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Abstract

This thesis explores how subjectivity is negotiated in the interplay between ideology, material objects, use, and the spaces these objects construct, in Cormac McCarthy's novel *Suttree*. McCarthy constructs a powerful and Naturalist wasteland comprised of an American materiality. The thesis employs the close connections between ideological class marginalization and spaces, to reframe the denizens of Knoxville as waste, rather than commodities. Exploring the tension of McCarthy's insistent materiality, by employing New Materialist approaches, this thesis reveals the novel's underlying potential to not only negotiate recentering and dehumanization of the marginalized, but to negotiate anthropocentrism, as it reframes the subject-object relationships between the animate and inanimate, and thus serves to question agency. I argue that Suttree must shed his material possessions in order to gain autonomy and real agency, because these objects form compelling networks that enmesh and incapacitate his mobility. By drawing attention to this insistent materiality, McCarthy reveals the opaque constraints of human autonomy, and thus serves to illuminate and access these fascinating limits. In conjunction with McCarthy's materiality, I examine how his superabundant object world both maintains and resists ideological constructs. Positing object misuse as a potential instrument of such resistance, I expose how this resistance is interrogated, as misuse is appropriated by representatives of that which it is supposed to resist.

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List of Abbreviations

BM – Blood Meridian

CoG – Child of God

NCFOM – No Country for Old Men

TR – The Road

ISA – Ideological State Apparatus

RSA – Repressive State Apparatus

Introduction

Cormac McCarthy's novel *Suttree* (1979) constructs a superabundant object space that insists on dominating subjectivity. This space incorporates a negotiation of ideologies, and frames its inhabitants in a waste dynamic that ultimately questions potential autonomy and agency.

Central for discussing the constraints of agency, is addressing the foundations for subjectivity. Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer claim, in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, that subjectivity is largely a product of mass-culture, while Louis Althusser states that ideological representatives (states and institutions) form individual and collective subjectivity. According to these perspectives, our selves are thus products of what is communicated in culture and media, and shaped by institutions such as schools and religion, laws and police. This thesis seeks to answer how subjectivity is negotiated in the interplay between ideology, material objects, the use and misuse of these objects, and the spaces they construct, in *Suttree*. I argue that *Suttree*'s privileged subject position causes his agency to be interrupted by McCarthy's insistent materiality, where objects form compelling networks that enmesh and incapacitate his mobility, which ultimately results in his need to shed his material possessions in order to gain autonomy and real agency. When *Suttree* fails to appropriate his self-marginalized subjectivity, in his condemnation of object misuse, he defends the dominant class ideology. In contrast, the marginalized in the novel consistently employ object misuse, and thus resist ideological constructs. However, this thesis exposes how this resistance is interrogated, as misuse is appropriated by representatives of that which it is supposed to resist.

New Materialism's framing of quotidian objects as meaningful artifacts that mediate subjectivity contributes to Adorno, Horkheimer, and Althusser's ideas on how subjectivity is constructed. According to New Materialism, objects can function as crucibles that construct and negotiate subjectivity. This extends to a power-relationship between objects and human autonomy, or free will. In this agency that objects exert, in that they repeatedly expose our lack of agency and mastery, they challenge our anthropocentric models. Discussing how subjectivity is negotiated in *Suttree*, I will address the exchange that exists between ideology, material objects, and spaces. Jonathan Elmore and Rick Elmore argue, in regard to McCarthy's *No Country for Old Men*, that it is the overarching economic framework and ideology of the modern world that shapes and constrains agency. Katja Rebmann, however, suggests that the ultimate arbiter of agency is that of the physical landscape itself. Raymond Malewitz, in turn, posits that actors can effectuate agency and domination over objects through misuse, and thus achieve a sense of real autonomy. Specifically, I will examine how

Suttree in fact demonstrates the incorrigible allure of things either as attention-demanding objects, or waste objects that dominate the spaces of the dispossessed and marginalized, and how this compels subject positions. This is an important topic because it acknowledges the opaque constraints of human autonomy, and thus serves to illuminate and access these fascinating limits.

Considered one of the seminal American authors of the late 20th and early 21st century, his works are generally situated within the Late Modernist tradition (see especially David Holloway's treatise here), often with recurring Naturalist elements. McCarthy is important because he manages to dissect what seems to be the core of Americanism, while simultaneously challenging that core with his grand focus on, what ultimately seems to be, illusory ontological, identity, and spatial borders. Matters of philosophical nature abound in McCarthy's works, inspiring entire studies on his philosophy. Rick Wallach, in his foreword to David Holloway's *The Late Modernism of Cormac McCarthy*, places McCarthy on equal footing with Faulkner, as well as with Flannery O'Connor and James Dickey, as a writer in the southern tradition (xi). Rick Wallach claims McCarthy's novels "anticipate the exhaustion and failure of culture at every turn", and posits that, "If it is indeed the civilization of late capitalism that is going to supplant or encompass this desolation, we don't even get to see what the future will look like unless we can read such a projection in the ruins" (xiii). McCarthy's works are vital, then, because they mediate the breakdown of -isms, monolithic cultures and unified cultural expressions in postmodernity, globalization, and late capitalism. At the same time, both McCarthy, and Wallach's interpretation here, present quite pessimistic perspectives on the future, and thus simultaneously valorize a historical past.

Taking this into account, it is no wonder then that McCarthy's novels are read as both Modernist and Postmodernist. The latter comes to particular expression, according to Matthew Guinn, as McCarthy "chronicles the decentering of his era without celebrating it", and Guinn's observation that he forges "a form of his own that promises to transcend his own period" (Guinn 115). While Guinn then resists labelling McCarthy's writing as postmodernist, he acknowledges that his thematic and conceptual works negotiate the boundaries between the two literary genres. Employing Guinn's words, as McCarthy's "chronicles the decentering" of the late 20th and early 21st century, he also writes both of and within a space increasingly distanced from -isms. McCarthy's catalogue is often categorized according to geographical settings. His Appalachian period spans *The Orchard Keeper* (1965), *Outer Dark* (1968), *Child of God* (1973), where *Suttree* (1979) is regarded as the last novel in this category, before McCarthy directed his focus westwards with *Blood Meridian* (1985).

In McCarthy's oeuvre, *Suttree* is especially interesting because its style of narration amalgamates narrator and protagonist, but it does so at very distinct instances. David Holloway describes the novel as McCarthy's late modernist "pivotal work", and a "self-critique of [McCarthy's] own craft" (Holloway 12), a credible understanding as both the style of narration, as well as the biographical elements, expose his writing to himself, and himself to the reader. A novel taking shape over 20 years, it is a novel that, arguably, in combination with its biographical elements, straddles modernist and postmodernist genres and styles. *Suttree* has been read extensively as a work that lives and exists between modernism and postmodernism, where protagonist Cornelius Suttree undertakes a spiritual and existential journey, similar to traversing the river Styx in Greek mythology ("Eruption of the Sordid" 445), an easy simile to make as Suttree "row[s] in a sunless underregion of swirling mists, through bowls of cold and seething smoke" (*Suttree* 107). Through observation and negotiation of his social and environmental surroundings, through hard experiences, toil and death and anguish, largely as a result of confronting a naturalistic materiality, Suttree searches for crucial and essential truths in a world that ostensibly seems meaningless.

In addition to Ty Hawkins' simile of *Suttree* as an image of Greek mythology ("Eruption of the Sordid"), there exists a great multitude of rewarding readings of the novel. William Prather has suggested an absurdist reading of *Suttree*, likening it to Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* and Albert Camus's *The Myth of Sisyphus* ("Absurd Reasoning" 139), while Brian Evenson emphasizes in the same vein as Prather the similarities between Camus's absurdism and McCarthy's world in *Suttree*, claiming that "it is as if McCarthy has taken absurd philosophy and rendered it American" (Evenson 63). McCarthy interrogates these amalgamations and asks the reader how to frame both them and classical philosophical issues, through the lens of an American philosophy. While this focus on absurdism is one branch of existentialism, where one attempts to find meaning in an otherwise meaningless universe, existentialist readings of the novel itself are prevalent. Given its contrasting depictions of religion and religious institutions, and a seemingly meaningless world bordering on nihilism, *Suttree* has received considerable attention as an existentialist work. According to David Holloway, for example, the novel is an "existential struggle for the self" (116). While *Suttree*, following this existentialist vein, has often been read as an exploration of identity, subjectivity, purpose, and meaning in a seemingly nihilistic and materialist world, the materiality of the world has, on the whole, received far less attention. Andrew Keller Estes, in his ecocritical work *Cormac McCarthy and the Writing of American Spaces*, highlights the importance of reading McCarthy's spaces. Keller Estes suggests that while *Suttree*

superficially seems to focus specifically on “the psychological state of the eponymous protagonist”, the major plot branches and motifs are all centered on the importance of spaces, and specifically the interactions between these spaces and its inhabitants (Keller Estes 44). Having recognized the vibrant importance of spaces in the novel, however, he omits it in his analyses (except for a very few token mentions), and instead directs his focus to *Blood Meridian*, *All the Pretty Horses* and *The Crossing* (the two first books in the Border Trilogy), *No Country for Old Men*, and *The Road*. This is but one example, I believe, that highlights a real demand in giving more attention to *Suttree*, which will provide a more nuanced perception of how McCarthy negotiates the relationship between spaces and its marginalized inhabitants.

In *Suttree*, protagonist Cornelius Suttree, a man in his mid-to-late twenties from a middle-class family, has sought voluntary exile in the slums of 1950s Knoxville, living from hand to mouth as a fisherman on the Tennessee River. In this existence, Suttree surrounds himself with miscreants, outcasts and the marginalized of greater society, and thus mediates racial and social delineations. During Suttree’s two years in and around Knoxville, the reader experiences his bouts in jail and in prison, results of sordid drunkenness and brawling, where he encounters teenage country boy Gene Harrogate. Harrogate idolizes Suttree and seeks him out after having served his sentence. Consequently, their exchanges create a locus that challenges social and ideological institutions. Suttree acts as lens to the reader into the lives of this marginalized community in an urban and steadily modernizing landscape. During freezing winters, he suffers with them, as they continuously struggle to stay warm. He has occasional jaunts with women, where none of the relationships end well. His family exists as a constant periphery: he encounters aunts and uncles, which inform his identity, but does his best to avoid his mother and father. He has been ostracized by his parents-in-law and his ex because of his alcoholism, and does not get to see his son until he takes it upon himself to bury his small corpse.

The novel is episodic in form, meaning that rather than an overarching plot, the reader is presented with a multitude of quotidian episodes that are seldom causally connected. In other words, we are given a vaguely linear narrative constituted of generally isolated episodes. This representation of everyday life, generally exempt of any plot twists or dramatic episodes, greatly affects the meandering pace of the novel. Vereen M. Bell, in *The Achievement of Cormac McCarthy*, goes as far as to call the pace “agrarian”, or “methodically slow” (5). This lack of perceptible progression, however, evokes a minute focus on both the detailed material world the reader is presented with, and emphasizes realistic aspects of how we experience

time: to most of us, our lives are generally made up of the mundane and seemingly unimportant. Augmenting the materiality and material impact of the novel, *Suttree* has engendered a physical space in present-day Knoxville. On the riverfront, you can now find the Suttree Landing Park. A wholesome, gentrified, and sterile minimalist park area.

This thesis will be structured in four main chapters. The first chapter will establish core concepts and ideas that will be applied in this thesis. Specifically, I will discuss Bruno Latour's Actor-Network Theory and Bill Brown's Thing Theory, which both contribute to the field of New Materialism, in order to investigate subject-object relationships, and object agency. Following this, I will examine Louis Althusser's ideas on and definitions of ideology and subjectivity, especially his terms interpellation or 'hailing', and Ideological State Apparatuses and Repressive State Apparatuses. These concepts will provide a framework for discussing subjectivity in relation to ideology, and specifically mediate how formal and informal institutions exert pressure on subjects. Finally in this chapter, I will discuss Rachele Dini's waste perspective, which will provide access to the dynamics of materiality, and how this further affects us as actors. Specifically, I discuss waste both as a social construct, and as always-existing in a continuous waste/commodity dichotomy.

The second chapter will discuss ideology and subjectivity on the whole in *Suttree*, and its subsequent constraints on agency: how the merged narrator and Suttree protagonist exists as an observer flâneur, superficially void of subjectivity, able to move throughout a multitude of different spaces in the novel. This provides a lens to examine the abstract and social forces that dynamically negotiate subjectivity. Additionally, the chapter will examine how objects fundamentally serve to interrupt Suttree's mobility and autonomy, while they simultaneously facilitate his symbolic and material rebellion against Knoxville's oppressive society.

The third chapter discusses how objects negotiate agency, knowledge, and meaning. Specifically, I contend that the insistent materiality in *Suttree* in its overwhelming capacity threatens to destabilize the autonomous subject. The protagonist is bound by his materiality, which he must shed in order to progress. To counter this material dominance, object misuse and rugged consumerism will be examined as a means to escape or resist *Suttree*'s dominant materiality and ideologies. More specifically, I discuss how misuse is employed in the novel, and how it is interdependent on the actor: does individual resistance and condemnation of misuse imply a subsequent defense of ideologically sanctioned use? How can we interpret misuse if it is appropriated by an institution that it principally is supposed to form a resistance against?

While the third chapter investigates the objects and their usage in the semblance of a micro-perspective, the fourth chapter will provide a macro-perspective. Consequently, this fourth chapter will discuss the different object-laden spaces in *Suttree* in detail, and specifically examine how both subjects and objects are mediated by McCarthy's representation of a decaying and entropic Knoxville. Waste and violence will be key words here, as Knoxville is functionally an amalgamation of pastoral and urban wastelands that continuously redefines its inhabitants and its objects through an unrelenting waste violence.

For the reader not too familiar with Cormac McCarthy's works, there are some important points to note. When quoting from *Suttree*, one has to take into account McCarthy's dismissal of quotation marks, and his limited use of punctuation. Additionally, dialogues or conversations are conveyed in a vernacular that drops apostrophes. Conversations and replies, often minimally worded, tend to be written with line breaks, but without attributions. This means that when using quotes from dialogues, it will be necessary to identify who is saying what, by including the speaker (when known) in brackets. This will facilitate an easier reading and greater understanding of the various quotes.

Chapter 1. Theorizing Things, Ideology, Subjectivity, and Waste

In this thesis, I will frame Cormac McCarthy's *Suttree* within Bruno Latour's Actor-Network Theory, and Bill Brown's Thing Theory, which are conceived as prominent contributions in the field of New Materialism. Other perspectives regarding Materialism, and thus perspectives that might be foundational to the New Materialism, will also be discussed. This thesis will, additionally, benefit greatly from discussing the ideological elements and systemic powers that surround the characters in *Suttree*, and how both ideology and objects together *move* them along on their paths of self-reflection and discovery. Louis Althusser's ideas will provide valuable terms, especially interpellation, Ideological State Apparatuses and Repressive State Apparatuses, to investigate such ideological forces. Rachele Dini's perspectives on waste, as a framework, will supply more complexity, in providing a distinctive dynamic view of subjects and objects, in McCarthy's levelling world where the threat of becoming either material waste or social waste is incessant. This discussion will thus provide the necessary vocabulary, as well as deeply thought-provoking concepts that will be employed to my reading of *Suttree*.

First, as materialism is a major focal point of this thesis, I find it useful to elaborate on the content and development of the New Materialist movement. The increasing focus on material culture within literary critique arguably stems from Heidegger, but has been thoroughly revived in the 21st century. Mathias Nilges and Emilio Sauri, in their anthology *Literary Materialisms* (2013), start their introduction chapter by claiming that literary criticism is in a great crisis, and is "fac[ing] an apocalyptic moment firmly situated within an entire range of theoretical, political, social, and cultural accounts that would lead us to believe that we are, to borrow from Slavoj Žižek, living in the end times" (1). Nilges and Sauri, then, believe that literary criticism needs to refocus in order to justify its existence within academia as a relevant object of study, and that the focal point for valid inquiries should be on materialism. Paul Graves-Brown, in his introduction to *Matter, Materiality, and Modern Culture*, states that "the material world around us, the cultural world we have fashioned over thousands of years, is both a product of and a constraint upon all aspects of our societies, our individual psychologies, our beliefs, our understanding of our past and our goals for the future" ("Introduction" 1). The point that Graves-Brown makes here is crucial. The material world which we inhabit, littered by culture and its material objects, work upon us in the present, but also gives us a sense of both the past and the future. Simultaneously, we cannot ignore the extent to which our cultural materiality also shapes and thus determines our future.

Actants

Normally we look at objects as passive, inert, and inanimate: they are just sitting there, waiting for us to interact with them. This perspective, however, is something that has been challenged in several different trajectories and directions. Underlying Karl Marx's historical materialism are the material conditions which in any given time forms and shapes the development of societies, and thus shapes history as well. In other words, which things, instruments, and machines are available affects how a society develops. From a macro-perspective to a more minute one, Bruno Latour, philosopher, anthropologist and sociologist, posits objects as possible 'actants', as he calls them. This is an important part of his Actor-Network Theory (ANT), originally developed for and used in sociology. With this as his framework, Latour merges actor and object, and thus asserts that objects have agency. Specifically, that actants can "modify other actors through a series of..." actions (*Politics of Nature* 75). Tentatively referring to objects as nonhumans, Latour claims first, a bit peculiarly, that "objects and subjects can never associate with one another," but that, "humans and nonhumans can" (76). The distinction Latour makes may seem a bit confusing, but he succeeds in clarifying this by explaining that by 'object', he means a categorization, or a label, that is non-functioning. Rather, he states that:

As soon as we stop taking nonhumans as objects, as soon as we allow them to enter the collective in the form of new entities with uncertain boundaries, entities that hesitate, quake, and induce perplexity, it is not hard to see that we can grant them the designation of actors. And if we take the term "association" literally, there is no reason, either, not to grant them the designation of *social actors* (76).

Here, Latour makes clear that what we normally consider inanimate objects – mere things -, by their ability to influence and inflict real effect upon humans and the world, can in fact be social actors. It is, perhaps more plainly, the distinction between acting subject and manipulated object that Latour challenges. Objects can thus, according to Latour, exert control over and shape our societies, and by extension, challenge that which we traditionally regard as free will, or the framework in which a limited or constrained form of free will exists.

The argument that Latour posits is a development from his thoughts in *We Have Never Been Modern* (1991), considered a significant work in the historiographical questioning of

what we regard as modernity. Here, as in *Politics of Nature*, Latour interrogates objects; specifically what they are, and what they really do in society;

If religion, arts, or styles are necessary to ‘reflect’, ‘reify’, ‘materialize’, ‘embody’ society — to use some of the social theorists’ favorite verbs — then are objects not, in the end, its co-producers? Is not society built literally — not metaphorically — of gods, machines, sciences, arts, and styles? [...] Maybe social scientists have simply forgotten that before projecting itself on to things society has to be made, built, constructed? And out of what material could it be built if not out of nonsocial, non-human resources?

(We Have Never Been Modern 54)

Looking at society as a microcosm consisting of concrete, physical resources, Latour highlights the physicality which underlies literature, art, religion, science and philosophy. This physicality provides the foundation and fundamentals for our society, culminating in a material culture that is culture in the sense that objects are texts to be read only after the objects have come into existence. By this time, they have already established themselves as actors, or actants. These actants form associations of heterogeneous elements, constituting a network of meanings, uses, and dynamic forces. Latour, then, fascinatingly alerts us to the sheer materiality of our existence and reminds us that this materiality deserves our thoughtful attention.

While we might say that *certain* objects are powerful, Latour’s perspective can be evaluated as more radical. Indeed, he claims that “objects that exist simply as objects, finished, not part of a collective life, are unknown, buried under soil” (“On Technical Mediation” 46). In other words, objects that are wholly powerless only exist as those undiscovered, hidden away from and separate from our existence, and unavailable to our praxis. The objects that do exist in our world with their presence as “real objects”, are, according to Latour, “always parts of institutions, trembling in their mixed status as mediators, mobilizing faraway lands and people, ready to become people or things, not knowing if they are composed of one or of many, of a black box counting for one or of a labyrinth concealing multitudes” (46). These interesting and provoking thoughts on what objects are, what they can be, what they can shift into, and what they perform, have several implications. Objects serve as mediators between us and our existence, between us and the material world in which we find ourselves. In this mediation, they might invoke a vast

multitude of thoughts, memories, and hallucinatory imaginations. What would we be without these objects, considered both precious and simultaneously quotidian?

The decentering of humans as primary subject actors, and the reduction of humans to ‘mere things’, could be and have been perceived as a threat of dehumanization. Latour succinctly highlights how the fear of this threat has served to maintain and police the borders between human actors and inanimate things:

Tradition refused them [objects] this label, in order to reserve it for subjects whose course of action took place in a world – a framework, an environment – of things. But we now understand that this refusal had no cause other than the panicky fear of seeing humans *reduced* to things, or conversely, of seeing the prejudices of social actors *preclude* access to things. In order to avoid both this reification and this social construction, the border between social actors and objects had to be carefully patrolled. (*Politics of Nature* 76-77)

Acknowledging inanimate matter as less than inert, Latour argues, or ascribing some level of agency to that which we do not immediately recognize as an acting agent, can be troubling. Humans, as agents, seemingly by nature, or at least in most Western-hemisphere ideologies, perceive a certain mastery of the inanimate. Dissolving these boundaries between animate and inanimate also challenges our grasp and supremacy of our self and our position in the world, and serves to correct and highlight that the materiality that is beyond our individual control exercises great collective pressure in both micro-and macro-perspectives.

There is, then, an increased need to study the widespread implications of animating the formerly inanimate, and recognizing that human agency is severely constrained. In “Why has Critique Run out of Steam? From Matters of Fact to Matters of Concern”, Bruno Latour claims that scientific and literary criticism has failed to take these perspectives into account, and is in danger of becoming outdated, if not outdated already, and that they are in need of revision. Likening it to training for and fighting a war with obsolete weapons, Latour states that literary criticism needs new instruments in order to effectively matter. Discussing the problems of conspiracy theories, their hold over popular scientific and cultural discourse, and ultimately resulting in discussions on what constitutes truth, Latour asks: “What if explanations resorting automatically to power, society, discourse had outlived their usefulness and deteriorated to the point of now feeding the most gullible sort of critique?” (155). Literary criticism needs to be thoroughly discussed and revised for the critique to be an effective instrument in saying something worthwhile and interesting about society. Too long, Latour

argues, has critique been drifting and unmoored: a greater understanding and analysis of the status and role of the concrete ‘things’ that comprise our material reality, and our mutual relationship needs to be undertaken.

Thing Theory

Taking Latour’s ideas further, I will explore how things change as we interact with them, and the effects they induce in doing so. Employing Bill Brown’s Thing Theory will provide a valuable framework for this thesis. One significant observation by Brown is how our lives are undoubtedly organized by the objects surrounding us, and “how inanimate objects constitute human subjects, how they move them, how they threaten them, how they facilitate or threaten their relation to other subjects” (“Thing Theory” 7). An amusing, yet very poignant, example of this is one that Brown borrows from the Robert Zemeckis movie *Castaway* (2000), pointing to Wilson the volleyball. In *Castaway*, having survived a plane crash on a deserted island, Chuck Noland (Tom Hanks) battles his loneliness by painting a humanoid face on a Wilson volleyball, imbuing the ball, a result of mass-production, with human attributes. Wilson, as Chuck names it, is thus transformed into Chuck’s only conversation partner, or rather, receiver of Chuck’s monologues. Indeed, Wilson proves vital for preserving Chuck’s sanity in his isolation. Wilson becomes, in the eyes of the viewer, something resembling a support actor, and, in Chuck’s sense at least, a subject rather than an object, even if that ‘subjectness’ might be challenged by the process of naming this new subject: the corporation behind the production of the ball has printed Wilson on it, and Chuck accepts that name for his new, ball-shaped companion.

Recognizably echoing Latour, Brown argues that things inherently make up the stage on which we as humans perform, and that they in reality shape how and what we think, and that this is why they vitally require our utmost attention (*A Sense of Things* 3). His “thing theory” is an approach that provides us with a framework for critical thinking around our comprehensive relationships to objects, or things, in terms of social, philosophical, and matter-of-factness. This focus on representing concrete, physical things in art, and thus trying to discern how we relate to our materiality, and its contrasts to idealism, is, of course, not new in itself. By quoting Bohemian-Austrian Modernist poet Rainer Maria Rilke (1875-1926) and William Carlos Williams, Brown makes clear the connection between his “Thing Theory” and Modernism. Specifically, he recapitulates Rilke’s statement that “Only things speak to me”

(qtd. in “Thing Theory” 2), and Williams’ famous claim and subsequent Modernist motto or rallying cry that there are “no ideas but in things”: both of which are considered fundamental perspectives within the modernist art tradition, poetry specifically. Williams, especially, attempted to get at the nature of things by way of Imagism. In this return to Modernism, Brown circles back, indicating that important theoretical perspectives, or at the very least, that the potential for these perspectives, were lost somewhere along the way.

