

BINARISM AND INDETERMINACY IN THE NOVELS

OF

THOMAS PYNCHON

Shaun Irlam

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of Arts,
University of Cape Town for the Degree of
Master of Arts

October 1983

The copyright of this thesis vests in the author. No quotation from it or information derived from it is to be published without full acknowledgement of the source. The thesis is to be used for private study or non-commercial research purposes only.

Published by the University of Cape Town (UCT) in terms of the non-exclusive license granted to UCT by the author.

ABSTRACT

I attempt in this thesis, to graft together a close critical, and predominantly thematic, reading of Thomas Pynchon's novels with selected issues treated in the work of Jacques Derrida on philosophy and textuality, illustrating how this work demands the revision and interrogation of several major critical issues, concepts, dualisms and presuppositions. The thesis consists of an Introduction which sets forth a brief rationale for the graft described above, followed by a short and unavoidably inadequate synopsis of Derrida's work with a brief review and explication of those of his 'concepts' which play an important role in my reading of Pynchon's texts. The Introduction is succeeded by three lengthy chapters in which I discuss, more or less separately, each of Pynchon's three novels to date. These are V. (1963), The Crying of Lot 49, (1966) and Gravity's Rainbow (1973), and I discuss them in the order of their appearance, devoting a chapter to each.

I attempt to treat different but related issues, preoccupations, themes and tropes in each of the novels to avoid repeating myself, engaging the apparatuses derived from Derrida's writing where deemed strategic and instructive. I suggest moreover, that several of the issues examined apropos the novel under consideration in any one chapter apply mutandis mutandi to the other novels. Each chapter therefore to some extent conducts a reading of the novels which it does not treat directly.

Finally, supervising these separate chapters is a sustained focus on the epistemology of binarism and digitalism, and the conceptual dualisms which structure and inform major portions of the thematic and rhetorical dimensions

of the novels. This focus is conjoined with a periodic attention to certain semantic devices and effects which register the limitations and inadequacy of the extensive dualistic framework of the texts and which motivate the questions of polysemy and semantic indeterminacy.

The thesis concludes with a Bibliography and a summary Epilogue which seeks to assess briefly the 'achievement' of Pynchon's writing.

*

*

*

*

CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	iv
Abbreviations	v
INTRODUCTION	1
JACQUES DERRIDA AND DECONSTRUCTION	23
CHAPTER ONE - <u>V.</u>	43
TWO SHORT STORIES	47
THE DOCTRINES AND INFLUENCE OF HENRY ADAMS	54
"U.S.S. SCAFFOLD" : THE STRUCTURE OF PLOT IN <u>V.</u>	60
STRUCTURE AND SUPPLEMENTARITY	62
TOWARDS A STRATEGY OF INTERPRETATION	64
TRACING CO-ORDINATES : The Animate and the Inanimate	66
ANIMATE/INANIMATE AND DECLINE : The Global Pattern	68
ANIMATE/INANIMATE AND DECLINE : EXTENSIONS	72
THE DREAM OF ORDER : The Imperial Strategy	74
THE DREAM OF ORDER : Colonialism	76
THE DREAM OF ORDER : Fetishism	80
THE DANCE OF DEATH	84
THE CHOREOGRAPHY OF THE TOUR : Tripping through Baedekerland	88
TOURISM : FIGURAL TRANSFORMATIONS	92
TOURISM AND ITERABLE FORM : Ritual, Convention and Game	95

TRANSFORMATIONS OF TOURISM : Whole Sick Crews	99
THE ANIMATE AND INANIMATE REVISITED	104
STENCIL AND PROFANE : The Hothouse and the Street	108
Benny Profane and the Street	108
Herbert Stencil and the Quest for V.	116
V. - "not who, but what : what is she"	122
THE DISSEMINATION OF V.	130
The Aporia of Vheissu	132
SOME CONCLUDING POSTSCRIPTS	143
CHAPTER TWO - <u>THE CRYING OF LOT 49</u>	148
SYNOPSIS AND SITUATION : A Brief Introduction	150
MAJOR RHETORICAL FRAMEWORKS	152
THE SITUATION OF MRS. MAAS	157
TWO PARABOLIC PREAMBLES : Cultural Allegories	159
1. Mucho's Car Lot	159
2. Rapunzel's Tower	163
TWO TROPOLOGICAL STRATEGIES	168
FIGURAL NETWORKS : Maxwell's Demon	170
FIGURAL NETWORKS : Religion and Mysticism	171
THE SACRED TRISTERO : Mendelson's Thesis Considered	175
FIGURAL NETWORKS : The Transformations of Insulation	180
SPATIAL CO-ORDINATES AND THEMES OF CENTRISM	185
SPATIAL TRANSFORMATIONS : Same and Other	193
SPATIAL TRANSFORMATIONS : U.S. Mail and Tristero	194
"THE SHRINK FLIPS" : The Unconscious and Transformations of the Spatial Dichotomy	200

THE 'PLACE' OF THE TRISTERO AND SOCIO-SYMBOLIC ORDER	203
SYMBOLIC ORDER AND THE ODDS OF THE TRISTERO : One and the Double	209
Chance and Transformations of the Double	213
NOSTALGIA FOR PRESENCE AND THE 'LOSS' OF MEANING	216
THE VOICE OF PHONOCENTRISM AND THE MUTE SIGNS OF THE TRISTERO	225
THE UNDECIDABLE TRISTERO AND BLURRED BOUNDARIES	231
THE STYLE AND SYNTAX OF UNCERTAINTY	236
THE TROPE OF 'WRITING' or AMERICA AS TEXT	243
CHAPTER THREE - <u>GRAVITY'S RAINBOW</u>	258
THE ALLEGORICAL "OVERLAY"	263
TWO PARABOLIC PREAMBLES	274
DEVELOPING THE PICTURE : "black-and-white bad news"	281
NECROPOLICY : "wherever the enterprise is systematic death"	288
POINTS MAN/ANTIPOINTS MAN : An Epistemological Allegory	301
DISSECTING THE CREATION	316
THE ART OF REIFICATION	323
"THE VIOLENCE OF REPRESSION"	327
"ELITE AND PRETERITE, WE MOVE THROUGH A COSMIC DESIGN OF DARKNESS AND LIGHT"	332
THE HYPERBOLE OF THE WAR	337
NOTES FROM THE ZONE : "Forget frontiers now. Forget subdivisions. There aren't any"	342
Zonal Discourses	353
LINES OF DISSEMINATION	368
ALLEGORY REVISITED	381
EPILOGUE	388
BIBLIOGRAPHY	396

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank Professor J.M. Coetzee for vigilant, patient and informed supervision; Julia Saville for her constant help and humour; and my mother, Moira Irlam, for preparing the final typescript.

I wish to acknowledge the financial assistance of the Human Sciences Research Council, the South African Council for English Education and the University of Cape Town.

ABBREVIATIONS

In the interests of reducing an already extensive series of footnotes, frequently cited texts are identified by the appropriate abbreviations and the relevant page number.

- Diss. Jacques Derrida, Dissemination, trans. Barbara Johnson (London: Athlone Press, 1981).
- OG Jacques Derrida, Of Grammatology, trans. G.C. Spivak (Baltimore & London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976, rpt. 1978).
- GR Thomas Pynchon, Gravity's Rainbow (London: Picador, 1975 rpt. 1978).
- Lot 49 All references to The Crying of Lot 49 are identified by two unmarked page references divided by a slash, e.g. (1/5), indicating the two most widely available editions, respectively:
 Thomas Pynchon, The Crying of Lot 49 (New York: Bantam Books, 1967 rpt. 1978);
 Thomas Pynchon, The Crying of Lot 49 (London: Picador, 1979).
- V. Thomas Pynchon, V. (London: Picador, 1975, rpt. 1978).

INTRODUCTION

The biographical Thomas Pynchon, born 1937, remains an elusive and enigmatic figure. By the same token his fiction, because of its dazzling spectrum of narrative modes, tones, voices and styles behind which the 'real' Thomas Pynchon vanishes, because of its extraordinary erudition, overwhelming allusive breadth, conceptual complexity and sustained figural deformation, whose organisation endeavours to defy rational, logical and 'realistic' "arrangements" and ultimately deny any moment of 'transcendental meaning', continues to elude critical accounts which inevitably attempt to locate a centre, extract 'meaning' or in some way impose a totalizing order or control upon the text. Several critics have already offered a diversity of 'meanings' and often highly instructive and persuasive interpretations for the three novels, as well as a number of the short stories; it remains satisfying to witness Pynchon's fictions eluding the sum of these critical exegeses. This point must serve as a precaution that this thesis too, unable to recognize its own prejudices and presuppositions, will inevitably behave as if its perspective were (for the duration) totalizing, whilst succumbing to the same failure to deal exhaustively with Pynchon's texts and a related inability to be master of the language over which it maintains the illusion of control. However, by trying to recognize and take account of the mechanisms by which we dissemble mastery, and by trying to understand the necessary persistence of these appearances in critical discourse, we perhaps begin to dismantle our illusions. I must ask my reader to judge whether my thesis observes this premise.

It is my aim in this thesis to undertake a close critical reading of Thomas Pynchon's fictions, dealing primarily with his three novels: V. (1963), The Crying of Lot 49 (1966) and Gravity's Rainbow (1973), and focussing particularly on structural and thematic binarism and its

limitations in conjunction with, and in relation to, the motif of semantic indeterminacy. I attempt to locate this indeterminate motif in each novel and indicate its role, status and effect in the text; this is oversimplification, particularly with respect to Gravity's Rainbow. My analysis of binarism and indeterminacy in Pynchon's novels will be shaped by two major considerations which I will discuss in this introduction, rendering it perforce dense with quotation.

Firstly, guided by trends of consensus and dissension amongst Pynchon's critics, I am encouraged to treat his novels as 'plurisignificant', open networks and consider the question of semantic indeterminacy. I trace briefly the area of consensus, setting aside the variety of inferences and conclusions it produces.

An early commentator on V. concludes, "Even the title V. is cryptographic. Available to all interpretations, it is answerable to none."¹ This sentiment sets the tenor of the consensus, "Pynchon combines the intricacy of his plotting with a symbolist openness to all possible elements suggested by the letter 'V', thereby greatly adding to the confusing quality of his book."² Another writes, "If V. can mean everything it means nothing"³ and again, "At the end author and protagonists alike are left with the certainty that V. can be almost anything... which gives her less and less of a logical distinction."⁴

¹ R. Poirier, "A Literature of Law and Order," Partisan Review 36 (2) 1969, p. 203.

² B. Bergonzi, The Situation of the Novel (London: Macmillan & Co., 1970), p. 97.

³ T. Tanner, "V. and V-2," in Pynchon: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. E. Mendelson (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1978), p. 27.

⁴ M. Puetz, "Thomas Pynchon's The Crying of Lot 49: The World is a Tristero System," Mosaic 7 (4) 1974, p. 127.

Shifting to commentaries on The Crying of Lot 49, we read, "Oedipa painfully discovers that symbols...do not lead to one stelliferous Meaning. Rather they point in a thousand different directions and never lead to a solid conclusion. This notion of symbol and metaphor seems to lie at the centre of Pynchon's fiction. This idea forms the basis of Pynchon's novel, V., where the symbol V. mockingly suggests a chaotic host of irreconcilable things."⁵ Again, apropos Lot 49, "neither she nor we ever learn which possibilities are truths and which are lies, for the ultimate possibility of the book, the ultimate answer to every man's deliverance, and the ultimate meaning of the Tristero are never revealed."⁶ Another commentator suggests that Lot 49, "contrives, without explicit advertisement, to raise the question of suspended meaning and ask questions which cannot be answered by an appeal to some incontrovertible, unproblematic structure."⁷ Finally, writing of Gravity's Rainbow, Tanner describes the experience that surely belongs to every reader, "The reader does not move comfortably from some ideal 'emptiness' of meaning to a satisfying fullness, but instead becomes involved in a process in which any perception can precipitate a new confusion, and an apparent clarification turn into a prelude to further difficulties."⁸ He adds, "never before has there been such uncertainty about the reliability of the texts"⁹ and advises, "we must avoid the temptation to reduce the book to one fixed meaning."¹⁰ Another recent critic abandons the criterion of a 'meaning'

⁵ A. Mangel, "Maxwell's demon, entropy, information: The Crying of Lot 49," TriQuarterly 20 Winter 1971, p. 198.

⁶ R. Olderman, Beyond the Wasteland (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), p. 146.

⁷ F. Kermode, "Decoding the Trysterro," in Mendelson (ed.) op. cit. p. 162.

⁸ T. Tanner, Thomas Pynchon (London: Methuen & Co., 1982), p. 75.

⁹ *ibid* p. 77.

¹⁰ *ibid* p. 82.

and suggests conceiving the novel as an aggregate of options, possibilities and probabilities without any orientating centre, "Gravity's Rainbow...delineates probabilities, lines of technological, economic and cultural force, and patterns of phenomenological occurrence, rather than proclaiming unequivocally the transcendence or destruction of mankind. Throughout the novel, Pynchon emphasizes pattern and probability as opposed to more absolute and static epistemologies. ... Pynchon's language, so rich in multiple meaning and suggestiveness, has itself been seen as a vehicle for travelling beyond the simplistic binary conception of reality that demands that something be either true or false."¹¹ And so on. Several critics therefore, have commented on the operation of a semantic 'vanishing point', and guided by this consensus and my own reading experiences, I try to engage a poetics and philosophy of language which can account for this effect.

A recent article, taking as its pretext a passage concerning "Holy-Center-Approaching" in Gravity's Rainbow, very usefully suggests that "The Holy Center is the terminus of the quest, the epiphanic point...where the questing hero realizes the full meaning of his life, his search and his world. ... In Pynchon's novels no major character reaches this Holy Center."¹² It is this absence of centre, intrinsic (as we shall see) to any structure, which I will examine as systematically as possible. The author continues, "The novels all capitalize on a sense of insufficiency, and in creating this sense of insufficiency Pynchon has effectively created a gap that most criticism of his work has tried to fill."¹³

¹¹ M. Siegel, Creative Paranoia: Understanding the System of Gravity's Rainbow," Critique: Studies in Modern Fiction 18 (3) 1977, p. 44.

¹² M. Hite ' "Holy-Center-Approaching" in the Novels of Thomas Pynchon,' The Journal of Narrative Technique 12 (2) 1982, p. 121.

¹³ *ibid* p. 122.

This point is followed by a concise synopsis of the general conclusions which the 'gaps' in the novels have elicited. Finally the author suggests that, "In Pynchon's comic vision, Western man is a failed platonist, committed to the proposition that the truth is One... People take note of the diversity by trying to resolve it into unity."¹⁴ The pertinence of these allusions to the concepts of centre, truth, unity, meaning, and the description "platonist", will become clear as I elaborate my theoretical framework. The foregoing citations thus indicate that certain effects of semantic overdetermination, suspended meaning and what will be called dissemination are active in the texts. These effects are closely related to the concept of 'textual productivity' (to which I shall return). The article cited above a moment ago, attempting to consider the implications of the consensus I have sketched for some major critical notions, begins to justify the theoretical framework that I adopt.

The issues raised above introduce the second consideration orientating and contextualizing this thesis and one which, in my estimate, is closely connected with the first. There has been an extensive and cogent reevaluation of the role of language and discourse in the human sciences (particularly philosophy, linguistics, psychology and social anthropology) in the twentieth century and this reevaluation, whose implications only begin to emerge in the latter half of the century, necessarily affects our understanding of the critical enterprise and the practices of the literary critic, to the degree that the critic shares presuppositions about the human individual, the psyche, ontology, discourse, communication, meaning and social structures, with the spokesmen of the human sciences. These implications, which are becoming increasingly legible in critical debate and exchange,

¹⁴ *ibid* p. 123.

have their roots in the works of Freud, Heidegger, Marx, Nietzsche, Saussure and others and have initiated a strenuous reconsideration of 'the question of the text'.

Before engaging Pynchon's texts I will briefly sketch the context of inquiry in which the 'question of the text' is motivated and in which this thesis will be situated. I have adopted this context of inquiry on the basis of two main assumptions. Firstly, as I have indicated above, Pynchon's textual practices and the critical response evince the necessity of a more detailed account of certain effects produced by these texts, and secondly, this context of inquiry—the revaluation of the status of language and the question of the text—I believe, to some extent responds to recent and contemporary (Modernist, post-Modernist and non-realist) textual practices. Thus, whilst keeping close to Pynchon's texts I will find it necessary to refer frequently to theoretical debates apropos textuality.

The work of recent language theory (as noted a moment ago) has required a reappraisal of the complex problems of semantics and a wide range of related textual phenomena. This work, largely initiated by F. de Saussure's thesis of the 'arbitrariness of the sign' has led to the assignation of a new respect and status for discourse in the human sciences. This shift in perspective has already had extensive repercussions in the field of discourse and text analysis. It is the recognition and awareness that language, along with the semantic difficulties it creates, is both the locus and the focus of all debate and exchange, that has radicalized and invigorated the discourse and epistemologies of hermeneutics and the human sciences.

Tony Tanner touches on this dilemma in a recent publication:

Language, apparently so simple and there to use, becomes not only the arena for all kinds of problematical encounters but the agency and medium that brings into being the encounters, the problems, and the forms they take. ¹⁵

Poirier, in the article cited above, alludes to the same bind:

In their struggle with language and literary form, the writers I'm discussing become aware, and turn this awareness into modes of expression, that what are supposed to be instruments of knowledge do not offer clarification at all but are part of what needs to be clarified. ¹⁶

Both these statements communicate with the formal philosophical problem of the 'logical type' (defined as follows) whose schema is worth preserving for the insight it provides into the relation between the discourse analyzed and the analyzing discourse:

Russell's theory of logical types, [states that] there is a discontinuity between a class and its members. The class cannot be a member of itself nor can one of the members BE the class, because the term used for the class is of a different level of abstraction or logical type from the terms used for the members of the class.¹⁷

¹⁵ Tony Tanner, Adultery in the Novel: Contract and Transgression (Baltimore & London: John Hopkins University Press, 1979), p. 97.

¹⁶ Poirier, p. 193.

¹⁷ A. Wilden, System & Structure: Essays in Communication and Exchange, 2nd ed. (London: Tavistock Publications, 1972 & 1980), p. 117.

It is this organization which prevents any metaphysical predicate, necessarily articulated in language, from disengaging itself from, and superveniently controlling the language. This organization consequently has, as we shall see, major repercussions for the predication of Being and an entire range of hierarchically determined conditions attendant upon Being. It is from this organization that the paradoxes inhabiting the concepts of centre, unity and other motifs of autarky derive, which paradoxes in turn constitute the raison d'être (!) of a discourse which systematically dismantles these motifs. I scan this 'logical type' dilemma because it seems to lie at the base of the project within which I embark here: the discourse of deconstruction.

My analysis will be based then, primarily on the contributions of the contemporary French philosopher, Jacques Derrida, whose work systematically deals with many of the issues I have broached above and which gives a positively disproportionate degree of attention to the 'question of the text'. I hope to indicate through an application of this work to Pynchon's novels, how Derrida's meditations on the text have much to offer literary criticism. I engage Derrida's deconstructive apparatuses on the assumption that several major textual practices and techniques in Pynchon's novels become more clearly legible and comprehensible in such a context. I will endeavour to explain and demonstrate why I believe this to be so, and apply this mode of reading to the best of my ability. The products of this effort are legible in the following discussions of the three novels and would, I might hope, anticipate points of departure for a more able and assured deconstructive reading than I have been able to achieve; however if this dissertation do no more than raise obstacles and problems hindering the interpretation of Pynchon's texts and register a dissatis-

faction with prevailing critical procedures (first and foremost suspecting its own), it will have served some purpose.

It will be evident from the foregoing and the following, that language, or 'writing' as it shall be called with a modified sense, is accorded a special status in this project, based in part on the following premises:

Because all the practices that make up a social totality take place in language, it becomes possible to consider language as the place in which the social individual is constructed. In other words, man can be seen as language, as the intersection of the social, historical and individual. It is for this reason that work on language has created considerations of man as 'subject', that is, the individual in sociality as a language-using, social and historical entity.¹⁸

It is within the social framework and the conception of man as text - "man...seen as language" - suggested in this brief outline, that I wish to establish my enquiries into the status of the binary structures to Western epistemological and conceptual discourse generally.

An ancillary consequence of such enquiry would be a critique of the averred role of the critic as interpreter and textual exegete, diviner of meaning and unveiler of literary truth. Similarly, an enquiry into the traditional status of the author, the reader and the text must be initiated. As a further corollary, the notions of 'truth', 'meaning' and 'fiction' and the criterion of 'critical objectivity' must come under scrutiny. Such an enquiry is necessitated by an alliance with Derrida's philosophical investigations.

¹⁸ R. Coward & J. Ellis, Language and Materialism: Developments in Semiology and the Theory of the Subject (London & Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977), p. 1

If one feels dissatisfied with the criterion of 'meaning' in appreciating the total effect of Pynchon's texts, recent developments of the notion of textual productivity can begin to extricate us. The notion of textual productivity: the postulation of the text as a space of signifying-production and -productivity which neither solicits, nor is constrained by any critical interpretation; which permits the extraction of meaning(s) yet is not retrieved or controlled by any semantic reductions, or 'transcendental signifieds', but consistently eludes semantic arrest; this notion,—of which Pynchon's novels, through the operation of several recurrent textual devices and strategies, perhaps more thoroughly than any contemporary English-language texts, provide examples—can begin to deliver us from the dominating but inadequate conception of the text, and a fortiori the literary text, simply as the vehicle of a meaning or the expression of an author's intention (what-he-meant-to-say). These aspects are certainly retained under the new dispensation but greater attention is given to the roles of chance and textual play and their effects on the 'orderly' discourse. Let us review some recent definitions of the concept of 'textual productivity', which is exercising an extensive influence on current literary critical work. Barthes writes tentatively of it in S/Z:

Let us first posit the image of a triumphant plural, unimpoverished by any constraint of representation (of imitation). In this ideal text, the networks are many and interact, without any one of them being able to surpass the rest; this text is a galaxy of signifiers; it has no beginning; it is reversible; we gain access to it by several entrances, none of which can be authoritatively declared to be the main one; the codes it mobilizes extend as far as the eye can reach, they are indeterminable (meaning here is never subject to a principle of determination, unless

by throwing dice); the systems of meaning can take over this absolutely plural text, but their number is never closed, based as it is on the infinity of language. 19

Barthes' account of the plural or "writerly" text (as he chooses to call it) is unfortunately never fully or explicitly developed in his writing, and his retention of the criterion of "ideal text" implies that some constraints do prevail, but their relation to the 'imperfect "writerly" text' is never systematically disclosed. I cite below a second synopsis which gives some indication of the mode of this textual production:

The text is...a productivity, and this means: first, that its relationship to the language in which it is situated is redistributive (destructive-constructive), and hence can be better approached through logical categories rather than linguistic ones; and second, that it is a permutation of texts, an intertextuality: in the space of a given text, several utterances, taken from other texts, intersect and neutralize one another. 20

The paradoxical, disintegrating-synthesizing "(destructive-constructive)" process of Pynchon's texts, is among the issues of crucial interest to us. This extract also introduces the concept of 'intertextuality' which its author expands upon elsewhere, "any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another. The notion of intertextuality replaces that of intersubjectivity." 21 It will be clear how aptly this concept describes Pynchon's textual practice which involves massive-scale and diverse

¹⁹ Roland Barthes, S/Z: An Essay, trans. R. Miller (New York: Hill & Wang, 1974), pp. 5-6.

²⁰ Julia Kristeva, Desire in Language, trans. L. Roudiez et. al. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980), p. 36.

²¹ *ibid.* p. 66.

allusion, stylistic imitation, parody and satire and a range of narrative voices and tones: producing a tissue composed of a multiplicity of styles, genres, lexicons, dialects, jargons, etc. Barthes describes the text as an intertextual space in similar fashion, "the text is made of multiple writings, drawn from many cultures and entering into mutual relations of dialogue, parody, contestation."²²

It is crucial at some stage to take account of the massive dialogue which Pynchon's texts conduct with prior texts and signifying practices, and confront the vast banks of data and information which his texts amass. Whether one conducts a purely empirical investigation of Pynchon's use of textual sources, allusions, imitations or parodies, or chooses to analyse his reliance upon, and representation and renewal of broader social codes, conventions and structures, it is the function of dialogue between the precursors and the renewing, supervening text to which intertextuality particularly draws attention. The antecedent signifying practices assist our comprehension of the new, and reciprocally, synallagmatically, the new transforms and modifies our comprehension of the signifying practices and texts into and amongst which it is inserted. Borges, anticipating the concept of intertextuality, draws attention to the disconcerting logic which this intertextual dialogue inaugurates and according to which intertextuality must finally be described. Borges, similarly anticipating Derrida's critique of the origin and the paradox of 'the dangerous supplement' (which we will come to shortly) expresses the phenomenon of generic intertextuality by this apparently paradoxical formulation:

²² R. Barthes, Image-Music-Text, trans. S. Heath (Glasgow: Fontana/Collins, 1977), p. 148.

The fact is that every writer creates his own precursors. His work modifies our conception of the past, as it will modify the future. 23

Parenthetically: Eliot says something similar in "Tradition and the Individual Talent".²⁴ Derrida, teasing out the implications of this retroactive logic, is directed to a radical reappraisal of the text. The notion of intertextuality thus emphasizes the operation of some fairly involuted textual mechanics and prescribes the necessity for a more sophisticated textual logic than a simply linear and serial one. Derrida attempts to provide an account of this strange 'logic of the supplement'. However, I am anticipating a later passage in this introduction. Let us return to the issue of 'textual productivity' in current critical thinking.

Conjoined with this textual productivity must be a reevaluation of the reader as a producer. Barthes declares, "the goal of literary work...is to make the reader no longer a consumer but a producer of the text."²⁵ Pynchon's novels seem to both encourage, and dramatize the necessity and the danger of, this reader/quester-production, demonstrating it to be a function by which the individual, whether Stencil père and fils, Hugh Godolphin, Oedipa Maas, Tyrone Slothrop, Dr. Pointsman, Enzian, Capt. Blicero, Tchitcherine, the reader 'all those who act in the same special relevance to the word', exercises his/her desire for order, meaning and centre;

²³ Jorge Luis Borges, 'Kafka and his Precursors,' Labyrinths, trans. J.E. Irby (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972), p. 236.

²⁴ T.S. Eliot, Selected Essays (London: Faber & Faber, 1932 rpt. 1976), p. 15.

²⁵ Barthes, S/Z, p. 4.

projects a world, and produces a text. Pynchon's stipulative definition for this 'will-to-order' is paranoia and his attitude to this activity is profoundly ambivalent. He demonstrates that it is necessary, perhaps even inevitable yet hampered by severe limitations and potential dangers (ranging from hysteria and futility, to the initiation of destruction and annihilation in the interests of perfection) which must certainly interrogate our understanding of 'meaning', and truth as the products of a 'will-to-order' or paranoia:

If there is something comforting — religious, if you want — about paranoia, there is also anti-paranoia, where nothing is connected to anything, a condition not many of us can bear for long. (GR 434)

This passage seems to endorse the activity, yet the 'ordering-reflex' is frequently handled with sarcasm and ironic detachment as well. The narrator drily suggests of Slothrop at one point that, "his paranoia's just out of hand again," (GR 262). The presentation of Stencil in his search for V. is frequently ironic as well. It is against this ambivalent background that I propose the theory of textual productivity, employing it with all the irony and scorn it must incur.

One more issue, before we proceed to a synopsis of Derrida's work, is the problem of locating Pynchon's writing generically. If formal categories any longer have pertinence and are not an effective means of obscuring a text's individual merits, differences and difficulties by co-option into a general category, Julia Kristeva's formulation of the genre of Menippean satire indicates more specifically the pertinence of these theoretical themes to, and offers an instructive provisional description of, Pynchon's energetic and innovative writing.

Kristeva's conception of the Menippean satire and the "carnavalesque discourse" which she seems to conflate together, are drawn from the literary poetics of Mikhail Bakhtin (who proposed and distinguished these categories), but very much her own interpretations. However, leaving aside the question of Kristeva's faithfulness to Bakhtin's work, I cite her formulation of the Menippean satire/carnavalesque (to which I shall have recourse in my discussion of Gravity's Rainbow) because it emphasizes a radical fervour of writing which I believe one finds in Pynchon's texts; Gravity's Rainbow in particular, is an angry, provocative and penetrating critique (among other things) of white, Western culture and one cannot ignore or dismiss this fury. The reader who fails to recognize this will equally fail to recognize that the notorious formidability of Gravity's Rainbow is itself a vehicle of this assault.

Let me note that Pynchon's writing — specifically Gravity's Rainbow — has previously been located within the Menippean genre by several commentators who all however draw their accounts of Menippean satire or 'anatomy' (as Northrop Frye proposed renaming it) from Frye's Anatomy of Criticism.²⁶ Frye's account does not, in my estimate, stress adequately enough the disruptive effects and textual ambivalence of the Menippean fiction, and a fortiori of Pynchon's fictions, which interest us here and are the focus of Kristeva's adaptation. Kristeva, placing greater emphasis on the 'revolutionary' and critical functions of Menippean satire, an emphasis more germane to the strident critique of American and Western culture sustained in Pynchon's

²⁶ vide. S. Morgan, "Gravity's Rainbow: What's The Big Idea?" Modern Fiction Studies 23 (2) 1977, pp. 199-216. (Esp. pp. 200-201), and Linda Westervelt, "'A Place Dependent on Ourselves': The Reader as System-Builder in Gravity's Rainbow," Texas Studies in Literature and Language 22 (1) 1980, pp. 69-90. (Esp. p. 88, n. 6). E. Mendelson's description of the "encyclopedic narrative" into which he places Gravity's Rainbow--E. Mendelson, "Gravity's Encyclopedia," in Mindful Pleasures: Essays on Thomas Pynchon, eds. G. Levine & D. Leverenz (Boston & Toronto: Little, Brown & Co., 1976), pp. 161-195, also seems to owe something of its formulation to Frye's account of Menippean satire as an "encyclopaedic farrago".

novels, writes as follows:

Menippean discourse is both comic and tragic, or rather, it is serious in the same sense as the carnivalesque; through the status of its words, it is politically and socially disturbing. It frees speech from historical constraints, and this entails a thorough boldness in philosophical and imaginative inventiveness.Phantasmagoria and an often mystical symbolism fuse with macabre naturalism. Adventures unfold in brothels, robbers' dens, taverns, fairgrounds and prisons, among erotic orgies and during sacred worship, and so forth. The word has no fear of incriminating itself. It becomes free from presupposed "values"; without distinguishing between virtue and vice, and without distinguishing itself from them, the word considers them its private domain, as one of its creations. Academic problems are pushed aside in favour of the "ultimate" problems of existence: this discourse orients liberated language towards philosophical universalism. Without distinguishing ontology from cosmogony, it unites them into a practical philosophy of life. Elements of the fantastic, which never appear in epic or tragic works, crop forth here. Pathological states of the soul, such as madness, split personalities, daydreams, dreams and death, become part of the narrative.... According to Bakhtin, these elements have more structural than thematic significance; they destroy man's epic and tragic unity as well as his belief in identity and causality; they indicate that he has lost his totality and no longer coincides with himself. At the same time, they often appear as an exploration of language and writing: Menippean discourse tends towards the scandalous and eccentric in language. The "inopportune" expression, with its cynical frankness, its desecration of the sacred, and its attack on etiquette, is quite characteristic. This discourse is made up of contrasts: It uses abrupt transitions and changes; high and low, rise and fall, and misalliances of all kinds. Its language seems fascinated with the "double" (with its own activity as graphic trace, doubling an "outside") and with the logic of opposition replacing that of identity in defining terms. It is an all-inclusive genre, put together as a pavement of citations. It includes all genres (short stories, letters, speeches, mixtures of verse and prose) whose structural signification is to denote the writer's distance from his own and other texts. The multi-stylism and multi-tonality of this discourse and the dialogical status of its word explain why it has been impossible for classicism, or for any other authoritarian society, to express itself in a novel descended from Menippean discourse.

Put together as an exploration of the body, dreams, and language, this writing grafts onto the topical: it is a kind of political journalism of its time. Its discourse exteriorizes political and ideological conflicts of the moment. The dialogism of its words is practical philosophy doing battle against idealism and religious metaphysics, against the epic. It constitutes the social and political thought of an era fighting against theology, against law.

Menippean discourse is thus structured as an ambivalence, as the focus of two tendencies of Western literature: representation through language as staging, and exploration of language as a correlative system of signs. Language in the Menippean tradition is both representation of exterior space and "an experience that produces its own space." In this ambiguous genre appear, first, the premises of realism (a secondary activity in relation to what is lived, where man describes himself by making of himself an exhibition, finally creating "characters" and "personalities"); and secondly, the refusal to define a psychic universe (an immediate present activity, characterized by images, gestures, and word-gestures through which man lives his limits in the impersonal). ...the Menippean experience is not cathartic; it is a festival of cruelty, but also a political act. It transmits no fixed message except that itself should be "the eternal joy of becoming", and exhausts itself in the act and in the present.* ... The tyranny it [Menippean discourse] is subjected to is that of text..., or rather its own structure, constructing and understanding itself through itself. It constructs itself as a hieroglyph, all the while remaining a spectacle. It bequeaths this ambivalence to the novel, above all to the polyphonic novel, which knows neither law nor hierarchy, since it is a plurality of linguistic elements in dialogical relationships. The conjunctive principle of the different parts of Menippean discourse is certainly similitude (resemblance, dependence and therefore "realism"), but also contiguity (analogy, juxtaposition, and therefore "rhetoric"— ...). Menippean ambivalence consists of communication between two spaces: that of the scene and that of the hieroglyph, that of representation by language, and that of experience in language, system and phrase, metaphor and metonymy. ...

In other words, the dialogism of Menippean and carnivalesque discourses, translating a logic of relations and analogy rather than of substance and inference, stands against Aristotelian logic. From within the very interior

of formal logic, even while skirting it, Menippean dialogism contradicts it and points towards other forms of thought. 27

*(This formulation seems to preserve a residual 'meta-physics of presence' which, in the aftermath of Derrida's critique of presence, would require further qualification.)

One could find frequent support in Pynchon's novels, particularly Gravity's Rainbow and V., for these theses concerning Menippean discourse; many of the motifs, themes and structures to which Kristeva refers here, will hold our attention in their particular transformations in Pynchon's novels. This extended quotation serves, then, as a cursory generic location but also identifies certain generic characteristics to which we shall have further recourse, viz. the Menippean discourse is at once a discourse synthesizing discourses and a discourse about discourses; it is a discourse both representational and textual which consequently suspends itself between these two polarities. The Menippean discourse practises a writing which vacillates between the transitivity of attempting to double a prior 'event' and an inherent intransitivity which classic realist texts (with varying degrees of success and failure) seek to suppress.

So, having laid out the observations of Barthes, Kristeva and others, and noted some of the broad features that we must consider in Pynchon's work, I declare the critical strategy which both these theoretical formulations and Pynchon's textual practices implicitly urge. A reading of Pynchon's work must continually seek to evince and retain the text's plurality and, as far as possible, avoid imposing a unitary or totalizing 'meaning':

²⁷ Kristeva, pp. 82-85.

a semantic product, on the text; this constraint will be impossible to observe satisfactorily but the necessity of its regulation should nevertheless supervise the critical enterprise.

The accounts of textual productivity and the related notion of intertextuality which poses the text as palimpsest (adumbrated above), give some idea of their operation, but it is in Derrida's work that the mechanics of this productivity and intertextuality find their most rigorous and meticulous articulation, and their furthest applied extensions. Still deferring a synopsis of Derrida's discourse, I shall take the liberty of adding his accounts of the productive reading, noting his emphasis on the productive potential of every text to the degree that it forms some alignment with regard to the language in which it is situated:

the writer writes in a language and in a logic whose proper system, laws and life his discourse by definition cannot dominate absolutely. He uses them only by letting himself, after a fashion and up to a point, be governed by the system. And the reading must always aim at a certain relationship unperceived by the writer, between what he commands and what he does not command of the patterns of language that he uses. This relationship is ... a signifying structure that critical reading should produce. (OG 158)

And noting his emphasis on the significations — intended or unintended — inaugurated between elements within the text and between the text and the language which mobilizes it; (he is writing here of Plato's philosophical system):

The system is not primarily that of what someone meant-to-say. Finely regulated communications are established, through the play of language, among diverse functions of the word and, within it, among diverse strata or regions of culture. These communications or corridors of meaning

can sometimes be declared or clarified by Plato [the author] when he plays upon them "voluntarily", a word we put in quotation marks, because what it designates, ... is only a mode of "submission" to the necessities of a given "language". Then again, in other cases, Plato [the author] can not see the links, And yet these links go on working of themselves. (Diss. 95-6)

The implication of these pronouncements, for the notions of meaning and intention, are extensive. This conception of the text will also legitimize a close attention to effects of textual play and paranomasia in the novels under consideration.

Elsewhere, Derrida states the programme for reading slightly differently, "the task is ... to dismantle the metaphysical and rhetorical structures which are at work ... not in order to reject or discard them, but to reconstitute them in another way."²⁸ The type of reading practice schematized above responds to several textual effects which a commentator has summarized as follows:

a text signifies in more than one way, and to varying degrees of explicitness. Sometimes the discrepancy is produced ... by a double-edged word which serves as a hinge that both articulates and breaks open the explicit statement being made. Sometimes it is engendered when the figurative level of a statement is at odds with the literal level. And sometimes it occurs when the so-called starting-point of an argument is based on presuppositions that render its conclusions problematic or circular.²⁹

The last of these items is the common logical fallacy of 'begging the question' but what Derrida has shown is that this error occurs more frequently than it is believed to do.

²⁸ Jacques Derrida, "The White Mythology", trans. F.C.T. Moore, New Literary History 6 (1) 1974, p. 13.

²⁹ B. Johnson, "Translator's Introduction", Dissemination, pp. xiv-xv.

These then are among the features upon which an ideal productive reading focusses. The purpose of the productive reading therefore, is to recognize that "a text signifies in more than one way" and by systematically following other patterns of signification, lead the text beyond, and indicate the inadequacy of, semantic constraints. This is not, therefore, to discard 'meaning' (an unthinkable and impossible task, "nothing would be more ridiculously mystifying")³⁰ but to demonstrate the inadequacies and paradoxes within the bases from which 'meaning' and 'truth' are constituted as such.

These theoretical issues belong then, to the second consideration orientating this thesis (assuming these two considerations could ever be absolutely separated). Having thus endeavoured to justify the theoretical-practical interchange I employ henceforth, I will now outline in greater detail the mode and style of Derrida's vast and highly complex philosophical project. It is worth stressing at the outset that the operational lexicon (which I define and to which I shall have recourse during the remainder of this analysis) is always intricately connected with individual reading practices and situated in an entire textual and philosophical system, or method which Derrida terms 'deconstruction', and should be seen in context to fully appreciate its capacities. (For example, this random list of his key-'concepts' appears somewhat inscrutable here, "into this open chain of differance, of the supplément, of écriture, of the gramme, the pharmakon, the hymen, the motif ... the impulse to

³⁰ Jacques Derrida, "Positions" Part I, Diacritics 2 (4) 1972, p. 13.

generality called dissémination inserted itself." 31)
 We shall clarify those terms in this chain which will be
 important for our reading of Pynchon's novels.

Jacques Derrida and Deconstruction

The work of Jacques Derrida consists of a sustained and continually developing critique of the Western metaphysical tradition. This interminable analysis is indeed as ambitious as it sounds. Responding to discrepancies, paradoxes and aporias in the writings of Plato, Hegel, Husserl and others, and developing the critique initiated by Nietzsche, Heidegger and indirectly, Freud, Derrida insists that, despite individual differences amongst philosophical systems, all conclude by determining Being in general as presence:

The history of metaphysics....Its matrix...is the determination of Being as presence in all senses of this word. It could be shown that all names related to fundamentals, to principles, or to the center have always designated an invariable presence - eidōs, archē, telos, energeia, ousia (essence, existence, substance, subject) alētheia, transcendentality, consciousness, God, man, and so forth. 32

He expands on this feature again elsewhere, when he writes of:

31 *ibid.* p. 37.

32 Jacques Derrida, Writing and Difference, trans. A. Bass (London & Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978 rpt. 1981), pp. 279-80.

the historical determination of the meaning of being in general as presence, with all the subdeterminations which depend on this general form and which organize within it their system and their historical sequence (presence of the thing to the sight as eidos, presence as substance, essence, existence [ousia], temporal presence as point [stigmè] of the now or of the moment [nun], the self-presence of the cogito, consciousness, subjectivity, the co-presence of the other and of the self, ...). (OG 12).

Thus, metaphysics has always centred itself on the unity and self-presence of a transcendental consciousness, or cogito, and defined Being, and all its attendant determinations (identity, truth, logos, essence, reason, unity, meaning, centre) as variations upon, or constellated around a moment of self-presence. Metaphysics consequently remains bound in a platonico-idealist framework.

Derrida observes that, as a corollary to this determination, an entire network of conceptual oppositions is constituted which has never been the simple opposition of pairs of contraries but a hierarchically ordered field of positively and negatively valorized terms. The conceptual field of Western metaphysics is diagnosed as a skewed, rational binarism which privileges one term of each dyad above the other. The operation of this skewed binarism, which Pynchon's novels go some way towards capsizing (I shall demonstrate this in the reading of the novels individually), working the entire conceptual field and procedure of metaphysics, is consequently reflected and preserved throughout Western discourse. The passage quoted above already intimates this (vide. OG 158) and the point is frequently stressed, "There is no sense in doing without the concepts of metaphysics to shake metaphysics. We have no language—no syntax and no lexicon—which is foreign to this history." 33

³³ *ibid.* p. 280.

Derrida repeatedly draws attention to the exertions of this binary rhetoric which he describes as, "the closed, agonistic, hierarchical field of philosophical oppositions," (Diss. 5) and insists that, "in a classical philosophical opposition we are not dealing with the peaceful coexistence of a vis-à-vis, but rather with a violent hierarchy. One of the two terms governs the other (axiologically, logically, etc.), or has the upper hand." ³⁴ and, "these oppositions have never constituted a given system, a sort of ahistorical, thoroughly homogeneous table, but rather a dissymmetric, hierarchically ordered space whose closure is constantly being traversed by the forces, and worked by the exteriority that it represses: that is, expels and, which amounts to the same, internalizes as one of its moments" (Diss. 5).

Barbara Johnson in her "Translator's Introduction" summarizes the struggle:

Western thought, says Derrida, has always been structured in terms of dichotomies or polarities: good vs. evil, being vs. nothingness, presence vs. absence, truth vs. error, identity vs. difference, mind vs. matter, man vs. woman, soul vs. body, life vs. death, nature vs. culture, speech vs. writing. These polar opposites do not, however, stand as equal and independent entities. The second term in each pair is considered the negative, corrupt, undesirable version of the first, a fall away from it. Hence, absence is the lack of presence, evil is the fall away from good, error is a distortion of truth, etc. In other words the two terms are not simply opposed in their meanings,

³⁴ Jacques Derrida, Positions, trans. and annot. A. Bass (London: Athlone Press, 1981), p. 41

but arranged in a hierarchical order which gives the first term priority, in both the temporal and qualitative sense of the word. In general, what these hierarchical oppositions do is to privilege unity, identity, immediacy and temporal and spatial presentness over distance, difference, dissimulation, and deferment. In its search for the answer to the question of Being, Western philosophy has indeed always determined Being as presence.³⁵

In contrast to this "metaphysics of presence" which concludes that Being (the 'podium' from which, and about which its attending discourses: truth, meaning, unity, centre, etc., are organized) partakes simply of presence, Derrida argues that presence, and consequently Being, has an irreducible relationship with absence. The 'here and now' (indicating both the spatial and temporal co-ordinates of this presence) is always constituted and differentiated by what is absent and non-identical with it, as well as what precedes and follows it.

The presence/absence distinction, and this holds similarly for all the conceptual dyads, is static—digital—effects constituted by and within a play of differences. The present and absent are not mutually exclusive, existential categories, but instead constitute and are constituted by each other, in a mutually reciprocal and irreducibly inextricable relationship, so that neither is simply present, nor simply absent, but each relies intrinsically (the irony of this description is clear) on its counter-term, its other, for its delimitation and its essence.

Derrida proposes replacing the concepts of 'origin' and 'centre' (metaphysical concepts presupposing spatio-temporal place) with play, "Play is always play of absence

³⁵ Johnson, Dissemination, p. viii.

and presence, but if it is to be thought radically, play must be conceived of before the alternative of presence and absence." 36

Derrida later develops the diabolical machine différance to describe the multiple functions and effects of this differential play. He declares that metaphysics has always erected its very autarky firstly within this general economy of play, simultaneously suppressing, disqualifying and excluding as negativity those aspects of this economy which are not compatible with the premises of this metaphysical order, yet which are nevertheless always indispensable to the delimitation of the restricted, metaphysical and conceptual economy. The discourse to which this gives rise, orientated by the hierarchical opposition: speech/writing, with the affirmation of the former (invariably as Logos, seat of truth, meaning, etc.) over a subordinated, phonetic writing, Derrida refers to as logocentrism. Logocentrism is the generic name he assigns to all Western discourse which is determined by, participates in, and is centred on metaphysical conceptual-ity and the logos (Greek for speech, logic, reason), as the 'Voice of Being' where Being is determined as self-presence. And he reminds us, "We have no language... foreign to this history" (vide. n. 33). Logocentrism is defined:

logocentrism: the metaphysics of phonetic writing...
 [controls] in one and the same order:

1. the concept of writing....
2. the history of (the only) metaphysics, which has, in spite of all difference...always assigned the origin of truth in general to the logos: the history of truth, of the truth of truth, has always been - ... - the debasement of writing, and its repression outside "full" speech.

³⁶ Derrida, Writing and Difference, p. 292.

3. the concept of science or the scientificity of science — what has always been determined as logic — a concept that has always been a philosophical concept, even if the practice of science has constantly challenged its imperialism of the logos, by invoking, for example, from the beginning and ever increasingly, nonphonetic writing. (OG 3)

All discourse therefore conforms to, and is articulated within a common conceptual heritage. Within this discourse, the hierarchy to which Derrida has directed most energy and deciphering, because it is the forum and matrix of all the others and because its foundation displays most clearly all the metaphysical predicates and paradoxes, is the hierarchy of speech/writing and the pivotal concept of the sign: conceptually logocentric but functionally subversive and problematic.

Derrida draws attention to the traditional subordination of writing, stressing that it has always been conceived as a contingent and superfluous adjunct to a "full" speech pregnant with meaning, intentionality and consciousness, "The structure and history of phonetic writing have ... played a decisive role in the determination of writing as the doubling of a sign, the sign of a sign. The signifier of a phonic signifier " (Diss. pp. 109-110) and "the exterior surface, the insubstantial double of a major signifier, the signifier of the signifier - " (OG. p. 7), and remarks on its traditional disqualification as a parasite and its association with death. Proposing that this disqualification has taken place because writing, possessing the capacity to function in the radical absence of any author, receiver, referent, context or other supervising entity, has posed a crucial aporia to a "metaphysics of presence" which cannot satisfactorily accommodate it, Derrida takes as his point of departure Saussure's famous thesis:

in language there are only differences. Even more important: a difference generally implies positive terms between which the difference is set up; but in language there are only differences without positive terms. 37

This insight has major repercussions for the concept of the sign because what it permits is the complete disengagement of material signifiers from the signifieds they conventionally represent, hence permitting the "arbitrariness of the sign." Henceforth signification can only occur and thus a signified be able to emerge within a system of differences. There is consequently no 'transcendental signified' prior to, and commanding the system of differences, rather differences produce the 'signified', "the original or transcendental signified, is never absolutely present outside a system of differences. The absence of the transcendental signified extends the domain and the play of signification infinitely."38 This system of differences is most clearly operative in any system of writing. For writing to function without a necessary link or reference to any context as we noted above, the entire system must be, and is, self-regulating and self-referring, i.e. each element, each sign defines and is defined only by reference to those other elements in the system which differ from it, with no element ever dominating and centring the system. Thus, as was intimated above, no 'transcendental signified' can ever stabilize and organize the system, because it is first dependent on a system of differences in order to appear.

³⁷ F. de Saussure, Course in General Linguistics, trans. W. Baskin (Glasgow: Fontana Collins, 1974 rpt. 1978), p. 120.

³⁸ Derrida, Writing and Difference, p. 280

For the system of writing to function, for signification to be possible, two conditions are necessary: iterability and spacing. Each element in the system must have a repeatable, iterable form by which it may be distinguished and the system must be organized by spacing (preserving the active-passive sense of this word): the distribution of the 'elements' in a spatio-temporal medium. Spacing thus designates both the activity of differentiating and the result of this activity which is the constitution of differences: the articulation of the system, in space and time. Derrida also refers to this process as différance. This 'concept' is difficult to imagine: the 'element' and its difference from the others emerge simultaneously when it is installed or imprinted in the system, rendering the 'element' a composite phenomenon of presence and absence, identity and difference. Concluding that these are the pre-conditions of any system of writing, Derrida proceeds to show that these conditions are similarly essential for speech. Speech is similarly dependent on iterable forms, phonic differences and the spacing of a medium. In fact it is these common conditions which permit the system of writing to represent speech. Derrida thus proposes that speech and writing be considered as species of a 'generalized writing' or arche-writing, and distinguishes between this modified concept of writing and the "vulgar concept of writing" emphasizing that the difference between speech and writing are first produced in this general economy of difference. An interviewer distinguishes these two types of writing:

In your essays at least two meanings of the word "writing" are discernible: the accepted meaning, which opposes (phonetic) writing to the speech that it allegedly represents (but you show that there is no purely phonetic writing), and a more radical

meaning that determines writing in general, ... the common root of writing and speech. 39

Thus arche-writing describes a more generalized writing, or economy of differences, which comprises writing and speech. Derrida justifies the retention of the 'old' name of writing for this modified concept:

An arche-writing ... which I continue to call writing only because it essentially communicates with the vulgar concept of writing. The latter could not have imposed itself historically except by the dissimulation of the arche-writing, by the desire for a speech displacing its other and its double and working to reduce its difference. If I persist in calling that difference writing, it is because ... writing was, by its situation, destined to signify the most formidable difference. It threatened the desire for the living speech from the closest proximity, it breached living speech from within and from the very beginning. (OG 56-7)

Arche-writing, yet another name for différance, is the economy within which metaphysics produces and qualifies the field of rational binarisms by the misrecognition of this generalized writing which precedes and produces presence and absence. Furthermore, the constraints we noted governing the production of signs hold for the appearance of 'things' in general. Identity itself, in order to exist as such, relies on determinate/determinable features by virtue of which it can be distinguished. This condition also effectively preordains the duplication of the 'identity'. Thus the 'identity' of the 'present-being' is always already 'doubled' in its appearing-present; to put it differently, a pre-condition of 'identity' is its potential iterability which obviously at once both founds and divides the 'identity':

³⁹ Jacques Derrida, "Implications", in Positions, p. 7.

What is is not what it is, identical and identical to itself, unique, unless it adds to itself the possibility of being repeated as such. And its identity is hollowed out by that addition, withdraws itself in the supplement that presents it. (Diss 168)

Derrida indicates that everything is first and foremost 'writing' understood in this renewed sense before the assignation of a specific place to writing under a phonetically-determined model which has gradually proved less tenable.

The critical and analytical project is henceforth to articulate a critique of this logocentric tradition and clearly, if this critique is directed at the entire Western mode of conceptuality, a great deal is at stake, notwithstanding Derrida's own discourse. His deconstructive method can only use a metaphysical conceptuality and a philosophical logic to demonstrate their own inadequacy and pre-condition. This is a self-defeating necessity Derrida has never denied. He writes:

Operating necessarily from the inside, borrowing all the strategic and economic resources of subversion from the old structure, borrowing them structurally, that is to say without being able to isolate their elements and their atoms, the enterprise of deconstruction always in a certain way falls prey to its own work. (OG 24)

The deconstructive reading can never dispense with the metaphysical concepts (some of which we have noted in the preceding discussion) but instead takes this metaphysics as its point of departure. By a meticulous analysis of strategic metaphysical concepts deconstruction then exposes the complicities through which the privileged term in the binaristic conceptual economy achieves its ascendancy whilst nevertheless remaining inhabited by its devalorized and suppressed partner. Derrida urges, throughout his theoretical discourse and by his textual

practice, the reinscription of this restricted, binaristic economy within a general economy of difference and play (différance), a system of a higher 'logical type' which, by definition, no logic or discourse can absolutely master but instead within which these will always be situated, and from which they will always be derivative. Henceforth it is necessary to situate logocentric discourse by marking and loosening its limits. This is what grammatology: a 'science' of writing (which must also interrogate the concept of scientificity), entails. Let us trace the procedure of this mode of discourse.

The first phase of this critical methodology involves the critique of the dominant idealist position and the interrogation of the hierarchy. Derrida describes this phase as inversion or overturning, "we must traverse a phase of overturning. ... To deconstruct the opposition, first of all, is to overturn the hierarchy at a given moment."⁴⁰ I tried to show how Derrida achieved this by inverting the traditional hierarchy between speech and writing, disclosing instead that speech was a species of writing. The phase of reversal however, is not sufficient as it would simply lead to the installation of a counter hierarchy and remain within the oppositional system of the conceptual field. Thus a second procedural phase is necessary.

The second phase of this critical methodology involves the intervention, or interruption of the system. This phase involves surrounding the traditionally subordinated term with a meticulous critical discourse such that the

⁴⁰ "Positions", Positions, p. 41.

paradoxes of the hierarchy are emphasized and the system repunctuated by the disclosure of a function which straddles the opposition and cannot be accommodated under the logocentric dispensation, but instead puts the system in play. The intervention consists of inscribing the system differently, "Therefore it is necessary ... to mark the gap between the inversion which brings down the superior position while reconstructing its sublimating or idealizing genealogy, and the irruptive emergence of a new 'concept', a concept which no longer allows itself, never allowed itself to be understood in the previous regime."⁴¹ Again, we saw the substitution of the 'concept' arche-writing to describe this displaced concept of writing which is the common root of speech and writing.

This, briefly, is the broad context in which Derrida's discourse operates, and in the deconstruction and displacement of logocentric discourse, he has tirelessly reshaped an old vocabulary according to new axioms, as well as developing a new lexicon, some of whose terms we have already encountered above. This new lexicon consists of a chain of substitutable terms which, like arche-writing, cannot be resolved or adequately accounted for in a traditional logocentric discourse—"certain marks ... that by analogy [with Gödel's theorem] ... I have called undecidables, that is ... verbal properties ... that can no longer be included within philosophical (binary) opposition, but which ... inhabit philosophical opposition, resisting and disorganizing it,"⁴² —but are instead strategic in the unravelling of that discourse.

⁴¹ Derrida, "Positions I," Diacritics, p. 36

⁴² Derrida, Positions, pp. 42-3.

I will indicate below the basic sense of some of the more important of these terms. The most important for my purpose in this analysis are the reconfiguration of writing (which we have already examined), the supplement and the dissemination. All these operations function according to similar mechanics: by effecting a breach in the concepts of Being, identity, meaning and presence (conceived either spatially or temporally). These operations involve understanding that the dimensions of space and time are always differentiating-differentiated fields in which 'presences' are produced. Derrida attempts to describe and condense this active-passive differing-deferring which simultaneously and inextricably structures spatial and temporal dimensions under the name (or gramme) of différance of which he frequently insists, "Différance is neither a word nor a concept." ⁴³ and adds, "différance is not, does not exist, and is not any sort of being-present ... it has neither existence nor essence. It belongs to no category of being, present or absent."⁴⁴ Derrida describes it elsewhere:

This concept can be called gram or différance. The play of differences supposes, in effect, syntheses and referrals which forbid at any moment...that a simple element be present in and of itself, referring only to itself. Whether in the order of spoken or written discourse, no element can function as a sign without referring to another element which itself is not simply present. This interweaving results in each "element"...being constituted on the basis of the trace within it of the other elements of the chain or system. This interweaving, this textile, is the

⁴³ Jacques Derrida, "Differance," in Speech and Phenomena and Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs, trans. D.B. Allison (Northwestern University Press, 1973), p. 130.

⁴⁴ *ibid.* p. 134.

text produced only in the transformation of another
text. 45

Différance, Derrida's most general term in the 'undecidable' arsenal — one commentator suggests that it "comes close to becoming Derrida's master-concept"⁴⁶ — gathers up all the traits spawned by dismantling the presence/absence opposition and reconstellates the 'world' as systems of difference in an endless play. It is an intricate and highly complex operation with which all the other terms: spacing, arche-writing, trace, gramme, supplement, dissemination etc., necessarily communicate, but whose characteristics are barely imaginable. It helps to have an intuition of how this principle functions, but need not detain us any longer here.

I turn now to examine the logic of the supplement, or as it later comes to be called, the graphics of supplementarity, indicating that it cannot be accommodated within any 'logic'. The supplement, a pioneering undecidable and one which retains a major status in Derrida's work, is explored at length in his reading of it in the text of Rousseau (Of Grammatology Part II). We have already had a preview of this supplement in the operation of writing, traditionally determined as a 'supplement to speech'. Derrida defines its paradoxical functioning in the following formulation:

the concept of the supplement ... harbours within itself two significations whose cohabitation is as strange as it is necessary. The supplement

⁴⁵ Derrida, Positions, p. 26

⁴⁶ G.C. Spivak, "Translator's Introduction" to Of Grammatology, p. xliii.

adds itself, it is a surplus, a plenitude enriching another plenitude, the fullest measure of presence. It cumulates and accumulates presence. It is thus that art, techne, representation, convention, etc., come as supplements to nature and are rich with this entire cumulating function.

But the supplement, supplements. It adds only to replace. It intervenes or insinuates itself in-the-place-of; if it fills, it is as if one fills a void. If it represents and makes an image, it is by the anterior default of presence. Compensatory and vicarious, the supplement is an adjunct, a subaltern instance which takes-(the)-place. As substitute it is not simply added to the positivity of a presence, it produces no relief, its place is assigned in the structure by the mark of an emptiness. Somewhere, something can be filled up of itself, can accomplish itself, only by allowing itself to be filled through sign and proxy. The sign is always the supplement of the thing itself.

This second signification of the supplement cannot be separated from the first. Each of the two significations is by turns effaced or becomes discreetly vague in the presence of the other. But their common function is shown in this: whether it adds or substitutes itself, the supplement is exterior, outside of the positivity to which it is super-added, alien to that which, in order to be replaced by it, must be other than it. (OG 143-4)

The question, or paradox of the supplement arises at the moment when the ideal self-presence has to manifest itself as such. In order to announce itself: its truth, its identity, its Being, it has to manifest itself, exteriorize itself in a supplementary discourse which has always been determined as merely contingent, a superfluous adjunct to the transcendental ego in its full self-presence. The paradox of the supplement of writing, representer of a "full" speech allegedly proximate to Being, is only possible because this speech is itself a supplement to an ideal signified which in turn discloses an irreducible incompleteness. The moment that the identity of the being is to be exteriorized, (i.e. manifested); the moment Being has to venture from the realm of pure ideality, assuming

such a condition were possible, it must have recourse to the detour of a substitute, or supplement which, in effect, precludes from the beginning, the possibility of full-presence to the extent that 'presence' is at least divided between the supplemented and the supplement. And once this primary supplement breaches the 'identity' or 'presence', it prescribes the possibility of a second supplement supplying the first, and so forth, in an endless chain of supplements and substitutions:

This process of substitution, which thus functions as a pure play of traces or supplements or, again, operates within the order of the pure signifier which no reality, no absolutely external reference, no transcendental signified, can come to limit, bound or control; this substitution... can go on infinitely in the element of the linguistic permutation of substitutes, of substitutes for substitutes; (Diss. 89).

Stating the problem slightly differently, we may say that the manifestation, the Being appearing-present, appearing in its identity, is already subject to the conditions of the sign, "the idea of manifestation is the idea of the sign" (OG 49). Identity, in order to constitute itself, must make an iterable mark in a system of differences; this is both the possibility and the impossibility of the identity, of the 'presence' of Being. Thus the possibility of doubling, of the supplement, is always already inscribed in the possibility of identity and is, in fact, a pre-condition of 'identity'.

the being-present ... in its truth, in the presence of its identity and in the identity of its presence, is doubled as soon as it appears, as soon as it presents itself. It appears, in its essence as the possibility of its own most proper non-truth ... reflected in the icon, ... , or the simulacrum. (Diss. 168).

I shall leave aside the concept of the supplement here and briefly discuss the pharmakon, the word by which Plato

describes writing and which harbours two totally contradictory senses: remedy and poison, good and evil etc. It thus has the same undecidable status in relation to the entire field of philosophical contraries which constitute the Platonic metaphysical system. Derrida notes, "With a few precautions, one could say that pharmakon plays a role analogous in this reading of Plato, to that of supplement in the reading of Rousseau" (Diss. 96 n.43).

One more term which requires some explanation, describing an operation which I envisage Pynchon's texts performing, is dissemination. Derrida's concept of dissemination communicates particularly with the place and domain of semantics in the text, and the limitations of theories of meaning.

Dissemination, a logical extrapolation of difference, before being 'defined' should be pre-faced by this precaution, "If dissemination, seminal différance, cannot be summarized into an exact conceptual tenor, it is because the force and form of its disruption explode the semantic horizon." 47 Let us misrepresent it, then, by the following definition which states quite concisely its most important features:

a linguistic or textual productivity which escapes the domination of or determination by concepts. Whereas the notion of ambiguity assumes the possibility of enumerating and thus controlling meanings, dissemination is a semantic dispersal, produced by various effects of order or resemblance, which can never be completely controlled. 48

⁴⁷ Derrida, Positions. p. 45.

⁴⁸ J. Culler, "Jacques Derrida," in Structuralism and Since, ed. J. Sturrock (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), p. 160.

It is necessary to note that dissemination, despite similarities, must be contrasted^{with,} and distinguished from any theory of finite semantic univocity (monosemy) or polysemy. This is not to deny that 'meanings' exist, or occur, but of noting that these always govern and orientate the text by disqualifying and suppressing other signifying effects which cannot be accommodated within any semantic quotient, "one of the theses—there is more than one—inscribed within dissemination is precisely the impossibility of reducing a text as such to its effects of meaning, content, thesis, or theme. Not the impossibility, perhaps, since it is commonly done, but the resistance - we shall call it the restance—of a sort of writing that can neither adapt nor adopt such a reduction" (Diss. 7-8). Barbara Johnson (vide. n. 29 above) indicated some of these alternative forms of signification which cannot be comprehended within any semanticity.

Dissemination is also to be distinguished from polysemy because the latter still preserves "the possibility of enumerating and thus controlling meanings." Polysemy, Derrida maintains, "is organized within the implicit horizon of a unitary resumption of meaning, that is, within the horizon of a dialectics, ... a teleological and totalizing dialectics that at a given moment ... must permit the reassemblage of the totality of the text into the truth of its meaning, constituting the text as expression, as illustration and annulling the open and productive displacement of the textual chain " 49 and, "Polysemy always puts out its multiplicities and variations within the horizon, at least, of some integral reading which contains no absolute rift, no senseless deviation—

⁴⁹ Derrida, Positions, p. 45.

the horizon of the final parousia of a meaning at last deciphered, revealed, made present in the rich collection of its determinations" (Diss. 350). Thus, although the difference between dissemination and polysemy is very slight, it is nevertheless decisive. Dissemination, conceiving the text as a field of play without any centre or 'transcendental signified' controlling, organizing and limiting the play, cannot be limited by any concept of 'meaning'. No 'meaning' can ever enumerate, account for and rationalize the total signifying effects of the text within itself and in relation to the language in which it is situated.

The notion of dissemination permits the text to be prised loose from the trammelling force of meaning- and logic-conditions, and opens up a whole extra realm of signification, textual plays, patterns and effects which have always marked a text but have previously been disqualified as trivial, 'non-serious' or figurative discourse etc. In Pynchon's novels, where the 'serious' or truth-conditioned discourse is under severe interrogation by satire, parody and irony and where textual play and 'non-serious' discourse of all kinds are so clearly visible, the widened parameters of textuality produced by dissemination seem particularly applicable.

