

“Art becomes an attunement to the demonic”:
Confronting the Hyperobject in McCarthy’s
No Country for Old Men

Kevin Edwin Stadt

Hyperobjects are agents. They are indeed more than a little demonic, in the sense that they appear to straddle worlds and times, like fiber optic cables or electromagnetic fields. And they are demonic in that through them causalities flow like electricity. (Morton, *Hyperobjects: Philosophy and Ecology after the End of the World*, “Viscosity”)

I think if you were Satan and you were settin around tryin to think up somethin that would just bring the human race to its knees what you would probably come up with is narcotics. (McCarthy, *No Country for Old Men* 218)

In Cormac McCarthy’s novel *No Country for Old Men*, Sheriff Ed

Tom Bell—who is revealed as the central character by the end of the novel—says or thinks “I dont know” or some variation of it around sixty times. In the vast majority of the instances he says the actual phrase “I dont know” (with no apostrophe in the contraction, as McCarthy does), but there is a wide variety of constructions Bell uses to voice the same epistemological uncertainty and anxiety, such as “I aint sure” (79), “Hard to say” (93), or “I dont have no answer about that” (303). Sixty instances is remarkable, all the more so given that early on in the novel especially there many sections of the text in which Bell does not even appear due to the narrative’s focus on the violent drama unfolding between other characters, particularly Moss and Chigurh. Despite Bell’s steady, constant voicing of his uncertainty, only one critic has discussed this aspect of *No Country* to date. In “‘Mercantile Ethics’: *No Country for Old Men* and the Narcocorrido,” Stephen Tatum notes that the “I dont know” “becomes a refrain” (78) in this text, and that the novel “diagnoses a cognitive paralysis” in Bell, whose “abiding desire is to produce a narrative explanation that will make disjunctive things and events in time and space cohere” (80). Tatum dwells on this only briefly, though, observing that Bell’s refrain of “I dont know” signals an inability to impose a satisfying narrative on the violent events he confronts. The goal of the present study is to posit an explanation of Bell’s “I dont know” chant by exploring the drug plague as an example of a hyperobject, as discussed by Timothy Morton in *Hyperobjects: Philosophy and Ecology after the End of the World*. Conceiving of the narcotics scourge as a hyperobject yields insight into Bell’s unremitting expression of perplexity, as well as other questions about the text, such as whether Chigurh is to be read mimetically or allegorically.

What is a hyperobject? Morton’s thinking on this subject figures as an expression of the new wave of object-oriented ontology (OOO) and

speculative realism in post-postmodern philosophical thought, and his discussion of hyperobjectivity probes a constellation of thinkers and subjects such as quantum theory, relativity, Heideggerian philosophy, global warming, and art. For the purposes of this study, however, summary of some of the most apropos aspects of the hyperobject will suffice. In his introduction Morton writes,

I coined the term *hyperobjects* to refer to things that are massively distributed in time and space relative to humans. A hyperobject could be a black hole. A hyperobject could be the Lago Agrio oil field in Ecuador, or the Florida Everglades. A hyperobject could be the biosphere, or the Solar System. A hyperobject could be the sum total of all the nuclear materials on Earth; or just the plutonium, or the uranium. A hyperobject could be the very long-lasting product of direct human manufacture, such as Styrofoam or plastic bags, or the sum of all the whirring machinery of capitalism. Hyperobjects, then, are “hyper” in relation to some other entity, whether they are directly manufactured by humans or not. (“A Quake in Being: An Introduction to Hyperobjects”)

