

Fact in fiction?

Looking at the 1850 Texas Scalphunting Frontier
with Cormac McCarthy's Blood Meridian as a guide.

by

John Harley Gow B.A.,
University of Victoria, 2005

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of
MASTER OF ARTS
in the Department of History.

John Harley Gow, 2005
University of Victoria

All rights reserved. This thesis may not be reproduced
in whole or in part, by photocopy or other means,
without the permission of the author.

©

Abstract

“Fact in fiction?” was begun in response to student responses to Cormac McCarthy’s Blood Meridian, as taught in Brian W. Dippie’s ‘American West’, 2003. The class’s dismissal of the novel as a mere violent fantasy launched an investigation indicating that McCarthy’s ‘violent fantasy’ might just be an historically truer depiction of the 1850 Borderlands than was available in history surveys and texts. McCarthy’s novel reveals a scalphunting enterprise that preyed on “Barbarous Indians,” and turned lives into commodities in the form of scalp bounties. The perpetrators of this scheme were American, and the bounty money was sourced in Mexican treasuries. The scalphunting enterprise was played out on the Texas / Mexico borderlands, and Blood Meridian compresses that history into a one-year narrative span. “Fact in fiction?” looks at Texas in 1850 through census records, travel accounts and a wide reading of secondary sources to present the historical context of those events, and make the case that a novel can be a primary source.

Contents

Abstract.	ii.
Contents.	iii.
Foreword.	iv
Preface.	x.
<u>From Estevan to Bexar : Looking at History with Cormac McCarthy.</u>	
Introduction.	
<u>From fiction to fact? : Looking at the Borderlands with Cormac McCarthy.</u>	1.
Chapter 1.	
<u>From Tennessee to Texas : Down the Mississippi with Cormac McCarthy.</u>	8.
Chapter 2.	
<u>From Columbus to McCarthy ; Building a 'moving box'.</u>	32.
Chapter 3.	
<u>From Herodotus to <i>Blood Meridian</i> : "Barbering" through the ages.</u>	55.
Chapter 4.	
<u>From Factual to Fictional : Who is 'real' in <i>Blood Meridian</i>?</u>	87.
Chapter 5.	
<u>From Nacogdoches to Castroville ; Across 1850 Texas with the kid.</u>	119.
Chapter 6.	
<u>From Bexar to Hell ; ... and back : A brief look at Indian Texas.</u>	184.
Conclusions.	
<u>From here to insecurity : Looking for fact in fiction.</u>	205.
Bibliography.	209.

Foreword A: 'people' terms / language, aka "politics".

Yet the historian is obliged to choose: the use of language forbids him to be neutral.¹

E. H. Carr

Perhaps the most overtly political act an historian can make, after choosing words, is to define them. In the interests of ready comprehension of the thesis of this paper, the following necessarily tendentious definitions are provided, as encountered in the text corpus.

American. Refers to a citizen of the Republic of the United States of America. Citizenship was not for everyone however, and in 1850 American literally meant Anglo Saxon white, and male.

Euroamerican. Refers to groups or individuals identified in source materials as "white", and also when referring to European / American institutions, practices and customs. Usage of the term "white" to refer to Euroamericans is no more justifiable than using the colour designations black, red and yellow. However, this paper will respect the language of the times under consideration, and will not edit for language.

Negro. Originally I used the signifier "African American." However, as my impressions of Texas in 1850 deepened, I realised that this term is ahistorical and completely obliterates the reality of the times. There were only a few free Negro in 1850 Texas, and they could not hold property without a special dispensation, they could not vote and they were not citizens.

Slave. All of the diverse socio-genetic groups in Texas in 1850 took and held slaves, and commerce in slaves was a major part of Indian, Texican, and Texian economies. No specific ethnicity may be presumed when one encounters the term slave, and further iden-

¹ E. H. Carr, What is History? New York: Penguin Books, 1990 [1961].

tification will be provided when possible.

Indian. Throughout this paper I will employ the term *Indian(s)*, after, without italics or quotation marks - to refer in general and collective terms to those peoples of the Southwestern plains of aboriginal or Native American genetic / cultural origins. Anywhere I refer to specific individuals or groups I will endeavor to identify them by their individual name and / or group appellation as would have been used on the ground in 1850s Texas.² The terms Apache(s) and Comanche(s) refer to large linguistic groupings we know today as nations - each nation included many smaller sociopolitical-cultural groups which were known as tribes, and which were in turn composed of family groupings known as bands. This naming system will be used herein as it most effectively conveys how 1850s Southwestern Indians groups functioned socially and economically. Apachean sub - groupings included the Lipan, Mescalero, Gila, Jicarilla, Paloma, and many other specific and highly differentiated tribes. It is worth noting here that these tribal names were often generated in complex interrelations with explorer / settler groups and were both linguistically and geographically sensitive. In other words, the term Gila Apache owes as much to Spanish perceptions and language as it does to Apachean ones. It is a given that, when this tribe - or some group that looked like this tribe - was identified by Spanish observers, they were first encountered on the Gila River - these Euroamerican signifiers are then both context, and contact, sensitive. Given the intense state of flux that was Texas in 1850, there is no guarantee that Indian tribal names used herein bear any relation to the physical area in which they are encountered.³

² Thanks as always to Val Napoleon for "on the ground" - this very useful phrase I endeavor to always keep in mind as an antidote in confronting the Marxist objection to cultural history as tending to exist entirely "in the air." Peter Burke, What is Cultural History? (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2004): 23.

³ An example of the naming phenomenon is given by Pekka Hämäläinen (in "The Western Comanche Trade Center: Rethinking the Plains Indian Trade System." *Western His*

In justifying my usage of the term Indian, I would first note that, regardless of one's own politics, this is still the preferred self-identifying term used by a majority of American Indians – one current exemplar being Philip J. DeLoria's Indians in Unexpected Places (2004), with its unapologetic usage by DeLoria, himself of "Dakota Sioux Heritage." Of course using Indians as an identifier does automatically, in the words of Michael Yellow Bird, identify one as a "European American colonizer," one of the "White-skinned people of European origins ... racial group" who so stupidly view all North American aboriginals as comprising "one racial group: Indians."⁴ Yellow Bird conducted a poll of Indigenous Peoples academics as to "What terms(s) [of self-identification] do you prefer?" and found that of the nineteen respondents (out of 345 approached) there were fifteen different responses, and that of those American Indian was preferred.⁵ I will here confess that I regard the term Indians as a functionally useless fiction except when used as a signifier to explain Native / Newcomer interactions, and specifically, European attitudes towards the indigenous peoples of the Americas where the term is absolutely indispensable.

Secondly, in spite of many obvious cultural, physical, economic, social, linguistic, and political differences between Southern Plains aboriginal groups, one unifying term seems unavoidable, particularly since recorded accounts of 1850s Westers make clear

torical Quarterly **29**: Winter 1998 (485-513): 488.) "The southern route brought the Shoshones in contact with the Utes, who named them *komantcia*, and when the Spanish encountered them in 1706, they followed the Ute practise and called them Comanches."

⁴ Michael Yellow Bird, "What We Want to be Called." (1 - 21) *American Indian Quarterly* **23**: 2 (Spring 1999): 3. Yellow Bird finds Charlton Heston, the NRA's celluloid Moses, to be a useful exemplar of a typical "European American colonizer." *Op cit.*

⁵ Yellow Bird's essay reveals some of the problems involved in a greater society's (America's) attempts to identify as a group (Indians) those who do not wished to be identified as a group (First Nations). He points out that one of the politically motivated aspects of this attempt is the "threat to trust responsibility," which could conceivably result in the federal government treating with Indians as individuals at the expense of economic benefits accorded to Indians groups at the treaty level (nations).

that they thought of all aboriginals as comprising and representing Indians. American Indians appear to have had no inclusive term for anyone outside their individual clan / family / tribal unit that acknowledged commonality, and Gila Apaches had no notion of, and therefore no term for, Indians generally until given one by Europeans. However, regardless of how Gila Apaches perceived themselves, they were regarded as Indians by the westering Europeans, and treated with accordingly.

Genizaro(a)s. Detribalised Indians. Those indigenous people who either by choice or other sets of circumstances, including tribal decimation by disease and warfare, were found on the Borderlands existing outside what one thinks of as 'traditional' sociopolitical Indian groups.

Texan (Texian). Refers to the non-aboriginal, and non-Spanish speaking settlers of Texas, and is generally synonymous in the ethnic sense with what the term American meant in the 1850s (*i.e.*, white, "the accepted ante-bellum definition of the word"⁶). Politically, most Texans highly differentiated themselves from Yankee Americans, and would be solidly be on the Confederate side in the Civil War. The Texan population was fairly diverse, but while French names appeared, Scots-Irish ones predominated. While class and race also highly impacted Mexican attitudes towards who was, or was not Mexican, these attitudes were often highly differentiated from American / Texian ones. These differences will be pointed out whenever possible in the text body - quite often they prove to be highly significant.

Texican / Tejano(a). Refers to those of Mexican / Spanish ethnic descent, living on the Texas side of the Mexican border. When speaking of a collective, Texican will be used and when referring to individuals Tejano(a) will be employed as it respects both Spanish culture and gender individuality. This term can become complicated in that

⁶ Billy D. Ledbetter. "White Over Black in Texas : Racial attitudes in the Ante-Bellum period." *Phylon* 34: 4, 1973 (406-418): 406, note.

Tejano is also Mexican for Texan, and some American writers, such as Ralph Adam Smith, use the term that way.

Foreword B : Geographic terms.

borderlands / Borderlands. Capitalisation indicates the Spanish / Mexican - American borderlands region specifically. Non-capitalised refers to borderlands generally, as in borderlands theory.

Tejas. An Indian (Hasinai) word meaning friend or ally and originally used to describe / name:

a confederacy of native people (the Hasinai) found living in [this geographic area]. Although the name was given to the land very early in the era of Spanish activities and was used consistently, the boundaries of the country that it identified changed many times during the succeeding centuries[.]⁷

In the Spanish and Mexican sense of the word: the rather amorphous area north of Mexico and east and north of the Rio Grande including New Mexico, but not California. Generally meant by the Spanish to extend to the Mississippi, although this became complicated with French claims to Louisiana. This term recognises the importance of the Spanish influence on the borderlands generally, and Texas in particular. In the text body, **Tejas** will be used to indicate this geographical area under Spanish and Mexican occupation prior to 1835. For pre-Spanish Indian or geographical history, **tejas** is used as an admittedly inadequate means of recognising the continuous Indian occupation of this region, which predated the Spanish by at least 9 000 years.

Texas. As addressed in the text body, the final physical shape of the American state of

⁷ Rupert N. Richardson, et al. Texas : The Lone Star State 8th ed. (Prentice Hall: Upper Saddle River NJ, 2001): 13.

Texas that we would recognize on a map today was arrived at in the year 1850. Also generally generally taken to mean roughly this same geographic area from Texas is a time-sensitive cognomen however, and the meaning of this term was hotly contested on a number of levels in the period under consideration, as will hopefully be made clear in the text body. While Texas was an American state from 1845, it would be grossly simplifying matters to think of this region as in any way settled in the senses that one would employ in thinking of, say, 1850s Maine.

America(s). Both North and South America, and the intellectual construction / historical process of the extension of American hegemony over these continents and adjacent areas including Cuba, the Bahamas and the Caribbean. This definition is in recognition of the Monroe Doctrine (Address to Congress, 1823) which stated, in part, “the American continents [are] not to be considered as subjects for future colonization by any European powers[.]” Cormac McCarthy’s filibustering Captain White stirringly acknowledges the Monrovia mindset :

Unless Americans act, people like you and me who take their country seriously while those mollicoddles in Washington sit on their hindsides, unless we act, Mexico--and I mean the whole of the country--will one day fly a European flag. Monroe Doctrine or no. (at 35)

Mexico. Mexico, in terms of this paper, refers to the Republica, and the geographic boundaries of same as existed at the end of 1850. It is important to note that the State of Mexico is a sometime player in this narrative, and that the Mexican States contiguous to Texas (Chihuahua, Sonora and Coahuila primarily) were much more direct players both in Cormac McCarthy’s novel / the scalp industry, and, quite probably, the everyday life on the ground in Borderlands Texas. Nevertheless, the border between Texas and Mexico was a very real “medicine line” in terms of issues such as slavery.

Bexar. San Antonio de Bexar, the Tejan / Texan San Antonio (San Antone), as opposed to the several Mexican San Antonios. The Texas pronunciation is close to ‘bear’.

Preface :**“From Estevan to Bexar : Looking at History with Cormac McCarthy.”
- Hidden History - Disclosure - Agency -**

And when we turn to take a retrospective view ...
we are always looking and looking away at the same time.⁸

W. G. Sebald

Perhaps there is a region on the planet that has a more self-congratulatory and self-serving, fictionalised and unrepentantly mythical written history than does the state of Texas. I am not from Missouri, but even so, show me if you have a contender for the white hat that historians have plunked down upon the broad shoulders of historic Texas. What is that white stetson hiding? Perhaps the most effective organised removal / extinction of Indians of any North American jurisdiction, and scalped heads, Indian heads mostly, and lots of them. The position taken by this paper is that surveys and textbooks purporting to be histories of Texas have so completely sanitised the past that a novelist could do a better job of telling us what it was really like on the Texas side of the Spanish American borderlands in 1850 than any academic history you would care to put forward.⁹ The fictionist who comes to mind is Cormac McCarthy who has written four novels of Texas¹⁰, none more historically and literally true than his Blood Meridian, or the evening redness in the West (1985). Blood Meridian claws its way out of the Staked Plain like

⁸ W. G. Sebald, On the Natural History of Destruction (Toronto: Vintage House, 2004 [1999]).

⁹ This notion is based on a survey of Texas histories and an extensive internet survey keying on the names of the primary figures and terms in the scalphunting enterprise. Rupert N. Richardson, et al, Texas : The Lone Star State 8th ed. (Prentice Hall: Upper Saddle River NJ, 2001), and T. R. Fehrenbach, Lone Star : A history of Texas and the Texans. Rev. ed. (New York: DaCapo, 2000[1968]) are the two most widely read histories of Texas. Richardson is *the* college history book on Texas, and Fehrenbach the most widely read popular history. Neither mentions Kirker, Glanton nor the scalping trade.

¹⁰ McCarthy's Texas novels are Blood Meridian (1985), and the Border Trilogy, All The Pretty Horses (1992), The Crossing (1994) and Cities of the Plain (1998).

some unrepentant bloody great Grendel or Balrog gnawing on a human arm with a bowie knife in one hand and dripping scalps hanging from its belt - no white stetson on this beast, it is buck-naked, elemental. Welcome to Texas in 1850, it was not white yet, though the process was well begun.

A postmodern moment of disclosure before turning to this paper's thesis. The author is descendant from the same Scots-Irish (here, with a with a soupçon of aboriginal blood added along the way) who provided much of the Union, and most of the Confederate, cannon-fodder in the Civil War,¹¹ settled the plains of Texas, and provided the Borderlands with its most illustrious scalphunters, James Kirker and John Glanton.¹² Although of mixed feelings on the subject, the author is presumed by most to be of the 'white male oppressor class', although his working class roots and biases are central to his thinking (and obvious in his conversation!). Raised by lefties who read everything and talked about it, voted CCF and sponsored refugees from various Communist takeovers, he was reared in the profoundly racist and quite violent environs of redneck southern Saskatchewan in the Sixties, and schoolground misunderstandings were legion. One lasting impression is that of the creation of cultural / ethnic hypertension that arose from the Provincial government's imposition of a separate school system. Children who had formerly been unremarked classmates were now different - 'catlickers', in fact - as evidenced by the fact that they *had* to go to a separate school. One of the consequences of the new system were huge valley brawls between the testosterone bearing members of the two new groups. Scalping was not a part of the proceedings. The government's power to create difference, and presumably political capital, out of the previously relatively peaceful population was impressive. The family business (bakery / restaurant) was earmarked

¹¹ James Webb, Born Fighting : How the Scots-Irish Shaped America. (New York: Broadway Books, 2004).

¹² Ralph Adam Smith, Borderlander : The Life of James Kirker, 1793-1852 (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1999).

for 'special attention' by various levels of governmental regulatory officials, whom my mother referred to as Quislings vocally and in the papers. Raised to love the underdog regardless of "race", misunderstand the French, and hate the English and Germans in near equal measure, and now nearly cured of the English / German bias, the author is profoundly interested in history generally, and even moreso in the brilliant and horrific past of his own Scots-Irish people who always survived, even if they had to take someone else's land (or car) to do it. Why anyone would want to hide the past is a matter of mystery - and causal of very deep suspicion.¹³

Before introducing the thesis of this paper, a brief backgrounding is in order. This paper treats Blood Meridian, or the evening redness in the West as a primary source, and a very few notes on the novel would greatly assist those who are familiar with the history of the American Borderlands but have not encountered McCarthy's novel. Blood Meridian relates the adventures of 'the kid', McCarthy's Tennessee-born fictional protagonist who leaves home in 1847 and, through a series of misadventures, finds himself engaged in the trade of commercial scalphunting of West Texas Indians on the Texas Borderlands in the employ of the state government of Chihuahua, Mexico. McCarthy's novel is heavily based on *bona fide*, if relatively obscure, historical sources, and both his characters and events are an interesting mix of pure fiction and historical reportage. Some of the character names encountered in this paper are John Joel Glanton, who is a fact-based character, Holden (aka 'the judge'), who is either totally fictional or a composite of his-

¹³ An example of how we hide the past and shield our sensibilities in creating a useable world view or collective memory (and ultimately, history) was in this day's *Times Colonist* (February 23, 2005): A12. An editorial from the Madison WS *Capital Times* is quoted noting the "absurdity to which the public discourse has degenerated in the United States." Cited is a PBS editorial decision to strike all expletives from a "documentary" about American combat troops in Iraq. Heaven forefend our warriors using expletives! Americans want to 'remember' Iraq as a good, clean thing, and don't mind changing the current 'facts' to suit both their sense of mission and what will become their nation's history.

torical impressions, and Angel Trías who was in fact the governor of 1850 Chihuahua. This paper will also often refer to James Kirker who, although he seems to be larger than life, was in fact a professional scalphunter.

Do we all, as Cormac McCarthy has written, live in “archives of our own devising”?¹⁴ Perhaps we do insofar as the stories we tell ourselves, and others, about our experiences are concerned. We can make those stories up, and remember and edit them as needs be. We can tell them to anyone we choose, or keep them to ourselves as we see fit. We have a tremendous amount of agency in this regard, and those stories we choose to tell may or may not be true, depending on our highly individual inclinations, needs and capacities. It seems simplistic to observe that the stories we collect in our personal and collective meta-archives are not actual events, but rather mental constructions, and again note that we have tremendous agency in how and why we make those archival memories. Imagine for a minute, however, that you have just been aroused from your siesta by the close-at-hand reports of large caliber pistols, and that a raging buckskin-clad mountain-man is pulling you from your tent while simultaneously running a huge bowie knife around the front and sides of your skull, above the left ear and below the right. Knocking you to the ground with the butt end of his knife, he plants his feet on your shoulders while holding your long hair in his left hand. Then, in one fast practiced move, he rears back, tearing your scalp and right ear from your skull as he does so.¹⁵ What happens next depends on whether you are man, woman or child, for a man would be

¹⁴ “We have no faith in being because we have fractured it into history. And this is the way we live. In archives of our own devising. There is no book where the world is written down. The world is that book.” From *Whales and Men*, an unpublished play by Cormac McCarthy. In *Cormac McCarthy*, Ed. James D, Lilley (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2002).

¹⁵ While this paper takes the position that scalping in general was not exclusively a male pastime, neither is there any indication that there were female professional scalphunters. Insofar as Indian scalping, nearly every source encountered maintains that female scalping was taboo, but there were exceptions (discussed in section on scalping).

killed as a potential threat, whereas a woman or child might be left alive to save a bullet, or for other purposes. You have just had your 'hair lifted' by a professional scalphunter.¹⁶ You were chosen primarily because your hair is long and black and secondarily, but not necessarily, because you are an Indian. By way of explanation, your long black hair represents a Comanche or Apache man, woman or child, both to the scalphunter, and to the scalphunters' employer, Governor Trías of the Mexican state of Chihuahua. To the scalphunter your scalp represents \$100 (man), \$50 (woman) or \$25 (child). Where, in this sordid and brutal reality, is the agency of the person just scalped? Where are the stories of those subjects of this commercial and organized carnage on the 19th century Texican borderlands?

¹⁶ Scalphunter, as opposed to scalp - hunter, may be a minor neologism - if it is I am sticking with it.

Introduction.**From fiction to fact? Looking at the Borderlands with Cormac McCarthy.****- Fact in Fiction?- Alchemy - White space - *Blood Meridian* - Thesis.**

My thesis, *Fact in Fiction?*, is based on the simple notion, and my strongly held conviction, that Cormac McCarthy's novel Blood Meridian: or, the evening redness in the West does a better job of revealing what the 1850s Texas borderlands were actually like than do any number of history books. Blood Meridian constitutes the adventures of a group of individuals who commercially hunted and sold Indian scalps for bounty to various Mexican state governments. The novel relates the scalphunters' coalescing as a group in, and their subsequent commercial ventures on, the plains of Texas and Mexico circa 1849 / 1850. This is not a 'story' that finds its way into the history books for reasons I hope to illuminate in the course of answering the following two part question: What in fact was going on along those borderlands that engendered the state organized commercial scalping of Native Americans, and, is Blood Meridian an historically authentic representation of the Texas borderlands in 1850?

One obvious problem that must be here specifically addressed is that of region. On the back cover of Blood Meridian, the novel is identified as being "[b]ased on historical events that took place on the Texas-Mexico border in the 1850s[.]"¹ The kid's,² or rather McCarthy's, story moves across Texas into the Mexican border states, up into New Mexico, Arizona and California, before returning to end again in Texas. Many volumes have been written about this huge culturally and naturally diverse geographic re-

¹ Editor, Blood Meridian New York: Random House, 1985.

² The kid is the forever unnamed, and uncapitalised, protagonist of Blood Meridian. McCarthy does not want the reader to mistake in any way his kid for Billy the Kid or any other celebrity. Presumably, McCarthy's kid is unremarkable within the context of his times. The kid is mistakenly listed as "the Kid" on the back jacket, an epic editorial gaffe.

gion, which to Americans is The Southwest, and to Mexicans El Norte ; and of these volumes a large subset covers the specific period of the late 1840s - mid 1850s. It is possible to write an economic or political study of this area, but it would be a true fool's errand to attempt to write a truly inclusive cultural history of the Borderlands as one site. However, there are several factors that indicate focussing on Texas makes sense in terms of this discussion. First, McCarthy moved to and wrote in Texas, and has his protagonist, the kid, follow the same trail. Secondly, the scalphunter John Joel Glanton and many of historical crew were Texans. Third, many of the impulses on display in the novel from scalphunting to filibustering centered on Texas, which was in 1850 the American frontier in the Southwest. Fourth, and most importantly, the Indians in question were in large part from Texas. McCarthy's big messy story exceeds and flows over the boundaries of Texas, but the beginning, ending and guts of Blood Meridian belong to the Lone Star State.

My contention is that Blood Meridian does a fair job of showing that the scalphunters, both the fictional and the real iterations, serve to illuminate the horrifying "clash of civilizations" that played out on Southwestern plains in the mid-Nineteenth century.³ Here, at this time, an array of historical movements of peoples and political / economic / environmental forces spawned both the yeasty culture of racial hatred, and the opportunity for some enterprising individuals to turn that hatred into bread, in its colloquial sense. In the temporary near-vacuum of functional European-model political order⁴ that was post-Alamo Texas the quintessentially adaptive and opportunistic Apaches and Co-

³ My apologies to Samuel Huntington for the appropriation of his phrase. While Huntington wrote about the clash between "major civilizations", specifically Islam and the West, I believe his contention that "[o]ver the centuries ... differences among civilizations have generated the most prolonged and the most violent conflicts" quite obviously applies to the Indian / EuroAmerican borderlands. Samuel Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations," *Foreign Affairs* 72: 3 (Summer 1993): 25.

⁴ There was plenty of Euro style *power* on display in 1850 Texas, but very little of the ...

manches, having grown totally dependent upon the bison trade, compensated for the 'overnight' decimation⁵ of the Southern bison herds by exponentially increasing their raiding for food, slaves and goods.⁶ The genocidal scalp bounty of Chihuahua was in response to the equally horrendous Apache / Comanche depredations upon the settler / agriculturalist (both Indian and Euroamerican) inhabitants of the *plano*. Driven by the collapse of the buffalo economy, Indian raiding shifted from periodic, discretionary and selective (albeit violent), to continuous, predatory and wanton pillage. One historian of the Comanches has characterised the Indian depredations upon the Mexican / Texican⁷ population as "the most horrendous holocaust ever enacted against a civilized people in the Western World."⁸ Driven as well were the *Gobernadores* of Chihuahua and other northern Mexican states who, possessing gold but no military strength, were reduced to paying a large bounty on Indian scalps to outsiders they both feared and detested. And, driven by market forces and greed, the scalphunters James Kirker, John Glanton and their ilk served as both the wolves and the carrion crows of this clash, plucking gold from the bloody carnage they helped create on the Texas borderlands.

Human ingenuity and avarice have allowed for the commodification not just of what is thought of as external to the physical being of our species (gold, hydrocarbons,

...order one is meant to associate with that power.

⁵ Decimation here signifying a near reversal of the Roman meaning of one in ten.

⁶ To credit these developments entirely to Apache / Comanche dependence on the bison trade and the degradation of bison stocks is, however, misleading. The "quintessentially adaptive and opportunistic" Apache and Comanche were precisely that, and demonstrated an unbelievable ability to rapidly adapt and prosper in the chaotic evolution of the Southern plains milieu, and they displayed a tremendous amount of creativity and agency in doing so. That these peoples shifted paradigms at least generationally from 1770 to 1910 is a testament to their toughness and adaptability. That each of their cultural / economic shifts was soon outflanked by the encroaching EuroAmerican juggernaut was as inevitable as one's historical mindset allows for.

⁷ See Foreword, **Mexican, Texican**.

⁸ Rupert N. Richardson, in Ralph Adam Smith Smith, Borderlander : The Life of James Kirker, 1793-1852. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1999): 106.

water, air, land), but also of such internal human attributes as spirituality through organized religion, of emotional need through consumerism, drugs and alcohol, and of allegiance via any number of nationalistic political schemes. Since time immemorial, but always under a very specific set of circumstances, that which we think of as internal and elemental, the physical human body, has also been commodified through prostitution, slavery, headhunting, contract killing, the medical collection of blood, organs and genetic material, and the non-medical sale of human scalps. Every thing commodified generates conflict at some level, be it (for the purposes of this paper only) relatively low-level conflict with the inanimate forces of Nature, or high-level animate conflict between humans over life, limb, and scalp.⁹

My contention is that human beings are capable of commodifying any thing and every thing on this, or any other, planet that technology and enterprise will allow us to identify, capture, and get to market. Seen in this light the scalphunters' 'commercial' activities were, despite their odious nature, not inhuman, but merely another example of humanity's seemingly innate alchemical urge to turn any 'thing' into gold. 1850 Texas was also an example of another form of alchemy, that of turning the brown, the black and the red space of Texas into white space. From this perspective the scalphunters were the rather unattractive, but no less efficient, pointmen for advancing America.¹⁰ Blood Meridian allows us the opportunity to exhume long-buried ugly truths into the light of both academic and popular awareness and consideration. In response to the inevitable "So what!?" question, I would respond that Blood Meridian affords us that which is rarer than gold : an unexpurgated glimpse into the universal and timeless, humankind's ex-

⁹ The December 2004 Tsunami makes mock of this conceit, however the on the ground holocaust on the 1850 Borderlands was generated by human and not 'natural' actions. As far as natural phenomenon goes the physical Borderlands treated everyone equally, subject to their survival skills.

¹⁰ For this insight, which should have been very obvious but somehow was not, this writer is indebted to Richard White, "Lone Star," *Reviews in American History* 26: 4 (1998).

ploitation of other humans, revealed in a form we can all understand, organised commercial enterprise.

To pursue this notion I intend to use Blood Meridian as a primary source. McCarthy's novel is heavily rooted both in the literal and in the literary / historical soil of the Borderlands. The author spent some seven years researching and writing Blood Meridian, and factual incidents, characters and details abound in the novel, as evidenced by the work of John Emil Sepich and other writers. I must stress that I am not under any illusion as to Cormac McCarthy's purposes, agendas or artistic intentions / inventions regarding his novel and the historical materials he assembled for the writing of this work of fiction – it would be disingenuous in the extreme to mistake Blood Meridian for a history of Texas in 1850. Regardless of a novelist's intentions, (s)he need never operate under the historian's obligation to historical truth. However, Blood Meridian could serve an important function for historians, political scientists and other academics, as it has for me, as a lens for focusing attention on areas including: the nature of human conflict over resources, the impact of environmental change on indigenous populations (and the converse), frontier and borderlands theory and studies, indigenous economic and socio-political strategies, slave economies (white and Indian), comparative native / newcomer studies (both Indian / European, and Spanish / American), the impact of epidemic disease, and commercial scalphunting. All this, and a damn fine yarn.

Using Blood Meridian for a guide I will track across the Texas plains cutting for signs of incidents and omissions, events and issues, fact and fiction, illuminated by this historical - fictional travelogue. I will use episodes, representations, and lacunae in Blood Meridian, and engage historical sources (primary sources wherever possible), in order to expand upon those episodes, representations, and lacunae. After much experimentation the form employed will be that of a narrative tracking the kid's progress from the time

[h]e takes as pay from a farmer an aged mule and aback this animal in the year eighteen and forty-nine he rides up through the latter-day republic of Fredonia into the town of Nacogdoches, (5)

until the end-days of 1850 when the scalphunters have themselves been passed through the bowels of the borderlands, and Texas has achieved its ultimate outline on the map. The theoretical and philosophical underpinnings of this paper will also be examined as and where they impact upon the body of the narrative, and background history and information about McCarthy and Blood Meridian will be introduced where it seems organically apropos to do so. In short the historiographical bones and theoretical cartilage that carry the body of this essay are also presented in a parallel narrative. The intention of this approach is to honour both the expressive capabilities of fiction and the informative powers of historical discourse, while hopefully acknowledging which is which. The whole schematic is a mirror of McCarthy's "they rode on" approach, in which the kid bounces from episode to episode seemingly without conscious thought. Denied that approach, this writer will recognise the appearances of McCarthy's chaotic universe in this "he wrote on" format, while attempting to bring some order to the historical circumstances that allowed for / created that violent chaos.

As this paper follows McCarthy's lead in addressing issues and events, the time frame of this paper is restricted to one long year from late 1849 to January 1851. The broad thematic focus necessitated a far-ranging (albeit by definition, shallow) engagement with many time-specific sources, as many as this writer could locate and read. While any periodisation is an artificial imposition on the past, one year does not seem to be any more or less artificial than the standard eras, epochs, periods, long seventeenth centuries and *durées* one associates with normal historians. Blood Meridian compresses historical events of a rough decade into a rough year, and that would seem to be McCarthy's greatest crime from this historian's view, although it is really no crime at all for a

novelist. The task of this paper will be to identify and use those novelistic events which are in proper chronological order as elements of this narrative, and to annotate those which impact on this thesis, but do not belong in 1850. Remembering that the point of this exercise is to give a socio-cultural historical impression of 1850 Texas, it would be wallowing in artifice to exclude social and cultural impressions that were not generated precisely in 1850. To reiterate, that which is presented herein as an historical fact is precisely that, and that which is impressionistic was gathered from readings on the period of the late 1840s to mid 1850s. To differentiate between the two, this writer will allow the facts to speak for themselves in standard third person voice, and will intrude on the proceedings in first person voice to express that which "rarely touches the ground."

To summarise then, the task ahead is to show that the novel Blood Meridian can be used to gain a more faithful picture of what the state of Texas was like in the year 1850 than does any survey history or text this author has encountered. The novel will be used as a lens for examining cultural, social and materialist aspects of 1850 Texas to demonstrate that the practise of commercial scalphunting, which is generally ignored or repressed in academic histories, can be used as an entry point for examining the Americanisation of the Texican Borderlands. The period of time under consideration is one extended year, from mid - 1849 to December 1851, and the site of this inquiry is restricted to Texas and the Texian Borderlands of 1850.

Chapter 1.
From Tennessee to Texas ; Down the Mississippi with Cormac McCarthy.

**Pigment vehicle - the kid - *Cormac* - The ugly fact -
The inner dark - A *celebration of rapine and slaughter* -
'interesting times' - *Dispatches* - *Meridians* - McCarthy's comet -
Figs? - Whitewash.**

Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brains of the living.

Karl Marx, The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte

Our guide to 1850 Texas is the kid, Cormac McCarthy's pigment vehicle for painting a word picture of the blood meridian, that evening redness in the west. If you are going to paint a picture you are going to need a pigment vehicle, something that will let you mix your colours and get them onto a canvas, because basic colour in the form of pigment, does not hold to canvas ; pigment is too elemental for painting, it can be daubed onto the skin, or a rock, but it won't stick to a canvas or a page. A pigment vehicle has to be a neutral colour, say white, so as to let the pigment shine. The kid is white, but only just ; he is white only in the sense that he is a blank page, capable of taking on any colour laid on him. A second necessary quality is that it also has to be caustic enough to dissolve the pigment and allow it to be absorbed. The kid is caustic, fully capable of dissolving almost anything he touches, love, family, nature, loyalty, boundaries, god. The third quality required is adhesiveness, to allow that distributed pigment to hold onto a surface. And the kid is adhesiveness personified, the entire animate history of the South and Southwest combined cannot dislodge him ; knives, guns, Comanches, filibusters, governments, alcohol - the kid resists them all and sticks to the canvas like mythology to a Lone Star State. McCarthy slaps the kid on Texas Borderlands like cheap

red paint over the whitewash on a picket fence. The point is, McCarthy knows that you cannot re - cover up blood with whitewash, and any attempt to do so only makes the bloodstains more obvious. Take a look at Texas post-McCarthy ... it is not white, has never been white, except in legend, myth and the history books, and it currently grows less white with every passing year.¹¹

The kid was born in 1833 somewhere in Tennessee, that curious lateral state that runs from the Appalachians over the Cumberland Plateau to the Mississippi, providing a funnel from both the East and the Old Northwest to the new frontiers of the West and the Southwest. In the Civil War this funnel would be turned end for end and provide Jeb Stuart, Robert E. Lee and Stonewall Jackson a highway from the deep South into the Capitol heart and the industrial guts of the Yankee empire. In 1820 the northern border of Tennessee (with Kentucky and Virginia) would provide for the abolitionist section the northernmost limits of the expanding chattel slave economy, that great and peculiar institution that both defined nineteenth century America, and would provide much of the spur for adding Texas to the Republic in 1845. The Missouri Compromise (1820) excepted Missouri from what was to be the exclusionary 36° 30' Northern latitude of slavery, the exception being made to balance the admission of Maine as a non-slave state,

¹¹ Within a year or two, Texas will have a "minority, majority population," as Anglo numbers fall to less than 50% for the first time in two centuries. While the total state population is expected to double from twenty to forty millions from 2000 to 2030, the great majority of those new Texans will be "Hispanic, blacks, and ... Asians." Rupert N. Richardson, Cary D. Wintz, Adrian Anderson, Ernest Wallace. Texas : The Lone Star State. 8th ed. (Prentice Hall: Upper Saddle River NJ, 2001): 460.

¹¹ The Mississippi Compromise appeared to many Northerners to be a fool's deal at the time. In return for conceding slave status to Missouri, and the eventual admittance of Arkansas Territory as a slave state, the North won the right to keep the rest of the Louisiana Purchase above 36° 30' as free states - just as Zebulon Pike was proclaiming this vast area to be the 'Great American Desert.' The Compromise passed, "by a very narrow margin," supported by President James Monroe, and opposed by Secretary of State John Quincy Adams. Tindall, George Brown, and David E Shi, eds.

thereby maintaining the equilibrium in the Senate at eleven states for each section.¹² This semi-permeable barrier would both serve to delay Texas statehood by a decade, and eventually provide, in 1850 and not coincidentally, the final and northernmost border of Texas.¹³

The night the kid was born his mother died, and the skies were so full of the Leonid meteorite showers that it temporarily put the fear of God into America, and both sparked a fundamentalist outbreak in the Northeast and inspired the song "Stars fell on Alabama".¹⁴ That would make it November 12, 1833, making the kid a Scorpio and destined for a violent life as his house is ruled by Mars, the planet and the god of war, and by Pluto, planet of secrecy.¹⁵ "God how the stars did fall. I looked for blackness, holes in the heavens. The Dipper stove," (3) his drunken father, a schoolmaster, tells him, but refuses to reveal his mother's name.¹⁶ Neither will he teach the boy to read and write

America; A Narrative History. Vol. 1, 5th ed. (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1999): 424ff.

¹³ The Compromise and its sister the Second Compromise, would be to Thomas Jefferson "like a fireball in the night [that] awakened and filled [him] with terror. [He] considered it at once as the knell of the Union." Tindall (1999): 424. This writer presumes that Alexis de Tocqueville was familiar with Jefferson when he virtually mirrored these sentiments in 1831/2. Tocqueville leaned more towards a war between the races than between the sections as being "inevitable", however. Alexis de Tocqueville, Democracy in America. (New York: Bantam Classic, 2000[1835]): 434ff.

¹⁴ Neil Campbell, "Liberty beyond its proper bounds : Cormac McCarthy's history of the West in *Blood Meridian*" in Myth, legend, dust. Ed. Rick Wallach, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000): n.1.

¹⁵ John Emil Sepich, Notes on Blood Meridian. (Louisville : Bellarmine College Press, 1993): 58.

¹⁶ The "I" is the kid's father speaking. McCarthy does not use quotation marks to signify dialogue, it is just laid down on the page like another description or event. Some writers refer to the narrator in Blood Meridian, but there is no narrator. There are other points, "See the child." (1), and the second ending / Epilogue (337), where there is a sort of an external and detached, or godlike, reader in the book, but the novel generally "rides on" from detail to incident, as does its idiot savant 'hero', the kid. For a listing of these authorial intrusions see Sepich (1993), Notes on Blood Meridian at 141ff.

(continued...)

; if knowledge is power then the father intends the son to be powerless. As the son has taken the wife from the father, so the father takes the birthright from the son and leaves him fallen backwards in time, devolved from the scant social standing the father has won with his education. The kid will be worse off than some Irishman fresh off the boat, for he was born in America, the land of promise, and has less than nothing to show for it. Greater hatred hath no man. What the father does give the son is his taste for alcohol, that, and a bent "for mindless violence."⁽³⁾

The kid runs away in 1847, through cotton country to St. Louis, thence to New Orleans, having flowed downriver from Tennessee like some piece of animate jetsam,¹⁷ a Huckleberry Finn too poor to own a slave or a conscience. In New Orleans he learns how to fight, "All races, all breeds," and survives being twice gunshot. He waits for a boat out and finds one; it could be going literally anywhere, but it was instead, "going to Texas."⁽⁴⁾ A long century later, in 1964, a roughly parallel travel itinerary would take Cormac McCarthy from Tennessee to New Orleans, and eventually to Texas.

Charles Joesph McCarthy Jr. was born on 20 July 1933 in Providence, the one in Rhode Island.¹⁸ Charles Sr., in the family home both Jr. and Sr. were called Cormac, (Irish-Gaelic for Charles), was an attorney, who in 1935, accepted a position with the

My reading on the subject of a narrator is that the book reminds one of a Shakespeare play where very occasionally there will be found a stage direction which was in the original likely a note scribbled (by who?) on the margins of a working play. In this way the instructions are more of a conscious mistake by the printer than a word from the playwright. There remain the cryptic chapter leads, however, where McCarthy does visibly play his hand. They serve the function of foreshadowing, allowing the fictionist to presage and build narrative tension while relieving him of the necessity of intruding upon his annal to do so. Within the story wolves seem to take the place of Shakespeare's red rose, presaging the deaths to come.

¹⁷ As sailors know, flotsam is wreckage and jetsam the stuff that is thrown overboard.

¹⁸ With apologies to The Eagles, "The Last Resort," (Henley / Frey). "She came from Providence / the one in Rhode Island / Where the Old World shadows hang / Heavy in the air / She packed her hopes and dreams / like a refugee / just as her father came from across the sea."

Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) at Knoxville. Leaving the family in Providence until 1937, Charles Sr. went to work in what was the economic “basket case” of a nation that was itself “in crisis,” reversing the the usual route of the hillbilly highway in doing so.¹⁹ One can only surmise the reception McCarthy Sr. received as one of the legal pointmen for the Roosevelt / Yankee TVA, of which the labouring employees monthly salary of \$30 equaled what “some sharecroppers made in a year.”²⁰ “We were considered rich because all the people around us were living in one- or two-room shacks,” said McCarthy in 1992.²¹ Cormac McCarthy then became a borderlander at the age of four,²² as the urban and Irish-Catholic McCarthys moved into the heart of the rural and Protestant South, the “principal area of Scots-Irish settlement and influence.”²³ The McCarthy family lived for some years on the Tennessee River in Knoxville, where Cormac and his two older sisters attended parochial school. When Cormac was ten the family moved out to a house on Martin Mill Pike, an “old road wandering among the wooded hills and small farms” that would provide the boy with both a window on the “mountain folk,”

¹⁹ James Webb, Born Fighting : How the Scots-Irish Shaped America. (New York: Broadway Books, 2004): 277 / 8.

²⁰ Webb, 277.

²¹ Richard B. Woodward, “Cormac McCarthy's Venomous Fiction” (New York : New York Times, April 19, 1992, Sunday, Late Edition. < <http://www.nytimes.com/books/98/05/17/specials/mccarthy-venom.html> >): no pagination.

²² Robert L. Jarrett, Cormac McCarthy (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1997). Jarrett will be used as the basis for the discussion of Cormac McCarthy.

²³ Webb, 277. On the history of the antipathy between the Scots-Irish and the Catholic Irish see Webb (2004): 102 -122 ; Noel Ignatiev, How the Irish Became White (New York: Routledge, 1995): 39 ; and Ralph Adam Smith (Borderlander : The Life of James Kirker, 1793-1852. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1999): 9ff. Ignatiev, in his otherwise fine study, appears to seriously misread the nature of the antipathy between the Catholic Irish and the Protestant Scots-Irish, with the result that he greatly downplays the conflict between these two Gaelic groups in America. The Scots-Irish were the agent of England in their cultural and economic war against the Catholic Irish, and fought alongside the English at the Battle of the Boyne and other scraps. That the Scots-Irish were ultimately, equally and always served as badly by the English as were the Irish does not lessen the fact that there was a tremendous amount of conflict between the two Gaelic groups.

and a new “childhood hobby of trapping.”²⁴ These ‘wilderness’ experiences would later inform McCarthy’s ‘Southern’ plays and novels, including Child of God and The Orchard Keeper,²⁵ and, judging by the available scanty facts of Cormac McCarthy’s life, and the voluminous evidence of his writing, this outlander / borderlander experience was crucial in both his personal and his artistic development.

McCarthy graduated from a Catholic High School in 1951, and enrolled at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. As an Arts student, Cormac McCarthy was “indifferent at best,”²⁶ and, by his own admission, “skipped around too much from one course to another.”²⁷ He survived less than a year at the University of Tennessee and “in the spring of 1952 ... either he was asked to leave the university or he made his decision to drop out of the school” to see the world.²⁸ McCarthy apparently had the same regard for college as he had held for parochial school:

I hated school from the day I set foot in it. I remember in grammar school the teacher asked if anyone had any hobbies. I was the only one with any hobbies, and I had every hobby there was. There was no hobby I didn't have, name anything, no matter how esoteric, I had found it and dabbled in it. I could have given everyone a hobby and still had 40 or 50 to take home.²⁹

McCarthy enlisted in the Air Force and served four years, at least two of them in Alaska, where he “began reading literature in the barracks.”³⁰ “I read a lot of books very quickly,” McCarthy said in explaining his “self-administered syllabus.”³¹ As Woodward and many other writers note,

²⁴ Jarrett, 1.

²⁵ *Ibid.* 1.

²⁶ Jarrett (1997): 2.

²⁷ *Ibid.* 2.

²⁸ *Ibid.* 2.

²⁹ Woodward, no pagination.

³⁰ Jarrett (1997): 2.

³¹ Woodward, *np*. The second quote is Woodward.

McCarthy's style owes much to Faulkner's -- in its recondite vocabulary, punctuation, portentous rhetoric, use of dialect and concrete sense of the world -- a debt McCarthy doesn't dispute. "The ugly fact is books are made out of books," he says. "The novel depends for its life on the novels that have been written." His list of those whom he calls the "good writers" -- Melville, Dostoyevsky, Faulkner -- precludes anyone who doesn't "deal with issues of life and death." Proust and Henry James don't make the cut. "I don't understand them," he says. "To me, that's not literature. A lot of writers who are considered good I consider strange."

The G.I. Bill funded McCarthy's return engagement at the University of Tennessee from 1957 to 1961, "his second quarrel with schooling,"³² and this time he studied first engineering, then business administration. McCarthy did not graduate, but he did begin his literary career in writing for school publications, and received the first of what would be many "literary award[s], an Ingram - Merrill Foundation grant of \$125 to pursue his writing."³³

McCarthy also launched his own family career on the Knoxville campus, marrying Lee Holleman (later, poet Lee McCarthy).³⁴ McCarthy would apparently bring the same operating principles to bear in his domestic life that he had employed to such effect in his college career, "skipping" from one complication and location to another. The first marriage lasted long enough to see a son, Cullen, into the world, and the family's moving to New Orleans, Chicago, and back to Tennessee as McCarthy worked "a series of odd jobs, reportedly as an auto mechanic," finished the play *The Orchard Keeper* (1965),

³² Woodward, *np*. Woodward's line ; it would appear that Woodward was an inspired choice to conduct the singular McCarthy interview.

³³ Jarrett, 2. While McCarthy's book sales ranged from the low hundreds to a few thousand per title until *All the Pretty Horses* sold 500 000 units in 1992 (BM sold 1 500 copies in 1985), his critical reception and institutional support was astounding. He received a Faulkner Foundation award in 1965, two Rockefeller fellowships, a Guggenheim fellowship (1969), and a MacArthur "genius grant" (1981).

³⁴ Lee McCarthy's *Desire's Door* (1991), in part chronicles the failed marriage. McCarthy seems to have had a penchant for women whom, as ex-wives, would be able to castigate him in a highly literate fashion.

and began work on Outer Dark (1968), which would be his first published novel.³⁵ His publisher would be Random House, “the only publisher I had heard of,” and his editor through publication of Blood Meridian would be Albert Erskine, William Faulkner's last editor and “the sponsor for” Malcolm Lowry's Under the Volcano and Ralph Ellison's The Invisible Man.³⁶

For McCarthy the next decade, roughly 1966 to 1976, “reads in part like the fairy tale dreamed by most aspiring writers,”³⁷ but it also gives clues as to what an intense and chaotic character the author was. Madison Bell noted in 1982 that McCarthy represented a ‘writer’s writer’ to Bell and his editor, who told him that being a “‘writer’s writer’ [was] a thing you did not want to be,” as it carried all the weight of celebrity, with none of the remuneration of stardom.³⁸ This decade would feature numerous awards, a ship-board “whirlwind” romance that resulted in another marriage, a European tour, three novels published, a PBS play written and aired, and two Guggenheim fellowships. McCarthy’s second wife, Annie DeLisle, followed him from England to “a little pig farm” in Tennessee, she would have cause to wonder why, as post-divorce interviews of DeLisle reveal something of McCarthy, “an intensely private man.”³⁹ McCarthy, she said,

was such a rebel that he didn’t live the same kind of life anybody on earth lived. He knew everything there was to do in life ... We never had any money. We were always scrimping and scraping. He couldn’t have children, it would have driven him crazy.⁴⁰

³⁵ Woodward, *np*. From the Woodward interview; “Asked if he had ever paid alimony, McCarthy snorts. “With what?”” This interview indicates that McCarthy, after moving to Texas, established a relationship with his son Cullen.

³⁶ Woodward, *np*.

³⁷ Jarrett, 2.

³⁸ Madison Smartt Bell, “A writer’s view of Cormac McCarthy,” Myth, legend, dust : Critical responses to Cormac McCarthy. Rick Wallach, ed. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000): 2.

³⁹ Jarrett, 2.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.* 3. The quote is from a DeLisle interview from 1990.

During this period of great critical success, McCarthy “eked out a bare living on his novel advances and odd jobs to support his writing.”⁴¹ McCarthy also worked on Suttree (1979) which would prove to be “a big messy salivating hairy”⁴² novel, that would enthrall his thousand or so fans. One favourite detail from this period is that McCarthy built an extension and fireplace on his “upgraded barn” (DeLisle) using bricks somehow scavenged from “James Agee’s childhood home.”⁴³

Along the way McCarthy underwent a “transformation [in which his] reticence [became] a form of public withdrawal,”⁴⁴ and Annie DeLisle reported that he began turning down “offers of \$2,000 and more for speaking engagements at universities.”⁴⁵ McCarthy is famous for his Salingerian refusal to grant interviews (two extant), and Madison Bell reports that McCarthy would respond to his questions with “I don’t see why you people can’t just leave a writer alone! Why don’t you just read the damn books!”, and a well-slammed phone.⁴⁶ It appears in retrospect that no matter what laurels McCarthy gained as a ‘writer’s writer’, he remained a tormented one. About 1975 / 76, in the fashion of the kid McCarthy “rode on” once again, leaving his wife and Tennessee, perhaps for good. On New Year’s Eve, McCarthy told DeLisle, “I’m leaving. I’m going,” and he did just that, after having spent a month “packing his truck.”⁴⁷ Whether it was his demons or his muse that drove McCarthy down the road to Texas is

⁴¹ *Ibid.* 3.

⁴² Bell, 2.

⁴³ Jarrett (1997): 3. Let us now praise famous bricklayers?

⁴⁴ *Ibid.* 5.

⁴⁵ Woodward, no pagination. “We lived in total poverty,” says the second [wife], Annie DeLisle, now a restaurateur in Florida. For nearly eight years they lived in a dairy barn outside Knoxville. “We were bathing in the lake,” she says with some nostalgia. “Someone would call up and offer him \$2,000 to come speak at a university about his books. And he would tell them that everything he had to say was there on the page. So we would eat beans for another week.”

⁴⁶ Bell, 4.

⁴⁷ Jarrett, 4.

unknown, but it is possible that his actions constituted a 'geographic cure for alcoholism.' Once in Texas the author

abruptly stopped drinking. In a 1992 interview he would call drinking the "occupational hazard" of writing and comment that the friends still alive from the *Suttree* days "are simply those who quit drinking."⁴⁸

As McCarthy would later say "[t]hree moves is as good as a fire,"⁴⁹ and newly single, sober and southwestern, he had a fresh page to work on.

In El Paso and living in "cheap motels," McCarthy would begin the seven year labour of researching and writing his next novel.⁵⁰ This one would not be about the *inner dark* of the South, but an historically based look at the bloody meridians of 1850s Texas and the shock troops of the advancing American empire. This task would be aided considerably by the \$236,000 MacArthur grant the author received in 1981 which allowed him to purchase a "small stone cottage in El Paso."⁵¹ McCarthy's new digs were located somewhat appropriately on Coffin Street, and working on the little stone house would keep his hands busy for years. Blood Meridian would be published in 1985 and typical for a McCarthy novel it would receive some rave reviews as well as many shocked ones, and sell 1,500 copies.⁵²

Straightaway some of the critical response would introduce the notion of disbelief at McCarthy's "single-minded celebration of rapine and slaughter, relieved only by an

⁴⁸ Jarrett, 5.

⁴⁹ Woodward, *np*.

⁵⁰ Jarrett, 6.

⁵¹ Jarrett, 5.

⁵² Anyone who claims to have been a McCarthy fan previous to the phenomenal success of All the Pretty Horses (1992) is likely a liar. Personally, I had the book recommended to me in 1988 by a highly literate, but cross-addicted, fisher-captain who had run away from home at thirteen and made a living stealing artifacts from Belizian temples. The book was then well-known among a brawny literate subgroup of the working class who favoured mass consumption of cocaine and alcohol and rode motorcycles. The book also appealed to macho drunken screenwriters and, apparently, the odd academic as well.

occasional fainthearted thrust at philosophy.”⁵³ McCarthy believes that

[t]here's no such thing as life without bloodshed. I think the notion that the species can be improved in some way, that everyone could live in harmony, is a really dangerous idea. Those who are afflicted with this notion are the first ones to give up their souls, their freedom. Your desire that it be that way will enslave you and make your life vacuous.⁵⁴

The author had bitten another big chunk out of the body politic and artistic, but this time he had done so out of the Nudie-clad hide of the Lone Star State, and not some backwater Faulkneresque hellhole. White scalpers of Indians? Rape and pillage by Whites, not Comanches nor Mexxers? In Texas? John Wayne's *The Alamo* Texas? Unbelievable!

