranquil existence with his wife.

6. Analysis of Cormac McCarthy's *No Country for Old Men*, Focused on the Notion of Archetype and Genre

Interestingly enough, Cormac McCarthy's *No Country for Old Men* follows in the footsteps of *Cities of the Plain*, in that it does not only feature one, nor two, but three

protagonists, all sharing the same story. The first of these that the readers become familiar with is the sheriff of Terrell County, Texas, Ed Tom Bell. Furthermore, the first thing that the readers learn of Ed Tom Bell is that he has a conscience, as in the novel's opening soliloquy, Bell reminisces about a young man he killed by sending him "to the gas chamber."[64] This "killing," which was the first and, perhaps, the *last* in Bell's life, is of tremendous weight on the sheriff's conscience. He is not proud of testifying against the young man and cannot understand the motive behind the crime that the young man committed. Here, it is shown that Bell – a man who, once, was tremendously in tune with the world and people around him – has started to lose his touch.

Being the county sheriff, Bell is the moral backbone of the community he serves. A textbook example of the incorruptible lawman archetype, Bell's character is up there with the likes of the Western's Wyatt Earp and Batman's James Gordon. He is also – at first glance, at least – the most straightforward candidate for the novel's hero, which I will discuss in more detail later.

Following Bell's introduction, the readers are introduced to the character of Anton Chigurh. In contrast to Bell's introduction – which was made by revealing the character's inner monologue and his personal struggles – Chigurh's introduction is made through action alone. He is first seen in custody, having been pulled over by a deputy and being held at the police station. Unlike Bell, Chigurh does not talk to himself. There is no inner monologue, no musing on morality. Instead, the only speech made is that of the deputy, describing Chigurh's peculiar weapon to someone on the phone. As the deputy does so, Chigurh frees himself, sneaks behind the deputy and begins to strangle him. After splitting the deputy's jugular open and watching him bleed to death, Chigurh washes his hands, reclaims his weapon, leaves the deputy's office and, stealing a police cruiser, heads for the interstate. There, Chigurh pulls another car over to the side of the road, asks the man driving it to step out of the car and, using the peculiar weapon of his, shoots the man in the head. He then steals the man's car and rides off, unbothered by any of the murders he committed.

Here, it is made clear by McCarthy that Chigurh is a character unbothered by collateral damage. While his first murder – that of the deputy – could be excused, by some, as a necessary killing, i.e., one that allowed Chigurh to escape and therefore being a murder for survival, his second murder is anything but. For, while with killing

[64] McCarthy, *No Country*, 3.

the deputy it could be argued that Chigurh was put in a morally ambiguous situation of killing or being killed, his second killing is an inexcusable as it is whimsical. He is revealed as a ruthless murderer who will go out of his way to end another's life, given that – if it was all that necessary for Chigurh to find another car different than the stolen police cruiser – he could just as easily have stolen a car that was parked somewhere and not being driven. Instead, he chooses to murder an innocent man, revealing himself to be the villain of the novel. The only thing that is unclear now, and one that I will also be focusing on in more detail later on, is exactly *what* kind of a villain Chigurh is.

The novel's third protagonist, Llewelyn Moss, is simultaneously the novel's most prominent character from beginning and throughout, and one that is given the most exposition. It is easy to say that Moss is *No Country for Old Men*'s main protagonist. He is also the least straightforward one, with his archetypal allegiance being the hardest to pin down. In the opening chapter, Moss is found in the desert, an environment that he is very familiar with; he is hunting for antelopes:

> Moss sat with the heels of his boots dug into the volcanic gravel of the ridge and glassed the desert below him with a pair of twelve power german binoculars. His hat pushed back on his head. Elbows propped on his knees. The rifle strapped over his shoulder with a harness-leather sling was a heavybarreled .270 on a '98 Mauser action with a laminated stock of maple and walnut. It carried a Unertl telescopic sight of the same power as the binoculars. The antelope were a little under a mile away. The sun was up less than an hour and the shadow of the ridge and the datilla and the rocks fell far out across the floodplain below him. Somewhere out there was the shadow of Moss himself. He lowered the binoculars and sat studying the land. Far to the south the raw mountains of Mexico. The breaks of the river. To the west the baked terracotta terrain of the running borderlands. He spat dryly and wiped his mouth on the shoulder of his cotton workshirt. […] The rifle had a Canjar trigger set to nine ounces and he pulled the rifle and the boot toward him with great care and sighted again and jacked the crosshairs slightly up the back of the animal standing most broadly to him. He knew the exact drop of the bullet in hundred yard increments. It was the distance that was uncertain. He laid his finger in the curve of the trigger. The boar's tooth he wore on a gold chain spooled onto the rocks inside his elbow.[65]

Looking at this excerpt one is able to tell that, in being outside, all-alone with the desert, Moss is "in his natural habitat," one that he can easily navigate. He is, admittedly, also a

[65] McCarthy, *No Country*, 8-9.

skilled marksman, as the way in which his shooting routine is described is way too elaborate and detailed, especially for someone who the reader might be meant to take for a novice. However, just as important as the description of Moss, is the description of the landscape itself. "[T]he ridge and the datilla," "the floodplain," and "the baked terracotta terrain of the running borderlands," they all serve the purpose of setting the novel both in the American South and the Western genre, as well as foreshadowing the places to follow.

After taking a shot and wounding an antelope, Moss descends the ridge in order to investigate. Yet, while using his binoculars to look for the animal, Moss spots what, to him, looks like "men lying on the ground."[66] Going farther to investigate, Moss finds – at the scene of a drug-deal – "a heavy leather document case,"[67] all filled with money. And, after waiting a while to make sure he is alone, Moss is shown unceremoniously taking the money and hurrying home.

Here, it is appropriate to stop and ask the important question, i.e., "Is Llewelyn Moss the hero of the story?" There is, after all, another character with whom Moss could enter into the "hero-off," so-to-speak, and that would be Ed Tom Bell. In fact, if looked at more closely, both Moss and Bell can be said to possess heroic characteristics, with the presence of a moral compass being, arguably, the main one. Nevertheless, while they both can be said to have a moral compass and being knowledgeable of it, they both respond to it in a different way. Bell, for example, in the Campbellian sense, is a character who has all the workings of a hero – a strong moral compass, an affinity with God, and a sense of purpose, a sense of direction. Yet, unlike a hero, in his very first monologue, Bell rejects the hero's journey, or, at least, its completion:

> Somewhere out there is a true and living prophet of destruction and I dont want to confront him. I know he's real. I have seen his work. I walked in front of those eyes once. I wont do it again. I wont push my chips forward and stand up and go out to meet him. *It aint just bein older. I wish that it was*. I cant say that it's even what you are willin to do. Because I always knew that you had to be willin to die to even do this job. That was always true. Not to sound glorious about it or nothin but you do. If you aint they'll know it. They'll see it in a heartbeat. *I think it is more like what you are*

[66] McCarthy, *No Country*, 11.
[67] McCarthy, *No Country*, 17

willin to become. And I think a man would have to put his soul at hazard. And I wont do that. I think now that maybe I never would.[68]

Here, we can see that Bell is an older man reminiscing about his life. However, to speak in the Campbellian terms, Bell is not simply reminiscing about his life, but about his taking the hero's journey, or perhaps his failure to finish it. Bell definitely, when he was younger, embarked on the journey. His becoming a sheriff is a testament to this for, as far as Campbell's writing is concerned, the occupation of a sheriff can be considered a modern version of the knight. As a sheriff, Bell would be obliged to save innocent people from the forces of evil, and to guide the community that he serves. However, a part of the hero's journey, once it is finished, is not merely looking after a particular community, but to teach them the things that the hero has learned on their journey and help the community overcome itself, help it evolve. In order to do this, the hero must finish their journey and return back to the community bearing "the ultimate boon," which is something that Bell was unable to do, as he clearly never confronted the villain. This is palpable from Bell saying, in the beginning of the excerpt that I show here, that he does not want to confront the villain. So then, what is Bell? The fact that he is the sheriff would imply that he is indeed the typical, Campbellian hero, but his refusal of confronting the villain implies the opposite, that he is not. What seems most probable is to call Bell a failed hero, one who did embark on the hero's journey but never finished it, and returned to the ordinary world without the boon, simply sustaining the status quo.