In the face of the supposed crisis of theory, repeated by Nilges and Sauri, as well as Latour, Bill Brown takes on the challenge whether we need theory at all, when we can have just things. He argues clearly, however, that we do need a theory for Things, and specifically the concrete and physical aspects of things. In doing this, Brown implies that existing material culture theory is lacking. Rhetorically, however, Brown asks, “Can’t we learn from this materialism instead of taking the trouble to trouble it? Can’t we remain content with the ‘real, very dirty window’ – a “thing” – as the answer to what ails us without turning it into an ailment of its own?” (3), to which he replies “Fat chance”, claiming that “even the most coarse and commonsensical things, mere things, perpetually pose a problem because of the specific unspecificity that things denotes” (3). By this, Brown highlights that the symbolic meaning, and the vivid potential for different symbolic meanings, are there dormant and ready within these “coarse” and “commonsensical” things, exactly located within their unspecificity. At the same time, he understandably implies that just leaving things alone, “remain[ing] content” with the state of things, both suggest a dire loss of human curiosity and a missed opportunity for new, critical thinking.

In applying “thing theory” to literary texts, Brown highlights, quite poetically, that “texts”, fundamentally, “ask why and how we use objects to make meaning, to make or re-make ourselves, to organize our anxieties and affections, to sublimate our fears and shape our fantasies” (*A Sense of Things* 4). Brown, in other words, interrogates powerful ideas like culture, subjectivity, and identity, by putting human interactions with objects under a microscope: like studying art, studying our relationship to any object, has the potential to reveal and communicate meaning and provoke engendering of new ideas.

Continuing the discussion on the subject-object relationship, Brown extends this further, claiming that instead of a dualistic mode of thinking, or one that unifies subjects and objects, the issue might be even more complex. Brown writes that “things may still lurk in the shadows of the ballroom and continue to lurk there after the subject and object have done their thing, long after the party is over” (“Thing Theory” 3). By this he means that objects seem to be those things which are held up to be investigated, actively used, or revered, put in

the spotlight by seemingly acting subject agents. Thus, Brown draws a distinction between the object and the thing, of which the latter seems to comprise all that troubling matter – symbolic or not – that might fail to “arrest a poet’s attention” (3). In literature, this is a matter that may prove troublesome: when are objects too abundant and seemingly unimportant to catch the author’s attention? And does it really matter, if the reader’s attention is still, potentially, arrested? Brown, I think, acknowledges here that while the author’s attention and intention is irrelevant, the stuff, the matter - the Things - that stage narratives are there for the reader to discern and make sense of.

It is necessary, then, to discuss Brown’s distinction between “thinghood” and “objecthood”. According to Brown, “thingness [...] inheres as a potentiality within any object” (*Other Things* 5). By this he means that thingness or thinghood manifests the object’s potential to be not one thing, but many, and to signify a multitude of meanings. In contrast, objecthood constitutes the socially constructed meaning and use, as well as the immediate perception, of an object. Brown consistently uses the window as an example to explain his perspective: windows are windows because they are transparent and can be looked through, but occasionally, especially if the window is dirty for instance, you might also find yourself looking *at* the window (“Thing Theory” 4). Brown extends this line of thinking to the other things that surrounds us: we see their function and their intended use, but usually fail to look deeper. Specifically, Brown claims that “We look through objects [and what they say about history, society, nature, or culture] because there are codes by which our interpretative attention makes them meaningful, because there is a discourse of objectivity that allows us to use them as facts” (4). In other words, there are certain socially constructed codes that determine how we interact with objects, and how we look at them and interpret them. Interrogating these codes and how characters in *Suttree* relate to objects in accordance with these codes, will contribute to arresting the ideological nature of these codes.

The distinction between objects and things is one that Brown clarifies, by claiming that: “The story of objects asserting themselves as things, then, is the story of a changed relation to the human subject and thus the story of how the thing really names less an object than a particular subject-object relation” (“Thing Theory” 4). Things, and our penchant to referring to them as such, and as objects, manifest our relationship to them. By doing this, this not only interrogates our relationship to objects as such, but also our relationship to ourselves as subjects. This power, located in things, continuously acts upon us. Highlighting this distancing from mere objecthood, Brown states that things have a “force as a sensuous presence or as a metaphysical presence, the magic by which objects become values, fetishes,

idols, and totems” (“Thing Theory” 5). In other words, the physical and constant presence that things and artifacts display is what transforms them – by way of us as actors – into meaning-imbued and value-laden commodities, charms, trinkets, or even instruments – either instruments as extensions of our selves, or concrete, practical instruments. That a Thing can be both *a* thing and also a multiplicity of things suggests that things seem to somehow be beyond us, or our common understanding of them, and beyond our ownership and definition of them. Brown, in this regard, writes of a kind of “possession that is irreducible to ownership” (*A Sense of Things* 13). This possession that Brown discusses is rooted in the troublesome subject-object relationship that dominates so much of our discourses.

When we discuss subjects and objects, and the implications that these labels communicate, we cannot do so without first gaining a proper understanding of the subject-object relationship. Specifically, we need to consider how subjects and objects interact with one another. If an object has an accepted or intended use, and exerts pressure over its subject to prescribe to that use, the object by definition makes dominates the subject. In his discussion on “The Nature of Things”, in *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, Hans-Georg Gadamer looks specifically at the subject-object relationship, and writes that:

The concept of the thing [*Sache*] is marked above all by its counterconcept, the person. The meaning of this antithesis of thing and person is found originally in the clear priority of the person over the thing. (Gadamer 70)

Specifically, then, the mere matter of fact-ness of the subject-object relationship privileges the person as subject over the thing as object, according to Gadamer. Discussing this antithesis further, and in doing so, inverting the power relationship between subject and object, Gadamer claims that:

The person appears as something to be respected in its own being. The thing, on the other hand, is something to be used, something that stands entirely at our disposal. Now when we encounter the expression “the nature of things,” the point is clearly that what is available for our use and given to our disposal has in reality a being of its own, which allows it to resist our efforts to use it in unsuitable ways. Or to put it positively: it prescribes a specific comportment that is appropriate to it. But with this statement the priority of the person over the thing is inverted (Gadamer 70).

Gadamer here writes about an object’s prescribed, or intended, use, and argues that the fact that an object even has a prescribed use privileges the object over the person, or user. The

sanctioned use of an object constrains the user's agency, and thus decreases the user's real autonomy. The person in this relationship, according to Gadamer, becomes subject to the *thing*. The power to prescribe and sanction use lies in a discriminate field between the society's treatment of an object (how society has established and agreed on a sanctioned use), and the object itself, which becomes a container of its given use. Behind this sanctioned use lies powerful currents within ideology, which determine how we encounter objects, and how we interact with them.

In short, then, New Materialism recognizes that talking about the world without discussing the things in the world, which make up the world, is cutting it short, to say the least. The power of things affects our conceived anthropocentric mastery of the world, our societies, and our subjective selves. Optimistically, things may contribute to mobility and movement: either as explicit vehicles of transport, or as nodes that works as prompts, inciting action. Pessimistically, one can view the world as an obstacle course of things. This dejected perspective can be likened to how Vladimir Nabokov's protagonist in *Pnin* experiences the world. Nabokov writes that Timofey Pnin's existence "was a constant war with insensate objects that fell apart, or attacked him, or refused to function, or viciously got themselves lost as soon as they entered the sphere of his existence" (*Pnin* 13). Things can, when they confront us with their thingness, seem defiant. Not only are things potentially literal obstacles, painfully discovered when infuriatingly stubbing your toe into something, an act in itself that immediately makes you reconsider your corporeal materiality; things in this artifactual world provides prompts that make us swerve from our original intentions. In acknowledging this, we must also come to the conclusion that this power that things exercise over us demands that we question our own real autonomy and agency. Yet, this argument proposed by New Materialism, that agency lies not merely within the animate anthropocentric, is not to be confused with, or conflated with, the 'pathetic fallacy'. As explained by Paul Graves-Brown, editor of the anthology *Matter, Materiality, and Modern Culture*, the 'pathetic fallacy' is "the tendency to attribute agency and intention to inanimate objects" ("Always Crashing the Same Car" 159). Superficially, this supposed fallacy can be regarded as an attempt to discredit New Materialism. However, the pathetic fallacy is weighted more towards personification of the typically inanimate – imbuing objects with human emotions -, whereas New Materialism and its proponents recognize and argue that we have to use a different approach. This approach recognizes objects and things as agents without attempting to categorize them as quasi-human, or forcing them to be part of a completely anthropocentric model.

Ideology and Subjectivity

Ideology is a loaded and ambiguous term that needs to be properly explained and defined. In political discourse, the term has become an often conscious position on a political spectrum, or the fundamental framework for one's political position, either dominant or oppositional. Media institutions must also take some responsibility for this usage of the word, and its perpetuation. Here, ideology becomes something quite neat and orderly, a feature that can be isolated and recognized. In contemporary criticism, however, ideology is something broader yet more focused, reflecting deep undercurrents in society containing social and political behavior. This thesis will primarily use Louis Althusser's concepts to discuss ideology and subjectivity in *Suttree*, although James H. Kavanagh's perspective will be discussed in order to better traverse Althusser's ideas. Contrary to ideology as strictly politically-oriented, ideology is, according to Althusser, a process that negotiates "the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of experience" (1350). By this Althusser means that ideology is not *in* the real, but always exists as the layer between, that effectively mediates our real experiences, in the ways we communicate and participate in the real. Ideology is thus reduced to *representing* the real, without *being* materially real. The existence of ideology is only ever made material in institutional and social practices. The term ideology, used by Althusser as society's reproduction of basic social relations, easily becomes all-encompassing, as it includes the way we communicate and behave towards others, how our subjectivity is formed by our social sphere, and how this relates to different superstructures or powerful, influential actors. Althusser chooses to hone in on ideology according to dominant positions, and specifically how majorities and minorities continuously attempt, intentionally or not, to maintain or subvert dominant ideologies.

A fundamental aspect of Marxist theory, which Althusser's ideas are grounded in, is that every society throughout history "is crucially defined by its class structure, a network of relations much wider and more fundamental than a 'form of government'" (Kavanagh 308). According to Kavanagh, this means that social organization, foundationally economic in nature, is ultimately a more vibrant force than the formal organization and trappings of government. This form of unspoken social organization, social agreement, and social codes make up the contents of the term ideology. "Ideology", Kavanagh summarizes, "offers the social subject not a set of narrowly 'political' ideas but a fundamental framework of

assumptions that defines the parameters of the real and the self” (310). While Kavanagh here explains the framework of ideology, Althusser’s definition focuses specifically on the construction and forming of subjects, and particularly so within the praxis of late capitalist social systems. Here it is useful to clarify that the term subject will most often be employed, rather than identity. Although the two terms are somewhat interchangeable, the former recognizes, more directly, a self largely shaped by external forces, rather than a self-made and autonomous identity.

The discussion of these different subject-making institutions and their impact is accommodated by using a couple of simple categories. Althusser claims that what maintains ideology in society can generally be divided into two categories: Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs) and Repressive State Apparatuses (RSAs) (1341). The term ISA functions as an umbrella term that incorporates a cohort of formal and informal institutions, which by their nature reproduce ideology or social mechanisms. For instance, an education system might seek to instill or maintain various virtues, or that which society determines to be virtues, in its pupils, which Althusser effectively likens to indoctrination (1347). Similarly, a school or institution might teach its pupils to accept something as normal and natural, or a religious institution might (and most often will) equip its followers with a fundamental understanding of how to view the world, based on its doctrines. Althusser explains that ISAs are “the *site* of class struggle” (1343), which recenters ideology and its apparatuses as class-ordering systems. It is mechanisms like this, Althusser claims, that in turn function to form an obedient and conformed populace: ideology becomes apparent in all those areas that remain unquestioned and accepted as part of the normal order of things.

Attempting to explain how these different institutions work in concert, and how they together produce and maintain ideology, Althusser employs the image of an orchestra as a simile: while the individual instruments play different, sometimes contradictory, musical elements, they together constitute “a single [dominating] score” (1346). By this, Althusser means that various institutions ultimately construct a dominant message, or ideology, which within its container also includes the opposition to that ideology. In other words, an instrument (or the musician, really) might try to play its own tune, but it will still be an intrinsic part of the ensemble orchestra. Categorically policing the borders of this imaginary orchestra, we find the RSAs. These apparatuses, or institutions, enforce society’s ideology through law and a monopoly on violence. The most common RSAs are governmental: administration, the army, law enforcement, judicial systems, and prisons are the most obvious examples in this category (Althusser 1341). Together, they constitute a system that explicitly

tells you, with the threat of punishment, what to do and what not to do, and what is accepted and what is prohibited. It is, in other words, a system dedicated to exert force in order to uphold those boundaries in society.

ISAs, then, consists of those formal and informal institutions which reproduce ideology, or, reproduce social mechanisms that forms an obedient and conformed populace. Althusser explains that a key difference between the formal and informal institutions, and especially their difference to RSAs, is their presence in different domains. While formal ideological institutions like education systems, especially in concrete schools, are usually recognizably ideological, they also operate in the public sphere. RSAs also act within this same public space. An informal ideological institution, such as family, however, is situated in the private sphere, and would usually be regarded as less accessible to scrutiny. The most obvious distinction between ISAs and RSAs Althusser sums up in their manner of operations: where ISAs operate primarily by ideology and secondarily by the threat of punishment, RSAs inversely operate primarily by the threat of violence, and secondarily by ideology (1342). Thus, even by the innocuous presence of ideological institutions, for example family, there is always a secondary but lingering threat of violence that polices ideological social borders.

Discussing how one navigates these institutions, and overarching ideologies, demands looking at how one becomes part of this structure. Althusser uses the term ‘interpellation’, where society calls you, or hails you (1356). By answering this call, you consent to your subject position, and you are thus defined by society and ideology. Althusser highlights that we do not become subjects, but that we are “always already subjects” (1355). This emphasizes that there is no ‘outside ideology’, but that we as living, engaging individuals suffer a barrage of hailings, from birth, which continuously defines and re-defines us as subjects. Indeed, Althusser claims that “[t]he existence of ideology and the hailing or interpellation of individuals as subjects are one and the same thing” (1357). By this, he asserts that the structure of ideology and the act of hailing coexist, and are interdependent.

While Althusser uses the two categories of ISAs and RSAs quite generally, they have also been expounded on, and might ultimately incorporate a host of manifestations. Kavanagh extends the categories of ideological and political apparatuses to cultural expressions and social organizations, in explicitly recognizing for example mainstream Hollywood movie production as one such ideological apparatus (312), and one that is probably a major interpellating force in an increasingly globalized world. Additionally, Kavanagh acknowledges that more informal social apparatuses, in addition to family, education and religious institutions, influence our subjectivities as well. These are often institutions that

actively “disavow” political discussions, meaning they appear to be fundamentally apolitical: Sports, TV, and mass-consumed culture in general, yet the popularity of these expressions are, according to Kavanagh, recognized by their efficiency in interpellating subjects (313). One could, of course, also view literature this way: While a great deal of texts disavow politics and ideology, they are by nature ideological and demand that we view them as such. This highlights the subtleness of ideology and one’s place in it: the less you view something as ideological, despite its fundamental nature as ideologically loaded, the more you accept it. What this really means is that the depoliticizing of subjects is a politically charged act in itself. Ultimately, this subtle interpellating power can be extended to objects that ostensibly seem apolitical.

According to Althusser, then, ideology exists as an inescapable framework, which through interpellation hails us as subjects: we cannot help but respond to these hailings. Objects, likewise, are intrinsically products of ideology. They are not, and can never be, manufactured or perceived in a space outside ideology – as this outside does not exist. We continuously use objects, accept their usages, and accept the swirls they precipitate in our daily lives, and seldom question our interactions with these objects. This, I believe, mirrors the process that ideology performs on us, where it

works on and through every social subject, that, like any other social process, everyone is “in,” whether or not they “know” or understand it. It has the function of producing an *obvious* “reality” that social subjects can assume and accept, precisely as if it had not been socially produced and did not need to be “known” at all. (Kavanagh 311; emphasis in original)

Objects constitute our interaction with reality in the same manner, creating an obvious and accepted reality. Following this, objects hail consumers and users both in their intended use and unsanctioned use. This means that we can never fully escape, as an example, consumerism as an ideology, as the objects we use or misuse are products originating from and existing within an ideological space. Being surrounded by and having to use everyday objects which we take for granted constructs and shapes our subjectivity and our understanding of ourselves. Going further, we can question to which extent real authenticity, or the authentic self-made identity – and perhaps more importantly – to which extent real autonomy is possible, or if we are determined to continuously act and react according to the objects we interact with. In short, Althusser’s structuralist work on ideology finds that human

agency is thoroughly reduced, in favor of the systems and social frames that shapes and surrounds us. If we consider, however, that ideology and society shapes its subjects, we must also consider that we cannot ignore the material culture of that society, or simply all the *stuff* that make up societies. This connects to Bill Brown, Bruno Latour, and other New Materialists who claim, as an example of this, that thingless societies would be an absurd notion. Inevitably, then, ignoring the things which builds and manifests society leaves us with ideas removed from our material reality. Additionally, not taking into account New Materialist claims would ignore the effectively hybrid subjectivities that material objects engender.

Material and Social Waste

The label ‘waste’ is one that on the surface further disturbs neat categories of subjects and objects, agent and product. We normally define waste as a most often useless by-product, or, what a thing or instrument becomes when it can no longer fulfil its intended use. Waste is thus a social construct that relies on us to define and redefine it. The term waste can also be socially applied, extending and changing the meaning of waste. In an analysis of Mary Douglas’s theoretical work on purity and dirt (in *Purity and Danger*), Rachele Dini highlights that the dichotomies of “purity/impurity, cleanliness/dirt, and use/useless are a means of upholding hierarchical structures and re-instating moral values” (4). Throwing something away can, in a manner, be regarded as a class-conscious, or class-structured action. Likewise, using that which have been thrown away by others is an act that places one on a lower rung within the same hierarchical system, yet facilitates narrative movement forward. “Dirt”, by which she explicitly means excrement, Dini claims is not only “matter out of place”, but “matter *without* place” (4), and thus often refuses to fit neatly into binaries. Dini, however, states that dirt and waste cannot be analogously compared. Waste, says Dini, is “distinguished by narrative, origin, and time” (5). We can trace specific and complex trajectories that follow prior to something being categorized as waste. Waste is a by-product, what is left after something, or *a* thing, has achieved its use value. According to Dini “waste” is not only like dirt – out of place or without place, but “is matter out of *time* [emphasis; mine]” (5). If an object is considered waste when it has depleted its use value, so are people considered social waste when they are deemed worthless, without value, to society.

In an introductory and explanatory reading of Ellis Sharp's novella *The Dump* (1998), Dini explores the nature of things, in challenging the borders between the animate and inanimate of the landfill, while looking at the origins and trajectories of objects (1-3). An object's finality, according to Dini, does not lie in its categorization as waste: it continues to exist as a commodity with the ready potential for re-purposing. The dump, or landfill, juxtaposes usable throwaways with what most often might be regarded as trash, and in Sharp's *The Dump*, further disorders this space by throwing the dispossessed in society onto the wasteland scene, conflating the two. Thus, Dini argues, Sharp draws interrogatory lines between the 'stuff' society throws away and the people it excludes. Central to *The Dump*, Dini argues, is that the narrative's "human inhabitants have no purpose, and that lack of purpose becomes their defining feature" (11). Traversing potential discussions on existentialism, locating and recognizing the lack of purpose equally demands that we acknowledge that purpose and meaning is there to be valued. Dini employs Zygmunt Bauman's term "human waste", a term "use[d] to discuss the marginalization of those deemed supernumerary, and which [Bauman] argues is an 'inevitable outcome of modernization, and an inseparable accompaniment of modernity'" (Dini 11, quoting Bauman). Bauman means, then, that modernization intrinsically leads to a society where large swaths of people are made redundant. Waste and ideology are thoroughly interconnected, as capitalism and consumerism centrally orders objects and people as commodities and assigns them economic value. Thus, what ceases to have any evident economic value is often that which becomes defined as waste. The unemployed, for instance, ultimately, become "flawed consumers", according to Bauman, since they do not produce according to capitalism's premises, nor do they have disposable income to keep the consumerist machine running. Dini states that, "deemed irrelevant by society, such 'flawed consumers' may as well be invisible" (12). In a world where money is power, status, and visibility, the dispossessed are seen as unwelcome intruders in a social order that leaves no apparent space for them.

Capitalism and consumerism are driven by consumption, and thus relies on producing and selling as many products as possible. Dini highlights that the capitalist system relies on both efficiency and inefficiency at the same time (6). Specifically, that production must be efficient in order for the manufacturer to profit, while consumption must be inefficient, in order for customers to buy new products. Specifically, consumerism relies on products breaking down or becoming obsolete, in order for them to be replaced, which supplies the producer with new capital. For society as a whole, the end result is what Dini calls an "accumulation of detritus [...] inherent to modernisation" (6), or more concretely, an

aggregation of waste that is intrinsically bound to the increased efficiency and productivity of modern societies. Mass-production is prevalent, to the extent that an enormous surplus is produced. This surplus, in combination with products becoming obsolete, results in commodity landscapes that always threaten to become waste landscapes. This waste dynamic is apparent in individual commodities, and extends to subjects. Dini connects production or categorization of waste with Freud's definition of the uncanny (14), which arguably takes us to the crux of things: in recognizing waste as both familiar and unfamiliar at the same time, we also recognize that our identities are anchored in both the familiar and unfamiliar physical things that surround us. Things invade us and intrude upon us, like a multiplicity of Venn diagrams that threaten our uniformity and coherency. They demonstrate that we, like them, are also always-already threatened by being defined as waste. And ultimately, they make us subjects.

Chapter 2. “I am what I am”: Ideology, Subjectivity, and Mobility in *Suttree*

This chapter will discuss the various foundations for Suttree’s subjectivity, as well as that of the characters in the novel as a whole. Specifically, I argue that Suttree’s continuous rejection of the hailings which he endures from various social institutions, in combination with his privileged position, causes him to be more susceptible to the hailings that the material world exposes him to. In turn, Suttree’s potential autonomy and agency are both closely tied with the different subject positions he occupies; by extension, his real agency is thus thoroughly constrained by materiality. While he ostensibly identifies with the marginalized denizens of McAnally Flats, his actions signify that he ultimately maintains and reifies the dominant ideology and status quo in society. However, what makes his relationship to both class ideology and McCarthy’s abundant object world complex, is that what facilitates his final rebellion against a repressive society is specifically the thinghood which he manages to unleash within that object world. Providing background for this, I will outline how Suttree is hailed by a multitude of Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs): the major one being family, but including religious institutions, societal expectations, and cultural traditions. In his multiple encounters with law enforcement, and his fairly brief detainments in prison, Repressive State Apparatuses (RSAs) also influence his subjectivity, as they continuously represent counter-positions to Suttree. In this discussion, I will also draw interrogative lines to Cormac McCarthy’s first published work, his short story “Wake for Susan” (1959), and *No Country for Old Men*. These perspectives, I believe, are both necessary and valuable to properly understand Suttree’s subject position.

Suttree’s Fragmented Familial Subject Position

McCarthy’s *Suttree* is a deeply class-conscious text. The novel devotes little attention to the well off in society. Rather, through Cornelius Suttree, the reader is presented with a journey into “Knoxville’s sadder regions” (*Suttree* 99), which reveal stark class differences, exposing the vastly different spaces, environments, objects, relationships, and people that the narrator mediates. In his voluntary exile, Suttree undertakes a reverse class journey, rejecting his social status and background in order to seek a simpler and more authentic existence. Justifying this to himself and to his uncle, he states, deterministically, that “I am what I am” (19). In doing so, the statement he makes is that his old life, his inheritance, and his privilege

would result in a life where he is subject to considerable social and ideological forces that reduce his autonomy. It is this existence, along with the impending advancement of modernity and its increasingly influential socio-governmental determinacy, that Suttree attempts to resist.