The running example Morton looks to throughout his text is global warming. Global warming is bigger than you or I in time and space, existing on what Morton calls a “high-dimensional phase space” (“Introduction”). Besides being spatially and temporally vast relative to our everyday modes of perception, hyperobjects exhibit an array of other features. They are “viscous” in the sense that they stick to us; we can’t escape them. One can’t get away from global warming, at least not on Earth. They are “nonlocal,” meaning that any specific manifestation of the hyperobject is *not it*: “Stop the tape of evolution anywhere and you won’t see it. Stand under a rain cloud and it’s not global warming you’ll feel. Cut your coat into a thousand pieces – you

won't find capital in there" ("Nonlocality"). Because hyperobjects exist in a high-dimensional phase space, they also display "temporal undulation" and "phasing," meaning that while a "high enough dimensional being could see global warming itself as a static object [...] I only see brief patches of this gigantic object as it intersects with my world" ("Phasing"), such as experiencing a historically hot summer day. Hyperobjects are "interobjective," too, in the sense that every object always and everywhere necessarily (mis)translates other objects, that "nothing is ever experienced directly, but only as mediated through other entities in some shared sensual space" ("Interobjectivity"), so that the precipitation I feel, for example, is the translation of global warming coming to me through the "language" of rain.

One of the most important aspects of hyperobjects for the purposes of this study is their withdrawn nature. In his introduction Morton argues that "all entities (including 'myself') are shy, retiring octopuses that squirt out a dissembling ink as they withdraw into the ontological shadows." He cites Husserl's insight into the fact that no matter how many times one looks at a coin, one never sees the other side ("Introduction"), and he points out that "Quantum theory specifies that quanta withdraw from one another," and "Heisenberg's uncertainty principle states that when an 'observer' [...] makes an observation, at least one aspect of the observer is occluded," and furthermore "what Bohr called complementarity ensures that no quantum has total access to any other quantum" ("Nonlocality"). Hyperobjects are not different from any other objects in this withdrawnness, but they force it into our awareness with their magnitude.

The drug plague in *No Country* exhibits all the characteristics of a hyperobject. It is certainly "massively distributed" in spacetime compared to any one person, and indeed it is massively distributed

even in relation to any single region or country given that it operates fluidly across borders. It also appears exceptionally viscous, with no character in the novel escaping its dark stickiness, represented by the unending flow of blood we see over and over sticking to their skin, clothes, money, and lives, or the transponder hidden in the stacks of cash that allows Chigurh to stick to Moss's trail. The drug scourge is nonlocal as well. Just as no hot day is global warming, no single shootout or body or case of money is the drug trade itself. They are simply manifestations of the hyperobject's temporal undulation and phasing, momentary glimpses of an entity existing on a higher dimensional plane that our minds are ill-equipped to grasp as a totality. The drug plague is interobjective, too—we see no plague directly, wholly, but rather translated through other objects. It comes on to us through the phonology of staccato gunfire, the morphology of men and dogs dead in the desert night, the semantics of a satchel of cash, and the syntax of one of Chigurh's coin tosses. Above all the plague is exquisitely withdrawn, and this accounts for Bell's persistent refrain of "I dont know." Bell is struggling to fathom a hyperobject, a thing vast in scale both spatially and temporally relative to himself, a thing he can never see the whole picture of, a thing that only manifests itself in his dimension of perception at unpredictable times and places and then only in bewildering ontological translation.

Once one begins to see drug trafficking in *No Country* as hyperobject, it is difficult not to read Chigurh as its symbol. It is true that the occasional critic contends that Chigurh is not to be read allegorically, but mimetically. For example, in his discussion of the Coen brothers' film adaptation, Dennis Rothermel writes, "Chigurh we must understand as a man, not a symbol, a cipher, an embodiment, or evil incarnate" (ch. 14). Yet the overwhelming critical consensus is that Chigurh does function as a symbol, not a "real" man. Lydia Cooper,

for instance, argues Chigurh “is not much of an individual,” and is similar to *Blood Meridian’s* Judge Holden, “who himself is more caricature of evil than complex individual” (118). John Cant writes that Chigurh is “death personified” (249), while Linda Woodson reads him as a representative of determinism. In the context of the present study, Chigurh figures as a clear symbol of the novel’s looming hyperobject.