Moss is even more difficult to categorize. His journey is very much followed throughout the novel, only it is not the only journey that Moss has ever undertook and it is not a classical journey in the slightest – as we learn later in the novel, Moss is a Vietnam veteran. The first time that the reader meets Moss is, as I already mentioned above, hunting for antelopes. More importantly, this is Moss' "happy place," the ordinary world which, over the course of the novel, he leaves – that is clearly a Campbellian element. But Moss' behaviour throughout this segment/chapter is not heroic. It is not only that he is hunting, that could still be a trait that does not determine the heroicness of the character, as in many of the American novels, *Leatherstocking* novels especially, Natty Bumppo is also a skilled hunter, being a frontiersman.

[68] McCarthy, *No Country*, 4, italics mine

Furthermore, if we consider what I wrote about the American hero, and the western hero, more importantly, it is clear that the western genre has a penchant for outlaws as heroes, or at least former outlaws becoming the good Samaritans and embracing a more moral, less lawless existence.

Moss, however, is strangely "on the fence" in the opening chapter. When he arrives on the scene of the botched drug-deal, he finds a man still alive who is asking him for water, but Moss does not help him. Not only does he not have water, but he does not try to get him to a hospital. Instead, he scans the scene until he finds the case and then goes home. He does, however, help the man close the door on the car that he is in, to shelter him from wolves. When he finds the case with the money, Moss' first though is whether he should take the money or not. He is not thinking about not taking the money out of a moral reason, however. Rather, Moss understands that the money was brought to the scene for a reason, and that there are at least two groups of people who will be looking for it – the people who supplied the money to buy the drugs, and the people who supplied the drugs to get the money – and is thinking about whether taking it will be too much for him to handle.

The first heroic moment of Moss' journey in *No Country for Old Men* comes at the point whether Moss returns to the scene of the drug-deal after taking the money, all in order to help the Mexican man he left in the car. And while it is never made quite clear as to whether Moss understands this, it is at this moment that his life is ruined, as it is here that he is discovered by his adversaries, be it the cartel or the businessman. Now, it could be argued that, given what the reader learns later on – that the money case contains a transmitter that would, sooner or later, lead the bad guys to Moss – that Moss was in danger from the moment he picked up the case. I disagree. Were Moss to stay at home and calm himself down, there is a fair to middling chance that he would go through the case and find the transmitter. And while it is true that, after waking up that night, Moss does go through the case once without finding the transmitter, given his meticulous nature I believe it plausible that he would do so again. As such, this act of kindness on Moss' part can easily be viewed as altruistic, given that he sacrifices his own well-being – and the well-being of his wife – in order to help another human being. It is the first heroic moment of Moss' journey in the novel and one of the few truly heroic moments he has, as his later actions more resemble those of an antihero than a hero.

Thus, given what is known about both Moss and Bell from the opening chapter, one can go back and ask, once again, "Who is the hero of the novel?" Nevertheless, in the opening chapter, the contest still ends in a stalemate. One the one hand there is Bell, and old character already fulfilling his heroic duties by working as a sheriff of the county, protecting the innocent. On the other hand there is Moss, a character with a dubious past who, although unconventionally, is just about to embark on his heroic journey and accomplishes his first heroic feat, i.e., putting the life of another before his own. However, while Bell does occupy a heroic position, he makes it quite clear through his soliloquy that he is unwilling to fully devote himself to it. He is a character unwilling to undergo the necessary transformation of the Campbellian hero that only comes about through their confronting the villain and, more importantly, transcending the hero's old self. And while Moss *does* return to the scene of the drug-deal with an honourable purpose in mind, his general motivation throughout the whole novel is anything but honourable. He takes the money and competes over it with Chigurh not because of the greater good, or because it is the right thing to do in the situation, but because of his own, personal reasons. Hence, while Moss does fulfil the requirements for being a Western hero on the *surface* – he is an excellent marksman, an excellent scout and tactician – his inner world is more characteristic of the antihero.

Following his escape from the deputy's office, Chigurh drives on the interstate in a car stolen from a man that he has killed. In Chigurh's demeanour, there is no sign of anything, let alone remorse; he is not concerned with the fate of those around him and follows his goal, mercilessly. Driving down the interstate, Chigurh stops at "the filling station at Sheffield."[69] It is at this point that the reader gets their first *true* introduction to Chigurh's character, i.e., the first introduction to Chigurh's twisted moral code, nearly incomprehensible to the characters around him:

> […] You all gettin any rain up your way? the proprietor said.
>
> Which way would that be?
>
> I seen you was from Dallas.
>
> Chigurh picked his change up off the counter. And what business is it of yours where I'm from, friendo?
>
> I didnt mean nothin by it.
>
> You didnt mean nothing by it.

[69] McCarthy, *No Country*, 52.

> I was just passin the time of day.
>
> I guess that passes for manners in your cracker view of things.
>
> Well sir, I apologized. If you dont want to accept my apology I dont know what else I can do for you. […] Chigurh unfolded a dollar onto the counter. The man rang it up and stacked the change before him the way a dealer places chips. Chigurh hadnt taken his eyes from him. The man looked away. He coughed. Chigurh opened the plastic package of cashews with his teeth and doled a third part of them into his palm and stood eating.
>
> Will there be somethin else? the man said.
>
> I dont know. Will there?
>
> Is there somethin wrong?
>
> With what?
>
> With anything.
>
> Is that what you're asking me? Is there something wrong with anything? […][70]

Chigurh's first piece of dialogue in the novel is notable for several different reasons, the first being it is extremely well-written. In a very short amount of space, McCarthy manages to illustrate Chigurh's character in excruciating detail, achieving most of it through what is implied – the gas clerk, while it is never explicitly stated, is terrified of Chigurh, meaning that, when seen in person, Chigurh is an incredibly imposing individual. The second reason why this piece of dialogue is notable, however, is Chigurh's obvious contempt for the gas clerk. Needless to say, the justification for Chigurh's contempt is deeper than it may seem at first glance.

The key line here is that which Chigurh uses to conclude his and the clerk's first exchange, i.e., "I guess that passes for manners in your cracker view of things." Aside from belittling the clerk, his words give the reader an important insight into Chigurh's position in the world of *No Country for Old Men*. In fact, just like Billy Parham in the world of *The Crossing*, Chigurh is an outsider in the world of *No Country*. His arrival in Texas is just as enigmatic as everything else about the character – with no statement of purpose, no prior mention of a serial on the prowl, Chigurh simply appears. And, as it is revealed near the end of the novel, it is not even clear who hired him. At one moment, he is just there. However, for Chigurh, the world that he finds himself is strangely alien. And while it is not that he does not comprehend the world around him – Chigurh, as

[70] McCarthy, *No Country*, 52-53.