The narrative style of the novel, where the protagonist and narrator occasionally and ambiguously merge, generates in Suttree a subject position that on a deeper level incorporates McCarthy. This is interesting specifically because these prompts seem to be induced by Suttree's encounters with materiality. It is Suttree and his ideological position that serves as a mediator to the reader, especially so because the boundaries between the narrator and the protagonist in this semi-autobiographical novel prove ambiguous at best. On the narrator's subjectivity, Georg Guillemin notes in "Introduction: The Prototypical *Suttree*", that "the protagonist's melancholia is indistinguishable from that of the narrative consciousness", and that they "are distinct entities", but that they "virtually share a point of view" (Guillemin 55). By this, he means that the reader encounters a narrator that is occasionally semi-omniscient narrator, and one that is occasionally Suttree, but that the principal tone is colored by the two as a unified entity. Guillemin's claim that they are distinct entities is somewhat true. However, this amalgamation of narrator and protagonist is a tentative one that is more visible and explicit in some specific passages. While the semi-authorial narrator generally speaks of Suttree in third-person, from a non-objective point of view, they occasionally bleed into each other. This specifically occurs when the protagonist's autonomous subjectivity is challenged by materiality. In the Gatlinburg chapter, where Suttree has temporarily escaped into the mountains and woods, the narrator tells us that "[h]e was wandering in a swampy wood" (290), which then unexpectedly turns to first-person narration: "A curling bit of down cradled in this green light for the sake of my sanity. Unreal and silent bird albified between the sun and my broken mind godspeed" (291). Specifically, "he" and "his" transforms into "my". This unexpected explicit fragmentation catches the reader's attention, but it simultaneously highlights how Suttree's subjectivity is brought to the center by the materiality that surrounds him: it is the "curling bit of down", a manifestation of the real and concrete, that induces Suttree's overpowering of the distant narrator, and acts as a mediator between the external and the internal. Specifically, "the sun" constitutes the outside, and Suttree's "broken mind" the conscious inside.

Here, Suttree is hailed by his material surroundings, and affirms his subject position by recognizing the effect of the "curling bit of down". With the overpowering effect this thing has on him, mediating his relationship to the real and thus making Suttree its subject, it

effectively threatens the traditional subject-object distinction. Suttree is on the verge of being the manipulated object, yet, it is he that exists as a reader of the thing. The text relays that the ‘bit of down’ is certainly not reducible to that one existence, but that its existence extends to that of an “unreal ...bird”. The multiplicity of meanings and representations this evokes demonstrates the narrator’s close focus on the thing as a generator and aggregator of those material meanings.

The entirely fragmented and unstable constructs of self, I argue, leaves Suttree more susceptible to being influenced and affected by, and inevitably subject to, his external surroundings. While the narrator-protagonist relationship suggests a fragmentation of Suttree’s self, this is only exacerbated by the multitudinal references to Suttree’s mirror image. Stumbling out of the woods in Gatlinburg and entering a café, he finds a “stark and darker bearded visage” looking back at him, “[s]ome alien Suttree there among the carven names and rings and smears of other men’s meals” (291). That his reflection is explicitly that of an alien Suttree, unrecognizable to himself, in a narrative that is situated, according to the novel’s prologue, within “these alien reaches” (4), reinforces the aggregating alienation that the reader must contend with. Neither is this fragmentation first introduced with Suttree’s hallucinogenic journey through Gatlinburg’s sublime nature. In an earlier episode in the Knoxville bus station, Suttree finds himself

march[ing] darkly toward his darkly marching shape in the glass of the depot. His fetch come up from life’s other side like an autoscopic hallucination, Suttree and Antisuttree, hand reaching to the hand. The door swung back and he entered the waiting room. The shapes of figures sleeping on the wooden benches lay like laundry. (*Suttree* 28)

Here, Suttree, induced by his reflection, is divided into two similar but opposite halves that meet, and, temporarily at least, unify as he enters the waiting room. The recurring theme of Suttrees, Antisuttrees, alien Suttrees, “othersuttree” (287), “Suttree’s cameo visage ... his double” (414), however, proposes that the notion of a unified self seems entirely impossible within these constraints that McCarthy constructs and exposes. Certainly, the external world that Suttree must navigate is one that continuously threatens to destabilize his subjectivity.

Suttree’s susceptibility and subjectivity to his material surroundings should be read in view of his familial and geographic class background. In his self-imposed exile, Suttree continuously wanders urban Knoxville and pastoral counties, which makes up his external surroundings. If not quite on the scale of James Joyce’s chronicling of Leopold Bloom’s

wanderings in a single day in *Ulysses*, *Suttree* rivals Joyce's work in its often mundane episodes. In "Ulysses in Knoxville: Suttree's Aegean Journey", Rich Wallach argues that *Suttree* is McCarthy's response to James Agee's novel *A Death in the Family* (1957), highlighting the novels' contemporary but very different representations of Knoxville. Specifically, he claims that the stark difference between McCarthy and Agee's vision justifies *Suttree* as containing within it *A Death in the Family* as "its antibook", which it is continuously in dialogue with (Wallach 52). By this, Wallach explains that while *A Death in the Family* presents an idyllic highly pastoral South, McCarthy subverts this image of the South, and gives the reader a modern and constricting, urbanized wasteland. Having escaped from the pastoral into the city, Suttree, according to Wallach, "spends much of his young adult life in rebellion against his class, his father and himself, in refusal to be told who he is" (58). This explicitly surfaces in Suttree's exchange with his Uncle John: "I'm not like you. I'm not like him. I'm not like Carl. I'm like me. Don't tell me who I'm like" (*Suttree* 18). Wallach claims that this refusal to assume an identity thrust upon him is exactly what sets Suttree wandering, to seek out "a reference point" that Wallach believes he will ultimately disregard anyway (Wallach 56). This, however, does not fully reflect the complex tension that Suttree experiences in being defined by his family. While Suttree, with this statement, attempts to resist being subjective to his family and his genealogy, to increase his autonomy, the novel seems to suggest that this might be a losing battle.

Already with him entering the world, Suttree comes to be closely defined by his family, through his double in the form his twin who did not survive birth:

The infant's ossature, the thin and brindled bones along whose sulcate facets clove old shreds of flesh and cerements of tattered swaddle. Bones that would no more than fill a shoebox, a bulbous skull. On the right temple a mauve halfmoon.

Suttree turned and lay staring that the ceiling, touching a like mark on his own left temple gently with his fingertips. The ordinary of the second son. Mirror image. Gauche carbon. He lies in Woodlawn, whatever be left of the child with whom you shared your mother's belly. He neither spoke nor saw nor does he know. Perhaps his skull held seawater. Born dead and witless both or a terratoma grisly in form. No, for we were like to the last hair. I followed him into the world, me. A breech birth. Hind end fore in common with whales and bats, life forms

meant for other mediums than the earth and having no affinity for it. And used to pray for his soul days past. Believing this ghastly circus reconvened elsewhere for alltime. He in the limbo of the Christless righteous, I in a terrestrial hell. (*Suttree* 14)

This passage is important in establishing and discussing Suttree's subjectivity, as dynamically pulled on by his familial relations and the haunting of his past. Specifically, the birthmark, the "mauve halfmoon", effectively functions as an integrated signifying artifact that continuously hails him into the bourgeois ideology of his father. Additionally, with the invocation of the birthmark, the passage depicts a Suttree tormented by his twin mirror image, invoking religious language and the notion of an eternal existence with a "ghastly circus" that is never ending. Meanwhile, the description of the "bulbuous skull" in his twin brother here mirrors the exact wording of that of the flotsam fetuses in the Tennessee River. It is this tension that Suttree must contend with: that he is alive "in a terrestrial hell", while his dead twin never lived, and now lies both wastefully rotting in the ground, while also being in some religious limbo righteous state. This effectively both critiques and maintains Suttree's ties with the religious ideology he has inherited from his family and society. Equally, Suttree is offered baptism, and refuses: "You better get in that river is where you better get to, said the one in overalls. But Suttree knew the river well already and he turned his back to these malingerers and went on" (124-125). Suttree goes to church drunk, in hope of consolation or answers, and he refuses to attend church with the Reese family. He has seemingly escaped religion, as he has escaped his family and his inheritance: religion is not part of his new subjective self, but remains as a formative ideology that he has been continuously subject to, and proves to be something he cannot escape. While Suttree's confrontations with the spiritual and religious enhance the presence of McCarthy's materiality, religious institutions nonetheless constantly hail him, and beg him to partake and conform to prevailing ideologies.

The imagined burial of his twin is one that also haunts Suttree as his own estranged son dies. Having been denied attendance at the funeral by his in-laws, he is relegated to watching from afar, unnoticed (153). His familial relations are exacerbated by this troublesome lack of belonging, which is established early on to the reader. Where family is considered a major ISA that effectively negotiates Suttree's ideology and subjectivity, he resists his family's hailings. Specifically, what he attempts to oppose is his father's view that everything of real worth, "life", in the words of his father, occurs in the higher systems: "[i]n the law courts, in business, in government. There is nothing occurring in the streets. Nothing

but a dumbshow composed of the helpless and the impotent” (13-14). This perspective is something that Suttree refuses to accommodate. By extension, he views any potential authentic experience as found first and foremost on the margins of society, rather than in the overarching structures of power in that society. The ‘civilized’ society that Suttree’s father upholds is a comfortable lie, and one that he takes for granted due to his interpellated subject position into that society. Wallach notes that the socioeconomic system that Suttree’s father supports and maintains is also the system that initiates the disassembling of McAnally Flats’ community: “[t]he ... job-seeking emigration of some of his friends, and the deaths, murders, and imprisonment of others (“Ulysses in Knoxville” 60). In this subject position, his father lauds the control the upper classes maintains over both society and governmental institutions, which to the reader confirms his ideological frames of assumption. Suttree’s father and Suttree himself, thus inhabit, on the surface, two opposite stances in this ideological discourse, where the father seeks to justify and maintain the status quo, while the son ostensibly attempts to resist it.

His refusal to accept his father’s and family’s hailings is demonstrated while he is in prison. Here, he rejects the hailings of an ISA, while being kept and controlled by the prison system, an RSA. While playing cards with his fellow convicts, he is visited by his mother at Christmastime:

The following day was Sunday. Suttree was playing poker when his name was called. He played on.

That’s you, Suttree.

He folded his cards. He glanced towards the door and rose heavily, handing the cards down to Harrogate.

...

Hello Mother, he said.

Her lower chin began to dimple and quiver. Buddy, she said. Buddy...

But the son she addressed was hardly there at all. Numbly he watched himself fold his hands on the table. He heard his voice, remote, adrift.

Please dont start crying, he said.

...

Suttree began to cry nor could he stop it. People were looking. He rose. The room swam.

Buddy, she said. Buddy.

I cant, he said. Hot salt strangled him. He wheeled away.

(*Suttree* 61)

Suttree first ignores his name being called by the guards, and thus by extension refuses to acknowledge the RSA. It is only when Harrogate tells him that Suttree rises to go meet his mother. Although she tries reconciling with her son, Suttree at first distances himself clearly. When she calls his nickname, an endearment, again and again, he is clearly affected, but leaves the room, giving his mother nothing. He rejects any conversation and refuses to participate in any act that would reconcile him to his family.

Mediating Suttree's relationship to his past and his family, we find that concrete objects, walls lined with photographs, and especially family albums, effectively prompt expositional narratives. Specifically, they make up representations of the past, and become a lens for discussing subjectivity in relationship to one's origin and one's position in the world. By centering these photographs as vibrant objects, McCarthy implies that knowledge of the past is crucial for both understanding subjectivity and for centering that understanding in order to construct a more stable self. In "They Aint the Thing!: Artifact and Hallucinated Recollection in Cormac McCarthy's Early Frame-Works", Dianne C. Luce claims that Cormac McCarthy continuously negotiates the relationship between physical objects and that which they signify, or what they culturally contain. Specifically, Luce states that he interrogates "the ambiguous function of the historical artifact in its capacity to evoke or to displace the thing of which it is a record, the primacy of memory and imagination over mere record, the paradoxical frailty of memory" (21). The historical artifact in McCarthy's world, then, according to Luce, is primarily able to exert power over his characters' imaginations, inducing entirely vivid and persuasive narratives that take precedence over the thing itself. In a reading of McCarthy's early short story "Wake for Susan" (1959), a precursor to *The Orchard Keeper* (1965), Luce argues that the artefacts the protagonist, Wes, finds are what inevitably triggers, or, from somewhere deep within him and his relationship to his materiality, evokes the main narrative in the story. Indeed, objects, things, and artifacts entice and demand that we tell or imagine their origin stories. These objects raise our awareness of our position in time – they force us to analyze our chronotope surroundings – and by doing so, they also define our subject positions.

The narrative in "Wake for Susan" demonstrates how one's self and subjectivity is dynamically negotiated by the object world. The plot itself centers on Wes, a teenage boy, on a squirrel hunt in the woods on an autumn day. He finds a gravestone he has seen before –

Susan's gravestone – a girl who died at seventeen in 1834, which sets off an imaginary story within the frame narrative. In his imagination, Wes is Susan's lover, where they spend the summer together, up until the day she dies in October, and the narrative ends as Wes returns home. The first real trajectory change in the story occurs as Wes finds an old rifle-ball in the forest: "It was probably the discovery of the rifle-ball that prompted him to look for the burial plot" ("Wake" 3), and this is where Wes finds Susan's gravestone. Prior to him seeking out the gravestone, however, the rifle-ball causes him to imagine a past wherein he tries to understand how that artifact came to be at that exact spot. The gravestone proves to be another imaginative prompt, another artifact that propels the imaginary narrative forward. As Luce tells us, because of the inscription on Susan's gravestone, and Wes' relation to her age at the time of her death, the gravestone transforms to something beyond its physical, stone presence (Luce 23). McCarthy sublimely describes a transformation in the state of being: "From a simple carved stone, the marble turned to a monument; from a gravestone, to the surviving integral tie to a once warm-blooded, live person. Wes pictured Susan" ("Wake" 4). In his act of creative imagination, Wes inserts himself into the imagined Susan's life, as her lover. Luce refers to the gravestone as Wes' "bridge to the past", which also manages to return him to the present (Luce 25). The gravestone is a marker that "left no testimony" to how Susan died, and the narrative tells us "[t]hat there were so many ways" she could have died ("Wake" 6). This ambiguity of her death in contrast to the vividness of her life allows the stone to become a reconciling symbol, allowing Wes to grieve, cry, and empathically feel for all those "so lost and wasted and ungrieved" ("Wake" 6), and thereby achieve a sense of catharsis. Simultaneously, his sense of self, and subjectivity, changes and become bound by the gravestone to imaginary subjects and an imaginary past. Most importantly, McCarthy demonstrates in "Wake for Susan" the discrete interactions between artifacts and subjectivity.

In *Suttree*, McCarthy reinvigorates his protagonist's past during his visit to his uncle and aunt, by centering the Suttree family album, presented as a "picturebook of the afflicted" (*Suttree* 130). The album is situated as an artifact of a lost and unfamiliar past, crumbling and disintegrating, seemingly like Suttree's Knoxville itself; an image reinforced by Suttree's position as the end of the line, both in his family and to the reader:

The old musty album with its foxed and crumbling paper seemed to breathe a reek of the vault, turning up one by one these dead faces with their wan and loveless gaze out toward the spinning world, masks of incertitude before the cold glass eye of the camera or recoiling before this celluloid

immortality or faces simply staggered into gaga by the sheer velocity of time. Old distaff kin coughed up out of the vortex, thin and cracked and macled and a bit redundant. The landscapes, old backdrops, redundant too, recurring unchanged as if they inhabited another medium than the dry pilgrims shored up on them. Blind moil in the earth's nap cast up in an eyeblink between becoming and done. I am, I am. An artifact of prior races.

(Suttree 129)

The family album is an assemblage of Suttree's genealogy, subjecting him to his predecessors and his forefathers. In their celluloid immortality, they are constantly present as a stark reminder of Suttree's background and inheritance. Thematically this inheritance is something that he continuously attempts to distance himself from, never fully able to escape. Although Suttree claims that he is not like his family, that he is like himself, he cannot ignore his inherited disposition, nor forget his family. In judging the necessities of his existence as "a bit redundant", Suttree highlights his nihilistic and existentialist point of view, wherein meaning exists only as something yet to potentially be discovered. Pointing to a picture of baby Suttree, held "stiffly ... like an offering", Aunt Martha says "That's you", mirroring Harrogate's line to Suttree in prison, when his mother is there to visit him. To Martha's statement, Suttree affirms that "[t]his is me" (128). This hailing becomes something Suttree explicitly and affirmatively responds to, accepting his family subjectivity. Studying the photo in detail, Suttree sees "[c]old eyes bored at him out of the cowled coverlet. The congenitally disaffected" (128). This disaffection, however, suggests that Suttree regards himself as dissatisfied with the family, system, and even ideology he was born into; effectively, this is what foregrounds his mediating position between social classes and ideologies.

While the rifle-ball and the gravestone evoke narrative sequences in "Wake for Susan" of an imaginary nature, here the photo album takes Suttree back to some fragment of the conceived past. Specifically, it positions him both to himself and to the reader in an origin story, in the manner we would expect from Rachele Dini's commodity narratives, and reveals the dynamic potential for negotiating subjectivity. Following Suttree's lingering statement where he affirms himself as an artifact of prior races, the reader encounters a long continuous sequence centered on Suttree's grandfather and his funeral, only interrupted by his aunt bringing tea, relieving the reader of a poetic but perplexing expository narrative. The sequence is lent poetic quality by its incomplete and fragmented sentences, revealing just glimpses of some possible past: "Someone to be thanked for digging in such frozen ground.

Weary chant told from an old psalter” (129). This account, along with other accounts that the reader encounters, one for every picture Suttree studies, contributes to cementing his subjectivity. It becomes increasingly clearer that he is less independent, less solitary than the reader is led to believe, and more bound by his origins. The photo album and different photographs, then, constitute a barrage of hailings that inserts Suttree into his bourgeois family background, and social hierarchies. Not only does he situate himself as subject to this historical and ideological past, his utterance and affirmation that “this is me” cements the subject position that the novel virtually centers on him attempting to resist.

Suttree’s Communal and Ideological Subjectivity

Negotiating his different subject positions, Suttree inhabits an urban environment that seems to facilitate his propensity for mobility. *Suttree*’s Knoxville is on the surface little influenced by major governmental institutions or formal state apparatuses. The protagonist himself, of a middle-class background, has a college education; this in itself contrasts him to the communities he navigates. Specifically, what sets Suttree apart from the marginalized community he has immersed himself in, is his constant and unrestrained mobility. In “Flânerie, Vagrancy, and Voluntary Exile in *Suttree*”, Louise Jillett argues that Suttree functions as a flâneur. Largely applying Walter Benjamin’s ambitious but unfinished *Arcades Project* (or, *The Passagenwerk*), she claims that Suttree provides the reader with the perspective as that of an objective observer of naturalistic determinism. Benjamin originally studied the flâneur as an observer of people in a market setting, as the Paris Arcades were originally open-air markets that allowed observation without participation, a key feature. This distanced position allowed for a more objective, and thus more legitimate, social critique, as the observer saw not only parts, but the whole, and from any angle. With the advent of moving trade in-doors, to department stores, this observation without any participation or influence became, according to Benjamin, impossible (Jillett 147-148). Arguing that Suttree as a protagonist serves to fill that same role, Jillett emphasizes his “capacity for mobility”: his mobility is largely unrestrained as he wanders the marginalized communities of Knoxville, but simultaneously resists, as Jillett calls it, any organic connections with his fellow men (143). Even his choice of dwelling, his houseboat on the river, is one that preserves and symbolizes his mobility and detachment from the community. Suttree generally goes where he would like to, and leaves when he wants to. As Jillett notes, even his catchphrase seems to

be “I’ve got to go” (Jillett 148). This phrase becomes synonymous with his flâneur mobility, and a contrasted relationship to his surroundings:

Suttree drained his glass and handed it to the woman. I’ve got to go, he said.

(*Suttree* 132)

...

You want to see this piece? Said Ulysses.

No thanks. I’ve got to go. (*Suttree* 169)

...

[Suttree:] What makes you think I was rushing off?

[The goatman:] I dont know. But you welcome to stay.

[Suttree:] I’d better get on. (*Suttree* 206)

...

Suttree drained his mug and stood. I’ve got to go, he said. You do what you want but count me out. (*Suttree* 245)

In all these passages, Suttree demonstrates his capacity for mobility with leaving statements to the community. Receiving a car ride from a stranger away from his Aunt Martha and Uncle Clayton, Suttree even in an object of mobility that is ready to take him where he wants, demonstrates his objective nomadic distance by suddenly telling the driver “I get out here” (134). Despite the driver’s confoundment, telling Suttree “[t]hey aint nothin here”, Suttree insists that “[t]his is where I get out” (134). Explicitly, then, Suttree leaves any scene, and is free to do so, whenever he has decided that his time in that space is spent and exhausted. His insistence on leaving becomes an attempt to establish, maintain, and assert his autonomy. While these are autonomous individual actions, even the system surrounding Suttree occasionally seems to enforce his mobility: “You better go on, said the counterman” (293). The novel then continuously demonstrates both his capacity for, and the text’s propensity to reveal, his nomadic flâneur wanderings. In a different sense, McCarthy continuously insists on Suttree’s inside-but-outside position.

Seldom does the reader encounter Suttree as static. Indeed, a great part of his identity seems to be tied up either wandering the public spaces of Knoxville, or rowing his boat on the Tennessee River. As a voluntary exile from his family and his social inheritance, he is further

unfettered, having no obligations. In short, Suttree is first and foremost a window into the real characters in McCarthy's Knoxville, enabling and enhancing a social critique of 1950s Tennessee, and dispositions towards marginalized groups in society. Wandering through an old manor, in a dreamlike sequence combining both past and present, he, "[r]eprobate scion of doomed Saxon clans", leaves the house through a garden gate, where the keep out-sign is turned inward towards the house, paradoxically warning any trespasser to keep out of the outside world: "He went on anyway. He said that he was only passing through" (*Suttree* 136). McCarthy again illustrates Suttree as the very end of an ancient lineage, of Saxon clans, an image that is further enhanced by the once sumptuous but disintegrating mansion, depicted as a reflection of Suttree's ancestral house. While a great motivation behind the narrative in *Suttree*, then, seems to be an exact social critique, the protagonist as a flâneur is recognized by the fact that he is not invested in the situations he finds himself in: he is, after all, only passing through, and only temporarily suffers what the impoverished and debilitated must suffer as a normality. In this regard, his outsider position superficially reflects a subject position outside ideology. However, since there is no possible outside, this locus that he navigates is inevitably subject to the dominant ideology in society; namely, the one that his father prescribes to.

This capacity for mobility that Suttree exhibits initiates an important discussion of Suttree's subjectivity and free will. While Jillett argues that Suttree leaves whenever his independence is threatened (148), this extends to his subjectivity. Any occurrence where he risks becoming subjective to the wills of other people leads to him invoking the phrase "I've got to go", or an equivalent, before demonstrating his mobility and moving on. Thus, he refuses to be caught and defined by other actors. However, there are occasional points of slippage, where Suttree is forced out of his flâneur role, and where he is hailed or coerced to participate. Specifically, these fulcrums center around concrete artifacts forced upon him. Mother She's intrusion of his autonomy in a bone divination séance is one such pivot point. The crone in *Suttree*, called Mother She, acts in the vacuum where governmental institutions would normally work. She offers medical help to the poor and marginalized who hesitate to seek medical treatment from hospitals, and through her position as village wise woman and soothsayer, offers advice and fortunes to the inhabitants of McAnally Flats. While the novel generally attempts to give little credence to her doings, sometimes mocking her role, Mother She is also presented as a haunting and amorphous presence. Having "a figure the size of a child" (278), "stooped and shawled" (282), and clothed in a "homedyed black ... gown" (278), wearing spectacles on "goldwire frames" (279), she appears strange and foreboding, but within normality. However, as Suttree studies a family photo hanging on her wall, he

notes that she is strangely absent from the tableau, caught in “a grayed-out patch”, depicted as “a ghost in the photo among her pellagrous ancestors”, in what Mother She herself calls “that dead place” (279). Here, the photo itself manipulates her presence and her past, relegating her to a questionable existence, or an ambiguous state of being.

