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ISTANBUL YENI YUZYIL UNIVERSITY

INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE DEPARTMENT

ANGLO-AMERICAN LITERATURE AND CREATIVE WRITING

PROGRAMME



THE POLITICS OF THE UNCANNY IN CORMAC

MCCARTHY'S SELECTED NOVELS *THE ROAD* AND *BLOOD*

MERIDIAN

MA THESIS

DALAF HASAN ALLAWI

21131308504

ISTANBUL, DECEMBER 2023

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THESIS APPROVAL PAGE

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MA PROGRAMME

ETHICAL STATEMENT

In this project, I prepared my manuscript in accordance with the thesis writing rules of the Institute of Social Sciences at Istanbul Yeni Yüzyıl University and I hereby declare that;

- I have obtained the data, information, and documents provided within the thesis within the framework of academic and ethical rules,
- I have submitted all information, documents, evaluations, and results in accordance with the requirements of scientific ethics and moral rules,
- I have cited all works that I have used in the project by appropriately referring to my sources,
- I have not made any changes to the data used,
- The work I present here is original, and if found otherwise, I declare that I accept all loss of rights that may occur.

18/ 12 / 2023

DALAF HASAN ALLAWI

PREFACE

To my supervisor Assoc. Prof. Olgahan Bakşı Yalçın, for her guidance, careful and truly patient editing, support and valuable recommendations during the planning and development of my thesis, my sincere gratitude. To Prof. Dr. Günseli İşçi who stands with us in our difficult circumstances. Words are not enough to thank. To my family for their support, especially my beloved wife Noor Ayad for her endless love, support, and encouragement throughout my study. To my colleagues, especially Noor Nihad Al Azeez who has stood beside us from the beginning, many Thanks.

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DALAF HASAN ALLAWI

ÖZET

CORMAC MCCARTHY'NİN SEÇİLMİŞ ROMANLARI YOL VE KAN MERIDIAN'DA EŞİNSİZLİK POLİTİKASI

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Tekinsiz kavramını tanımlamak kolay değildir, bu da birçok tartışmayı beraberinde getirebileceği gibi farklı yorumlara da yol açabilir. Bu nedenle, bu tezin amacı, Freudyen tanımla ilişkili olarak tekinsiz algısının zaman içinde nasıl geliştiğini araştırmaktır. Bu nedenle çalışma, Birinci Bölüm'de Ernst Jentsch'ten günümüze terimin çeşitli yorumlarına genel bir bakış sunmaktadır. Bu tezin analiz bölümlerinde, Cormac McCarthy'nin *Yol* (2006) ve *Kan Meridyeni* (1985) romanlarında tekinsiz kavramını incelemeyi amaçlıyoruz çünkü bu iki roman, tekinsizliğin bu tür kıyamet sonrası dünyalardaki yönlerini tasvir eden tipik örnekler olarak kabul edilmektedir. Dolayısıyla, bu edebi analizin temel amacı, McCarthy'nin yukarıda bahsi geçen romanlarında tekinsizliğin ayırt edici özelliklerinin tasvirini keşfetmektir. Bu amaçla, bu romanların analizi, ürkütücü, ürpertici ve tuhafın farklı niteliklerinin çürüyen bir dünya karşısında tekinsizin varoluşsal sorununa katkıda bulunduğu kahramanların çevrelerinin tedirgin edici doğasında gezinme girişimlerine odaklanmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Tekinsiz, Freud, Anksiyete, *Yol*, *Kan Meridyeni*

ABSTRACT

THE POLITICS OF THE UNCANNY IN CORMAC MCCARTHY'S NOVELS *THE ROAD AND BLOOD MERIDIAN*

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It is not easy to define the concept of the uncanny which can not only raise many discussions but also lead to diverse interpretations. Thus, the purpose of this thesis is to investigate how the perception of the uncanny has developed throughout time in relation to the Freudian description. The study, therefore, provides an overview of several interpretations of the term from Ernst Jentsch to the present day in Chapter One. In the analysis chapters of this thesis, it is aimed to investigate the concept of the uncanny in Cormac McCarthy's novels *The Road* (2006) and *Blood Meridian* (1985). These two novels are considered to be typical examples that portray the aspects of the uncanny in such post-apocalyptic worlds. Hence, the primary objective of this literary analysis is to explore the portrayal of the distinctive attributes of the uncanny in the above-mentioned novels of McCarthy. To this end, the analysis of these novels focuses on the protagonists' attempts to navigate the unsettling nature of their surroundings in which distinct qualities of eerie, creepy, and weird contribute to the existential problem of the uncanny in the face of a decaying world.

Keywords: Uncanny, Freud, Anxiety, *The Road*, *Blood Meridian*

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INTRODUCTION

The concept of the uncanny has garnered significant scholarly interest in the humanities and has emerged as a prevalent theme in cultural practices and art criticism, after the publication of Sigmund Freud's renowned essay on the subject. Although Freud's general description of the uncanny as a disconcerting ambiguity between the familiar and the unfamiliar has gained some traction, the acceptance of his more intricate psychoanalytic analysis has been far less certain. Despite its increasing popularity in both theoretical and practical contexts, there has been no advancement in comprehending the nature of the uncanny since Freud's seminal work. It has become a widely accepted notion within scholarly discourse that the uncanny defies precise definition. Nicholas Royle supports the notion that the uncanny possesses an inherent quality of evading complete comprehension or manipulation and it pertains to something elusive and yet resistant to being firmly defined or regulated.

Freud established the foundational framework for the conceptualization of the uncanny in his essay "The Uncanny", published in 1919, which had a significant role in the categorization of the word as an artistic category. Freud's work has generated considerable scholarly interest in the topic, prompting several thinkers to offer their interpretations of the concept of the uncanny. Over time, some individuals arrived at the opinion that the phrase "is untranslatable regarding form and substance and the same impression may be described by terms such as 'scary', 'eerie', and 'strange'" (Masschelein, 2011, p.7). The term 'uncanny' is characterized by its ambiguity and dualistic nature, allowing for subjective interpretations of the notion. With time, the understanding of the uncanny has changed. Therefore, the concepts embodied by the uncanny have emerged as a foundational framework for the theories of deconstructionism, feminism, the inquiry into sexual identity, and the uncanny valley (Masschelein, 2011, p. 3). Freud's article situates the concept of the uncanny within the realm of aesthetics. Although the uncanny may not possess inherent aesthetic qualities, it is evident that it plays a crucial role in our aesthetic evaluation of several artistic creations. The comprehension of the uncanny holds significant implications for our comprehension of a crucial facet of art and society. In the introduction of his essay, Freud acknowledged that the term 'uncanny' does not necessarily possess a

delineated meaning. However, he posited that there is likely an underlying emotional essence that warrants the utilization of a distinct conceptual phrase (Freud, 1990, p. 219).

Cormac McCarthy, (1933-2023) is widely recognized as a prominent contemporary American author. He is regarded as one of the most influential literary figures of the past 50 years. Undoubtedly, one of the causes lies in his remarkable capacity to craft highly intricate personalities. After thirty years during which McCarthy's publications remained relatively unknown, both his literary works and his reputation have recently gained recognition among a growing audience of both general readers and literary critics. McCarthy's literary works predominantly draw upon well-known and even mythical narrative structures (Woodward, 1992, p. 104). These narratives typically involve young men protagonists who depart from a calamitous domestic environment and embark on a journey towards the transcendent, seeking a new sense of belonging, safety, and occasionally, romantic affection. Alternatively, they may engage in transgressive acts that yield dire repercussions. The author employs several styles, norms, and methods throughout his fictional works. Hence, the objective of this thesis is to examine the diverse approaches employed by McCarthy in his literary works about stylistic elements. McCarthy employs a complex and intricately allusive language style, which may be challenging to comprehend and deliberately resistant to interpretation. The author employs intricate and frequently prolonged grammatical structures while employing minimum punctuation to interweave words and diverse voices inside a framework of imagery and language (Frye, 2012, p.78).

Academic scholars divide McCarthy's career into distinct parts or periods. The above literary works are sometimes denoted as the Tennessee Appalachian texts. This collection comprises the following novels, *The Orchard Keeper* (1965), *Outer Dark* (1968), *Child of God* (1973), and *Suttree* (1979). The aforementioned literary works provide a profound and intellectually stimulating portrayal of the Appalachian terrain and culture in which their storylines unfold. Moreover, they enthusiastically embrace several attributes associated with the Gothic heritage that are unique to the region. Subsequently, a transition occurs when McCarthy's literary works migrate from the southern region to the southwestern border areas (Luce, 2009, p.45). The

subsequent stage starts with the author's highly acclaimed and formidable literary piece, *Blood Meridian, Or the Evening Redness in the West* (1985), followed by the trilogy known as the Border Trilogy, consisting of three volumes: *All the Pretty Horses* (1992), *The Crossing* (1994), and *Cities of the Plain* (1998). Subsequently, there emerges a distinct phase characterized by a multitude of artistic forms and settings commonly known as the 'latter works'. The literary works authored by McCarthy that are of particular significance include *No Country for Old Men* (2005), *The Sunset Limited* (2006), and *The Road* (2006), which garnered McCarthy the esteemed Pulitzer Prize for Fiction (Holloway, 2002, p. 97).

There are two of McCarthy's novels in which the uncanny plays a significant role, *The Blood Meridian* (1985) and *The Road* (2006). Each of these novels was written in a different period of McCarthy's writing career, which seems to be a good choice for the thesis. Each of these novels also represents a different genre and a different historical era. *Blood Meridian* is a western set in the 1850s and *The Road* is a post-apocalyptic narrative set in the near future. However, the two works share some features of the Southern Gothic style (Broncano, 2013, p.189). The American South, commonly known as the 'Deep South', stretches from Texas to Arkansas, Louisiana, Alabama, and North Carolina. The word commonly denotes the seven states that constituted the Confederacy. This term was not actually coined until the end of the Civil War. The region known as the Deep South is often characterized as a stronghold of religious fundamentalism and is generally recognized for its reputation of being intolerant and strongly committed to social conservatism. It is commonly referred to as Southern Noir, Rural Noir, Country Noir, or Southern Gothic. The term used to describe it is 'Grit Lit' (Adams, 2001, p.319).

A handful of authors have successfully explored this hotbed of tension and social unrest to create one of the most brutal, captivating, and intriguing crime fiction in recent times. McCarthy is one of those authors. The genre's attraction to readers stems from its close-to-home setting, frequent depiction of intense violence and extreme poverty, and its portrayal of protagonists who possess nothing more than innate intuition and sharp intelligence. Among the authors who have had a significant impact on the Southern Gothic genre as a whole, Harry Crews (1935-2012) is renowned for his portrayal of 'grotesque' characters and his use of 'preternatural'

and unsettling violence. Flannery O'Connor (1925-1964) is a writer known for her emphasis on the 'grotesque' and is undoubtedly a prominent figure in the Southern Gothic genre. According to Rath (1996, p.43), she expressed that any work originating from the South will be labeled as grotesque by readers from the North, unless it is genuinely grotesque, in which case it will be seen as realistic. Undoubtedly, she remains a significant catalyst for contemporary Southern noir authors.

It is essential to establish from the beginning that my objective is not to provide a comprehensive definition that encompasses all instances of the term 'uncanny', whether in everyday language or theoretical discourse. The focus of my inquiry is on the use of the phrase under consideration, which has a significant resemblance to the subject matter examined by Freud in his scholarly work. This term has predominantly found application within the realms of art theory and criticism. In the context of Freudian theory, the term 'uncanny' is used to describe a particular sensation that arises in response to various phenomena. These phenomena encompass doppelgangers or duplicates, wax figures, deceased bodies, severed limbs, automatons, coincidences, premonitions that materialize, and other seemingly supernatural or mystical occurrences, such as perceived hauntings and extraordinary abilities. According to Freud, these phenomena are unquestionably interconnected with stimuli that elicit fear, dread, and horror.

The utilization of the uncanny as a theoretical metaphor goes beyond the initial intentions outlined by Freud, resulting in its widespread popularity. In many instances, the term 'uncanny' has evolved beyond its original connotation of a specific emotional experience or the circumstances that elicit such a sensation. Instead, it is now employed as an abstract analytical instrument that may seemingly be employed to assess a wide range of subjects. When employed in this manner, the term 'uncanny' assumes the role of being equivalent to a technique or approach to speech. The study does not include abstract theoretical applications such as the one mentioned. More specifically, there exist theoretical applications of the term 'uncanny' that pertain to a certain sensation, but not the particular sensation that I am concerned with in this context. The concept I am contemplating pertains to the various applications of the term that elucidate a profound sense of existential

dislocation. The most comprehensive analysis of this sensation of uncanniness may be located within the framework of Heidegger's philosophical discourse. According to Heidegger, the concept of uncanniness serves as a basic condition of our being in the world. This condition entails a sense of not being fully comfortable or familiar with the world, referred to as 'unheimlich' or 'un-homely', and is characterized by feelings of uneasiness or dread.

The thesis will utilize the psychoanalytic theory as a framework for analysis with a specific focus on Freud's conceptualization of the uncanny. Subsequently, an analysis will be conducted to examine the many components of the uncanny as shown in McCarthy's novels. Consequently, this study will employ a descriptive-analytical approach to elucidate the occurrences inside the novels, thereby highlighting the literary characteristics associated with the concept of the uncanny. Based on the aforementioned theoretical framework and research methodologies, this study seeks to achieve numerous objectives. The primary objective of this study is to provide a comprehensive analysis of the uncanny elements included in the novels, with a specific focus on establishing a connection between the concept of the uncanny and the post-apocalyptic setting depicted in *The Road*. Additionally, this analysis aims to illustrate the characters' endeavors in self-construction and the pursuit of significance within a disordered realm, namely in the novels *The Road* and *Blood Meridian*.

The research is guided by the following research question to attain those goals. In what manner does Cormac McCarthy depict the concept of the uncanny? and to what degree do the novels portray the characters' construction of self-identity as a result of defamiliarisation within a post-apocalyptic world? To address the research topic, we provide the following hypotheses, the work effectively portrays the concept of the uncanny via several qualities, including displacement, estrangement, and homelessness. The presence of parental love and optimism might potentially contribute to the formation and development of an individual's sense of self amid a tumultuous and unpredictable global landscape. In order to check the research hypotheses, the study is divided into three chapters. The first chapter of this study is dedicated to the theoretical background of the concept of the uncanny as it pertains to literature. Initially, the text explores the concept of embodying the uncanny inside

the realm of writing. Next, I will shift the focus to the concept of the uncanny as viewed from Freud's perspective.

Chapter two shows some of the uncanny characteristics in the novel *The Road* which I find among, such as alienation, displacement, and homelessness. Then, I am going to deal with how the protagonists of the novel map and create themselves in a chaotic universe in which parental love and optimism have been places of strength to fight the uncanny pain. Furthermore, the style and the modes of writing of Cormac McCarthy are included in this chapter. I will discuss the concept of the uncanny in Cormac McCarthy's work, *The Road* which is widely considered a typical example that effectively conveys elements of the uncanny inside a post-apocalyptic world. The major purpose of this literary study is to analyze the representation of the characteristic qualities of the Uncanny in McCarthy's literature throughout the novel. My purpose in this research is to illuminate the protagonists' struggles to traverse the existential issue of the uncanny as presented in the novel, particularly in the face of a decaying world. After all, the two nameless characters of the novel, the father and his son, have tried to construct themselves and find meaning in a chaotic world with the help of parental love and hope persistence.

In chapter three, the analysis and focus will be directed towards the concept of uncanny and violence in *Blood Meridian*. I am going to clarify the majority of situations commonly categorized as 'uncanny' in the novel. The study presented does not aim to encompass all prevalent colloquial uses of the term 'uncanny', nor does it aim to encompass the entirety of the theoretical applications of 'uncanny' that have emerged from around the mid-twentieth century. In this discourse, I want to present a scholarly examination of the notion of the uncanny as it pertains to its primary theoretical application. This application involves the elucidation of the impact generated by certain occurrences that possess distinct qualities of eerie, creepy, and weird. The protagonists' journey portrays life in a bloody world full of uncanny characteristics. They have experienced violence, chaos homelessness, and pain through their journey of killing and collecting scalps.

Based on my analysis, it may be argued that characterizing the uncanny as having 'a special core of feeling' may be misleading, and inaccurate, as the uncanny encompasses more than just a subjective experience. The ability to

differentiate uncanny phenomena, which fall under the category of what is terrifying, is facilitated by a specific cognitive assessment of an item or event. This assessment involves seeing a potential danger to one's understanding of reality, resulting from the presence of something that is incongruent with what is considered plausible. Considering the increasing prominence of the uncanny in the realms of art and culture, coupled with the limited attention it has received in the literature of analytic aesthetics thus far, the objective of this paper is twofold to establish a fundamental basis for future discourse on the subject, and to advocate for the recognition of the uncanny as a topic worthy of comprehensive aesthetic investigation.



1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

1.1 The Concept of Uncanny

Theories of the uncanny make an effort to explain the strangeness connected to the difficult to categorize. The German philosopher Friedrich Schelling (1775-1854), from whom Sigmund Freud (1856-1939), derives his basic ideas; defines the uncanny as “a name for everything that should have remained hidden and secret, but nevertheless it unfolds, manifests itself, and appears” (Giblett, 2019, p.58). Uncanny sets against familiarity. It is a kind of anxiety, a state between life and death, confusion between consciousness and unconsciousness. Other instances of an inability to categorize, which may lead to an uncanny effect, would include the confusion of self with others as in a mirror image, or a double, or of past with present. In 1906, Ernst Anton Jentsch (1867-1919) wrote an essay entitled “On the Psychology of the Uncanny”, which is considered the first work to address this topic. Jentsch identifies psychical uncertainty as the cause of uncanny effects, uncertainty arising from a subject’s inability to categorize something (Jentsch, 2008, p.9). The uncanny is a special presence of the other in the self, an unstable anxiety between time and place, and an incomplete awakening. These kinds of confusions threaten the dissolution of the categories by which the world is conventionally ordered. It is also a neutral and intermediate state that lies between the emotions of fear, dread, curiosity, suspense, pleasure, reassurance, remembrance, terror, imagination, seclusion, confusion and loss of certainty (Jentsch, 2008, p.21).