It will be a major objective of my discussion to demonstrate that Pynchon's novels, besides actively constituting a dissemination, as Derrida maintains all texts do, explicitly mark out the space and possible reactions and experiences produced by this dissemination: specifically through the indeterminate constructs of *V.*, *the Tristero* and *the Rocket*. The basic methodology which I will adopt in approaching these novels will consist of three phases which I outline as follows.

The first phase will involve the isolation and justification of comprehensive and intrinsic polar co-ordinates of a thematic and structural character, demonstrating the broad binary conceptuality structuring the texts and permitting us to get a provisional purchase on them. Following this, the next phase will involve the arrangement and organization of the divergent bodies of allusion, information and figural language etc. around our pre-determined binary framework, indicating how this binarism is preserved by these diverse forms. During the course of this phase I will identify the hierarchical nature of the binary co-ordinates at work in the text and the attributes which accrete to each of the opposed terms. Finally, I will analyse the effects of those indeterminate structures in each text which, by straddling or integrating contrary co-ordinates will have rendered them from the beginning provisional and artificial, and which effect the dismantling and displacement of these binary co-ordinates. This final phase will correspond roughly to Derrida's processes of reversal and intervention.

This then concludes the programme of analysis for the novels. I will attempt to apply the principles I have laid out in the preceding discussion by a close and sustained reading of the novels. I will discuss the novels in chronological order, treating them more or less separately and alluding to the short stories where it is deemed instructive or necessary.

CHAPTER ONE

** V. **

"The triangle with its point downwards, the lower part of Solomon's seal, is a traditional symbol of the feminine principle, exploited extensively in Finnegans Wake. It goes without saying that the value of the letter V is more justly derived from a vague, vast group of associations."

-- unidentified quotation in Dissemination

Before I begin my analysis of the novels I should like to put before us a few epigraphs to remind us of Pynchon's vehemently contemptuous attitude to literary critical industry, which should urge us not to proceed without a certain embarrassment at the enterprise:

"You guys, you're like Puritans are about the Bible. So hung up with words, words." (56/53)

"Remember that Puritans were utterly devoted, like literary critics, to the Word." (117/107)

say that's our real Destiny, to be the scholar-magicians of the Zone, with somewhere in it a Text, to be picked to pieces, annotated, explicated, and masturbated till it's all squeezed limp of its last drop . . . (GR 520)

Original Sin - the latest name for that is Modern Analysis - (GR 722)

V. is Thomas Pynchon's first novel and first major publication, following the scattered publication of the short stories: The Small Rain (1959), Mortality and Mercy in Vienna (1959), Lowlands (1960), Entropy (1960), Under the Rose (1961). The last of these is extensively revised as chap. 3 of V., "In which Stencil, a quick-change artist, does eight impersonations" (V. 61). The novels, as is immediately evident to the reader, manifest a highly complex organization and a bewildering network of erudition, information and allusion; therefore one useful approach to these is through the shorts. These will provide some thematic co-ordinates and insights into the intricately connected, and more sophisticated preoccupations and extensions of the novels, and enable one to extract and examine some of the recurring concerns in isolation. Here already, one can perceive binary patterns and overdetermined semantic structures which, with greater complexity, play a crucial role in the creation of polysemic and disseminative texts. The approach to Pynchon's novels through the shorts is instructive and strategic for several reasons.

Firstly, because of their circumscription and relative immaturity, the early pieces lack the overwhelming breadth, density and interconnective possibilities of the three novels. (This aspect, although negative from the writer's perspective, is some relief to the floundering reader). Secondly, the young writer's thematic pre-occupations are less skilfully integrated and thus more accessible, and the mechanics of his narratives are more easily discernible. As Pynchon's fiction develops it absorbs information in a manner which paradoxically, signifies more abundantly, yet becomes progressively less clearly significant: i.e. it is more difficult to say what semes the abundancy of signs, allusions, metaphors and myths constitute. This effect, I will later propose, is precisely the effect the novels are intended to have.

Thirdly, an analysis of the short fictions enables one to witness a gradual sophistication of technique, style and content progressing towards the first major work, V. One of Pynchon's achievements, as he develops, has been his ability to efface himself, his own authorial 'persona', behind increasingly reticulate plots; multiple characters, tones and voices, and divers modes of narrative presentation, simulating states of consciousness and non-consciousness etc., with escalating efficiency. Thus I suggest that any reading which seeks to attribute a single moral, religious or metaphysical perspective to the author (and there are several already written: some admirable ones) runs a severe risk of distorting and limiting the plurisignification of the texts. Pynchon's textual practice tirelessly evokes uncertainty and indeterminacy, articulating or concluding in ambiguity, paradox and contradiction. Even the shorts, as I shall demonstrate in a moment, manifest these features. As a safeguard against attributing any particular narrative perspective or statements to the author, I wish to establish here, for convenience's sake, the convention of referring

to the narrator as "Pynchon" when intentionality seems in doubt. My punctuation will convey both the paradoxical relation of conception and dissociation from the author coupled in certain narrative statements, and indicate the arbitrariness of the sign I have selected to designate these effects.

Furthermore, the early fictions provide the reader and the critic with a few rudimentary repertoires with which to approach the novels and enable one to observe the way in which these repertoires have been reassessed, modified, inverted or rejected. I use the term 'repertoire', which must be linked to intertextuality, in the sense defined here: "The repertoire consists of all the familiar territory within the text. This may be in the form of references to earlier works, or to social and historical norms, or to the whole culture from which the text has emerged."¹ Pynchon evolves a repertoire which draws from three distinct realms: the historical and cultural context his texts represent, other textual sources and, finally his own previous texts. His novels, ostensibly distinct works, reveal an unusual degree of cross-referentiality, with several characters and conceptual analogies reappearing in subsequent works (Besides the more obvious reappearances of Pig Bodine, Mondaugen and Weissman in Gravity's Rainbow, is the puzzling appearance of the film, Lucky Pierre Runs Amok in Gravity's Rainbow circa 1945 (GR 497), originally a pornographic story radioed to the U.S.S. Scaffold (V. 219) circa 1955 for example).

Finally, regarding technique, Pynchon's shorts enable us to see operating on a restricted scale, some of his major subsequent strategies of inclusion, particularly his use of allusion, analogy and metaphor drawn from an extraordinary range and variety of sources, including some

¹ W. Iser, "The Reality of Fiction," New Literary History VII (1) 1975, p. 21.

fictive ones. I shall not embark on a detailed reading of the shorts but will confine myself, as a prolegomenon to V. and the other novels, to some relevant points concerning Pynchon's more important short stories.

TWO SHORT STORIES

Mortality and Mercy in Vienna describes the first of Pynchon's numerous chaotic parties degenerating according to an entropic pattern, told from the perspective of the protagonist, surrogate-host, Cleanth Siegel ("host" providing the basis of the extensive religious symbolism in the narrative). Siegel directs, as an act of mercy, the annihilation of the partygoers through the agency of a psychotic Indian, Irving Loon. The decadent party becomes transformed through the invoked allusions and metaphors, into a paradigm for society in decline. The emphasis on the setting, Washington, the political centre of America (incidentally the setting of Entropy as well), combined with the overt Christian symbolism, the dominant religion, together seem to insist on the party as an index: a synecdoche for the crumbling order of WASP-dominated America.

The tale deriving the contrast between 'mercy' and 'mortality' from The Merchant of Venice proceeds, by a skilfully controlled figurative network in which the protagonist accedes to his symbolic role in direct proportion to the party's decline, to dismantle the distinction between mercy and mortality. An equivalence is achieved where annihilation is allegedly the only merciful action left to a redeeming Host. This catastrophe is triggered by the convergence of symbolic and the literal with the final insertion of the former, embodied in Siegel, into the latter. Depending

on the reader's conventional senses of mercy and death, Pynchon draws the narrative to a conclusion where these terms become bizarrely equivalent, leaving one suspended between reaffirming one's customary meanings, the gathering's exhaustion and condemning the protagonist, or accepting the protagonist's terms and endorsing his nihilistic action. Thus, even in this early tale, the 'meaning' is not a simple univocal decision but instead suspended ambiguously between these two choices. One can also identify, besides the obvious biblical references, quotations from, and allusions to, Shakespeare, T.S. Eliot and Conrad's Heart of Darkness. Eliot's poetry and Conrad's novel both exercise a major influence on Pynchon's early work up to, and including V.; Lowlands is replete with references and allusions to The Waste Land, whilst representing this social 'wasteland' literally by situating the action in a rubbish dump.

Entropy is more emphatically binaristically conceived and structured. The major contrast is a spatio-conceptual one: the juxtaposition of Callisto's unit of static order --"this Rousseau-like fantasy, this hothouse jungle.... Hermetically sealed, it was a tiny enclave of regularity in the city's chaos, alien to the vagaries of weather, of national politics, of any civil disorder"² --with Meatball Mulligan's lease-breaking party, a riot of noise, "deteriorating into total chaos" (E. 291), provides the mise en scène for articulating opposite degrees of order in terms comprised by the scientific law to which the story's title refers. Entropy consists of the close cultural application of this concept, explicitly by Callisto

² Thomas Pynchon, "Entropy," Kenyon Review 22 (2) 1960, p. 279. Hereafter (E. ...).

and, one may conjecture, by "Pynchon". The apartments of Callisto and Mulligan correspond respectively to high or low entropy cells of the model used by James Clerk Maxwell in his postulation of a sorting, Maxwell's Demon--another construct Pynchon frequently applies, especially, as we shall see, in The Crying of Lot 49--represented in Entropy by Callisto's girl-friend and accomplice, Aubade.

The entropic party, which formed the mise en scène of Mortality and Mercy in Vienna, and functions (as already suggested) as a synecdoche for societies in decline, is recapitulated. (The motif of the chaotic party, developing according to an entropic teleology, is a favorite one and occurs frequently in V., most notably as "Foppl's Siege Party" (V. 235) where the structure of the closed system is preserved most literally. Three memorable parties responding to the same pattern in Gravity's Rainbow are Slothrop's Prince party (GR 211-4), Raoul de la Perlimpinpin's party (GR 244-9) and the non-stop debauchery aboard the Anubis (GR 460 ff.). The party is simply one of the many transformations that the 'closed system governed by entropy' paradigm undergoes in Pynchon's fictions .

In Entropy, Callisto's careful formulations of his entropic sociology, from which he vainly tries to extricate himself by projecting a microcosm of model order, contrasted with Mulligan's randomly degenerating party, respectively enable Pynchon to recapitulate the theory and applications of the entropy analogy, and provide an illustrative example.

Following Callisto's exegesis and adaption of entropy to historical and cultural analysis:

he found in entropy or the measure of disorganization for a closed system an adequate metaphor to apply to certain phenomena in his own world. He saw, for

example, the younger generation responding to Madison Avenue with the same spleen his own had once reserved for Wall Street: and in American 'consumerism' discovered a similar tendency from the least to the most probable, from differentiation to sameness, from ordered individuality to a kind of chaos. (E. 283-4),

we can trace several dichotomous organizations which reiterate the dual spatio-conceptual organization of the narrative and are also subject to entropic processes.

The Saul subplot introduces communications theory and the "signal-to-noise ratio" (E. 287) which (as we learn explicitly in Lot 49) is also a function of entropy. Saul elaborates:

Tell a girl: 'I love you.' No trouble with two-thirds of that, it's a closed circuit. Just you and she. But that nasty four-letter word in the middle, that's the one you have to look out for. Ambiguity. Redundance. Irrelevance, even. Leakage. All this is noise. Noise screws up your signal, makes for disorganization in the circuit. (E. 285)

Clearly the key-word linking these two passages (Callisto's and Saul's) is disorganization. The order-to-disorder ratio for an information network is signal-to-noise. Saul's 'communications theory' metaphor provides a crucial paradigm for the narrative conceived as a system of order: ordered discourse transmitting a 'message' from author to reader, and subject to distortion by contingent variables and other disqualified patterns of signification. Thus the degrees of order/chaos, signal/noise--which falls under the generic term for disqualified material in any system, waste (again anticipating our analysis of Lot 49)--are not merely thematic concerns, but constitute operational and hermeneutic considerations of some magnitude. Through the example of the Duke di Angelis quartet which is attempting to evolve an ideal music, "Pynchon" recognizes

that noise, distorting phenomena, are a precondition of any communicative network. The alternative is the quartet's "airless void" (E. 290), unvitiated by entropic disorganization, but also precluding communication.

This story, through its evocation of the signal/noise dilemma, self-reflexively indicates its own participation in, and determination by, these conditions which in one form or another remain a presiding preoccupation in Pynchon's writings. I shall discuss these issues again in relation to other texts.

Saul's 'communications theory' metaphor subsumes and orientates the acute, autistic struggles of Aubade who processes all sensory input in terms of sound and attempts to resolve it into a musical order and structure:

Counterpointed against his [Callisto's] words the girl heard the chatter of birds and fitful car honkings scattered along the wet morning and Earl Bostic's alto rising in occasional wild peaks through the floor. The archetectonic purity of her world was constantly threatened by such hints of anarchy: gaps and excrescences and skew lines, and a shifting or tilting of planes to which she had continually to readjust lest the whole structure shiver into a disarray of discrete and meaningless signals. (E. 283)

Clearly this situation is a variation on the 'communications theory' model and the exclusively musical imagery in which Aubade is conceived is explicitly linked to the tale's structure: eight blocks of narrative alternating between the 'high' and 'low' entropy cells in fugal counterpoint, confirming the applicability of Saul's model to the tale itself.³

³ R. Redfield & P.L. Hays, "Fugue as a Structure in Pynchon's 'Entropy,'" Pacific Coast Philology 12 (1977), pp. 50-55, confirm this structure in detail.

Entropy is a useful preface to Pynchon's novels because the themes and motifs it introduces continue to inform Pynchon's narrative technique throughout. The issues of entropy and communications theory, order and disorder, and the dilemmas of information, interpretation and meaning remain engaged at all levels of his subsequent writing.

Apart from the inviolable entropic teleology gloomily predicted by Callisto and reinforced by Henry Miller's epigraph, the dichotomies of animate/inanimate and street/hothouse which compose major thematic co-ordinates in V. are also already inchoate here. The unpredictability of the inanimate cosmos is conveyed by the inclement and capricious weather-patterns, "vagaries of weather", which, playing on the etymology of 'soul'--"as every good Romantic knows, the soul (spiritus, ruach, pneuma) is nothing, substantially, but air; it is only natural that warpings in the atmosphere should be recapitulated in those who breathe it" (E. 278)--"Pynchon" wryly suggests are translated into "the city's chaos" and "civil disorder". The figure of "this Rousseau-like fantasy, this hothouse jungle" populated by exotica of gaudy, 'unearthly' colours and radiance, becomes contrasted with the 'street' and extensively elaborated in V.

Entropy is, then, an intricately wrought narrative introducing several of the important themes, motifs, pre-occupations and methods which will be developed with greater sophistication in the novels. I wish briefly to compare the ending with that of Mortality and Mercy in Vienna in order to draw attention to a similar pattern of ambiguity.

Mulligan resolves to restore some semblance of order to his deteriorating party and, following the death of a bird in Callisto's "hothouse", indicating their failure to ostracize entropic decline, Aubade, perpetrating an act of compromise and a gesture toward chaos, smashes a window to re-embrace the external disorder. Both these actions, individually positive: Mulligan's gesture towards order and Aubade's renunciation of the sterile, quixotic dream of stability and reemergence with 'reality' are, ironically, cumulatively negative. Together they converge, affirming a breakdown of difference and increasing homogeneity, symptoms of entropy, at another level. Thus, similar to the equivalence between mercy and death established in the former story, here the conclusion suspends the reader in a paradox. The narrative hovers irresolutely between affirming the options of idealistic conservatism with decadence and anarchy or compromise in both quarters with a resultant entropic effect anyway.

The character of Callisto is the most developed one in Entropy and invites some further comment. His enterprise and manner of speaking about himself in the third person establish him as a prototype for Herbert Stencil in V. These characters are both modelled on Henry Adams, the narrator-protagonist of his autobiography, The Education of Henry Adams. The ideas espoused, the method of their assembly by correspondences, the peregrinating manner of their assembly and the proximity of Adams' vision to Pynchon's own enterprise, justify a cursory account of Henry Adams' predications here. His historical system and modus operandi are, in many respects, the paradigm for Stencil's quest after the lady V., whilst his speculative tone and style inform the journal entries of Sidney Stencil and Fausto Maijstral.

THE DOCTRINES AND INFLUENCE OF HENRY ADAMS

Adams' autobiography is itself a highly personalized account of history. It describes his persistent and often idiosyncratic search for relevant and reliable historical principles and an adequate method of historiography, by the adaptation of various scientific phenomena and hypotheses for the purposes of describing these perceived or inferred historical patterns and principles. This search is sustained over a lifetime of peregrinations amongst diplomatic and political circles across Europe and America.

The main similarity between Adams, Callisto and Stencil lies in their common methodology of establishing, with varying degrees of credibility, connections between diverse systems by exploiting correspondences and similarities, supported by extensive inference, speculation and adaptation. It is a methodology which Pynchon consistently and deliberately uses, engages in the reader, and persistently and mercilessly satirizes in his fiction, characterizing it as paranoid. Adams' autobiography is therefore a major influence on Pynchon's writing, most obviously Entropy and V. where Adams is directly referred to; V. resembles, in some respects, a playful and imaginative commentary upon, and fictional application of, Adams' historical and philosophical theses. Stencil files discloses this source with some qualification of his own 'depersonalization':

Herbert Stencil, like small children at a certain stage and Henry Adams in the Education, as well as assorted autocrats since time out of mind, always referred to himself in the third person. This helped "Stencil" appear as only one among a repertoire of identities. "Forcible dislocation of personality" was what he called the general technique, (V. 62)

Entropy reveals the relevance of Adams' work to Pynchon when Callisto remarks, "Henry Adams, three generations before his own, had stared aghast at Power; Callisto found himself now in much the same state over Thermodynamics, the inner life of that power, realizing like his predecessor that the Virgin and the dynamo stand as much for love as for power " (E. 280). He adapts certain thermodynamic principles to augment Adams' doctrines and applies these to sociological ends, deriving a pattern for his own life. Pynchon uses this excessive and caricaturistic figure to demonstrate the central maxim of Adams' work, "Chaos was the law of nature; Order was the dream of man." ⁴

This maxim summarizes the general conclusion Adams reluctantly admits after years of research. Responding to the escalating developments of science, technology and mechanical power, all revealing a stranger and more powerful cosmos than had previously been imaginable, Adams declares, "man had translated himself into a new universe which had no common scale of measurement with the old. He had entered a supersensual world." ⁵ Describing his own confusion and sense of impotence before a cosmos of forces in which he felt obsolete, Adams resolves to select appropriate phenomena for historical investigation and seek methods of historical analysis equal to these new exigencies:

Satisfied that the sequence of men led to nothing and that the sequence of their society could lead no further,

⁴ Henry Adams, The Education of Henry Adams (New York: Modern Library, 1931), p. 451.

⁵ *ibid.* 381.

while the mere sequence of time was artificial, and the sequence of thought was chaos, he turned at last to the sequence of force. 6

It is here that Adams' historiography seems to become particularly relevant for Pynchon. He elects to attend to symbolic force. The conception of the symbol as a force was itself rare and innovative:

The symbol was force, as a compass-needle or a triangle was force, Symbol or energy, the Virgin had acted as the greatest force the Western world had ever felt, and had drawn man's activities to herself more strongly than any other power, natural or supernatural, had ever done; the historian's business was to follow the track of energy. 7

However, the Virgin as a symbolic force, Adams suggested, was being vitiated and displaced by the emergent technological powers, which he symbolized with the dynamo, and her command on the mass-imagination was declining. Following his adaptation of several scientific models of the cosmos to historiographical ends Adams concludes, "Modern science guaranteed no unity." 8 Thus he ponders, "what happened if one...frankly gave up Unity altogether? What was Unity? Why was one forced to affirm it?" 9

The crucial pre-occupation of Adams' inquiries involves confronting a material cosmos which manifests no centre or unity, but rather, only a play of forces where (from a human perspective) chaos prevails. Resolving that "the only honest alternative to affirming unity was to deny it" 10 he reviews the Western intellectual tradition for

6 *ibid.* 382.

10 *ibid.* 430.

7 *ibid.* 388-9.

8 *ibid.* 429.

9 *ibid.* 431.

some assistance. "Apparently no one ever denied it. Every philosopher...naturally affirmed it "¹¹ whilst, "By that path of newest science, one saw no unity ahead-- nothing but a dissolving mind"¹²

These indications together lead Adams to conclude that order--a unity or universe--is an artificial construct projected onto an essentially alien and indifferent cosmos. He recognizes that order is an illusory grid, but a necessary anthropomorphism enabling the organism to organize and control his environment. Hence his famous maxim, "Chaos was the law of nature; Order was the dream of man." "Universe" in Adams' lexicon--contrasted with "multiverse"--is the product of human determination and, we may adjoin, has an ideological character: "man's mind behaved like a young pearl oyster, secreting its universe to suit its conditions until it had built up a shell of nacre that embodied all its notions of the perfect. Man knew it was true because he made it."¹³ Let us remark too, the violence this manufacture of truth requires, "He sacrificed millions of lives to acquire his unity."¹⁴ Clearly, this ideology of unity is not harmless or innocent.

It is with particular attention to the second proposition of Adams' maxim with its implications of illusion and violence that Pynchon develops his numerous and intricate plots. His heroine in The Crying of Lot 49, following the example of Randy Driblette, echoes Adams when she contemplates, "Shall I project a world?" (59/56). The former

¹¹ *ibid.* 432.

¹² *ibid.* 434.

¹³ *ibid.* 458.

¹⁴ *ibid.* 458.

proposition, "Chaos was the law of nature," whilst still relevant in human terms, is revised and modified by Pynchon's adaptations from Wittgenstein's Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, chiefly, in this regard, the proposition divined from the 'sferics by Weissmann's cryptological "Finaglings," "The world is all that the case is" (V. 278), and repeated shortly thereafter for "comic relief" (289) in Charisma's seduction serenade, a burlesque of Wittgenstein's logical positivism, to willing Mafia Winsome.

Wittgenstein's proposition is consolidated elsewhere in the novel, most explicitly by Maijstral when he asserts, "The room simply is. To occupy it and find a metaphor there for memory, is our own fault" (V 304).¹⁵ This is the condition of the inanimate world and cosmos prior to axiological, alethiological, temporal, historical or any other anthropomorphic superimpositions, or 'metaphors' of which Adams' evaluation, "chaos" remains one. Another proposition from the Tractatus, complementing Adams, avers, "There is no order of things a priori."¹⁶ As Wittgenstein's relevance to Pynchon seems confined to some casual allusions to the Tractatus, I do not consider his philosophy in any detail; nevertheless, it is worth noting that Wittgenstein's philosophy has been the basis for some interesting critical work on Pynchon's novels.¹⁷

In V., Stencil files, "Born in 1901, the year Victoria died, Stencil was in time to be the century's child" (V. 52), one upon whose fate Adams gloomily ruminated, is the most substantial approximation of Adams, but Pynchon's frequent trivialization and comic treatment of the quest for V.

¹⁵ cf. "the world is neither meaningful nor absurd. It quite simply is." - A. Robbe-Grillet, Snapshots & Towards a New Novel, trans. B. Wright (London: Calder & Boyars, 1965), p. 53.

¹⁶ L. Wittgenstein, Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, trans. C.K. Ogden (London, Boston & Henley, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1922, rpt. 1981), p. 153 (Prop. 5.634).

¹⁷ vide. W. Plater, The Grim Phoenix: Reconstructing Thomas Pynchon (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1978).

creates a caricature of his model in Stencil. Stencil too registers fear and awe at the cosmos that confronts him but remains committed to an ideology of unity whose shape is V., and blind to the obsolescence of his epistemology, as Adams does not. The characters of Fausto Maijstral and Stencil père are, in fact, closer facsimiles of Adams in the novel.

Maijstral, describing his personal history, closely echoes Adams' awareness of the artificiality of order and hence history:

We can justify any apologia simply by calling life a successive rejection of personalities. No apologia is any more than a romance--half a fiction--in which all the successive identities taken on and rejected by the writer as a function of linear time are treated as separate characters. The writing itself even constitutes another rejection, another "character" added to the past. So we do sell our souls: paying them away to history in little installments. It isn't so much to pay for eyes clear enough to see past the fiction of continuity, the fiction of cause and effect, the fiction of a humanized history endowed with "reason".
(V. 306)

These sentiments, contrary to an entire Western intellectual tradition convinced of the primacy of reason and causality, I suggest, judging from Pynchon's textual practices, closely approximate his own position.

Let us now proceed to V. and trace the binaristic structures which we have already begun to decipher in the short stories, noting their consistency in the novel's thematic organization and their limitations implicitly inscribed by the function of certain semantic properties.

* * * * *

"U.S.S. SCAFFOLD" : THE STRUCTURE OF PLOT IN V.

V. divides structurally into two narratives, each with its own protagonist. These two characters eventually converge on Malta, momentarily united in the quest for V., late in the novel. These narratives are followed by a superadded Epilogue. The first plot narrates the picaresque wanderings--"a random array of picaresque acts" (V. 273)--of Benny Profane, "a schlemihl and human yo-yo" (V. 5), and his marginal involvement with the Whole Sick Crew in the streetland of New York, 1956. These episodes are counterpointed with the presentation of a motley assortment of personal reports from diverse periods, locations and cultures between 1898 and 1946, all dubiously chronicling the development of the figure V. These historical episodes, gathered by Herbert Stencil during his peregrinations in search of V. and presented to the reader in random order, punctuate the Profane episodes at regular intervals. Stencil, an eccentric historian and maverick globetrotter, whose obsession with V. binds the historical narrative he presents together, is inclined to identify plots, causality and teleology in any random sequence of events--"In a world such as you inhabit, Mr Stencil, any cluster of phenomena can be a conspiracy" (V. 154)— and does not inspire a great deal of confidence.

Each of the two plots has a deliberately loose construction --consisting of the loose juxtaposition of sequences; the Stencil episodes are not even chronologically ordered (although a conventional temporal order can be retrieved), suggesting that their order is entirely arbitrary-- reinforced by their development alongside one another with minimal narrative overlap. This loose structure to the novel performs several functions.

Firstly, the double plot serves to reinforce the binaristic thematic scheme (which I shall trace in some detail) and

generates a major tension between the two thinly connected plots; the loose co-ordination of the two plots predictably elicits speculation about the relationship between them, but also gives the novel an ostensibly loose and superficially unplotted form. The episodic and picaresque structure of the Profane-saga combined with the arbitrary assembly of the Stencil-papers reinforces this loose appearance.

At the risk of over-generalization, I suggest that this provocatively loose form is a deliberate attempt to disrupt the normative criteria of the 'well-wrought story' conforming to a 'pellucid Distribution of Time' (to paraphrase from V. 409), and a set of narratively and semantically relevant events and details. In direct contrast to these conventions, the Profane episodes include several sequences which would require putting somewhat extensive limits on the concept of 'good narrative form', whilst the jumbled presentation of the Stencil papers, particularly, is a vigorous disruption of causal temporality and history. What this textual practice presents is a structure of narratives in play. Derrida has remarked on the structure in relation to centre and play:

the structurality of structure--...has always been neutralized or reduced, and this by a process of giving it a centre or of referring it to a point of presence, a fixed origin. The function of this centre was not only to orientate, balance and organize the structure...but above all to make sure that the organizing principle of the structure would limit what we might call the play of the structure. 18

The 'Stencil-papers' demonstrate quite clearly their

¹⁸ Jacques Derrida, Writing and Difference, p. 278.

absolute play. (I have already remarked on the arbitrariness of their arrangement in the novel). No narrative in the collection can be privileged as the original or central narrative.

STRUCTURE AND SUPPLEMENTARITY

We have a very clear demonstration of Derrida's thesis of the supplement (vide. 'Introduction') where each of the "Stencilized" (V. 228) episodes functions as a supplement to the others, manifesting their incompleteness and simultaneously its own, to the extent that it reciprocally relies on that which it supplements. This structure, however, does not constitute an insular, self-sufficient system, fully present to itself. The Epilogue, rendered after the departure of Stencil files from the novel, but resembling one of his episodes in every respect, provides yet another supplement to the structure. Similarly, the Profane-plot supplements and is supplemented by the 'Stencil-papers'. The Epilogue and a remark elsewhere by Stencil files, "V. in Spain, V. on Crete; V. crippled in Corfu, a partisan in Asia Minor." (V. 388) intimate the interminability of this supplementary process: episodes could be inserted into the narrative indefinitely. Thus the novel testifies to its own fundamental incompleteness. We may compare the reader's experience of this supplementarity with the psychological action of Nachträglichkeit (Freud's term for 'deferred action') which vigorously disrupts any linear conception of time. This concept describes the process by which a past 'event' acquires a new and different contextual configuration from an 'event' succeeding it, whilst the following 'event' acquires orientation from that which precedes it. This sensation is experienced at every point where some new detail or

'event' in the novel adds to the significance of some preceding point and illustrates, in retrospect, that the initial moment already contained the possibility of its own supplement, i.e. it was not a moment of semantic plenitude and full presence in itself. This supplementarity is active at every level of structuration in the novel from morphemes, words and sentences, to figures, themes and chapters, in as far as these constitute systems of correspondence and difference.

The fact that we were able to supplement or preface (a species of supplement) a reading of V. with comments drawn from Entropy and Adams' Education indicates that V., and similarly any other text, can never be fully present to itself, can never be self-sufficient and consequently does not constitute a Book in the traditional sense by which 'book' has indicated the adequate representation of a full, autarkic presence. Instead, the identity of V. fades amongst an incalculable reference to other texts. It follows too that if a critical discourse claims to present the meaning of the novel, the novel's meaning as the reappropriation of the presence it represents, this discourse already bears witness to its own bankruptcy, as the 'meaning' is evidently already divided between the novel and supplementing critical discourse. Similarly, this ensemble contains the possibility of further supplementation. The supplement is therefore a pre-condition of textuality.

In V. the 'Stencil-papers' force us to experience this mechanism of supplementarity whilst their chronological disruption forces us to experience temporality or history non-linearly and non-causally.

Tanner provides a further explanation for the novel's loose structure, suggesting that, "By standing back from this dedicated pursuer and collector of notes towards a supreme fiction [Stencil], Pynchon is able to explore the plot-making instinct itself. To this end his own novel has to appear relatively unplotted--leaving chunks of data around,...for Stencil to try to interrelate."¹⁹ We will discover, with a distinctly self-conscious irony, that we as readers are also insinuated in this 'plotting' activity as we rearrange the scattered historical fragments, attempt to correlate the culture presented in the Profane episodes with those presented in the 'Stencil papers' and inevitably attempt to restore a narrative continuity and integrity to the enigmatic figure of V.

TOWARDS A STRATEGY OF INTERPRETATION

Thus, acknowledging the intense irony of our critical task here and attending to the numerous structural and thematic cross-references, resemblances, patterns, correspondences and differences in the text, I will attempt to demonstrate a systematic conceptual and thematic organization which, to a great extent belies the superficially loose appearance of the novel. It is, in fact, at a thematic and figural level that Stencil's disparate historical documents become linked to each other and with the contemporary American subculture represented in the Profane saga.

A major difficulty for any literary critical discourse is distinguishing and deciding, from the complex network of

¹⁹ Tanner, "V. and V-2." in Mendelson (ed.), p. 20.

narrative modes, mediated and unmediated reports etc., what one may only attribute to the expressions and musings of individual characters and what one may infer about the novel as a whole. It is for this reason that narratology distinguishes between author/implicit author/narrator/protagonist/character; (I have already stipulated that "Pynchon" for my purposes, designates the implied or inferred author of the novels under discussion). The risk of imputing any position to "Pynchon" is particularly acute, thus Tanner cautiously writes, "with the many 'vocabularies' deployed in the book, we can [not] be sure who, if anyone, has the right words".²⁰

At the outset of this discussion I noted the efficiency with which "Pynchon" dissociates himself, despite his adherence throughout his novels to the convention of an omniscient narrator (with a few exceptions), from the range and diversity of scientific analogies, theories of history, politics, scholasticism, emotion, compassion, love, sex and death, and moral, intellectual, eschatological and volitional stances he derives and represents in his novels. He achieves this "absentia" by mediating these numerous versions of the world through the utterances, consciousnesses, dreams, hallucinations and actions of specific characters: in V., Stencil père and fils, Godolphin père and fils, Benny Profane, Rachel Owlglass, Fausto and Paola Maijstral, Rooney and Mafia Winsome, McClintic Sphere, Dudley Eigenvalue, Shale Schoenmaker, Kurt Mondaugen and Vladimir Porcépic et.al. One is therefore faced with the standard problem of deciding who says the

²⁰ Tanner, Thomas Pynchon, p. 48

'right' words, whose discourses may be privileged and what can only be attributed to the individual traits and personalities of the characters involved. This distinction between discourses attributable to characters and discourse imputable to an implied author is, of course, the traditional problem of 'intentionality' crucial to the 'meaning' and 'correct' interpretation. There is apparently one strategy by which one can determine to some extent, with as much certainty as is ever possible, who speaks the 'right' words.

"Pynchon's" consistency and commitments in V. can be detected at those points where several characters from divers places and times express similar sentiments or observations, or where the narrator has recourse to recurring thematic, figurative and stylistic devices in the articulation of the divers narratives, episodes, incidents and communities in the novel. I will take this supra-personal and supra-episodic correspondence as the index of an 'intentional' discourse in V.

TRACING CO-ORDINATES : The Animate and the Inanimate

The novel distinguishes, as already intimated, between the animate and the inanimate world and this dualism is conspicuous in every episode in the novel, prompting more than one critic to comment rather uncharitably that V. is the "overgrown elaboration of a simple idea. ...the decline of the animate into the inanimate" and "the single thread that runs through every individual detail. ... in V. is the idea of decadence or decline, and everything in the book is an analogue of the induration or hardening of the woman V." ²¹

²¹ E. Mendelson, "Introduction," in Mendelson (ed.), p. 6.

Whilst V., compared with Pynchon's subsequent novels, is somewhat mechanistically dualistic, and probably even didactic in places, Mendelson's reductive reading, recuperating the novel simply as an overextended parable of decline to which all the novel's diverse ramifications are subjugated, cannot do the novel justice. Other attributes associated with the animate/inanimate dichotomy as well as the enigmatic figure of V. render the novel less simple than Mendelson claims. We shall for the moment take the animate/inanimate dichotomy as our orientating co-ordinates.

One character, autobiographer of The Confession of Fausto Maijstral, distinguishes these separate states in the course of chronicling the animateness of his discarded personae:

Fausto III is the closest any of the characters comes to non-humanity. Not "inhumanity", which means bestiality: beasts are still animate. Fausto III had taken on much of the non-humanity of the debris, crushed stone, broken masonry, destroyed churches and auberges of his city. (V. 306-7)

This dichotomy is frequently iterated at various junctures throughout the novel, unravelling in many imaginative, bizarre and startling ramifications.

Fausto's formulation orientates most explicitly the numerous contexts in which the dichotomy occurs. It provides, too, an instance of the technique which one repeatedly encounters in Pynchon's writing: the insertion of a passage articulating some principle or paradigm which will have a 'catalyzing', and most frequently, retro-active effect on the numerous scattered references, allusions and indications, gathering them into an accumulated thematic force. One might propose some general principles of thematic reading and interpretation. There is clearly

no causality or linearity ordering this thematics, but only the cumulation and accumulation of patterns of signification. The form of a theme is structural, but there are no centres to these structures, no privileged passages within the articulation of a particular theme, only the cumulative signifying force of an open, supplementary chain of iterations, differences and transformations which conforms to no mode of temporality. Clearly what was said earlier concerning the system of the 'Stencil papers' and the novel as a whole applies mutatis mutandi here as well. The thematic structure is compiled of an economy of increments which is never closed but always includes the possibility of another increment's insertion into the structure. Thus if one selects a centre, it is only an arbitrary and provisional starting-point whose centrality is always and entirely dependent on the total effect of the structure in which it is situated. It is for these reasons that I try to relinquish the notion of centre, of organizing the analysis around a particular point in the narrative: this is a very difficult principle to maintain rigorously, as any analysis must necessarily select points of reference, co-ordinates in order to begin, and from which to operate and articulate, a sustained discourse. However, I advertise the artificiality and dispensibility of such co-ordinates.

ANIMATE / INANIMATE AND DECLINE : The Global Pattern

Fausto reinforces his prediction (above) with the following remark, introducing the 'variable' of decadence into the formula:

Decadence, decadence. What is it? Only a clear movement toward death or, preferably, non-humanity. As Fausto II and III, like their island, became more inanimate, they moved closer to the time when like any dead leaf or fragment or metal they'd be finally subject to the laws of physics. (V. 321)

Decadence evidently describes the human movement from the animate to the inanimate, consonant with an increasing entropy and disorder. This movement is reinforced in the novel by the various exhausted social and geographical settings. Setting aside for the moment our correlation of the animate/inanimate dichotomy, I wish to attend to some subordinate themes and motifs which nevertheless remain informed and supervised by this dichotomy.

Once again, sustaining the settings and allusions of the shorts, the episodes in V. are set within a generic 'wasteland' ravaged by forces of entropy and decline: several resonances of Eliot's poetry occur (V. 52 "New York must have been for her a city of smoke, its streets the courtyards of limbo," or 385, "Time, gentlemen, please" etc.) and V.'s juxtapositional assembly recalls the method of Eliot's famous poem. Throughout the novel episodes are located either literally in deserts (Egypt, Kalahari, Antarctic) or figuratively in cultures afflicted by a malaise of corruption, emotional and intellectual sterility, inanimate proliferation and excess, mass death and increasing chaos and disorder. The 'wasteland,' both literally and figuratively, is proposed as the predominating human and ecological condition, and a symptom of advanced entropy in the twentieth century, certainly in the Occident. Articulating this malaise, besides the multiple transformations of the 'wasteland' motif, are three broad indices of advanced and advancing entropy and decline. It is against this backdrop that Herbert Stencil and Benny Profane move and operate.

The first indication that an advanced state of entropy prevails is the novel's loose structure which stages an advanced state of disorder and disorganization, although, as I have suggested, this is not the only purpose of this de-formation.

Stencil's lady V. herself becomes a second and major index of the progressive decadence and inanimateness of humanity. Not only does she always appear in environments of death and disorder but she also gradually incorporates inanimates objects into her person, including an ivory comb, a glass eye, a set of false teeth, a sapphire navel and an artificial foot. Fausto Maijstral, witnessing the disassembly of one of her avatars, the Bad Priest, on besieged Malta circa 1943, records:

I wondered if the disassembly of the Bad Priest might not go on, and on, into the evening. Surely her arms and breasts could be detached; the skin of her legs be peeled away to reveal some intricate understructure of silver openwork. Perhaps the trunk itself contained other wonders: intestines of parti-coloured silk, gay balloon-lungs, a rooooo heart, (V. 343)

and Sidney Stencil, Malta 1919, just prior to the June Disturbances, reflects, "Even in Florence...he had noted an obsession with bodily incorporating little bits of inert matter " (V. 488). Stencil files, refusing to think that V.'s disassembly meant her death and the end of his quest, fondly imagines her:

at age seventy-six: skin radiant with the bloom of some new plastic; both eyes glass but now containing photoelectric cells, connected by silver electrodes to optic nerves of purest copper wire and leading to a brain exquisitely wrought as a diode matrix could ever be. Solenoid relays would be her ganglia, servo-actuators move her flawless nylon limbs, hydraulic fluid be sent by a platinum heart-pump through butyrate veins and arteries. (V. 411)

We now return to the animate/inanimate dichotomy, the third and most substantial index of entropy and decadence: a dichotomy which proposes that communities, societies, history, the world, and cosmos behave like closed thermodynamic systems and are inexorably transforming into inanimate matter. The figure of the 'closed system' in decline is translated into several substantial narrative episodes in V. and ranges in application, from parties to empires.

There are several prophets of this irreversible teleology in the novel, seers who have, through some form of revelation or crisis, come to perceive and proclaim the alien, non-human nature of the inanimate cosmos (Gebrail, Maijstral, Mehemet among them). Increasing disorder with a proportionate decline of humanity is a pervasive theme in the novel. In the Epilogue, the old Moorish captain of the Astarte, Mehemet--allegedly a time-traveller from 1324 come through "a rift in time's fabric" (V. 459)--declares, "I am old, the world is old; but the world changes always; we, only so far. It's no secret, what sort of change this is. Both the world and we,...began to die from the moment of birth" (V. 459). He follows this with the parable of the sailor painting a sinking ship, a fable whose social applications Stencil père is quick to grasp, and adds, "'The only change is toward death,...'"Early and late we are in decay"' (V. 460). These sentiments, similarly expressed by Fausto above, (earlier? later?) writing of decline in relation to humanity, recall Itague's remarks in Paris, 1913:

"A decadence," Itague put in, "is a falling-away from what is human, and the further we fall the less human we become. Because we are less human, we foist off the humanity we have lost on inanimate objects and abstract theories." (V. 405)

Abstraction is suggested as a species of retreat from humanity. Another example maintains that the recognition of this inanimateness (and the illusions which conceal it), a pervasive feature of the human condition, is nevertheless humanity's deepest fear:

the desert, or a row of false shop fronts; a slag pile, a forge where the fires are banked, these and the street and the dreamer, only an inconsequential shadow himself in the landscape, partaking of the soullessness of these other masses and shadows; this is 20th Century nightmare. (V. 324)

These passages, sketching the skeleton of the dichotomy, are augmented and elaborated by numerous others, often explicitly, more frequently implicitly, suggesting (in represented time) a historical continuity, but disclosing also, one cohesive discourse in the apparently 'random' structure of the novel and a supervising authorial intention. Elsewhere, during a rare moment of direct address, coyly shielded by a conditional syntax, "Pynchon" remarks, "If alignment with the inanimate is the mark of a Bad Guy, Schoenmaker at least made a sympathetic beginning" (V. 101). After this "sympathetic beginning", Schoenmaker, the plastic surgeon, undergoes a "deterioration of purpose; a decay" (V. 101). Although the novel exhaustively identifies the 'Bad Guys' it is clearly under some duress to discover the criteria of a 'Good Guy'. The animate/inanimate dichotomy is sustained.

ANIMATE / INANIMATE AND DECLINE : EXTENSIONS

A Whole Sick Crew party, one of several parties which conform to the same devolutionary pattern: a devolution as a function of time, is described, "The party as if it were inanimate after all, unwound like a clock's mainspring..."

seeking some easing of its own tension, some equilibrium" (V. 52). The theme is invoked again when an embittered prophet of the inanimate teleology (whose name, Gebrail, its roughly homophonic correspondence with 'gebel'-desert, and his philosophical predictions, cumulatively confer a quasi-mystical status upon him) laconically reflects:

The desert moves in. It happens, nothing else.
No djinn in the boy, no treachery in the wall,
no hostility in the desert. Nothing. Soon,
nothing. Soon only the desert. (V. 82)

The inexorability of this process as a function of time is again indicated, "the house begins to fill with desert, like the lower half of an hourglass which will never be inverted again" (V. 83).

Observing that the city's buildings and monuments "were only different forms of the same dead sand that had taken his home," he declares, "the city is only the desert--gebel--in disguise" (V. 83). This startling transformation on the 'wasteland' motif is immediately reinforced when the narrative shifts back to New York, 1956 and Esther Harvitz travelling to her latest lover, architect of her retroussé nose, Shale Schoenmaker, "The bus entered the sudden waste country of Central Park" (V. 96) where "night and lawlessness" prevail. Motifs of night and lawlessness recur in Pynchon's subsequent novels and perform a crucial rhetorical role in The Crying of Lot 49, as we shall see.

Shifting to the 'Mondaugen Story,' the 'wasteland' motif, sustaining Gebrail's contemplations, is recapitulated quite literally. The narrative is located in "the Kalahari, that vast death" (V. 229) and another speaker, recalling the colony in the early days, declares, "on that foggy, sweating, sterile coast....Community may have been

the only solution possible against such an assertion of the Inanimate" (V. 272). The desert/'wasteland' in all its manifestations and transformations, as this passage unequivocally confirms, is the kingdom of the Inanimate. We will continue to confirm this dichotomy at many other junctures in our discussion of other important dichotomies, themes and pre-occupations in the novel.

THE DREAM OF ORDER : The Imperial Strategy

Henry Adams, as we have seen, suggested that the multiple phenomena of the world and the "multiverse" repeatedly displayed a lack of conformity to man-made patterns of order and resolved, "Order was the dream of man". If Pynchon's animate/inanimate dichotomy has, by sheer force of conspicuousness, trammelled V., and hampered its appreciation, perhaps another and more effective approach would involve an analysis of his transformations of Adams' proposition. I propose to discuss Pynchon's transformations of Adams' proposition, whose reverberations sound throughout V. These transformations nevertheless remain involved with the dichotomy we have been tracing.

The 'dream of order' or 'world-projection' (as it is described in Lot 49) and the 'rituals' which they generate are pertinent to many different and substantial episodes, aspects and themes in V. These activities are clearly engaged at every level of human ordering-activity (obviously this thesis notwithstanding), from the individual's constellation of a gestalt and the organization of his socius, to corporate ideological, political, religious and mythological frameworks--dreams--of order and perfection. The 'dreams of order' perpetrated by German idealism culminating in Nazi fascism, and Calvinist

theology, producing European and subsequently American capitalist imperialism, are regular butts of criticism, satire and derision in all Pynchon's novels.

Pynchon reminds us of this continual ordering faculty in operation:

People read what news they wanted to and each accordingly built his own rathouse of history's rags and straws. In the city of New York alone there were at a rough estimate five million different rathouses. God knew what was going on in the minds of cabinet ministers, heads of state and civil servants in the capitals of the world. Doubtless their private versions of history showed up in action. If a normal distribution of types prevailed they did. (V. 225) (Predictably, "Stencil fell outside the pattern.")

It is particularly the corporate dream of order, the "common dream" (V. 255), to which the individual is obliged to conform, voluntarily or involuntarily, or face exclusion (alienation, victimization, punishment, confinement, excommunication, banishment, annihilation), that preoccupies Pynchon in V. He urges one to recognize that the imposition of any order' the superimposition of an artificial grid upon the material cosmos, human and non-human, necessarily applies an overt or tacit violence. The constitution of this order requires a volitional agency exerting an 'imperial' power to master and subordinate the phenomena which provoke it, and must establish its legitimacy, its inalienable propriety by the repression, expulsion and destruction of that which does not conform to, or implicitly contradicts its parameters and threatens the order.

THE DREAM OF ORDER : Colonialism

The most explicit investigation of this violent 'dream of order' occurs in "Mondaugen's Story" which recounts the grisly atrocities inflicted upon the Hereros in pursuit of the 'imperial dream'. "Mondaugen's Story", particularly the 1904 "Vernichtungs Befehl" (V. 245) interpolations, constitutes a horrifying and penetrating document of the imperial-colonial 'psychosis'. This episode, which motivates several themes, dramatizes the violence with which European 'order' is projected and inversely, as manifest in the massive abreaction of the troops to Western social and moral conditioning, the expenses at which it has been maintained by powerful interdictions and taboos. The speaker who symbolizes this imperial-colonial consciousness (an indistinguishable blend of Foppl, Godolphin and Mondaugen's dream-embellishments whom we shall, for convenience, call 'Foppl', "in a passage ostensibly his host's Mondaugen could at least note that though the events were Foppl's, the humanity could easily have been Godolphin's" and, "there was no way to say for certain, later, whether Foppl himself might not have come in to tell tales of when he'd been a trooper, eighteen years ago." V. 255,256), recalls with pride his transgressions and the mastery of his guilt:

You weren't ashamed. For the first time in twenty years of continuous education-to-guilt, a guilt that had never really had meaning, that the Church and the secular entrenched had made out of whole cloth; after twenty years, simply not to be ashamed. Before you disemboweled or whatever you did with her to be able to take a Herero girl before the eyes of your superior officer, and stay potent. And talk with them before you killed them without the sheep's eye, the shuffling, the prickly-heat of embarrassment.... (V. 257)

This passage coupled with others in the episode describing acts of violence and massacre dramatizes too the expulsion and transference of latent aggression interdicted within the community onto a foreign scapegoat, the Herero, with a strengthening of internal community bonds. 'Foppl', "When a man wants to appear politically moral he speaks of human brotherhood. In the field you actually found it" (V. 257). One need not labour the point that every atrocity described by 'Foppl' involves, separately, or in combination, the twin variables of sex and death, the most tabooed areas of human experience, in all their possible permutations.

The Hereros become utterly dehumanized by the colonizing militia. Totally and utterly subjugated to the colonists' disposals, the Herero is constituted by the colonists purely as an 'object of pleasure' and a 'thing' even to the point where satisfaction is only obtained at the total expenditure of the victim-object: his/her death. The Hereros, by virtue of their dehumanization and subordination to the status of mere 'objects of pleasure' incarnate henceforth the 'inanimate' against whose persistence the debased colonial community holds itself to be the only possible solution (V. 272).

This episode poses the narcissistic extreme of 'animate' order, a dream of order where the image of human perfection is defined as living, white, Aryan, nominally Christian and preferably male: the paragon of patriarchal and phallogocentric western society. (We shall see that the American variation of this, the WASP, plays a major part in Pynchon's novels, particularly The Crying of Lot 49). Consequently, when the speaker 'Foppl' concludes his recollections linking together the colony's several adversaries, we have, gathered together, everything which challenges or contradicts its model of order, i.e. its

other. The association of the Herero with this cluster seems to confirm their classification with the inanimate. Barthes' definition aptly describes the colonial mentality portrayed in "Mondaugen's Story"; "The petit-bourgeois [colonist] is a man unable to imagine the Other. If he comes face to face with him, he blinds himself, ignores and denies him, or else transforms him into himself. ...all the experiences of confrontation are reverberating, any otherness is reduced to sameness. ...the Other is a scandal which threatens his essence. ... Sometimes--rarely--the Other is revealed as irreducible: not because of a sudden scruple, but because common sense rebels: a man does not have a white skin but a black one,....There is here a figure for emergencies: exoticism. The Other becomes a pure object." ²² I have suggested that the Hereros are both denied (indeed, massacred) and treated as objects in a violent dehumanization process.

Let us now examine 'Foppl's' closing statement on the polarization of the animate/inanimate cosmos:

humanity was reduced to a nervous, disquieted, forever inadequate but indissoluble Popular Front against deceptively unpolitical and apparently minor enemies, enemies that would be with him to the grave: a sun with no shape, a beach alien as the moon's antarctic, restless concubines in barbed wire, salt mists, alkaline earth, the Benguela current that would never cease bringing sand to raise the harbor floor, the inertia of rock, the frailty of flesh, the structural unreliability of thorns; the unheard whimper of a dying woman; the frightening but necessary cry of the strand wolf in the fog. (V. 274)

Here, in this bleak colony, the colonial is forced to

²² Roland Barthes, Mythologies, trans. A. Lavers (London: Granada Publishing, 1973 rpt. 1979), pp. 151-2.

confront most directly and intensely every assertion of the Inanimate, every assertion of the negativity upon which his artificial cyst of order is established. The Herero woman (we should note that the primary social commerce, of which the 'Foppl'-Sarah relationship is something of a synecdoche, is between the European men and Herero women), symbolizing the absolute antithesis of the white, male European order, embodies the negativity contained in the following set of contraries: white/black, male/female, animate/inanimate, north/south, Christian/heathen, order/disorder, active/passive, same/other, life/death: one notes these condensations, "a score of identical female corpses" "the unheard whimper of a dying woman" (V. 273,274), light/dark, master/slave, destroyer/destroyed etc. This last dichotomy is suggested by 'Foppl' at a point where he is sublimating his participation in the 1904 genocide to an abstract and quasi-Hegelian principle (which in fact gives us some clue to the reading of the episode), "Things seemed all at once to fall into a pattern,It had only to do with the destroyer and the destroyed, and the act which united them,..." (V. 264).

The 'encroachment' of the desert described by Gebrail is thus given the broadened connotations of animate community and inanimate other in 'Foppl's reminiscences. In order to justify further, the claims I have made in the reading of this episode, and demonstrating once again the interlocking dependency of the episodes at a thematic level, I shift now to a much later passage concerning a love-relationship between the novel's notorious enigma, "If we've not already guessed, the 'woman' is, again, the lady V. of Stencil's mad time-search." (V. 406) and Melanie l'Heuremaudit: La Jarretièrè.

THE DREAM OF ORDER : Fetishism

V.'s initial conversation with La Jarretière bespeaks her attitude to the girl:

"Do you know what a fetish is? Something of a woman which gives pleasure but is not a woman. A shoe, a locket . . . une jarretière. You are the same, not real but an object of pleasure." (V. 404)

Without embarking on a detailed psychoanalysis of the possible self/other combinations in this bizarre relationship of identities and doubles dispersed in specular play, we can note another variation of the 'closed system' and an entropy of different sexual variations; their relationship permits narcissism, lesbianism, voyeurism, auto-eroticism, and fetishism. However, this tableau also plays a key role in the development of the thematic dichotomy and clarifies the 'Herero' episodes in important ways. The clauses in apposition confirm a predictable equation:

If V. suspected her fetishism at all to be part of any conspiracy leveled against the animate world, any sudden establishment here of a colony of the Kingdom of Death, then.... (V. 411)

Setting aside the conditional speculation, the sum of the equation is unequivocal: the 'Kingdom of Death' and the 'inanimate' are synonymous. The passage continues, "the Kingdom of Death is served by fetish-constructions like V.'s which represent a kind of infiltration" (V. 411). The passage concludes that this process: the fetishization, the reification and consequently dehumanization of another-- the equation established between these apposite clauses is instructive too, "a trans-vestitism not between sexes but between quick and dead, human and fetish" (V. 410)--corrodes the humanity, infiltrates

the animateness of the 'reifier' and initiates an insidious inverse colonialism with this end, "It would have meant, ultimately, V.'s death: in a sudden establishment here, of the inanimate Kingdom" (V. 411).

It should be clearer how this episode communicates with the German dehumanization of the Hereros. Through the transformation of the Hereros into "objects of pleasure", fetishes, the 'animate' community simply furthers its own dehumanization and transformation into inanimateness and this is the real threat of those self-projected "deceptively unpolitical and apparently minor enemies." Thus, colonization is proposed as a mass-fetishization of the indigenes, and the self/other relation between V. and Melanie here reinforces the homologous relation between colonizer/colonized, animate/inanimate that I proposed above.

The fetishism which Pynchon describes in Ch. 14: "V. in love," seems predominantly Freudian, as V.'s definition of a fetish confirms. However, the Marxist overtones of the concept of fetishism are legible in the novel as well.²³

²³ The term 'fetishism' in Marxist theory is understood as "the mechanism which conceals the real functioning...of the dominant structure in the social formation, i.e. it is the constitutive dislocation...between the ideological practice and the other practices." --B. Brewster, "Glossary" to L. Althusser & E. Balibar, Reading Capital. trans. B. Brewster (London: New Left Books, 1970 rpt. 1979), p. 313. This 'fetishism' has two effects which are relevant to us. Firstly, "In the capitalist mode of production it takes the form of the fetishism of commodities, i.e., the personification of certain things (money-capital) and the 'reification' of a certain relation (labour).--ibid. p. 313. Marx writes elsewhere, "There is a definite social relation between men, that assumes, in their eyes, the fantastic form of a relation between things. In order, therefore, to find an analogy, we must have recourse to the mist-enveloped regions of the religious world. In that world the productions of the human brain appear as independent being endowed with life, and entering into relation both with one another and the human race. So it is in the world of commodities with the products of men's hands. This I call Fetishism which attaches itself to the products of labour, so soon as they are produced as commodities, and

Whilst these two forms of fetishism are theoretically separate and clearly defined, Pynchon blurs the distinction. Melanie is not strictly a jarretièrè so her fetishization by V. also amounts to a reification of a human being analogous to labour-capital reifications described by Marxist economic theory, whilst the 'personification' of commodities which Profane discovers also has overtones of sexual cathexis:

Profane wondered what it was with Da Conho and that machine gun. Love for an object, this was new to him. When he found out not long after this that the same thing was with Rachel and her MG, he had his first intelligence that something had been going on under the rose, maybe for longer and with more people than he would care to think about. (V. 23)

Indeed, shortly hereafter Profane has glimpse of a new sense to 'auto-eroticism' (V. 29). Evidence of a massive "fetishism of commodities" is quite clear when Profane later observes:

All around him were people in new suits, millions of inanimate objects being produced brand-new every week, new cars in the streets, houses going up by the thousands all over the suburbs he had left months ago. (V. 148)

Fetishism appears to be applicable in two broad senses in the novel. The first involves the dehumanizing transformation of another into some thing, "not real, but an object of pleasure," or the substitution of a human relationship for a human-object relationship with the 'personification'

which is therefore inseparable from the production of commodities."
--quoted in Tanner, Adultery in the Novel, p. 292.

of the object. Both forms of fetishism are held to advance the encroachment of the inanimate upon the animate, and "represent a kind of infiltration." Fetishism is replaced, in more acute cases in the novel, by a human/object symbiosis (V. 52, 80).

The first form of fetishism, the form described in V.'s relationship with La Jarretière, is evidently predominant because it is an effect of the projection of an individual or corporate grid of narcissistic order which demands that the 'other' conform to the impositions and expectations (transferences) of the self. More adequately, this fetishism is the projection and fetishism of a sign of the 'other', an image substituted for the 'other' with the corollary denial of the 'other' qua 'other'.

This 'annihilating' fetishism, this 'reification' thus operates as the corollary of the 'dream of order.' This process is reflected in several transformations besides the ones we have discussed. Underpinned throughout the Herero-chronicle in horrific understatement, is the Nazi genocide of the Jews, "von Trotha... is reckoned to have done away with about 60,000 people. This is only 1 percent of six million, but still pretty good " (V. 245). The notorious figure needs no further elaboration. The motif of 'reification' crops up again in the darkly comic accounts of Esther's nose job. Shale Schoenmaker (another German!), who 'reifies' Esther in the name of a 'sexual Platonism', justifies his agency in assisting people to conform physically to dominant cultural stereotypes, "Esther's nose. Identical with an ideal of nasal beauty established by movies, advertisements, magazine illustrations. Cultural harmony, Schoenmaker called it" (V. 103). 'Cultural harmony!...the modes of social and institutional violence are quietly made visible.

Furthermore, the three episodes discussed above indicate the contiguity of public and private domains of social exchange. These episodes dramatize the translation of the dominating hierarchized power-relations (of the master/slave order) into interpersonal relationships: 'Foppl'-Sarah, V.-La Jarretièrè, Schoenmaker-Esther, with the attending degrees of violence and self-violation. These relationships provide some index against which to evaluate others portrayed in the novel. Rachel implies the ubiquity of these hierarchies with the following reflections:

What is it, she thought, is this the way Nueva York is set up, then, freeloaders and victims? Schoenmaker freeloads off my roommate, she freeloads off me. Is there this long daisy chain of victimizers and victims, screwers and screwees? (V. 49)

Once again, the narrator transfers the responsibility of decision onto the reader with an aptly interposed rhetorical question (this strategy which preserves the indeterminacy of the statement is one which Pynchon gradually perfects in his subsequent novels).

I wish now to suspend discussion of the 'dream of order' trope and the daisy chain of fetishized relationships to follow the movement of a dance. The dance will enable us to broaden the scope of the developing analysis and does, I suggest, complement the 'dream of order' tropology. This will emerge in the ensuing discussion.

THE DANCE OF DEATH

'Foppl', during the course of his reminiscences, draws upon the medieval 'Dance of Death' motif to describe the spectacle

cut by the Hottentot prisoner trains across the dunes and preserves its traditional reference:

How many can understand the resemblance he saw? In his village church in the Palatinate was a mural of the Dance of Death, led by a rather sinuous, effeminate Death in his black cloak, carrying his scythe and followed by all ranks of society from prince to peasant. Their own African progress was hardly so elegant:....Yet that association, which most of them shared, was enough to give the unpopular chore an atmosphere of ceremony. (V. 262)

This motif which is frequently invoked performs an important connective role, binding together several diverse contexts and social groups and lending the 'inanimate teleology' thesis an enduring eschatological dimension gesturing beyond the formal historical boundaries of the novel: 1898-1956 .

The motif is recapitulated when Stencil, ironically taking his lead from a Crew member, applies it to the Whole Sick Crew and redirects it towards the decadent Crew at Foppl's Siege Party, hence asserting the similarities between the two 'closed-system' communities:

And Stencil sat dour and undrunk...while Slab's friend, another Catatonic Expressionist...told of the Dance of Death. While around them something of the sort was in fact going on: for here was the Whole Sick Crew... linked maybe by a spectral chain and rollicking along over some moor or other. Stencil thought of Mondaugen's story, the Crew at Foppl's, saw here the same leprous pointillism of orris root, weak jaws and bloodshot eyes, tongues and backs of teeth stained purple by this morning's homemade wine, lipstick which it seemed could be peeled off intact, tossed to the earth to join a trail of similar jetsam--the disembodied smiles or pouts which might serve, perhaps, as spoor for next generation's Crew . . . God. (V. 296)

The motif, used in one connection in the "Mondaugen Story", is applied to another context which is in turn morphologically homologous to the orgiastic context where the motif

was initially motivated. This effects the retro-active application of the motif to Foppl's Party itself which gives Foppl's comparison an ironically self-reflexive twist. The emblem returns to Foppl with an irony and a vengeance, linking his party and the natives, and establishing a grim equation between the involuntary destiny of the Hereros and the presumably voluntary decadent convulsions of Foppl's wassailers (and latterly the Whole Sick Crew).

Again, one can detect the operation of an intricate supplementary network of themes and motifs functioning according to the principles I delineated above (vide. p.68), The motif undergoes further extensions and applications, producing a deliberate and controlled overdetermination of the motif and constellating a community of episodes in the novel which consequently programmes a consideration of comparisons and contrasts on the basis of this mutual correspondence. Each episode in the emblem-bound community then amplifies the signifying dimensions of the others to an unspecifiable degree.

This technique is one Pynchon engages frequently. A particular motif or attribute will link several disparate contexts and this correspondence will usually be sufficient to entice the reader, under the full weight of authorial irony, to correlate the analogous instances further. Another application of the motif, suspended by a rhetorical question but nevertheless proposing the comparison, occurs when Stencil rides the subway on Slab's recommendations, "Vertical corpses, eyes with no life, crowded loins, buttocks and hip-points together. ...Was it the Dance of Death brought up to date?" (V. 303)

Now let us return to another occurrence which actually, although unremarkably, initiates the entire chain of 'Dance

of Death' motifs, confirms, through another figural detour, the above application (effectively overriding the rhetorical question) and co-ordinates the communities bound by the motif with another major pre-occupation in the novel. This simple, yet crucial consolidating application occurs in the 'Florence, 1899' episode (Ch. 7) with the following simile, "the music was sweet and painful, the strolling chains of tourists like a Dance of Death" (V. 201). This correlation of tourism with the dance of death considerably extends the regions covered by the 'inanimate' and, through the following detour, confirms Stencil's question:

The shuttle after morning rush hour is near empty, like a littered beach after tourists have all gone home. In the hours between nine and noon the permanent residents come creeping back up their strand, shy and tentative. Since sunup all manner of affluent have filled the limits of that world with a sense of summer and life; now sleeping bums and old ladies on relief who have been there all along unnoticed, re-establish a kind of property right, and the coming on of a falling season. (V. 37-8)

Thus, by a series of 'metaphorical' displacements, the text renders the following rhetorical syllogism, a logical simulacrum which impersonates truth: tourists resemble a dance of death; commuters resemble tourists; therefore, commuters resemble a dance of death.

The Dance of Death terminates in the dramatic and grisly impalement of La Jarretière with the coda of Porcépic's ballet, L'Enlèvement de Vierges Chinoises, a scene loosely based on the première of Stravinsky's Le Sacre du Printemps. This motif indicates to some extent the intricate inter-relations between episodes, historical and contemporary, in the novel and reinforces morphological correspondences evident elsewhere.