Suttree’s coerced participation and suspension from his flâneur role is induced by material objects in a bone divination séance. Suttree goes to Mother She with his friend Ab Jones, after she has stitched Ab up due to just one of his long line of brawls. Ab Jones is there specifically to put a curse on Tarzan Quinn, a cop and alleged enemy of Ab, which contributes to elevate Mother She’s position as both benevolent healer and malevolent destroyer. The crone’s fortune-teller and witch-like presence is exaggerated by the abundance of objects she dresses her body with: “neckware winked, tin amulets, a toadstone, an ebon baal that hung from a necklace of braided hair” (280). The crone is thus loaded down with signifying objects of mundane, geologic and religious origins. These are objects that contribute to, or even make possible the crone’s apparent identity as wise and knowledgeable. In fact, together the objects engender a signifying actant network that constructs Mother She’s subjectivity and identity to the reader, as an occult death-defying presence. This perception is made more complex as it is also challenged by the text: both Suttree and the narrator ostensibly seems to resist her material-laden presence, in how the séance is at first conveyed as an amusing curiosity. Her cursing of Quinn for Ab Jones makes Suttree “smile against the back of his hand” (281), for instance. Entirely unasked for, Mother She starts reading Suttree’s fortune, or perhaps more correctly, his future.

The reading is offered and performed without his input. Up until this point, he is merely an observer in the room, fulfilling his flâneur role, mediating Mother She and Ab Jones to the reader. However, Mother She commands him out of the flâneur role and forces him, via objects and bone divination, to participate. Climbing up to a kitchen cupboard, the crone withdraws a pouch that she handles carefully, a pouch that is loaded with animistic terms; “Her fingers undid the mouth of the little bag and when the strings hung loose she held it clenched by the neck as if what crouched inside might otherwise come out” (281). Specifically, McCarthy makes the secretive object vibrant and animated by employing a combination of “mouth” and “neck”, while the secrets contained within “crouched”, threatening to escape. After going into a trance-like state, the crone pours the contents of the bag onto “a cloth of black damask”:

Out clattered toad and bird bones, yellow teeth, frail shapes of ivory
 strange or nameless, a small black heart dried hard as stone. A joint from a
 snake's spine, the ribs curved like claws. A bat's skull with needleteeth
 agrin, the little pterodactyl wingbones. Tiny pestles of polished riverstone
 (281).

These objects, or relics, associated with death are also intrinsically bound to time, and especially pre-history. This reflects McCarthy's focus on placing *Suttree* and Knoxville in geological timespans, and thereby achieving a curious conflation of past and present. The relics mediate a distant past as life and existence, with extended trajectories. Not only are they continually used, by the crone, past general assumptions that would categorize these objects as waste; in the hands of Mother She, it is in this past existence that they achieve their main function. Negotiating distinctions between use, waste, and re-purposing, they mediate the present (as powerful instruments in the room), and the future. The relics, then, exist across time. The details in identifying the different shapes and the dose of ambiguity, where the narrator describes the shapes as "strange or nameless" (281), serves to estrange and defamiliarize the material object world. Trying to read and make sense of the signifying networks of objects thrown, Mother She herself is affected by their meaning:

These things lay shapen still and final upon the black damask and the dark
 gospeler of their constellation who would in moments now postulate the
 denial of the old lie that beholder and beheld are ever more than one, this
 dusky fugitive of the pyre with whom they trafficked studied the figures
 briefly and looked away. Looked away, let shut the seamy doors of her eyes.
 They sat in silence. (281)

These things, of bone, stone and unknown, initiate a poetic epiphany of cosmic insight. Strewn across the dark cloth, forming a constellation, these things and the Crone become one. That the "things lay shapen still and final" suggests a deterministic universe, one in which when all the parts are thrown on the table offers not a myriad of potentialities, but finality. However, there is a tension here: that matter inanimate and 'still' has deterministic power, or that the divination objects when thrown lie 'still' and unresponsive. Yet, McCarthy imbues them with meaning, if not outright agency: they are figures communicating something unspoken and unheard to Mother She, and to *Suttree* as well. Between the Crone and *Suttree*, there is nothing more to say after seeing this truth. Ab Jones breaks the silence by mediating what the reader wants to know:

[Ab Jones:] What do it say?

[Crone:] About you it dont.

[Ab Jones:] About Quinn then.

[Crone:] It dont say. It aint you nor Quinn neither. It's him [Suttree].

Suttree felt the skin on his scalp pucker.

[Ab Jones:] Why aint it me?

[Crone:] I caint make it be if it aint.

[Ab Jones:] Do it again.

[Crone:] No.

(*Suttree* 281)

The crone's inability to change things is telling here; it is in her power to interpret these signs, but the objects, or relics, are imbued with meaning, power, and agency, which Mother She confesses to not being able to change. Here, McCarthy is extremely sparse with details, which greatly contrasts his otherwise detailed-laden writing. While Ab confronts her, Suttree remains silent, which contributes to highlight their different subject positions: Suttree is hailed by these divination objects and affirms his subjectivity to them with his silence, where Ab is able to confront the things themselves and demand meaning from them. The effect makes the reader pause and ponder what it all means, and directs attention to the fact that we are attempting to read characters whom themselves are reading objects, and we are trying to dissect or extract any kernel of meaning from it. It induces a curious form of meta-reading. The reading, although ambiguous to the extreme, becomes imprinted in the reader, and insists on being remembered. Something is revealed, but the reader is not part of it.

The scene mediates Suttree's subject relationship to his community, and to his material surroundings, in that it serves to temporarily incapacitate him. After this séance, Suttree avoids the Crone. The narrator states that "He did not go back" (282). Her presence stalks Suttree, however, as he sees her, or thinks he sees her, in the streets he is walking throughout the summer. Her presence and being is such that he finds it impossible to know if it really is her that he sees. His continuous avoidance of her reflects a refusal to partake, albeit failed at this point, wherein his mobility, autonomy, and sense of self becomes hesitant and interrupted. His usual preferred existence and subject position as that of a watchful observer, his attempt to resist investing himself in this ritualistic determinism, and thus reducing his subjectivity to anything else than himself, fails as he is confronted with the deterministic power of the bones thrown on that black damask cloth.

Systems of Ideology

The ideological system surrounding Suttree is a constant presence as an overarching structure that potentially informs and constrains his decisions and his mobility. If we acknowledge that, using Althusser's definition, ideology is an all-pervasive framework that largely shapes and determines our actions, it would be intrinsically useful to consider how such a system manifests itself in the novel. Jonathan Elmore and Rick Elmore have an especially apt discussion on this for McCarthy's *No Country for Old Men*, which I believe can function as a valuable framework for considering how deterministic ideology in accordance with subjectivity and free will works in *Suttree*. In "Human Become Coin: Neoliberalism, Anthropology, and Human Possibilities in *No Country for Old Men*", Elmore and Elmore argue that McCarthy's *No Country for Old Men* conflates anthropology and economics, specifically that the brute characters of McCarthy are actors within a neoliberal system that forms and restricts their decision-making. The plot of *No Country for Old Men* is itself quite simple and linear: Llewellyn Moss, while out hunting, encounters the results of a drug deal gone wrong in the Texas desert. The drugs Moss decides to leave behind, but he grabs the money, hoping that he will get away with it. Of course, he does not. Shortly after, Moss is hunted by hitman Anton Chigurh, who has been hired to return the money to its owners. The narrative centers on Moss's continued attempts of escape and evasion, with Chigurh relentless on his heels, and Sheriff Bell and the rest of law enforcement confounded by the extreme and inexplicable scenes of violence they encounter while trying to catch up.

Ideological systems can either be perceived as reflections of a natural state, or as wholly social constructs, that inevitably shape and structure our subjectivities, motivations, and actions. While the particulars of neoliberalism stems from the 1980s, after the publication of *Suttree*, many of the core concepts of neoliberal ideology have their origins in consumerism and capitalism, which are, of course, important elements in *Suttree*'s Knoxville as well. The neoliberal system represented in *No Country for Old Men*, according to Elmore and Elmore, is a system that is first and foremost based on market logic and market forces, and is then applied to social behavior. In a reading of Jason Read's "A Genealogy of Homo-Economicus: Neoliberalism and the Production of Subjectivity", and Michel Foucault's lectures on biopolitics, Elmore and Elmore argue that the dominant neoliberal ideology is first and foremost a human construct rather than a mirror reflection of human nature. This construct, however, serves to reduce everything in anthropology to economic decisions, and

thus results in an economically motivated determinism. Foucault specifically distinguishes between social behavior rooted in economic exchange, and behavior rooted in economic competition, claiming that “Homo æconomicus [...] is not at all a partner of exchange”, but “an entrepreneur of himself” (qtd. in Elmore & Elmore 170). By this, Foucault means that there is a distinction in a system serving oneself to the added benefit of others, exchange, and a system serving only oneself; competition. Elmore and Elmore explain this further by applying Gary Becker’s term “human capital”, which posits that the subject is a product of investment in the self. I would refrain from presenting this as a reductionist perspective, however, where a highly autonomous self is in total control. If we consider that everything, especially consumerism, is self-investment, that means every choice and action is equally framed by economics. In a competition-oriented paradigm, however, no decision or action is neutral, as nothing escapes the cost-benefit analysis of whether a given action provides an advantage. According to Elmore and Elmore, “any decision not leading to a competitive advantage, any economically “neutral” decision would be an unnecessary cost” (171), and would therefore be counter to efficiency, which in turn would prove the poorer choice. Consequently, Elmore and Elmore highlight that neoliberalism is a reductive paradigm which undermines every act that cannot be addressed in terms of profit to “human capital”.

Some troublesome social implications arguably surface with “human capital”, investment in the self, and the economical neoliberal frame in which this investment occurs. Elmore and Elmore argue that what follows is a logic of total individual responsibility, claiming that “not only is every social activity explainable”, but that “all social inequalities and all oppression become simply the result of “poor” individual investments”, which subsequently results in “a logic that naturalizes social inequalities as natural, inevitable, and justified” (172). This means that it is the sole responsibility of the individual to make rational decisions in a neoliberal framework. Rationalizing from this, we end up with 1980s Reaganite rugged individualism. Consequently, if the outcome of a decision is poor, that only means the decision was wrong or uncompetitive; a perspective that either wholly ignores or undermines the restrictions or limitations any systemic framework might have on individuals.

Altogether, these concepts, specifically the links between anthropology and economics, force us to rethink our understanding of subjectivity, according to Elmore and Elmore. Rather than reading the vicious Anton Chigurh (in *No Country for Old Men*) as a nihilistic psychopathic killer and purveyor of determinism, Elmore and Elmore reason that he is “the ideal neoliberal subject, a *Homo economicus* in the purest sense” (174). In other words, Chigurh is not an incomprehensible psychopath signaling the loss of Western morality; rather,

his actions are ruled by cold, rational calculations of possible costs and benefits to his “human capital”. Chigurh is ultimately subject to neoliberal market forces, which form his identity. Nowhere is this conflation of subjectivity and economics made more clear than in Chigurh’s affinity for the coin toss. Chigurh uses the coin to determine the fates of people he encounters, forcing them to call it; the result of which they either survive, or suffer death by his hands. For his victim, Elmore and Elmore point out, this end scenario is merely the result of a long series of bad decisions within a neoliberal deterministic framework. In the face of this cold and calculative killer, the coin toss – while a game of chance – transforms into a chance of surviving an encounter with the *Homo economicus*.

Chigurh’s rationale is, however, resisted by McCarthy, according to Elmore and Elmore. While neoliberalism claims to represent a natural order of things, Elmore and Elmore argue that it is Chigurh as an agent who enforces and maintains neoliberal structures. They expose this by dissecting Chigurh’s coin toss encounter with Carla Jean, Moss’s wife, as she tells him: “You make it like it was the coin. But you’re the one... the coin didn’t have no say. It was just you” (258). Here, Carla Jean strips away Chigurh’s justification, in contrasting the inanimate coin with his role as an agent and perpetuator of neoliberal ideology. He makes a conscious decision to flip the coin. His victims are ultimately those who subsequently fail to live by self-serving neoliberal codes. Furthermore, it is due to these characters’ lapses into altruism that they eventually die within the neoliberal habitat: the competitive environment arguably leaves no room for altruistic actions. Concretely, Moss cannot help but return with water to the dying man at the drug shootout, and he is unwilling to kill Chigurh when he has the chance. Elmore and Elmore unmask the concepts of neoliberalism and human capital to reveal the tension between *Homo sapiens* and the new *Homo economicus*. In doing this, they simultaneously question the power of agents to both perpetuate and resist systemic structures and ideologies, and how these habitats form human subjectivity.

Chigurh’s use of the coin toss as a determiner is, according to Elmore and Elmore, motivated (or even determined) by neoliberalism as the dominant ideology. This affinity for employing an object, such as the coin in this instance, in order to determine fate, or relegate one’s agency to chance, seems to be an exaggerated extension of how the material object world functions in McCarthy’s *Suttree*. While *Suttree*’s Knoxville, as a habitat, ostensibly seems to stun its inhabitants, and thus functions as dominant force upon them, Chigurh literally inhabits this role. Employing his pressurized captive bolt pistol (used to kill cattle), he stuns and marks those who threaten to hinder his mobility. Both this use as a murder

weapon, and his use of the bolt pistol as a skeleton key, blowing out the lock of any door, confounds the local police, and stuns their progress. His use of the coin is similarly but cognitively stunning: confronted with an incomprehensible choice between heads and tails is deeply unsettling to his victims. Specifically, this confrontation with an object that has such decisive power, logical and reasonable reactions and replies become incoherent and impossible. Sheriff Bell expresses this inability to comprehend the consequences of Chigurh's presence, when he finds that Carla Jean has been killed: "it didnt make no sense" (*NCFOM* 248).

No Country for Old Men is arguably more a critique of global capitalism and its alienating faceless corporations, than it is about individual drug dealers and the questionable morality of the narcotics industry. The focal point becomes the significant forces behind them; the systemic forces that in effect organizes the drug trade and wreaks havoc on communities. *Suttree* is not a contested locus for faceless corporations, nor is there any economically motivated violence (unless you count Harrogate's pig fight and bat slaughter). While the two novels were published 26 years apart, temporally they have some common traits that together offers good reasons for why we might look at them synoptically. While *Suttree* is set in the early 1950s, it was worked on until its publication date in 1979. *No Country for Old Men*, meanwhile, was published in 2005, but is set in 1980. In other words, the writing and settings overlap. Meanwhile, Daniel S. Traber notes that the publication of *Suttree* in 1979 nearly coincides with Reagan's presidency and his promotion of rugged individualism (34). This promotion addressed social issues by justifying the inequalities that existed in society, and relegated responsibility to the individual, meaning that if you were poor and suffering, it was your own fault. This largely sums up neoliberalism as presented by Elmore and Elmore. Arguably, this ideology also influences *Suttree*, and perhaps especially the novel's ending, where modernization seems to be conflated with an encroaching alienating neoliberalism.

Where *No Country for Old Men* represents the challenges of globalization by honing in on local communities, the reader encounters in *Suttree* a pre-globalized world that deals with the municipal quotidian experiences. However, with its focus on the margins of urban Knoxville society, the novel negotiates an in-built systematic violence that effectively functions as an ideological framework for the narrative. This violence becomes most apparent in the character of Ab Jones, as he explicitly (and violently) resists various RSAs. Yet we can equally consider the marginalizing that the system exerts on its poorer inhabitants as a certain type of violence. While Ab Jones throughout the episodic narrative is in a constant struggle

against repressive law enforcement, this also allows Suttree to rebel against the RSAs in the novel. Ab's conflict with the ideological enforcing, wherein the marginalized are consistently labelled undesirable, culminates in his confrontation with two police officers, a scene that Suttree himself becomes witness to:

The cruiser had stopped and was backing slowly. The spotlight came on and sliced about and pinned them against the wall.

[Ab:] Go on, Youngblood.

[Suttree:] No.

...

All right, said the officer. What's this?

I'm just getting him home, said Suttree. He's all right.

Is that so? He dont look so all right to me. What are you doing with him? He your daddy?

Fuck you, said Ab.

What?

There were two of them now. Suttree could hear the steady gutturing of the cruiser's exhaust in the empty street.

What? said the officer. (*Suttree* 440)

Ab runs for it, and the two officers follow. Suttree, meanwhile, decides to steal the idling police car, acting somewhat against his otherwise law-abiding character. Rebelling against the RSA and its representatives, he dumps the car in the Tennessee River (442). This symbolizing act is only made possible because of the car as a physical and signifying object. In other words, the police car, and the unnamed police officers, function as concrete representatives of a repressive system that targets the dispossessed: Ab Jones is shot, beaten, and eventually dies of his injuries. Suttree, meanwhile, suffers no consequences. William Prather highlights a section from *The Orchard Keeper* that describes the workings of the novel, but also evokes immediate parallels to *Suttree*: "This modern world, 'presided over by brutish constables, inept humane officers and governmental employees who follow nihilistic and futile polices [sic] they don't attempt to understand' ... is assuredly the realm that McCarthy's readers must recognize as their own" (Prather 54). Not only are Suttree and his miscreants continuously confronted with RSAs and threats of violence and incarceration, systemic and confounding policies dominates the spaces of the marginalized in the novel: vagrancy laws recur as a topic, where the dispossessed are effectively and legally punished by the system, merely because

one does not have a home. While Suttree consistently challenges RSAs by consorting with the criminalized, and thus presents the reader with a perspective first and foremost oppositional to the RSAs, it is his drowning of the police car that manifests his enmity to this repressive system.

Repressive State Apparatuses are, however, generally something Suttree worries about on behalf of others, less than himself. While Suttree does experience confrontations with police, and serves time in prison, his privileged subject position is seemingly never at stake in this regard. When showing up to attend the funeral of his dead son, he is able to bury his son's remains without consequence. The sheriff threatens him afterwards, on behalf of his parents-in-law in an attempt to persuade Suttree to leave, yet he ends up both driving him to the bus station and giving him five dollars for the bus fare (156-157). In "Strangeness, Gaps, and the Mystery of Life: Cormac McCarthy's Southern Novels" Gerhard Hoffman argues that the "passive existence" Suttree is leading, one where he deals with the concrete "sheer presence and authority of the physical world", provides liberation for Suttree, and distances him from social forces and control (230). This explanation by Hoffman echoes Jillett's perspective; they both recognize Suttree as comparatively passive in his self-marginalization. However, while his passive flâneur position might initiate freedom from social institutions, his autonomy is not severed from the material object world: he is consistently hailed by the authority of the physical world, and must respond to it, either in affirmation and thus the maintenance of the ideology that foregrounds the material, or as a rejection and resistance to that ideology.

In contrast to Suttree, who throughout the novel seems to have few possessions of his own, the inhabitants of McAnally Flats seem to sometimes be utterly defined by their things. The novel negotiates a dynamic dialectic, where the poor and marginalized amass junked surplus which they occasionally succeed in transforming into commodities, but often seems to weigh them down with a materiality that does little for them, except to define their existence. This first and foremost reflects what seems to be an over-production of goods, commodities, and things – all products of an industrial America, originally representing its surplus wealth. Specifically, we do not find that the poor and dispossessed in *Suttree* have no things, but that they seem to have too many *useless* things and possessions. Bill Brown, when discussing the relationship between buildings, objects, and people, notes that "people collect objects to manifest themselves physically in space" (*A Sense of Things* 186). In the limited space for realization and mobility that the marginalized denizens of Knoxville inhabit, the way they assert their existence is by collecting. Specifically, the Ragman, the Junkman, and Harrogate all perform their existence by accumulating things and fragments of things. Indeed, one could

say that the characters in *Suttree* are all subject to this overabundance of things that mediate waste dynamics. In other words, we encounter an invigoration of what can be described as marginalized object-people, wherein they are externally defined solely by their possessions.

While these possessions are depicted as commodities, they can be interpreted as waste objects that effectively interpellate their possessors. The Junkman collects and sells junk (largely junked cars, sometimes grisly with body parts still in them, and disassembled parts), the Ragman collects and sells old rags or pieces of cloth, and the amusingly named Rubber Baron collects and sells used condoms. These are characters who are named, hailed, and interpellated as subjects within their society according to their relationship to the things they deal with. Indeed, their whole identities seem to be contingent on waste somehow re-purposed into pseudo-commodities. Certainly, McCarthy negotiates concepts of waste, commodities, and identity, as he depicts characters who are commanded by their possessions. This, however, will be discussed more in-depth in chapter four, where I analyze the specific relationships between the inhabitants of Knoxville and the waste landscape they populate.

Chapter Conclusion

Subjectivity in *Suttree* seems to be inherently fragmented. Suttree, perhaps due both to his privileged position as protagonist (and, arguably, narrator) as well as his privileged background, experiences a very different kind of subjectivity and autonomy than the dispossessed denizens he consorts with. If we consider him a social nomad, one that demonstrates his ability to navigate and engage communities according to his wants and needs, we are also able to illuminate his flâneur capacity. While Suttree is continuously hailed and interpellated into the bourgeois ideology of his family, a symbol for maintaining the status quo of capitalism and consumerism in society, his resistance to these hailings prove a consistent theme in the novel. However, while he attempts to appropriate a marginalized identity, he is not fully able to dispose of his ideological subjectivity. This is continuously demonstrated by his unique flâneur position, his various condemnations of inhabitants in the marginalized community he inhabits, and, especially, how that community never seems to fully view Suttree as one of them.

That which binds Suttree seems to be the material object world that he necessarily must engage with. In the Smoky Mountains, his subjective self is hailed by the piece of down that catches his attention, and serves to mediate and clarify his relationship to his external

surroundings, away from an internal solipsist center of self. Equally, the reader's encounter with the bone divination scene at Mother She's exposes how things, as hailing actants, are able to induce an interruption and interrogation of Suttree's flâneur subjectivity. Specifically, they reveal how his autonomy, agency, and sense of self, are challenged by this threatening augural materiality: in this passage, his autonomous capacity for mobility, and his "I've got to go"-catchphrase become impossible. Rather, in the section following this scene, he is haunted by the crone's presence and continuously attempts to avoid her: as his movements become restricted, so is his reduced autonomous mobility exposed.

We might consider, for instance, how, ultimately, the marginalized in *Suttree* disappear at the hands of political interests: McAnally Flats must be destroyed in order to make room for the new expressway. The poor must suffer more slow violence: they are not explicitly moved, they are just driven or forced away, as construction crews and machines encroach upon their lives, creating roads that seemingly go nowhere. Modernization is coming to Knoxville, and intrinsically linked with it, late capitalist ideology, where worth and value equals capitalist productivity, wealth and success, and where extravagant possessions are used as status symbols: for instance, the car Suttree and Joyce buy on a shopping spree, that subverts Suttree's appropriated marginalized subjectivity. The marginalized, albeit re-centered by McCarthy in *Suttree*, are in contrast hailed by the greater society as worthless, or social waste.

In Cornelius Suttree and Gene Harrogate, we find an exemplary contrast between subject positions. While Suttree is continuously hailed by ISAs, and affirms his various subject positions, such as family, religious, and social institutions, while also attempting to resist them, Harrogate is largely alienated from these ISAs. Repressive State Apparatuses are generally something Suttree worries about on behalf of others, more than himself. While Suttree is continuously confronted by the police, and spends time in the workhouse, his position never seems to be at stake. Harrogate and Ab Jones, in contrast, are at incessant odds with law enforcement and a judicial system that attempts to contain them, and which experiences Ab and Harrogate as inherently outside the dominant ideology, to the extent that this is possible. Harrogate, additionally, in his outsider position (one very different from Suttree's outsider position), is under close scrutiny by the formal and informal institutions he encounters. Among that which becomes his own community, the vagrants of McAnally Flats, he is a "paler derelict who held his small hands to the flames without a word" (438), among Suttree's friends Rufus comments that "Wherever he [Harrogate] at he's fucked up. Aint no news in that" (271), while Suttree says outright to him that "You look wrong. You will always

look wrong” (59). Where he looks wrong, he consequently looks like no recognizable thing: this defamiliarized subjectivity at stake eludes systems of meaning and coherence. There is, then, no place for Harrogate, seemingly not in the space of the novel, nor in McCarthy’s Knoxville.