Sigmund Schlomo Freud (1856- 1939) an Austrian neurologist and one of the twentieth century's most important thinkers, devoted much of his life to psychoanalysis, a method used to treat psychopathology through dialogue (Fromm, 2013, p 98). Freud is considered the cornerstone of the uncanny theory and his article “Das Unheimlich,” published in “The Psychoanalytic Journal Imago” in 1919, is regarded as a crucial point of discussion and discourse. Freud gives his conclusions on what constitutes the uncanny in his essay, “The Uncanny”. The first original definition of the uncanny, given near the start of his essay, is that “the uncanny is a class of the frightening, which leads back to what is known of old and long familiar” (Freud, 1990, p. 340). For Freud, the uncanny is those special feelings towards a certain thing that is not simply mysterious, strange, and unusual; more specifically, it

is weirdly familiar. Among the meanings of the uncanny is the appearance of the unfamiliar, or the stranger of the home, in a familiar context, and also the transformation of the familiar, into the unfamiliar. In brief, the life that is in death and the death that is in life. Freud's project and his research on the uncanny depend on a special kind of approximation to the far, in which the past is present and childhood is attended to adulthood and the dead in the living. In light of the above, the uncanny emerges, materializes, and grows in ghostly and spectral worlds that cannot be judged by the specific laws of reality (Schweigert, 2010, p.6).

The German philosopher Martin Heidegger (1889–1976) describes the uncanny as an empty spatial space, resulting from the loss of faith, in sacred images, and the man who is incapable of faith is left a stranger, in emptiness and nothingness. Heidegger also argues that the uncanny is an essential character of our being in the world since we are not in our home, our world, but in a perpetual state of anxiety and strangeness. For Heidegger, “Uncanny” is everything that drives us and throws us away from our homes, away from our world, away from everything that is familiar, usual, and safe. That is to say, it is just like the stranger from his home 'unhomely'; an unfamiliar home is also what hinders us from being in our home. The strangest thing is the human's existence himself, and that the universe itself with all its beings is uncanny, and none of these beings is eerier than man (Guardiola, 2008, p.44).

Helen Cixous (1937-) states that the terminology of the uncanny is ambiguous and unstable, its early definitions equivocal, yielding multiple tangents. The uncanny, in its broadest sense, is the sensation of recognizing something curiously out of place. It represents an uncomfortable emotion that was initially described as aesthetic in the sense that it relates to the quality of our feelings. The phantasm, the severed body, and the doppelgänger are examples of the uncanny (Cixous et al., 1976, p.529). In this vein, Jean La Marche thinks that among Uncanny's meanings is “the appearance of the unfamiliar in a familiar context, the appearance of the ghosts of the past and its thoughts and behaviors in the present” (La Marche, 2003, p.100). In other words, the appearance of an unexpected, and creepy stranger from the home. In this regard, uncanny is also the transformation of the static into moving, and the moving into static, the return of the dead to life. Conversely, entering the living into the world of the dead, this perplexity of knowledge and the confusion with which we

do not know whether someone is alive or dead is also one of the special meanings of uncanny (Bronfen,1992, p.113).

In line with this idea, the uncanny is a particular mild kind of anxiety that is connected to certain real-life situations and specific artistic intentions, particularly in fictional literature. In this vein, the uncanny has two types: real uncanny and literary creative uncanny, and, the real uncanny may exceed the literary uncanny. Nevertheless, Freud said that “the uncanny is the only feeling, which is more powerfully experienced in art than in life” (Creed, 2005, p.36). In addition, the literary uncanny is divided into two types: the uncanny of the unfamiliar, and the uncanny of the familiar. Bizarre double repeats, the feeling that your desires or ideas are fulfilled, the confusion of spirit and inanimate objects, and other experiences connected to madness, superstition, or death are some examples of such phenomena or literary impulses (Komorowski, 2015, p. 21).

Mystery still surrounds the meaning of uncanny, so what does uncanny mean? In his book *Uncanny Modernity Cultural Theories, Modern Anxieties* (2008), John Jervis argues that uncanny is not a one-dimensional term or a simple meaning; rather, it is a multi-dimensional term, with complex meanings with diverse connotations. Moreover, uncanny means the appearance of the familiar in the context of the unfamiliar. The appearance of the familiar old ideas, perceptions, and emotions that we think that they had overcome or repressed, in a temporal and spatial context unfamiliar to its appearance. This is the meaning of ‘return of the repressed’ as it is called by the Austrian neurologist Freud (Jarvis, 2008, p.56). However, the majority of literary theory and criticism, art history, philosophy cultural studies, and architecture are all areas of aesthetics, but “Uncanny” has received the most critical and theoretical attention. The most significant examples are Weber, Cixous, Hertz, and Kofman in the 1970s and early 1980s, while Lydenberg and Moller are more recent examples. Therefore, the term uncanny is a negative concept, similar to the unconscious, so it is incoherent internally. It indicates something that cannot be thought of consciously or rationally because of its negativity (Damai, 2004, p.20).

Russian Formalists understand the uncanny as defamiliarisation. Viktor Shklovsky writes “The technique of art is to make objects ‘unfamiliar,’ to make forms difficult, to increase the difficulty and length of perception because the process

of perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged” (Shklovsky, 1917, p.12). This is in order to promote “a renewed and sharpened attention to reality” (Bennett, 2002, p.26). The coupling of things considered unlike is a key theme among Russian Formalist thinkers. Conventionally, traditional opposites are paired to build unexpected connections that alter the subject's perception of the world (Bennett, 2002, p.30). Stephen Frosh thinks that uncanny effects result from seemingly similar, unrelated events. As he writes, “the uncanny . . . is not absolutely other: rather it has a familiar quality . . . the small and unexpected difference that is the almost-the-same brings to light . . . enough to open up a crack in identity” (Frosh, 2013, pp.14-15). The uncanny implies the existence of an oddity that we have not previously noticed, something that threatens the unattended foundations on which we stand. Frosh continues, “whereas the absolutely alien is a clear threat, the almost-the-same is deceptive. It reassures us that it is a friend but then turns out to be on its own mission” (Frosh, 2013, p.16). How strangeness is elicited, then, is different in the uncanny to those techniques of defamiliarisation identified by the Russian Formalists. In the case of the uncanny, things assumed to be the same prove to be different, and their difference is often not immediately apparent (Frosh, 2013, p.17).

1.2 The Etymology of Uncanny

Freud claims that any attempt to define the word ‘uncanny’ in literature is difficult or impossible since the definition makes the word known, familiar, and not eerie. Yet, he has an attempt to define the word in his essay “The Uncanny”. Freud begins his analysis with the word ‘heimlich’. In the German language, the word ‘heimlich’ is the opposite of ‘unheimlich,’ meaning ‘native,’ ‘familiar,’ or belonging to the home. Certainly, the opposite meaning will be something unfamiliar, uneasy, strange, eerie, or unhomely, but Freud argues that these qualities alone are not enough to make something uncanny (Windsor, 2019, p. 88). Numerous academics have offered their own definitions of the term ‘Uncanny’ since the initial idea emerged in the 20th century, yet its meaning goes well beyond what is suggested by a dictionary explanation. According to Masschelein, the term “is untranslatable form and substance; more or less the same impression can be described by words such as ‘scary’, ‘eerie’, or ‘strange’ (Masschelein, 2003, p. 7). Yet, the most important perspectives on the uncanny can be compared, demonstrating how the concept has

continuously evolved into a basis for several academic disciplines, including literature and art (Masschelein, 2003, pp.9-10).

There are originally two options available to us. Either to ascertain the connotation that has been attached to the term 'uncanny' throughout its history or to enumerate all the traits of individuals, objects, sensory impressions, occasions, and circumstances that give rise to our uncanny feelings. The unknowable character of the uncanny is then inferred from what each of these instances has in common. The uncanny is that category of the terrifying that refers to the well-known and long-familiar, and both directions seem to point to the same conclusion. How is this feasible, and under what circumstances can the ordinary become extraordinary and unsettling? This will become clear. The word 'uncanny' means 'strange place' in Latin and, in essence, the need to embody one's fear in unnatural forms in German. The term's meaning has been equated in other languages with anything frightful and scary. Due to its many contradictory meanings and connotations, this term has a unique character in the German language. The adjective 'heimliche' itself signifies all that is known and related to a person's birthplace, as well as all that protects, comforts, and reassures. Its root, heim, means 'house' or 'home' or 'homeland'. However, the term 'heimliche' itself also has additional meanings, including those of black magic, envy, and the effects of the evil eye. It also means attempts to kill someone or bring about his death as well as anything that is opposed to one's familiar surroundings, home, and country. Therefore, the conclusion is that something is uncanny and frightening exactly because it is unknown and unfamiliar.

The German term 'unheimlich' is the opposite of 'heimlich' homely and 'heimlich' native, which are the opposite of what is familiar. Not everything that is unusual and foreign is terrifying, but the relationship cannot be reversed (Leitch, 2018, p.433). The idea of something dangerous and hidden is typically associated with the word 'unheimlich'. Accordingly, the German artist, Max Klinger writes,

At times I feel like a man who walks in the night and believes in ghosts; every corner is *heimlich* and full of terrors for him'. Thus, concludes Freud, heimlich is a word the meaning of which develops towards an ambivalence, until it finally

coincides with its opposite, unheimlich and therefore, unheimlich is in some way or other a subspecies of heimlich. (Sharoni, 2017, p.32)

The first step is clearly to choose a suitable example to start on when reviewing the things, people, feelings, events, and situations that can evoke in us a sense of the uncanny in a specific forcible and definite form (Capps, 2010, p.98). William E. Cain is a literary writer and editor of many works. In *The Norton Anthology of the Theory and Criticism*, he explains the concept of the uncanny:

What is frightening to what arouses dread and horror; equally certainly, too, the word is not always used in a clearly definable sense, so that it tends to coincide with what excites fear in general. Yet we may expect that a special core of feeling is present which justifies the use of a special conceptual term. One is curious to know what this common core is which allows us to distinguish as 'uncanny' certain things which lie within the field of what is frightening. (Cain., et. al ,2018, p. 930)

It is determined that frightening things are "uncanny" because they are weird and unknown. It makes sense that not everything new and unusual is terrifying, but this connection cannot be reversed. Simply put, new things tend to be unsettling and terrifying. Some new things are frightening, but this is not always the case. What is unusual should have something extra to make it uncanny. Making the reader unsure of whether a particular character in the narrative should be considered human or an automaton is one of the most efficient techniques for subtly evoking the uncanny. The author will arrange the information so that the reader's attention is not instantly drawn to his doubt; as a result, he may choose not to address the issue directly because, as has been stated, doing so would quickly diminish the peculiarly emotive impact of the entity. Through the use of an interpolated story and literary uncanniness, Freud described his own experience as a fiction reader. He referred to the "uncanny feeling" he had while reading "Strand Magazine" in English during a period of seclusion when Europe was embroiled in a World War. Freud was intrigued by a tale of a newlywed couple renting their first house and noticing

something odd about a strange-looking table with carved crocodiles on it. The house looked to be inhabited by crocodile-like supernatural beings that were difficult to distinguish from ghosts or other supernatural creatures. The author of that rather trivial tale chose to focus on the experiences of the honeymooners, who caught glimpses of the paranormal activity but were only able to describe the creatures' motion as gliding (Leitch, 2018, p.433).

According to Freud, uncanny feelings arise when a person is more acquainted with something or in situations where they should feel more safe. Furthermore, Freud's use of the German word demonstrates the structural nature of uncanny experiences, i.e., how the experience of feeling "unhomely" or "not-at-home" occurs within the concept of the home. Freud's concept of the uncanny has been the subject of numerous critiques and theories. For instance, Anthony Vidler is an architecture historian and critic who in his work, *The Architectural Uncanny: Essays in the Modern Unhomely*, argues about the concept of the uncanny. The uncanny has, not unnaturally, found its metaphorical home in architecture: first in the house, haunted or not, that pretends to afford the utmost security while opening itself to the secret intrusion of terror, and then in the city, where what was once walled and intimate, the confirmation of community... has been rendered strange by the spatial incursions of modernity (Vidler, 1992, p. 11). Vidler realistically re-enacts the idea of the uncanny in a physical setting. In spite of placing its residents in what is supposed to be a private and personal space, the contemporary home turns out to be a paradoxical location that displaces its inhabitants. Due to its peculiar location, the modern home also has monstrous characteristics because it guarantees stability and security, but it also confounds and threatens, as theologian and literary writer Timothy Beal contends in his book *Religion and Its Monsters*. In so far as they pose a danger to the security and well-being that a home offers, he contends that monsters are embodiments of the uncanny. The monster transforms into a dislodging force that brings disorder into an area of order and inspires doubt in the enduring elements of human existence, such as one's own self, society, and the global order (Beal, 2002, p. 69).

As a result, this word has many contradictory interpretations. Depending on the situation, some people may use it to describe something intimate and familiar to

them, while others may use it to describe something new and unsettling. It is a dual word with multiple meanings, making it inherently strange because it can be used to express a variety of living phenomena as well as literary and artistic phenomena. What occurs, for instance, when dolls and machines seem to be being moved by spirits? When one's own photographs and paintings seem to be alive with frightful life, when one can read the thoughts of others or control objects with their minds, when healthy people's limbs move independently of them and come to have their own lives, as in Kafka's novel *The Metamorphosis* when someone transforms a man into an insect, and when men are buried alive, all of these situations involve irrational, illogical behavior, therefore they are strange (Johnson, 2010, p.152). According to the Oxford English Dictionary,

the earliest recorded use of the word 'uncanny' as meaning 'not quite safe to trust' is in 1773. By 1785 it means 'dangerous, unsafe'. Jorge Louis Borges has identified its first fictional appearance as being William Bickford's (1760-1844) strange oriental Gothic fantasy *Vathek* (1784): this adjective[uncanny] is applicable to certain pages of *Vathek*, and I can recall it in no other book before then. (Jackson, 2013, p.56)

In other words, the term 'uncanny', which originally meant 'smart or careful', has its roots in northern and Scottish English the adjective uncanny: "The Scottish and Northern English dialect word 'canny' means knowing, sagacious and cautious" (Sheard, 2011 p.120). It is preceded by the prefix 'un', which means 'not'. Then, in the late 19th century, the word 'uncanny' entered common usage to describe something that seemed strange, weird, or mysterious. The adjective 'uncanny' is used to characterize things that feel strange and are challenging to explain. The term was repeated many times during the nineteenth century by many writers associated with interviews with the shadow or the devil. For instance, the castle of Dracula was described as a place that causes uneasiness in the well-known novel, *Dracula*, written by Bram Stoker. The castle is known by the narrator as an uncanny place, so fear dominates him and takes hold of his lips (Stoker, 1897, p.56).

Freud mentioned at the beginning of his article *The Uncanny* that dictionaries do not tell us anything specific about the nature of the uncanny. This is because the language itself becomes uncanny, and it is our role to breathe life into this corpse that is the text, trying to make the uncanny familiar (Urdang, 1995, p.212). From this perspective, Freud reviews what is associated with the word uncanny in German, Latin, ancient Greek, English, French, Spanish, Italian, and also in Arabic and Hebrew where the meaning of uncanny mixes with the demonic and the terrible or frightening and sad. So, understanding of the two words 'unheimlich' and 'heimlich' in various languages appears to agree. More definitions of the uncanny are introduced by Freud as he continues to study it in a variety of languages, including 'strange, foreign' (Greek), 'uncomfortable, uneasy, gloomy, dismal, and daemonic, horrible' (Arabic, Hebrew). In other terms, the words 'gruesome' and 'daemonic' indicate unpleasant and horrifying, typically because they are related to death or harm. 'Daemonic' refers to the internal restlessness that propels us into the unknown and causes us to be self-destructive, "Unheimlich is the name for everything that ought to have stayed secret and hidden but has come to light" (Freud, 1997, p.199). Freud mentions in several pages the various meanings of the word, and what is associated with it along with its linguistic roots in German dictionaries and heritage books. He concludes that the word has become dual or with an increasing emotional and cognitive contradiction and that it is also related to the word 'house' or 'home'.

Additionally, it is related to the meanings of alienation, isolation, eeriness, and distance from the familiar and home. Thus, and from Freud's study of the linguistic roots of the term in human languages, it may be understood that this term indicates a person's feeling that he is not at home in this world, that is, he is not in the place where he should be (Vidler, 1994, p.143). In connection with this, Jacques Lacan (1901-1981) a psychoanalytic theorist, expanded on the idea by saying that "the uncanny places us in the field where we do not know how to distinguish good from bad, pleasure from displeasure, causing an uncontrollable unease that signals to the real" (Hunter, 2002 p.202). Since then, the notion has been embraced by a wide range of philosophers and theorists, including Julia Kristeva's idea of abjection and roboticist Masahiro Mori's uncanny valley.

1.3 Mechanism of Uncanny in the Light of Freud's Psychoanalytical Theory

1.3.1 Ernst Jentsch and Sigmund Freud: The Beginnings of the Uncanny Theory

In 1906, a German psychiatrist Ernst Anton Jentsch (1867–1919) published a study titled “Über die Psychologie des Unheimlichen English: On the Psychology of the Uncanny”. Jentsch’s study deals with popular culture and aesthetics, but it also serves as the source of many of Freud's pivotal concepts. Jentsch uses the word ‘unheimlich’ to describe “how someone to whom something 'uncanny' happens is not quite 'at home' or 'at ease' in the situation concerned, that the thing is or at least seems to be foreign to him” (Jentsch, 1995, p.217). That essay is essential to understand the uncanny as a term in philosophical and theoretical debate. Jentsch proposes the concept of intellectual doubt to explain how specific emotions, such as mistrust, unease, and even hostility are responsible for generating the effect of the uncanny in response to the new and the unusual. He provides numerous examples to support his assertion as a result and explains why people cannot get acclimated to masks and disguises. According to Jentsch, wax figures and robots seem animate objects due to their striking likeness to human people.

