

20 July 2007

These few words—

Chris Forbis talked about a web-site.

I said something about a *Blood Meridian* concordance.

Wes Morgan brought more concordances to Chris through the web-site.

The report “Words Cormac McCarthy Uses in His Novels” has helped us focus on small items to fix in the concordances, but has also drawn questions about our methodology.

Combining in one entry *echols* 7[12] with *echols'* 7[5] as *echols(')* 7[17], and combining *hindleg* 4[2], 6[1], 7[1], 8[1] in one entry with *hindlegs* 4[2], 6[1], 7[2], 8[1], seems fine. All things are equal.

But the report would be much less useful when entries like these combine:

bettern 6[2], 8[1], 9[1]	misunderstand 7[1]
better'n 1[2], 4[2]	misunderstandin 3[1]
	misunderstood 1[1]

Which-book for which-word-form would become invisible. Part-of-speech questions would have to have been answered (a years-long, 920,000 word project). Early book/late book questions are gone (recognize the blandness of *bettern* (*better'n*) 1[2], 4[2], 6[2], 8[1], 9[1]).

The McCarthy concordances and reports are available today, and are functional. I wanted to look at the word *recruit* (or *recruits*, or *recruited*) in *Blood Meridian*, and that first and rawest concordance in May 2006 did fine.

But why to combine? To shrink the McCarthy “number”? Oh, please.

Last week Chris leveled the playing field. Given exactly his same program and the Gutenberg Project's Shakespeare (all plays and the sonnets), Shakespeare's works generate a “Words Used” item total of 31,941 to McCarthy's 30,069.

McCarthy's not a new Shakespeare: let him bear the burden of absolute success. Indeed, in McCarthy's forty years half his novels remaindered in their first printings.

So.

So, maybe tone-down the Shakespeare “Why Great” stuff on vocabulary. Or, maybe give McCarthy a little bit of that “Why Great” spotlight.

All Best,



John Sepich
Chris Forbis
Wes Morgan