When questioned in 1992 as to his authorial motives regarding Blood Meridian “McCarthy [said] blandly,”

I've always been interested in the Southwest. There isn't a place in the world you can go where they don't know about cowboys and Indians and the myth of the West.⁵⁵

There is no question that his novel was an assault on the “myth of the West,” and McCarthy's use of the phrase would seem to indicate a familiarity with that notion as an historical theoretical concept. An excellent history of the 19th century creation of a usable mythology of the frontier experience is to be found in David Murdoch Hamilton's The American West : The invention of a myth.⁵⁶ While the “Myth of the West” is now gospel, it was not always so, and perhaps its first academic exegesis as historical gospel (as opposed to the popular culture version as examined by Hamilton) was in 1950 with Henry Nash Smith's Virgin land ; the American West as symbol and myth.⁵⁷ Perhaps

⁵³ Jarrett, 5.

⁵⁴ Woodward, *np*.

⁵⁵ *Ibid. np*.

⁵⁶ A discussion of myth-making process, apart from the scalphunting whitewash of course, is outside the realm of this paper, but Hamilton's book (Reno : University of Nevada Press, 2001) provides one in highly readable fashion.

⁵⁷ Henry Nash Smith, Virgin land ; the American West as symbol and myth (New York: Vintage, 1950).

the most obvious candidate as a source of that phrase for McCarthy would be Richard Slotkin's, Regeneration Through Violence : The mythology of the American frontier, 1600-1860 published in 1973. While McCarthy's using the phrase in 1992 is no guarantee he had it in mind during the writing of Blood Meridian, the novel's historicity, tenor, site and subject when taken as a whole indicate that he was indeed attacking America's frontier mythology. As well, one must consider the cultural climate in which the novel was written.

'May you live in interesting times' goes the old and apocryphal oriental curse, and Blood Meridian was written during very interesting times, 1976 - 1984, both for the author and for America. In 1975 America finally bailed out of Vietnam and faced its first military defeat as a nation, televised and in colour. There is no way to understand Blood Meridian separate from the context of Vietnam and America's cultural response to that war. One literary critic, Vince Brewton, finds that Blood Meridian "comes close to being a novel whose true subject is Vietnam, a kind of allegory of American involvement in Southeast Asia and of the reverberations of that history in the American psyche."⁵⁸ Brewton opines that there are two distinct periods in McCarthy's writing, the first being "defined by the military involvement in Vietnam," and includes all his writings up to and including Blood Meridian.⁵⁹ The second comprises the Texas Trilogy and reflects what Brewton sees as "a landscape best evoked by the Reagan presidency and the Gulf War with Iraq in 1991." Brewton's thesis is to show that the

correspondences between McCarthy's work and his times are part of a larger cultural equation whereby contemporary historical events influenced prevailing cultural attitudes on the one hand, and cultural production on the other, a form of influence manifested in film and literature generally, but felt with equal force in the arena of national media culture, in the cam-

⁵⁸ Vince Brewton, "The Changing landscape of violence in Cormac McCarthy's early novels and the Border Trilogy." *The Southern Literary Journal* (37.1, 2004): 123.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.* 121.

paings for president in 1980 and 1984, and in the political discourse of the 1980s.⁶⁰

What unites these two periods in McCarthy's writing is "the representation of violence and issues closely related to violence."⁶¹ As Richard Hofstadter and Michael Wallace wrote in American Violence, the Sixties had been "a time of unprecedented concern over American violence," both at home and abroad.⁶² Hofstadter observed that Vietnam had forced America from a period of "historical amnesia," and that the intellectual "rediscovery of our violence will undoubtedly be one of the intellectual legacies of the 1960s."⁶³ Cormac McCarthy was the literary Columbus to this "rediscovery."

Now maybe academics had suffered "historical amnesia" and temporarily lost track of American violence, but a casual search of any period newspapers will reveal that the American people never did. Further, violence has been a part of America's written culture since the beginning. Americans seem to have a gut-level comprehension that violence is unavoidable, and that it is the 'righteousness' of a cause that separates the good violence from the bad. The "earliest of American novels, Wieland" (1798) features a protagonist, whose father had died of spontaneous internal combustion, who slaughters his entire household in accordance with verbal instructions from his God.⁶⁴ This fiction was based on actual events from 1760s Pennsylvania. Edgar Allan Poe was consumed by the

⁶⁰ *Ibid.* 122.

⁶¹ *Ibid.* 122.

⁶² Owens, 31ff. This was in reaction to not just Vietnam, but also the civil rights battles of that decade.

⁶³ Quoted in Owens, 31ff. Of course, being a child of the Sixties, I perfectly well remember being taught how to hide under my desk at school and how to find a door frame to stand under in case of nuclear attack. It has always struck me that the student violence of the Sixties was a sometime joyful rediscovery of the potentialities of violence, and the reclaiming of that violence from a generation who had lived in fear of *others* (Russians, who then nicely filled the bill as borderlands barbarians) inflicting that violence upon them.

⁶⁴ Emory Eliot, "Introductory Notes" to Charles Brockden Brown, Wieland. (New York: Oxford, 1998 [1798]).

specter of violence, and transcendentalist Henry David Thoreau both urged Americans to get back to Nature at Walden Pond, and applauded John Brown's use of "the Sharpe's rifles and revolvers ... in a righteous cause."⁶⁵ Real life conflict always attracted American writers, both fictional and historical, and the breaking of the Wild West proved a bonanza for both. Even violence in a righteous cause, such as W.W.II, was examined and justified in fictional form. Jack Shafer's Shane (1949) is still considered by many to be the archetypical Western but can also be looked at as a justification for extreme violence in the cause of rightness. There is violence in Shane, but it is of the mythic sort and is classified RL5, suitable for Americans "ages 12 and up." The gunfighter Shane shows up on a Turnerian cattle frontier to defend the little sodbuster from the evil big cattle business and its contract killers (fascism?), no longer any need for scalping Indians here, they are long gone. Shane shoots bad guys and only bad guys, but there is still a moral price that must be paid for violence even in the service of right. Shane rides off gut - shot, either to die alone beside some trail or recover and save some other dirt farmer, depending on one's own tolerance for romance. If the 'good fight' of W.W.II required justification in mythology, what could American writers possibly do with Vietnam?

Brewton makes a distinction between the meaning of violence in Blood Meridian versus the Border Trilogy. He finds the former to represent informal serial violence, and the latter formal "symbolic drama."⁶⁶ Here it is good to remember the vast difference in audience and critical reception for the two as McCarthy's formal symbolic western All The Pretty Horses (1992) outsold Blood Meridian, and all that came before combined, by huge margins. Blood Meridian is a western too, of course, but "it is a western in which

⁶⁵ Henry David Thoreau, "A plea for Captain John Brown," in Walden and Other Writings.

⁶⁶ Brewton, 122.

we would rather not believe.”⁶⁷ Don Moos notes that not all writers took McCarthy’s Vietnam-jaundiced view of the Borderlands, as Larry McMurtry published his fabulously successful Lonesome Dove the same year as McCarthy’s opus.⁶⁸ Lonesome Dove also features death and mayhem, but of a different sort. Like McCarthy’s work based in historical sources, with McMurtry “invoking correct place names, geography, and general historical figures and events,” Lonesome Dove tells a far different, and far more acceptable tale.⁶⁹ McMurtry’s cowpokes, both retired Texas Rangers, make their living as cowboys for one thing, and archetypal cowboys at that. They have honour and work within the accepted notion of the American system. They punch cows and not women and children. Justice means a pistol-whipping administered to a rapist, and not a bounty on Indians run by the state. McMurtry’s cowboys, circa 1880, travel out of Texas to get to a frontier in Montana. They are exporting the Lone Star mythos to still-blighted uncivilised areas, launching a cattle frontier, bringing order and capitalism to the wastelands. Combined with sympathetic and strong male and female characters and a similar reverence for description and landscape as McCarthy, it is no wonder McMurtry won the sales war a thousand to one. As Moos writes :

In the traditional western, those upon who [...] justice is served do not get scalped or sodomized, roasted or skewed. They are merely put away, out of the picture: the righteous cleanly amputate the dishonorable from society.⁷⁰

It is in the conflict between a text and of a reading audience’s emotional needs combined with their received notions of what the past should be like that Blood Meridian foundered in popularity next to Lonesome Dove. The former book is much closer to being true to

⁶⁷ Don Moos, “Lacking the Article Itself : Representation and History in Cormac McCarthy’s Blood Meridian.” *The Cormac McCarthy Journal Online* (Accessed 12 May 2005): 23.

⁶⁸ Larry McMurtry, Lonesome Dove, (New York : Simon and Schuster, 1985).

⁶⁹ *Ibid.* 24.

⁷⁰ Moos, 23.

its times than the latter, and yet it is the former that is perceived as a violent hallucination, and the latter as historical fiction. As Moos writes, McCarthy's novel is "hyper-real," and that is its problem :

Ironically, the meticulousness of McCarthy's research and his use of archaic but historically accurate language defamiliarizes much of the novel. While *Lonesome Dove* seems engagingly familiar to most readers because McMurtry patterned his story around conventions and language that appear transparent to an American collective frontier sensibility. McCarthy's novel seems alien and distant in both its language and narrative.⁷¹

Brewton's views on the depiction of violence in McCarthy's works bears repeating here, as it helps to explain why a greater audience did not take to McCarthy's view of the Borderlands:

While all literary violence can be viewed as formal in the sense that it has achieved literary form, normally we make a distinction between formal violence on the one hand - violence governed by rules, agreements, and cultural assumptions, typified by the formal duel—and informal violence on the other hand - violence that is fragmentary, unconsidered, "random," or "senseless," as public discourse of our time denotes it. Southern literature—from which Cormac McCarthy emerges in terms of our understanding of his work, especially in his early, Tennessee centered vision—favors a narrative strategy in which violence represents a climax of tensions and stress with the literary text.⁷²

As McCarthy and other Americans watched Vietnam play out on their televisions there must have been a huge disconnection for many between their notion of formal war, and the "fragmentary, unconsidered, 'random,' [and] 'senseless'" violence they were shown nightly.

At the same time, there was not much relief to be had either from the movies or books of popular culture. A televised Vietnam War had made many Americans take a new look at the "disturbing connections" between the mythological Wild West "conquest along the frontier," and what they saw of Vietnam on the news and at the movies. Bar-

⁷¹ Moos, 24.

⁷² Brewton, 122.

cley Owens has assembled much evidence to make the point that Americans from the “killing fields of Vietnam” to the University of Chicago made the unavoidable mental connection between Wounded Knee and Vietnam ; that “on the killing fields of Vietnam, frontier nomenclature was commonly used by troops as battle slang,”⁷³ and that

many Americans, especially students and teachers, [were forced] to reject old myths and frankly reassess the brutal facts of nationalism. The climbing death toll and the planeloads of body bags bore awful “witness to the end of America’s absolute confidence in its moral exclusivity, its military invincibility, its manifest destiny ...”⁷⁴

The Seventies witnessed a bloom of revisionist histories and movies, one of which, *Little Big Man* (1970), trashed near-sacred frontier roles of “rescued captive, White Indian, scout, gun-fighter, and gambler.”⁷⁵ Dee Brown also published *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee* in 1970, and Americans were confronted with Louise Weasel Bear’s voice from the past:

We tried to run, but they shot us like we were a buffalo. I know there are some good white people, but the soldiers must be mean to shoot women and children. Indian soldiers would not do that to white children.⁷⁶

Anyone hoping that this sort of “soldierly” activity was safely consigned to the historic past was disabused of that notion by the (again, televised) testimony of the Lieutenant William Calley (My Lai massacre) trial in 1971. To quote Private Paul Meadlo :

We huddled them up. We made them squat down ... I poured about four clips into the group ... The mothers were hugging their children ... Well, we kept right on firing. They was waving their arms and begging ... I still

⁷³ Owens, 31.

⁷⁴ Owens, 31. The enclosed quote is from Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam : A History*.

⁷⁵ Richard Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation : The myth of the frontier in Twentieth-century America*. (New York : Harper Perennial, 1993): 631.

⁷⁶ Dee Brown, *Bury my Heart at Wounded Knee*, (New York : Henry Holt & Company, 2000 [1970]): 444. As poignant as is Louise Weasel Bear’s statement, McCarthy also shows us that many Indian soldiers were as callous as were the scalphunters, or the 7th Cavalry. As noted elsewhere in this paper, McCarthy is an antidote to both Euroamerican and Indian romances of the Borderlands.

dream about it. About the women and the children in my sleep. Some days ... some nights, I can't even sleep.⁷⁷

It must have seemed to McCarthy, a reluctant product of both America's university and military systems, that the nation's dark, distant, violent and unavoidable frontier past was also America's horrific and destined present and future. As Michael Herr observed in Dispatches (1977), a book that I believe was instrumental to McCarthy's writing of Blood Meridian,

[y]ou couldn't find two people who agreed about when it all began ... You couldn't use standard methods to date the doom; might as well say that Vietnam was where the Trail of Tears was headed all along, the turn-around point where it would touch and form a containing perimeter[.]⁷⁸

Herr's "containing perimeter" informed McCarthy's "blood meridian", and both notions stood in for an uninterrupted succession of lines (or "terminal moraines" to Frederick Jackson Turner) of American frontier exploits, or "ventures", which began in 1607 at Jamestown and proceeded in Turnerian "falls" west and south across the American continent until oceans and time forced detours to Cuba, the Philippines, Vietnam and eventually, Iraq.⁷⁹ Turner's beautiful geological term "terminal moraines" links the notion of violent organic tectonic activity with peak upsurges in state violence against indigenes. Generally speaking these American 'ventures' were directed against peoples who were not white, they involve(d) separating indigenes from some thing (be it land, scalps, oil or security), they were / are always violent, and they were / are always in the best interests of America's well-being, be it resource or security - driven. And, given the political needs of a democratic republic, these ventures always require a myth-making component to as-

⁷⁷ Gary B. Nash, et al, Eds. The American People : Creating a Nation and a Society. (New York : Harper & Row, 1986): 949.

⁷⁸ Michael Herr. Dispatches (New York : Vintage International, 1977): 49.

⁷⁹ Turner, Frederick Jackson. "The Significance of the Frontier in American History." In Readings in Intellectual History : The American Tradition. Ed. C. K. McFarland.

sure a sensitive populace that the violence involved was a) necessary, and / or b) unavoidable, or c) *at least* directed against an inferior or different race / group. These requirements beg a corollary which is that they are best conducted in the absence of public scrutiny if too gruesome or unpopular (Borderlands scalphunting, Vietnam, and Iraq II); however, if popularly supported (Cuba and Mexico, Iraq I,) these ventures can even be advertised and create political capital.⁸⁰

In the context of Herr's "containing perimeter", McCarthy's title Blood Meridian, or the evening redness in the West is worth a linguistic deconstruction, courtesy of Webster's. Blood is primally simple, although in McCarthy's context it could refer to either Indian or African-American males, but it is likely sufficient to keep race and violence in mind. Meridian is a fascinating word and includes in its meanings : a half circle, a boundary, the transit of earth through the poles (and one's observation of same), and high noon, but also, "the pathways in the body along which vital energy flows", "a point or period of highest development, greatest prosperity", and a period of the 'greatest splendor.'" Here recall Turner's terminal moraines which, at the time they are formed, represent the literal peaks of tectonic progress.⁸¹ So far, it would seem safe to say that besides announcing that it tells of a specific place / site, the novel will relate the apex or epitome of racial bloodletting. Evening can take its classic meaning of early nighttime, but in the South means from noon until sundown. Evening can also refer to a general leveling or mixing, and can also refer to a decline or declining period (from its sundown meaning). Evening can also be taken to mean a social or entertainment. Redness would seem to be fairly safe, as it can mean the obvious, as in a Western sunset. But Webster's

⁸⁰ The Hearst papers led the charge for the Cuban and Philippine scraps, and American media generally for Iraq I (and II, initially).

⁸¹ In keeping with this Turner's metaphor, both the tectonic and the human peaks of violence wear down over time - the recreation of those peaks provides careers for geologists and historians both.

says redness means only that something has “the quality or state of being red”, and in the Borderlands context redness naturally connotes race, specifically Indianness, which can be literally translated to mean savagery or barbarousness.⁸² Red is of course the colour of blood, but it is also the primary colour at one “extreme end of the visible spectrum” and the colour that is least refracted and contains within it many colours. Black is of course off the spectrum, “lacking hue and brightness,” and white is, classically, “of the color of pure snow.”⁸³ Red is then, in short, the spectral antithesis of white. That leaves only the west, and in the context of McCarthy’s work and times, it would be fairly safe to say that “the evening redness in the west” does not only refer to sundown, but has a rather bleaker meaning as well.

McCarthy’s “west” is meant to stand for “The West” in its largest sense, meaning western culture. Given McCarthy’s strength with words, had he meant to geographically limit his thesis to the “Southwest”, he likely would have done so. Therefore, one could take this title to mean just a bloodletting of epic proportions, which the novel delivers, but McCarthy also had bigger fish to fry. What Blood Meridian shows us is not just savagery in action, or how contact with ‘savage peoples’ can make one savage, but that an elevated and civilised savagery, a savagery aided by technology, science, law, organisation, can trump elemental savagery. The scalphunters (and the Marines in Vietnam) do not just encounter savagery on the Borderlands, they take it there.⁸⁴ In keeping with these ideas of colour and meridians then, one way of seeing McCarthy’s novel is as a sort of violent racial rainbow arcing over the Borderlands.

⁸² The Mexican term for undomesticated Borderlands Indians was *los barbaros*.

⁸³ Webster’s Unabridged Dictionary 2nd ed. (New York: Random House, 2001).

⁸⁴ Remember the classic Airborn tee-shirt from the Sixties? “Travel the world, meet nice people, kill them!” Also, this is all classic Turner. One of the reasons that Turner fell out of favour (again!) in the Seventies was likely his forthright acknowledgment in his frontier thesis of the very tight connection between American imperialism / exceptionalism and high levels of violence.

This metaphor implies however, an arc, a going out. But given Blood Meridian's double endings, that of the kid in the jakes and the second ending of the hole - digger, it would seem that McCarthy intends to have his book taken to mean a great circle, and not a linear progression from points A to B. The kid circles the Borderlands and dies back in Texas because there is no place for him in the civilised world. The kid is a cipher, cannon-fodder, a tommy or a brownshirt, an expendable grunt of no consequence. The judge however, is the man : the voice of law, religion, science, order ; He coolly survives and does make a circular solunar transit. The kid was one meteoric arc of destruction, all flames and blood, but of no consequence but for the damage he inflicts. The judge is McCarthy's comet coolly circling the heavens, seemingly appearing out of nowhere, but in reality just making a regular check-in. The judge symbolises the American venture, not the kid. The kid is in retreat from the brutal realities of the frontier, the judge is in place to find him wanting, to judge him, and to dispatch of him as not up to the challenges ahead. The judge is just resting up for his next go-round, maybe the Philippines, maybe Vietnam, maybe Iraq.

Dispatches and the Calley trial showed America that there was a direct connection between the savagery and wantonness of the Trail of Tears, Wounded Knee and their involvement in Vietnam. If the modern military could behave like Private Meadlo , or like the souvenir hunting Marines in Vietnam (below), was there something wrong with America?

[A] Marine came up and asked [Herr] if we'd like to look at some pictures he'd taken ... He'd also taken some "number-one souvenirs" ... leaving the details to our imaginations ... There were hundreds of these albums in Vietnam, thousands, and they all seemed to contain the same pictures : the obligatory Zippo-lighter shot ("All right, let's burn these hootches and move out") ; the severed-head shot, the head often resting on the chest of the dead man or being held up by a smiling Marine, or a lot of heads, arranged in a row, with a burning cigarette in each of the mouths, the eyes open ("Like they're *lookin'* at you, man it's scary") ; the

VC suspect being dragged over the dust by a half-track or being hung by his heels in some jungle clearing ; the very young dead with AK-47's still in their hands ("How old would you say that kid was?" the grunts would ask. "Twelve, thirteen? You just can't tell with them gooks"); a picture of a Marine holding an ear or maybe two ears or, as in the case of a guy I knew near Pleiku, a whole necklace of ears, "lovebeads" as its owner called them ; and the one we were looking at now, the dead Viet Cong girl with her pajamas stripped off and her legs stiffly in the air.⁸⁵

Barclay Owens notes that "[m]any scenes in *Blood Meridian* have an eerie resonance for a Vietnam-era audience,"⁸⁶ and some of those resonances must come from the recognition that keepsakes / markers of a "number-one souvenirs"⁸⁷ variety were common to both frontiers. One of these resonances occurs when Toadvine meets his first professional scalphunter: "Toadvine looked at him. The necklace of human ears he wore looked like a string of dried black figs."⁸⁸ (87) One Vietnam veteran, Glen McCoy, remembered seeing special forces 'cowboys' with "human scalps and ears on [their] belts,"⁸⁹ and here is the kid first viewing a scalphunting crew :

one day a pack of vicouslooking humans riding half drunk through the streets, bearded, barbarous, clad in the skins of animals stitched up with thews and armed with weapons of every description, revolvers of enormous weight and bowieknives the size of claymores and short twobarreled rifles with bores you could stick your thumbs in and the trappings of their horses fashioned out of human skin and their bridles woven up from human hair and decorated with human teeth and the riders wearing scapulars or necklaces of dried and blackened human ears... (78)

To reiterate, the 1850 scalphunters and the Marines in Vietnam do not encounter savagery on the Borderlands, they take it there. Louise Weasel Bear's observation that "the

⁸⁵ Herr, 198ff.

⁸⁶ Barclay Owens. *Cormac McCarthy's Western Novels*. (Tucson : University of Arizona Press, 2000): 24.

⁸⁷ Herr, 198.

⁸⁸ This notion, that to Toadvine the ears resembled "dried black figs" serves to introduce one of McCarthy's themes, that being visual deception. Here Toadvine's experience has obviously had more to do with eating figs than taking ears.

⁸⁹ McCoy, a helicopter pilot, was quoted in Barclay Owens, 24.

soldiers must be mean to shoot women and children”⁹⁰ at Wounded Knee has resonances in this ‘joke’ from Dispatches :

some reporters asked a door gunner, “How can you shoot women and children?” and he’d answered, “it’s easy, you just don’t lead ‘em so much.”⁹¹

Not really that far from the Trail of Tears, or from Borderlands scalping at all, is it? Unfortunately and problematically, McCarthy’s violent racial rainbow arcing over the Borderlands also connects the past to the present(s).

Robert Jarrett observes that, to the utter horror of those who prefer to think of McCarthy’s work as naught but exceptionally fevered fiction, Blood Meridian “forces its readers to confront the history of violence and the uncultural rhetoric of the antebellum period of Manifest Destiny.”⁹² And in so doing Jarrett gets it comfortably, but completely, wrong and adds to the whitewash. The whole point of Blood Meridian is that “violence and the uncultural rhetoric” was *not* safely back in the wild west past, it went with the Americans to Vietnam (and necessitated the Civil Rights movement), and it was more recently there at Abu Ghraib, too.⁹³ Vince Brewton finds the essence of Blood Meridian in the words of the judge, “War endures ... War was always here. Before man was, war waited for him” (248) :

The war waged by Holden and his associates is by its nature endless and in its essence less the pursuit of an object than the practice of a trade,

⁹⁰ Dee Brown, Bury my Heart at Wounded Knee. (New York : Henry Holt & Company, 2000 [1970]): 444.

⁹¹ Herr, 35.

⁹² Robert L. Jarrett. Cormac McCarthy. (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1997): 93

⁹³ There is a rather prescient section in Dispatches that flies past Vietnam into Iraq. In discussing chaplains’ roles in assisting America’s Vietnam efforts, Herr wrote, “Holy war, long-nose *jihad* like a face-off between one god who would hold the coonskin to the wall while we nailed it it, and another whose detachment would see the blood run out of ten generations, if that was how long it took the wheel to go around.” Michael Herr, 45.

“the ultimate trade,” as Holden calls it. (248)⁹⁴

But the judge is the apologist for the scalphunters, the Justifier General of the enterprise, and to listen to his logic is to fall into a trap. To McCarthy, American frontier violence is cyclical, a meridian connecting the past to the present and the future, and not simply a line connecting the civilised present to the savage past.

Vietnam was not the whole story, however, and competing for attention on television and in the papers was the spectacle of Wounded Knee II, and the military might of white America versus the lightly armed but nevertheless still arrogant Sioux, redux. Richard Nixon resigned in 1974 during the Watergate and OPEC crises. Three Mile Island, the Iran hostage humiliation, and the Contra crisis all occurred / began in 1979 and a reeling and disillusioned America headed into recession. And this was the progress of American civilisation? Judging by what we know of McCarthy from the scant known biographical details, and the nature of his next novel, Cormac McCarthy did not believe that for an instant. And being a true artist, and not a theory-spavined academic, he did not reach for a bucket of whitewash, but rather the biggest brush and bucket of blood-red paint he could find.

⁹⁴ Brewton, 131.

CHAPTER 2.
From Columbus to McCarthy ; Building a 'moving box'.

**What is a 'Texas'? - The 'moving box' - Tejas -
Columbian Exchange - *Barbarous Indians* - tejas - Caddoes -
an exterminating war - geography -
cotton - space and theory.**

The first chapter introduced Cormac McCarthy and his bloody novel of the 1850 *Borderlands*, and connections were made establishing frontiers and violence, and the bizarre cultural practice of taking souvenirs of that frontier / borderlands violence, of which scalps are an interesting example. The purpose of this chapter is to set out the antecedents, or prehistory to the events that Cormac McCarthy covers in *Blood Meridian*. Some of the ground covered herein will be geographic, as the physical bounds of Texas are discussed and the idea of a "moving box" of Texas territory and cultural identity is introduced. Within that "moving box" is : physical space, the economic reasons for acquiring that space, the violent acts of acquisition and resistance, the individuals and groups involved in those acts, and the justifications for those acts -- history, in other words. Much of that history belongs to Indian tejas, the antecedent for Spanish Tejas and for Euroamerican Texas. The first issue to be dealt with is to ask and hopefully define the question, ¿What is a Texas?, or more precisely, what was a Texas in 1850? The easiest aspect of this question to deal with is the geographic and political boundaries of the region, the outside as it were, of a "moving box."

To understand the achievement of the physical / political boundaries of Texas is to have insight into the nature of Texans, and also to have the beginnings of an appreciation of just what a contested area antebellum Texas was. *Blood Meridian* gives readers a fair notion of what that contestation sometimes looked like. While conflict is a daily fact of life for most humans, it is reasonable to say that a great number of the inhabitants of

1850 Texas conducted their lives in an atmosphere of continuous and unrelenting conflict completely unknowable to us coddled academics, but perhaps familiar to a modern Chechnayan or Somali. To discuss the physical political / boundaries of Texas, this paper will utilise a concept taken from an examination of another great American conflict, Stephen Crane's The Red Badge of Courage. Crane's metaphor, "the moving box", represented the Civil War regiment, a group of men who subsumed their own identities that the regiment might function as one body and perform two equally important tasks, one being the destruction of Rebel troops, the other being the preservation of the Union regiment and its individual components. The first function could not proceed without the success of the latter, and the latter served no purpose but for enabling the performance of the first. Such is the nature of the moving box model for the purposes of this paper -- the occupants of the geographic area as defined by the boundaries finalised in 1850, willing or unwilling, opposed to or in favour of, Indian, Mexican or Euro-American, all contributed to the formation of the State of Texas. The boundaries of Texas were formed out of and in response to intense conflict amongst the principals both within Texas, and without.

The political boundaries of 1850 Texas had their beginnings in the Spanish enterprise in the Columbian New World. The southern coast of tejas⁹⁵ was first 'discovered' by Europeans in 1519 when the Spaniard Alonso Álvarez de Piñeda circumnavigated and charted the Gulf of Mexico. Piñeda and his four ships laid up briefly at the mouth of the Rio Grande (River of Palms to Piñeda).⁹⁶ Some seven years later Spanish treasure hunters came to grief off Gulf Coast Florida, and eighty of them led by "treasurer and high sheriff" Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca built small boats and headed west to hopefully find

⁹⁵ See **Texas / Tejas / tejas** in Foreword.

⁹⁶ Odie B. Faulk, Land of Many Frontiers : A history of the American Southwest (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968): 6.

relief in New Spain.⁹⁷ This party made it as far as Galveston Island (Isle of Misfortune to de Vaca), and are relevant to this discussion nominally as the European discoverers of Tejas, but more importantly because they introduce several themes that will resurface in this discussion of 1850 Texas. The Spaniards were sighted on landing by Karanakawa Indians who first terrified the interlopers and then fed them - in exchange for gifts. What followed was a textbook exemplar of the 'Columbian Exchange'.⁹⁸ The Karanakawas were a subsistence economy people, and when Cabeza de Vaca and company landed it was spring, and food was plentiful. During the seasonal course of the following year, winter brought wet and cold, famine and disease. Who knows who infected whom, but by spring 1529 half the Karanakawas and sixty five of the Spaniards were dead (cholera, most probably an indigenous North American disease, the likeliest suspect).⁹⁹ Cabeza de Vaca and the fifteen remaining Spaniards, now weakened and unarmed, had the dubious honour of experiencing a reversal of the 'natural order of things' as they were enslaved by the Karanakawas. Somewhat ironically, given the microbial holocaust they had just survived, Cabeza de Vaca saved himself and followers by convincing the Karanakawas he was a great healer. Six years later, 1535, Cabeza de Vaca with two soldiers and a Moorish slave managed to escape the Karanakawas and spent a year walking across Tejas and northern Mexico (via New Mexico and Colorado by some accounts), finally reaching Spanish civilisation at Culiacán on the Golfo de California in May 1536.

Upon reaching Spanish civilisation de Vaca would, in keeping with the Columbian Exchange, infect his countrymen with the disease of ideas. The first of these was that of that illusive city of gold (like the Kingdom of Saguenay, always just up the river)

⁹⁷ Faulk (1968): 6.

⁹⁸ Alfred W. Crosby.

⁹⁹ At least one scientific source considers that cholera was an indigenous American disease that was exported to Europe through Viking contact. If this is the case then Napoleon owes his demise to an American germ, for it was cholera that ended his dreams of a Russian province.

that would launch repeated expeditions including that of Coronado (1540-42) who sought a “gilded land”¹⁰⁰ but found only “nothing but cows and sky.”¹⁰¹ The second was the notion of the poor Karanakawas as being mud-hut cannibals, a reputation that would stick with that unfortunate nation until their virtual extinction in the mid 1800s. Here we see the construction of the vital connection a conquering race seems to require in order to pursue its own best interests materially in what will of necessity be a barbarous process : attacking the legitimacy of the connection between an indigenous people and their resources. When de Vaca was grilled for information it was the mythical Seven Cities of Cibolla his interrogators wanted to hear about, a “gilded land.”¹⁰² That de Vaca saw no sign of wealth of any kind was immaterial, but what he did provide Spain was priceless. His information that the Karanakawas, who had undoubtedly saved his life, were cannibalistic savages would justify any harsh treatment the Spanish could conceive of inflicting upon them ; de Vaca had, wittingly or not, condemned the Karanakawas to be classified as *Barbarous Indians*. The Karanakawas would pay the highest price any people could pay for being classified as value - less barbarians. Estimated to have had a population of some 3,000 in 1690, they were extinct as a recognisable group decades before Frederick

¹⁰⁰ Richardson, Rupert N., Cary D. Wintz, Adrian Anderson, Ernest Wallace (8th ed., 2001). Texas : The Lone Star State (Prentice Hall: Upper Saddle River NJ): 22ff. Cabeza de Vaca’s repeated protestations that there were no signs of mineral wealth in Tejas fell on deaf ears. Likely his audience realised his antipathy towards returning to *el Norte*. To me the Spanish belief in, and drive to find, the golden mountain was their true religion. Literally nothing could dissuade 15th to 19th century Spaniards that there was not some huge mountain of gold underneath the next Indian hutment. Of course the Spanish *did* find the wealth they were searching for in Mexico and New Mexico and had the Spanish found the gold in California before Sutter did America would look a lot different today.

¹⁰¹ Richardson (8th ed.): 24. This phrase, “cows and sky” has always been a puzzlement. Here presuming that Coronado was referring to bison, although why he would refer to them as bovines is a mystery.

¹⁰² *OpCit.*

Jackson Turner declared the American frontier closed in 1893.¹⁰³ It would be the Karanakawas' neighbors the Hasinai who supplied the Spanish with a name for the new territory ; tejas, meaning friend or ally.¹⁰⁴

Cabeza de Vaca was of course but the opening salvo in a barrage of Spanish expeditions to Tejas, which came in time to mean to the Spanish those lands north of Mexico between the Californias in the west and Florida in the east, and basically open-ended to the north. New Mexico would provide the wealth the Spaniards sought, as reflected in its name. Tejas however would remain a frontier, a place for missions, cows, and the few settlers brave or desperate enough to risk their lives on a daily basis to protect a Spanish claim to a land of "nothing but cows and sky."¹⁰⁵ This frontier "moved constantly,"¹⁰⁶ and was inhabited by thousands of highly motivated indigenes who had one thing in common, they all rejected "the Spanish presence, whether it took the form of landed estate, mine or presidio."¹⁰⁷ And in spite of continuous efforts to solve the problem, "Texas would always remain the most sparsely populated of Spain's northern frontiers,"¹⁰⁸ and the least profitable as well. If a Spaniard was then asked what a Tejas was he might have responded, 'a bitter disappointment,' as the Seven Cities of Cibolla proved to be a mirage.

The Spanish then not only defined what Tejas was in the sense of boundaries, but they also went a long ways in defining the identity of those who belonged there. The Spanish phrase, 'Barbarous Indians', is key I believe to understanding much of what will

¹⁰³ Russell Thornton, American Indian Holocaust and Survival : A population history since 1492 (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987): Table 5-12 at page 131.

¹⁰⁴ Richardson (8th ed.): 1.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.* 24.

¹⁰⁶ Brian Hamnett, A Concise History of Mexico (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999): 106.

¹⁰⁷ Hamnett: 107.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.* 107.

happen in 1850 Texas relating to the scalphunting industry. To see the phrase in the context of de Vaca is to understand both what the phrase means, and how very useful it is. First, the Karanakawas were barbarous because they had a 'low level' of civilisation that centered upon the acquisition of seasonal food stuffs. By many accounts they did engage in anthropagy when times were lean, as de Vaca and his surviving crew undoubtedly did as well. But what really made the Karanakawas barbarous was that they had no wealth of any kind, they were not even proximate to any source of wealth, and they lived in a disease inducing swampy environment. This made them functionally useless to the Spaniards. Had the Karanakawas by some miracle converted en masse to Catholicism, it would have caused complications, as they would have then possessed souls, but that did not happen and the Karanakawas remained to the Spanish barbarous and barbarously poor. To be perceived by the Spanish to be soulless and unnecessary was not a good position to be in. This would become apparent when the Spanish introduction of range cattle to Tejas would make the Karanakawas' scrub home a paradise for cows, who do not have souls either, but did have some very limited commercial value. The precise English equivalent of the term *Barbarous Indians*, was of course Savage Indians.

Remember that de Vaca's job description on his venture to Tejas was "treasurer and high sheriff," an interesting juxtaposition of his functions of procuring and leading. In de Vaca's company were, of course, priests who would administer the third function of the Spanish colonial venturers, that of supplying the moral justification for any actions the soldiers would undertake in pursuing the material desires and requirements of an empire built upon gold and silver. Unable to de-heathenise the Karanakawas, they were then able to condemn them.

These three pillars of the Spanish enterprise -- locating resources, taking posses-

sion of them, and generating the legal / spiritual justification for doing so will be shown in this paper to also typify the 1850 scalphunting enterprise, and perhaps all imperialist enterprises. The scalphunters, fictional and historical, certainly practised locating and procuring scalps, while the judge provided the justification for them doing so -- in real life Angel Trías and the Chihuahuan government handled that important function. These three pillars are all necessary to each venture, but the order in which they take place in individual scenarios is largely irrelevant, but for academic purposes. Of course the venturers seem always to have the third requirement looked after before launching the exploration phase. For the Spanish this took the form of converting heathen souls, for the less overtly righteous Texans and Americans the orthodoxy was Manifest Destiny. The scalphunters themselves operated on the model set by James Kirker which required no higher justification than that they came, they saw and they scalped -- for a profit. Then they rode on.

Who knows when tejas was first 'discovered' and occupied by humans? Archaeological records indicate tejas has known continuous indigenous inhabitation of at least ten, but perhaps as many as thirty thousand years.¹⁰⁹ Interestingly, while being bounded on three sides by highly advanced indigenous civilisations : to the north and east, the mound builders of Cahokia and the other great Mississippian cities, to the north and west the Hohokam (Anasazi) with their ball courts and irrigation, and to the south the Mayans,¹¹⁰ advanced civilisation seems to have been largely immune to the attractions

¹⁰⁹ T. R. Fehrenbach. Lone Star : A history of Texas and the Texans. Rev. ed. (New York: DaCapo, 2000[1968]) 3ff. Texas occupation dates to the Pleistocene (Ice Age), and archeologists, "who once firmly thought that Indians were the first proprietors of North America, grudgingly named [the] original Texans Paleo-Americans, or simply, Old Americans."

¹¹⁰ Colin G. Calloway, One Vast Winter Count : The Native West before Lewis and Clark. (Lincoln : University of Nebraska Press, 2003.): 75. And, Rupert N. Richardson,, Adrian Anderson, Ernest Wallace. Texas : The Lone Star State. 6th ed. (Prentice

of tejas (some would opine that it still is!). As a geographic area, it seems to this writer that tejas was defined by outside indigenous forces thousands of years before the Spanish imposition, and largely defined as to what it was not. Tejas was not the central plains, nor the northern mexican jungle, it did not border the Mississippi River, and it was not the mountainous and mineral-rich west. It generally did not support large-scale indigenous agriculture, but it was variously overrun by millions of bison and malarial swamps, neither of which were conducive to bipedal settlement. And, tejas was also a place people went across to get somewhere else. Judging by where the advanced indigenous populations thrived, tejas was not their homeland(s). What Texas is today geographically is what tejas has been historically, although Texans have at times wished it to be much larger.

As there are exceptions to every law, so the Caddoan and Hasinai peoples were the exception to the above observation about culture. The Caddoes and the Hasinai occupied the turf roughly along where the Louisiana border is today, and the Caddoes were possibly the first Indian group in tejas.¹¹¹ With linguistic ties to the Iroquoian family, the Caddoans followed the river valleys to Texas, arriving some several hundreds of years B. C.¹¹² While the Mississippian culture peaked “around A. D. 1200,”¹¹³ there were still likely tens of thousands of Caddoes in 1492. They were agriculturalists (the three sisters,¹¹⁴ nuts, etc.), built dome houses, wove rush blankets, produced some of the finest

Hall:Upper Saddle River NJ, 1993): 9. Neither Richardson nor Calloway bear any responsibility for this writer’s definition of tejas.

¹¹¹ The spelling of Caddo seems universal, but the plural varies. Caddoes seems to have been the general 19th century spelling.

¹¹² Todd F. Smith, The Caddo Indians (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1995): 7.

¹¹³ Todd F. Smith: 7.

¹¹⁴ The three sisters being corn, beans and squash / pumpkin. The three are natural companions as the bean plants replace the nitrogen burnt by the corn. They can also be (continued...)

pottery “produced by an aboriginal culture in the United States,”¹¹⁵ buried their dead in mounds and had a complicated religion partly based on fire.¹¹⁶ Anyone living near the Great Plains had to account for fire, of course, and these Texas Indians learned to lose their fear of it and use it as a tool. Fire was used both to roundup and hunt animals and to clear land attract grazing animals “to the green-up of old burns.”¹¹⁷ Cabeza de Vaca would witness these people using fire circa 1530 :

Those from further inland ... go about with a firebrand, setting fire to the plains and timber so as to drive off the mosquitoes, and also to get lizards and similar things which they eat, to come out of the soil. In the same manner they kill deer, encircling them with fires, and they do it also to deprive them of pasture, compelling them to go for food where the people want.¹¹⁸

Burning was also important to the agriculturalist Indians because it fertilized the soil and also assisted the growth of hardwood nut and fruit trees. The continuous burning also made it easier for incoming Euroamericans to access tejas as they had no need to hack through endless brush.

The Caddoes and the Hasinai occupied the lands around Texarkana and Nacogdoches, where the kid first enters Texas in Blood Meridian. Numbering about 9,000¹¹⁹ by a Spanish count in 1690, they are invisible in McCarthy’s book. This is not a mistake on McCarthy’s part. As these people had improved and maintained east tejas as an agricultural preserve they had inadvertently paved the way for Euroamerican agriculture,

...grown all three together on the same plot as the squashes occupy the ground with corn plants growing above and supplying trellises for creeper beans. Beans and corn are also easily dried and transported, and therefore constitute a tradable commodity.

¹¹⁵ Todd F. Smith: 7.

¹¹⁶ Richardson (6th ed.): 11.

¹¹⁷ Stephen J. Pyne. Fire : A brief history (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001):49.

¹¹⁸ Pyne: 49.

¹¹⁹ Russell Thornton. American Indian Holocaust and Survival : A population history since 1492 (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987): 130.

and they also had the misfortune to be the most proximate Indian population to an American population that was by 1830 already bursting the seams of the agricultural South. Various epidemics, beginning with smallpox in the 1600s, and including cholera, measles, influenza would reduce the Caddoes and the Hasinai to the point that their 1890 population of some 536 individuals would represent a serious rebound from their population nadir at around 1860.¹²⁰ Pressure also came as Cherokees and other Indian groups were pushed by the American advance and in turn encroached on Caddoan lands.¹²¹ Of course there was also sporadic open warfare between the Caddoans and their allies and the incoming Texans. One example of this also shows the efforts of the remaining East Texas Spanish population in resisting Texan hegemony.

In August 1838 a "Mexican refugee from Nacogdoches" named Captain Vincente Córdova was sent by Mexico to stir Texas Indians into rebellion against Texas.¹²² Córdova would raise some 300 Mexicans at Nacogdoches as well as a handful of Indian allies, but would face a combined reaction from Texas and American troops, and the rebellion would fade away without a battle.¹²³ It was entirely possible to have Spanish / Mexican blood and be a Texan, but it was no longer possible for any part of Texas to remain Spanish / Mexican. As the Spanish occupancy of tejas ended the purely indigenous epoch, so the Córdova insurrection may be seen as a closing of the Spanish Tejas era, for it was obvious to everyone that the Texans were now ascendant over their territory. Everyone except the West and Central Texas Indians, of course.

Córdova had lost without a battle, but not without consequences, for it must be assumed that those Mexicans who did rise up and had to flee with Córdova lost their land and possessions at Nacogdoches. Texas Indians generally also paid a price for the

¹²⁰ Thornton, 131.

¹²¹ Many sources, see Richardson (6th ed.): 128ff for example.

¹²² Todd F. Smith, 138ff.

¹²³ Todd F. Smith, 138. This number included both men and women.

Caddoan / Cherokee alliance with Córdoba as the conflict would help get Mirebeau Buonaparte Lamar get elected President in September 1838 over the reconciliationist Sam Houston. Lamar, in his first address to the Texas Congress announced that it was time

for the prosecution of an exterminating war on [Texas Indian] warriors ; which will admit of no compromise and have no termination except in their total extinction or total expulsion.¹²⁴

There would be no barbarous Indians in Lamar's 'moving box', and he wasted no time in putting this plan into action in East Texas. In 1843 the bulk of the Caddoes signed a peace treaty with American War Department representative Zachary Taylor in Indian Territory (Oklahoma), which indicates that their days in Texas were essentially over by then, although scattered remnants of the nation would still cling to their ancestral lands.¹²⁵

The Caddoes can be used to illustrate in microcosm the fate of Texas Indians. Central to this project is a canny observation by Michael Ignatieff on the general framework of Indian and Euroamerican interactions:

As long as aboriginal nations had the power to make war on settler peoples, settlers had a strong incentive to seek peace through treaties. As soon as these settler communities expanded to sufficient size to compete effectively with aboriginal tribes, the settlers claimed exclusive titles to land, ignored treaty agreements, and pushed native peoples into the hinterlands. Rights were conceded when power was equal; rights were taken away when power flowed to the settler side.¹²⁶

This is precisely the overall process that typified relations between Texas and Texas Indians, as exemplified by the Caddoes. One 1835 incident involving Sam Houston, the Texan war-leader, illustrates this proposition, as he left the war with the Mexicans to

¹²⁴ Todd F. Smith, 138

¹²⁵ Douglas R. Hurt. Indian Frontier, 1763-1846 (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2002): 208.

¹²⁶ Michael Ignatieff. The Rights Revolution. (Toronto: Anansi, 2000): 59.

treat with the East Texas Indians.¹²⁷ During the Texas Revolution the Caddo / Hasinai population was still in the thousands and, in combination with the Cherokees, posed a serious threat to the Texas flank.¹²⁸ Apparently Houston realised, as Napoleon had not, that a multiple front war was a very bad idea, and the Caddoes 1835 exchanged a promise of eternal peace with Texas for reserved lands on the Brazos River. However in 1839, following the Texas victory over Mexico, the Caddo tribes were gathered in three groups, all located outside the Republic of Texas.¹²⁹ As the Caddoes now fell under American jurisdiction, America now became a political player in Texas relations with its Indian population, and America pressed Texas to treat with and provide reserves for its own indigenous population. This pressure would be amplified after Texas became a state in 1845, but Texas remained stubborn and resisted Zachary Taylor, then American President. Millard Fillmore, having replaced Taylor who died in office, would in 1850 beg Texas “to assign a small portion of her vast domain for the provisional occupancy of the small remnants of tribes within her borders.”¹³⁰ Texas would respond by voting in February 1850 to reject extending the protections of the federal trade and intercourse laws to Texas Indians,¹³¹ in essence saying that America could do anything it liked with its Indians, but that *Texas Indians were emphatically not American Indians.*¹³²

¹²⁷ Richardson (6th ed.): 129.

¹²⁸ “In 1834 Juan N. Almonte, after a visit to Texas, placed the population at 24,700, including slaves. In 1836 there were probably 5,000 blacks, 30,000 Anglo-Americans, 3,470 Hispanics, and 14,200 Indians in Texas.” Texas Census and census records.(Accessed 15 March, 2005): <<http://www.tsha.utexas.edu>>

¹²⁹ Todd F. Smith , 143.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.* 163.

¹³¹ *Ibid.* 162.

¹³² There is a very interesting parallel here between the relationship between the United States, Texas, and Indians, and Canada, British Columbia, and Indians. British Columbia and Texas both had the same sort of belligerent attitude towards Indians and senior governments that were typified by a refusal to treat with their indigenous populations. Canadian exceptionalism requires that it be noted here that BC’s relations with Indians were not nearly as bloody as were those of Texas. I hope to explore this notion in the future.

Other Indian groups will be examined as they impact the course of the kid's transit across Texas in 1850, but the Euroamerican experience of the Caddoes was common to most Texas Indian groups, with one very strong proviso. The Caddoan ties to their territory were doomed to be extinguished early-on by encroaching Euroamericans precisely because those ties were so strong. Burial mounds, houses and fields are simply not portable. The Caddoans relied upon agriculture and manipulation of their environment to produce food and trade goods that allowed them succeed as a people. Other groups, ironically those who had a more "primitive" and portable socioeconomic structure, would prove to be much harder to deal with. Crudely put, it was simply not necessary to devise a scalphunting system to deal with the Caddoans as disease and the seizure of their production lands largely accomplished their erasure from the landscape without open warfare having been necessary. To return to the opening question '¿What is a Texas?' then, Texas is in part a geographical tejas virtually cleared of Indian presence.

As seen on a map, the physical representation of the State of Texas is an amazing amalgam of surveyor-friendly straight lines on the northwest and western (as well as a brief north - south run on the upper Louisiana border) perimeters, joined together by a mass of squiggly lines that represent political boundaries mimicking riverine courses and coastal meanders. Each of these lines and meanders represents, if not always a physical formation, then certainly a political one, and each of those was a charged and violent contest between Texans, and anyone who presumed to stand between Texans and their manifest destiny. It is important to understand that each of these contests also represented a loss (or even worse, a compromise) for many Texans who, in 1850, viewed most of New Mexico, Arizona, California, and northern Mexico as more properly belonging within the bounds of a greater Texas. That Texas did not expand to include this vast and amorphous territory is more testament to the resistance of external political entities

(Mexico, New Mexico, the U.S.), than it was to the boundless efforts and energies of Texans. Conveniently, Texas would assume its final shape during the year of 1850.

Beginning in the south, the coastline of Texas is defined by the run along the Gulf of Mexico, which earth scientists believe acquired its unique circular shape from an ancient meteor impact.¹³³ While certainly one of Texas's busiest border areas, it was also naturally the least contested, if only because the indigenous contestants were not possessed of navies.¹³⁴ This land-bound mindset would punish the Mexican side in the Texas war of Independence when the Mexicans were unable to resupply their land troops in their revolting province because the Texans controlled the three known ports, and the rest of the coastline remained (after 200 years of 'occupation'), largely uncharted.¹³⁵ The furthest western point at which the Texas border intersects the *Golfo* is at Port Isabel where the Rio Grande River terminates. On the map this would appear to be the 'natural' point for a border between the most northern of the Mexican States: Tamaulipas, Nuevo Leon, Coahuila and Chihuahua, and Tejas / Texas. While we associate the Rio Grande as the divisor between Mexico and Texas, history shows us that this boundary was anything but natural, as far as the Spanish / Mexican regimes were concerned. While the Gulf coastline has always formed the southernmost boundary of Texas, precisely where that boundary began was fiercely contested. The Texas Revolution resulted in a border at the Nueces River, with its termination at Corpus Christie. This satisfied no one, and Texas's interim President David Burnet had his hands full in keeping the Texas army from marching to Matamoros as to war. American intervention in the form of the

¹³³ One cannot take advantage of every opportunity for metaphoring.

¹³⁴ While the British, French and Spanish and Americans all sent ships to the Gulf and pirates such as Jean Lafitte plied his trade there, naval actions as far as Texas goes were limited, I believe, to the scrap between the nascent State of Texas and Mexico, 1835-36. Texas was possessed of a small navy which operated out of Galveston and harassed Mexican supply ships.

¹³⁵ Fehrenbach, 201. "The only advantage Texas had in this war was geography."

Mexican-American war would result in a more official 'official' Texas boundary at the Rio Grande, achieved through the Mexican Cession of 1848.

Moving counterclockwise, the easternmost terminus is at Port Arthur and separates Texas from Louisiana. This section of the Texas border had been 'debated' for some two hundred years with those on the Texas side including Texas (State and Republic), Mexico and Spain, and those on the Louisiana side including the U.S., France, Spain (!), France again, and England. The run from Port Arthur follows the Sabine River and Lake system until heading due north for 100 miles along northwestern Louisiana, and southwestern Arkansas borders. These boundaries were decided upon at the achievement of statehood, of Louisiana in 1812 and Arkansas in 1836.

The northeastern bounds of Texas were also imposed by the United States, and form the southern boundary of (in 1850) Oklahoma Territory which was the federal dumping ground for dispossessed and unwanted Indians from as far away as Illinois and Florida. Oklahoma territory -- part of the 1803 Louisiana Purchase, it would not achieve statehood until 1907 -- began serving this function following the implementation of Andrew Jackson's 1830 *Indian Removal Act*.¹³⁶ This 'wasteland', for so it was thought to be, would become invaluable to Texas legislators as a dumping ground for those scant few Indians whom disease, scalphunters and the Texas Rangers did not exterminate. Indians could have their own moving box, and it was not going to be in Texas. Jackson's own voice best justifies and explains this process, which would be so amenable to 1850 Texans:

The States which had so long been retarded in their improvement by
the Indian tribes residing in their midst are at length removed from the

¹³⁶ 1838 was the year of the infamous *Trail of Tears*, Winfield Scott's cattle drive of 14,000 Cherokees out of Georgia to Oklahoma during which some 3,000 would die of hunger and exposure. The term was coined to describe the Choctaw removal of 1831. The process of removal was ongoing in 1850. Frederick E. Hoxie, Ed. Encyclopedia of North American Indians. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1996): 639.

evil, and this unhappy race -- the original dwellers in our land -- are now placed in a situation where we may well hope that they will share in the Blessings of civilization and be saved from the degradation and destruction to which they were rapidly hastening while they remained in the States ... the philanthropist will rejoice that the remnant of that ill-fated race has at length been placed beyond the reach of injury or oppression.¹³⁷

The construction of this moving box was a process as much defined by outside forces as it was by those within the bounds of 18th century Texas. Indeed, it would be foolhardy in the extreme to attribute the achievement of this State solely to the efforts and desires, no matter how enthusiastic and ruthless they may have been, of Texans alone. 1850 Texas was inextricably entwined with several powerful external political / economic entities which obviously include Mexico and the Yankee section of the U.S., but also, and less obviously, England, Germany and the American South. What bound Texas to these nations / regions was economics, and economics in its most peculiar guise -- chattel slavery. Texas was but one of the sites where "the hunger of the free Northern population in the West collided with the demand of the slaveocracy for more territory."¹³⁸ To utilise the moving box metaphor then, if the box is the construction of the state of Texas, the box was designed to contain cotton, and is carried along not just by Texans, but the market factors that motivated them.

