

Cormac mccarthy's blood meridian



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Blood Meridian “ Blood Meridian”, Cormac McCarthy’s horrific yet beautifully written novel is set in Texas and Mexico in the 1850s. Heavily based on actual historical events, it chronicles the brutal world of the Texas-Mexico borderlands.

The novel is the tale of a 14-year old Tennessee youth, simply known as “ the Kid” who travels west in the 1840s through the harshest of environments. He is shot and wounded grievously but he survives after 2 weeks of nursing by a tavern keeper’s wife. (McCarthy 4). He works in several places like a sawmill and a diptheria pesthouse (McCarthy 5) before joining a cadre of ruthless mercenaries led by Glanton. The novel can be called a “ historical novel” without the aura of historical fiction, and not an “ escapist Western” as it chronicles the expeditions of Glanton’s paramilitary gang sent out by both the Mexican and Texan authorities to murder and scalp as many Apaches as possible. Further encouraged by the bounty offered by a Mexican governor for Indian scalps, the Glanton gang takes to scalp hunting Apaches with a vengeance. However, this is not just a case of bloodthirsty whites slaughtering noble savages: the Apaches themselves commit horrendous atrocities of their own.

Most of the action in the novel centers around Judge Holden, a massive 7-foot albino who towers over everyone else, yet seems pre-pubescent because of his total lack of hair and small hands and feet. (“ He was bald as a stone and had no trace of beard and had no brows to his eyes nor lashes to them” {McCarthy 6}). Judge Holden manages to manipulate everyone with whom he comes into contact (even Glanton), and easily turns situations to his advantage. The Judge’s physical characteristics are used as comparison with other characters such as the Kid (the Kid is not big, but he has big wrists

and hands {McCarthy 4} - unlike the Judge's small hands) and the dead babies that the Kid finds, who " stare eyeless at the naked sky. Bald and pale and bloated..." (McCarthy 57): a comparison with the Judge, who is bald and pale (being an albino).

Judge Holden is a mystery from his very first appearance in the novel and remains so until the very end, when he is one of the few characters surviving. One mysterious aspect is his uncanny ability to move from place to place so swiftly and eerily that it seems he is in fact not one, but two persons (e. g. he escapes from the riot in Reverend Green's tent to a salon where he is completely dry, even though it is heavily raining outside). His seeming " double identity" is a source of mystery to all. (" Every man in the company claims to have encountered that sooty souled rascal in some other place" {McCarthy 124}).

There is constant chaos and violence wherever Judge Holden goes (e. g. he incites the riot at Reverend Green's tent, and he is the cause of the dancing bear being killed at the bar) a fact that the Kid realizes at the end of the novel. McCarthy shows us the long and slow development of the Kid from just another mindless scalper of Indians to his final courageous confrontation with Judge Holden in the salon. The Kid is murdered by the Judge at the end of the novel.

McCarthy's gripping narrative is liberally strewn with graphic violence and depravity as line by line, the stab of actuality brings to its readers the events that accompanied America's westward expansion. The depictions of murders, massacres and mutilations are appalling: none of this is gratuitous or redundant - it belonged to the Mexico-Texas borderlands in 1849-50.

However, the book's magnificence - its language, landscape, persons, and

conceptions - manages to transcend the violence and convert goriness into terrifying art. The book's high style, as overtly Shakespearean as it is Faulknerian, aesthetically distances the violence and depravity in a number of complex ways, making its readers learn to endure the carnage McCarthy describes.

McCarthy's style of deliberate, slow storytelling perfectly matches the scenery and the pace of the protagonists. He comes across as one who understands what he wants to say, and has the talent and mastery of the language - words, rhythms, cadence and punctuation - to bring it alive. With this masterpiece exploration of human aggression, Cormac McCarthy shows he is comparable with other great writers like Melville and Faulkner.

Reference used:

McCarthy Cormac. Blood Meridian: Or the Evening Redness in the West. U. S. A. Vintage Books (Random House Inc.). May 1992.