THE CHOREOGRAPHY OF THE TOUR : Tripping through Baedekerland

We are led then, by a dance of death, into another major theme and spectacle of the novel--tourism--and another important instance of "world-projection", the empire of Karl Baedeker; "Baedeker world" (V. 70), "Baedeker land" (V. 74), "a world if not created then at least described to its fullest by Karl Baedeker of Leipzig " (V. 408).

After the extended metaphor comparing commuters and tourists (vide. above), the theme and spectacle of tourism remain constantly legible, particularly in chs. 3, 7, & 14. To demonstrate the transformations and pervasiveness of this trope I will consider some of the chief references. In ch. 3, 'Alexandria and Cairo, 1898' at the time of the Fashoda crisis, the indifference and condescension of the tourist and the silent contempt of the residents are reflected through several of the interior monologues. Gebrail with characteristic cynicism discloses the selective/omissive-repressive system on which the "tourist-state" is predicated:

a man comes to the City and drives for you and every other Frank with land to return to. His family lives all together in a room no bigger than your W.C., out in Arabian Cairo where you never go because it's too dirty, and not "curious". Where the street is so narrow hardly a man's shadow can pass; a street, like many not on any guidebook's map. (V. 83)

The selective/omissive-repressive, valorizing/disqualifying method of the guidebook becomes, for Pynchon, the model of all systems of order, anticipating the elect/preterite dichotomy of Gravity's Rainbow.

A British expatriate and retired pederast, Maxwell Rowley-Bugge (a.k.a. Ralph MacBurgess, formerly of Lardwick-in-the-Fen, Yorks., Victoria's Wren's hometown),

alludes to the dehumanization and fetishization accomplished by tourist practices and customs. I call attention here to a rhetoric of theatre, stage, disguise, game and fair characterizing the artificial order of the tourist-state. Rowley-Bugge:

He was that sort of vagrant who exists, though unwillingly, entirely within the Baedeker world--as much a feature of the topography as the other automata: waiters, porters, cabmen, clerks. Taken for granted. ...Max was defined as a well-off fellow tourist temporarily embarrassed by a malfunction in Cook's machinery.

A common game among tourists. They knew what he was; and those who participated in the game did so for the same reason they haggled at shops or gave baksheesh to beggars: it was in the unwritten laws of Baedeker land. Max was one of the minor inconveniences to an almost perfectly arranged tourist-state. (V. 70-1)

The dehumanization of the locals--"other automata"--as part of the covenant of the tour clearly implicates the tourist with the more overt forms of imperial violence and sexual fetishism which promote the homogenizing inanimate and deny or domesticate the 'other'. Another local, Waldetar, a Sephardic train-conductor muses less bitterly, "There's no organized effort about it but there remains a grand joke on all visitors to Baedeker's world: the permanent residents are actually humans in disguise " (V. 78). The local residents are consequently all defined by the tourist as simply present for his service and amusement.

Identifying certain tourist practices, Pynchon links this phenomenon to the tropes of 'world-projection', illusions of order, colonialism and fetishism which we have already shown to be rhetorically interrelated.

Colonialism marks the phase of violent incision, the imprinting of a grid of order: graphically reproduced on the land

by the topography of streets and railways which symbolize the 'civilization' of the colony, "The harbor needed dredging; railroads had to be built inland from the seaports, which couldn't thrive by themselves any more than the interior could survive without them. Having legitimized their presence in the Territory the colonists were now obliged to improve what they had taken" (V. 267).

This initial violent establishment of order is thereafter preserved in the rituals observed by the tourist who vicariously indulges in the victories of subordination achieved by European imperialism and parades among the domesticated and secure exotic sights and monuments with the Baedeker and "Cook's machinery" in full control. The tourist rituals become a stylized maintenance of the initial colonial violence carried through into fetishized intercourse with the indigenes and permanent residents, and renders the tourist complicit in the violent rules of colonialism and the ethnocentric Baedeker. Following the routes blazed and established by colonists and the tour-director after them, the tourist, participating in a fetish-world becomes another agent of the proliferating inanimate.

The tourist-lands, 'Baedeker land' possesses no authentic otherness, but only co-opted and domesticated forms reduced to the order of service and spectacle and all organized and homogenized by Baedeker's global 'dream of order'. Baedeker land--like Inverarity's submarine pleasure land in Lot 49--possibly modelled on Disneyland, similarly provides the tourist with a condensed, abridged and, of course, comfortable edition of the land and its history for leisurely consumption.²⁴ Baedeker land enables the

²⁴ I draw attention to a suggestive and demythologizing reading of Disneyland in this respect, of which the following remark is representative, "What Disneyland proposes is a technique of abbreviated shorthand culture for the masses,In a forthcoming time of highly-

tourist to participate in a world which comprises grafted facsimiles of his own culture embellished with predetermined images, spectacles of the 'other': a co-opted and fetishized 'exoticism' which is permitted to co-habit with the tourist's own grafted order and culture. Here let us recall Barthes' remarks, "Sometimes...the Other is revealed as irreducible:....There is a figure here for emergencies: exoticism. The Other becomes a pure object, a spectacle, a clown." ²⁵ and, "Faced with anything the Established Order knows only two types of behaviour, which are both mutilating: either to acknowledge it as a Punch and Judy show, or to defuse it as a pure reflection of the West." ²⁶ This exoticism clearly comprises no more than a touristic transference of his presupposed idea of the 'other'; enclaves of his own culture abound in the host-country, "The bierhalle north of Ezbekiyeh Garden had been created by north European tourists in their own image. One memory of home among the dark-skinned and tropical. But so German as to be ultimately a parody of home" (V. 88), and, recapitulating the colonial/imperial theme, "tourists bring into the world as it has evolved part of another, and eventually create a parallel society of their own in every city " (V. 411).

A virtual replica of Boeblich's bierhalle is Scheissvogel's, "Scheissvogel's Biergarten und Rathskeller was a nighttime favorite not only with the German travelers in Florence but also, it seemed, with those of the other touring nations" (V. 203). This brief pub-crawl brings us to 'Florence, 1899' (ch. 7) where the tourists once again provide a continual

governed masses in an overpopulated world, this technique may be extremely useful both as a substitute for education and, eventually, as a substitute for experience."--E. Doctorow, The Book of Daniel (London: Picador Books, 1982), p. 295.

²⁵ Barthes, Mythologies, pp. 152.

²⁶ *ibid.* p. 96.

milling backdrop to the various sub rosa schemes, conspiracies, plots, counter-plots and sub-plots whose convoluted tangle creates the suspense, confusion and humour of this episode.

TOURISM : FIGURAL TRANSFORMATIONS

A hypothetical tourist gazing upon the 'spectacle' of Signor Mantissa would observe with disappointment, "a street-long festival of sorrow with no booth the same, no exhibit offering anything solid enough to merit lingering at" (V. 160). Eventually, in this episode the spectacle of tourists--tourists themselves ironically become objects of regard, of entertainment--"gaping at the Campanile" (V. 184), elicits this response from Hugh Godolphin, "F.R.G.S. and explorer of the Antarctic," "hero of the Empire" (V. 156):

He wondered at this phenomenon of tourism: what was it drove them to Thomas Cook & Son in ever-increasing flocks every year...? To return to Ludgate Circus at the desolate end of every season having caressed the skin of each alien place, a peregrine or Don Juan of cities but no more able to talk of any mistress's heart than to cease keeping that interminable Catalogue, that non picciol' libro. (V. 184)

Apposite allusion to Don Juan, arch-libertine and pursuer of V.--"As spread thighs are to the libertine, flights of migratory birds to the ornithologist, the working part of his tool bit to the production machinist, so was the letter V to young Stencil " (V. 61)--supplements the figure of tourism and anticipates the popular and extended analogy Godolphin draws between seduction and colonization in his tales of the inscrutable and fabulous country of Vheissu. Godolphin contrasts himself to the tourist and

responds to Mantissa's inquiries about exploration:

"I think it is the opposite of what sends English reeling all over the globe in the mad dances called Cook's tours. They want only the skin of a place, the explorer wants its heart. It is perhaps a little like being in love. I had never penetrated to the heart of any of those wild places, Raf. Until Vheissu. It was not till the Southern Expedition last year that I saw what was beneath her skin." (V. 204)

I will discuss the enigma of Vheissu in greater detail when I consider the characteristics and textual function of the V.-construct in the novel. For the moment I wish to note the conflation of woman and country which reinforces some of the major figural alliances already discerned, notably the correspondences between colonialism and V.'s relationship with La Jarretièrre. Another passage on tourism consolidates several of the points we have recorded about tourism and links it with V.'s relationship:

V...had found love at last in her peregrinations through (let us be honest) a world if not created then at least described to its fullest by Karl Baedeker of Leipzig. This is a curious country, populated only by a breed called "tourists". Its landscape is one of inanimate monuments and buildings; near-inanimate barmen, taxi-drivers, bellhops, guides: there to do any bidding to various degrees of efficiency, on receipt of the recommended....More than this it is two-dimensional as is the Street, as are the pages and maps of those little red handbooks. As long as Cook's, Travellers' Clubs and banks are open, the Distribution of Time section followed scrupulously, the plumbing at the hotel in order..., the tourist may wander anywhere in this coordinate system without fear. Tourism thus is supra-national, like the Catholic Church, and perhaps the most absolute communion we know on earth: for be its members American, German, Italian, whatever, the Tour Eiffel, Pyramids, and Campanile all evoke identical responses from them; their Bible is clearly written and does not admit of private interpretation; they share the same landscapes, suffer the same inconveniences; live by the same pellucid time-scale. They are the Street's own. (V. 408-9)

This passage confirms many of the features of Baedeker land described elsewhere and, comparing tourism and Catholicism as species of community, similarly implicates religious and mythological 'world-projections' intimating that ultimately all forms of community are founded on shared illusions and the observance of certain sacraments, rules and rituals whose form is arbitrary and conventional. Another passage from the Profane-saga dramatizes the artificiality of myth with the following comical instance:

Together on the stoop they hammered together a myth.
Because it wasn't born from fear of thunder, dreams,
astonishment at how the crops kept dying after harvest
and coming up again every spring, or anything else
very permanent, only a temporary interest, a spur-of-
the-moment tumescence, it was a myth rickety and transi-
ent as the bandstands and the sausage-pepper booths of
Mulberry Street. (V. 142)

To take up the trope of tourism again, immediately following the extended synopsis of tourism (above) one reads the same assimilation of human and country as varieties of geography accessible to the tourist that Godolphin drew upon, except that the metaphor has been inverted. Where Vheissu was assimilated to a woman, here the woman is offered as a country:

love was in its way only another version of tourism;
for as tourists bring into the world as it has evolved
part of another, and eventually create a parallel
society of their own in every city, so the Kingdom
of Death is served by fetish-constructions like V.'s,
which represent a kind of infiltration. (V. 411)

This extract brings us to the end of a round-trip which intricately connects colonialism, fetishism and tourism as well as those other groups involved in the side-trip taken for the Dance of Death. As the last extract indicates explicitly, tourism is not confined to its

conventional sense, instead the world, its inhabitants, its cultures, are all equated as topographical surfaces: skins, geographies to be explored and inscribed with one's particular 'dream of order'. The novel discloses several other tours: the New York tour with Stencil; the Street tour with Profane; the sewer tour; the subway tour, the "nine million yo-yos" (V. 303) whom we've already seen compared with tourists in the Dance of Death; the perversities tour directed by Foppl, "who was in fact coming more and more to define his guests assembled, to prescribe their common dream" (V. 255), also an adequate description of Karl Baedeker; the poseur tour with the Whole Sick Crew, and finally the reader's own tour through the novel.

Pynchon intimates that it is a condition of the contemporary man to be a tourist across the face of the earth as long as he is content to inhabit complacently an ordered and communal system of rituals, "coordinates", conventions, laws and meanings: in short an artificially constructed and arbitrarily established symbolic system, particularly one designed and predetermined by others, without interrogating the boundaries and incongruities of this system and the world it projects.

TOURISM AND ITERABLE FORM : Ritual, Convention and Game

Before following some of the other tours which further the infiltration of the inanimate Kingdom of Death, I wish to consolidate the links between tourist, believer and dreamer and, implicitly, all communities necessarily bound by common rituals, illusions, presuppositions and conventions. Fausto's Confessions disclose that the rituals which maintain these

diverse 'dreams of order' are co-extensive with the most comprehensive symbolic system guaranteeing community, communication and communion: language.

We noted earlier the conception of tourism as a form of game and again, a "coordinate system" and, finally, the condensation of game and sacrament/ritual through the equation of tourism and Christianity. This equation acquires another extension when Fausto observes of Malta's children, "The R.A.F. game was only one metaphor they devised to veil the world that was" (V. 331), which follows a long meditation on the nature and function of metaphor (one notes the echo of Wittgenstein's proposition in his sentence). Furthermore, he prefaces the discourse on metaphor with some reflections on the 'dream-community' which is society, averring the coincidence of the 'dream-community' and the 'metaphor-community'. He writes:

It is a universal sin among the false-animate or unimaginate to let well enough alone. Their compulsion to gather together, their pathological fear of loneliness extends on past the threshold of sleep; so that when they turn the corner, as we all must [...] to find ourselves on the street . . .
 · [...]

 It is the acid test. To populate, or not to populate. (V. 323-324)

And this passage follows shortly, admiring Malta's steadfastness during the wartime siege:

Malta, and her inhabitants, stood like an immovable rock in the river Fortune, now at war's flood. The same motives which cause us to populate a dream-street also cause us to apply to a rock human qualities like "invincibility", "tenacity", "perseverance", etc. More than metaphor, it is delusion. But on the strength of this delusion Malta survived. (V. 325)

One could underscore "The same motives" which links the two passages and discloses that Fausto groups the 'dream of order', the "common dream" of community and the "act of metaphor" together as strategies to "veil the world that was." The terms of his elaboration indicate that Fausto recognizes that metaphor, the substitution of one sign for another, taken to its logical conclusion is the basis of language itself; the linguistic sign is already a substitute for the 'idea' of the sensory 'sign' which the referent makes to the perceptual sensorium. He adds to the above passage:

Living as he does much of the time in a world of metaphor, the poet is always acutely conscious that metaphor has no value apart from its function; that it is a device; an artifice. So that while others may look on the laws of physics as legislation and God as a human form with beard measured in light years and nebulae for sandals, Fausto's kind are alone with the task of living in a universe of things which simply are, and cloaking that innate mindlessness with comfortable and pious metaphor so that the "practical" half of humanity may continue in the Great Lie, confident that their machines, dwellings, streets and weather share the same human motives, personal traits and fits of contrariness as they. (V. 326)

This decidedly Nietzschean conception of language and metaphor is the basis of Maijstral's equations of language, game and dream as so many embroideries to cloak the 'otherness' of the non-human cosmos, domesticate it and make it safe and "comfortable,"²⁷ Fausto's discourse

²⁷ Nietzsche, taking the principle of metaphor as substitution observes that language, the sign, is already a substitution for the referent and thus the forms of displacement instituting language already follow a 'metaphorical' configuration. He writes, 'The "Thing-in-itself" (it is just this which would be pure ineffective truth) is...incomprehensible to the creator of language and not worth making any great endeavour to obtain. He designates only the relations of things to men and for their expression he calls to his help the most daring metaphors. A nerve-stimulus, first transformed into a percept!

on metaphor subtly discloses Pynchon's own awareness of the Great Lie that language is capable of perpetrating and perpetuating by its participation in a broader reified symbolic economy. The supplements of language, game and dream are gradually equated with myth, religion, law and order artificially constructed and functioning as various remedies for making the non-human cosmos habitable, but in the process perpetrating structures of death which further the inanimate teleology.

It should be clear from the preceding discussion that the colonist, the fetishist, the tourist, the priest and ultimately, the writer, all participate in the creation of order and are hence agents of inanimate infiltration. These activities all constitute an alignment with the inanimate which the narrator hints is the "mark of a Bad Guy," but the remaining dilemma is the problem of negotiating beyond this totalizing paradox and a reifying, binaristic order based on contraries of same and other, identities and opposites. Several other communities are described and satirized for their alignment with the inanimate and provide transformations of the 'closed-system' paradigm. The most notable of these are the Whole Sick Crew and Foppl's Siege Party. The manifest decadence of Foppl's Siege Party is intimated to have its contemporary (1956) expression (as the epithet, anticipating the scurvy and disease that prevails at Foppl's, suggests) in the Whole Sick Crew.

First metaphor! The percept again copied into a sound! Second metaphor! And each time he leaps completely out of one sphere right into an entirely different one.'--F. Nietzsche, 'On Truth and Falsity in their Ultramoral Sense,' The Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche II, ed. Dr. O. Levy (London: Allen & Unwin, 1911 rpt. 1924), p. 178. Nietzsche continues, inverting the relations between literal and figurative, rhetoric and truth, "What therefore is truth? A mobile army of metaphors, metonymies, anthropomorphisms: in short a sum of human relations which become poetically and rhetorically intensified, metamorphosed, adorned and after long usage seem to a nation fixed, canonic, and binding; truths are illusions of which one has forgotten that they are illusions;" *ibid.* p. 180.

TRANSFORMATIONS OF TOURISM : Whole Sick Crews

The Whole Sick Crew, against whom Stencil, Profane, Paola Maijstral, Rachel Owlglass, and others are cast, by turns, in comparable or contrastive relief, follows a lifestyle which consists of endless drinking bouts at the Rusty Spoon and Forked Yew, degenerate parties, artistic pretentiousness, pseudo-intellectualism and politically radical affectations. All attempts at authentic forms of social rebellion or protest are undermined by their unexamined economic expediency. Stencil's scornful reaction to this group, restated at intervals by Rachel and Winsome, serves to typify its style, diagnose the extent of its existential duplicity and, to some degree, indicate Stencil's own integrity in contrast to the values it espouses. Together with the comments by Rachel and Winsome, Stencil's critique articulates a trenchant satire which indicates, I suggest, something of "Pynchon's" own sentiments.

Stencil's reflections provide a full critical account. He observes with respect to his search for V., "The Whole Sick Crew had nothing to offer" (V. 56), but we are perhaps justified in generalizing his assessment following a reading of the whole novel. Their effeteness is everywhere manifest, "The pattern would have been familiar--bohemian, creative, arty--except that it was even further removed from reality, Romanticism in its furthest decadence; being only an exhausted impersonation of poverty, rebellion, and artistic 'soul'. For it was the unhappy fact that most of them worked for a living and obtained the substance of their conversation from the pages of Time magazine and like publications" (V. 56-7).

The trademarks of the group are a positive alliance with the inanimate, "exhausted impersonation" and a general

decadence. Fergus Mixolydian, who "laid claim to being the laziest living being in Nueva York" (V. 56), emphasizes this alignment with the inanimate by having become a servo-mechanism for his TV set. Eigenvalue's reflections on the Crew substantiate Stencil's observations:

they produced nothing but talk and at that not very good talk. A few like Slab actually did what they professed; turned out a tangible product. But again, what? Cheese Danishes. Or this technique for the sake of technique--Catatonic Expressionism. Or parodies on what some one else had already done.

So much for Art. What of Thought? The Crew had developed a kind of shorthand whereby they could set forth any visions which might come their way. Conversations at the Spoon had become little more than proper nouns, literary allusions, critical or philosophical terms linked in certain ways. Depending on how you arranged the building blocks at your disposal, you were smart or stupid. ...The number of blocks, however, was finite.

"Mathematically, boy," he told himself, "...they're bound to run out of arrangements someday."... This sort of arranging and rearranging was Decadence, but the exhaustion of all possible permutations and combinations was death. (V. 297-8)

Eigenvalue's musings affirm that the Crew similarly support an artificial grid of order through which it asserts its communal identity, a closed intellectual/philosophical system about whose grid one conducts the 'intellectual tour' and on the strength of which people are assessed and classified. The motifs of tourism and the closed-system are once again clearly legible; the iteration of the latter motif reinforces the correspondence of the Whole Sick Crew to Foppl's party, more explicitly closed by the state of siege.

Rachel Owlglass too, initially an eager acolyte of the Crew, later renounces them. When Profane first meets her she espouses Crew doctrine, "talking, talking, nothing but MG-words, inanimate words he couldn't really back at" (V. 27) and, like the others, cherishes objects, things:

the MG. However, through her contact with Profane--who arouses unsolicited love and affection in every woman he meets--and her own maturation, she imperceptibly outgrows the 'bad faith' rebellion of the Crew, "The Crew lost all glamour for me, I grew up, I don't know what happened" (V. 358). Later, admonishing a stoned Profane for his flirtations with the Crew, she angrily declares:

that Crew does not live, it experiences. It does not create, it talks about people who do. Varèse, Ionesco, de Kooning, Wittgenstein, I could puke. It satirizes itself and doesn't mean it. Time magazine takes it seriously and does mean it. (V. 380)

Winsome, another disillusioned Crew-member, delivers a pre-suicidal soliloquy, following this with an itemized critique of each individual forming the core of the Crew and concluding, "Anybody who continues to live in a subculture so demonstrably sick has no right to call himself well" (V. 361). Rooney Winsome, once proud to style himself, "king of the decky-dance" (V. 220), is driven to suicide (failure courtesy of Pig Bodine) and subsequently becomes an angry cynic.

The Whole Sick Crew, as these several reactions and denouncements establish, is the current formation of a decadence which Stencil's papers reveal to prevail in the twentieth century. A passing reference to the "Decadents of England and France, the Generation of '98 in Spain" (V. 160) implies the ubiquity of decadence at the century's turn. Shifting to "Mondaugen's Story" we are confronted with a community--significantly resembling, "a tiny European Conclave or League of Nations" (V. 235)--whose decadence hardly requires further comment. This episode discloses "Foppl's Crew" as predecessor to the Whole Sick

Crew by several morphological and functional (!) correspondences. This episode, by a deft system of symbolic and rhetorical condensations (a designation whose Freudian and oneiric overtones apply particularly to a narrative composed largely of memory, dream, delirious hallucination, visions and self-deluding projections) communicates closely with the 1904 atrocities, by allusion with the Nazi genocides and, through Mondaugen's fevered recollections, with the Depression Faschings of 1919:

In the dream it was the Fasching,....The season in Munich under the Weimar Republic and the inflation, had followed since the war a constantly rising curve, taking human depravity as ordinate. (V. 243)

These multiple allusions extend the episode's frame of reference and boundaries of significance enormously; from the close juxtaposition and counterpoint of the 1904 massacre/1922 siege party and the other allusions to Faschings, fascism and war, this episode implies particularly acutely the thesis, tacit throughout, that a connection obtains between violent conflict and increasing decadence, both indices of an escalating chaos.

Eventually Mondaugen, shortly before retiring from Foppl's castle to live with the Hereros (so we are told in Gravity's Rainbow), speculates gloomily on his fate and confirms decadence's ubiquity:

Mondaugen remained up in his turret...taking occasional breaks to...wonder if he would ever escape a curse that seemed to have been put on him one Fasching: to become surrounded by decadence no matter what exotic region, north or south, he wandered into. It couldn't be only Munich,...: nor even the fact of economic depression. This was a soul-depression which must surely infest Europe as it infested this house. (V. 277)

This critical recognition seems to 'redeem' Mondaugen from an alignment with the inanimate, indeed, one of the few characters to attain this precarious status.

Once again the motif of entropy prevails in "Mondaugen's Story". As the siege party progresses, an advancing state of a type of 'cognitive entropy' comparable to the Whole Sick Crew's finite and closed philosophical system proliferates where, by virtue of the absence of external inputs, reality and dream, identity and difference, past and present, and self and other collapse and become confused. Mondaugen becomes progressively incapable of distinguishing Godolphin and Foppl positively, the reminiscences of others from his own dreams; Godolphin mistakes Mondaugen for his son, Evan; Foppl regresses to 1904 with conviction, drawing his guests along with him as he begins "to define his guests assembled, to prescribe their common dream" (V. 255).

When the novel shifts to Paris, 1913, morphological similarities are enough to establish the links between the Whole Sick Crew, Foppl's Crew and the avant-garde Paris theatre crowd. This description of a Black Mass the morning after resembles the closing hours of any Whole Sick Crew party, "The entire room and the bodies inside it--some twisted, some coupled, some awake--the scattered Hosts, the black furniture, were all bathed in an exhausted yellow light filtered through rain clouds which refused to burst " (V. 403). The meteorological imagery is sustained throughout the episode evoking a stifling atmosphere of oppressiveness and 'closedness', and also anticipating the war's 'storm'. The episode concludes with a reference to the society as "this fetish-world" (V. 414), again reinforcing the earlier interpretation of these several and diverse communities as chronically fetishized and dehumanized.

Together these decadent communities practise, in unperceived

collaboration with those different modes practised by forces of imperialism, fascism, monarchism and oligarchism, and communities of ritual, religion, law, order and convention, modes of narcissism, auto-affection or centrism which result in the promotion of certain attributes and values at the expense and subordination of others, with a corollary fetishism and reification. It is the fate of these ostensibly 'animate' forces, societies, and communities to promote, inadvertently or deliberately, the inanimate and death.

THE ANIMATE AND INANIMATE REVISITED

We must distinguish a profound ethical duality with which the animate/inanimate dichotomy is applied and manipulated in the novel. This duality involves a vacillation between the moral and amoral, or human and empirical dimensions of these terms. The inanimate represents at once, the condition of the non-animate and inorganic and the state towards which energy-systems tend according to an inviolable entropic teleology, viz. "The body slows down, machines wear out, planets falter and loop, sun and stars gutter and smoke. Why say a disease? Only to bring it down to a size you can look at and feel comfortable?" (V. 461), "The world started to run more and more afoul of the inanimate.It happens every month in a succession of encounters between groups of living and a congruent world which simply doesn't care" (V. 290); the 'other' which a binaristic and colonial mentality seeks to contain, subordinate and determine as derivative with regard to its own 'originary' position (a 'colonialism' which is less a specific historical phenomenon than a recurring logocentric and dualistic cognitive practice); and a highly disagreeable decadence and corrosion of humanity by human

obsessiveness or irresponsibility--too much or too little care--which permits "a kind of infiltration." Conversely, the 'animate' represents the mobile and organic, specifically mankind; the ethnocentrically and hierarchically privileged position in a binary and colonial ("screwer/screwee") economy exemplified by 'Foppl', (what Fausto distinguishes as the "false-animate"); and more tentatively, those marginal and fortunate few who, through revelation, recognition, crisis or some mysterious grace of default, find a precarious and dubious accommodation (détente) with the inanimate.

The distinction between the animate and inanimate is manifested in human terms as the distinction between life and death. The ancient and banal truism that life precedes death is entirely unoriginal. Pynchon's use of the animate/inanimate dichotomy repeats "the single melody, banal and exasperating" (V. 410), confronts us with a smug fatalism and is simply "the overgrown elaboration of a simple idea." To be sure. Pynchon's manipulation of this dichotomy will necessarily remain unremarkable and easily reducible provided we wrench it free from the context of V., interpret its terms conventionally and submit to their traditional, mutually exclusive binarism. However, it is precisely a conventional conception and synopsis which impoverishes a reading of the novel. What such reduction fails to take into account is a redefining critique of this dualism and an inauguration of its 'punctuation' differently, articulated in the text. Whether one dismisses Pynchon's application of these terms as merely captious or not (a dismissal whose motives and legitimacy ought first to be carefully scrutinized), it is nevertheless necessary to recognize that the senses of these terms undergo a certain modification in the text and that the senses they acquire do not fully intersect with conventional senses. The text creates new criteria of 'definition'.

Distinguishing Pynchon's manipulation of these terms is the challenge it issues to an anthropocentric and binaristic conceptual economy which privileges life over death, Being over nothingness, presence over absence and similarly animate over inanimate, attempting to determine the former term as originary and the latter as derivative rather than recognizing the mutual complicity of these conditions (vide. 'Introduction', n.35, Barbara Johnson's synopsis). V. interrogates the traditional hierarchy of the animate/inanimate dichotomy by averring, through a persuasive and provocative rhetoric, the continual encroachment of the inanimate upon the animate, the startling and variform 'Trojan horse' infiltration of the animate by the inanimate where least sought or suspected, the inanimate as the matrix of the animate and the continued existence of the latter by the grace of the former. Waldetar, the Sephardic train conductor muses, "Men, he felt,...are at the mercy of the earth and its seas. Whether a cataclysm is accident or design, they need a God to keep them from harm" (V. 78). Whilst not endorsing Waldetar's theological conclusion, V. certainly confirms the first predication.

Moreover, Pynchon's rhetoric dismantles the boundary between the distinctions, life/death, animate/inanimate with the averral that these are not mutually exclusive categories, the one suddenly transformed cusp-like into the other, but a complicit economy of vector-like forces governed by a gradual decline, "a slow falling" (V. 317), "We all get involved to some extent in the politics of slow dying" (V. 410). This slow decline in Pynchon's lexicon, however, is no longer confined to an organic decline and organismic death, but furthered by the classification and treatment of humans as objects on the basis of reified symbolic relations: a fetishization of human beings by the substitution of a sign, an image for the kinetic being, which constitutes a movement towards the inanimate and death.

The animate/inanimate dichotomy thus undergoes a substantial and subversive revision and receives a different re-inscription in V., such that one can no longer be sure where to mark the boundary between these terms, or even, whether such delimitation is any longer legitimate or desirable. During this process "Pynchon" casts into severe doubt and virtually eradicates the category of the 'animate,' only retaining it tacitly (as suggested earlier) for a marginal few who, by default or critical confrontation with the inanimate, avoid alignment with the inanimate and presumably remain precariously 'animate'. Here, "Pynchon" is deliberately and, I believe, necessarily evasive. To propose a programme for the "resurgence of humanity in the automaton, health in the decadent" (V. 337) would simply project once again, terms of order and prescription similar to those under assault and, in the wake of a critique of the scale articulated in the text, would appear thoroughly naïve.

Clearly, too, Pynchon's critique remains dependent upon the very tradition it challenges, at once relying upon and rhetorically extrapolating to the point of inversion and capsize, the conventional sense of the animate/inanimate dichotomy. The fact that Pynchon is working in, and drawing upon, the very tradition of order he so vigorously attacks and disputes introduces a paradox which cannot be overlooked. This paradox, which bears a striking resemblance to a problem and a necessity we encountered in the project of 'deconstruction' (vide. 'Introduction', p. 32), remains legible throughout Pynchon's work. I shall identify two major 'rhetorical' strategies in V. which, in a qualified manner, negotiate beyond this totalizing paradox and a pervasive, monolithic binaristic conceptuality.

STENCIL AND PROFANE : The Hothouse and the Street

I wish now to examine the figures of Stencil files and Profane in some greater detail, evincing the characteristics and attributes imputed to each with reference to the pervasive animate/inanimate dichotomy and showing how, as contrasted extremes of response to the social malaise they inhabit, they orientate several important pre-occupations of the novel, and function to polarize the field of 'animate' response. In contrast with the vast swarms of "false-animate" (V. 323) who deliberately or inadvertently ally themselves with, and promote, the inanimate by inhabiting static systems of order and ritual, these two figures neither resist nor embrace the 'inanimate' and maintain a minimal 'momentum' which disqualifies and alienates them from the colonies and communities of the "false-animate". Their 'animateness,' however, consists of a resignation to the play of chance and an almost fortuitous non-alignment with the 'inanimate' rather than a coherent and rationalized resolution to establish some form of 'animate' counterforce, a resolution which would simply replicate the conditions produced by other paralyzing dreams of order (as noted above apropos Pynchon's own discourse).

Benny Profane and the Street

From the outset we know of Profane's anxiety, "Profane was afraid of land or seascapes...where nothing lived but himself" (V. 20) and his status as victim rather than ally of the inanimate is hereafter regularly averred. Stencil is distinguished by a similar momentum and non-alliance with the inanimate, "His random movements before

the war had given way to a great single movement from inertness to--if not vitality, then at least activity" (V. 55). The search for V. has provoked in Stencil, "this acquired sense of animateness. Having found this he could hardly release it, it was too dear. To sustain it he had to hunt V.; but if he found her where else would there be to go but back into half-consciousness? He tried not to think, therefore, about any end to the search" (V. 55).

The narratives of Stencil and Profane (can Stencil's papers satisfactorily be called a narrative?) stake out another important dichotomy for the novel; the twin, complementing human (animate and false-animate) geographies which provide the spatio-temporal mise en scène where the business of the animate/inanimate 'kingdoms' is conducted and prosecuted, viz. the hothouse and the S/street.

This spatial dichotomy is only declared formally in the "Epilogue" by Sidney Stencil, gathering together into a binary semantic structure the frequent separate and scattered occurrences of these two motifs:

"If there is any political moral to be found in this world," Stencil once wrote in his journal, "it is that we carry on the business of this century with an intolerable double vision. Right and Left; in the hothouse and the street. The Right can only live and work hermetically, in the hothouse of the past, while outside the Left prosecute their affairs in the streets by manipulated mob violence. And cannot live but in the dreamscape of the future. (V. 468)

The intersection of this dichotomy with the (in)animate dichotomy achieves a similar spatio-temporalized conceptualization to the schema sketched in Entropy. Prior to Sidney's convergence of hothouse and street, the novel's two protagonists are separately identified with these two spaces:

Since his discharge from the Navy Profane had been road-laboring and when there wasn't work just traveling, up and down the east coast like a yo-yo; ...Profane had grown a little leery of streets,.... They had in fact all fused into a single abstracted Street,.... (V. 10)

Stencil, on the contrary, inhabits the hothouse of the past as his dossiers on V. testify, "Stencil...who seemed more unaware each day...of what was happening in the rest of the world, reinforced Maijstral's growing theory that V. was an obsession after all, and that such an obsession is a hothouse: constant temperature, windless, too crowded with particoloured sports, unnatural blooms" (V. 448).

Benny Profane, the protagonist of the contemporary American episodes, "a schlemihl and human yo-yo" (V. 9) leads an emphatically unremarkable life. Born during the Depression, he is a symbol of all America's impoverished, dispossessed, victimized and unemployed, "it is Profane the Depression Kid, that lump that wasn't aborted, that became an awareness on the floor of one old Hooverville shack in '32, it's him you see in every no-name drifter, mooch, square's tenant, him you love" (V. 358), and remains a living monument to those austere times, "he felt now as if he were living in some private depression days" (V. 148).

Benny Profane is, in every respect, a denizen of the Street. He first appears in the night-streets of Norfolk Virginia, Christmas Eve 1955 (a potentially portentous date) where the streetlights are seen "receding in an assymmetric V. to the east where its dark and there are no more bars" and is last described running a darkened street with a new acquaintance, "Profane and Brenda continued to run through the abruptly absolute night, momentum alone carrying them toward the edge of Malta, and the Mediterranean beyond" (V. 455). Between these points, a period of roughly

9 months during which no apparent 'rebirth' occurs, Profane roams the streets of America and Malta, works beneath them as an alligator exterminator, takes a job as a night-watchman and yo-yoes when unemployed.

Benny Profane, like the yo-yo he adopts as emblem, remains abroad by "momentum alone" and displays an almost total passivity and indifference to the world he inhabits; two anxieties harrow him: acquiring dependents and doubting his animateness. He is characterized as unable or reluctant to codify, organize or order his experience in any way. Thus, though he inhabits the Street, he remains permanently estranged from it, "Road work had done nothing to improve the outward Profane, or the inward one either. Though the street had claimed a big fraction of Profane's age, it and he remained strangers in every way. Streets... had taught him nothing" (V. 36-7).

Instead of attempting to exert any control over his 'world' through his own volition, Profane resigns himself to government by the law of the inanimate: chance, thus paradoxically preserving his 'animateness'. This resignation installs him as a victim of the inanimate: accident-prone and always at odds with the inanimate cosmos. He reflects prior to his departure for Malta, "that Fortune's yo-yo had also returned to some reference-point, not unwilling, not anticipating, not anything; merely prepared to float, acquire a set and drift wherever Fortune willed. If Fortune could will" (V. 367) and previously observes, confirming his status as anti-hero, "What was a hero?.... Master of the inanimate. But a schlemihl, that was hardly a man: somebody who lies back and takes it from objects, like any passive woman" (V. 288).

Profane, in fact, is continually running afoul of the inanimate as this slapstick procedure illustrates:

He made his way to the washroom of Our Home, tripping over two empty mattresses on route. Cut himself shaving, had trouble extracting the blade and gashed a finger. He took a shower to get rid of the blood. The handles wouldn't turn. When he finally found a shower that worked, the water came out hot and cold in random patterns. He danced around, yowling and shivering, slipped on a bar of soap and nearly broke his neck. Drying off, he ripped a frayed towel in half, rendering it useless. He put on his skivvy shirt backwards, took ten minutes getting his fly zipped and another fifteen repairing a shoelace which had broken as he was tying it.It wasn't that he was tired or even notably uncoordinated. Only something that, being a schlemihl, he'd known for years: inanimate objects and he could not live in peace. (V. 37)

This poor adaptation to his environment, in contrast with the peaceful symbioses of characters like Mixolydian, is perversely, sign of Profane's dubious 'redemption'. His inability to be "at peace with some machine or other" (V. 215) precludes him from performing a useful function to society and becoming caught in its slow vortex of dehumanizing exploitation as animate servo-motor to its vast technologies. Even his language, bearing out Fausto's observations on metaphor and community, is improperly acquired and conformed, "here...was Profane,...whose vocabulary it seemed was made up of nothing but wrong words" (V. 137). Consequently, unable to be adequately accommodated by society, he identifies with its discarded human waste: America's demi-monde of drifters, vagrants, bums...social detritus of all kinds. Ironically, only accident keeps him from joining this community; women keep taking pity on him and giving him shelter and, "Women had always happened to Profane the schlemihl like accidents: broken shoelaces, dropped dishes, pins in new shirts" (V. 134). Rachel Owlglass, who vainly tries to win Profane's love, exercises the sole control on his otherwise random movement, "though her yo-yo hand was usually busy at other things, now and again would come the invisible, umbilical tug...and he would wonder how much his own man he was" (V. 29).

Profane embodies a certain 'molecular' kinesis and the fate of one existentially 'abandoned' in an indifferent cosmos whose motion he frequently obstructs at his own expense. He is explicitly offered as an anti-hero but fits this role so perfectly as to be ultimately a parody of the type; Stencil, similarly, is a burlesque of the 'questing-hero' figure in literature. During the course of the novel other symbolic roles are tendered for Profane but never sustained by a supplementary chain of confirming motifs. He is variously described; for example, after "pissing at the sun", "It went down; as if he'd extinguished it after all and continued on immortal, god of a darkened world" (V. 26); later he prowls about, thinking, "he felt like the Angel of Death" (V. 29); aboard the Susanna Squaducci for a New Year's Eve party he styles himself as God for his own distraction, "suppose I was God" (V. 31); and finally, at the novel's close, "hadn't he, now, really stood there still on the sea like a schlemihl Redeemer...?" (V. 453) Other similar symbolic roles are donned and discarded in the manner of "a quick-change artist." His name 'Ben Profane' lends credence to his status as offspring and heir to a secular world, but a discussion of Profane's role in V. sharpens the problems of interpretive uncertainty; several critics have elected to give credence to select symbolic roles (ignoring others), positing Profane as a secular redeemer of the contemporary 'wasteland' et. al., and situated readings of Profane and others accordingly. The indications are there but the critical confirmations are invariably ours.

At the novel's close Profane has resolved to return to road or sewer work and exchanges some words with Brenda Wigglesworth, "an American WASP who attended Beaver college" and an "inviolable Puritan" (V. 452) on a "Grand Tour" of Europe. Brenda:

"You've done so much more. Boys do."
 "What?"
 "You've had all these fabulous experiences.
 I wish mine would show me something."
 "Why."
 "The experience, the experience. Haven't you
 learned?"
 Profane didn't have to think long. "No," he said,
 "offhand I'd say I haven't learned a goddam thing." (V. 454)

Brenda's beliefs echo the faith in Rachel's original demand that Profane write telling, "How the road is. Your boy's road that I'll never see,....Places I won't know" (V. 27). The myth of the revelation remains intact.

Evidently Profane's future holds another road, another sewer, another female acquaintance, another similar conversation. His passage has been circular or periodic: a tour, "it seemed there were Beaver and the Street for them separately to return to; and both agreed this was nowhere, but some of us do go nowhere and can con ourselves into believing it to be somewhere: it is a kind of talent and objections to it are rare but even at that captious" (V. 453).

Profane has described a tour where somewhere, like Slothrop after him, the "moment of revelation", or "redemption" (if these have not always been simply mythologies) has passed him over. Let us digress for a moment to discuss the case of McClintic Sphere and his "moment of revelation".

McClintic Sphere, a black jazz musician acquires a binaristic epistemology which perplexes him, "Ruby, what happened after the war? That war, the world flipped. But come '45, and they flopped. Here in Harlem they flopped. Everything got cool--no love, no hate, no worries, no excitement. Every once in a while, though, somebody flips back. Back to where he can love . . . [. . .] But you take a whole bunch of people flip at the same time and you've got a war. Now war is not loving, is it?" (V. 293). This epistemology, derived from "talking stochastic music and

digital computers" (V. 293), and therefore an 'inanimate' epistemology whose formal categories Sphere preserves in the flip/flop dyad, he eventually resolves as follows, "the only way clear of the cool/crazy flipflop was obviously slow, frustrating and hard work. Love with your mouth shut, help without breaking your ass or publicizing it: keep cool, but care. He might have known, if he'd used any common sense. It didn't come as a revelation, only something he'd as soon not've admitted" (V. 365-6).²⁸

It is a resolution whose main dictum the sinistrally oracular SHROUD repeats to Profane, "Keep cool. Keep cool but care. It's a watchword for your side of the morning. There, I've told you too much as it is" (V. 369). If McClintic Sphere's tentative negotiation past binaristic epistemology, repeated to Profane by SHROUD, is valid and can be dubiously deemed a 'revelation', Profane misses it

²⁸ This maxim has, in fact, been the occasion of lively and controversial dispute amongst Pynchon critics. "McClintic's recognition is one of the most positive and tender moments of the book:.... Pynchon gives us little else as a counterbalance to our communal dream of annihilation--only the small though decidedly positive hope that we can keep cool but care."--Olderman, Beyond the Wasteland, p. 139. Tanner initially writes, "'Keep cool, but care,' is about as much genuine emotion as the book seems to allow. As such it is unconvincing. ... You cannot render great emotions in a comic strip, and 'Keep cool, but care,' is just such bubble talk or the sort of slogan-jargon mongered by advertisements."--"V. and V-2," in Mendelson (ed.), p. 25. He later qualifies this reading, "...keep cool, but care.' That last formulation has been criticized as being too easy - slick and glib, like an advertising slogan. But perhaps that is a result of the problem of finding 'right words' in a world in which language seems to be declining like everything else. ...it promises no Messianic healing. But it gestures towards some form of maintained humanity...."--Tanner, Thomas Pynchon, p. 50. Another commentator reckons, "Sphere's higgledy-piggledy cutely 'authentic' prose holds no charm for me."--Irving Feldman, "Keeping Cool," Commentary, 3 No: 36 (Sept. 1963), p. 260. Finally, Sphere reminds us--almost a comment on his own slogan, "There's no magic words. Not even I love you is magic enough" (V. 366).

(as his inability to dismantle his "schlemihl" persona and enter a love-relationship--demanding care and compassion --confirms) and, "...likewise groweth his Preterition sure" (GR 509). We shall have more to say about the inscrutable and mischievous SHROUD.

Profane exits at the end of the novel (but does the novel end in 1956 with Profane or 1919 with Stencil?) affirming Maijstral's meditations, "they turn the corner, as we all must, as we have done and do--some more often than others--to find ourselves on the street . . . You know the street I mean, child. The street of the 20th Century, at whose far end or turning--we hope--is some sense of home or safety. But no guarantees. A street we are put at the wrong end of, for reasons best known to the agents who put us there. If there are agents. But a street we must walk" (V. 323-4). I will move on now to discuss the character of Herbert Stencil and the creature-construct, "the lady V." who constitutes one of the main enigmas of the text.

Herbert Stencil and the Quest for V.

Stencil shares several attributes with Profane. As I have suggested, he too, is never fully aligned with the 'inanimate' and his movements are also governed, with some intense self-discipline, by chance, allowing this 'control variable' to direct his search for V.; (one of the roles Stencil fulfils in this respect is the clichéd 'soldier of Fortune' figure). Of his New York itinerary we learn, "He'd taken to roving the city, aimlessly, waiting for a coincidence" (V. 56). Again, prior to his momentous voyage to Malta, "Stencil's going to Malta like a nervous groom to matrimony. It is a marriage of convenience, arranged by

Fortune, father and mother to everyone" (V. 389): a government the majority of the novel's inhabitants cannot bear, or fail to, recognize. Fausto recording the 'progress' of Fausto II recalls, "All the while only in the process of learning life's single lesson: that there is more accident to it than a man can ever admit to in a lifetime and stay sane" (V. 321).

Stencil's resignation to chance establishes him in contrast with the plentiful communities who project dreams of order and control fostering inanimate proliferation, and contrasts him with the novel's enigmatic heroine. Her early avatar, Victoria Wren, "felt that skill or any virtù was a desirable and lovely thing purely for its own sake; and it became more effective the further divorced it was from moral intention. ...she would act, when occasion arose, on the strength of a unique and private gloss on The Prince. She overrated virtù, individual agency,...."(V. 198-9). Pynchon adapts the Machiavellian dichotomy to polarize further the (in)animate dichotomy and distinguish degrees of human control and abdication. Through Victoria Wren's commitment to virtù--again, "the young entrepreneuse with all spring's hope in her virtù, with her girl's faith that Fortune (if only her skill, her timing held true) could be brought under control " (V. 410)--"Pynchon" implies that systems of order, predicated on virtù, seek to control or deny chance, accident, contingency, and inculcate stasis and inanimateness accordingly. Victoria Wren seeks to master Fortune and, in some inscrutable fashion, direct the course of history; she wishes to conform and make others, "a part of the vast system of channels, locks and basins she had dug for the rampant river Fortune" (V. 199). Virtù (another V) is identified as the motivating drive behind 'world-projections' and 'dreams of order' and the virtù/fortuna dichotomy defines more explicitly the conflict between human volition and

its attempts to create an ordered world, and the unpredictable movements of the inanimate cosmos which announces itself through disasters, catastrophes and cataclysms. Much later, during one of his last appearances in the novel (prior to his departure for Mme. Viola in Stockholm and another potential lead), Stencil, reaffirming his resignation or declaring his faith, reveals to Maijstral on Malta:

"Did you know, he's devised a prayer. Walking about this city, to be said in rhythm to his footsteps. Fortune, may Stencil be steady enough not to fasten on one of these poor ruins at his own random or at any least hint from Maijstral." (V. 447)

Thus both Stencil and Profane, "Fortune's yo-yo"--at one point he abdicates to "inanimate schmuck, inanimate paper, pure chance" (V. 215)--remain responsive to the motions of inanimate matter and the rule of chance rather than attempting to control or promote the 'inanimate'. Consequently they remain among the marginally animate characters in the novel and eligible for the dubious rewards of this status.

Furthermore, Stencil, resembling Profane, is a social misfit, one excluded from the community of mankind, the "false-animate", and gravitating towards a position of greater alienation. An ensemble of tableaux illustrates this. Shortly after his appearance, Stencil muses, "Stencil could see a day when he would only be tolerated. It would then be he and V. all alone, in a world that somehow had lost sight of them both" (V. 55). We have already noted his unorthodox historical vision, "Doubtless their private versions of history showed up in action. If a normal distribution of types prevailed they did. Stencil fell outside the pattern." Leery of official histories, he has developed his own, idiosyncratic methods of data retrieval and selection, "Stencil would rather depend on the imperfect vision of humans for his history. Somehow

governments reports, bar graphs, mass movements are too treacherous" (V. 388); Stencil favours animate, personal and spoken histories whilst distrusting inanimate, written statistics and official documents.

Once again, similar to Profane, Stencil is victim of a 'language-barrier'; his 'vocabulary' does not coincide with normative discourse. A conversation with a professional man and social patriarch, Dudley Eigenvalue D.D.S. after Stencil's theft of a set of false teeth from him, eminently illustrates this: 'They discussed the concept of property and agreed that a true owner need not have physical possession. If the soul-dentist knew (...), then "owner", Eigenvalue-defined, was Eigenvalue; Stencil-defined, V. It was a complete failure of communication. They parted friends' (V. 422). Later Stencil announces, "Stencil expresses himself like an idiot" (V. 447).²⁹ Like Profane he seems unable to find the 'right' words and is adjudged socially maladjusted by other characters in the novel. Albeit for different reasons, the 'idiolects' of Profane and Stencil do not correspond to the dominant 'sociolects' and this exacerbates their alienation from the declining communities they inhabit.

However, whilst having these features in common with Profane, this counterpart is the cognitive antithesis to Stencil and this is the basis of several marked contrasts between them. Whereas Profane trundles, volitionless and motiveless in the streets of the 20th century, given occasional impetus by the whims of others, Stencil's all-consuming motivation, direction and passion is his quest for V. Whereas Profane has no historical sense beyond a vaguely sentimental nostalgia for the Great Depression, Stencil, having

²⁹ An idiot, we may note, is etymologically, a person with his own language.

inherited an ambiguous legacy from his father--one to which he believes Sidney's death is mysteriously connected--is obsessed with the past, with history. Profane exercises no ordering-principles and fosters no cognitive-grid for retaining, organizing, interpreting and controlling his world, "I haven't learned a goddamn thing." Stencil, on the contrary, responding to Sidney's sybilline legacy (we shall witness the importance of the written legacy to the quest again in The Crying of Lot 49)--'Under "Florence, April, 1899" is a sentence, young Stencil has memorized it: "There is more behind and inside V. than any of us had suspected. Not who, but what: what is she. God grant that I may never be called upon to write the answer, either here or in any official report"' (V. 53)--believes that everything is subordinate to the truth of V., explicable in terms of V. and connected with V., and has been hunting V. since the end of WW II.

Thus Stencil and Profane, to recall Sidney's dichotomy, respectively embody the hothouse and the street. Or to engage the terms of McClintic's dichotomy, the crazy and the cool: the 'flipped' Stencil on his "mad time-search" (V. 406), "his obsession" (V. 155) and Profane, the indifferent and passive schlemihl, cool but also socially a flop. Or to engage the axes of Maijstral's dichotomy, "Perhaps British colonialism has produced a new sort of being, a dual man, aimed two ways at once: towards peace and simplicity on the one hand, towards an exhausted intellectual searching on the other" (V. 309). Stencil and Profane conceivably embody the separate attributes of this "dual man", together constituting an unusual composite figure. Further comparisons have been made with the Quixote/Panza duo and the Bloom/Daedelus duo from Ulysses. Binary coordinates describing, comparing and contrasting the two figures could undoubtedly be multiplied.

Stencil is the archetypal "Western platonist" (vide. 'Introduction' n. 14), committed to the proposition that the 'truth', in his case the truth of history: the definitive history of the Western world, is One and its name and shape is V. He subordinates the twentieth century crises and turning points: the averted Fashoda crisis between Britain and France, then imperial world-powers, 1898; the delicately balanced Triple Alliance, 1899; the 1904 Herero and 1940's Jewish massacres; the Russian Revolution, 1917; the German Depression and June Disturbances on Malta, 1919; two World Wars; the 1922 Herero revolt; the Great Depression, 1932; the A-bomb, 1945; the crises brewing in Hungary, Poland and Suez, 1956, as so many surface phenomena: shapes within a master cabal, "V. and a conspiracy. Its particular shape governed only by the surface accidents of history at the time" (V. 155). He repeats elsewhere his suspicion that V. is an agent in "the ultimate Plot Which Has No Name" (V. 226). He concludes that, as this ultimate historical teleology has not as yet been realised; that as this Armageddon has not yet occurred, V. must still be at large. It is Stencil's perpetual faith in a 'larger synthesis' into which all the available facts and information will eventually be accommodated, that keeps him in motion. The reader is simultaneously able to observe Stencil in the process of attempting to assemble a "hothouse" system of order from the numerous facts, documents, signs, coincidences, clues and artefacts he has acquired, and encouraged to participate in his own 'quest for V.' as a meaning, symbol, or otherwise explicable, rationalizable and logically recuperable entity. I will now focus the discussion on the "lady V." and the nature of the information Stencil files assembles about her.

V. - "not who, but what : what is she"

During the course of the novel the reader vicariously acquires a plethora of details, attributes and other information imputed to V. The information which Stencil assembles is, however, invariably framed in doubt and uncertainty, introducing the first dimension of unreliability and further distorted, to a degree we can never gauge, by Stencil's own speculation and inference, introducing a second dimension of unreliability. Stencil himself reveals,

Around each seed of a dossier...had developed a nacreous mass of inference, poetic licence, forcible dislocation of personality into a past he didn't remember and had no right in, save the right of imaginative anxiety or historical care, which is recognized by no one. (V. 62)

Hereafter he frequently acknowledges again, "She's yielded him only the poor skeleton of a dossier. Most of what he has is inference" (V. 155) and, "Stencil sketched the entire history of V. that night and strengthened a long suspicion. That it did add up only to the recurrence of an initial and a few dead objects" (V. 445).

Reading the V.-structure consequently becomes less an encounter with any 'reality' or 'truth' of V., than the psychoanalysis of an obsessive. As one of Stencil's narrat_ees, Eigenvalue observes "when Stencil retold it, the yarn had undergone considerable change: had become... Stencilized" (V. 228). The possibility perpetually remains, despite Stencil's own faith, that V. is entirely Stencil's fiction, a history which only acquires its shape and organization through his supervenient vigilance. The dilemma of V. is consequently a parable of reading and writing. Stencil attempts to gather, read and interpret all the signs and artefacts which compile the text of V. and,

motivated both by desire and fear, endeavours ultimately to restore or reappropriate V. in her/its (?) full presence. In the activity of this hermeneutic quest, he compiles a text in which the reader subsequently becomes involved with the same quest for V. as a coherent concept, character or meaning, whilst confronting the increasing ignominy into which Stencil is incessantly deciphering himself.

Information regarding V.'s personal appearance (the ivory comb, the glass eye, the sapphire navel), her various occupations (primarily a couturière and dress-merchant) and attributes of her personality accumulate. Potential and substantial links to all the other V. phenomena, and several other characters and entities besides, are established. Frequently, similar attributes are imputed to V. and other entities allowing the reader to 'join-the-dots' and confirm the parallelism or "daisy chain" of correspondences. For example, V. in her 'sacred' aspect communicates with the Virgin-cult and then structurally, through this detour, with Fina Mendoza and Veronica the rat-saint. Through the aspect of "venery" combined with the disclosure that, "Disguise is one of her attributes" (V. 388, 462) she communicates with Mehemet's myth of Mara and consequently with every other metamorphosis of the 'goddess of love' (Astarte, Venus, etc.). Again, through the feminization of Malta as "cradle of life" and "womb of rock" in Fausto's Confessions and elsewhere, combined with Godolphin's tales of Vheissu--subsumed under an extended metaphor of 'colonial' venery--in which intrigue Victoria Wren is involved, V. is associated with countries and geographies of all sorts. It becomes difficult to envisage any limits to these multiple transformations and permutations, and it is in this system of correspondences and differences that the reader's 'ordering-reflex' or paranoia is engaged. Pynchon deliberately exploits the reader's ability to perceive patterns emerging and to

connect similar attributes in different V.'s in the hope of eventually binding them together into some form of unified concept or entity. The reader replicates Stencil's comic quest itself an inconclusive allegory of reading, after his own fashion, and emulates, "clownish Stencil capering along behind her, bells ajingle, waving a wooden, toy oxgoad. For no one's amusement but his own" (V. 61-2).

Let us confirm some of the attributes sketched a moment ago. Initially a quality of venerary (in both senses) and a habitat of siege, the hothouse, are attributed to V.:

V. ambiguously a beast of venerary, chased like the hart, hind or hare, chased like an obsolete or bizarre, or forbidden form of sexual delight. (V. 61)

Stencil suspects "V.'s natural habitat to be the state of siege" (V. 62). Hereafter information concerning V. is recapitulated through the series of historical testimonies bound together by V.'s superintendence and Stencil's speculative commentaries and synopses.

During one of several interviews with Eigenvalue, the last following his burglary by Stencil and Profane, Stencil posits further attributes and connections:

Florence only a few summers ago had seemed crowded with the same tourists as at the turn of the century. But V., whoever she was, might have been swallowed in the airy Renaissance spaces of that city, assumed into the fabric of any of a thousand Great Paintings, for all Stencil was able to determine. He had discovered, however, what was pertinent to his purpose: that she'd been connected, though perhaps only tangentially, with one of those grand conspiracies or foretastes of Armageddon which seemed to have captivated all diplomatic sensibilities in the years preceding the Great War. V. and a conspiracy. Its particular shape governed only by the surface accidents of history at the time. (V. 155)

This prefaces the lengthy 'Florence, 1899' narrative whose events occasioned the journal entry which triggered Stencil films' quest.

During this episode Victoria Wren (who previously appeared in Cairo and Alexandria with Goodfellow and Porpentine) an early avatar or "disguise" of V. (although Stencil challenges the certainty of this assumption) learns of Godolphin's fantastic land of Vheissu. Vheissu in turn becomes entwined, through the interception of a telegram, with various diplomatic paranoias, a revolution in Venezuela, a plot against the Venezuelan embassy by Venezuelan expatriates led by the Gaucho who is simultaneously involved in a plot to steal Botticelli's Birth of Venus, and even with old Mme. Vogt's theory that Vesuvius is one aperture to a global network of tunnels lacing the earth. The Vesuvius-theory in turn suggests an oblique allusion to the myth of Vulcan. Vheissu is a floating signifier in the episode. Taken as a code-name by different individuals and communities, it is invested with a meaning which will confirm the particular plot or organization of events each paranoiacally suspects. Vheissu once again offers us a parable of reading and interpretation in which each reader assembles his own logic of events and 'dream of order'. (We shall consider the structural and figural relationship between Vheissu and V. in greater detail later). Victoria Wren's "outré brand of Roman Catholicism" (V. 167) reinforces Stencil's attribution of venerary and indicates a perverse "sacred" aspect, whilst her bizarre fascination with political disorder and death, already presaged by her macabre choice of headgear, is established in the following scene:

She saw a rioter in a shirt of motley, sprawled over the limb of a tree, being bayoneted again and again by two soldiers. She stood as still as she had at the crossroads waiting for Evan; her face betrayed

no emotion. It was as if she saw herself embodying a feminine principle, acting as complement to all this bursting, explosive male energy. Inviolable and calm, she watched the spasms of wounded bodies, the fair of violent death, framed and staged, it seemed, for her alone in that tiny square. From her hair the heads of five crucifixes also looked on, no more expressive than she. (V. 209; my emphasis indicates the uncertainty in which these attributes are suspended).

As the novel progresses, V.'s various manifestations or disguises, and her numerous and extensively scattered symbolic analogues (established by allusions, motifs, emblems, characteristics and personal features), enable her to accumulate qualities of venerability, sainthood, fascism, anarchism, apocalypse and death. Florence is the first strong indication that Victoria is evidently not merely an innocent, English country girl, so the episode also marks the 'Birth of V.ness' which Stencil's remark on V.'s dissolution into "any of a thousand Great Paintings" and the theft sub-plot obliquely and paronomastically underscore. An apposite allusion to Graves' The White Goddess previously is also re-engaged in the theft sub-plot and other attributes of Graves' fabled beast are constellated around V. in the novel, thus allusively incorporating Graves' protean white goddess and all her contradictory attributes, under the V.-umbrella.³⁰ Henry Adams' distinction between the Dynamo and the Virgin are similarly echoed and Stencil's late remark that, "V.'s is

³⁰ A detailed though somewhat erratic mythic interpretation of V. based on the two compendia of myth mentioned in V., The Golden Bough and The White Goddess, is attempted by Joseph Fahy, "Thomas Pynchon's V. and Mythology," Critique: Studies in Modern Fiction 18 (3) 1977, pp. 5-18. Fahy draws attention to the following passages from The White Goddess, "The Goddess is a lovely, slender woman with a hooked nose, deathly pale face.... Her names and titles are innumerable."--R. Graves, The White Goddess (London: Faber, 1961 rpt. 1977), p. 24. Elsewhere, writing of the sea-goddess, Marian, "Botticelli's Birth of Venus is an exact icon of her cult." *ibid.* p. 395. Graves' thesis holds furthermore that the Virgin is a Christianized appropriation of the White Goddess and the multiple transformations of Venus represent the benign aspect of the White Goddess. His incredible and rather dubious fable and his faith in "the single infinitely variable Theme"--*ibid.* p. 21, provides, along with Henry Adams' intellectual searches, another analogue for Stencil's comical quest.

a country of coincidence ruled by a ministry of myth" (V. 450), further reinforces these multiple mythic angles.

Another interview with Eigenvalue establishes the following details about Stencil's V.:

Truthfully he didn't know what sex V. might be, nor even what genus and species. To go along assuming that Victoria the girl tourist and Veronica the sewer rat were one and the same V. was not at all to bring up any metempsychosis: only to affirm that his quarry fitted in with The Big One, the century's master cabal, in the same way Victoria had with the Vheissu plot and Veronica with the new rat-order. If she was a historical fact then she continued active today and at the moment, because the ultimate Plot Which Has No Name was as yet unrealized, though V. might be no more a she than a sailing vessel or a nation. (V. 226)

The entire 'Florence, 1899' episode brings us no closer to determining what the V. in Stencil père's journal signifies, as he has contact with Victoria, Vheissu, and tangentially, Venezuela. Stencil files, after eleven years of searching, in 1956 has not even managed to determine the sex, genus or species of his quarry which leaves the range of possible evidence ludicrously wide.

Again, much later in the novel, Stencil provides another synopsis of the V.-jigsaw, this time for Profane:

he stayed off Malta. He had pieces of thread: clues.all along the first thread, from a young, crude Mata Hari act in Egypt--as always, in no one's employ but her own--while Fashoda tossed sparks in search of a fuse; until 1913 when she knew she'd done all she could and so took time out for love--all that while, something monstrous had been building. Not the War, nor the socialist tide which brought us Soviet Russia. Those were symptoms, that's all." (V. 386) (I draw attention to the tropology of 'textile' which will be discussed in greater detail apropos Lot 49.)

Stencil expresses again here, the belief that V. is an

agent in a conspiracy, plot or organized synthesis larger than the events of history. The Wars, the Russian Revolution are held to be simply subplots, narrative digressions in the "ultimate Plot Which Has No Name", the plot of the world, whose chronology is Time, whose content is History, whose characters are all humanity.

Gradually information proliferates and ramifies into new clues and connections, and continually divergent and pluri-dimensional symbolic attributes become constellated around V. The reader becomes reluctantly engaged in the organization of the information concerning V. Not to do so would require dispensing with the very faculties which enable one to read.

Towards the end of the novel, Stencil's recapitulations become more terse and our new information on V. triggers links with prior data almost exponentially in a continually ramifying excess. Episodes are edited to locations and allusions:

Disguise is one of her attributes. In Mallorca she spent at least a year as an old fisherman who... would...tell...of gun-running in the Red Sea.V. in Spain, V. on Crete: V. crippled in Corfu, a partisan in Asia Minor. Giving tango lessons in Rotterdam she had commanded the rain to stop; it had. Dressed in tights adorned with two Chinese dragons she handed swords, balloons and coloured handkerchiefs to Ugo Medichevole, a minor magician, for one lustless summer in the Roman Campagna. And, learning quickly, found time to perform a certain magic of her own; (V. 389)

Eventually, summarizing this process, "Stencil...had left pieces of himself--and V.--all over the western world. V. by this time was a remarkably scattered concept " (V. 389).

As Stencil acquires or expounds new information he is forced to devise new strategies to organize, rationalize

and contain V. as a unified object whilst his, and our, incoming data intractably refuse to conform to any such epistemology and conceptuality. On the contrary, he is repeatedly modifying his parameters for V. to accommodate new qualities and attributes until such point where the parameters are sufficiently inclusive to render the 'unity' of the concept or, less restrictively, the 'meaning' of the concept, almost farcical.