The above process, while hardly unique in history, has its peculiarities specific to Texas and the borderlands. As this section started with the Spanish incursion into Texas, so must any discussion of Texas statehood and the scalp trade of the 1800s. Texas was always a frontier to Spain and Mexico both. While Spanish influence was immense in this geography, as will be examined in other sections, neither Spain nor Mexico

¹³⁷ Andrew Jackson (1832) "Farewell Address." In John William Ward, Andrew Jackson - Symbol for an Age (New York: Oxford, 1962[1955]): 41. As Tocqueville wrote of official America and Indians, "It is impossible to destroy men with more respect for the laws of humanity."

¹³⁸ Noel Ignatiev, How the Irish Became White (New York: Routledge, 1995): 85.

ever possessed Tejas in the Euroamerican sense of stateness. France had recognised this in 1766 when the Marqués de Rubí had assessed “the supposed frontier of Spanish power in Texas as wholly imaginary.”¹³⁹ Both Mexico and Spain would claim Tejas, but the 1836 rebellion would prove that claims are one thing, and possession another thing entirely.¹⁴⁰ To Mexico and Spain, Tejas always remained outside the box of what constituted Mexicanness, and this was reflected in the abject failure of their efforts to populate this frontier. One aspect of Mexicanness that separated Mexicans and Texans in Texas was the issue of slavery.

Stephen Austin and the original “Old Three Hundred”¹⁴¹ families largely accommodated themselves to Mexican law, and done very well in terms of property acquisition in doing so. Austin wrote in 1829 that the Mexican government in Texas was “the most liberal and munificent Govt. on earth to emigrants -- after being here one year you will oppose a change even to Uncle Sam.”¹⁴² The Austin family had been financially ruined in land speculation, and Stephen Austin moved from Missouri to Tejas and because “a man without money, but with an official grant, had a much better chance to succeed on Spanish territory than on American soil.”¹⁴³ But Austin’s immigrant families would be primarily Southerners, and what they brought with them was cotton knowledge and slavery. Mexico in 1829 enacted against slavery specifically to counter the Texans’ impulse, and part of this enactment was a restriction on American immigration. The Bustamente government reasoned that if Americans posed these problems, than it was best to keep them out,¹⁴⁴ but the agitation around these laws would be the primary driving

¹³⁹ Fehrenbach, 67. Fehrenbach here paraphrasing Rubí.

¹⁴⁰ One relatively recent and still touching illustrator of this notion was the imbecilic tussle between Britain and Argentina over the Falklands Islands.

¹⁴¹ Richardson (6th ed.): 63.

¹⁴² *Ibid.* 80. The spelling is Austin’s.

¹⁴³ Fehrenbach, 136.

¹⁴⁴ Richardson (6th ed.): 46ff.

force behind the Texas rebellion against Mexico. Richardson (6th ed.) held that

[o]f all the underlying causes of the revolution, slavery is the most difficult to evaluate and measure ... Mexican policy contained in constitutions and laws threatened slavery; many, perhaps most Texans, supported slavery and were determined to retain the institution. [And yet, to] attribute the outbreak of revolution in 1835 to slavery would seem to require further evidence[.]¹⁴⁵

In 2001, Richardson (8th ed.) was still sticking to his guns, as apparently no pertinent research had yet been undertaken :

The answer to just how significant was slavery in comparison with other influences? The answer to that question is not clear and perhaps can be answered only through intuition.¹⁴⁶

Richardson also downplays the “extent of cultural differences”¹⁴⁷ between Texans and Texicans as a cause of the revolution, while Fehrenbach says that cultural differences were unquestionably a major cause :

The real, underlying cause of the Texas Revolution was extreme ethnic difference between two sets of men, neither of whom, because of different ideas of government, religion, and society, had any respect for the other. Added to this was the inherent distaste for Anglo-Americans for the racial composition of the Mexican nation.¹⁴⁸

One might add that the Mexican nation enthusiastically reciprocated that “inherent distaste” for Americans in general and Texans in particular.

The facts of the matter are that the 1820s and 1830s were a time of tremendous influx of population into Texas, that population was predominately Southern American, and the majority of those who were not, were Negroe slaves:

The estimated population of Texas was 7,000 in 1806, and it was not much greater fifteen years later when Stephen F. Austin founded his col-

¹⁴⁵ Richardson (6th ed.): 94.

¹⁴⁶ Richardson, Rupert N., Cary D. Wintz, Adrian Anderson, Ernest Wallace, 8th ed. . Texas : The Lone Star State (Prentice Hall: Upper Saddle River NJ, 2001): 99.

¹⁴⁷ Fehrenbach, 166.

¹⁴⁸ Fehrenbach, 168.

ony on the Brazos River. In 1826 a census of the Austin colony showed 1,800 persons, 443 of whom were slaves. The colonization period of 1821-35 brought many settlers; the population was estimated at 20,000 in 1831. In 1834 Juan N. Almonte, after a visit to Texas, placed the population at 24,700, including slaves. In 1836 there were probably 5,000 blacks, 30,000 Anglo-Americans, 3,470 Hispanics, and 14,200 Indians in Texas. A population of about 50,000 is indicated by the vote for the first president of the republic in 1836, and the vote of 1845, the last year of the republic, indicated a population of 125,000. In 1847 a partial enumeration was made showing a population of 135,000, of whom 39,000 were slaves. In a census of the state for 1848 the total population was given as 158,356, of whom 42,455 were slaves.¹⁴⁹

By the first federal census in 1850, Texas was 54% "Southern Anglo-American," and 28% "Negroe," which for all intents and purposes meant 'slave.'¹⁵⁰ Stephen Austin, a long time foe of slavery in Texas had bowed to the wishes of his nascent countrymen and conceded in 1835 that "Texas must be a slave *country*. It is no longer a matter of doubt."¹⁵¹

There were many reasons for Texas to seize independence from Mexico, but the driving force for doing so was that for the incoming Southerners the chattel slavery cotton economy was what they understood and sought to replicate, that Texas was made for cotton growing, and that Mexico could probably be defeated in a fight. No doubt had Tejas not been a potential cotton growing paradise, the questing Americans would have still sought the territory as a 'natural' extension of the States. However in reality cotton was the driving force behind American expansion into Tejas, slavery was the motor of the cotton industry, and slavery was unequivocally the point issue in Tejan / Mexican conflict that led to rebellion.

To update the narrative framework of this paper then : what is a Texas? Texas

¹⁴⁹ Texas Census and census records (15 March, 2005). <<http://www.tsha.utexas.edu>>.

¹⁵⁰ Terry G. Jordan. "Population Origins in Texas, 1850." *Geographical Review* 59 : 1 (January, 1969): 85.

¹⁵¹ Richardson (8th ed.): 99.

was from its inception a slave state and a state that would have its early development powered by the cotton economy, as would be perfectly clear by 1850. The 'moving box' of Texas identity then, was from its inception a construction specifically designed to facilitate and account for / justify a slaveocracy in the Borderlands. Geographically, Texas on a map appears to be a part of the West, but in reality its population, its social, political and economic structure, and its connections to the outside world -- the "circumstances and the manners of the country,"¹⁵² in other words -- tell us that Texas was very much a part of the antebellum South.

Michel Foucault was not the first French expert American academics have called upon in times of need. One of the first, and still most-quoted, is Alexis de Tocqueville. Tocqueville never set foot in Texas, although he came as close as Natchez on the Mississippi in late 1831 on his grand tour of what he called America. However, this proximity allowed him to keenly observe and comment upon Borderlands race and political mores:

The Spaniards were unable to exterminate the Indian race by those unparalleled atrocities which brand them with indelible shame, nor did they even succeed in depriving it of its rights; but the Americans of the United States have accomplished this twofold purpose with singular felicity; tranquilly, legally, philanthropically, without shedding blood, and without violating a single great principle of morality in the eyes of the world. It is impossible to destroy men with more respect for the laws of humanity.¹⁵³

Alexis de Tocqueville had a knack for keen observation, sound analysis and prescient forecasting, but he would have been amazed at some of the wrinkles Texans came up with in carrying out the above agenda, supplying the scalphunting industry with both practitioners and product being just one of these. Now of course what the Texas' moving box contained was not just people and resources, but space -- space in its theoretical fou-

¹⁵² Alexis de Tocqueville, Democracy in America (New York: Bantam Classic, 2000 [1835]): 303.

¹⁵³ de Tocqueville, 410. Tocqueville is one of the cornerstones of the American Exceptionalism premise, and provided one does not actually *read* Democracy in America but sticks to secondhand bites of his prose, it is possible to see how Americans might be

cauldian sense, but also space in its physical guise as property. As the frontierers would endlessly discover, turning space, particularly when someone else thinks they own it, into property can be a chore fraught with peril. And, in 1850 Texas by force of law one had to be white to purchase land.¹⁵⁴

Tocqueville “claimed to support sovereignty,”¹⁵⁵ but he also questioned what that power could do in the hands of *hoi polloi*, and feared that it would devolve from theoretical incandescence into “a bad and dangerous thing.”¹⁵⁶ On his travels along the northern American frontier, Tocqueville found that,

tyrannical abuses frequently occur in America at the present day, but I maintain that no sure barrier is established against them, and that causes which mitigate the government are to be found in the circumstances and the manners of the country more than in its laws.¹⁵⁷

Tocqueville’s worst fears were to be realised in 1850 Texas, where American law existed in theory, at least for some male Euroamericans, but the “circumstances and the manners of the country” overrode any pretensions of justice for the majority of the inhabi-

flattered by his attentions. A closer inspection reveals his caustic and ironic view of America. True, he did believe that Americans were exceptional in many ways...many of them less than flattering, as here demonstrated. Americans, and Texans, were at least as efficient in exterminating North American Indians as were the Spanish- although the Spanish record of extermination in South, Central and Caribbean America was unsurpassed in recorded world history, ranking with the Roman annihilation of Carthage on anyone’s top ten list of genocides.

Democracy in America here reveals that the “Black Legend” was already well established when Tocqueville was writing up. The “Black Legend” was also a cornerstone of American Exceptionalism which allowed Americans to feel better about how they had treated with the Indians, as everyone knew that the Spanish had done ten times worse. As Jill Lepore writes, “Part of the mission of New England’s “city on a hill,” ... was to advertise the civility of the English colonists and to hold it in stark contrast with the barbarous cruelty of Spain’s conquistadors...” Jill Lepore (1999): 9.

¹⁵⁴ Neil Foley, The White Scourge : Mexicans, Blacks, and Poor Whites in Texas Cotton Culture (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997): 19.

¹⁵⁵ Daniel Lazare, “L’Amérique, Mon Amour.” *The Nation* (April 26, 2004): 27.

¹⁵⁶ de Tocqueville, 301.

¹⁵⁷ de Tocqueville, 303.

tants ; not even all Euroamericans belonged in the moving box. Tocqueville was more or less a believer in the noble savage construct of his era, and was also a charter member in what would be the “Vanishing Indian” paradigm. Democracy for Tocqueville was not therefore a universal or even necessary right, as the “Indians will perish in the same isolated condition in which they have lived.”¹⁵⁸ Negroes were another matter entirely, however, and Tocqueville’s interpretation of America seems prescient about the Civil war:

the destiny of the negroes is in some measure interwoven with that of the Europeans. These two races are attached to each other without intermingling,¹⁵⁹ and they are alike unable entirely to separate or combine. The most formidable of all the ills which threaten the future existence of the Union arises from the presence of a black population upon its territory ... in contemplating the cause of the present embarrassments or of the future dangers of the United States, the observer is invariably led to consider this as a primary fact.¹⁶⁰

For better or worse, the Spanish / Mexican – American Borderlands, within which Tejas was (and Texas is) but one integral part, is likely the most heavily theorized (if not historicised) region in America. This is in large part due to the fact that in the South and Southwest, as opposed to the West, the American moving box / territorial progression was confronted by other writing and record-keeping civilizations, England, Spain (later Mexico) and France, as well as a number of varied Indian tribes which enlivened / inhibited ‘progress’ in the same fashion as did the Plains tribes. In the South and Southwest, Frederick Jackson Turner’s frontier thesis trips over the sagebrush and lands flat on its face in the prickly pear reality that here the American westers were advancing, not by

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.* 411.

¹⁵⁹ How Tocqueville did not see, or chose not to see, the obvious “intermingling” of the races is hard to fathom. A subject for another paper.

¹⁶⁰ Tocqueville, 411. This brings to mind a class lecture by Brian W. Dippie who opined that one of the reasons that Frederick Jackson Turner’s frontier thesis had such legs was because it was *a*) descriptive, *b*) analytical, and *c*) predictive. Tocqueville also manages to here master all three elements as well. “The West that Was--and the West that is” (September 6, 2002).

stages into a savage wasteland, but inch by bloody inch into someone else's colonial backyard. This accounts for Texas's very irregular outline on a political map -- so different to the cookie-cutter shapes of most western states created by federal edict, and rather less complicated (if often no less violent) conquest. Texas looks as if it were fought over and drawn up by several committees, as in fact, it was ; not everyone wanted to be in the moving box.

As dynamic as the Borderlands were, in and of themselves (Indian and Euroamerican alike), they were in no wise isolated from the greater world. Settlers and workers, furs and scalps, ores and manufactured goods, animals and stockmen, raiding-parties and slaves, political and artistic impulses all flowed either into or out of the borderlands. Generally these flows were one way, particularly when they were forms of wealth. Gold, for instance, flowed out of the Borderlands in 1850, as it had in 1750. Furs followed the traditional movements south along water routes to the Gulf, or occasionally by land to Mexico. Euroamerican beeves were trailed west to California, south to Mexico, southeast to New Orleans and northeast to the States. Euroamerican horses were trailed in to bolster the blood of the little range horses that were so ideal for raiding and buffalo-hunting, but near totally useless for military purposes. The American germ, Republicanism, inflowed relentlessly, as it had despite the efforts of Mexico and Spain, and in the wake of the Mexican defeat would attempt to begin flowing south as well. James Kirker was already there, making an honest living turning scalps into gold.

CHAPTER 3.**From Herodotus to McCarthy : "Barbering" through the ages.****James Kirker - *proytecto* - *Quirquismo* - Genocide - Scalping -
exchange - Indian Tejas - The Angel Trías -**

Having looked at the geographic and historical bounds of the moving box of Texas, or the site of this thesis, it is time to turn to the central subject of this discussion. While it was Captain White's filibster that drew the kid into the Borderlands, it was the innovation of commercial scalphunting that paid his way once there. The scalphunters did not invent the practise of scalping, which predates Texas by millennia, but merely commercialise it. This chapter will briefly discuss that practise, and introduce some of the historical figures that introduced bounty scalphunting of west Texas Indians to the Borderlanders.

As alluded to previously, there is an historical character who is most obvious in his absence from Blood Meridian, and that is the inestimable James Kirker. Now, that he is not present in McCarthy's novel is historically defensible as Kirker was in 1849 / 50 making his farewell tour of the Borderlands on his way to retirement in California. One of his last acts before leaving was to abandon at Santa Fe a wagon-train of 49ers he was supposedly leading to Sacramento.¹⁶¹ However, that this individual is missing so completely from McCarthy's work is a major mystery, for James Kirker was not only the preeminent Borderlands scalphunter, he was also the architect of the scalphunting business, and it would be quite reasonable to suggest that he not merely took advantage of the entrepreneurial opportunity scalphunting offered, but he was instrumental to engen-

¹⁶¹ Ralph Adam Smith (1999): 217ff. R. A. Smith thinks Kirker left the train to attempt to get his family out of Mexico, and James's family felt that Kirker had convinced them to follow the southern route as he "wished to have an escort to take him safely to" New Mexico. The 49ers were apparently not amused at having been led from St. Louis to Santa Fe to be abandoned.

dering the whole bloody business. Kirker was to scalphunting what Henry Ford would be to cheap mass-produced automobiles ; he did not just supply the product, he invented the business. How Kirker achieved this is foundational to understanding Texas in 1850, and will here be examined in some depth.¹⁶² As John Wegner so elegantly states, “history is an important, viable character in Blood Meridian,”¹⁶³ and that character relies upon an unseen back story to be understood as history. That back story largely belongs to James Kirker.

James Kirker’s amazing life and career(s) on the 1830s -1850 Borderlands has been chronicled by, among other writers, William Cochran McGaw in Savage Scene and Ralph Adam Smith in Borderlander ,¹⁶⁴ and he is quite simply the most fascinating character this writer has encountered in reading of the 19th century American West. Kirker’s story from childhood is too interesting to profane by condensing into a paragraph here, so this paper will introduce the transplanted Scots-Irishman (1793 - 1853) as he enters the New Mexico Borderlands circa 1823 by means of a brief *curriculum vitae*.

Kirker first made his Borderlands living by trapping in New Mexico and trading furs both into Mexico and back the to the States. Kirker soon became allied with Robert McKnight at the gold and copper mines of Santa Rita (near Taos), which were associated

¹⁶² As one cannot look at the historicity of Blood Meridian without mentioning John Emil Sepich, one cannot consider scalphunting without crediting Ralph Adam Smith, whose Borderlander: The Life of James Kirker, 1793-1852 (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1999) forms the basis of this discussion of Kirker. William Cochran McGaw’s work on Kirker was also very helpful to this writer, as I am guessing he was to Cormac McCarthy.

¹⁶³ John Wegner, “Wars and rumors of wars” in A Cormac McCarthy Companion. Edwin T. Arnold and Dianne C. Luce, eds. (Jackson : University of Mississippi Press, 1999): 76. Wegner’s conceit, history as a character, is an interesting one, and an allowable one for a textualist as it implies a certain inevitability or immanence to the proceedings, something that would likely result in low grades for a historian.

¹⁶⁴ William Cochran McGaw, Savage Scene : The life and times of James Kirker. Frontier King. (New York: Hastings House, 1972). Ralph Adam Smith, Borderlander ; The Life of James Kirker, 1793-1852. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1999).

with McKnight - owned smelting facilities at Corralitos, Chihuahua, Mexico.¹⁶⁵ The road in between mine and smelter was known as the Copper Road and was as dangerous a stretch of turf as has existed in history.¹⁶⁶ This road, incidentally, was as least as ancient as the Spanish occupation and but lately abandoned by Mexican owners and workers.¹⁶⁷ Blood Meridian does a good job of demonstrating the bones of Spanish occupation and some of the reasons for abandonment :

They entered the caldera ... riding singlefile through the shaley streets between the rows of old adobes abandoned these past twelve years when the Apaches cut off the wagontrains from Chihuahua and laid the works under siege. The starving Mexicans had set out afoot on the long journey south but none had ever arrived. (113)

James Kirker was soon riding protection on ore trains (mules, primarily) to Mexico and supply trains back. A cursory examination of a period map reveals that the Copper Road passed through the New Mexican homelands of the Jicarillo Apaches and the Navajo, the West Texas turf of the Mescalero Apaches and the Western Apache alliance (Coyoteros, Tontos, etc.) through the Big Bend country, and into the Chiricahua alliance (Mimbrenos, Gilenos) territory in Mexico.¹⁶⁸ Additionally, as will be later examined, the East -Central Texas Comanches raided into Mexico through the Big Bend and crossed, in fact followed, the Copper road to do so ; all of these groups used the Copper Trail as a highway to and from their 'raiding grounds' in Mexico. James Kirker survived

¹⁶⁵ McGaw, Savage Scene. 87ff. From Corralitos the Trail continued on to Mexico City.

¹⁶⁶ The mineral wealth of New Mexico profited only Mexico until the 1846 war closed the border, and this economy merged the American one. Copper would remain one of Mexico's three most important exports (oil / gold, silver, copper) until at least the 1930s. Somewhere around the turn of the 20th Century, oil replaced gold in terms of export value. Brian Hamnett (1999). A Concise History of Mexico. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press): 237.

¹⁶⁷ In all likelihood the Spanish road followed ancient Anasazi commercial trails.

¹⁶⁸ Primarily based on McGaw, Savage Scene, 94-95. Out of all these nations listed the Navajo were the most sedentary, although the other nations listed here seem to have held their ground as here listed from the 1830s through to 1850.

and prospered for some three decades in this fabulously violent environment, and in the process he acquired a reputation as a 'can-do' guy, as Roy Bean's son Sam would write :

At that time, this was the most fearfully dangerous enterprise that any man could think of engaging in ; the mines were more than a hundred mile remote from any settlement and surrounded by two tribes of the worst blood spilling Indians on the continent ; it was like going through the gates of hell to get there.

The whole country at the time was kept in commotion by Indian depredations ... every trip they made there was an attack on the pack-mule trains going and coming from the mines ; but Kirker was so successful in repulsing them that he soon acquired a reputation as an Indian fighter.¹⁶⁹

Kirker was, without a doubt, a "frontier king," and McGaw's title is no mere hyperbole, although Kirker's kingdom was made not of static real estate, but rather of political influence, commercial connections and savvy, and force of arms. The Indian nations listed above were not the only players along the Copper Road and by 1836 these included New Mexico, the Texas Republic, America, the northern Mexican states and Mexico. No one of these had anything approaching what we would today think of as state control over any part of the Borderlands but for the larger urban areas, and not always there. Many Borderlands towns and cities, including Bexar and Chihuahua, were subject to daytime raids. In the absence of effective state control, James Kirker was both capable of and willing to be the law. In 1836 a set of circumstances that included Kirker's being charged by New Mexico for illegally trading with outlaw Indians and the Santa Rita mines' closing caused Kirker to look further afield for gainful employment. Apparently, he switched teams, and by 1838 "reports of his raiding and trafficking with the Apaches reached Chihuahua City."¹⁷⁰ Kirker, who was by then

the principal American gunrunner in the borderlands [and was] suspected of selling arms and munitions to Apaches, Navajos, Jicarillas, Mescaleros, Pueblos, and Utes, who were reportedly planning a general

¹⁶⁹ Sam Bean quoted in Smith, Borderlander: 34.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.* 73.

uprising.¹⁷¹

There were reports that James Kirker might have actually led Apache raids into Sonora, and he was soon wanted by authorities in Chihuahua as well as New Mexico.¹⁷² Although Smith opines that Kirker was unfairly “[d]ubbed an opportunist by some historians” for his ability and willingness to “join either Indians or Mexicans [or seemingly any group] in legal or illegal traffic depending on what was most profitable,”¹⁷³ it seems clear that Kirker was the ultimate opportunist. By 1838 he was gainfully employed in a variety of sidelines that saw him pitted at various times, sometimes apparently simultaneously, against almost every definable group on the Borderlands. It is clear that there was a tremendous upsurge in the amount of Borderlands raiding and violence in the 1830s, and Kirker was certainly one of the contributing factors in that increase.

James Kirker’s actions circa 1835 - 1838 nicely illustrate this paper’s position in regards to his impact on the Borderlands. Recall that in 1835 Kirker was guarding the Copper Road for McKnight and his ore and supply trains, and that his sidelines at this time included trading guns and liquor with raiding Indians for rustled horses and other booty. In 1836 he was also investigated by Mexican officials and charged with conspiring with the “Coyotero Indians, Navajos and Utes [in] preparing a campaign of 1,400 warriors in order to attack ... points in the department of Sonora [and also against Chihuahua].”¹⁷⁴ Regardless of who was leading them, the West Texas and New Mexico Indians did not restrict their raiding to Mexico, and McKnight’s mines were also a target. This resulted in McKnight “appealing to Jim to come to [the] assistance” of the miners,

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.* 73.

¹⁷² *Ibid.* 74.

¹⁷³ Smith, *Borderlander*, 73.

¹⁷⁴ Jose Joaquin Calvo (1836), “Letter to Chihuahua legislature.” In William Cochran McGaw (1968.). *Savage Scene : The life and times of James Kirker. Frontier King.* (New York: Hastings House): 99.

which Kirker did and attacked

an Apache village in Southern New Mexico and at dawn struck so furiously as to kill fifty-five Apache braves out of a total population of about 250, while taking nine female prisoners. He captured about 400 head of stock and destroyed the village[.]¹⁷⁵

While Kirker was acquiring a reputation as the “scourge of the Apaches” and the “King of New Mexico,”¹⁷⁶ he was also being accused of encouraging

the Apaches in their murders and robbing and [he and his company] have devastated the settlements in this department and not many days ago [May 1838] under his direction [Kirker and the Apaches] attacked a convoy of carts carrying provisions to the copper mines, taking the provisions and mules that pulled them.¹⁷⁷

The same official also complained that Kirker and his crew were seen leaving Mexico with “a large quantity of horses and mules.”¹⁷⁸ James Kirker was hardly the only Gringo killing Indians in the Borderlands at this time. The well-known 1837 massacre of “Apache Chief Juan José Compa”¹⁷⁹ and his band by J. J. Johnson and Ben Leaton also caused a stir.¹⁸⁰ This incident, involving a hidden cannon and much alcohol, also informed McCarthy’s depiction of the Glanton ferry massacre of the Yumas. (261ff.) The point of this exercise is to point out that it is inconceivable that there is no connection between Kirker’s infusion of alcohol, firearms, stolen stock, massacres of both Indians and copper train swampers, and the huge upsurge in Borderlands violence in the years 1837-1838. Immediately following the Johnson and Kirker massacres in 1837,

the rest of the Apaches were so outraged and emboldened that they murdered residents in bright daylight in the streets of Chihuahua City. Farms were abandoned, freighting in and out of the frontier lands stopped

¹⁷⁵ McGaw, *Savage Scene*. 113.

¹⁷⁶ McGaw, *Savage Scene*. 114.

¹⁷⁷ Bernardo Revilla, interim governor of Chihuahua (July 1838). “Letter to the Governor of New Mexico.” In McGaw, *Savage Scene*. 116.

¹⁷⁸ *Op Cit.*

¹⁷⁹ McGaw, *Savage Scene*. 108. Also, Josiah Gregg (1954 [1845]): 205.

¹⁸⁰ McGaw, *Savage Scene*. 108ff. And Ralph Adam Smith (1999): 69.

and the mines were shut, except those owned by Courcier and McKnight, protected by Santiago Querquer.¹⁸¹ Josiah Gregg also reported "open warfare" breaking out in West Texas in 1837 as Comanche raiding increased and Texas responded in kind.¹⁸²

What this great outbreak of violence set in motion was a set of events somewhat different than the usual 'send in the Mexican army for a punitive war' model that had typified Mexican / 'Barbarous Indians' since at least the "fiercely fought Mixton War (1541-42), in which Alvarado met his end, [but] opened the northern frontier of New Spain."¹⁸³ By 1838 things had changed, and when the raiding Indians retreated they did so not into Mexican territory, but into the Republic of Texas and a New Mexico that had in 1837 launched its own rebellion against Mexican rule. Mexico was itself in the midst of a massive centralist reorganization.¹⁸⁴ Torn by internal strife, which included an 1837 insurrection in the northern state of Sonora,¹⁸⁵ it did not have the resources this time to pay the Apache and Comanche raiders in kind. One indicator of the level of Mexican political volatility is revealed in that from 1835 to 1840 the country had more than twenty finance ministers.¹⁸⁶ Further, Mexico was well aware that behind Texas and New Mexico there lurked the power of the States, and an incursion by Mexican troops was simply out of the question. Given that a federal response to the West Texas Indians was not in

¹⁸¹ This is but one of the myriad spellings of James Kirker's name. The Spanish *Santiago Querquer* may be considered his *nom de guerre*.

¹⁸² Josiah Gregg. *Commerce of the Prairies*. Max L. Moorhead, Ed. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1954[1845]): 436ff and *N* at 437.

¹⁸³ Brian Hamnett. *A Concise History of Mexico*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999): 79.

¹⁸⁴ Hamnett, 147. The Seven Laws of 1836 and other measures "sanctioned the abolition of the federal structure created in 1824 and its replacement by departments under governors appointed by the president." This chaotic turn and move away from a more American system also increased the level of Texan / American contempt which would grease the wheels for the American incursion Mexico of 1846.

¹⁸⁵ David J. Weber. *The Mexican Frontier, 1821 - 1846 : The American Southwest under Mexico*. (Albuquerque : University of New Mexico Press, 1982): 261ff.

¹⁸⁶ Hamnett, 150.

the cards, and that Chihuahuan officials relied on election as did their American counterparts, some local solution had to be found.

1838 was also a year of transition in that Chihuahuan Governor José Joaquín Calvo, who had attempted to rid the Borderlands of James Kirker,¹⁸⁷ died in office. Handily enough for Kirker the new Governor, José María de Irigoyen, relied upon the advice of a Robert McKnight associate named Stephen Curcier (Courcier). It quickly became clear to Governor Irigoyen,

and to the many mine owners living in Chihuahua City that Kirker was the only one who could provide protection from the Apaches, no matter how distasteful this might be to Mexican pride.¹⁸⁸

Chihuahuan Governor José María de Irigoyen's response was to follow the notion William Cochran McGaw said was put forward by Curcier,

that they organize a private society to raise a war fund with which to combat the Indians; [Curcier] thought the citizenry was sufficiently aroused to subscribe liberally to such a fund and that they could strike effectively at the Apaches through a private company headed by Kirker. It would take professional fighting men to do the job, he said, not politically led militia.¹⁸⁹

Governor José María de Irigoyen then took this proposition and combined the brutal market efficiencies of Curcier and Kirker with the needs of a politician. Irigoyen connected the recent Indian depredations with the historic Spanish construction of the Barbarous Indian to give the project deep context, the society was to be named the *Sociedad de Guerra Contra Los Barbaros*, and the project was to be dignified by terming it a war against a traditional enemy, and not some tawdry commercial enterprise. Designating the project a private company kept it out of the "hands of the Mexican army and the debilitat-

¹⁸⁷ McGaw, *Savage Scene*. 99-100.

¹⁸⁸ McGaw, *Savage Scene*. 120.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.* 21.

ing control of politics.”¹⁹⁰ Employing Americans, James Kirker, “Pauline Weaver ... Jim Hobbs, Gabe Allen, John Spencer, James Glenday ... the giant Negro named Andy [and probably Ben] Leaton,”¹⁹¹ meant that it would be Americans who would perform the necessary cross-border expeditions and not a group that in any way could be officially accused of being Mexican. Both the killers and the victims would be American, and using gold and silver for specie meant that not even the payment was identifiably Mexican. Irigoyen also had a missal published and sent out to important locals to garner support for his program, which started with, “There is scarcely a citizen of Chihuahua without reason to mourn some calamity resulting from Indian ferocity[.]”¹⁹² The local legalities were handled by Chihuahuan Secretary of State, Don Angel Trías who proposed a *proyecto de guerra* (plan of war) which “received general applause in the capital.”¹⁹³

The *Sociedad de Guerra Contra Los Barbaros* was an overwhelming popular success and raised the equivalent of \$100,000 in pesos.¹⁹⁴ The money was to be used for raising and equipping a force to kill Barbarous Indians. The advance was to be paid back by the chosen franchisee, James Kirker, who would raise the force and kill the Indians. The franchisee would pay back the advance, pay his employees, and take his profits from commissions paid by the Society. These commissions were to be paid out as “a prize of one hundred pesos for the [*cabellera*] of each Indian male, fifty for the [*cabellera*] of each female

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.* 121

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.* 122.

¹⁹² McGaw, *Savage Scene*. 123.

¹⁹³ Smith, *Borderlander*, 70.

¹⁹⁴ A full peso was then equivalent to slightly more than one 1850 American dollar. The peso was solidly backed by Mexican gold and silver.

Indian, and twenty-five for the capture of each indian under twelve years old."¹⁹⁵ But for the fact that the seed money did not come directly from the public purse, the whole affair is remarkably similar in structure, if not purpose, to any modern-day 'private-public' partnership venture. This model, tried and tested over a dozen years, would be the motivating factor which would draw John Joel Glanton into its web in 1849-50.

Without going so far as to say that Kirker had some master plan, the facts say that he did take every advantage of Borderlands conditions to further his own interests, and that those interests resemble a business model. Kirker began his interactions with West Texas Indians by trapping furs and trading with local bands. In exchange for furs he supplied Indians with what they wanted of Euroamerican manufacture, and that was not money but rather liquor, guns and powder. Kirker at the same time engaged as a protection specialist for McKnight, providing protection for the copper mines and Trail. In this capacity he had cause to kill members of the same bands he traded with. The weapons Kirker supplied the Apaches and Comanches were used in raiding predominately Mexican, but also American, farms and towns for stock, goods and captives. Kirker also fenced these animals from the Indians and then engaged in trade with Americans -- Mexican brands were particularly easy to sell on American soil. The Indian raiding incensed all parties who were victimized by it -- Texan, New Mexican and Mexican alike -- particularly so since the Indians increasingly used weapons that were the equal of or better than, those of their victims. Many of these weapons were supplied by Kirker in exchange for stock animals he sold in America and Texas. Reaction by Mexicans, Tex-

¹⁹⁵ *El Noticioso*(Chihuahua), September 23, 1836. In Ralph Adam Smith (1999): 7, and *N.* 19 at 270. *Cabellera* did not have the meaning of scalp, it did and does mean a long head of hair, as in *una hermosa cabellera negro*, a (woman's) long black hair. Larousse Diccionario Moderno, 1983. Smith used scalp in his translation, but noted that the paper said *cabellera*. No doubt the 'scalp' meaning would have been understood to readers, but it is unclear if 'scalp' was then in usage. The Spanish verb is *escalpar*, clearly from the English, and it has no other meaning but that of an Indian taking someone's scalp. *Ibid.*

ans and New Mexicans, including actions by Kirker, resulted in the 1830s in massacres of Apaches and Comanches. These massacres in turn enraged the Indians who redoubled their raiding and depredations on the Borderlands in exchange. Kirker then contracted with Chihuahua to collect bounties on Indian scalps as a remedy for Indian raiding. In short, the scalp bounties did anything but decrease Indian raiding in the Borderlands, and the consequences were far-ranging.

As David Weber writes, previous to the events discussed above, "Americans [trappers and traders] operated ... almost under the protection of the Apaches until the season of 1836-37, a time which represents a turning point in American-Apache relations."¹⁹⁶ The actions of Kirker and other Americans in supplying Borderlands Indians with "Taos lightning"¹⁹⁷ in exchange for stolen stock was incendiary enough a practise, but it was supplying the Apaches with guns, as charged by Mexican officials and newspapers,¹⁹⁸ that raised the stakes in terms of Borderlands conflict. Well-armed Apaches and Comanches were dangerous enough to other armed groups such as Texans, Navajos and Cherokees, but they were absolute anathema to Mexicans who had scant access to American trade goods. Further, a continual political chaos in Mexico had resulted in the rather bizarre situation that Mexicans were legally prohibited from bearing arms. Elton Miles wrote, as Captain White observed, that Apaches had formerly left their firearms stashed in Texas when raiding in Mexico as they had needed only their bows and clubs to deal with the Mexicans,

however, a new factor ... intruded. Governor Angel Trías of Chihuahua was paying a bounty for Indian scalps and the Indians needed guns to

¹⁹⁶ David J. Weber. The Taos Trappers: The Fur Trade in the far Southwest, 1540-1846. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1971): 223.

¹⁹⁷ Weber, The Taos Trappers, 225.

¹⁹⁸ Weber, The Taos Trappers, 222. *El Fanal* de Chihuahua, October 21, 1834.

fight the scalp-hunting parties led by James Kirker and John Glanton.¹⁹⁹

Obviously the lawless, and the rich and powerful, were not affected by this feudal edict, but by all accounts the general populace including the rural population was essentially unarmed.

Only one of Kirker's expeditions will be discussed here, and it is chosen because it closely precedes Glanton, and because it has been related from several points of view, including an Apachean writer. In July 1846, at the height of the American incursion into Mexico, Kirker led an expedition out of Chihuahua in search of barbarous Indians. Near Galeana, south of the Big Bend, Kirker and his 'troops' encountered a band of some 150 Apaches in a seasonal camp near that town where they received government rations. While Kirker claimed to have followed a track from a robbery committed upon an hacienda, Kirker's story was "not well founded" according to an Ensign Cásares, who witnessed what followed.²⁰⁰ Regardless of whether or not the robbery charges were valid, what followed was the massacre of some 130 of the Apaches "of all ages and sexes"²⁰¹ in and around the adobe walls of Galeana. This attack was unusual in that it occurred within sight of observers, but also in that the observers took part in the carnage. All reports, including those of Ensign Cásares, Mangas Colaradas and James Kirker, say that great quantities of liquor and the participation of the Mexicans were involved in the massacre.²⁰²

Apparently unaware that Chihuahua had set a "bounty on the head of every man, woman and child," Chief Reyes' Apache band, according to Apache Chief Mangas Colaradas, went to a feast where they "drank and became intoxicated, and were lying asleep,

¹⁹⁹ Elton Miles. Tales of the Big Bend. College Station: (Texas A&M University Press, 1976): 56.

²⁰⁰ Smith, Borderlander. 163.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.* 163.

²⁰² *Ibid.* 163-167.

when a party of Mexicans came in and beat out their brains with clubs."²⁰³ Other reports feature Mexicans killing a pregnant Apache women in a church, and a general orgy of bloodletting. Kirker wrote that he was preparing for a good night's rest when a signal was heard, and marching out he "encountered a part of the dead Indians in the streets. The people continued the attack until 130 Indians of all ages were dead."²⁰⁴ No doubt Kirker's precise figure came from the number of scalps he produced for bounty. Kirker's triumphant entry into Chihuahua, with scalps fluttering from lances, set off a remarkable celebration, reports of which likely influenced McCarthy's account in *Blood Meridian*.²⁰⁵

A reading of the many accounts of the Galeana massacre yield several impressions that shed light on Borderlands conflict more generally. First all accounts make clear that the walled town lived in constant fear of Indian raids, and the townspeople were happy to kill Apaches when supported by Kirker and his band. Second, Reyes' band were probably guilty of being nothing more than being Indians. There was actually a report of his band warning neighbouring Mexicans that a predatory band of Mogolloñeros was nearby.²⁰⁶ Third, there is no mention of the surviving Indians in any of these accounts, and this author's presumption is that the children and young girls were locally pressed into service. Fourth, that, apart from the devastation inflicted upon Reyes' band, and some \$1500 in bounties generated, not much was 'solved' by this local genocide. Kirker had been now plying his scalping trade for a dozen years and personally had some "487" bounty scalps to his credit, but to what end?²⁰⁷ As even the Kirker booster Ralph Adam Smith wrote, "After five Kirker wars," on the Borderlands,

²⁰³ Smith, *Borderlander*. Mangas Coloradas to U.S. Major John Grinder, 1867.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.* 163. James Kirker, *El Provisional* de Chihuahua, July 21, 1846.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.* 168. Adolphus Wislizenus and George Frederick Ruxton were among the American observers.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.* 168. Ensign Cásares.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.* 170. Smith's best guess.

Apaches and Comanches raided at will. Travelers said that the countryside reverted to raw nature and that buzzards picked human skeletons along the roads and in deserted villages. Coyotes, wolves, and other wild animals roved in packs. On big ranches where droves of horses and mules, herds of cattle, and flocks of sheep had grazed a few years earlier, only small wild packs ran. One day the Apaches raided, the next day the Comanches. Both carried fine rifles obtained through trade with Americans ... The only people moving safely on the roads were in the government trains[.]²⁰⁸

Whatever tenuous peace had existed on the Borderlands was shattered completely by the scalphunters trickle-down economics. And into this milieu rode McCarthy's fictional kid, and the historical frontiers Texan.

It must be here mentioned that Kirker was never a Texan, although he scalphunted into Texas and had an enormous impact on the scalphunting enterprise and Borderlands warfare generally. Perhaps it would be plausible to write a history of 19th century Texas and never mention Kirker in the text body, as long as one acknowledged the impact of his baby, the scalphunting trade, and relegated Kirker to the footnotes. To write the same history of New Mexico, Northern Mexico or the Borderlands as one region without mentioning him would be unconscionable. For the purposes of argument this writer proposes that James Kirker had as much influence over Borderlands life and security from 1837 to 1850 as did any individual, barring heads of state. Kirker's great accomplishment was to foster through his relentless pursuit of profit out of chaos something Ralph Adam Smith called *quirquismo*.

James Kirker's great life achievement was summable in the word *quirquismo*, which I would define as 'the creation of socioeconomic agitation so intense it leads to racial hatred, and intense levels of group versus group violence.' This definition comes fairly close to Frank Chalk and Kurt Jonassohn's perfect one-sentence definition of genocide as "a form of one-sided mass killing in which a state or other authority intends to destroy a

²⁰⁸ Smith, Borderlander, 171.

group, as that group and membership in it are defined by the perpetrator."²⁰⁹ Chalk and Jonassohn's definition is much superior to that of Webster's (2001) as "deliberate, systematic measures toward the extermination of a racial, political or cultural group," as there is a certain relativity or amorphousness about Webster ("measures toward") that is not to be found in real world genocide.²¹⁰ Chalk and Jonassohn list the key elements : groups, killing of groups by other groups, intention coupled with high level organisation, and most importantly, the idea that total control of the genocidal process is in the hands of the perpetrator who not only destroys another group(s), but gets to define who constitutes said. Texas President Mirebeau Buonaparte Lamar came fairly close to enunciating genocide as a state policy in 1838 in enacting "the prosecution of an exterminating war on [Texas Indian] warriors ; which will admit of no compromise and have no termination except in their total extinction or total expulsion."²¹¹ The great caveat in dignifying the term genocide is that it is strictly a one-way and non-reciprocal deal - the Nazis conducted a genocide against Jews ; whatever acts of violent resistance Jews undertook in response are moot in consideration of the Nazi actions. In terms of this elaborate definition then, it is the opinion of this writer that the institution of Borderlands bounty scalphunting was a conscious attempt at genocide directed against a group the Spanish / Mexicans would identify as *barbarous Indians*.²¹²

Professor Smith never intended that his neologism would be interpreted this

²⁰⁹ James Axtell (1993). "The Moral dimensions of 1492." In John R. M. Wilson, ed. Forging the American Character. 2nd ed. Volume 1., (Upper Saddle River NJ : Prentice Hall, 1997): 3.

²¹⁰ Some of the historical "measures toward" have included the Nazis rendering Jews into soap, the modern-day butchery of African women's sexual organs to prohibit conception, Rome's famous reduction of the Carthaginian population to young and not pregnant females.

²¹¹ Todd F. Smith, 138

²¹² One has to be exceptionally careful in terms of this discussion against charges of insensitivity or worse, and the term genocide has a tragic dignity that must be ...

broadly.²¹³ For him, the term *quirquismo* means “kirkerism ... the use of bounties and Kirker warfare” in the service of the Mexican states against the Indians of West Texas, Apaches and Comanches primarily. It must be noted that Smith’s Kirker is much more of an ennobled character than this writer finds him to have been. Smith argues that those historians who sentenced Kirker to footnote purgatory were mistaken in their judgments that he was

a notorious adventurer, a carnivore, a traitor, a dean, king, and lord of the scalp hunters, a murderer, a blood-money man, a cold-blooded killer, and a man of massacres and slaughters. According to these writers, James thought only of his own interests and welfare.²¹⁴

Professor Smith argues that Kirker is being judged *ex post facto* by modern day standards and that his scalphunting activities were legally sanctioned and popularly accepted in jurisdictions from Mexico to Canada.²¹⁵ Further, Kirker did not resort to dastardly methods of Indian extermination “such as strychnine laced in watermelons or gifts placed in front of loaded cannons,” as had some of his peers, and his methods

were straightforward, acceptable, American and Spanish-Mexican frontier strategies of swift movements, whiskey diplomacy, and surprise dawn attacks. Nothing indicates he ever encouraged scalps to be taken for mere bravado. No statement in any language says that he personally killed anybody, shot anyone, or fought with anyone except in battle or that he scalped anybody ... Taking scalps for pay rather than taking them for trophies or other purposes seems to have made scalping appear more hei-

... honoured. The term arose of course during / after W.W.II in the very specific context of Nazi Germany, and using the word genocide is a fraught experience in any other context. The most recent travesty involving dishonoring genocide was the United Nations refusal to act in Sudan because there were mere “acts of genocide” and not a general genocide that would require that august body to act.

²¹³ I believe that the term *Quirquismo* was invented by Smith, as it does not appear to be used in any of the source material he presents in Borderlander.

²¹⁴ Ralph Adam Smith (1999). Borderlander : The Life of James Kirker, 1793-1852. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press):246 ff.

²¹⁵ Smith, Borderlander. 247.

nous in the minds of many people.²¹⁶

Further to this remarkable defense, Smith argues for Kirker as

a man of culture and formal education. He spoke Spanish fluently [and several Indian dialects as well]. All writings from his own pen indicate that he had a sharp mind, a broad vocabulary [...] He left not one misspelled word in any of his extant manuscripts. [...] A leader of men by force of example, he had a reputation that attracted men to join him in daring undertakings.²¹⁷

There are some aspects of this remarkable testimonial with which this writer agrees. First, it is precisely the point of this paper that commercial scalphunting was context sensitive, and that it was a creature of a very specific time and place. There is no question that Kirker, and Glanton and those who followed in Kirker's bloody tracks, operated within a system that rewarded them financially for the procurement of human scalps in what was without a doubt, a program of state organised genocide. Kirker was a remarkable and charismatic man, and a literate one, as well as a leader of Indian killers of great ability. However Kirker was also, "a man of massacres and slaughters [who] thought only of his own interests and welfare," as Smith himself so capably demonstrated in the great body of his own work on Kirker. That notion that Kirker never personally killed or scalped any of the hundreds of Indians (and Mexicans) that fell to his gangs is simply ludicrous. To try and whitewash Kirker's actions as morally defensible because they happened a century and a half in the past is an interesting tack, but one that can only be justified by those who believe, as did Kirker, Trías and Glanton, that those scalped actually were Barbarous Indians and not human beings struggling for survival.

Now there is one more complication that arises in discussing the commercial scalphunting that is no doubt one of the likeliest reasons sensible historians avoid the is-

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*

²¹⁷ Smith, Borderlander. 247.

sue like the plague. To reprise Chalk and Jonassohn's definition of genocide: "a form of one-sided mass killing in which a state or other authority intends to destroy a group, as that group and membership in it are defined by the perpetrator." Simply put, the scalp bounty system was supported by the fact that by 1850 the raiding Indians were in the process of committing their own fairly effective total war against Borderlands Mexicans, and, in terms of gross numbers (although not in terms of population percentage) the Indian versus Mexican campaign was far the more effective than the Mexican versus Indian one.

Before leaving James Kirker and the *Proyecto* and addressing the practice of scalping, there is one more historical character to discuss, particularly as his name has already been introduced. This is the Chihuahuan rancher, businessman and politician, Angel Trías. Trías is the connective tissue between Kirker's scalping exploits and those of Glanton. Angel Trías also serves to expand the discussion of the scalp bounty system beyond the parameters of those set down by William C. McGaw, and to a lesser extent, Ralph Adam Smith. McGaw saw the scalp *Proyecto* as being a creation of Mexican officialdom to benefit the mining interests of both McKnight and Mexican investors. No doubt Trías, in his capacity of Secretary of State to Irigoyen, was content to go along with the mining interests, but his personal interests lay elsewhere, and it is entirely possible that he had much more at stake in eradicating the Indian raiders than did McKnight. Angel Trías was by all accounts one of the largest landholders in Northern Mexico, and he made his living as a rancher and not a miner. As such, and as his lands lay across the Copper Trail, there is no question that large numbers of his stock made the trip north to the States in the company of Apache and Comanche raiders.

Josiah Gregg made the acquaintance of Trías in 1839 when he was crossing Chihuahua. Gregg's company was short of food, could not find any game, and helped them-

selves to a few 'stray' cattle.²¹⁸ They soon found themselves facing the guns of Angel Trías and a group of his *vaqueros*. Gregg reports that Trías, then only a rancher, was "a perfect despot within the limits of his little dominion,"²¹⁹ and that Gregg's party escaped a gunfight or jail more through luck than good planning. Gregg noted that Trías' herds were "buffalo-like droves," and that he had to travel "sixty to eighty miles," once leaving Trías' hacienda, to reach the limits of his ranch.²²⁰ Apparently Trías' belligerence towards *yanquis* never left him, and U.S. Surveyor John Kendall Bartlett would write decades later that, although he was a cultured man, "General Trías detests the Americans as a people."²²¹

It would be Angel Trías as *Gobernador* of Chihuahua and in conjunction with James Kirker, who helped ignite yet another flare-up of Borderlands violence as the two took advantage of the post-Mexican American war chaos to try and eradicate the West Texas Indians through the genocidal scalp *proyecto* of 1849.

The scalp ... is a patch of the skin taken from the head of an enemy killed in battle, and preserved and highly appreciated as the record of death produced by the hand of the individual who possesses it[.]²²²

George Catlin (1836)

For the purposes of argument, this writer believes that scalping, of anyone by anyone, is a "barbaric yawp" in the history of human culture.²²³ Scalping as a practise has so few redeeming qualities that the cultural relativists have been so far largely un-

²¹⁸ Josiah Gregg (1954 [1845]). *Commerce of the Prairies*. Max L. Moorhead, Ed. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press): 308-314.

²¹⁹ Gregg, 308.

²²⁰ Gregg, 306.

²²¹ John Kendall Bartlett. In Josiah Gregg, *N.* 3, 307..

²²² George Catlin, *North American Indians* Peter Mathiessen, ed. (New York, Penguin Classics, 1996): 233.

²²³ With sincere apologies to Walt Whitman.

willing to salvage it in the manner of genital mutilation of African girls, although biologist Barbara Ehrenreich gives it a shot, calling the practise a tangible expression of the “symmetry of war”:

At the level of the individual, the symmetry of war may even be expressed as a kind of love. Enemies by tradition “hate” each other, but between habitual and well-matched enemies, an entirely different feeling may arise. Sometimes this love is reserved for the trophies created from the bodies of dead enemies, their shrunken heads or scalps[.]²²⁴

Now the only “kind of love” that one could mistake scalping, of anyone by anyone, for, is violent rape. Scalping is the forced taking possession of another person’s body. The scalp is in all circumstances a memento of that rape. That this rape is sometimes institutionalised and the scalp turned into a marker of exchange and compensation is the innovative aspect of scalping covered by this paper.

Scalping for profit in the form of bounty would appear to be but a wrinkle of an age old human practise, although commercial scalping is, as far as evidence thus far shows, peculiar to North America. Cormac McCarthy’s task in Blood Meridian was to cinematically represent scalphunting, and, to use Martin Heidegger’s words, “by letting it be what it is, and in letting it be, in allowing it to reveal itself as what it is.”²²⁵ Scalping is of course a highly charged issue politically and culturally, and it should come as no surprise that more cautious souls choose not to treat with the issue, no matter who the practitioner might be. To try and put this practise in historical context it is interesting to note that the Ur historian, Herodotus, discussed Fifth-Century BC scalping and therefore we know that it is at least as old as Western history, and further that it is associated with the Western world. McCarthy himself puts scalping in true historical perspective with his epigram concerning the discovery of a “300,000-year old fossil skull ... show[ing] evi-

²²⁴ Barbara Ehrenreich, Blood Rites : Origins and history of the passions of war. (New York: Metropolitan Books, 1997): 140.

²²⁵ Martin Heidegger quoted in Young, 7.

dence of having been scalped” in northern Ethiopia.(xi)

Herodotus’ scalpers were Scythians who, not coincidentally, had much in common with the Apaches and Comanches of 1850 Texas. These groups were all horse people and semi-nomadic, favoring open plains and and they all served the role of barbarians at the edges of empire, although the Scythians preferred wagons to tents or hogans. As Edward Said notes of civilisation more generally, “Greeks always require barbarians.”²²⁶ In the absence of large bison herds, already extincted in Europe, the Scythians ranged cattle and were essentially transhumanist.²²⁷ They were also inveterate raiders. While they had no cities to defend, they were subject to a strong central authority and could fight en masse when required to do so. This made them devilishly hard to run to ground, as Darius discovered. What made the Sycythians a force to be reckoned with was the combination of their mobility and their organisation combined with there commando tactics and ability to fight “on horseback with bows and arrows.”²²⁸ Herodotus reckoned them “the most unlearned [nation] in the world,” but conceded they had “managed the most important thing in human affairs better than anyone else on the face of the earth : I mean their own preservation.”²²⁹

Scythian scalping was a cultural offshoot of a pragmatic economic practise :

The heads of all enemies killed in battle are taken to the king; if he brings a head, a soldier is admitted to his share of the loot; no head, no loot. He strips the skin by making a circular cut around the ears and shaking out the skull; he then scrapes the flesh off the skin with the rib of an ox, and when it is clean he works it in his fingers until it is supple, and fit to be used as a sort of handkerchief. He hangs these handkerchiefs on the bridle

²²⁶ Edward W. Said . Culture and Imperialism. (New York : Vintage Books,1993)): 52.