McCarthy shows time and again, is perfectly capable of navigating the Western landscape of south-west Texas and Mexico – he does not find the world logical.

For Chigurh, the conversation that he has with the gas clerk is less of a conversation and more a series of questions that Chigurh asks, which the gas clerk tries to answer with a series of non-sequiturs. Chigurh engages with the gas clerk and intimidates him, "putting him on the spot," to use a colloquial expression. For Chigurh, there is no functional purpose to the clerk's answers, which is why he belittles him. He does not have the capacity for the Western talk, for people speaking in regional accents and using rhetorical questions just to make conversation. He does, however, take offence at the clerk pointing out that the car that Chigurh rode in on bears a Dallas license plate, as that piece of information does ring functional to Chigurh – it could, after all, be used to identify him. Once the clerk points out that the car is registered in Dallas, Chigurh's demeanour changes. He officially enters into a confrontation with the clerk upon hearing those words, with the clerk oblivious to what is happening. This can be seen in the passive aggressiveness of Chigurh's following lines of dialogue, namely when he replies to the clerk's question "Will there be somethin else?" with "I dont know. Will there?"

Yet, in this confrontation, an important part of Chigurh's character is revealed suggesting – or, perhaps even *stating* – that, despite Chigurh's lack of remorse for killing the deputy, he is not a man entirely without a code. Quite the opposite, in fact. Once engaged in the confrontation with the clerk, Chigurh begins to interview him, which I believe Chigurh does in order for him to determine whether the man is deserving of death:

> […] What time do you close?
>
> Now. We close now.
>
> Now is not a time. What time do you close.
>
> Generally around dark. At dark.
>
> Chigurh stood slowly chewing. You dont know what you're talking about, do you?
>
> Sir?
>
> I said you dont know what you're talking about do you.
>
> I'm talkin about closin. That's what I'm talkin about.
>
> What time do you go to bed.
>
> Sir?
>
> You're a bit deaf, arent you? I said what time do you go to bed.

Well. I'd say around nine-thirty. Somewhere around nine-thirty.

Chigurh poured more cashews into his palm. I could come back then, he said.

We'll be closed then.

That's all right.

Well why would you be comin back? We'll be closed.

You said that.

Well we will.

You live in that house behind the store?

Yes I do.

You've lived here all your life?

The proprietor took a while to answer. This was my wife's father's place, he said. Originally.

You married into it.

We lived in Temple Texas for many years. Raised a family there. In Temple. We come out here about four years ago.

You married into it.[71]

Chigurh identifies the gas clerk as a weak man, a man who – from Chigurh's point of view – is below him. Recognizing that the man is scared of him, Chigurh openly treats the clerk as his prey, not allowing him to, so-to-speak, escape, and prolonging the conversation to keep him incapacitated. Upon learning that the business in not the clerk's own but that he married into it, the clerk is absolved of all humanity in Chigurh's eyes. At that point, he is reduced to nothing but cattle.

This relationship of Chigurh and his victims being the same as that of the butcher and their cattle is not coincidental – in fact, it is a theme running throughout the entirety of *No Country for Old Men*. It is also an aspect of Chigurh's character that sets him apart from the other characters in the novel, and an aspect that the other characters – Moss and Bell included – are painfully aware of: Anton Chigurh's superiority. Bell is the first character to notice this superiority, and also the first to identify Chigurh's peculiar weapon at a latter point in the novel. For now, however, suffice it to say that Chigurh views himself as above the other characters, and let us move on.

After escaping the patrol that chased him away from the scene of the drug deal, Moss returns home. At this point, his heroic journey is already, so-to-speak, in full swing, as his first action to take after returning home is to drive Carla Jean away to the airport. Needless to say, Moss driving his wife away is not an aspect of the Campbellian

[71] McCarthy, *No Country*, 53-55.

journey, nor is it generally an aspect of the journey of the Western hero. It is, nevertheless, a heroic feat, as in understanding the gravity of the situation that he has gotten himself into, Moss' first instinct is to get his innocent wife to safety. Where the Western comes into play is in Moss' – much like Bell's – assuming the role of the protector, where he stations himself firmly between the worlds of lawlessness and innocence. Yet, unlike Bell's, Moss' motivation is, again, more antiheroic than heroic. In fact, while Bell is looking for Moss and the money mainly because it is the right thing to do, Moss is doing so out of his own, personal reasons, and for his personal gain. The general models that the characters follow also supports this, in that it is Moss who, throughout the majority of the novel, is on the run, and that it is Bell who does the chasing.

Due to this, it would make a lot of sense to categorize Moss as the archetypal outlaw, one who – throughout his arc – is on the run from the law and, in the end, is prepared to face either the good sheriff or the evil villain in a standoff. Notice, however, that I categorize the villain and the outlaw as two different entities. The reason for this is the same as I already outlined above in the chapter on Westerns, in that a character's lawlessness – or, in this case, *outlawness* – does not necessarily imply their villainy. And Moss is, by no means, a villain. In fact, were it not for his selfish motivation and the fact that, by embarking on his journey, he inadvertently puts the ones closest to him in danger, Moss would be a prime candidate for the novel's hero. All in all, Moss does, indeed, appear to be the best candidate for the role of the antiheroic outlaw in the novel. More-so, it is a role that Moss, himself, seems to be aware of fulfilling:

> […] He looked at her. After a while he said: It's not about knowin where you are. It's about thinkin you got there without takin anything with you. Your notions about startin over. Or anybody's. You dont start over. That's what it's about. Ever step you take is forever. You cant make it go away. None of it. You understand what I'm sayin?
>
> I think so.
>
> I know you dont but let me try it one more time. You think when you wake up in the mornin yesterday dont count. But yesterday is all that does count. What else is there? Your life is made out of the days it's made out of. Nothin else. You might think you could run away and change your name and I dont know what all. Start over. And then one mornin you wake up and look at the ceilin and guess who's layin there?
>
> She nodded.
>
> You understand what I'm sayin?
>
> I understand that. I been there.

> Yeah, I know you have.
> *So are you sorry you become a outlaw?*
> *Sorry I didnt start sooner.* […][72]

I would argue that Moss' realization here is not that, once he took the money, he suddenly and irreversibly became an outlaw, but that he has always been an outlaw and that his life – or, at least, a part of it – has always been a lie. Taking the money, more than anything else, only helped Moss fully solidify this. Furthermore, Moss' realization that "ever[y] step [he] take[s] is forever" is more than just the character's consideration of his own, impending demise; it is, I think, also a meta-fictional comment on the nature of Moss' journey as such. In fact, it is my belief that, while Moss may try to convince himself that he *could* become an upstanding citizen – i.e., a dependable husband, or a family-man who is true his word – he *knows* that he never will, as it simply is not a part of his character. The terrible truth that Moss is realizing here, is that he was always going to go to the desert, search through the scene and pick up the money, and that he could not change it. The archetypicality of his journey is suddenly made clear to him.

Bell and Chigurh also come to this realization, albeit much less dramatically than Moss. Both Bell and Chigurh realize their archetypicality off-screen, so-to-speak, and in their own way, they each refer to it as some form of a divine intervention. As for Bell, his musings on the nature of his character take place exclusively during his soliloquies, during which he reminisces about his life prior to his encounter with Chigurh. His becoming the sheriff or Terrell County was not so much an act of will as it was an act of succession, given that both Bell' father and grandfather have worked as sheriffs at some point in time. It is shown that Bell, much like Moss, lived most his of life without any agency: his becoming a sheriff, his fulfilling the job as was expected of him, they all were decisions that Bell had no say in; his entirety of Bell's journey was, in fact, determined by Bell's archetype. Bell's first act of agency – and, in fact, the *last* act of agency he ever commits – comes when he refuses to confront Chigurh, an act that costs Bell both his job as the sheriff and his heroicness. For, after refusing to confront the villain, Bell can no longer fulfil the heroic role of the sheriff, as in refusing to confront Chigurh he also refuses completing the journey.