Chapter 3. “I caint make it be if it aint”: Things, Agency, and Misuse in *Suttree*

This chapter will discuss how physical objects affect agency and subjectivity in *Suttree*. Specifically, I argue that they effectively negotiate and define cultural and ideological identities. This subjugating power that these objects assert over their keepers are closely connected with agency. By constraining their modus operandi, or set of available actions, things can constrain agency and autonomy; where real autonomy and perceived autonomy are comprehensively at odds. Simultaneously, the chapter will discuss object misuse, and interrogate whether such interactions with the material world resists or maintains dominant ideologies in society. Especially for this discussion, I will compare how misuse functions in *Suttree* in contrast to *No Country for Old Men*. Specifically, I argue that these dynamic interconnections between objects, actants, actors, and use are negotiated by ideological subject positions.

The world the reader encounters in *Suttree* is one where the ostensibly inanimate materiality insistently exercises control over its characters. Notable Cormac McCarthy critic David Holloway suggests that *Suttree* depicts a dominating materiality. He offers that the Knoxville McCarthy has wrought in the novel is “a world where human energy is arrested ... by the inertia of physical things” (Holloway 116). By this, Holloway explains that the text effectively mires its actors in a dominant materiality that reduces mobility. This, however, does not mean that physical things in *Suttree* are themselves inert. In fact, they seem to have, if not lives of their own, at least their own kind of existence and major impact on the world. Rather than “arrested”, or stunned, by things, I argue that the human energy Holloway is talking about falls victim to the dynamic swerves imposed on by things.

In *Suttree*, representations of unfamiliarity and fragmentation ultimately lead to wholeness. While the novel may be read as Cornelius Suttree’s spiritual and existential journey, and indeed has been, *Suttree* may also be interrogated through its materiality and physicality. Specifically, studying how Suttree and his fellow miscreants navigate Knoxville’s objects and commodities might provide a deeper understanding of McCarthy’s *oeuvre*, and may also add valuable analytical readings to the literary field of New Materialism. McCarthy’s works in general, and *Suttree* in particular, seem to contain worlds where the volume of things comes steaming relentlessly at the reader. This is a result of the sheer amount of details of the physical environment which McCarthy forces the reader to confront, and his writing style. Beatrice Trotignon, in “Detailing the Wor(1)d in *Suttree*”, discusses this abundance of details in regards to Roland Barthes’ ‘reality effect’, claiming that the “signs of

dislocation and fragmentation make for a sense of realist concreteness if not aesthetic wholeness” (91). In other words, it is arguably this amount of detail that contributes to making McCarthy’s narratives more realistic. At the same time, however, like Trotignon implies, the gratuity and grittiness of these details also serve to distance these spaces from the reader’s sense of reality, thus constructing a world that is vividly material and recognizable, but also strange and unfamiliar. One such example of this, and especially striking detail that contributes to this estranging effect, is how the city river is a space where grisly and rotting human fetuses seemingly regularly surface:

A world beyond all fantasy, malevolent and tactile and dissociate, the blown lightbulbs like shorn polyps semitranslucent and skullcolored bobbing blindly down and spectral eyes of oil and now and again the beached and stinking forms of foetal humans bloated like young birds moon-eyed and bluish or stale gray. (*Suttree* 4)

Here, McCarthy is explicit himself, as he describes the scene as one “beyond all fantasy”, yet we are nonetheless confronted with a passage that depicts a defamiliarization of the human, intermingled with his wasteland world. Distinctions between what constitutes subjects, objects, and spaces are levelled; objects take on human resemblance, where lightbulbs are “skullcolored”, where “spectral eyes of oil” appear, and where humans – foetuses – are removed from any real semblance of the human, threatening to become first birds, then mere things.

The detail-laden descriptions in *Suttree* allows for a subversion of the subject-object relationship. While the descriptive language lends the novel a sense of realism, Trotignon, resists simply categorizing Cormac McCarthy’s style according to Roland Barthes’ ‘reality effect’, and instead argues that McCarthy’s parataxis (or paratactic style) serves to highlight “the world’s sheer materiality, by which objects are given eminence over the subject” (91). Specifically, his use of coordinating rather than subordinating conjunctions facilitate sentences where the reader is confronted with a cascade of material objects, and where the subject in the sentences get lost among these objects:

Suttree looked about at the mounds of moldy rags and the stacked kindling and the racks of bottles and jars and the troves of nameless litter, broken kitchen implements or lamps, a thousand houses divided, the ragged chattel of lives abandoned like his own. (*Suttree* 421)

Often, even the coordinating conjunctions disappear, and become replaced by punctuation, which allows for a deluge of objects which simultaneously grants pause and time for reflection:

In the belly of an iron trashbin big enough to hold a pokergame he sorted out mementos all the morning long. Indemnified bottles cast off by the rich. Redeemable at two cents per. Newsprint for baling. Useless bones. A dead rat, a broken broom, part of an inkpen. A side of gangrenous bacon filled with skippers. The wreck of a fruitcrate which his eyes saw as kindling, salvageable, saleable. (*Suttree* 256)

This subversion of the normal subject-object relationship, where the subject nominally exercises control over the object, I believe is key to understanding *Suttree*. While the novel arguably disguises itself as a journey of individual self-discovery (treading the path to a collective, human exploration of meaning and existence), its locus is albeit one where epiphanies are often frustratingly unresolved. Within and depending on the social relations in the text, and Suttree's relationship to humanity in his proximity, the undercurrents in the novel recognize the troubling conflation of subject and object, or occasionally, that subjects are dangerously contingent on objects. This is especially prominent when discussing the power and functions of artifacts in *Suttree*, and how they shape subjectivity and threaten real autonomy.

Fishermen and Talismans

The reader is constantly at odds with how to understand Suttree's subjectivity. A protagonist relegated to, or alleviated with, some sort of voluntary exile, the reader must piece together the different fragments given: these reveal that he has left his family, or families, and that he in the novel exists in a locus somewhere between a self-imposed purgatory and 'authentic' and 'real' minimalist life fraught with character-building hardships: at the same time, he continuously refuses to take up factory jobs, and thus refuses to be yet another cog in, what he deems to be, the alienating oppressive wheel of late capitalism:

[Uncle Clayton:] Are you still fishin?

[Suttree:] Yep.

[Uncle Clayton:] You want a job?

[Suttree:] Nope.

(*Suttree* 131)

He exercises a continual dismissal of the expectations derived from the dominant social order and ideology that has engendered him. This element is reinforced by how the text refers to him, and its insistence on first establishing his subjectivity and identity as ostensibly independent. In fact, Suttree is first introduced by the narrator to the reader simply as a recurring series of references to him as “he” (7-9), while Suttree meticulously sets his lines, and is then named and hailed as “the fisherman” (9), to distinguish Suttree from the rescue workers pulling a dead body from the river. A novel that continuously plays with intertextuality, among them biblical parables, *Suttree* invokes religious ideology and draws lines to its self-marginalized protagonist as a fisher of men. He is not given a proper name until he is called, by Joe, from within the text: “The fisherman had made to go when someone in the crowd took his elbow. Hey Suttree” (9). Invoking his name finally establishes a semblance of a unified and independent self, although as it is his paternal last name that is called, it simultaneously subjects him to his family and especially his father.

Objects in *Suttree* can function as an instrument that perpetuates ideology and traditions. For a long time, the reader is unaware of how exactly Suttree came to be a fisherman on the Tennessee River. After meeting the Indian, however, Suttree reveals that he simply took over the fishing lines of one that came before him. Here, McCarthy exposes the reader to tradition as ideology, as Suttree responds to its hailing, and then affirms and propagates that tradition. Specifically, the continuance of tradition itself constrains freedom and autonomy, in that it sustains past actions and systems often long after the original meaning of that which started the tradition has been lost. The Indian specifically asks Suttree: “What got you fishin?” (240), to which Suttree answers, “I dont know. I sort of inherited my line from another man”. The Indian follows up by asking, “What happened to the other man?”, where Suttree replies, “I dont know”, “all he said was not to look for him back”. Here, Suttree’s continual answer of “I dont know” becomes a telling reply to the implied question; “Why are you doing what you are doing”, where Suttree’s answer suggests an existence where he has relinquished his agency. His reasoning, or knowledge, behind his actions, is unclear to himself.

Suttree’s agency, or lack of it, is reflected in his line of work. In “Introduction: The Prototypical *Suttree*”, Georg Guillemain claims that Suttree “has renounced his Catholic faith,

social status, and career prospects to become a fisherman” (51). The exchange between Suttree and the Indian, however, seems to suggest that Suttree’s life on the river and his identity as a fisherman is, if not entirely coincidental, controlled by ideology. In contrast to ideals centered on self-sufficiency and rugged individualism – major motifs in the American literature canon – Suttree is not actively realizing his existential self through fisherman’s work: he is merely inheriting and inhabiting the role (the line) from another. That he has fled from his family inheritance, only to find himself paradoxically subject to another inheritance, is a major focal point. Suttree is presented as a free and autonomous subject, one that most of the time moves and acts without constraints, yet here, when questioned, he undermines his own agency. The employment of “line” here not only contributes to dissolving the binaries of subject and object, but also draws societal position, identity and subjectivity in.

The constraints of free will in the novel is explored through Suttree’s line of work, his wanderings and connections to the community, and his interactions with the object world of Knoxville. Suttree is seemingly defined by his role as a fisherman, although it is not the result of any particularly active choice on Suttree’s behalf: the fishing lines decided for him, in that the equipment became Suttree’s path where an agential choice would or should be. What seems like chance and coincidence threatens to convey determinism, in a system where Suttree’s free will becomes inconceivable. Perhaps the fishing lines, on the other hand, function as a concrete reply to Suttree’s lack of will and agency. These same lines were originally left, or abandoned, and as such treated as waste. Suttree, however, continues the use of the lines, again making them useful, serving as instruments for Suttree’s existence, in that they provide a minimal but sustainable day-to-day income for him. Eventually this suggests a cyclical narrative, reflecting a deterministic cosmology: Suttree himself, as the man before him, ultimately abandons the lines, as well as the houseboat.

Returning to the passage preceding Suttree’s explanation of how he became a fisherman, to his enlightening encounter with the Indian, provides valuable context and a deeper understanding. Specifically, it serves to frame objects as persuasive and vibrant actants. The Indian enters the narrative and Suttree’s sphere, when he becomes known around the market, town, and river for catching the biggest catfish anyone ever saw, “Eighty-seven pounds, Suttree muttered” (220). The Indian, as McCarthy’s narrator continuously refers to him (even after it is revealed his real name is Michael), serves to subvert the role of the mystic indigenous as keeper of ancient and secret knowledge. Suttree seeks him out at the cave, by the river, he has taken residence in, and the Indian invites him over for turtle supper. During

this meeting, drinking beer and watching the city lights at night, Suttree draws attention to the Indian's talisman;

[Suttree:] What do those signify?

The Indian looked down. He touched the doll's eyes. [The Indian:] Them?

I dont know. Good luck.

[Suttree:] I guess they must work. Judging by that catfish.

[The Indian:] Dont you have nothin'?

[Suttree:] A good luck piece?

[The Indian:] Yeah.

[Suttree:] No. I guess not.

(*Suttree* 239)

Suttree seems to automatically assume that the Indian's talisman must "signify" something. If this is because of who is wearing it, or what it consists of, is unclear, but the act of posing the question makes the talisman encroach upon the world as a signifying symbol, echoing Suttree's question to the reader. Indeed, the triangular relationship between the Indian, the talisman, and Suttree is a strange one. If we consider Brown's thing theory, and his insistence that we use objects to both produce meaning, and to "make or re-make ourselves" (*A Sense of Things* 4), this allows us to analyze how identity is both produced and signified in this passage. On the one hand, Suttree here forces the Indian to *be* Indian, and conform to a stereotypical Native American subject-position, through the talisman. If we consider the recognition that thing theory offers, that this "age of things" leads people to be possessed by their possessions (*A Sense of Things* 5), the Indian's identity and subjectivity is, in a manner, performed by his talisman. On the other hand, the talisman itself interpellates, or hails, Michael into the role of the Indian, as he consents to this Indian subjectivity. This is further reinforced by McCarthy's narrator's insistence on constantly referring to him as the Indian, rather than Michael – his real name which is only mentioned the one time. Indeed, the narrator-self continuously hails Michael as Indian, echoing the interpellation that the talisman insists on.

Secondly, the Indian's hesitating answer to Suttree's question about signification makes it difficult to know whether the talisman is really intended for luck, as his first reply is that he does not know what it is for. Rather, his second answer might just be intended to fulfill Suttree's, and others', expectations on what the meaning of such a talisman could be. They imbue the object with meaning, according to their framework of understanding. This fulfilling

of set expectations is a further result of interpellation: the system surrounding both Suttree and Michael have imprinted in them this relationship between object talismans and subject Indians. Indeed, how Michael hesitates seems to be him tossing of his own volition, undermining his own autonomy, and thus highlighting the systemic constraints of his perceived autonomy. This is reinforced by both the Indian and Suttree framing the artefact as lucky: they both imbue and prescribe the object with this meaning. However, if we consider that luck is intrinsically like chance – a suspension of the logical cause and effect relationship – it is subsequently a meaning that also fundamentally rejects meaning. Bill Brown asserts that when things catch your close attention, they offer “occasions of contingency – the chance interruption – that disclose a physicality of things” (“Thing Theory” 4). Specifically, the talisman offers a negotiation of where ultimately meaning resides, or even whether there is any meaning to be located.

In associating with actants, they threaten to independently arbitrate culture and identities. Relinquishing his autonomic subjectivity, Michael simultaneously becomes subject to the talisman he wears, and furthermore, becomes subject to – while reifying - static notions of indigenous culture, thus demonstrating the cultural, social, and ideological conditioning power of actants. Bill Brown, relatedly, discusses Toni Morrison’s *The Bluest Eye*, specifically Claudia and her relationship with the blonde blue-eyed Shirley Temple doll she receives as a gift, and then tears apart, in order to find where those beauty ideals that she can never achieve really resides. The doll is loaded with a multitude of ideological signification and meanings, and, according to Brown, it communicates that it is

the cultural psychology that makes part-objects – yellow hair, blue eyes – sacred to a culture. She doesn’t find the thing, or the idea in the thing, because it is everywhere and nowhere. If the idea had been there she could have junked the toy, gotten on, and lived her childhood outside its power. (*A Sense of Things* 7)

In other words, trying to find the idea of the thing within the thing, by tearing the doll apart, fails because the idea exists both in the thing and resides in the collective ideological unconscious. Similarly, the talisman that the Indian ornaments himself with mediates a cultural subjectivity that contributes to him being called “Tonto or Wahoo or Chief” (225). While his subjectivity does not exclusively reside within his possessions, the objects mediate his identity within the collective space that he inhabits.

While the talisman figures as an object that makes one subject to its cultural connotations, its function as a charm subsequently ascribes some agency to it. Specifically, the talisman first manages to seize Suttree's attention. In "Thing Theory", Bill Brown references Maurice Merleau-Ponty, by highlighting that we are "caught up in things", and that our "body is a thing among things" (Merleau-Ponty qtd. in "Thing Theory" 4). On this note, he continues to explain how things have the power to draw your attention to them, and that their presence exerts power over you through events of both intended and unintended interaction. The Indian's talisman here exerts that power to interrupt and hijack not only Suttree's attention, but the reader's attention as well. The talisman then, if we consider it one of Latour's actants, exercises control over Michael the Indian, and forces him – by way of Suttree's question – to justify its presence and its meaning. In attributing his luck to it, and thereby attributing his feat of being able to catch the biggest catfish ever seen in Knoxville to a talisman made of "doll's eyes", this seems to be a testament to how we willingly ascribe agency to the things surrounding us, and to the rather unseen but forceful power of things.

While McCarthy manages to establish objects as effective, assertive, and meaningful, especially when the reader is set up to imbue objects with meaning, he also challenges this perspective. After hearing that Suttree does not have a talisman, the Indian leaves for a minute, and comes back with "a small lozenge of yellow bone" which he hands to Suttree. Having "a hole bored in one end", the artefact seems partly man-made, and Suttree immediately searches for significance in it, "turn[ing] it in his hand to feel if there were not some carving on it but there wasn't. A few hairline cracks. A tooth? He rubbed its polished surface" (239). The artefact is polished, indicating the work of an external force, maintaining the ambiguity that it could be either intentionally made, or the result of natural forces smoothing the piece of bone. Equally ambiguous, the Suttree-narrator questions whether it is in fact a tooth, but allows the question to hang, unanswered and unresolved. Seemingly hoping that it should be a unique, carved artefact, perhaps an ancestral indigenous piece, given to him in earnest, a piece imbued with something akin to luck, Suttree asks the Indian:

What is it?

The Indian shrugged.

[Suttree:] Where did you get it?

[The Indian:] I found it.

[Suttree:] Do I have to wear it or can I just carry it in my pocket.

[The Indian:] You can carry it if you want to.

[Suttree:] Okay.

[The Indian:] Dont forget about it.

[Suttree:] No. He held it up.

[The Indian:] You cant just put it away and forget about it. (239)

What is most notable in this passage is the Indian's insistence, twice, that Suttree must not forget about the artefact. If the talisman is, as I have argued, possibly void of real meaning, this implies that Suttree is asked to remember something that was never fixed. If the artifact resists meaning, and if the act of remembrance is to evoke some significant original meaning, what does the Indian want him to remember? Michael's command extends to the reader, where we are asked to remember the artefact for hundreds of pages, like we are asked to remember Suttree for hundreds of pages. This also mirrors the ambiguous bone divination scene with Mother She, Suttree, and Ab Jones, discussed in chapter two, where the crone's reading lingers with the reader and continuously asserts its presence. We are asked to remember something, but the reader is in the position where that something is void of any real content. The artefact is ultimately lost in the text, only for it to be very briefly introduced as one of many things Suttree "divest[s] himself of": specifically, "the little cloaked godlet and his other amulets in a place where they would not be found in his lifetime" (468). The talisman is held up to be remembered, invested with both meaning and the question of meaning. However, after being found and given, it is not used. It is forgotten, just as it has been forgotten in the time preceding Suttree's acceptance of the talisman. This leads us to question whether the artefact is treated as a sacred talisman, or if it is simply considered waste. Until its finding, the piece has been left behind, removed from human knowledge. Where the artefact is placed on this hierarchical ladder might reflect McCarthy's secularized world, or rather, the tension between his spiritual and secular world. Religious and spiritual rituals and artefacts abound, but they are treated with apprehension: the talisman's function is limited, its role profane and material rather than cultic and magical.

Disengaging with Actants

The artifact's purpose and meaning ultimately seems to lie entirely in the act of having to leave it behind, and disengage with the talisman. This mirrors Suttree's existentialist narrative, and that he must ultimately find a meaningful existence void of material things: After Suttree's near-death (or symbolic death and subsequent resurrection), Suttree must

discard his materiality. The talismans, both the one he received from the Indian (239), and the one he found in the riverbed (327), become something Suttree must rid himself of before moving on, along with all his other belongings, having instead “taken for talisman the simple human heart within him” (468). In this act, Suttree performs what Bill Brown refers to as “Thoreau’s conviction that Americans should expropriate themselves of their possessions” (*A Sense of Things* 14). Suttree is thus, in the end, on the one hand fulfilling Thoreau’s way of living authentically and removed from possessions that tie you down and distract you. On the other hand, the fact that he has kept these two talismans, reveal that they have until now had value to Suttree: He has, in the end, *not* forgotten about the artefact he received from the Indian, even if McCarthy’s narrator has until now ignored its existence. The act of rediscovering the talisman, to the reader, becomes conflated with Suttree’s rediscovery of “the simple human heart within him”, indicating a causal relationship: In order for him to live according to his full human potential, he must discard any other talisman.

As he leaves Knoxville, with “the departing steps of the fisherman” (469), the novel with its re-insertion of Suttree into the subject of fisherman threatens to come full-circle, ending as it began. However, now Suttree “fe[els] everything fall away from him. Until there was nothing left of him to shed. It was all gone. No trail, no track” (468). That leaving behind his amulets equates to there being “nothing left of him to shed” suggests indiscriminate boundaries between his belongings, his valuables, and himself. The amulets contribute to the construct that is Suttree, and to cleanse himself in order to move on, he must leave physical things behind. In doing so, Suttree is seeking the thingless existence, like Thoreau, a life free of hailing things and forceful actants. This pursuit resonates with Suttree’s pre-epiphany hallucinogenic exchange with a stranger he encounters:

[Turtlemonger:] Harkee stranger, cried the man. A turtle for your soup.

[Suttree:] Stranger let me pass for I am weary.

[Turtlemonger:] Fifty cents and your choice of the best, ye’ll not buy cheaper.

[Suttree:] Outbound I am, beyond all wares.

[Turtlemonger:] It’s hard else could bring you here.

[Suttree:] This is no path of my choosing.

[Turtlemonger:] Nor mine.

...

[Turtlemonger:] These be special turkles. Dont pass on without you've give em your consideration.

To this the traveler did consent. The vendor's face grew crafty. The wet sack collapsing aclatter on the ground. He turns back the mouth.

[Suttree:] Those are not turtles. Oh God they're not turtles.

(*Suttree* 455)

The mention of turtle soup, here, suggests an immediate reference to Suttree's relationship with Michael the Indian, and their talisman-centric existentialist discussion. Suttree, "outbound [...] beyond all wares" is incapable of further burdening himself with material objects, even with sustenance, and refuses the turtles. The turtlemonger counters, enigmatically, that there is no other reason for Suttree to be there, in that space, except for "wares", or the oppressing thingness, we might consider. Suttree's reply that he has not chosen his path, and the turtlemonger's surprising agreeance, that neither has he, is telling. Suttree, at this point, still does not recognize his own agential will in making his own path. They are both prey to forces outside their control that chooses their path for them. In this passage, the sheer material world and commodity landscape haunts Suttree even in his illness- and drug induced dreams, and forces him to confront them, and to make choices. Suttree's consent to inspect the bag of turtles, even after having first refused to, captures his inability to act in defiance of the material objects that waylay him. The result is a horrific one, and its effect is exacerbated by the sheer ambiguity McCarthy proposes to the reader: If they are not turtles, or even "turkles", what are they? Lacking an answer to this, we only know what they are not, and are thus forced to insert our own personal speculation. The inexplicable meaning of the object that confronts Suttree is one that is invoked in McCarthy's prologue: "The city beset by a thing unknown, and will it come from forest or sea? The murengers have walled the pale, the gates are shut, but lo the thing's inside and can you guess his shape?" (4). Again, we encounter the ambiguous thing which, in some sense, fails to signify, like the talismans of Suttree and the Indian, but their ability to negotiate the meaningless is continuously called attention to. This can be read as a crossing of the destabilizing object into the subject's perceived autonomy, upsetting the discrete delineations in the subject-object relationship.

While his hallucinations mediate the troublesome boundaries between actants and his own subjectivity, Suttree's flight from Knoxville is preceded by an eradication of materiality. Contributing to this discarding of material existence is first reinforced by the text's insistence in highlighting his decreasing corporeal presence. Trippin Through The Dew encounters

Suttree while he is about to leave, and tells him: “Sweetie you have just fell off to skin and bones” (468). Although this is a real result of Suttree’s bout with typhoid fever, it nonetheless expounds on the text’s suggestion that materiality to Suttree is an obstacle, and a threat to his autonomous flâneur subjectivity. Similarly, Suttree breaks the seemingly deterministic cycle of his occupation. Where he took over the fishing lines after some other unnamed person, the one that seems poised to take Suttree’s place when he leaves is found dead in the houseboat. After recovering from his illness, Suttree returns to his riverside dwelling,

door ajar and someone sleeping in his bed. He entered in a fog of putrefaction. A hot and steady reek under the quaking tin. So warm a forenoon. He screened his nostrils with his sleeve.

Suttree nudged the sleeper with his toe but the sleeper slept.

(Suttree 465)

In this passage, after having encountered a multitude of doppelgangers in the form of “Antisuttree” (28), “othersuttree” (287), and haunting mirror images, we encounter the death of Suttree’s double, illustrating that Suttree’s subject position is not perpetuated. After having attempted to rouse the man he finds in his own bed, Suttree leaves to sit and draw fresh air, before returning to the houseboat, and confronting Knoxville’s unrelenting naturalistic materiality: one where the rotting corpse is awash with maggots and flies. Leaving the dead man in his houseboat twice, he returns to his shelter one last time, only to discover an ambulance at the place, along with a crowd.

Who sick? one said.

There was a man dead in there, the driver said.

They looked at each other. How long he been dead?

A couple of weeks.

Shoo, one said, wrinkling his wide nose. That’s what that’s been.

You dont know who it was do you?

No suh.