Initially, Stencil suspects V. to be a beast of venery and to inhabit states of siege. Victoria Wren, combining aspects of the sacred and the sexual, fits this description adequately but as data accumulate Stencil confesses, as we have noted, that he has not managed to determine whether, "V. might be no more a she than a sailing vessel or a nation." Furthermore, initially requiring that V. be "connected, though perhaps only tangentially," with critical events, he eventually relinquishes any hypotheses of control or causality over 'events', "Not even as if she were any cause, any agent. She was only there. But being there was enough, even as a symptom" (V. 386). Evidently by this late stage in Stencil's quest only the criterion of presence need suffice, however Stencil also avers that disguise is one of her chief attributes. This latter qualification permits V. to fulfil any role, or alternatively, qualifies any figure to fit the V.-ensemble. One more remark, made by Vera Meroving, another 'disguise' of V. even exempts her from attending presence, "Condescending, she explained that she'd been off in another country in 1904, and that a year and place don't have to include the physical person for there to be a certain ownership" (V. 245). This last remark qualifies V. to preside over any epoch or entity manifesting her attributes or 'essence', i.e. 'V.ness', which can evidently be anything.

Contrary to the traditional teleology of the quest, the

field of possibilities harbouring the quest-object relentlessly unfolds and broadens in V. This general 'unbinding' of the V.-ensemble rhetorically permits V. to accommodate and contain spatiality itself, whilst a suspicion--derived from V.'s attendance at every historical epoch: stated, implied and inferred--that time is also intrigued in the V.-ensemble, is reinforced by one observer's remark on "a glass eye in the shape of a clock: 'as if I'd been fixed by the evil eye of time itself'" (V. 388). An intimation rests that temporality and spatiality themselves are conceived as dimensions of a human ordering-faculty, or plot which V. embraces.

The relentless condensation of data about V. produces a figure so overdetermined with 'meanings', "a chaotic host of irreconcilable things. . . ." ³¹ as to constitute a parody of meaning, a mockery or impersonation of meaning whose effect ultimately is to 'satirize' the concept of meaning and challenge the limits of current meaning-conditions and -constraints. When Stencil concedes, "V.'s is a country of coincidence, ruled by a ministry of myth" (V. 450), the last control on V. is lifted. Hereafter and retrospectively any perceivable coincidence is permissible: chance is the only rule.

THE DISSEMINATION OF V.

The V.-ensemble accomplishes, through a multiple and probably incalculable condensation of different analogies, concepts,

³¹ Mangel, p. 198.

structures and meanings it engages, the convergence of the several binary oppositions and distinctions we have noted structuring the novel, and implicitly accomplishes the collapse of differences in general. I have already attempted to trace and evince the rhetoric of the animate/inanimate dichotomy and several of the other binarisms that intersect and interact with it, providing the main body of discourse in the novel. V., however, is offered as straddling, embracing and absorbing these oppositions. We have seen how she incorporates the animate/inanimate difference and even the spatio-temporal difference. Stencil père notes, moreover, "Riot was her element, as surely as this dark room, almost creeping with amassed objects. The street and the hothouse; in V. were resolved, by some magic, the two extremes. She frightened him" (V. 487).

Here, let us recall the entropy motif which informs the direction of the animate/inanimate dichotomy throughout the novel. The V.-trope engineers a systematic breakdown of differences, which is also a manifestation of increasing entropy and a consequent drift towards homogeneity. Two recent critics have commented on the inverse relationship between differentiation and increasing entropy in connection with Pynchon's writing. Slade comments:

Somewhat paradoxically another manifestation of increasing entropy is greater homogeneity among the system's parts. Healthy systems encompass diverse elements in relation to each other, but as entropy increases those elements lose their differentiation,³²

and Tanner, following the function of the entropy construct apropos V., observes:

³² Joseph Slade, Thomas Pynchon (New York Paperbacks, 1974), p. 33.

Indeed as this 'concept' [V. was by this time a remarkably scattered concept (V. 389)] expands to include ever more manifestations of V., and as opposites such as love and death, the political right and left, start to converge in this inclusiveness, it points to that ultimate disappearance of differences and loss of distinction which is the terminal state of the entropic process.³³

Suggested in Tanner's remarks is the appreciation that 'meaning' is a function of linguistic differences (as Saussure and his successors have cogently demonstrated) and that, "If V. can mean everything it means nothing."³³ In other words, granting that V. marks the convergence and breakdown of differences, she enacts a semantic entropy and annihilation.

The Aporia of Vheissu

Here, let us digress to consider Godolphin's tales of Vheissu which are related to Victoria Wren and obliquely related to V. by certain figural exchanges. The parable of Vheissu with Godolphin's interpretation provides an allegory of V. and some indication of "Pynchon's" own interpretation of the V.-ensemble, confirming Tanner's reading.

We have already noted Stencil's concession that V. need "be no more a she than a sailing vessel or a nation" (V. 226), and the revolving metaphor where tenor and vehicle interchange comparing Vheissu to a savage woman and V. to a landscape. These indications point towards a commonality between V. and Vheissu.

³³ Tanner, "V. and V-2," in Mendelson (ed.), p. 27

Godolphin relates the story of Vheissu to Victoria and Signor Mantissa, disclosing several of its features:

Everything changes.No sequence of colors is the same from day to day. As if you lived inside a madman's kaleidoscope. Even your dreams become flooded with colors, with shapes no Occidental ever saw. Not real shapes, not meaningful ones. Simply random, the way clouds change over a Yorkshire landscape. (V. 170; my emphases)

Developing the metaphor of the love-affair, a colonial scenario we have seen elsewhere, he adds:

...as if the place were, were a woman...a dark woman tattooed from head to toes."

"And you would be in love with her."

"At first. But soon that skin, the gaudy godawful riot of pattern and color, would begin to get between you and whatever it was in her that you thought you loved. And soon,...you would begin praying to whatever god you knew of to send some leprosy to her. To flay that tattooing to a heap of red, purple and green debris, leave the veins and ligaments raw and quivering and open.... (V. 171)

His son Evan, to the Gaucho, picks up the thread of Vheissu, indicating again the threat its unearthly 'otherness' poses to corporate imperial dreams of order and homogenization and the reaction it provokes from the European mind, "I have seen two governments hagridden to alienation over this fairy tale or obsession I thought was my father's own." (V. 193) In contrast with the increasingly static and domesticated half-life of the European world, "A glow about old Firenze seems to be missing, seems more a leaden gray." (V. 201), apparently the effect of burgeoning global bureaucratization--"Die lood van die Goevernement" (V. 223)--Victoria Wren suggests, "Perhaps the only radiance left is in Vheissu " (V. 201). Vheissu thus seems to represent Godolphin's V., his "obsession", a fable, and also a mode of existence which cannot be colonized, rationalized ("a madman's kaleidoscope"), subjugated and ordered ("Everything changes"). Vheissu marks an aporia in the European

cognitive framework and hence its existence is denied and repressed by the imperial bureaucracies with interests in establishing "a world of neat hollow squares and snappy counter-marching" (V. 171).

Godolphin takes up the yarn again with Mantissa, providing his 'interpretation' of Vheissu.

I had never penetrated to the heart of any of those wild places, Raf. Until Vheissu. It was not till the Southern Expedition last year that I saw what was beneath her skin."

"What did you see?"....

"Nothing, Godolphin whispered. "It was Nothing I saw."
(V. 204)

I draw attention to the motif of centrism: "heart" and Godolphin's 'revelation' of "Nothing". He expands on his trip to the Antarctic and his discovery of one of Vheissu's rainbow-coloured spider monkeys frozen beneath the ice:

I think they left it there for me. A mockery, you see: a mockery of life, planted where everything but Hugh Godolphin was inanimate. It did tell me the truth about them. If Eden was the creation of God, God only knows what evil created Vheissu. The skin which had wrinkled through my nightmares was all there had ever been. Vheissu itself, a gaudy dream. Of what the Antarctic in this world is closest to: a dream of annihilation. (V. 206).

This reminiscence prescribes Mantissa's subsequent 'revelation' before The Birth of Venus:

The whole surface of the painting now seemed to move, to be flooded with color and motion. [...]
What sort of mistress [...] would Venus be? [...]
And she herself (perhaps even her native desmesne?)
was only . . .

A gaudy dream, a dream of annihilation. Was that what Godolphin had meant? (V. 209-10).

The painting, another variegated skin, inaugurates Mantissa's

personal transformation of the Vheissu-trope, indicating the possibility of others and inspissates the grid of correspondences between Vheissu and V. The activity of painting operates too (if we recall Mehemet's parable) as a figure for culture, society and communal 'dreams of order'.

Other parallels between V. and Vheissu emerge. V. is frequently distinguished by a riot of gaudy, parti-coloured apparel.³⁴ The balloon is another of V.'s emblems, communicating with the phrase, "Up goes the balloon" (V. 67, 434) as a sign of impending political chaos. Yusef, the factotum, "Anarchist and no one's fool" (V. 66), who reveals a passion for balloons, "any gaily-dyed pig's intestine, distended...." (V. 67), first applies the epithet, "A balloon-girl" (V. 67) to Victoria Wren, and Stencil père, watching Veronica Manganese in 1919, reflects, "Wasn't she the same balloon-girl who'd seduced him on a leather couch in the Florence consulate twenty years ago?" (V. 488).

The balloon, designated in the rhetorical logic of the text as a gaudy skin enclosing nothing and a consistent sign of

³⁴ The following selection of passages is indicative, "a girl in a flowered dress" (V. 94), "a woman of indeterminate age in a negligee of peacock blues and greens" (V. 235-6), 'She owned a dress shop in the rue du Quatre-Septembre. Wore tonight a Poiret-inspired evening dress of crepe Georgette the color of a negro's head, beaded all over, covered with a cerise tunic which was drawn in under her breasts, Empire style. A harem veil covered the lower part of the face and fastened behind to a tiny hat riotous with the plumage of equatorial birds. Fan with amber stick, ostrich feathers, silk tassel. Sand-colored stockings, clocked exquisitely on the calf. Two brilliant-studded tortoise-shell pins through her hair; silver mesh bag, high-buttoned kid shoes with patent leather at the toe and French heel.

Who knew her "soul", Itague wondered,.... It was her clothes, her accessories which determined her' (V. 399-400); Ms. Manganese, one of V.'s 'disguises' later muses, "if a girl could have, oh, a lovely rainbow or wardrobe of different-hued, different-sized and -shaped feet . . ." (V. 488) and Maijstral even hypothesizes at the disassembly of the Bad Priest, "intestines of parti-colored silk, gay balloon-lungs, a rococo heart " (V. 343).

anarchy and political disorder, preserves the structural formation of Vheissu, "The skin... was all there had ever been", whilst the epithet "balloon-girl" suggests that V. too conforms to this structure. This parallelism seems to legitimize the transfer of the personality of Vheissu to V. and/or vice-versa, mobilizing once again the ubiquitous graphics of supplementarity. (Which trope supplements which? If one grants that Vheissu's attributes are conferred on V., which attributes of V. transfer to Vheissu?)

Moreover, in the "disguise" of Veronica Manganese on Malta, the narcissistic V. who desires her reflection in the 'other' (as we witnessed in the love-episode with Mélanie) declares, "How pleasant to watch Nothing" (V. 487). Granting V.'s narcissism, another important attribute of Godolphin's Vheissu adheres to V. As this comment occurs in the single historical episode unmediated by Stencil films, combined with Godolphin's interpretation of Vheissu, a parable of V. and a paradigm for the trope Pynchon attempts to perform with V., it would seem reasonable to infer that "Pynchon's" intended sense, or interpretation of V. is legible here; V. is "Nothing" and "a dream of annihilation." Some critics appear to endorse this interpretation and resolution of V.³⁵ Following the indications I have adduced one might be justified in privileging the moment of "Nothing"

³⁵ One critic describes Pynchon as, "the man who illuminated the death at the heart of all experience."--Josephine Hendin, Vulnerable People: A View of American Fiction since 1945 (New York: Oxford U.P., 1978 rpt.1979), p. 204. Other critics have implicitly adopted a similar position by describing Pynchon as 'absurd' and 'apocalyptic'. One annotated bibliography includes this sample: R. Lehan, "V. shows us that when we exhaust the possibilities of history we are left with the absurd "; H.B. Henderson, 'Pynchon, "pleads for a kind of dignified passivity in the face of the Apocalypse."' The compiler summarizes other views: J.W. Hunt, "Pynchon and his characters begin with an absurdist view of the world"; A. Kazin, "In Pynchon's absurdist view, V. is Stencil's way of locating History. ...the end is the Void." ---Bruce Herzberg, "Selected Articles on Thomas Pynchon: An Annotated Bibliography, Twentieth Century Literature 21 (2) 1975, pp. 221-5.

and concluding that Pynchon's declared position is essentially absurdist. However, to resolve V. in this way, to arrest the play of the V.-ensemble with this annulment, to privilege the absence at the centre of the structure as a permanent, transcendental moment, would inevitably submit to a similar framework of logocentric transcendentalism and a corollary misrecognition of difference-differing (differance). Nothing, too, is only 'distinguishable' with reference to some-thing and therefore is already caught in a system of differences which vitiates its existence as pure, transcendental absence. Moreover, to privilege the motif of "Nothing" at the centre of Vheissu, of V. is to efface the function of a material remainder, a "skin" which educes the illusion of the 'centre' of 'non-centre', "The skin...was all there had ever been."

Legible in these twin tropes--Vheissu, and by extension, V.--is the question of textual meaning. These tropes, through the figural oppositions, skin/heart, body/soul capitulate us into a matrix of familiar structural distinctions of the order material/ideal which in textual terms occur as signifier/signified: the terms of the sign. Also intrigued in these tropes as we noted by certain emphases, are the motifs reason, meaning, stability and predictability. Vheissu and V. are evoked as the antithesis to all these privileged motifs. These two textual entities provide, respectively, a model (what I shall elsewhere call allegory) of the text and a case of the text, whilst both constituting paradigms for V. Tanner comes to a similar conclusion:

V. is all those constantly changing coloured shapes which make up the dazzling and enchanting surface of Vheissu. She is also the void beneath the decoration, the Nothing at the heart of the dream, [and,] The book itself is a "dream of annihilation": it is Pynchon's Vheissu.³⁶

³⁶ Tanner, "V. and V-2," in Mendelson (ed.), pp. 36, 37.

Thus in one respect the description of V. as "Nothing" would be perfectly accurate. V., conforming to no order of Being, no rationalizable or retrievable mimetic model of ontology and presence, cannot be comprehended by any ontological semantics or, since we are dealing with a textual entity, mimesis: the doubling, or truthful representation ("mimesis has to follow the process of truth. The presence of the present is its norm, its order, its law" Diss. 193) of a transcendental signified, referent or presence. Within a logocentric framework, V. marks a moment of non-being, non-presence and non-sense, determinable within this dispensation as "Nothing" but nevertheless leaving a material remainder producing certain effects which are not quite nothing.

Here we should regard the two major reservations within which Godolphin's interpretation of Vheissu is bracketed, "We can always so easily give the wrong reasons" (V. 169) and, "it was not what I saw or believed I saw that in the end is important. It is what I thought. What truth I came to" (V. 206). We should also emphasize that this "Nothing" is described as "a mockery of life", a double and an impersonation of life. This entity which is both non-Being, "Nothing" and "a mockery" is precisely the paradoxical status of the supplementary double which is disqualified as having no being, no identity, no truth yet is indispensable to the constitution of Being, identity, meaning, truth etc., and with this gesture establishes the impossibility of a Being or truth perfectly present to itself. Here it should be apparent that we are engaging with the text at a level beyond the ostensible intentions or volitions of a supervising author but interrogating a conceptual economy in which the text participates and within which it is situated.

We have noted the relentless extension of V.'s range of inclusiveness (which I have gestured towards and inevitably evinced inadequately; instances could be multiplied. Some further extensions of V.'s range are in formation, e.g. this

analysis, others have yet to be written) and the continual broadening of the criteria for V.-phenomena. Pynchon exploits and extends the differentiating capacity of writing to the limits, overdetermining V. with numerous, divergent and contradictory senses which install V. as a 'non-centre' of semantic convergence/divergence. This V.-aggregate ultimately constitutes a semantic space so vast that it includes, appears to include and dreams of including everything; its rule of constitution, the rule of chance, permits the inclusion of everything: a dream of absolute plenitude which seeks to sublimate all differences into one absolute meaningful/meaningless cipher.

This semantic overproduction, produced by a sustained textual labour of 'superimposition' or 'overwriting', mobilizes numerous discourses and an excess of signification which generates inextricable semantic interference patterns amongst the portions of the V.-ensemble within and beyond the text. Such over-production enables the 'meaning' of V. to recede or, as I have suggested, become parodic, and the play of V. as a (massively overdetermined) signifier to be foregrounded, drawing attention to its graphic function.

Let us retrace our steps a little. V. maps a space of semantic condensation in the convergence of differences and dyadic distinctions; however, in this process it is necessarily also constituted as the matrix from which differences diverge in the novel. Not reducible to the conceptual dualisms by which it could be conferred with meaning, not adequately accommodated within a binaristic dispensation, irreducible to any particular signified or configuration of signifieds: the framework of the theme, the V.-aggregate on the contrary, assigns a determinate place to a binary economy and exposes the limitations of a thematic reading, granting both these practices a relative position in a broader economy of differences and differing

(differance). One perceives the necessity of relinquishing the theme which has always focussed on chains of meaningful transformations supervised by an organizing, central signified, in order to recognize the manner in which meaning is viti-ated by the play of differences in a diacritical structure and to recognize the operation of V. beyond the limits of semanticity.³⁷ It becomes practically impossible to delimit or enclose V. semantically, or define the boundaries of its signification as it embraces, traverses and imprints all orders of meaningful discourse in (and implicitly beyond) the novel with its mark, as well as transgressing semantic boundaries to gesture towards a non-semantic remainder of sub-lexical V. shapes, letters, contingencies and extra-logical or non-rationalizable "daisy chains" of pattern and correspondence which no semantics or thematics can adequately comprehend.³⁸

³⁷ Derrida enlarges on this point, "diacriticity already prevents a theme from being a theme, that is, a nuclear unit of meaning, posed there before the eye, present outside of its signifier and referring only to itself, ... even though its identity as a signified is carved out of the horizon of an infinite perspective. Either diacriticity revolves around a nucleus and in that case any recourse to it remains superficial enough not to put thematicism as such into question; or else diacriticity traverses the text through and through and there is no such thing as a thematic nucleus, only theme effects that give themselves out to be the very thing or meaning of the text " (Diss. 250).

³⁸ For our own divergence we could enter the critical game of 'V.-spotting', compiling a catalogue that would resemble the following. We start with the character of Victoria Wren (although indications exist to link her to precedents like Venus, the Virgin, the White Goddess and Queen Victoria before her). Victoria becomes diffused by her tangential involvement with Vheissu, Venezuela, The Birth of Venus (V.ness), Vesuvius, Mme. Vogt who plays viola, Vulcan, virtù, the numerous Italian Vias presaging V.'s territory in the 20th century Street. Hereafter Victoria becomes V. in Paris, Veronica Manganese, Vera Meroving, Veronica, the rat-saint, the Bad Priest etc. As associations accumulate more loosely, she becomes Valletta, Violet "an all electronic woman" (V. 385), Fina Mendoza, Hedwig Vogelsang, the V. Note, the assymmetric V. in the Street, Paola (by the latter's inheritance of the five-tine comb and the epithet, "balloon-girl" (V. 331), SHROUD perhaps. Where shall this stop? The shape of Stencil's

V.s multiply ceaselessly before us, imprinting both sides of the meaning/non-meaning dichotomy. V. performs a deliberate and sustained conceptual disassembly--prefigured in the dismemberment and disarticulation of the semi-mechanical "Bad Priest", the last known "disguise" of V. (although indications exist to suggest that she has become "Violet" or SHROUD)--"V. was by this time a remarkably scattered concept" (V. 389); scattered, we have reason to believe, "all over the western world" (V. 389).

Not only is V. disassembled amongst the innumerable paradigms, parables, patterns, metaphors, metonymies and other supplements it mobilizes in and beyond the novel, notwithstanding the infinity of contingencies the reader is licensed to discover, but the inconclusiveness of Stencil's quest must

obsession, the shape of "spread thighs...flights of migratory birds... the working part of his tool bit to a production machinist" (V. 61), the shape of the quest (either as convergence or divergence), the V. of visual perspective, a maximized female principle incorporating all the metaphorical feminizations in the novel: Vheissu, colonies, Malta, History, Liberty, Victory etc., more specifically, "a flat isosceles triangle," (V. 68), "the green triangle" (V. 82) of the Nile delta, Hanne's brown evanescent stain, "Roughly triangular" (V. 90), "Hotel Victoria" (V. 83), "a motley pyramid" (V. 86), the corner of a building, "the building bisecting him from eyebrows to abdomen" (V. 86), "Vergeltungswaffe Eins and Zwei. The magic initial!" (V. 228), "Vernichtungs Befehl" (V. 245), the V.-typography introducing each chapter, the V.-cluster (V. 7), space, time, the vortex of supplements diverging from V.'s inception to 1956 and beyond, the tip of a writing tool, the title of a novel, the shape of an open book etc. ("The sign 'etc.,' moreover, is ludicrously inadequate here; one ought to invent something that would signify the incessant or the innumerable, something that could serve as an abbreviation of vertigo within the general dictionary)."--Phillippe Sollers, quoted in Dissemination, p. 310 (my emphasis). V.'s could be multiplied. Finally, who left this for us to find? "The triangle with its point downwards, the lower part of Solomon's seal, is a traditional symbol of the feminine principle, exploited extensively in Finnegans Wake. It goes without saying that the value of the letter V is more justly derived from a vague, vast group of associations."--unidentified quotation in Dissemination, p. 330!

militate still further against any attempt or desire to close the V.-dossier on a signified concept, polysemy or presence; the assembled data are manifestly incomplete--the novel, as I have suggested, gestures (in the form of a jest, to underline a chance etymological paronomasia), towards its potentially infinite perpetuation--and consequently strategies to reappropriate V. as any form of 'meaning' or signified should, taking cognizance of this inscribed deferral: a unpredictable complement is always yet to come, recognize their own proscription pending further information.

Thus V. challenges the entire politics and legislation of signification and marks an aporia within prevailing conceptual and discursive practices. This aporial position necessarily has an 'annihilating' but also transformative (undecidably "destructive/constructive") effect on the presuppositions and assumptions of meaningful and ordered discourses and a fortiori, any critical discourse seeking to apprehend and master V. as a 'meaningful' construct.

The V.-ensemble performs, through the multiple convergence/divergence of the differences by which meaning is produced, not a determinate polysemy, but a general dislocation of meaning and a disassembly, a dissemination of V, both as a cipher and overdetermined conceptual formation, throughout the text, conditioning a redistribution of the economy of identities, opposites and hierarchies which organize, orientate and structure meaningful discourse. Let us recall what dissemination practises:

a term which includes among its deliberately contradictory significations the notions of having the effect of a meaning, of dispersing meanings among innumerable possibilities, and of negating meaning. 39

³⁹ M.H. Abrams, A Glossary of Literary Terms, 4th ed. (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1981), p. 39.

In the context of V. and the conceptual oppositions it mobilizes, V. performs exactly this dispersal and negation of meaning: at once a "dream of annihilation" and a "disassembly", which nevertheless operates out of circuits of meaning and seduces the reader into pressing a meaning, or meanings into its ensemble. Within the economy of conceptual oppositions which founds meaning, V. performs a critical, undecidable role which retroactively dismantles the text, V. within which it is articulated, or V., the text which situates and determines the qualities of the V.-ensemble, dismantles V. Clearly there is no determinable priority or origin to this process. V. cannot, finally, be located anywhere; this figure perhaps conveys most accurately the law of her 'Being':

It was her inability to come to rest anywhere inside plausible extremes, her nervous, endless motion, like the counter-crepitating of the ball along its roulette spokes, seeking a random compartment but finally making, having made, sense only as precisely the dynamic uncertainty she was (V. 256)

On the limits and gesturing outside the arena of meaning, although always caught within its horizon, V. is a limit-text and V., the lacuna where its différance becomes legible.

* * * * *

SOME CONCLUDING POSTSCRIPTS

We have managed to isolate two, counter-active discourses articulated in V. The first of these is the animate/inanimate discourse which, with some degree of assurance, structures the novel and which both inverts the conventional distribution of the hierarchy, and reserves and promotes a

marginal 'animateness' which finds some form of rapprochement with the inanimate whilst not actually affirming or succumbing to it. By contrast, the discourse of V. performs the subversion and disorganization of binaristic discourse, interrogating and challenging its pertinence and legitimacy and thus working against any assurance with which the animate/inanimate dichotomy might divide and distribute the novel's population and geography.

Both these discourses however are situated within a broader framework of dislocation traversing the entire text and interrupting any positive critical assertions by an incessant and ubiquitous predicative/erasive textual practice. This practice displaces the entire novel into a mode of radical uncertainty and suspension and thus confronts us with the recurrent impossibility of adopting a decisive critical position. Instead, it brings into focus the dilemmas, paradoxes and difficulties of any hermeneutic enterprise. We have already noted that the episodes mediated by Stencil are highly unreliable. Predicating V.'s existence, they are insistently erased with the reminders, "Most of what he has is inference" (V. 155), "The rest was impersonation and dream" (V. 63) and are profoundly "Stencilized". Dismissing Stencil's obsession as a case for psychoanalysis is small comfort when the spectre of V. returns, in Stencil's absence, to haunt us in the Epilogue. No narrator mediates to buffer us from responsibility for the V.-hallucination. The unreliability of the Stencil-papers alone ought to lead one to suspect the modes of 'stencilization' shaping the other episodes.

One such 'stencilization' which traverses the entire text is the 'theme' of chance, accident, randomness, contingency, the attributes of the 'inanimate' which govern a major portion of the lives of Stencil and Profane. By unfolding its plots against the sustained trope of chance, the novel preserves

the possibility that any order, any plot is always possibly an aggregate of coincidence without any order or logic. The novel, ostensibly following in the tracks of Stencil and Profane: soldiers of Fortune both, alleges/impersonates an ensemble of pure chance and thus offers itself as a discourse of the 'inanimate'. By this rhetorical gesture the text attempts to erase the ordering-processes by which its own plots have been manufactured and transfers the responsibility for any plot onto Stencil and the reader: indeed, implying that the plot is a conspiracy between Stencil and the reader.

Another incident signs the novel with an allusive disclaimer. Brenda Wigglesworth reads a poem which, recapitulating several recurrent motifs and emblems in a free-associative play, engages the novel in a loose, intertextual dialogue. She dismisses the poem with a remark whose implications inevitably have some bearing on the novel and once again undermine any 'intention' and challenge the status of its discourse, "It's a phony college-girl poem. Things I've read for courses " (V. 454).

One more incident places indecisive odds on the 'animateness/inanimateness' of the author, and we should ask how this might make a difference to the status and intentions ascribed to the text. Earlier I established a reading strategy which proposed:

"Pynchon's" consistency and commitments in V. can be detected at those points where several characters from diverse places and times express similar sentiments or observations, or where the narrator has recourse to recurring thematic, figurative and stylistic devices in the articulation of the diverse narratives, episodes, incidents and communities in the novel. I will take this supra-personal and supra-episodic correspondence as the index of an intentional discourse in V.

This statistical accumulation and correlation of various passages and recurring tropes, emblems, motifs, phrases and themes has afforded us some measure of success. I suggested that cases like McClintic Sphere's aphorism, "Keep cool, but care", repeated in an unconnected context by SHROUD, for example, indicated a degree of authorial endorsement. However, one incident complicates this scenario a little further.

SHROUD also wishes Profane "Bon Voyage" (V. 369), a comment whose pertinence emerges with Profane's subsequent departure for Malta. This moment is significant for several reasons. Its fulfilment certainly lends ominous impetus to SHROUD's other prophecies but more importantly, combined with SHROUD's 'coincidentally' perfect quotation of Sphere, this unique and privileged moment of clairvoyance: insight into the subsequent development of the plot, gives credence to a possibility that SHROUD may be the author of V., an 'inanimate' (if these distinctions any longer have pertinence) cybernaut impersonating a human author. Inserted into the tangled skein of animate/inanimate interpenetration and articulating it would be a schema something like the following. Provisionally inferring an 'animate' author (although this is doubtful) and since the text resembles other 'animate' texts, one is confronted with a situation where an animate author impersonates an inanimate author dissembling an animate discourse impersonating an inanimate discourse representing an inanimate author resembling an animate author dissembling an inanimate discourse resembling an animate discourse impersonating an inanimate discourse representing an inanimate author∞, or some similarly endless permutation and oscillation between terms which establishes clearly that 'living discourse' and the "mockery of life" are finally indistinguishable as both are manifested in a text caught between the true and real, and the false and fictional.

These heterogeneous moments cumulatively cast a shadow of uncertainty over the exact source and reliability of the text, producing a novel which, by chance, is uncannily suspended between predication and erasure, order and coincidence. Every statement in the novel is recorded and cancelled, allowing both affirmation and cancellation to remain legible. Thus, at the end of the novel (if it can properly be said to end), we are no more capable than Stencil, père and fils of writing (and reading) the answer, "Not who, but what: what is she." Either here or in any official report.

V.

V.

V.

CHAPTER TWO

THE CRYING OF LOT 49

"You can put together clues, develop a thesis, or several,....
You could waste your life that way and never touch the truth."

-- The Crying of Lot 49

Thomas Pynchon's second novel The Crying of Lot 49 offers itself as a seminal work within his corpus. Its relative brevity provides a possible access and introduction to the complexity of his textual methods yet without sparing the reader the involutedness which is a trademark of Pynchon's texts. Drawn together in this circumspect, extraordinarily reticulate and condensed short novel is an exemplary sample of his diverse narrative strategies. One encounters the fecund metaphors and conceits, homologies, analogies, isomorphisms and the bold and erudite organization and juxtaposition of widely disparate orders of information drawn from science, technology, literature, myth, fine art, popular culture, history, psychology, religion, sub-culture networks etc., interspersed with frequent fictive elaborations and alterations which, accomplished with such attention to detail, cast into serious critical relief the relationship pertaining between truth and fiction. This novel, like V. and Gravity's Rainbow, wilfully exploits language's dispassionate capacity to accommodate both reality/history (both regarded as 'truth') and fiction without distinction. A particularly clear though trivial example of this in the novel is Serge's Song (Lot 49 109-110/101) but the rest of the novel with its convincing development of the Tristero is ample demonstration of the way in which these categories easily become blurred. As I hope to demonstrate, one metaphor the narrative urges upon us is the possibility that America is only a Text of which the novel is a footnote, an annotation, or a gloss in which case the notion of the novel doubling a "real" outside is diminished and the problem becomes the grafting of one text on to another which is open to the same vicissitudes of 'truth' and 'falsehood'. This is a theme to which I shall return at a later point in the discussion.

SYNOPSIS AND SITUATION : A Brief Introduction

I begin with a brief synopsis of the basic linear plot. It may be instructive to invoke a syntagm/paradigm analogy here. The following synopsis would then represent a syntagma around which the various paradigmatic orders of discourse would be arranged (this analogy has inherent difficulties and should not be applied too closely).

Oedipa Maas discovers that she has been appointed the co-executor--"or she supposed executrix"--of Pierce Inverarity's estate. She desires to bring order--"to the scatter of business interests that had survived Inverarity. She would give them order, she would create constellations " (65/63)--to Inverarity's estate, to the "assets numerous and tangled" (5/1). During the process she detects signs of a subversive agency which had previously remained imperceptible to her, an agency which defies all her attempts to verify its existence, whilst apparently manifesting itself everywhere. This agency, of course, is identified as the Tristero, but its existence must become the subject of an 'Husserlian' bracketing: permanently in parentheses. Furthermore, she learns, and the reader is adequately cued to anticipate this "revelation", that Inverarity's estate and America are synonymous:

She had dedicated herself, weeks ago, to making sense of what Inverarity had left behind, never suspecting that the legacy was America. (134/123)

Pierce Inverarity, by contiguity, becomes a posthumous personification, or synecdoche of the 'official' narcissistic, phallogocentric, WASP-culture of America, as the text makes plain. Let me justify this string of epithets.¹

¹A. Wilden, commenting on "real" American culture, "And no matter what ecosystem we consider - natural, social, psychological, economic - the punctuators tend both individually and collectively to be white, male, industrialized, affluent and usually Protestant." --op.cit., p. 116.

Pierce Inverarity is initially described as "a founding father" (14/16); etymologically, a 'funding father' as well. His "domicile and headquarters" (12) are located at San Narciso: ironically an anagram contained in 'San Francisco', and the values to which he is/was dedicated are given:

his need to possess, to alter the land, to bring new skylines, personal antagonisms, growth rates into being. (134/123)

Elsewhere, Jesús Arrabal, a Mexican anarchist, comments to Oedipa, "Like your friend [Pierce] . He is too exactly and without flaw the thing we fight" (89/83). Oedipa's interlude with Metzger implicates Inverarity's influence in 'legacy America' as extensive, probably total:

Now and then a commercial would come in, each time Metzger would say, "Inverarity's", or "Big block of shares", and later settled for nodding and smiling. (26/26-7)

One notices also that the world through which Oedipa moves is everywhere populated and dominated by men. However, everywhere these men are entranced by their own visions and delusions, their own auto-affection and narcissism. During one interlude--The Greek Way--homosexuality is suggested as an emblem of this narcissistic America, incidentally lending the ideal of "homogeneity" an ironic turn. "Oedipa sat, feeling alone as she ever had, now the only woman, she saw, in a room full of drunken male homosexuals. Story of my life, she thought " (86/80). I recall a significant passage from V.:

Lesbianism, we are prone to think in this Freudian period of history, stems from self-love projected onto some other human object. If a girl gets to feeling narcissist, she will sooner or later come upon the idea that women, the class she belongs to, are not so bad either. (V. 407)

Here is a programme for reading Pynchon's use of unusual sexual relations as symptomatic (allegorical) of other social conditions, a programme which I have already applied in the reading of certain relationships in V.

Oedipa is also clearly implicated in this society and, as I shall demonstrate in detail later, Chapter One is especially concerned with locating Oedipa in this culture: in relation to her husband, in relation to Pierce and, in the broader context which these two give some definition, in relation to America. For the moment the following image will serve as an emblem for Oedipa's social position: "safely surrounded by old, somnolent men" (60/58). I draw attention in passing to the adjective "somnolent" as this becomes part of a prominent figurative constellation associated with 'official' bourgeois (and Rip van Winkle) America.

MAJOR RHETORICAL FRAMEWORKS

Let me return to the narrative kernel, the 'syntagma' which I summarized a moment ago. Oedipa's appointment as executrix, her subsequent "sensitizing" (29/29) to "revelation", and finally her obsessive quest for the Tristero provide the skeletal framework of the novel. Pynchon uses this basic narrative situation--a quest-structure at least as old as Oedipus Rex but also evoking the Grail-legend--to elaborate a multiple and complex overwriting, which I have demonstrated operating in a restricted and less assured fashion in Mortality and Mercy in Vienna and Entropy (and which can also be isolated in Lowlands). The text gradually accumulates an enormous and divergent spectrum of paradigms, analogies, homologies and metaphors which provides the reader with a massive semantic base to perceive, characterize, interpret and speculate upon Oedipa's activity, the author's

activity and the reader's own engagements, vested interests and desires. Lot 49 deliberately invites the reader to draw a straw from the clutch it offers, only to reveal that they are inextricably entangled.

The guiding narrative, concerning Oedipa's investigations, thus organizes the diverse tropological material into some form of consecutive sequence, whilst reciprocally, these tropes and paradigms urge a continual and expanding reassessment of Oedipa's endeavours. Thus, if we recall Derrida's critique of the centre (cited in Chap. 1, n.18), the central syntagm is at best only a provisional centre and becomes dislodged as subsequent nodes of organization emerge in the structure of the novel.

The massive plethora of information, and Oedipa's reaction to it, become--amongst other things--an allegory of the hermeneutic activity (of which reading and decoding are certainly amongst the most important). Beyond the particular configurations of information and the various correspondences and connections implied between them, what is important is the very existence of an informational excess itself--replicating the excesses experienced by Oedipa, "other revelations...now seemed to come crowding in exponentially, as if the more she collected the more would come to her," (58/56)--and the interpreter's reactions to it. Thus the novel is able to explore both chains of data and the activities of perception/interpretation: one paranoid plotter charts the plot of an organization of postal plotters against the (p)lot of America. One character in Gravity's Rainbow comments explicitly on this interpretive activity:

The ba-sic theory, is, that when given an unstruc-tured stimulus, some shape-less blob of exper-ience, the subject, will seek to impose, struc-ture on it. How, he goes a-bout struc-turing this blob, will reflect his needs, his hopes--will provide, us with clues, to his dreams, fan-tasies, the deepest re-gions

of his mind. (GR 81 - the subject in question is, of course, Tyrone Slothrop, whose Rorschach is the Zone.)

I shall trace several of the main paradigms which the novel offers and upon whose imagery it draws in detail, but wish to preface such analysis with some general remarks about the formal, metafictional appropriateness of the communications-, alternatively, information-theory model, for the novel as a 'coded message' mediating between an addresser/author-addressee/reader.

A great deal has been written of the scientific discourses Pynchon draws upon to perform a host of textual functions but the two most productive and important of these remain communications-theory and thermodynamics with their pivotal concepts of entropy and Maxwell's Demon which exert a powerful informing influence throughout The Crying of Lot 49. Various accounts of these paradigms and concepts have already constituted a fairly formidable critical legacy. Friedman and Puetz, Mangel, Mendelson, Slade and Tanner, to name authors of some substantial accounts, have all provided analysis of entropy in Pynchon's writing, and this is inevitable as the novels and short stories explicitly adapt entropy and related concepts to their narrative and conceptual purposes, as well as indicating these concepts as efficacious paradigms for the interpretation and understanding of the works.² Together, the thermodynamics and communications

² A.J. Friedman & M. Puetz, "Science and Metaphor: Thomas Pynchon and Gravity's Rainbow," Contemporary Literature 15 (3) 1975, pp. 345-359; Anne Mangel, *op. cit.* pp. 194-208; E. Mendelson, "The Sacred, the Profane and The Crying of Lot 49," in Mendelson (ed.) pp. 112-146; Joseph Slade, *op. cit.*; Tony Tanner, "V. and V-2," in Mendelson (ed.) pp. 16-55.

theory models provide very suggestive analogies for the form and structure of The Crying of Lot 49.

One of the major metaphorical models invoked in the novel hinges on the intersection of communications theory and thermodynamics in the concept of Maxwell's Demon, to which Oedipa is assimilated. Nefastis provides Oedipa (and the reader) with the technical details (77-8/72-3). These two fields provide apposite analogies for Oedipa's culture, marked by both an excess of information and signification, and ubiquitous decline. However, a major function of this model, besides its narrative function of expanding and extrapolating Oedipa's role, is the implication of the reader in the same process by the resemblance existing between our position and hers. Consequently, her anxiety and uncertainty when confronted with data inviting interpretation and suggesting pattern, order, Gestalt, should be the reader's, too.

The correspondence obtaining between communications systems which preserve the paradigm of an encoded message passed from addresser to addressee and threatened in transmission by the skewing effects of noise and misinterpretation produced by the vagaries of an arbitrarily established digital code, and the obvious parallel of the author-coded text-reader which replicates in a particular form the generic terms of the paradigm, plays a central role in the implication of the reader in Oedipa's situation and quest. The text seeks **both** to double, and provide an instance of perceptual and interpretive uncertainty. Its function is to be both a representation and a presentation. The communications theory metaphor thus serves as a constituting paradigm for Oedipa's hermeneutic activity as a reader of signs, texts and data which confront her and by extension implicates the reader-critic in an analogous position apropos the text.

Compounding the complexity of this already tricky bi-focal perspective, the novel broadens this paradigm to **circumscribe** all hermeneutic activity and, within its limits, interrogate and problematize the conditions of the model (located in the novel) which locates the novel, Oedipa, the reader, all those acting "in the same special relevance to the word " (95/89).

In addition, the relationship between Oedipa and Inverarity, and the text--"will"--that mediates between them, also conforms to the same paradigm. Consequently, if an explanation be required for the uncanny correlations (to be discerned hereafter) between Pynchon's writings and current themes and perspectives in critical theory, I would conjecture that this is because Pynchon's novel is based on, although displaced and concealed in the broader, communications theory model, the relationship pertaining between critic and text (Author). Hence, Oedipa encounters several of the current and perennial exegetical dilemmas, e.g. the Author's intention: "What did Pierce mean?"; the relationship between 'text' and reality; the discovery, or generation by interpretation, of signification beyond the author's probable intention and control; the effect of a text's insertion into a broader language-context and its necessary conformity to certain systematic constraints; the relation of the author to his 'world' compared and contrasted with the critic's own orientation etc., etc. That the critic--text paradigm is the basis of The Crying of Lot 49 is, of course, simply speculation; however, there are indications in the text that this is so ("you're like Puritans are about the Bible" (56/53), "Puritans were utterly devoted, like literary critics, to the Word" (117/107) and, ultimately, it is not important whether this is what Pynchon actually intended, but that it is verifiably legible in the text.

The process in which Oedipa becomes implicated can be described as an adventure of semiotic, hermeneutic and (peripherally), ontological proportions (her sanity is clearly at stake) and, through the gradual elaboration and overwriting of a persuasive figural or tropological logic, implicates every textual exegete. The dilemmas and paradoxes to which the narrative draws attention are those which the literary critic, the historian, the political scientist, psychologist, philosopher and theologian must confront and are confronting. It is the relation between difficulties which my reading of the novel raises and several current critical themes and paradoxes which has initiated and directed the following analysis of The Crying of Lot 49.

THE SITUATION OF MRS. MAAS

I begin, as indicated earlier, with Chapter One of the novel, where I wish to locate Oedipa's initial 'ideological' site: her place as a woman and subordinate citizen in a male-dominated culture--the novel itself is populated almost entirely by male figures--noting also the genesis of certain crucial emblems and motifs and developing my commentary on the patriarchy, or phallogentrism--as I characterize it--that marks this culture.

The opening chapter carefully delineates a traditionally organized bourgeois social context. This context serves an important function because it has inculcated particular presuppositions, prejudices, assumptions, expectations and desires and an epistemology which to a great extent conditions Oedipa's responses. As she diverges from this socio-psychological context, it serves as a model against which her subsequent experiences and "unfurrowing" shifts of consciousness become contrasted. Let us examine its

aspects more closely.

The novel introduces "Mrs. Oedipa Maas" (1/5), and, by the prominence of the 'Mrs.', she is implicated in a male-operated social economy. Her place as the property of a 'Mr. Maas', is clearly marked. We might adapt Tanner's analysis of Madame Bovary's name where he observes that:

your name as far as society is concerned is made up of a part that is supposedly your own and designates your own self and a part that is by definition not your own and designates the Other, the father. The name of the father is a necessary part of the full name as far as society is concerned, if you are to have an identity. It provides, ...the context that gives the first name meaning.³

During subsequent exchanges with her narcissistic, agonizing husband, her repressed and self-effacing role is clearly demonstrated. This exchange is symptomatic:

Mucho Maas, home, bounded through the screen door. "Today was another defeat," he began.
 "Let me tell you," she also began. But let Mucho go first. (3/7; my emphasis)

Throughout the novel Oedipa's expected role is palliative, ministrative, placatory. She becomes, for many of the male characters caught up in their several delusions and fantasies, a presumed confidante, commiserator or participant. She is subjected to importunities and solicitations by Mucho, Metzger, Nefastis, Koteks, Hilarius, Glozing, Funch et.al, bringing her to reflect after one of Mucho's "regular crises of conscience," (3/7) and the plural pronoun is instructive here, "You comfort them when they wake pouring sweat or crying out in the language of bad dreams, yes, you hold them, they calm down, one day they lose it: she knew that " (5-6/9).

³ Tony Tanner, Adultery in the Novel, p. 306.

One importunity is more cataclysmic than most. Pierce Inverarity's death: his 'absence', bequeathing a written remainder: his testament which takes Oedipa from her 'proper' social place and installs her as executrix, is the grim origin of her Orphean descent into the manifold American culture and sub-culture. The event marks a distinct rupture in the protagonist's highly routinized and sterile existence, neatly itemized in a catalogue of suburban domesticities and quotidian trivia which concludes, "shuffling back through a fat deckful of days which seemed... more or less identical,...." (2/6). However, the following and concluding clause adds, "or all pointing the same way subtly like a conjuror's deck, any odd one readily clear to a trained eye." (2/6). The possibility of an omnipotent, presiding magician introduces a recurrent motif (as we shall see) and announces the first term of one of the novel's major conceptual oppositions: absolute determinism vs. autarkic solipism. This opposition participates in a series of such dichotomies whose autonomy the novel interrogates and presses. I wish now to examine two emblematic sequences at the start of the novel which play a major role in the elaboration of the central tropes and conceptual categories contained within them. These two vignettes introduce and orientate much of the subsequent stylistic and tropological development.

TWO PARABOLIC PREAMBLES : Cultural Allegories

1. Mucho's Car Lot

Oedipa's confrontation with 'legacy America' is retrospectively contrasted with the prior confrontation between Mucho and the used car lot. Through her subsequent encounters with numerous other male figures and their various responses

to 'America' Oedipa's own efforts to deal with the 'delusion' of Tristero become contrasted. The several male responses are marked by withdrawal, failure, annihilation. Each of them succumbs to some form of escape, personal fantasy, illusion, or irresponsibility (and perhaps any of these terms might suffice as the master-term in the chain). These alternatives, which the males embrace, are ones with which Oedipa--like one of her suggested analogues, Christ in the wilderness, if we give credence to her position in a previous title, preserved as sub-title, "The World (This One), the Flesh (Mrs. Oedipa Maas), and the Testament of Pierce Inverarity," and recall the original terms of the formula whose syntax is deliberately retained here--is frequently tempted.⁴

The car lot emblem, retrospectively, forms a synecdoche of the urban wilderness into which Oedipa descends and from which everyone else in the novel seeks to withdraw. Mucho's lot:

all the bits and pieces coated uniformly, like a salad of despair, in a gray dressing of ash, condensed exhaust, dust, body wastes--(5/8)

and the "unvarying gray sickness " (5/8), evokes a compelling image of a land wrought by the anaesthetizing and homogenizing effects of entropy: "uniformly," "unvarying," "gray," recalling the ash-heaps of The Great Gatsby (a novel with certain similarities to Lot 49), and bears comparison with Oedipa's later adventures in "the infected city," (86/80) and, "In a street close enough to the drab, stone openness of

⁴ Thomas Pynchon, The Crying of Lot 49. Title-page acknowledgements. It is instructive that the other preliminary piece, "The Shrink Flips," is not identified.

the Civic Center to be infected by its gray " (96/90).

The important feature of this vignette, besides the stylistic traces which link it to Oedipa's geography, is Mucho's treatment of it as a text: he is able to read and decipher the lot's meaning, "he'd been a used car salesman and so hyperaware of what that profession had come to mean " (4/7). In the endless rituals of trade-in," (5/8) and the absence of miracle, where "you had to look at the actual residue of these lives " (4/8), and where "each owner, each shadow, filed in only to exchange a dented, malfunctioning version of himself for another, just as futureless, automotive projection of somebody's else's life. As if it were the most natural thing " (5/8); in this interminable tableau Mucho deciphers a travesty of the 'American Dream' (and the oneiric element of that cliché receives a very ironic emphasis in this novel), which threatens him:

As if it was the most natural thing. To Mucho it was horrible. Endless, convoluted incest. (5/8)

He withdraws to station KCUF as a disc-jockey where, as the acronym inverted makes plain, he, become a purveyor of 'dream' ("all the fraudulent dream of teenage appetites " 6/9), proceeds to fuck his teenage audiences metaphorically and literally, "at KCUF record hop to...see,...a Sharon, Linda or Michele, seventeen...and the thing would develop then groovy as it could when you found you couldn't get statutory rape really out of the back of your law-abiding head " (29/30). Mucho effectively remains within and becomes a purveyor of the phallogocentric-capitalist mythology. Later, he even withdraws from this engagement with America and comes to inhabit the oneiric and solipsistic mindscapes generated by LSD.

Mucho's Maas' lot forms a central emblem of America's lot and poses a number of the important concerns of the novel.

Some of these I have discussed above, others to which the lot-tableau also draws attention and issues which Oedipa will consider, are faith: "he had believed in the cars " (4/8), "he believed not at all in the station " (6/9); the status of origin and repetition, miracle and ritual: "each death...is miraculous " (5/8), "endless rituals"; and the ubiquity of anaesthesia, analgesia and insulation: "Even if enough exposure...managed to immunize him " (5/8). This last group of terms forms a part of the chain earlier described in terms of withdrawal and escape, and this whole chain of significations elaborates an extensive and systematic coherence throughout the novel. It seems germane to announce this network of signification here.

The lot is a traumatic disillusioning episode for Mucho which haunts his dreams and whose deeper significance is only revealed to us much later when Oedipa meets him at the Hilarius clinic after 'the shrink flips'. He joins station KCUF and Oedipa suspects that "the disk jockey spot...was a way of letting the Top 200, and even the news copy that came jabbering out of the machine--all the fraudulent dream of teenage appetites--be a buffer between him and the lot " (6/9). The streams of information broadcast by the station act as an insulation.

Oedipa also registers the condition of insulation, or numb suspension a few pages later in the highly evocative and lyrical account--interpenetrated with fable--of the conditioning processes alienating and imprisoning her. She reflects, "There had hung the sense of buffering, insulation, she had noticed the absence of an intensity,...." (10/12). I shall have cause to return to this theme.

2. Rapunzel's Tower

The second major emblematic sequence, which introduces an intricately telescoped cluster of themes and motifs, is Oedipa's reflection on her situation prior to, and during her relationship with Pierce Inverarity. This passage concludes Chapter One. A detailed understanding of this section is a crucial key to the major concerns of the novel.

There are three moments in the development of this highly economical and convoluted tropological system, which massively extend the social and metaphysical implications of Oedipa's role and deciphering activities. The three moments of this tropology are: i) the simile of the cinema where Oedipa is in the audience (evoking by 'chance' Plato's famous simile of the cave from The Republic); ii) Oedipa's appropriation of a double, an image in the fabulous Rapunzel figure locked in her tower; and iii) her subsequent interpretation of Varo's Bordando el Mante Terrestre (Embroiderers of the Terrestrial Blanket) with an assimilation of its scene to her own condition. Together, these figures lay out an important but extremely entangled account of ontology, solipsism and social determinism, through which the subsequent tale is refracted.

Let us scrutinize this lengthy passage extending from "As things developed she was to have all manner of revelations," to "If the tower is everywhere and the knight of deliverance no proof against its magic, what else?" (9-11/12-3). The narrator hastens to remind us that the ensuing is not an 'ontological fiction', "she was to have all manner of revelations. Hardly about Pierce Inverarity, or herself" (9/12), although ontological repercussions are implicit in all that follows. Oedipa's passage is one of intensifying self-doubt rather than 'self-discovery'. Her self-assurance is gradually dismantled by her rendezvous with

Tristero. Instead, what she endures is, "what had remained yet had somehow, before this, stayed away " (10/12). Perpending further, she identifies the insulation already noted, "there had hung the sense of buffering, insulation, she had noticed the absence of an intensity, as if watching a movie, just perceptibly out of focus, which the projectionist had refused to fix " (10/12). (Again, 'projection' retrospectively acquires significance, designating the extrusion and exteriorization of a mental set: the classic solipsistic production).

The simile of the cinema, emphasizing the existence of an intransigent projectionist, introduces the possibility of an artificial reality (world as text) under the direction of another, and sustains the motif of an external, omnipotent magic. Tanner adds a suggestive interpretation of the 'cinema' simile:

that sense of something that had somehow remained and yet stayed away, and that absence of intensity which is like a movie slightly out of focus--this suggests strange states of mind, odd intimations of something between presence and absence, a sense of something, an image, a picture, a plot that is not quite visibly there but not quite visibly not there either. Such strange sensations, which seem to take place at the very interface between meaning and non-meaning, will occur to Oedipa increasingly.... 5

Much of our forthcoming inquiry will be concerned with the presence/absence and meaning/non-meaning suspensions, these paradoxical zones of which Tanner writes.

The goetic imagery is sustained throughout the passage. Magic is ubiquitous; its mode, inscrutable; its nature,

⁵ Tony Tanner, Thomas Pynchon, p. 62.

evil and its purpose, imprisonment, confinement: enclosure. Oedipa and Pierce are surrounded and enclosed by an inscrutable magic beyond their control. Oedipa inhabits the "Rapunzel-like role of a pensive girl, somehow, magically, prisoner" (10/12) and she and Pierce are plagued by "sinister sorcery". Oedipa/Rapunzel's confining tower becomes an adequate symbol of the social forces and phallic mythology enclosing her.

Oedipa's equation with Rapunzel precipitates a second equation and the third moment of the complex tropological space which the text has opened. Supplementing the Rapunzel-myth in order to imbue the metaphor with metaphysical proportions, is Oedipa's recollection of the Varo painting:

a number of frail girls with heart-shaped faces, huge eyes, spun-gold hair, prisoners in the top room of a circular tower, embroidering a kind of tapestry which spilled out the slit windows and into a void, seeking hopelessly to fill the void: for all the other buildings and creatures, all the waves, ships and forests of the earth were contained in this tapestry, and the tapestry was the world. (10/13)

Oedipa confirms, through an interpretation of the painting--the first of her hermeneutic engagements--and, by assimilating it to her own condition, that she inhabits a solipsistic world of her own embroidery:

She had...known, then, because of a painting, that what she stood on had only been woven together...in her own tower, was only by accident known as Mexico, and so Pierce had taken her away from nothing, there'd been no escape. (10-11/13)

Oedipa concludes melancholically, "all that had then gone on between them had really never escaped the confinement of that tower " (10/13).

Finally, opposing the total solipsism and the "Rapunzel-like role" with which Oedipa "had...gently conned herself " (10/13), an anonymous narrative voice, preserving the motifs of 'imprisonment' and 'sorcery', reiterates the alternative of an inscrutable external deterministic force suggested in the 'cinema' simile:

Such a captive maiden, having plenty of time to think, soon realizes that her tower, its height and architecture, are like her ego only incidental: that what really keeps her where she is is magic, anonymous and malignant, visited on her from outside and for no reason at all. (11/13)

The tower which encloses Oedipa confines Pierce as well. It functions as a vivid symbol of ego- and ethno-centrism. Cast as "knight of deliverance " (10/13), Pierce, himself enclosed by the phallogentrism of the tower, is "no proof against its magic " (10/13). Both he and Oedipa are prisoners within a tower whose architect is forgotten. The image of the 'tower' marking an inside held against an anonymous, malignant, unmotivated magic active "from outside", constitutes a major symbol in the series of conceptual oppositions co-extensive with the spatial pair. This spatial opposition, as we shall have cause to demonstrate, performs an important structural, stylistic and rhetorical role in the novel.

The extract examined above thus suspends itself between the possibilities of autonomy and conditioning. Oedipa and Pierce are both producers and products, perpetrators and sub-species, masters and victims of the culture they inhabit and which encloses them. Similarly, all the novel's other characters are equally implicated. "The tower is everywhere," and also "like her ego only incidental." Oedipa is thus an innocent victim of social conditioning:

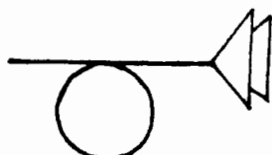
Along another pattern of track, another string of decisions taken, switches closed, the faceless points-men who'd thrown them now all transferred,.... Among them they had managed to turn the young Oedipa into a rare creature indeed (76/71-2).

Elsewhere she pleads, "I use the U.S. Mail because I was never taught any different " (82/77), and another potential Inverarity is reported as having been "rigidly instructed in an eschatology that pointed nowhere but to a presidency and death " (83/78). These individual experiences are symptomatic of a victimized, subordinated America at large. The nation's oppressed await, "another set of possibilities to replace those that had conditioned the land to accept any San Narciso among its most tender flesh without a reflex or a cry" (136/125) (Again, we may recall the 'sub-title': "The Flesh (Mrs. Oedipa Maas)").

However, elsewhere, Oedipa holds herself responsible (guilty, perhaps) for the culture she inhabits. Pynchon neatly invokes the flag, emblem of 'legacy America' and the embroidered textile (Varo):

This is America, you live in it, you let it happen.
Let it unfurl. (112/103)

We may conclude from the foregoing that one of the most important oppositions within which the novel is elaborated is the irreconcilability of the myth of absolute self-determination ('self-actualization' to use an appropriately American catch-phrase) to which Oedipa, Randy Driblette and others like them are committed, with the terrifying alternative of an omnipotent, ubiquitous external control.



TWO TROPOLOGICAL STRATEGIES

I wish now to return to the figural or tropological method of the narrative and consider its logic. I am able to identify two major techniques by which the style and tropology are elaborated. The first technique (and these two methods are certainly not clearly separable) functions by the location of an analogical vignette presaged and sustained by supplementary figural motifs. The relation between the figural chains and the analogy which orientates and valorizes the chain is dynamic and reciprocal. The analogical identity of the latter is determined by the chains of figuration which precede and follow it, whilst it retroactively constellates and reinforces these chains. Instances of this are Oedipa's encounters with Koteks and Nefastis which introduce her to the concepts of entropy and Maxwell's Demon, and the fields of thermodynamics and information theory. These incidents then force a closer attention to other accounts of decline, communication, sorting and, exploiting the equivocal name of Maxwell's hypothesis, the demonic, sinister, magic. Oedipa's encounter with the solipsist, Randy Driblette similarly constellates all preceding and succeeding allusions to 'projection'. Driblette announces, "the reality is in this head. Mine. I'm the projector at the planetarium" (56/54). His solipsism is a reaction Oedipa seriously entertains as her subsequent rhetorical question testifies, "into her memo book, she wrote Shall I project a world?" (59/56).

Finally, if I may adduce a third example, the isolated remark on 'miracles' during the anecdote concerning Mucho's lot acquires renewed emphasis from Arrabal's theory of miracle:

You know what a miracle is. Not what Bakunin said.
But another world's intrusion into this one. (88/83)

When Oedipa reflects shortly after this recollection that, "The dead man, like Maxwell's Demon, was the linking feature in a coincidence" (89/83) who, we will recall, represents for Arrabal an "anarchist miracle," we discover ourselves in the midst of a very complex economy of signification in which Maxwell's Demon=anarchist miracle=Pierce Inverarity. These three 'points of intersection' in entirely disparate orders: science, anarchist political theory and American imperialism ironically become the linking features in the coincidence we have just discerned here.

The second technique by which the narrative evolves its tropology is a gradual accretion of motifs developing and reinforcing each other without a clearly identifiable kernel binding the chain together. This is perhaps most evident in the various figures of insulation, somnolence, narcissism, dream etc., whose common denominators are impenetrability and closure: inaccessibility. I have already commented briefly on Oedipa's sensation of insulation.

Another dimension of the novel generated primarily by accretion is its entire religious and supernatural order. Mendelson (n. 2) has provided a detailed and challenging account of the 'religious' order of the novel, but puts a misplaced emphasis on this aspect. The supernatural tropology is perhaps the most pervasive in the novel and thus develops through both of the techniques I have isolated here. For example, Arrabal's account of miracles and Nefastis' description of Maxwell's Demon, related during fairly insular vignettes, are both subsumed into the wider tropology of religion, occult and supernature.

In the process of this elaborate tropological network the possibility of a clearly distinguishable linearity all but dissolves. The only element of the novel preserving any linearity is the rather tenuous chronological consecution

beginning, "One summer afternoon..." (1/5) and progressing through a rapid parade of people, signs, encounters until Oedipa recalls, "She had dedicated herself, weeks ago, to making sense of what Inverarity had left behind" (134/123). Information of widely disparate kinds is provided to Oedipa (and the reader) and links and coincidences are so rapidly and frequently generated that it becomes difficult to sort out which information is provided in what order and where.

FIGURAL NETWORKS : Maxwell's Demon

I will now trace some of the major chains of figuration alluded to in the preceding synopsis and elsewhere and the first of these is Oedipa's assimilation to the Maxwell's Demon, noted earlier (p.155). The Maxwell's Demon, through Pynchon's exploitation of its polysemy becomes, as will be clear, a paradigm for both Oedipa and Pierce, its secular, sorting aspect applying to the former, and its teratological aspect as miracle, ghost-demon applying to the latter. Koteks and Nefastis relate its features. Koteks: "the Demon only sat and sorted," (62/59) and Nefastis:

there were two distinct kinds of this entropy. One having to do with heat-engines, the other to do with communication. The equation for one looked very much like the equation for the other. It was a coincidence. The two fields were entirely unconnected, except at one point: Maxwell's Demon. As the Demon sat and sorted his molecules into hot and cold, the system was said to lose entropy. But somehow the loss was offset by the information the Demon gained about what molecules were where. (77/72)

As Oedipa's engagement with the Tristero intensifies, her position as the bridge between America and the Tristero becomes progressively analogous to the link-function of the Demon. However, these two episodes reinforce and orientate

a number of textual markers. Oedipa's initial task is described as "the job of sorting it all out" (1/5). Hereafter we read, "Later, possibly, she would have trouble sorting the night into real and dreamed" (86/81).⁶ Oedipa finally appears, overwhelmed by excesses of information and pattern, illuminated by the sunlight, as the sorting Demon incarnate in the following suggestive image, "She stood in a patch of sun, among brilliant rising and falling points of dust " (137/126). The numberless motes surrounding her offer a poignant image of the embattled Demon. 'Sorting' is one of several keywords whose semantic range is maximized in the narrative to bind together enticingly, the divergent fields of discourse and experience amongst which persuasive connections are made. Implicating the Post Office in the same network as herself and the Demon, to Koteks Oedipa retorts, ' "Sorting isn't work?" Oedipa said. "Tell them down at the post office " ' (62/59). Thus, by a lexicon of extensive reference (e.g. 'sorting', 'revelation') and polysemy (e.g. 'communication', 'lot/lots') which I will elaborate further, the narrator reinforces the parallels he draws and extends the resonances of Oedipa's experiences.

FIGURAL NETWORKS : Religion and Mysticism

Another, and extremely pervasive series of motifs, tropes and allusions elaborates the religious dimension of the novel. Mendelson has argued cogently for the religious symbolism as locating the principal meaning of the novel.

⁶ Consolidating these instances is the passage already cited (134/123), "she had dedicated herself, . . . , to making sense of what Inverarity had left behind," a reflection which reiterates her earlier declared desire, "to bring the estate into pulsing, stelliferous Meaning " (58/56), and again, recalling a passage cited earlier, "She would give them order, ["the scatter of business interests that had survived Inverarity"] she would create constellations" (65/63).

Indeed, this position guides his entire reading:

Pynchon uses religious terms and hieratic language not simply as a set of metaphors from which to hang his narrative,.... The religious meaning of the book does not reduce to metaphor or myth, because religious meaning is itself the central issue of the plot.⁷

Without drawing any conclusions at this point, I shall provide a compendium of the religious and other supernatural imagery informing the novel, with the intention of indicating how the figuration of supernature does provide one important tropological dimension, yet also a dimension which is no longer simply tropological. Arguing that the narrator's constant endeavour is to amplify the connotations of Oedipa's Progress as diversely as possible we can chart the course of her enlightenment (which is, paradoxically, an obfuscation or 'entenebration') in religious terms.

The task of executing Pierce Inverarity's estate, presented initially as an intricate but purely mundane legal operation, is gradually extrapolated into an experience of universal hermeneutic proportions by the religious, supernatural and metaphysical tropology. The religious theme is initially evinced when Oedipa invokes God's name like a spell, "Oedipa... spoke the name of God,.... But this did not work" (1/5) and more explicitly in the narrator's overtly teleological remark, indicating his omnipotent direction:

As things developed, she was to have all manner of revelations (9/12).