And yet, it is at this moment of unheroicness – reminiscent, in part, of Billy Parham's – that Bell former heroicness shines all the more brightly, as it is Bell'

[72] McCarthy, *No Country*, 227-228, italics mine.

refusing to confront Chigurh that results in Chigurh's getting away. And, considering the outline of the hero's journey I provided above, it should be clear that the role to confront and, ultimately, destroy the villain is the hero's alone, and that this is equally true for both the Campbellian and the Western hero. Hence, seeing how Bell's giving up his search for Chigurh allows Chigurh to run free, it is possible to add another argument for Bell's essential heroicness to my analysis. Since, if it were not for Bell's refusal of the hero's confrontation with the villain, the villain may have been captured. Nevertheless, one can never be so sure with Chigurh.

Now, Chigurh's case is different than Bell's. While both Chigurh and Bell come to the understanding that their role in the story has been predetermined, Bell only does so after the novel's main story is finished, while Chigurh does so prior to it even beginning. As recounted by Chigurh in a story he tells Wells, Chigurh's own instance of realization came about when he murdered a man in front of a café for being rude to him. It was at this point, I believe, that Chigurh was transformed from a violent, although still a fairly regular Western villain into a cold-blooded monster. For, in so far as Chigurh's account of the story can be trusted – which, I believe, it can, as Chigurh is a rather reliable character in *No Country for Old Men* – one may assume that, before the killing took place, Chigurh was, indeed, a Western villain, especially given the imagery that is used throughout the flashback, and the way that the story in the flashback develops:

> […] When I went down on the border I stopped in a cafe in this town and there were some men in there drinking beer and one of them kept looking back at me. I didnt pay any attention to him. I ordered my dinner and ate. But when I walked up to the counter to pay the check I had to go past them and they were all grinning and he said something that was hard to ignore. Do you know what I did? […] I ignored him. I paid my bill and I had started to push through the door when he said the same thing again. I turned and looked at him. I was just standing there picking my teeth with a toothpick and I gave him a little gesture with my head. For him to come outside. If he would like to. And then I went out. And I waited in the parking lot. And he and his friends came out and I killed him in the parking lot and then I got into my car.

The imagery used here – the café and the rude men – and the way that the story is shown to develop, both imply to me the hackneyed motif of the main street shootout that is popular with Western. Albeit generally reserved for the hero, the motif or a

stranger entering a saloon, not being liked and asked to come outside to settle the matter is about as old as the genre itself. Yet, it is in *No Country for Old Men* that one can see this motif reworked. In traditional Western, there is often a reasonable motivation behind such conflict in the main street on the part of the hero – they either enter a town in which the law is corrupt, or one that is ruled over by a villain. Then, by confronting the corrupt law or the villain's posse in the main street, the hero sends a clear message to the people of the town to not be afraid. With Chigurh, however, it is the opposite. The message that Chigurh sends to the people by killing the rude man in front of the café, is that they have a very good reason to be afraid, and the reason is Chigurh.

Here, it could be argued that the reason for this is Chigurh's being a villain, which may just as well be true. However, if one were to consider, for a moment, the cinematic Wester, *Unforgiven*,[73] an opposing argument could be made just as easily that, while it is the villain's role to incite fear in the people, in a traditional Western it is unbecoming of them to kill on first sight. It is in this way, I believe, that the motif of the main street shootout is reworked by McCarthy in *No Country for Old Men*. For, while to motive for it may be the same, the ultimate goal of Chigurh's is not to spark hope, nor to incite fear – although he most certainly does. In fact, I believe that the only reason Chigurh has for killing the man is to break free, not of the man but of his own, archetypal programming. He does so for superiority alone, and thus is transfigured into a different kind of villain, for which the murder of the deputy is to serve as a proof:

> […] An hour later I was pulled over by a sheriff's deputy outside of Sonora Texas and I let him take me into town in handcuffs. I'm not sure why I did this but I think I wanted to see if I could extricate myself by an act of will. Because I believe that one can. That such a thing is possible. But it was a foolish thing to do. A vain thing to do. Do you understand?
>
> Do I understand?
>
> Yes.
>
> Do you have any notion of how goddamned crazy you are?
>
> The nature of you.
>
> Chigurh leaned back. He studied Wells. Tell me something, he said.

[73] In *Unforgiven*, a revisionist Western directed by Clint Eastwood, English Bob, a character played by Richard Harris, is spotted arriving in town by the town's corrupt sheriff, Little Bill Daggett, played by Gene Hackman. English Bob, a hitman hoping to cash in on a bounty left by a prostitute whose face was mutilated by a drunken client, is beaten and humiliated by Little Bill Daggett, who, as the audience later find out, does not approve of hitmen entering his town. Yet, instead than being killed, English Bob is jailed by Little Bill, as his own, personal prize.

What.

If the rule you followed led you to this of what use was the rule?[74]

There is a meta-physical connection between Bell and Chigurh, as only Bell and Chigurh are able to realize their own archetypicality and are able to overcome it. Yet, while Bell does so by refusing his journey, Chigurh does so by refusing his archetype, as well as his genre. And, given his belief of every step taken being forever, Moss is excluded from this connection, as he is unable to handle this realization as Chigurh, or Bell. While he is capable of recognizing that his life is, truly, archetypal, Moss is not able to break free of this archetypicality and, in the end, is undone by it. However, more interesting than the plight of Moss is the plight of Chigurh, who – unlike any other character in the novel – is the only one to truly stand out, specifically because he does not belong there. I already mentioned above that Chigurh's transformation came at the cost of his original genre, i.e., the Western. What I did not yet mention and what I certainly should, is what genre *does* Chigurh transition into.

As far as Chigurh's character is concerned, he definitely *is* a ruthless serial killer, rightfully at home within the realm of Genre Fiction, itself the home to many a killer, many a murderer and many a rapist, all tucked away in their respective genres, be it the Thriller, the Horror, or the Detective Novel. Now, as I already pointed out in the section above where I compare the Thriller to the Detective Novel, the three are certainly similar to one-another, as they all seem to tackle similar subject matter. The difference generally made between the three – the Thriller, the Horror, and the Detective Novel – is that while their subject matter may be similar, they each approach it from a different direction. Take, for example, the Detective Novel. Similar to the Thriller and Horror, the Detective Novel does not shy away from portraying death, in some shape or form – as a murder or a killing, an accidental death, etc. Yet, unlike the Horror or the Thriller, the Detective Novel is, above all else, concerned with the *motive* behind the murder, not with the murder itself – that is, if it is concerned with murder at all, which also may or may not be the case. The Thriller, then – if, too, even concerned with murder or death in the first place – is concerned, more, with its consequence. Such is the case with Bret Easton Ellis' *American Psycho*, in which death, more than

[74] McCarthy, *No Country*, 174-175, italics mine.

anything else, is treated like an accessory, dragging the novel's titular *American Psycho*-path, Patrick Bateman, ever-so-deeper into maddening despair.