Jentsch gives the novella Hoffmann's *The Sandman* as an example: “the doubtful tension is made serviceable by the author's virtuosic manipulation for the purposes of artistic investigation” (Gomez, 2019, p.30). Olympia is a life-like doll which can move and make sounds, a simulacrum which can potentially pass as a human. Jentsch believes that “a particularly favorable condition for awakening uncanny sensations is created when there is intellectual uncertainty whether an object is alive or not and when an inanimate object becomes too much like an animate” (Freud, 1990, p. 233). He believes that this is a common technique employed by storytellers to exploit the reader's psychic helplessness. Frequently, at the end of the novel, the reader learns that the entire experience of unsettling nature was actually the protagonist's hallucination. Jentsch believes that people have an innate tendency to perceive inanimate objects as living. The child of nature populates his environment with demons; small children speak earnestly to a chair, their spoon, etc. This tendency, however, appears to diminish as people's ability to think rationally increases with age. Jentsch emphasizes the significance of intellectual ambiguity in

the genesis of anomalous experiences, and also a state of mind devoid of doubts (Sorum, 2019 p.149).

Freud writes a direct reply to Jentsch's study in which Freud divides his essay into three sections. In order to clarify his key idea of the uncanny, Freud explores the etymology of the German word *unheimlich* in the first section. Jentsch's theories serve as the foundation for Freud's second section, which extends on Jentsch's analysis of the uncanny in *The Sandman* written by Ernst Theodor Amadeus Hoffmann (1776- 1822), a German Romantic author of fantasy, Gothic horror, music critic and artist. He focuses on the doll Olympia in his analysis, although he takes a different stance than Jentsch. The final section of Freud's piece delves into how the uncanny influences both fictional works and case studies from real-world situations (Mrówczyńska, 2021, p.222). Freud begins his essay by attempting to rebut Jentsch's central thesis that the uncanny is inextricably bound up with uncertainty only to increasingly give ground on this point. Freud responds explicitly to a number of these remarks, stating that Jentsch's work is "a fertile but not exhaustive paper" (Freud 1919, p.1). Jentsch's beliefs serve as the foundation for Freud's subsequent study of the uncanny. As a result of their metaphorical relationship with the castration complex, and in light of his investigation, Freud concludes that the fear of losing one's eye because of the sandman's deed becomes the main source of uncanny feelings "a morbid anxiety connected with the eyes [...] is [...] a substitute for the dread of castration" (Freud, 1990, p.7). He undercuts the significance of inanimate items in creating the uncanny effect, which was the emphasis of Jentsch's research on the topic, by arriving at this conclusion. The ambiguity about an object's existence is "quite irrelevant in connection with this other, more striking instance of uncanniness" (Freud, 1990, p. 7).

At this moment, Freud is unable to recognize that Jentsch's perception of the idea encompasses more than just uncertainties regarding whether or not an object is living. In his analysis of the uncanny, Freud does not take into account Jentsch's concern of "aliveness [and] how we respond to our own confusion regarding that issue" (Barnaby, 2015, p. 981). As already mentioned above, Jentsch's theories served as the foundation for Freud's uncanny theory, which is why in his subsequent analysis he concentrates on the doll Olympia while departing from Jentsch's

viewpoint. Precisely, Freud assures that humans truly want these inanimate items to be alive because they treat them as though they are living things (Barnaby, 2015, p. 983). Freud begins by providing a general description of the novella, which he calls 'short'. Although it may be considered an exaggeration that his summary is three pages long the actual narrative is approximately twenty pages long. However, Freud's reinterpretation of the event served as the basis for subsequent research, but many scholars view his interpretation as "a manipulation of the data and the text" (Masschelein, 2011, p. 109).

Freud examines the factors of the uncanny like repetition compulsion, castration complex, animism, magic and sorcery, the omnipotence of thoughts, man's perspective on death, and the double as some of the causes of the uncanny sense. By asserting that anything can seem both familiar and unfamiliar at the same time. However, the uncanny is much more than just a feeling of alienation or confusion (Weber, 2000, p.231). The concepts of the uncanny have applications in a variety of domains, including art and literature, film, cultural studies, and sexual difference. The uncanny has historically been associated with mental illnesses, inanimate things, the figure of the double, and a fear of the dead, but today it also deals with issues related to cloning, body transformation, literature, religion, and politics. The dualistic aspect of the word was first made clear by Freud, who concentrated on the meanings of *Heimlich* and its antonym. The translators' choice of the uncanny for the odd and the ambiguity of the German word *unheimlich* led to the development of several ideas and linked the Freudian theory to weird literature and literary criticism. Since Freud's "The Uncanny" was first published in 1919, the uncanny has advanced significantly, and it appears that with each reading, new interpretations of the idea are revealed (Royle, 2003, p.75).

1.3.2 The Uncanny After Freud

The uncanny has received a lot of attention, in the humanities since Freud's renowned essay on the subject. It has also become a common metaphor in cultural practices and art criticism. It has been widely adopted to describe the uncanny as an uncomfortable ambivalence between the familiar and the strange, which is how Freud defined it. In harmony with modernity, the uncanny develops and signals a contemporary kind of strangeness. The uncanny, as Freud describes it, is often

accompanied by a sensation of fatefulness, and eerie mysticism. Yet, as Mladen Dolar observes, the examples he cites are predominantly modern. Dolar suggests the uncanny “is historically covered and veiled by the area of the sacred and untouchable” (Dolar, 1993, p. 7). In the 1970s, deconstructionists, whose main strategy is to focus on the text marginal, were attracted to the concept of the uncanny as the uncanny perfectly satisfies this technique. The uncanny has historically been connected to inanimate objects, mental disorders, the figure of the double, and a fear of the dead, but in modern times it also touches on topics like cloning, body modification, literature, religion, and politics.

I am going to choose five scholars, as a sample for this period after Freud. Those are Jacques Derrida, Helen Cixous, Tzvetan Todorov, Jacques Lacan, and Masahiro Mori. In his essay, Derrida (1930-2004) focuses on ‘themes of repetition and doubling,’ which were the key components of Freud's uncanny. He refers to Freud’s essay “The Uncanny”, while he is stating that certain words are undecidable because of lexical ambiguity. According to Derrida,

We find ourselves constantly being brought back to that text by the paradoxes of the double and of repetition, the blurring of the boundaries lines between 'imagination' and 'reality', between the 'symbol' and the 'thing it symbolizes' ..., the references to Hoffmann and the literature of the fantastic, the consideration on the double meaning of words. (Derrida, 1994, p.220)

As promised in the cited passage, Derrida's studies on the uncanny were expanded in “Specters of Marx” in 1994. This provocative investigation into Marxism and the future of the world following the fall of the Soviet Union defines the uncanny as a “destabilizing notion that upsets the ethical and political order” (Masschelein, 2011, p.138). But it's important for the idea of the uncanny that Derrida takes into account paranormal phenomena like ghosts and spirits. He claims that the apparitions symbolize the future rather than the past and that communism and democracy are examples of the future (Royle 2003, p. 58). Derrida defines the uncanny as follows:

a stranger who is already found within (das Heimliche-Unheimliche), more intimate with one than one is oneself, the absolute proximity of a stranger whose power is singular and anonymous (esspukt), an unnamable and neutral power, that is, undecidable, [...] and identity that [...] invisibly occupies places belonging finally neither to us nor to it. (Derrida, 1994, P.217)

Derrida claims that every concept in “Specters” of Marx deals with the uncanny to the extent that the title of the essay may have been “Marx-the uncanny”. “Derrida coined the term ‘hauntology’ which means “the haunt and the return of the repressed in which the ghostly takes precedence over being, existence” (Derrida, 1994, p. 202).

Helene Cixous is another deconstructionist who conceptualized the uncanny by establishing a close connection between the uncanny, literature, queer studies, and feminism theory. In her essay “Fiction and Its Phantoms”, she also addresses homosexuality and sexual identity issues. She argues that the positioning of the doll Olympia in a footnote of Freud's “The Uncanny” is rather a “typographic metaphor of repression and it is a matter [...] of turning the Olympia episode into satire, thereby managing to eclipse and obscure it” (Cixous, 1976, p.537). Cixous concludes that Heimlich and Unheimlich merge to form an androgyny: containing both masculine and feminine characteristics. According to her, “homo-and hetero- coincide with one another in the same manner as heimlich and unheimlich do in Freud's study, demonstrating that the uncanny and doubts about sexual identity appear to be inextricably related” (Royle, 2003, pp. 42-43).

Tzvetan Todorov tries to define the uncanny in his book *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*, first published in 1970. He concludes that “the fantastic incites uncertainty in the subject about what is real, and remains always irrational; the uncanny, however, seems fantastic but ultimately can be explained rationally” (Todorov, 1973, pp. 25-26). Todorov has a different concept of the uncanny than Freud since he thinks that Freud's theories are still being put to the test. However, the notion of hesitation allows for a shift of the uncanny towards the fantastic. Freud's text's ambiguity establishes a relationship between fantastic and uncanny literature. Todorov states that the motifs of the fantastic and the uncanny are

intertwined, “the themes of the fantastic have become, literally, the very themes of the psychological investigation of the last fifty years” (Kittler, 1997, p. 95). Todorov thinks that the book must make the reader debate between a supernatural and a natural explanation for the occurrences. The author emphasizes the significance of the reader's mindset in the reading process, “The fantastic implies, then, not only the existence of an uncanny event, which provokes a hesitation in the reader and the hero; but also a kind of reading, which [...] must be neither 'poetic' nor 'allegorical” (Todorov, 1973, p.32).

As stated by Todorov, the defining characteristic of the uncanny is the hesitation or confusion, bewilderment, and doubt produced in the reader, through implausible or frightening incidents within the text, for this fictional genre to be one related to the uncanny. Also, there must be some kind of temporary, unstable ambiguity, associated with doubt, confusion, and anxiety, which he works to produce in the reader before this confusion can be broken up or terminated in the narrative, and explained by the ordinary laws of reality. The effect of uncanny continues during that period in which this hesitation and confusion continues. Todorov distinguishes the uncanny from the marvelous in literature and says that weird phenomena may be explained by these laws of reason even though they are somehow implausible, extraordinary, shocking; frightening, rare, disruptive, and unexpected. The heroes of stories and novels, as well as readers, feel their inability to transcend or escape from the present, when secrets, memories, and repressed information that should have remained hidden become visible, and revealed, yet disjointed; separate from their original contexts (Praver, 1982, p.89).

Petra Eckhard in his book, *Chronotopes of the Uncanny Time and Space in Postmodern New York Novels*, uses the theoretical frameworks of Freud and Todorov. He explores how American writers of the late 20th century have translated the Psychoanalytical concept of the uncanny into their novelistic discourses. Eckhard provides a long discussion of Todorov's theory noting that “Todorov's fantastic bears a striking similarity to Jentsch's uncanny” (Eckhard, 2011, p.35). Jacques Lacan, a French psychoanalyst, also discusses Freud's theory of the uncanny in the following words:

The unheimlich is what appears at the place where the minus phi should be. Indeed, everything starts with imaginary castration, because there is no image of lack, and with good reason. When something does appear there, it is, therefore if I may put it this way because lack happens to be lacking. (Seshadri, 2002, p.84)

In correlation with his theory, Lacan suggests Freud's thorough language analysis as the source of the uncanny (Robertson, 2015, p.232). According to him, the Heimlich is familiar, while the Unheimlich is unfamiliar. His spot of focus in the uncanny is the immediate arrival of anxiety, especially when the unfamiliar is familiar. When the subject arrives at the homely void inside, he is in the domain of the unheimlich. All of this implies that Lacan's interpretation of 'anxiety' has a similar object, which is a domestic need. Lacan agrees with Freud's theoretical viewpoint and uses his seminar to illustrate how anxiety begins as bewilderment and transforms into anxiety afterward (Lacan, 2010, p.205).

Masahiro Mori, a Japanese researcher, released a significant study in 1970 in which he puts forward the hypothesis that people would not be drawn to robots that resemble humans, but can still be distinguished from being human, but rather would experience an uncanny feeling. The term 'the uncanny valley' was first used to describe the eerie effect of humanlike figures that are too lifelike (Soler, 2015, p.87). Finally, some people are familiar with the uncanny under the term "the uncanny valley". The uncanny valley's effect is more relevant to art and culture, as technological advancements permit more lifelike human representations in two and three dimensions as well as new, more realistic ways to consume images, including virtual reality. The uncanny valley effect is a phenomenon that has received much study in the field of social robots, and numerous studies have since been carried out to corroborate Mori's theory. The details of a robot's behavior and appearance produce such a strange feeling (Mori, 2012, p. 39).

1.4 Uncanny in Literature

There are commonly two main trends of the uncanny in literature. First, the uncanny of the unfamiliar, as in cases of transformation, duplication, metamorphosis, and copying. Second, the uncanny of the familiar, such as repetition, absurdity, chaos, and an imbalance in the sense of reality and self. In the context of literature,

Jentsch believes that feelings of uncanniness most often arise when the reading subject is confronted with the notion of doubt:

In storytelling, one of the most reliable artistic devices for the producing of uncanny effects easily is to leave the reader in uncertainty as to whether he has a human person or rather an automaton before him in the case of a particular character. This is done in such a way that the uncertainty does not appear directly at the focal point of his attention, so that he is not given the occasion to investigate and clarify that matter straight away; for the particular emotional effect, as we said, would hereby be quickly dissipated. (Jentsch, 1995, p.13)

Correspondingly, Freud divides the uncanny into two classes and he does his best to differentiate; the repressed uncanny, and the surmounted uncanny. They are different. The repressed uncanny is the return to consciousness of the repressed, for instance, evidence of incestuous feelings or experiences. The surmounted uncanny is the return of discarded beliefs, for example, a person who does not normally believe in ghosts being confronted by what appears to be a ghost (Freud, 1990, p.150). Freud labels the return of the repressed uncanny, and surmounted uncanny as 'regression'. The idea of the repressed is familiar enough and relates centrally to sexuality. Two key passages on the surmounted uncanny in 'The Uncanny' detail what it is. Writing concerning the possibility of the supernatural, the magical, and the animistic, Freud states:

We – or our primitive forefathers – once believed that these possibilities were realities, and were convinced that they actually happened. Nowadays we no longer believe in them, we have surmounted these modes of thought; but we do not feel quite sure of our new beliefs, and the old ones still exist with us ready to seize upon any confirmation. As soon as something actually happens in our lives which seems to confirm the old, discarded beliefs we get a feeling of the uncanny. (Freud, 1990, p.224)

In this vein, Freud says that the writer of stories possesses a special directed force by which he controls the reader, and then he possesses it through those emotional means, that he can put us into his world. He can direct our current feelings, and make them freeze in one direction, or flow in another. He can also achieve a variety of effects by using the same writing material. According to Freud, a writer can recreate this effect by,

in a sense betraying us [the reader] to the superstitiousness which we have ostensibly surmounted; he deceives us by promising to give us the sober truth and then after all overstepping it. We react to his inventions as we would have reacted to real experiences; by the time we have seen through his trick it is already too late. (Freud, 1990, p.374)

As previously mentioned, the storyteller possesses the creative freedom that many others do not have in ordinary life. He has the freedom of imagination since he possesses the energy that makes him give life to some of the things and beings that lack life. Here the reader is compelled to stop his logical judgment on things and leaves his command to the writer to direct him as he wants. Hence, the reader becomes negative and the writer positive, yet in the reader's negativity there is a kind of positivity, and in the writer's positivity there is a kind of negativity. The reader is surrounded here by the imagination of the writer with his will and lets the writer direct him as he wants. But he interacts with him and moves in this direction in his way as well. As for the writer, he may also be subject to his thoughts, dreams, and fantasies, directing him wherever he wants (Haughton, 2003, p. 77). In his essay, Freud also alludes to two further classes of the uncanny. These additional classes are effects to do with the death drive, and uncanny effects specific to storytelling. What the four classes of Freud's uncanny share is the central insight of his essay.

Freud associates uncanny effects with childhood fears to do with silence, solitude, and darkness. He enumerates other links between the uncanny and childhood, such as the formation of the castration complex, and the common belief in

children of the omnipotence of thoughts: that they only have to wish for something, for instance, to make it come true. He also links the uncanny to the figure of the double and coincidence and repetition (Freud, 1990, pp. 357-358). More elaborately, there are many dimensions of uncanny in literature related to life events and different forms of human interactions and human behavior. Freud suggested the dimensions of literary and artistic uncanny. The anxiety of losing something or someone dear. This is evident in the close link between the uncanny and the fear of death or the fear of losing a body part. The phenomenon of the consort and its association with fear. This is represented in cases of disintegration, division, and multiplicity of the self, thoughts of shadows, mirrors, and others.

Animation (dummies). The transformation of the dead into the living, and vice versa the transformation of the living into the dead, and the combination of life and death in one case, as in the case of dolls, for example. More broadly, uncanny is associated with mechanism, repetition, dolls, and dead bodies, as well as with living beings, especially human ones, which combine the living and the dead. Thus, puppets are essentially dead, because they are inanimate objects that do not speak or move, but through special technical tricks they can be made to move, and when these puppets are in human form, the possibility of raising fear is greater. The puppets and their images embody the emotional contradiction between the human and the living and the dead robot. The dolls are also associated with the uncanny because they are located in a place between the living and the non-living, the rigid and the moving; Hence, they are located in the region of ambiguity and non-specificity (Stern, 1997, p.122).

Based on the description above, there are important characteristics of uncanny, which can be summarized as follows:

1- Uncanny is a sense of aesthetics and life. It is also a life event associated with the subsequent emotion associated with the existence of anything weird. It is also terrifying and strange inducing anxiety and panic. It can be found in literature, art, and other forms as well.

2-Uncanny appears in new situations, but it is the one that brings us back and reminds us of familiar past situations. Thus, strange situations are like returning and

repeating old familiar situations that may have been repressed or forgotten previously.