Dont know who lived here?

No suh. (469)

...

The boys watched [the ambulance] go. Shit, one said. Old Suttree aint dead.

(*Suttree* 470).

The rotting corpse found in his houseboat, his recurring double, suggests a divestment of his material body that surpasses Trippin Through The Dew's observation that Suttree is reduced to skin and bones. This is reinforced by the final scene in the novel: after having been picked up by a passing car, the reader is told that "an enormous lank hound [...] like a hound from the depths [...] was sniffing at the spot where Suttree had stood" (471). While Suttree's amulets are hidden away not to be found, the spot where he stood is now empty, and signals his final step in shedding his materiality. Despite the narrator's insistence that he left "no trail, no track" (468), the reader is left with his resonance, like the presence of the dog illustrates. The physical space of the spot is empty, and Suttree is gone, yet parts of him is still there to be found in Knoxville, where "the city lay smoking, the sad purlieus of the dead immured with the bones of friends and forebears", and where the expressway ramp under construction "curved out into empty air and hung truncate with iron rods bristling among the vectors of nowhere" (471). This, ultimately, is an attempt of Suttree's to transcend his own materiality, then, and the shedding of the things that bind and anchor him to that materiality must be meticulously achieved in this attempt to leave it all behind. However, while it ostensibly seems that Suttree succeeds in doing this, his escape is arguably unresolved; as Mother She tells Suttree after their second séance, "It don't make no difference where you go" (425).

Misuse and Rugged Consumerism

Object use and misuse can be considered as ideological, in that re-purposing can act in defiance of sanctioned ideological use systems. In "'Anything Can Be an Instrument': Misuse Value and Rugged Consumerism in Cormac McCarthy's *No Country for Old Men*", Raymond Malewitz argues that the prevalent repurposing of objects in McCarthy's works is a critique against the late-capitalist system. Specifically, the act of removing an object from its original or intended context through "misuse" rather than use, is an act of establishing one's dominant will over both that one object and over modern consumerism. This is interesting because "misuse", or creative use, becomes a successful act of resisting conforming consumerism. It rediscovers the authenticity and artisanship, as Walter Benjamin discusses, where craft has been undermined by mass-production and reproduction. Thus, repurposing is an act of

rebellion and authentic creativity that pushes against the dominance of capitalist and consumer ideology.

The existence and perception of a thing changes with how one uses or misuses that object. In his analysis of David Holloway, Malewicz argues “misuse” conflicts with “use value” (722). Specifically, Malewicz engages with Holloway’s treatise of David Brown’s shotgun from *Blood Meridian*. The shotgun and its unique craftsmanship is elaborately described; “English made”, gold inscriptions, “platinum bands”, “the locks and the hammers were chased with scrollwork”, “partridges engraved”, and ultimately “rare and beautiful and lethal” (*BM* 265-66). Brown, however, hands this ornate shotgun to a farrier, and asks him to saw it down. Where the gun by this modification sees its use value increased, but its aesthetic properties diminished, Holloway claims that an altered, or reconfigured, object loses its original artisanal value, and is thus removed from its perception as a unique artifact (Holloway 104). According to Malewicz, however, this, firstly, privileges aesthetic exchange value over practical use value. Secondly, it fails to address established Benjaminian notions of aura and authenticity, where an object’s value is further determined by its “transformative history” (Malewicz 724). This suggests that an object’s value is negotiated by socio-cultural and historical factors, including past use and “misuse”. If aura is dynamic, then the conservation of pristine condition in itself does not necessarily lend value to an object. The aura of an object, then, resides somewhere within its uniqueness, and not its aesthetic condition.

Malewicz addresses this discussion by looking at Bill Brown’s discussion of “misuse value”, and subsequently claims that:

“the daily habits that give form and sense to our perception operate as cognitive buffers that allow us to see things only as socially constructed objects. Turning [a] picture bottom up estranges it from its socially constructed value and thus releases the picture’s ephemeral “thinghood” from its standard conceptual frame – its “objecthood” (725).

Thus, removing an object from its normal (and socially constructed) context forces a re-framing of that object. In other words, while “objecthood” corresponds with an object’s normal usage, “thinghood” reflects the entire potentiality for how an object can be used as a tool independent of its original intended use, becoming a “misused” instrument of human will. Malewicz applies this misuse to McCarthy’s *No Country for Old Men*, highlighting how both main characters (Llewelyn Moss and Anton Chigurh) continuously progress and drive the

narrative by repurposing objects; a pneumatic captive bolt pistol becomes both an untraceable murder weapon and skeleton key, while tent poles, clothes hanger, and venetian blind-cords serves as Moss's long-handled hook used to recover a bag of money from a vent duct.

Consequently, it is this "thinghood", the liberation of objects from their intended use, that facilitates evasion from law-enforcement on the one hand, and Moss's evasion of Chigurh on the other. To Malewitz, McCarthy's act of blurring prescribed use and creative use serves to "renaturalize the artificial world of commodities and remake the new west into the Wild West" (727). Where the original frontier was a space that invited or demanded that one made do with what one had to hand, and thus propagated inventive instruments that impelled survival, the new modern west presents a commodity landscape where no such requirements for creativity exist. Consequently, *No Country for Old Men* changes this commodity landscape by reintroducing – renaturalizing – highly efficient and lethal object misuse. This has several implications. First, as a mere geographical or topological effect, as objects and object use serve to alter or reconstruct the (mythopoetic) space of the Wild West. And secondly, that effectively, industrial capitalism is resisted by establishing a new familiarized relationship to objects by re-crafting and repurposing mass-produced products. It is this valuing of creative anarchic chaos over capitalist product templates, specifically the potential to practice inventive labor and manufacturing skills outside the industrial structure, that Malewitz terms "a new, rugged consumerism" (727). In a modern space that does not facilitate this rugged consumerism, where we are overwhelmed by mass-produced objects, the exact act of propagating this misuse ideology forms an individual resistance to a dominant system.

Where Malewitz argues that object misuse is forcing one's own will on objects, simultaneously disregarding prescribed use, the Indian in *Suttree* has re-purposed beads or doll's eyes into what is seemingly a talisman – thus exercising his dominant will over the objects. However, there is a potential paradox here. By misusing an object, revealing its thinghood, creating a talisman, the Indian – and Suttree by proxy – relinquish their own will and consequently their own ability to act in the world. This inability is recognized by their constant hesitations and continuous replies of "I dont know". In fashioning this talisman as an instrument that functions as a container for fate, the Indian has exercised his dominant will over an object, *and* simultaneously diminished his own agency, by ascribing determinist potential to this artifact.

Object misuse can potentially change the actor, the object, and the space in which this misuse occurs. Gene Harrogate provides a textual space that interrogates the effects of misuse

in *Suttree*. Harrogate, in his endeavors, interacts with a multitude of objects that ultimately serve as instruments to his will, sometimes successfully, but quite often humorously unsuccessfully. This grants a valuable perspective on studying the interrelationship between actors and objects, and how they influence each other: specifically in how use and misuse serves to define a human. Harrogate becomes known to the reader as “the moonlight melonmounter” (*Suttree* 48) – after his sexual misuse of a farmer’s melon patch: “Somebody has been fuckin my watermelons. [...]. He’s damn near screwed the whole patch” (33). For this melon patch abuse he is shot at, and sent to the workhouse, where he meets Suttree. Harrogate continuously repurposes and misuses objects in his inventive, often comical, endeavors to achieve status and wealth, and to conduct a journey between social classes. By aligning Harrogate with comic relief, and thus providing what Georg Guillemin calls “a counter-discourse to the existential gloom of the novel’s bulk” (51), Harrogate provides a sanctioned carnivalesque space. This space allows for misuse while potentially restricting the potential for any real systemic change that would follow in that same space.

The space in which Harrogate operates is one where he continuously confronts ISAs and RSAs. Dealing with these institutions seems to be beyond what his upbringing has equipped him with. A country boy, often blatantly referred to as the “country mouse”, who has grown up separated from urban and modern facilities, Harrogate has never seen a shower before and does not know how it works. He is, in other words, arguably little influenced by the increasingly modern consumer society of 1950s Tennessee. Looking at Suttree as a role model, he attempts to spatially situate himself near Suttree and near the Tennessee River, in McAnally Flats. Struggling to fit in, Harrogate often achieves nothing but a frustrating aporia in his dealings and communication with the society of the marginalized, and especially so when trying to deal with social and commercial institutions. Case in point, he is almost put in a mental institution after having attempted to profit on a rabies outbreak among bats in Knoxville. Specifically, he ingeniously devices a way to poison bats with strychnine, and takes a sack full of dead bats with him to the hospital to claim his reward, each bat supposedly “worth a dollar” (207). He ends up temporarily committed, however, “in a little white room”, is given a box of ice cream (217), and eventually leaves the hospital with a mere total of \$1.25, on the condition that he tells the doctor how he managed to kill a sackful of bats. The ISAs and RSAs themselves seem confounded by Harrogate, and struggle to properly address his transgressions.

Among these ISAs, Harrogate is unable to properly initiate himself properly into the marginalized community itself. Similar to the bat extermination passage, most of his schemes

and ventures fail miserably for the reader to laugh at. For instance, he assembles an instrument, consisting of a stick and chewing gum, to steal from a blind beggar (103). Surrounded by grotesques, he ends up with a legless beggar biting him, and an old lady beating him with a meal scoop; “Bong bong bong went the mealscoop on his bony head” (103). Demonstrably, the space Harrogate occupies is one where he fails to graft himself onto both dominant and marginalized institutions. However, in some of these endeavors, he creatively challenges the traditional sanctioned use, use value, and an object’s capacity as a signifying symbol. In his melon misuse, for example, Harrogate – and McCarthy – allows the melon to mean anew. While one can argue that this unsanctioned misuse occurs inherently as part of a carnivalesque space (the textual space that Harrogate constructs), I would offer that it is Harrogate’s misuse that engenders the space as carnivalesque. In this order, liberating the melon from its objecthood, albeit via sexual misuse, serves to change the space of the novel. It is in this generation of the sanctioned carnivalesque space that objects and symbols are torn from their ubiquitous contexts and meanings, and where foodstuff become an object of sexual desire.

The value of use and misuse ultimately seem to be contingent on subjectivity, and thus calls to attention the dynamic relationship between things as actants, the subject that interacts with it, and the interaction itself. Successfully, Harrogate builds a boat out of two Ford car hoods welded together. The Junkman whom he asks for the second hood questions Harrogate’s sanity. A watcher from the shore calls out to Harrogate and asks him “what is that?”, to which Harrogate simply replies “Boat” (210). Suttree, like the watcher, is unable to comprehend quite what he is looking at when he sees the boat:

Good God, said Suttree.
 What do you think of it?
 I think you’re fucking crazy.
 You want to go for a ride?
 No.

(*Suttree* 211)

The vessel, functionally a boat, is defamiliarized such that, to Suttree and his friend Leonard, it is practically a non-boat: its being, despite its function, eludes categorization as a boat, where form is valued over function. When Leonard attempts to get Suttree’s help in dumping his father’s corpse, Suttree tells him:

Get Harrogate to help you. Loonies ought to stick together.

[Leonard:] He aint got a boat. Listen Sut . . .

[Suttree:] The hell he aint got a boat.

[Leonard:] You got to be shittin me Sut. I wouldnt set foot in that fuckin thing.

(*Suttree* 245)

Here, specifically, Suttree serves to legitimize the bizarre boatness of the boat, reversing his position that it is not a boat, and therefore nothing. While the discourse surrounding the boat has changed, the physical thing is still the same. Leonard still refuses to acknowledge it as a boat, and instead refers to it as “that fuckin thing”. In contrast to Harrogate, Suttree, at first, the Junkman, and Leonard, are unable to see beyond the sanctioned intended use of the car hoods and fully recognize the handcrafted one-of-a kind boat Harrogate has produced. Harrogate, nonetheless, in his doomed-to-fail flirtations with a girl, takes great pride in claiming that Suttree has used his boat: “He’s rid in it ... In this here boat. Suttree has” (315). Harrogate, here, ostensibly seems dependent on Suttree’s bourgeois recognition in order to value his creation, and to get others to value it as well. It is, however, principally Suttree’s *use* that grants it authenticity and value. Where Suttree continuously condemns Harrogate’s boat, he (and the narrator) becomes altogether neutral regarding Michael the Indian’s boat. While it is first introduced as “a skiff composed of actual driftwood, old boxes and stenciled crateslats and parts of furniture patched up with tin storesigns and rags of canvas and spattered over with daubs of tar”, described as “[a] crazyquilt boat” (220), it soon becomes referred to as “the skiff” (224), overlapping with the term commonly used for Suttree’s boat (225). The Indian’s boat resembles Harrogate’s, in that it has been “pieced back with tacked and flattened foodtins” (225). Certainly, both boats are haphazard constructions, yet Suttree and the narrator seem to judge them very differently, respective to their makers, or inventors. He treats Michael with great respect, and helps him recover his boat when it is stolen. This, perhaps, questions whether this certain kind of misuse is made authentic and auratic by the Indian’s cultural subjectivity, while Harrogate’s marginalized subjectivity does not allow for this authenticity and use value to be inscribed in his own.

While Harrogate, in his misuse exploits, continually seems to reinvent his subjectivity and authenticity, he is still bound, and hailed, by consumer objects. The manufactured car hoods, although repurposed, in their shape and construction constrain how Harrogate uses or misuses them. Nonetheless, they facilitate a vessel for Harrogate which grants him the freedom of the river. This vessel is one of Harrogate’s many ways to introduce objects and

instruments that are manipulated and mutilated into existence, that if not entirely removed from consumerism, is at the very least distanced from it. While Harrogate seems to be the locus for misuse in the novel, we find an interesting dynamic, as Harrogate autonomously misuses, but is also subjected to misuse by the text. Upon close reading, the text suggests that the system itself facilitates misuse upon Harrogate. When Suttree first meets Harrogate again, after their prison stint together, Harrogate has been dressed by the prison guards in a “shirt fashioned from an enormous pair of striped drawers”, where “his neck stuck through the ripped seam of the crotch, his arms hanging from the capacious legholes like sticks” (114). The RSA itself re-purposes, and arguably misuses clothing, in order to ridicule Harrogate. The trousers, a commodity and useful object, becomes an instrument used to subject Harrogate to the RSA’s authority by exerting a continued demonstration of power over him, even after he is released from prison. By extension, the piece of clothing, subverted, signifies as a repressive tool that identifies unsanctioned subjectivities, Harrogate’s subjectivity in this specific instance, and maintains the dominant power structure, where Harrogate is left as a marginalized denizen of McAnally Flats.

Whether his misuse-related crimes, usually get rich-schemes, are ultimately harmful to society is debatable; yet, the consequences that he suffers depicts the ideological inequality that functions in a class society such as Knoxville. Richard Marius questions whether Harrogate’s actions are: any different from an equally avid search for wealth among the rich of Knoxville with their soft accents and polite reserve whose schemes may be only shady rather than criminal, whose effects are perhaps much more generally harmful than anything Harrogate dreams up” (Marius 123). Arguably, it is the overarching system here that both motivates Harrogate’s propensity for creative misuse, and punishes him for acting on these inclinations. In contrast to Harrogate, Suttree himself seems to be navigating a world of sanctioned use value and exchange value. Occasionally, he expresses surprise – sometimes bordering on admiration – at Harrogate’s radical creativity, whether it is killing pigeons by electrocution or exterminating bats with strychnine. Overshadowing this, however, we find his recurring condemnation of Harrogate: “You’ve got no way of knowing how crazy you are” (260), and “Gene, you’re crazy” (263). Suttree thus gives voice to the system and community that Harrogate has crossed a threshold of the acceptable boundaries in society. Suttree, in this position, maintains his distance to Harrogate’s blatant object misuse. Of a higher social class, and despite his nomadic, flâneur role, he is ideologically conditioned to resist breaking those conventions that Harrogate consistently violates. Suttree ideologically defends consumerism, capitalism, and the dominant structures of society, and fails to

appropriate the marginalized subjectivity he seeks. Consistently, his separation from the subjectivity he longs for is demonstrated by his relationship to object use and misuse, and the respect he holds for these objects according to the ideology he navigates.

Malewicz's argument that the act of removing an object from its original or intended context through "misuse" rather than use, is an act of establishing one's dominant will over both that one object and over modern consumerism. However, Cormac McCarthy's *Suttree* negotiates this by situating misuse as that which Suttree becomes subject to. Specifically, his subject position is mediated by the misuse of others, demonstrated in one passage where he meets up with his familiar gang, the last time they are all gathered in Jones's shanty (Suttree 368-371). When he shows up, they have already re-purposed gravestones into tables. The markers have been torn up by the river in a flood, and have consequently ended up far removed from their original graveyard site, in a communal space that allows for re-purposing. It is Suttree's search for text inscriptions and meaning that highlights his different approach to the material world, in contrast to the 'real' marginalized. While Suttree seems incapable of or unwilling to read the carvings himself, he asks Blind Richard to do it for him, guiding him from gravestone to gravestone, almost like a game: "Thisn dont say who", Richard tells Suttree, whereby Suttree insists that "It must say something" (369). His statement reflects and demands a search for origins; the stone must, according to Suttree, convey both its meaning and its place of origin, and thus mirrors his talisman exchange with the Indian. The others present in the room, however, have recognized the gravestones removed from their objecthood, and have misused them as tables to keep their drinks on, considering it a celebration of the person's life rather than an act of sacrilege. There is, however, a gravestone that changes this. Richard places his hands on a table and suddenly "lif[ts] them off again as if it were hot" (370), saying "I aint reading no more" (371). Following this, Suttree asks Richard twice, "What is it?", highlighting his urgency to know, before "running his own hand under the table but he could not read the stone" (371). The misuse of the gravestone, its removal from its objecthood, leaves Suttree unable to read the meaning of the text inscribed in it. Richard reveals to Suttree that the name on the stone is William Callahan, their friend, whom Suttree did not know had died. Here, the gravestone itself, through misuse, becomes a literal message and bearer of knowledge, and a merging of the sacred religious and profane drinking and debauchery. The spaces that the stone has been reintegrated in has changed the meaning and use of the stone. This passage reinforces Suttree's separation and disconnect from the social world that he has attempted to insert himself into. His higher social class, together with

the continuous hailing of his friends situating him within that class, marks him as different and distinct from them.

Outside the carnivalesque space Harrogate creates, modern things and commodities often prove useless and worthless, and their use value is not redeemed by misuse. Rather, *Suttree* might be read as McCarthy's attempt to resist modernity altogether. In "The Eruption of the Sordid: Cormac McCarthy's Resistance to Modern Ideology", Ty Hawkins claims that the novel presents a world "threatened by modernization", and constitutes an "anti-institutional [...] full-throated critique of not just modernization, but the very Enlightenment itself" (445). In other words, Hawkins explains that the modernization of Knoxville presents no solutions, no resolution, and no answers. With his recurrent references to geological time, and his prologue conclusion that "[r]uder forms survive" (*Suttree* 5), McCarthy creates an aggressively modernizing world that is ultimately falling to pieces, always on the cusp of turning primeval once again. According to Hawkins, the "novel becomes a site of preservation" (446): a rudimentary fossil layer, if you will, that catalogues human experiences, suffering, debauchery, and solidarity. This becomes tangibly manifest in Wanda. Suttree's love interest on the river, during his summer of pearl-fishing, becomes literally buried by a landslide: turned into a mass of "sheared limbs and rags of meat among the slabs of rock" (362), and thus becomes levelled with the earth itself, fragmented and collapsed into yet another geological layer. Suttree's love towards Wanda, and the rare, pure happiness she has brought him, disintegrates in this levelling. However, if *Suttree* is an insistence on resisting modernity, the protagonist simultaneously serves to uphold and maintain the status quo ideology that propagates modernization in full, an observation justified by his consecutive condemnations of his marginalized community.

Chapter Conclusion

While I argued in chapter two, while discussing Suttree's role as a flâneur, that his catchphrase ("I've got to go") is a powerful vocal demonstration of his mobility and subsequent refusal to become subject to other actors and their definitions, the talisman passage, like the bone divination scene, suggests that this does not extend to Suttree's encounters with objects. Keenly attempting to resist being subjective to his family and society, Suttree is less attentive to objects and their actant power, which inevitably do constitute a threat to the maintenance of his ostensibly independent subjectivity and autonomy. Similarly, the talisman passage as a

focal point exposes how objects come to function as powerful identity markers. As seen with the Indian's talisman, it is an artifact that constructs the Indian's subject position, and simultaneously negotiates definitions of Native American culture and identity. At the same time, the text posits specific objects as paradoxically both meaningful and meaningless: the talismans, and the "turkle", for instance. Consequently, they together negotiate, bizarrely, what it means to mean, and how the act of remembering is tied to that of a meaningful and significant origin, that in *Suttree* subsequently fails to materialize.

The scene with the turtlemonger, the talisman passage, and the bone divination séance all demonstrate the overwhelming material object world that Suttree has to confront. At this point, it is difficult to distinguish whether he is in fact able to exert his will over that material existence, or if he is reduced to being a simple part of the material arrangement of the world. David Holloway argues that if Suttree is considered a thing among things, then his conclusive epiphany, "that there is one Suttree and one Suttree only" (461), "is an existential reaffirmation of the self as a powerful mediating influence within and upon the world of matter" (Holloway 140n14). This 'powerful mediating influence', however, seems to be overvalued. While Suttree, towards the end of the novel, ostensibly seems to have regained control and direction, this constrained autonomy only serves to facilitate one potential action: his subsequent escape from both Knoxville and the world of matter. By leaving all his material artifacts behind, Suttree admits a certain kind of defeat to the material world and existence that he is, and continues to be, subject to.

Suttree's object use seems to be quite strictly negotiated by his ideological subjectivity. In other words, his failed appropriation of the marginalized subjectivity he pursues suggests that rather than challenge the dominant ideology in society, he contributes to maintaining it. This line of thought can be extended to how he interacts with objects, and the constraints he experiences in any object misuse he encounters. Where Harrogate, for instance, through misuse continuously devices new instruments that helps him navigate the slums of Knoxville and his subject position, Suttree in contrast resists this misuse. If his failure to adopt misuse reflects his failed appropriation of subjectivity, Suttree's inability to misuse demonstrates not a resistance to dominant ideology, but his support of it, due to being subject to ISAs. Harrogate is ostensibly not subject to these ideological obstacles, but is confronted with RSAs that attempt to prevent his continuous misuse by force. However, the kind of misuse that the system enforces on Harrogate, by dressing him in a shirt that is effectively a pair of trousers, might serve to neutralize or invalidate the power that misuse can signify. Specifically, if misuse is a principal instrument in resisting systemic ideology (such as

consumerism), what happens when the enforcers of ideology – here, the RSA – appropriate and normalize the misuse dynamic?

Chapter 4. “I’m just puttin him in the river”: Violent Waste and Materiality in *Suttree*

This chapter will discuss how the variety of spaces in *Suttree* are fundamentally mediated through their inhabitant subjects and objects. Specifically, this chapter argues that where objects represent a micro-perspective of materiality, the spaces in the novel function as a material macro-perspective. Thus, where objects and actants are influential on an individual scale, spaces ridden with such objects exert pressure on a collective scale. McCarthy’s representations of spaces are dominated by a waste dynamic, which contributes to center entropy and decay as contrasting forces to progress and modernization, yet both margins in this dynamic suggests an inherent violence. Similarly, Knoxville is represented as an admixture of the pastoral and nostalgic, and a 1950s urban wasteland, forcefully described as both “[e]ncampment of the damned” and “interstitial wastes” (*Suttree* 3, 4). McCarthy’s levelling and merging of spaces, subjects, and objects causes these categories or labels to be continuously redefined. Specifically, the novel enticingly forefronts, especially through its important riverscape depictions, all that which we uncomfortably attempt to distance ourselves from – the marginalized in which we recognize undesirable aspects of our selves, chemical pollution, human waste, and death – and uses this to negotiate and interrogate any interconnections between the landscape and its subjects. This is performed by exposing the intrinsic violence in *Suttree*’s spaces which the denizens of Knoxville must suffer; Harrogate, among others, is literally nearly buried in waste, while the city’s inhabitants are depicted as part of the geology, exposing them to entropic violence. In discussing the dynamics of violence, I will draw useful parallels to *Blood Meridian* and *No Country for Old Men*. Equally, as the geography affects its inhabitants, the populace of the city changes and redefines the landscape; the inhabitants constitute a “carnival of shapes upreared on the river plain that has dried up the sap of the earth for miles about” (*Suttree* 4). Meanwhile, the river tentatively serves as both source of sustenance, and as dumping ground for all that is too socially illicit to remain unconcealed. These opposing material counter-forces negotiate anthropocentrism, and thus allows for a critical reflection on both ecological systems and humanity.