The Horror's primary function, on the other hand, is to horrify. This claim of mine is substantiated by what Jess Nevins, the author of *Horror Fiction in the 20th Century*, says of it, namely that "[t]o qualify as horror, the commonly accepted view goes, all that a text must contain is the ability to create an effect in its reader: the feeling of dread, fear, horror, or terror."[75] Hence, while the Detective Novel approaches murder, death, and the narrative surrounding them, as puzzles created for the reader to solve, and the Thriller uses them to thrill and to shock, the death-centred Horror approaches murder and death – if it does so at all – as the agents of fear. In order to achieve this, murder is often committed in an obscure and incomprehensible way – here speaking, of course, of traditional Horror – and death is often treated as a super-natural phenomenon. In Edgar Allan Poe's *The Fall of the House of Usher*, for example, the death of Roderick Usher is accompanied by the, quite literal, falling apart of the Usher manor itself. Furthermore, even one of the most grounded and plausible of Stephen King's novels, *Misery*, portrays its villainess, Annie Wilkes, as nearly super-naturally omnipresent. There does, therefore, appear to be a requirement for the super-natural element in Horror, an element that does not seem to be required by the Thriller, and certainly not by the Detective Novel. And, in Robert Bloch *Psycho*, before her big reveal as a fragment of Norman Bates' psyche, the nature of Bates' mother is also afforded a super-natural edge.[76]

With this short, generalized distinction in mind, I believe it is safe to say that, after killing the man in the parking lot, Anton Chigurh does *not* cross over into the realm of the Horror, as there is not much super-natural about him. And although he may, at the first glance, at least, resemble the Boogey-Man, it is paramount to note that Chigurh is nothing like the Boogey-Man; Chigurh's presence in the novel and his progression through it is, in fact, not at all super-natural, only extremely methodical. In forsaking his own "rule," i.e., his former, Western predisposition to wait until a danger makes itself clear and then dealing with it accordingly, Chigurh is able to bypass many of the Western genre's traps and pitfalls before they even take place. Instead of waiting,

[75] Jess Nevins, *Horror Fiction in the 20th Century: Exploring Literature's Most Chilling Genre* (Santa Barbara : Praeger, 2020), xv.
[76] One can never be sure if the mother is real, or if she is a ghost; one can always be sure, however, that there is something tremendously wrong about her, something that defies all logic.

asking questions and – only *then* – shooting, Chigurh always shoots first, regardless of how remote the danger may be. Since, and this is important, *No Country for Old Men* is still a Western novel. Everything about it – from its specific setting and archetypal characters to its hackneyed plot (which, if all its nuance is removed, is still, simply, about the hero and the villain competing in finding a long-lost treasure in an inhospitable land) – is rooted deeply in Western archetypes. Everything, that is, aside from Chigurh.

However, the one reason that I can see, in light of which it would be possible to liken Chigurh to the Boogey-Man, is in the relationship Chigurh has with his victims, as well as with the people of Texas. Now, in a previous section, I already pointed out Chigurh's treatment of his victims to echo that of the butcher, killing cattle. This view, albeit morbid, is – I believe – the intended view of the novel, and is even corroborated by it. Take, for example, the instance where Bell is finally able to identify the weapon that Chigurh is using:

> […] When Bell walked into the office Torbert looked up from his desk and then rose and came over and laid a paper down in front of him.
>
> Is this it? Bell said.
>
> Yessir.
>
> Bell leaned back in his chair to read, tapping his lower lip slowly with his forefinger. After a while he put the report down. He didnt look at Torbert. I know what's happened here, he said.
>
> All right.
>
> Have you ever been to a slaughterhouse?
>
> Yessir. I believe so.
>
> You'd know it if you had.
>
> I think I went once when I was a kid.
>
> Funny place to take a kid.
>
> I think I went my own self. Snuck in.
>
> How did they kill the beef?
>
> They had a knocker straddled the chute and they'd let the beeves through one at a time and he'd knock em in the head with a maul. He done that all day.
>
> That sounds about right. They dont do it thataway no more. They use a airpowered gun that shoots a steel bolt out of it. Just shoots it out about so far. They put that thing between the beef's eyes and pull the trigger and down she goes. It's that quick.[77]

[77] McCarthy, *No Country*, 105-106

A motif characteristic of the Slasher sub-genre of Horror cinema is to make the Boogey-Man its primary villain, and to set him onto the unsuspecting public – generally sex-crazed college students. In films such as *Halloween*, *Friday the 13th*, *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* or *A Nightmare on Elm Street*, the killer – often super-naturally resilient – is relentless in chasing after their victim. Nearly omniscient, they are always one step ahead of anyone else; they cannot be reasoned with, escaped, or killed. They are, in every sense of the word, superior to the people they are hunting (if only a tad emotionally undeveloped).

This cannot be said of Chigurh, however, whose superiority to those around him is just as ability-based as it is ideological. While Chigurh is a better marksman that any other character in the novel, it does not make him invulnerable to being shot. He is, in fact, wounded on multiple occasions, and has only his persistence and intelligence to thank for his life. Yet, it is the intelligence that makes Chigurh such a compelling character, and it is his ideological distinction from his opponents that, in the end, allows him to win. Furthermore, Chigurh's ability as a marksman is likely to be learned, rather than innate, as marksmanship is, generally, the kind of discipline that one must practice in order to get good at. In the case of Slasher villains, many of their super-natural abilities are innate, or achieved fully-formed through an instance of occultism, magic, and so on. Or, they may never be explained at all, as is the case with Jason Voorhees, the trademark Boogey-Man of the *Friday the 13th* franchise, who is able to survive just about everything.

Furthermore, Chigurh's murdering in the novel is not just done for the sake of murdering, i.e., it is not unreasonable. Surely, it can be said that some of Chigurh's murders are unnecessary; however, they are never unreasonable. Just like with everything else Chigurh does in *No Country for Old Men*, there is a specific motive guiding each and every murder he commits. And, in a way that is most uncharacteristic of the Slasher villain, Chigurh does, in fact, have a code, an amoral compass, so-to-speak, that he uses to distinguish between possible victims and the people whom he is willing to let go. As such, the instinct might just as well be to, simply, categorize Chigurh as a villainous detective, i.e., as the Moriarty to Bell's Sherlock Holmes, and be done with it. After all, Chigurh is, in his own, strange way, a detective – he is, after all, hired to solve a case and does so through logic and reasoning as much as violence. Such

an approach, however, seems rather contrived, especially considering how close to one another the Detective Novel and the Thriller are.

Here, it might be a good idea to refer back to this thesis' chapter on the Thriller and contemplate how it differs from the Detective Novel. In it, I quote Donald Glover, who himself is quoting R. Austin Freeman's article, "The Art of the Detective Story," published in *The Art of the Mystery Story: A Collection of Critical Essays*, in which Freeman writes of the Detective Novel as being preoccupied with "the power of logical analysis and subtle and acute reasoning."[78] Considering this, let us take a look back at *No Country for Old Men* and, specifically, Chigurh's role in it:

> He registered and got the key and hobbled up the steps and down the hall to his room and went in and locked the door and lay on the bed with the shotgun across his chest staring at the ceiling. He could think of no reason for the transponder sending unit to be in the hotel. He ruled out Moss because he thought Moss was almost certainly dead. That left the police. Or some agent of the Matacumbe Petroleum Group. Who must think that he thought that they thought that he thought they were very dumb. He thought about that.
>
> When he woke it was ten-thirty at night and he lay there in the half dark and the quiet but he knew what the answer was. He got up and put the shotgun behind the pillows and stuck the pistol into the waistband of his trousers. Then he went out and limped down the stairs to the desk.[79]

This moment of conscious deliberation on Chigurh's part is, in my opinion, a fairly good example of "logical analysis and subtle and acute reasoning." However, it is the only instance of such deliberation that is mentioned in the novel that I know of, which does not exactly make it a compelling argument. The novel, also, does not make it clear how Chigurh arrived at the answer, only that at first he did not know what the answer was and, a moment later, he did. And, if one were to look at, for instance, a more *generic* example of the Detective Novel, such as *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* by Agatha Christie, one would find that making the sequence in which the case had been solved explicit is a rudimentary and, indeed, a necessary feature of many such novels (this is also the case with Thomas Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49*, which, in and of

[78] R. Austin Freeman, "The Art of the Detective Story," in *The Art of the Mystery Story: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Howard Haycraft (New York: Carroll & Graf, 1983), 9.
[79] McCarthy, *No Country*, 171.

itself, is already saying something, as that novel can only be called a Detective Novel by association).