3- Uncanny is also associated with repetition of situations, feelings and ideas, and that repetition is associated with strangeness involuntarily in most cases.

4- Feelings of uncanny are more likely in familiar and realistic situations, whereas the frightening compulsive force that surrounds the realistic situation is stronger. As Freud said, in literature it is easier to create the effects of uncanny when we exist within the realm of reality and not outside it, that is, not in the realm of the supernatural and paranormal beings.

5- It is possible to evoke a sense of uncanny through some subjects, such as wax statues embodying human figures; well-made puppets; automata or robotic creatures that mimic living things; As well as with regard to ghosts, mirrors, likenesses, and mummies.

6- Uncanny is often embodied through the idea or personality of the consort. Personalities can be considered identical because they are similar to each other and this is done by uniting oneself with another person. The projection mechanism plays an important role, as processes of duplication, division, exchange, and multiplicity of the self occur (Royle, 2003, p.37). Besides, there is strangeness, that repeats the same thing, of the same characteristics, or the same personality traits for the same names or even the same crimes; through multiple generations. Freud stated that the confusion between the living and the dead is not alone sufficient for the occurrence of the uncanny; rather, the anxiety that exists between them is associated with doubt and confusion. The mixing of life with death is what causes that feeling of uncanny (Freud, 1990, p.365).

The uncanny plays a significant role in a great deal of literature as it is a fundamental aspect of the post-apocalyptic world, which is marked by loss and destruction. Indeed, literature is one of the best means to deepen our understanding of the world. Because literary works cannot be fully appreciated without reference to their contexts, the selected McCarthy novels offer the reader an opportunity to enter into the world of the uncanny. I am going to use a psychoanalytic literary approach through which it examines the characters' selfhood in the uncanny world. In the next chapters, I will discuss *The Road* and *Blood Meridian*, two of McCarthy's darkest

and most challenging novels, which serve as both the pinnacle of that earlier period and the entry point into the later Westerns. The author's fame will always be based on this last work, which is probably the height of his artistic achievement.



2. EXPLORATIONS OF THE UNCANNY IN *THE ROAD*

2.1 Introduction

The end of the world is an interesting topic, which has been covered well in many works of literature, and *The Road* (2006) is one of these works. *The Road* is a post-apocalyptic tale set in a southern location and the novel is read by some critics as “haunted both by Old Southern slavery guilt and by anxiety over New Southern consumption” (Ellis, 2013, p. 50). McCarthy wrote *The Road* to show how people live in a world that has been destroyed by human beings. Both readers and researchers have been interested in his work because it shows the difficulty of living in a post-apocalyptic world. McCarthy gives his readers the chance to go where his characters go and even feel what they feel. For his book *The Road*, Cormac McCarthy won the Pulitzer Prize in 2006 (Frye, 2012, p.78). He has also received the PEN/Saul Bellow Award for lifetime achievement in American literature. These two awards have drawn the attention of several academics and reviewers from various fields of study. *All the Pretty Horses* immediately after its release in 1993 sold 500,000 copies, and gained the National Book Award for Fiction and the National Book Critics Circle Award. In particular, following the popularity of his books *All the Pretty Horses*, *No Country for Old Men*, and *The Road*, he has been regarded as one of the most well-known American authors alongside Philip Roth, Don DeLillo, and Thomas Pynchon.

McCarthy’s works, for the most part, manage brutality, fear, awfulness, pandemics, and other topics that human experience in the journey of endurance. He expressly discusses the terrible and violent situations in the great majority of his writings. For instance, the kid who is the hero of the novel *Blood Meridian* starts his horrific existence after the passing of his mother. Additionally, McCarthy asserts in his other novels, including *The Road*, *The Son of God*, and *The Crossing*, that when social norms are ignored, people adopt the brutal, callous characteristics of the process of natural selection. Here you need to relate these topics to the uncanny. This novel ‘*The Road*’ (2006) is regarded as a typical illustration of how the uncanny might appear in a post-apocalyptic setting. The goal of the present chapter is to illustrate how the characteristics of Uncanny are exhibited throughout McCarthy's

novel. It also aims to illuminate how the novel's protagonists have attempted to deal with the fundamental truth of the uncanny when the world crumbles.

2.2 Uncanny and Anxiety

The 21st century is characterized by a heightened sense of anxiety related to the increasingly uncanny quality of contemporary life. Through his study, *The Uncanny* 1919 Freud shows that the uncanny cannot exist without anxiety. Anxiety is a part of everything uncanny, but not all anxiety is uncanny. Freud thinks that anxiety is linked to the feeling of losing someone, loss of the self as an object of self-consciousness, or loss of access to an object through perception,

the uncanny is a form of anxiety, and anxiety in general is still considered by Freud to be essentially a result of repression—and of its “return.” The Uncanny is thus that form of anxiety in which what appeared to be strange reveals itself as familiar, without however losing its quality of strangeness just as that which was repressed once had to be known, and remains known, but not to self-consciousness. (Masschelein, 2012, p.42)

However, Todorov defines the uncanny as the reader's uncertainty or confusion, hesitation, and doubt created by unbelievable or terrifying happenings within a text therefore the fantasy genre is related to the uncanny. Todorov also says that there must be some kind of unstable ambiguity linked with uncertainty, bewilderment, and fear, which helps to produce inside the reader's mind; this ambiguity may be dismantled or terminated in the narrative and clarified by the usual laws of reality. The uncanny effect lasts as long as this hesitation and confusion last. Todorov asserts that the purely miraculous text makes both the main characters of the story and the reader completely unsure or confused so that they cannot accept the unfamiliar events that describe him. This kind of anxiety is embodied in the structure of the literary works (Greenwood, 2009, p.232).

The descriptive vision of actions that are controlled by doubt, dominated by suspicion, and loss of certainty is transmitted from the central character in the story or novel to the reader. In other words, the ambiguous events are formed by the confusion or conflation that occurs between the narrator and the protagonist of the

story inside the work (Todorov, 1973, p.211). McCarthy adopts Todorov's point of view regarding the appearance of the uncanny in the text and applies all these conditions in his novel *The Road* when he makes the reader and protagonists live a state of suspicious, uncertainty, and ambiguity from the first line of the novel,

When he woke in the woods in the dark and the cold of the night he'd reach out to touch the child sleeping beside him. Nights dark beyond darkness and the days grayer each one than what had gone before. (McCarthy, 2006, p.1)

The Road portrays a trip of a father and his son, whose names are unknown! and are trying to stay alive and safe while crossing a dangerous road in a destroyed country. During the trip, the father tries to keep his son safe by showing him how to protect himself and keep him from getting hurt. So, the father always orders his son to carry the pistol. The first image of the uncanny is that the heroes have no names. McCarthy from the beginning wants to make the reader live in a state of anxiety which is one of most the important signs of uncanny. The protagonists are nameless, which means there is something wrong that happened or will happen to them. As in many narratives, life after post-apocalyptic becomes meaningless, fruitless, valueless, and senseless. Thus, the individuals turn to be merely numbers and tools without feelings. Thus, the novel begins with a vague scene, as we do not know what happened. Is it a nuclear attack, a falling star on Earth, or a world war that destroys everything? These are the worries of advanced technology, immorality, and capitalism in a world of wretchedness and anxiety (Chen, 2018, p.119).

The protagonists, a son, and his father are known only as 'the boy' and 'the man', walking in a barren wasteland, and sleeping in the bush. They live in fear; it is a world occupied by slayers and cannibals. The uncanniness of this post-apocalyptic world resides in a future that has been transformed into the past. The past recedes, as do the man's memories. As they fade, so does the language "How much was gone already? The sacred idiom shorn of its referents and so of its reality" (McCarthy, 2006, p. 93). The uncanniness of the situation emerges because the past/present/future becomes indistinguishable since all the ornament of modern life has become useless; nonetheless. Just as the landscape "has been universalized through lack of specificity, so have the characters; they have no names, belong

nowhere and are going nowhere” (Søfting 2013, p. 710). When the father and his son are wandering this primitive landscape, they see roads, billboards, cars and houses, but these signifiers of modernity have been transformed into ruins. The food they eat is also outdated in this invalid world. They refuse to resort to the barbarism and primitive practice of cannibalism; the only remaining food is tinned. Plants and animals are gone (Gwinner, 2011, p. 198).

The father and the boy live on the ruins of a vanished consumer society. The term ‘modern’ has changed over time, which is one issue with the terms ‘modern’ and ‘postmodern’. Modernism is sometimes described as an epistemic shift that took place at the turn of the 20th century, although we might very well refer to ourselves as modern. However, McCarthy creates a universe in *The Road* that can truly be called postmodern. It comes after modernity but is in no way modern itself. In this world, modernity is truly historical and ruined. McCarthy writes,

He the man tried to think of something to say but he could not. He’d had this feeling before, beyond the numbness and the dull despair. The world shrinking down about a raw core of passible entities. The names of things slowly following those things into oblivion. Colors. The names of birds. Things to eat. Finally, the names of things one believed to be true. More fragile than he would have thought. (McCarthy, 2006, p. 93)

The fragility between the signifier and the signified has been recognized as a major theme in *The Road*. Donovan Gwinner states that “the novel stages a largely completed process of signs becoming irrevocably divorced from the things they represent, a dying state of signification and meaning to match corporeal death” (Gwinner, 2011, p.143). It is worth reiterating the association between anxiety and the uncanny in Lacanian theory “The phenomenon of anxiety is the sudden appearance of the Heimlich within the frame” (Lacan, 2011, p.76). Anxiety, at its core, is uncanny. Lacan says that Freud's deep study of language is where the idea of the uncanny comes from, and the Unheimlich is unfamiliar and the Heimlich is familiar, so he focuses on the uncanny through the feeling of ‘anxiety’ that comes especially when the unfamiliar becomes familiar. In anxiety “what was already

there” appears “at much closer quarters, at home, Heim” (Lacan 2011, p. 75). When the subject gets to the empty space inside, it enters the realm of the unheimlich. All of this means that Lacan's reading of anxiety is also based on homely needs.

At a certain point in the novel, the reader may understand the ambiguity surrounding the scene through the questions that have been asked by the boy. Again, the boy begins his question in the next conversation:

Why are they the state roads?

Because they used to belong to the states. What used to be called the states.

But there's not any more states?

No.

What happened to them?

I don't know exactly. That's a good question.

But the roads are still there.

Yes. For a while.

How long a while?

I don't know.

Maybe quite a while.

There's nothing to uproot them so they should be okay for a while. (McCarthy, 2006, p.43).

From this conversation, the son now understands the significance of the state roads' names “advertisements for goods which no longer existed” (McCarthy, 2006, p.135). However, the father does not know the answers to other issues because no one does, such as the cause of the world's collapse and what the world would be like in the following days, so he lets his son learn such things by himself through time.

The uncanny appears in the novel when the signifiers disappear. Signifiers of modernity are radically transformed; now familiar signifiers are subject to unfamiliar significations. McCarthy writes,

The ashes of the late world carried on the bleak and temporal winds to and fro in the void. Carried forth and scattered and carried forth again. Everything uncoupled from its shoring. Unsupported in the ashen air. Sustained by a breath, trembling and brief. (McCarthy, 2006, p.10)

Lacan accepts Freud's theory which gives a diagram of anxiety that shows how it starts with confusion and leads to worry after it changes. Therefore, McCarthy exploits this point in his novel *The Road* to make anxiety a source of uncanny. McCarthy depicts the different characteristics of the uncanny through his narrative of alienation, dislocation, and homelessness. The concept of 'home' in this novel refers to dangerous places that are engraved with anxiety and tension rather than the secure place and the place where someone belongs. The dreadfulness of the place creates the feeling of not 'at home' and it makes the characters afraid of 'getting lost'. For instance, many times the boy wishes to die like his mother as he does not want to live in this fearful world, and he says:

I wish I was with my mom.

You mean you wish that you were dead.

Yes.

You must not say that.

But I do.

Don't say it. It is a bad thing to say.

I can't help it. (McCarthy, 2006, p.30)

Father and son walk to the south coast to find a better place to live for the rest of their lives. A few months before the boy was born, an end-of-the-world event destroyed civilization and burned up the whole earth, leaving a huge cloud around

the planet. They make the trip the best way to stay alive and avoid the hazards of the trail, and the most crucial aspect of the excursion is enduring through to the end. The two characters in the journey are put to the test as perseverance becomes a constant intellectual and moral struggle (Qiu-sheng, 2017, p.213). In a post-apocalyptic uncanny world, life is so dangerous, the father does not have anyone except his son, the son asks his father:

Did you have any friends?

Yes. I did.

Lots of them?

Yes.

Do you remember them?

Yes. I remember them.

What happened to them?

They died.

All of them?

Yes. All of them.

Do you miss them?

Yes. I do. (McCarthy, 2006, p. 33)

According to this dialogue; the father has lost all of his loved ones. In this uncanny society, his identity has fractured along with the identities of those who truly survive. He is questioned at a certain point: “Are you a doctor? then he answers, I’m not anything” (McCarthy, 2006, p.64). Taking care of his son has consumed and replaced his identity and the life he has experienced. Because they do not have a place to call home, the two protagonists encounter numerous difficulties on their trip.

The father and his kid avoid towns on their travels because there are ‘bad guys’ sleeping under the rain and wearing ragged clothes which signifies they are homeless. For instance, an unknown man robs their clothes and runs away. They follow him and return the items that are taken by the thief. The father forces the thief to take off his clothing despite his pleas for mercy due to the cold. The son feels sympathetic and grieving for the thief:

Don't do this, man.

You didn't mind doing it to us.

I'm begging you.

Papa, the boy said.

Come on. listen to the kid.

You tried to kill us.

I'm starving, man. You'd have done the same.

You took everything.

Come on, man. I'll die. I'm going to leave you the way you left us. (McCarthy, 2006, p. 136)

Because he poses a threat to their safety, the father continues to treat him in the same manner as previously. Later in the story, the father and his kid are traveling in a wrecked car outside of a deserted city when they discover some lights in a home in front of them. The father is amazed at how these people are still alive and what they are eating. Then, the son says to him: “Who are they, papa?” (McCarthy, 2006, p.44). The father cannot reply because the people are cannibals. After they awaken, the son's interest is in security when he sees the unknown people and again asks:

We're going to be okay, aren't we papa?

Yes. we are.

And nothing bad is going to happen to us.

That's right. (McCarthy, 2006, p.44).

The boy says this because he is scared and unsure of what will happen to them, yet his father instills in him a sense of security. However, the boy and man's immigration across the restricted local boundaries and the abandoned locations create a sense of dislocation. The father takes his son home to seek food even though he is aware of the dangers. "The house was tall and stately with white Doric columns across the front [...] fine Morris paper on the walls, water stained and sagging" (McCarthy, 2006, p.111). The large house becomes dreadfully unhomey due to the decay of the structures as well as the bared and crowded individuals, who are now thought of as a store for cannibals. This reverses the notion, of turning home from a familiar local location into a place filled with fear and monsters. The house becomes a source of the uncanny and the pain of the uncanny and the absence of safety is clear in the realm of *The Road*. It is evident throughout the novel that the father is familiar with his son and is invested in getting to know him. They are traveling through the same world and face the same difficulties. As a result, the father completely determines himself with his son (Turner, 2013, p.324).

Peter Boxall in his work, *Twenty-first-century fiction: A critical introduction* argues that McCarthy's prose imitates the stripped-back existence of the novel's new world order. In this world, the symbolic structures of the past continue only as an irrational, outdated remainder:

For the father in *The Road*, too, the encounter with the novel's ashen, post-infernal landscape signals the death of language, the dissolution of the forms in which we have clothed our being in the world [...] As the names die in *The Road*, as the human forms lose their capacity to capture the environment, to bind themselves to an estranged earth, the novel traces a vast sundering between word and world, between historical form and an unnamable present, an unliving time

without precedent and without succession. The father lists the names of things that are fading, eluding him in his new, unaccommodated state. (Boxall, 2013, p. 218)

Although this happened years ago, the son has not seen the stars, the sun, the moon, or any trees, birds, or animals that are alive: “The evanescent past becomes cloudy and opaque ‘Like the onset of some cold glaucoma dimming away the world’” (McCarthy, 2010c, p. 1). Father and son both wear masks to keep the ash away from getting into their lungs.

It is obvious that they care about each other and love each other a lot. Their plan to stay alive is to keep moving along the road and get food, clothes, and other goods from the ruins of homes, farms, and towns. As a father and son move south through a cold, grey environment, they meet people from all walks of life, from good to bad. They try hard to hold onto memories and ideals that are becoming less and less important in a world where both the past and the future have been erased. Lazarus defines the object of anxiety as “an uncertain, existential threat” (Lazarus, 1991, p.273), whereas Stanley Rachman describes anxiety as “a tense unsettling anticipation of a threatening but formless event feeling of uneasy suspense. It is a negative effect feeling so closely related to fear. In many circumstances, the two terms are used interchangeably” (Rachman, 2004, p.3). The protagonist evaluates the house as a threat, but it is an uncertain, vague, and elusive threat. Anxiety shows the subtle nature of the threat posed by the uncanny object. According to Rachman, when experiencing anxiety, the person has difficulty identifying the cause of the uneasy tension or the nature of the anticipated event or disaster. These feelings can be confusing to the person experiencing them.