Morton writes that at this stage of history, when hyperobjects are forcing themselves into our consciousness, “Art becomes an attunement to the demonic” (“The Age of Asymmetry”). Certainly this is true of McCarthy’s art, his creation of a character like Chigurh. Hyperobjects are demonic in the way they stick to us, influence everything in our lives, are vast in timespace, can’t be known directly, and yet can kill us. This is an eerie, weird type of demonic—Morton uses the word “weird” some forty times and the word “strange” one hundred thirty-three times in his text. One cannot help but note the weird strangeness of the hyperobject, and one cannot escape the weird strangeness of Chigurh. The very first time we see Chigurh, he has intentionally let himself be captured by police for murder, purely because “I wanted to see if I could extricate myself by an act of will” (174-75), which he does. Though his hands are cuffed behind his back, he simply waits until the deputy holding him is on the phone and then “squatted and scooted his manacled hands beneath him to the back of his knees. In the same motion he sat and rocked backward and passed the chain under his feet and then stood instantly and effortlessly. If it looked like a thing he’d practiced many times it was” (5). Chigurh then uses the handcuffs to strangle the detective from behind with what becomes his trademark equanimity, his typical placidity during the performance of a brutal killing. Just as he calmly chokes the life out of a police officer, so he treats a gaping gunshot wound in his own leg in a hotel bathroom with impossible poise, after which “Other than a light

beading of sweat on his forehead there was little evidence that his labors had cost him anything at all" (164). Not long after this severe injury we find him hunting the man who sent another assassin, Wells, to kill him, and "Chigurh limped up seventeen flights of concrete steps" and yet he ends up "Breathing no harder than if he'd just got up out of a chair" (198). The last time we see Chigurh in the text, a car of teenagers blows through a stop sign at a high speed and hits Chigurh's car on the driver's side door, resulting in extensive injury, including broken bones. He simply "looked at his arm. Bone sticking up under the skin. Not good [...] He held the arm and turned it and tried to see how badly it was bleeding. If the median artery were severed. He thought not" (260-61). The weirdness of Chigurh's demeanor in the heat of murder or in the face of his own extreme bodily injury is matched by his oddly withdrawn, enigmatic identity. When Moss hears Chigurh's name spoken for the first time, he mishears the foreign-sounding word and asks "Sugar?" (152), and when Chigurh comes to Moss's hotel room to kill him, "There was an odd smell in the air. Like some foreign cologne" (111) and "The man turned his head and gazed at Moss. Blue eyes. Serene. Dark hair. Something about him faintly exotic. Beyond Moss's experience" (112). Of Chigurh, Bell says "I tried to see if I could get his fingerprints off the FBI database but they just drew a blank [...] He's a ghost" (248). Similarly, his eerie, menacing behavior even towards characters who seem innocent leaves them struggling to understand: one thinks of the scene in which Chigurh forces the gas station owner into a coin toss to determine his survival, so weird and eerie to the old man who cannot possibly fathom the dimensions of the force he has been drawn into the orbit of.

If we see the drug plague as a hyperobject, and Chigurh as its avatar, this sheds new light on the behavior of the other characters in

No Country. Morton suggests that “Hyperobjects have already had a significant impact on human social and psychic space” and they have “ushered in a new human phase of *hypocrisy, weakness, and lameness*” (“Introduction”). This study focuses on these effects as they manifest with Sheriff Bell, as hypocrisy, weakness, and lameness are particularly pronounced with him, and also because by the end of the novel he replaces Moss as the true protagonist.