And yet, it is no secret that, in *No Country for Old Men*, Chigurh is, almost constantly, capable of brilliantly mapping-out his victims' next move. But, then again, so is Wells. Bell, given his occupation as the sheriff, can also be said to do some detective work, be it following clues to their respective solution or, as he does with Chigurh's weapon, taking a larger whole and extrapolating a miniscule detail from it. Nevertheless, in many an instance, Bell is just told – or, informed by Tolbert – or what to do and where to go next, and at these moments, his detective ability falters. Wells, on the other hand, is able to find Moss, simply by following the clues left by him and, so-to-speak, putting two and two together. The sequence in which he does so is, also – unlike with Chigurh – completely explicit; when visiting Moss at the hospital, he even tries to explain his process of finding him further, which, however, Moss does not want to hear. To make the distinction between Wells and Chigurh clear, it must be said that while I consider Wells to be the prime candidate for the killer-detective role, Chigurh, in my estimation, is merely a predator.

For Chigurh, his ability to understand and map-out his victims' behaviour is not a matter of induction, i.e., of following clues and building from them a larger whole. Rather, I find, it is an instance of observation. Chigurh, who is an outsider in the Western, can view the whole world from and outsider's perspective, much like the reader. And, unlike the rest of the novel's cast, he need not abide by the same rule as they do. Therefore, while Wells' approach to finding Moss was that of the insider – and, really, that of the tracker – Chigurh's approach is the outsider's approach. Furthermore, while Wells could find Moss by following a series of logical assumptions – i.e., he came here and bled over-there, therefore his next move is going to be… – Chigurh can find Moss by knowing that Moss is required by his archetype to face him, that his archetypal setting is that of the outlaw, who must seek out some kind of final confrontation.

And, were Chigurh faster, this final confrontation would have taken place in the Van Horn motel. In fact, prior to Moss' anti-climactic death at the hands of the Mexican hitmen, the novel does appear to be going in the direction of a final confrontation between Chigurh and Moss, as Moss can be seen preparing for it, buying weapons and a new truck. Chigurh does not prepare. Nevertheless, this does not mean that he is not aiming for a confrontation with Moss, as he has been searching for him the entire novel.

It is also true that Chigurh's main mode of operation is confrontation. This is an important aspect of Chigurh's character, as Chigurh's continuous penchant for violence may create an expectation for it in the mind of the reader, that is, it might – and, likely, does – make the reader expect Chigurh's next violent act. Which, in my opinion, is a rather thrilling position to be in.

The Thriller is the last of the violence-centric genres I outlined above, and the last one that I will try to link Chigurh to. And, although it may not be much of a reason to argue in favour of *No Country for Old Men*'s usage of Thriller-esque motifs and themes, I find it interesting how the novel's title can, itself, be viewed as an echo of – or, perhaps, as a nod to – some Thrillers of old, such as Horace McCoy's *No Pockets in a Shroud*, or James Hadley Chase's *No Orchids for Miss Blandish*, both published in the 1920s and 30s. However, what I *do* believe to be a good reason for such argument, in favour of both the novel's use Thriller-esque motifs and themes, as well as Chigurh's being the main representative of them, is the novel's overwhelming portrayal of violence. In the above chapter discussing the Thriller, I already mentioned the genre's predisposition to revel in violence, along with its penchant for portraying the violence as plausible and verisimilar. Here, to illustrate just how different the violence is in a traditional Detective Novel, compared to – what I believe to be – the violence that is representative of the Thriller, I include an excerpt from the aforementioned *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*, contrasting it to the opening scene from *No Country for Old Men*.

> It was a quarter past ten as we went up the stairs. I had just reached the top when the telephone rang in the hall below.
> "Mrs. Bates," said Caroline immediately.
> "I'm afraid so," I said ruefully.
> I ran down the stairs and took up the receiver.
> "What?" I said. "*What?* Certainly, I'll come at once."
> I ran upstairs, caught up my bag, and stuffed a few extra dressings into it.
> "Parker telephoning," I shouted to Caroline, "from Fernly. They've just found Roger Ackroyd murdered."[80]

Now, let us compare the above excerpt, i.e., the announcement of Roger Ackroyd's murder, with Chigurh's murder of the deputy in Sonora, shown below:

[80] Agatha Christie, *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* (London: HarperCollins Publishers Ltd, 2011), 38.

> When he stood up out of the chair he swung the keys off his belt and opened the locked desk drawer to get the keys to the jail. He was slightly bent over when Chigurh squatted and scooted his manacled hands beneath him to the back of his knees. In the same motion he sat and rocked backward and passed the chain under his feet and then stood instantly and effortlessly. If it looked like a thing he'd practiced many times it was. He dropped his cuffed hands over the deputy's head and leaped into the air and slammed both knees against the back of the deputy's neck and hauled back on the chain.
>
> They went to the floor. The deputy was trying to get his hands inside the chain but he could not. Chigurh lay there pulling back on the bracelets with his knees between his arms and his face averted. The deputy was flailing wildly and he'd begun to walk sideways over the floor in a circle, kicking over the wastebasket, kicking the chair across the room. He kicked shut the door and he wrapped the throwrug in a wad about them. He was gurgling and bleeding from the mouth. He was strangling on his own blood. Chigurh only hauled the harder. The nickelplated cuffs bit to the bone. The deputy's right carotid artery burst and a jet of blood shot across the room and hit the wall and ran down it. The deputy's legs slowed and then stopped. He lay jerking. Then he stopped moving altogether. Chigurh lay breathing quietly, holding him. When he got up he took the keys from the deputy's belt and released himself and put the deputy's revolver in the waistband of his trousers and went into the bathroom.[81]

Much like David Glover in "The Thriller," Paul Cobley, in *The American Thriller*, cites verisimilitude as one of the Thriller's major features, instrumental in making "crime fiction […] a simulacrum which it is difficult to distinguish from the real world."[82] That, of course, is not to say that, by reading Crime Fiction – or the Thriller, in this case – one is likely to lose the ability to distinguish what is real from what is not. Nor is it to say that one is likely to be fooled into believing the fiction they read to be real. It does, however, appear to be the case that, the more verisimilar the work of Crime Fiction is, the stronger the reader's response to it will be. This, I would say, is rather apparent in the case of McCarthy.