²²⁷ In Braudel’s sense of the word. An organised movement according to seasonal grazing requirements which implies a commitment to a specific region(s) as opposed to the implied sub-civilised connotations of ‘nomadic’.

²²⁸ Herodotus (2003 [430 BC]). The Histories Revised Ed. Aubrey de Selincourt, Translation. (London : Penguin Classics): 253ff.

²²⁹ Herodotus : 255.

of his horse, and is very proud of them.²³⁰

Note that there is more than a hint of capitalistic enterprise in the Scythian model. The king does exchange gold for scalps, albeit in a somewhat more circuitous manner than just buying scalps outright. Herodotus notes that those males who could not produce scalps for the king comprised an underclass of Scythian society forced to “sit by themselves in disgrace” at the all-important royal banquets.²³¹ There is a whiff of this historic connection between Herodotus and Borderlands scalping as McCarthy introduces the Comanches as

A legion of horribles, hundreds in number, half naked or clad in costumes attic²³² or biblical or wardrobed out of a fevered dream with the skins of animals and silk finery and pieces of uniform still tracked with the blood of previous owners[.] (52)

Note as well the institution of demanding a physical token of the kill, a verbal claim apparently not being worth the paper it was written on. Herodotus wrote that the Scythian king (left nameless as befits a savage, as all Greeks and other civilised individuals are named in The Histories) also demanded a physical token when taking a census of his fighting troops -- each soldier brought an arrow head to the king as a token of his actuality. This aspect of scalping is the primary reason, at least a sometimes official primary reason, for the token-taking by American frontierers in Vietnam. It was SOP (Standard Operating Procedure) for Airborne troops to collect and hand in the right ears of kills “to prove [their] body count,” and at least one infantry division exchanged a badge for the “ear[s] of the dead Vietnamese.”²³³ According to Herodotus the token de-

²³⁰ *Ibid.* 260.

²³¹ *Ibid.* 261.

²³² John Emil Sepich (1993): 63ff. Sepich makes the connection between “attic or biblical” and several primary sources who noted they saw parallels between the Comanche dress and “pictures of antique Grecian warriors.” The second quote is from government surveyor W. H. Emory from 1848.

²³³ Barclay Owens, Cormac McCarthy’s Western Novels. (Tucson: University of ...

manded was originally the head entire, and it does not take too much imagination to see the scalp as a shorthand version of lugging whole heads home from battle, and the America in Vietnam practise of taking ears as a yet more practical refinement of an age old practise. The pragmatic Scythians often used the skulls from their more important kills, decorated and gilded, as drinking cups.

Careful reading reveals that Herodotus had no word for the practise of scalping and had to resort to phrases to describe both the practise and the object. Scalping was then to Herodotus' culture and experience a novelty, for cultures find words for that which is familiar. So too did the first Europeans in the New World struggle to describe the practise of scalping as neither the Spanish nor the English language had a word for the practise / object until they themselves embraced the practise as a pragmatic solution to what they regarded as excessive number of Indians. Scalping was a "common practise among New England Indians," but the word *scalping* did not yet exist for Increase Mather in 1676 as he wrote of the Indians, that

Such also is their Inhumanity as that they flay off the skin from their Faces and Heads of those that they get into their hands.²³⁴

And yet a neighbour of Mather's, Nathaniel Salmonstall could also write in 1676 describing Metacomet's War that

above Eight Hundred [lost] since the war began: Of whom many have been destroyed with exquisite Torments, and most inhuman Barbarities ... they first forced [the Women] to satisfie their filthy lusts and then murdered them; either cutting off the Head, ripping open the belly, or skulping the Head of Skin and Hair, and hanging them up as Trophies...²³⁵

Arizona Press, 2000): 24.

²³⁴ Increase Mather (1676), A Brief History of the War, quoted in Jill Lepore, The Name of War : King Phillip's War and the origins of American Identity. (New York : Vintage Books, 1999): 93.

²³⁵ Nathaniel Salmonstall (1676). "A True but Brief Account of our Losses." quoted in Jill Lepore, The Name of War : King Phillip's War and the origins of American Identity. (New York : Vintage Books, 1999): 72.

The English word scalp likely comes from *skälpr*, a Scandinavian word meaning sheath, “hence, metaphorically a covering,”²³⁶ and according to both Webster’s and Oxford, the word entered English in the Middle Ages. Whether it was ever used in the sense of the ‘removed skin and hair of an individual’ before the American frontier is not clear, but to this writer it does not appear that it was, and perhaps Salmonstall usage above was neologistic. Both James Axtell and Elizabeth Miller have observed that “early European explorers in the New World had difficulty finding words to describe the practice when they encountered it among Native Americans.”²³⁷

Once Euroamericans grew comfortable with practicing scalping, as they certainly had by the end of Metacomet’s War, they quickly worked it into their repertoire of frontier - clearing tactics. The connection between scalp and bounty soon followed, and by 1776 Alexander Hamilton was known as the “hair buyer-general.”²³⁸ The last use of scalp bounty by an American state uncovered was during the 1863 Great Sioux Uprising in Minnesota, when that jurisdiction purchased Siouxan scalps from the general populace and displayed them in the statehouse. It must be emphasised that the only purpose for the bounty by Euroamericans was that one scalp represented one dead Indian, one less potential threat, and one less obstacle to progress.

Central to the argument of this paper is establishing a relationship between two cultural practices, exchange and scalping. This relationship does not always exist *ex post facto* as the following section demonstrates. One of the structural requirements necessary for a commercial scalphunting enterprise is an imbalance of power between two groups. Be that imbalance only temporary and localised as in an Indian band upon Indian band raid, I believe it is obvious that a power imbalance exist for scalping of one group by the

²³⁶ Webster’s.

²³⁷ Elizabeth Miller, “Evidence for prehistoric scalping in Northeastern Nebraska.” *Plains Anthropologist* **39**: 148 (1994): 211.

²³⁸ H. Henrietta Stockel, “Scalping,” *Military History of the West* **27**: 1 (Spring 1997): 83.

other to occur. Exchange then can influence and ferment incidences of group on group violence that engender scalping. A straightforward narrative of how Euroamerican presence and goods allows for the examination of Indian cultural and political practices may be found in the journal of Henri Joutel (1640?-1735) who recorded the Sieur de La Salle's 'last voyage', which in 1686 ended in the Borderlands.²³⁹ The French demonstrated to the Hasinai²⁴⁰ the power of the firearm by killing a bison, and a warrior

went to inspect the bullet hole which had passed through the animal. Much astonished, the Indian remained a while without saying anything, admiring the power of our guns."²⁴¹

The chain of events that followed, as summarized by David La Vere, were a joint French / Hasinai expedition against the nearest mortal foes, the Canahatinos, in which the Hasinai's new weapons proved decisive :

The Hasinai took many captives on this raid. The children were adopted, the adult men and women were scalped and tortured to death, with some cut up and eaten in order to add Canahatino power to their own. One woman was scalped alive. A musket ball was put in her hand and she was sent back to her people with a warning that now the Hasinai had guns and they would not hesitate to use them again.²⁴²

It is to be noted that the Hasinai had obtained their own guns through the burning and looting of French fort at Matagorda Bay which had been weakened by a disas-

²³⁹ A linguistic aside. David La Vere presents a letter from the bishop of Guadalajara in 1767 referring to the Hasinai saying that "the people of that nation, which they call Texas..." If indeed there was no spell-checking going on, and the Spanish bishop did write TEXAS, and not TEJAS as would become the Spanish norm, then we must change the pronunciation of Texas straightaway. For the 'x' in Spanish is not a harsh English 'x', but is spoken as a "sh," as in my favourite Mexican town-name, X-can (shh-kan). Therefore Texas must be henceforward pronounced Tay-shas in recognition of its Indian occupants. David La Vere (2004). The Texas Indians (College Station: Texas A&M University Press): 108.

²⁴⁰ Hasinai : a major sub-group of the Caddo nation.

²⁴¹ Henri Joutel, quoted in David La Vere (2004): 110.

²⁴² La Vere, 110.

trous bout of smallpox.²⁴³ The Hasinai were “overjoyed” at their military success, and asked the French to stand for adoption -- a few accepted, they were a long way from home. Among other consequences, this brief French / Hasinai alliance would cause Spain to redouble its efforts in Tejas, and the Hasinai would be blessed with several Spanish missions and presidios between 1716 and 1721. The immediate impact of the introduction of firearms through exchange was disaster for the Canahatino, and victory for the Hasinai. The longer term impacts for the Hasinai would also be disastrous as their increased power also increased the attentions of the Spanish. To connect the notion of exchange with the previously discussed concept of Barbarous Indians, what the Spanish faced post 1721 was a local Canahatino reduced by Hasinai actions. The Hasinai themselves were now in the position of being in possession of nothing much the Spanish needed, but armed they were more dangerous to Spanish security than formerly. Since the Hasinai had nothing to offer the Spanish but potential aggravation through animal theft, raiding and occasional violence they were essentially disposable. The ultimate outcome of this exchange was a field decimated of all Indian presence and left more easily susceptible to Euroamerican settlement. Indian on Indian violence / scalping then, was both conducive and beneficial to Euroamerican settlement in Texas.

What these events reveal is in essence that Indian relations in Texas prior to the influx of Euroamerican and their technologies was essentially ‘nasty and brutish’, and certainly ‘short’ as well for many. There is no question that Euroamerican presence fundamentally changed whatever social/ political dynamics it encountered. However, that change was a result of the amplification of intra - Indian conflict, and not necessarily the creation of same. The Hasinai did not suddenly form the idea of so punishing the Canahatinos, they were merely enabled to do so in a much more efficient and effective manner

²⁴³ *Ibid.* 109.

than they had previous to firearms possessed. And, as Elizabeth Miller observed, "scalping was a fairly common practise in North America prehistorically, and only intensified with the encouragement of Europeans and the introduction of firearms and steel weapons."²⁴⁴ Somehow out of all the violent activities that typified Borderlands intergroup conflict, be it Indian on Indian, Euroamerican on Indian, or its converse, scalping would become the symbol of that violence. It did so because it was a practise that both typified and was accepted by all sides in the great Indian clearing of Texas, and it also represented an exchange that was understood by all. Possession is after all conceded to be nine-tenths of the law, but when the object in question is someone else's scalp, that possession is total.

Indian on Indian scalping was a very complex business made even more complex by the plethora of approaches and viewpoints Indian groups had towards the practice. Most Plains groups seem to have been enthusiastic scalp-takers and tended to treat a scalp as a "mere trophy," a symbol of individual superiority, and something to publicly "rejoice and dance over."²⁴⁵ The scalp might be used as decoration, left on poles to disintegrate (Blackfeet), or even burnt (Pawnee). These scalps had no apparent materialistic value to their takers. To the Hasinai the scalps clearly had a meaning similar to that of Euroamerican bounty payers, they represented the victory over opposing groups and symbolised the taking of resources from those defeated groups. Borderlands Indians showed an even greater range of responses to this practice which ranged from the apparently offhand Comanche approach, to the Chiricahua Apaches' absolute abhorrence and refusal to take scalps, to the incredibly involved and protracted purification rites the Navajos²⁴⁶ and Maricopas undertook after taking a scalp. Then too, James Kirker's pre-

²⁴⁴ Miller, "Evidence for prehistoric scalping," 211.

²⁴⁵ Stockel, 85.

²⁴⁶ Stockel, 83-86.

ferred troops in his scalping crews were his steadfast friends the Shawnee Indians led by Spiebuck (Spybuck) and the Delawares led by their unfortunately named chieftain, Big Nigger.²⁴⁷

How important was the institution of scalping to Texas? Texas, both the republic and the state, may be the only jurisdiction on the planet that mentions scalping in both its constitution and its declaration of independence. One of the reasons stated for separation in the 1836 *Declaration of Independence* was that Mexico had, “through its emissaries, incited the merciless savage, with the tomahawk and scalping-knife, the massacre the inhabitants of our defenseless frontiers.”²⁴⁸ And the state constitution of 1866 noted that Texas had,

at a former day, passed resolutions declaratory of the defenseless condition of the people settled upon the frontier of the State; and, extensive raids by Indians since that time--raids in which large herds of horses and cattle were stolen and driven off, and many men, women and children, murdered and mutilated in the most barbarous manner, and many others carried away into captivity, whose condition is far worse than that of those who suffered death by the tomahawk and scalping knife.²⁴⁹

Campus conversations have shown that most students when faced with the notion of Indian scalping instinctively adhere to an updated ‘Noble Savage’ mindset that includes the idea that scalping had to have been introduced to the Americas by Euroamericans. This is simply not so, and “no reference to scalping can be found in Europe after approximately AD 966.”²⁵⁰ First, Crusades literature has yielded forthright descrip-

²⁴⁷ McGaw, *Savage Scene*, 102ff., and Smith, *Borderlander*.

²⁴⁸ *Unanimous Declaration of Independence, by the Delegates of the People of Texas*, March 2, 1836. < <http://tarlton.law.utexas.edu/constitutions/text/cddecl.html> > (accessed 22 April, 2005).

²⁴⁹ *Constitution of the State of Texas (1866) Ordinance NUMBER 7*.

< <http://tarlton.law.utexas.edu/constitutions/text/FOrd08.html> > The “at a former day” recognises the 1845 Constitution; the post bellum document seems intent on wrangling money and troops out the recent foe, President Johnson and the federal government.

²⁵⁰ Miller, “Evidence for prehistoric scalping,” 211.

tions of anthropagy by Crusaders, and given the straightforward descriptions of Spanish and Puritan cruelty towards Indians, it is nearly inconceivable that Euroamericans would have been compelled to mask scalping. Second, there is a wealth of anthropological and archaeological evidence that shows unequivocally that Indian scalping in North America preceded Columbian contact by at least 2,000 years.²⁵¹ Third, the earliest recorded contacts in America between Euroamericans and Indians uniformly contain references to Indian on Indian scalping. Jacques Cartier in 1535 was told by Donnacona, the Stadaconan Chief that

the scalps of five Indians, stretched on hoops like parchment [were from] Toudamans from the south, who waged war continuously against [Donnacona's] people.²⁵²

Jacques le Moyne in 1564 recorded the Timucan Indians of Florida scalping other Indians and curing the scalps for so they could carry "them home in triumph."²⁵³ Captain John Smith in 1608 received a lesson in Powhatan's warfare tactics after the "English [had] brazenly set themselves down" upon lands belonging to the Powhatan Confederacy, and Powhatan responded by launching

a surprise attack on a village of [his Indian] "neare neighbours subjects" killing twenty-four ... the victors retired from battle [carrying away] "the long haire of one sides of their heads with the skinne cased off with shell or reeds."²⁵⁴

Powhatan then invited the English to come see the scalps and prisoners as a lesson of what could happen to those who displeased him. Scalps to Powhatan were a powerful statement that could convey in terms anyone could understand the power he held over his own people and those who opposed him ; scalps here also represented wealth in the form of political / military power. To Powhatan these scalps also obviously represented

²⁵¹ *Ibid.* 211.

²⁵² James Axtell, "Who invented scalping?" *American Heritage* 28 : 3 (1977): 97.

²⁵³ Axtell, 97.

²⁵⁴ *Op Cit.*

a claim to the disputed lands that was as tangible as an English deed.

Scalping of Indians by Euroamericans in Texas has a relationship that dates to the earliest penetration of Indian lands by Euroamericans. Just how ingrained and 'natural' the practise was is evident in "Recollections of Capt. Gibson Kuykendall." The Kuykendall family, originally Kentuckians, left Arkansas Territory in October 1821 for Texas and initially settled just past the Colorado River, one of "the first [American] families" to do so, but soon pulled back to the Brazos River because of 'Indian problems.'²⁵⁵ Gibson Kuykendall (b. 1802) commented on hunting and killing Indians in the same measured tones he used to discuss normal weather patterns and planting corn. Chastising Indians, the "Carancawas" (Karanakawas) and "Tonkewas," appeared to have been as common for these Texans as was exchange and commerce with them. In response to "the Carancawas committ[ing] several depredations," which included their wounding of a settler, Gibson Kuykendall's uncle Robert organised and led a punitive raid on the Karanakawas. It is of interest to note that this Euroamerican raid closely followed upon the heels of a Wacoe war against the Karanakawas in which the latter group suffered a "massacre [of] about thirty" noncombatants -- lessening the band's food production capabilities.²⁵⁶ As these actions take place in the late autumn of 1821, it is likely that the band was suffering from having their village destroyed heading into winter.

Robert Kuykendall led his rifle-bearing Texans against the bow-bearing Karanakawas using a Tonkewa chief who happened to be "camped near [Robert Kuykendall's] house" to lead the group to the Karanakwa encampment. Finding the group "in a thicket pounding brier-root," the Texans surrounded them and waited until the "morning twilight" when the Tonkewa chief led them

²⁵⁵ Gibson Kuykendall (1903). "Recollections of Capt. Gibson Kuykendall." *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 7 : 1 (29-39): 29.

²⁵⁶ Kuykendall, 30.

into the thicket and to the camp of the Indians. When the party got within a few paces of the Indians they found that but one had risen, who perceiving the party, seized his bow, but before he could use it was shot down by my uncle Robert. The settlers now rushed on the camp and delivered a deadly fire. Nine or ten of the savages were killed on the spot and but few escaped. The scalp of one of the slain, taken by Andrew Castleman, together with his bow, six feet long, was afterwards sent me by my uncle Robert.²⁵⁷

The scalp and the bow seem to be of equal value as souvenirs, and as oddities, although it is the bow that is described.

Were scalps that commonplace an item on the Texas Borderlands that they did not require a description? Robert Kuykendall offered no comment as to whether this farina gathering group was composed mainly of women, who customarily performed this task for their family groups. It is entirely possible that the one or two warriors mentioned were the only men in this group of "nine or ten ... savages ... killed." Interestingly, in 1823 when the young Kuykendall had the opportunity to lead his own expedition against suspected Tonkewa horse thieves he sought the assistance of Stephen Austin and the law, such as it then was. It is impossible to say whether this was because the young Kuykendall was a more sensitive man than his father and uncle, or whether the fact that the posse was greatly outnumbered by the Tonkewas was the deciding factor. The horse thieves were apprehended, lashed and "barbered" - they had their heads shaved, not scalped - but they were not massacred.²⁵⁸ This is typical of what one reads of Stephen Austin, the Texian Moses. Here Austin demonstrated his understanding of the cultural underpinnings of the Indian institution of scalping, and has modified them to use as part of the administration of Texas law. This sort of justice was not to be found in 1850 Texas.

As the second chapter introduced Texas as the site of this discussion, this chapter

²⁵⁷ Kuykendall, 31.

²⁵⁸ Kuykendall, 32.

introduced the subject of scalping, and scalping's historical antecedents in the Borderlands. The next chapter will connect and combine site and subject in the temporal and economic frame of the 1850s Borderlands. Also discussed will be the notion of representation in relation to Blood Meridian and the novel's historical bones.

CHAPTER 4.**From Factual to Fictional : Who is 'real' in *Blood Meridian*? -**

**- A meridian of representations - Chamberlain - the judge -
"commercial possibilities"- Glanton - the kid redux - the Glanton gang**

To briefly restate the thesis of this paper is to discuss representation. Again, the events and historical characters that comprise the scalphunter's enterprise have largely been scrubbed from conventional histories, such as Richardson and Fehrenbach, and were resurrected by Cormac McCarthy in Blood Meridian. Critical and consumer response, as well as this writer's personal experience show that the relatively few readers who do tackle McCarthy's representation find it too gruesome to be believable. McCarthy has presented what is likely the most historically accurate account of the Borderlands outside of Ralph Adam Smith and yet is not believable to most readers because the events he portrays, which are all based on historical sources, just seem unbelievable. One part of the problem in getting the story of scalphunting in 1850 Texas is that the story is not readily accessible in official histories and a reader has to dig for this story. A second component is as basic as human nature, and most of us, stake holders all in a sanitised history of North American conquest, simply do not want to believe McCarthy could be telling the truth. A third component is inherently structural in representation and has to do with McCarthy's convergence of the form of the novel with the substance of history. What McCarthy has done is reveal not just a bloody meridian of enterprise on the Borderlands, but a meridian of representation as well. His characters, and events as well, arc from the near totally fictionalised to the near totally historic. Interestingly, the more fictitious the event or character, the more banal, and therefore believable the event / character is. Conversely, even perversely, the more outrageous the behaviour or event in Blood Meridian, the more believable it seems.

It is entirely likely that this paper is unusual in that it sees the kid as the central character in Blood Meridian. Every critical examination of McCarthy's western thus far encountered is unanimous in seeing the judge, or Holden, as the guiding light of the novel, as Glanton is always cited as being the character most accessible in terms of historical sources. This author has no compunctions in agreeing that Holden is by far the most complex and interesting character in Blood Meridian, and that Glanton is also a magnetic force in terms of his archival accessibility. Glanton is of interest to this thesis, for instance, in that he assists in allowing for the connection of the the great state of Texas to the scalphunting industry and, in his Texas Ranger guise, as a lens on the Lone Star State's genocide of Texas Indians. Glanton also opens up avenues of investigation into the phenomenon of America's 1846 cross-border shopping expedition into Mexico, for Mexico. The judge sets literary hearts beating because he is endlessly voluble, compared to the kid this man never shuts up. He is a continuously running roadside attraction. But, apart from murdering and raping girls and boys, the judge does not really do anything but explain and describe, aid and abet ; when there is action in Blood Meridian it centers around the kid, always.

In terms of how the novel works, and somewhat sadly to relate, structurally the kid is the locus of the action. He, rather than the judge, is McCarthy's major literary creation in the novel as the kid is fabricated from naught but imagination while both the the judge and Glanton existed in historical sources. Where the kid goes mayhem either follows or is there waiting for him to walk onstage, yet he is both so transparent and so opaque that he often disappears from events. Nevertheless, McCarthy's authorial camera rarely leaves the kid. Remembering the conceit of this paper of the meridian being a circle and not an arc, the kid is front and center in one great long tracking shot (albeit broken in two by the kid's turning into the man years, conducted off camera), that begins

with his entry into Texas and ends with his death there. Glanton is the pointman for the scalphunting enterprise ; he is the point of historical entry into the novel as well. He leads the gang in the novel as he led the gang in reality. Glanton gives the gruesome events of Blood Meridian historical heft and lifts them above the realm of pure authorial invention. The judge is the greek chorus, signification personified, endlessly justifying the gang's depredations in terms of religiosity, science and governing business principles in language that is historically apropos for those times (1850s). His thoughts, which entirety comprise a religion for business persons totally divorced from humanity, supply justification of a kind for what the gang has done or will do. Endlessly supportive, he rarely leads (the powder-making episode an exception), and when he does it is into some literal dead-end like the excursion into the Grand Canyon, a useless detour that allows him to make Turnerian geological connections, but accomplishes naught in terms of scalp production. The judge in this instance resembling some dissembling MBA in a board room, or a crazed Custer in *Little Big Man* insanely nattering²⁵⁹ to those who will actually do the dirty work, and die. Accessible through but one historical source, Samuel Chamberlain's My Confession, he is a murderous, parodic and pedophilic Falstaff to the kid's moronic and uncomprehending Hal and Glanton's brutally efficient Hotspur. As McCarthy telegraphs to the reader what will happen in his chapter headings, the seemingly prescient judge telegraphs their upcoming fates to the gang. That they are always too stupid to take the warnings is not the judge's fault. Of course, if the gang ever did take the warnings the judge no doubt would have begun keeping his thoughts to himself.

To recap then, the kid does, the Glanton leads, and the judge justifies the scalphunting ; the three form a sort of *ad hoc* and berserking frontier government apparatus with executive (Glanton), judicial (Holden) and military (the kid) branches. Offstage as

²⁵⁹ Brian W. Dippie has pointed out that the 'insane nattering' of Thomas Berger's Custer in *Little Big Man* was actually based on Custer's own memoirs.

always in frontier scraps, sheltered from the blood and violence, are the legislators who send but never serve, and the “expectant capitalist” Texans waiting for the property to safely go on the market. Blood Meridian then places the events in an historical context that literally links the scalphunting to its proper 1850 context, and figuratively links scalphunting to Vietnam and the American enterprise generally. The three characters in themselves represent a full spectrum of literary invention versus historical representation as well, arcing from the historically well-described Glanton, to the once-described Holden, to McCarthy’s pure invention of the kid. Before turning again to the fictional kid and an examination of the real-world economics of the scalphunting enterprise, a brief look at two of the historical scalphunters is in order.

But for one source, Samuel Chamberlain, looking for the judge in history is like looking for a very large needle in a prairie of haystacks. Chamberlain not only provides us with the historic judge, but connects him to John Joel Glanton as well. Samuel Emery Chamberlain, born November 27 1829, was a New Hampshire boy who ran away from home at fifteen (1844) as a result of assaulting church members who had besmirched the honour of his true love, who dumped him for his efforts. More prosaically, his father had just died and there exists the possibility the belligerent lad was being sent to his uncle’s farm in Illinois to grow up. Chamberlain drank and brawled his way into Texas just in time to be swept up in the 1846 war. Having survived the war, somewhat incredibly given his penchant for booze, sex and extracurricular fighting, Chamberlain deserted to become a 49er. Fate intruded on his prospects however, in the form of John Joel Glanton. Chamberlain had previously met Glanton in 1846 in Bexar when the former was on his way to the front and the latter was playing cards with a “tall, reckless, good looking young Ranger” in the Bexar Exchange. Glanton,

who was playing his hand in a mild timid way utterly at variance with his hardened desperate appearance, was short and thick set, his face

bronzed by exposure to the hue of an Indian, with eyes deeply sunken and bloodshot, and coarse black hair hanging in snakelike locks down his back. His costume was that of a Mexican herdman, made of leather, with a Mexican blanket thrown over his shoulder. [...] A dispute arose, the short ruffian [Glanton] threw a glass of liquor into the tall one's face, [and the young Ranger pulled his gun on Glanton.]

The threatened man did not move from his seat, but replied, "Shoot and be d- - d, but if you miss, John Glanton won't miss you!"²⁶⁰

Unfortunately for the reckless Ranger, Glanton's word was as good as gold, and when the Ranger's revolver misfired,

quick as a flash Glanton sprang up, a huge Bowie knife flashed in the candlelight, and the tall powerful young Ranger fell with a sickening thud to the floor a corpse, his neck cut half through.²⁶¹

This made a big impression on the young Chamberlain, who rushed out and bought his own Bowie knife ("Arkansas Toothpick") with "a nine inch blade warranted to cut through bone without turning the cutting edge."²⁶²

Chamberlain would remember Glanton as he fought through Mexico with the First Regiment of the United States Dragoons. However, when Glanton sent "Crying Tom"²⁶³ to recruit the young deserter in March, 1849 Chamberlain had some doubts, and after agreeing to join the gang :

I laid down to sleep, but my mind was too active to rest, the step I was about to take, to separate myself from all civilization and friends, to join a band of outlaws, for such the Scalp Hunters was considered, even by half the savage frontiersmen, was an act to make one think and reflect.²⁶⁴

But join he would, and his narrative of his adventures with the Glanton gang would provide many of the historical bones McCarthy would use to assemble the narrative skele-

²⁶⁰ Samuel E. Chamberlain, My Confession (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1956 [1861]): 39.

²⁶¹ Chamberlain, 40.

²⁶² *Ibid.*

²⁶³ Real life scalphunter Tom Hitchcock.

²⁶⁴ Chamberlain, 260.

ton of Blood Meridian. After meeting Glanton, Chamberlain's *Confession* follows his exploits with the gang up to the infamous Yuma ferry massacre(s) that forms one gruesome highlight of Blood Meridian. The ferry incident puts a cap on Chamberlain's written adventures (how would you top that?), and there followed an unaccounted for four or five year wander before he returned home to Boston in 1854. The parallel to the kid's literary construction here seem obvious. Chamberlain however not only survived the judge, but lived to become a family man, politician and a Union "brevet brigadier general [by] the end of the Civil War."²⁶⁵ My Confession was written down and profusely illustrated by Chamberlain "between the years 1855 and 1861," and would be hauled out to impress visitors and house-guests. Mrs. Chamberlain was surprisingly supportive of his writings, and "after his death in 1908 [she] made sure it would not be lost or destroyed." Eventually the manuscript wound up in the hands of an antique collector and through his shop, the pages of *Life* magazine, expurgated of course, in 1955.²⁶⁶ Cormac McCarthy would have been laying in his bunk in Alaska, "reading literature in the barracks"²⁶⁷ when the book was serialised.

Shall I give you the judge's philosophy, and all? ...to begin, some reconnoitering of the ground in a philosophical way the judge always deemed indispensable with strangers. For you must know that Indian-hating was no monopoly of Colonel Moredock's but a passion shared among the class to which he belonged. And Indian-hating still exists; and, no doubt, will continue to exist, as long as Indians do.

Herman Melville, The Confidence Man

But for the fact that he sprang at least partially fledged from Chamberlain's My Confession, judge Holden would certainly be Cormac McCarthy's great literary inven-

²⁶⁵ Roger Butterfield, "Introduction." Chamberlain, 1.

²⁶⁶ McCarthy would not have found any reference to Holden in *Life* as all references to the judge were left out of the serialised My Confession. The scalphunter section was otherwise included.

²⁶⁷ Jarrett, 2.

tion. McCarthy's hairless, seven-foot sociopath is a remarkable distillation of 19th century science, philosophy and *zeitgeist*. It is not so much what the judge does in Blood Meridian, as what he says that matters here, although one should not lightly dismiss the string of sexually motivated murders that the judge perpetrates upon the Borderlands populace. What the judge verbalises is the philosophical underpinnings of America's restless expansion into the great 'unoccupied' desert of the West and the Southwest. In this he is equal parts Colonel Moredock, Meriwether Lewis and Frederick Jackson Turner, with a soupçon of Hannibal Lecter thrown in. McCarthy's judge explains *why* the scalphunters pursue their trade, and indeed why they have a trade to practise. Holden is the voice of the "metaphysics of Indian-hating," and as portrayed in Blood Meridian he is a fascinating mix of Chamberlain's description, and of other period historical sources.

One of the key contributions Chamberlain would make to McCarthy was the only extant description of Glanton's second in command :

a man of gigantic size called "Judge" Holden of Texas. Who or what he was no one knew but a cooler blooded villain never went unhung; he stood six feet six in his moccasins, had a large fleshy frame, a dull tallow colored face destitute of hair and all expression. His desires was blood and women, and terrible stories were circulated in camp of horrible crimes committed by him when bearing another name, in the Cherokee nation and Texas[.]²⁶⁸

And here is the kid's first glimpse of judge Holden just before he destroys Reverend Green's²⁶⁹ world at Nacogdoches :

An enormous man dressed in an oilcloth slicker had entered the tent and removed his hat. He was bald as a stone and he had no trace of beard

²⁶⁸ Chamberlain, 271.

²⁶⁹ John Emil Sepich (1993). "Reverend Green is the first verifiable historical character named in [Blood Meridian]." A baptist minister at Nacogdoches, R. G. Green was dismissed "for drunkenness" in 1840. Second quote is from History of the primitive Baptists in Texas.

and he had no brows to his eyes nor lashes to them. He was close to seven feet in height[.] (6)

If one believes, as Hayden White and Arthur Danto apparently and mistakenly do that “‘facts’ are ‘events under a description’,”²⁷⁰ then the judge is an historical fact. To an historian, of course, a fact is no such thing, and it is a given that more than one description is necessary. American historian William Goetzmann is not so sure about Holden, or about Chamberlain generally, and has hinted he thinks “Holden [might be] an entirely fictitious character” as the judge labours under but one description, that of Samuel Chamberlain.²⁷¹ However Goetzmann’s suspicions and best efforts at proving *or* disproving Chamberlain’s description of Holden’s existence were inconclusive and he admitted that “after a number of years of intense research it is by no means certain that [Chamberlain] did not actually ride with Glanton.”²⁷² For the purposes of this paper it is immaterial whether or not the judge existed in real life or whether he was a figment of Samuel Chamberlain’s imagination. If Chamberlain did invent Holden as

a composite creation of [his] leisurely reveries, nothing like [Holden] existed in our *belles lettres* before, and he surely deserves to be included on any list of great literary figments of the American imagination.²⁷³

While this writer does not believe that Chamberlain invented the judge, if only because there is no indication from Chamberlain’s prose that he was in Shakespeare’s league, Goetzmann believes that Chamberlain was in a position to absorb all of the scientific and philosophical ideas his Holden propounds. Chamberlain was a Bostonian af-

²⁷⁰ Hayden White. “Response to Arthur Marwick.” *Journal of Contemporary History* **30** (1995): 2. If White believes that one description alone sanctifies a report of an event into factness, then it is no wonder he has major issues with historicity.

²⁷¹ William Goetzmann (1996). “Introduction.” in *My Confession : Recollections of a Rogue* (Austin: Texas State Historical Association): 33.

²⁷² Goetzmann, “Introduction.” 13

²⁷³ Rick Wallach. “Sam Chamberlain’s Judge Holden and the iconography of science in mid-19th Century nation-building.” *Southwestern American Literature* **23** (1997): 10.

ter resurfacing from the Borderlands, and William Goetzmann writes that “[clearly Sam had a relatively sophisticated knowledge of geology and mineralogy ... he had access to the Harvard Museum Library and the Peabody Museum of Anthropology,”²⁷⁴ as of course did all of Boston. As Goetzmann believes it was near impossible for the judge to exist, so this writer believes it was highly improbable that Glanton metamorphosed from the drunken soldier / scalphunter of the historic record into a genius polymath after five years of frontier wanderings.

Engaging for a moment in pure rhetoric, in terms of regarding Blood Meridian as a plausible representation of 1850 Texas and the scalphunting industry, both Chamberlain’s representation of Holden and McCarthy’s representation which so obviously draws on Chamberlain do have considerable value as history for the following reasons. First, there is a chance that Chamberlain was not the Shakespeare of the Borderlands and that the judge actually existed ; as Goetzmann admits, there is no proof he did not. In this case, because Holden was so endlessly voluble, Chamberlain gives us a direct line into the thinking of one of the most savage intellectuals ever to walk the plains of Texas until McCarthy himself would show up. That McCarthy based his judge on Chamberlain’s is simply irrefutable, as John Emil Sepich so capably demonstrates in Notes on Blood Meridian.

Second, Goetzmann and other writers have advanced the notion that Holden was a composite character fabricated out of Borderlands legends and snippets of records. In this case Chamberlain cobbled together a character to represent bits and snatches of lore and reality to represent conversations and events he had some familiarity with, and his representation would have some value as reportage on the thoughts and mores of the

²⁷⁴ William Goetzmann (1996). 13 Of course, Chamberlain *did* metamorphose from a drunken deserter into a (presumably drunken) Union “brevet brigadier general,” but given a nominal knowledge of the caliber of Civil War leadership, that does not seem so great a stretch.

Borderlands. John Sepich has found models who might have informed Chamberlain's synthesis, such as "Judge H." who survived hideous injuries from Mexican soldiers in 1836 to "finally reach the [California] coast in safety."²⁷⁵ Another example from Sepich is this character from the biography Colonel Jack Hays by James Greer (1952) who has Holden-like attributes:

A huge fat Englishman named Self was encamped near San Antonio. He bragged continuously about how he would conduct himself in a fight with the Indians. [...] he could, to give him his due, play the violin. In a benevolent mood one day [Texas Ranger] Hays invited him to bring his violin and spend several days with the Rangers. The boys enjoyed his fiddling, but detested his bragging.²⁷⁶

Goetzmann too invested considerable energies in cobbling together historical sources to account for Chamberlain's judge, "although they are of some later provenance : explorer Joseph Rutherford Walker" being one example. Why would Goetzmann expend these efforts if he was convinced Chamberlain invented the brilliant and depraved judge? The answer is that Holden gives us some legitimate insights into the tenor of his place and times. Whether the judge spoke the words Chamberlain / McCarthy have him speak, or whether Chamberlain invented those words for him, he still speaks resoundingly of and for a mindset that helps explain commercial scalphunting -- a sort of scalphunter's Mein Kampf, as it were. As Goetzmann writes there are holes in Chamberlain's story, but,

Sam knew the people of his era [and he had] a Dickensian vision of nineteenth-century humanity. He understood its sin, evil and darkness, but he also understood its comedy. [...] He takes us far beyond recorded fact.²⁷⁷

Where Chamberlain takes the reader to, is somewhere approaching a true story of what happened on the 1850s Borderlands.

²⁷⁵ John Emil Sepich, Notes on Blood Meridian (Louisville : Bellarmine College Press, 1993): 23.

²⁷⁶ Sepich, Notes on Blood Meridian, 22.

²⁷⁷ Goetzmann, "Introduction," 22.

A third possibility, there must be many more, is that, Chamberlain who had some education, and was obviously clever and perceptive as well, invented Holden out of a need to explain his own involvement with the Glanton gang. Sam was after all an officer and a gentleman, and he was also an effective prison warden and owner of several hundred bibles.²⁷⁸ There is a telling section in his confession where Chamberlain spends a number of words regretting shooting the “huge savage” he shot while traveling with Crying Tom. This warrior

presented a ghastly sight, he tried to call his pony to him, but the affrighted animal stood at a distance, snorting in terror. The savage gave a wild startling yell, and by his hands alone, dragged himself to the brink of the deep barranca, then singing his death chant and waving his hand in defiance towards us he plunged into the awful abyss.

“Cincuenta pesos gone to h--l, muchacho,” cried Tom. “The doggone mean red nigger done that thar, to cheat us out oh his har!”

[...] the death of the warrior affected me greatly; I felt as if I had committed a murder. Conscience said, You were safe, he never harmed you, and he was on his own soil, yet you killed him.²⁷⁹

Noble sentiments, but not ones you would want running through your head when charging a village of Apaches to collect their scalps. There is at least one section in Blood Meridian where a scalphunter betrays this sort of sensitivity. Toadvine tells the kid before the attack on the “peaceful Tiguas” :

Them sons of bitches aint botherin nobody, Toadvine said. The Vandiemlander looked at [Toadvine]. He looked at the vivid letters tatted on his forehead and at the greasy lanky hair that hung from his earless skull. He looked at the necklace of gold teeth that hung at his chest. They rode on. (173)

Did Chamberlain have fits of conscience on his excursions with Glanton? - he appears to have gone on at least two or three such trips. Did Chamberlain feel a need for the rationalisation of his deeds and invent the judge to cover that need? Why then write

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.* 1ff

²⁷⁹ Chamberlain, 263.

his confession and hand it out to house guests to read? If Chamberlain wanted to keep his scalping career under wraps, he need only have kept quiet and never written his account or burned the book when it was finished, like an alcoholic's fourth step. Instead what Chamberlain gave us was a record of what happened on the 1850 Borderlands, and a priceless rationale as to why an American would participate in the scalphunting business. This is not a pretty picture that Chamberlain paints, unlike his many extraordinary watercolors which both capture the 1840s Borderlands and further establish that Chamberlain was actually there. It is however a true picture of one thinking scalphunter's take on the mores of the scalphunting trade.

And what did Chamberlain's "Holden of Texas" have to say about life on the Borderlands?

Judge Holden mounted a rock for a rostrum and gave us a scientific lecture on Geology. The Scalp Hunters ... listened to the "Literati" with marked attention. [...] Holden's lecture was no doubt very learned, but hardly true, for one statement he made was "that *millions* of years had witnessed the operation producing the result around us," which Glanton with recollections of the Bible teaching his young mind had undergone said "was a d-----d lie."²⁸⁰

And here is a parallel construction from McCarthy :

In the afternoon [the judge] sat in the compound breaking ore samples with a hammer, the feldspar rich in red oxide of copper and native nuggets in whose organic lobations he purported to read news of the earth's origins, holding an extemporaneous lecture in geology to a small gathering who nodded and spat. A few would quote him scripture to confound his ordering up of eons out of the ancient chaos and other apostate supposings.. The judge smiled.

Books lie, he said.

God don't lie.

No, said the judge. He does not. And these are his words.

He held up a chunk of rock.

He speaks in stones and trees, the bones of things.

The squatters in their rags nodded among themselves and were soon reckoning him correct, this man of learning, in all his speculations, and

²⁸⁰ Chamberlain, 276.

this the judge encouraged until they were right proselytes of the new order whereupon he laughed at them for fools. (116)

Now apart from this concordance between Chamberlain and McCarthy, this passage also strikes a chord of remembrance from another source of geological speculation on the meaning of it all. It is hard not to look at Blood Meridian once the idea is in place as a bloody parody of those frontier exploration journals, of which Meriwether Lewis's is the most telling. Thomas Jefferson sent Lewis and Clark to gather up accurate information on geography, "Native American languages and customs; and to learn about climate, plants, birds, reptiles, insects, and volcanoes." All of these McCarthy's judge will examine in the course of his travels with Glanton. The Lewis and Clark venture was not purely a scientific expedition,²⁸¹ however, as Jefferson had stressed the "commercial possibilities" of the vast territory drained by the Missouri in obtaining expedition funding from Congress.²⁸²

Judge Holden parallels the role of the scientist Meriwether Lewis as Glanton does the soldier-leader Clark. But Holden is a profane parody of Lewis who is intent on pursuing his own manifest destiny and business interests, and yet still finds time to sit and write in his journal, and speculate on the past and future. Both, however have the same interest in "the bones of things" as the judge displays in taking a break from scalping and rapine to sit

...breaking ore samples with a hammer, the feldspar rich in red oxide of copper and native nuggets in whose organic lobations he purported to read news of the earth's origins, holding an extemporary lecture in geology to a small gathering who nodded and spat. (116)

And here is Meriwether Lewis from his journal:

²⁸¹ "As Goetzmann shows in Exploration and Empire, this is true of ALL exploring expeditions -- including Custer's to the Black Hills in '74." Brian W. Dippie.

²⁸² Paul S. Boyer, et al., The Enduring Vision 4th ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2000): 218.

this collection consists of white and grey gannite, a brittle black rock, flint, limestone, freestone, some small specimens of an excellent pebble and occasionally broken stratas of a stone which appears to be petryfyed wood; it is of a black colour and makes excellent whetstones. Coal appears to be of a better quality.²⁸³

Both journalists were also venturing into lands that were foreign, not just in the indigenous occupants, but in the strangeness and 'emptiness' of the land. On the upper Missouri, Lewis was mystified as he

can hear of no burning mountain in the neighborhood ... but the bluffs of the River are now on fire at several places. The plains in many places, throughout the great extent of open country, exhibit abundant proofs of having once been on fire. [T]he Pummice Stone seen floating down the Missouri, is rather burning or burnt plains than burning mountains.²⁸⁴

It must have been reassuring to realise that it was just burning land, and not burning mountain, floating on the flooding river. McCarthy's judge also finds hellish landscapes in the Southwest :

about him lay only the strange coral shapes of fulgurite in their scorched furrows fused out of the sand where ball lightning had run upon the ground in the night hissing and stinking of sulphur. (215)

Burning stone floating on the river, and balls of fire melting the desert sands into stone, the borderlands are always surprising and strange, if not always hospitable, and the fictional can be no stranger than the actual.

There are commonalities in the two writers in that they both accept that the world is an older place than frontier Christians -- like Glanton! -- would have had one believe, but the judge most clearly attacks the received creationist wisdom. Both are concerned with finding practical applications for natural resources, as the judge's turning urine and saltpeter into gunpowder, a Borderlands 'loaves and fishes' moment, most

²⁸³ Reuben Gold Thwaites (1959 [1904]), ed. Original Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, 1804-1806, Vol. 1. (New York: Antiquarian Press): 329.

²⁸⁴ Thwaites, Volume 6, 160ff.

clearly displays.²⁸⁵ But Holden and Lewis really do have different agendas. Lewis never in his journals feels compelled to justify his actions or his presence in the Northwest, as Judge certainly does in the Southwest. Lewis has all the support, fiscal, moral and philosophical of Jefferson and the nation behind him, he does not have to explain anything to his readers. Of course, Lewis and Clark, don't have the souls of hundreds of scalped Indians on their consciences, either, and they possibly did not take the smallpox to the Blackfeet in 1804 / 5, that fatal year. The judge is a different story, however, as he continuously extemporises on the brevity and ultimate meaninglessness of life, a handy philosophy to have, for one who will take so many of them.

If there is one sure way to differentiate the world views of Lewis and Holden, it is that Lewis is a civil servant selflessly questing for resources for his people, and, while the judge is also cutting trail for empire, his motivation is entirely selfish. It is hard for example to imagine Lewis coming out with a line like the judge's "the freedom of birds is an insult to me," (199) or, "Whatever in creation exists without my knowledge exists without my consent." (198) Of course for the long-term effects on the local Indian inhabitants, it was entirely moot what the motivation of the intruding Euroamerican individual was. Even an officially sanctioned government expedition into the borderlands generated violence simply by passing through, but no one would suggest that Lewis and Clark paralleled the judge's wanton levels of destruction. Lewis and Clark were the pointmen for the American Empire, they were cutting trail, not clearing land for occupation, but the Custers would follow them. In the Borderlands, the Fremonts had already marked the trails and now the Glantons and Holdens were in the process of clearing the ground that the incoming dirt farmers and ranchers might break it. Rooted in the paral-

²⁸⁵ The judge urges the boys to "piss for your very souls[!]" (131) John Emil Sepich gives a fascinating reading of this passage and its historical roots in Notes on Blood Meridian at 119- 128.

lel historicity of Lewis' narrative, McCarthy sends his band of cutscalps berserking through the Borderlands in search of "commercial possibilities." The two expeditions, Lewis and Clark and judge and Glanton, show precisely the same process at different points of completion.

Who was Glanton, the leader of both the fictional and the historical scalphunter gangs? John Joel Glanton is the individual who links together all the threads this paper has so far examined. Glanton was an *uber* Texan -- a Texas Ranger. He was also a member of America's official filibuster into Mexico in 1846, and a professional Indian killer who became a professional scalphunter, and he briefly assumed James Kirker's place on the Borderlands. In this one well documented individual it is possible to see the subterranean exploits of James Kirker brought to the surface in 1850 Texas by a member of the American and Texan military establishments. To reiterate a conceit, the greatest times of crisis may also afford the greatest times of opportunity as John Joel Glanton demonstrated in life, and does in Blood Meridian. Glanton not only seized the opportunity created by the breakdown of order (such as it had been) on the Borderlands, he also seized the market and business James Kirker had painstakingly created, and so reluctantly 'given up'. As this narrative will briefly show, Glanton had every bit of Kirker's opportunism / ruthlessness, courage and ability to lead; what he lacked was Kirker's uncanny knack for survival.

John Joel Glanton was born (about 1820?) in South Carolina in what was then the cattle frontier of America, and moved as a child to Stephen Austin's colony in Tejas. Samuel Chamberlain has supplied the only known account of the formative years of "the meanest rakehell ever to roam the Big Bend" country of Texas.²⁸⁶ Perhaps Glanton had some legitimate claim to the requisite background that writers attribute to him in ex-

²⁸⁶ Elton Miles (1976). Tales of the Big Bend. (College Station: Texas A&M University Press): 114.

plaining his exploits as a killer, and maybe his family was carried off by Comanches or Apaches. Apparently he had a “deeply religious youth” because his usage, or misuse, of religious sermons and imagery is a feature of all reports of his adult life.²⁸⁷ Glanton seems to have grown up, not in his family home, but within the ranks of the Texas Rangers where Mabry B. Gray was his mentor. At the age of sixteen Glanton was leading a company of Rangers and acquiring a reputation not just as a scourge of Indians, but as one of the infamous ‘Cow-Boys’ who “slaughtered South Texas Mexicans wholesale in the whipsaw violence that followed the Texas revolt.”²⁸⁸ Not all Texans cherished these exploits, as President Sam Houston “declared [Glanton] an outlaw.” However “the people held him in such awe and respect that” he was allowed to remain at large.²⁸⁹ There must be some truth to this sentiment, as it would be the vengeful Pima Indians and not any Euroamerican body that would finally bring Glanton to heel in 1850, for this was certainly not the only occasion that Glanton would be perceived as being on the wrong side of Borderlands law. Among Glanton’s other escapades before his scalphunting career were trying to shoot two preachers (one Presbyterian, one Methodist) in Bexar.

Had Glanton never gone to Mexico in 1846 as a private in “Major Walter Lane’s company of Texas Cavalry, U.S. Army,”²⁹⁰ he might have remained merely a local legend, however it was the 1846 war that gave Glanton his opportunity to achieve a greater infamy. Glanton’s war included killing the young Texas Ranger in the Bexar Exchange, and being charged in 1846 with the murder of Mexicans by General Zachary Taylor. It must be emphasised that being charged with killing enemy aliens in context of the Mexican-American War was an almost unimaginable feat, as General Taylor reported

²⁸⁷ Miles, 115, 126.

²⁸⁸ *Ibid.* 115.

²⁸⁹ *Ibid.* 115.

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.* 117.

that generally the “mounted men from Texas have scarcely made one expedition without unaccountably killing a Mexican.”²⁹¹ It seems by the context of Taylor’s charge that Glanton disobeyed direct orders, perhaps endangered American troops by indiscriminately charging after any armed Mexican he encountered, and by killing and robbing noncombatant Mexicans. Perhaps it was an accumulation of negative impressions that caused Taylor to charge Glanton in Mexico, for Taylor had also tried to have Glanton arrested in Texas. Perhaps Glanton is deserving of the “psychotic former army officer” label that Rick Wallach uses to describe his later exploits.²⁹² Apparently Glanton still had his supporters, and Taylor’s order to have him arrested was again not followed. Instead, Glanton was transferred to another regiment with which he returned to Texas where he was “mustered out” of the U.S. Army in April, 1848.²⁹³

By May, 1849 Glanton was back in Mexico where he signed up with Major Michael H. Chevallié (another ex-Ranger / ex-U.S. Army hand), who had just signed a contract with Chihuahua to

fight the “barbarous Indians.” [The “Fifth law”] offered \$200 for each barbarous Indian warrior killed, \$250 for each barbarous Indian warrior presented alive, \$150 for each barbarous Indian female captive regardless of age, and \$150 for each barbarous Indian captive under the age of fourteen years of age of either sex. (The law did not use the word ... “scalp” or the word “apache” ...).²⁹⁴

Chevallié and Glanton would help inaugurate the “Sixth Kirker War, 1849 - 1891,”²⁹⁵ between the Mexican States and the West Texas Indians and set in action the events that McCarthy would chronicle in Blood Meridian. These two were short-term partners as

²⁹¹ Miles, 117.

²⁹² Rick Wallach, “Sam Chamberlain’s Judge Holden and the iconography of science in mid-19th Century nation-building.” *Southwestern American Literature* **23** Fall 1997 (9-17): 11.

²⁹³ Miles, 119.

²⁹⁴ Ralph Adam Smith, Borderlander : The Life of James Kirker, 1793-1852. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1999): 220.

²⁹⁵ Smith, Borderlander: 220.

Chevallié was soon killed, possibly while on his way to the gold-fields. Glanton took up the contract and over the next year “captured and scalped many Apaches and took numerous head of livestock ... along the Conchos, the Rio Grande, and in Texas.”²⁹⁶ How many scalps the Glanton gang took in 1849 is unknown, but the Chihuahuan treasury paid out “17,896 pesos” in that year alone. Figure the exchange rate at 1:1, and an average pay out per *pieza* at \$150, and a rough guess at the number of scalps turned in at 120.²⁹⁷ Remember that the program was just ramping up, that Chihuahua was only one of several states that paid bounty, and that 1850 was the peak year for scalp production, at least for the Glanton gang.

While this was going on, James Kirker, who still had a \$10,000 bounty on his head in Chihuahua, was busily doing “a lively traffic ... with less risk than taking scalps to redeem or taking mules to sell to forty-niners. This was the old contraband trade of swapping guns, lead and powder to Indian raiders for horses and mules”²⁹⁸ they were taking from Texans and Mexicans. At the time of the greatest Borderlands chaos when the Apaches, who had been “surprisingly friendly” towards Americans “were making good on their threats to kill every American possible,” James Kirker was in Texas and New Mexico meeting returning Comanche and Apache raiders and doing good business in relative safety, while Glanton was now the pointman for the scalping enterprise on the Borderlands.

Perhaps Glanton’s key contributions to the Borderlands was to generate *quirquismo* in the absence of James Kirker. As reported in the *Bexar Telegraph and Texas Register* of January 3, 1850 the frontier past the Pecos river was in turmoil because of a sudden increase in Apache warfare on Texans :

²⁹⁶ Smith, Borderlander: 220.

²⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 220:

²⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 224.

The Apaches are said to be well armed, some of them having six shooters. Their great hostility is ascribed to the attacks on them by parties of Americans in the employment of the Frontier States of Mexico, principally those under the command of Cheville and Glanton, formerly of this city. Capt. Johns, on his way from El Paso ... lost two men, killed by the Indians.²⁹⁹

Kirker may have left the Borderlands, but his legacy lived on through the efforts of John Joel Glanton. In this particular instance the reaction of official Texas was to send "two companies of the 3rd Infantry"³⁰⁰ from El Paso to guard supply and express lines, but surely there would have been retaliation against any Indians who happened to be accessible to the reach of the Texan / American military. It is probably a moot point to mention that had the combined might of Texas and America chosen to pursue and punish Glanton for the murder of Texas / American Indians on American soil rather than punish the Apaches, or whoever else was handy and Indian, for retaliating, then the Borderlands *may* have been a more placid environment in 1850. There is no record of this thought having crossed the collective mind of Borderlands officialdom, however.

A fortuitous find regarding Glanton is in a 1944 exchange of letters in the *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* (SHQ). A Colonel M. L. Crimmins wrote that Glanton

was a scalp hunter who palmed off Mexican for Apache scalps and was associated with the Brown brothers. [...] General Zachary Taylor ordered Glanton tried for murder when he was a ranger in Mexico in 1846. He was allowed to escape and came back to San Antonio and married Joaquina Menchea ... He was the grandfather of Zulema Lacosta, who married Ferdinand Herff.³⁰¹

Some crucial details of Crimmins' letter were challenged by an Edith Simpson Halter in the following issue, who corrected Crimmins as regards the name of Glanton's wife. Ap-

²⁹⁹ San Antonio *Telegraph and Texas Register* (January 3, 1850). In *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* **48**: 2 (October 1944): 272.

³⁰⁰ *Telegraph and Texas Register* (January 3, 1850).

³⁰¹ Colonel M. L. Crimmins. Letter re: "the country from Austin to El Paso," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*. **47**:4 (April, 1944): 430.

parently not every Texan wanted a “scalp hunter” hanging in their family tree :

an article by Colonel M. L. Crimmins [stating that Glanton] “was the grandfather of Zuleme LaCoste” ... is incorrect.³⁰² Zuleme Herff Simpson, daughter of Zuleme LaCoste, is a member of our chapter of the Daughters of the [Texas] Republic.

This “scalp hunter” Glanton Col. Crimmins speaks of married Joaquina Mendosa, aunt of Zuleme La Coste, so is not even blood kin. [...] This matter should be corrected as a matter of genealogical record.³⁰³

What these letters do is help establish Glanton’s existence, his activities as a scalphunter and connect him to Texas in the time frame of Blood Meridian. What they also do is help this writer to feel justified in his extreme suspicions that the historical records regarding the scalphunters contain a “slipperiness”³⁰⁴ of language that betrays the notion that scalphunting was a normal business. As Jill LePore so capably demonstrates in The Name of War,³⁰⁵ any war causes an upsurge in creative and justifying or masking language, and the more terrible the conflict, the more creative the neologisms and ‘turns’ of phrase can be. One impression that is frequently imprinted on a reader looking at scalphunter sources is just how often one encounters as set of circumstances that goes something like : “A robust young frontiersman was destined to be a farmer / rancher / clerk until his beloved young wife / sister / daughter was savagely raped and / or scalped and then kidnapped / or killed by savage Indians. The stricken frontiersman then turned to a life as a brutal, but highly effective Ranger / Indian Killer / scalphunter. Who could blame him?”

Here is Chamberlain’s apologia for Glanton:

Nothing remarkable distinguished Glanton in his youth from the other

³⁰² The spellings here are faithful to the source.

³⁰³ Edith Simpson Halter (1944). Letter re: “I was much interested.” *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*. **48**:1 (July): 98.

³⁰⁴ Patricia Limerick, quoted in Le Pore.

³⁰⁵ Jill Lepore(1999). The Name of War: King Phillip’s War and the origins of American Identity. (New York : Vintage Books): xv. ff.

young men of the settlement, without it was a deep religious feeling and a strict moral conduct. A young orphan girl, whose parents had been killed by the Lipans, gained the affections of the young South Carolinian; his love was returned, the marriage day was set, though his affianced was only seventeen. Glanton had built a log hut for his bride on the bank of the beautiful Guadalupe ... one day a band of Lipan warriors charged on the the outskirts of Gonzales, killing and scalping the old women and young children, and carrying away the girls, Glanton's betrothed among the latter. [...] The next day the savages were overtaken and suffered a severe defeat at the hands of the outraged Texans, but the prize for which they fought, the poor girls, were tomahawked and scalped while the fight was raging.³⁰⁶

That this model had become a cliché by 1850 is evidenced by the fact that the fictioneer³⁰⁷ Captain Mayne Reid used this device to explain his scalphunter king's motivation in The Scalp Hunters : A romance of northern Mexico.³⁰⁸ The scalphunter king, who is named Seguin, in all likelihood after a Texas town which is by remarkable coincidence some fifty miles from Glanton's "log hut [at] Gonzales," employs a rather unattractive James Kirker as one of his shock troops. Seguin launched into his career after being released from prison (he was innocent, of course), when he returned to find

' ... my home again, it was plundered and desolate. The wild Navajo had been there : my household gods were scattered and broken ; and my child, oh God! my little Adele, was carried captive to the mountains!'

'And your wife? your other child?' I inquired, eager to know the rest.³⁰⁹

The canny scalper finds this atrocity to be an excellent motivator for his suspiciously Glanton-like crew of scalphunters who might be otherwise too shy to scalp and kill. Of course they would kill only the warriors,

' ... and every man shall be paid according to his number [of scalps]. ... Let it be understood then, no women or children. The plunder you shall have, it is yours by our laws ... Do you all bind yourselves to this?'

³⁰⁶ Chamberlain, 268.

³⁰⁷ Webster's. "A writer of fiction, esp. a prolific one whose works are of low quality."

³⁰⁸ Captain Mayne Reid (1853),. The Scalp Hunters : A romance of northern Mexico. (London: George Routledge and Sons).

³⁰⁹ Reid, 119.

“Yes sir!’ ‘Si, Si!’ ‘Oui, oui!’ Ya, ya!’ ‘All!’ ‘Todos, todos!’ cried a multitude of voices, each man answering in his own language. [...]

We go then to seek for our friends and relatives, who for years have been captive to our savage enemy. There are many among us who have lost kindred, wives sisters and daughters.’

A murmur of assent ... testified to the truth of this statement.³¹⁰

The Kirker character would, of course, fail to comply with these fairly simple guidelines and lay about him with his scalping knife with indiscriminate zeal. With all due respect to those frontiersmen who actually did lose loved ones to Indian captive-taking, it is highly unlikely that many of the scalphunters fit that description. Insofar as Glanton himself, it is impossible to say whether or not he lost a first young wife to Indian warfare. What is known about him from the exchange in *SHQ* and other sources is that he had a young wife and daughter he had abandoned for the scalp trail and California. This would place him in the same general category of family men as James Kirker, who is known to have abandoned at least two and possibly three families to pursue fur and hair on the Borderlands.

As has been hitherto,
it is hoped that the intelligent and moral only,
will find their way to Texas.
Melinda Rankin, 1850.³¹¹

What, then, is left for the kid? As in Palestine, which has one of the youngest mean ages of any group on earth, and other violent hotspots in today’s world, a surfeit of young males is seemingly the one essential commodity in any violent enterprise. It is not necessarily the case that a surplus of young males will guarantee violent confrontations, unlike every other motile species on earth, but any conflict one cares to examine

³¹⁰ Reid, 175.

³¹¹ Melinda Rankin, *Texas in 1850*. (Waco: Texian Press, 1966 [1850]): 15.

will be carried out by this demographic.³¹² McCarthy's kid is the pointed end of the sharp stick of warfare. He may not know who he is fighting ; in fact total ignorance of and disconnection from others (any others) is a prime requisite for his effectiveness. He may not know what direction he is pointed in, or at whose eye, or for what reason he is being pointed, but he is being pointed Too much thinking would only reduce his effectiveness in action, and get in the way of his illiterate and unschooled "taste for violence." (3) The kid displays his political awareness while being recruited by the doomed filibuster Captain White³¹³ at Bexar. In regards to the recently signed treaty between Mexico and the States, the kid is asked :

What do you think of the treaty?

The kid looked at the man on the settle next to him. He had his eyes shut. He looked down at his thumbs. I don't know nothin about it, he said.

... I'm afraid that's the case with a lot of Americans, said the captain.(33)

McCarthy makes effective use of the kid in deflating many of America's cherished frontiering / westering myths, but one of which is the cherished 'frontiersman = deadly rifle shot' model that has sustained everything from the Natty Bumppo / Deerslayer franchise to the foundational exceptionalist premise that Andrew Jackson cannily used the dread 'Hunters of Kentucky' rifles to defeat the British at New Orleans:

'But Jackson he was wide awake, and
wasn't scared with trifles,
For well he knew what aim we take
with our Kentucky rifles.'³¹⁴

³¹² A tip of the lid here to Chechnya's Black Widows and other militant women around the world who form a very effective and interesting, if tiny, minority of the world's gun-carrying freedom fighters, revolutionaries and soldiers.

³¹³ "We are about to be the instruments of liberation in a dark and troubled land," White tells the kid. Sure they will.

³¹⁴ Samuel Woodworth (1822?). "The Hunters of Kentucky, or, The Battle of New Orleans." in John William Ward (1953) Andrew Jackson : Symbol for an Age. (New York : Oxford University Press):14.

When Captain White's 'staff sergeant' asks the kid :

Where ye from?

Tennessee.

Tennessee. Well I dont misdoubt but what you can shoot a rifle[,] (30)

the sergeant's triple negative indicates that *he* is aware that being born in Kentucky or Tennessee does not automatically a Natty Bumppo make, and that Jackson's deadly riflemen showed up at New Orleans in rags and rifleless just like the kid. Perhaps, just like the kid, many of them had never even held the old man's prized rifle. As John William Ward wrote in deflating this particular myth :

it can be flatly asserted that Jackson's overwhelming victory can in no way be attributed to the sharpshooting skill of the American frontiersman; further, that fact was recognized by those who took part in the battle and in the immediate newspaper accounts of the battle. So what we have in "The Hunters of Kentucky" is the imputation to a historical cause of an event which has no basis except in the widespread desire of Americans to believe their own imaginative construction of the battle.³¹⁵

The sergeant knows that the kid could not hit the broadside of a Mexxer church with a blunderbuss had he possessed one, which he obviously does not.

Captain White continues his sergeant's teasing out of the kid's vast frontier / military experience, his toolbox of weapons and his motivation :

Have you got a rifle?

Not no more i aint: [..]

You're young . But I don't misread you. I'm seldom mistaken in a man.

I think you mean to make your mark in this world. Am I wrong?

No sir. [..]

What about a saddle? he said.

Saddle?

You don't have a saddle?

No sir.

I thought you had a horse.

A mule.

I see.

I got a old hull of a mule but they ain't much left of it. Ain't a whole lot left of the mule. He [the sergeant] said I was to get a horse and a saddle.

³¹⁵ Ward, 16.

After ordering the sergeant to get the kid a saddle, some clothes and a horse, Captain White is told there are no broken horses, and the sergeant suggests the kid might be able to break his own :

You ever break horses?

No sir.

Ain't no need to sir me.

Yessir.

Sergeant, said the captain, easing himself down from the desk.

Yessir

Sign this man up. (35-36)

Captain White now has all the information he needs to recruit the kid, actually he had it before the interrogation began : **Sought out to join an army**, is how McCarthy's header introduces the sergeant trying to talk the kid down from the tree in which he is hiding from the law.

Was you the feller that knocked in that Mexxer's head yesterday evenin'?

I aint the law.

Who wants to know?

Captain White. He wants to sign that feller up to join the army.

What army?

Company under Captain White. We goin to whup up on the Mexicans.(29)

The kid has demonstrated the ability to kill a Mexican with a broken bottle for a quart of mezcal ; that is all the qualifications he needs for the venture ahead in Mexico.

Here is Chamberlain's version of *his* job interview with the real-life Glanton:

A rough looking, short and thick-set man came forward and saluted [Crying Tom] Hitchcock and myself in the following choice language. "What in h- - I have you got thar, Tom? Whar were ye spawned, stranger, and whar do ye tie up?"

I recognized in this frontier Chesterfield the John Glanton of the ... Bexar Exchange tragedy, and was about to answer him when he extended his hand as if to shake hands with me. I reached out mine, when the ruffian with a hoarse laugh seized me by the nose, giving it a severe twist [...] the moment he let go ... I struck him with all my might in the face, sending him to the grass. My safety was now the question.³¹⁶

³¹⁶ Chamberlain, 267.

Chamberlain drew his revolver and jumped onto his horse, but was lassoed off and hog-tied to a tree. Glanton rose up "with blood streaming from his face" and stuck his revolver in Chamberlain's face and for "one full minute he glared into [Chamberlain's] eyes," before saying "Real grit, stranger, ye'll pass, ye strike like the kick of a burro."³¹⁷ The actual Chamberlain, like the fictive kid, had demonstrated to his employers he had all the attributes required to be a successful scalphunter on the Borderlands.

Now, what might those manly attributes be in aid of? In a word, exchange : swapping one thing for another thing, alchemy in the term employed by this paper. Of course, McCarthy tells us that what he is showing us is the swapping of "an evening redness" for what came before, progress in other words. What Chamberlain and the kid have to exchange is their abilities to obtain Borderlands scalps, and what they have to gain is filthy lucre. In the greater sense, what is being exchanged is Indian scalps for Euroamerican access to or security of territory and property. This is made brutally clear in a brilliantly illuminating passage from Blood Meridian, the provenance being the gang's attack on a "band of peaceful Tiguas camped on [a] river," (173) which is set up by McCarthy's having the judge erasing Indian petroglyphs :

with a piece of broken chert he scrapped away one of the designs, leaving no trace of it only a raw place on the stone where it had been. Then he put up his book and returned to the camp. [...] In three days [Holden and the gang] would fall upon [...] the village trampling down the grass wickiups and bludgeoning the shrieking householders.

Long past dark that night when the moon was already up a party of women ...returned to the village and wandered howling through the ruins. ...All about [them] the dead lay with their peeled skulls like polyps bluely wet or luminescent melons cooling on some mesa of the moon. In the days to come the frail black rebuses of blood in those sands would crack and break and drift away so that in the circuit of few suns all trace of the destruction of these people would be erased. The desert wind would salt their ruins and there would be nothing, nor ghost nor scribe, to tell any pilgrim in his passing how it was that people had lived in this place and in

³¹⁷ Chamberlain, 268.

this place died. (173-174)

Two impressions arise out of this bloody representation. The first has to do with McCarthy's use of the term "householder" to describe the Indians in their camp, which is surely the only iteration of this word to describe 1850 Texas Indians one will ever come across. Any charges that McCarthy is hiding any latent racist attitudes towards the Indians he has his characters address in such terms as "mean red nigger" (275) can be unequivocally laid to rest just by his usage of this remarkable term. For householders is precisely the right and supra racial term to use to describe these Tigua family units. McCarthy here extends the basic 'stuff' of American family existence to the scalphunters' prey. Note that the term is used in the omniscient narrator's voice and does *not* issue from any character in the book, this being the reason the word stands out in such relief - it is so out of its historical context.

The second impression is that McCarthy restores to the record what the judge has just "scrapped away" with a sharp stone. Holden erased the pictographic record of Indians and recorded their lack of presence in his book, and then goes on to help erase living Indians in the same fashion. These attempts to scrape away and whitewash are countered by McCarthy's efforts to represent what was erased and masked. The Tiguas did exist, and they were human like all the rest of us. It must already be apparent that metaphor plays a major role in this narrative. Of course, narrative is metaphor. The recruitment, sometimes drafting, of facts, images, notions, (words basically), in the aid of a project of some sort constitutes a narrative. How could the writing up part be anything else? The state of Texas as portrayed in history books, novels and texts is like a Georgia O'Keeffe painting of a longhorn skull glimmering against the boundless white sands of the Staked Plain. The background is an impossibly blue sky, the promise of eternity. Off to one side is a tumbledown adobe wall, the 'blasted tree' of Southwestern art, here recognising the pastness of Spanish culture while the Indian culture has simply been

erased. And the skull, the only other object in the painting, is pristine in its whiteness. There is no hint of conflict here -- there are no slaves, no Indians, no scalps, no flesh left on the skull at all. The blood in the sands have drifted away and "the destruction of the people ...erased" by sun and wind. (174) This space is now free of Spanish and indigenous title and debt to the past, and clear for artists and oil-men and ranchers to stake *their* claim, and safely produce art and profits. The painting hints at, in the absence of any human agency but for an adobe wall, a natural order of things. It was Nature that felled the beast and stripped the carcass - (wo)man here is but an innocent viewer, an appreciator of art and space, and not part of a white horde just recently descended upon the populace of Tejas like flesh-eating locusts. This space is pristine white now, but that was not always so ... but how could one know that? If judge Holden had his way no one would ever know, but Blood Meridian provides an antidote for that scrapping away.

One of the reasons for erasing the scalphunter history from historical consciousness is that it was horrific, but also so very prosaic. There were no lofty justifications for rubbing out the Indians of Texas, apart from the fact that they impeded the progress of turning the frontier into real estate. The gang's swapping death and scalping for the Tiguas lives and land, the kid's exchange (one life for a bottle of Mezcal), Glanton's paying out his poker opponent with a severed neck in the perfectly named Bexar Exchange, and the scalphunters' turning lives into gold typify the various representations of exchange and 'economics' that form a strong current throughout both McCarthy's, and the historical, 1850 Borderlands.

We can see the two themes of this paper, masking and exchange, revealed in one semantic byte. This is in how the principals in the scalping industry referred to their business. 'Scalps', 'scalping', 'bounty', and 'Indian' are the key components of the scalphunting trade. It is interesting to observe how those key terms are used and mis-

used, or masked, by those who engaged in the trade. 'Indian' will be left until a later section on race, but the other three terms are worth a very brief examination here. Angel Trías and the "Spanish colonial documents" referred to scalps as "*piezas* or pieces."³¹⁸ The scalping system was, to the Mexican / Spanish system a *proyecto*, a legal framework that sanctioned various measures to protect the northern frontier from Indian, specifically West Texas Indian, depredations. The issue was protecting Mexicans and property, and not scalping Indians. *Pieza* was also interchangeable with 'one Indian' as bounties could be filled by captive Indians and other 'objects' as well :

In official usage [*piezas*] were actually those live, whole Apaches, Comanches, Kiowas, Navajos, and Seris who could be taken conveniently. But otherwise, they were the ears, heads, and scalps of the same, or the livestock, plunder, and native and white slave taken from them.³¹⁹

Piezas were not intrinsically scalps, but rather symbols representing something of value, in the way of a coin. It would have been possible for Trías to talk to Kirker or Glanton about financing a scalphunting expedition without ever mentioning death or scalping, and it made it possible to write about the system without ever mentioning the bloody truth. This masking had value at the time for Trías, because not all of the feedback on the bounty in his own country was positive, and Trías was after all an elected official. The following piece from the *New York Daily Tribune* (August 1, 1849) shows that not everyone was fooled by the slippery language or masking of events:

The Government of Chihuahua has made bloody contract with an individual named Cheville, stipulating to give him a bounty of so much per head for every Indian, dead or alive, whom he may secure. The terms of this atrocious bargain are published in the Mexican papers, which, to their credit be it said, denounce them as inhuman and revolting. The Chihua-

³¹⁸ Ralph Adam Smith . "Bounty power against the West Texas Indians." *West Texas Historical Association Yearbook* 49 : (1973): 46.

³¹⁹ Ralph Adam Smith, "Bounty power against the West Texas Indians." 46.

huans themselves are disgusted with the treaty.³²⁰

James Kirker had no compunctions in calling a scalp a scalp, except when he had to interact with the world outside the Borderlands. In his attempt to have the English Government assist him in collecting scalp bounties owing him from the Mexican Government, Kirker wrote to “Ewen Mackintosh, the British Consul General in Mexico City” and requested his assistance in being recompensed for lost revenues from “Nutria³²¹ and trade in the territories of the Republic.”³²² A letter from Kirker to Mackintosh dated November 19, 1842, demonstrates Kirker’s literacy, awareness of political mores, and mayhap irony as well:

I am conscious of having committed no act overt or otherwise, against the Government ... I was not aware that as a Foreigner I had no right to apply for a license to hunt Nutria and most assuredly in obtaining it I never assumed the character of a Mexican Citizen, altho married in the country and if the Governor [Trías] supposed me to be one from such a circumstance it was gratuitous on his part.³²³

Kirker was fully aware that his legal efforts to recover scalp bounties would be doomed to failure, but that there was an outside chance if the claim was for “Nutria.” Incidentally, Kirker was in 1842 a naturalised citizen of both Mexico and America, and was still an English citizen as well.

The intention of this chapter of “Fact in Fiction” is to introduce the historical antecedents and primary characters in Cormac McCarthy’s Blood Meridian that allow for approaching the issue of commercial scalphunting in 1850 Texas, and to show that McCarthy used a range of representations from purely fictional to authentically historical

³²⁰ In John Emil Sepich (1993): 8. Cheville was an erstwhile partner of Glanton’s. They had served together both in the Texas Rangers and in the 1846 Mexican War.

³²¹ Webster’s. Nutria, a beaver-like animal and / or its fur, and from 1810-20, otter pelt or fur more generally.

³²² Smith, Borderlander, 130-131.

³²³ James Kirker (1842). “Letter to Mackintosh,” in Smith, Borderlander, 132.

to present his ideas about the Borderlands. This idea of representation is a recurring one in this paper, and McCarthy's characters illuminate various aspects of representation. A second concern was to introduce the notion of exchange on the Borderlands which was perhaps McCarthy's operative theme. Exchange in its many social, cultural and economic guises is at the heart of both McCarthy's work and this one as well. In concluding this section it is hoped that the reader will now be better equipped to follow the 'write on' approach of this paper as it investigates McCarthy's representation in Blood Meridian of the historical apogee of commercial scalphunting in 1850 Texas.

CHAPTER 5.**From Nacogdoches to Castroville ; Across 1850 Texas with the kid.****Fredonia - Roads - Material Texas #1 - movin' on - Cows -****Eight pounds of hamburger - "Texas System".**

Though held in sort a barbarian, the backwoodsman would seem to America what Alexander was to Asia – captain in the vanguard of conquering civilization.

Herman Melville, The Confidence Man : His Masquerade

The fourth chapter introduced Cormac McCarthy's players in his historical fiction of the Borderlands. The ideas of representation and exchange were discussed, as was the idea of a 'moving box' of Texas identity and space. The historical antecedents connected to the scalphunting trade were set in place that the events of 1850 Texas might be understood in terms of this history that has never really seen the light of day in history texts and surveys. This chapter will wrangle together the ideas and characters so far introduced and put them on the road in relation to Cormac McCarthy's vision of Texas in 1849 /50. First hand accounts and other primary source materials such as census figures will be employed to link McCarthy's vision with an historical representation of Texas in 1850. The overlaying concern is ¿Does McCarthy's novel reflect an historically true Texas? These pages will look at race and violence and the connections between those concepts and state-building, but also at how Texans, as groups and individuals, lived and survived on the Borderlands. Geographically, the material moves from East Texas (Nacogdoches) to Southwest Texas (Bexar), which also parallels the historical movement of the Borderlands. Time wise, this section covers the one year of the kid's transit from entering Texas up to his leaving Texas for the scalp frontier in 1850.

On the boat from New Orleans to a Texas port, Port Neches or Port Arthur(?),

the child [the kid] is finally divested of all that he has been. His origins are become remote as is his destiny and not again in all the world's turning will there be terrains so wild and barbarous to try whether the stuff of creation may be shaped to man's will or whether his own heart is not an-

other kind of clay. (4)

The kid begins working his way north again by some magnetic attraction, securing along the way an ancient mule and a few dollars, and eventually “rides up through the latter-day republic of Fredonia into the town of Nacogdoches.” (5) The Fredonia reference refers to an 1826 episode involving American Haden Edwards. Edwards had invested a considerable sum (\$100,000) in bringing American settlers into Nacogdoches, only to have Mexican colonial officials disallow his claims to favour Mexican titles.³²⁴ On December 20, 1826 Edwards and some 200 Euroamerican supporters declared the ‘Republic of Fredonia’, and requested support from the States, Stephen Austin, and the Cherokee nation. Austin and America refused the offer, but the Cherokees temporarily joined the rebellion, only to be dissuaded by Austin confidante Peter Ellis Bean.³²⁵ The rebellion collapsed in January 1827 and the hard-liners “fled to the United States,” while those who remained were pardoned by Mexico and allowed some of the original grant.³²⁶ The rebellion did have the effect of making Mexico even more suspicious of all things American and would lead to some draconian but unenforceable restrictions³²⁷ being placed on Austin’s colony regarding immigration. Incidentally, Austin’s upholding Mexican authority in this case would cause him problems in his dealings with the States, as the jingoistic³²⁸ American papers played the “apostles of democracy ... crushed by an alien civilization”

³²⁴ T. R. Fehrenbach, Lone Star : A history of Texas and the Texans. Rev. ed. (New York: DaCapo,(2000[1968]): 162ff.

³²⁵ Fehrenbach, 164.

³²⁶ *Ibid.* 164.

³²⁷ “The Law of April 6, 1830.” Passed by the federal Bustamente government, the act was intended to stop American immigration to Austin’s colony and was so devastatingly effective that in the year after its passing, “the population of Austin’s settlements increased from 4,248 in June 1830 to 5,665 a year later,” an increase of 33.3%. Rupert N. Richardson (1993). Texas : The Lone Star State. 6th ed. (Prentice Hall: Upper Saddle River NJ): 67.

³²⁸ Admittedly a half-century before Disraeli’s ‘by Jingo’ took hold, but I believe the sentiments here were the same as the English papers later.

angle, and eerily foreshadowed Alamo headlines with “200 Men Against a Nation.”³²⁹

The kid’s choice of entry route into Texas would seem atypical for immigrants, but probably in character for the kid, as it displays a very loopy trajectory. One proven immigrant path was by boat from New Orleans to Natchitoches on the Red River, thence overland to Nacogdoches, then west or south (as Melinda Rankin). Many other immigrants, particularly European ones would land at New Orleans and then transship to Texan ports (as W. Steinert). Most Southerners would overland or follow the coastal route (as McCarthy). It would seem that McCarthy wanted the kid crossing the western plains, and not the southern coastal and agricultural area. This is a central point to this thesis, as the kid will therefore cross Texas and see the West, as opposed to seeing Texas as the South.

Nacogdoches had been established in 1779 by Mexicans fleeing from Comanche raiding at Bexar, and had become perhaps the northernmost outpost of the Spanish cattle ‘industry’, with connections to New Orleans and San Antonio, and initially had some three hundred settlers.³³⁰ Nacogdoches apparently had a very brief heyday as a ranching center, but by 1840 no “Spanish-surnamed person ... reported as many as 100 cattle to the tax collector.”³³¹ Edward Smith would find in his travels just north of Nacogdoches in 1849 that he “did not find a Spaniard or a Mexican amongst” the population there.³³² By 1850 the influx of Americans had reduced Nacogdoches’ Hispanic population to some three hundred souls, who had “lapsed into subsistence farming” or had taken “menial

³²⁹ Fehrenbach, 164.

³³⁰ Rupert N. Richardson, *et al.* Texas : The Lone Star State. 8th ed. (Prentice Hall: Upper Saddle River NJ, 2001): 45. Natchitoches, Louisiana was the preferred destination of these refugees, but they were forbidden to go there by Spanish officials wanting to maintain a presence in Tejas.

³³¹ Terry G. Jordan. North American Cattle Ranching Frontiers : Origins, Diffusion and Differentiation. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1993): 158.

³³² Edward Smith. Account of a Journey through North Eastern Texas ; Undertaken in 1849 for the Purposes of Immigration. (London : Hamilton, Adams & Co., 1849): 41.

positions in the towns of the region, overwhelmed by the numerically superior Anglos.³³³ Here, as everywhere in Texas, the decline of the Spanish population, in terms of relative percentages, was well under way as the new State actively recruited European and American population, “a mixture of races from Europe, and the Northern and Southern states,”³³⁴ while shunning Hispanic immigration. One aspect of this was the removal of Mexicans from Texas following the “end of the Mexican War in February 1848,”³³⁵ as the former citizens of Mexico “were given one year to move south of the new [Texas] boundary or become American citizens.”³³⁶ Indications were that this “exodus” from Texas “may have been considerable,” and that it was ongoing in 1850.³³⁷ Melinda Rankin wrote that in 1850 the physical record of Spanish presence was quickly being erased in Nacogdoches as “the Spanish style of building has nearly disappeared by the erection of new buildings.”³³⁸ The kid would later view the casual contempt with which Americans and Texans viewed all things Mexican when he spends the night in a ruined Catholic

³³³ Jordan, *North American Cattle Ranching Frontiers*: 158. Note that the population figures go from 300 in 1779 to 300 in 1850, some seventy years. Jordan’s language would indicate that the 1850 figure represented some huge decline in population which would be consistent with his thesis that invading “Anglo plunderers ... stole the cattle and lands of the ... tejanos,” and ended the golden days of the Spanish ranching enterprise. I would submit that Jordan was carried away by his politics and thesis and that there *was* no golden period of Tejan Spanish ranching, particularly at an obvious backwater like Nacogdoches which survived primarily because it was on the route from one region to another. As Richardson and many other sources make clear, regardless of their politics, the one thing that neither Spain nor Mexico could deliver to Tejas was population. Just as certainly there were very successful individual Tejan Spanish ranchers who did suffer the “loss of Hispanic livestock and land” at the hands of post-Alamo “Anglo plunderers.” It would be good to here acknowledge that those Hispanic ranchers fought tooth and claw to wrest their assets from Indians, and that this process was ongoing when the Americans arrived *en masse* following 1836.

³³⁴ Smith, 41.

³³⁵ Richard L. Nostrand. “Mexican Americans circa 1850.” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 65: 3 (1975): 379.

³³⁶ Nostrand, 379.

³³⁷ Nostrand, *N* #8 at p. 379.

³³⁸ Melinda Rankin (1850). *Texas in 1850*. (Waco: Texian Press, 1966): 108.

church:

The facade of the building bore an array of saints in the niches and they had been shot up by American troops trying their rifles, the figures shorn of ears and noses and darkly mottled with leadmarks oxidized upon the stone. (26)

The Borderlands had literally moved past Nacogdoches and taken up residence upon the new Texas - Mexico border.

The kid's first experience of Nacogdoches is historically verifiable sheets of rain,³³⁹ and the second is the judge reducing Reverend Green in front of a crowd of "the wet and bathless" (5) in a fundamentalist praying tent. John Emil Sepich found an historical Rev. Green at Nacogdoches circa 1838 - 1840.³⁴⁰ R. G. Green was a hellfire preacher of the "Primitive Baptist"³⁴¹ variety, who was dismissed for drunkenness in February 1840, although there is no mention of child molestation or "having congress with a goat," as the judge accuses the fictional Green with. (7) The Presbyterian missionary Melinda Rankin did not mention Baptists at Nacogdoches, primitive or otherwise, but observed that

Catholicism formerly bore undisputed sway, but has yielded in its customs to the more consistent principles of Christianity. Some of the worthy and influential citizens of the town still adhere to Catholic practices ...

There are other religious denominations in the town, which, from neglect or inability, have no building for public worship, as yet. The Methodist denomination is the most numerous ... They have a church building in

³³⁹ All visitors to Texas in 1849 noticed the unusually high amounts of precipitation and in Spring 1850 noted the high levels of streams and rivers. "It had been raining for sixteen days when [the kid] met Toadvine and it was raining yet." (BM, 8) W. Steinert almost drowned crossing overflowing creeks, and cotton-trade paddle wheelers reached spots on the Brazos and other rivers that had never been accessible before that year. Steinert, and Earl F. Woodward, "International improvements in Texas under Governor Peter Hansborough Bell's Administration, 1849-1853." *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 76: 2 (October 1971): 161-182.

³⁴⁰ "Reverend Green is the first verifiable historical character named in *Blood Meridian*." John Emil Sepich (1993), Notes on *Blood Meridian*. (Louisville : Bellarmine College Press): 13.

³⁴¹ J. M. Carroll, History of the Primitive Baptists in Texas, in Sepich, Notes on *Blood Meridian*, 13.

contemplation[.]³⁴²

Evidently, McCarthy was correct in having his borrowed Reverend pitching God in a wet tent in a doomed effort to bring the Second Great Awakening to Nacogdoches.

Finding a church in Texas to belong to was not always possible as the state had the fourth lowest ratio of churches to population in America. Only California, Louisiana and Michigan had lower ratios than Texas's one church per 1,300 Texans.³⁴³ Most states had a ratios of five to six hundred per church. Of the 164 churches in Texas, 88 were Methodist, 30 Baptist, 15 Presbyterian and only 13 were Catholic. The low number of Catholic churches reflects in part the size of the Mexican population, and the fact that Mexico had never been able to get priests to come to Tejas, but also points up that many of the German arrivals were Catholic. The Friends, Jews, Mormons and German Protestant churches did not yet have buildings, but these would not be long in appearing.³⁴⁴ The Catholic Germans regarded Mormonism as a "dragon" that openly "preached robbery and plundering," in spite of the fact that Mormons had helped the early German settlers at Fredricksburg "with flour, etc., during the time of famine and did many kind deeds in general."³⁴⁵ On the other hand, W. Steinert attended Protestant churches in Houston, and found them all to be preaching an antagonistic babble that was low on human kindness. The Baptists, who had established their first Texan church in 1834, "brought intact ... from Illinois,"³⁴⁶ seem underrepresented, but they were just getting rolling in Texas. The Baptist church in Texas would, by 1860, have nearly 500 congregations, 280 with buildings and lead all denominations "in number of church publications."³⁴⁷

³⁴² Rankin, 107.

³⁴³ Seventh Census, 1850: Report of the Superintendent, "Churches," 30-31.

³⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁴⁵ Steinert, Part 2: 198.

³⁴⁶ Richardson (6th ed.): 196.

³⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

The kid's life on the Louisiana borderlands are "days of begging, days of theft," and on leaving Nacogdoches with his life, his mule, and not much else, the kid heads out west through the "pinewood country," and spends "[d]ays of riding where there rode no soul save he." (15) McCarthy has the kid avoid the "king's road for fear of the citizenry." (15) Likely McCarthy is referring to the "Old San Antonio Road" on which Nacogdoches was a stop between Bexar and Natchitoches,³⁴⁸ but it is the idea of the *camino real*, or "king's road" that does not ring entirely true, for by all accounts there was no such thing at Nacogdoches. In 1850 there was a "route of travel" from Nacogdoches to San Antonio and other trails paralleling the Gulf, but to dignify them as *caminos real* would be a tad misleading.³⁴⁹ Frederick Law Olmstead entered this country from Louisiana in 1855 and found that east Texas roads to still be without exception "cowtrack[s]", while Rutherford B. Hayes commented that he found "14 miles of good dry roads" near Columbia in 1849, as if surprised.³⁵⁰ There would have been defined trails leading south and southeast, and cattle trails coming through from the northwest to New Orleans, but nothing so grand as a road.

Colonel Randolph B. Marcy crossed this northeastern part of Texas in the winter of 1849 / 50, likely returning from scouting along the Canadian River for the U. S. army.³⁵¹ Col. Marcy gives an idea of what life was like for families on that frontier. Riding in the middle of "a severe storm of snow and rain", he stumbled across a "small clearing, in the centre of which was a very diminutive log cabin, from whence arose a

³⁴⁸ Smith, F. Todd. The Caddo Indians. (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1995): map at 145.

³⁴⁹ Faulk, Odie B., Land of Many Frontiers : A history of the American Southwest. (New York : Oxford University Press, 1968): 38. San Antonio / Bexar (1718) was originally set up by the Spanish as a halfway point between Matamoros on the Rio Grande and Natchitoches in Louisiana.

³⁵⁰ Richardson, 8th ed. 192ff.

³⁵¹ Faulk, 170.

cheerful smoke,” and he introduced himself to the woman, “some half a dozen children, and as many dogs [that] emerged therefrom.”³⁵² Marcy, in the course of securing accommodations for the night discovered the woman’s “ole man” was out tracking a bear, and that the cabin contained no food but for “some sweet taters and a small chance of corn.” Marcy was able to shoot a deer which he “*packed* to the house, and, by the aid of my ‘*couteau de chasse*,’ soon had nicely dressed.” The woman asked Marcy to grind some corn in a coffee mill attached to the cabin, and “after about half an hour’s steady application, succeeded in producing from the rickety old machine about a quart of meal, which was speedily converted” by his hostess into a “poen.”³⁵³ An “excellent supper,” which included a cup of coffee “produced from [Marcy’s] saddlebags,” was then enjoyed by Marcy and his hostess. Although the unnamed woman (her husband’s name was Davy), seems fairly cheerful in Marcy’s narrative, these details make one wonder what dinner would have consisted of had Marcy not supplied coffee and venison. The answer would appear to be cornpone and sweet potato, as she told Marcy that “she had not, previous to [his] arrival, tasted sugar, tea, or coffee for three months,” and that the family had not had meat in several days.³⁵⁴

Over his coffee and a cigar, Marcy “took a survey of the establishment” in which he would be spending the night, and observed that it

consisted of one room about fourteen feet square, with the intervals between the logs not *chinked*, and wide enough in places for the dogs to pass in and out at their pleasure. There was an opening for the door, which was closed with a greasy old beef’s hide, but there were no windows, and no floor excepting the native earth. The household furniture consisted of two small benches of the most primitive construction imaginable, and two

³⁵² Colonel R. B. Marcy, (1866). Thirty years of army life on the border. (London: Sampson Low, Son, and Marston): 334. Earlier in 1849 Marcy had been on the Borderlands laying out “Marcy’s Trail,” and finding sites for forts to “protect immigrants and traders.” Faulk, 170.

³⁵³ Marcy, 335.

³⁵⁴ Marcy, 358, 359.

bedsteads, each made by driving four forked stakes into the ground,³⁵⁵ across which poles were placed, and then covered transversely by flour barrel staves, the whole structure surmounted by a sack of prairie hay,³⁵⁶ upon which I observed the remains of an antiquated coverlid³⁵⁷ that had evidently seen much service. The table furniture consisted of one milk-pan, three tin cups, two knives and three forks, two of the latter having but one prong apiece.³⁵⁸ The *tout ensemble* gave every indication of the most abject destitution and poverty[.]³⁵⁹

Marcy's domestic inventory is reflected in the observations of W. Steinert who in 1849 observed that Americans were very mobile in comparison to Germans largely because of their ability to "transport all their household belongings and families on one wagon without difficulty."³⁶⁰ Steinert reported that a settled German family at Fredricksburg lived in a log cabin which resembled a

carpenter's shed in Germany ... by the door, a joiner's bench with craftsmen's tools, and in two corners are many books placed on boards that are fastened to the walls. The remaining furniture consists of a table, three bedsteads and some hunting outfits [and an] old train-oil lamp on a wooden stand[.] The room has no ceiling and no wooden floor ... Since there were only three plates ... the party was divided into groups. When

³⁵⁵ This marks the first time this writer has encountered this rude but ingenious form of making a bed.

³⁵⁶ As uncomfortable as this sounds it is likely that, given that Marcy was east of 95°, at least the dried prairie grass used to stuff the "mattress" sacks were of the long grass variety, and not the short grass of the mid plains. Comfort-wise this is likely close to being a moot point.

³⁵⁷ Coverlid, meaning coverlet. A quilt used for warmth, not decoration. Webster's.

³⁵⁸ Likely the missing tines had been used as nails or staples for the 'door' or some other construction project.

³⁵⁹ Marcy, 359. It is entirely likely that Marcy here somewhat exaggerates the crudeness of the structure, as he definitely gives in to both sarcasm and irony at other points in his narrative (often directed towards slave-owners). However, other 19th century observers noted that the timber belts of Texas contained large pine and oak trees, so it is *possible* that large diameter logs were used in constructing this cabin. The 14' size of the cabin was likely dictated either by the usable length of the local trees and / or, and more likely, the weight that one man and one woman (assisted by a horse or mule) could lift into place.

³⁶⁰ W. Steinert* (1849). Part 3. "W. Steinert's view of Texas in 1849." Translated and edited by Gilbert J. Jordan, *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*. Published in five parts : Part 1,

the first had finished eating, the second one took its turn.³⁶¹

Another observer of Fredricksburg in 1849 was C. C. Cox, who was leaving Harrisburg, Texas for the California gold. Cox thought Fredricksburg contained

a population of about two thousand [another traveler guessed 500] entirely dutch, the inhabitants seem to be healthy and industrious and of the lower orders. There are several stores in the place but badly supplied--hence high prices.³⁶²

Steinert's German family lived in relative opulence compared to Marcy's hostess, and even had bacon and an egg with their evening meal of "gray corn soup [and] a piece of corn bread."³⁶³ Not all German families were this well off, however, and Steinert's hosts were often only able to offer the standard corn and coffee fare. In port areas where wheat flour was available, "coffee and a piece of wheat bread" could replace the frontier fare.³⁶⁴ There existed regional differentiation in what was available to eat, often due to the proximity of trade and the length of time an area had been settled (and not merely occupied) by Euroamericans. Generally Steinert reported the average living quarters to measure approximately twelve by twelve feet, and occasionally twelve by fourteen. While he never reported dogs crawling in between the logs, Steinert reported a general proliferation of canines, to the point that at least one jurisdiction, Galveston, had put in place a dog tax of twenty five cents. Steinert did however spend a rainy night in one family's cabin where the stick roof let in so much rain that the coverlid on his bed offered the only protection from the downpour.

... July 1976 : (57-78). Part 2, October 1976 (177-200) [* Jordan was unable to find any record of Steinert's given name, at note 1, 177] ; Part 3, January 1977 (283-301) ; Part 4, April 1977 (399-416) ; Part 5, July 1977 (45-72).

³⁶¹ Steinert, Part 2 : 190.

³⁶² Cornelius C. Cox, "From Texas to California in 1849: Diary of C. C. Cox." Part 1. Ed. Mabelle Eppard Martin, *Southwestern Historical Journal* July 1926 (36-50): 42.

³⁶³ *Ibid.*

³⁶⁴ Steinert, Part 1 : 60.

As the woman could neither read nor write,³⁶⁵ she asked Marcy to write for her a letter to a friend back in Mississippi, and in the course of taking dictation, Marcy learned that Davy and his wife had come from Mississippi some “two years previously,” that the closest neighbour was some fifteen miles away, and that “not the slightest trace of a road or a trail” linked this cabin to any other locality.³⁶⁶ The results of this isolation were that “mighty few humans ever com’d that-a-way,” which gave the woman some sense of security, and the side benefit that there was “narry fever-n’ agur” in the district. The family had planted corn and potatoes, and had gotten in good crops of both.³⁶⁷ These observations, combined with the fact that neither Marcy nor the women ever mention Indians or the fear of Indians, illustrate that in 1850 this area of Texas is for all practical purposes, cleared of Indian presence. The Caddoes and the Hasinai discussed earlier no longer have a presence here, but for the fact that both the traveler and the nester take unknown advantage of centuries of Indian burning and clearing of the land. In 1850 immigrants in the southern part of the state, where the Karanakawas had Trombley lived, were faced with walls of what they called wickerwork, a “favourite term for virgin forest”³⁶⁸ when they traveled.

Given that Marcy’s hostess did not mention domestic animals in her dictation to him that there was no meat in the house, and that Marcy makes no mention of any sort of domestic animals (barring the dogs), or means of keeping farm animals on this homestead, it seems likely that Davy and family were still hardscrabble nesters, possessed of

³⁶⁵ Literacy rates are simply impossible to figure, but they were very low. The 1850 Census said that for Nacogdoches there were 1,249 “Whites 20 yrs. and over unable to read and write” out of a total “White” population of 3,758. Out of that total population only 329 were at school from grade school to college. Some of those might have been at Baylor, established 1840. Almost all incoming Southern immigration would seem to have been illiterate as well.

³⁶⁶ Marcy, 360.

³⁶⁷ Marcy, 361 ff.

³⁶⁸ Steinert, Part I: 74.

not much more than what Marcy mentions. While an absence of farm animals might be indicative of extreme poverty and nothing else, it might also be evidence of a conscious survival strategy that was common to many Euroamerican frontier families and Indian nations as well. Simply put, domestic animals require a tremendous amount of resources and labour capital to maintain. If a group was to practise agriculture (as in the corn and potatoes above), then animals must be kept out of fields and gardens, requiring either fencing or a considerable investment in time in herding. As long as meat was available in the form of game, and Marcy's bagging a deer here demonstrates that it was, domestic animals were an expensive luxury and not a necessity. One thing all European observers of 1850 Texas agreed upon was that surviving was not difficult and that

settlers who emigrated to Texas without capital, and from countries where it was necessary to labour hard to procure food [suddenly found] themselves surrounded by an abundant supply of game and delicious wild fruit, and occupying land which will yield a good harvest almost without culture, they acquired lazy habits, and are content with the food which nature alone provides.³⁶⁹

One qualifier must be made here in that all of these emigration scouts, such as Steinert and Smith, were inspecting Texas in settled areas, and their presumptions about the ease of "occupying land" would have been put to test on the Borderlands. Given what we know about Marcy's host's apparent poverty, it is hard to imagine how poor one would have had to be to be recognised as one of the seven paupers in 1850 Texas who were aided by the state at a total cost of \$438.³⁷⁰

Marcy's hosts were just beyond this pale, they were pioneers or frontierers. As far as sleeping arrangements, there were two beds in the cabin and the hostess and daugh-

³⁶⁹ Edward Smith, Account of a Journey through North Eastern Texas; Undertaken in 1849 for the Purposes of Immigration. (London: Hamilton, Adams & Co, 1849).

³⁷⁰ Seventh Census, 1850: Report of the Superintendent: "Pauperism", 28. The seven paupers were all native born.

ters slept in one. She offered the other bed, "the width of [which] could be measured with a flour-barrel stave," to Marcy to share with "three boys, two on the back side, and one at the foot."³⁷¹ Marcy cleverly set about making himself more comfortable by pinching two of the sleeping boys until they cried out repeatedly, and their mother made them move to her bed, so as not to disturb the guest. Other travelers would also comment on having to sleep two or more to a bed, and were often happy to do so if the alternative was sleeping on the ground. W. Steinert wrote that sleeping arrangements were often easier in south - central Texas where there had been Euroamerican settlement for a period. Here one could often find empty cabins to overnight in as "empty houses are no rarity in Texas."³⁷²

One thing all the introduced human subjects of this chapter have in common is a demonstrated penchant for mobility. The kid of course never stops moving until he dies, but Marcy and his hosts are all recent immigrants to Texas, and while Steinert himself is just passing through, the settlers in his narrative have all emigrated and most have moved repeatedly once in Texas. It would seem that those who were inclined to move to 1850 Texas were inflicted with some sort of 'Seven Cities of Cibolla / Kingdom of Saguenay' virus, that they were always looking for the main chance, just along the next river. A large proportion of frontierers on the Borderlands had been previously frontierers on some other frontier(s), and fully two-thirds of the Texas population in 1850 had been born outside the state.³⁷³ That the kid is from Tennessee and Davy and his wife were from Mississippi is indicative of the Texas population in 1850. While population figures will be examined as they relate to different subject areas, here the idea of mobility will be introduced, as will the predominately Southern accent of Texas immigrants.

³⁷¹ Marcy, 360.

³⁷² Steinert, Part 2 : 178.

³⁷³ Terry G. Jordan, "Population Origins in Texas, 1850." . *Geographical Review* 59: 1. (1969): 87.

As previously noted, Cormac McCarthy has the kid transit Texas across the central plains where one might be misled into thinking that Texas was a Western state. Population-wise, nothing could be further from the truth as Texas was in 1850 predominately a Southern state, and an integral part of the Southern cotton economy by extension. Fully eighty per cent of Texans were Southerners, and of these 53.7 per cent were Euroamerican Southerners. A further 27.5 per cent of the populace were Negroes, and the vast majority of these were slaves. These ratios would only increase throughout the 1850s and 1860s as Southern population, and hegemony, extended further into the Borderlands until being stopped by the Indians and the termination of agricultural lands suitable for cotton / cane planting at Bexar and the Balcones Escarpment. Statistics clearly show that the Southern population were primarily (97%) agriculturalists who shunned urbania, leaving the towns and cities to Yankees and those of direct European descent. Casual observers of Texas history might also be surprised at the low identifiable Spanish population (5.3%), but these figures seem accurate when one looks at census returns.

Daniel Shipman provided us with Frontier Life, a family history that illuminates both of the above notions and a family history of Texas from 1821 to 1879. While Shipman's interpretations of Texas history are useful, it is his reportage of his family's history that is of interest here. Shipman's ancestors came from Wales, Ireland, and England, and coalesced as a family in the Carolinas, where his parents were parents were married in 1798:

The writer of [Frontier Life] was their second son born February 20th, 1801, after the death of my oldest brother. After me were four sons and four daughters, to wit:

Edward, born in Tennessee, March 1st, 1803.

Mary, born in North Carolina, September 28, 1805.

John McMinn, born in the same state, March 17th, 1808.

Christena Reed, born August 23, 1810, in South Carolina.

James Robinson, born in the same state, April 8th, 1813.
 [...]ses, born in Franklin Co., Tennessee, January 16th, 1816.
 Elizabeth, born in Howard County, Mo., February 3rd, 1819.
 Loretta, born in Arkansas, December 28th, 1821.³⁷⁴

Now presumably Loretta was born on the trail to Texas from Arkansas, as the Shipmans dated their arrival in Texas at 1821, but apart from this one child born in transit, this record seems remarkable to this reader for a number of reasons. First is that Mrs. Shipman was pregnant for 18 years, second that the Shipmans managed to keep eight children alive. Third is how incredibly mobile the family was in recording at least a half-dozen major moves in two decades; from South Carolina to Tennessee, to North Carolina, to South Carolina, to Tennessee, to Missouri, to Arkansas, to Texas. Once in Texas this movement does not stop, as Daniel Shipman reported several more moves.

The Shipmans were agriculturalists, farmers, before coming to Texas where they seized the opportunity to take part in a ever-growing economy in several businesses. Until then they broke ground on at least seven sites in five states. This does not appear to be a remarkable record for Texas immigrants. It does intimate just how hard those immigrants had to work until they finally found the perfect situation, or died in the trying. The attitude seems to have been farm and move on when the local game / wood supply / soil was exhausted, which would account for, but also create, the extreme poverty of possessions that Marcy and Steinert observe in much of 1850 Texas. In this pattern the Shipmans were not even transhumanist, working the same general area generationally, but were essentially nomadic, moving on as they exhausted local resources. Ironically, this is precisely the same pattern that would cause Euroamericans to dismiss Indians as nomadic savages as they had no legitimate 'ties to the land,' as would a Christian group. In 1850 Texas, it was the Indians who were fighting to protect ancestral homelands in the face of a restless horde, who 'cut and moved on' every few years.

³⁷⁴ Daniel Shipman . Frontier Life : 58 years in Texas, (Washington: Unknown, 1879): 4.

From Marcy's narrative it would seem apparent that Davy and his family would inevitably follow this pattern, for what was there to stay for but an opening in the woods and a throw-together stick cabin? As these lines from Shipman's narrative indicate :

In the fall we sold our crop and started for Tennessee on the fifth of October [1815], in the same year. [... Eventually,] we crossed a little stream called Collins' river ... into Franklin County. There we bought a little tract of land in the barrens ... The next thing was to build a house before we went back for our furniture ... Now, in the dead of winter, snow and ice, we had a very bad time ... We got to work, rented a field[.]³⁷⁵ ...

Both the Shipman family with its eight surviving children in one generation, and Davy's family with its "some half a dozen children" illustrate one social norm that the incoming Texans brought with them from the previous American frontiers, namely, a high birthrate that was "regarded by the Latin world with despair."³⁷⁶ Not only did 19th-century frontier Americans have a birthrate that exceeded that of Mexico and the European nations, but "it was higher than that of any region in the 20th-century world," and families of ten children were not uncommon.³⁷⁷ Further, as the Shipmans demonstrate, frontier families were remarkably proficient at keeping those children alive, barring acts of war and other cataclysmic events.

One aspect of inflow migration from the South to Texas that this writer finds particularly interesting is how these immigrants tended to stick to a lateral movement pattern. Here McCarthy's kid again proves an anomaly to historic immigration patterns, as he moved south and then west. Jared Diamond's thesis that population diffusion tends to follow latitudinal patterns based on food production capabilities³⁷⁸ seems to apply to 1850 Texas. Simply put, Southerners tended to move latitudinally west from

³⁷⁵ Shipman, 62.