The theme of revelation--a word whose frame of reference, whilst conventionally 'religious' is less specific than Mendelson would have it and refers to any manifestation,

⁷ Mendelson, in Mendelson (ed.), pp. 119-120.

sacred or secular--is sustained through the novel; (it is, in fact, the theme of the logos and thus logocentrism). Hereafter we read, "She left Kinneret, ...with no idea she was moving toward anything new" (12/14), and in an extended passage describing Oedipa's apprehension of San Narciso's urban sprawl which, from her vantage she compares to a printed circuit, she reflects, "there were to both outward patterns a hieroglyphic sense of concealed meaning, of an intent to communicate" (13/15); my emphasis). She suspects, "a revelation also trembled just past the threshold of her understanding. ...she...seemed parked at the centre of an odd, religious instant. As if, ...on some other frequency, ... words were being spoken " (13/15). Thus, early in the novel, the reader is explicitly 'sensitized' to imagery of a religious nature. Her apprehension reminds Oedipa of Mucho:

She thought of Mucho, ... trying to believe in his job. Was it something like this he felt, looking...at one of his colleagues...cueing the next record with movements stylized as the handling of chrisms, censers, chalices might be for a holy man, yet really tuned in to the voice, voices, the music, its message, surrounded by it, digging it, as were all the faithful it went out to;...? (13/15)

Elsewhere, confounding its certainty, concerning 'revelation' we read, "Things did not delay in turning curious.... As if ...there were revelation all around her" (28/29) my emphasis).

Later, their certainty again in question, Oedipa reflects on, "other revelations which now seemed to come crowding in exponentially, as if the more she collected the more would come to her, until everything she saw, smelled, dreamed, remembered, would somehow come to be woven into The Tristero" (58/56). The solipsistic alternative is offered, the embroidery motif, synonymous with Varo's world-weaving/projection, reiterated. Revelation clearly has more than

simply a religious frame of reference here. Later, Oedipa returns to The Scope, "because of other revelations" (64/61). Pynchon also uses a more specialized synonym for revelation, when Oedipa, watching T.V. sees a map of Fangoso Lagoons, an Inveraritian holding, "Some immediacy was there again, some promise of hierophany: printed circuit, gently curving streets, private access to the water, Book of the Dead...." (18/20). The word 'hierophany', apparently drawn from Mircea Eliade, is defined as an 'act of manifestation of the sacred.'⁸ When Oedipa encounters the notorious muted post-horn for the first time in The Scope's latrine she thinks, "God, hieroglyphics" (34/32). Sacred carving as Mendelson insists, certainly, but equivocally also secret writing without sacred connotations: a code. Later, Oedipa reflects after Arrabal, "If miracles were,...a kiss of cosmic pool balls, then so must be each of the night's post horns" (92/86).

At the novel's close with a potential revelation imminent, the cryer's gestures are described in religious terms, "Passerine spread his arms in a gesture that seemed to belong to the priesthood of some remote culture; perhaps to a descending angel" (138/127; emphasis mine). The statement preserves a binarism operating emphatically throughout the novel, here juxtaposing secular and sacred representatives of theological intercourse, yet the assimilations are never more than provisional as my 'italics' underline.

Driblette's comparison of Oedipa to the Puritan maintains the religious connotations of her dealings with Tristero and invokes their mutual religious heritage as Anglo-Saxon Americans, "You guys, you're like the Puritans are about

⁸ *ibid.* p. 122. (Mircea Eliade, The Sacred and the Profane, quoted in Mendelson).

the Bible. So hung up with words, words" (56/53). The Puritan doctrine provides the basis for the ethics, epistemology, eschatology and metaphysics characterizing phallogocentric, ethnocentric WASP-America. Driblette, certainly no Puritan, is, like many other figures not committed to any orthodox religious persuasion, nevertheless a victim of the American myth of autarkic self-determination, a theology of the Self, which has evolved co-extensively with Protestantism and capitalism. Apropos this myth Mike Fallopian cynically comments, "In school they got brainwashed, like all of us, into believing the Myth of the American Inventor" (64/61). Elsewhere Puritanism is again broached in Bortz's account of the Scurvhamite sect with its binary, Manichaean theory of the Creation which provides a further paradigm for Oedipa's binary universe containing America and a W.A.S.T.E./Tristero. Within the overall religious rhetoric in the novel, Oedipa, already comparable with Maxwell's Demon, becomes the nexus of a coincidence and the occasion of an 'anarchist miracle' of the widest proportions: the intrusion of a wholly alien order into a wholly familiar one.

THE SACRED TRISTERO : Mendelson's Thesis Considered

One could continue adducing evidence of the religious dimension of the novel but this would simply reproduce the detailed analysis provided by Mendelson. Instead, following the indispensable critique by T.H. Schaub, I will try to summarize Mendelson's central conclusions and indicate where these seem faulty.⁹ Mendelson interprets the Tristero

⁹ T.H. Schaub, "Open Letter in Response to Edward Mendelson's 'The Sacred, the Profane, and The Crying of Lot 49,'" Boundary 2 5 (1) 1976, pp. 93-101.

as a redeeming alternative to the malaise in which America founders and in order to achieve this he seeks to preserve its sacred, beneficent, renewing aspect. He draws attention to these passages, concerning the Tristero as a communications channel for the alienated, "For here were God knew how many citizens, deliberately choosing not to communicate by U.S. Mail" (92/86), and "you have stumbled...onto a secret richness and concealed density of dream; onto a network by which X number of Americans are truly communicating...; maybe even onto a real alternative to the exitlessness, to the absence of surprise to life, that harrows the head of everybody American you know" (128/117-8), and himself adds, picking up and sustaining Pynchon's syntax, "an alternative to physical crowding and ethical vacancy, an alternative that reveals itself quietly but persistently to the passive listener."¹⁰ Emphasizing the Tristero's sanctity Mendelson declares, "The Trysterero carries with it a sense of sacred connection and relation to the world, and by doing so it manifests a way of comprehending the world."¹¹ The Tristero's dark and demonic side is cursorily accommodated under the sacred: "the demonic is a subclass of the sacred,"¹² and is never permitted to interfere with Mendelson's classification of the Tristero as essentially benevolent.

Mendelson seems to register some difficulty with the brief, secular history of the Tristero provided towards the end of the novel, as it does not conform to his interpretation of the Tristero as a sacred phenomenon, "The Trysterero returns... into a realm which is historically safe and believable. ..

¹⁰ Mendelson, p. 117.

¹¹ *ibid.* p. 119.

¹² *ibid.* p. 122.

.Pynchon offers...the Trystero [as] a symbol for a complex of events...but it is merely a symbol,...with no hieratic significance in itself. But the novel, while offering this possibility, does so in a chapter in which nothing strange occurs, where the world is Aristotelian and profane, The book offers the possibility that its religious metaphor is only metaphor: but if the book were founded on this limited possibility, the remaining portions of the book would make no sense, and there would be little reason to write it in the first place." ¹³ What motivates Mendelson to privilege certain features of the Trystero and omit others? By a curious post facto appeal Mendelson seeks to sublimate the secular chronicle of the Tristero to its sacred aspect and preserve the latter aspect intact. Supporting his argument for the Tristero's benevolence he describes the barrage of information confronting both Oedipa and reader as "invigorating" and finally attempts to close down the novel on a meaning which is entirely religious and sacred.

However, it is not necessary to conceive the novel only according to the binary pair of possibilities entertained by Mendelson, i.e. the Tristero is either sacred or secular and to conclude the latter is an egregious misreading. Instead, the text prevents one from closing on either of these alternatives or conversely, perversely sustains both of these and several others. One of the subtler effects produced by the text is such a consistent suspension of meaning.

I shall paraphrase some of Schaub's perceptive objections to Mendelson's thesis. His critique goes a long way in the direction my analysis attempts to take Pynchon's texts, a direction which seeks to move away from a univocal conception of the text embodying a single 'meaning'.

¹³ *ibid.* p. 121.

Let us note the "invigorating" effects of the increasing excess of information confronting Oedipa (compared here with the private-eyes of detective fiction):

But the private eye sooner or later has to get beat up on. This night's profusion of post horns, this malignant, deliberate replication, was their way of beating up. ...one by one, pinch by precision pinch, they were immobilizing her. (91-2/85)

Elsewhere, much later in the novel with every ground of certainty undermined, Oedipa's condition has deteriorated to one of psychosomatic dysfunction:

Waves of nausea, lasting five to ten minutes, would strike her at random, cause her deep misery, then vanish as if they had never been. There were headaches, nightmares, menstrual pains. (129/118)

And, during the same period:

The toothaches got worse, she dreamed of disembodied voices from whose malignance there was no appeal, the soft dusk of mirrors out of which something was about to walk, and empty rooms that waited for her. (131/121)

One also learns that the Trystero organization serves the communication requirements of anti-communities like the AC-DC (90/84) and the Inamorati Anonymous (83/77-8) as well as having a lengthy history of terror campaigns perpetrated against various Occidental postal networks: "a sub rosa campaign of obstruction, terror and depredation along the Thurn and Taxis mail routes " (120/111), and Oedipa 'confirms' from Mr. Thoth that adversaries of American postal companies were Trystero agents "...sometime before 1853 it [Trystero] had appeared in America and fought the Pony Express and Wells Fargo, either as outlaws in black, or disguised as Indians " (80/75). Clearly Oedipa's experience of Trystero's signs is hardly 'invigorating', and the Trystero's aspect

dubiously benign.

This point coupled with the fact that Mendelson's reading dismisses the information concerning the secular Tristero whilst crediting its equally dubious 'sacred' manifestations-- "Mendelson sees this information as sacred. He argues that Oedipa discovers patterns which operate across time, and thus exist in a sacred present. But Oedipa's efforts to validate a trans-historical Tristero/W.A.S.T.E. are fraught with maybes, dim visions, poor lighting,...." ¹⁴ --must raise serious problems for his conclusion that, "religious meaning is itself the central meaning of the plot." I have taken care to record Mendelson's interpretation of the text because it so clearly performs a familiar gesture: the attempt to extract a single meaning and locate a centre in the text despite demurring evidence, and ultimately reappropriate the text as meaningful and thus restoring the text as a transcendental signified or a recuperation of the full presence of what the author intended-to-say. Speaking of structure of which the literary text is a species, Derrida comments on this interpretive exertion:

The concept of centred structure--although it represents coherence itself, the condition of the epistēmē as philosophy or science--is contradictorily coherent. And as always, coherence in contradiction expresses the force of a desire. ¹⁵

As one might, discloses the presence of a specific ideology.

It remains for me to attend henceforth to three prominent issues alluded to previously: the operations of the 'insula-

¹⁴ Schaub, p. 96

¹⁵ Derrida, Writing and Difference, p. 279.

tion' trope (p. 162), the spatial duad (p. 166) and the constellation of America as a Text (p. 149 & passim.).

FIGURAL NETWORKS : The Transformations of Insulation

The first of these issues I wish to discuss is the rhetoric of insulation which enters into close association with the pervasive theme of narcissism which I have already described in some detail and to which I shall have cause to return occasionally. I have determined narcissism as the dominant mode of being, or symptom, of the culture Oedipa inhabits and will educe below its manifold decorations with the trope of insulation.

I have already noted the introduction of this motif in Oedipa's suspicion that Mucho is allowing the radio's 'information' to "be a buffer between him and that lot" (6/9) and her own sensation of "buffering, insulation" (10/12). One of the novel's ostensible developments, accompanying Oedipa's gradual but inexorable 'ostracism', is her displacement from narcissism. Mendelson comments, "The novel describes... Oedipa's progress away from modes of narcissism."¹⁶ Let us record the concurrence of the themes of narcissism and insulation, allowing ourselves to ask what this insulation might be a buffer from. I defer speculation temporarily.

Following the initial instances of the 'insulation' trope, noted above, occurrences proliferate. A trivial instance occurs when Roseman flirts with Oedipa, "Roseman tried to play footsie with her under the table. She was wearing boots and couldn't feel much of anything. So, insulated she decided not to make any fuss" (9/12). Oedipa's

¹⁶ Mendelson, p. 135.

clothing insulates her effectively. Again, on the point of revelation, a buffer seems to intrude, 'as if a cloud had approached the sun or the smog thickened and so broken the "religious instant" ' (13/15). As the narrative unfolds insulation becomes quite easily synonymous with isolation and alienation. Implicated with this insularity is an absence of stimulation, precipitating a milieu of somnolence and enclosure. The tower symbol, discussed earlier, also contains these possibilities in its structure. It is at once a fortress of protection, a haven of security insulated against a 'malignant outside', and a prison. Let us proceed.

Oedipa's hysterical dressing prior to Strip Botticelli is both a clinging to the extensions of herself and an attempt to insulate herself--reiterating the alliance between insulation and clothing noted above--against transgression and passage 'outside' her culture's moral codes (adultery with Metzger). (I shall have cause to discuss this episode in greater detail later). San Narciso, the explicit centre of narcissistic culture, is contrasted with Fangoso Lagoons as "the more inland somnolence of San Narciso " (36/36). At a Yoyodyne shareholders' meeting the motifs of safety, insulation, slumber and male domination are telescoped when Oedipa discovers she is, "safely surrounded by old, somnolent men" (60/58). Following her visit to the somnolent old Mr. Thoth, whose dreams are interpenetrated with television and memories, she reflects, "All these fatigued brain cells between herself and the truth" (68/65). The motif of an interceding layer is again active, and we begin to glimpse what this insulation might be a buffer against. Still tracing Oedipa's trajectory, we discover Berkeley campus, a site of great social protest and upheaval in the 1960's, contrasted with her own background and political history, "this Berkeley was like no somnolent Siwash out of her own past at all " (76/71) and, "she had undergone her

own educating at a time of nerves, blandness and retreat" (76/71). Finally, invoking a passage cited earlier, we read of the several species this withdrawal and insulation has taken:

Where were...those dear daft numina who'd mothered over Oedipa's so temperate youth? In another world. Along another pattern of track, another string of decisions taken, switches closed, the faceless points-men who'd thrown them now all transferred, deserted, in stir, fleeing the skip-tracers, out of their skull, on horse, alcoholic, fanatic, under aliases, dead, impossible ever to find again. (76/71)

The deceased Inverarity is one of this number. The malaise of somnolence linked directly to dream in the Thoth episode, by extension combines with the recurrent motifs of hallucination, illusion, solipsism, delusion, withdrawal and other modes of self-engrossment and auto-affection symptomatic of a narcissistic culture, whilst alluding satirically to the perpetual theme of the "American Dream". Taking our cue from "on horse" we may retrace our tracks briefly and consider this conceit:

What the road really was, she fancied, was this hypodermic needle, inserted somewhere ahead into the vein of a freeway, a vein nourishing the mainliner L.A., keeping it happy, coherent, protected from pain, or whatever passes, with a city, for pain. But were Oedipa some single melted crystal of urban horse, L.A., really, would no be no less turned on for her absence. (14/16).

Oedipa's grim conceit of 'America' as a dependent junkie "protected from pain" and relying on consumption to remain "happy, coherent," articulates a savage indictment of American consumerism whilst sustaining the 'insulation' motif. Fuller and blunter exposition of this conceit-- 'society' or 'civilization' as addict--emerges in Gravity's Rainbow in an extract worth juxtaposing here:

Taking and not giving back, demanding that "productivity" and "earnings" keep on increasing with time, the System removing from the rest of the World these vast quantities of energy to keep its own tiny desperate fraction showing a profit: and not only most of humanity--most of the World, animal, vegetable and mineral, is laid waste in the process. The System may or may not understand that its only buying time. And that time is an artificial resource to begin with, of no value to anyone or anything but the System, which sooner or later must crash to its death, when its addiction to energy has become more than the rest of the World can supply (GR 412)

Thus, added to the catalogue of symptoms qualifying narcissism is narcosis, emphasizing the analgesic, securing function of the insulation and the entranced condition of the narcissistic organism. At this point let us note too the etymological complicity between Narcissus and narcosis:

The Greek myth of Narcissus is directly concerned with a fact of human experience, as the word Narcissus indicates. It is from the Greek word narcosis, or numbness.¹⁷

Numbness, as we have already seen, is one of the attributes of insulation emphasized in the novel. During Oedipa's nighttime odyssey in San Francisco, she witnesses amongst the gallery of freaks she encounters, "a child roaming the night who missed the death before birth as certain outcasts

¹⁷ Marshall McLuhan, Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man. (Aylesbury, Bucks.: Abacus, 1973 rpt. 1974. Orig. published, 1964) p. 51. I cite here extracts from McLuhan's chapter "The Gadget Lover," whose coincidence with several concerns we are examining in Pynchon's text is instructive, "The youth Narcissus mistook his own reflection in the water for another person. This extension of himself by mirror numbed his perceptions until he became the servo-mechanism of his own extended or repeated image. The nymph Echo tried to win his love with fragments of his own speech, but in vain. He was numb. He had adapted to his extension of himself and had become a closed system."; "...our intensely technological and, therefore narcotic culture.... It is this continuous embrace of our own technology in daily use that puts us in the Narcissus role of subliminal awareness and numbness in relation to these images of ourselves. By continuously embracing technologies, we relate ourselves to them as servo-mechanisms " (pp. 51,56). In this respect, attention may be fruitfully directed at the development of specular imagery in the novel.

do the dear lulling blankness of the community " (91/85; my emphasis). The simile's vehicle presages Oedipa's own alienation from the community, when, as an outlaw-- "I'll be a fugitive" (108/100)--she stands, "between the public booth and the rented car, in the night, her isolation complete " (135/122). The 'numbness' of the community is reiterated and linked with several other malaises in this passage, where Oedipa speculates upon the ostensible effects of the Tristero:

X number of Americans are truly communicating whilst reserving their lies, recitations of routine, arid betrayals of spiritual poverty, for the official government delivery system; maybe [you have stumbled] ...onto a real alternative to the exitlessness, to the absence of surprise to life, that harrows the head of everyone American you know (128/117-8).

Eventually language itself is invoked as an insulating medium in a novel where, as we shall discover, language becomes the paradigm for all varieties of human endeavour and extension (to recall McLuhan's word and one used in the same sense by Pynchon). The conception of language in the novel is instrumental in guiding my interpretation. Let us scrutinize the following passages using this aside as a guideline: "whatever it is the word is there, buffering, to protect us from " (95/89). The equation of 'word' and 'buffer' immediately recalls Oedipa's suspicion of Radio KCUF's 'jabber'. Let us juxtapose this phrase from that early passage, "even the news copy" (6/9; my emphasis) with this account of the telephone network--matrix of communication and iterability--to draw attention to the conjunction of insulation and repetition:

searching ceaseless among the dial's ten million possibilities for that magical Other who would reveal herself out of the roar of relays, monotone litanies of insult, filth, fantasy, love whose brute repetition must someday call into being the trigger for the unnamable act, the recognition, the Word. (136/125)

Repetition—and here we must recall "recitations of routine," "endless rituals of trade-in " (5/8), Metzger's comment on Cashiered: "One of your endless repetitions " (20/21), and several other instances where remarks are made concerning ritual and repetition (56/54, 64/61)—is the form insulation assumes in language. However, we are now moving into the arena of a problematic which I wish to shelve temporarily. It is worth noting that religious practices are also insinuated in this round of endless repetition by the single word "litanies" in the passage above and in The Courier's Tragedy, when, opposing ritual and truth, one of the fiends supervising the persecution of a cardinal who, consecrating his own toe is forced to declare, "This is my body " (47/46), wryly observes, "that it's the first time he's told anything like the truth in fifty years of systematic lying " (47-8/46).

Thus, in its iterative capacity, we see language implicated as a drug (a pharmakon), a type of insulation and form of evasion. It acquires, in the curious logic of the book, all the other attributes assembled around the theme of 'insulation' which is itself both the safeguard and the prison of narcissism. I shall suspend here the discussion of 'insulation'; however, all that has been noted above remains engaged in the following discussion.

SPATIAL CO-ORDINATES AND THEMES OF CENTRISM

I return now to consider the pervasive structural force of the spatial pair: inside/outside, examining the several guises of its operation: ontological, social, theological, political, cultural. In the case of each dimension of human order, specific applications repeat the structure of the spatial couple which locates itself in the general binary form of conceptual opposites, an epistemological

structure which Pynchon's texts all draw upon heavily. Towards the conclusion of the novel Oedipa contemplates this binarism without conviction. The novel's syntax ritualistically mimes this binarism at this point with its sustained 'either/or' logic, "Ones and zeroes. So did the couples arrange themselves." (136/126). The valorization, "Ones and zeroes " suggests that the units of each dichotomy are not equal counterparts in a conceptual economy. I shall discuss this implication in a moment.

All the preceding work on 'narcissism' in its various modes will now also be recognizable as representations of centrism, and the Tristero with all the connotations and attributes it acquires, intervenes as an antinomy challenging, subverting and unravelling the sovereignty and propriety of the varieties of centrism officiating at every level. I have endeavoured to show that Oedipa inhabits and represents (as a 'representative' or 'typical example') a society which practises and promotes, and maintains itself in, various forms of centrism.¹⁸

¹⁸ Oedipa's stability as an ego and a centred being, or cogito (and I shall mark the specific location of the Unconscious, albeit frivolously, in the text) one could argue, depends on a homogeneous, uninterrupted interlocution with her social order--narcissistic, centric America--which reflects a consistent image of her own projections and responds predictably to her presuppositions. Through a process of self-extension and image projection (the classic recapitulation of the Narcissus myth), the ego replicates itself in discourses in order to reinteriorize and recuperate its 'double' as one of its own moments, in a simple mimetic detour which permits an illusion of self-presence, whilst the mediating and reproducing medium and the gap between the self and its extension or 'double' are effaced in the self-recuperation and reappropriation of presence. The consistency of the image satisfies yet imprisons and benumbs because it issues from and returns to its source whilst the alterity and artifice it embraces are effaced and unrecognized; in other words, it is generated by and from and remains comprehended within and circumscribed by the system whence it issues: the classic and conventional itinerary of ideological determinations. In this respect I cite a concise although over-simple account of the production of social mythologies: "Social function has been a recurrent theme in recent discussion of cultural products. A crucial notion has been that stories, myths, books, rituals are not so much an answer about the world, but a set of questions shaped to provide a consoling result for the anxieties

The levels of conceptualization which we have noted occurring diversely as onto- or ego-, ethno-, phallo- and implicitly theocentrism become specific transformations of a structural inside sublating and oppressing an outside occurring variously as subversion, anarchy, terrorism, sacrifice, insanity, fraud, coincidence, i.e. modes of threat to the security and sovereignty of the "Republic" (92/86, 135/124) and its populace.

The centrism which the narrative exposes is revealed as that effected by the fraudulent promotion of one term over the other, constituting the conceptual field, as the text proposes, in terms of "ones and zeroes": the one privileged over the zero. The text discloses, through the fabulation of the Tristero organization, the traditional hierarchism supervising the polarization of the constituent 'elements' of each dyad according to their affinities.

The operation of this skewed binarism, as we noted in the 'Introduction', is not simply confined to Pynchon's texts or his 'authorial vision', but works the entire field and procedure of Western metaphysics and discourse and hence all its presuppositions are reflected and preserved in its languages. The hierarchicization of conceptual dualisms,

of those who share in the cultural activity--the audience. Cultural productions appear to deal with real problems but are in fact both conceived and resolvable in terms of the ideology of the culture group dominant in the society."---S. Knight, Form and Ideology in Crime Fiction (London & Basingstoke: The MacMillan Press, 1980), p. 4.

Clearly then, the Self, indicated in the text by the motif of solipsism, is one version of the spatial story we are reading here. The polarity Self/other is one mode of the spatial dyad. In parallel fashion the narrative produces America and its opponent or counterpart--its "dark double+ (98/91)--in the same conceptual space.

as we established in the 'Introduction', is intrinsically related to the desire to centre discourse and Being in a matrix of self-presence. One of Derrida's best commentators remarks, "It is this longing for a centre, an authorizing pressure, that spawns hierarchized oppositions. The superior term belongs to presence and the logos; the inferior serves to define its status and mark a fall."¹⁹ Clearly, the desire for a centre in Western discourse is a persistent preoccupation and discloses its commitment to an essentially theological way of thinking which has not yet been exorcised. I trust that the place The Crying of Lot 49 occupies in relation to this conceptual structuration is becoming clear; I have already shown how Pynchon excavates the theological nature of the quest, the quest for meaning, through an extensive religious rhetoric.

With this pervasive centrism goes the desire or nostalgia for a presence which has never actually existed as such, and the privileging of "unity, identity, immediacy," (Johnson, Diss. p. viii) the promotion of the One (number of Unity, Truth, God) over the Zero (cipher of absence). "Ones and zeroes. So did the couples arrange themselves." The Crying of Lot 49, I will argue, goes some way towards capsizing and deconstructing this skewed binarism and the discourse of logocentrism. It will be the work of the following pages to illustrate how the Tristero marks and delimits, in its negating, antinomic aspect, the narcissistic domain of the "One".

Some of the attributes associated with the Tristero are contrasted directly with those we have seen characterizing narcissistic America. New attributes will be derived around the culture of narcissism, structurally the 'inside',

¹⁹ Gayatri Spivak, "Translator's Preface," to Of Grammatology, p. lxix.

through systematic inference from those attributed to the Tristero (this is most apparent in the rhetorical contraries of "light/dark", "black/white" and "announcement/silence." These tropes will emerge in the following analysis). What the Tristero effects during the course of the novel, is the shuddering and subversion of America's illusions of security, sovereignty and certainly through the terrorization of Oedipa who is (as we have already suggested, 'typical', a personification of her culture, and is), in this respect, a scapegoat.²⁰ ||

It is worth contrasting Oedipa's own experience with the activities of one of the Tristero's affiliates, the AC-DC, "Once a month they were to choose some victim from among the innocent, the virtuous, the socially integrated and well-adjusted, using him sexually, then sacrificing him " (90/84): the classic scapegoating ritual.

Pynchon's choice of protagonist and perspective in The Crying of Lot 49 is a strategically crucial one. The

²⁰ Northrop Frye describes the scapegoat as follows, "the figure of a typical or random victim begins to crystallize in domestic tragedy.. .. We may call this typical victim the pharmakos or scapegoat. The pharmakos is neither innocent nor guilty. He is innocent in the sense that what happens to him is far greater than anything he has done provokes [Oedipa exhibits neither harmartia nor hubris], like the mountaineer whose shout brings down an avalanche. He is guilty in the sense that he is a member of a guilty society, or living in a world where such injustices are an inescapable part of existence."-- Northrop Frye, Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957 rpt. 1973), p. 41. Anticipating the objection that scapegoating is an internal ritual and that therefore Oedipa only fulfils this role from a certain angle: the possibility that her terrorization is an Inveraritian hoax (126/116), a strategem staged from the 'inside' to cast Oedipa 'outside', I reply that what Oedipa perceives as an external force, the Tristero, is in fact a function of the possibilities the Republic and the U.S. Mail (Male) have refused. She is therefore a victim of her society's own projected and proscribed alternatives returning and irrupting the 'inside'; Oedipa is terrorized by her society's and consequently her own 'Other': an aggregate of decisions which have defined what lies 'outside' the limits of the culture's cognitive-symbolic space, i.e. what has been excluded, discarded, 'disenfranchised'. However, I am anticipating the direction of my own argument.

inexorable subversion of Oedipa's certainty--also the certainty of any interpreter--produces an unsettling and vertiginous text whilst articulating a more effective social critique than The Secret Integration, which can be compared and contrasted with the later text in several respects. ²¹

I shall begin with a crucial passage which condenses the spatial dyad along with some important corollary motifs, and enables me to indicate a debt and sketch the programme for the following analysis:

²¹ The short story also confronts the construct of a 'subversive' organization, but, confined to a group of youths within the culture, it lacks any serious thrust, "They knew by now,...that the reality would turn out to be considerably less than the plot, that something inert and invisible, something they could not be cruel to or betray...would be between them and any clear or irreversible step...there was a point at which the reflex to their covering warmth, protection, effectiveness against bad dreams, bruised heads and simple loneliness took over and made worthwhile anger with them impossible"--"The Secret Integration," Saturday Evening Post, 237: 45 (19-26 Dec. 1964), p. 51. Here, the perspective is similarly located in legitimate but subordinate members of the dominant culture (here white, non-adults where Oedipa is a white, non-male), in both cases giving the cliché, 'It's a man's world,' an ironic twist. From their included/excluded site in the white, bourgeois culture,--"the scaled-up world adults made, remade and lived in without him" (36) --they are more receptive, "sensitized," to its exterior. Thus, by virtue of total naïveté apropos racial malice, the pranksters ally themselves with an itinerant Negro musician whose reminiscences enable them to glimpse life on the margins of white culture, adroitly condensed by juxtaposition, "down under a drive-in movie screen outside Kansas City,...while a John Wayne picture exploded overhead" (48). Thereafter, the pranksters set about the complex 'integration' of an imaginary Negro playmate, "Carl had been put together out of phrases, images, possibilities that grownups had somehow turned away from, repudiated, left out at the edges of towns,...things they could not or did not want to live with but which kids,...could spend endless hours with, piecing together, rearranging, feeding, programming, refining" (51). This passage reflects satirically on that above (p. 36). Carl, however, remains simply an attenuated extension of themselves,--"His words were the kids' own words: his gestures too" (51) --readily co-opted by the adult culture. Clearly, major sections of the framework for The Crying of Lot 49 are already in place here.

Cammed each night out of that safe furrow the bulk
of this city's waking each sunrise again set virtuously
to plowing, what rich soils had he turned, what concentric
planets uncovered?" (93/87)

To which Schaub comments, "The passage suggests this
opposition:

Inside: daylight, safe, furrowed

Outside: night, unfurrowed, rich soils." 22

Thus I attempt to elaborate and explore Schaub's brief
but highly suggestive schema. One will divine from the
preceding that Oedipa, Pierce, Mucho, their culture, their
world (their universe?) all conform to a structural Inside
of which the Tristero and its attributes compose the Outside.

The earliest instance of the spatial metaphor we noted in
the tower emblem (vide. p.166). The connection of the
Outside and the Tristero is first broached, albeit retro-
spectively, when Oedipa receives Mucho's letter. This
incident contrasts the sterility of the Inside and their
marriage with a 'communicating' Outside, "an intuition
that the letter would be newsless inside...made Oedipa
look more closely at its outside" (30/30). Again, at
a point in the synopsis of The Courier's Tragedy, the
spatial metaphor is repeated, simultaneously linking the
play to its modern American context and alluding to V.,
"While a battle rages in the streets outside the palace,
Pasquale is locked up in his patrician hothouse" (48/46). 23

22 Schaub, p. 99.

23 "If there is any political moral to be found in this world,"
Stencil once wrote in his journal, "it is that we carry on the business
of this century with an intolerable double vision. Right and Left;
the hothouse and the street. The Right can only live and work herme-
tically in the hothouse of the past, while outside the Left prosecute
their affairs in the streets manipulated by mob violence. And cannot
live but in the dreamscape of the future" (V. 468). Again, in Lot 49,
"the militants and the conservatives fight to a standstill" (123/114).

Later, Oedipa, already deeply "sensitized" (29/29) and terrified by the prospect of a Tristero's existence, is described by this simile, at a point where yet another unnerving coincidence has disclosed itself. Emphasizing also the sensation of enclosure, "as if she had been trapped at the centre of some intricate crystal" (67/64). Again, following shortly after the passage cited at the beginning of this discussion, and correlating the Inside with the security afforded by insulation, we read a suggestive comment on metaphor, a passage whose full resonance I shall explore later, noting for the moment the recurrence of the spatial format, "The act of metaphor was a thrust at truth and a lie depending where you were: inside, safe or outside, lost" (95/89).

A wistful student, nostalgically recollecting Randy Driblette says, "what was bugging him inside, usually, somehow or other, would have to come outside, on stage" (115/106). Finally, when Oedipa hears that a bidder is interested in lot 49, Genghis Cohen, her philatelic agent informs her, "as far as Morris knew he was an outsider," and adds, "our mysterious bidder may be from Tristero" (132/121). These, then, are the explicit moments of the spatial metaphor, but its force insists within several of the novel's other major tropologies: the anarchist miracle, Maxwell's Demon, the tower emblem, the profane/sacred relation, the Tristero / America opposition, the binary logic, the Scurvhamite's Manichaen cosmology and the entire chain of oppositions allied with Inside and Outside which we still have to tease out.

SPATIAL TRANSFORMATIONS : Same and Other

I want to focus now on another crucial passage which develops a second major paradigm within the spatial dyad we have been pursuing: the fictive anecdote of the Scurvhamite doctrine. Bortz recounts their reverse-Bowdlerization of The Courier's Tragedy (merely a D'Amico hypothesis):

Creation was a vast, intricate machine. But one part of it, the Scurvhamite part, ran off the will of God, its prime mover. The rest ran off some opposite Principle, something blind, soulless; a brute automatism that led to eternal death. The idea was to woo converts into the Godly and purposeful sodality of the Scurvhamite. But somehow the few saved Scurvhamites found themselves looking out into the gaudy clockwork of the doomed with a certain sick and fascinated horror, and this was to prove fatal. ... But the brute Other, that kept the non-Scurvhamite universe running like clockwork, that was something else again. Evidently they felt Trystero would symbolize the Other quite well." (116-7/107-8; my emphasis marks a reprise of the spatial metaphor and the motif of 'safety'.)

Bortz' word, "soulless" picks up a line from The Courier's Tragedy (50/49) and also presents us with one of the frequent bifid passages which ambiguously indicate both a restricted and general reference. Clearly, like the applicability of the 'Maxwell's Demon' and 'anarchist's miracle' paradigms, the nomination of the Trystero as the Other is still valid for its relationship to Oedipa's culture at both an individual (Self/Other; vide n. 18) and collective (Norm/Other) level. To this conclusion I splice Michel Foucault's formulation:

The history of madness is the history of the Other-- of that which, for a given culture is at once interior and foreign, therefore to be excluded (so as to exorcise the interior danger) but by being shut away (in order to reduce its otherness); whereas the history of the

order imposed on things would be the history of the Same. ²⁴

Amongst other things, it is remarkable how frequently Oedipa contemplates the Tristero as the possibility of her own insanity, "she wanted it all to be fantasy-- some clear result of her wounds, needs, dark doubles. She wanted Hilarius to tell her she was some kind of nut... and that there was no Trysterero. She also wanted to know why the chance of its being real should menace her so" (98/91). The Trysterero thus assumes its place in relation to Oedipa's America as the relationship of the Same to Other. And one can enjoin here a re-reading of the recurring phrase, "other revelations" (58/56, 64/61): new and different revelations certainly, but also conceivably revelations of the Other. Let us commence then, the task of teasing out the antithetical attributes polarizing Trysterero and America.

SPATIAL TRANSFORMATIONS : U.S. Mail and Tristero

The Tristero has its ostensible historical beginnings with the vengeance of its enigmatic founder, described as "highly unstable" (120/110):

Hernando Joaquín de Tristero y Calavera, perhaps
a madman, perhaps an honest rebel, according to
some only a con artist. (119/110; my emphasis)

The string of epithets is instructive. Couched again in hesitancy and uncertainty and filtered furthermore through Bortz's speculative historical reconstructions, the attributes are nevertheless amongst those Oedipa has associated with the Tristero: insanity, "a trembling unfurrowing of

²⁴ Michael Foucault, The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences, trans. A. Sheridan (London: Tavistock Publications Ltd., 1970 rpt. 1977), p. xxiv. (vide. also pp. 322-328 passim.)

the mind's plowshare" (95/89); rebellion, "handling anarchist correspondence" (129-30/119); dissimulation, "Their entire emphasis now toward silence, impersonation, opposition masquerading as allegiance" (130/120). The motifs of silence and dissimulation, disguise, masquerade recur frequently. Cohen, commenting on philatelic irregularities:

"It sounds ridiculous," Cohen said, but my guess is it's a mute."

She nodded. The black costumes, the silence the secrecy. Whoever they were their aim was to mute the Thurn and Taxis post horn. (70/67).

Cohen adds, "It's obviously a counterfeit" (70/67). Just as Thurn and Taxis is historically Tristero's adversary, so the U.S. Mail becomes the adversary of Tristero's modern subsidiary, W.A.S.T.E., whose initials are resolved again through Cohen, "WE AWAIT SILENT TRISTERO'S EMPIRE" (127/116).

We are told more, too, about Tristero y Calavera and the roots of the organization (never forgetting that this chronicle is entirely Bortz's speculative reconstruction and that therefore the entire history is lodged on a ground of uncertainty). Tristero y Calavera adopts a slogan and an iconography:

His constant theme, disinheritance. ... He styled himself El Desheredado, The Disinherited, and fashioned a livery of black for his followers, black to symbolize the only thing that truly belonged to them in their exile: the night. Soon he had added to his iconography the muted post horn.... He began a sub rosa campaign of obstruction, terror and depredation along the Thurn and Taxis mail routes. (120/110-1).

Here, in these few extracts, we have recapitulated the major symbolism constellated about the Tristero, confirming what Oedipa has discovered in her assembly of W.A.S.T.E.,

lapidarily: disinheritance, exile (preserving the spatial metaphor), night, blackness, subversion, terror. By contrast, the legitimate states, for whose officiality Thurn and Taxis and subsequently U.S. Mail function as synecdoches, are imputed with property, propriety, whiteness, daylight, hereditament and heritage etc. Opposed to U.S. Mail (also, we have suggested, the U.S. Male), W.A.S.T.E. might whimsically be described as a Blackmail. The Trystero thus acquires the position of Other in relation to American, and by historical extension, Western society at large. Historically an alternative mail-system, its influence extends to the New World in the 19th century and it becomes the massive underground communications network, W.A.S.T.E., functioning as the champion of, and courier to America's ethnic minorities, disinherited, oppressed, exiled, outlaw, fugitive, lazar, disenfranchised.

Trystero's collusion with the disaffected and alienated is made quite explicit in Oedipa's conclusions:

Last night she might have wondered what undergrounds apart from the couple she knew of communicated by WASTE system. By sunrise she could legitimately ask what undergrounds didn't. ... For here were God knew how many citizens, deliberately choosing not to communicate by U.S. Mail. ...it was calculated withdrawal, from the life of the Republic, from its machinery. Whatever else was being denied them out of hate, indifference to the power of their vote, [effectively disenfranchisement] loopholes, simple ignorance, this withdrawal was their own, unpublicized, private. (92/86).

Despite its silence and secrecy, this decision of withdrawal is nevertheless a politically subversive act, which this declaration, from a historical European context, reinforces, "whoever could control the lines of communication, among all these princes, would control them" (123/113). Clearly, the postal struggle is also, unequivocally, a struggle for power and ascendancy. When Oedipa confronts Mike Fallopian

of the Peter Pinguid Society with the Tristero and declares:

"I'm surprised you people aren't using the system too."

"Are we an underground?" he came back, mild enough.
"Are we rejects?" (125/115).

The Trysterero is again aligned with the outcast. It is once more contrasted with the official state machinery-- America's malaise with Tristero's redemptive potential-- when Oedipa contemplates the permutations of her possible response, "a network by which X number of Americans are truly communicating whilst reserving their lies, recitations of routine, arid betrayals of spiritual poverty for the official government system" (128/117-8; cited previously p.184). Again, "she might have found The Tristero anywhere in her Republic, through any of a hundred lightly-concealed entranceways, a hundred alienations, if only she had looked" (135/124). Oedipa recollects intensely at this point, "what remained, yet had somehow, before this, stayed away" (10) — America's disinherited, previously glibly overlooked:

She remembered now old Pullman cars,.... Were the squatters there in touch with others, through Tristero; were they helping carry forward that 300 years of the house's disinheritance? ... She thought of other, immobilized freight cars,... of other squatters who stretched canvas for lean-tos behind smiling billboards along all the highways, or slept in junkyards..., or even, ...spent the night up some pole in a lineman's tent.... She remembered drifters she had listened to, Americans speaking their language carefully, scholarly, as if they were in exile from somewhere else invisible, yet congruent with the cheered land she lived in. (135/124-5)

When Oedipa assembles her knowledge of Tristero at an early point, its alliance with transgression and non-conformity is already patent, and the motifs of blackness and impersonation preside:

She knew a few things about it: it had opposed the Thurn and Taxis postal system in Europe; its symbol was a muted post horn; sometime before 1853 it had appeared in America and fought the Pony Express and Wells Fargo, either as outlaws in black, or disguised as Indians; and it survived today, in California, serving as a channel of communication for those of unorthodox sexual persuasion, inventors who believed in the reality of Maxwell's Demon, possibly her own husband, Mucho Maas (80/75) 25

Elsewhere, during the 'nighttown' episode, a laundromat becomes an isolated colony of the Inside, held against the night and blackness (specifically negritude):

Somehow near Fillmore she found the symbol tacked to a bulletin board of a laundromat,... .. Around her the odor of chlorine bleach rose heavenward, like an incense. ... Except for Oedipa the place was deserted, and the fluorescent bulbs seemed to shriek whiteness, to which everything their light touched was dedicated. It was a Negro neighbourhood. (90/84).

The last sentence is pointedly set apart and deliberately juxtaposed to the preceding, emphasizing a play of chiaroscuro which is manifest throughout the text. The Negroes, amongst America's most oppressed (a corporate pharmakos), particularly at the time of writing (1965), are explicitly set in opposition to white America, an antagonism previously explored in some detail in "The Secret Integration." The

25 The Tristero's alliance with the night, darkness, blackness and death is consolidated through the insistent appearance of the post-horn and Oedipa's discovery of the many disaffected, excluded, non-conformist freaks using the W.A.S.T.E. system during her dark drifting hours in San Francisco (80-97/75-90) as well as several passages of linking imagery. Tristero is variously described and alluded to as, "dark adversary " (67/64), "dark double " (98/91), "Tristero's shadow-state " (122/112), "Thus, the article smugly concluded, did the organization enter the penumbra of historical eclipse " (129/119) and "Tristero ...in its twilight, its aloofness, its waiting " (136/125). (Conceiving the night as an alien kingdom populated by aliens owes much of its mood--pp. 80-97/75-90--to Djuna Barnes' Nightwood (1936) esp. the chapter, "Watchman, What of the Night?" a novel Pynchon alludes to in "Entropy").

location of the Negro on the side of the Tristero provides an actual political instance of the Inside's expulsion and oppression of 'blackness' from the sanctuaries of the legitimate Republic.²⁶

One notes the complicity in the novel between the Inside, whiteness and illumination, which is resumed and elaborated alongside the global opposition of Elect and Preterite (terms borrowed from Puritan theology and secularized) which structures Gravity's Rainbow and conditions a revised understanding of the word Elect-ricity. The Tristero is thus constituted as a Counterforce (to adopt retroactively, a name from GR 617 ff.) for "the whole host of down-trodden and disaffected"²⁷ with whose lot, whose "alternate histories" (GR 336) Pynchon has been continually concerned since his earliest fiction and whom he finally unites under the banner of the Preterite in Gravity's Rainbow.²⁸

²⁶ Elsewhere, "Among her other encounters" (91/85; also, encounters with the Other) during a disturbing allegorical episode Oedipa meets the following freaks, "a Negro woman...who kept going through rituals of miscarriage..., deliberately as others might the ritual of birth,...; an aging night-watchman, [an allusion to Barnes?] nibbling at a bar of Ivory Soap, who had trained his virtuoso stomach to accept also lotions, air-fresheners, fabrics, tobaccos and waxes in a hopeless attempt to assimilate it all, all the promise, productivity, betrayal, ulcers,..." (91/85). His is an attempt to incorporate all the culture's heterogeneity. One constant binds this heterogeneous diversity, "Decorating each alienation, each species of withdrawal,...there was somehow always the post horn" (91/85). Again, this apparent confirmation of a sinister conspiracy is lodged in uncertainty, by the emphasis on poor lighting--"the streetlight was dim" (86/80)--and Oedipa's optative perception, "She grew so to expect it that perhaps she did not see it quite as often as she later was to remember seeing it" (91/85).

²⁷ Thomas Pynchon, Mortality and Mercy in Vienna (London: Aloe Books, n.d.), p. 10.

²⁸ I should like to interpolate, corroborating the relations we have been deciphering, the reportage shortly following The Crying of Lot 49, in which Pynchon gives attention to the maladies afflicting Watts and repeats, albeit somewhat formulistically for the purposes of polemical force, the major contraries and themes discerned in Lot 49. Watts, a Negro neighbourhood and racial flashpoint in the

"THE SHRINK FLIPS" : The Unconscious and Transformations
of the Spatial Dichotomy

Furthermore, through the consistent use of figures of chiaroscuro and illumination--aligning the Inside with daylight and the Outside, demonstrated also as America's Other, with darkness, shadow and night--and an extension of these tropes into Hilarius' discourse, the Unconscious

heart of L.A., harbours the disaffected, the oppressed, the outlaw, what the novel has called disinherited (what we might precociously call the Preterite), "There are still the poor, the defeated, the criminal, the desperate, all hanging in there with what must seem a terrible vitality." "A Journey into the Mind of Watts," New York Times Magazine, 12 June 1966, p. 35, and the 'reality' of the black suburb is contrasted throughout the article with the 'white American dream,' "Watts lies impacted at the heart of this white fantasy. It is by contrast a pocket of bitter reality" (78). Clearly this repeats a major dichotomy working the novel's figural field, the opposition of white and black. Again, more overtly, "Whatever else may be wrong in a political way...lying much closer to the heart of L.A.'s racial sickness is the coexistence of two very different cultures: one white and one black" (35). Appended to what has already been said of the motifs of narcissism is this, "What is known around the nation as the L.A. Scene exists chiefly as images on a screen or T.V. tube, as four-color magazine photos, as old radio jokes, as new songs that survive only a matter of weeks. ["radios playing songs in the lower stretches of the Top 200, that would never become popular, whose melodies and lyrics would perish as if they had never been sung" (Lot 49; 90/84)]. It is basically a white Scene, and illusion is everywhere in it" (78). Again, by contrast, "In Watts,...no one can afford the luxury of illusion" (81). Recalling the conceit of 'junkie-L.A.', "alcohol is a natural part of the Watts style; as natural as LSD is around Hollywood. The white kid digs hallucination simply because he is conditioned to believe so much in escape, escape as an integral part of life, because the white L.A. Scene makes accessible to him so many different forms of it. But the Watts kid, brought up in a pocket of reality, looks...for...some relaxation" (80). Here Mucho and no doubt his young fans evidently exemplify the phenomenon. Evoking again the somnolence of the novel, "the outposts of the establishment drowse in the bright summery smog" (81). Pynchon characteristically invokes here a thermodynamic principle latent in the antinomies of the novel, referring to the Watts riots, "for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction" (82) which offers another angle on the Trystero; exposes the white gestures of reappropriation, "this attempt to transmogrify the reality of Watts into the unreality of Los Angeles " (84); and provides a different slant on violence which links Tristero's

becomes implicated on the side of the Other, opposing and threatening the security and autarky of the cogito or conscious self, in the novel's rhetorical logic. I call attention in passing to the encore of security, co-option and socialization in the following passages.

Oedipa, seeking a strategy to rationalize and domesticate her 'Tristero plot', resolves to consult Dr. Hilarius, only to discover that the 'shrink' has 'flipped'. He freely espouses his doctrines and practice, declaring:

part of me must have really wanted to believe--like a child hearing, in perfect safety, a tale of horror--that the unconscious would be like any other room, once light was let in. That the dark shapes would resolve.... That therapy could tame it after all, bring it into society....(100/93)

Interspersed with this monologue are symptoms of Hilarius' chronic paranoia and acute mistrust of everybody, "the others" (101/94,103/96) and Them. "They replicate: you flee them, turn a corner, and there they are, coming for you again" (100/93). In the throes of this paranoid state he also declares, "I can't guarantee the safety of the 'police'" (100/93). He continues, alluding to the LSD programme under his direction and into which, we discover in the sequence immediately following, he has drawn Mucho Maas, "There is me, there are the others. ...with the LSD, we're finding, distinction begins to vanish. Egos lose their sharp edges. But I never took the drug, I chose to remain in relative paranoia, where at least I know who I am and who the others are" (101/94). Oedipa's interview with Mucho Maas permits a skilful

function as a communications network with its frequently violent methods, "Far from a sickness, violence may be an attempt to communicate or to be who you really are" (84). One can begin to see how the concept of The Crying of Lot 49 as a 'Book' whole unto itself already becomes diffused amongst the network of interrelations we have indicated between Pynchon's texts even before linking these to others.

juxtaposition and contrast of Hilarius' rigidly differentiated condition and Mucho's undifferentiated condition:

When those kids sing about 'She loves you,'...she does, she's any number of people, all over the world, back through time, different colors, sizes, ages, shapes, distances from death, but she loves. And the 'you' is everybody. And herself. (106/99)

You're an antenna, sending your pattern out across a million lives a night, and they're your lives too. (107/99)

Returning to Hilarius, his monologue alternates between paranoid symptoms, professional comments and recollections. Motifs of light and domestication mark his memory of Nazi atrocities and his own retrospective horror:

Freud's vision of the world had no Buchenwalds in it. Buchenwald, according to Freud, once the light was let in, would become a soccer field, fat children would learn flower-arranging and solfeggio in the strangling rooms. At Auschwitz the ovens would be converted over to petit fours and wedding cakes, and the V-2 missiles to public housing for the elves. I tried to believe it all. (102/95)

Invoking his notorious face-therapy, he locates insanity, too, in imagery of horror, darkness and repression:

"There is a face," Hilarius said, "that I can make. ...the young man who saw it..... Hopelessly insane. ...I can make that face again. ...it...drives anyone unlucky enough to see it down forever into the darkened oubliette, among the terrible shapes, and secures the hatch irrevocably above them" (100-101/93-4)

Desperately attempting to guard his self-integrity against the pillage of integration, Hilarius yearns for an identity without difference and a cycle of paranoia gains ascendancy once again. He seeks to deny the alterity which fashions his own identity, regarding it as a theft of selfhood, and perceives all approaches as threats and gestures of co-option:

the etiolation of a full self-presence. When Oedipa mentions her Tristero "fantasy" Hilarius advises enthusiastically:

"Cherish it!" cried Hilarius, fiercely. "What else do any of you have? Hold it tightly by its little tentacle, don't let the Freudians coax it away or the pharmacists poison it out of you. Whatever it is, hold it dear, for when you lose it you go over by that much to the others. You begin to cease to be. (103/95-6)

Consequently, the cruel irony of Mucho's answer when Oedipa asks, "'Where are they taking him?' 'Community hospital, I guess,' Mucho said,' (104/96; we will recall the "dear lulling blankness of the community"--91/85--). I conclude this discussion with the following jaundiced comment, "an enormous priest caste of shrinks who counsel moderation and compromise as the answer to all forms of hassle" ²⁹

THE 'PLACE' OF THE TRISTERO AND SOCIO-SYMBOLIC ORDER

Thus, by a somewhat prolix route, we observe that Tristero inhabits the recesses of the Republic's collective darkness and represents (as deputy and form) a community which is essentially an 'anti-community': it includes the excluded, invests the disinherited with a kind of counter-heritage, facilitates communication amongst the 'excommunicated,' locates its own alternate network in the interstices of the Republic's web of social relations and locates in its network, the Republic's exiled and displaced. I should like to juxtapose some general comments on the novel from Tanner's pioneering work on the novel of adultery:

²⁹ Thomas Pynchon, "A Journey into the Mind of Watts," p. 84.

The novel, in its origin, might almost be said to be a transgressive mode inasmuch as it seemed to break, or mix, or adulterate the existing genre-expectations of the time. It is not for nothing that many of the protagonists of the early English novels are socially displaced or unplaced figures orphans, prostitutes, adventurers, etc. They thus represent or incarnate a potentially disruptive or socially unstabilized energy that may threaten, directly or implicitly, the organization of society, whether by the indeterminacy of their origin, the uncertainty of the direction in which they will focus their unbonded energy, or their attitude to the ties that hold society together and that they may choose to slight or break.³⁰

I draw attention to the emphasis on the "socially displaced" and suggest that the Tristero as an organization incarnates this "potentially disruptive or socially unstabilized energy," recalling that Tristero y Calavera was described as "highly unstable" (120/110).

The Tristero embraces and champions everybody who is socially displaced, either from himself--i.e. alienated, spiritually impoverished--or disinherited: alienated in a political and social way from the life of the Republic: in short, everybody who does not, psychologically, socially or otherwise, occupy a proper place.³¹

³⁰ Tony Tanner, Adultery in the Novel, pp. 3-4.

³¹ "PROPER...A. adj. I. 1. Belonging to oneself or itself; (one's or its) own; owned as property; intrinsic, inherent. 2. Belonging or relating to the person or thing in question distinctively or exclusively.... II. 1. Strictly belonging or applicable; accurate, exact, correct 1449. 2. To which the name accurately belongs; strictly so called; genuine, real; normal. ... 4. Such as a thing of the kind should be; excellent, admirable, of high quality. Now arch. or vulgar. late ME. b. Of good character or standing; respectable, worthy. III. 1. Adapted to some purpose or requirement; fit, apt, suitable; fitting, befitting; esp. appropriate to the circumstances; right ME. 2. In conformity with the demands and usages of society; decent, decorous, respectable, 'correct' 1738. b. transf. of persons." The Shorter O.E.D. 3rd ed., (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973, rpt. 1978), II p. 1687. The concept of the 'proper place' clearly has several repercussions.

Finally, identifying the "town" as yet another outpost of the Empire, "walkers along the roads at night, zooming in and out of your headlights without looking up, too far from any town to have a real destination" (135/125; my emphases. Noting the complementing structures of space and light, the condensation and allegiance of light and capital and the emphasis on the absence of an authorized, socially sanctioned telos). These, then, are the people without a proper place in the Republic. Consequently, everything we have managed to infer and determine about, or attribute to the Tristero in the foregoing, applies inversely to the imperial Inside.

I turn now to the function of the Tristero specifically as an alternative communications or postal network: a Black-mail, opposed historically to Thurn and Taxis and more recently (indulging in an acronymic play the text initiates) a THEM-mail opposing U.S. Mail (also the U.S. Male, as we have seen).

Pynchon's strategic choice of a counter-postal system enables him to telescope several possibilities under one rose: an organization engaged in actual seditious and guerilla activity, society's Other and, at a more abstract level, the hypostasis of the subversive, redistributive energy inhabiting, dismantling and redistributing otherwise, officially authorized and legitimized signifying practices. The Postmaster--sovereign's deputy--and the network he controls, becomes a synecdoche for the State and the

One notices the complicity within the concept of the proper, of 'self-presence': "Belonging to oneself," naturalness: "intrinsic, inherent, such as a thing of the kind should be," the literal: "To which the name accurately belongs," and normativity or conformity to socially determined constraints and conventions, social function: "In conformity with the demands and usages of society."

dominant socioeconomic group. In this respect, let us briefly read these letters, "POST I. 1. Orig. applied to men with horses stationed or appointed at intervals along the post-roads, the duty of each being to ride with, or forward the next stage, the 'king's packet'." ³² The Postmaster is thus rhetorically installed as the controller of communication and information, and supervisor of the orderly distribution of the king's dispatches (i.e. the Law or sovereign voice) in the Republic. He is director of the agents of the Letter and custodian supreme of society's signifying practices, ideological power and hence implicitly, the Contract and the Law. I recall the declaration, "whoever could control the lines of communication, among all these princes, would control them" (123/113). Clearly, in the network, the Postmaster occupies a special and powerful place. Against these agents of the Letter and the Law the Tristero organization is elaborated, an organization paradoxically committed to a policy of disorganization and anarchy (89/83, 118/109, 130/119).

Thus the Tristero, a hypostatization of society's other and outside, functions both as a historical organization and a generative/disruptive (depending on one's sympathies) textual force inscribed within and renewing/subverting and interrupting the circulation of 'naturalized' and proper discourse, codes and conventions. Tristero discloses at once the potential for new possibilities: the extension, change, renewal and even inversion of current signifying practices and customs, and the artificial conformity of humanity to arbitrarily determined normative constraints sustained by and within a diacritical symbolic order of 'Occidental' proportions.

Hence, the Tristero is perceived by Oedipa as both a threat

³² *ibid.* p. 1636.

and a promise (cf. "the true paranoid for whom all is organized in spheres joyful or threatening about the central pulse of himself" 95/89), a threat of meaninglessness, "For this, oh God, was the void " (128/118), and a promise of renewed signifying practices, "a network by which X number of Americans are truly communicating"; possibilities which the name "Trystero" itself contains and suspends within a homophonic play (we shall have more to say of this motif), "Tryst or odious awry, O Niccolo " (74/70).

"Tryst or O": a clandestine rendezvous and communication, or the Zero, the void? One critic writes, "In the Trystero symbol of the muted post horn Pynchon ambivalently renders at once the notion of resourceful and healthy subversion (the breaking of a postal monopoly) and the silencing of the phallus, the silence of inversion and death." ³³

The Tristero simultaneously discloses the possibility of an alternate pattern of order and communication to the reified, naturalized conventions; the capacity for renewal or inversion; and ipso facto, the artificiality of all patterns of order: "what she stood on..., was only by accident known as Mexico" (10-11/13). Here, we may recall Henry Adams' maxim, "Chaos was the law of nature; Order was the dream of man," and:

order was an accidental relation obnoxious to nature; artificial compulsion imposed on motion; against which every free energy of the universe revolted; and which, ...resolved itself back into anarchy at last. He could not deny that the law of the new multiverse explained much that had been most obscure, ...the perpetual effort of society to establish law [contract] and the perpetual revolt of society against the law it had established; [transgression] .³⁴

³³ Neil Schmitz, "Describing the Demon: The Appeal of Thomas Pynchon," Partisan Review, 42 (1) 1975. pp. 115-6.

³⁴ Adams, The Education, pp. 457-8.

I underscore the relation we have seen repeated in "Pynchon's" text, between social order and anarchy and Adams' neologism: "multiverse."

The possibility of the Tristero marks the possibility of any order, pattern, meaning, unity and reified structure of identities and opposites, as well as the possibility of change, process event and difference (and the actual impossibility of unity, identity etc. This will become clearer). Tristero discloses the "existence" (but this concept belongs in the system under interrogation) of a field of absolute play, but also total or maximum possibility: what we commonly term chance, coincidence, randomness, contingency etc., within which order is inscribed and delimited as a restricted economy. This tableau is tersely illustrated in Adams' figure of the "universe as a raft...in the surge of a supersensual chaos." 35

The Tristero thus serves a paradoxical and undecidable function in the novel. It functions, for Oedipa, to link a set of always possibly 'coincidental' phenomena: making "coincidence respectable" (80/75) i.e. proper (vide. n. 31), and functions for the narrator to demonstrate the absolute difference and play of differences (différance) within which, as a restricted economy and an effect, order is created and achieved; in fact, order in the Republic is inaugurated by the exclusion, or exorcism of certain values, patterns, traits, phenomena, which will henceforth mark the 'outside'. Let us note the Tristero's emphatic collusion with chance throughout the novel, prefacing with Nietzsche's predication, "What is evil? Three things: chance, the uncertain, the sudden." 36

³⁵ *ibid.* p. 459.

³⁶ Friedrich Nietzsche, The Will to Power, trans. W. Kaufman & R.J. Hollingdale (New York: Vintage Books, 1968), Bk. IV, para. 1019, p. 526.

SYMBOLIC ORDER AND THE ODDS OF THE TRISTERO :

One and the Double

We have already discerned a consistent alliance or association, at least from the perspective of the 'inside', of the Tristero with destruction, evil and explicitly waste and death (the acronyms as they appear to the 'non-sensitized'). Society determines as worthless and discards, 'waste': "possibilities that grownups had...repudiated" (vide n. 21), rubbish, human trash, the destitute, the disinherited; and represses beneath taboos, death—refusing to confront its absolute negativity which cannot be sublated within any dialectic. The novel proposes the reappraisal of all the Republic has excluded in the construction and elaboration of its artificial order.

Consistent, then, with Tristero's connotations of WASTE and DEATH, are the motifs of chance and play which threaten the orderly transmission of 'serious' discourse--the discourse of truth--with semantic dissolution, or 'death', and which are regularly discarded and disqualified by the orderly discourse.

Play is introduced at the moment that the sovereign unity or identity of the inside has to represent, that is, exteriorize or manifest itself as such; which is also to double or repeat itself through the detour of a substitute, or supplement (I refer to the account of the supplement in the Introduction):

This process of substitution, which thus functions as a pure play of traces or supplements or, again, operates within the order of the pure signifier which no reality, no absolutely external reference, no transcendental signified, can come to limit, bound or control; this substitution...can go on infinitely in the element of the linguistic permutation of substitutes, of substitutes

for substitutes; this unleashed chain is nevertheless not lacking in violence. (Diss. 89; my emphasis)

The substitutional play described above is violent precisely because such play threatens the conventions of signification, the culture's symbolic order.

These supplementary effects implicate us in the entire graphics of supplementarity. The supplement simultaneously enables the repetition of the truth; represents it, and has the capacity to replace the truth by replicating its functions, producing its effects and being itself entirely mistaken for the truth, hence usurping its place and rendering the true entirely redundant. The absolute necessity of the supplement indicates that the 'truth' is always already contaminated by that which supplies it. Thus the Tristero, whose speciality is disguise--effacing itself, being not-itself (wherein lies its 'essence')--bears both the ability to dissemble and therefore represent and entirely replicate the functions of the status quo (the U.S. Mail), by "masquerading as allegiance" (130/120) and the capacity to challenge, undermine and usurp the status quo (U.S. Mail and everything it already stands for, in-the-place-of).

It is the latter skill on which the novel focusses. Contained in the Tristero construct are the graphics of the 'dangerous supplement,' the unit which represents by adding, "being enough the same and enough other so that it can replace by addition " (Diss. 168). Same enough to transact the business of its official counterpart: otherwise; different enough to threaten the official authority.

Repetition, the supplement, is thus the pre-condition of the appearance of both the true and the false, "The true and the untrue are both species of repetition " (Diss. 168).

This repetition haunts every moment of certainty which Oedipa entertains in the novel. It is at the moment of doubling the truth, the signified; the moment of opening a sovereign unity upon a differential-differentiated exterior field; the moment the integral truth is projected into the non-truth of the supplementing double, that the integrity of the truth is risked (and in fact, breached). Exteriorized in a spatio-temporal medium, it risks being doubled infinitely, maligned, falsely represented, in the play of differences which reconstitutes (and, in fact, manifests) it.

Being, traditionally determined in Western metaphysics as presence, and this applies equally to the values invested in its various attending supplements: meaning, identity, truth, unity etc., announces itself as such, by losing its integrity in the chain of supplements, doubles, icons, mimemes it inaugurates/inaugurating it within the play of differences and vitiating contingencies which structure the 'supervening' representative medium. Thus the double, from the angle of presence, represents the 'identity' of the One by adding 'nothing', a non-Being, a Zero, but in the same stroke it divides the One and opens it irrecuperably to differential play and chance: chance similarities and differences generated in the representing system.

We will notice, besides the possibility Tristero promises for Oedipa of some new order of truth, sought and possessed in the verification of the Tristero's existence (and presence: these two states amounting to the same thing), the consistent alliance of the Tristero with chance, play, dissimulation, fiction (The Courier's Tragedy, Bortz's several historical sources), game: simulacrum of the law and the rule, and hoax, "some grandiose practical joke" (128/117); in short, all the traditionally negative features of repetition from the perspective of Being, meaning and truth. It should also by now be clear

that these qualities are in close collusion with political counter-violence, subversion and anarchy.

The Tristero, according to the structural relations we are deciphering, becomes discernible as an allegory of the traditionally repressed-effaced force of writing, an aspect of writing whose exact character has been consistently misrecognized. We are deciphering "a most bizarre resemblance" (43/42) between the function of the Tristero in the novel and the force of a "double writing" working, on the one hand, to articulate the logocentric discourse which subordinates it in a hierarchical opposition and, on the other hand, as the general economy which enables the appearance of the logocentric discourse and within which the latter is inscribed. The construct of the Tristero is, we begin to suspect, the negatively valorized 'writing' opposed to the logos and the living, phonic signifier of which 'writing' is a secondary, supplementary signifier, in an hierarchical descent, "writing as the doubling of a sign,.... The signifier of a phonic signifier. While the phonic signifier would remain in animate proximity,...., the graphic signifier, which reproduces it or imitates it,...falls outside of life, entrains life out of itself and puts it to sleep in the type of its double" (Diss. 109-10) and one glimpses the equivocal function of 'insulation' which we earlier linked to language (vide p.185): at once protecting, bolstering the integrity of the present, securing it, and hypnotizing, enchanting, imprisoning it.