McCarthy's portrayal of the deputy's murder is both shockingly violent and, in my view, quite verisimilar. Every aspect of the deputy's death – from kicking the door shut to choking on blood – is portrayed in a concise, straightforward way, with little to no stylization in place. And, by opting for telling, rather than showing, the murder – i.e., portraying the murder through description alone – McCarthy's effect here is all the

[81] McCarthy, *No Country*, 5-6.
[82] Cobley, *The American Thriller*, 79.

more stronger, allowing the reader to experience it first-hand. On the other hand, Christie, who, in her work, opts for an approach much less verisimilar, achieves, also, a much lesser effect. In fact, by not portraying Ackroyd's murder at all and choosing, instead, to merely announce it through dialogue, Christie inadvertently forces the reader into only experiencing the murder referentially. Therefore, while the murder may be shocking to the character who, in the excerpt, is first hearing of it, it is not quite as shocking to the reader himself. It should also be noted that the presence of dialogue – in-and-of itself, and as a part of Christie's writing – is not what is making the piece less verisimilar; rather, the culprit here is the language. Christie's language choice in the excerpt can only hardly be said to make any effort in realistically and, as it were, verisimilarly, portraying the speech of a man in distress or, at least, in a state of shock. In my opinion, Christie's language in the excerpt is rather uninspired and its effect much less immediate. Thus, instead of getting an emotion across, the dialogue's only function is to forward the narrative.

Then again, the Detective Novel does not seem to thrive on immediacy, which is something that cannot be said of the Thriller. For, while in the case of the Detective Novel, portraying slow, steady, precise deliberation may, indeed, be the preferred mode of storytelling, the Thriller appears to mostly revolve around verisimilitude and action, as well as the said action's immediacy. In fact, it is this immediacy that Chigurh's arc in *No Country for Old Men* is, above all, the most representative of. And, despite also showing, at one point, a moment of such detective deliberation, almost every appearance that Chigurh makes in the novel is also the appearance of action and violence. Therefore, I believe that, while it may be Chigurh's disregard for human life and his willingness to perform unspeakable acts in order to achieve his goal that help categorize Chigurh as the archetypal villain, it is the way that he, ultimately, performs the said crimes that helps categorize him as the Thriller-esque villain. Enhanced by McCarthy's masterful use of language, Chigurh's crimes are violent and extremely graphic, as well as realistic in their rendition.

Furthermore, given the hideous nature of Chigurh's crimes and the effect that they have on the reader, I believe it is possible to regard them in a way similar to the one I outlined above, in my chapter on the Thriller, i.e., that the primary function of the villain's crimes is to motivate the hero, while their verisimilar rendition is mainly there to thrill the reader. I say similar, as Chigurh's crimes do less to motivate Bell to find him, and more to motivate him to reject his heroic role. They do, however, motivate

Moss, from whose point of view, Chigurh is the ultimate villain, and the main villain of Moss' own journey. From the novel's perspective, however, Moss is merely an outlaw, and not the heroic kind of an outlaw. Moss, in fact, is a traditional outlaw, the kind that Buffalo Bill would fight in his novels – his motivation is selfish, and his methods are, at best, questionable. His major mistake, however, is not being the outlaw. Instead, Moss' major mistake is not realizing what Chigurh's true archetype is, and fighting the character as if he were a Western villain. Instead, Chigurh is a Thriller villain. During the only instance in which Moss has the upper hand over Chigurh – i.e., when he is holding Chigurh at gun-point in the motel room – instead of shooting him, Moss questions the killer. His belief, I assume, is that Chigurh will turn, look him dead in the eye and threaten him, before letting him go with his money, only to swear to deal with him later, like a Western villain would. Instead, as soon as he is free from danger, Chigurh starts shooting at Moss, as the ruthless Thriller villain he is.

Yet, Moss does not meet his demise with Chigurh. Instead, and more interestingly, perhaps, he does so at the hands of the man working for the cartel. Still more interesting, I believe, is that this demise only comes about when Moss is, once more, trying to cross over into the heroic sphere of one's journey. For, if Moss stayed true to his nature as an outlaw, during the shootout at the Van Horn motel, he might just have run away with the money, leaving the Mexican man to take the hitchhiker hostage or, possibly, even kill her. Instead, it is said in the novel that once the Mexican man took the hitchhiker hostage, Moss tried to save her, as "when he seen the Mexican had a gun pointed at the woman's head he laid his own piece down."[83] In my estimation, an outlaw would not do this.

[83] McCarthy, *No Country*, 237.

Conclusion

Although quite generic with respect to its story, *No Country for Old Men* is a fairly unique novel. The way that it approaches the notion of genre and character is, in my opinion, especially intriguing, and likely the reason behind much of the novel's popularity, both at the time of its publication, and now. However, this popularity is merely a by-product of what, in reality, is a surprisingly in-depth and serious evaluation of the specific genres, as well as the notion of genre itself. Yet, it is hard to escape the feeling that this notion of surprise is anything but foolish. After all, the novel's author, Cormac McCarthy, is quite notorious for his – often unorthodox – dealing in Genre Fiction.

McCarthy's penchant for experimentation is also visible in *No Country for Old Men*. More so, it is perhaps McCarthy's most elegant – which is to say, the least rough – instance of genre blending up to that point. Each of the novel's three protagonists – Bell, Chigurh, or Moss – have a specific role which, in the novel, they fulfil, and they never stray far away from the beaten path. On it, they each experience a moment of definitive transformation that affects them all differently; nevertheless, they never leave their path, not before the narrative is over.

Moss, from taking his first shot to taking his last breath, is, with some alterations, the Western's archetypal outlaw. Starting his journey on the fringes of society, Moss is met with fortune after finding the money and chased away into the desert after taking it, and forced to live in motels around Texas, staying vigilant lest someone might kill him. His stealing the money in not a heroic action, and neither is fighting Chigurh – the latter is, simply, a fight for survival. He does, however, act heroically on more than one occasion, for example when – right after taking the money – his first instinct is to get his wife to safety, and then, later, when he declines the hitchhiker's advances, as well as when he attempts to save her. Nevertheless, Moss' major act in the novel, the very act of taking the money, is not a heroic one, either, as instead of being motivated by a moral desire to, for instance, help the poor, Moss' taking the money is motivated by his desire for the life of an outlaw. And as an outlaw, his ultimate goal is to confront Chigurh, albeit not out of some heroic desire to punish and destroy evil, but a selfish desire to dominate it – which, if Chigurh was a Western villain, Moss might have been able to do.

Chigurh, nevertheless, is not a Western villain. While, at some point, he may well have been one, it is made clear during his confrontation with Wells that he is, in fact, a much more dangerous breed – rather than a Western villain, Chigurh is a Thriller villain, trapped in a Western world. As such, he is not bound by the rules of the genre and is, as it is shown time and again, nearly unstoppable. The reason for Chigurh's unstoppability is that, unlike Moss, he does not need to follow the Western's beaten path of the villain, who – much like the archetypal American villain – will often spoil his own plan by revealing it to the hero, or by not killing the hero when he gets the chance. As a Thriller villain, Chigurh is the harbinger and the catalyst of death. However, what differentiates Chigurh from a Horror villain – as these, too, have the tendency to deal in death – is his lack of any super-natural power, and his having a code. This code, which, in the case of Chigurh, is a coin-toss that determines whom Chigurh kills and whom he lets live, puts him next to such Thriller villains as *The Silence of the Lambs*' Hannibal Lecter, who generally killed those whom he found to be rude.