³⁷⁶ Fehrenbach, 90.

³⁷⁷ Fehrenbach, 90.

³⁷⁸ Jared Diamond, Guns, Germs, and Steel : The fates of human societies. New York: W. W. Norton, 1999 (1997): 186-191.

where they had perviously resided. Davy's family moved straight across from Mississippi into north east Texas. No doubt people tended to settle in areas that geographically supported the type of subsistence strategies they knew best, and so cotton families headed for cotton-growing areas / climates, as grazing and grain families headed for cooler and more open areas. Undoubtedly, as in-migration patterns developed over time, new immigrants also tended to settle in areas that already had sympathetic populations. To return to the notion of Texas society as a 'moving box', it would seem that immigrants did not mind at all moving as long as they were moving to someplace similar to where they had been before. In terms of how Texas developed in social and economic terms, as the following illustrations demonstrate, wherever Texas geographically supported the Southern cotton slaveocracy model that was exactly what what occurred.

One element favoring the rapid extension of the rancher's frontier is the fact that in a remote country lacking transportation facilities the product must be in small bulk, or must be able to transport itself, and the cattle raiser could easily drive his product to market.

Frederick Jackson Turner

Out on the prairie the kid encounters the dust of what will prove to be a cattle drive off to the Northwest. The first thing this sight does is locate us in the year, for autumn was the time of cattle drives, after the scorched plains of summer and before the Northers of winter.³⁷⁹ Cattle drives across Texas were facilitated by the number of rivers that ran down from the New Mexico and Arkansas mountains to the Gulf. These same rivers would also facilitate the Comanches' runs across Texas to and from raiding in Mexico. "All that day he watched to the north a thin line of dust. It seemed not to move

³⁷⁹ In the "Texas system", later expanded upon, there was but one yearly roundup for branding. Autumn seems to have been the favoured season. As this paper will discuss in a section on bison, Summer was the most inhospitable time of the year for plains ruminants and grazers.

at all and it was late evening before he could see that it was headed his way.”(20) A second day passes, the dust always in view, and the kid moves through “a forest of live oak”, and camped by a stream. These details likely situate the kid somewhere near Waco, where the belts of oak and pine begin to give way to the dust of the high plains. The evening of the third day,

the first of a drove of cattle came into view. Rangy vicious beasts with enormous horns spreads. That night he sat in the herders’ camp and ate beans and pilotbread and heard of life on the trail. They were coming from Abilene, forth days out, headed for the markets in Louisiana. Followed by packs of wolves, coyotes, indians. Cattle groaned around them for miles in the dark. (20)

While it is a fictioner’s prerogative to label these long horned cattle “vicious,” McCarthy’s byte depiction of these range animals is both historically verifiable, and commonly held:

These Texas cattle had long legs, lanky bodies, with legs and feet built for speed. It took a good horse with a good rider to outrun a Texas Longhorn. Their narrow faces, sullen expressions, and horns that swept out horizontally, gave these cattle a sinister look. And indeed, they could be mean... And the bulls... There was probably no meaner creature in Texas than a Longhorn bull. The slightest provocation would turn him into an aggressive and dangerous enemy. The bull’s horns usually measured six feet or less from tip-to-tip, but could measure over eight feet long. In addition, the sharpness of horns of any length, the speed and muscle power of the bull, and the ease with which he could be aroused and enraged, made him a dangerous and uncontrollable animal.³⁸⁰

The classic and mythic image of Texas cattle drives is precisely the opposite of McCarthy’s picture. For one thing, these drovers and their herd are headed in the ‘wrong direction’, south towards New Orleans, whereas one would naturally think of cowboys driving herds north on the Chisholm and Goodnight-Loving Trails to railheads and markets. The days of rail and Chicago and Denver stockyards are years in the postbellum future however, and McCarthy here demonstrates his knowledge of the commercial cur-

³⁸⁰ <<http://www.ansi.okstate.edu/breeds/cattle/texaslonghorn/>> (22 March, 2005).

rents in 1850 Texas. The kid may be viewing one of the first droves from Abilene, as this area was invested by Euro-American stockmen following the 1846 Mexican war.³⁸¹ That the drive is headed for New Orleans is also historically accurate.

Josiah Gregg, in his economic history of the late 1830s to mid 1840s Borderlands, often comments on the livestock held by the frontierers, both because of his economic interests, but also because of the difference between American and Tejan stock.³⁸² Gregg also comments at length on the seemingly pathological resistance of both the Tejanos and Texans to improving their stock, and is particularly disparaging of Mexican stock. Some what revealingly, Gregg found the sedentary Navajo agriculturalists to be the premier Borderlands stock-keepers:

They ... possess extensive herds of horses, mules, cattle, sheep and goats of their own raising, which are generally celebrated as being much superior to those of the Mexicans; owing, no doubt to greater attention to the improvement of their stocks.³⁸³

Firstly, any cattle found in Texas at this time were feral animals descended from those brought by the Spanish. Columbus had brought the Iberian black cattle from Spain to "the Canaries to Española in 1493,"³⁸⁴ and subsequent Spanish ships also brought the reddish brown long-horned Andalusian range animals that were the model for the Texas longhorn.³⁸⁵ Likely the *ur* tejano cow was brought to Rio del Norte (New Mexico) by Don Juan de Oñate sometime in 1596. Oñate, "a citizen of Zacatecas," had gained the right

³⁸¹ Richardson 8th ed. 182.

³⁸² Gregg was, in common with the kid and McCarthy, from Tennessee, but lived all over the then Northwest, - Illinois, Missouri, before heading West (for his health), to the Borderlands. Josiah Gregg (1954 [1845]), Commerce of the Prairies. Max L. Moorhead, Ed. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press): 216.

³⁸³ Gregg, 199. The Navajo, centered in the New Mexico / California Borderlands, had no Texan Indian counterparts in terms of stock raising.

³⁸⁴ Crosby, Ecological Imperialism. 177.

³⁸⁵ Terry G. Jordan (1993), North American Cattle Ranching Frontiers: Origins, Diffusion and Differentiation. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press): 29.

to the first legally sanctioned colony in Tejas, and invested his property with an “abundance of horses, black cattle, sheep, etc.”, along with 200 soldiers to protect his 100 plus families of colonizers.³⁸⁶ Given that Oñate chose for his colony the spectacularly productive Rio del Norte (Rio Grande) homeland of the Navajo, also the hunting turf of the Lipan Apache, it is highly likely that the theft and subsequent dissemination of Spanish cattle began the day they arrived, if not sooner.³⁸⁷ Further, there is no reason to believe that Oñate left one environment for a less hospitable one, and in the highlands of Zacatecas,

Iberian cattle ... exploded in numbers, dropping calves at what the colonists thought amazing rates. At the end of the sixteenth century, the cattle herds in northern Mexico may have been doubling every fifteen years or so, and one French visitor wrote his king of the “great, level plains, stretching endlessly and everywhere covered with an infinite number of cattle.”³⁸⁸

The southern Tejas plains from Matamoros to Bexar were particularly hospitable to cattle culture, and by 1774 just two missions at Goliad boasted a cattle population of

³⁸⁶ Gregg, 82. Fehrenbach places the numbers at “400 soldiers and priests.” That Oñate, was “a citizen of Zacatecas,” also indicates the rate of Spanish expansion in Mexico as this puts his origins within a 200 mile range of the Rio Grande. This also, I believe, indicates the desirability of the borderlands, that an established patron would leave the relative safety and wealth of central Mexico to face the obvious and known dangers of this northern frontier.

³⁸⁷ Given the high rate of failure of the Spanish mission settlements in Tejas, as would Oñate’s, it seems realistic that large numbers of domestic animals would have been left behind, and that this would be unrecorded as of lesser import than the survival human mission occupants. One recorded example of this is from 1638 when Jesuits were forced to abandon a Brazilian mission, “leaving 5,000 head of cattle behind.” Crosby, Ecological Imperialism. 178.

³⁸⁸ Crosby, Ecological Imperialism. 177. Also, Josiah Gregg commented (c. 1840) on “those buffalo -like droves which run so nearly wild upon [the] extensive domain.” Gregg (1954 [1845]): 306. To Gregg’s shock, taking one for food wound up in his being taken prisoner by the *vaqueros* of *Alcade* and rancher Angel Trías. While the beeves may have been as numerous as buffalo, they were however, owned. This is the same Trías who figures so prominently in James Kirker’s life and the scalphunting industry. Kirker knew Trías as a *gobernador* and payer of scalp-bounties, and not as a stockowner. No

25,000.³⁸⁹ What this industry could not supply were significant commercial connections to Mexico. Tejas' distance from Mexican markets coupled with the huge herds located in the more proximate northern Mexican states guaranteed that if the beef industry was to prosper on a commercial basis, other markets would have to be developed.³⁹⁰ This is precisely what would transpire, and a Spanish edict of 1778 allowing Tejanos "to round up herds of stock and drive them to other regions"³⁹¹ merely acknowledged an already thriving, if illegal, trade in cattle from Tejas to Spanish Louisiana. One factor influencing this movement of trade had to have been Apachean and Comanchean raiding of Mexican cattle, which ebbed and flowed in intensity, but was essentially institutionalised by the mid 1700s. The Apaches' north to south raiding routes flowed out of west Tejas and New Mexico across the coastal plains, and any stock movement out of central / east Tejas would cross those routes. The Comanches' institutionalised raiding pattern was southward across the Gulf plains from east - central Texas.³⁹² This Tejas - Louisiana

doubt there is a strong correlation between Indian raiding of stock, Trías' livelihood as a rancher, and the scalp-bounties system he oversaw as *gobernador* of Chihuahua.

Gobernador, as opposed to governor, is preferred as the northern Mexican states appear to have been marginally more autonomous than the American states, at least in terms of the feudalistic power the head of state had over the citizens, and non-citizens under his control. In the economic, military and political spheres, it would appear that the Mexican system was generally more centralised than the American system. The history of Texas makes clear that the one crucial difference between the two Republics as regards Texas was that the Mexican locus of power was always much further from the frontier than was the American. Another point here being that, while the Mexican and American systems were *de jure* similar, they were *de facto* very different. This difference would fuel the American contempt for all things Mexican, the Mexican state in particular.

³⁸⁹ Richardson 6th ed. 277ff.

³⁹⁰ The huge herd model was apparently set by the Jesuits who, before their banishment from Mexico in 1767, maintained massive herds to attract and feed mission Indians. Part of the reason for their banishment was the fact that they had become so 'wealthy,' one Jesuit Sonoran herd reportedly numbered 100,000 animals in 1637. Terry G. Jordan (1993): 138-43.

³⁹¹ Jordan, North American Cattle Ranching Frontiers. 157.

³⁹² There were also, beginning around 1849, cattle drives from west Texas to California to feed the forty-niners.

trade would survive the myriad shifts in sovereignty the Borderlands would undergo, and the "Texas-to-New Orleans overland cattle trade"³⁹³ would thrive throughout the Civil War even while all other export outlets were closed by blockade.

Typical of the two-way flow of culture that typifies commercial activity generally, the Tejas - New Orleans trade exported not just beeves to Louisiana, but the whole Spanish / Mexican *vaquero* (cowboy) system of ranching as well. It would be this Spanish-developed industry that would supply not just the raw material of the industry, the beeves, but also the entire cowboy culture and practices, from open-range herding, lassos, branding, chaps, to roundups and the institution of the cattle drive. Texans tended to deride all things Mexican, regarding for instance the perfectly serviceable system of Spanish branding symbols as an abomination, but *vaqueros* were the stylistic kings of the range. When W. Steinert bought a horse from a German-Texan in May 1849, he

had an opportunity to observe the adroitness and skill of two Mexicans. They dashed as fast as lightning on their little horses after the horse they wanted to catch. In one hand they held a long rawhide lasso and in the other hand, the reins. With their long spurs they forced their horses to do their will. In a short time ... the noose was around the neck of the horse they wanted.³⁹⁴

The whole cowboy lingo entered the English language in Tejas, where usages of *ranch*, *corral* and *lasso* were first used.³⁹⁵ Terry Jordan makes the case that the Texas cowboy culture largely developed in Louisiana where Mexican and Carolinian - American stock - handling systems conjoined, and was exported back to Texas along with post bellum emigration from the South to Texas.³⁹⁶ One of Jordan's methodologies was to track the

³⁹³ Jordan, North American Cattle Ranching Frontiers, 156. The Spanish actions here are yet more proof that the central government, be it Mexican or Spanish, never understood the 'natural' situation of Tejas in regards to trade and immigration, nor was this authority ever capable of enforcing its wishes in its remote province.

³⁹⁴ Steinert, Part 1 : 70.

³⁹⁵ Jordan, North American Cattle Ranching Frontiers, 157.

³⁹⁶ *Ibid.* 156ff. The ramifications of this on the Myth of the West as regards cowboy cul-

usage of cowboy language through median and records to track the spread of *vaquero* practices. This is a clever thesis and Jordan makes a strong case, but it also puts one in mind of Richard White's dependency theory on Indians. Jordan makes clear that there was a cultural intermingling of Anglo and Spanish practices in Louisiana that owed much to early American practices in Carolina, and that those Americans who moved in to exploit the Texas cattle industry (such as it then was) were well-prepared to do so. No doubt canny Americans hugely influenced the cattle industry in Texas, how could they not have, but a reading of the sources indicates that what Americans primarily achieved in Texas was to overrun an existing system by force of arms. What the Texas system took from the *vaquero* system, whether directly from the texicans or by osmosis from Spanish practices from Louisiana, was the Mexican cattle system which was essentially bovine *laissez faire*. One of the 'improvements' that Texans made over the adopted Mexican system was to drop the number of annual roundups from twice a year to once. What was required of Texas cowboys was to keep track of huge herds of near - feral beasts spread over boundless tracks of unfenced and largely un-owned range land, and annually collect and drive some of them to market. What this range land comprised was of course still mostly Indian lands, at least as far as the Indians were concerned.³⁹⁷

In 1850 Texas, however, it was not just human life that was cheap, and beeves had so little cash value that they were often reduced to "hides and tallow" for commercial purposes. The primary cause of this low value, even before considering markets, was the sheer number of cattle in Texas in 1850, but it was in the millions, and in 1849 one

ture will be examined elsewhere. Jordan (at 215) does concede that a Texan, "cobbler H. J. Justin of Spanish Fort" did design what we would recognise as the cowboy boot - although not until the 1870s.

³⁹⁷ W. Steinert reported surprisingly few problems with Indians and settler cattle herds, bearing in mind though that his travels were restricted to long settled areas where the bulk of German immigrants resided, and resident Indians displaced or already extincted. More on this later.

observer noted that “only a few planters know even the approximate head count of their herds.”³⁹⁸ An 1860 bovine census would estimate that there were then “3,786,433 head of cattle in Texas, six times as many as people,”³⁹⁹ In his evaluation of the Texas cattle industry W. Steinert offered this précis :

Finally there is the problem with markets. I saw herds of five hundred to one thousand head of cattle. When I asked people why they did not sell some [of them], I was answered with another question : “To whom?” Several times butchers from New Orleans were in the country and bought some cattle, but there are no prospects of doing business of this kind with Mexico.⁴⁰⁰

By the late 1840s Houston was the centre of this industry and was home to a “few slaughter yards for extracting hides and tallow,” although this was essentially the remnants of “a more Hispanic enterprise”.⁴⁰¹ Alfred Crosby said they were the type of animal that meat packers called “eight pounds of hamburger on eight hundred pounds of bone and horn.”⁴⁰² The reasons for this were numerous, and include the fact that 1850 Texas was very much a frontier economy characterised by limited and distant markets, nonexistent transportation, and a frontier population generally more intent on, and more capable of, surviving until dawn than on increasing the profitability of the homestead. One way of ordering this is to consider it, as does Terry Jordan, the “Texas System” :

the subtropical practice of allowing cattle to care for themselves year-round in stationary pastures on the free range ... Through such self-maintenance, the herds should not merely survive, but reach a grass-fattened maturity, ready for market. [...] Texas and Louisiana were even better suited to this careless system than had been the Andalusian marshes, yielding a still more profound neglect of the livestock.⁴⁰³

This neglect, therefore, was not a matter of ‘racial’ incompetence as hinted at by

³⁹⁸ Steinert, Part 5 : 46.

³⁹⁹ Richardson, 8th ed. 279.

⁴⁰⁰ Steinert, Part 5 : 46.

⁴⁰¹ Jordan, North American Cattle Ranching Frontiers: 218.

⁴⁰² Crosby, Ecological Imperialism. 178.

⁴⁰³ Jordan, North American Cattle Ranching Frontiers. 210.

Josiah Gregg, but rather a conscious strategy to deal with environmental and economic realities. Also, given that the feral cattle not protected by vaqueros or cowboys were hunted into extinction by Indians and Euroamericans, it is also likely that 1850s frontier ranchers / farmers were disinclined to spend efforts on improving beef cattle that were destined to be stolen and eaten.

McCarthy's Glanton gang would later have another run - in with wild bulls when

[o]n the range they saw wild bulls so old that they bore spanish brands on their hips and several of these animals charged the little company and were shot down and left on the ground until one came out of a stand of acacia in a wash and buried its horns to the boss in the ribs of a horse ridden by James Miller. (224)

One last observation on this subject relates back to McCarthy's tagging the cattle as "[r]angy vicious beasts," which is also accurate in that the "Texas System" was known for not castrating calves, and this fact alone would guarantee that cowboys would have their hands full with their bovine charges.⁴⁰⁴ This system would also guarantee that, as in bison and other range herbivores, there would be packs of extraneous bulls driven off herd by the alpha males. John Sepich connects the James Miller incident with an 1847 journal by Phillip St. George Cooke who recorded his party being attacked by wild bulls that gored horses and humans and knocked wagons "into the air."⁴⁰⁵ Cooke also displays a 'blame it on the Indians' frame of mind as he wrote,

[t]hese bulls were very hard to kill ; they would run off with a half a dozen balls in them unless they were shot in the heart. The Indians had apparently killed off the cows.⁴⁰⁶

It is possible that the Indians had taken all the cows, but far more likely that these animals were just bachelors attached to no herd, rather like McCarthy's scalphunters.

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid. 149.

⁴⁰⁵ "Cooke's Journal of the march of the Mormon Battalion, 1847-1847." In Sepich, *Notes on Blood Meridian*, 70-71.

⁴⁰⁶ Sepich, *Notes on Blood Meridian*. 71.

**Gold germs - Argonauts - Going to see the elephant - Chihuahuas - Eureka -
Theoretical germs - Karl Marx - Real germs -**

The draw of California gold is an ever-present force in McCarthy's novel, as it was around the world. Perhaps the kid is the only character in Blood Meridian who is totally immune to the draw of gold. This is in itself a fascinating dimension of McCarthy's work, that his primary character, who must obviously be aware of the gold rush, has absolutely no interest in it, and chooses instead to make his way in life as a scalphunter. Perhaps *choose* is the wrong verb to use here, however. Since we are given no insight to the kid's motivation or thought processes (perhaps mercifully), we can only observe what he does. And what the kid does is move on from one situation to the next. Not only does he not have a plan, he does not own a compass. To go to the gold fields would require one to have at least the glimmer of hope or motivation, two qualities we can in no way associate with the kid. However, thousands of men from around the world did have the hope and motivation to try their hands in the California gold fields.

In the Spring of '49 what would have been more natural for the southern plains to be covered with forty-niners? Because John A. Sutter's swampers were unable to keep a secret, news of his gold strike in the Sacramento Valley leaked out like water from a jury-rigged sluice, and by New Year's day 1849 scores of ships were rounding Cape Horn for San Francisco Bay, and by May "12,000 wagons had crossed the Missouri River ... bound for the gold fields."⁴⁰⁷ As historian Odie B. Faulk wrote, the San Franciscan "gold

⁴⁰⁷ James A. Henretta, David Brody, Lynn Dumenil, eds., America : A Concise History 2nd Ed. (Boston: Bedford / St. Martins, 2002): 382. One might question why the author would use a figure only to challenge it, but wagons "crossing the Missouri" does not seem to guarantee that they were all headed for the gold fields. Oregon Territory was also booming, and wagon was the far preferred choice of transport for families to head west.

fever ... quickly spread, the germ seemingly borne on the wind in every direction”⁴⁰⁸ Mere hallucinations of gold had driven the Spanish exploration, if never the occupation, of Texas, and it would stand to reason that given the 1849 / 50 setting of Blood Meridian that the plains would be awash in hopefuls on their way to fortune in the California gold fields.

Karl Marx provides evidence that demonstrates the international draw of 49er gold. Marx reported in December 1850 an illegal French lottery scheme hatched by Louis Napoleon (Napoleon III) to raffle California gold bars:

Seven million lottery tickets at a franc apiece, the profits ostensibly devoted to shipping Parisian vagabonds to California. On the one hand, golden dreams were to supplant the socialist dreams of the Paris proletariat; the seductive prospect of the first prize, the doctrinaire right to work [...] In the main, however, the matter was nothing short of a downright swindle... The three millions ... squandered in riotous living.⁴⁰⁹

Another example of European connections to California gold fever shows the usually much more sensible George Catlin responding to peoples' desire for easily gained riches. Brian Dippie writes that Catlin was on January 5, 1849 giving a lecture in the Manchester Free-Trade Hall when, in response to wild enthusiasm from the audience, he began telling the punters what they wanted to hear about the Wild West. “Shamelessly ... [h]aving fired the imaginations of the greedy,” Catlin told the punters that forty-niners were “picking out the gold” from quartz lumps “with bowie knives,” and that Catlin had himself seen “lumps of gold” around the necks of “Comanche and Kiowa Indians.”⁴¹⁰ It is no wonder that some European forty-niners were a tad disoriented and disillusioned when they actually got to Bexar or Galveston on their way to picking gold nuggets off the

⁴⁰⁸ Odie B. Faulk. Land of Many Frontiers : A history of the American Southwest. (New York : Oxford University Press, 1968): 158.

⁴⁰⁹ Karl Marx, The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte. (New York: International Publishers, 1963 [1869]): 84ff.

⁴¹⁰ Brian W. Dippie . Catlin and his Contemporaries : The politics of patronage. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990): 136 - 137. The first and fourth quotes are Dippie, and the second and third are George Catlin.

ground in California. Catlin also gave the impression that if the El Dorado angle did not pan out, a fallback position was available because the so-called Great American Desert was actually an agricultural Eden, with plenty of water and “beautifully variegated, fine, and fertile” soils and that in particular, “northern Texas [was] abloom with wild flowers.”⁴¹¹ Martin Gauldin would have at least agreed with Catlin about the soil of northern Texas, which he said to be,

very rich the soil is black and about eight feet deep ... the soil is mixed with marl the timber is very good on the creeks the people look helthy in this region ... there are a large party of dutch emigrants with us to night--land is worth from 25 cints to \$2 [per acre].⁴¹²

There was the small matter of rainfall, however, although immigrants who arrived in 1849-50 would have been deluded into thinking that it never stopped raining, this was not the norm. The careful land-seeker might have also met the disillusioned German nester who offered to sell his 320 acres to W. Steinert for “a bottle of wine.”⁴¹³ Steinert himself would have warned any immigrant to be wary of land purchases as real estate scams as such cases “were not too rare in Texas.”⁴¹⁴

Given the international draw of California gold the Texas plains must have been swamped with forty-niners, however in his transit across mid-Texas, paralleling the old Spanish trail from Nacogdoches to Bexar, the kid encounters only the anchorite and cattle drovers. Where are the forty-niners? This aspect of Blood Meridian allows for making connections with the historical *bona fides* of the novel. It seems highly probable that there is a connection between McCarthy’s research and Odie Faulk’s Land of Many Frontiers : A history of the American Southwest, a highly readable general history published in 1965. Faulk noted that

⁴¹¹ *Ibid.* The first quote is Catlin, the second Dippie paraphrasing Catlin.

⁴¹² Gauldin, 102.

⁴¹³ Steinert, Part 2: 178.

⁴¹⁴ Steinert, Part 2: 179.

[t]hree routes westward “to see the elephant” emerged as the most popular : by sea to Panama, overland to the Pacific, and thence by boat to California; overland via the Humboldt Trail, an offshoot of the Oregon Trail ... ; and the Gila Trail, which was in effect Cooke’s Wagon Road across the Southwest. This latter trail was used by an estimated sixty thousand “pilgrims” during the period 1849-50. It was a popular route because there were fewer mountains to cross, the weather was more tolerable [...], and there were towns along the way where food and other supplies could be purchased. Following the custom of the Santa Fe traders, these “*argonauts*” traveled by groups in semi-military style.⁴¹⁵

The Gila trail drew its argonauts from New Mexico, then ran on old Spanish roads parallel to the American border to the Gulf of California.⁴¹⁶ In Blood Meridian it is therefore on the Borderlands, and not the Texas plains, where the kid first encounters forty-niners,

patched Argonauts from the states driving mules through the streets on their way south through the mountains to the coast. Goldseekers. Itinerant degenerates bleeding westward like some heliotropic plague. (78)

Apart from being historically accurate then, this brief passage contains some clues as to McCarthy having used this specific work as source material. First the term “argonauts” links McCarthy with Faulk, and while argonauts may well have been a term used by newspaper writers of the time, as was “going to see the elephant,” in this context would seem evidence of a connection.⁴¹⁷ There would also appear to a connection with McCarthy’s notion of the “goldseekers” resembling a light-seeking (heliotropic) plague and Faulk’s description of the “gold fever that started in San Francisco [that] quickly spread, the germ seemingly borne on the wind in every direction.”⁴¹⁸

It may be a stretch but there might have been another ‘germ’ planted in McCarthy’s imagination from Faulk’s prose, and that from the notion of going through Chihua-

⁴¹⁵ Faulk, 158.

⁴¹⁶ The Gila Trail, or Cooke’s wagon road as it is also known, also provides the opportunity for yet another vicious bull story. Cooke’s party of Mormon soldiers was attacked by wild bulls in 1846. Cooke himself was nearly gored, and George Stoneman, a future governor of California, then a lieutenant, “almost shot off his thumb with his own rifle” while repelling the wild bulls. Faulk, 135.

⁴¹⁷ Faulk, 158.

⁴¹⁸ Faulk, 158.

hua "to see the elephant."⁴¹⁹ Interestingly enough, and right after joining the Glanton Gang, the kid and his companions encounter not an elephant, but a traveling circus,

a family of itinerant magicians seeking safe passage ... Glanton looked down at them ... They were dressed in fool's costumes with stars and half-moons embroidered on and the once gaudy colors were faded and pale from the dust of the road and they looked a set of right wanderfolk cast on this evil terrain. (89)

Glanton asked the performers if they were "a show" and was told they were *bufones*,⁴²⁰ fools or clowns, and then one boy ran to bring out this troupe's 'elephants'.

The boy ran to one of the burros and began to tug among the packings. He came up with a pair of bald and bat-eared animals slightly larger than rats and pale brown in color and he pitched them into the air and caught them on the palms of his hands where they began to pirouette mindlessly. (89-90)

Typical of McCarthy's dark vision and humor, the gang's westering to "to see the elephant" yields dancing chihuahuas instead.⁴²¹ As Glanton opined on the entertainment, "[a]int that the drizzlin shits." In classic McCarthy form, the whole episode is witnessed by a blind man who was "led forth ... on a string to a place of vantage" by a Mexican kid. (90)

Now all of this literary unpacking could be mistaken for mere authorial enthusiasm but for the fact that this passage from Faulk just precedes his observation that one

...bizarre aspect of this overland traffic was the scalp bounty system, which induced many forty-niners to work their way westward as employ-

⁴¹⁹ According to John Sepich, "McCarthy apparently drew historical "authority" and artistic impulse for this Gypsy scene from his reading of John Woodhouse Audobon's narrative, in which he mentions a "Mexican traveling circus" accompanying his party for its protection on one stretch of Mexican road." John Emil Sepich, "The dance of history in Cormac McCarthy's *Blood Meridian*." *Southern Literary Journal* 24: 16-31.

⁴²⁰ The section caption provided by McCarthy is "Hiccius Docius," Gaelic for juggler, also, in doggerel, "This is a learned man." Webster (1828)

⁴²¹ This writer is not the only one to find McCarthy's writing hilarious at points. As if it was not politically incorrect enough just to write about scalphunting, to find humor in a fictional representation of same might well be considered 'over the top'.

ees of the state governments of Chihuahua and Sonora. Not a few of the gold-seekers paused to collect this reward ... One such scalp hunter [was] John Joel Glanton.⁴²²

There can be little doubt that Cormac McCarthy either began his scalphunter odyssey with Faulk's book, or encountered Faulk early on while researching scalphunting generally. Odds are that it is the former guess that is correct, and that Land of Many Frontiers was seminal to Blood Meridian. This section in Faulk was a true eureka moment for this author partly because of its connecting McCarthy to historical sources. An especially fevered imagination might even see the inside cover map of Faulk's book as having been a eureka moment for Cormac McCarthy as it presents a meridian just waiting for a bloody - minded novelist to find it. Primarily, however, it also served to give credence to this writer's suspicions regarding Cormac McCarthy and "the most famous of the scalp hunters ... James Kirker," who does not appear in Blood Meridian, although traces of his bloody tracks are all around the novel.⁴²³ Faulk has, and this almost uniquely (this paper having already noted Kirker's relegation to the nether world of the cryptic footnote) a full paragraph on James Kirker and his exploits as a scalphunter, the wording of which indicates a familiarity with the writing of Ralph Adam Smith.⁴²⁴

Lest one presume that there were no forty-niners in Texas, this was not the case, as evidenced on September 18, 1850 when "the French Expedition to California fell apart at El Paso."⁴²⁵ Organised by one Parker H. French this expedition consisted of 180 pas-

⁴²² Faulk, 160ff.

⁴²³ Ibid., 161.

⁴²⁴ Faulk's wording indicates to this writer a familiarity with the writing of Ralph Adam Smith, later biographer of Kirker (Borderlander, 1999), and scalphunter aficionado generally. Faulk eschews footnotes, however he does acknowledge specific journals including the *New Mexico Historical Review* which published Smith's "The Scalp Hunters on the Borderlands, 1835-1850." (6:1, 1964) Other Smith essays (he was prolific) on this subject and geographic region date from 1959.

⁴²⁵ Texas Day by Day.

sengers who had paid up to \$250 a head to invest in their gold futures in California. Sailing from New York the group had made a week-long stop in New Orleans before landing at Port Lavaca, Texas, and making a "difficult overland journey" to El Paso.⁴²⁶ Possibly Parker French had succumbed to the temptations of the Big Easy, because his doughty but suspicious Argonauts mutinied and cracked his safe, "only to find it empty."⁴²⁷ French would follow the lead of many a slave and desperado, and escape "across the Rio Grande into Mexico."⁴²⁸ W. Steinert also reported meeting a few groups of what he termed "Californians" in his months in Texas, but the numbers amount to perhaps a dozen individuals.

In keeping with the germ theme W. Steinert also made, on June 15 1849, an observation that impacts on the relative absence of forty-niners from both the fictitious and the actual Texas plains. Upon reaching Bexar, Steinert wrote that

Cholera raged terribly here. A man counted five hundred new graves recently.⁴²⁹ many of the people died on their way to California, especially, and also many soldiers died ... It is said that almost one-third of the people who stayed here died. [...] The sorry huts and the filth in the city probably contributed to the spread of the epidemic.⁴³⁰

Steinert was correct in his guess that "filth" aided the cholera outbreak,⁴³¹ but the problem was much greater than the confines of Bexar, as Steinert himself found in his later travels. McCarthy's drovers might have been headed to New Orleans not just be-

⁴²⁶ Texas Day by Day.

⁴²⁷ *Op Cit.*

⁴²⁸ French would prove immune to the attractions of Mexico, however, as "[d]uring the Civil War he was arrested in Connecticut." *Op Cit.*

⁴²⁹ To put the "five hundred new graves" in perspective, the population of Bexar in 1850 was 3,488.

⁴³⁰ Steinert, Part 2 : 193.

⁴³¹ Breeden, James O. "Health of early Texas : The military frontier." (357-398) *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* **80** : 4 (April 1977): 380. "[C]holera is an acute intestinal disease spread by unsanitary conditions and filth accumulation ... fatal in roughly one of two cases. [...] symptoms themselves are often awesome, consisting in rapid succession of 'vomiting, purging, cramps, profuse perspiration, and collapse.'"

cause of market opportunities but also because in 1849 and 1850, "attempts were made to export cattle to New Orleans because there is cholera up along the Mississippi River."⁴³² The 1849 outbreak of cholera "was the most widespread and disastrous" on record and was believed to have entered Texas via a "steamer from New Orleans."⁴³³ From Brownsville and New Orleans, the disease spread up to St. Louis and across the Rio Grande into California, tracking the 49ers. Bexar lost a third of its 1,500 citizens and Matamoros lost 1,000 of its citizens. McCarthy has the kid try and take his first steps out of Texas with the filibuster Captain White, but the troop take cholera with them from Laredito into Mexico.

Six days out ... two men fell sick and one died before dark. In the morning there was another ill to take his place. The two of them were laid among sacks of beans and rice and coffee in the supply wagon with blankets over them to keep them from the sun and they rode with the slamming and jarring of the wagon half shirring the meat from their bones so that they cried out to be left and then they died. (44)

Something you will not find in McCarthy nor survey or Texas histories is the effect of disease on 1850 Texas Indians. Of course the Indians would be effected, especially given that both their homeland and raiding ranges were crossed by immigrant and 49er trails. The Comanches were hit hard by both cholera and an 1848 smallpox outbreak. The bands of Santa Anna and Mopechucupe were camped on the Brazos River near one of the remaining Caddo camps when they were infected with cholera by the "Neighbors-Ford El Paso expedition [which] passed through their villages." R. S. Neighbors reported in 1849 that "about 300" of these people, including both leaders, died in January of that year.⁴³⁴ No reliable figures exist regarding Comanche numbers however as they were ex-

⁴³² Steinert, Part 5 : 49.

⁴³³ Breeden, 381.

⁴³⁴ Thomas W. Kavanagh, Comanche political History : An Ethnohistorical Perspective, 1706-1875 (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996): 332.

tremely and understandably skittish about having their census taken by the enemy at a time of war. As federal Indian agent Jesse Stem wrote in 1851,

of the number of Comanches, it is difficult if not impossible to get any accurate knowledge. The southern bands, who are the only Comanches that remain in Texas continuously, are not numerous ... their chiefs ... estimated the number at about 600.⁴³⁵

It was the mobility of the Comanches, which they had in common with the early Texans, that likely saved them :

If a prominent person died, or if an epidemic caused several deaths at a certain camp, the site would be abandoned at once, and the people would never return there--a practice that, in spite of its obvious inconvenience, no doubt checked the ravages of disease.⁴³⁶

One of Frederick Jackson Turner's motivations in propounding his Frontier Thesis was to counteract a notion firmly held by the predominately Eastern historical academy in his day, this was the notion of germ theory. Germ theory held that European mores, institutions, culture arrived in America with the proper Anglo-Saxon immigrants, and was transferred fully fledged to the advancing frontier in the form of military officers, ministers, officials and freemasons. There was therefore no exceptional new American character created on the front, merely a transposal of traditional European culture to a new, and thus far benighted, portion of the world. No doubt this theory, if firmly held, might have given its professors some problems in explaining the stubborn clinging to chattel slavery, and the institution of commercial scalphunting in the Borderlands. Turner's thesis was however inherently accommodating of violence in the service of frontiering.

McCarthy's kid was possessed of another sort of germ, that of the Irish borderlander, a far remove from the culture germ theorists had in mind. If the kid was born

⁴³⁵ Kavanagh, 332.

⁴³⁶ Richardson (8th ed.): 17.

with any elevated impulses they had been beaten out of him by his old-man and the whoresons on the Mississippi before ever he saw Texas. This fellow is a germ from the Dark Ages, and not the Enlightenment. What he has to spread is not White culture that would be upheld by any academic, but rather more white trash hatred, resentment and entitlement -- not culture, but anti-culture. In keeping with McCarthy's subtitle, "the evening redness in the west," this is what the kid brought to the Borderlands ; he did not aspire to gold and fortune, he was drawn to blood and chaos. I believe that it is the genius of McCarthy that what the kid does is not infect the Borderlands, neither does the Borderlands infect the kid. What McCarthy does is show us a human and a situation (time and place) that are made for each other ; the person and the place inhabit each other. Ironically the kid in some ways appears to become somewhat humanized while immersed in the brutality of the Borderlands, as his refusal to kill the wounded scalphunter and his, in the judge's words "clemency for the heathen" (299) reveal. And, as the kid's end in the jakes would suggest, both he and the 1850s Borderlands were time and place sensitive. The kid could not live outside the bounds of the Texas Borderlands.

**Material Texas #2 - King cotton - Who's in charge? - Of whom? -
Morals? - Race and Slavery on the blood meridian -**

Taking a look at who was in charge of Texas in 1850 can shed some light on scalphunting Texas, but also give some illuminates how, five years into union, Texas was becoming even more of a Southern state than it had been in 1836 or even 1845. Perhaps the place to start is to first look at who constituted the population of Texas in 1850. Even in performing this seemingly straightforward procedure, given that 1850 was the year of the Sixth decennial American census, takes on Texas size complications. The

first complication that arises from looking at federal census figures is that no Indians appear on the count, at least not as Indians. Indians were, after all citizens of 'domestic dependent nations' and therefore not really Americans. Now without performing an in depth search of the statistics, it is unquestionable that some Indians were included in census figures, but these individuals would not have been reported as Indian.⁴³⁷ The Texas term for 'denatured' or assimilated Indians was *genizaro*, which in the Borderlands had the specific meaning of "detrribalized."⁴³⁸ In short, Indians and particularly mixed-blood individuals were included in Texas society and in census polls if they did not live like Indians. Suffice to say that the great majority of Texas Indians were not included in the 1850 census.

It requires a serious search of the 7th Census to find information on Indian populations, but tucked into a section on "Annual Taxes" was this seemingly unrelated note:

INDIANS.-- The number of Indians within the territory of the United States ... 76,000 in 1789. In consequence of the annexation of new territory, notwithstanding the extinction of tribes ... In 1853 the .. estimated total number at 400,764, of which 271,930 were in California, Oregon, Texas &c. ... The largest tribes in 1853: ... Texas Indians, 29,000.⁴³⁹

Negroes were included in census data, but not in the regular fashion as they were scheduled as property even though they were counted as individuals for the purposes of gross population figures (upon which were allotted Congressional seats). While it is commonly understood that in Dixie "all political privileges [were] denied to the colored man, whether free or a slave,"⁴⁴⁰ perhaps it is less well understood that the majority of

⁴³⁷ In fact a look at the census rolls for several counties revealed not one person identified as Indian by 'race', 'origins' or name.

⁴³⁸ David J. Weber. The Mexican Frontier, 1821 - 1846 : The American Southwest under Mexico. (Albuquerque : University of New Mexico Press, 1982): 213. .

⁴³⁹ Seventh Census, 1850: Statistical View, "Indians," 191.

⁴⁴⁰ Edward Smith (1849). Account of a Journey through North Eastern Texas ; Undertaken in 1849 for the Purposes of Immigration. (London : Hamilton, Adams & Co.): 77.

free states were not much further down the road to racial equality in 1850. In eight of the fifteen free states Negroes could not vote, and New York had a \$250 property requirement for Negroes.⁴⁴¹

The total population of Texas in 1850 was 212,592 of which 154,034 were "Whites", 397 were "Free Colored," and 58,161 were "Slaves". As per agreement with the Southern States, this gave Texas a population for representation purposes of 189,327, entitling the new state to two seats in the 33rd Congress.⁴⁴² Nearly half the white population was 15 or younger, and 80% of the white population was under thirty years old. Somewhat surprisingly more than 160 of the "Free Colored" population were fifteen or under.⁴⁴³ While this probably shows that African-Americans managed to have families in 1850 Texas, it also demonstrates just how difficult it was to become free, and the census schedules make clear that manumittance was becoming less frequent in the South.

Richard Lowe and Randolph Campbell⁴⁴⁴ used census schedules to investigate competing claims that political Texas was either an oligarchic Southern aristocracy, or a raw frontier democracy. Looking at "all levels of political leadership from national to county" what they found was a mixed bag of impulses both towards Jacksonian small-farmer democracy and towards a cotton oligarchy.⁴⁴⁵ In 1850 for instance the Texas legislature added the positions of treasurer, comptroller and attorney-general to the list of electable offices, seemingly in the direction of increased popular sovereignty. On the other hand Lowe and Campbell's analysis show that Texas was rapidly moving towards

⁴⁴¹ Edward Smith (1849) : 77.

⁴⁴² Seventh Census, 1850: Statistical View. Pps. 52-53.

⁴⁴³ Seventh Census, 1850: Statistical View. P. 70..

⁴⁴⁴ Richard Lowe and Randolph Campbell. "Wealthholding and political power in Antebellum Texas." *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 79: 1 (July 1975) : 21-30.

⁴⁴⁵ Lowe and Campbell, 25.

having a government apparatus dominated by a wealthy cotton planting elite, and that those new political positions were likely to be controlled by the planter class.

Looking at 1850 census figures, of the general Texas population, nearly 80 per cent were farmers (78 per cent of the general population), of which roughly one third were slave-holders (25 per cent of the general population).⁴⁴⁶ By occupation, just over half the Euroamerican population of Texas in 1850 were non-slaver farmers, and approximately two-thirds of the non-farmer working population were not slaveholders. However in terms of political representation, a clear majority of political positions, some 68 per cent, were slaveholders, and by a ratio of 4:1 these were farmers. Put a different way, one-third of the Euroamerican population (slaveholders) occupied two-thirds of the public offices. These numbers would become even more extreme by the 1860 census when slaveholders would compromise one-quarter of the Euroamerican population but still occupy seven-tenths of public offices.⁴⁴⁷ W. Steinert's report from the Austin, the Texas capital seems to bear this out :

The city is planned on a large scale, but it only has about three dozen frame houses. [...] The legislature holds its sessions in a large frame building. Many farmers are here every day while their Negroes do their work for them at home.

Incidentally, Austin in 1849 appeared to have recovered greatly in the four years since one traveler's 1839 visit :

the city of Auston ... is the seat of government this has been a very Considerable place some years ago but owing to the hostility of the indians it was almost deserted but it is now settling up again and no dout it will become quite a considerable place in a few years.⁴⁴⁸

The above figures connect slaveholding with office-holding, but give no clue as to

⁴⁴⁶ Lowe and Campbell, Table 1 at p. 25.

⁴⁴⁷ Lowe and Campbell, Table 1 at p. 25.

⁴⁴⁸ Martin Austin Gauldin (1845). "From Missouri to Texas in 1845 : Martin Austin Gauldin's Journal." Jackie McElheney, Ed. *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 83: 2 (October 1979): 165.

the economic / class structure of Texas. Roughly breaking down slave numbers is not much help either, for there were 7.2 slaves per capita (slaveholders only), and 8.8 per capita for slaveholding politicians. However, officeholders held on average four times the real property as did the average Texan property holder (\$6,503 to \$1,461).⁴⁴⁹ Further, in 1850, "political leaders produced ... twice as much cotton as farm operators generally," and this ratio would become 3:1 by 1860.⁴⁵⁰ Now it would appear to be a mistake to presume that Northern states were more egalitarian in terms of office-holding as Lowe and Campbell report a similar study revealing that in contemporaneous Wisconsin the 'average' state senator was "9.3 times wealthier than the average adult," a "much greater [ratio] than that enjoyed by Texas political leaders in general."⁴⁵¹ This would appear to illustrate a gaffe by Lowe and Campbell, as another distinction that occurs to this writer is that the Wisconsin census figures would include the entire population, whereas the Lowe and Campbell's Texas figures are skewed because at least 30 percent of Texans are not represented in property-holding statistics, namely the Negro and Indian population who comprised 30+ per cent of the population and possessed essentially no real property. If these Texans were included in the calculations the wealth ratio of Texas officeholders to all non-officeholders would be more extreme than that of Wisconsin. Further, another crucial distinction was that the Wisconsin officeholders were merely richer than the average citizen, they were not removed from 70 percent of the Euroamerican population by dint of owning slaves.

The figures above make a strong connection between cotton, slavery, office-holding and Texas, but was /were these relationship(s) somehow typical of all Texas? The answer to this is a qualified no ; while cotton and slavery are a dominant issue in 1850

⁴⁴⁹ Lowe and Campbell, Table 2 at p. 27.

⁴⁵⁰ Lowe and Campbell, 28ff.

⁴⁵¹ Lee Soltow (1971). Patterns of Wealthholding in Wisconsin since 1850. Madison WI. In Lowe and Campbell at 29. In Wisconsin Negroes had the vote in 1850.

Texas and the planter economy was crucial to understanding Texas history, this economy was primarily geographically limited in 1850 to the

eastern two-fifths of the state. This region, stretching from the Louisiana border on the east to roughly the 98th on the west, was approximately the size of Alabama and Mississippi combined and contained about 93 percent of Texas's free population and 99 percent of the State's slaves.⁴⁵²

It is this part of Texas, the vast majority of the population and the lesser part of the geographic area, that the kid quickly traverses in the opening pages of Blood Meridian, for this part of Texas is still the South from which the kid (and the author) is fleeing. It must be emphasised that the cotton-growing demographic was flowing westward behind the line of settler advance, and would flow as far as planting conditions allowed for.

There are a few clues in Blood Meridian that link the Texas to the political economic South, as differentiated from the sharp edge of frontier on the Borderlands. In the Nacogdoches dram house

was a long narrow hall wainscotted with varnished boards. There were tables by the wall and spittoons on the floor. There were no patrons. The barman looked up when they entered and a nigger that had been sweeping the floor stood the broom against the wall and walked out. (11)

And, later on the prairie when he encounters the cattle drive, the drovers

asked him no questions, a ragged lot themselves. Crossbreeds some, free niggers, an indian or two. (20)

And again at Bexar,

Blacks were washing a carriage in the ford and he went down the hill and stood at the edge of the water and after a while he called out to them.

They were sopping water over the black lacquerwork and one of them raised up and turned to look at him. The horses stood to their knees in the current.

What? called the black.
Have you seen a mule.
Mule?

⁴⁵² Lowe and Campbell, 23.

I lost a mule. I think he come this way.

The black wiped his face with the back of his arm. Somethin come down the road about an hour back... It might of been a mule. It didn't have no tail nor hair to speak of but it did have long ears.

The other two blacks grinned. (28)

This obviously Shakespearian moment sets the preceding quotes in context. In Nacogdoches, the “nigger ... sweeping the floor” could *only* be a slave identified as such by his subservience, “stood the broom against the wall and walked out,” and by his occupation. Statistically, the odds of this worker being anything but a slave are remote in the extreme, and McCarthy lets us know that in his spare (and unsparing) style. This man is a “nigger” in his social and economic setting; he is not an African or a negroe, and he is nowhere near achieving African-Americanness. McCarthy brandishes “nigger” like the kid a broken bottle in a bar scrap, and with the same considered intent and effect! In using the ‘N-word’, McCarthy is following the same guidelines he used in basing his historically-based characters in the language and deeds of 1850. Later on the prairie, but still in east Texas, the kid meets the drovers among whom are “free niggers;” a slight improvement linguistically, but a great leap forward in terms of their relative freedom. Statistically if there were more than a two or three free Negroes in McCarthy’s group, they would compromise as much as one percentage point of the total free Negro population of Texas in 1850. For, out of an 1850 Texas population of some 58,558 Negroes, there were 397 free Negroes (1.4 %) , and 58,161 slaves.⁴⁵³ The chances of these numbers increasing were infinitesimal as only five slaves were manumitted in Texas in 1850.⁴⁵⁴ Further on at Bexar the “Blacks ... washing a carriage,” could again only be slaves. There is a remote statistical chance they could have been owned by another Negro, as it was not theoretically constitutionally impossible for Negroes to own property.

⁴⁵³ 1850 American census data. (20 March, 2005)

<<http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/view/CC/ulcl.html>>

⁴⁵⁴ Seventh Census, 1850: Statistical View. P. 64.

There was a small but crucial distinction made between the legal rights of Indians and Negroes in 1850 Texas. The easiest way to approach this subject is through examining citizenship and voting rights, for an Indian could become a citizen merely by deciding to do so. There seems to have been an implied right of first occupancy lightly written into the *Constitution of the State of Texas (1845)*. Should an Indian choose to engage in property-holding and / or commerce and pay taxes on that property or income then as a

free male person who shall have attained the age of twenty-one years, and who shall be a citizen of the United States, or who is, at the time of the adoption of this constitution by the Congress of the United States, a citizen of the republic of Texas, and shall have resided in this State one year next preceding an election, and the last six months with the district, county, city, or town in which he offers to vote, (Indians not taxed, Africans, and descendants of Africans, excepted,) [he would] be deemed a qualified elector.⁴⁵⁵

Precisely how an Indian was to acquire property or income was left up to the individual, but the important point is that it was at least theoretically possible for an Indian to join the voting citizenship.

The same could not be said for Negroes in Texas. "Africans, and descendants of Africans, excepted" unequivocally reads the document. This statement is clarified in *Section 9* of the 1845 document:

All persons of color who were slaves for life previous to their emigration to Texas, and who are now held in bondage, shall remain in the like state of servitude, provide the said slave shall be the bona fide property of the person so holding said slave as aforesaid. Congress shall pass no laws to prohibit emigrants from the United States of America from bringing their slaves into the Republic with them, and holding them by the same tenure by which such slaves were held in the United States; nor shall Congress have power to emancipate slaves; nor shall any slave-holder be allowed to emancipate his or her slave or slaves, without the consent of Congress, unless he or she shall send his or her slave or slaves without the limits of the Republic. No free person of African descent, either in whole or in part, shall be permitted to reside permanently in the Republic, without the con-

⁴⁵⁵ *Constitution of the State of Texas (1845) Article III, Section 1.* (accessed 20 April, 2005), < <http://tarlton.law.utexas.edu/constitutions/text/DART03.html> > .

sent of Congress, and the importation or admission of Africans or negroes into this Republic, excepting from the United States of America, is forever prohibited, and declared to be piracy.⁴⁵⁶

A careful reading reveals the true insidiousness of this document as it 1) requires Negroes to individually petition Texas Congress for freedom / citizenship, 2) prohibits free Negroes from entering Texas, and 3) prohibits slave owners from freeing slaves “without the consent of Congress.” The Constitution essentially ‘grandfathered’ in any property-owning free Negroes who had that status under the Republic, but ensured that “only white heads of family’ would be able to purchase property.⁴⁵⁷ Texas was in short a long ways from being a free enterprise state, and was in fact designed to be a slaveocracy. One further point here is that the originally proposed document stipulated “free *white* male person,” but in the Borderlands context of 1845 so many property holders were of Mexican heritage that the white qualifier was untenable as it would have either served to disenfranchise an important segment of the economy, or necessitated extending whiteness to Mexicans, an unthinkable concept for many Texans.

Getting at the morality of any site-age can be a difficult task, the most obvious reason being that people do not always commit their most interesting thoughts and experiences to paper. Getting a grip on the morality of 1850 Texas is also complicated by the fact that the body-public morality of that state was in itself a slippery construction, due in large part to the racial underpinnings of much of that morality. In 1850 rustling a cow could get a person strung-up, but owning other people and treating them like cattle was considered by the majority to be not just OK but the height of achievement. Shooting a stray Indian was a frontier norm, and shooting groups of Indians was viewed as but

⁴⁵⁶ *Constitution of the State of Texas (1845) Article III, Section 9.* (accessed 20 April, 2005), < <http://tarlton.law.utexas.edu/constitutions/text/DART03.html> > .

⁴⁵⁷ Neil Foley. *The White Scourge : Mexicans, Blacks, and Poor Whites in Texas Cotton Culture.* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997): 19..

one function of a robust government. How do shoplifting and premarital sex fit into that milieu? Perhaps the best way to consider morality, as it was understood at the time, is most easily found in what Texans said about other Texans. It is much easier after all to judge our neighbor's morality than our own.

Martin Austin Gauldin traversed Texas in 1845 looking for the "promised land" of the new frontier.⁴⁵⁸ Gauldin was twenty-seven at the time, and was already a frontierer before he became a Borderlander, as he was born in Virginia but had tried Missouri in 1840. On his travels he would display a familiarity with the gilded guide books for Texas immigrants that were "circulated widely" and offered moral young men a "wide and uncultivated field to become not only rich but eminent and distinguished among men while living and objects of veneration when dead."⁴⁵⁹ Too bad the kid was illiterate, or he might have set his sights a tad higher! Gauldin makes a good choice as a commentator on morality because first he appears to have one, but he also seems by his journal to be both generally nonjudgmental, and very observant of the behaviour of others.