2.3 Anxiety of Losing Darlings

Freud explicitly distinguishes the Uncanny as a distinct sort of worry. He states that “the uncanny is undoubtedly related to what is frightening to what arouses dread and horror” (Freud, 1919, p. 219). The fact that Freud describes the uncanny as one of the “subdued emotional impulses which, inhibited in their aims and dependent on a host of concurrent factors, usually furnish the material for the study of aesthetics” provides a first clue as to the Uncanny’s place in the theory of anxiety (Freud, 1919, p.219). This suggests that Freud considers the uncanny primarily as an aesthetic

rather than a clinical phenomenon. *The Road* deals with anxiety themes that are intertwined with the novel through setting, characterization, and dialogue. The narrative alternates between the perspectives of the father and his son, whose name is not disclosed, as already mentioned above. This ambiguity produces anxiety in the plot because it allows us to view the anxious world through our own eyes. The novel's protagonist, referred to as 'He' continues his trek like a blind man traveling in a silent environment with no sense of assistance but only pure determination. His willpower to rescue his son is unrivaled; he would do anything to keep his son alive, saying, "I would wash a dead man's brain out of his hair. That's my job" (McCarthy, 2006, p.74). He has a will to kill for his son's safety and life. He never gives up, no matter how terrible things get; he always continues looking forward, putting on a brave face for the unknown tomorrow. The father tries to keep his son safe throughout the trip by teaching him how to defend himself and avoid danger. As a result, the father keeps telling his son old stories of courage and justice as he remembers them (McCarthy, 2006, p. 42).

Later in the novel, however, when the boy wants them to be courageous, the father chooses to stay safe, avoids helping others, and evades going to towns because there are 'bad guys' and most of them are flesh-eating (Hage, 2010, p.103). It appears difficult to reconstruct human civilization in *The Road*. People, however, never stopped interacting with and relying on one another, and these relationships are typically associated with concepts from the past. The interaction between the main novel's protagonists, father and son, is the best example of such interactions. The father is shown as an advisor to his kid, attempting to construct new ideas from the old and convey them to his son. The son's role is to apply the new principles to real-world situations (Jergenson, 2016). Many people became cannibals in order to survive in such a devastated world with a lack of food and they are starving: "A shopping trolley becomes the most prized travel aid of the man and boy, stripped of its historical usage. A can of Coca-Cola, becomes excellent source of energy" (McCarthy, 2006, p. 22).

As a precaution, the father keeps his son and himself separate from the other passengers on the trip. His wife's words make him sleepless and full of horror: "Sooner or later, they will catch us and kill us... They will rape and murder us, and

eat us, and you won't have to face it. I'd rather wait for that to happen. But I can't" (McCarthy, 2006, p.56). From the beginning, his wife has chosen to surrender and suicide as she is afraid of the inevitable fate; she uses one bullet from the three that they have, rather than living in such a moment. As a result, having a pistol with two bullets remaining is necessary for a father and his son to protect themselves in case they face any danger, and the father is afraid that his son might be harmed or killed in a cruel way by the cannibals. The father does his best to show his son how to carry the pistol and use it to protect himself or commit suicide if necessary. When they enter a risky place, he keeps the gun with the son:

Stop it. I want you to do what I say. Take the gun.

I don't want the gun.

I didn't ask you if you wanted it. Take it. (McCarthy, 2006, p.70).

This evidence is a close link between the uncanny and the dread of death or the fear of losing darlings or a body part as Freud called it. The anxiety of losing something or someone dear is one of Freud's postulated dimensions of the literary and creative uncanny. At first, the boy is afraid of carrying a gun, but his father encourages him to carry the pistol. There is a great responsibility on the father to keep his son safe throughout the journey (Strand, 2013, p.182).

To study the uncanny pain and the lack of safety as indicated in the realm of *The Road*. The novel's focus will be on the uncanny elements as it previously highlighted in the opening chapter. The double is one of these variables on which Freud concentrates. It is apparent throughout the narrative that the father has information, feelings, and engagement in getting to know his son. They live in the same world and confront the same challenges on their journey. As a result, the father determines himself completely with his son (Suyoufie, 2005, p.31). The qualities the father respects courage, justice, and decency have no place in this world. If these qualities are not recognized, however, and have no social currency, they are likely to kill you. At one point the man and boy walk into a cellar, inside it there are prisoners, and they are locked away. They are being kept alive so they can be used as meat for

cannibals' meals: "On the mattress lay a man with his legs gone to the hip and the stumps of them blackened and burnt" (McCarthy, 2006, p.116). Throughout the novel, the father acts as the narrator for his son by telling him stories in order to make him remember everything in the coming days when he is gone. The father's stories are a moral and personal legacy for the son since he offers parenting love and sacrifice, which are feelings that most fathers have. During their trip, the father is the main source of practical knowledge for the son. The boy asks many questions about different things and each time his father answers him with a sufficient explanation (Reesman, 2019, p.45).

To illustrate that, we can look at the following dialogue as a sample. When the son asks his father about the dam,

What is that, Papa?

It's a dam.

What's it for?

It made the lake. Before they built the dam that was just a river down there. The dam used the water that ran through it to turn big fans called turbines that would generate electricity.

To make lights.

Yes, to make lights.

Will the dam be there for a long time?

I think so. It's made out of concrete. It will probably be there for hundreds of years. Thousands, even. (McCarthy, 2006, p.19)

This is the first occasion the child has seen a dam. Therefore, the father provides a full explanation of the structure. Another conversation between son and

his father starts when they find a kind of mushroom, so the father eats some and the son asks,

What is it, Papa?

Morels. It's morels.

What's morels?

They're a kind of mushroom.

Can you eat them?

Yes. Take a bite.

Are they good?

Take a bite. (M.cCarthy, 2006, p.40)

After learning more about that type of mushroom, the son realizes that it can be eaten. The father responds, 'Take a taste' which allows him a personal experience of that thing. As a result, the child gains a lot of knowledge through experience. Here, the father tries as much as he can to give his darling son all the information regarding the new life after the post-apocalyptic (Turner, 2013, p.67).

2.4 Uncanny and Repetition

Uncanny is also associated with the repetition of situations, ideas, and feelings, and the repetition associated with the uncanny is involuntary in most cases. Repetition that appears in *The Road* is an additional factor of the effect of the uncanny according to Freud. Throughout the novel, father and son display great familial love in different situations. In one of those situations, when the father finds a bottle of Coca, he asks his son to drink since the boy has not tested it before, but the boy also wishes his father to have some:

You have some, Papa.

I want you to drink it...You have some.

He took the can and sipped it and handed it back. You drink it, he said.

(McCarthy, 2006, p.12).

Each one of them is interested in the other. The son refuses to drink the cola alone, so he offers some to his father. A father orders his son to have the can at all. McCarthy writes: "Each the other's world entire." This means that each of them represents everything to the other. During the tired trip, the physical and mental dependence on the father and the son is obvious:

What would you do if I died?

If you died I would want to die too.

So you could be with me?

Yes. So I could be with you. (McCarthy, 2006, pp.5-6)

Through these words, a powerful emotion is shown, they both depend on one another and cannot survive without the other. By the end of the novel, the father has met his demise. He continues to teach his son how to survive in a dangerous and destructive environment. The father keeps urging his kid to arm himself with guns and shoot to defend himself:

You're going to be okay, Papa. You have to.

No I'm not. Keep the gun with you at all times. You need to find the good guys but you can't take any chances. No chances, do you hear?

I want to be with you. (McCarthy, 2006, p.145)

By telling his son to 'carry fire', the father is attempting to develop in him a sense of self-defense. In other words, the father gives his son the force until he reaches salvation and safety. The father was a pillar of strength and support for his son even in his final hours. Strong phrases and sentences from the text convey how devoted and caring the father is,

You have my whole heart. You always did. You're the best guy. You always were. If I'm not here, you can still talk to me. You can talk to me and I'll talk to you. You'll see. (McCarthy, 2006, p.150)

Parental love and hope have been the weapons to overcome the crucial features of the uncanny. It is one of the most important themes that characterize McCarthy's *The Road* (Britton, 2015, p.162).

Also, the natural desire that the father has to return to his childhood home, is another factor of uncanny. When he sees a house a " few miles south of the city the boy says to him, what is it?", his father answers, "it's the house where I grew up"(McCarthy, 2006, p.25). Then the father enters his childhood home with his son. These memories, which bring to mind a local family location, serve as the foundation for his ambition of instilling in his son superior ideas and ways of living. He feels:

with his thumb in the painted wood of the mantle the pinholes from tacks that had held stockings forty years ago. This is where we used to have Christmas when I was a boy. On cold winter nights we would sit at the fire here, me and my sisters, doing our homework. (McCarthy, 2010c, p. 26).

The son also has another response regarding the sight of the man thinking back to his childhood. After the unknown incident that destroys the planet, the son enters the world. He has no memory of the time leading up to that unknown occurrence, in contrast to the father. His early years have been marked by burned-out forests, deserted paths, and a persistent fear of being attacked or eaten by cannibalism. The son has "no sense of a bedroom or a living room...because all the sleeping and living that has ever known has been outdoors"(Bernardo et al., 2014, p.122). The son does not know the meaning of security and solace in a home (Britton, 2015, p. 69). Therefore, before the man is going to come into the house, the son feels anxious, he says:

Are we going in?

Why not?

I'm scared.

Don't you want to see where I used to live?

No.

It'll be okay.

There could be somebody here. (McCarthy, 2006, p.15).

The son does not want to be alone when they are in an abandoned house because he thinks there are 'scared' or 'dead' aggressions. The interest in the little places is evident because the son has lived so long on the road. This concern is related to the son's past. Where the unknown event destroys all forms of life and our homes become a place of fear instead of a place of comfort and safety. Fantastic memories and fantasies before the end of the world are very risky. At first, the father regrets the way he was, already dreaming in the shadows of the pre-apocalypse, "and the dreams so rich in colour. How else would death call you? Waking in the cold down it all turned to ash instantly. Like certain ancient frescoes entombed for centuries suddenly exposed to the day" (McCarthy, 2010c, p.21). Dreaming does not give many advantages in a dystopian world, because colors and memories are monstrous symbols of a world that has stopped living. Instead of that, dreams just give the carelessly attractive temptation of death (Yee, 2010, p.232). As a father tells his son when he has a terrible dream, "When your dreams are of some world that never was or of some world that never will be, and you are happy again then you will have given up" (McCarthy, 2006, p.108). So, these are dreams of all times, both past and future. The protagonists' trip depicts life in a post-apocalyptic world under the properties of the uncanny. As they travel to survive, they encounter strangeness, homelessness, and pain. After all, using parental love, optimism, and perseverance, the two nameless characters of the novel try to find meaning for themselves in a chaotic world. The stories of the past have little significance in the man's new world. While enduring a fever dream:

Years later he'd stood in the charred ruins of a library where blackened books lay in pools of water. Shelves tipped over. Some rage at the lies arranged in their thousands row on row. He picked up one of the books and thumbed through the heavy bloated pages. He'd not have thought the value of the smallest thing predicated on a world to come. It surprised him. That the space which these things occupied was itself an expectation. He let the book fall and took a last look around and made his way out into the cold gray light. (McCarthy, 2010c, p. 199).

These books are insignificant because they are written in a different world, a world that has not come yet. On the one hand, the stories of the past are no longer sufficient; this is why the boy refuses to participate in his father's stories of 'courage and justice'. The boy wants to be good and senses the stories are dishonest. On the other hand, it is owing to these stories that the 'idea' of good has taken root. As a parable, the novel warns that this catastrophic future is the consequence of contemporary life. To avoid this future something needs to change: for all our knowledge scientific, social, or philosophical we are headed for disaster. To argue that a disavowal of all historical knowledge and symbolic influence is the way forward, however, is too simplistic. The boy wants to be good, but it is obvious that such an impulse stems from the father's influence in the first place.

The novel brings the reader into the darkness. The world, which is dim and formless to the father, is presented from his diminishing perception. It is not only that the past is forgotten. The language the man knew, and the symbolic order to which he was connected, is entirely incompetent for his current situations. The father and son enter a deserted house. They are doubtful, because the house may be engaged, and an occupier may wish to kill or eat them. McCarthy writes, "They wandered through the rooms like skeptical house buyers" (McCarthy, 2006, p. 220). In this wasteland homes have become decidedly unhomey: they are not shelter, but of close danger. The home is transformed into its uncanny double: a place of fear, inhumanity, and horror. In the end, it is worth pointing out that given the bleakness of *The Road's* horrors and dystopian subject matter, it may be McCarthy's most optimistic novel. The man dies, but the boy is taken in by a group of survivors. They

are welcoming to the child, and they have other children among them. Also, life appears to be re-emerging on the planet "there were brook trout in the streams in the mountains" (McCarthy, 2006, p.306). *The Road* ends on an unusually optimistic note, and this optimism resides in the potential of future generations (Suyoufie, 2003, p.217).

2.5 Hope Against Uncanny

The Road has two opposing sides, and each side is distinct from the other. On one hand, the setting of the novel presents a gloomy and dark view of the world; it may be the gloomiest setting among McCarthy's works. It is a setting full of danger, darkness, evil, and destruction. On the other hand, and between its lines, the novel expresses confidence and optimism in humanity's kindness. It conveys hope and optimism via its text. The father and son, the novel's central protagonists, are considered "good guys" who also have faith that there are still good people in this corrupt society. The contrastive sides, which the novel shows, appear through the beginning of the novel:

When he woke in the woods in the dark and the cold of the night he'd reach out to touch the child sleeping beside him. Nights dark beyond darkness and the days grayer each one than what had gone before. (McCarthy, 2006, p.1)

Carrying the fire is one of the most important expressions that has been repeated frequently in the novel. Many critics have agreed that the expression "Carry the fire," has a strong meaning to hope and humans' future (Curtis, 2010, p. 96). Paul Patton, for instance, states that the expression is used as "a metaphor for some kind of moral order and as such the guarantee of a future humanity that is clearly intended" (Potts, 2015, p.180). 'The fire', as a symbol of hope, has taken great significance. The mother kills herself and leaves her son and husband because she is powerless and does not have any hope. She does not persuade her husband to share her well. She does not think about anybody else than herself, and she avoids all of the challenges she will confront. In many cases, her husband has not done like her, but he accepts his fate and stays to protect his child.

The connection between a father and his son takes up the bulk of the focus in the novel. In spite of that, they want solitude and being away from the rest of the

people, but they still believe in the existence of the 'good guys'. They have a belief that there is still goodness in people. This is shown through the text of the novel when the child asks his father that he does not know what to do, and his father answers him: "There are people and we will find them" (McCarthy, 2006, p.33). You will see. The son is confused about the end of their journey, and what would they find. The father tells him, even if he is not entirely sure of this, that they will find good people and he should be part of them, interacting and communicating within this community. This belief has made their struggle for survival worthy and meaningful (Jergenson, 2016, p.188). Along the journey, the father has been the first source of optimism for his son., he keeps his son hopeful and positive. The kid has shown a wide range of curiosities. So, he and his father talk about a wide range of subjects. One of the subjects that the father and his child have spoken about is life and death. The child asks about such a topic here,

Are we going to die?

Sometime. Not now.

And we're still going south.

Yes.

So we'll be warm.

Yes. (McCarthy, 2006, p. 5)

The father provides a wise response and does not tell his child lies and claim they will live forever. The response also expresses optimism and hope by stating that although they will pass away 'sometime', it won't be today because everyone's life ends with death (Jackson, 2015, p.97). There is always a chance they will survive as long as they keep moving south. The father and his kid continue keeping their decency and human nature, in spite of the difficult living situations they encounter. The kid and his father repeatedly reject the thought of eating other people despite famine throughout the novel. They discuss that through this conversation:

We wouldn't ever eat anybody, would we?

No. Of course not.

Even if we were starving?

We're starving now.

You said we weren't.

I said we weren't dying. I didn't say we weren't starving.

But we wouldn't.

No. We wouldn't.

No matter what.

No. No matter what.

Because we're the good guys.

Yes.

And we're carrying the fire.

And we're carrying the fire. Yes. (McCarthy, 2006, p. 75)

In spite of the tough environment they live in, it seems from this conversation that the father and son still have a decent disposition as people. They continue to carry the fire, a representation of hope and faith in life, and they continue to think of themselves as good men (Qiu-sheng, 2017, p. 77). The man and his child, all through the novel, are struggling continually to find food. After they discover the dugout of nourishment, they find 'corned beef' and 'canned hams'. The hope and happiness return to them. They feel pleasure and joy as the world becomes hopeful with this delicious meal. The man is surprised and begins to scream and repeat 'oh my God' again and again. The morals of man are also shown in the novel, he generally consoles his son that they are 'the good guys'. This makes them hopeful to keep going since they are carrying the fire (Lippmann, 2020, p.88).

The seeds that have been found by the father in the shed, represent life and development. A wonderful image is recommended by McCarthy that there is a person who will plant the seeds. There is no doubt, that the son will do as the father man is sick and feeble and all signs highlight the son is the survivor. Also, the barking of the dog appears to be uncanny and eerie as they believe that all the creatures have died. But this barking gives them hope to carry on their trip. All through the novel, hope will remain. The son's answer is a reliable reaction by using the word 'Okay'. He maintains that all should be 'Okay'. The word 'Okay' is considered as the stone of hope that he grips. The appearance of hopelessness on a superficial level in the novel cannot continue to the end in McCarthy's gloomy world. But there is a light at the end of the tunnel represented by the boy, who will be the hope for humankind (Lidberg, 2010, p.144).

With power of the hope the father resists the lethal diseases, and then he dies because of the destroyed world not from the loss of hope. The critic Cecilia Lindbergh states that the trip of the father and his son gives such optimism for the future of the ruined civilization. Lindbergh argues that the two protagonists and their beliefs show an extraordinary degree of goodness (Lidberg, 2010, p.145). It is true that they do not reach their goal geographically, However, the man has reached a goal within. The father could die calmly as he has come to be so certain of his son's prosperous future, so it is, for the moment, a happy ending. The father encourages his son to continue: "You need to keep going, you don't know what might be down the road. We were always lucky. You'll be lucky again. You'll see. Just go. It's all right" (McCarthy, 2006, p.147). These expressions are full of hope and belief for the boy to never give up (Strand, 2013, p.211).

The boy feels lonely after his father's passing but he still holds onto the optimism that the man has given him. Then, the foreigner wearing the 'yellow parka' comes into view. Yellow is a distinct symbol of hope since it resembles daylight in a life that is otherwise gloomy. The son asks whether he is carrying fire, which is what he actually means. Additionally, one of the nice men who wears the yellow is still a person and hasn't injured anybody else. The unknown man extends an invitation to the youngster to live with him and his family. The boy asks him:

Do you have any kids?