An interesting idea to ponder, I find, is what kind of a novel would *No Country for Old Men* turn out to be, were it not for Chigurh being a Thriller villain. In my opinion, it would be much closer to a regular Western, at the end of which, the villain is caught – or, maybe, killed – and the outlaw is reformed by the infallible sheriff. And even if Chigurh was not present at all, the novel would still likely work as a chase, in which Bell would chase Moss through the desert and back. As it stands, however, the novel ends in carnage, as Moss finds himself in a situation he is unable to navigate. Bell does so too, albeit in safer way.

Bell is the quintessential hero of the novel, presented to the reader through, mainly, his own inner monologue. In it, Bell recounts his journey as a hero, comparing the Western world of his youth to the world of the novel, and he is not thrilled. Bell's world – i.e., the old, Western world – is where he accomplished most of his journey. The world of his youth, however, was a world much less violent and much more sensible than the world of his old age, the world of Chigurh. Yet, unlike Moss, Bell can see Chigurh for what he truly is, without ever meeting him; he knows that Chigurh is an alien in the genre, bound by no rules except for his own. Furthermore, in knowing himself to be the hero, Bell knows that, at some point, he will have to fight him. And, understandably, Bell is afraid.

Yet, it is my belief that, rather than being afraid of Chigurh, Bell is afraid of what Chigurh symbolizes. For Bell, I believe, he is a turning point – or, a point of transcendence, if you will. Bell knows that, by confronting Chigurh – who, I believe, is Bell's journey's main villain – he would not only fulfil the hero's journey, but leave the old world behind, transcending from the old, safer Western into a new, more hostile one. And, as he is not built to survive in the new Western world, Bell cannot bear this idea. Therefore, he abandons his journey and his post of the sheriff, not confronting Chigurh. And yet, I believe that it is this act of defiance, this act of agency that is the last on Bell's part, that functions as the true heroic act, as instead of letting go of responsibility and calling, this act can be viewed as one of holding on. By killing Chigurh, Bell would have been transformed into the ultimate hero – only, the world would have been transformed with him. Thus, instead of possibly opening himself – and the community he had served his whole life – to more danger, by not confronting Chigurh and holding onto the old, familiar world of the Western, Bell is able to preserve it. Still, as a punishment for abandoning the journey and not stopping the villain, Bell is brushed away into retirement limbo, his heroic deed being either forgotten, or plainly misunderstood. At the end of the novel, Bell is a relic of the past, trapped in a world with no place for a hero, and no country for old men.

Resumé

V mé diplomové práci zkoumám román Cormaca McCarthyho z roku 2005, *No Country for Old Men,* který analyzuji na základě poznatků ze studií žánrové literatury a Campbellovské archetypální teorie, a ve kterém hledám příklady žánrového spojování. K dosažení tohoto cíle využívám práce zabývajících se tématikou žánru a žánrové fikce, zejména pak práci Johna G. Caweltiho, *Adventure, Mystery, and Romance*, práci Rosemary Jacksonové, *Fantasy*, práci Paula Cobleyho, *The American Thriller*, stejně jako článek Davida Glovera, obsažen v *The Cambridge Companion to Crime Fiction*, "The Thriller." V případě archetypální teorie využívám, jakožto sekundární literatury, prací Josepha Campbella, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, Johna Sheltona Lawrence a Roberta Jewetta, *The Myth of the American Superhero*, Valerie Estelle Frankelové, *The Villain's Journey*, Carla Junga, *The Collected Works of C. G. Jung*, Sigmunda Freuda, *The Ego and the Id*, a článku Erin Beeglyové, publikovaného v periodiku *Hypatia*, "What is Stereotype? What is Stereotyping?"

K analýze díla Cormaca McCarthyho pak využívám prací Marcela Arbeita, *Fred Chappell, Cormac McCarthy a proměny románu na americkém Jihu* a článku "No Real Heroes in Cult Novels: Cormac McCarthy's 'The Border Trilogy,'" publikovaného v knize *Cult Fiction & Cult Film: Multiple Perspectives*. Rovněž využívám práce Erika Hagea, *Cormac McCarthy: A Literary Companion*.

Má diplomová práce je rozdělena do šesti hlavních kapitol, z nichž Resumé, Anotace a Bibliografie jsou poslední; zbývající kapitoly rozdělují práci do tří částí, tj. Úvodu, Těla, a Závěru. V úvodní části mé diplomové práce svou práci představuji a popisuje v ní svou tezi, postup, a představuji autory sekundární literatury, s jejichž texty pak v teoretické části pracuji.

Tělo mé diplomové práce se skládá z části teoretické a analytické; v teoretické části popisuji postup, jenž pak v části analytické, při analýze díla Cormaca McCarthyho, následuji. V teoretické části mé diplomové práce čerpám z prací Josepha Campbella a Carla Junga, na základě kterých nacházím model literárního archetypu. Ten pak dál rozšiřuji, na základě prací např. Johna G. Caweltiho, Rosemary Jacksonové a Donalda Glovera, o žánrové elementy a zkoumám, jakým způsobem – a zda vůbec – jsou dané archetypy žánrovými elementy ovlivněny. V části analytické pak své poznatky aplikuji na román Cormaca McCarthyho *No Country for Old Men*, ve kterém, na základě vybraných úryvků, poukazuji na přítomnost archetypálních a žánrových prvků.

Přítomnost archetypálních a žánrových prvků v románu svou analýzou potvrzuji a v závěrečné části mé diplomové práce je uvádím do kontextu románu jako takového. Popisuji zde, jak spolu archetypální a žánrové prvky spolupracují a jakým způsobem ovlivňují podobu románu samotného. Polemizuji zde také o tom, zda by podoba románu mohla být ovlivněna, kdyby jednotlivé žánrové a archetypální prvky v něm využité byli více, či méně, experimentální.

Annotation

In my master's thesis, I look at Cormac McCarthy's 2005 novel, *No Country for Old Men*, which I analyse from the perspective of Jungian and Campbellian archetypal theory, as well as genre studies. In analysing the novel, I look for instances of genre blending, which is the practice of utilizing not only one, but two, three, and perhaps even more, genres in creating a literary work, simultaneously. For this purpose, I first discuss Jungian and Campbellian archetypal theories, which I follow by the discussion of genre and Genre Fiction, using the work of John G. Cawelti, David Glover, and Rosemary Jackson, among others, as a reference. I then apply the findings to my analysis of the novel.

Key words: Cormac, McCarthy, Cormac McCarthy, genre, fiction, genre fiction, genre blending, archetype, Bell, Moss, Chigurh, no, country, old, men, No Country for Old Men, border, trilogy, The Border Trilogy

Anotace

V mé diplomové práci se dívám na román Cormaca McCarthyho z roku 2005, *No Country for Old Men*, který analyzuji z pohledu Jungovské a Campbellovské archetypální teorie, stejně jako i z pohledu žánrových studií. Při analýze tohoto díla hledám příklady žánrového spojování jakožto praktiky, na základě které je, při tvorbě literárního díla, využíváno nejen jednoho, nýbrž dvou, tří, nebo více žánrů zároveň. Z tohoto důvodu se v práci nejdřív zaměřuji na Jungovskou a Campbellovskou archetypální teorii, kterou následuji rozborem žánru a žánrové beletrie, přičemž odkazuji na práce Johna G. Caweltiho, Davida Glovera a Rosemary Jacksonové. Své poznatky pak využívám při analýze zmíněného románu.

Klíčová slova: Cormac, McCarthy, Cormac McCarthy, žánr, beletrie, žánrová beletrie, žánrové spojování, archetyp, Bell, Moss, Chigurh, není, země, starec, Není země starcú, hranice, trilogie, Hraničářská trilogie

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