Thus I am arguing that the problem of the Tristero is the problem of textual meaning itself (in this respect Mendelson and I appear to concur but, far from affirming religious meaning-- and the concept of meaning regulated by any ontology in general must henceforth be regarded as a theological product--and thus reappropriating the text by installing

the Tristero as a transcendental signified and theological entity beyond play, I insist, and attempt to show, that the novel effects a dissemination of these notions in the production of a generalized writing beyond the comprehension of presence, being, truth and their subsidiary products erected within the general field).

Chance and Transformations of the Double

Let us now examine some of the instances where the Tristero is allied with chance, play (drama, game, joke, hoax) and the inevitable double. I cite two explicit associations to initiate this investigation.

One of the contexts which transforms the Tristero's iconography (re-cites its marks) is a child's game, "A kid's game? Places on a map, dates from a secret history?" (86/80-1); "You used only one image and it was a jump-rope game, a little girl explained: you stepped alternately in the loop, the bell, and the mute while your girl-friend sang:

Tristoe, Tristoe, one, two, three,
Turning taxi from across the sea..." (87/82)

and at the airport decorating chance and loss (a theme to which I will attend shortly), "Oedipa, feeling invisible, eavesdropped on a poker game whose steady loser entered each loss neat and conscientious in a little balance-book decorated inside with scrawled post-horns" (90/84).

More importantly, Tristero's numerous modes of manifestation-- and I insert, "the idea of manifestation is the idea of a sign" (OG 49)--to Oedipa are marked by the vagaries of chance, randomness, fictions undermining certainty. Oedipa reflects, "With coincidences blossoming these days

wherever she looked, she had nothing but a sound, a word, Trysterero, to hold them together" (80/75).³⁷

Oedipa's entire quest for the Tristero in its 'truth', certainty, presence, is subject to mediation and inhabited by contingencies, "accidental correlation" (67/64), "other, almost offhand things" (29/29). The faith of others in the face of potential coincidence merely serves to confirm Oedipa's increasing skepticism and isolation. To her "heretical" challenge of the validity of Maxwell's Demon, Nefastis responds with a smile, "impenetrable, calm, a believer" (78/73), emphasizing the theological nature of reason and producing Oedipa's reaction, "The true sensitive is the one that can share in the man's hallucinations, that's all" (79/74).

Oedipa, after being thoroughly subdued by the extensive repetition of post horns, "this malignant, deliberate replication" (91/85), finally asks, "What, tonight, was chance?" (89/83), and this after resolving "to drift tonight, at random" (80/75).³⁸

³⁷ After discussing "the Tristero thing" with Driblette, "She... wondered how accidental it had been" (57/54). Oedipa discovers Koteks and hence Nefastis who triggers an important thematic chain in the novel, on the strength of a chance encounter whilst the former is doodling (signifying randomness) a post-horn, and she is "arrested by this coincidence" (61/58). A great deal of her enlightenment stems from her attendance at The Courier's Tragedy, itself a play which introduces into the complex of the novel several of the problems and dilemmas of the theatre-within-theatre order, and the Tristero's chance (as it emerges, "Changing the script had no clearer motive than his suicide. There was the same whimsy to both "-121/112-) appearance therein.

³⁸ Elsewhere, during her interviews of speculative historical reconstruction with Bortz, she is haunted by the sense that, "For Emory Bortz it seemed to turn into a species of cute game" (122/112) which later reinforces her suspicion that the entire "Tristero thing" might be a huge hoax or practical joke of Inverarity's authorship written from out of his disappearance, his death, in order to ensure his immortality as a plot, a coded plot, "had a plot finally been devised too elaborate for the dark Angel to hold at once, in his humorless vice-president's head, all the possibilities of? Had something slipped through and Inverarity by that much beaten death?" (134/124).

The close association of the Tristero with chance performs a dual function both linking these two 'phenomena' in the same conceptual space in relation to their opposite, legitimate partners and undermining Oedipa's assembly (and this holds for the reader too) of the Tristero--or, alternatively its appearance to her--with the recurring possibility that like John Nefastis she is simply making "coincidence respectable" (80/75): proper. The Tristero is linked with chance and infected by chance; i.e. it incarnates and allegorizes chance and its chances of existence are inhabited by chance ("there was still that other chance. That it was all true" 134/124). Consequently this motif serves to locate the Tristero in a radically undecidable space straddling the presence/absence dichotomy.

Random change, coincidence and contingency are anathema to the positivistic epistemology inherited by 'private-eye Oedipa' precisely because they reveal an inexplicable lack of order and control; they are phenomena outside rationality. One notes Oedipa's inference of a conscious or superintending agent, which incidentally reveals her initial faith in digital binarism, during the scene of the flying aerosol can: randomness objectified, "The can knew where it was going,...or something fast enough, God or a digital machine, might have computed in advance the complex web of its travel" (23/24) (Several critics have commented on the emblematic illustration of 'entropy' in this episode but we may note as well the threat chance poses to the mirror of representation, "The can collided with a mirror...leaving a...reticulated bloom of glass" (23/24).

Thus Tristero is associated throughout the novel with play, the pre-condition of the double, and repetition. These phenomena are invoked variously in games, disguise, impersonation, hoax, jokes and lexical plays, indiscriminate--

"malignant"--repetition, whimsy. Chance, doubling and the uncertain are inserted, along with evil, death and all the negatively valorized moral values we have deciphered, in the conceptual space of the Tristero which emerges as a sort of hypostatization, or 'reification' of all these "other" effects, phenomena, demi-monde groups, undergrounds, ideologies etc.--"the formless magic" (11/13)--which cannot be adequately formalized, rationalized and controlled.

I shall discuss several interconnected passages, which corroborate the relationships averred above from a different angle, in order to confirm a certain intrigue between the motifs of truth, meaning, centre, presence, unity and immediacy contrasted consistently with iterability-- "malignant, deliberate replication"--and loss.

NOSTALGIA FOR PRESENCE AND THE 'LOSS' OF MEANING

Recalling our textual "analogy" Oedipa, having engaged with Pierce's will, is implicated within the textual system to which Inverarity's testament belongs and confronts all the classic hermeneutic problems. Within a broad text: "America, Past and Present" and its 'intertextual' relation to European history, Inverarity's testament composes a single chapter, "That America coded in Inverarity's testament, whose was that?" (135/124). The comprehension of "America" by the scriptural metaphor is one to be followed. For the moment let us repeat that Oedipa's quest is initiated by a faith in, and commitment to "pulsing, stelliferous Meaning" (58/56) and perpetuated by a desire to reconstitute and appropriate the Tristero as an immediate presence, confirming the truth of its Being. However, against this demand for immediacy of knowledge and percep-

tion, is juxtaposed Oedipa's recurring registration of loss.

Frequently in the novel, faith in an ideal state of 'prelapsarian' unity and presence, marked by atemporality and an absence of change (conforming to Plato's hypothesis of an eidetic realm), and accompanied in Oedipa by a wistful nostalgia, lending the novel a distinctively elegiac tone--the futile embroiderers in the void, of Varo's painting arouse "the sadness of the moment" (10/13) in Oedipa--is contrasted with merely secular, material repetition and loss. The following passage illustrates quite clearly some of the assertions I have just made:

"You see,...when the dandelions begin to bloom again, the wine goes through a fermentation. As if they remembered."

No, thought Oedipa, sad. As if their home cemetery in some way still did exist, is a land where you could somehow walk, and not need the East San Narciso Freeway, and bones could still rest in peace, nourishing ghosts of dandelions, no one to plow them up [cf. "that safe furrow the bulk of the city's waking...set virtuously to plowing" (93/87)]. As if the dead really do persist in a bottle of wine. (72/68)

The entry in parentheses will have sufficed to programme a reading of the agricultural imagery and its close relation with the Puritan work ethic (to become the butt of critical satire in Gravity's Rainbow). The above passage demonstrates perhaps both the unimpeachable accuracy and bankruptcy of Mendelson's interpretation which enjoins us to believe in the Tristero as a theological entity--effectively reappropriating it and removing it from the play of the textual mechanism--and reaffirming a timeless, sacred, but mythical present.

Several other passages iterate the motifs introduced here, contrasting faith in states of immediacy and presence with

the actual experience only of mediacy, repetition and loss. In a number of these passages, associated explicitly with immediacy and religious vision, the status of truth--as concealed, as revelation--is clearly under interrogation. Oedipa is confronted with the irreducible hiatus between the ideal meaning (signified) and the material signal, form, word (signifier):

She could, at this stage of things, recognize signals ... , as the epileptic is said to--an odor, color, pure piercing grace note announcing his seizure. Afterward it was only this signal, really dross, this secular announcement, and never what is revealed during the attack, that he remembers. Oedipa wondered whether, at the end of this (if it were supposed to end), she too might not be left with only compiled memories of clues, announcements, intimations, but never the central truth itself which must always blaze out, destroying its own message irreversibly, leaving an overexposed blank when the ordinary world came back. (69/66)

Here "central truth", echoing "pulsing, stelliferous Meaning" is directly contrasted with--nudged from ascendancy by the signifier, "this signal, really dross, this secular announcement"--amnesia: "too bright for her memory to hold" and hence loss, "destroying its own message." This incendiary figure in which the loss of truth is couched, reappears in Nefastis' account of information loss, Oedipa's premonition of the unnamed sailor's death (compared with a Viking's funeral pyre) and the retrenched executive's decision to immolate himself (inspired by a Buddhist monk in Viet Nam 84/79).

Another passage sketches the same structural relations, with "Word" (recalling the capitalized "Meaning" 58/56) invoking here the full range of meaning attributed to the Greek, Logos whilst emphasizing again its strong religious connotations (the Biblical translation of Logos as "Word" to designate God's supplement, Jesus Christ):

She was meant to remember.... She tested it, shivering: I am meant to remember, Each clue that comes is supposed to have its own clarity, its fine chances for permanence. But then she wondered if the gemlike "clues" were only some kind of compensation. To make up for her having lost the direct, epileptic Word, the cry that might abolish the night. (87/81)

We remark the figure of "epilepsy" linking these two passages (epilepsy was traditionally regarded as a sacred disease); the motif of a 'pre-lapsarian plenitude' compensated, supplied, by the repetitive "clues" making up a loss; the contrast between the immediacy of the "direct, epileptic Word" and its loss; the opposition of the phonic "cry" and the "night".

A third important passage relating again the several motifs we are discerning, emphatically indicates all those who approach textual interpretation with the presupposition of a religious/ideal truth seated in one of various, traditionally determined locations —all those who treat the word as Logos, the clarion of truth:

The saint whose water can light lamps, the clairvoyant whose lapse in recall in the breath of God [i.e. the divine pneuma], the true paranoid for whom all is organized in spheres joyful or threatening about the central pulse of himself, the dreamer whose puns probe ancient fetid shafts and tunnels of truth all act in the same special relevance to the word, or whatever the word is there, buffering, to protect us from. (95/89)

The religious allusions reinforce, in conjunction with the extensive religious tropology throughout, the quasi-religious character of idealism. "Pynchon's" evident skepticism for the deification of the word as the instrument of a putative truth located in God, the Self or the Unconscious is conveyed in the concluding appendix, "or whatever it is the word is there, buffering, to protect us from." Oedipa

is included amongst those who "act in the same special relevance to the word," to the degree that she harbours faith in an eventual moment of revelation, resolution and meaning. Conversely, the novel's operation insistently dismantles the centric epistemology which determines transcendental signifieds (God, ineffable Being, the Unconscious) to whose essence language gives expression, or at least, provides rudimentary access.

Contrasted against these moments of faith in presence, unity and truth are Oedipa's recurring loss-registrations, sustained throughout the novel. Varo's painting, introducing the distinction between order and void--which presages the binary couple, viz. One and Zero, and a discourse of unity which determines its other as nothing--and the artificiality of this woven order, first suggests the loss of certainty to Oedipa with the indication that her own world is merely the force of certain coincidences over others: an aggregate of various remedies, "what she stood on had only been woven together a couple of thousand miles away in her tower, was only by accident known as Mexico" (10-11/13; my emphasis).

Hereafter, Oedipa's approach to San Narciso is marked by a loss: unheard words, "on some other frequency...words were being spoken " (13/15; my emphasis). Indeed, as she gradually realizes, the words of the 'other'. Later, the game of Strip Botticelli, where each question is complemented with a loss and excoriation, prefigures the hazardous, critical quest for the Tristero. The Lost Guard of Faggio (52/50) from The Courier's Tragedy together with the lost guard of G.I.'s in the Lago di Pietà (42/41), presage Oedipa's own lost guards, insulations, defences and "knights of deliverance." (One may detect submerged mythic allusions in the archetypal character of Oedipa and others: the novel proposes to

some degree a re-reading of Oedipus Rex and the many quest-myths of Occidental literature in the light of the epistemological critique it articulates, whilst also drawing many of its own ambiguities from allusions to Oedipus Rex and other quest-narratives.³⁹⁾

Amongst her lost are "those dear daft numina...impossible ever to find again" (76/71), Pierce Inverarity, "she could never again call back any image of the dead man" (134/123), and most intensely those losses sustained during the temporal span of the narrative. Following Driblette's suicide, "they are stripping away, one by one, my men" (114/105).

Oedipa learns too that decreased entropy is lost in information gained by the Demon (re-animating the gain/loss aspect of the Strip Botticelli scenario), a paradigm which resembles Oedipa's heuristic quest (if Oedipa is a Demon sorting and assembling information according to the "bizarre resemblance" (43/42) suggested in the novel, is the reader analogously implicated in the same position of 'sensitive', upon whom the task of making "Pynchon's" 'textual machine' work, is conferred? I aver this is the case.)

When Oedipa discovers the aged sailor, the Demon paradigm informs her assessment of the situation and she is filled with a melancholy vision of conflagration and loss again. She perceives this simile in his mattress, "the insatiable stuffing...like the memory bank to a computer of the lost." (93/87) Loss folds upon loss as she premonitors the loss the "memory...of the lost" and, "It astonished her to think so much could be lost " (95/88). The mattress, conceived as a preterite will, preserves these men's lives

³⁹ J-P Vernant, "Ambiguity and Reversal: On the Enigmatic Structure of Oedipus Rex," trans. P. du Bois New Literary History IX (3) 1978, pp. 475-501, provides an excellent account of the ambiguous status of Oedipus in that irresolvably ambiguous play.

beyond the grave, as a code, a text, a writing: the mattress is a palimpsest bearing "coded years of uselessness" complementing the 'usefulness' of the proper. This 'waste' is simply information disqualified, devalorized, unrecognized by the dominant culture: "possibilities that grownups had...repudiated."

Counterpointing these many moments of loss, which are not yet all plotted, is the emphasis on iterability: repetition of the sign, the clue, the announcement, the intimation (69/66). Its prominence has already been stressed in several of the passages cited in the preceding discussion and need simply be recalled here (vide. p. 185).

Each and every manifestation of the Tristero's "presence" is countersigned by the "malignant, deliberate replication" which, one may aver in deference to some myth of origins, is "compensation for having lost the direct, epileptic Word, the cry that might abolish the night" (87/81). Elsewhere, this perverse, uncontrolled, endless iterability is called "brute repetition," a deliberate (malignant?) echo of "the brute Other," linking this wanton iterability to all we have located under the banner of the 'other'.

At a private wake for Driblette, to continue this chronicle of loss, "Oedipa sat on the earth,...wondering whether,... some version of herself hadn't vanished with him" (121/111) and dreams of a supplement for this lack, "some prosthetic device." The motif of loss is finally terminated in an extraordinarily condensed passage where, lost amidst the lots she loses America, albeit momentarily, as an aggregate of reified identities and oppositions; as a digitally codified topography. She loses the quantity of bearing, boundary and law in which she has been entrained and remains trammelled, "she'd lost her bearings. ... As if

there could be no barriers between herself and the rest of the land. San Narciso at that moment lost (the loss pure, instant, spherical,...), gave up its residue of uniqueness for her; became a name again, was assumed back into the American continuity of crust and mantle" (133/122-3). If any 'revelation' is to be attributed to Oedipa it is the recovery of the analogical matrix of difference in which digital order is superveniently borne and engraved. The passage continues, "San Narciso was a name;...a moment's squall-line or tornado's touch-down among the higher, more continental solemnities-- storm systems of group suffering and need, prevailing winds of affluence. There was the true continuity, San Narciso had no boundaries" (133-4/123). The contrast of "bearings", "barriers" and "boundaries" with "continuity" is a major one here. It juxtaposes once more, reified digital codes and values: the identities, oppositions and rigidly defined boundaries of a binaristic epistemology, with the, generally effaced, analogical continuity of writing (in Derrida's sense) which, in fact, functions as a system of differences: a differential and deferring slippage from one signifier to other signifiers producing semantic effects but without points of capture or purchase upon any 'transcendental signified'.

At this moment of total isolation in the novel, become an outlaw, "I'll be a fugitive" (108/100), Oedipa glimpses beyond the digitalized and reified symbolic constraints manufactured and purveyed by her culture. Hence her progress through the novel is punctuated with a dual loss: most importantly, the excoriation of her socialization in an alienating, binaristic culture, and her corollary perception of the violent loss caused by digital typing, resulting in "excluded middles" whose exclusion the novel eloquently indicates, has never been a naïve or innocent gesture.

The allusion to the "excluded middle" is an explicitly philosophical one. Its status as received knowledge for Oedipa is emphasized, "She had heard all about excluded middles; they were bad shit, to be avoided" (136/125). This loss consolidates allusion to a previous loss effected by the digitalization (analysis) of the analog in the application of the "average rate" in the following passage (I take up the issue of analysis implicit here, in further detail in the chapter on Gravity's Rainbow):

"dt,"...a vanishing small instant in which change had to be confronted at last for what it was, where it could no longer disguise itself as something innocuous like an average rate; where velocity dwelled in the projectile though the projectile be frozen in midflight, where death dwelled in the cell though the cell be looked in on at its most quick. (95-6/89)

We may remark the reprise of "disguise" and the aporial status of change in the digital order imposed on the analogic continuity. I have already tried to suggest that The Tristero occupies a similar status--representing the potential for change in political orders, in signifying practices--in relation to the orders it inhabits covertly.

This tableau of loss is eventually concluded with Oedipa's attendance at the auction sale for lot 49 motivated by, "the courage you find you have when there is nothing more to lose" (137/126). Retrospectively, a reflection which casts into poignant, ironic relief Oedipa's early rationale for taking a phone call from Hilarius, "having nothing she knew of to lose" (7/10).

What I have wanted to show in the preceding discussion is that Oedipa's experience has involved an anamnesis or 'maieutic' recovery and comprehension of the lack of plenitude and oneness which has always, despite her inheri-

ted mythologies to the contrary, riven her culture.

This passage will consolidate several of the points covered in the discussion of the motifs of truth, immediacy and loss and indicate the broader epistemological context with which the novel is involved:

Thus, within this epoch, [logocentrism] reading and writing, the production or interpretation of signs, the text in general as fabric of signs, allow themselves to be confined in secondariness. They are preceded by a truth, or a meaning already constituted by and within the element of the logos. Even when the thing, the "referent", is not immediately related to the logos of a creator God where it began by being the spoken/thought sense, the signified has at any rate an immediate relationship with the logos in general...and a mediated one with the signifier, that is to say with the exteriority of writing. (OG 14-5)

Through its displacement of Oedipa from an initial positivistic faith in an obtainable, recuperable "central truth," "stelliferous Meaning," "direct, epileptic Word," to an inkling of these properties as differential effects, the novel articulates a cogent critique of the conceptual scenario summarized in the extract above.

THE VOICE OF PHONOCENTRISM AND THE MUTE SIGNS OF THE TRISTERO

Thus, having claimed, or rather, this is the conclusion towards which we have been drawing, that the Trystero-- "a metaphor of God knew how many parts" (80/75)--represents the aporia in the dominant discourse one might call "legacy America" (137/126), I direct attention again to the 'Introduction', where we noted the metaphysical gesture of promoting speech over writing and, noting all that has been described in this commentary as centric, narcissistic culture, aver that the post-horn (unmuted), besides its

feasible sexual-phallogocentric connotations, a possibility that the text does not altogether deny--"It might be something sexual," (34/34)--offers a concrete symbol of the culture which announces itself, especially acoustically, through the phonē (Greek for 'voice') and in the name of phonē. The unmuted horn symbolizes that culture which announces itself through the detour of the voice, promotes unity and self-presence by an emphasis on the proximity of the living, speaking voice (instrument of logos and truth) to the Being of the organism, whilst effacing the necessary exteriorization which such a detour involves: in phonic substance, in the differential framework of language; the unmuted horn explicitly symbolizes these phonocentric biases.

I will briefly record the contrast between voice and silence (noted earlier: vide. p. 195) placed respectively 'inside' and 'outside' to recall our spatial dichotomy. Pierce Inverarity, epitomizing the phonecentric culture, is a pastiche of caricatured minorities and exotica derived from the mass-media:

a voice beginning in heavy Slavic tones as second secretary at the Transylvanian Consulate, looking for an escaped bat; modulated to comic-Negro, then on into hostile Pachuco dialect, full of chingas and maricones; then a Gestapo officer asking her in shrieks did she have relatives in Germany and finally his Lamont Cranston voice,
..... it was the last of his voices she ever heard. (2-3/6)

Hereafter, we have read of, "news copy that came jabbering" (6/9); all those radio fans, "tuned in to the voice, voices, the music, its message, surrounded by it, digging it, as were all the faithful it went out to " (13/15), a passage couched deliberately in quasi-religious rhetoric; and, punctuating the scenario at Echo Courts (the name revives the motif of repetition):

There came from the TV set a terrific explosion. (19/20)

She heard commercials chasing one another into and out of the speaker of the TV. (21/22)

...the buzzing distorted uproar from the TV set. (23/24)

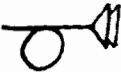
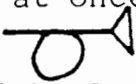

...the TV was blaring a commercial (24/25)

WW II provides comic relief in the soap opera Cashiered.

Elsewhere, reinforcing these early motifs, the telephonic network--whose instrument, the phone (let us emphasize its etymology: phonē), is aptly dubbed "the horn" (110/102) --is a "roar of relays, monotone litanies of insult, filth, fantasy, love whose brute repetition must someday call into being the trigger for the unnamable act, the recognition, the Word " (136/125 ; my emphasis). We should by now recognize the purely optative sentiment of the "must" in Oedipa's anamnestic reflection.

Contrasted with this pervasive vocal culture is the insistent silence of the Tristero: the silence of a graphic mark; the muted horn; the "mute stamps" (29/29); the silence of "Certain things,...not...spoken aloud " (50/48); the periods silently punctuating the signs we thought we knew--waste, death--producing acronyms silently concealing mottos declaring a policy of silence (We Await Silent Tristero's Empire) and threatening with dire retribution those who do not observe this policy (Don't Ever Antagonize The Horn); the silent transposition of letters in "POST" (30/30, 71/67); the silent erasure of periods, in a nightmare, effecting the intrusion of another language haunting its WASP-dreamer (Mucho) with the persistence in the unconscious, of what, under a binaristic dispensation, has been repressed as the "void," "that sign in the lot, that's what scared me. In the dream I'd be going about a normal day's business and suddenly, with no warning, there'd be the sign. We were a member of the National Automobile Dealer's Association. N.A.D.A. Just this creaking metal

sign that said, nada, nada, against the blue sky " (107/100) ("nada": Spanish for "nothing"); the silence of writing. It is the silence of the chance anarchist miracle--"a kiss of cosmic pool balls" (92/86)--and the "DEAF -MUTE ASSEMBLY" (73/69), the antithesis of a phonocentric community, coöperating in a way Oedipa cannot rationalize: by chance or according to an "unthinkable order" (97/90; my emphasis). Oedipa, terrified by the astonishing co-ordination of "the silent, gesturing swarm" (97/90) flees, and the narrator concludes, "Jesús Arrabal would have called it an anarchist miracle. Oedipa, with no name for it, was only demoralized" (97/91).

Within the binary logic we have been tracing then, this symbol:  emphasizes the silence with which writing invades the logocentric discourse through its mute supplement. The supplement of the mute in the icon at once indicates its ability to disassemble the voice:  and all that it adds to the voice:  which also signifies the muting, or 'death' of the voice and the autonomy of phonocentric culture.⁴⁰

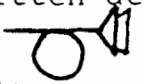
⁴⁰ We have already noted frequently, the alliance of Tristero and death; consequently, furthering the argument being developed, it will be instructive to insert here Derrida's account of the traditional association of writing with death. Contrasted with the "living word" Derrida isolates the following détermination; "What writing itself, in its nonphonetic moment, betrays, is life. It menaces at once the breath, the spirit, and history as the spirit's relationship with itself. It is their end, their finitude, their paralysis. Cutting breath short, sterilizing or immobilizing spiritual creation in the repetition of the letter, in the commentary or the exegesis, confined in a narrow space, reserved for a minority, it is the principle of death and of difference in the becoming of being " (OG 25). Derrida exposes this détermination again and again in metaphysical and other writings in the human sciences (e.g. de Saussure's Cours de linguistique générale.) Writing marks, for a metaphysics of presence, the death of presence through its supplantation by a representation.

Once again, in the text of Plato, writing and death are conjoined and this relationship, Derrida suggests has conditioned all subsequent determinations, "...in the Phaedrus, another thing held against the invention of the pharmakon [Socrates' rhetorical name for 'writing'

Thus the post-horn icon (unmuted) would symbolize all the traits and values of logocentrism and conversely, the Tristero represents the other of those determinations: all that has been repressed and disqualified or devalorized, in the process of founding presence, as its pure opposite number and the generalized economy in which the former is produced.

I wish to suggest, then, that the inscription of the muted horn as an icon in the novel performs two roles. It prescribes the reversal and conversion of the traditional, axiologically arranged hierarchy, and apodeictically, hieroglyphically, performs its graphicity. It is a sign which simply cannot be voiced where even a written description

which condenses two contradictory senses in a single signifier] is that it substitutes the breathless sign for the living voice, claims to do without the father (who is both living and life-giving) of logos,.... In all the cycles of Egyptian mythology, Thoth presides over the organization of death" (Diss. 91-2). Thoth performs the functions attributed to writing, in Egyptian mythology: the ability to represent, supplement, dissemble and take-the-place-of. He is the power of writing personified. Again, in the same commentary, Derrida notes; "he who has the tekhnē of writing at his disposal.... will know that...he can forget all about them ["The imprints (tupoi) of writing"] without their leaving his service. They will represent him even if he forgets them; they will transmit his word even if he is not there to animate them. Even if he is dead, and only a pharmakon can be the wielder of such power, over death but also in cahoots with it. The pharmakon and writing are thus always involved in questions of life and death " (Diss. 104-5). Finally, after distilling several themes and figural chains from Plato's texts and systematically correlating them, Derrida concludes, "The pharmakon introduces and harbours death. Death, masks, makeup, all are part of the festival that subverts the order of the city, its smooth regulation by the dialectician and the science of being" (Diss. 142). I add, for comparison with the "Disinherited" in Lot 49 the qualities Derrida can impute to writing by inference from those rhetorical figures in the service of the Logos, "writing is not an independent order of signification; it is weakened speech,....it is not insignificant; it simply signifies little,.... This signifier of little,...is...errant. It rolls (...) this way and that like someone who has lost his way,...having strayed from the correct path, the right direction, the rule of rectitude, the norm; but also like someone who has lost his rights, an outlaw, a pervert, a bad seed, a vagrant, an adventurer, a bum. Wandering in the streets, he doesn't even know who he is, what his identity--if he has one-- might be, what his name is, what his father's name is" (Diss. 143).

might still have permitted its subordination to a phonetic model of reading and writing. The graphic image complementing the merely written description, "a loop, triangle and trapezoid, thus: " (34/34) draws attention specifically towards its graphic quality, i.e. its status not as a medium subordinated to the dogma of the logos and the phonē but its own inaugurating capacity as a grapheme.

We begin to glimpse the direction of a further analysis of the novel's manifest binarism and the disseminating effect of the undecidable, indeterminate Tristero construct, of which one cannot even say: it exists; it does not exist. This decision is always deferred throughout and 'beyond' the novel. The Tristero thus has a double mark, both as the obverse of the One, that dangerous Zero, and as the symbol of the general economy in which the order of the One is inscribed and thus inhabited by the effaced grapheme, courtesy of which it has staked out a proper place for itself. We may notice in this regard that Oedipa is led from her 'proper' place in society by a force of writing, Pierce's will, which produces effects beyond his death and bears the power to re-name her and assign a new place to her, "she, Oedipa, had been named executor " (1/5); it is this writing of Pierce's authorship which sets her on an inexorable quest to "sort out", interpret and reappropriate Pierce's estate, "That America coded in Inverarity's testament" (135/124), and gradually deflects her towards an awareness of the aporia excluded from WASP-America and the rationalist epistemology which it promotes/promotes it.

THE UNDECIDABLE TRISTERO AND BLURRED BOUNDARIES

Thus far we have examined the Tristero and America with all the attributes constellated about each, almost entirely in terms of binary opposites. I now wish to correlate and discuss the figures surrounding Oedipa's moment of deflection or anamnesis and describe the mechanics of the aporial 'disinherited'. It is, for Oedipa, a moment analogous to the psychological phenomenon of 'deferred action' (Nachträglichkeit).

Here she reflects:

If San Narciso and the estate were really no different from any other town, any other estate, then by that continuity she might have found The Tristero anywhere in her Republic, through any of a hundred lightly-concealed entranceways, a hundred alienations, if only she'd looked. (135/124)

The concluding phrase is given increased impetus by its iteration shortly hereafter, and we can now contrast this moment of 'consciousness' with that early indication that "she was to have all manner of revelations. ...about what remained, yet and somehow, before this, stayed away." (9-10/12). The initial "absence of intensity" has eventually become sharply focussed.

I shall examine, then, the character of Oedipa's altered perception--her apprehension of the insistence of the 'lost' in the interstices of American property: the 'lots' and 'plots' divide and demarcate America. We discover, with Oedipa, the reemergence of this aporia which has always already inhabited, symbolically and demographically, the cultural system which denies it. Hence Oedipa apprehends the aporia not simply as a disenfranchised and repressed group of social refugees, but as an unstabilized signifying

force, which Tanner described (vide. n. 30 above) as, "a potentially disruptive or socially unstabilized energy that may threaten, directly or implicitly, the organization of society." It is this energy which the Tristero, as representative of the 'Disinherited', symbolizes.

What is finally glimpsed and barely understood by Oedipa during these concluding reveries, is that the 'outside' is an artificial idealization and negative valorization of certain values already inhabiting the 'inside' and that this latter involves the repression and misrecognition of the former.⁴¹

Hence Oedipa's difficulty, functioning according to a rigidly defined binary model of social space, to conceptualize the site of this 'other' society, "Since they could not have withdrawn into a vacuum (could they?), there had to exist the separate, silent, unsuspected world" (92/86), and "somewhere else invisible yet congruent to the cheered land she lived in" (135/125).

A discrepancy emerges between the overt values and criteria averred by the centric culture and the covert practice. Contrary to the claims of the binary culture, the intrusions of the aporial Tristero are evidently ubiquitous ("she might have found The Tristero anywhere in her Republic, through

⁴¹ Tanner contrasts the City of the Nuptials and the City without Nuptials whilst isolating adultery as a predominant form of socio-symbolic subversion, 'Adultery challenges the City of the Nuptials with the unthinkable--its own impermanence and instability. [T]he problem is...compounded for those who discover that the City without Nuptials is now inside the City of the Nuptials; then the departure recoils on itself, and any hopes for an escape to the "outside" turn into new torments involved in being alien within the City. This is at once both to exist and not to exist, to leave without departing, to be excluded without being removed and to be excommunicated while still remaining within the prevailing circuits of communication. It is to be discategorized without literally being displaced.' Tanner, Adultery in the Novel, p.63.

any of a hundred lightly-concealed entranceways, a hundred alienations" (135/124) to the degree that alienation (elsewhere, "spiritual poverty" and "the exitlessness,... the absence of surprise to life that harrows the head of everybody American you know" 128/118), the symptom of a lived aporia, is ubiquitous.

Thus the imperfectly codified, imperfectly socialized and unpredictable energy continues to inhabit the interstices of the reified, dominant symbolic order. The following images seem to illustrate emblematically the relationship pertaining between 'inside' and 'outside' under this new dispensation. These emblems collectively illustrate the strange co-habitation of 'sameness' and 'otherness' in a general milieu which embraces both of them. Concealed behind the Republic's signs, "She thought...of other squatters who stretched canvas for leantos behind smiling billboards along all the highways" (135/124), and inhabiting interstices between the lots of America, "amid green farm flatnesses" (135/124; my emphasis). Symbolizing the aporia inhabiting customary signifying practices we discover the following image of, "other squatters...living in the very copper rigging and secular miracle of communication" (135/124). This image is complemented at a linguistic level by the frequent invention of anagrams, acronyms, jokes etc.--'other' effects--inhabiting and interrupting the customary and domestic signs.⁴² Finally,

⁴² These 'other' effects (puns, metaphors, jokes, catachreses and other lexical plays) threaten the reified symbolic order with 'death' but promise also renewal. Clearly in the play with w.a.s.t.e., d.e.a.t.h., n.a.d.a. etc., and the lost anagrammatically caught in the interstices of the lots mapping and dividing America--which discloses this death and transformation as the co-habiting negative and positive sides of the same coin of change--the feature of play is sustained not simply as a theme but as a technique. The novel at once describes and performs this play, this semantic dissemination, which shudders the orderly, serious discourse.

"She remembered drifters she had listened to, Americans speaking their language carefully, scholarly, as if they were in exile from somewhere else invisible yet congruent with the cheered land she lived in" (135/124-5).

Oedipa, by a kind of inverted dialectical process, has been stripped, de-socialized, in order to perceive the 'otherness' co-existing with her culture, "knowing as if maps had been flashed for her on the sky how these tracks ["the hard, strung presence she stood on"] ran on into others, others, knowing they laced, deepened, authenticated the great night around her" (135/124).

The narrative thus constellates under the Tristero all the negatively valorized terms of the dyadic oppositions structuring the novel as well as its remedial potential for the malaise of the Republic, and subsequently indicates, as we have suggested in a reading of the above passages, the mutual interdependence and manifest complicity of these positive and negative poles. This operation implicitly prescribes a dissolution of these poles and a re-organization of conceptual space according to different co-ordinates and axioms. The values 'inside/outside', 'truth/lie' must henceforth mark determinate moments in a broader, general economy which cannot be mastered by these values.

The independence and mutual separability of America and its other proves to be an illusion and the undecidable present/absent Tristero is the outfit which shakes this dichotomy. Contrary to the illusion of autarkic identity and self-presence, we glimpse the mutual interpenetration of force and counterforce, and the latter--Tristero--provisionally delimiting the former, demarcating its margins and tracing the conditions of its possibility.

Oedipa reflects morosely on the reprehensible state of affairs she has inherited, whilst a binaristic logic prescribes her codification and rationalization of the Tristero affair, "These, now that she was looking at them, she saw to be the alternatives. Those symmetrical four. She didn't like any of them, but hoped she was mentally ill" (128/118) and again, concluding her reverie, "She had heard all about excluded middles; they were bad shit, to be avoided; and how had it ever happened here, with the chances once so good for diversity? For it was now like walking among matrices of a great digital computer, the zeroes and ones twinned above, hanging like balanced mobiles right and left, ahead, thick, maybe endless" (136/125). However, unable to negotiate beyond this digital framework which binds her, Oedipa resigns herself to the concluding categories of binary alternatives, aware that they are a falsification of her experience. The motifs of truth and meaning, elsewhere under scrutiny, are once again involved:

Behind the hieroglyphic streets there would either be a transcendent meaning, or only the earth. In the songs Miles, Dean Serge and Leonard sang was either some fraction of the truth's numinous beauty (as Mucho now believed) or only a power spectrum. ... the bones of the GI's at the bottom of Lake Inverarity were there either for a reason that mattered to the world or for skin divers and cigarette smokers. Ones and zeroes. So did the couples arrange themselves. ... Another mode of meaning behind the obvious, or none. Either Oedipa in the orbiting ecstasy of a true paranoia, or a real Tristero. For there either was some Tristero beyond the appearance of legacy America, or there was just America and if there was just America then it seemed the only way she could continue, and manage to be at all relevant to it, was as an alien, unfurrowed, assumed full circle into some paranoia. (136-7/125-6)

The indeterminacy of the Tristero, then, is established at a semantic level by its location on the boundary

between being and non-being, presence and absence, and implicitly, meaning and non-meaning. Consequently, the novel avoids simply opposing to the tyranny of America, the counter-tyranny of a Tristero. The Tristero waits, "if not for another set of possibilities to replace those that had conditioned the land to accept any San Narciso..., then at least,...waiting for a symmetry of choices to break down, to go skew" (136/125). The undecidability of the Tristero construct enables it to negotiate past the co-optive bind by which it would be reappropriated and its 'otherness' reduced as a moment of dialectical negativity were its existence affirmed. If it were given a distinct ontological status it would become subject to the metaphysical constraints which have shaped literary interpretation and which it seeks to transform. This indeterminacy is also produced by the consistent use of syntactical markers of uncertainty which produce critical and sustained effects throughout the narrative.

THE STYLE AND SYNTAX OF UNCERTAINTY

The perpetual use of a lexicon and syntax of uncertainty and conditionality, very often prefacing or initiating decisive movements and directions in the text, functions as a network of railway points which remain unthrown, suspending the text indecisively between two possible tracks. (We may note the recurrence of the "points" image in Pynchon's writings frequently used to illustrate digital decisions and epistemology).⁴³

⁴³ "the faceless pointsmen who'd thrown them now all transferred" (76/71); the central characters of Edward Pointsman and Roger Mexico, "If ever the Antipointsman existed, Roger Mexico is the man" (GR 55); "being routed now past points which may arc through the silence" (GR 411) and again, "Come back, here, to the points" (GR 644) etc.

We may note then, juxtaposed with the manifest binarism under interrogation, the development of a kind of aporial rhetoric which a binaristic discourse is unable to accommodate, and which Oedipa and the reader inhabit. Tanner declares, "Oedipa is mentally in a world of 'if' and 'perhaps', walking through an accredited world of either/or. It is part of her pain, her dilemma and, perhaps, her emancipation."⁴⁴ Throughout the novel one encounters passages beginning, "perhaps", "possibly", "seemed", "a kind of", "as if", "like", "it might be", (34/34), "either/or", (esp. 80/75, 128/117-8, 136), several conditional clauses, "if...then" (28/29, 135/124), "Suppose...." (135/124) etc., as well as a litter of rhetorical questions which transfer the responsibility of decision to the reader, leaving the questions proposed and unresolved (vide. 11/13, 13/15, 29/29, 36/36, 90/84, 92/86, 114/105, 117/108, 121/112, 128/117, 134/123-4, 136/125-6, etc.) These rhetorical questions, interposing at crucial points to pose critical but unanswered questions, offer a very parody of the authorial commentary. These questions frequently propose recuperating rationalizations and explanations which are short-circuited by an interrogative syntax and a question mark. The omniscient narrator presides in all the novels but functions mostly to mystify and obfuscate already confounding quest grails. I have already emphasized instances of this 'anti-certifying' textual practice in the preceding discussion (vide. pp.173, 174,194 preceding). The effect of this practice is the creation of a tissue of indecision(s) where any interpretive decision or conclusion can only be made by overriding other narrative possibilities also active, or by extensively qualifying any such critical assertion.

⁴⁴ Tanner, Thomas Pynchon, p. 73.

Compounding this condition of indeterminacy, it is possible to isolate several key passages of deliberately indeterminate reference: comments, remarks etc., which are ostensibly focussed on a specific text and anchored to a specific context, yet which, without much imagination, can be extrapolated to refer to the text (Lot 49) which contains them. We can discover this technique of self-reflexivity operating frequently in V. and Gravity's Rainbow as well. (One thinks particularly Stencil's musings on his V.-plot and "The Confessions of Fauste Maijstral" in the former whilst numerous examples can be cited from the latter, amongst which this passage is representative, "Those like Slothrop, with the greatest interest in discovering the truth, were thrown back on dreams, psychic flashes, omens, cryptographies, drug-epistemologies, all dancing on a ground of terror, contradiction, absurdity" (GR 582), certainly an adequate description of the modes of consciousness and signification Gravity's Rainbow attempts to imitate).

Any comments made by characters or narrator about the reliability and verity of specific texts automatically initiates some speculation on the interpretation and certainty of texts in general. All the various paradigms, anecdotes, analogies, religious and supernatural imagery, historical(!) data in the novel offer, as we have seen in some cases, possible ways of interpreting the Tristero and understanding Oedipa's quest, but also engage one in an endless chain of allusions and citations which are themselves in need of further explanation and exegesis.

Driblette's skeptical proviso issued to Oedipa is exemplary of this indeterminate reference and reflexivity:

You can put together clues, develop a thesis, or several, about why characters reacted to the Trystero possibility the way they did, why the assassins came on, why the black costumes. You could waste your whole life that way and never touch the truth. (56/54)

Driblette's comments have a disconcerting dual referent (for those of us developing a thesis), at once addressed to Oedipa about The Courier's Tragedy and quite credibly addressed to the reader about The Crying of Lot 49; they create immense semantic interference patterns coupled with other similar passages in the novel. At every point where speculation is provided (either by Oedipa, or the narrator: the two loci are frequently indistinguishable) about the status and being of the Trystero, the strange 'ontology' of the text as medium of this intangible institution, is implicated as well. This technique of ambiguous reference facilitates an extremely subtle and skilfully consummated 'self'-reflexivity. Again, admitting the 'bizarre resemblance' existing between The Courier's Tragedy and The Crying of Lot 49 (which, testifying to the possibility that the message might not always be delivered, could have been aptly subtitled 'The Courier's Tragedy') let us suspend the reference of the following comment:

It is at about this point in the play, in fact, that things really get peculiar, and a gentle chill, an ambiguity, begins to creep in among the words. Heretofore the naming of names has gone on either literally or as metaphor. But now, ... a new mode of expression takes over. It can only be called a kind of ritual reluctance. (49-50/48)

Here, in order to describe this "new mode of expression," a tentative simile interposes, "It can only be called a kind of ritual reluctance" (50/48). I wish to assert that it is such a mode of expression that the novel attempts to achieve: the ascription of a name and the retention of that name in signs which inscribe presence and absence

simultaneously.

Together, the markers of undecidability and these frequent passages of dual reference serve to create semantic interference patterns and disseminate the meaning of the text quite explicitly. I propose that the entire novel in fact submits to an interpretation as an extended proposition of the order, 'This sentence is possibly false' which opens a potential contradiction between the constative and performative axes of the proposition, or, 'If there is a Trystero, then it exists'. The novel similarly practices a potentially paradoxical discourse through the vehicle of the 'neither affirmed, nor negated' Tristero. "Pynchon's" texts, particularly V. and Lot 49, to the degree that they are structured by these paradoxical mechanics, are thus radically self-erasing. The Trystero and V. in V. thus both function as indeterminate 'centres' on which the novels converge and around which they are arranged. This trope is preserved in Gravity's Rainbow as well (one thinks of Tchitcherine and the Kirghiz Light, Blicero's quest for transcendence; Slothrop's quest for the Schwarzgerät--its existence for him is never confirmed--and even whatever diabolical sense of perfection it is that urges Western man on to more complex and more cataclysmic technological achievement) but is subordinated to other methods of establishing textual indeterminacy and incompleteness.

These texts proceed a substantial way towards enacting and averring their own deconstruction by: the exploitation of referential ambiguity and self-reference which raise problems for mimetic theories of literature, a sustained hypothetical mode, markers of syntactical and semantic indeterminacy, various forms of textual play, apocryphal textuality, unreliable protagonists, as well as affirming the absence of unitary meaning and truth, and complementa-

rily, insisting upon the textual character of order, culture, the 'world'. This textual trope will be correlated henceforth apropos The Crying of Lot 49.

Within this milieu of indeterminacy Oedipa's quest for Trystero, rather than rendering a retrievable resolution/revelation and confirming Oedipa's own status as an entity, has the opposite effect, unravelling and displacing Oedipa's initial self-certainty. Oedipa begins by attempting to exert her unifying power on Inverarity's estate and subsequently the Trystero but instead experiences a disunifying force exerted upon her.

Oedipa, as we have already suggested, is uneasily accommodated within the ideological structure of her culture because she does not comply sexually with its reified-idealized requirements. This imperfect fit is prised further ajar as the narrative unfolds. Rather than confirming her ontology through a satisfactory rationalization of the Trystero, her psycho-social insulation is excoriated and her normativity, or sanity, put into question.⁴⁵ It

⁴⁵ She reflects at various points as the Trystero becomes more threatening to her stability, "she wanted it all to be fantasy.... She also wanted to know why the chance of its being real should menace her so" (98/91), "anxious that her revelation not expand beyond a certain point. Lest, possibly, it grow larger than she and assume her to itself" (125/115).

As the novel draws to a close, psycho-somatic maladies begin to plague her, "She...hoped she was mentally ill; that that's all it was." (128/118) and, "her attention span could often be measured in seconds, and she laughed nervously more than she spoke. Waves of nausea, lasting five to ten minutes would strike her at random, cause her deep misery, then vanish as if they had never been. There were headaches, nightmares, menstrual pains" (129/118),

.....
"The toothaches got worse, she dreamed of disembodied voices from whose malignance there was no appeal, the soft dusk of mirrors out of which something was about to walk, and the empty rooms that waited for her" (131/121).

Finally, capping these symptoms, Oedipa is forced to conclude that, "if there was just America then it seemed the only way she could continue, and manage to be at all relevant to it, was as an alien, unfurrowed, assumed full circle into some paranoia" (137/126).

seems clear that Oedipa's subjectivity (i.e. her unity as a conscious ego) is at stake; Oedipa herself becomes a locus of indeterminacy by virtue of her engagement and experience with the Tristero. Within her psyché the categories of real and fantasy have been collapsed and remain only very unreliably distinguishable. Invoking again, the spatial dualism, distributing the dichotomy "truth/lie" within it, and indicating the problematic, aporial status of metaphor in truth-conditioned discourse, the narrator indicates the indeterminable position of his protagonist, "The act of metaphor then was a thrust at truth and a lie, depending where you were: inside, safe, or outside, lost. Oedipa did not know where she was" (95/89). She cannot be comfortably accommodated in either of these categories.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Figural language, and specifically metaphor, currently regarded as, "the figure of figures, a figure for figurality," J. Culler, The Pursuit of Signs (London & Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), p. 189, occupies an aporial position in philosophy for the reason that it is assigned a determinate place by philosophy yet continues to work the entire text of philosophy, "Any "metaphorology" would...be derivative with regard to the discourse over which it would claim ascendancy," J. Derrida, "The White Mythology," New Literary History, VI 1974. p. 28. Moreover, metaphor is invested with the paradoxical properties of unveiling poetic truth, immanent but concealed resemblances, and the capacity for catachresis, the improper figural application of a proper, literal sense. Thus, "Metaphor carries the risk that it may interrupt the semantic plenum to which it should belong. Since it marks the movement or the detour in which the sense may seem to launch out by itself, unloosed from the very object to which it nevertheless is pointed, from the truth which brings it into harmony with its referent, metaphor may set off an errant semantics. ... Signification, by its capacity for metaphorical displacement, will be what we might think of as a state of readiness, lying between the non-sense which precedes language (...) and the truth of that language which tells it how it is. But it is not a guaranteed truth. There can be bad metaphors. ... Metaphor is the moment of possible sense as a possibility of non-truth. It is the moment of the detour in which truth can still be lost " *ibid.* pp. 41-2. Furthermore, the figurative predication involves asserting a resemblance at the expense, or subordination, of difference between the things, phenomena compared, or even, deflecting a sign into a zone where no signified precedes it, in which case the signifier inaugurates a 'signified' of the previously uncharted zone (and hence baseless resemblance): "The act of metaphor then was a thrust at truth and a lie." For further meditation on this relation between rhetoric and truth see, F. Nietzsche, "On Truth and Falsity in their Ultramoral Sense," pp. 171-192 passim.

Thus, at the novel's end we are still unable to verify the existence/non-existence of the Trystero and, as a corollary effect, unable to verify the sanity/insanity of the protagonist. Hence, the critic's commentary is deflected into a hypothetical and conditional style of the order, 'If we admit X, we can conclude Y, however we must acknowledge the possible inadmissability (or, what amounts to the same thing: indeterminacy) of X.' Here, in brief, we have a paradigm of the literary-critical enterprise, unable to proceed without some presuppositions, perceived or unperceived.

THE TROPE OF 'WRITING' or AMERICA AS TEXT

Concluding this analysis of the novel, I should like to examine the function of the textual trope, in some respects the 'master-trope' of the novel, even perhaps more accurately a tautology rather than a figure: a tautology for the reason that it is a scriptural figure reflecting on the 'written' quality of the 'world' the novel represents. I call this figure the 'master-trope' because it comprises the entire narrative: it is the figure of writing in a writing. A distinction pertaining to this scriptural trope must be drawn; it is both tautological, referring to material signifiers, or graphic marks (a self-evidence), and ostensibly figural, at the level of represented/signified (i.e. the appropriateness of the figure is not immediately apparent), although a chief intention of this commentary has been to demonstrate adequately, that a synallagmatic constraint is the pre-condition of the possibility of representer and represented, that both conform to a common system of difference. The possibility of the double, or 'mimeme' is already programmed by the laws of difference enabling the mimed referent to appear and be

distinguished as such. Thus the 'figure' emerges as a synonym.

Hence, the novel refers at once to its own artifice (but this will not mean privileging the 'fictional' at the expense of the 'true' or 'real', an untenable and manifestly bankrupt project), and intimates that what it doubles is not a 'reality' or 'transcendental signified' but an anteriorly codified text upon which it supervenes. It supplements, but simultaneously inaugurates--retrodeictically--as its origin, the prior text (precisely the paradoxical operation of the supplement). One literary critic comments, in this regard, "There is nothing represented that is not already a representation."⁴⁷ Tersely, Oedipa traverses a written world represented in a world-written, the novel. Let us consolidate and verify this metaphor of writing in the novel.

I have made several allusions to the important and perplexing alternative the narrative submits, that "legacy America", 'culture', 'society', 'history', (these regional designations necessarily intersect) and consequently the Tristero, too, be conceived as textual institutions; "The very idea of institution--hence the arbitrariness of the sign--is unthinkable before the possibility of writing and outside its horizon" (OG 44).

I have attempted to demonstrate the reciprocal interpenetration of "legacy America" and the "Disinherited", and it remains to indicate the comprehension of America (inside) and its other (outside) by the figure of writing. I will trace this trope, prefacing with the following epigraphs, "a historico-metaphysical epoch must finally determine as language the totality of its problematic horizon" (OG 6). Granting this statement, one can discern that The Crying of Lot 49 manifests a textual practice which places it on

⁴⁷ J. Riddel, "From Heidegger to Derrida to Chance: Doubling and (Poetic) Language," boundary 2 4 (2) 1976, p. 588.

the very frontiers of this epoch (whether this situation is intentional or unintentional is barely pertinent to the inquiry). Derrida remarks similarly on the Platonic text-- observations which remain relevant if we concede that literature, poetics and philosophy share a common metaphysical-conceptual heritage--as follows, "At the moment of ultimate difficulty,...when theoretical discourse cannot find any other way of formulating the order, the world, the cosmos of politics, Socrates turns to the grammatical 'metaphor'. ... Structure is read as a form of writing in an instance where the intuition of the sensible or intelligible presence happens to fail" (Diss. 162).

He adds:

The scriptural "metaphor" thus crops up every time difference and relation are irreducible, every time otherness introduces determination and puts a system in circulation. The play of the other within being must needs be designated "writing" by Plato in a discourse which would like to think of itself as spoken in essence, in truth, and which nevertheless is written. (Diss. 163)

Keeping these epigraphs before us, we can begin to appreciate some of the implications of this common and apparently innocent 'metaphor'.

The novel, by the systematic deployment of this figure, provokes several of the crucial dilemmas which continue to confound the powerful traditional, but demonstrably paradoxical, theories of mimesis (e.g. the status and ontology of the 'double' in relation to its model; that the success of mimesis depends on both the fidelity of the simulacrum and on a degree of disparity by which the simulacrum and simulated may be distinguished; the capacity for the 'double' to precede any model or referent from which the double ought always to be derived, "this order of appearance, the prece-

dence of the imitated,...governs the philosophical or critical interpretation of 'literature'," Diss. 192). It would be presumptuous to attempt here a full exploration, and ludicrous to presume a resolution of these dilemmas, but I hope the following analysis will mark the aporia in traditional mimetic theories. But let us return to the text. The trope of the 'world' as 'text' is introduced by Varo's allegorical painting, where the world is proposed as a textile design of one's own invention and embroidery, "and the tapestry was the world" (10/13).⁴⁸ The activity is echoed shortly, "take up a useful hobby like embroidery" (11/13).

Within this tropology, a metaphor frequently intervenes to supplement our 'metaphor'; 'textile' regularly substitutes for 'text' in accordance with a common and ancient inter-textuality (the textual trope is merely one instance of the dense intertextuality and overt allusion, real and feigned, which the novel practises). Metaphors of cloth and thread for text--the etymological complicity between 'text' and 'textile' itself evinces the frequency and antiquity of this figure--abound in Western literature and poetics, and occur, more especially to our purpose, in The Crying of Lot 49. One thinks inevitably of James'

⁴⁸ Varo's painting, responsible, as we have seen, for inaugurating many of the major structural motifs of the novel, also proposes the consistent structural relation between the embroidered order of the One and the space, conversely determined as 'void', in which order is raised. These passages schematically illustrate this sequence, "a kind of tapestry which spilled...into a void, seeking hopelessly to fill the void" (10/13); later a strategic textile simile repeating the components of the Varo painting, describes Oedipa as, "feeling like a fluttering curtain in a very high window moving up to and then over the abyss--" (114/105); After she has been totally isolated, and become a "fugitive" (108/100), "she sat for hours---teaching herself to breathe in a vacuum. For this, oh God, was the void" (128/118). This last citation recalls Oedipa's earlier speculation, confounded by one of the many rhetorical questions, on her emerging perception of America's alienated and Disinherited, "Since they could not have withdrawn into a vacuum (could they?), there had to exist the separate, silent, unsuspected world" (92/86).

"figure in the carpet," phrases such as "narrative thread," "thread of the argument," "web of intrigue," and Pynchon's own, "Wharfinger supplied words and a yarn" (56/54), "Old-timers remember the yarn" (67/64) or, characterizing Gravity's Rainbow with one of those ambiguously referring passages, passing in a dream, "No, this is not a disentanglement from, but a progressive knotting into--" (GR 3).⁴⁹

The textile thus functions as a material symbol for all forms of textual production and 'invention' (recalling "the Myth of the American Inventor" (64/61), taking 'invention' in its widest sense and underscoring the designation, "Myth"). All the characters and implicitly Western imperial civilization (including a few of their gods, to the extent that 'gods' are never more than anthropomorphic projections invested with supernal capacities of authorship) are involved in the activity of writing with respect to their material, spatio-temporal milieus, worlds, universes.

Following the Varo painting, figures equating 'world' and 'text' regularly occur. Oedipa's first sight of San Narciso (a written, fictive entity without referent) occasions a simile between the urban topography and the "printed [iterable] circuit" (13/14; my emphasis). The "vast sprawl of houses...like a well-tended crop" (13/14), safe in furrows, is conceived by Oedipa as a text containing a "hieroglyphic sense of concealed meaning" (13/15). Again, whilst watching a TV advert for Fangoso Lagoons--an Inveraritian project (quite possibly Disneyland-inspired) assembled from a pastiche of dead, 'found' objects and past cultures, which serves, along with Mucho's car-lot, as a synecdoche for the American landscape: in this instance its cosmopolitanism (elsewhere Bortz comments, "Other

⁴⁹ Apropos the genealogy of this tropology and the rhetoric of critical writings, vide. "Ariadne's Thread: Repetition and the Narrative Line," Critical Inquiry 3, Autumn 1976, p. 57 ff., by J. Hillis Miller, and Derrida's account of the 'hymenology,' Diss. 213 & passim.)

immigrants come to America looking for freedom from tyranny, acceptance by the culture, assimilation into it, this melting pot" 130/120) and death-transfiguration, and given as follows, "an artificial lake, at the bottom of which lay restored galleons, imported from the Bahamas; Atlantic fragments of columns and friezes from the Canaries; real human skeletons from Italy; giant clamshells from Indonesia--all for the entertainment of Scuba enthusiasts" (18/19-20) --Oedipa's response to this underwater world (also an Underworld, a cultural museum), linking it to the emerging chain of signification conflating 'world' and 'text' is, "Book of the Dead" (18/20; my emphasis). Are these 'textual' figures simply accidental, or do they constitute an "ominous logic" (V. 449)? Archaeology, and implicitly history, begins to be regarded as a text. This notion of history is confirmed elsewhere in the novel.

As the Tristero becomes a prominent feature in Oedipa's world, it too is assimilated beneath the 'textile' topology, "everything she saw, smelled, dreamed, remembered, would somehow come to be woven into the Tristero" (58/56). We can begin to see the degree to which the scriptural 'metaphor' comprises and governs the text.

Later, a synecdoche establishes a terse connection between the textuality of Oedipa's America and the textile of its flag, reiterating the 'textile' trope, "This is America, you live in it, you let it happen. Let it unfurl" (112/103). The connection between world-projection (Driblette's pre-occupation), and the text, is explicitly made when Oedipa writes, "Shall I project a world? If not project then at least flash some arrow on the dome to skitter among constellations and trace out your Dragon, Whale, Southern Cross" (59; latter emphasis mine). Writing intercedes at the moment a sign is externalized and inscribed. Elsewhere the durable textual trace is figured in the

simile of a thread and the textuality of history is again intimated, ' "You think it's really a correlation?" She thought how tenuous it was, like a long white hair, over a century long' (68/64-5).

Towards the novel's end we are provided with the crucial insight that Inverarity's estate and America are synonymous, "the legacy was America" (134/123) and that America is an encyclopaedia which Pierce has authored or edited.⁵⁰

This insight tends to corroborate the equation between 'world' and 'text', Inverarity's testament is a text of course, a piece of writing, and the novel emphasizes Oedipa's hermeneutic inclinations towards it: her attempts to read the 'text', decrypt it, arrest a "pulsing, stelliferous Meaning," and retrieve, "That America coded in Inverarity's testament" (135/124) from amongst the overwhelming excesses of sign, repetition and signification (actual, potential, hallucinated, dreamed) parading throughout the novel. The emphasis on Oedipa's hermeneutic activities, corroborated by the scriptural figures describing her geography, (e.g. "Behind the hieroglyphic streets there would either be a transcendent meaning, or only the earth" 136/125; and elsewhere), effect the transfer of the textual 'analogy' to Oedipa's America, and require us to view it in terms of writing.

The equation of 'world' and 'textile', emphasizing the text's materiality (the 'material' occupies a strategic position in the 'world/text' con-fusion), occurs again in the phrase, "skein of stars" from The Courier's Tragedy:

⁵⁰ Cf. this whimsical remark, "Benjamin Franklin was also a Mason and given to cosmic forms of practical jokesterism, of which the United States of America may well have been one" (GR 663-4)!

No hallowed skein of stars can ward, I trow,
 Who's once been set his tryst with Trystero. (52/50)
 (Courier's Tragedy, Act IV, Scene 8. -113/104-)

This 'allusion' without source, a fiction masquerading as truth, this simulacrum of a citation, miming drama, both presenting itself and dissembling citation (re-presentation), demonstrates the status of the entire play and the several other 'quotations' in the novel (vide. Miles's Song (15/17); Yoyodyne's Hymn and Glee (59-60/57) and Serge's Song 109-110/101). These possibilities are not innocent and should serve as a precaution to the self-assured incontrovertibility of the true discourse whose structure they always inhabit.

Furthermore, by the above scriptural 'figure' and other thematic correlations, The Courier's Tragedy, ostensibly a 'fiction' (or a facsimile of fiction to be more precise) embedded in a matrix of 'reality': i.e. Oedipa's life, enters into a curious and disconcerting dialogue with the novel's American context by some "most bizarre" resemblances. One of the effects of the play is to elaborate and historically extend the postal feud Oedipa suspects, proposing also an etiology to several dominant American cultural afflictions. Passing reference to "patrician hothouse" (vide. p. 191). above) recalls the patriarchal, or phallogocentric American culture, whilst St. Narcissus' icon is publicly worshipped, echoing (or anticipating) the narcissism pervading Oedipa's society. The synopsis of the play anticipates (and here the narrator's rhetoric assists the correlations) several features and elements of Oedipa's culture, enabling the articulation of a bizarre dialogue between the 'real' and the 'fiction'. The effects of this are to extend the scope of the novel's plot, give the American malaise a historical perspective and provide it, in combination with Bortz's speculations, with a genealogy in European civilization, and to evince,

not the 'truth' of the play, but the 'artifice' of the real. As we have already insisted, this cannot amount to a simple inversion of the real/artificial, true/false dichotomies with a corollary affirmation of the latter values, but the admission of a third 'term' which serves as a differentiating-differentiated matrix for the first two and is neither for the one or the other, nor reducible to presence.

Historical fact and inventive fabulation freely interchange, each supporting themes and motifs in the other and deliberately blurring any distinctions between 'true' and 'false'. History, too, becomes another text to be read and deciphered in this endless discovery of textuality. Driblette intimates this with his jaundiced comment:

The only residue in fact would be things Wharfinger didn't lie about. Perhaps Squamuglia and Faggio, if they ever existed. Perhaps the Thurn and Taxis mail system. Stamp collectors tell me it did exist. Perhaps the other, also. The Adversary. But they would be traces, fossils. Dead, mineral, without value or potential. (56/54)

Driblette's sentiments are borne out more explicitly in a later exchange with a literary group:

"The historical Shakespeare," growled one of the grad students..."The historical Marx. The historical Jesus."
 "He's right," shrugged Bortz, "they're dead. What's left?"
 "Words."
 "Pick some words," said Bortz. "Them, we can talk about." (113/104)

'History', like the contemporary 'world' Oedipa inhabits, is revealed as one vast tissue of texts participating in a general textual economy and intertextuality. This transformation of a metaphysical conceptuality into a

textual "materialism of the idea" (Diss. 207 n. 24, cited from J. Hyppolite); this transformation of identities, concepts and beings into 'texts' is macabrely demonstrated by the conversion of human beings--the Lost Guard--into writing, their bones into ink:

Yet what, transmuted, swart and silken flows
Between, was neither plucked, nor harshly flayed,
But gathered up from wildly different beasts. (49/47)

We may remark the return of silence in the word 'transmuted'

Once more, in San Francisco, the textuality of the environment is urged, "The city was hers, as, made up and sleeked so with the customary words and images (...) it had not been before" (86-7/81; my emphases). Further corroborating and consolidating the signifying links we have deciphered, I juxtapose the following two passages. The first relates Oedipa's participation in Strip Botticelli, the game where loss accompanies each inquiry and the second anticipates Oedipa's attendance on Trystero as an "attendance" at a symbolic strip-tease performance.