We do...And you didn't eat them.

No. You don't eat people.

And can I go with you

Yes. You can.

Okay then.

Okay. (McCarthy, 2006, p. 150)

After this dialogue, the boy trusts the strange man and agrees to go with him because he has hope in this family. *The Road* ends with an image that can be considered the best representative of hope. *The Road* comes to a close with an image that may be considered the finest embodiment of hope. The strange man becomes the savior of the boy after their first meeting. For him, he represents life and hope. This man stands for "the good guys" that the father and son have been looking for through their trip. This end illustrates how hope endures in a dangerous and cruel world. With the boy's survival, there is hope. (Greenwood, 2009, p.219). The goal of this chapter is to illustrate how the characteristics of the uncanny exhibit throughout the course of McCarthy's novel. It also aims to illuminate how the novel's protagonists have attempted to deal with the fundamental truth of the uncanny when the world around them crumbles.

3. THE UNCANNY AND VIOLENCE IN *BLOOD MERIDIAN*

3.1 Uncanny and Violence

When sexuality and machinery collide, the uncanny haunts our interpretations of sexual violence. The uncanny looms over our narratives of sexual violence, when sexuality is labelled disturbingly or when violent bodies transcend the line between war and peace. Writing about this topic or reading this material may provoke profound discomfort. An emphasis on the penis as an embodied weapon may appear to reify a limited vision of sexual violence or to support essentialist concepts of victim and perpetrator. It's difficult to put into words, reflecting the frightening and horrific proportions of the uncanny weapon itself. To say that the penis weapon is uncanny is to say more than just that sexual violence is horrible; military theorists define it as an uncanny weapon object. The term 'uncanny' alludes to the contradictory ways that male bodily parts in the context of warfare symbolize both one thing and another: as mechanical but organic, as sensual but vulnerable, utilitarian yet insensitive, as subservient but unruly (Weber, 2016, p.211).

The meaning of the uncanny has particular importance in existing expressions of the body weapon. Firstly, the line between peace and war, which has proven particularly difficult for studies of embodied violence, might be conceptualized in another manner thanks to the uncanny coexistence of the familiar and the unfamiliar. However, the view on sexual violence is different in its measure and dynamics during conflict times. Wartime behavior is explained by inequalities grounded in 'peacetime' gender orders against those who maintain the distinctiveness of war. Secondly, the clash between sexuality and machinery that is seen in military sociology is indefinably uncanny. Whether military planners regard body parts as components of a war machine or not, the repetition of these themes is nonetheless an important aspect of war history. On many occasions, these two vocabularies—one organic, the other mechanical—superimpose or combine. Why? For uncanny theorists, the feeling of a division and duplication of the self, including the alienation of a bodily object, is a key issue. The body is visible in the context of armed group attempts to weaponise sexual organs, analogous to the parts cobbled together into an explosive device, since it exists in the fertile zone of indiscernibility between military and non-military items (Grove, 2016, p.339).

Third, the uncanny has a clear sexual component. Particularly when the “animate item” is genital, the warrior-automaton is an unnerving creature. By bringing up the context of battle, the “familiar” physical component becomes threatening, and the threat is justified (Cahill, 2001, p. 140). The uncanny, on the other hand, is not simply calibrated in time and place. The penis as a gun, a symbol of national manhood, becomes the focal theme for decades of work, each repetition another uncanny double. Instead of rejecting the ambiguity of opposing elements in the development of an image of sexual violence as a type of technology, the uncanny acknowledges the weirdness of war (Wood, 2018, p. 112). The usefulness of the viewpoint offered here is to open new conceptual and documentary pathways that would otherwise be blocked by the straightforward analogy between bodily parts and weapons. The aesthetic aspect of the uncanny is reminiscent of post-structural artworks that depict the 'masquerade' of wartime bodies (Sylvester, 2012, p. 56). The uncanny, as a component of experience, is also a resource for understanding war-making and sense-making from below. The uncanny may be taken up as a topic for more specific studies of mobilization and resistance when attempts focus on decoding the strange features of the sexual body weapon (Gray, 2019, p.34).

After The Mexican authority launched a genocidal campaign against Apache tribes in 1894. Through providing financial incentives to hunters, a policy of Apache eradication is carried out through the use of rewards paid for Apache scalps (Hall, 1989, p. 161). Along the Texas-Mexico border, ex-Anglo soldiers organize gangs of Indian renegades and warriors to hunt Apache for money. “A woman's scalp was valued at fifty pesos, an Apache man's at one hundred, and a child's at twenty-five” were the monetary rewards for scalps (Lahti, 2017, p. 100). The scalp trade instantly becomes a profitable market for renegades to profit from. Among these bunch of criminals was the Glanton gang. McCarthy chooses this gang as a subject matter in *Blood Meridian*. This historical troop consisted of scalp-hunters who were employed by Mexican governors (Anderson, 2019, p.77).

Everywhere in this novel, death leaves behind its memorials, serving as enduring reminders of its presence. These include the scalps amassed by Glanton and his companions, the tree adorned with deceased infants, the crucified mummy, the encirclement of severed heads, and the disembowelled corpses of bearded individuals

who bear peculiar wounds resembling menstruation, lacking their male genitalia, which have been severed and grotesquely displayed from their gaping mouths. The act of reading *Blood Meridian* elicits a sensation of vertigo and nausea, accompanied by a feeling of intense elation. The present material elicits a compelling inclination that goes beyond mere captivation or dread (Shaviro, 1999, p. 145).

This chapter presents an academic analysis that critically examines the consequences of the haunted history of the American South, specifically focusing on the portrayal of violence symbolized by Judge Holden in Cormac McCarthy's novel, *Blood Meridian, or The Evening Redness in the West*. The narrative employs the use of uncanny figures, namely 'the kid' and 'the judge,' to provide a moral compass for the reader by presenting a contradiction between good and evil inside the realm of humanity. Therefore, this study enhances the understanding of the uncanny interpretation of the chosen text by examining several features. Exaggeration, hyperbolism, and excessiveness are commonly regarded as basic characteristics of the uncanny style.

3.2 Uncanny and The Main Title and The Subtitle

Cormac McCarthy moved from Tennessee to Texas to work on his fifth novel in 1976. Based on actual historical events, he wrote his uncanny Western Novel *Blood Meridian, or The Evening Redness in the West*, which is set in Texas and Mexico during the 1840s. McCarthy did deep research for this novel, and he also visited all the places in the novel. After nine years, *Blood Meridian* was published (Spurgeon, 2011, p. 179). *Blood Meridian* prominently exhibits themes of terror and horror, which can reflect Freud's theoretical framework of the 'uncanny': "The subject of the uncanny [...]is undoubtedly related to what frightens and what arouses dread and horror" (Freud, 2019, p. 5). The concept of the uncanny is commonly understood as something that disrupts the familiar, the ordinary, and the endangered aspects of one's surroundings. The concept of the unhomely prevents individuals from experiencing a sense of belonging or comfort in their surroundings. The aforementioned statement contains a significant amount of intensity. Human beings possess a remarkable quality of being uncanny. This is not only because they spend a significant portion of their lives immersed in the concept of the uncanny, as defined in this context but also because they can transcend the familiar and customary

boundaries. Similar to those who engage in acts of violence, humans can surpass the confines of the familiar, thereby venturing into the realm of the overwhelming uncanny (Heidegger, 2000, p. 161).

Blood Meridian is a violent historical novel because of its events from real life. McCarthy comes across a book called *The Confession* written by one of those who were recruited by those military gangs. So, he uses these events which happened between 1849 and 1850 in his novel. The novel's characters are fictional, but the historical events truly happened. McCarthy wants to document all these so that they never happen again. The narrator's point of view is the writer himself, which is a third-person, omniscient narrator's point of view. The tone in which the novel is written is poetic, expressed in a very powerful literary language. His writing style is dense, poetic, and full of details. He describes what is eternal and what people do and says as if you are watching a film. But the readers do not know what runs through people's minds. He does not use the stream of consciousness. Instead, he describes what his eyes can see, what people say, what they do to their external appearance, and so on (Campbell, 2000, p. 171). The initial observation highlights the evident conflicts present within *Blood Meridian*, specifically referring to the novel's intrinsically brutal world. The presence of violence in McCarthy's portrayal of the Southwest region is a pervasive and significant factor that contributes to tension in the narrative. This tension is evident in the character of the judge as well as in the experiences of the youngster, who encounters violence consistently during his journey (Owens, 2000, p.30).

One thing that stimulates the reader's mind is the title of the novel. The main title is *Blood Meridian*, and the subtitle is *The Evening Redness in the West*. The primary title of the novel *Blood Meridian* can be derived from a specific sentence found inside Lord Byron's poem *Stanzas to the Poem*: "My blood is all meridian" (Byron, 1994, p. 104). In addition, the title refers to the kid's journey from Nacogdoches, where he meets the judge and the moment of violence begins. The kid embarks on a journey from the state of Tennessee to a specific longitudinal demarcation in Texas, proceeding deeper into the state and eventually crossing into Mexico, before continuing westward to reach the southern coast of California. The primary focus of the term 'Blood Meridian' seems to be the longitudinal line

intersecting the geographical location of Nacogdoches in Texas. It is true that the blood meridian, which runs through Nacogdoches, is the boundary that commemorates the height of the region's inhumane brutality during the Manifest Destiny era (Peebles, 2021, p. 265). However, critics' opinions have split over which meridian line McCarthy is referring to in the main title. Some critics, such as Walter Prescott Webb, believe that it is the ninety-eighth meridian, and he claims that this line is the separating boundary between 'frontier and wilderness' while scholars like Rick Wallach assert that it is the ninety-sixth meridian.

This meridian is designated as the '*Blood Meridian*' to symbolise the violence of the Southwest's expansion, as portrayed in McCarthy's novel (Hall, 2002, p. 91). One rationale for the association between the term 'meridian' in the novel's title and the ninety-eighth meridian is in its alignment with the specific region in Texas traversed by this longitudinal line: "During the spring of 1849, the individual in question traverses the latter-day republic of Fredonia and proceeds towards the town of Nacogdoches" (McCarthy, 1985, p. 5). In this context, Cormac McCarthy acknowledges the extraordinary brutality that occurred at the height of Manifest Destiny. Neil Campbell writes:

The concept of the "mythic space" in the Western context can be understood as a void that presents a profound existential challenge, as individuals are compelled to affirm their own existence in the face of the ever-present specter of mortality. McCarthy's novel 'Blood Meridian' symbolizes the juncture at which individuals attain the pinnacle of existence while concurrently acknowledging the nearness, and even the inescapability, of its ultimate termination. (Kiefer, 2006, p. 183)

Along with the Glanton gang and the judge, the kid has violent experiences close to the 'blood meridian' when they cross it into an unexplored area in Nacogdoches. They participate in a bloody campaign of scalp-hunting that mirrors the horrific crimes in the Southwest, and they break the line dividing 'civilization and barbarism'.

The title also expresses deeply the thirst for conquest and the temptation to know what is beyond 'Blood Meridian'. The 'Blood Meridian' is a barrier that exists

both literally and figuratively, and the allure of freedom and limitless opportunity inspires people to participate in barbaric acts of violence and compels them to confront their own death in a horrifying way (Hage, 2010, p. 122). *Blood Meridian* reveals a terrifying and primordial view of the West as “a world that appears to exist “before nomenclature existed and each was all” (McCarthy, 1985, p. 172). The *Blood Meridian* serves as a symbolic border rather than a physical boundary that separates the doomed area beyond it from the rest of the world and drives all travelers past it to an uncharted zone that incites within a desire to persuade the most erotic instincts (Mundik, 2016, p.88).

According to Harold Bloom, Judge Holden who is the only remaining member of the Glanton gang is representative and the primary focus of the subtitle of the novel, *The Evening Redness in the West*. However, Michael Carragher states that the pun in the subtitles suggests that the thirst for blood and its redness are the evening factors in us all. Bloom links the ‘*Evening Redness in the West*’ with Judge Holden, mainly because Holden is the only character in the novel who officially usurps death. Thus, the subtitle's reference to ‘redness’ really refers to the colour of the blood in McCarthy's violent West (Bloom, 1987, p.117). In light of the information above, John Sepich suggests that the word "redness" in the title alludes to a fiery, dark mental condition that might readily describe a number of the guys in McCarthy's *Blood Meridian*. In other words, the subtitle indicates the end of life or the West. The metaphorical picture of a ‘blood red’ sun disappearing over the horizon to its final resting place, never to rise again, is evoked by the phrase *Evening Redness in the West* (Sepich, 2008, p. 54).

There is a short description in the novel, which seems to be a direct reference to the subtitle: “The Yumas successfully dissolve the gang by executing a surprise attack that eliminates a significant portion of its members and culminates in the assassination of John Glanton, achieved with a forceful blow that severs his head to the thrapple” (McCarthy, 1985, p. 226). These lines describe how the Indian tribe of Yuma chased Tobin, Toadvine, and the kid across the desert. It may be argued that the Glanton Gang also falls victim to the pervasive violence that characterises the southwestern region. The Apaches “suspend the final remaining scouts of the gang in an inverted position, securing them by piercing the tendons of their heels with

sharpened wooden projectiles. These scouts are left unclothed, positioned above the extinguished remnants of the fire where they were subjected to roasting” (McCarthy, 1985, p. 227). At the end of that chase massacre, “as nightfall approached, Yumas gathered in silhouette before the sun on the red desert to the west” (McCarthy, 1985, p. 281). The only thing left to find in the crimson land to the west is death. The subtitle infers that there is no escape from the cruel fate and that the West of McCarthy is a place where men go to die.

According to one interpretation of the novel, it is the moment when a person has experienced the fullness of life and simultaneously realises that the end of it is close by, if not inevitable. Hence, the blood in this context is both life-giving and life-destroying; the subtitle of the novel, *The Evening Redness in the West*, reminds us of a more general mythical dread about the West as an area where the sun dies. The West tempts people with the promise of limitless opportunities, only to offer a form of insanity and a disastrous path. The ‘mythic space’ of the West, according to Neil Campbell, “challenges the ego to declare its presence against the death that constantly lurks there” (Campbell, 1997, p. 187). McCarthy's West is a place where everything is dark and without definition: “During the early hours, a sun with a hue resembling that of urine ascended wearily, its rays filtering through windows coated in particles of dust, illuminating a lackluster and unremarkable world” and other such phrases are true (McCarthy, 1985, p. 100).

3.3 The kid, Toadvine, and Judge Holden

The plot of the novel is centered on ‘the kid’, a member of the Glanton gang, a ferocious gang of criminals that gathers red Indian scalps. Judge Holden is the leader of this mercenary group. The novel startled readers and angered reviewers when it was first released. Caryn James writes, “*Blood Meridian* is like a slap on readers’ faces. It is an affront that demands we endure an image of the Old West replete of burned human skulls, blood-soaked scalps, and a tree hanging with murdered infants” (Owens, 2000, p. 8). Furthermore, the novel has been accused of being both “terribly beautiful” and “pornographically violent” (Shaviro, 1999, p. 84). *Blood Meridian*, however, portrays the ‘Great West’ as a place of uncharted darkness because of “everything that it represents of legendary optimism, courageous pioneering, and the prospect of quick wealth” (Caant, 2013, p. 158). Where Native

American and Anglo cultures regressed into violence that seemed primordial, the most severe acts of violence occurred at the edge of civilization,

During Manifest Destiny, Anglo, Native American, and Hispanic cultures fought over Southwestern territory and culture. *Blood Meridian's* border zone of collision, where Glanton's scalp-hunters practice their 'Trade', is uncanny. The massacres of harmless Tiguas and Mexican villagers show brutality in graphic detail. (McCarthy, 1985, pp. 173–174)

The novel elicits feelings of fear and horror within the reader's psyche. The feeling of apprehension arises not only from supernatural elements but also from the overall atmosphere. According to Freud, the presence of uncanny elements is what creates these atmospheres. The creation of an 'uncanny' ambiance is further facilitated by unforeseen occurrences, mortality, and apprehension around the unknown. The story opens with the hero. We do not know his name, but he is referred to as the kid. His mother died while giving birth, and his father was drunk. Thus, he escapes and leaves his father when he turns fourteen in Tennessee and heads west, which is known as the Wild West, 'The Place of Lawless'. A few years will pass while the kid wanders in the southwest of America. He goes through a few fights, and he gets shot and stabbed in the back, below the heart, in New Orleans. A drunken youth named "The Jakes" attacks Toadvine on a muddy boardwalk in Nacogdoches: "He runs after the youngster with a jagged bottleneck to shove it in his eye" (McCarthy, 1985, p. 5). The kid is unconscious at the end of the fight when Toadvine manages to knock him down. The kid sees Toadvine clearly for the first time when he regains consciousness and notices that Toadvine's physical appearance has been changed by frontier violence. The child observed the adult male. The individual's cranial structure had an atypical narrowness, while his hair was styled in an unconventional and rudimentary manner, with mud serving as a fixative agent. The individual's forehead displayed the letters H and T, but the letter F was positioned somewhat lower and closer to the eyes. These markings appeared vivid and ostentatious, resembling the effect of prolonged exposure to heated iron (McCarthy, 1985, p.11).

The identification of the various features of violence present in the several settings of the novel allows for an examination of the pervasive nature of violence within the universe depicted in *Blood Meridian*. The protagonist, the boy, and the mysterious figure known as the judge all experience palpable tension throughout this exploration. It is important to acknowledge that the narrative voice effectively portrays these features, but it is necessary to highlight that McCarthy himself sets the recurring theme of violence throughout the novel. The universe depicted in *Blood Meridian* is characterised by physical violence, which includes explicit acts of brutality committed by one individual against another. The narrator draws the reader's attention to this aspect of the narrative. According to Barclay Owens, it is the presence of violence in the novel that consistently and profoundly impacts the readers' psyche, resulting in a shocking assault that is sustained throughout the pages. The novel's narrator's initial emphasis is on the prevalence of physical violence in the depicted environment with a focus on the claim that animalistic aggression is inherently a part of human nature (Owens, 2000, p.33).