Morton conceives of hypocrisy as “a ‘secret doom’: convention tells us that someone is hiding something, pretending. Hypocrisy is a pretense, an act. But it is also simply hidden doom, a message sent from somewhere obscure” and that all objects, given that they are necessarily withdrawn and come to us only through interobjective translation, must always and everywhere be “actors portraying themselves” (“Hypocrisies”). Bell is indeed an actor, relishing the role of small-town sheriff. Yet while he clearly takes pleasure playing that part to the hilt, he also invariably manages to get to the scene of danger a little late. In fact, Bell so overdoes his role that a great many critics have commented that upon the first reading of *No Country* one can easily get the impression that McCarthy slipped in writing this novel, creating a character too formulaic and clichéd. Bell overplays the part. Jay Ellis writes that he nearly dropped the book when he read the passage in which we find Bell on the phone with a local woman who wants him to come rescue her cat from a tree—the cliché so shocked him. In another passage, DEA agents arrive at Bell’s crime scene and he initially feigns an unaccommodating posture in answering their questions, playing the well-worn scene from television and film in which the local sheriff is outraged at the intrusion of federal agents into his jurisdiction. Bell is inclined to make grandiose statements about his role such as “The people of Terrell County hired me to look after em. That’s my job. I get paid to be the first one hurt. Killed, for

that matter” (133), yet his actions reveal that he is more interested in enjoying his romanticized image of the small-town sheriff than in actually facing the danger. For instance, Bell tells the story of pulling over a pickup truck with Mexican license plates only to have the men in the truck fire on him with a shotgun. He reacts in a way that establishes a pattern for his behavior—he literally lays down on the seat and hides. Only when he hears them driving away does he return fire, and then rather than pursuing them he drives the shot-up cruiser to the local café:

I drove back to Sanderson and pulled in at the café and I'll tell you they come from all over to see that cruiser. It was shot just full of holes. Looked like the Bonnie and Clyde car. I didnt have a mark on me. Not even from all that glass. I was criticized for that too. Parkin there like I done. They said I was showin out. Well, maybe I was. But I needed that cup of coffee too, I'll tell you. (39-40)

Bell has no interest in engaging in an actual gunfight with bad guys, but he happily displays his bullet-ridden car to the locals. He takes obvious pride in the role he plays with statements such as “I was sheriff of this county when I was twenty-five. Hard to believe. My father was not a lawman. Jack was my grandfather. Me and him was sheriff at the same time, him in Plano and me here. I think he was pretty proud of that. I know I was” (90), but Ellis notes that he is “always a bit slow (unhurried enough to stop for coffee and pie) so that once he arrives, the most recent history has not only missed hurting him, but has also rendered the horror at his destination—of a drug shoot-out, a burned car, a motel shooting, a grieving father—distant to him” (241). When Bell and one of his deputies get to Moss’s trailer, he is (as always) a step behind Chigurh, and the sheriff says,

"We might have just missed him" (93). Bell always manages to "just miss him," somehow remaining unable to track down Chigurh or Moss throughout the entire novel, yet when Wells searches for Moss he finds him in only three hours. In the end, Bell quits and abandons his career rather than face Chigurh. Despite his claims that he's paid to be the first one hurt or killed, he decides walking away from the part he's been playing is better than playing it through to its logical conclusion: "Somewhere out there is a true and living prophet of destruction and I dont want to confront him [...] I wont push my chips forward and stand up and go out to meet him" (4). Bell's hypocrisy is colored by the cryptic message of doom delivered by Chigurh, by the hyperobject, a doom that reduces his identity to mere theater.

Bell's hypocrisy in his playing of the sheriff role is paralleled by his hypocrisy in the soldier role. Near the end of the novel, when Bell visits his Uncle Ellis, a representative of the old-timer lawman type that Bell so admires, he tells Ellis a confessional story from his time as a soldier in World War II that has plagued him with guilt every day in all the decades since. The story is that Bell and his men were bombed by Nazi soldiers and Bell was the only man left standing. He defended his fallen men throughout the day, but when night descended he knew the Germans would overtake him so he fled, abandoning his brothers in arms. He tells Ellis, "you go into battle it's a blood oath to look after the men with you and I dont know why I didnt. I wanted to" (278). Ironically, the army awarded Bell a commendation, the Bronze Star, because "I guess they had to make it look good. Look like it counted for somethin. Losin the position" (276), and that medal is part of the reason Bell was later elected sheriff. He played the part of soldier until real danger presented itself, and the undeserved medal he got for it allowed him into another role, that of sheriff, in which he also enjoyed playing the part until real danger appeared and he again abandoned

those he was responsible for. While Bell suffered enormous guilt for his actions in war, it did not prevent him from repeating the same pattern of behavior as sheriff.