We have already dealt with the motifs of insulation and loss in this first passage (pp. 181, 220):

"Go ahead," said Metzger, "ask questions. But for each answer you'll have to take something off. We'll call it Strip Botticelli." (22/23)

In this first extract, the 'textile' figure resurfaces, although its link to textuality is not immediately clear. Oedipa is dressed in products manufactured by her culture, and chosen and projected as extensions and insulations of herself, which potentially signify; (Barthes proposed a semiotics of fashion in Elements of Semiology pp. 25-7 and Systeme de la Mode). This image of Oedipa presents

a variant of the world-projection parable, recalls Mucho's observations in the car-lot, "metal extensions of themselves," (4/8) and invokes McLuhan (vide. n.17 above) whilst the game presages, as I have suggested, Oedipa's later psycho-social excoriation and loss. The novel explicitly refers the second extract to this one above, clarifying its place in the scriptural tropology and linking it via the 'textile' of clothing. This extraordinarily condensed passage mobilizes several motifs and opens the Tristero issue under an extended theatrical motif:

So began, for Oedipa, the languid, sinister blooming of *The Tristero*. Or rather, her attendance at some unique performance, prolonged as if it were the last of the night, something a little extra for whoever'd stayed this late. As if the breakaway gowns, net bras, jeweled garters and G-strings of historical figuration that would fall away were layered dense as Oedipa's own streetclothes in that game with Metzger in front of the Baby Igor movie; as if a plunge toward dawn indefinite black hours long would indeed be necessary before *The Tristero* could be revealed in its terrible nakedness. Would its smile, then, be coy, and would it flirt away harmlessly backstage, say good night with a Bourbon Street bow and leave her in peace? Or would it instead, the dance ended, come back down the runway, its luminous stare locked to Oedipa's, smile gone malign and pitiless; bend to her alone among the desolate rows of seats and begin to speak words she never wanted to hear? (36/36)

I quote this magnificent passage in full, allowing it to display several of the major syntactical devices of undecidability deployed in the novel. This extract confirms the relation between clothing and the textuality of history, with the catalogue, "the breakaway gowns, net bras, jeweled garters and G-strings of historical figuration" and, invoking the preceding passage, consolidates the trope of clothing as cultural signs, relating these--"dense as Oedipa's own streetclothes in that game with Metzger"--directly to the emphatic textuality averred by the phrase,

"historical figuration". Moreover, 'history' is set in synonymy with "performance". Tanner comments on this crucial superimposition:

one important point to notice is the conflation of 'performance' with 'historical figuration'. History and theatre become almost interchangeable terms, and Oedipa will never know when she is, or is not, present at some kind of 'performance'--a 'play' which might end in harmless knockabout, or with her hearing 'words she never wanted to hear'.⁵¹

This extract in the novel sustains the motif of excoriation (in this case the undressing of history). It becomes evident how the motif of excoriation--the removal and unravelling of Oedipa's self-extensions and modes of insulation--complements the extensive tropology of insulation examined earlier. Through the zany parallellism which the novel directs, Oedipa's "knights of deliverance," her partners and purveyors of the narcissistic culture, similarly function as a psycho-social insulation which also becomes gradually stripped away, providing a human index to her mental destabilization. The themes of insulation, or myth-making, and excoriation, or iconoclasm, consequently form a complementary pair in the narrative's rhetorical logic. It is instructive to note in The Courier's Tragedy, during an incident which presages Oedipa's own apprehension, the equation of waking with vision of the Trystero, thus indicating that awareness of the Trystero is a movement away from narcissistic insulation. Niccolò, struck dumb and petrified by the Trystero's appearance, is paradoxically described, "As if breaking out of some dream's paralysis" (51/49; my emphasis), once again implying the fictional, hallucinatory or oneiric status of social reality.

⁵¹ Tanner, Thomas Pynchon, p. 58.

Reinforcing our conception of America as a written text are the many parallel engagements with texts, all focussing on regions of Western culture, to which Oedipa's quest for meaning can be compared and contrasted. The many, and frequently absurd, textual engagements include her lawyer's case against Perry Mason, "the rough draft of The Profession v. Perry Mason, A Not-so-hypothetical Indictment,... had been in progress for as long as the TV show had been on the air " (9/11). This struggle between the 'Law' and its simulacrum (not unlike the rivalry between the dialectician and the sophist in Platonic philosophy), conforms to the structural co-ordinates which have shaped our reading and Metzger's comments on their complicity indicate the abysmal degree to which the model and its double can be confounded and lost in a hall of mirrors:

A lawyer in a courtroom,...,becomes an actor, right? Raymond Burr is an actor, impersonating a lawyer, who in front of a jury becomes an actor. Me, I'm a former actor who became a lawyer. They've done the pilot film of a TV series,...based loosely on my career, starring my friend Manny di Presso, a one-time lawyer who quit his firm to become an actor. Who in this pilot plays me, an actor become a lawyer reverting periodically to being an actor. The film is in an air-conditioned vault...it can be repeated endlessly. (20/21)

This passage indicates the potential complexity of the relationship between imitator and imitated, signifier and signified and provides us with some insight into the author's awareness of these infinite regresses. Coming back now to the other textual engagements; we encounter the Paranoids who seek the key to success by modelling the Beatles, "We watch English movies a lot, for the accent" (15/17); Mike Fallopian of the P.P.S., who is compiling a "history of private mail delivery in the U.S." (a post post-script!) and the "vigorous suppression" thereof (35/35); Nefastis' zealous cultivation of a faith based on Maxwell's

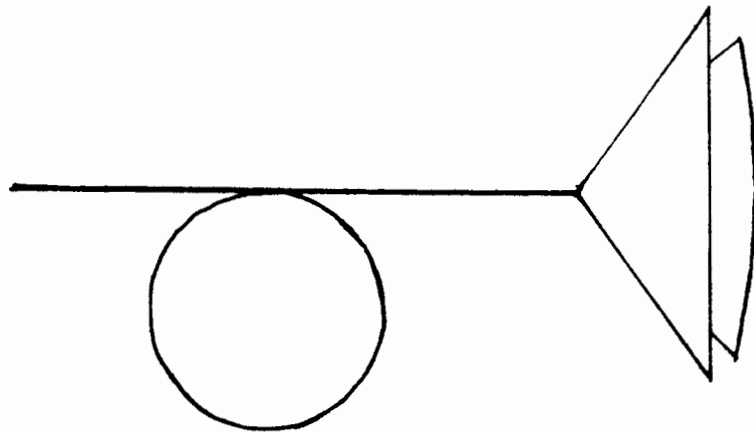
fabular Demon; Dr. Hilarius' devotion to Freud, "Tried to cultivate a faith in the literal truth of everything he wrote" (100/93); her husband's post-lysergic analyses of pop songs and musak in terms of power spectra, "The songs, its not just that they say something they are something, in the pure sound. Something new" (107/99-100). Other textual projects include Driblette's attempts to restore "the invisible field surrounding the play, its spirit" (113/105), Bortz' quest for the definitive edition of The Courier's Tragedy, Cohen's commitment to philatelic history. All these characters and their quests are constellated about and give resonance to Oedipa's hermetic and fully textual quest for the Tristero. Throughout the novel characters are suspecting patterns, pursuing quests, seeking the secret recipes to various ends and searching for meaning amongst the vast proliferation of signs and excesses of signification. The environment and culture which these many characters inhabit is a matrix of signs, symbols, icons, images, popular media, songs, letters, notes, slogans, cryptograms, acronyms, anagrams etc., which alluringly beckon and invite interpretation, suggest pattern, seem orderly, appear pregnant with meaning and significance but repeatedly defer the revelation and give back only the interpreter's own pre-supposed constellations and illusions. The narrator of Gravity's Rainbow comments with poignancy:

The rest of us,...must go on blundering inside our front-brain faith in Kute Korrespondences,...kicking endlessly among the plastic trivia, finding in each Deeper Significance and trying to string them all together like terms of a power series hoping to zero in on the tremendous and secret Function whose name, like the permuted names of God, cannot be spoken. . .
(GR 590)

The 'world' Oedipa encounters is a matrix of information and communication where significance is everywhere imminent

yet nowhere recuperable. The novel thus discloses a complicity and semantic interchangeability between 'world' and 'text'. The play and intersection between the notions of world-projection and text-authorship in the novel serve to dismantle the limits between, and diffuse these categories inextricably. The notion of the text representing a 'reality' is effectively and thoroughly dismantled by the scriptural 'metaphor' and emerging in its place is the realization that 'world' and 'text' are synonyms whose 'performances' are both heard on another stage.

Finally, conflating the 'real' and the 'fiction' one last time before it delivers the reader over to the more profound silence (the Tristero's sign) sustained beyond the narrative's suspended end, the auctioneer's gestures are compared with those of "the priesthood of some remote culture; perhaps ... a descending angel " (138/127), but these descriptions are qualified by the initial designation that he "hovered like a puppet-master" (138/126-7). The precise status of the performance we have witnessed here remains uncertain.



CHAPTER THREE

GRAVITY'S RAINBOW

"A World War passed through my brain"

"The question of the text, as it has been elaborated and transformed in the last dozen or so years, has not merely "touched" "shore" le bord...all those boundaries that form the running border of what used to be called a text, of what we once thought this word could identify, i.e., the supposed end and beginning of a work, the unity of a corpus, the title, the margins, the signatures, the referential realm outside the frame, and so forth. What has happened, if it has happened, is a sort of overrun [débordement] that spoils all these boundaries and divisions and forces us to extend the accredited concept, the dominant notion of a "text," of what I still call a "text," for strategic reasons, in part--a "text" that is henceforth no longer a finished corpus of writing, some content enclosed in a book or its margins, but a differential network, a fabric of traces referring endlessly to something other than itself, to other differential traces. Thus the text overruns all the limits assigned to it so far (not submerging or drowning them in an undifferentiated homogeneity, but rather making them more complex, dividing and multiplying strokes and lines)--all the limits, everything that was to be set up in opposition to writing (speech, life, the world, the real, history, and what not, every field of reference--to body or mind, conscious or unconscious, politics, economics, and so forth). Whatever the (demonstrated) necessity of such an overrun, such a dé-bordement, it still will have come as a shock, producing endless efforts to dam up, resist, rebuild the old partitions, to blame what could no longer be thought without confusion, to blame difference as wrongful confusion!"

-- Jacques Derrida

"Those like Slothrop, with the greatest interest in discovering the truth, were thrown back on dreams, psychic flashes, omens, cryptographies, drug-epistemologies, all dancing on a ground of terror, contradiction, absurdity."

-- Gravity's Rainbow

The possible ways of writing about this extra-ordinary text are legion. The following discussion cannot hope to be more than an identification of some provoking and recurrent preoccupations and issues. It is plain that in a thesis of this scope we are unable to devote the same kind of (necessary) scrutiny to Gravity's Rainbow that was possible with The Crying of Lot 49 (had I but space enough and time I would!) However, I hope that the preceding chapters will have demonstrated the extensions of reading that might be possible, but also prepared a programme for reading Gravity's Rainbow; this novel, apart from engaging numerous new issues and motifs, methods and concerns, mutatis mutandi reiterates many of the motifs, themes and structures (let us always remark a distinct dissatisfaction with this inadequate terminology) which we discerned in V. and The Crying of Lot 49, although a highly sophisticated 'overwriting' complicates prior scenarios by several degrees.

Gravity's Rainbow communicates with its two predecessors in diverse ways which alone could provide the substance of a lengthy dissertation. The dense network of cross-references within Gravity's Rainbow however, has been convoluted enough to detain us without considering the extent to which the novel supplements Pynchon's prior texts, or the extent to which they preface and inform it. References to Gravity's Rainbow in the foregoing chapters will already have illustrated some lines of connection. I will briefly map some of the broader regions of overlap by which the borders of each text are overrun.

The development of the V-2 or Aggregat-4 in Gravity's Rainbow (we shall discover to what degree its function is tropological rather than simply referential) serves as a complex supplement and extension of the V-trope: an extension already anticipated in V.; we will recall, "The

engineer's name was Kurt Mondaugen, he had worked, yes, at Peenemunde, developing Vergeltungswaffe Eins and Zwei. The magic initial!" (V. 227-8). Through this process each text paradoxically incorporates and comprehends the other (V. as a Preface to, or digression within Gravity's Rainbow or Gravity's Rainbow as a supplement to V.: Gravity's Rainbow might indeed constitute one extended episode in the open system of the 'Stencil-papers,' placed chronologically between The Confessions of Fausto Maijstral and Stencil's conversations with Margravine di Chiave Lowenstein on Mallorca in 1946 V.53).

Similarly, the bizarre gallery of female and androgynous blonde characters: the Margherita Erdmann, Gretel, Greta transformations and their mythic correlatives in the Grimm's fable, Goethe's Faust, Wagner's Tannhäuser (Lisaura appears to Tannhäuser as the incarnation of Venus); Katje Borgesius who plays the roles of Gretel (GR 96), Domina Nocturna (GR 232-6), the Golden Bitch (GR 658) and has several other avatars in the novel; Nora Dodson-Truck, linked to Leni Pökler; Ilse Pökler and Bianca Erdmann, both progeny of the film Alpdrücken; Gottfried and Geli Tripping; all implicated in a convoluted and non-rationalizable tissue of shared characteristics, a rhetorical ensemble of doubles, doppelgängers, transvestitisms, disguises and general role-switchery ("The book is full of disguises, of changes and fusions of identity." ¹), will remind us of the protean figure of V. The narrator indicates at one point the tenuous order of connection and relation we are licensed to discover (against the insistent chorus that all connections are paranoia or violent illegitimacy):

¹ R. Poirier, "Rocket Power," in Mendelson (ed.), p. 169.

If there are analogies here, if Eventyr does, somehow, map on to Peter Sachsa, then does Nora Dodson-Truck become the woman Sachsa loved, Leni Pökler? (GR 218)

And elsewhere Thanatz confirms a similar superimposition, "he'll remember that he held it for a little, saw its texture and color, felt it against the side of his face as he woke from a space of sleeping near it--that the two children, Gottfried and Bianca, are the same (GR 672).² Uncanny coalitions of this type suggest themselves throughout the novel.

Gravity's Rainbow creates its intertextuality with The Crying of Lot 49 in different ways, primarily along rhetorical and figural lines of correlation. Similar polarizations to those developed in Lot 49 are elaborated in greater detail, and the strong critique mounted against 'legacy America' and the 'culture of narcissism' is once again adopted and sustained here.

Gravity's Rainbow, as I remarked in my 'Introduction,' is a savage and provocative attack on Western technocratic ("official") culture. The novel formulates a penetrating diagnosis and a devastating critique of Western power apparatuses and the myriad procedures of reification, rationalization, oppression and exploitation which condition and coerce their subjects to receive and conform to dominating symbolic practices in metaphysical, scientific, political, theological and psycho-social dimensions of human culture. Gravity's Rainbow is a diagnosis of the processes of

² I will distinguish my ellipses from Pynchon's widespread elliptical marks by double-spacing his, as I have already done on the infrequent occasions where ellipses appear in V. and Lot 49.

stabilization and stasis, of change becoming ritualistic and repetitive routine, and simultaneously, through its own strenuously disruptive textual practices, an attempt to counteract, even momentarily, these processes. Kristeva's remarks on "carnavalesque discourse" apply particularly well to Pynchon's destabilizing textual practice:

The poetic word, polyvalent and multi-determined, adheres to a logic exceeding that of codified discourse and fully comes into being only in the margins of recognized culture. Bakhtin was the first to study this logic and he looked for its roots in carnival. Carnavalesque discourse breaks through the laws of a language censored by grammar and semantics and, at the same time, is a social and political protest. There is no equivalence, but rather, identity between challenging official linguistic codes and challenging official law. ³

We may compare these remarks with Kristeva's conception of the Menippean discourse cited in the 'Introduction': "Put together as an exploration of the body, dreams, and language this writing grafts onto the topical....it constitutes the social and political thought of an era fighting against theology, against law."

The diagnostic and critical perspective which Pynchon's fiction, and Gravity's Rainbow in particular, launches against Occidental discourses, puts him in a familiar paradoxical situation of working within conventional circuits of signification and literary form whilst challenging these forms. Since this language is the only one available to Pynchon he negotiates the paradox from within by developing an extensively figural/catachretic, and vigorously disruptive, discourse which loosens and

³ Kristeva, p. 65.

transforms conventional senses by grafting other modifications to them (I shall indicate a few examples during the following discussion) and consequently holding his text at the limits of coherence.

Similarly, he dissembles compliance with the conventions of coherence and causality far enough to seduce the hapless reader into the diabolical paranoid networks of the novel, before surrendering it to "the Principle of Maximizing Risk" (GR 659), the risk of absolute incoherence in the gradual disassembly of the novel into a heterogeneous ensemble of thinly connected fragments which positively defy the reader or critic to arrange them into a sensible order.

THE ALLEGORICAL "OVERLAY"

When the Pulitzer Prize advisory committee overturned the judges' unanimous nomination of Gravity's Rainbow, ('The Committee found it "unreadable," "turgid," "overwritten," and in parts "obscene" ' 4), they cannot have known how accurately the epithet "overwritten" applies to the technique of the text (nor how instructively they situated themselves in relation to the novel, or how gratifying their reaction must have been to its author). Gravity's Rainbow musters an encyclopaedic overlay of allusions to a massive body of literature (partly constituting what I have variously designated as "condensation," "overwriting" and "overdetermination") which would similarly sustain an extended analysis and has already been the basis of

⁴ S. Simmon, "Gravity's Rainbow Described," Critique: Studies in Modern Fiction 16 (2) 1974, p. 30.

several studies clarifying uses of technical and non-literary information.⁵

The text is indeed a dazzling and disorientating array and mixture of tones, postures, narrative voices, modes and discourses ranging through World War II history, Pavlovian psychology (GR 48-9, 55, & *passim.*), organic chemistry (412-3), plastics (249-50, 699-70), popular culture (argots, slang, comics, films, T.V. shows, John Dillinger), drug cultures (93, 368, 702-3, 745), syndicate economics and politics, rocket technology (301), European music (Beethoven, Rossini, Carl Orff, Wagnerian opera, Anton Webern), occult mysteries (séances, Tarot, astral travel, Kabbalah and Gnostic doctrine), paranoia, Puritanism (554-5 & *passim.*), high Romanticism (Blicero and Rilke, "letting go of the self and passing into the All" GR 662), sexual variety and perversity, Teutonic and Norse fable and mythology, Argentinian anarchism, Herero culture, Soviet literacy campaigns,⁶ Weberian sociology, etc., etc.,--"by Gödel's

⁵ These include, A.J. Friedman & M. Puetz, "Science as Metaphor: Thomas Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow*," *Contemporary Literature* 15 (3) 1975, pp. 345-59 (cited previously chap. 2, n. 2); John M. Krafft, "And How Far-Fallen": Puritan Themes in *Gravity's Rainbow*, ' *Critique* 18 (3) 1977, pp. 55-73; L. Ozier, "Antipointsman/Antimexico: Some Mathematical Imagery in *Gravity's Rainbow*," *Critique* 16 (2) 1974, pp. 73-90, and "The Calculus of Transformation: More Mathematical Imagery in *Gravity's Rainbow*," *Twentieth Century Literature* 21 (2) 1975, pp. 193-210; Joseph Slade, *Thomas Pynchon* (previously cited; examines Max Weber's sociology in *Gravity's Rainbow*); John O. Stark, *Pynchon's Fictions: Thomas Pynchon and the Literature of Information* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1980)--an archaeologically helpful guide to various elements of Pynchon's fiction, viz. Science and Technology, Psychology, History, Religion, The Film, Literature etc., but critically a very disappointing work; Lawrence C. Wolfley, "Repression's Rainbow: The Presence of Norman O. Brown in Pynchon's Big Novel," *PMLA* 92 (7) 1977, pp. 873-889.

⁶ Pynchon's immediate source for this episode was Thomas G. Winner, "Problems of Alphabetic Reform among the Turkic Peoples of Soviet Central Asia, 1920-41," *The Slavonic and East European Review* 31 1952, pp. 133-147. This article is particularly valuable because it enables us to see, on a very specific scale, how Pynchon's fictional adaptations correlate with source texts.

theorem there is bound to be some item around that one has omitted from the list" (GR 320).

To describe this "overwriting" process again, somewhat differently, let us say that Pynchon layers his text, layers it in numerous startling and original ways. This stylistico-structural technique is furthermore repeated in a recurrent trope, a trope itself submitted to this structural principle. Thus, (to select a few examples) this trope, describing the strata of the earth's surface, "Imagine coal, down in the earth, dead black, no light, the very substance of death. Death ancient, prehistoric, species we will never see again. Growing older, blacker, deeper, in layers of perpetual night. Above ground, the steel rolls out fiery, bright. But to make steel, the coal tars, darker and heavier, must be taken from the original coal. Earth's excrement, purged out for the ennoblement of shining steel. Passed over" (GR 166; already legible here is a tissue of rhetorical contraries--election ("ennoblement") preterition ("passed over"), white/black, day/night, ---chiaroscuro whose configurations we shall confirm in further detail); describing the stratified surface generally, "Things have fallen roughly into layers, over a base of bureaucratic smegma that sifts steadily to the bottom" (GR 18; Slothrop's desk); this trope is gradually extended to designate a conception of history in which the oil and chemical cartels are conceived, despite appearances, as the primary agents, "tapping...out of that global stratum, most deeply laid, from which all the appearances of corporate ownership really spring" (GR 243), "the recent history that's being pumped up fetid and black from other strata of Earth's mind. . . . (GR 354). History, very roughly, is the chronicle of an idealized "surplus value" refined from these strata: power. Again, Lyle Bland turned astral traveller, "imagines that he has been journeying underneath history: that history is Earth's mind, and that there are layers, set very deep, layers of history analogous to layers of coal and oil in

Earth's body" (GR 589). One more example motivates the elect/preterite dichotomy again, "Felipe has come to see, as those who are not Sentient Rocksters seldom do, that history as it's been laid on the world is only a fraction, an outward-and-visible fraction" (GR 612).

This trope is finally extended to identify the inscription of a political and symbolic order. Out in the Zone, "G-5, living its fantasy of being the only government in Germany now" (GR 290-1), is revealed as simply one layer amongst others; its personnel are described, "air traffic people down in their own kingdom, one more overlay on the Zone, antennas strung in the wilderness like redoubts, radiating half-spheres of influence, defining invisible-corridors-in-the-sky that are real only for them" (GR 620).

The "overlay of the Zone" identifies for us then a trope and a method, a complex analogy (as glimpsed above, an analogy of the analogy (GR 218), a metaphor for the metaphor) of the text as palimpsest; Derrida describes the palimpsest as follows:

The thickness of the text...opens upon the beyond of a whole, the nothing or the absolute outside, through which its depth is at once null and infinite--infinite in that each of its layers harbours another layer. The act of reading is thus analogous to those X rays that uncover, concealed beneath the epidermis of one painting, a second painting: painted by the same painter or by another, it makes little difference, who would himself, for lack of materials or in search of some new effect, have used the substance of an old canvas or preserved the fragment of a first sketch. And beneath that, etc. (Diss. 357)

Text piles upon text; we will remark that every notable figure, shape, situation, structure, has one or several doubles, homologues, transformations, pre-texts,

which are either alluded to explicitly, left to be inferred (and there is no means of prescribing a limit here) or identified in the inspissate network of overlappings, superimpositions, cross-correlations, doublings and redoublings the text tirelessly performs: groups of characters link by sets of attributes distributed amongst them, individual characters divide into multiple identities (Slothrop is also Ian Scuffling, Rocketman, an unidentified Russian soldier, "He's stripped all the insignia off Tchitcherine's uniform, trying for less visibility" (GR 551), Plechazunga the Pig-Hero and even, on occasion, Cary Grant (GR 294) and Errol Flynn (GR 381). During this last episode one has an absurd layering of disguises; Slothrop disguised as Rocketman, disguised as Max Schlepzig masquerading as Errol Flynn!)

This technique, which we might provisionally call 'irresponsible symbolism': a symbolism severed from any guarantee of eventual deliverance of "some payload of meaningfulness" (GR 321); this overdetermination which we examined in some detail apropos the V-aggregate, is launched again in the Aggregat-4 and numerous other tropes besides in Gravity's Rainbow, constituting a multiple allegorical style and a corollary convergence/divergence of signification. In substituting symbol for allegory I follow Paul de Man's distinction which discloses the logocentric investments sedimented in the concept of symbol promoted against the arbitrariness of allegory:

The supremacy of the symbol, conceived as an expression of unity between the representative and the semantic function of language, becomes a commonplace that underlies literary taste, literary criticism, and literary history.

.....
 The symbol is the product of the organic growth of form; in the world of the symbol, life and form are identical: "such as the life is, such is the

form" [Coleridge]. Its structure is that of the synecdoche, for the symbol is always a part of the totality that it represents. Consequently, in the symbolical imagination, no disjunction of the constitutive faculties takes place, since the material perception and the symbolical imagination are continuous, as the part is continuous with the whole. In contrast, the allegorical form appears purely mechanical, an abstraction whose original meaning is even more devoid of substance than its "phantom proxy" [Coleridge], the allegorical representative; it is an immaterial shape that represents a sheer phantom devoid of shape and substance.⁷

Paul de Man's analysis demonstrates that the symbol is in fact simply a special case of an 'arche-allegory' (my term). This dichotomy exhibits a constitution homologous to Derrida's speech/writing and origin/supplement hierarchies; in all three conditions the primary/secondary order of derivation is preserved with a negative valorization of the latter, more comprehensive term. Thus, an interpretive procedure for Gravity's Rainbow should follow Abrams' designation that "allegorical interpretation... uncovers multiple meanings expressed by a single textual item" amended to read 'uncovers multiple texts.'⁸ However, before accrediting this method let us consider the ways in which Gravity's Rainbow allegorizes a method of interpretation.

⁷ Paul de Man, "The Rhetoric of Temporality," Interpretation: Theory and Practice, ed. Charles Singleton (Baltimore & London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1969), pp. 175, 176-7. Here I have deliberately attempted to lay some pretexts for an interpretation of Pynchon's textual practice in terms of de Man's suggestive and highly sophisticated theory of allegory elaborated more recently in Allegories of Reading (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979). I have been unable to research this approach in sufficient detail to discuss it here but it seems to suggest a very promising angle of inquiry. I refer the reader to the sub-section 'Allegory Revisited,' at the close of this chapter for further discussion of the issue.

⁸ Abrams, p. 88.

We frequently witness, amongst the various characters, "a Puritan reflex of seeking other orders behind the visible, also known as paranoia" (GR 188) and, shifting the emphasis to the artifice, the iterable, ritual form ("there is already something of ritual to this, of iteration" GR 231) of such order, viz. the game, Slothrop apprehends in the Himmler-Spielsaal, Casino Hermann Goering:

These are no longer quite outward and visible signs of a game of chance. There is another enterprise here, more real than that, less merciful, and hidden from the likes of Slothrop. Slothrop...is alone with the paraphernalia of an order whose presence among the ordinary debris of waking he has only lately begun to suspect.

.... Shortly, unpleasantly so, it will come to him that everything in this room is really being used for something different. Meaning things to Them it has never meant to us. Never. Two orders of being, looking identical . . . but, but Why here?what game do They deal? (GR 202-3; my emphasis. The appearance of the 1st pers. obj. plural pronoun suddenly generalizes the scene, intriguing author, character and reader. Close attention has yet to be given to Pynchon's labile deixis in Gravity's Rainbow; Linda Westervelt's article initiates analysis in this direction⁹).

Later, shrewdly aware that he is the centre of some plot (which the reader knows he is of course: Pointman's, if not indeed Pynchon's) of which Katje Borgesius is a part, Slothrop enters the Spielsaal once more, "he surprises her alone by a roulette wheel. She's standing...playing croupier. An employee of the House." Slothrop interrupts the turning wheel, "The ball drops in a compartment whose number they never see. Seeing the number is supposed to be the point. But in the game behind the game, it is not the point" (GR 208; my emphasis). The coincidence

⁹ Westervelt, pp. 69-88, passim.

of order and game (the rule of law and the rule of the game being functionally identical), an issue we discussed apropos Lot 49, plays a prominent role again in Gravity's Rainbow, one to which the reader must remain alert; for the moment, however, it is the overdetermination of the sign which interests us: the possibility that within the interstices of every order is another possible order, allegorical in relation to the first or, to express it differently, every text encodes other texts, constitutes a code, an allegory for one or several other texts.

The above extracts articulate the possibility and conditions of allegory; others, themselves acts of interpretation, constitute an allegory instructing the reader. I select some significant instances to illustrate this point. "Pynchon," interpreting Blicero/Weissman's Tarot indicates the practice of allegorical interpretation:

Of 77 cards that could have come up, Weissmann is "covered," that is his present condition is set forth, by the Tower. It is a puzzling card, and everybody has a different story on it. It shows a bolt of lightning striking a tall phallic structure, and two figures, one wearing a crown, falling from it. Some read ejaculation, and leave it at that. Others see a Gnostic or Cathar symbol for the Church of Rome, and this is generalized to mean any System which cannot tolerate heresy: a system which, by its nature, must sooner or later fall. We know by now that it is also the Rocket.
(GR 747)

The rudimentary symbol system of the Tarot, already heavily overdetermined as "Pynchon's" summary of the allegories sedimented in one of its symbols shows, simultaneously adds supplementary sense to the novel's multiply alle-

gorical Rocket.¹⁰ Elsewhere, this interpretive activity, more covert but nevertheless interpretation, is perceptible in "Pynchon's" reading of the double-S and the parabola:

¹⁰ The fairly transparent allegory in portions of the text should serve as both a guide and a precaution to the reader to create ordered ensembles, confirm patterns and to relinquish and dismantle these orders with the discovery of conflicting data, counter-patterns, all multiply determined, testifying to alternative configurations. This is, I think, the most common sensation experienced by the reader of Gravity's Rainbow. Tony Tanner expresses my sentiments when he writes, "If we as readers try to win away one narrative 'system' from the book, we are in danger of repeating mentally what They are doing in building the Rocket. To put it in its most extreme form, They are trying to reduce all of nature's self-renewing variety to one terminal rocket; we must avoid the temptation to reduce the book to one fixed meaning. That is why our reading should be both paranoid and anti-paranoid, registering narrative order and disorder, experiencing both the determinate and the indeterminate, pattern and randomness...."--Thomas Pynchon, p. 82. Let me sketch a few other instances which suggest a compound allegorical interpretation of the novel.

Brigadier Pudding's sado-masochistic coprophagy sessions with Katje (Domina Nocturna) are translatable into a recapitulation of Passchendaele and the Salient (GR 232-6). Furthermore, during this episode a voice intoning "I am blessed Metatron. [etc.]" (GR 231) provides for Pudding, the kabbalistic cast of his approach to Katje, and the narrator intrudes, drawing attention to "a repetition high and low of some prevailing form (as, for instance, no sane demolition man at his evening dishwater will wash a spoon between two cups, or even between a glass and a plate, for fear of the Trembler it implies....) (GR 232). Similarly, Osbie Feel's film Doper's Greed becomes a code for Katje, an allegory, "It is a message in code, which after not too long she busts as follows" (GR 535).

The biography of Byron ~~the~~ Bulb, through an extended rhetoric of personification, similarly draws attention to an allegorical function (GR 647-55). And again, "the story about the kid who hates kreplach" (GR 737) turns out to be a censoring displacement, an allegory of the Fearful Assembly—the threat of a counter-Rocket 00001, a counter-culture capable of functioning without Them—disguised in innocuous form, "As some secrets were given to the Gypsies to preserve against centrifugal History, and some to the Kabbalists, the Templars, the Rosicrucians, so have this Secret of the Fearful Assembly, and others, found their way inside the weatherless spaces of this or that Ethnic Joke" (GR 737-8). A similar reading of King Kong as white culture's fear of negritude, indeed, conceiving counter-organizations like the Schwarzkommando in some indirect way, is also proposed. Pynchon's sociopathological reading of culture, following the example of Norman O. Brown, is one which we shall discuss later.

The basic layout of the plant [the Mittelwerke] was another inspiration of Etzel Ölsch, a Nazi inspiration like the parabola, but again also a symbol belonging to the Rocket. Picture the letters SS each stretched lengthwise a bit. These are the two main tunnels, driven well over a mile into the mountain....

But the shape is more than an elongated SS.

"It-it's about the shape of the tunnels here, Master."

"Don't flinch like that. I based that design on the double-lightning stroke, Hupla--the SS emblem."

"But it's also a double integral sign!

Etzel Ölsch's genius was to be fatally receptive to imagery associated with the Rocket. in the dynamic space of the living Rocket, the double integral has a different meaning. To integrate here is to operate on a rate of change so that time falls away: change is stilled. That is one meaning of the shape of the tunnels down here in the Mittelwerke. Another may be the ancient rune that stands for the yew tree, or Death. The double integral stood in Etzel Ölsch's subconscious for the method of finding hidden centers, inertias unknown,....

Double integral is also the shape of lovers curled asleep, (GR 299-302)

One more example of this allegorical interpretive process in action is Sir Stephen's scholarly gloss on the name 'Hawaii I' (radio transmitter for Rocket guidance), "There's a poetry to it, engineer's poetry . . . it suggests Haverie--average, you know--...hauen, too--smashing someone with a hoe or club . . ." off on a voyage of his own here,...bringing in the popular wartime expression ab-hauen, quarter-staff technique, peasant humor, phallic comedy dating back to the ancient Greeks. . . .' (GR 207). Tony Tanner's account of this scene reinforces my own, "At one point, one character [Slothrop] is reading a Plasticman comic; he is approached by a man of encyclopaedic erudition, who engages him in a conversation about etymology. Here is a clue for us: we should imagine that we are reading a comic, but it is partly transparent, and through it we are also reading an encyclopaedia, a film script, a piece of science history, and so on. There is only one text but it contains a multiplicity of surfaces; modes of discourse are constantly turning into objects of discourse with no one stable discourse holding them together"--ibid. p. 77: a description which I graft back onto Derrida's account of the palimpsest, cited previously.

These instances, particularly the second passage, give us some insight into the heterogeneous combinations of diverse elements which will trigger searches for more substantial patterns to explain this superficial play of shapes. Within these extracts, however, we have an indication of the manner in which the novel creates comprehensible and incomprehensible patterns of order and disorder which are continually radiating outwards into other patterns, themes and motifs in the novel, and an illustration of how we might begin to approach the text. Within these heterogeneous passages in which "The most heterogeneous ideas are yoked by violence together," we thus discover allegories of interpretation.¹¹

I assert with some confidence therefore that Gravity's Rainbow cultivates a generalized allegorical technique but, of course, no allegorical framework comes to dominate this ensemble; the network of allegories which accumulates, instead ("As B/4" GR 436) generates a supplementary, open system of allegorical layers. Even the most fundamental co-ordinates of any text, the conventional givens of time, space, sound, light etc., are invaded by an allegorization: constituted as possible sources of signification, possible signs (as we shall see). "Pynchon" selects the most basic predicates of our universe and demonstrates how these can become textualized, can begin to signify.

I wish now to select, with a concomitant and unavoidable passing over of other choices, two parables which will provide us with a few co-ordinates for orientating and discussing this colossal text, and also, to some extent,

¹¹ S. Johnson, "Life of Cowley," in Johnson's Lives of the Poets: A Selection, ed. J.P. Hardy (London: Oxford University Press, 1971) p. 12.

illustrate the allegorical interpretive approach which I have outlined above. We have already had a preview of one of these parables during the reading of Lot 49 where I discussed the trope of the 'System as addict'.

TWO PARABOLIC PREAMBLES

A first parable, one contextualizing and critically reevaluating the use of Kekulé's crucial benzene dream, which to a great extent revolutionized organic chemistry, inaugurated the era of artificial molecular synthesis and paved the way for the discovery of plastics, prefaces the extract setting forth the System as power addict, as follows:

Kekulé dreams the Great Serpent holding its own tail in its mouth, the dreaming Serpent which surrounds the World. But the meanness, the cynicism with which this dream is to be used. The Serpent that announces, "The World is a closed thing, cyclical, resonant, eternally-returning," is to be delivered into a system whose only aim is to violate the Cycle. Taking and not giving back,.... (GR 412)

The passage continues, reactivating the "tour" motif (the ritualized format of the quest), which we examined in V.:

Living inside the System is like riding across the country in a bus driven by a maniac bent on suicide.... There are stops...: you get out to stretch in lime-lit courtyards where the old men sit around the table... shuffling the ancient decks oily and worn, throwing down swords and cups and trumps major... passengers will now reclaim their seats and much as you'd like to stay, right here, learn the game, find your old age around this quiet table, it's no use: he is waiting beside the door of the bus in his pressed uniform, Lord of the Night he is checking your

tickets, your ID and travel papers, and it's the wands of enterprise that dominate tonight . . . as he nods you by, you catch a glimpse of his face, his insane, committed eyes, and you remember then...that of course it will end for you all in blood, in shock, without dignity--but there is meanwhile this trip to be on . . . over your own seat where there ought to be an advertising plaque, is instead a quote from Rilke: "Once, only once . . ." One of Their favorite slogans. No return, no salvation no Cycle--that's not what They, nor Their brilliant employee Kekulé, have taken the Serpent to mean. No: what the Serpent means is--how's this--that the six carbon atoms of benzene are in fact curled around into a closed ring, just like that snake with its tail in its mouth, GET IT? (GR 412-3)

Quite obviously, in this complex passage of science history, ecological speculation, oneiromancy, parable and myth, several different points are being made. This episode asserts the fanatic deathwishfulness of the "System"; it asserts, too, the indiscriminate exploitation of the earth's resources and populations for uni-dimensional technocratic and economic ends (expressed most forcefully in the omitted passage cited previously); it identifies the paraphernalia of Their order ("pressed uniform," "ID and travel papers") which we shall repeatedly confirm; it diagnoses a logic of linear irreversible temporality which conceives the earth as an infinite abundance, justifying an incessant uni-directional progress devoid of ecological (not to mention ethical!) considerations.

Finally this extract, concluding with a sarcastic account of the Serpent's interpretation, identifies a hermeneutic practice which rationalizes a demonstrably ambiguous text (the dream) to a single, logical sense and then, furthermore, reads this interpretation as an externally motivated sign justifying, legitimizing the prevailing enterprise, the classic Puritan ruse for justifying capitalism, "(money in the Puritan sense--an outward and visible O.K. on their intentions)" (GR 652). The extract thus impugns

an unjustified interpretive practice of subordinating the mythical or figurative axis (mythos) to the logical axis (logos) of a text which predicates itself precisely in this ambivalence. In other words, I also discover here another allegory of interpretation warning that, by seeking a unitary meaning "we are in danger of repeating mentally what They are doing in building the rocket" (Tanner). Let us turn now to a second parable which will provide another pretext for gathering predicates of the System.

Late in the novel we encounter a narrative concerning Slothrop's comic-strip/T.V. serial band of superheroes, The Floundering Four ("Each of the FF is, in fact, gifted while at the same time flawed by his gift--unfit by it for human living" GR 675), the antithesis of a systematic organization. (The exact source, that is to say, "speaker" of this episode is not clear, and it is an attractive but oversimplistic temptation to recuperate this, and other unanchored and baffling episodes towards the end of the novel, as simply Slothropian reveries. With the disappearing Slothrop fades the certainty of ever knowing whose psyché/space/text we are reading; as Tanner expresses it, "At times in his book it is not always clear whether we are in a bombed-out building, or a bombed out mind, but that too is quite appropriate. For how many of those rockets that fell on London fell in the consciousness of the survivors, exploding in the modern mind?"¹²).

The Floundering Four of futuristic Raketenstadt wage constant battle against an abstracted "Pernicious Pop" (GR 676), a comic-strip representative of the castrating, Oedipal Father and the paternal law, and a local regent of the anonymous Them whose corporate absenteeism

¹² Tanner, in Mendelson (ed.), p. 51.

dominates the novel's environments more firmly than any 'present' individual. The anonymous "They," ambiguously an amalgam of actual power-figures sublimated into an exteriorized projection of (frequently unverifiable but) vivid sensations of control, as external agency, performs a theological function; "They" are invested with all the attributes of a less-than-honorable deity, and Their agents, for subordinate characters, are power-figures like the Faustian Capt. Blicero; Dr. Pointsman and Laszlo Jamf (two 'mad scientists'); Lyle Bland (cf. Pierce Inverarity); Crutchfield/Courchfield ("he's the White Cocksman of the terre mauvais GR 69) a dream-archetype of this prevailing form of white, phallic authority; and even Broderick Slothrop, all of whom are further augmented by a number of mythic and legendary prototypes which assert the ubiquity of these power-relations: the Oedipus myth (Sophoclean and Freudian), the tale of Hansel and Gretel (GR 96, 176 & passim.) and Abraham and Isaac (GR 749-50).

This sketches broadly the power-contexts which the novel defines and I have attempted to scan some of the many guises and figures through which this hierarchy appears, but let us return to the FF and the "Paternal Peril" (GR 675).

The FF's search for "momentary targets such as the Radiant hour" "which has been abstracted from the day's 24 by colleagues of the Father, for sinister reasons of their own" (GR 674), is interrupted by "that Pause that Refreshes!" (GR 677), introducing the Iceboxland sub-plot. This sub-plot allegorizes the condition towards which the leviathan syndicates and cartels, the corporate "Pernicious Pops" of the electric age would bring the World over which

Their Power-Grid and Electricity presides.¹³ "Walking now in among miles-down-the-sky shelves and food-mountains or food-cities of Iceboxland (but look out, it can get pretty Fascist in here...the Grid's big function in this System is iceboxery: freezing back the tumult s cycles of the day to preserve this odorless small world, this cube of changelessness)" (GR 677-8).

¹³ "Electricity," which we discussed briefly in chap. 2, paronomastically telescopes the common sense of electric power and the quality and power of 'being Elect' providing one of numerous instances where "Pynchon" extends the conventional senses of our vocabulary in playful and innovative ways, but also making an urgent rhetorical point. Kristeva, discussing the carnivalesque discourse of which her Menippean satire is a major type (here I direct the reader to the lengthy quotation from Kristeva cited in the 'Introduction'), comments, "the writer can use another's word, giving it a new meaning while retaining the meaning it already had. The result is a word with two significations: it becomes ambivalent. This ambivalent word is therefore the result of a conjoining of two sign systems."--Kristeva, p.73; we previously noted this function in "Pynchon's" re-organization of the animate/inanimate dichotomy in V. The trope of Electricity provides a comprehensive image of the conjoined power of technological prowess (of which electricity is commonly an index) and the less tangible grids of symbolic power concealed by devices of mystification i.e. naturalized. Electricity concisely represents this technological power and grids of symbolic, patriarchal order modulating and conforming what Tanner described as "disruptive or socially unstabilized energy" (vide. chap. 2, n. 41) i.e. libido, desire etc., into preferred and normative "waveforms"; Mondaugen's electro-mysticism tacitly confirms this, "Think of the ego, the self that suffers a personal history bound to time, as the grid. The deeper and trueSelf is the flow between cathode and plate. The constant, pure flow, Signals--sense data, feelings, memories [the designation of these phenomena as species of sign is instructive] relocating-- are put onto the grid, and modulate the flow. We live lives that are waveforms constantly changing with time, now positive, now negative. Only at moments of great serenity is it possible to find the pure, informationless state of signal zero" (GR 404), to which we graft the following passage indicating who has shares in the ego, "The Man has a branch office in each of our brains, his corporate emblem is a white albatross, each local rep has a cover known as the Ego, and their mission in this world is Bad Shit" (GR 712-3). Axioms of a burlesqued Freudian and Zen Buddhist text are nevertheless legible in Mondaugen's electro-doctrine.

Electricity provides one umbrella-trope (among others) reinforcing an equation of human organisms, societies, symbolic communities, inanimate matter and the Rocket, already amongst the most overdetermined

Within this brief tableau we find recapitulated, indices of stasis, reification, insulation and implicitly, that WASP, Aryan, Western fetish, 'whiteness' (themes we traced in V. and Lot 49) combined with some other important

figures, in complex allegorical relations where each transfers epithets to the others. Three examples will suffice to identify this network. During the Närrisch reverie where the 2nd pers. pronoun acts as a crucial lever deliberately superimposing reader and Rocket, "radio-signals from the ground would enter the Rocket body, and by reflex--literally by electric signal traveling a reflex arc [crux of the analogy]--the control surfaces twitch, to steer you back on course the instant you'd begin to wander off (how could you've kept from lapsing, up there, into that radiant inattention, so caught up in the wind, the sheer altitude . . . the unimaginable fires at your feet?) (GR 517). Again, "Pynchon" draws attention to the electrical continuity of the animate/inanimate in a description of the Iron Toad in the latrine at Putzi's, "hooked up to the European Grid" "Often enough to matter, the current will be there--piranha-raid and salmon-climb up the gold glittering fall of piss, your treacherous ladder of salts and acids, bringing you back into touch with Mother Ground, the great, the planetary pool of electrons" (GR 604). Asserting the equation of Rocket and humanity slightly differently is Katje's meditation, "Katje has understood the great airless arc [the Rocket's parabola] as a clear allusion to certain lusts that drive the planet and herself, and Those who use her--over its peak and down, plunging, burning, toward a terminal orgasm" (GR 223). Examples could be multiplied.

These episodes communicate in turn with the parable of Byron the partisan Bulb where, courtesy of a German pun, "The pattern gathers in his soul (Seele, as the core of the earlier carbon filament was known in Germany)" (GR 654) in conjunction with a rhetoric of personification throughout the 'biography,' the trope of the body-electric emerges again.

We could in turn trace this current of electricity through the numerous references to lightning (e.g. GR 455, 663-5 & passim.), Donar the thunder-god and his deputy Plechazunga (GR 567-9), illuminations (revelations, hallucinations, vision, dreams, insights) to the "double lightning-stroke" which is the SS emblem, to the unpredictable and sudden lightning-like action of the A4 strikes on London, and so on until "It is difficult to perceive just what the fuck is happening here" (GR 504). It will be clear that no exhaustive context of any theme in the novel can be provided and that arbitrary limits always have to be imposed by the reader/critic; this linking process which I have briefly indulged above could obviously be extended indefinitely always ramifying differently. The trope of electricity, however, is one of the devices with which "Pynchon" avers, literally and figuratively, the artificiality of symbolic divisions which here, for example would separate the non-exclusive opposition of animate and inanimate matter.

predicates of the System. The odourless, changelessness of the white icebox, the dream of the Thousand-Year Reich, is also, "Pynchon" persuades, the emblem of death trans-figured, displaced, expelled, and paradoxically assured in the inertias produced of a narcissistic commitment "to concentrate energy into one favored room of the Creation at the expense of everything else" (GR 411). The point is made explicitly:

Shit, now, is the color white folks are afraid of. Shit is the presence of death,...the stiff and rotting corpse itself inside the whiteman's warm and private own asshole, which is getting pretty intimate. That's what that white toilet's for. You see many brown toilets? Nope, toilet's the color of gravestones, classical columns of mausoleums, that white porcelain's the very emblem of Odorless and Official Death. (GR 688)

The passage points to a scato-eschatological rhetoric which is sustained throughout and illustrates the method of "Pynchon's" cultural psychoanalysis, and confirms the System's promotion of whiteness implied in the Iceboxland sequence (You see many brown refrigerators?). This then concludes the second parable mapping out some coordinates of the System which we will repeatedly confirm during the subsequent discussion.

These are, of course, only two of the many routes of access one might have taken, two parables of massive and brute power whose force and processes--like his flawed superheroes ("a secret process among the granters of permission, a process it is one of the 4's ongoing mandates to discover and impart to the world" GR 678-9)--it seems one of "Pynchon's" ongoing mandates to discover and impart to the world. Where our latter parabolic preamble wishes to lead us with a rhetorically loaded chiaroscuro, is to that vast icebox of Blitzed winter London where, supervised by Whitehall, "a million bureaucrats are diligently plotting death" (GR 17).

DEVELOPING THE PICTURE : "black-and-white bad news" (GR 209)

The hierarchies we identified operating in the Republic, Inverarity's "legacy America," are developed and expanded again here, with the dominance of digital and binary symbolic practices; reason and logic are promoted over emotions and compassions, mind over body, male over female, same over other, causality over contingency, ideal over material etc., with the subordination or disqualification of the latter; that is the state of the System, the status quo.

I shall restrict myself (reluctantly!) to some of the more important and extensive thematic networks and structures which I classify under the comprehensive, but once more arbitrary, co-ordinates of "System" and "Zone," co-ordinates of geographical and cognitive-symbolic space which, we will suspect from previous experience, do not constitute a balanced, symmetrical opposition, and which will correspond roughly to the other spatial pair (Inside/Outside) which orientated our discussion of Lot 49. (We could indeed call these co-ordinates "Inside-System" and "Outside-System"). Within these broad categories I propose to examine recurrent themes and structures under a series of subheadings dealing with roughly independent issues. Thus I shall sketch out an agenda of emblems, motifs, myths, symbols, archetypes and themes or, recalling the inadequacy of the concept of theme and similarly this entire lexicon of forms, anthems.¹⁴

¹⁴ "Each word cited yields a key or grid that you can move through the text....the difficulty is that there is no unit of occurrence: fixed form, identifiable theme, element determinable as such. [No themes but] Only anthems [anthèmes], scattered throughout, collecting everywhere"--Jacques Derrida, quoted in J. Culler, On Deconstruction: Theory and Criticism after Structuralism (London, Melbourne & Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983), p. 210. Culler's interpolations.

Let us begin to trace out some of the binarisms which hierarchize and polarize this System. During Part I, "Beyond the Zero," the predicates of this System are minutely mapped out and "Pynchon" sustains the binary arrangement of this space through a remarkable rhetorical concord of colour, light, season and temperature.

London, one of the Electricities, cumulatively etiolated by the astringency of numberless interdictions and numberless repressions imposed by the War and the System which supports it, is deftly patterned by steel colours and particularly a chiaroscuro of white and black, shadow and light (which my reading of Lot 49, by virtue of a sort of future perfect operation, will unwittingly have begun to read) indicating the exclusive polarities promoted by the System. The severity of the winter emphasizes the corrosive hostility of the environment and the prevailing emotional temperature. Thus, throughout Part I, one reads of "winter and elastic light" (GR 4), Slothrop's office at ACHTUNG is characterized by "its black typewriters tall as gravemarkers. ...the electric light is yellow, cheap, merciless" (GR 17); at St. Veronica's hospital, "Steam drifts into the glare of the gooseneck lamp, now and then becoming very bright, and the shadows of the men's gestures may pass through it, knife-edged, swooping very fast. But both faces are usually reserved, kept well back, in the annulus of night.

Out of the blackness of the ward, a half-open file drawer of pain each bed a folder, [cf. n. 15], come cries, struck cries, as from cold metal" (GR 47) I draw attention to the chiaroscuro, the bureaucratic metaphor and a predominance of steel imagery. Let us cite some other examples, 'At "The White Visitation" the walls read ice. Graffiti of ice the sunless day, glazing the darkening blood brick and terra cotta as if the house is to be

preserved weatherless in some skin of clear museum plastic, an architectural document, an old-fashioned apparatus whose use is forgotten. Ice of varying thickness, wavy, blurred" (GR 72-3); whilst Pointsman and Mexico take a walk on the beach, "this day the coldest so far of the winter" (GR 86) a passing flight of B-17s is described in some detail. One notices a dominance of muted colours:

Behind these Fortresses the undersides of the cold clouds are blue, and their smooth billows are veined in blue--elsewhere touched with grayed-out pink or purple. . . . Wings and stabilizers are shadowed underneath in dark gray. The shadows softly feather lighter up around curves of fuselage or nacelle. Spinners emerge from hooded dark inside the cowlings...the light of the sky catching all vulnerable surfaces a uniform bleak gray. The planes drone along, stately, up in the zero sky, shedding frost as it builds, sowing the sky behind in white ice-furrows, their own color matching certain degrees of cloud, all the tiny windows and openings in soft blackness.... Inside it is black obsidian. (GR 87)

This minutely detailed network of colour (lessness) and ice is sustained, "A gull goes screaming away sidewise along the frozen beam. The chalk cliffs rear up above, cold and serene as death. Early barbarians of Europe who ventured close enough to this coast saw these white barriers through the mist, and knew then where their dead had been taken to" (GR 89), "So the two of them: trudging ...their footprints behind them a long freezing progress..., the overcast reflecting from the glazed beach nearly white. They walked till that winter hid them and it seemed the cruel Channel itself would freeze over, and no one, none of us, could ever completely find them again" (GR 92). I hope these cited passages also convey the extraordinary evocative force of the prose.

Throughout the novel Western European culture is distinguished by a rhetoric of 'colourlessness' with a clear predominance of white; Part I, as I have indicated, is a recurring testimony to "white necropolizing" (GR 626). Katje Borgesius, Europe's child and one of Their employees, is described with Slothrop in the south of France:

Her hand is gloveless and icy in his, her narrow black coat making her taller.... They stop,... he watching the midwinter sea, she the blind and chilly Casino.... Colorless clouds slide by, endlessly, in the sky.her fair eyebrows, plucked to wings, darkened, eyes rimmed in black, only the outboard few lashes missed and left blonde. Cloudlight comes slanting down across her face, taking away color, leaving little more than a formal snapshot, the kind that might appear on a passport. . . .

They are standing among black curly skeletons of iron benches, on the empty curve of this esplanade ... trying to spill them into the sea.... The day has grown colder. He reaches and turns up the collar of her coat, holds her cheeks then in his palms . . . is he trying to bring back the color of flesh? (GR 224-5)

Again, a consistent rhetoric of colourlessness, coldness and death is legible. Back in London, the "measured winter holocaust" (GR 112) continues; on Christmas day Thomas Gwenhidwy, Pointsman's colleague, is "a pocket of color, a holdout against this whitening day" (GR 170) and the sky delivers, "the deep choral hum of American bombers: Death's white Gymanfa Ganu" (GR 171).

Elsewhere, pointing to the unnaturalness of London's polarized and bleached geography, is the coincidence of this 'bureauchromatism' with Expressionist set-design, "courtyards in stark Expressionist white/black, built to no human scale" (GR 393) and the experience of Tchitcherine père interprets this chiaroscuro a little further:

He only wanted a rest from the working parties and the way it looked . . . from what the black and white of coal and arc-light were about to say . . . no color, and the unreality to go with it--but a familiar unreality, that warns This Is All Being Staged To See What I'll Do So I Mustn't Make One Wrong Move . . . on the last day of his life...he will think of the slowly carbonizing faces of men he thought he knew...a conspiracy of carbon, though he never phrased it as "carbon," it was power he walked away from, the feeling of too much meaningless power, flowing wrong . . . he could smell Death in it. So he waited till the master-at-arms turned to light a cigarette, and then just walked away (GR 350-1).

If black, as we saw earlier (GR 688), is the colour of death feared by white culture, white is the colour of the death it promotes, "white porcelain's the very emblem of Odorless and Official Death" (GR 688), and etiolation is its process. The long history of Western imperialism, racial antagonism and anti-ecological technology is repeatedly located in the obsession, the fetish of official, Western culture to promote white homogeneity. The hierarchical polarization of the "real" into exclusive identities and opposites is identified as the first phase of an ideal sublimation and eradication of difference into perfect, uniform homogeneity.

The Faustian Weissman/Blicero, obsessed with the glory of the sublime, transcendental death, personifies the Fascist extreme of this destructive desire. He preaches a doctrine of self-immolation and transcendence to his perfect Aryan minion, Gottfried:

"Want the Change," Rilke said, ...wanting it, to be taken, to embrace, to fall toward the flame growing to fill all the senses (GR 97)

He...wants now to be out of the winter, inside the Oven's warmth, darkness, steel shelter, the door behind him...gonging shut, forever. The rest is foreplay. (GR 99)

"I want to break out--to leave this cycle of infection and death. I want to be taken in love: so taken that you and I, and death, and life, will be gathered, inseparable, into the radiance of what we would become. . . ." (GR 724)

However attractive this doctrine is made to appear, its end result is nevertheless self-annihilation, and Blicero, its most dedicated advocate, becomes synonymous with a Death which, each time finding a surrogate for the ritual of sacrifice, endures:

The true king only dies a mock death. Remember. Any number of young men may be selected to die in his place while the real king, foxy old bastard, goes on. (GR 131)

Indeed, after instructing him in the glamour of a transcendental death, Gottfried is sacrificed and becomes Blicero's scapegoat, "Soon there will be fires, too. The Oven we fattened you for will glow" (GR 751).

Returning now to the significance of "Pynchon's" colour-schema in this idealistic transcendentalism we observe that it is explicitly linked with a desire for the sublimation of difference in perfect blankness. Enzian, Weissman's ex-minion, recalling how his former master found his pseudonym, develops this complex allegorical framework:

Enzian's found the name Bleicheröde close enough to "Blicker," the nickname the early Germans gave to Death. They saw him white: bleaching and blankness. The name was later Latinized to "Dominus Blicero." Weissman, enchanted, took it as his SS code name. (GR 322)

And again, in the final moments of the novel, shortly after Gottfried (symbol of the Western child sold an eschatology of transcendental death in the 'Oven' of

the West's technology) has been launched in the Rocket 00000, "Pynchon" consolidates the persona of Blicero:

what is this death but a whitening, a carrying of whiteness to ultrawhite, what is it but bleaches, detergents, oxidizers, abrasives--Streckefuss he's been today to the boy's tormented muscles, but more appropriately is he Blicker, Bleicheröde, Bleacher, Blicero, extending, rarefying the Caucasian pallor to an abolition of pigment, of melanin, of spectrum, of separateness from shade to shade, it is so white that CATCH (GR 759)

The film jumps and the following frames are lost, but the relationship between the fetish of "whiteness," the ideal of homogeneity, and death, is established. During a penultimate conversation with Gottfried, Blicero has remarked, suggesting its lineage:

Can you feel in your body how strongly I have infected you with my dying? I was meant to: when a certain time has come, I think we are all meant to. Fathers are the carriers of the virus of Death, and sons are the infected . . . and, so that the infection may be more certain, Death in its ingenuity has contrived to make the father and son beautiful to each other as Life has made male and female . . . (GR 723)

Within all these extracts the emphasis on the ideal eradication or sublimation of differences, of opposites: the abolition of pigment, of female, of Life, of otherness, provides a parable of unconstrained idealism which, in less perfect circumstances, is encumbered by negativities and polar opposites providing obstacles to the realization of its teleology. Thus I suggest that Capt. Blicero represents both a character in the traditional sense, and the personification of a prevalent form of idealism which inhabits Western system-building practices, extrapolated to its extreme. Concluding on a more sinister note, "Pynchon" indicates where this cognitive set can be detected, where Blicero still prevails: Weissmann's Tarot is interpreted as follows:

The King of Cups, crowning his hopes, is the fair intellectual-king. If you are wondering where he's gone, look among the successful academics, the Presidential advisers, the token intellectuals who sit on boards of directors. He is almost surely there. Look high, not low.

His future card, the card of what will come, is The World. (GR 749)

Let us however, return to the System and discuss the methods and devices by which death's enterprise is executed within a bureaucratic social order where Blicero's rampant solipsism is somewhat constrained.

NECROPOLICY : "wherever the enterprise is systematic death"
(GR 76)

What was continually described as a culture of narcissism and phallocentrism (and which I endeavoured to show coincided with logocentrism) in Lot 49 and V., is preserved in Gravity's Rainbow, but elaborated more minutely and provocatively as a myopic "culture of death" (GR 176) perpetrated by (trading on a double sense) executive powers. Roger Mexico reflects, "The city he visits nowadays is Death's antechamber: where all the paperwork's done, the contracts signed, the days numbered. Nothing of the grand, garden, adventurous capital his childhood knew" (GR 40).¹⁵ (Something of the garden and the adventure will be regained in the ruined landscape of the summertime Zone, "The Zone is in full summer" GR 336).

¹⁵ "Paperwork" is a consistent metonymy of the System's bureaucracy: maps, schedules, blueprints, dossiers, timetables, permits, passports, ID's etc., are consistent evidence of the System's priorities and control. Tracing the convergence of the Slothrop lineage with the American cultural mainstream, Government and paper are closely associated by "Pynchon," and the Western "whiteness" fetish, elsewhere identified as the source of racial antagonism, is here given anti-

I elaborate the theme of "necropolicy" mostly in terms of our first "parable," illustrating the development of its predicates elsewhere in the novel and confirming the motifs of exploitation and use which we found legible there.

ecological overtones, "back when Shays fought the federal troops across Massachusetts, there were Slothrop Regulators patrolling Berkshire for the rebels, wearing sprigs of hemlock in their hats so you could tell them from the Government soldiers. Federals stuck a tatter of white paper in theirs. Slothrop's in those days were not yet so much involved with paper, and the wholesale slaughtering of trees. They were still for the living green, against the dead white. Later they lost, or traded away, knowledge of which side they'd been on. Tyrone here has inherited most of their bland ignorance on the subject" (GR 268). Sure enough, the Slothrop Paper Company was founded and "diminishing green reaches were converted acres at a clip into paper--toilet paper, banknote stock, newsprint--a medium for shit, money, and the Word.the three American truths, powering the American mobility, claimed the Slothrop's, clasped them for good to the country's fate" (GR 28).

Numerous other references besides, confirm the network of "the State's oversize paper brain" (GR 421). Slothrop's rocket-hunting routine is encumbered by a snare of bureaucracy, "ACHTUNG can... submit its fifty-millionth interbranch request to that S.O.E." (GR 20) and amongst the "bureaucratic smegma" on his desk is "a layer of forgotten memoranda, empty buff ration books, phone numbers, unanswered letters, tattered sheets of carbon paper" (GR 18) all pointing to a sophisticated bureaucratic network. The abject Brig. Pudding during his session with Domina Nocturna, reflects, "They have taken him far from his simple nerves. They have stuffed paper illusions and military euphemisms between him and this truth, this rare decency, this moment at her scrupulous feet" (GR 234). Franz Pökler, the German rocket-engineer, a curious contradiction of civil meekness and wild, Fascist fantasies, cloisters himself in a paper existence, "Pökler knew how to find safety among the indoor abscissas and ordinates of graphs" (GR 399), "the gift of Daedalus...allowed him to put as much labyrinth as required between himself and the inconveniences of caring" (GR 428), in his case labyrinths of intricate calculation. Pökler, like Pudding a victim of endless bureaucratization and control resentfully reflects whilst he is stationed on a Rocket target with his life endangered, "No one else here cares for the penetralia of the moment, or the last mysteries: there have been too many rational years. The paper has piled too thick and far" (GR 426). Conjoined with the recolonization of the Zone is a "closer adherence...to the paperwork" (GR 727) and contrasting WW II with the First "Pynchon" remarks, "In this latest War, death was no enemy, but a collaborator. Homosexuality in high places is just a carnal afterthought now, and the real and only fucking is done on paper. . . ." (GR 616) Earlier an elegy on the destiny of toothpaste tubes concludes, "the continuity,

Thus, personifying the apparent deathwishfulness of Those who direct the System, is masochistic, wanton London aroused by her chances for 'pain' and death under the impact of History (which is to suggest that the Rocket vividly allegorizes the 'historical event'; a point to which I shall return):

the Angel...stood over Lübeck during the Palm Sunday raid...to bear witness to a game of seduction. It was the next-to-last step London took before her submission, before the liaison that would bring her at length to the eruption and scarring of the wasting pox noted on Roger Mexico's map ["red pock-marks on the pure white skin of lady London" GR 125], latent in this love she shares with the night-going rake Lord Death . . . because sending the RAF to make a terror raid against civilian Lübeck was the unmistakable long look that said hurry up and fuck me, that brought the rockets hard and screaming (GR 215)

This death-dealing, developed here through a sado-masochistic metaphor which inserts it into an ensemble of sado-masochistic relationships elsewhere, is diagnosed as one of the fundamental processes of the System, and a necessary product of power, prescriptive order and control, a notion which is expanded and consolidated in several ways throughout the novel. (Parenthetically, Thanatz, the leading theoretician of Sado-anarchism,

flesh to kindred metals, home to hedgeless sea, has persisted. It is not death that separates these incarnations, but paper: paper specialties, paper routines. The War, the Empire will expedite such barriers between our lives" (GR 130). Finally, people become subordinate to bureaucratic priorities as Thanatz, fallen late amongst the Zone's preterite, the Displaced Persons (DP's) discovers. He circulates like a document, "He is rubber-stamped...named, numbered, consigned, invoiced, misrouted, detained, ignored. He passes in and out of the paper grasp of Russian, British, American and French body-jobbers, round and round the occupation circuit.... Without a ration card or Soldbuch, you are doomed to be moved, in lots of 2,000, center to center, about the Zone, possibly forever" (GR 669).

elaborates on this sado-masochistic model:

"a little S and M never hurt anybody."