Sometimes, the purpose of violence in the novel is to emphasize the cruelty of expansion to the West in an extremely uncanny manner. The kid's trip westward is interrupted by useless violence with Toadvine, who becomes a member of the Glanton gang near the Blood Meridian. He spends two weeks recovering; after that, he goes to Texas and then heads north from Galveston. Through his way, he sees a man "hanged in a crossroads hamlet" (McCarthy, 1985, p. 9). He leaves Tennessee and leaves Western civilization behind him. with the hope of chasing the American Dream and starting a new life in the West (Arnold, 2012, p. 51). On the one hand, David Mogen contends that "the Americans are plainly destined to acquire riches, and a power mentality is embodied in the American Dream" (1989, p. 29). On the other hand, Mogen also asserts that despite the allure of the American Dream, it may also be 'potentially harmful'. By this time, the child reaches the 'blood meridian, but his childhood is lost. At this point, he is known as 'the kid'. Near the blood meridian, in Nacogdoches, and with a beginning violent experience, the kid first meets Judge Holden. Once the kid and the rest of the crowd note the judge's monstrous physical stature, as soon as he enters the tent,

The individual exhibited a complete absence of hair on his scalp, like the smooth texture of a stone. Additionally, there was no discernible presence of facial hair, including both beard and eyebrows, as well as the absence of eyelashes surrounding his eyes. The individual in question possessed a height nearing seven feet and was observed within the confines of a transient place of worship. (McCarthy ,1985, p.6)

Holden's speech, according to David Cremean, “represents a very formal Victorian manner of speech, that of an educated person, even legalese” (Cremean, 2013, p. 10). The judge is portrayed as an expert rhetorician with extraordinary charisma and uses his speech to project an appearance of authority. The kid is involved in a fight with a barman shortly after leaving Nacogdoches and crossing ‘the blood meridian’. That quarrel qualifies the kid for recruitment into Captain White's band of mercenaries. The kid meets a very important character called Captain White. The captain is a retired marshal. He recruits young people to invade Mexico. Captain White tries to tempt the kid to join by promising him a homestead in Mexican territory at the end of the expedition. The kid joins the white military unit. Captain White informs the kid that the campaign's purpose is to enter Mexico so that “the tools of emancipation and civilising every Mexican residing in that dark and difficult land might be used” (McCarthy, 1985, p. 33). In the sentence that follows, Captain White signifies the most insidious form of manifest destiny:

The subject at hand pertains to a population characterized by a decline in physical or moral qualities. A mixed racial group, perceived as being of lower social standing. And perhaps even superior. Mexico lacks a functioning government. In Mexico, the existence of a deity is not universally acknowledged. It is quite unlikely that this will ever occur. We are confronted with a cohort of individuals who evidently lack the capacity to govern themselves effectively. (McCarthy,1985, p.34)

In other words, Captain White justifies his racism because he thinks that Mexicans and Indians are unfit to possess the land: “And we are going to be the ones to split the loot. Every man in my firm will have his own piece of property. Beautiful meadow. among the best in the entire globe. Land abundant in minerals, I would say beyond the wildest anticipation, and in gold and silver” (McCarthy, 1985, p.35). A sun of bad omen fills the sky with a 'redness' that resembles blood as White and his army move west from the tavern to the desert,

They continued their journey, while the sun in the eastern horizon illuminated faint streaks of light, followed by a more intense display of color resembling the seeping of blood. This phenomenon rapidly extended across the plane, where the boundary between the earth and the sky appeared to vanish, giving rise to the emergence of the sun's uppermost section. Its appearance resembled that of a large, red phallus, until it ascended beyond the unseen rim and assumed a squatting and pulsating position, exuding a sense of malevolence in their wake. (McCarthy, 1985, pp.44-45)

According to the novel's events, Inger-Anne Softing assures that violence occurs randomly and without motivation and “is never heroic or in any way justified or justifiable” (Softing, 1999, p. 16). After 48 hours, while they are moving towards Mexico, they are attacked by the Apache tribes, Red Indians, or Native Americans. The kid would be jailed in Chihuahua, Mexico. He is charged with attempting to invade Mexico. The kid is bailed out by Judge Holden, so he gets out of prison. Judge Holden is a mysterious and weird character. With another militant leader, whose name is Glanton, the judge has a contract with the Mexican government to bring the scalps of Red Indians. In 1835, soon after the end of the Mexican-American War, the campaign began. Because of the gang's scalp hunters and Comanches, Apaches, and Navajo, the territory from the Arkansas River to the Rio Grande has been ravaged for years. The gangs aim to earn some benefits from that massacre. An area in Northern Mexico known as Comancheria, which comprised the state of Sonora, was the only scene of the Comanche-Mexico War (1821–1870) and the

Apache Wars (1849–1886). In 1849, the states of Sonora and Chihuahua each paid a reward of 100 pesos for each scalp of an Indian male, with smaller sums offered for women and children. This led to the rise in violence that is shown in the novel. Indirectly, McCarthy explains the Glanton gang's background and its uncanny practice of scalping (Hillier, 2017, p.215).

Because these males obey a completely savage order, the kid must be initiated into the Western culture of violence before he can continue with them. The kid agreeably establishes an alliance with Toadvine after their violent altercation in Nacogdoches. Together, they set a motel on fire and murder a guy by kicking him to death (Owens, 2000, p. 97). After that, “the kid man pauses as he leaves Nacogdoches to admire their work, and the judge nods in agreement” (McCarthy, 1985, p. 14). Despite the hate between the Mexican government and the American government, the deep hatred of red Indians collects them together. The kid joins them because he does not have another choice. But the difference between him and the other gang members is that the gang set out to kill the native Americans, whether they were civilians or militants, and get their scalps to give to the Mexican government. In return, they got a bounty for each scalp. But the kid does not want to kill people without reason, especially if they are civilians. He loathes that act, so Judge Holden regards him as a weak person. Judge Holden considers killing like breathing air. The scalp hunters travel through ‘the demon kingdom’, where violence, malevolence, and fear are the ruling features of that land. However, when they return to society, they are filthy, depraved, and only reinvigorated for more bloodshed, with even more war mementos dangling from their ‘scapulars’. For the kids, they are,

A group of individuals with an aggressive appearance, riding barefoot on Indian ponies, traversing the streets in an intoxicated state. These individuals possess beards and exhibit a barbaric demeanor, donning animal skins as clothing. Notably, the riders adorn themselves with scapulars or necklaces made of desiccated and darkened human ears. (McCarthy, 1985, p.78)

In Nacogdoches, the kid is not ready to cross the ‘blood border’ and continue further west. During his westward journey, the kid witnesses bloodshed and violence but

never fully engages in violence himself. The gang of savages led by John Glanton and the violent judge who supports them in their endeavours are portrayed as a mythical force,

The individuals rode with a sense of determination, as if their objective had deep historical roots, akin to being inheritors of a significant and distant lineage. Although each individual among them possessed discretion, when they came together, they formed something that had not existed previously. Within this collective spirit, there were vast uncharted territories, comparable to the blank spaces on ancient maps inhabited by mythical creatures, where only speculative winds and nothing else from the known world could be found. (McCarthy, 1985, p.152)

Because they have no sense of seriousness or industry and inadvertently pursue self-ruin rather than benefit. These men can withstand the hard conditions beyond the 'blood meridian' (Shaviro, 1999, p.156). McCarthy paints a picture of a landscape rife with violence to raise concerns about one of the deadliest periods in American history. The author constructs a fictitious setting in which it is possible to discern a parallel tale that is conveyed through the presence of very significant spatial landmarks, in addition to the narration of the devastation committed by the Glanton gang. *Blood Meridian* portrays humanity's inherent propensity for bloodshed in a Southern Gothic manner. The plot of the novel is based on real-life events and centers on the kid's exploits. The kid runs away from home and wanders around the post-apocalyptic wasteland (Edward, 2013, p. 64).

This incident creates an uncanny atmosphere. It gives shock to the readers as well as the characters in the novel. The climax starts when this gang falls under attack by the Yumas tribes while they are searching for native Americans to kill. The Yumas wipe them out, and none survive but the kid, the judge, and a few gang members. Ten years pass, and the judge meets the kid accidentally in a bar. They will speak briefly, and the kid will go to a W.C. building outside the bar. Once he opens the door, he finds the judge waiting for him inside. The judge pulls him inside and

closes the door. Then, the judge is coming out alone. We do not know whether he kills the boy or not. The judge goes back to the bar alone and is cheerful. The story ends here. Despite his aggressive tendencies and lack of idealism, the kid's trip ultimately represents the nation's effort to establish an identity that sheds light on the past and heralds a new era (Bloom, 2014, p.138).

3.4 John Glanton and Judge Holden

The novel begins with death and ends with death. The presence of death permeates throughout the narrative. The majority of the events in the novel occur inside a desert landscape, which establishes a prevailing environment that contributes to an uncanny atmosphere throughout the narrative. The reader is made to experience dread and fear through the narrative depiction of the various situations. The concept of the uncanny does not serve as an explanatory factor for the occurrence or distribution of sexual assault during times of war. Rather, it is a term used to describe the emotional impact and perception associated with war, which can be observed in representations of the connection between weapons and the human body. War thought highlights the contradictory nature of violence, which is simultaneously inherent to gendered identity and subject to transformation during times of war. This transformation involves a shift from the organic to the mechanical, the familiar to the sinister, and the intimate to the instrumental. The concept of the uncanny is deeply intertwined with our narratives around instances of sexual violence, particularly at the intersection of sexuality and technology, the disconcerting categorization of sexuality itself, and the migration of aggressive bodies across the boundary separating periods of armed conflict and periods of peace (Wallach, 2000, p.79).

John Sepich demonstrates that Samuel Chamberlain's *My Confession: Recollections of a Rogue* is the book that most likely had an impact on Cormac McCarthy's *Blood Meridian*. As said by John Sepich, Captain John Glanton, the head of the Glanton gang, is a big player in Chamberlain's memoir, *My Confession*, and McCarthy also makes him a key character in his novel. In the past, the Texas Ranger known as Glanton battled Mexicans during the Mexican War and later slaughtered Indians and Mexicans for profit (Sepich, 2008, p. 98). Records show that on June 18, 1849, Glanton agreed to a contract from the Chihuahuan governors that required him to provide the scalps of Apache Indian raiders. As stated by historical reports,

Glanton's active involvement in the scalp trade was motivated by a 'passion' to exact revenge on the Apaches who killed his fiancée in 1835.

According to Chamberlain's memoir, there are many lawless men who accompany Judge Holden on his brutal trip for Indian scalps. Judge Holden is one of them. He is described as "a huge man, about seven feet tall, bald as a stone, with no sign of facial hair, eyelashes, or eye brows" (McCarthy, 1985, p. 6). In other words, he is just as unnatural as the character in *Blood Meridian*. There are some strange similarities between McCarthy's judge in *Blood Meridian* and Judge Holden, played by Chamberlain. McCarthy's version of the West is completely different from that of other historians who praise the history of the West. McCarthy combines fact with fiction, thus creating a more accurate portrayal of the American West. McCarthy believes that the paradox of the frontier is a location that draws men in with its promise of freedom and all the expectations associated with personal satisfaction while also driving everyone who crosses the 'meridian' into a form of madness (Campbell, 1997, p. 176). McCarthy portrays Judge Holden Herculean, a Faustian genius demon, as a disappearing agent in *Blood Meridian*. He is a dancer, a nudist, a fiddler, a global traveler, a magician, a linguist, a legal expert, a natural scientist, an anthropologist, a chemist, a philosopher, and a magnificent warrior. According to the biography of this character, he is a being of forceful personality and of myriad accomplishments (Spenser, 1995, p.217).

As aforementioned, it is challenging to determine the judge's identity because he has several identities and thus, he is an enigma. Emily Stinson writes, "The judge is one and all-powerful" (Stinson, 2007, p. 9). The judge, however, personifies conquering and disappearance since it is in his nature to both demolish and erase whatever he comes into contact with. According to *The Evening Redness in the West*,

The judge consumes the earth due to its mineral composition, as he perceives it as a source of knowledge on the origins of the planet. This perception equates the earth's geological formations with divine communication, as if they were sacred scriptures. The judge assumes the role of leading the Western civilization towards its demise. (McCarthy, 1985, p. 116)

The judge has destroyed everyone, even the children. As Neil Campbell writes, “In the novel, there are many infanticides, but they all include the judge” (Campbell, 1997, p. 60). The judge takes a little kid as his prisoner after their raid and scalps a sleeping Gilenos Indian tribe, which is the clearest example of this reality:

As the judge leads the procession, he is accompanied by a peculiar child, whose body is coated with ash, positioned on the saddle in front of him. Toadvine, a member of the gang, observed the judge in the company of a child when they crossed paths. However, upon Toadvine's return ten minutes later, he discovered the child deceased and the judge having removed its scalp. (McCarthy, 1985, p.164)

Ultimately, and in this frontier, the judge controls the land like a deity, deciding who lives and dies. While Glanton and his followers leave to the south, “they leave a mess of blood, salt, and ashes behind them on the scorched bank of the lake” (McCarthy, 1985, p. 160). Because of the hyper-violence of Judge Holden, what was once Mexico became Texas. In “a world beyond men's judgements where all contracts were frail,” a judge seeking a godlike life finds that all covenants are fragile (McCarthy, 1985, p. 106).

Later in the novel, we learn that human ears and scalps act as ‘RECEIPTS’ for those “who have been killed by John Glanton, Judge Holden, and other scalp-hunters” (McCarthy, 1985, p. 98). Glanton's cruelty is highlighted by his calm manner as he checks the woman's scalp after his casual execution of her in a Mexican village, “in the way a man might qualify the pelt of an animal” (McCarthy, 1985, p.99). Another memorable picture celebrating these ‘receipts’ is Toadvine's decaying earring, which he ironically wears as a barbaric battle trophy. Barclay Owens writes, “The ears are literally a string of witnesses who swear to frontier slaughter as a badge of honor obtained via involvement in primitive violence” (Owens, 2000, p. 24). But in order to receive their ‘receipts,’ the Blood Meridian's scalp hunters must go to a strange location that “seems like some demon kingdom conjured up or changeling

world that lies beyond the Blood Meridian" (McCarthy, 1985, p. 45). Megan McGilchrist also writes,

The human population has regressed to a state resembling feral behavior, or even surpassing it. This state can be described as a depraved condition that imitates the characteristics of the wild, yet lacks the inherent dignity found in the natural world. Notably, this state is governed and guided by an individual known as the Judge, who embodies the principles of science. The reality shown through the presence of the scalp-hunters is characterized by a transformation of regular existence into its antithesis. (2012, p.122)

As a result of being severely disturbed at some time in history, humanity has returned to a primitive condition of hyper-violent masculinity. According to Blood Meridian, the West's promise of unrestricted opportunity has tainted human nature and "fed a monstrous need for self-satiation by destroying all limits set by religion, morality, and obedience, as well as a monstrous ambition against authority" (Slotkin, 1998, p. 35). Death is described as "the most frequent element of this environment in several accounts of the terrible terrain that lies beyond the blood meridian" (McCarthy, 1985, p. 48). This region is a "terra damnata" (McCarthy, 1985, p. 61), a "purgatorial waste" (McCarthy, 1985, p. 63), and a land where "war is god" (McCarthy, 1985, p. 249).

The novel depicts the good-evil duality and the human world via the uncanny figures of 'the kid' and 'the judge'. 'Hyperbolism', 'exaggeration', and 'excessiveness,' which are often regarded as essential characteristics of the uncanny style, Repeatedly, the reader is exposed to the harshness of Southwestern expansion as depicted by the Glanton gang's brutal assaults, characterised by their indiscriminate killing of individuals of all ages and genders, men, women, and children, including their own comrades. McCarthy transforms the American West into a West of mythical locales; instead of describing Texas, the descriptions move into a netherworld that lies "beyond the sun". McCarthy portrays American cruelty page after page, as bodies pile up, ripping the lid off sentimental understandings of the

past. Readers are astounded by McCarthy's inventiveness in coming up with fresh ways to describe human tragedy,

The equestrians continued their journey. The individuals traversed an expansive arid lake, accompanied by a series of deceased volcanoes positioned in a linear formation, resembling the creations of colossal insects. To the southern direction, there existed fragmented formations of scoria within an expansive lava bed that extended as far as the observer's visual perception allowed. (McCarthy, 1985, p. 247)

The judge and his followers see death in the West as the only law. Their journey Even though the West is dangerous, the need to discover what lies behind the sun pushes their journey to continue even at the risk of immediate destruction (Tucker, 2011, p. 274). The Glanton gang is portrayed in McCarthy's *Blood Meridian* as mythical beasts with a mandate for blood, wandering an undiscovered land,

For several weeks, they traversed the borderland in search of any indication of the Apache tribe. Primarily, they exhibited a complete lack of structure, appearing uncertain, rudimentary, and lacking organization. Similar to entities emerging from solid rock and existing without any designated identity or distance from their own imminent appearances, they aimlessly traverse with insatiable hunger and impending demise, rendered speechless like gorgons. (McCarthy, 1985, p.172)

McCarthy calls the Glanton gang "GORGONS," which refers to three female monsters in Greek mythology who could kill people just by looking at them. McCarthy conveys a crude and antiquated view of the West as a region that existed before humans developed a system of names and terminology by employing these obscure terms. The flames leaned downwind in the darkness as hot chains of sparks raced amid the brush. "This is a common description of the West in the book, and the fires frequently look to be alive" (McCarthy, 1985, p.91).