If Gauldin engaged in sex on his travels he did not admit to it, but he was a thoughtful observer of his companions' mores and a master of the euphemism to boot. On the 11th November Gauldin "started down the mountain caut Trigg roasting potatoes with a girl,"⁴⁶⁰ likely a local lass starved for affection or pin money, as Gauldin's group was all male. Later on just past Bucksnot, Texas the locals again proved accommodating as Gauldin "herd another one offer to lone his wife to his neighbor," a practise Gauldin was apparently unfamiliar with.⁴⁶¹ This practise was better known in Nacogdo-

⁴⁵⁸ Gauldin, 151.

⁴⁵⁹ Gauldin, 151. Editor McElheney lists a number of boosterish publications beginning in 1835. *E.g.*: David Woodman Jr. Guide to Texas Emigrants (Boston : 1835). Woodman was quick off the mark given that the Battle of San Jacinto was not until 1836, and that Texas was in a state of panic in 1835 waiting for Santa Anna to strike.

⁴⁶⁰ Gauldin, 158.

⁴⁶¹ Gauldin, 158. Editor McElheney makes Bucksnot out to be the later more elegantly

ches where a large imbalance of the sexes due to the presence of “unmarried soldiers, slaves and transient” males helped lead to the “prostitution of the town wives.”⁴⁶² Sex with Indians appears to have been a possibility however, for Gauldin notes he has “not seen any pretty Squaws yet,” which implies he was looking for them.⁴⁶³ Likewise, W. Steinert delicately approached this prospect in 1849 when he opined that “[m]orality is almost out of the question in most tribes. The white people have burdened themselves with many sins regarding this matter.”⁴⁶⁴ There is quite a contrast between these two observers as regards relations between Texans and Negroes, however. Gauldin, a Virginian out of Missouri, grew up in and worked in the milieu of slaveholding. In his journal there is not one reference to a “Negroe”, even though he travels through the heart of the burgeoning western cotton empire and reports seeing cotton farms. To Gauldin, steeped in cotton culture, Negroes are invisible, the equivalent of domestics in Victorian English literature ; one knows they must be there, but they are so ubiquitous as to not rate a mention. The German Steinert however saw Negroes everywhere in his travels, and since he saw Negroes he also could not help but notice that sexual relations obviously existed between Negroes and their masters : “the half-breed Negroes show adequately how much the noble white people love the association with the Negroes.”⁴⁶⁵

One 1850 traveler who was incapable of seeing, or at least reporting the presence of Negroes in Texas was Melinda Rankin. Miss Rankin was a lifelong Presbyterian missionary who originally went southwest to save heathen (Catholic) Mexico from the fires of hell, but was unable to obtain a visa, and settled for Texas.⁴⁶⁶ Miss Rankin was the

named Bed of Coals Falls. *N* 38 at page 158.

⁴⁶² Gilberto Miguel Hinojosa. *A Borderlands Town in Transition : Laredo, 1755-1870.* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1983): 110.

⁴⁶³ Gauldin, 159.

⁴⁶⁴ Steinert, Part 3 : 284.

⁴⁶⁵ Steinert, Part 5 : 65.

⁴⁶⁶ Melinda Rankin (1850). *Texas in 1850.* (Waco: Texian Press, 1966).

last person one would expect to talk about sexuality, but her inability to see Negroes, given her New Hampshire birth, is startling. While she comments extensively on Texas economics and society, neither would appear to have encompassed either Negroes or sexuality. There is a faint chance, however, that Miss Rankin talked of these 'things' in code. For instance, while discussing the physical land around Nacogdoches, in the heart of the expanding South, Miss Rankin (cryptically?) writes:

The various appearances which are observed in this vicinity might present a subject for interesting speculations. Varieties occur only at short intervals. Frequently, the red, black and white soil are found so contiguous, that their colors become blended into one. [The] town ...exhibits an appearance which is peculiar to many other towns in Texas, not however in the way of improvement, but rather, otherwise.⁴⁶⁷

Slavery in 1850s Texas was not merely a peculiar institution, but also an incredibly complex one, embodying not only all the individual's and states' rights issues central to the great American imbroglio, but also all the complications of the Spanish / Mexican borderlands and Indian slaveholding practices. Nearly every identifiable ethnic group in 1850 Texas took and held slaves, and this includes all the Indian groups surveyed as well as the Texicans, Mexicans and Americans. The Euroamerican notion of chattel slavery was, it today's vernacular, all about economics. Certainly, slavery had a massive cultural and psychological impact on both its subjects and its practitioners, and this reality drove many cultural and psychological adaptations and accommodations by slave and slaver.

In a Dixie Texas the boundaries of slavery were almost uniformly positive from a slaveholder's point of view. The Atlantic and the Gulf provided an hermetic seal around the east and the south of the slaveocracy. No slave was going to run away across this aqueous plane. To the north was a more permeable but still effective boundary in the

⁴⁶⁷ Rankin, 109.

still agricultural but industrialising Yankee states. Economically codependent on the cheap slave-grown cotton and agricultural products of Dixie, in 1850 there was yet no breadbasket / stockyard in the West, the northern section bent over backwards to accommodate the continuation of southern slavery, if not always the territorial expansion of same. The upshot of this state of affairs was that the North provided almost as effective a barrier as did the Atlantic to slavery. The products of, and profits from, slavery flowed as freely across the North / South 'boundary' as they did across the Atlantic, yet the slave was as constrained (but for rare exceptions) in Dixie by economics and politics as they were by oceans and gulfs. To the west and the northwest lay the Comancheria and the Apacheria, almost as effective barrier to escaping slaves as was the Gulf.

One aspect of the Indian barrier to escape from slavery was noted by Captain Marcy. The specifics were that Seminole Indians were in 1850 in transit from their relocated home in Indian Territory to the Borderlands in hopes of gaining freedom from American pressures there. Groups of runaway slaves from Arkansas attempted to join the Seminoles by crossing Texas, but were massacred by the Comanche, who had "taken an inveterate dislike" to Negroes,⁴⁶⁸ as they were slaves to the Euroamericans. Marcy was told "with sardonic humor" that the Comanches had killed the negroes because "they were sorry for them."⁴⁶⁹ Marcy believed the Comanches saw the Seminoles as a potential barrier to, or as competition for, their raiding out of Texas into Mexico.⁴⁷⁰ Of course the Comanches also took and held negroes for slaves as well. Robert E. Lee in 1850 led the 8th U.S. Infantry against the Comanche Chief Yellow Wolf on the Nueces River and seized the Chief's son and some 130 horses. Yellow Wolf ransomed his son

⁴⁶⁸ Marcy: 55, 56.

⁴⁶⁹ Porter, Kenneth Wiggins. "Negroes and Indians on the Texas Frontier, 1831-1876." *Journal of Negro History* 41: 4 (Oct. 1956): 285-310. p 287.

⁴⁷⁰ Porter, 287.

back with thirteen captives including ten Mexicans, two “whites” and one negro.⁴⁷¹ One presumes that the negro was not released as a free person. This episode helps make sense of the fact that most runaway slaves congregated along the southern Rio Grande in Mexico -- while still within reach of Texian posses, this must have also offered some protection from raiding Indians.

Only then to the southwest and Mexico was there a truly permeable border that had to be guarded by Texas against runaway slaves. Sean Kelley provides an excellent exemplar of how the borderlands serve to amplify an already complicated issue in “Mexico in His Head.”⁴⁷² In 1851 Guy M. Bryan, a Brazoria County-based slaveholding politician, agonized over swapping one very valuable piece of real property for another. Bryan coveted a slave held by his brother-in-law, who was willing to part with his “property” in exchange for a piece of land owned by Bryan. Bryan waffled on consummating the deal knowing the land he traded would remain where it was, but fearing the slave he traded for would leg it, as “the negroe he has got Mexico in his head.”⁴⁷³ For chattel slavery, as in the practice of commercial scalphunting, the Borderlands offered a unique set of circumstances and opportunities for the individuals involved. The theoretical and tangible ‘moving box’ of slavery required “[n]ational boundaries [that] delineated the scope of state power, which, through military support and the passage of slave codes, was vital to the maintenance of slavery.”⁴⁷⁴ As noted, on three sides Texas had those boundaries, but in 1850 the Borderlands side of the box was a porous construction as regards slavery. Precisely how porous those boundaries were are not precisely known, but as there were only twenty-nine fugitive slaves reported in the 1850 census,⁴⁷⁵ it would

⁴⁷¹ Porter, 288, and N 64 at 288.

⁴⁷² Sean Kelly. ‘Slavery and the Texas-Mexico Border, 1810-1860.’ *Journal of Social History* 37:3 (2004): 709-723.

⁴⁷³ *Ibid.* 709.

⁴⁷⁴ *Ibid.* 709.

⁴⁷⁵ Seventh Census, 1850: Statistical View. “Manumitted and Fugitive Slaves,” 64.

seem that Guy M. Bryan was just not a man to take small chances.

How do these issues play in Cormac McCarthy's view of the borderlands? In light of the burgeoning cotton industry in Texas, and the importance cotton had on the creation of Texas, it is on this issue that Blood Meridian does the most disservice as an historical informant. From reading the novel, one would garner no indication that Texas was a cotton state, and therefore, a Southern state. Certainly we are forewarned in McCarthy's subtitle, "an evening redness in the west," that the author was writing about the West and not the South, and it is only fair to note that the kid merely "rode on" over east and central Texas; McCarthy and the kid engage the Spanish Borderlands, after all. Even when the kid passes through an area where slavery dominated the local economy, for instance Nacogdoches where a third of the local population were slaves,⁴⁷⁶ he rarely notices. McCarthy does give us one very important clue glaringly presented as to where and how Negroes fit into the Texas the kid rode over, however. The hermit tells the kid he left his career as a slaver in Mississippi as he was "[s]ick of niggers." He produces "a small dark thing ... Some man's heart, dried and blackened," and announces he had paid two hundred dollars for it, "the price they put on the black son of a bitch it hung inside of." (18)

This erasure of slavery is made the more noticeable in that the kid while still in Tennessee wandered,

a solitary migrant upon that flat and pastoral landscape. Blacks in the fields, lank and stooped, their fingers spiderlike among the bolls of cotton. A shadowed agony in the garden. (4)

Here engaging in a rare moment of psychoanalysis, it is possible that McCarthy as a Southerner was oblivious in Texas to that which was most common to him, Southern culture and cotton culture, and wrote about what stood out for him in Texas, which was

⁴⁷⁶ Seventh Census, 1850: Statistical View. "Population," 314.

Texas as the West. This phenomenon of unconscious erasure will be pointed out in travel accounts and histories both at various points in this paper. A likelier thesis than unconscious erasure, given McCarthy's obvious talents as a writer and a researcher, is that he, like generations of academic and popular historians fell into the frontier trap of written history, and consequently viewed 1850 Texas as the western frontier, and not as a part of the South. But perhaps the simple truth is that McCarthy manipulated the kid's trajectory specifically to avoid having to view Texas as a Southern State, as his intended target was the scalphunting industry and not slavery.

W. Steinert offers an interesting outsider's view of race relations in 1849 Texas, and how those relations intersect with economics, politics and public morality. Steinert was a German schoolteacher who in 1849 undertook to tour through Texas and from there, through the Mississippi Valley to the Great Lakes and thence to New York and home to Germany. Steinert's mission was to scout "the so-called German Belt" of Texas and ascertain "first hand the conditions in Texas, the opportunities for employment, and the prospects for settlement in the new state."⁴⁷⁷ This writer also helps place 1850 Texas in international context when he notes that even with the hardships immigrants endured in Texas, many "were glad that they had escaped the turmoil over there" in the German states.⁴⁷⁸ Steinert was sponsored by the Craftsmen's Guild of Luckenwalde to both look for opportunities for emigration and to check previous glowing reports, such as Viktor Bracht's Texas im Jahre 1848 which painted Texas as an investor's and worker's paradise. Steinert's powers of observation and analysis, directed at both the social and economic mores of Texas, his class consciousness and his willingness to forecast the futurity of Texas make him a working-class and region specific de Tocqueville. Bracht is the recipient of many snide comments by Steinert as the latter follows

⁴⁷⁷ Steinert, Part 1 : 57.

⁴⁷⁸ Steinert, Part 2 : 180.

in the footsteps of the former and finds, for instance, instead of excellent locally brewed beer as plumped by Bracht, “a brewery standing on shaky ground. I shall not discuss the wholesomeness and good qualities of the beer. I drank some of it.” Bracht had particularly extolled Texas as an agriculturalist’s eden, but everywhere Steinert went he found hardworking German farmers struggling, and notes of one farmer turned schoolmaster that “[h]e, too, seems to have found a hair in this highly praised farm soup.”⁴⁷⁹ Steinert would meet Bracht in his travels and find that one short year after publishing his gilded ode to Texas, Bracht’s “enthusiasm for Texas [had] already cooled off very much.”⁴⁸⁰ It is obvious by Steinert’s text that he was fascinated by Texas. He spent more words on the state than he did on all the rest of his American tour, but he also came away convinced that Texas that only those

who are actually driven out of Germany should emigrate over here, but they should not take this action lightly. Whoever can make his living in Germany should stay where he is because the the conditions that the emigrant may encounter are often bad. [...] Whoever comes here to avoid political contests will get involved here even more. I cite as examples the problems of slavery...⁴⁸¹

In the sections of his narrative that were written extemporaneously, Steinert never overtly condemns slavery, although a reader comes away with the strong impression that this educated and sensitive observer was very much opposed to the peculiar institution. Steinert seems to have been dismayed to find the extent to which previous German immigrants had embraced the slave-model local economics. For, everywhere he went in Texas, Steinert found that “Negroes did the farm work,” and that they did so whether the farm was owned by an American or German Texan. Either Steinert’s feelings against slavery calcified during his four months in Texas (May - August 1849), or he did not

⁴⁷⁹ Steinert, Part 3 : 295.

⁴⁸⁰ Steinert, Part 3 : 301.

⁴⁸¹ Steinert, Part 5 : 72.

write them down until he was physically removed from the state, but in later recollecting and synthesising his experiences, Steinert was much more forthright in his condemnation of the institution on slavery, and the German emigrants who embraced the peculiar business institution. Steinert gives us a clue that it was the latter reason :

In your dealings with Texans of American extraction you must be very careful not to provoke them. Your reward might be a bullet in your head, and nobody would take any notice of it. You have to be especially careful in talking about slavery. If you do not restrain yourself from commenting on this subject too freely, you can easily get into unpleasant quarrels. This is freedom of speech in Texas! The least insult results in bloody revenge.⁴⁸²

Once removed from Texas however, Steinert was very direct in expressing his opinions :

Finally ... I shall write about the class of people who are esteemed the least here and are considered to be like cattle. These are the slaves, who are bought and sold. Many Americans take great efforts to prove that these people are an intermediate stage between apes and men and they do this chiefly to palliate their deeds by this theory. There are others, however, who consider the slave trade as something shameful and favor a reasonable freedom for the Negroes. Slavery will become a leading question also in Texas in a few years. There are some Germans, too, who not only defend slavery, but practise it. This is especially unbecoming to those Germans who demand dignity and rights for all men in their homeland and who entered into the fight for human rights and freedom there. You can see that many people preach these theories until they themselves are in a position of using their fellow men for their service and convenience.⁴⁸³

In following this travel narrative, it is obvious that Steinert is never oblivious to the fact that the Negroes he saw working were almost always slaves, but he does not really evince a strong moral reaction to this reality until he is personally confronted with the actualities of slave existence on a mail coach from New Braunfels to Austin on a Sunday morning in August 1849.

⁴⁸² Steinert, Part 5 : 62.

⁴⁸³ Steinert, Part 5 : 64.

Our travel group consisted of four gentlemen, two ladies, and one child. The men were whites and the women were Negroes, in other words, slaves. But you will ask: "Slaves in a mail coach? I thought no white person would speak to them, and you say they are riding with you in the mail coach? Yes, that's right. They are riding in the mail coach with us and they converse in a manner that reveals that they have gotten out from behind their cook stove. Their clothes ... are not at all bad, and in this respect they are fully the equals of German ladies. [...] One of the women got off after several miles, but the other one with the child went to Austin with us. [And once there,] the little girl looked out of our coach, and a Negro woman ran up to us and pulled the little girl out of the coach while she cried "My baby, my little baby." ... she ran to the next house and continued to cry out in the same way. The black neighbor woman leaped over the fence like a deer. Tears streamed from the eyes of both women and both of them hugged the girl [...]

Nobody can tell me that the Negroes do not have fatherly and motherly love in their hearts. The very happy woman was the mother of the child. The Christian whites had torn mother and daughter apart by a sale. On the other hand they were humane enough to permit this visit.⁴⁸⁴

From this point onwards in his travels and narrative, Steinert displays a heightened critical awareness of slaveholding and its connections to economic factors and morality both. And, when he next encounters Negroes they are not dealt with as anonymous Negro workers toiling in the background. At a soiree in Houston Steinert meets a "Negro man and a Negro woman" who are spectacularly well-dressed and obviously affluent. Steinert finds that the man is the "dancing teacher for the white people of rank," and that he had done so well as to be able to buy "his freedom for one thousand dollars and his wife's for eight hundred."⁴⁸⁵ And this at a time where a German - Texan labourer made a dollar a day! One peculiarity of racial awareness remains however, and that is that these two Negroes, no matter how remarkable their rise from slavery, remain nameless. All of the Germans Steinert encounters are named in his narrative, as are many (but certainly not all) of the American Texans, but at no point in his narrative is a Negro

⁴⁸⁴ Steinert, Part 4 : 409-410.

⁴⁸⁵ Steinert, Part 4 : 412.

or an Indian identified by name. In such a fashion does a superior race, even an extraordinarily sensitive member of a superior race, maintain its distance from an inferior one. The giving and withholding of names is but one observable facet of Euroamerican power. To Steinert the Germans are all individuals, as are many Texans, but the Negroes remained, well, 'niggers'.

While having noted that McCarthy erases cotton from Texas is not to suggest that he shies away from confronting the race question. Two of the McCarthy's Glanton gang are named John Jackson, and one is "white," the other, "black." There was a Negro with the historical Glanton crew named John Jackson who was named in a deposition following the Pima ferry massacre,⁴⁸⁶ and Chamberlain also said there was a Negro scalphunter. What the twin Jacksons reveal in the gang is that they hate each other, that they are both ferocious fighters, and that there appears to be no particular weighting given by the gang to "black" Jackson's skin colour. Of course, "black" Jackson also kills anyone who does discriminate against him, including a barman who refuses to serve him and "white" Jackson who appears to be a classic racist and refuses to sit at fire with a Negro. When "black" Jackson decapitates "white" Jackson, the gang act as if justice has been served. It would appear to be pure authorial invention that there be both Negro and a Euroamerican Jackson in Glanton's crew, but one possible connection to historical sources presented itself while perusing census schedules from the 1850 census. One of the peculiarities of the chattel slave economy was that slaves were not dignified with their own names in the census count but took the name of their master. It is a very disturbing sight to see a list of 20, or 60 or a hundred Jacksons all listed at one farm and most sharing but a few "Christian" names among them as well.⁴⁸⁷ Possibly this notion was at play in McCarthy's depiction of the two scalphunters who shared a name.

⁴⁸⁶ Sepich, *Notes on Blood Meridian*, 27.

⁴⁸⁷ Gloria Mayfield, Panola County Texas, "1850 Census, Slave Schedules."

Law and order - Boredom and extreme weather - German girls -

Law and order was an interesting construct in 1850 Texas, and there were many approaches taken to the interpretation of the law, depending on place and situation. Martin Gauldin, for instance, writes of passing through “bonham this town is a small vilage built principally of log ... this is the place whare they hang people with out Judge or Jury.”⁴⁸⁸ Gauldin also had a good citizen of Bucksnot offer to “Steal any thing that he might want that would add to our Comfort.”⁴⁸⁹ We won’t use the kid’s activities in Texas as a barometer of how the ‘average’ Texan conducted themselves. What is surprising about the firsthand accounts of Texas is how little crime and violence is reported firsthand by travelers. Steinert does complain about “the horse theft, etc., in San Antonio, the rope-cutting in New Braunfels,” but what really annoyed him was the “pickpockets, robbers, etc., in New Orleans.”⁴⁹⁰ Of course, travelers are by definition just passing through, and do not have long term experience to relate, but it does seem that most of the violence that was inflicted upon them came from Nature, accident, and themselves. One issue that C. C. Cox introduces, at least to suspicious minds, is the issue of self-murder, for on his journey the only people who die from gunshot wounds both die while ‘cleaning their pistols.’ Capt. Fuller died by “the accidental discharge of his own gun,” and young Fuller shot himself while loading his pistol, and Cox noted that these cases should be a constant warning to [all] of the careless use of firearms.”⁴⁹¹

Census crime statistics seem to be of little use when looking at 1850, if only because they are flat out unbelievable. There was no penitentiary in Texas, but there were

⁴⁸⁸ Gauldin, 162. There were “several” lynchings in Bonham Texas in 1845.

⁴⁸⁹ Gauldin, 164.

⁴⁹⁰ Steinert, Part 5, 63.

⁴⁹¹ Cox, Part 2: 140.

county jails, but according to reported statistics they were barely necessary. For the year 1850 there were reported to have been 19 Texans jailed in total. This appears to have made Texas the safest environment in the United States by quite a margin, as the ration of .147 jailed per 10,000 citizens was one twentieth of that hotbed of crime, Massachusetts.⁴⁹² Undoubtedly, crime was underreported in Texas, and furthermore the locals often took the law as a local concern as the “eighteen men who were hanged on the trees along Mill Creek [for] theft,” attested to.⁴⁹³ McCarthy makes this point early on when one of the first things the kid sees in Texas is “a parricide hanged in a crossroads hamlet.” (5) C. C Cox also reported a jury-rigged trial in a wagon train where one man was tried and shot by the council for shooting another train member in a fight.

We are able to access statistical records of the Texas medical frontier courtesy of Joseph Lovell. Lovell was the first surgeon general of the army and was appointed to the Congressionally created position in 1819. A “man of marked ability and foresight,” Lovell began a system of recording vital statistics that laid the “groundwork for the epidemiological basis of preventative medicine in the United States.”⁴⁹⁴ Texas was one of the specific departments and Texas was in turn broken down into Borderlands, Western Frontier and Southern regions, and James O. Breeden did a study of Texas for the 1850s. Data specific to the moral climate of Texas includes the incidences of venereal diseases and alcohol problems. As far as alcohol problems go Texas led all army departments in reported deaths and incidences of alcohol related problems by a fair margin. Boredom and extreme weather appear to have been among the causes of excessive drinking but as

⁴⁹² Seventh Census, 1850: Statistical View, “State Prisons & Penitentiaries, 1850,” 167.

⁴⁹³ Steinert, Part 5, 63.

⁴⁹⁴ James O. Breeden (1977). “Health of early Texas : The military frontier.” *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* (80 : 4): 359. Lovell’s statistical collection was foundational to the 1836 founding of the Library of the Surgeon General’s Office. Lovell also began a systemic recording of meteorological data that would lead to the formation in 1890 of the US Weather Bureau.

Samuel P. Moore, "future surgeon general of the Confederacy," wrote in 1853, that Texas soldiers

appeared determined to make true the saying : 'Let us eat and drink ; for tomorrow we shall die.' I can certainly say I never saw so many drunkards congregated together before.⁴⁹⁵

The determination of soldiers to get drunk was exacerbated by the relative ease of so doing, for apparently Texas was blessed with an unusually enterprising "host of unregulated itinerant liquor dealers," who sold not just whiskey but 'lightning whiskey,' an interesting sounding brew which could contain alcohol along with shoe blacking, tobacco, and narcotics.⁴⁹⁶

Both the quality and the availability of alcohol took a toll on the army in Texas as the 1850s saw

800 cases of drunkenness reported in Texas ... The cases fairly evenly divided between the southern and the western frontiers. These figures ... represent but the tip of the iceberg, for it is likely many, perhaps a majority, of the cases of excessive drinking went unreported and untreated.⁴⁹⁷

While figures for the general population were not found, it may be safely assumed that any surplus male population in the towns and cities also imbibed their fair share of spirits. Melinda Rankin noted that there was a thriving Temperance movement in 1850 Texas, the "Sons of Temperance" having been started in reaction to "the destructive consequences of intemperance on a large scale."⁴⁹⁸ Certainly the kid takes to drink like mould to leavened bread. But not everyone was able to tipple in relative freedom. W. Steinert reported that the moralistic requirements of Negroes were higher than those of Texans when

a negro ... offered some brandy, answered he would drink if he were a white man; but since he was a black man and black men were often ac-

⁴⁹⁵ Breeden, 386.

⁴⁹⁶ Breeden, 386. Ever wonder where those spittoon contents wound up?

⁴⁹⁷ Breeden, 389. Table III.

⁴⁹⁸ Rankin, 28-29.

cused of drunkenness, he would not drink.⁴⁹⁹

Steinert was also appalled to discover that even German girls, when under the sway of the frontier and frontier hootch could act like barbarians, and on a Sunday night to boot.

Last night [Sunday, August 19, 1849] three loose wenches, unfortunately German, were put in jail because they were up to mischief on the open streets with boys fourteen to sixteen years of age. They were led past our place while the street urchins raved and roared. This morning they were brought before the judge. Since no serious charges were brought against the women, they were released with a reprimand.⁵⁰⁰

No doubt part of the reason for the German girls' boisterous behaviour was due to the presence of many unattached males, as in 1850 Houston there were some 900 females versus 1100 males.⁵⁰¹ For Texas as a whole and depending on the age group, there could be as large a disparity in genders as large as sixty females to one hundred males. Bexar, for instance had 3,412 males to 2,220 females.⁵⁰² In frontier areas those ratios were even higher, and the transient and outlier populations that passed through for work or 'refueling' were almost entirely male as well. This reduces somewhat the mystery as to how characters such as John Joel Glanton were able to attract wives.

One of the criticisms of Blood Meridian is a near total lack of representation of female presence. While this no doubt makes the book of less interest to female readers, it is historically accurate, dependent upon the locales described. Insofar as the kid's 'moving box' goes, the Glanton gang was exclusively male, and in small part this is no doubt due to McCarthy's employment of

a primary convention of the war genre in literature and film [which] is the handful of soldiers who constitute a microcosm of the conflict or of hu-

⁴⁹⁹ Steinert, Part 5 : 65.

⁵⁰⁰ Steinert, Part 4 : 414.

⁵⁰¹ Seventh Census, 1850: Statistical View. "Texas," 308. Galveston, at 4,434 was the only Texas city to make the list of "Other Large Cities," it was the second lowest on the list.

⁵⁰² *OpCit*.

manity in general.⁵⁰³

While this notion meets the needs of literary criticism, it also reflects the historical reality that on the sharp edge of the frontier, there were simply very few (Euroamerican) women present. Remember that the kid's trajectory across Texas stays scrupulously away from the settled areas of south-central Texas and towns / cities like Houston and Austin. This reflects both the kid's own nature and also the idea that the scalphunting was a practise that throve away from the light of civilisation. Nearly all of the accounts from 1850 accessed reveal an almost entirely male make-up of groups traveling to, or on, the western frontier. C. C. Cox reported that out of his party of some twenty wagons and thirty-seven 49ers, there was but "A single lady in camp ... and stranger still an "old maid--no doubt of her success in California."⁵⁰⁴ M. A. Gauldin's account also shows no evidence of females accompanying his group.

One caveat here is that just because an account does not specifically mention women, does not mean that women were not present on the trip. Cox for instance wrote in starting out that his group included a Mrs. Lewis B. Harris, who is never again mentioned on the trail, although the male Harris figures in the account. Likewise, the Harises took with them "their two slaves" according to Cox's editor, and these persons were never mentioned in the narrative. Perhaps to the twenty-three year old Cox, these people were simply invisible. Certainly Cox notes without exception every pretty young female he encounters on his ten month trip from Harrisburg , Texas to Stockton, California by ox-drawn wagon. Women were obviously on his mind as he viewed the flood-

⁵⁰³ Vince Brewton. "The Changing landscape of violence in Cormac McCarthy's early novels and the Border Trilogy." *The Southern literary Journal* 37.1 (2004): 8.

⁵⁰⁴ Cox, Part 1: 50. Apparently this "old maid" also trailed and milked cows, to which Cox objected, "I do not like the practice--it is too much upon the "Womans Rights" principle, but the information may be useful to future immigrants."

ing "Rio Grand [as] too strongly impregnated" to cross.⁵⁰⁵ The Cox memoir was written in a style which suggests it conformed to a certain literary style of travel diary, as evidenced in the following rather painful passage:

A few mile to the Northward stands forth the majestic Guadalupe, nature grandest spectacle, a wall as it were extending from earth to Heaven, grand beautiful sublime--but we must pass over it. another time I will attempt a discription--would that I could picture a sunset or a dawn of morning reflected from its marble cliffs, the soft transparent clouds that veil its front, the halo of purple vapour that encircles its summit[.]⁵⁰⁶

When he was not waxing poetic on the "majestic Guadalupe" or some frontier girl, Cox wrote about the adventure of his epic trip, the hunting, the river-crossings and the threat of Indian attack -- which never happened. Reporting domestic details like slaves, wives and mothers was simply not his forte, and perhaps he did not even notice them. Perhaps these domestic trivia just did not fit into the *saga* of the pioneering male.

McCarthy's kid is never shown to have an interest in girls, nor anything else but alcohol. However, it would be a mistake to think that there are no women present in Blood Meridian. It is true that the only woman in the novel who is identified is Sarah Borginnis, aka "The Great Western," nicknamed after the largest steamboat of her day,⁵⁰⁷ but a careful reading of McCarthy's novel reveals that there are numerous women mentioned, but always in the context of what is being done to them, or how they are perceived by the kid or the gang. Before entering Texas the kid is nursed back to health by "the tavernkeeper's wife ... She brings his meals, she carries out his slops. A hardlooking woman with a body like a man's." (4) Of course the kid has no money to pay her and "leaves in the night" for the boat to Texas. The kid does not seem to notice women as he crosses Texas, but when he is in company of either the White troop or the Glanton

⁵⁰⁵ Cox, Part 1: 47.

⁵⁰⁶ Cox, Part 1: 48.

⁵⁰⁷ Sepich, Notes on Blood Meridian. 51.

gang, women are often noticed, as are children.

Throughout the novel women, be they Texan, Indian, or Mexican seem to play a civilising role that is in stark contrast to the gang of men the novel follows. When the kid is in a Chihuahuan prison resting up from the White donnybrook,

A woman brought them bowls of beans and charred tortillas on a plate of unfired clay. She looked harried and she smiled at them and she had smuggled them sweets under her shawl and ther were pieces of meat in the bottom of the bowls that had come from her own table. (71)

One interesting trick McCarthy plays is to describe young Mexican girls as dark-eyed, smoking little cigars and having them stare brazenly at the passing gang. If one chooses to label them whores it is up to the reader to do so, for neither the author nor the gang were so compelled. This is a writerly tactic that seems to reflect the traveler accounts of the time. For instance one gets the impression that C.C. Cox is forever and hopefully alluding to the possibility of wantonness on the part of Mexican girls, without ever having the evidence to back his supposition up. It is obvious that the Texian opinion of Mexican women was fairly low as revealed in the comments of the U.S. Army doctor at Ringgold Barracks on the Rio Grande that,

not a single case [of syphilis] exists in town, nor among the troops-- a fact without precedent! That a Mexican town, in which there are about two hundred women, and mostly Mexican morals, should exist without syphilis among them is a wonder.⁵⁰⁸

Since Texas troops reported some 100 new cases of venereal disease every year and these cases were notoriously underreported,⁵⁰⁹ as were alcohol problems, it seems unlikely that the women near Ringgold would long remain free of disease.

McCarthy sometimes portrays women as brave, loyal and fearless to the point of foolishness in standing up to the gang's depredations, as in the Alcades' Mexican wife

⁵⁰⁸ Breeden, 392.

⁵⁰⁹ *OpCit.*

who saves both her and her husband's lives by defying the gang. Glanton somewhat begrudgingly spares the pair, although he does leave them bound and gagged in "an abandoned hut." (271) Of course, Glanton's relative humanity did not extend as far as including Indian women:

In the square [was] a weathered old woman with skin the color of pipe-clay. Dry old crone, half naked, her paps like withered aubergines hanging from under the shawl she wore...

Glanton crossed in front of his horse, passing his reins behind his back.

Watch her, Cap. She bites.

She had raised her eyes to the level of his knees. Glanton pushed the horse back and took one of the heavy saddle pistols from its scabbard and cocked it.

Watch yourself there.

Several of the men stepped back.

The woman looked up. Neither courage nor heartsink in those old eyes. He pointed with his left hand and she turned to follow his hand with her gaze and he put the pistol to her head and fired ...

Get that receipt for us ... (98)

Here, as elsewhere in the novel, some of the gang are nonplussed at the casual manner in which Glanton and the judge are able to so matter of factly go about the business of dispatching Indian women and children.

- More boundaries - Dutchmen - Naming - *Frontier Trap*

One interesting aspect of Steinert's narrative, particularly in light of his obvious awareness of racial constructions, was his apparent lack of awareness that he himself, and the German settlers he traveled among, were thought of as being a little lower down the evolutionary ladder than the Anglo-Gaelic / Celtic Texans thought themselves to be. 'Dutchmen' was what the German immigrants were universally known as, and it was not meant to be a compliment, and "stupid German peasants"⁵¹⁰ was a common sobriquet.

⁵¹⁰ Steinert, Part 2 : 184.

McCarthy's gang run across two German brothers in a ruined church who are portrayed like twin Robinson Crusoes "dressed altogether in homemade clothes even to boots and a strange cap." (225) Scalphunter Prewett shoots one, of course. An interrogation of the surviving brother reveals that they had jumped ship and found their way to the Borderlands. The gang leaves the live brother,

trotting up and back in the yard calling out. He seemed not to be aware that his brother was dead in the church ...

Glanton spat. Ort to have shot that one too, he said.

The judge smiled.

I dont like to see white men that way, Glanton said. Dutch or whatever. I dont like to see it. (226)

Now not all Texans shot Germans on sight of course, but a careful reading of German immigration reveals that the both the Texas Republic and State Governments may have intentionally used German immigrants as the sharp point of the frontier, ahead of both the American and the military advance into Borderlands Indian country. One 1847 German colony past Fredricksburg failed because of lack of support, and "the few farmers that stayed on were frequently harassed by the Indians and that the military post was more than thirty miles away,"⁵¹¹ presumably at Bexar. In 1850 this area was still the front lines of the Texas advance, and would it remain so until after the Civil War. As Steinert rather naively wrote, "there are still Indians living in these regions, in spite of the fact that the government bought this land from them."⁵¹²

Missionary Melinda Rankin saw the "German colony" at New Braunfels and thought that they had done well to become established in the face of the "incursions of the Indians" that were a constant worry.⁵¹³ While a reader is made to know that the Germans will never be American, Rankin did concede that,

⁵¹¹ Steinert, Part 2 : 185.

⁵¹² Steinert, Part 2 : 186.

⁵¹³ Rankin, 187.

[t]he industry and enterprise of the Germans render them valuable citizens, and, could they be induced to lay aside their priestly expiations, and embrace that system of faith which acknowledges but one mediator between god and man, they might become a very important acquisition to the population of Texas. This town represents an important field for evangelical laborers. Ministers and teachers are greatly needed to counteract the influence of Catholicism.⁵¹⁴

Dating from 1844, New Braunfels was the first large scale organised German colony in Texas, although German immigration dated from 1838.⁵¹⁵ Rankin also helps advance the theory of this writer that German settlement was often at the sharp edge of the frontier when she writes that,

[s]ome three miles from New Braunfels is situated Comal Town. The settlement of this town was in 1846, and, for more than twelve months, but two individuals dared to reside there, it being the great resort of the Camanches. Causes of fear became dissipated, and a town of about one hundred families sprang up, in which has settled a Presbyterian clergyman[.]⁵¹⁶

By the time Comal was established, the Germans had already moved "about 80 miles" farther northwest to establish Fredricksburg, where a new tactic was tried out with some success.

Baron Ottfried Hans Freiherr von Musebach, Solms-Braunfels successor, exchanged gifts worth \$3,000 with the [Penataka Comanches] for a treaty of peace. Fredricksburg grew rapidly, by 1850 its population was 754.⁵¹⁷

⁵¹⁴ Rankin, 187.

⁵¹⁵ Richardson (6th ed.): 143. The town was named after Prince Carl of Solms-Braunfels who purchased the Fisher Miller Grant which dated from Mexican times. Prince Carl was one of a group of German noblemen who comprised the *Adelsverein*, or Society for the Protection of German Immigrants in Texas, formed "for the purpose of promoting German immigration to Texas." I believe that gaining connections with Southern cotton production was one of the society's aims.

⁵¹⁶ *Ibid.* 189.

⁵¹⁷ Richardson (6th ed.): 143. This approach of dealing directly with the resident Indians, rather than, or in addition to, purchasing claims from the Mexican era which often had consisted of lines drawn on a very sketchy map, seems to be nearly unique. It seems to have been a very effective, if sadly under-utilised, means of avoiding Indian - settler conflict.

Following von Musebach's lead, Governor James Pickney Henderson in 1847 established a line 'thirty miles above the highest settlements above which no white person should be allowed to go,'⁵¹⁸ and these efforts appeared to take the pressure off Fredricksburg. That September when the Comanches returned from Mexico "with many horses, mules and a number of prisoners,"⁵¹⁹ Fredricksburg was left untouched. Given the relative prosperity and cohesiveness of the German settlement in Texas, it would seem likely that some of the derision directed towards them was at least partly based in petty jealousy.

This chapter is meant to take the reader across Texas in the year 1849 -50 with Cormac McCarthy's kid as a guide. The purpose of this exercise is to reveal through primary sources and firsthand accounts some of the racial, social and economics constructions that might help place in context the scalphunting events, as I believe McCarthy did in having the kid move across Texas to get to Bexar. To carry forward the themes of this paper, this section helps to demonstrate how the 'moving box' of Texas stateness and identity moved across the plains as had the kid, taking with it the institutions of chattel slavery and the cotton economy. Texas was then in more senses than one, turning white. By the time the kid got to Bexar, Texas -- meaning Texas as an established Southern state -- was there waiting for him. The borders of Texas were by then settled. However, the 1850 Borderlands just ahead on and across the Rio Grande River were as unsettled as any place on Earth. The next chapter will briefly take the kid into the Borderlands, the scalping business, and the world of the West Texas Indians. Up to this point in this paper it no doubt seems that this writer feels that the scalping industry was pretty much a one-sided construction and that it involved 'red' victims and 'white' perpetrators. Nothing could be further from the historical truth.

⁵¹⁸ Thomas W. Kavanaugh, Comanche political History : An Ethnohistorical Perspective, 1706-1875. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996): 306.

⁵¹⁹ *OpCit.*

CHAPTER 6.**From Bexar to Hell ; ... and back : A brief look at Indian Texas.****- Borderlands - Comancheria - Glanton again - Agency -
where's the bison? -**

Hopefully a reader will, after having read the preceding chapters, some idea of what Texas was like for Euroamericans in 1850, and at least an inkling of what things might have been like for west Texas Indians. The last chapter took us across Texas in 1850 with the kid, and looked at some of the political, economic and social currents that might account for such a bizarre socioeconomic practise as the commercial scalphunting of one group by a more powerful group(s). Central to this account have been the ideas of representation and exchange, and violence in the pursuit of resources. Underlying those themes is the unstated but important qualifier that, as Texas advanced into the Borderlands, the areas behind the border became a state and the practise of an activity like commercial scalphunting was no longer sanctioned -- probably because it was no longer necessary. Where Texas was, in other words, there were no barbarous Indians. Ahead of Texas, in the Borderlands, it was a much different story.

Fundamental to the scalphunting trade was the elaborate construction of an Indian identity / representation as barbarous Indian, that would allow for their destruction as a people. This process in Texas was an ongoing one both temporally and geographically and took place on a site this paper calls the Borderlands, which was located just at the leading edges of the advancing state of Texas. The Borderlands was a nebulous and highly contested site that existed between the established (as opposed to claimed or theoretical) states of Texas and Mexico. The motivator for the scalphunting business was business. As many historians have noted, the idea of a cut and dried, bordered, frontier, with barbarians on one side and civilization on the other does disservice to comprehending most (all?) situations, but the 1850 Texas Borderlands could be the poster child for

dysfunctional borders.

In the 1830s and 1840s it is instructive to view the activities of the Apaches as an effort to create an Apacheria, a 'state' of their own in the Borderlands. This idea might be a difficult one to grasp if one believes that only a constitutional state is capable of forming the idea of connecting a people with a territory and following through with organised actions to achieve that goal. Yet the Apache were a group of people, they had a culture, a society, and they most definitely had a territory that included large parts of northern Mexico and western Texas. While Euroamerican boundary constructions in the Borderlands were quite effective in supporting such Euroamerican constructions such as slavery, they were woefully inadequate in controlling Indian movements and actions. In other words the Apaches had their own 'moving box' of Apacheness every bit as defined as those of Texas and America. For quite a period of time, say the 1790s to the 1870s, the Apache 'moving box' quite simply trumped the Texan and American efforts at superimposing their constructions upon the Apacheria.

Opposed to the Apaches maintaining their territory during this period were the states of Mexico, New Mexico, Texas and America. Aiding and abetting the Apaches during this period was a motley collection of individuals and groups which included all those traders who supplied the Apaches with goods and weapons, such as James Kirker, but also those same states listed above. For it was very much in the interests of New Mexico, Texas and the United States that the Apaches pummel the population of Mexico. It was in the best interests of Texas that the Apaches raided and weakened Mexico and New Mexico, as Texas coveted the territory of both. It was in the interests of Mexico that Apaches raided West Texas and kept the line of the advancing American frontier in check. New Mexico valued the Apaches as a hindrance to Texas, and individuals on all sides made profits from the trade and chaos that both created and sustained Border-

lands warfare.

As with the scalphunting enterprise, Apache efforts at maintaining / expanding a homeland territory was much assisted by the fragmentation of political power in the Borderlands. As noted elsewhere, neither Spain nor Mexico had been able to establish anything like hegemony over the Borderlands. There had been times of relative peace between the Apaches and Mexico, but this peace had always been paid for out of the Mexican / Spanish treasury. The Bourbon king Carlos III (1759-88) had been particularly aggressive and generous in maintaining the Spanish claim to Tejas.⁵²⁰ However, the willingness of Spain / Mexico to pay the Apaches (trade goods and stock) declined and then completely evaporated in 1821 with Mexican independence. Independence,

depleted the colonial treasury, severed trade linkages to the frontier, and dried up state subsidies for Apache rations. Formerly peaceful Apaches faced starvation, disease, and renewed racial animosity (for now frontier elites had to subsidize peace from their own pockets), and soon returned to raiding and warfare to survive.⁵²¹

It must be noted that there had never been a time when the Apaches had abandoned raiding, but open warfare was a more cyclical state. As Truett and other writers point out, when the Apaches renewed warfare against Mexico, they did so from perhaps the most powerful situation they had ever enjoyed. First, Mexican space including Texas was politically fragmented and would obviously become moreso during the Texas rebellion. Further, "a generation of peace had made Apaches stronger enemies," their numbers had increased, their warriors better understood Euroamerican tactics and political / military strengths and weaknesses, they were better armed and they had greatly increased economic power through "new commercial networks with Americans and other

⁵²⁰ Samuel Truett. "The Ghosts of Frontiers Past : Making and unmaking space in the Borderlands." *Journal of the Southwest* 46:2 (Summer 2004): 314.

⁵²¹ Truett, 317.

Mexicans in New Mexico and Chihuahua.”⁵²² And, to even reach the Apacheria from Bexar, one had to first fight one’s way through the Comanches.

The kid leaves Bexar after being recruited by the filibuster Captain White.⁵²³ The White section -- surely there is no need to unpack his name -- is the most overtly political portion of Blood Meridian. Here we see the impulse behind Manifest Destiny, and America’s seemingly insatiable urge to possess and order the ‘empty wastelands’ of the continent, which included for many the godless tracks of Mexico. Perhaps no one has ever more effectively enunciated this impulse than has McCarthy’s Captain White, who felt America was betrayed when the army did not complete the occupation of Mexico:

We fought for it ... And then by God if we didnt give it back. Back to a bunch of barbarians that even the most biased in their favor will admit have no least notion in God’s earth of honor or justice or the meaning of republican government. A people so cowardly they’ve paid tribute a hundred years to tribes of naked savages. Given up crops and livestock. Mines shut down. Whole villages abandoned. While a heathen horde rides over the land looting and killing with total impunity ... What kind of people are these? The Apaches wont even shoot them ... They kill them with rocks.

A mongrel race, little better than niggers ... There is no government in Mexico. Hell, there is no God in Mexico. Never will be. We are dealing with a people incapable of governing themselves. (34-35)

Captain White made clear to the kid that his intentions were not entirely religious in nature, as

We are to be the instruments of liberation in a dark and troubled land ... We are to spearhead the drive ... We have the tacit support of Governor Burnett of California[!] ... we will be the ones who divide the spoils. There will be a section of land for every man ... Fine grassland. Some of the finest in the world. A land rich in minerals, in gold and silver I would say beyond the wildest speculation. (35)

But Captain White’s dreams were not to be, any more than were America’s aspi-

⁵²² Truett, 317.

⁵²³ Sepich concludes that there was no historical Captain White, but that McCarthy likely cobbled together a composite character based on many individuals such as William Walker. Notes on Blood Meridian, 24-27.

rations to all Mexico. America's venture into Mexico cost a higher percentage of troops than any other military conflict in history -- 13,678 of 104,556 troops had died⁵²⁴ -- and the White filibuster was also doomed to failure. It would not be underestimating the Mexicans that did White in, but rather his incomprehension of the realities of fighting on Indian territory. Somewhere in Chihuahua the White troops see what they first think is a herd of buffalo, but is soon revealed to be a "several thousand head" of stolen mules and cattle being moved to Texas. (51) The neophyte Borderlander White fatally mistakes the herders for Mexicans until the Comanches reveal themselves with "a rattling drove of arrows" to be

a legion of horribles ... one in a stovepipe hat and one with an umbrella ... some in headgear that bore the horns of bull or buffalo and one in a pigeontailed coat worn backwards[.] (52)

McCarthy's description here obviously owes something to an eyewitness account of a Comanche attack at Plum Creek in 1840:

There was a huge warrior, who wore a stovepipe hat, and another who wore a pigeon-tailed cloth coat, buttoned up behind. Some wore on their heads immense buck and buffalo horns[.]⁵²⁵

The kid is one of only eight survivors of White's miscalculation. This incident speaks volumes of McCarthy's conception of filibuster politics and the White notion of racial superiority.

There is an unexplained and very interesting connection between the Comanches and Mexico visible in this incident. It is the Comanches who kill White but somehow Captain White's head winds up in a Mexican marketplace. The survivors, now prisoners of Mexico,

⁵²⁴ Brian Hamnett, *A Concise History of Mexico*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999): 154.

⁵²⁵ Barclay Owens, *Cormac McCarthy's Western Novels*. (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2000): 36ff..

were pressed about by other rude apothecaries and by vendors and mendicants until all came at last before a trestle whereupon stood a glass carboy of clear mescal. In this container with hair afloat and eyes turned upward in a pale face sat a human head. ...

It was Captain White. Lately at war among the heathen.

[the kid] spat and wiped his mouth. He aint no kin to me, he said. (69-70)

Captain White had entered the Mexican market economy in a fashion he had not intended. The unexplained connection here between Comanche and Mexican economies indicates that White was just an interloper into a long-standing relationship, and that the two warring sides had more in common with each other than they had with any filibuster. The kid of course remained as steadfast in his doctrinaire apolitical stance as the average college student.

The Comanche "incident" reinforces what this writer believes to be a general pattern as regards Blood Meridian's portrayal of Borderlands violence. That is, that McCarthy exaggerates and compresses what was essentially generic violence to make both his literary set-pieces and his sociopolitical points as well. While there is no record of the butchery of a filibuster troop, the Comanches are shown where they historically belong and in the process of going about their economic business in Mexico. In 1849 and 1850 the Comanches were essentially at war with Mexico and both quirkismo and the advancing Texas state were among the causes. As Comanches told Mexican officials, their reasons for war included avenging the death of an important Comanche killed in 1849, and because Texas had "declared war [upon them and] thrown them out and pursued them with great numbers."⁵²⁶ The Comanches engaged in several battles with Mexican troops, including a "six-hour fight" north of Chihuahua.⁵²⁷ Comanche leaders

⁵²⁶ Thomas W. Kavanagh, Comanche Political History: An Ethnohistorical Perspective, 1706-1875 (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996): 329.

⁵²⁷ *Ibid.* 329.

of the time included a powerful woman named Tave Peté (or Arriba el Sol)⁵²⁸ whom Julius Frobel called their “generaless and prophetess,” Estrella, and Miramontes.

As Thomas Kavanagh writes, the Comanches may have had other justifications for raiding into Mexico from Texas, but “above all, they were there to make a living, and they were very creative in how they did it.”⁵²⁹ The Comanches were fairly forthright about their dependence upon raiding as an integral part of their economy. Captain Marcy reported that the Comanche Chief Esakeep told him in 1849 that his sons were “a great source of comfort to him in his old age, and could steal more horses than any young men in his band.”⁵³⁰ But, when hard pressed, or simply offered other opportunities, the Comanches were as quick as was James Kirker to seize a business opportunity. Pressed by the scalphunters and the Mexican army recently freed from fighting the Americans, Tave Peté and other Comanche leaders heard Emilio Landeberg, a military inspector for Chihuahua, suggest that since the Apaches had already “devastated a much larger portion of the state,” the Comanches might be further ahead by joining Chihuahua in fighting the Apaches -- of course, they would be paid good bounty for each Apache scalp. The South Texas Comanches agreed to a temporary truce, and then raided further into Mexico “assured that Chihuahua would not attack from the rear.”⁵³¹ By 1851 the Southern Comanches were following the lead of James Kirker, John Glanton and the Seminole Indians “under Wild Cat and John Horse” and hunting Apache scalps for bounty in the employ of Chihuahua, and by May 1852 they had collected “at least 18,000 pesos for scalps and other trophies of Apaches.”⁵³²

⁵²⁸ Ralph Adam Smith, “Poor Mexico, so far from God and so close to the Tejanos.” *West Texas Historical Association Year Book* 44: (1968): 92-93.

⁵²⁹ Kavanagh, 329.

⁵³⁰ Colonel R. B. Marcy, Thirty years of army life on the border. (London: Sampson Low, Son, and Marston, 1866): 23.

⁵³¹ Kavanagh, 330.

⁵³² Kavanagh, 330-331.

Perhaps it is the Comanches who help to put the scalphunting enterprise in true perspective, insofar as the motivations of the scalphunters go. A wealth of circumstances contributed to the making of a scalp mart in the Borderlands, and some of the historical Euroamerican 'causes' dated back to Spanish / Indian contact in tejas. However, some of the root causes predated that contact as the Comanches had by most accounts followed the horse from the Northern Plains, and likely arrived in tejas at about the same time as did the Spanish. The Comanches and Apaches were from the beginning rivals in and for the Borderlands. With their mastery of the horse, the bison economy, and the resultant access to trade firearms largely denied the Apaches⁵³³ the Comanches were very quickly the lords of the southern tejas plains. A combination of Comanche power and disease drove the Apaches from the Edwards Plateau back into what would be New Mexico, and left the open plains to the Comanches.⁵³⁴

As the Comanches' scalphunting of Apaches suggests then, while there was definitely a racial component in the justification of collecting Indian *piezas* for the Euroamerican sponsors and scalpers, race was simply not the driving force behind the scalp bounty for all of the participants. The Comanches collected bounty because they had the opportunity to do so ; they were not driven to it by some impulse towards destroying the Apaches. Euroamerican observers had long commented on the Comanches' mastery of the exchange system, and that they were not mere consumers of trade goods, but skilled traders and manipulators of markets.⁵³⁵ The antagonistic histories of the two groups cer-

⁵³³ The Comanches inserted them selves between the Apaches and the Mississippi trade. Since the Spanish did not trade firearms to Barbarous Indians, and the English / French / American traders had no such compuncions, the Comanches were soon far better armed than the Apaches would ever be.

⁵³⁴ Rupert N. Richardson, Cary D. Wintz, Adrian Anderson, Ernest Wallace. Texas : The Lone Star State. 8th ed. (Prentice Hall: Upper Saddle River NJ, 2001): 16ff.

⁵³⁵ A Father Domíquez wrote in 1776 that if the Comanches sold a pistol "its price was a bridle", which also indicates the Comanches role in supplying arms. Douglas R. Hurt, Indian Frontier, 1763-1846. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2002): 31.

tainly cleared the way for the commercial scalping of one by the other group, and there would have been conflict and scalping in 1850 regardless of any bounty. However, the bounty served to greatly amplify Borderlands scalping and violence. The efforts of James Kirker and Angel Trías had created a “mart” for the scalps of Barbarous Indians, and many individuals and groups took advantage of the commercial opportunity this mart offered.