Bell's behavior is the result of confrontation with a hyperobject. Ellis notes that although it is Bell's job to protect Moss, Carla Jean, and others, "he knows he is ineffectual at this [...] he is so outgunned and outnumbered as to make it ridiculous for him to take a stand against the drug dealers. And they know it" (247). The drug scourge makes Bell not only a hypocrite, but also weak and lame. Morton explains that "The time of hyperobjects is a time of weakness, in which humans are tuned to entities that can destroy them" and

Every aspect of hyperobjects reinforces our particular lameness with regard to them. The viscosity that glues us to the hyperobject forces us to acknowledge that we are oozing, suppurating with nonhuman beings: mercury, radioactive particles, hydrocarbons, mutagenic cells, future beings unrelated to us who also live in the shadow of hyperobjects. The nonlocality of hyperobjects scoops out the foreground-background manifolds that constitute human worlds. The undulating temporality that hyperobjects emit bathes us in a spatiotemporal vortex that is radically different from human-scale time. The phasing of hyperobjects forcibly reminds us that we are not the measure of all things, as Protagoras and correlationism promise. And like a wafting theater curtain, interobjectivity floats in front of objects, a demonic zone of threatening illusion, a symptom of the Rift between essence and appearance. ("The Age of Asymmetry")

Bell's weakness and lameness are among his defining characteristics, and understanding the nature of hyperobjects allows us insight into why. Ellis observes that Bell is a "defeated, emasculated, and sorrowful man" (249), and while he convincingly argues that Bell becomes that

way by measuring himself against an impossibly idealized image of his father, Bell's confrontation with the hyperobject explains the feelings of weakness and lameness as well. Bell's insignificance in the face of the drug plague is perfectly captured in the words of Wells, who has only this to say of Bell: "I dont think of him at all. He's a redneck sheriff in a hick town in a hick county. In a hick state" (157), as it is when Bell admits that "I think the worst if it is knowin that probably the only reason I'm even still alive is that they have no respect for me. And that's very painful" (217). Bell is just a single man, one who romanticizes a nostalgic version of the lawman who knows all the people in his county, who doesn't need to carry a gun, whose most dangerous adventure involves the occasional fistfight. The hyperobject he faces—an international drug trafficking industry shackled by no laws or borders, staffed by trained ex-military assassins, equipped with cutting-edge equipment and the black market's economic power—makes Bell an impotent figure by comparison indeed.

It is not only Bell who shrivels into hypocrisy, lameness, and weakness under the influence of the hyperobject in *No Country*. Arguably, all the characters except Chigurh do. Moss, for example, immediately experiences the viscosity of the drug plague and in the course of his attempts to extricate himself from it, his lameness and weakness become obvious as well. Although he is a trained ex-soldier, intelligent, tough, and resourceful, he stands no chance against Chigurh and what he represents. He senses the magnitude of the hyperobject he faces directly when he first lays eyes on the satchel of cash: "There was a heavy leather document case standing upright alongside the dead man's knee and Moss absolutely knew what was in the case and he was scared in a way he didn't even understand" (17). From the moment he takes the money, Chigurh and other representatives of the drug plague stick to his trail, wear him down, and ultimately kill him.