Spaces can exert such force because they have the capacity to mold our subjectivities, our understanding of ourselves, and our understanding of the world. In a more comprehensive understanding Klaus Benesch, in the introduction to his anthology *Space in America: Theory – History – Culture*, argues that:

we have to move away from the idea of world ‘out there’, a sense of space that is extrinsic and independent of the structure of our own thinking and perception. Because we live not only in but *through* [emphasis; mine] and with space. (Benesch 15)

In other words, we must resist reducing spatial materiality to an external outside; rather, we should affirm the interconnective effect between our perception of spaces, and the effect these spaces exert on our subjectivity and identity. In *Suttree*, we find that the voice of Cormac McCarthy’s wastelands and waste is distinctly audible. Jay Ellis, in *No Place for Home: Spatial Constraint and Character Flight in the Novels of Cormac McCarthy*, argues that a general rule to understand McCarthy’s works, and being able to thoroughly comprehend his characters and their motivations, is best achieved through closely examining how these narratives depict spaces (Ellis 5). The spaces represented in *Suttree* give voice to the dynamics of subject-object relationships and conflicting ideological structures. Steven Frye, in *Understanding Cormac McCarthy*, equally highlights that reading the city of Knoxville is of major importance, as it “emerges as a subject of immense preoccupation, as the essential reality that defines the protagonist, conditions in part his identity, and circumscribes his range of choices both ethical and otherwise” (55). Frye explains, then, that in *Suttree* the city functions as both a vibrant setting and a crucial character, and thus forms the structure or framework in which Cornelius Suttree acts.

Throughout the novel *Suttree* is in a subjective bind, where his mobility and direction is continuously negotiated by ideology, geography, and the abundant object world. He has fled *to* Knoxville, moves incessantly through its urban spaces, through the pastoral countryside, through hallucinogenic dreamscapes (or arguably, hellscapes), and ends the novel fleeing *from* Knoxville. The major argument that Ellis proposes centers around McCarthy’s recurring tendency to focus on escape, or flight, in his novels and narratives. Rather than settling in, the protagonist must always move on. In fact, Ellis highlights this by summarizing a collection of McCarthy’s various endings: *Suttree* leaves west, heading out on the open road; Sheriff Bell, in *No Country for Old Men*, leaves his West Texas community; and John Grady Cole, in *All the Pretty Horses*, rides into the sunset, to give a few examples (Ellis 32-33). When, or if, they survive, they are called to always travel on. The space of the novel ultimately becomes unsustainable to the reader and uninhabitable for the protagonist.

Modernist or Realist Urban Spaces

Suttree has perhaps most often been read as a Late Modernist text. We might, for instance, compare it to Carl Sandburg's Modernist poem "Chicago" (1914), where we see a city thoroughly personified: "Hog Butcher for the World", "Stormy, husky, brawling", "shovelling, wrecking, planning, building, breaking, rebuilding", and "laughing as a young man laughs" (3). The dynamic language and prose of Sandburg, dense with verbs and adjectives, constructs a Chicago that is alive and agential. It is a collective construct, a composition of all the vibrant human energy contained within it, that the city also facilitates: it presents itself as a reinforcing feedback loop of centrifugal and centripetal forces. In stark contrast to this extraordinary vigor, McCarthy's Knoxville is marked by its entropy, distance, and inertia, simultaneously conflicting with its madness and dynamic albeit directionless capacity: its inhabitants struggle in environs that resist both their social and geographical mobility, while their capacity for production is reduced to making ultimately useless commodities from waste material. McCarthy's Knoxville is one of "hobo jungles" (303-304), "abandoned lots" (3), "grim perimeters" (3), "pavings rent with ruin", "the slow cataclysm of neglect" (3), and "blownout autos sulk on pedestals of cinderblock" dominate the cityscape (3). Immediately, the reader is confronted with ruins of what has once been, where the city's inhabitants sprawl in a location that is continuously threatening to fall apart.

The city presented to the reader is plagued by its disintegrated boundaries between the landscape, its inhabitants, its overarching ideological structures, the old and the new (or the pre-modernized and modernized), and most of all its constant threat of waste-becoming: that anyone and anything can be discarded. Mike Gibson, in his investigation to find the "real" Knoxville and "authentic" characters from the novel, calls McCarthy's depiction of 1950's Knoxville "almost uncanny" (31). While his intention is to highlight the supposed explicit similarities between the real Knoxville and *Suttree*'s Knoxville, and thus present the case for a realist *Suttree*, Gibson's employment of the word 'uncanny' betrays what the reader really encounters: a strange and eerie place temporally located in a shift that compiles modernization, mass-production, burgeoning consumerism, urban sprawl and squalor, inadequate institutions, oppressive power dynamics, and strained familiar relations. McCarthy's Knoxville is *like* a city, but one mired in different types of waste. If we consider Rachele Dini and her argument that waste is matter out of time, but potentially also matter out of place (Dini 5), this leads to a possible categorization of the marginalized denizens as waste. They are categorically directed by ISAs and RSAs, driven from public spaces, controlled by

vagrancy laws, and excluded by the market ideology as they have nothing of worth to sell: Harrogate is ultimately stopped from cashing in on his bat extermination scheme, the Ragman's rags are seemingly never sold, and the Junkman's junkyard seems to do little other than aggregate more junk. Additionally, Reese's treasured pearls, which Suttree helps acquiring during a warm summer, prove worthless: the jeweler presented with the pearls repeatedly utters "I cant use it" (333), revealing that "you might have a shoebox full and I wouldnt give a dime for them" (334). The commodities and possessions that the marginalized ultimately serve to mirror the worthlessness that they themselves are burdened with by both the society and the landscape that they must maneuver.

The dense setting of the novel, like a vortex, draws extraordinary attention to itself, which inevitably affects the representation of any subject matter mired in its environs. Attempting to describe the Market Square, the "other earthy and squalid downtown settings", and the characters in *Suttree*, all as a unified subject, Gibson calls it "a kaleidoscopic and madly vibrant spectacle" (31). Unintentionally, perhaps, Gibson collapses spaces and subjects into a possible reductionist "spectacle" as a major object for the reader to be entertained by, rather than absorbing the marginalization and human suffering that materializes and endures in *Suttree*'s Knoxville.

Violent Landscapes

The human suffering encountered in the novel, meanwhile, is exacerbated by natural and social violence. Vince Brewton, in "The Changing Landscape of Violence in Cormac McCarthy's Early Novels and the Border Trilogy", argues that particularly McCarthy's employment of sparse borderlands and stark conflicts allows for exploration of narrative storytelling itself, rather than saying something about one specific story. Particularly, Brewton highlights how storytelling is often negotiated within the dynamic passing of the old world and the emergence of 'new worlds' (141). Where *Blood Meridian* sees a reinvention of and remythologizing of the West, *Suttree* depicts the passing of a world order within very local boundaries, seemingly leaving as alternative a blank canvas that threatens to be as blank as the nihilistic barrenness of *Blood Meridian*. Indeed, although *Suttree* was published six years before *Blood Meridian*, spatially it intervenes as an interloper between the worlds of *Blood Meridian*, *No Country for Old Men*, and *The Road*. Where *Suttree* presents a superabundant object space anchored to real space and time that eventually ends with a specific *lack of*

things, both *Blood Meridian* and *The Road* presents spaces to the reader explicitly unmoored from specific chronological and spatial details. Discussing the aesthetics of violence in McCarthy, a prevalent theme in McCarthy criticism, Brewton argues that it is an integral part of his landscapes. Brewton's criticism, however, tends to focus mainly on the hyperviolence of *Blood Meridian*, particularly, and the extreme most often incomprehensible violence found in *Outer Dark*, *Child of God*, and *The Road*, where psychopaths and necrophiliacs take center stage, and where cannibals ceaselessly roam.

While the novel contains numerous brawls, including bar fights, pig wrestling, and police violence, the majority of the violence found in *Suttree* I argue is systemic and concealed. Specifically, it is a type of normalized violence, one that does not properly register, exactly because we assume it is a normal part of the existing conditions. For this, we might consider Slavoj Žižek's definition of violence:

[S]ubjective violence is experienced as such against the background of a non-violent zero level. It is seen as a perturbation of the "normal" peaceful state of things. However, objective violence is precisely the violence inherent to this "normal" state of things. Objective violence is invisible since it sustains the very zero level standard against which we perceive something as subjectively violent. Systemic violence is thus something like the notorious "dark matter" of physics, the counterpart of all-too-visible subjective violence. (*Violence 2*)

Žižek's definition helps us navigate the types of violence found in *Suttree*, where the background or zero-level is expressed and sustained through a debilitating marginalization of the dispossessed. Vagrancy laws are accepted as normal. And rather than the police protecting its populace, they incarcerate them for minor misdemeanors; even Suttree, in his privileged subject position, is arrested while on his way home the morning after a night out (83-84). The beggars occupying Market Street and Vine Street constitute a static demonstration of this systematic violence, the "old negress" with her wasted leg, sitting "fixed in perpetuity, steadfast, a paradigm of black anathema impaled upon the floor of the city like a medieval felon" (245). The poor denizens of Knoxville are situated within the landscape as a congruent mass that exists intrinsic to the urban landscape, and in opposition an 'upright' community that is mostly invisible to the reader.

Staged Violence: Spaces as Perpetuators of Violence in Cormac McCarthy

If we consider, then, that McCarthy's landscapes are inherently violent, we should also examine how this dynamically affects McCarthy's characters and influence their actions. In "Cormac McCarthy's Topologies of Violence", Katja Rebmann argues that McCarthy's spaces and "non-spaces" are fundamentally unified with violence. According to Rebmann, it is the emptiness, the void, of McCarthy's settings which allow for and accommodate violence. Rebmann makes this clearer by employing Marc Augé's "Non-Places". According to Augé, any place "which cannot be defined as relational, or historical, or concerned with identity will be a non-place" (qtd. in Rebmann 107n2). In other words, these are places that lack any historical or identity markers. It is exactly in their sparseness that they at first resist readings and interpretations. Looking to McCarthy, Rebmann highlights that his settings, which are often deserts entirely without human or even animal presence, are traversed by lone travelers. There is, in fact, often a clear divide in McCarthy's narratives in what Rebmann calls "inhabited spaces and uninhabited non-spaces" (108). Rebmann uses McCarthy's hyperviolent *Blood Meridian* to support her claims, where the setting is one of the empty and featureless American West. This emptiness is inhabited by McCarthy's characters, who are free to act unrestrained by society, morality and town-life. Delving into Judge Holden and his philosophy, Rebmann claims that in Holden's view the land itself is an eternal battleground, one that even before life existed set the "stage for violence" (111). The landscape, then, dictates life and death, and by its very existence as a stage that constrains any possible and permissible agency perpetuates violence. The "non-space" landscape is a naturalistic one where all morality is reduced to human constructs, one removed from historical constructs of what it means to be civilized, where one arguably by free will and choices decide their own morality and actions.

The landscape does not only affect free will and morality; it also affects its inhabitant's abilities. Interestingly, Rebmann compares *Blood Meridian*'s Judge Holden and *No Country for Old Men*'s Anton Chigurh. She actually extends this comparison to claiming that Holden is figuratively revived as Anton Chigurh. Both characters, Rebmann claims, function as avatars of space. By this, she means that they both mirror the landscape to the extent that an avatar of space and space itself is not easily distinguishable. Chigurh, Rebmann suggests, is an updated postmodern reiteration of Judge Holden, who escapes categorization and definition, being simultaneously familiar and foreign, deterministic but inexplicable. His link to the landscape is in his ability to move through it uninhibited, while also being able to

disappear, seemingly “melt[ing] into the landscape” (112). While Rebmann claims Judge Holden is a twisted embodiment of Enlightenment ideals, Chigurh as the postmodern version perpetuates violence as paradoxically both deterministic and according to chance at the same time. Following this logic, as Rebmann does, leaves Chigurh as an instrument of fate. If you were to meet Chigurh, that means he was probably meant to kill you, as he explains in his encounter with Carla-Jean, wife of Llewellyn Moss: “Somewhere you made a choice. All Followed to this. The accounting is unscrupulous” (*NCFOM* 259). The coin toss, which Chigurh offers in his encounters throughout the novel, acts as a violent game of chance with only two possible outcomes: life or death. Chigurh, however, bears no fault in this course of action according to his own philosophy, as he is merely an instrument of fate. Rebmann claims that he is a product of the land itself, “not governed by societal law” (116). This juxtaposition of Chigurh with the landscape suggests that it is ultimately the land, McCarthy’s often untamed deserts and wild landscapes, which violently determines individual fates, whether it be life or death.

In contrast to the empty, timeless landscapes in *Blood Meridian* that seemingly seem to engender violence and determine autonomy, the reader in *Suttree* has to contend with a very specific place and time: Knoxville, Tennessee, in the 1950s. While Rebmann argues that it is the non-place that resists readings, *Suttree*’s environs of the paradoxically pastoral yet urban wasteland, dominated by a river that sediments and separates, as a rift, both the by-products of Knoxville’s consumerism and its inhabitants, creates a defamiliarizing and destabilizing effect that eludes simple analysis. This conflation of the spatial, social, and especially ideological, I discussed in chapter two, in regard to Elmore and Elmore’s ideological work on *No Country for Old Men*. Yet, it might prove valuable to consider it in tandem with Rebmann’s perspectives. If we consider that both the landscape *and* neoliberal ideology are actants that both determine and constrain traditional free will in *No Country for Old Men*, and we accept that *Suttree* also can be linked to the roots of neoliberalism, we could argue that the same results apply in this novel. However, where both *Blood Meridian* and *No Country for Old Men* feature powerful and violent actors (even if they are determined by external actants), this has notably different implications in *Suttree*. Where the two former novels largely center anthropocentrism by showing the potential for violence inherent in humans, the latter, in contrast, represents a textual world where its inhabitants are mired in its waste environs.

In *Suttree*, the waste landscape ostensibly serves to negotiate the naturalistic violent past and the systemic violent present. Specifically, the pre-historic and past landscape in some sense mires its inhabitants in a time that no longer is, and reduces their capacity to act. Rebmann's discussion on the landscape as inherently violent can be regarded according to its actors and its divergent representations. Where Rebmann highlights the West in *Blood Meridian* as a perpetual violent battlefield; one where amoral and immoral men led by, what one would normally call, psychopaths constitute a constant threat, the peril in *Suttree* is of a different nature: here evolution, survival, and extinction on a geological timescale is a recurring motif, especially connected to the Tennessee River, which continuously serves to reveal sediments of "striae fossil bones, limestone scarabs rucked in the floor of this once inland sea" (3), "rich alluvial harbored bones" (4), and "prints of trilobites, lime cameos of vanished bivalves and delicate seaferns" (82). This is not constrained only to the river itself, but the architecture that surrounds the river, where the viaducts, or "cathedral vaultings" have visible "fossil woodknots" (7). In a sense, the fossil record works across time and space: it unifies the past and the present, and it consolidates the natural with the man-made. McCarthy's Knoxville is heavy with these paleontological, geological, and archeological references, where the past is not buried, but continuously resurfaces, expressing the fundamental violence of time and entropy that McCarthy's characters are bound by.

While the prehistoric and fossilized creatures are, in the most common sense, long dead, McCarthy's prologue simultaneously concludes and foreshadows that "[r]uder forms survive" (*Suttree* 5). The river plain and the landscape that surrounds it becomes a space in which Suttree wanders like "a shape among the ruins, prodding dried artifacts like some dim paleontrope among the bones of fallen settlements where no soul's left to utter voice at what has passed" (*Suttree* 246). Suttree's Knoxville is predominantly both a pre-historic and historic place in time that simultaneously has failed to continue the "voice" of those that came before, while the fossil record continuously reveals what has passed. The way Suttree wanders, looking for meaning in artifacts from a time removed from his own, serves to reinforce his own position in a time of particular decay. McCarthy's descriptions recognize that entropy is constant, yet they highlight that in this place and time – in 1950s Knoxville – decay is suggestively and seductively exponential. This development proposes a finite end point, in the road and exit point Suttree probes for and ultimately finds, as he leaves. The road itself, linear in nature, has a start and an end point, yet the modernization that overwhelms Knoxville seems to reflectively propose what that end point is: "the white concrete of the expressway gleamed in the sun where the ramp curved out into empty air and hung truncate

with iron rods bristling among the vectors of nowhere” (*Suttree* 471). Considering this, *Suttree* symbolically suggests a clinical “gleam[ing]” modernity that is leading nowhere, and thus proposes itself as an anti-modernizing space, in constant peril of being buried in artifacts that may be too overwhelming to signify meaning. That *Suttree* exits west, specifically, towards what Benjamin S. Child calls “a region marked by mythological promises of freedom, and frontier unencumbered by modernity” (Child 14), indicates, to *Suttree*, the existence of a liberated space, untouched by modernity, and reconciled with its past. If, however, the freedom of the West is the one of *No Country for Old Men*’s West Texas, or *Blood Meridian*’s brutal desert wastes, *Suttree* mediates the borders between slow violence and inexplicable violence.

Actant Waste: Or, The Merging of Landscape and its Inhabitants

The merging of the landscape and its inhabitants is a ceaseless subject in the novel: both spaces and actors are depicted as interdependent, which together form a close relationship that is often exposed as achingly explicit. When the pastoral outskirts of Knoxville are reinvigorated by spring, after a freezing winter, *Suttree* is out rowing and observes the marked change “suddenly pasted over the waste he was a familiar of” (119). While this depicts his relationship to the Knoxville wasteland, the specific wording, that he was “a familiar of”, rather than the landscape he was “familiar with”, produces a more complex relationship. Specifically, it reveals a double meaning: he is not only a familiar wanderer of the wastes, but like a familiar, often thought of as a folkloric spiritual assistant, *Suttree* is thus explicitly portrayed as subject and subjugated to the wastes. The relationship between the rural and urban spaces, and its inhabitants, are interdependent; while *Suttree* and the other denizens of Knoxville are shaped by the landscape, and subject to them, so do the inhabitants principally change these spaces. The bridges, for instance, span the river and become “all betrolled now what with old ventriloquists and young melonfanciers” (144). Consequently, the existential boundaries between geography and beings are destabilized, and the threat of merging landscape, beings, and objects is continuous.

Spaces in the novel change, as they become the naturalistic locus for amalgamating and dissociating geography, objects, and subjects. In his third year on the river, in a particularly rainy spring, *Suttree* sits:

gazing out at the swollen river coming down from the gutted upcountry and sliding past with a slaverous mutter and seethe.

Bearing along garbage and rafted trash, bottles of suncured glass wherein corollas of mauve and gold lie exploded, orangepeels ambered with age. A dead sow pink and bloated and jars and crates and shapes of wood washed into rigid homologues of viscera and empty oilcans locked in eyes of dishing slime where the spectra wink guiltily.

One day a dead baby. Bloated, pulpy rotted eyes in a bulbous skull and little rags of flesh trailing in the water like tissuepaper.

...

In the fluted gullies where the river backed or eddied spoon-drift lay in a coffeecolored foam, a curd that draped the varied flotsam locked and turning there, the driftwood and bottles and floats and the white bellies of dead fish, all wheeling slowly in the river's suck and the river spooling past unpawled with a muted seething freighting seaward her silt and her chattel and her dead.

(*Suttree* 306)

The river depicted is one as a container for all that which has been willingly or unintentionally thrown away, and that which time itself has claimed: fruit peelings, bottles, and ruined objects that dreadfully take on the semblance of intestines. Following this, a dead pig and a dead rotting baby, creates a horrific congealed mass of visceral imagination: of “garbage”, “trash”, “dishing slime”, a bloated pig’s carcass, and a baby’s “little rags of flesh trailing in the water”, wherein it becomes an abominable organism in itself, albeit one that is in the midst of major decomposition. The naturalistic landscape the reader is presented with indeed constructs “a world beyond all fantasy, malevolent and tactile and dissociate” (*Suttree* 4). McCarthy ceaselessly highlights the waste aspects of the river: not only as objects drifting downstream, but human waste in the present as well, as Suttree shortly after observing the flotsam encounters a young girl “piss[ing] loudly into the river” (307), an encounter that arguably acts as a foreshadowing of the treatment of the Reese family as social waste. Their family, after all, has drifted downstream on their “derelict barge” (307), a “patchwork shack composed of old slats and tarpaper and tin snuff signs all mounted in wild haphazard” (306), together with all the abject detritus. The Reese family is bound to the river to the extent that

they are *of* the river, while living according to the mercy of it: they drift where the river takes them, and subside on whatever the river supplies.

The implications of this encroaching materiality, where humans are engulfed in waste objects, suggests a dehumanizing threat where humans themselves become part of the waste landscape. Curiously, Suttree explicitly juxtaposes himself with the naturalistic stuff of nightmares from the river, or “curiosa”, as he or the narrator calls it: “Oaring his way lightly through these curiosia he felt little more than yet another artefact leached out of the earth and washed along, draining down out of the city”, and where Suttree is “among the leavings like a mote in the floor of a beaker, come summer a bit of matter stunned and drying in the curing mud, the terra damnata of the city’s dead alchemy” (306). The invocation of Knoxville as a physical cursed, or damned, place where one becomes “stunned” into its geology, its “curing mud”, suggests a scenario where space conquers and occupies its inhabitants. This thingness, which engenders a space where geological artifacts and waste by-products amalgamate, surrounds and threatens Suttree and his miscreants, like an overwhelming force. D.S. Butterworth, in “Pearls as Swine: Recentering the Marginal in *Suttree*”, argues that while McCarthy on the surface situates the socially marginalized center-stage, he simultaneously casts them as part of a “geological arrangement” (133), and thus reduces them to just another “geological object” (136). Butterworth, like Bruno Latour and Bill Brown, contends that the traditional subject-object relationship, particularly in *Suttree*, must yield. In contrast to Latour and Brown, however, he claims that disordering that fundamental binary leads to the text betraying a stark dehumanizing view: one where the already marginalized must suffer the dehumanization imposed on them by the acknowledgement of brute materiality’s agency as actant. This dehumanization can arguably be perceived in McCarthy’s narrative structure. Butterworth highlights *Suttree*’s episodic structure as detrimental to the causal action and reaction pattern that the reader expects to find, and argues that the result of this constitutes an obstacle to character progression (Butterworth 133). The narrative structure itself lends credence to the non-linearity of McCarthy’s characters. I believe this missing sense of progression, due exactly to McCarthy’s choice of narrative representation, contributes to reinforcing the prevalent inertia that afflicts McCarthy’s dispossessed characters in *Suttree*.

This reduction of human actors to geological artifacts is extravagantly reinforced by and depicted in the last scene McCarthy leaves the reader with. Suttree, waiting to leave Knoxville, sits around and watches a group of workmen dig ditches, sees: “hands come up from below the rim of the pit in parched supplication” (470). The mere image of men in a “pit”, that both Suttree himself and the reader leaves with, gives credence to Butterworth’s

argument where humans are juxtaposed with geological objects. Butterworth, however, conflates Cornelius Suttree and the marginalized, making him part of that same group, despite his unique narrator-subjectivity, his bourgeois background, and his privileged university education. While they are left behind, inert, struggling, and begging “in ... supplication”, Suttree, by shedding his geological and archeological commitments, is ultimately transient and free from the “pit” of McAnally Flats.

However, Suttree’s reconciliation with the earth, and in turn geology, during the Gatlinburg episode, presents a competing motif to the waste dynamics. His attempt to escape the city also represents the pursuit of an existence away from the material world that provokes dread memories and existential angst. Having walked for days, and having ingested hallucinogenic mushrooms, he finds that here

Everything had fallen from him. He scarce could tell where his being ended or the world began nor did he care. He lay on his back in the gravel, the earth’s core sucking his bones, a moment’s giddy vertigo with this illusion of falling outward through blue and windy space, over the offside of the planet, hurtling through the high thin cirrus. (286)

It is interesting that it is only after everything falls from him, when he sheds his material and immaterial burdens, that his “being” collapses both figuratively and literally into the world. Achieving unity with the universe here, as it were, echoes the epiphany that suggests real change in Suttree at the end of the novel: recognizing in delirium that “all souls are one and all souls lonely” (459), and soberly “that there is one Suttree and one Suttree only” (461). But inevitably, he must return to the world of things, and all the demands and swerves they expose him to. It is, perhaps, as Mother She, pronounces, that “the specter of things sings in its own ashes. Who has ears to hear it?” (*Suttree* 423).

