

Leviathan, Ziz, Behemoth: Allegories of Sovereignty, War and Empire
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- I. Introduction: Why these authors—Herman Melville, Thomas Pynchon and Cormac McCarthy—and why now?
 - A) They are “untimely” and speak to our present—possibly our future, as well
 - B) The need to rethink the field of “American Studies”
 - 1) Alan Wolfe reviewing Pease (ed.) *Futures of American Studies* = “Anti-American” (pre-Iraq Invasion)
 - 2) Amy Kaplan addressing the American Studies Association (post-Iraq Invasion): How does American Studies respond to Guantánamo (hereafter GTMO)?
 - C) My own attempt to “respond” to GTMO, the never-ending “War on Terror,” and current political realities

- II. Overview of My Presentation & Project
 - A) Three Beasts that Herald the Messianic Age: Leviathan, Ziz, Behemoth
 - 1) Used to structure my readings of *Moby-Dick* (1851), *Gravity’s Rainbow* (1973) and *Blood Meridian* (1985)
 - 2) Allegory (from *allo* “other” and *agoria* “speaking”) read mainly through Walter Benjamin (as marking disruption, disjunction and suspension)
 - 3) The “other discourse” at play in these allegories = Sovereignty
 - B) Relation to War, Crisis
 - 1) *Moby-Dick*: Mexican-American War 1846-1848
 - 2) *Gravity’s Rainbow* and *Blood Meridian*: Vietnam 1965-1975
 - 3) Melville akin to Baudelaire, an allegorist of the crisis of “modernity”
 - 4) Pynchon & McCarthy: post-WWII, post-Vietnam, postmodern allegorists
 - C) Reading *Moby-Dick* Allegorically
 - 1) Dimock, *Empire for Liberty* & Jeffersonian Individualism/Expansionism
 - 2) Spanos, *Errant Art of Moby-Dick* & Critique of American “Exceptionalism”
 - 3) Following Spanos: linking these novels to Iraq, “War on Terror,” GTMO
 - 4) This approach helps us better read them as “political” texts, as having a second (allegorical) level of meaning that must be historicized: Sovereignty
 - D) On Sovereignty & the State of Exception
 - 1) Carl Schmitt: “Sovereign is he who decides on the exception”
 - 2) Giorgio Agamben: indeterminacy; the “inclusive exclusion;” bare life
 - 3) Reading the three novels through Agamben (Sovereign Violence/Bare Life)

- a) *Moby-Dick*: Ahab—Pip/"Pagan" Harpooners/Ishmael
 - b) *Gravity's Rainbow*: Blicero/Weissmann—Gottfried/Enzian/Slothrop
 - c) *Blood Meridian*: Judge Holden—his "fool"/the Delawares/"the kid"
- 4) Contrast Pynchon & McCarthy on the State of Exception
- a) Pynchon's "Zone"—more Utopian, nostalgic, "Subjunctive Hopes"
 - b) McCarthy's "Bloodlands"—more Dystopian, nihilistic
- III. In Place of a Conclusion
- A) This study might help to reconstruct the genealogy of American militarism and the "Metaphysics of Indian Hating"
 - B) A way to read American Literature in the age of GTMO—and bring "Empire" back into "American Studies" in a moment of profound crisis
 - C) Possibility of resistance, through Melville's "isolatoes" and "castaways," Pynchon's "Preterite" and even McCarthy's "itinerant degenerates"?

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