Moss tries earnestly to play the part of the hero, the tough guy, but his efforts are doomed to failure and hypocrisy, like Bell's. Ellis describes Moss as "a parody of the hard-boiled hero for a Young Man genre novel" (235), noting that before Moss goes off to face Chigurh, who has vowed to kill Moss's wife Carla Jean, Moss goes to a clothing store and we get a detailed description of the clothes he buys to "look the part" (235) of a real cowboy preparing for a showdown. Andrew Keller Estes, too, remarks that in picking out the elements of his cowboy outfit, "Moss methodically goes through the boot section [...] While his wife is being stalked, Moss worries about his footwear" (185-86). On his way to try to rescue his wife from Chigurh, he picks up a young girl hitchhiking and his conversations with her are brimming with clichés and stereotypes which reveal how fully he is acting a role, such as "If you spend three days with me [...] I could have you holdin up gas stations. Be no trick at all" (212), or when the girl asks him if he's sorry to have become an outlaw and he answers "Sorry I didn't start sooner" (228). Despite his posturing, though, the situation is just as Wells tells Moss it is: "This isn't going to go away. Even if you got lucky and took out one or two people—which is unlikely—they'd send someone else. Nothing would change. They'll still find you. There's nowhere to go" (156). Morton points out that there is nowhere for any of us to go to escape the hyperobject global warming; similarly, for Moss there is nowhere to go to escape the drug plague.

Nor do other characters in the novel escape it, even those innocent or uninvolved. When Wells investigates the scene at a hotel where Moss, Chigurh, and others had a three-way shoot-out, for example, he finds that a stray bullet killed an old woman who had simply been sitting in her rocking chair in her apartment. Moss's wife, the hitchhiker, the man working at the front desk of the hotel—none of these characters escape the viscosity of the hyperobject. Even those who

are part of the drug plague are weak and disposable against the scale, power, and violence of it, demonstrated by the horrifying, seemingly endless parade of representatives of the drug trade brutally murdered throughout the text.

Although they are frightening, Morton views hyperobjects as teachers or messengers; they force us to come to terms with certain truths. In the global warming example, the hyperobject looms demonic in the minutia of our daily lives, from our small talk about the weather to starting the car to replacing a light bulb, demanding we take responsibility for our actions and our relationships to objects in the world. The hyperobject in *No Country* also compels characters to come to terms with their own complicity. In “Do you see?: Levels of Ellipsis in *No Country for Old Men*,” Ellis describes Chigurh as “a Socratic figure who, when he has time, engages in extended dialogue intended to help his victims see what they could not before see, that their past actions, in conjunction with chance events, have determined their fated end at his hands” (96). When Chigurh is about to kill Carla Jean, for example, he takes pains to try to show her how she is actually responsible for her situation, regardless of how innocent she may initially appear. Although she starts out claiming “I don’t know what I ever done” (256), Chigurh explains at some length that “Every moment in your life is a turning and every one a choosing. Somewhere you made a choice. All followed to this. The accounting is scrupulous” (259). Finally, when he tells her that wanting life to be some other way is nonsensical because it is as it is, and is so because of choices she made, he asks if she understands and she responds, “Yes, she said, sobbing. I do. I truly do” (260) before he shoots her. Ellis’s reading of Chigurh as teacher supports the interpretation of the drug plague as a hyperobject and Chigurh as its symbol. Moreover, like global warming, it is a hyperobject we bear responsibility for creating. By the end of the

novel, Bell begins to realize as much, as we see when he tells a reporter that “you cant have a dope business without dopers” (304) or in this conversation in which he and another sheriff marvel at the bloody mess Chigurh has left in his wake:

The sheriff shook his head. Dope, he said.
They sell that shit to schoolkids.
It’s worse than that.
How’s that?
Schoolkids buy it. (194)

Chigurh and what he represents is not a hyperobject like a planet, but rather a hyperobject like global warming. Its origin is traceable to our own actions; the demand for narcotics among Americans creates it. It seems we learned little from the Prohibition era in which alcohol, upon becoming illegal, immediately spawned powerful and violent criminal organizations feeding on the vast profits created by their very illegality. Bell, then, has direct responsibility for the drug plague he is so mystified by since he is a part of the system that makes drugs illicit and therefore makes their business so lucrative and violent.

