Thesis Abstract

This thesis takes it upon itself to investigate Cormac McCarthy’s rendition of the process of creation of American national identity based on pragmatic individualism during the period of the nation’s westward expansion, as it appears in his 1985 novel Blood Meridian Or The Evening Redness in the West. The initial point of departure for the argument will be the essay written by G. Deleuze “Bartleby; or, The Formula,” where Deleuze conceives of American identity and culture as a continuous process of rapture with what he calls paternal models of social formation pertaining to the old continent, seeing the pragmatic line of thought as the chief constituting factor of this essentially anti-teleological process. This attitude is going to be juxtaposed to McCarthy’s own depiction of America in the period of the nation’s westward expansion. Through working with Deleuze and F. Guattari’s concepts of reterritorialization and deterritorialization we shall investigate some of the prominent features of McCarthy’s narrative style, most notably his imagery and narrative technique, attempting to suggest how his specific stylistic choices influence the novel’s rendition of what shall be claimed to be an ideologically decentered space, not dissimilar to Deleuze’s conception of nation without fathers. Subsequently, it shall be our aim to show the most significant departure of McCarthy’s rendition from Deleuze’s theory that is, the ways McCarthy’s protagonists conceive morally of this anti-ideological space.

This investigation shall be enhanced throughout the first chapter by comparing McCarthy’s views with other important figures of American letters studied in Deleuze’s essay, namely H. Melville and R. W. Emerson. The second chapter, focused at the investigation of the character of Judge Holden, shall conceptualize the moral question as the Nietzschean problem of ressentiment, which will, however, be studied in its cognitive appropriation by Deleuze in his philosophy of the event. By thorough application of this
theoretical framework on Holden’s views of morality, representation and language, Holden shall be shown as an embodiment of the worst version of American pragmatic individualism. In the conclusion of the thesis this shall be put into broader perspective and seen as critical comment of McCarthy’s on the conception of American national identity; a conception wherein the individual is unable to live up to the positive aspects of the disruption of teleological models of historical identity spoken of by Deleuze, and instead turns the solidification of his own supreme individualism into a version of continuous warfare against everything that would stand autonomous to it. Not excluding the land and lives of the American indigenous population whose eradication McCarthy so conspicuously depicts in his novel.