

Thesis Abstract

This thesis deals with the deconstruction of the myth of American westward expansion in Cormac McCarthy's *Blood Meridian or The Evening Redness in the West*; it also tries to answer the question of how the book fits into the Western genre. The chief focus is on the two key characters: the kid and Judge Holden, and their fight for dominance, the depiction of the frontier landscape, and the portrayal of violence.

The thesis is divided into three larger sections, followed by a conclusion. The first part, titled "*Blood Meridian: Between History and Myth*," is an extended overview, putting *Blood Meridian* into the context of the author's literary production and introducing the central themes of the novel that are examined in the subsequent sections of the thesis. The second part, titled "Introduction," is divided into four chapters presenting notions essential to understanding how *Blood Meridian* engages with the myths of American westward expansion and subsequently dismantles them. The first chapter focuses on Frederick Jackson Turner's theory that the American frontier was the birthplace of the American character. The second chapter introduces Roland Barthes' definition of myths and the second and third semiological chains, as well as William H. McNeill's concept of mythistory. The third chapter examines *Blood Meridian* as a historical novel and investigates how it works with historical sources. The fourth chapter chronicles the evolution of the Western genre and establishes *Blood Meridian's* place among the revisionist Westerns.

The third part, titled "Reconstructing the Myth of the American West," contains the analytical part of the thesis and is once again divided into four chapters. The first two chapters of the analytical part follow the conflict of the nameless hero, the kid, with the main villain, Judge Holden, discussing how the hero fails the expectations of his role and his eventual death at the hands of the villain Holden, who appropriates the position of the central character of the novel. The second chapter also introduces several possible approaches to interpreting the

character of Judge Holden. The third chapter ponders at the absence of God on the frontier of *Blood Meridian* and explains the workings of occult sciences present in the book. The fourth and final chapter deals with the portrayal of violence and the conflict between Euro-Americans and Indians.

The principal goal is to demonstrate that *Blood Meridian* dismantles the long-established myths of American westward expansion by using both history and counter-myth. The thesis is based upon the assumption that myths are historical, and therefore subject to change; it follows the evolution of the myth of American expansion west from its conception to the point of its revision, which was compelled by a historical change, and subsequently shows how *Blood Meridian* developed on the tradition of both classical and revisionist Westerns.