Reading the drug plague in *No Country* as hyperobject affords us new insights into the text. Bell’s constant refrain of “I dont know” makes sense when we understand that hyperobjects, existing on a different scale of time and space than individual humans, necessarily come to us as mysterious, unknowable. The hyperobject’s scale also renders us weak and lame, which illuminates the inevitable defeat of Bell, Moss, and other characters confronting it. Just as object-oriented ontology and hyperobjects prove useful tools in the analysis of *No Country*, applications to other McCarthy texts suggest themselves. One could argue that the ecological colonization throughout the Border Trilogy and *Blood Meridian* figures as hyperobject, as does the

Tennessee Valley Authority in *Suttree* or the blanket of ash that covers the world in *The Road*. McCarthy's art is tuned to the demonic indeed. The demonic hyperobject figures prominently in his texts, sticking to characters and readers alike, manifesting in blood and bodies, withdrawing from understanding only to emerge in grotesque interobjective translations, reaching out to us with messages never fully reckonable.

Seoul National University of Science and Technology

www.kci.go.kr

- Cant, John. *Cormac McCarthy and the Myth of American Exceptionalism*. New York: Routledge, 2008.
- Cooper, Lydia R. *No More Heroes: Narrative Perspective and Morality in Cormac McCarthy*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 2011.
- Ellis, Jay. "'Do you see?': Levels of Ellipsis in *No Country for Old Men*." Spurgeon. 94-116.
- _____. *No Place for Home: Spatial Constraint and Character Flight in the Novels of Cormac McCarthy*. New York: Routledge, 2009.
- Estes, Andrew Keller. *Cormac McCarthy and the Writing of American Spaces*. New York: Rodopi, 2013.
- McCarthy, Cormac. *All the Pretty Horses*. New York: Vintage, 1992.
- _____. *Blood Meridian*. New York: Vintage, 1985.
- _____. *Cities of the Plain*. New York: Vintage, 1998.
- _____. *No Country for Old Men*. New York: Vintage, 2005.
- _____. *The Crossing*. New York: Vintage, 1994.
- _____. *The Road*. New York: Vintage, 2006.
- Morton, Timothy. *Hyperobjects: Philosophy and Ecology after the End of the World*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2013. Kindle file.
- Rothermel, Dennis. "Denial and Trepidation Awaiting What's Coming in the Coen Brothers' First Film Adaptation." *No Country for Old Men: From Novel to Film*. Ed. Lynnea Chapman King, Rick Wallach, Jim Welsh. Lanham: Scarecrow, 2009. Ch. 14. Kindle file.
- Spurgeon, Sara L, ed. *Cormac McCarthy*. New York: Continuum, 2011.
- Tatum, Stephen. "'Mercantile Ethics': *No Country for Old Men* and the Narcocorrido." Spurgeon. 77-93.
- Woodson, Linda. "'...you are the battleground': Materiality, Moral Responsibility, and Determinism in *No Country for Old Men*." *The Cormac McCarthy Journal* 5 (2005): 4-13.

“Art becomes an attunement to the demonic”:

Confronting the Hyperobject in McCarthy’s *No Country for Old Men*

Abstract

Kevin Edwin Stadt

The protagonist of Cormac McCarthy’s *No Country for Old Men*, Sheriff Bell, says or thinks “I dont know” or some variation of it around sixty times, a striking fact that has been largely overlooked in McCarthy scholarship. This study attempts to illuminate Bell’s refrain of “I don’t know” by analyzing the drug plague in the novel as what Timothy Morton’s object-oriented ontology calls a “hyperobject.” Reading the drug scourge as hyperobject and the villain Anton Chigurh as its avatar allows us to gain insight into the patterns of hypocrisy, weakness, and lameness in the novel’s characters.

Key Words

Cormac McCarthy, *No Country for Old Men*, Timothy Morton, hyperobject, object-oriented ontology

논문 투고 일자 : 2015. 1. 23.

심사 완료 일자 : 2015. 3. 30.

게재 확정 일자 : 2015. 4. 27.

www.kci.go.kr