While reducing Suttree to another geological arrangement within McCarthy’s world, as Butterworth suggests, seems reasonable, Suttree is nonetheless not exposed to the waste dynamics that the properly marginalized must suffer. It is not Suttree that is almost drowned in a cascade of human waste, but Harrogate. In his attempt at striking it big with a bank heist, navigating caverns under Knoxville, and digging through to a bank vault, Harrogate by accident dynamites a sewer main. Following the explosion that knocks him senseless, he is “engulfed feet first in a slowly moving wall of sewage, a lava neap of liquid shit and soapcurd and toiletpaper” (270). This tsunami of waste objects ultimately leaves him alone in the dark, “wounded and covered in shit” (274), and it is only due to Suttree that he is saved. The literal

and social underworld that Harrogate navigates is synthesized in these scenes; the underground wastes below Knoxville is a space formed by “sipes of sewage” (261). Harrogate’s inventive endeavor is doomed to fail, of course. The ideological system that makes up the city, even its geological root underpinnings, will not allow him to succeed. The illicit space that he navigates underneath the city, is one where the slow geological forces violently threaten to bury him: “Everywhere a liquid dripping, something gone awry in the earth’s organs to which this measured bleeding clocked in a constantly eluded doom” (261). In turn, this image of Harrogate buried in waste and excrement brings to attention the dependent relationship that the marginalized have to the spaces they negotiate. Like Harrogate, the Ragman suffers the same threat of being buried in waste: “The old man felt the door above him darken and looked up with eyes terrible to see the round mouth of a swillcan tipping. He leaped back flailing and was upended by a turtling box. A lapful of lettuce and old bread, nothing worse” (256). While he is buried in “nothing worse”, and remains free to wander and scavenge, the waste landscape of Knoxville exerts tremendous pressure to bury the marginalized. As the newspaper reports during “[a] season of death and epidemic violence”: “A young girl’s body buried under trash down by First Creek” (416). Where the dispossessed denizens of Knoxville are continuously subject to a violent cascade of waste heaped upon them, Suttree in stark contrast, demonstrates that his social mobility and capacity allows him to avoid becoming enmeshed in the naturalistic and ideological violent waste.

Death Mediates Waste

In *Suttree*, death and its continuous presence haunts the spaces of the novel. This presence leads us to consider exactly how death dynamically mediates life, waste, and things. D.S. Butterworth argues that the Tennessee River troubles the distinctions of life and death. He notes that, “Suttree”, whom the text also conflates with the river’s contents, “pulls fish out of the same river that, a few pages later, yields the body of a dead man to rescuers’ grapnel hooks” (Butterworth 134). Significantly, Butterworth argues that Suttree’s continuous situational references to being in a “terrestrial hell” (*Suttree* 14), conflated with his twin brother’s place in “the limbo of the Christless righteous” (14), effectively symbolizes that “[t]he living are ... already dead” (Butterworth 135). While Butterworth explains that the material and physical presence and amalgamation of the dead and the living suggests an existence where the living are effectively dead, he circumvents the fact that death

reinvigorates *things*. Indeed, it is the onset of death that transforms what used to constitute *being* into a thing, which consistently also seems to incorporate a different kind of being. This estranging thingness is a theme that Anthropologist Michael Taussig, in “Dying Is an Art, Like Everything Else”, encounters as well. Taussig poignantly questions why it is that thinghood suddenly sets in at death, or really, “Why is death the harbinger and index of the thing-world, and how can it be, then, that death awakens life in things?” (381). By this, Taussig means that the end of a certain kind of life –the one we commonly recognize - invites the creation of a thing, and thus induces a different kind of existence.

Our way of thinking about death, and our relationship to the physical burial and the mental and spiritual goodbyes, can be problematic. In this regard, Taussig tongue-in-cheek entertains the notion of increasing the separation between the dead and the living:

It would be nice if the dead could be tucked away, far away, so there would be two worlds, one of the living and one for the dead. It would be almost as nice if they were given visiting privileges, say one or two days a year, like the Mexican Day of the Dead, candies and grinning skulls with picnics in the cemetery, and as a result of this liberal attitude they then promised to keep well out of the way for the remaining 364 days. (Taussig 383)

Indeed, Taussig explains the social functions of such events and carnivalesque spaces like Día de los Muertos and Halloween, in that they mediate and assert more distinct boundaries between the living and the dead. In *Suttree*, the river, in a similar but less clinical fashion, becomes an important mediator of Knoxville’s social order and McCarthy’s ontology. It is a carrier of both unborn human fetuses and old, dead, rotting corpses, as well as an abundant supply of fish, highlighting that boundaries are not strictly maintained, but challenged. Butterworth, for example, highlights the suicide victim drawn from the river following Suttree’s fishing in the waters, as one possible demonstration of this. In one specific passage, however, the relationship between the waste clogged river, and the living and the dead is particularly salient. In the Huddle, one of Suttree’s frequented waterholes, he meets up with his friend Leonard, “weird [...] pale and pimply part-time catamite” (241). He reveals to Suttree that his father has died, but to the reader his father’s human presence and life is regarded as secondary. Rather, his father’s welfare and unemployment amount to “so much for everybody” (242), that Leonard’s family has kept his body for six months, continuing to rely on that money. Leonard says his mother even has been “savin to get her some things she needs. She done got a steamiron” (242). The only apparent reason that they now must rid

themselves of the rather lucrative corpse is because the smell of decomposition makes the house uninhabitable, due to summer rapidly approaching. This maintaining of, or refusal to bury, dead people seems to some extent to be a recurring motif within McCarthy's works, although with wildly varying motivations. Lester Ballard, in *Child of God*, for instance, keeps a woman's corpse for company and necrophiliac vices (*CoG* 103), while *The Road* sees "the mummied dead everywhere. The flesh cloven along the bones, the ligaments dried to tug and taut as wires" (*TR* 24).

McCarthy's novels consistently seem to contemplate death, and by extension a human waste dynamic. If we consider the hyperviolence of *Blood Meridian*, we are presented with a space where humans are continuously murdered; where their bodies become part of the wastelands, but parts of their bodies – their scalps – become trophies and currency. *Child of God* negotiates death by arguably extending the life and use of the human body past death, through necrophilia. Similarly, Leonard tries to tell Suttree that: "If we could just get him out of there without anybody bein the wiser we could still draw on him" (234). If we consider Leonard and his family as socially marginalized and by extension, "human waste", to use Baumann's term, we encounter a dynamic where waste negotiates waste. Specifically, that Leonard as "human waste" craftily attempts to situate his father's subjectivity in a troublesome zone where the idea of him is alive, according to the overarching system and structure, but one where he is simultaneously physically dead and buried. Not buried even, as Leonard says, "We'll dump him in the fuckin river of course" (244), and that "We'll have that old fucker so loaded down he wont even show up for judgment day" (244). His idea to dump his father's corpse in the river coexists with the river as the obvious place for dumping problematic waste, mired in aborted fetuses, used condoms, and swollen animal carcasses, as it is.

While in Leonard's mind, dumping the body in the river is the common sense thing to do with something that "wasnt nobody's fault" and that "just got out of hand" (244), Suttree repeatedly attempts to distance himself from the situation, rejecting Leonard's ideas, and refusing to help: "You're crazy" (243), "no" (243), "Forget this goofy goddamned notion and just call the police or whatever and tell them to come and get his stinking ass" (244), and "I'm not getting mixed up in it" (245). Suttree, in his privileged subject position, acts according to his flâneur role, and suggests involving the police, thereby demonstrating his inability to confront the realities of the RSA as an ideological and repressive machine.

Suttree's refusal to help Leonard proves futile, however: the thingness that the corpse has attained is overpowering, steering the narrative arc, where Suttree's confrontation with the

corpse becomes inevitable. It is not until Suttree has taken a girl home with him, however, after a night out on the town, that Leonard reappears outside his houseboat, and interrupts him:

Who is it? said Suttree.

It's me.

Who?

Me. Leonard.

Mother of God, said Suttree.

...

Suttree opened the door. Leonard had not lied. It was himself.

(Suttree 247)

Leonard shows up with the rotting corpse of his father, to get Suttree to help him dump the corpse in the river. The text presents an implied dichotomy between the vitality of the young woman, and the decomposing corpse of Leonard's father, that only serves to reinforce the disconcerting thinghood of the corpse, and the negotiation of it. Attempting to refuse and thus resist partaking, Suttree condemns his friend for both exploiting the corpse of his father in the first place, and for involving him in the disposal of the body.

While Taussig insists that thinghood sets in at death, here it does so not at the moment of death, as nothing particularly changes: rather, it is when the presence of the corpse becomes untenable that Leonard confronts its thinghood, representing a waste dynamic. That which has been a source of income, Leonard's father, transforms into something that Leonard must obstinately rid himself of, and which must disappear completely in order for his family to continue to profit. Arguably, the corpse, in this, has finally become waste. Suttree's resistance to Leonard's plan situates him ideologically oppositional to Leonard. In "Everything's Interesting: Cormac McCarthy and the Social Construction of Reality", Forest G. Robinson argues that Suttree's encounter with death is affected by his relationship to the various ISAs in society. Specifically, Robinson claims that "[b]ecause Suttree has washed his hands of all the structures of social, legal, and religious order dominant in his world, he is acutely vulnerable to the anomic terror brought on by encounters with death's 'naked truth'" (99). In other words, since Suttree ostensibly attempts to resist hailings from the various ISAs, and dismisses all the institutions that exist as mediators and thus reconcile people with death, he is more susceptible to its terrors. Thus, where Leonard's reaction to his father's death and subsequent decomposition is detached and dispassionate, Suttree is unable to navigate this

sudden confrontation with a defamiliarizing and destabilizing thinghood, telling Leonard that “God you’re a sick bastard” (250).

Still wrapped in the sheets he died in, they drag Leonard’s father down to Suttree’s boat. The scene in its entirety manifests McCarthy’s prose discussion on distinctions between the dead and the living. Here, the corpse is recurrently referenced as a “thing” and “it” (250-252), although one that both moves with a “nauseating limberness” (250), and lies still and unmoving “like a dead klansman” (250). The whole scene, complete with a discussion whether this qualifies as burial at sea, and whether certain words should be said, contributes to mediate McCarthy’s animate and inanimate materiality. Specifically, it brings to question the dynamics of conducting a burial in the wasteridden Tennessee River:

[Suttree:] Are you going to say a few words?

[Leonard:] Do what?

[Suttree:] Say a few words.

Leonard gave a sort of nervous little grin. [Leonard:] Say a few words?

[Suttree:] Arent you? I mean, you’re not going to bury your father without anything at all.

[Leonard:] I aint burying him.

[Suttree:] The hell you’re not.

[Leonard:] I’m just puttin him in the river.

[Suttree:] It’s the same thing. It’s the same as burial at sea.

[Leonard:] Well goddamn, Suttree.

[Suttree:] Well?

[Leonard:] This old son of a bitch never went to church in his life.

[Suttree:] All the more reason.

[Leonard:] Well I dont know no goddamned service nor nothin. Shit. You say it.

[Suttree:] The only words I know are the Catholic ones.

[Leonard:] Catholic?

[Suttree:] Catholic.

Leonard regarded his chained and hooded father in the floor of the skiff.

[Leonard:] Hell fire. He sure wasnt no Catholic. What about that part that goes through the shadow of the valley of death? You know any of that?

(Suttree 251)

Continuously, McCarthy questions what constitutes a burial, and whether “puttin him in the river” qualifies as one. Leonard, for one, seems to distinguish clearly between the two, insisting that they are not the same. Perhaps, in some sense, dumping his father in the river, rather than burying him in the ground, serves to preserve his father as somehow still alive, as the river is demonstrably more dynamic than the geological landscape. While the river is also consistently rendered as a dumping ground for that which has ceased to function, it seems to have a propensity to resurface whatever is dumped into it.

Suttree insists on establishing the finality of life by mediating the passage of the corpse into death, by burying it with words. Due to his ideological subjection to Catholicism, Catholic words prove to be the only way to ritually render a transformation from human to thing. No words are said over the body, in the end, however, suggesting that the confrontational thinghood of the corpse resists any such finality. They shove the remains out into the river, and Leonard exasperates a sober “whew” (252), leaving his father, in the words of Suttree, “without anything at all”. This dumping of the corpse in the river only justifies McAnally Flats as an “encampment of the damned”, and aptly mirrors the Tennessee River as the mythological River Styx, boundary between the living, and the dead and lost. Moreover, the ‘burial at sea’ in this scene can be read synoptically with the gravestone passage discussed in chapter tree, wherein Suttree and his gang re-purpose gravestones into tables for their drinks. Where the misuse encountered in that scene negotiates borders between the sacred and profane, here the entire discourse between Leonard and Suttree is dominated by this mediating secularization. Indeed, here McCarthy’s philosophy of the absurd comes front and center: in effect, no religious words prove adequate or meaningful in the confrontational materiality that the text suggests. No matter the weight of the chains and wheelrims that they put on the corpse, the river causes Leonard’s father to resurface, with the chains still on him (417), seemingly defying laws of physics. The corpse refuses to stay hidden and forgotten, like the rest of the river detritus, where a network of actant forces, river currents, erosion, and where the vibrancy rather than inertia of the material world causes the body to reappear, and consequently result in Leonard’s arrest.

Chapter Conclusion

This chapter brings together the urban and pastoral postsouthern landscapes in the novel, and discusses how commodities and waste serves to negotiate the existence of the denizens within

these striated spaces. Moreover, this dynamic discourse is also impinged on by temporal pressure, as the prehistoric past and more recent past both are manifest in the detailed landscape that confines its inhabitants. Not only is the populace mired in fragments of the past, they are simultaneously wedged between that violent past and a seemingly violent future that proposes no possible space for the dispossessed. The text's representation as that of an anti-modernizing space, in this regard, is troublesome. If we consider the novel as one arguing against modernization, this simultaneously resists the direction of progress surrounding the social conditions that exist in the text. McCarthy's dispossessed are thus preserved, and their suffering by extension, as between glass microscope slides. On the cusp of development and modernization, McAnally Flats is ultimately razed to the ground. Arguably, the Knoxville the reader experiences in *Suttree* is in its death throes, where its inhabitants are vagrants and scavengers, in constant threat of displacement. The encroaching threat of modernization ultimately seems to mirror a scenario similar to that of *The Road*, and thus presupposes the endgame of modernization as one of post-apocalyptic endless wastes.

Suttree subverts mythic spaces, those found in *Blood Meridian*, for instance.

Negotiating the urban and rural divides, the text also illuminates the stark differences between the superabundant object world that the reader encounters here, in contrast to the empty yet similarly violent spaces of *Blood Meridian*. Front and center the reader is confronted with the naturalistic waste dynamics in *Suttree*'s Knoxville: rather than the individual violent actors in McCarthy's Western and post-apocalyptic novels, the waste dynamics in *Suttree* suggest that it is first and foremost the underlying and overarching social and ideological structures that propagate violence against the dispossessed inhabitants of McAnally Flats. If we consider the passage where the corpse of Leonard's father is dumped in the river, this is ultimately the result of a structural system that motivates its denizens to hide the death of a family member, in order for them to economically maintain their existence. Meanwhile, their subsequent motivation for "puttin him into the river" is their inability to handle the thinghood they are confronted with as its presence becomes untenable.

Where the novel starts by unifying waste and decay with "the aberrant disordered and mad" (3), *Suttree* ends with a razing of McAnally Flats, and an eradication of the wasteland and its inhabitants. *Suttree* moves on, unrestrained and unencumbered as he is, but it is unresolved what the proper marginalized must suffer in the wake of this. Are they to survive as relics in a new and modernized environment, one of paved highways, or one of slow violence where they are continuously driven away from any comfort and any potential sustainability?

Conclusion

This thesis has reconciled subjectivity, ideology, artifacts, use and misuse, and the violence of spaces in Suttree. As this thesis has shown, *Suttree* navigates important discussions on individual and collective subject positions, as they are insistently mediated by ideology and the material object world. Specifically, through the protagonist-narrator and his flâneur capacity to move from episode to episode within a marginalized community, the reader is confronted with a negotiation of ISAs and RSAs. Althusser establishes a framework that constrains free will, effectively deautonomizing subjects, as he exposes the insistent influence that formal and informal apparatuses exert over any given populace. In other words, he reveals the limits of our free will and real agency. Suttree, despite his voluntary exile and ostensible resistance to a system he opposes, serves to expose those limits. While attempting to self-marginalize by consorting with the dispossessed of Knoxville, his subject position continuously reveals his failed appropriation of the marginalized subjectivity he attempts to achieve. Effectively, in his outsider flâneur subjectivity, he ultimately maintains the modes of ideology that his father symbolizes, rather than resist them. He resists helping Leonard dumping the corpse of his father, until it is forced upon him; he remains static and silent during the bone divination passage; and he continuously condemns Harrogate and his creative misuse.

As Suttree tries to reject hailings by the ISAs which surrounds him, and thus attempts to distance himself from his family, religion, and college background, this creates a space where he is increasingly exposed to hailings from the material object world. These hailings become especially striking in his wanderings in Gatlinburg, the bone divination scene with Mother She, and his talisman exchange with Michael: material artifacts, construed as actants, catch his attention and become crucibles for negotiating his subjectivity. *Suttree* does not shelter systems of belief, but continuously challenges these largely ideological systems. At the same time, McCarthy makes clear that the material object world works in concord with these systems, and that they both continually hail any subjects. These objects and actants that Suttree interacts with serves to interrogate our understanding of meaning. The novel has a tendency to produce questions, rather than answers, especially in the recurring pattern where meaning proves elusive. How, as with the talisman, can you remember an object, or the meaning of an object, that seems to signify no origin or meaning? Similarly, the talisman prompts questions regarding determinism and agency, wherein Suttree attempts to justify his self-marginalized subject position. The text suggests that it was by the fishing lines

themselves that he came to occupy this position, rather than a pursued choice. Thus, the limits of his autonomy are ostensibly challenged by his interaction with the material world. These are constraints which he breaks by discarding all his possessions, including the talisman, and symbolically and figuratively minimizing his worldly presence. Suttree, in order to maintain (or reinvent) his autonomy, and initiate the novel's epilogue, must leave behind the material things that ultimately destabilize his sense of self, and his subjectivity.

However, Suttree is not inherently stunned and incapacitated by the material object world. It is by dumping the police car, a symbol of the RSA, in the river that Suttree is able to properly express his rebellion against both society and against his father, a staunch defender of the power that RSAs are able and willing to exert. Thus, it is the specific object that facilitates this, and generates the possibility of this powerful signifying act. There is a parallel, then, in Suttree's act of dumping the police car, and discarding his possessions. While the former constitutes an explicit rebellion against RSAs specifically, the latter suggests a resistance against the ISAs and ideologies that are so intrinsically connected to those objects. While objects then make rebellion possible, the sheer materiality that permeates the novel produces an aching effect: the protagonist must continuously suffer the symptoms of McCarthy's material world.

Liberation from both incapacitating objecthood and ideologies is posited as potentially achieved through misuse. However, here the interplay between object, subject, and use becomes apparent. If misuse is an instrument to resist ideology, Suttree's lack of misuse and his relationship to it, maintains that he preserves rather than challenge dominant ideological systems. Harrogate, meanwhile, is the novel's major locus for misuse and in his recurring conflicts with both ISAs and RSAs demonstrate that misuse is perceived as an ideological transgression. The interesting dynamic that ensues in this relationship between Harrogate, these apparatuses, and objects is challenged as the RSA subjects Harrogate to object misuse: specifically, if misuse is defined in contrast to use, where the latter represents the sanctioned and ideologically normal state of things, an appropriation and normalization of misuse would incorporate it into 'use'. Thus, if the RSA appropriates misuse to both mark and punish any transgressor, this subverts the potential inherent in misuse as a signifying and liberating force. To clarify in regard to *Suttree*, as the enforcers of ideology expose Harrogate to misuse, does the ideology consume the misuse dynamic, and thus redefine Malewicz's misuse and rugged consumerism?

The community in the novel is, as the protagonist, similarly dominated by things, to the extent that they suffer the threat of drowning in them. Suttree is enticed by things, but largely remains unaffected by the waste dynamic that the proper marginalized are exposed to. This contrast warrants an examination of both individual artifacts, and masses of objects that constitute waste. We are confronted with thingness when objects break down and cease to work. Similarly, *Suttree* leaves us with a textual world where people continuously seem to stop working, if they even have designated functions. We are left with no objective distance that allows us to comprehend the systemic pressure exerted by ideological systems that exist both within and outside material objects. While the individual things in the novel threaten to destabilize anthropocentrism, this threat is exacerbated by the wasteland spaces of Knoxville. McCarthy describes the urban sprawl of the American fifties, and its subsequent waste by-products. In *Suttree* the reader experiences all that which is ultimately foundational to the development of the American society. The legacy left exists in all that *stuff* that was left behind: rusting and decaying in nature, and lingering in a pseudo-past of the American collective. Effectively, this becomes an image of society's by-products, where the poor denizens of the city are juxtaposed with waste, and are continuously treated as such by both society and the material environs of Knoxville. The Tennessee River serves as the crux of the wasteland dynamics the reader is confronted with: it continuously brings society's abject waste to the surface, and in itself insist that we remember that things do not cease to be, but that their trajectories continue to constitute the world. Corpse-ridden as the river seems to be, it amalgamates the human and the non-human, the living and the dead. Continuing this aggregation, the marginalized become covered in rubbish, buried in landslides, murdered and buried in trash, and submerged in sewage. For those who do survive this violent landscape, the razing and ensuing modernization of their communities await. Consequently, the inhabitants of McAnally Flats are not commodified, but turned into waste. Even Harrogate, who ends the novel imprisoned at a state penitentiary, can be read as prey to *Suttree*'s waste dynamics: imprisonment is, after all, a way to separate and contain the undesirable and superfluous in society that threaten to contaminate it.

Ultimately, the novel's resolution centers on one decisive act where Suttree abandons his material possessions, and thus disengage with actants, in order to re-gain and exercise his free will, and to exist apart from McCarthy's insistent materiality. This materiality exists in an interrelationship with the animate, in that it demands that we make sense and meaning of it. As the reader is told during Suttree's hallucinogenic morphine high in the hospital near the end of the novel: "Clocks need winding and people to wind them. Someone should be told"

(454). In other words, objects, or things, are dependent on humans. This, however, is negotiated by the following line: “Someone should be told”, meaning that this is neither apparent nor inherently evident.

Further research should be conducted to more comprehensively interrogate the wasteland in *Suttree*. I have discussed how McCarthy negotiates boundaries of recentering and dehumanizing the marginalized in *Suttree*, and have argued that the dispossessed are portrayed closely connected to the waste landscape and dependent on its waste products, to the extent that they are an intrinsic part of it – avatars almost. The Ragman and Junkman, especially, are significant examples of this. Employing Rob Nixon’s highly influential *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (2011) as an approach to readings of McCarthy’s narratives, I believe would prove valuable. Juxtaposed to the marginalized we find spaces that amalgamates rivers, trash, aborted fetuses, corpses, animals, and obsolete and broken objects. Framing this, we encounter cold winters that claim poor souls, the razing of McAnally, and the inexistence of institutions caring for its citizens. McCarthy’s worlds, *Suttree* specifically but also *The Road*, are rampaged by, accordingly, capitalist mass-production and military authority, and depict grim scenarios. Further exploring these spaces in *Suttree* that seem to consist of and for the marginalized themselves would therefore be interesting. To which extent do the dispossessed also produce these wasteland spaces, and thus further intensify the wasteland dynamics in Knoxville?

I noted briefly in my introduction a very tangible result of McCarthy’s novel: the riverfront area in Knoxville named Suttree Landing Park. Studying pictures from it, it is conceivably a space which is distant from any landscape envisioned and negotiated in the novel. Rather, it is a sterile, empty space consisting of green meticulously cut lawns and strict and straight concrete pathways, and little else. It calls to mind the modernization that consumes the communities of McAnally Flats at the end of the novel, and simultaneously reflects, with its empty spaces, the elusive meanings that are negotiated in the aggregating objects we encounter. As the park performs upon the world, it constructs a competing and redefining motif to the violent superabundant object wastelands in *Suttree*.

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