Having somehow survived the Comanche attack, the kid bides his time until being ‘rescued’ from the Chihuahuan jail by the Glanton crew, who are gearing up for an assault on Apache scalps. It is while in jail that the kid, and McCarthy, get as close to mentioning James Kirker as happens in Blood Meridian:

He’d taken up a pallet between Toadvine and another Kentuckian, a veteran of the war. The man had returned to claim some darkeyed love he’d left behind two years before when Doniphan’s command pulled east for Saltillo [...] (76)

And, at the head of Doniphan’s Missouriians, “on his war horse, and serving as a U.S. Army guide, interpreter, forager, and scout,” was Don Santiago Querquer, James Kirker.⁵³⁶ Kirker was engaged with the Americans against his new home, and would be regarded as something of a hero in battling his former employer, Angel Trías, who would place an \$8,000 bounty upon his head for this affront to loyalty and Mexican dignity.⁵³⁷

From the jail the kid sees the “patched argonauts” heading for California, Governor Trías “erect and formal within his silkmullioned sulky clatter” by, and then one day:

a pack of viscouslooking humans mounted on unshod indian ponies riding half drunk through the streets, bearded, *barbarous*, clad in the skins of animals stitched up with thews and armed with weapons of every descrip-

⁵³⁶ Ralph Adam Smith, Borderlander: The Life of James Kirker, 1793-1852 (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1999): 177ff..

⁵³⁷ Governor Trías would offer Kirker “a bona fide colonel’s commission” to oppose the American invasion, but Kirker abandoned his contract, and his Mexican family at Chihuahua, to lead Doniphan against his home. ‘Greater love for profit hath no man ...’ Smith, Borderlander, 174.

tion ... the trappings of their horses fashioned out of human skin and their bridles woven up from human hair and decorated with human teeth ... and also riding in the company a number of halfnaked savages reeling in the saddle, dangerous, filthy, brutal, the whole like a visitation from some heathen land where they and others like them fed on human flesh. (78)

And suddenly, the kid knew what he wanted to do with the rest of his life!

The kid is soon introduced to Glanton, “two men named Jackson,” and the rest of the gang. He learns what separates a successful scalping crew from its victims:

Two men carried from a wagon a stenciled ordinance box from the Baton Rouge arsenal and a Prussian jew named Speyer⁵³⁸ pried open the box ... and handed up a flat package in brown butcherpaper translucent with grease ... Glanton opened the package ... In his hand he held a longbarrelled sixshot Colt's patent revolver. It was a huge sidearm meant for dragoons and it carried in its cylinders a rifle's charge ... These pistols would drive the half-ounce conical ball through six inches of hardwood and there were four dozen of them in the case.

The kid never gets one, but many of the crew do, although most of these guns will eventually wind up in the hands of the Apaches who kill them. A Napoleonic maxim has it that an army travels on its stomach, but this army traveled on the strength of American armaments. Anything else they needed, including food, can either be shot or stolen by those who have superior armaments, and the will to use them.

From this point on in Blood Meridian the kid and the gang commence their scalphunting career through the Borderlands. Until a definitive history of this yearlong rampage is written one will have to rely upon Samuel Chamberlain or Cormac McCarthy for an impression of those events and the impact they had on the Borderlands. This paper will give just a few notes on what happened to the historical Glanton gang after leaving Chihuahua, before finally roping all the stray bits of this thesis together.

As noted, Glanton seized the scalp contract when Chevaillié met his end “but a

⁵³⁸ Also an historical character, shown at the correct time, place, and occupation.

few miles from the capital” at Apache hands⁵³⁹, or “when he accidentally shot himself,”⁵⁴⁰ or possibly by other means. With the aid of the American Consul at Chihuahua, Benjamin Riddel, Glanton raised \$2,500, assumed leadership of the scalping crew, and in June 1849 set off for the scalping grounds. By the end of the month, Glanton was back to collect \$1,350 in bounties, and returned again to the field. In July the Glanton gang crossed into Texas and collected some fifteen Mescalero Apache scalps, which they took back to Trías for a \$2,100 bounty. They left behind them in Texas, “the Mescaleros⁵⁴¹ enraged, and the United States and Texas civil and military officers greatly disturbed over Apache vows to exterminate all whites who entered their land.”⁵⁴²

The Glanton gang then turned in late 1849 to New Mexico and James Kirker’s old haunts to pursue their trade. The gang so stirred up things for the locals and 49ers passing through that they were outlawed, and retreated back into Chihuahua. It must have been a hard winter, because this is when Glanton’s story becomes entwined with the notion that he was not really fussy about whom he scalped, as long as the hair was black. Governor Trías, after having paid out another \$2,100⁵⁴³ to Glanton on December 21, 1849, placed a bounty of \$8,000 on Glanton’s head for the crime of turning in Mexican scalps for bounty.⁵⁴⁴ Glanton then retreated, presumably with Samuel Chamberlain in tow, if not the kid, to Sonora, which was offering similar bounties to those of Chihua-

⁵³⁹ In 1849 Apaches were raiding right into Chihuahua City, and one potential gang member, Texan Henry Vaughan was killed and scalped just outside the city as he was attempting to catch up to Glanton. Ralph Adam Smith, “John Joel Glanton, Lord of the scalp range.” *Smoke Signal* 6 (1962): 9.

⁵⁴⁰ Smith, “John Joel Glanton, Lord of the scalp range.” p.9.

⁵⁴¹ One of those difficult Borderlands terms, Comancheros were originally Mexicans engaged in the bison and fur trade with west Texas Indians. Over time genizaros and half-breed Indians joined their ranks until the term ceased to lose any definable ethnic meaning, except for the fact that they were fair game as Barbarous Indian scalping material. Perhaps they formed more of a guild than a racial group.

⁵⁴² Smith, “John Joel Glanton, Lord of the scalp range.” p.11.

⁵⁴³ Smith, *Borderlander*, n.26 at p. 296.

⁵⁴⁴ Smith, “John Joel Glanton, Lord of the scalp range.” p.12.

hua. The Glanton gang would make at least two more sorties after scalps before meeting their demise at the Pima ferry, so colorfully written up by McCarthy. On one trip, Glanton,

lost eleven men and failed to take a crown. Within a few weeks, however, he had thirty-seven Indian and Mexican scalps, each validated by a right ear.⁵⁴⁵

A rough approximation of the scalps the Glanton gang took out of the Borderlands between the time the kid (Chamberlain?) joins up in July 1849 and Christmas 1849 is sixty to seventy, based on bounties paid. Since the gang was then just getting 'warmed up', these numbers give credence to Cormac McCarthy's portrayal of those violent times on the Borderlands.

Ralph Adam Smith as a source for Glanton and Kirker's trade seems, if anything, a somewhat downplayed account of the events. Unlike Kirker biographer McGaw and many of the travel and secondhand accounts, Smith has based his research on letters and documents from the Mexican states in question. He is not a generator of fake dialogue, and when he attributes something to Kirker or Trías, the source is always a letter, an interview or some other document. One might take umbrage with Smith's efforts to reclaim Kirker as a member of polite society, but his facts seem to be in order. What Smith has accomplished is to assemble and maintain the story and facts of James Kirker and the scalphunting enterprise in the Borderlands. His work serves to support the level of violence conjured up so vividly and so sanguinely by Cormac McCarthy.

The scalphunting enterprise as devised and enacted by James Kirker, Angel Trías, and carried on by John Joel Glanton relied upon a great number of specific circumstances for its conception and realisation. In keeping with the conceit of this paper that scalphunting took the form of a business, consider the following. First, one requires a prod-

⁵⁴⁵ *Ibid.* 12-13.

uct, or a demand for a product. Judging by modern advertising it does not seem to matter which comes first. In our model, the product is scalps. Since scalps never appear to have had any intrinsic market value as human hair attached to its skin, this is where demand and product merge. The scalp, through a very complicated process hopefully well-addressed in an earlier section, was turned by Kirker and Trías into a valuable commodity by having a scalp come to represent one dead Western Texas Indian, which in turn represented one unit of increased security of property and person for Euroamerican Borderlanders. Any casual search of today's media will yield many examples of how important security is to our daily existence, and this is reflected in everything from international conflicts directed towards terrorists, to advertising for security systems, large SUV's, cellphones, *ad infinitum*. James Kirker was a master at creating both the product, scalps, and the demand for scalps, quirkismo. That there was a large amount of negative Indian reaction to the scalp trade, which took the place of increased raiding and warfare by the Western Texas Indians upon the non-Indian Borderlanders, was a positive for the trade as the resulting violence increased the value of the supposed security that the scalphunters offered in the form of scalps collected.

Kirker had therefore created something of a miracle in business, a product that created its own demand. The more scalps were taken, the more scalp bounties were paid (profits), and the bounty served to increase the number of scalphunters. The increase in scalphunters obviously further provoked Indian reaction both as punishment and to replace their human and economic losses. Since the scalphunters were as hard to pin down as were the Indians, Euroamerican agriculturalists bore the brunt of the Indian counterattacks. This in turn increased the value of scalps. In one sense the system was open-ended as long as the supply of scalps lasted. But peak demand, which gendered the economies of scale that scalping crews demanded to be profitable, was only sustainable

in the face of a high level of sustained Indian raiding. Any reduction in the level of violence or the number of scalps available for "harvesting" impacted negatively upon the scalphunting business.

This is where the idea of the marketplace becomes important, and the marketplace for scalps was the Borderlands. As horrendous as the Indian raiding in the Borderlands was in terms of personal suffering, and as gruesome as was the scalphunting of hundreds of Indians, one thing must be said for this elemental attack-and-counterattack loop -- it was incredibly effective in clearing the ground for those Euroamericans who would waltz in and take possession of the lands that Mexican and Indian had warred over for 200 plus years. One takes relevant statistics where one can find them, and while no numbers could be found for the period under study, the Spanish losses in one of the previous great flare-ups circa 1771 - 1776, were 1,674 killed and 154 women and children captured, as well as some 68,000 head of livestock run off.⁵⁴⁶ All accounts, from government agents, to 49ers to McCarthy's crew comment on the devastation and emptiness of the 1850 Borderlands. John Russell Bartlett, U.S.-Mexican Boundary Commissioner wrote:

None but those who have visited the [Sonoran borderlands] can form any idea of the widespread devastation which has marked the inroads of the savage ... Depopulated towns and villages, deserted haciendas and ranches, elegant and spacious churches falling to decay, neglected orchards teeming with fruit, and broad fields once highly cultivated, now overgrown with shrubbery and weeds show to what extent the country has been overrun.⁵⁴⁷

While it is easy to get an impression of just how violent the Borderlands were, it is difficult to get a fix on the numbers involved. One source of quantification comes in the

⁵⁴⁶ William Merrill paraphrased in Jeremy Adelman and Stephen Aron, "From Borderlands to Borders: Empires, nation-states, and the Peoples in between in North American history," *American Historical Review* 104: 3 (June 1999): 834.

⁵⁴⁷ Adelman and Aron, 832.

form of federal statistics, as the U.S. Army was first officially stationed in Texas in 1849. From 1849 to 1881, when the U.S. cavalry helped the Texans illegally “chase Victorio’s Apaches into Mexico” and finally bring to a close thirty years of war between the federal troops and the Texas Indians, the army fought in 219 battles against Texas Indians.⁵⁴⁸ This number reflects but one facet of Texas’ war of ethnic cleansing upon the Indian population within its borders. However, as these federal actions were actually reactions to 219 Indian raids, the number also reflects but a fraction of the Indian raids and actions against the Euroamerican population of Texas. For the period 1812 to 1889 the American commissioner of Indian Affairs estimated that the Comanches alone were responsible for over a thousand “depredations,” the great majority of which were in Texas.⁵⁴⁹

In addition to the efforts of the senior government’s troops, Texans themselves had an incredible variety of armed responses available to counterattack, and often attack, the Texas Indians. These ranged from local vigilante actions such as those of the Kuykendalls, junior and senior, already discussed, to outright wars between Indians and the several levels of Euroamerican organisation from the county level to the republic. As David La Vere writes,

whenever Indians raided inside of Texas, they might be pursued, at one time or another, by informal posses of citizens, companies of Texas mounted volunteers, the Texas Rangers, and, of course, other Indians, who might be their traditional enemies or serving with the Rangers or army as scouts and volunteers.⁵⁵⁰

As well as these options, Texans also informally engaged in the scalp bounty trade financed by the Mexican States. The armed responses were in addition to the state’s general policy of Indian clearance through political and economic means as already dis-

⁵⁴⁸ David La Vere, The Texas Indians (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 2004): 196.

⁵⁴⁹ La Vere, 196.

⁵⁵⁰ *OpCit.*

cussed.

Here and there in this paper it might be mistakenly believed that his writer has been caught up in the sources and has come to see Indian actions as but a sidelight on a stage of "imperial rivalry," as Jeremy Adelman and Stephen Aron have been accused of doing.⁵⁵¹ This is not the case, and this writer believes that the real history of Texas, one that details the centuries-long resistance of Texas Indians to Euroamerican incursion in at least as much detail as has been spent on the Alamo scrap alone, has yet to be written. But what agency is involved in being scalped, and scalped for commercial purposes at that? Certainly Texas Indians displayed a tremendous amount of resiliency and adaptiveness in violently resisting, and wresting a living from, the encroaching Euroamericans. However, if one looks at a map of Texas one finds that those lines the Texans devised to map out their territorial aspirations were achieved. Where they were not, it was the agency of other Euroamerican states that limited those aspirations, and not Indian agency. In 1690 a conservative estimate places the population of the Texas Indians at 40 -50,000,⁵⁵² with the total Borderlands Indian population possibly double that. From 1836 on the Texas assault against the Indian population within its bounds continued unabated through various means until 1890 when the Indian presence had been scrubbed from the map and the Indian population reduced to some eight or nine thousand individuals, a large proportion of whom resided in Indian Territory and not Texas.⁵⁵³ If that is what agency looks like, one would hate to see abject failure and genocide in action.

However knowing how it turned out does not mean that there was not fascinating

⁵⁵¹ John R. Wunder and Pekka Hämäläinen. "Of lethal places and lethal essays," *American Historical Review* **104**: 4 (October 1999): 1233.

⁵⁵² Russell Thornton, *American Indian Holocaust and Survival: A population history since 1492*. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987): 131.

⁵⁵³ Thornton, 131.

history on the way to 'inevitability,' and much of that history belongs to Indians. The Comanches will here stand in for all west Texas Indians just as they were the last ones standing in the Borderlands. 1705 marks the first time the Comanches had come out of the Coloradan Rocky Mountains to procure horses on the Southern plains, and they achieved this by stealing a herd.⁵⁵⁴ The mountain Utes and apparently every other Indian group on the plains signified the Comanches with a backward wriggling movement of the index finger which was universal sign for "snake," and when used to refer to Comanches meant simply, "enemy." Within a few decades the Comanches, who took to the horse as had the Scythians before them, went from being "fruit- and berry-pickers,"⁵⁵⁵ to horse-mounted bison killers. They took from the Spanish not just their horses, but their horse-culture entire ; they mounted from the right as did the Spanish, and copied Spanish tack out of bison hide. Their one great innovation was a sling which allowed warriors to drop over the side to fire arrows from under the horse's neck, as Captain White learned too late.⁵⁵⁶

Both Blood Meridian and virtually all the firsthand sources surveyed make clear two points that mitigate against 1850 Texas as being the wild west. First, as already noted, there were virtually no Indians in Texas before the Borderlands. Second, none of the 1850 sources mention great numbers of bison in their travels across Texas. Since the accounts cover all parts of the year except for the dead of winter, this is strong evidence that there were no great herds of bison in 1850 Texas. One commonsense notion is that farmers and bison do not mix, and that Texas was settled from Arkansas down and through to Fredricksburg. The great southern bison herd that had once numbered in the

⁵⁵⁴ T. R. Fehrenbach, Lone Star : A history of Texas and the Texans Rev. ed. (New York: DaCapo, 2000[1968]): 30.

⁵⁵⁵ Fehrenbach, 31.

⁵⁵⁶ This discussion from Fehrenbach, 30-33 ; and Pekka Hämäläinen, "The Rise and Fall of Plains Indian Horse Cultures." *Journal of American History* (December 2003): 840 ff..

millions had disappeared from Texas. It is also not possible to blame Euroamerican hunters as is common in the northern plains milieu. And while there were large amounts of bison taken by Euroamericans, Indians and Mescaleros combined, those numbers do not add to millions.

Pekka Hämäläinen and other writers point out that there are many indications that the Central Plains cyclically really are the Great American Desert, and that the decades before 1850 were a “deep drought” that had a serious impact on bison numbers.⁵⁵⁷

Taken together with,

the opening of several highly trafficked overland trails across the central [and southern] Plains, the bison herds were vanishing all across the western Plains below the Platte River, causing periodic famine.⁵⁵⁸

Another factor was the Comanches' love of horses, and they maintained herds of up to seven or eight per capita, which meant grazing herds of thousands of horses for larger groups. These huge herds had numerous effects on both the environment and the Comanches mode of living. First the herds were grazed on the choicest of river valley grasses, and the Comanches tended to remain in one spot until the grass was gone. This kept bison away from the valleys when they were occupied, and meant the choice winter grazing was no longer available.⁵⁵⁹ Also, huge herds of horses on the open range need supervision, and this was not work the Comanche men undertook themselves. One result of this need was increased raiding as the Comanches sought young males that could either be adopted or enslaved for the purpose of looking after stock.⁵⁶⁰

Then too, the Comanches' own commercial inclinations worked against their

⁵⁵⁷ Pekka Hämäläinen, “The Rise and Fall of Plains Indian Horse Cultures.” *Journal of American History* (December 2003): 844.

⁵⁵⁸ Hämäläinen, “The Rise and Fall of Plains Indian Horse Cultures,” 844.

⁵⁵⁹ Pekka Hämäläinen, “The First Phase of Destruction : Killing the Southern Plains Buffalo, 1790-1840.” *Great Plains Quarterly* 21:1 (Spring 2001): 103-107.

⁵⁶⁰ Hämäläinen, “The Rise and Fall of Plains Indian Horse Cultures,” 844

long-term survival. Inveterate traders, their language became near universal on the southern Plains as the medium of exchange, along with sign. The Comanches “opened up their hunting territories to foreign groups [Comancheros, Mexicans, Texans, Germans, Cheyenne, Arapahos] in exchange for trade purposes.”⁵⁶¹ They also embarked on an intensive program of buffalo robe production “to fuel their trade with Americans.”⁵⁶² All of these activities produced pressures on the bison stocks, but they also served to increase raiding. The robe industry was highly labour intensive, and the Comanches raided for girls and women to prepare robes. Disease, raiding and warfare also decreased Comanche numbers. One estimate has their population falling, despite all those added through raiding, by some 75 per cent in just forty years -- “from some 20,000 in the 1820s to fewer than 5,000 in the 1860s.”⁵⁶³ As the Comanches’ bison economy collapsed, their raiding into the Borderlands increased, and this in turn inspired and maintained the scalphunting enterprise. As shown, the Comanches themselves became bounty collecting participants in that scheme.

A brief reading of the Comanches’ story also puts in historical perspective what this writer had taken to be two ‘flaws’ in McCarthy’s historical underpinnings. When the kid crosses Texas, he encounters no Indians, no bison. It seemed to be a serious flaw, as my perceptions of Texas had always been that it was the Wild West up until it was conquered by the U. S. calvary and the coming of the railroads sometime in the 1860s to 1880s. Instead, it would seem that McCarthy had his sources in order, and it was entirely possible for the kid, as it was for C. C. Cox, to transit Texas in 1850 without seeing hide nor hair of either of those indigenous species.

The kid survives the donnybrook at the Pima ferry, in which Glanton and his crew are killed by the remnants of a tribe they had so recently slaughtered. He lives on, to

⁵⁶¹ Hämäläinen, “The Rise and Fall of Plains Indian Horse Cultures,” 844.

⁵⁶² *OpCit.*

⁵⁶³ *Ibid.* 844

wander in California and eventually return to Texas as ‘the man’ in the “late winter of eighteen seventy-eight.” (316) He seems to have changed. When the the bonepicker, the new kid on the plain, tries to fight him, he tries to avoid the scrap, but fails. Texas has changed too, it is covered in the bones of the bison that are now being picked up and sold to fertilizer manufacturers back East. The bones are from the great “stamping out” that followed the Civil War and the freeing up of the Army :

The Army then took the total warfare to Comanche and Kiowa territory, where American hunters, protected and supplied by army soldiers, virtually exterminated the bison herds by the fall of 1874. The following winter campaign, the so-called Red River War, was merely a stamping out of people who had lost their ability both to feed and to defend themselves.⁵⁶⁴

The first ending of Blood Meridian alludes to the kid being done in by the judge in the jakes. The judge then passes the night away dancing in the saloon, assuring people that “He never sleeps[and] that he will never die.” (335) The kid’s work is done, as was Glanton’s before him. There is no work on the Borderlands for an Indian-killer when all the Indians are gone. But McCarthy reassures us that the judge, the brains of the outfit, will be ready and waiting when the next enterprise beckons. That Blood Meridian’s events are to McCarthy but one round in a thousand-year-long bout is made clear in his second ending, which follows.

In the dawn there is a man progressing over the plain by means of holes which he is making in the ground. He uses an implement with two handles and he chucks it into the hole and he enkindles the stone in the hole with his steel hole by hole striking the fire out of the rock which God has put there. On the plain behind him are the wanderers in search of bones and those who do not search and they move haltingly in the light like mechanisms whose movements are monitored with escapement and pallet so that they appear constrained by a prudence or reflectiveness which has no inner reality and they cross in their progress one by one that track of holes that runs to the rim of visible ground and which seems less the pursuit of some continuance than the verification

⁵⁶⁴ Hämäläinen, “The Rise and Fall of Plains Indian Horse Cultures,” 845.

of a principle, a validation of sequence and causality as if each round and perfect hole owed its existence to the one before it there on the prairie upon which are the bones and the gatherers of bones and those who do not gather. He strikes fire in the hole and draws out his steel. Then they all move on again

Conclusions.

From here to insecurity : Looking for fact in fiction.

This thesis was for its author as much an exercise in attempting to reach a working definition of what comprises 'history', as it was an explication of the 1850s borderlands scalping industry. To reiterate, this quest along the Blood Meridian was launched because of this writer's love of a rather gruesome novel, and his perception that history students generally seemed unwilling to consider a great work of art as anything more than a twisted fantasy. Subsequent inquiries revealed that Cormac McCarthy based his novel on historical sources, and that the facticity behind many of Blood Meridian's violent incidents was demonstrable, but not easily accessed. That the Texican scalping industry existed and was recorded in many disparate forms are facts. That those specific facts are better represented in a novel than they are in the totality of textbooks and academic histories written about 1850s Texas is also a fact, and the thesis of this dissertation. The questions asked were : Is Blood Meridian an historically authentic representation of the Texas borderlands in 1850? And, what in fact *was* going on along those borderlands that engendered the state-organized commercial scalping of Native Americans?

Hopefully this paper has made its case that Blood Meridian does in fact put in the public eye the Borderlands events that led Cormac McCarthy to write the story of John Joel Glanton, Angel Trías and the West Texas Indians. In hunting down Glanton's story, McCarthy unearthed an alternate and much less triumphalist lone star history long excised from the record of a state that celebrated other violent episodes such as the Alamo. Written at a time of reappraisal of the American mission, Blood Meridian was undoubtedly a book about Vietnam and the recurrent nature of state versus indigenous populations as much as it was about 1850 Texas. As historian David J. Weber has writ-

ten,

Cormac McCarthy has captured the mayhem in the post-war border region with dazzling intensity in *Blood Meridian*. An epic work of fiction built on a base of sickening historical realities.⁵⁶⁵

In answer to the first part of the above question, 'Is Blood Meridian an historically authentic representation of the Texas borderlands in 1850?', the answer would have to be an emphatic, yes ... and, no. McCarthy's novel consciously excises the South from 1850 Texas, at least in terms of the cotton economy. In looking at the scalphunting enterprise, McCarthy turns Texas into the West that it never really was. As long as slavery and cotton ruled, Texas was an extension of the South into the Southwest. McCarthy does not shy away from the inherent racial nature of the cotton slaveocracy and forthrightly examines the conflict between Negro and Euroamerican, but does so in terms of the military unit on the frontier, and not in terms of the cultural and economic underpinnings of Texas. Other aspects of 1850 Texas such as ranching are represented, and issues connecting Texas to the outside world, such as the gold rush, American Manifest Destiny, German immigration are much better served. Likewise, the everyday multileveled construction and maintenance of racial stereotypes which was so essential to the Indian removal is capably presented, and the kid traverses an 1850 Texas already largely cleared of both Indians and bison on his way to the Borderlands, which is historically accurate. However the day to day drudgery and boredom of Texans' lives away from the sharp edge of the Borderlands is missing from McCarthy. In the end, of course, these 'faults' are no faults at all for a novelist, whose duty is to art and not history.

After finding that Blood Meridian presents a less comprehensive socio-cultural picture of the 1850 Texas Borderlands than I had first supposed it to do - the question re-

⁵⁶⁵ David J. Weber, "Conflict and Accommodations : Hispanic and Anglo-American Borders in Historical Perspective, 1670-1853." *Journal of the Southwest* 39: 1, 1997 (1-32): 14..

mains, does Blood Meridian present a more historically true picture of the violence that accompanied Texas imposing its 'moving box' on the Borderlands? The answer is an emphatic *yes*. Apart from McCarthy, there is simply no direct route of access from any of the Texas histories to the events on the scalphunting frontier. Only by diligently tracking obscure footnote references to James Kirker, or by cutting across the trail of Ralph Adam Smith, would one encounter the notion of scalp bounties in the Borderlands. As horrifying as is to realise, the body count in Blood Meridian, which one critic noted is in the hundreds, is not exaggerated, but merely compressed in time, and the efforts of James Kirker folded into those of Glanton.

Perhaps one of the reasons that Kirker, Glanton and the scalp trade have been excised from the record is because of the commercial nature of their activities. Killing people in the heat of battle over some great cause is one thing that has been a staple of history since Herodotus, but killing people for the purpose of turning their scalps into gold does not seem to have ever been a mainstream part of western culture or historical discourse. It should be, mind you, because it happened. Even Ralph Adam Smith, that maven of scalphunting business, was under the impression that the "last bounty for a scalp in the East[ern]" states was in 1840 when Colonel W. S. Harney paid for a Florida Seminole scalp,⁵⁶⁶ but then there was the Minnesota bounty in the 1860s. Hopefully, this paper makes a strong case for the commercial aspect of the "Great American Scalp Hunt."

It is difficult to look at most historic representations of Euro-colonialist versus indigene conflict without falling prey to our own latent Euro-colonialist mindsets, and giving in to the classic and guiltily ahistorical presumption that goes something like, *'despite my cherished objectivity, it is pretty difficult to see how this story could have gone some*

⁵⁶⁶ Ralph Adam Smith, "Bounty power against the West Texas Indians." *West Texas Historical Association Yearbook* **49** (1973): 57,

other way. In the face of the progressing American state, these Comanches and Apaches were doomed'. Further, in a very real sense, the American Indians who were 'on the ground' in 1850s Texas *were* doomed, as census data reveals that Indian populations continued to decline until their turn of the twentieth century nadir. However, statistics also show that Indian populations have since rebounded to rival seventeenth century numbers, and so it proved to be the idea of the Vanishing Indian that was truly doomed, and not Indians per se. That present day numbers showing that Indian numbers have, after a century and a half, returned to pre-1850s levels *is* a testament to the remarkable survival skills of Indians individually and collectively, but it should not be allowed to mask the fact that Indians now comprise less than one per cent of the American population, and that their collective holdings amounts to tiny scattered plots of American soil. Texas was particularly capable and effective in ridding its territory of Indian presence and influence. The genocide of Indians carried out on the Southern plains was then, if not complete, then certainly effective enough to allow for the transferal of virtually 100 per cent of the Texas land mass from Indian to Euroamerican 'title'. Certain aspects of this erasure of Indian presence, the scalphunting enterprise, had been in turn erased, as if scrapped away with a piece of chert.

In summation, Cormac McCarthy's 1985 novel Blood Meridian : or, the evening redness in the West does a better job of bringing to light the ethnic cleansing of the Indian population on the 1850 Borderlands than does any general history book or text this writer has encountered. Cormac McCarthy's bloody 'story' unveils the past, but it also reminds us that America's violent frontiering impulse and Manifest Destiny did not die with the achievement of hoisting the Stars and Stripes over Texas and California.

Sources.

- Adelman, Jeremy and Stephen Aron. "From Borderlands to Borders : Empires, nation-states, and the Peoples in between in North American history," *American Historical Review* **104**: 3 (June 1999): 814-841.
- Anderson, Douglas. "Idealism in American Thought" (22-34), The Blackwell Guide to American Philosophy. Ed. Armen T. Marsoobian and John Ryder. Blackwell Publishing: Malden MA, 2004.
- Anderson, Gary Clayton. The Indian Southwest, 1580-1830 : Ethnogenesis and reinvention. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1999.
- Axtell, James. "Who invented scalping?" *American Heritage* **28** : 3 April, 1977 (96-100).
- Axtell, James. "The Moral dimensions of 1492." (1-12) Forging the American Character. Volume 1, 2nd ed. Ed. John R. M. Wilson. Upper Saddle River NJ: Prentice Hall, 1997.
- Bell, Madison Smartt "A writer's view of Cormac McCarthy"(1-12), Myth, legend, dust : Critical responses to Cormac McCarthy. Rick Wallach, ed. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000.
- Binnema, Theodore. Common and Contested Ground : A human and environmental history of the Northwestern Plains. Norman; University of Oklahoma Press, 2001.
- Boyer, Paul S., et al. The Enduring Vision 4th ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2000.
- Breeden, James O." Health of early Texas : The military frontier." (357-398) *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* **80** : 4 (April 1977).
- Brewton, Vince. "The Changing landscape of violence in Cormac McCarthy's early novels and the Border Trilogy." (121-143) *The Southern literary Journal* **37.1** (2004)
- Brooks, James F. Captives & Cousins : Slavery, kinship, and community in the Southwest Borderlands
- Brooks, James F. "Served well by plunder : *La Gran Ladroneria* and producers of history astride the Rio Grande." (23-58) *American Quarterly* **52**: 1.
- Brooks, James F. "Violence, Justice, and State Power in the New Mexico Borderlands,

- 1780 - 1880." In Power and Place in the North American West. Eds., Richard White and John M. Findlay. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1999.
- Brown, Dee. Bury my Heart at Wounded Knee. New York : Henry Holt & Company, 2000 [1970].
- Bullock, Alan and Stephen Trombley. The New Fontana Dictionary of Modern Thought 3rd ed. London: HarperCollins, 2000.
- Burke, Peter. What is Cultural History? Cambridge UK : Polity Press, 2004.
- Calhoun, Daniel H. "Strategy as lived." *American Indian Quarterly* **22**: 1/2 (Winter/Spring 1998): 181-203.
- Calloway, Colin G. One Vast Winter Count : The Native West before Lewis and Clark. Lincoln : University of Nebraska Press, 2003.
- Campbell, Neil. Liberty beyond its proper bounds : Cormac McCarthy's history of the West in *Blood Meridian*" in Myth, legend, dust Ed. Rick Wallach, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000.
- Campbell, Randolph B. An Empire for Slavery : The peculiar institution in Texas, 1821-1865. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1989.
- Carr, E. H. What is History? New York: Penguin Books, 1990 [1961].
- Carter, Jonathan A. "Telling Times : History, emplotment, and truth." *History and Theory* **42** (February 2003): 1-27.
- Catlin, George. North American Indians Peter Mathiessen, ed. New York, Penguin Classics, 1996 .
- Chamberlain, Samuel E. My Confession. New York : Harper & Brothers, 1956 [1861].
- Chamberlain, Samuel E. My Confession : Recollections of a Rogue. Austin: Texas State Historical Association, 1996 [1861].
- Clarke, A. B. Travels in Mexico and California. Ed. Anne M. Perry. College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1988 (1852).
- Clow, Richmond. "Bison ecology, Brulé and Yankton winter hunting, and the starving winter of 1832-33." *Great Plains Quarterly* **15** (Fall 1995): 259-270.
- Coward, John M. The Newspaper Indian : Native American Identity in the Press, 1820-90. Urbana: University of Chicago Press, 1999.
- Cox, Cornelius C. "From Texas to California in 1849: Diary of C. C. Cox." Part 1. Ed. Mabelle Eppard Martin, *Southwestern Historical Journal* **19**:1 (July 1926) :36-50.

- Cox, Cornelius C. "From Texas to California in 1849: Diary of C. C. Cox." Part 2. Ed. Mabelle Eppard Martin, *Southwestern Historical Journal* **19**:2 (Oct. 1926):128-146.
- Cox, Cornelius C. "From Texas to California in 1849: Diary of C. C. Cox." Part 3. Ed. Mabelle Eppard Martin, *Southwestern Historical Journal* **19**:3 (Jan. 1926):201-223.
- Cremony, John C. Life Among the Apaches, 1850-1868. Glorieta, NM: The Rio Grande Press, 1969 [1868].
- Crimmins, Colonel M. L. Letter re: "the country from Austin to El Paso," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*. **47**:4 (April 1944): 430.
- Cronon, William. Changes in the Land : Indians, colonists, and the ecology of New England. New York: Hill& Wang, 1983.
- Crosby, Alfred W. Germs, seeds & animals: Studies in ecological history. Amronk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1994.
- Crosby, Alfred W. Ecological Imperialism : The biological expansion of Europe, 900-1900. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004 (1986).
- Davis, David Biron. Challenging the Boundaries of Slavery Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003.
- Diamond, Jared. Guns, Germs, and Steel : The fates of human societies. New York: W.W. Norton, 1999 (1997).
- Dippie, Brian W. Catlin and his Contemporaries : The politics of patronage. Lincoln : University of Nebraska Press, 1990.
- Ehrenreich, Barbara. Blood Rites : Origins and history of the passions of war. New York: Metropolitan Books, 1997.
- Eliot, Emory. "Introductory Notes" to Charles Brockden Brown, Wieland. New York: Oxford, 1998 [1798].
- Farr, William E. "Going to buffalo : Indian hunting migrations across the Rocky Mountains. Part 1: Making meat, taking robes." *Montana: The Magazine of Western History* **53**:4 (Winter 2003): 2-21.
- Farr, William E. "Going to buffalo : Indian hunting migrations across the Rocky Mountains. Part 2: Civilian permits, army escorts." *Montana: The Magazine of Western History* **54**:1 (Spring 2004): 26-43.
- Faulk, Odie B. Land of Many Frontiers : A history of the American Southwest. New York : Oxford University Press, 1968.

- Fehrenbach, T. R. Lone Star : A history of Texas and the Texans. Rev. ed. New York: DaCapo, 2000[1968].
- Fielder, Adrian V. "Historical representation and the scriptural economy of imperialism: Assia Djebar's L'Amour, la fantasia and Cormac McCarthy's Blood Meridian." *Comparative Literature Studies* **37**:1 (2000): 18-44.
- Flores, Dan. "Bison Ecology and Bison Diplomacy: The Southern Plains from 1800 to 1850." *Journal of American History* (September 1991): 465-485.
- Foley, Neil. The White Scourge : Mexicans, Blacks, and Poor Whites in Texas Cotton Culture. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997.
- Gaddis, John Lewis. The Landscape of History : How Historians Map the Past. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002.
- Gauldin, Martin Austin. "From Missouri to Texas in 1845: Martin Austin Gauldin's Journal." Jackie McElheney, Ed. *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* **83**: 2, October 1979:151-165.
- Goetzmann, William. "Introduction." My Confession : Recollections of a Rogue. Austin: Texas State Historical Association, 1996: 1-25
- Gregg, Josiah. Commerce of the Prairies. Max L. Moorhead, Ed. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1954 [1845]).
- Hagan, William T. American Indians. 3rd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993 [1961].
- Halter, Edith Simpson. Letter re: "I was much interested." *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*. **48**:1 (July 1944): 98.
- Hämäläinen, Pekka. "The Western Comanche Trade Center: Rethinking the Plains Indian Trade System." *Western Historical Quarterly* **29** (Winter 1998): 485-513.
- Hämäläinen, Pekka. "The First Phase of Destruction : Killing the Southern Plains Buffalo, 1790-1840." *Great Plains Quarterly* **21**:1 (Spring 2001): 101-114.
- Hämäläinen, Pekka. "The Rise and Fall of Plains Indian Horse Cultures." *Journal of American History* (December 2003): 833-862.
- Hamnett, Brian. A Concise History of Mexico. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.
- Hegel, G. W. F. , The Philosophy of History. Translation J. Sibree (New York: Collier, 1956 [1902]).

- Henretta, James A., David Brody, and Lynne Dumenil. America : A Concise History. 2nd ed. Boston : Bedford / St. Martins, 2002.
- Herodotus. The Histories Revised Ed. Aubrey de Selincourt, Translation. London : Penguin Classics, 2003 [430 BC].
- Hinojosa, Gilberto Miguel. A Borderlands Town in Transition : Laredo, 1755-1870. College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1983.
- Homer-Dixon, Thomas F. Environment, Scarcity, and Violence. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999.
- Hoxie, Frederick E., Ed. Encyclopedia of North American Indians. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1996.
- Huntington, Samuel P. "The Clash of Civilizations?" *Foreign Affairs* 72:3 (Summer 1993): 22-49.
- Hurt, Douglas R. Indian Frontier, 1763-1846. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2002.
- Ignatieff, Michael. The Rights Revolution. Toronto: Anansi, 2000.
- Ignatiev, Noel. How the Irish Became White New York: Routledge, 1995.
- Isenberg, Andrew C. The Destruction of the Bison : An Environmental History, 1750-1920. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
- Jarrett, Robert L. Cormac McCarthy. New York: Twayne Publishers, 1997.
- Johnson, Susan Lee. "Bulls, Bears, and Dancing Boys: Race, Gender, and Leisure in the California Gold Rush." *Radical History Review* 60: 3 (Fall 1994): 4-37.
- Jordan, Terry G. North American Cattle Ranching Frontiers : Origins, Diffusion and Differentiation. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1993.
- Jordan, Terry G. "Population Origins in Texas, 1850." *Geographical Review* 59: 1 (January 1969): 83-103.
- Kavanagh, Thomas W. Comanche political History : An Ethnohistorical Perspective, 1706-1875. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996.
- Kelly, Sean. "Slavery and the Texas-Mexico Border, 1810-1860." *Journal of Social History* 37:3 (2004): 709-723.
- Knaut, Andrew L. The Pueblo Revolt of 1680 : Conquest and Resistance in Seventeenth-Century New Mexico. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995.

- Krech III, Shepard. The Ecological Indian : Myth and History. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1999.
- Kuykendall, Gibson . "Recollections of Capt. Gibson Kuykendall." *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 7 : 1 (July 1903) : 29-39.
- La Vere, David. The Texas Indians College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 2004.
- Lazare, Daniel, "L' Amérique, Mon Amour." *The Nation* (April 26, 2004): 25-31.
- Ledbetter, Billy D. "White Over Black in Texas: Racial attitudes in the Ante- Bellum period." *Phylon* 34: 4 (4th Quarter, 1973): 406-418.
- Lepore, Jill. The Name of War: King Phillip's War and the origins of American Identity. New York : Vintage Books, 1999.
- Lowe, Richard, and Randolph Campbell. "Wealthholding and political power in Antebellum Texas." *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 79: 1 (July 1975) : 21-30.
- Luce, Dianne C. "On the trail of history in Cormac McCarthy's Blood Meridian." *Mississippi Quarterly* 49: 4 (Fall 1996): 1-4.
- Marcy, Colonel R. B. Thirty years of army life on the border. London: Sampson Low, Son, and Marston, 1866.
- Marx, Karl. The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte. New York: International Publishers, 1963 [1869].
- McCarthy, Cormac. Blood Meridian: or, the Evening Redness in the West. New York: Vintage International, 1992 (1985).
- McGaw, William Cochran. "James Kirker" (125-143) The Mountain Men and the Fur Trade of the Far West. Vol. V. Ed. LeRoy Hafen. Glendale CA: The Arthur H. Clark Co., 1968.
- McGaw, William Cochran. Savage Scene : The life and times of James Kirker. Frontier King. New York: Hastings House, 1972.
- McMurtry, Larry. Lonesome Dove New York : Simon and Schuster, 1985.
- Melville, Elinor G. K. A Plague of Sheep : Environmental Consequences of the Conquest of Mexico. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.
- Melville, Herman. The Confidence Man : His Masquerade. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1984 [1857].
- Miles, Elton. Tales of the Big Bend. College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1976.

- Miller, Elizabeth. "Evidence for prehistoric scalping in Northeastern Nebraska." *Plains Anthropologist* 39: 148 (1994): 211-219.
- Miller, Elizabeth. "The effect of European contact on the health of Indigenous populations in Texas." In Bioarchaeology of Native American Adaptation in the Spanish Borderlands. Eds. Brenda Baker and Lisa Kealhofer. Gainesville : University Press of Florida, 1996.
- Miller, Susan A. "Wild Cat and the Origins of the Seminole Migration to Mexico," (Unpublished M.A. Thesis, University of Oklahoma, 1988).
- Moos, Don. "Lacking the Article Itself : Representation and History in Cormac McCarthy's Blood Meridian." *The Cormac McCarthy Journal Online* (Accessed 12 May 2005). <<http://www.cormacmccarthy.com/journal/Default.htm>>.
- Nabokov, Peter. A Forest of Time. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002
- Nash, Gary B., et al, Eds. The American People : Creating a Nation and a Society. New York : Harper & Row, 1986.
- Nostrand, Richard L. "Mexican Americans circa 1850." *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 65: 3 (September 1975): 378-390.
- Oja, M. F. "Fictional history and historical fiction : Solzhenitsyn and Kis as exemplars." *History and Theory* 27: 111-124.
- Owens, Barclay. Cormac McCarthy's Western Novels. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2000.
- Peebles, Stacey. "Yuman belief systems and Cormac McCarthy's Blood Meridian." *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 45: 2 (2003): 231-244.
- Pierson, George Wilson. Tocqueville in America. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996 [1938].
- Phillips, Dana. "History and the ugly facts of Cormac McCarthy's Blood Meridian." *American Literature* 68:2 (June 1996): 433-460.
- Porter, Kenneth Wiggins. "Negroes and Indians on the Texas Frontier, 1831-1876." *Journal of Negro History* 41: 4 (Oct. 1956): 285-310.
- Pyne, Stephen J. Fire : A brief history. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001.
- Rankin, Melinda. Texas in 1850. Waco: Texian Press, 1966 [1850].
- Reid, Captain Mayne. The Scalp Hunters : A romance of northern Mexico. London: George Routledge and Sons, 1853.
- Richardson, Rupert N., Adrian Anderson, Ernest Wallace. Texas : The Lone Star State.

- 6th ed. Prentice Hall: Upper Saddle River NJ, 1993.
- Richardson, Rupert N., Cary D. Wintz, Adrian Anderson, Ernest Wallace. Texas : The Lone Star State. 8th ed. Prentice Hall: Upper Saddle River NJ, 2001.
- Ryder, John. "Early American Philosophy" (3-21), The Blackwell Guide to American Philosophy. Ed. Armen T. Marsoobian and John Ryder. Blackwell Publishing: Malden MA, 2004.
- San Antonio *Telegraph and Texas Register* (January 3, 1850). In *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* **48** : 2 (October 1944).
- Sebald, W. G. On the Natural History of Destruction Toronto: Vintage House, 2004 [1999].
- Sepich, John Emil. "The dance of history in Cormac McCarthy's Blood Meridian." *Southern Literary Journal* **24**: 16-31.
- Sepich, John Emil. "'What kind of indians was them?': Some historical sources in Cormac McCarthy's *Blood Meridian*." *Southern Quarterly* **30** : 4 (Summer 1992): 93-110.
- Sepich, John Emil. Notes on Blood Meridian. Louisville : Bellarmine College Press, 1993.
- Sepich, John Emil. "A 'bloody dark pastryman' : Cormac McCarthy's recipe for Gunpowder and Historical Fiction in *Blood Meridian*." *Mississippi Quarterly* **76** : 4 (Fall 1993): 547-563.
- Shipman, Daniel. Frontier Life : 58 years in Texas, Washington: Unknown, 1876
- Shuck-Hall, Sheri Marie. "Borderlands and Identities in Imperial Texas : The Alabamas and Coughattas in the Anti-Comanche Union, 1820-1840." *International History Review* **25**:3 (September 2003): 563-591. Thanks to Peter Baskerville for this.
- Slotkin, Richard. Regeneration Through Violence : The mythology of the American frontier, 1600-1860. Middletown, CN: Wesleyan University Press, 1973.
- Slotkin, Richard. The Fatal Environment : The myth of the frontier in the Age of Industrialization, 1800-1890. New York: Atheneum, 1985.
- Slotkin, Richard. Gunfighter Nation : The myth of the frontier in Twentieth-century America. New York : Harper Perennial, 1993 [1992].
- Smith, Edward. Account of a Journey through North Eastern Texas ; Undertaken in 1849 for the Purposes of Immigration. London : Hamilton, Adams & Co., 1849.
- Smith, Ralph Adam. "John Joel Glanton, Lord of the scalp range." *Smoke Signal* **6** :1962

- (9-16).
- Smith, Ralph Adam. "Indians in American-Mexican relations before the War of 1846." *Hispanic American Historical Review* **43** : 1 (February 1963): 34-64.
- Smith, Ralph Adam. "Poor Mexico, so far from God and so close to the Tejanos." *West Texas Historical Association year Book* **44**: 1968 (78-105).
- Smith, Ralph Adam. "Bounty power against the West Texas Indians." *West Texas Historical Association Yearbook* **49** (1973): 40-58.
- Smith, Ralph Adam. "Scalp Hunting ; A Mexican experiment in warfare." *Great Plains Journal* **23** (1984): 41-81.
- Smith, Ralph Adam. "The Bounty Wars of the West and Mexico" Part 1. *Great Plains Journal* **29** (1990): 102-121.
- Smith, Ralph Adam. "The Bounty Wars of the West and Mexico" Part 2. *Great Plains Journal* **30** (1991): 107-126
- Smith, Ralph Adam. Borderlander: The Life of James Kirker, 1793-1852. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1999.
- Smith, Todd F.. The Caddo Indians. College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1995.
- Spicer, Edward H. Cycles of Conquest : The impact of Spain, Mexico, and the United States on the Indians of the Southwest, 1533-1960. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1976 (1962).
- Steinert, W*. "W. Steinert's view of Texas in 1849." Translated and edited by Gilbert J. Jordan, *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*. Published in five parts:
 Part 1, **80** : 1 (July 1976) : 57-78. * (Jordan was unable to find any record of Steinert's given name, at note 1, 177)
 Part 2, **80** : 2 (October 1976) : 177-200.
 Part 3, **80** : 3 (January 1977) : 283-301.
 Part 4, **80** : 4 (April 1977) : 399-416.
 Part 5, **81** : 1 (July 1977) : 45-72.
- Stockel, H. Henrietta. "Scalping," *Military History of the West* **27**: 1 (Spring 1997): 83-86.
- Thornton, Russell. American Indian Holocaust and Survival : A population history since 1492. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987.
- Thwaites, Reuben Gold, ed. Original Journals of the Lewis and Clarke Expedition, 1804-1806, Vol. 1. New York: Antiquarian Press, 1959 [1904].

- Times Colonist*, Victoria British Columbia (February 23, 2005): A12. An editorial from the Madison, WS *Capital Times*.
- Tindall, George Brown and David E. Shi, eds. America ; A Narrative History. Vol. 1, 5th ed. (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1999.
- Tocqueville, Alexis de. Democracy in America. New York: Bantam Classic, 2000 [1835].
- Truett, Samuel. "The Ghosts of Frontiers Past : Making and unmaking space in the Borderlands." *Journal of the Southwest* 46:2 (summer 2004): 309-350.
- Turner, Frederick Jackson. "The Significance of the Frontier in American History." In Readings in Intellectual History : The American Tradition. Ed. C. K. McFarland. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1970.
- United States Census, J. D. B. De Bow, Superintendent. Seventh Census, 1850: Statistical View. Washington, Senate Printer. 1854.
- United States Census, J. D. B. De Bow, Superintendent. Seventh Census, 1850: Statistics of Manufactures. Washington, Senate Printer. 1854.
- United States Census, J. D. B. De Bow, Superintendent. Seventh Census, 1850: Report of the Superintendent Washington, Senate Printer. 1854.
- United States Census, J. D. B. De Bow, Superintendent. Seventh Census, 1850: Mortality Statistics Washington, Senate Printer. 1854.
- United States Census, 1850. (accessed 20 March, 2005),
<<http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/view/CC/ulc1.html>> .
- Van Hoak, Stephen P. "The Other Buffalo : Native Americans, Fur Trappers, and the Western Bison, 1600-1800." *Utah Historical Quarterly* 72: 1 (Winter 2004): 4-18.
- Wallach, Rick. "Sam Chamberlain's Judge Holden and the iconography of science in mid-19th Century nation-building." *Southwestern American Literature* 23 (Fall 1997): 9-17.
- Ward, John William. Andrew Jackson -- Symbol for an Age. New York: Oxford, 1962[1955].
- Watts, Sheldon. Epidemics and History: Disease, Power, and Imperialism. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997.
- Webb, James. Born Fighting : How the Scots-Irish Shaped America. New York: Broadway Books, 2004.

- Weber, David J. The Taos Trappers : The Fur Trade in the far Southwest, 1540-1846.
Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1971.
- Weber, David J. The Mexican Frontier, 1821 - 1846 : The American Southwest under Mexico. Albuquerque : University of New Mexico Press, 1982.
- Weber, David J. "Turner, the Boltonians, and the Borderlands." *American Historical Review* 91: 1 (February 1986): 66-81.
- Weber, David J. "Conflict and Accommodations : Hispanic and Anglo-American Borders in Historical Perspective, 1670-1853." *Journal of the Southwest* 39: 1, 1997 (1-32).
- Wegner, John. "Wars and rumors of wars" in A Cormac McCarthy Companion. Edwin T. Arnold and Dianne C. Luce, eds. Jackson : University of Mississippi Press, 1999.
- West, Elliot. "Called Out People : The Cheyennes and the Central Plains." *Montana: The Magazine of Western History* 48: 2 (Summer 1998): 2-15.
- White, Hayden. The Content of the Form : Narrative discourse and historical representation. Johns Hopkins University Press: Baltimore, 1987.
- White, Richard. "The Winning of the West : The Expansion of the Western Sioux in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries." *Journal of American History* 65: 2, 1978 (319-343).
- White, Richard. "Lone Star," *Reviews in American History* 26: 4 (1998): 766-771.
- Woodward, Earl F. "International improvements in Texas under Governor Peter Hansborough Bell's Administration, 1849-1853." *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 76: 2 (October 1971): 161-182.
- Woodward, Richard B. "Cormac McCarthy's Venomous Fiction" New York : New York Times, April 19, 1992, Sunday, Late Edition.
< <http://www.nytimes.com/books/98/05/17/specials/mccarthy-venom.html>>
- Wunder, John R., and Pekka Hämäläinen. "Of lethal places and lethal essays," *American Historical Review* 104: 4 (October 1999): 1229-1234.
- Yellow Bird, Michael. "What We Want to be Called." *American Indian Quarterly* 23 : 2 (Spring 1999): 1-21.
- Young, Brian. "Positive Law, Positive State: Class Realignment and the Transformation of Lower Canada, 1815-1866."

Internet Sources.

Constitution of the State of Texas (1845), ARTICLE VIII: *Slaves*. (accessed 20 April, 2005), <

<http://tarlton.law.utexas.edu/constitutions/text/DART08.html> > .

Constitution of the State of Texas (1845), ARTICLE III: *Legislative Department*. (accessed 20 April, 2005),

< <http://tarlton.law.utexas.edu/constitutions/text/DART03.html> > .

Constitution of the State of Texas (1866), *Ordinance NUMBER 7*. (accessed 20 April, 2005) < <http://tarlton.law.utexas.edu/constitutions/text/FOrd08.html> >

Handbook of Texas Online, s.v. "KIRKER, JAMES," (accessed February 1, 2005)

< <http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/view/KK/fki54.html> >

Texas Census and census records.(Accessed 15 March, 2005).

<<http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/view/CC/ulcl.html>> .

Unanimous Declaration of Independence, by the Delegates of the People of Texas, March 2, 1836. (accessed 22 April, 2005),

< <http://tarlton.law.utexas.edu/constitutions/text/CdDecl.html> > .

Woodward, Richard B. ;" Cormac McCarthy's Venomous Fiction" New York : New York Times, April 19, 1992, Sunday, Late Edition.

< <http://www.nytimes.com/books/98/05/17/specials/mccarthy-venom.html> >