Such “faith”, **McCarthy seems to imply, is divorced from any meaningful association with Christ; it merely looks down on and condemns those in physical or spiritual need. In this and comparable McCarthy scenes, God seems not so much absent as harsh and vindictive, as if looking down from an elevated space upon a desperately flawed humanity. Still, the most severe judgment on Culla comes from within; he believes that he has so violated established rules of human behavior as to stand in judgment outside the possibility of forgiveness. Most of all, it is Culla who withholds forgiveness from Culla.2 Once Culla undertakes his search for the stolen child, comparable judgments meet him at every turn.3 Sometimes they seem innocent enough on the surface, as when a “squire” for whom he briefly works lectures him that “I hope you’ve not got a family. It’s a sacred thing, a family. A sacred obligation”** **(47). Inevitably, Culla hears this pronouncement in the context of his sins of incest and child abandonment and cannot deny that he has, in fact, violated “a sacred obligation” (47). Inevitably, Culla hears this pronouncement in the context of his sins of incest and child abandonment and cannot deny that he has, in fact, violated “a sacred obligation.” Here as elsewhere in the text, outsiders—some of whom, like the squire, look down upon him from perspectives of social class or legal power—are, in some mysterious way, aware of his transgressions. Such judges exist on two levels, that of mimesis and psychological projection. The squire is a representative of class and economic superiority, of what Henri Lefebvre describes as the “power” of vertical space and the “submission” of horizontal space, as is made manifest in the squire’s** initial meeting with Culla in which the squire looks at the desperate young man “as he would anything for sale” (42). The squire’s dominant position in the socioeconomic hierarchy is based on the power to objectify others, to treat them as commodities that can be used and then discarded. His power is transitory, however, as he ultimately runs into the three nomadic killers who coldly and senselessly murder him. But he is also an emblematic figure who embodies Culla’s self-condemnation.

**After the doomed squire, the next “judge” Culla encounters is an old man from whom he begs a drink of water. Twice, the old man tells Culla that he “wouldn’t turn Satan away for a drink” (117). Like the squire, the old man appears to possess some mysterious knowledge of the primal nature of Culla’s sins. Moreover, he turns out to be a snake hunter given to telling grotesque stories about victims of snakebite, and inside his cabin he has the skin of a monstrous rattlesnake tacked above his fireplace:** “He was eight foot seven inches and had seventeen rattles. Big in the middle to where ye couldn’t get your hands around him” **(122).** The scene recalls traditional associations of serpents with death and evil ranging from Genesis to Satan’s magical staff in “Young Goodman Brown”; on a Freudian level, the phallic overtones of the monstrous snake recall Culla’s intercourse with Rinthy. Later a man who has lost his entire family to cholera charges Culla with being a plague carrier, to which Culla responds not at all honestly, “Ain’t nobody plagued” (138). Like that of Oedipus, Culla’s incest seems to have let loose a plague on the countryside. One also recalls Camus’s division in *The Plague* of human beings into the categories of plague carriers and plague fighters.

Near the end of the novel, Culla comes close to being executed in a black comic “(mis)reading” of an incident recounted in the New Testament book of Mark. He abruptly finds himself in the midst of a herd of hogs driven by men “gaunt and fever-eyed with incredible rag costumes and wild hair” (213). After some wildly absurd discussion between Culla and one of the drovers about “unclean” hogs, split hooves, and Jews (“What’s a jew? That’s one of them old-timey people from in the bible”), the drover concludes: “A hog is a hog.