The Glanton gang notices big groups of people travelling west in pursuit of gold as “they patched Argonauts... bleeding westward like some heliotropic plague” (McCarthy, 1985, p. 78). McCarthy portrays the West as a world that is rapidly approaching its demise; thus, this world lacks devoted followers. This perspective is most clearly expressed in the opening pages of *Blood Meridian* when the kid witnesses a Comanche attack on Captain White and his army force, who appear to be from another planet (Hillier, 2017, p. 87). The west becomes the bloodland. Barclay Owens argues that “McCarthy's amoral view of frontier violence is one of people going amok, undermining law at every curve in the road, and leaving all moral considerations empty and without warrant” (Owens, 2000, p. 7). It is not a coincidence that McCarthy decided to choose the American West as the frame for *Blood Meridian*, but McCarthy is familiar with the Western genre and its association with the mythic West. Therefore, he selects very accurate examples for his novel. McCarthy states:

I've always been fascinated by the Southwest...The region situated to the west of the sun encompasses vast expanses of uncharted land, characterised by its governance under an enigmatic entity known as the Other. This territory exists beyond the realm of human comprehension and remains mostly undiscovered

(McCarthy, 1985, p. 245).

McCarthy's West is an area of the unknown, similar to that shown in “A Neobiblical wilderness controlled by dreadful deserts and blinding winter, ghost towns, and bleached corpses” (Holmberg, 2009, p.149). This is how McCarthy characterises the American West in *Blood Meridian*. (Holmberg, 2009, p.149). McCarthy's descriptions of the land portray a world of the uncanny that is no longer the West. Instead, “a hallucinatory abyss made up of countries of some other order out there, whose actual geology was not stone but dread, the West has turned into” (McCarthy, 1985, p.113). This novel appears to explore the nature of humanity. In *Blood Meridian*, Cormac McCarthy presents a vivid depiction of a universe characterised by the pervasive presence of chaotic violence. In the arid regions of the Southwestern United States, where water scarcity is prevalent, the predominant fluid

present is blood. This blood mixes with the dust, resulting in the formation of clay, which serves as the medium for shaping the nascent human form. Vereen Bell states, “McCarthy's narratives consistently exhibit a tendency to approach, yet never quite transition into, allegory. In his works, every element possesses the potential for significance, including even the act of (vomiting)” (Bell, 1988, p. 39). The historical background of *Blood Meridian* will mostly focus on the Southwest region. The kid, born to an alcoholic schoolteacher cannot read and write, which signifies a regression.

The portrayal of the killing of Captain White's soldiers presents a macabre and gothic depiction that confronts the monstrous nature of violent activities. According to McElroy, “the underlying psychological factors contributing to this inclination remain ambiguous, although this inclination itself has had a significant impact on numerous cultures, spanning from the most rudimentary societies to the most advanced ones” (McElroy, 1989, p. 1). The extreme cruelty and abnormal behavior of the gang members are examples of their detachment from humanity, which McElroy discusses as having an archaic quality. Only grotesque and strange events that deviate from the accepted and widely accepted norms of rational human beings can explain this phenomenon. The exacerbation of brutality and malevolence is evident in the act of scalping individuals while they are still alive, which serves to amplify the degree of torture and simultaneously exposes the monstrous nature inherent within humanity. This involves the perpetrators wielding their blades across the scalps of both the living and deceased, forcibly removing the bloody hairpieces, and engaging in the violent dismemberment of exposed bodies. Limbs and heads are ruthlessly severed, while the peculiar white torsos are gutted, and handfuls of internal organs and reproductive organs are callously displayed. Additionally, some people encountered others who were in the process of dying and performed sodomy on them while making loud vocalizations. In all locations, individuals in the throes of death emitted audible expressions of pain and incoherent speech, whereas equine creatures remained in a state of distress, vocalising with intense and prolonged sounds (McCarthy, 1985, pp. 56-57).

Finally, this chapter delineates the correlation between violence and the uncanny, as well as the ramifications of violence personified by Judge Holden in

Cormac McCarthy's *Blood Meridian*. The text employs the character of the boy and the insanity exhibited by the judge to illustrate a moral framework and explore the concepts of good and evil within the world of humans.



CONCLUSION

Sigmund Freud is credited with popularizing the idea of the uncanny by asserting that anything can seem both familiar and unknown at the same time. However, the uncanny itself is much more than simply the sense of being alienated or uncertain. Various domains, including art and literature, film, cultural studies, and sexual diversity, are all places where the concepts of the uncanny might be found to be applicable. In the past, the uncanny may have been seen in the form of mental diseases, inanimate things, the figure of the double, and fear of the dead. However, in today's world, it is also concerned with themes such as cloning, body transformation, literature, religion, and politics. Freud was the first person to bring attention to the dualistic aspect of the word, utilizing the semantics of heimlich and its antonym as the primary focus of his attention. The ambiguity of the German word 'unheimlich' and the translators' use of the uncanny as a synonym for the weird both contributed to the development of a number of ideas and established a connection between Freudian theory and the literature of the bizarre and literary criticism. It is true that the concept of the uncanny has come a long way since 1906, and it appears that each time Freud's *The Uncanny* is read again, fresh interpretations of the term are brought to light.

At present, people in our contemporary societies are surviving physically without humanity; human civilization itself is currently in a state of uncanniness. This is the case because of the current state of political, social, and economic affairs. The value of humanity has been lost in human society since the end of World War II (Goldhagen, 2010, p. 56). The whole world begins to chase authority, and the concept of power is reimagined as a result of developments in science, technology, and artificial intelligence. Within the framework of this discussion, the battlefield is transformed into the digital realm. The majority of strong nations start to acquire nuclear weapons, endangering everyone on the planet. The modern era has seen the emergence of a brand-new culture known as internet culture. Although the internet culture promotes the idea of a global village where people from all over the world may communicate easily, this communication actually occurs between many 'uncanny' electronic devices and fake media rather than between two people.

People eventually lose interest in and passion for speaking with one another. As a result of the communication breakdown, people started to rely entirely on technology and online culture. It so promotes ambiguity and skepticism about the manifestation of human emotions and consciousness, which are the foundation of civilization and human worth. Consequently, human civilization is headed toward obliteration and an apocalyptic future and McCarthy's two selected novels *The Road* and *Blood Meridian* are good examples to detect some of these elements. People are addicted to technology, internet culture, and the virtual world. They are under attack from viruses and hate from this world expressed in the name of a country, race, area, language, or cultural practice. In addition to the actual, physical human society, they are attempting to establish an alternate universe. They thereby become an 'ALIEN' to their own people and society. They start to be seen as suspects and dangers to one another. The current world is filled with feelings of uncertainty, and it also starts to resemble a strange place where people are wandering around like aliens. They are human beings devoid of any sense of humanity or worth. They are recognizable yet strange animals that are portrayed as zombies in literary works and civilizations, whether they be fiction or films.

The uncanny evolves in unison with the progression of modernity. This is a strange and paradoxical occurrence: the phenomenon of the uncanny manifests itself at a time when rational cognition is attempting to abolish such thinking. The uncanny indicates a current form of strangeness. At first glance, it appears that scientific reason has replaced religious and spiritual beliefs; nevertheless, in their stead, a new kind of fear that appears to be rooted in superstition has emerged. Even though the uncanny, as Freud defines it, frequently comes with a sense of fatefulness and eerie mysticism, Mladen Dolar points out that the cases that Freud mentions are primarily modern. Dolar says that,

the region of the sacred and untouchable has historically covered and concealed that which is uncanny because of its historical significance. The uncanny manifests itself at a point in time when spiritualism and religion are no longer able to provide effective support. Throughout history, the experiences that we

today perceive to be uncanny were traditionally 'given to a place that was socially and religiously sanctioned. (Dolar, 2002, p.45)

According to Dolar, the uncanny did not become unplaceable until these supports disintegrated; it was only then that it became uncanny in the strictest sense.

The focus of this thesis heavily relies on the relationship that exists between modernity and the uncanny elements. We assert that we are currently living in a period of increased uncanny and that the literature of the 21st century is paying attention to this new sort of strangeness; it signifies a transition away from the postmodern sublime and towards the uncanny of the 21st century. This is the place where postmodern uncertainty gives way to disorienting worry and where magnificent wonder is transformed into horrible certainty. However, this is not a piece of literature that is associated with the uncanny; it does not feature doppelgängers, ghosts, haunted houses, or bad spirits. This body of literature, on the other hand, is alert to the growing strangeness of the times.

In this thesis, the second chapter, is devoted to analyzing the emergence of the uncanny through the novel *The Road*, which seeks to accomplish certain goals. In this section, we have identified the primary features of the uncanny, which include homelessness, estrangement, and dislocation. A lot of the traits that are supported by examples from the novel are believed to be characteristics of a post-apocalyptic literary work, and thus, *The Road* is considered to be one of those works. In *The Road*, McCarthy depicts a society that is experiencing the consequences of our contemporary era. The world has been nearly completely devoured. The present world is more disconnected from the past, resulting in a range of uncanny consequences. Symbols take on new meanings, and the objects of our modern existence serve new purposes.

There are clear similarities between these concepts of uncanny, an initial shock, a sense of anxiety, horror, disorientation, and a confrontation with the unknowable. It helps us describe and articulate the uncanny of the modern world. Anxiety, which permeates the inmost depths of the individual, should not be forgotten. Within the realm of anxiety, we do not only acknowledge the presence of contradictions and the uncanny, but we are profoundly entangled in them.

McCarthy's selected novels evoke a sense of fear through the uncanny, not only depicting a world of contradictions but rather profoundly unsettling us at our very essence. After that, the study concentrates on uncanny and anxiety, uncanny and repetition, and hope against uncanny, with a particular emphasis on the factors that have assisted the protagonists in overcoming the danger posed by the uncanny. With this title, there have been two subtitles. The first one, 'Anxiety of Losing Darlings', has portrayed the love of parents as a healing power, emphasizing the role of the father in his son's life via the journey that they have taken together and mapping and developing self-hood. The second subtitle has simultaneously focused on the use of optimism, the power of love and hope as a weapon to counter the threat that the uncanny poses.

While *The Road* concludes with a tribute to the natural world, suggesting that the nuclear explosion has eradicated all possibilities of hope or rejuvenation, the bond between the father and son ultimately establishes a structure through which a different form of redemption might be pursued. The man, who possesses a profound affinity for the past, harbors a negative outlook not only regarding their prospects for survival but also concerning the purpose, or rather the absence of purpose, of their aimless journey. Although the man has the option of going to the coast and the words "carrying the fire" as a reminder to persevere, he is unable to comprehend living in a desolate world after an apocalypse. The decline of his memories intensifies this profound feeling of despair. However, it is the youngster who provides significance and the solution for how we should navigate this unfamiliar realm. His selflessness, albeit seemingly foolish, implies that both optimism and virtue endured the nuclear catastrophe. The father's failure to understand the importance of his son's kindness requires his death in the end, enabling the kid to encounter virtuous individuals.

The objective of the third chapter is to investigate the uncanny and violence in McCarthy's *Blood Meridian*. The main title of the novel, with the subtitle *The Evening Redness in the West*, offers significant information about the novel. It seems that McCarthy's bold reinterpretation of the traditional Western genre effectively dismantles its customary norms and themes. In addition to this, I looked into the idea of the boundary, which is the point at which civilization and barbarism become congruent with one another. In *Blood Meridian*, McCarthy provides a detailed

portrayal of the actual violence that took place during the Glanton gang's historical expedition in the Southwest, which primarily involved hunting for scalps. To bolster my argument, I utilized evidence from McCarthy's preliminary material to demonstrate his intention of dispelling the myth of the American West while simultaneously highlighting the brutality of 'Manifest Destiny'. This occurred during a period that many people would have preferred to have suppressed.

We perform a comprehensive examination of the central theme of the novel, *Blood Meridian*. In my argument, the assertion that the term 'meridian' in the title does not refer to the highest or midday position of the sun in the sky. Instead, it symbolizes a figurative boundary that, once crossed, leads to a vast territory that corrupts the human condition and triggers instinctive savagery. It is proposed that this is indeed the situation. To clarify, we posited the perspective that the 'blood meridian, denoting the threshold of extreme violence in the Southwest during the era of Manifest Destiny, corresponds to the meridian across Nacogdoches, the place where the kid's violent initiation begins.

In addition to the phrase 'blood meridian' in the title, my interpretation also encompasses an examination of what is beyond the 'meridian' specifically the 'Terra Damnata', a desolate region that functions as the hunting grounds for Glanton's gang of scalp-hunters. Also, we provided an analysis of what lies beyond 'the meridian'. Because Glanton and his men are the embodiment of disorder and are inhabitants of a universe in which nature has rebelled against itself, these scalp-hunters are so insane that even their horses are carnivorous. That is because they are the embodiment of disorder. The presence of human ear scapulars suggests that scalp-hunters saw the indigenous individuals, to whom these ears originally belonged, primarily as exploitable assets rather than as fellow human beings, treating them as just another element in a perpetually violent environment. Individuals who have been hunted and subsequently killed by scalp hunters utilize scalps and severed heads as tangible evidence of their demise.

The liminal and undefined space that we are in, between a historical past that is currently vanishing and a rhetoric of the future that has not yet been defined, is what causes anxiety. An uncanny impression is produced as a result of the confluence of these incongruous states: all of a sudden, something that was once familiar is

endowed with a new meaning that cannot be explained. My main goal is to ascertain whether or not any other factors had an impact on the primary title. We say in the third chapter that there is a representation in McCarthy's draft material suggests a statement from Lord Byron had some connection to the primary title of *Blood Meridian*, which seems to be interesting. The phrase "Blood is All Meridian" from "Stanzas to the Po" was most likely the phrase that McCarthy had in mind for the title *Blood Meridian*. The subtitle of McCarthy's novel, 'Bleeding Westward' to The Evening Redness in the West,' is another aspect that I thoroughly investigated. I propose that the phrase '*Evening Redness in the West*' conjures up an image of a sun that is bleeding out and going away beyond the horizon, destined to die and never rise again. When viewed in this light, the subtitle is a metaphor for the demise or conclusion of the Western world. In the game *Blood Meridian*, the Glanton gang's unrelenting quest for scalps brings them to the most remote point of society, where the only thing left to discover is the closeness of death. Westward growth has now come to an end and has 'ran out of country' here, at the 'utmost extremity of the world,' where things have finally come to an end.

This uncanny feeling is associated with anxiety. The unheimlich materializes as a consequence of the transformation of the familiar world into something that is incomprehensibly foreign. As a result of the event, the symbolic supports that regulate our position in the world are broken down. However, it only turns reality upside down for a short period of time. The condition of anxiety is becoming more widespread. The judge is attempting to erase the history of the Southwest while simultaneously pushing his will over men. This is happening while the terrain disappears into nothingness. The judge makes a note of everything he observes in his sketchbook as he travels across the country. He meticulously documents the dimensions of each relic, but he intends to destroy them at a later time because it is his intention to eradicate them from the memory of man. The judge, by causing the relentless sun to descend into darkness as if he had commanded it long ago, before the creation of roads, men, or suns to traverse them, is a harbinger of death who seeks to terminate not only humanity but all of existence. He wants to bring an end to everything that exists.

All of these savage elements come together in the famous *Blood Meridian* passage, in which a horde of Comanches brutally massacre Captain White and his troop of filibusterers, to signify a malevolence that transcends culture and civilization, oceans and continents, as well as time and history. In the course of researching McCarthy's novel's title and subtitle, we learned a great deal about the power of evil and how it can destroy civilization when it faces no resistance and no moral restraints. The only thing that is left is the judge, who is seated in the closet and laughing like a monster while he is naked. He is gathering the child against his "immense and awful flesh" as the door to the bar latch slams shut behind him. Our only option is to speculate about what happens to the child who is hiding behind that door, and whatever it is, it must be a genuinely terrible thing. After that, the judge goes back to the bar. He then dances nude in the 'light and shadow' while whispering to anybody who will listen that 'he will never die'.

Blood Meridian demonstrates that there is an innate potential to excuse or justify violent behavior. When it comes to determining whether or not an act is considered violent, the symbolic meaning that is attributed to this act is the sole determining factor. Murders and other acts of violence expose the animalistic aspect of human nature, which is under the control of wrath and instincts, in contrast to Enlightenment ideas that encourage people to use their reason and consider the consequences of their actions. The purpose of the text is to conjure the concept that, on the opposite end of the spectrum, there is reason and goodwill that would heal people and prevent them from turning into bloodsucking monsters. This is accomplished by accentuating the animalistic side of evil. The wicked act destroys not only the people around us but also the person who committed the evil act. The numerous examples of outrage and violence in the text imply the absurdity of human behavior. These examples include the gruesome slaughter of infants, the drowning of a litter of puppies, and the unceremonious killing and subsequent scalping of an Apache child after the youngster had come to trust the judge. The Glanton Gang exhibits an interdimensional environment in which the polarities of good and evil collide within their space. There are many different dichotomies, including good and evil, that are included in the fate of the kid and the judge, which encompasses a vast region. Towards the end of the story, McCarthy uses a change in tense to describe the

judge, which gives the impression that the conflict between good and evil is not yet over and will not be over for all time. For the sake of demonstrating how terrible evil can be, McCarthy described rapes, massacres, and other brutal killings. It is one of the best illustrations of the idea that the boundaries between good and evil are permeable, and the priest is one of the best examples. The child, acting as a heroic good, is successful in avoiding the judge, but the victor, in the end, is once again determined to be evil. It is possible to view civilization as a continuation of primal violence, as a part of a continuum of violence in which our capacity to communicate has permitted violence to multiply in new and unpredictable ways. Civilization does not signify a break from primal violence.

In its most basic form, McCarthy's depiction of the American West is that of a cataclysmic catastrophe that is characterized by widespread fatalities. It is not possible to believe in a higher power or to have any chance of redemption. Rather than that, the story comes to a close with a solitary person laboring diligently in a parched desert, excavating, advancing, and lighting fires from stones. In this lonely landscape, the only things that are left are skeletal remnants and mindless travelers who continue to make their way toward their demise. In conclusion, the current investigation has produced significant discoveries that could serve as a source of motivation for other academics to do additional in-depth research on the subject matter. As a result of time constraints, it is possible that there is a certain failure to take into account some issues that should be taken into consideration for future research. These features are essential in order to fill in any gaps that may occur as a result of external conditions, such as a lack of references, or to rectify any gaps that may be present.

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