....
 "why are we taught to feel reflexive shame whenever the subject comes up? Why will the Structure allow every other kind of sexual behaviour but that one? Because submission and dominance are resources it needs for its very survival. They cannot be wasted in private sex. It needs our submission so that it can remain in power. It needs our lusts after dominance so that it can co-opt us into its own power game, There is no joy in it, only power. GR 737)

"Pynchon" links the diverse machineries of order and civilization to this dominating necropolicy, simultaneously averring a common analytical epistemology in Western culture's attendant discourses (history, science, metaphysics, organized religion, eschatology etc., all of which are savagely criticized, interrogated, parodied or satirized in some way or another) supplying this necropolicy and complicit with it. ¹⁶

¹⁶ The reader is referred to the brilliant collection of essays in System and Structure: Essays in Communication and Exchange, (cited previously), particularly "Epistemology and Ecology," where Wilden elaborates a very similar critique to Pynchon apropos "real" technological culture (in case anyone thought Pynchon's writing was simply fiction). Wilden remarks in one exemplary instance, "The biosocial hubris of a value system based on growth and efficiency for their own sakes, on the principle of selective affluence [election?], uninhibited 'progress', the virtue of diversification [specialization- cf. GR 448, "another kind of fanaticism: that of the specialist"], and the maximization of profit at all costs ["the System removing from the rest of the World these vast quantities of energy to keep its own tiny desperate fraction showing a profit" GR 412], coupled with an almost religious fanaticism about technology, further increases the biosocial deviations of the ecosystem which economic factors are already amplifying. But technology requires human and natural resources. And our global dependence on technology, along with the continuous increase of the technological index of every individual, has brought us to a situation which neither the human nor the natural will long stand for.

Each individual makes ever-increasing demands on technology because of the increasing demands technology makes on him. His demands include the psychological gratifications and 'escape potential' he seeks in an alienating, objectifying plastic [my emphasis] culture...." --p. 208.

During the visitation of Walter Rathenau's ("prophet and architect of the cartelized state" GR 166) disillusioned spirit to IG Farben and Nazi aristocracy, the following radical interpretation of technological culture is articulated:

to make steel, the coal tars,...must be taken from the original coal.

"We thought of this as an industrial process. It was more, We passed over the coal-tars. This is the sign of revealing.

"But this is all the impersonation of life. The real movement is not from death to any rebirth. It is from death to death-transfigured. The best you can do is to polymerize a few dead molecules. But polymerizing is not resurrection. I mean your IG, Generaldirektor."

"You think you'd rather hear about what you call 'life': the growing, organic Kartell. But it's only another illusion. A very clever robot. The more dynamic it seems to you, the more deep and dead, in reality, it grows. Look at the smokestacks, how they proliferate, fanning the wastes of original waste over greater and greater masses of city. Structurally, they are strongest in compression. A smokestack can survive any explosion--even the shock wave from one of the new cosmic bombs"--a bit of a murmur around the table at this-- ["the Cosmic Bomb was still trembling in its earliness, not yet revealed to the People" GR 539] "as you all must know. The persistence, then, of structures favouring death. Death converted into more death. Perfecting its reign, just as the buried coal grows denser, and overlaid with more strata--epoch on top of epoch, city on top of ruined city. This is the sign of Death the impersonator.

"These signs are real. They are also symptoms of a process. The process follows the same form, the same structure. To apprehend it you will follow the signs. All talk of cause and effect is secular history, and secular history is a diversionary tactic.

....

"You must ask two questions. First, what is the real nature of synthesis? And then: what is the real nature of control?

"You think you know, you cling to your beliefs. But sooner or later you will have to let them go. . . ." (GR 166-7)

An advanced infiltration of death into industrial culture is asserted (carrying forward a version of the animate/inanimate dichotomy from V.); frequent insinuations are made that everything that IG Farben nobility (exemplary representative of the international cartel-community which includes Shell, General Electric, Siemens, Imperial Chemicals Inc., Psychochemie AG, Chemnyco N.Y., General Aniline and Film, Glitherius Paint & Dye etc., etc.) believes, is illusion, fallacy, otherwise, demonstrating the extent of "Pynchon's" inversion of the conventional senses of life, real, progress, development and so on; it is a strident ecological polemic and the fundamental predicates in which Western industrial culture founds the justifications of its enterprise, are subverted. However, undercutting this critique is its absence of conventional authority; what credit has ever been given to spiritual communications? Once again we detect Pynchon's widespread predication/erasure practice in operation, giving a dubious, undecidable status to an acceptable/unacceptable (depending on your sympathies) diagnosis, and forcing the reader to both draw his own conclusions and recognize that they are his conclusions. (If we were to describe this passage in terms of speech-act theory we might say that the problematic status of the passage derives from a discrepancy between 'valid' constation and 'invalid' performance). Many examples of this kind may be found in the novel. Legible here again, in support of my 'allegory' thesis, is the "overlay" motif. I also draw attention to the implicitly textual cast in which Rathenau reads the urban topography ("signs" and "symptoms" cf. GR 144,159).

The same smokestacks dominate London's skyline, aptly exhaling "imperial presence"; a reprise of the theme of exploitation and use is remarked:

It was one of those great iron afternoons in London: the yellow sun being teased apart by a thousand chimneys breathing, fawning upward without shame. This smoke is more than the day's breath, more than dark strength--it is an imperial presence that lives and moves. People were crossing the streets and squares, going everywhere. Busses were grinding off, hundreds of them, down the long concrete viaducts smeared with years' pitiless use and no pleasure, into haze-gray, grease-black, red lead and pale aluminium, between scrap heaps that towered high as blocks of flats, down side-shoving curves into roads clogged with Army convoys, other tall busses and canvas lorries, bicycles and cars, everyone here with different destinations and beginnings, all flowing,...over it all the enormous gas ruin of the sun among the smokestacks, the barrage balloons, power lines and chimneys (GR 26)

Once more indices of exploitation and heavy industry obtain. Drab metallic colours predominate. "Streets and squares": the topography of the grid and Pökler's analogy with graph paper, asserting an oblique complicity with the Rocket (vide. GR 399-400) are already presaged here. Again, in this scene, details have been carefully selected and elaborated, constituting a semiotic network which belies any superficial appearances of realism. The narrator betrays the realistic potential of the passage by explicitly interpreting some of the details (here and elsewhere), extracting their signifying character and establishing them as signs. The textual cast of his details (obviously coinciding remarkably with "Rathenau's" description) demonstrates that description (realism) is already interpretation and by no means an objective, neutral transcription of the 'facts'. I raise this issue somewhat digressively here, in order to return to it in further detail later.

Elsewhere, Webley Silvernail, a lab. assistant at "The White Visitation" and subsequently a member of the Counterforce (as we might have predicted from this scene, in retrospect), confesses to the laboratory animals after a moment of

Hollywood choreography to "a peppy tropical orchestra"
(GR 229):

Now it's back to the cages and the rationalized forms of death--death in the service of the one species cursed with the knowledge that it will die. . . ."I would set you free, if I knew how. But it isn't free out here. All the animals, the plants, the minerals, even other kinds of men are being broken and reassembled every day, to preserve an elite few, who are the loudest to theorize on freedom, but the least free of all. I can't even give you the hope that it will be different someday--that They'll come out, and forget death, and lose Their technology's elaborate terror, and stop using every other form of life without mercy to keep what haunts men down to a tolerable level--and be like you instead, simply here, simply alive. . . ."
The guest star retires down the corridors. (GR 230)¹⁷

Hereafter, broadening the geographical and historical bases of this necropolitical tableau, we read and discern recurring structural characteristics, recurrent patterns which reinforce an "allegorical" approach according to which any individual episode is an "overlay" in which other strata are sedimented.

Coupling ubiquitous necropolicy with a long tradition of Christian authoritarianism conveniently adapted to oppressive political and colonial ends, "Pynchon" explains to Karl Marx, "Christian Europe was always death, Karl, death and repression" (GR 317) and sardonically elaborates the history

¹⁷ cf. Wilden, "Our industrial culture has traditionally depended on an 'ethic of disposability' for which natural resources, other people's eco-systems, 'other' human beings in general, and the disposable beer can have had roughly the same (exchange) value. Having taught that all it defines as environment is disposable, modern industrial society has only just begun to learn that THE SYSTEM WHICH DISPOSES OF ITS ENVIRONMENT DISPOSES OF ITSELF."--ibid. p. 207.

of imperialism as an abreaction to Western European religious and moral prohibitions (a notion examined in some detail in "Mondaugen's Story" in V.):

Colonies are the outhouses of the European soul, where a fellow can...enjoy the smell of his own shit. Where he can fall on his slender prey roaring as loud as he feels like, and guzzle her blood in open joy. Eh? [?] Where he can just wallow and rut and let himself go in a softness, a receptive darkness of limbs, of hair woolly as the hair on his own forbidden genitals. Where the poppy, and cannabis and coca grow full and green, and not to the colors and style of death, as do ergot and agaric, the blight and fungus native to Europe. Out and down in the colonies life can be indulged, life and sensuality in all its forms, with no harm done to the Metropolis, nothing to soil those cathedrals, white marble statues, noble thoughts. . . . No word ever gets back. The silences down here are vast enough to absorb all behavior, no matter how dirty, how animal it gets. . . . (GR 317)

In this savagely critical passage on the hypocritical contradictions between European Christian ethics and imperial policy, several polarizations can be discerned: the contrast of white and black, white and green, death and life, disease and fecundity, and the recurrence of the 'etiolation' motif.

Elsewhere, V-Mann Wimpe, dope salesman, develops a similar thesis apropos religion, politics and death to Tchitcherine, the novel's nominal marxist:

"The basic problem," he proposes, "has always been getting other people to die for you. What's worth enough for a man to give up his life? That's where religion had the edge, for centuries. Religion was always about death. It was used not as an opiate so much as a technique--it got people to die for one particular set of beliefs about death. Perverse, natürlich, but who are you to judge? It was a good pitch while it lasted. But ever since it became impossible to die for death, we have had a secular version--yours. Die to help History grow to its predestined shape. (GR 701)

We begin to detect an association between Blicero's diabolical doctrine of transcendent death and sublime deliverance, and the Christian version of this "pitch."

Taking up the colonial perspective again, the action of the European settlers against Didus ineptus extends the historical base of this necropolicy. This episode, relating the experiences of Katje's ancestor Frans van der Groov on Mauritius, illustrates the Christian-legitimized ethnocentrism which lent impetus to the great epoch of European imperialism (not to mention certain current ethnocentrisms):

They saw the stumbling birds ill-made to the point of Satanic intervention, so ugly as to embody argument against a Godly creation. Was Mauritius some first poison trickle through the sheltering dikes of Earth? Christians must stem it here, or perish in the Second Flood, loosed this time not by God but by the Enemy.
(GR 110)

The episode also constitutes an allegory and an anticipation of various imperial genocides which were to follow, most notably the German massacres of Herero (GR 362) and Jew, the slaughter of natives in Central Asia, "They hunted Sarts, Kazakhs, Kirghiz, and Dungans that terrible summer like wild game" (GR 340) (and implicitly incriminating the British eradication of the Tasmanians, the American purges on the North American Indians (vide GR 697), the comparable Spanish actions in South America and numerous other incidents perpetrated globally in the interests of imperial policy). Two recurrent imperial strategies are identified, the purge and the assimilation or co-option with the emphasis on exploitation, "No language meant no chance of co-opting them in to what their...invaders were calling Salvation" (GR 110). Frans, in the course of a reverie in which the dodoes receive the "Gift of Speech,"

discloses other imperial criteria, "For as much as they are the creatures of God, and have the gift of rational discourse" (GR 111) and "Sanctified now they will feed us, sanctified their remains and droppings fertilize our crops.Frans can look at both versions, the miracle and the hunt...as real, equal, possibilities. In both, eventually, the dodoes die." (GR 111). I underline the emphasis on "rational discourse" and the motif of sanctified exploitation which appears in this satirical context as a strategy for the absolution of imperial guilt.

Moreover, the Mauritius episode provides a microcosmic allegory of the finite biosphere whose resources can be exhausted and implicitly prophesies the fall of Western industrial culture as it is currently practised.¹⁸

This culture of death similarly flourishes and proliferates in the New World, "of course Empire took its way westward, what other way was there but into those virgin sunsets to penetrate and to foul?" (GR 214) and, chronicling the Slothrop genealogy and hereditament, "Country for miles around gone to necropolis, gray with marble dust, dust that was the breaths, the ghosts of all those fake-Athenian

¹⁸cf. A. Wilden, "the prevailing epistemology.... ...is an epistemology of biosocial imperialism. ...it involves the imposition of closed-system thinking on those aspects of reality which are open systems...."

The same epistemological error obtains whatever the ecosystem or the level of ecosystem we are concerned with: biological, psychological, socio-economic. Deterministic thinking in biology, elitism in genetics and psychometrics, instincts and intrapsychic conflicts in psychology, the free competition of the rational subject in economics... [etc.] are particularly obvious examples of the error. In its ideological manifestation (for every ideology is dependent upon a theory of knowledge and vice versa), the same error feeds pollution, racism, alienation, exploitation, oppression and ALL OTHER FORMS OF PATHOLOGICAL COMMUNICATION.--ibid. p. 210.

monuments going up elsewhere across the Republic. Always elsewhere" (GR 27).

Blicero summarizes this deathwish with characteristically sweeping and grandiose style, recapitulating the sado-masochistic figuration we noted elsewhere (GR 215):

"In Africa, Asia, Amerindia, Oceania, Europe came and established its order of Analysis and Death. What it could not use, it killed or altered. In time the death-colonies grew strong enough to break away. But the impulse to empire, the mission to propagate death, the structure of it, kept on. The savages of other continents, corrupted but still resisting in the name of life, have gone on despite everything . . . while Death and Europe are separate as ever, their love still unconsummated. Death only rules here. It has never, in love, become one with. . . (GR 722-3)

Once again we may note the polarization of European death-culture and a maimed but persisting life-culture as developed above (GR 317). The imperial policy of eradication or co-option, 'kill or alter' is again invoked. Blicero with characteristic perversity wishes to annihilate the final difference separating Europe and death. He desires a final consummation, to 'kil' death by the systematic extermination of life, in order to become "one with."

Consistent with the archetypal dimension elaborated around most of the other characters in Gravity's Rainbow, this death-culture (as much as 'character' as any other) has its corresponding mythical archetype, "dusty Dracularity, the West's ancient curse" (GR 263). The 'System as addict' trope (GR 412 & passim.) is supplemented by the trope of vampirism. We have already read, "he can fall on his slender prey...and guzzle her blood with open joy" (GR 317); this trope is confirmed elsewhere. Enzian, during a moment of paranoid speculation, proposes:

this War was never political at all,...it was being dictated by the needs of technology . . . by a conspiracy between humans and techniques, by something that needed the energy-burst of war, crying, "Money be damned, the very life of [insert name of nation] is at stake," but meaning, most likely, dawn is nearly here, I need my night's blood, my funding, funding, ah more, more (GR 521; Pynchon's interpolation)

And on a slightly lighter note (in a bizarre episode blending Pynchon's version of Dante's inferno--it's epigraphed, "Dear Mom I put a couple of people in Hell today. . . . --Fragment, thought to be from the Gospel of Thomas (Oxyrhynchus papyrus number classified) "GR 537-- with Piratical fantasy, ' "Oh no," Pirate whispers. This is one of his own in progress. Nobody else's GR 543) during a sermon by a Jesuit, follower of Teilhard de Chardin, playing DEVIL's ADVOCATE, "For every kind of vampire, there is a kind of cross" (GR 540).

Finally, addressing the reader with the ambiguously deictic "you" through the meditations of Horst Achtfaden, an engineer involved in the design modifications made to Rocket 00000, "Pynchon" demands that each reader situate himself in relation to this culture elaborately dramatized and described:

"You are either alone absolutely, alone with your own death, or you take part in the larger enterprise, and you share in the deaths of others. Are we not all one? Which is your choice," Fahringer now, buzzing and flat through the filters of memory, "the little cart, or the great one?" (GR 454)

In characteristic style, the answer is withheld and the question suspended for the reader to ponder like a koan.

Taking Blicero's remarks on analysis as our point of departure now, let us move back to Blitzed Iceboxland and the figures of Pointsman and Mexico. Once more, we will continue to confirm in passing, the themes and concerns we have motivated here.

POINTS MAN/ANTIPOINTS MAN : An Epistemological Allegory

"It will be a spectacle: the fall of a crystal palace"
(GR 3)

I should like now to consider in further detail the dramatization of certain dominant methodological processes which, it is suggested, perpetuate the System and the culture we have adumbrated above. Two scientific figures, Pointsman and Mexico, become the vehicles of two important epistemological alternatives.

Edward Pointsman F.R.C.S., a social patriarch, bureaucratic leader and the central authority figure in Part I, is a synecdoche of the System he inhabits, and espouses most clearly the epistemology in which it operates. He represents predominant cognitive and epistemological practices in Western discourses--conceptual dualism, analysis and causality--manifested in their scientific mode in a tradition of Newtonian physics, empirical positivism and behaviourism; the historical model, the 'pretext' for Pointsman is I.P. Pavlov. This epistemology, however, also constitutes, as I have argued at length through these chapters, the foundation to the dominant order of symbolic relations, viz. the digitalization of an interdependent conceptual field into exclusive oppositions of same and other, inside and outside, present and absent and a host of ideologically discriminative contraries. We shall

observe that close links are developed between Pointsman's cognitive practices and ideals, his ideological alignment and the goals of the System. This moment of reflection begins to convey to us some of Pointsman's prejudices, priorities and inhibitions:

Pointsman has a slight advantage. By facing squarely the extinction of his program, he has gained a great bit of Wisdom: that if there is a life force operating in Nature, still there is nothing so analogous in a bureaucracy. Nothing so mystical. It all comes down, as it must, to the desires of individual men. Oh, and women too of course, bless their empty little heads. But survival depends on having strong enough desires--on knowing the System better than the other chap, and how to use it. It's work, that's all it is, and there's no room for any extrahuman anxieties--they only weaken, effeminize the will: a man either indulges them, or fights to win, und so weiter. (GR 228)

I draw attention to this either/or thinking which characterizes much of Pointsman's analytical epistemology; his frequent elaborations on Pavlov's digital brain mechanics confirm his commitment to this epistemology.

Pointsman, a self-styled Theseus on a variant 'quest for V,' ("Surely the volume preceding the Book--the first Forty-one Lectures--came to him at age 28 like a mandate from the sub-montane Venus he could not resist: to abandon Harley Street for a journey more and more deviant, deliciously on, into a labyrinth of conditioned-reflex work.... . Venus and Ariadne!" GR 88), which might also be for the Minotaur, is obsessed with extending the provinces of scientific control and order, and eradicating the accidental and contingent:

"Pavlov believed that the ideal, the end we all struggle toward in science, is the true mechanical explanation. His faith ultimately lay in a pure physiological basis for the life of the psyche.

No effect without cause, and a clear train of linkages." (GR 89)

And focussing on the baffling problem of Slothrop's erotic precognition of A4s' target areas:

the stimulus, somehow, must by the rocket, some precursor wraith, some rocket's double.... damn it, what cue, right in front of our eyes, that we haven't the heart to see? . . .

But if it's in the air, right here, right now, then the rockets follow from it, 100% of the time. No exceptions. When we find it, we'll have shown again the stone determinacy of everything, of every soul. (GR 86)

Once more, Pointsman jots in his notebook (kept after the fashion of Pavlov) apropos Slothrop; "there can be no doubt that he is, physiologically, historically, a monster. We must never lose control. The thought of him lost in the world of men, after the war, fills me with a deep dread I cannot extinguish. . . ." (GR 144)

Pointsman's obsession with control, his 'will-to-power' (a drive which Pynchon, following Freud, consistently establishes on a sexual basis and one allegorized in many of his bizarre sex-tableaus as I suggested in the chapter on V.), as his masturbatory reveries of the Nobel Prize (GR 141), his quest for a human guinea pig, "One, little, Fox! (GR 53) and his quasi-Fascist fantasies, "it is Pointsman's burden alone. The solitude of a Führer" "Pointsman is finding it much easier to slip into a l'état c'est moi frame of mind" (GR 272) suggest, extends well beyond the confines of the laboratory. Or more accurately, Pointsman is prepared to conceive society and particularly the war, as a laboratory subordinated to the ends of science and the technology of control, "suppose we consider the war itself as a laboratory? when the V-2 hits, you see, first the blast, then the sound of its falling . . . the

normal order of the stimuli reversed that way" (GR 49). Pointsman's enterprise, and several others, positively thrives during the war:

Pointsman's season of despair was well upon him. He came to understand that the great continental pincers ["the Normandy landing"] was to be, after all, a success. That this war, this State he'd come to feel himself a citizen of, was to be readjoined and reconstituted as a peace--and that, professionally speaking, he'd hardly got a thing out of it. (GR 75)

Pointsman's pre-occupation with the inevitable "funding" will suffice to identify one of his archetypes, as we noted above (GR 521).

Pointsman thus constitutes a personification of the System and a model of the bureaucratic leader (to be contrasted with the more charismatic and unsystematic leadership of a Blicero), given to policies of unconstrained scientific investigation, exploitation and control. Another fantasy discloses, "How Pointsman lusts after them, pretty children. Those drab undershorts of his are bursting with need humorlessly, worldly to use their innocence, to write on them new words of himself, his own brown Realpolitik dreams" (GR 50; one detects shades of Humbert Humbert in the man).

He maintains a strict faith in the linear, serial organization of time and History, a methodology of digital analysis and a clearly defined and distinguished field of conceptual oppositions and symmetries, the chief elements of a logocentric epistemology whose assumptions were set trembling in The Crying of Lot 49 (I shall confirm these claims in a moment). Pointsman is explicitly contrasted with his colleague at "The White Visitation," statistician Roger Mexico. Mexico is the personification (allegory) of a probabilistic rather than deterministic theory of knowledge,

"the Probabilities...are all that Roger has to believe in" (GR 91). Statistics, in contrast with empirical behaviourism, is content to describe and predict on an open-ended and ad hoc basis rather than prescribe and control on the basis of a logically consistent but artificially assembled theoretical system which records data that it, to some extent, predetermines; statistical methods allow themselves to be governed by accident and chance instead of imposing a preconceived order on the environment or phenomena they measure. Thus Roger's Probabilities are capable of accommodating counter-possibilities and exceptions which the deterministic 'law' implicitly does not entertain. This is one of the recurring concerns of Pynchon's fiction--the extent to which human expectations and maps of order predetermine the selection and omission of sensory and super-sensory data and consequently confirm the projected order in a short-circuited feedback process. I give some prominence to the Pointsman/Mexico tableau because I think it situates the broad epistemological limits and options of scientific and rational thinking and because the logic of binarism, which is the chief focus of this thesis, is elaborated, in Gravity's Rainbow, most clearly here.

The contrast between Pointsman and Mexico then, is developed most explicitly in this scene:

If ever the Antipointsman existed, Roger Mexico is the man. Not so much, the doctor admits, for the psychical research. The young statistician is devoted to number and method, not table-rapping and wishful thinking. But in the domain of zero to one, not-something to something, Pointsman can only possess the zero and the one. He cannot, like Mexico, survive anyplace in between. Like his master I.P. Pavlov before him, he imagines the cortex of the brain as a mosaic of tiny on/off elements. Some are always in bright excitation, others darkly inhibited. The contours, bright and dark, keep changing. But each point is allowed only the two states: waking

or sleep. One or zero. to Mexico belongs the domain between zero and one--the middle Pointsman has excluded from his persuasion--the probabilities. (GR 55-6)

Elsewhere, augmenting this extract, Pointsman expresses his admiration for the binary elegance of Laszlo Jamf's experiments on the Infant Tyrone (Pynchon's darkly comic satire of the Watson and Rayner experiment on "Infant Albert", GR 84, once again demonstrating his skilful dovetailing of history and fiction), "Shoestring funding may have been why Jamf, for his target reflex, chose an infant hardon. a hardon, that's either there, or it isn't. Binary, elegant" (GR 84).

This tableau of binarism sketches the context of "Modern Analysis" which is isolated in the novel as the prevailing Western epistemic practice, expediting boundaries and divisions and purveying the commodities of truth, identity, consciousness, Being as discrete, unitary and autarkic forms. The trope of 'analysis' undergoes several transformations in the novel and is one to which I shall return. The reference to "excluded middles" above will suffice to direct us to an important similar passage in Lot 49 (136/125). Alternatively, Pointsman, I suggest, master of the "One" and "Zero," the fixed position and the proper place, is the Postmaster of Gravity's Rainbow.¹⁹ I emphasize again the

¹⁹ To the footnotes in Chapter Two, nn. 31, 32, I post the following supplement, "POST....I. 1. A stout piece of timber...used in a vertical position, esp. in building as a support for a super-structure. b. As a type of lifelessness, stupidity, ignorance, deafness, or hardness. POST.... 1. Mil. The place where a soldier is stationed. b. transf. and fig. The appointed place; the place of duty.... 2. Mil. A position taken; a place at which a body of soldiers stationed, or the force occupying this; esp. a strategic position taken by a commander. c. transf. A place occupied for purposes of trade, esp. in an uncivilized or unsettled country.... 3. An office or situation to which any one is appointed; position; place; employment. POST.... II. To attach or moor...to a post III. 1. To affix (a paper, etc.) to a post or in a prominent position; to stick up in a public place.... 2. To make known, advertise (some fact, thing, or person) by or as by posting a placard."--Shorter O.E.D. II, p. 1636.

service of this office to the Sovereign, the Law and the status quo.

Pointsman also endorses a causal temporality and baulks at Mexico's acausal, statistical version of history, which, under the rain of the V-2 certainly appears more plausible:

Each hit is independent of all the others. Bombs are not dogs. No link. No memory. No conditioning."

.... If there is nothing to link the rocket strikes...then. . . . How can Mexico play, so at his ease, with the symbols of randomness and fright? Innocent as a child, perhaps unaware--perhaps--that in his play he wrecks the elegant rooms of history, threatens the idea of cause and effect itself. What if Mexico's whole generation have turned out like this? Will Postwar be nothing but "events," newly created one moment to the next? No links? It is the end of history) (GR 56)

Perhaps, reinforcing my insistence that Pointsman represents the dominant cognitive mode, is the confusion and hostility naïve Mexico encounters from others: Jessica Swanlake; the Rev. Dr. Paul de la Nuit, "Leaning forward, definitely hostile." (GR 56); the description as "Cheap nihilist" (GR 57) by Prentice; and Mexico's eventual disenchantment and alienation from the System, and subsequent enlistment with the Counterforce.

A further exchange establishes the differences on analysis and causality between these two figures more pointedly, alternatives whose options reverberate through the remainder of the novel, drawing the reader to attend to the novel's textual practices and his own interpretive procedures. Pointsman begins by quoting the colleague of his revered Pavlov:

"Pierre Janet--sometimes the man talked like an Oriental mystic. He had no real grasp of opposites. 'The act of injuring and the act of being injured are joined in the behaviour of the whole injury.' Speaker and spoken-of, master and slave, virgin and seducer, each pair most conveniently coupled and inseparable-- The last refuge of the incorrigibly lazy, Mexico, is just this sort of yang-yin rubbish. One avoids all manner of unpleasant lab work that way, but what has one said?"

"I don't want to get into a religious argument with you...but I wonder if you people aren't a bit too--well, strong, on the virtues of analysis. I mean, once you've taken it all apart, fine.... But other than a lot of bits and pieces lying about, what have you said?"

.... "Pavlov believed that the ideal,...is the truemechanical explanation. No effect without cause, and a clear train of linkages."

"It's not my forte, of course," Mexico honestly wishing not to offend..."but there's a feeling about that cause-and-effect may have been taken as far as it will go. That for science to carry on at all, it must look for a less narrow, a less . . . sterile set of assumptions. The next great breakthrough may come when we have the courage to junk cause-and-effect entirely, and strike off at some other angle."

"No--not 'strike off.' Regress. There are no 'other angles.' There is only forward--into it--or backward." (GR 88-9)

This passage catalyzes the scattered references to Pavlov's (and Pointsman's) doctrine of "ideas of the opposite" (GR 48) according to the clear distinction of which, the "patient" is classified 'normal' or 'abnormal':

you weaken this idea of the opposite, and here all at once is the paranoid patient who would be master, yet now feels himself a slave... "I think," Pavlov writing to Janet, "it is precisely the ultraparadoxical phase which is the base of the weakening of the idea of the opposite in our patients." Our madmen, our paranoid, maniac, schizoid, morally imbecile--(GR 48-9)

Pavlov thought that all the diseases of the mind could be explained, eventually, by the ultraparadoxical phase, the pathologically inert points on the cortex, the confusion of ideas of the opposite. (GR 90)

This doctrine of clearly distinguishable, discrete essences and ideas of the opposite, separable by analysis and linear temporal sequences of cause and effect, comprises some of the fundamental predicates of Western metaphysics and a Newtonian physical universe, a doctrine which, translated into symbolic relations, forms the basis of Western cultural organization. One notices too, Pointsman's strong reaction against a symbolico-conceptual field of reciprocally constituting and therefore non-exclusive differences, "this sort of yang-yin rubbish."²⁰

²⁰ Julia Kristeva, again during her radical formulation (one to be appreciated for its ambition but read with reservation) of the "carnavalesque discourse," of which I suggest Pynchon's writing is a more adequate example than those Kristeva cites, beginning with the assertion, "the minimal unit of poetic language is...double," "every unit is double"--Kristeva, p. 69, proposes, suggestively for our purposes, "the inability of any logical system based on a zero-one sequence (true-false, nothingness-notation) to account for the operation of poetic language"--p. 70.

These proposals stem from the recognition that the sign (mark, signifying element), the basic unit of a signifying system participates in a differential structure of signification in which its significance is produced and which the 'present' sign implies, and the recognition that the valid sign possess a repeatable, ritual form. Derrida has possibly pursued this notion more effectively with the notion of the sign's iterability and its compound constitution of presence and absence (identity and difference), "A written sign...is a mark that subsists, one which does not exhaust itself in the moment of its inscription and can give rise to an iteration in the absence and beyond the presence of the empirically determined subject who, in a given context, has emitted or produced it"--J. Derrida, "Signature Event Context," trans. J. Mehlman & S. Weber, Glyph I (Baltimore & London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), pp. 181-2. This quality of iterability is thus a necessary precondition of the valid sign: a moment of economy which enables the sign to be infinitely recycled and renewed. The sign becomes, at the very moment of its inscription, divided from itself by its iterable form and its potential graftibility into other language contexts, "iterability...can be recognized even in a mark which in fact seems to have occurred only once. I say seems, because this one time is in itself divided or multiplied by its structure of repeatability"--J. Derrida, "Limited Inc. a b c ...," trans. S. Weber, Glyph 2 (Baltimore & London: Johns Hopkins U.P., 1977) p. 185. Iterability, doubleness is thus the irreducible and positive precondition of the valid sign.

These points in mind, we return to Kristeva. She writes, "Scientific procedures are indeed based upon a logical approach, itself founded on the Greek (Indo-European) sentence. Such a sentence begins as

Roger Mexico's objections, in conjunction with a textual practice of "non-exclusive opposition" and analogy, and extensive dramatization of non-rational and inexplicable psychic phenomena (dreams, hallucinations, extra-sensory

subject-predicate and grows by identification, determination, and causality."--p. 70. She continues, 'A literary semiotics must be developed on the basis of a poetic logic where the concept of the power of the continuum would embody the 0-2 interval, a continuity where 0 denotes and 1 is implicitly transgressed.

Within this "power of the continuum" from 0 to a specifically poetic double, the linguistic, psychic, and social "prohibition" is 1 (God, Law, Definition)'--p. 70. As Derrida stresses in his work, this double form, this structure of iterability always already inhabits the logocentric (in Kristeva's terms, monological) discourse, whatever subjugations logocentric exigencies may subsequently submit it to.

Significantly for our purposes, she gestures towards Oriental metaphysics and an alternative mode of cognition, 'where, in the place of God, there extends the Yin-Yang "dialogue"'--p. 70, manifesting the practice of a less prescriptive, non-hierarchical symbolico-cognitive system.

Kristeva adds, contrasting the monologically governed discourse and the "carnavalesque," "The only discourse integrally to achieve the 0-2 poetic logic is that of the carnival. By adopting a dream logic, it transgresses rules of linguistic code and social morality as well. the architectonics of dialogism...implies a categorical tearing from the norm and a relationship of nonexclusive opposites."--p. 70,71. Whilst it is never absolutely clear whether the "carnavalesque" identifies an independent generic form or a set of heterogeneous and disruptive points within texts where different textual logics intersect, we can nevertheless deduce that Kristeva's "Menippean" is an oscillation between monologism and dialogism, and confirm the recurrence of the textual features which she emphasizes, in Pynchon's texts. Kristeva repeatedly insists on the operation of the "carnavalesque" within an economy of nonexclusive opposites (pp. 71, 72, 78, 79; the relationship of the Yin-Yang "dialogue" should be evident), "it is a logic of analogy and nonexclusive opposition, opposed to monological levels of causality and identifying determination. Dialogue appears most clearly in the structure of carnivalesque language, where symbolic relationships and analogy take precedence over substance-causality connections. The notion of ambivalence pertains to the permutation of the two spaces observed in novelistic structure: dialogical space and monological space"--p. 72. I stress the textual procedures which Kristeva isolates--nonexclusive opposition, analogy etc.--as these play a major role in Pynchon's textual practice (and inferrable cognition). I wish to move in the direction of a reading which conceives Gravity's Rainbow as such an "ambivalent" text, as an oscillation between monological (mimetic) procedures and constraints performing a representative and realistic function, and a celebration of the double and of the text as writing which continually disrupts effects of mimesis, thus holding the text at the 'interface' between these two discursive spaces.

perception, unconscious etc.), register the limitations of the Western epistemology represented by Pointsman, the end of a crystal-palace of cause-and-effect, linear, serial temporality and a methodology of analysis. Hereafter, Pointsman commits himself with greater dedication to the work and lovelessness of the System (primarily his scheme to win the Nobel Prize with his work on Slothrop), whilst Mexico pursues an interdicted love-affair with Jessica Swanlake:

both know, clearly, it's better together, snuggled in, than back out in the paper, fires, khaki, steel of the Home Front. That, indeed, the Home Front is something of a fiction and lie, designed, not too subtly, to draw them apart, to subvert love in favor of work, abstraction, required pain, bitter death.

They have found a house in the stay-away zone.... Roger and Jessica occupy the place illegally, in a defiance they can never measure unless they're caught. (GR 41)

Once again, the priorities of the System (the Home Front) are sardonically declared. Registering increasing disillusionment with the System, which eventually woos Jessica away from him in the form of Jeremy/Beaver, Roger enlists with the Counterforce (an ad hoc group not unlike the Floundering Four) which is attempting to retrieve Slothrop from the Zone (originally).

One more scene with Pointsman following the death of his colleague Dr. Spectro by a V-2 for which Slothrop is once again apparently but inexplicably responsible, recapitulates the co-ordinates which orientated our reading of Lot 49, discloses a rare moment of introspection and faltering and gives us further guide to his conceptual armamentarium. The doubts Pointsman expresses are, I suggest, an important indication of the non-exclusive structure of the dualisms which the text invokes:

When one event happens after another with this awful regularity, of course you don't automatically assume that it's cause-and-effect. But you do look for some mechanism to make sense of it. You probe, you design a modest experiment. . . . He owes Spectro that much. Even if the American's not legally a murderer, he is sick. The etiology ought to be traced, the treatment found.

There is to this enterprise, Pointsman knows, a danger of seduction. Because of the symmetry. . . . He's been led before, you know, down the garden path by symmetry: in certain test results . . . in assuming that a mechanism must imply its mirror image--"irradiation," for example, and "reciprocal induction" . . . and who'd ever said that either had to exist? Perhaps it will be the same this time, too. But how it haunts him, the symmetry of these two secret weapons, Outside, out in the Blitz, the sounds of V-1 and V-2, one the reverse of the other. . . . Pavlov showed how mirror-images Inside could be confused. Ideas of the opposite. But what new pathology lies Outside now? What sickness to events--to History itself--can create symmetrical opposites like these robot weapons?

Signs and symptoms. Was Spectro right? ['Kevin Spectro did not differentiate as much as he between Outside and Inside. He saw the cortex as an interface organ, mediating between the two, but part of them both. "When you've looked at how it really is," he asked once, "how can we, any of us, be separate?" He is my Pierre Janet, Pointsman thought' GR 142]. Could Outside and Inside be part of the same field? (GR 144)

I suggest that Gravity's Rainbow goes a good way towards answering Pointsman's concluding rhetorical question applied broadly to any hierarchized economy of identities and opposites, along similar lines to the spatial distribution in The Crying of Lot 49.

Pointsman and Mexico, to recapitulate, together constitute a major epistemological polarization and demonstrate once more, the dualistic construction of Pynchon's fictions and a common technique of characterization whereby 'character' is less an imitation of some 'real' model, than a node assembling beneath a proper name certain cultural, conceptual, moral and metaphysical options and attributes and thus personifying a particular cognitive set. "Pynchon's"

figural juxtaposition of Pointsman and Mexico in this passage underscores their allegorical function:

Roger stares back at the man. The Antimexico.
 "Ideas of the opposite" themselves, but on what
 cortex, what winter hemisphere? What ruinous
 mosaic, facing outward into the Waste . . . outward
 from the sheltering city . . . readable only to those
 who journey outside . . . eyes in the distance . . .
 barbarians . . . riders. . . .(GR 89)

(I direct attention to the transposition of epithets telescoping psychological and social centres, here city and consciousness, both transformations of Inside held against an Outside but also blurring a distinction between the two and permitting us to speak of a spatialized psyché and a psychic geography.)²¹

Pointsman, we may conclude amassing condensations, is a synecdoche of the System: a patriarch of a 'Newtonian'/empirical science and technology, a major 'Oedipal' authority-figure or "Pernicious Pop," the advocate of "forward--into it" and a prophet of control. We may distinguish too, a similarity between Pointsman's fantasies of self-immolating centrism and Blicero's doctrine (the showdown at the centre of the labyrinth GR 142-3).

Eventually Pointsman, author of the castration-plot against Slothrop and "consistently portrayed as the villain of the

²¹ 'In its use of a symbolic and psychic geography, Gravity's Rainbow recalls romantic novels in which a region of adventure and magical possibility exists apart from ordinary civilized "reality."' --Lawrence Kappel, "Psychic Geography in Gravity's Rainbow," Contemporary Literature 21 (2) 1980, p. 225. A well-informed and well-developed contrast of London and Zone as regions of reality and fantasy respectively, based on the model of Kansas/Oz, although unfortunately marred by a rather over-ingenious and 'paranoid' reconstruction of the mystery concerning Slothrop's payload on the Anubis and Bianca's murder (GR 530-2) which does not convince.

piece,"²² by the most sublime dénouement to the melodrama (in a System where virility and power are synonymous, "love, among these men...had to do with masculine technologies, with contracts, with winning and losing. Beyond simple steel erection, the Rocket was an entire system won, away from the feminine darkness, held against the entropies of lovable but scatterbrained Mother Nature" GR 324), emasculates both castrator and castrated and ironically learns from one who "had no real grasp of opposites" that, "The act of injuring and the act of being injured are joined in the behaviour of the whole injury" which again is "the leading edge, of the discovery that everything is connected, everything in the Creation" (GR 703). Finally, discredited and dishonoured, with "a last look back at the door to Stockholm, closing behind him forever," Pointsman shuffles away to obscurity and ignominy:

Yes, well, he's an ex-scientist now, one who'll never get Into It far enough to start talking about God...no he'll be left only with Cause and Effect, and the rest of his sterile armamentarium . . . his mineral corridors do not shine. They will stay the same neutral nameless tone from here in to the central chamber, and the perfectly rehearsed scene he is to play there after all. . . .
(GR 752-3)

'"Yang and Yin," whispers the Voice, "Yang and Yin"' (GR 278); "coming down in total blackout, without one glint of light, only great invisible crashing" (GR 3).

00000

Roger Mexico, Pointsman's counterpart and antithesis, in the course of his escalating disaffection with the System identifies some of its important priorities, processes

²² Westervelt, p. 71.

and interdictions which may be confirmed frequently throughout the text. Roger, gloomily anticipating Jessica's departure at war's end, finds in Jessica's previous lover his own personification of the System:

If the rockets don't get her there's still her lieutenant. Damned Beaver/Jeremy is the War, he is every assertion the fucking War has ever made--that we are meant for work and government, for austerity: and these shall take priority over love, dreams, the spirit, the senses and the other second-class trivia that are found among the idle and mindless hours of the day. . . . Damn them, they are wrong. They are insane. Jeremy will take her like the Angel itself, in his joyless weasel-worded come-along, and Roger will be forgotten, an amusing maniac, but with no place in the rationalized power-ritual that will be the coming peace. She will take her husband's orders, she will become a domestic bureaucrat, a junior partner, and remember Roger, if at all, as a mistake thank God she didn't make. . . .
(GR 177)

Here are gathered several of the major features and priorities of the System which recur again and again: bureaucracy; rationalization; the subordination of female to male, non-conscious to conscious, emotion to mind, leisure and adventure to work; power-rituals; government; domestication.

Roger's complaint is corroborated by "Pynchon's" reflections on Penelope's visitation a moment before:

Demonic possessions in this house are not unknown. Is this really Keith, her father?...returned now not as the man she knew, but only the shell--with the meaty slug of soul that smiles and loves, that feels its mortality, either rotted away or been picked at by the needle mouths of death-by-government--a process by which living souls unwillingly become the demons known to the main sequence of Western magic as the Qlippoth, Shells of the Dead. . . . It is also what the present dispensation often does to decent men and women entirely on this side of the grave. In neither process is there any dignity, or any mercy. (GR 176; one detects a reprise of the "animate"/"false-animate" polarization in the Qlippoth-metaphor here)

Ironically, Jessica, the seminal agent of Roger's 'liberation' from the System's priorities and demands, herself maintains complete trust and faith in the legitimacy of the System's authority and control as these passages narrate:

His life had been tied to the past. He'd seen himself a point on a moving wavefront, propagating through sterile history--a known past, a projectable future. But Jessica was the breaking of the wave. Suddenly there was a beach, the unpredictable . . . new life. (GR 126)

"Roger," she'd smile, "it's spring. We're at peace." No, we're not. It's another bit of propaganda. . . . no, he sees only the same flows of power, the same impoverishments he's been thrashing around in since '39. His girl is about to be taken away to Germany, when she ought to be demobbed like everyone else. No channel upward that will show either of them any hope of escape. There's something still on, don't call it a "war" if it makes you nervous, maybe the death rate's gone down a point or two...but Their enterprise goes on. (GR 628)

She's meant to go. The orders come from higher than she can reach. Her future is with the World's own, and Roger's only with this strange version of the War he still carries with him. (GR 629)

This tableau is exemplary of the manner in which "Pynchon" manages to couple every advantage with disadvantage, every positive moment or position in the novel with a negative one, rendering the status of any positive position thoroughly ambivalent and its desirability entirely dubious; in this case Roger's capacity to perceive the artifice and malevolent power of the System is also the vehicle of his permanent enstrangement from the people it dominates and deceives.

DISSECTING THE CREATION : "I wonder if you people aren't a bit too--well, strong, on the virtues of analysis."

Roger, expressing his skepticism apropos 'analysis' to Pointsman (and taking up an issue to which we devoted some attention

in our reading of The Crying of Lot 49), initiates a sequence of episodes which explicitly motivate the question of analysis as epistemology, methodology and trope. Pointsman, we have remarked, is committed to a methodology which practises the dissection and digitalization of continuous and analog phenomena into discrete, autarkic and well-defined entities--posts--delimited by clearly demarcated boundaries and divisions: Cause and Effect, Inside and Outside and excluded middles. Two important passages confirm this as the prevalent scientific practice and also indicate the direction of its structural and figural transformations. During the account of Franz Pökler working under Blicero on the A4 and more specifically Rocket 00000, the narrator introduces the principal transformation of analysis:

There has been this strange connection between the German mind and the rapid flashing of successive stills to counterfeit movement, for at least two centuries--since Leibniz, in the process of inventing calculus, used the same approach to break up the trajectories of cannonballs through the air. And now Pökler was about to be given proof that these techniques had been extended past images on film, to human lives. (GR 407)

The second passage I wish to cite consolidates the implicit analogy, or metaphor developed above:

Slothrop is borne, afloat on the water leas. ... shapes keep repeating for him,.... The most persistent of these,...are the stairstep gables that front so many of these ancient north-German buildings They hold shape, they endure, like monuments to Analysis. Three hundred years ago mathematicians were learning to break the cannonball's rise and fall into stairsteps of range and height, Δx and Δy , This analytic legacy has been handed down intact-- it brought the technicians at Peenemunde to peer at the Askania films of Rocket flights, frame by frame, Δx by Δy , flightless themselves . . . film and calculus, both pornographies of flight. (GR 567)

Removing these two passages from their narrative contexts to discuss the general schema they describe, I argue that analysis and by extension the trope of film become the paradigm for the digital version of reality which They project (designating the dominant epistemological and ideological manifestations of 'official' Western culture) as a function of an imperial, corporate solipsism. The conjunction above, of Δx and Δy , the frames of analysis, (which imply digitalism) and film, also enables "Pynchon" to emphasize the fictive, illusory and reified--'framed'--quality of the social reality They forge. I remark the pejorative connotations which "counterfeit" and "pornography" carry in the passages above.

Elaborating the analysis/film trope is the following tableau which one could subtitle 'On the advisability of maintaining a cracked cistern' (where, with characteristic yoking of the most heterogeneous ideas by violence together, the filling toilet becomes an allegory and the pretext for a paranoid hypothesis of a Soniferous Aether):

The basic idea is that They will come and shut off the water first. Shutting off the water interdicts the toilet..., They've stopped the inflow/outflow and here you are trapped inside Their frame with your wastes piling up, ass hanging out all over Their Movieola viewer waiting for Their editorial blade.
(GR 694)

At least three analytical moments are legible in this brief tableau: interdiction, reification "trapped inside Their frame," and decision "Their editorial blade." I shall return to these points in a moment.

Elsewhere Tchitcherine, puzzled by the results of a sodium amytal interrogation of Slothrop, "Black runs all through the transcript: the recurring color black," inserts another common context of analysis into this already over-determined analytical schema:

Blackwoman, Blackrocket, Blackdream. . . . The new coinages seem to be made unconsciously. Is there a single root, deeper than anyone has probed, ["It was nice of Jung to give us the idea of an ancestral pool in which everybody shares the same dream material" GR 410] from which Slothrop's Blackwords only appear to flower separately? Or has he by way of the language caught the German mania for name-giving [the German mania for sub-dividing GR 448], dividing [the Creation finer and finer, analyzing, setting namer more hopelessly apart from named, even to bringing in the mathematics of combination, tacking together established nouns to get new ones, the insanely, endlessly diddling play of a chemist whose molecules are words. . . .(GR 391) 23

These extracts assert the historical predominance of the analytical legacy and illustrate some of its major transformations in the novel (which we have only begun to assemble). Outlined in these, too, are the principal references to analysis which identifies the basic methodology responsible for generating and maintaining the paraphernalia of the System, i.e. the quantities of division and decision which define, distribute and punctuate; which articulate the System.

Analysis: the dissection and resolution of heterogeneous and differentiated analog phenomena into discrete, present

²³ Once again, a really exhaustive reading would have to account for these ramifications and transformations of this trope which I simply cite, 'How alphabetic is the nature of molecules. "These are our letters, our words: they too can be modulated, broken, recoupled, re-defined, co-polymerized one to the other in worldwide chains that will surface now and then over long molecular silences, like the seen parts of a tapestry."

Blobadjian comes to see that the New Turkic Alphabet is only one version of a process really much older--and less unaware of itself--than he ever had cause to dream' (GR 355); "Tchitcherine has a way of getting together with undesirables, sub rosa enemies of order... he is a giant supermolecule with so many open bonds...and in the drift of things . . . in the dance of things...others latch on, and the pharmacology of the Tchitcherine thus modified...can't necessarily be calculated ahead of time" (GR 346). Elsewhere the trains are described, "playing molecules, imitating industrial synthesis as they are broken up, put together, coupled and recoupled" (GR 257), which leads us into the whole tropology of "synthesis and control" and plastics, and so on.

entities and the basis of an atomistic symbolico-social organization, consequently directs our attention to the act, legitimacy and effects of decision (Lat. decidere, to cut off). Analysis identifies the process by which differentiated but continuous fields of nonexclusive oppositions are distributed, digitalized and segregated on the basis of a reified symbolic economy of which language is the most important and complex form. The direct corollary of analysis is the decision, the predication of the boundary, the barrier, division, limit, limen, law and rule maintained in mutual internalization and observance or external enforcement and co-ercion. Let us reconsider Blicero's remarks, "Europe came and established its order of Analysis and Death" and "Europe's Original Sin --the latest name for that is Modern Analysis" (GR 722). (Blicero's remarks do not necessarily mean that his own doctrine is more desirable than the System he criticizes. In his conception analysis is a compromise which he finds intolerable. He advocates, as we have seen, a diabolical synthesis, an egalitarianism which seeks to eradicate all oppositeness and difference, including the difference between life and death; if anything this transcendental synthesis is the most extreme extrapolation of the analytical procedure in much the same way as fascism is the extreme expression of nationalism).

Blicero's remarks are augmented by a Counterforce spokesman (appropriately addressing the Wall Street Journal, a suitable representative of 'official' culture) who elaborates his interpretation of the Grail legend and the decisive form of the law:

We drank the blood of our enemies. That's why you see Gnostics so hunted. The grail, the Sangraal, is the bloody vehicle. Why else guard it so sacredly? Why should the black honor-guard ride half a continent, half a splintering Empire, stone night and winter day, if it's only for the

touch of sweet lips on a humble bowl? No, it's mortal sin they're carrying.... Your officially defined "mortal sin," that is. A sin against you. A section of your penal code....[The true sin was yours: to interdict that union. To draw that line. To keep us worse than enemies, who are after all caught in the same fields of shit-- to keep us strangers.] (GR 739; Pynchon's interpolation marks)

Thus, the Counterforce: 'the true sin is the interdiction, the act of decision and division.' Although those of us who still respect the taboos on cannibalism will balk at what the man is saying, his description of the analytical structure of the law is consistent with the thesis of institution and convention we are developing here. To draw the line, to mark the frontier, these are effects of analysis which constitutes the paradigm of the law, the rule, the institution and the covenant which regulate both the 'real' and the game, fiction, double, valorizing certain options and prohibiting others as transgressive.

Again, since Wilden expresses this point more efficiently than I:

Epistemology is a question of where you draw the line and there are only a restricted number of loci through which to draw it.... The line drawn between 'organism' and 'environment' by our conventional model of reality is such a line, and, like all such lines a fiction. Unfortunately we think that it is real. Some epistemological boundary is necessary (boundaries are the conditions of communication), but it is always arbitrary in the sense of being methodological rather than real. n. 16

n. 16 All boundaries in this sense involve paradox, for they correspond to the digitalization of an analog continuum, and the distinctions between the various components thus created can never be completely maintained.... Whyte....points to the Gödelian situation involved: "No rational system--logical, mathematical, scientific--can ever be used to define its own boundaries." And further on:

The temptation to treat static ideas as absolute, rather than as partial and provisional, proved irresistible to many Western thinkers; the apparent clarity of such ideas seduces the mind into dismissing change or transformation as a trivial secondary effect of interactions between the 'real' entities. ²⁴

Thus, the line is frequently necessary but the error occurs in treating it as a fixed, 'natural' division whereas in fact, like the projection of order, it must be conceived as a functional, provisional and continually context-sensitive methodological convenience and not an absolute.

Analysis identifies for us in its most abstract (mathematical) form, the processes by which social, ecological and ideological barriers are manufactured by the System for the purposes of exploitation and Western imperialism, "to keep its own tiny desperate fraction showing a profit" (GR 412); the processes by which the System segregates analog continua ("inflow/outflow") into reified 'frames', posts, positions, proper places, centres, identities, oppositions, uniforms, stereotypes and "civil-service categories" (GR 219).

It would be impossible, even in an unreasonably long reading of Gravity's Rainbow, to give account of all the diverse manifestations and transformations of the analysis trope; however, there are some other major instances of the analytical schema which I shall discuss henceforth. Clearly also at stake in this critique of analysis is what is probably the most fundamental predicate of analytical thinking: the determination of Being as spatio-temporal presence and the derivation of the rest of its discourses from this point of absolute reference

²⁴ A. Wilden, p. 219.

without adequate reference to its diachronic and spatial contexts, i.e. spatio-temporal difference. I shall not labour these points any further but proceed to a consideration of some further transformations of the analytical schema: the separation of elect and preterite, the processes of selection and repression, affirmation and negation, and reification: structures which, in various 'disguises' locate several of the major themes (anthems), preoccupations, emblems and paraphernalia of Systemic and individual psycho-social ordering processes.

THE ART OF REIFICATION

I have already relied extensively on this notion in the previous chapters, inserting it into a chain of related terms (fetishization, narcissism) which describe the promotion of static entities and hierarchies. Taking their positions in this ensemble are several phenomena invoked by "Pynchon's" rhetoric which describe processes of reification (bureaucratization, routinization, a term taken from Max Weber, domestication) and corollary products.

Several of the motifs and themes of reification, stabilization and stasis which may be confirmed elsewhere, are assembled in this brief description of the illegal refuge where Roger and Jessica make their trysts:

this stuffed, dim little parlor, hung about with rigid portraits of favorite gun dogs at point in fields that never existed save in certain fantasies about death, less more golden as their linseed oil ages, even more autumnal, necropolitical, than prewar hopes--for an end to all change, for a long static afternoon and the grouse forever in blurred takeoff, the sights taking their lead aslant purple

hills to pallid sky, the good dog alerted by the eternal scent, the explosion over his head always just about to come--these hopes so patently, defenselessly there that Roger even at his most cheaply nihilistic couldn't quite bring himself to take the pictures down (GR 57-8; my emphasis)

Motifs of durability and death freely interchange, the hallmarks of dreams of order and the chiliastic Reich. The stuffed parlor along with several other features becomes a consistent metonym for a static domesticity, "long dying afternoons through conservatory windows, minor-keyed lieder about days gone by, plaintive pianos, pipesmoke in a stuffy parlor, overcast Sunday walks by canals" (GR 646), "academic Sunday tranquilities" (GR 688; cf. 162, 346).

Elsewhere, a tour through the subconscious of Etzel Ölsch, Nazi architect, records some of the reified ideals of the Reich:

The double integral stood in Etzel Ölsch's subconscious for the method of finding hidden centers, inertias unknown, as if monoliths had been left for him in the twilight, left behind by some corrupted idea of "Civilization," in which eagles cast in concrete stand ten meters high at the corners of stadiums where the people, a corrupted idea of "the People" are gathering, in which birds do not fly, in which imaginary centers far down inside the solid fatality of stone are thought of not as "heart," "plexus," "consciousness," (the voice speaking here grows more ironic, closer to tears which are not all theatre, as the list goes on . . .) "Sanctuary," "dream of motion," "cyst of the eternal present," or "Gravity's gray eminence among the councils of the living stone," No, as none of these, but instead a point in space, a point hung precise as the point where burning must end, never launched, never to fall. (GR 302)

Of this catalogue, Etzel evidently reserves himself for most 'epic' reification; the abstracted Brennschluss Point is his personal symbol of the enduring Reich.

Again, during "the War's evensong" (GR 130) Advent 1944, the theme of the reified boundary is iterated in conjunction with the paperwork of bureaucracy:

the continuity...has persisted. It is not death that separates these incarnations, but paper: paper specialities, paper routines. The War, the Empire, will expedite such barriers between our lives. The War needs to divide this way, and to subdivide, though its propaganda will always stress unity, alliance, pulling together. (GR 130)

There must have been evensong here long before the news of Christ. Surely for as long as there have been nights as bad as this one--something to raise the possibility of another night that could actually...destroy the boundaries between our lands, our bodies, our stories, all false, about who we are (GR 135)

The episode effects an extraordinary historical sedimentation in which the Roman Empire and the Advent of the Messiah are overlaid with the Allied Empire and the advent of the Rocket and whatever dubious salvations either may have led us towards.

The invitation to evensong records once more the paraphernalia of bureaucracy and the priority of a reified and digital symbolic order:

Come then. Leave your war awhile, paper or iron war, petrol or flesh, come in with your love, your fear of losing, your exhaustion with it. All day it's been at you, coercing, jiving, claiming your belief in so much that isn't true. Is that who you are, that vaguely criminal face on your ID card, its soul snatched by the government camera as the guillotine shutter fell (GR 134)

and contrasts this with a hypothetical instant of analogic, tactile communication outside of any religious, political or ritual considerations:

on the way home tonight, you wish you'd picked him up, held him a bit. Just held him, very close to your heart, his cheek by the hollow of your shoulder, full of sleep. As if it were you who could, somehow,

save him. For the moment not caring who you're supposed to be registered as. For the moment, anyway, no longer who the Caesars say you are.
(GR 136)

These motifs and themes of bureaucratic order may be confirmed frequently in the novel.

One other area of science history advances the novel's thesis of escalating reification and death, the development of plastics, which "Pynchon" once more relates to ideological priorities, those of Nazism and implicitly imperial Western culture at large. Plastic becomes another metonym of the System's death-culture, its artificiality and its fantasy of permanence:

Plasticity has its grand tradition and main stream, which happens to flow by way of du Pont and their famous employee Carothers, known as the Great Synthesist. His classic study...was...at the time and well within the System, an announcement of Plasticity's central canon: that chemists were no longer to be at the mercy of Nature. They could decide now what properties they wanted a molecule to have, and then go ahead and build it. The target property most often seemed to be strength--first among Plasticity's virtuous triad of Strength, Stability and Whiteness (Kraft, Standfestigkeit, Weiße: how often these were taken for Nazi graffiti....) (GR 249-50)

Clearly the anthems of eternity, permanence, stasis, recur in numerous transformations and carry what I have conveniently described as 'reification' through the novel in numerous figures, forms and disguises. We begin to glimpse in "Pynchon's" rhetorical elaborations on plastics how any signified, any predicate of our cosmos can be invested with a signifying function and textualized. The allegorical function identifies this property which prescribes the figural and signifying capacity of any referent or signified whatsoever.

The reification theme is sustained amongst the Hereros. The Empty Ones, led by Josef Ombindi, constitute a mirror-community of the white death-culture, the major distinction being that white Christian-European culture misrecognizes its own necropolity, "conned by their own Baby Jesus Con Game" (GR 31) whilst the "Revolutionaries of the Zero" (GR 317) are under no illusion about the destiny they are attempting to realize. Enzian, the enigmatic leader of the Schwarzkommando, himself a devotee of the Eternal Center, another node of stasis, recognizes, "The Eternal Center can easily be seen as the Final Zero. Names and methods vary, but the movement toward stillness is the same" (GR 319). I simply gloss these points in order to suggest how they fit into the broader framework I have elaborated. Let us now discuss a second major analytical process, the selection/repression dualism, focussing particularly on the latter phenomenon.

"THE VIOLENCE OF REPRESSION" (GR 735)

One of the System's fundamental requirements is the repression and subjugation of any sentiments which may threaten the efficiency of its mercenary and necropolitical enterprise. Here again, many instances could be cited in illustration of the ways in which the dualism of selection and repression is employed. The purely psychoanalytic sense of this concept is very often augmented by its figural application to political oppression and social conditioning. ²⁵

²⁵ I direct the reader's attention to the excellent article by Lawrence Wolfley which correlates Norman O. Brown's psychoanalysis of history with the distinctly psychoanalytic cast of Pynchon's own psycho-social historiography in Gravity's Rainbow. However, whilst I find Wolfley's correlation of Brown and Pynchon very convincing, I do not accept that Pynchon is adopting a 'Brownian' position, or

We will note in passing how the selection/repression dualism, and more broadly the selection/omission dualism (for clearly not all omission is necessarily repression, a factor which poses a major dilemma for the Preterite) intersect with the Puritan doctrine of election/preterition, a Pavlovian framework and a Weberian sociology of charisma and routinization: dualisms which all, at some point or another, get projected onto the same social field and provide potential interpretive co-ordinates. Let us select some examples to illustrate the repressive machinery of the System.

Two employees of the Firm, one of several subsidiaries of the System at large, dramatize the self-inhibitions which the System requires. Pirate Prentice, specialist in other people's fantasies, is particularly useful in this respect; he has the bizarre job of actually having the fantasies of others on their behalf so that they not be distracted from important political matters like war and foreign policy management:

might as well mention here that much of what the dossiers call Pirate Prentice is a strange talent for--well, for getting inside the fantasies of others.... It is a gift the Firm have found uncommonly useful: at this time mentally healthy leaders and other historical figures are indispensable. What better way to cup and bleed them of excess anxiety than to get someone to take over...their exhausting little daydreams...to get their erections for them, at the oncome of thoughts the doctors feel are inappropriate...remembering the words of P.M.S. Blackett, "You can't run a war on gusts of emotion."
 (GR 11-2)

that Brown's work reveals the 'real' meaning of Gravity's Rainbow any more than any other source work. Wolfley's article demonstrates nevertheless that Brown's framework provides the basis of a more cogent account of Gravity's Rainbow than more conventional literary approaches.

Much later in the novel, Clive Mossmoon, husband of Pirate's ex-lover and fellow junior-bureaucrat, "feels himself rising, as from a bog of trivial frustrations, political fears, money problems: delivered onto the sober shore of the Operation, where all is firm underfoot, where the self is a petty indulgent animal that once cried in its mired darkness. But here...inside the Operation. There is no lower self. The issues are too momentous for the lower self to interfere" (GR 616).

Ned Pointsman is a similar creature of inhibition and self-control, and the occasion of Pavlov's formulation of our dichotomy as excitation and inhibition; (the occasion is one hilarious behaviourist poem!):

Thus [Pointsman never shows these excursions
of his to anyone], reaching for some flower on my table,
I know the cool mosaic of my room
Begin its slow, inhibitory dissolve
Around the bloom, the stimulus, the need
That brighter burns, as brightness, quickly sucked
From objects all around, now concentrates
... focuses to flame.
The others lurk..../ Their spirits,
Or memories I kept of where they were,
Are canceled, for this moment, by the flame:
(GR 226; Pynchon's interpolation)

The poem, describing the processes of selection and omission, is itself the object of repression. The inhibition which the interpolated aside testifies to here is confirmed elsewhere when Pointsman, after losing several colleagues, devotees of The Book (Pavlov's Conditioned Reflexes and Psychiatry), discovers, 'One cannot, he cannot...cannot even suggest...how he misses them... I should . . . should have. . . . There are, in his history, so many of these unmade moves, so many "should haves"... why couldn't he?' (GR 140-1).

The introduction of the Pavlovian schema emphasizes the conditioning processes: the entraining of selected responses and inhibition and repression of others, in the socialization of the individual.

We will recall "Pynchon's" remark to Karl Marx, "Christian Europe was always death...death and repression" and again, Thanatz, recounting Blicero's atavism as the hour of 00000 approached, "he reverted to some ancestral version of himself," indicates a conjoined tradition of society and repression; to quote V-Mann Wimpe, "It appears we can't have one property without the other" (GR 348):

You and I perhaps have become over the generations so Christianized, so enfeebled by Gesellschaft and our obligation to its celebrated 'Contract,' which never did exist, that we, even we, are appalled by reversions like that. But deep, out of its silence, the Urstoff wakes, and sings . . . (GR 465)

Thanatz, speaking a moment earlier about the A4, explicitly introduces the Weberian co-ordinates (which, as several critics have noted--Mendelson, Slade, Tanner et. al.--exercise an important influence on Pynchon's 'characterization' of individuals and bureaucratic systems. Blicero, Enzian, the Rocket and even Slothrop to some extent, all bear the attributes of the Weberian 'charismatic') and reinforces the messianic condensation we noted during the 'Advent' episode:

"I think of the A4...as a baby Jesus, with endless committees of Herods out to destroy it in its infancy....it really did possess a Max Weber charisma . . . some joyful--and deeply irrational--force the State bureaucracy could never routinize, against which it could not prevail (GR 464)

Routinization identifies once more, with a slightly different emphasis, the co-option and socialization of an unstable, individual energy. It describes in yet

another framework, the apparatuses of repression by which individual members of society are conformed and 'normalized', and co-opted into the rational structures of the System. "Pynchon's" attitude to the property of charisma, judging from the spectrum of characters invested with charismatic qualities, is profoundly ambivalent.

Franz Pökler's reminiscences of German Expressionist cinema recapitulate the charisma/routinization dichotomy in the figures of Klein-Rogge and Goetzke and provide one allegory of the contrast between Blicero and Pointsman; "Goetzke... played tender, wistful bureaucratic Death in Der Müde Tod,...Mabuse Klein-Rogge trying to hypnotize him, drug him, bomb him to death...nothing worked, each time the great Weimar inertia, files, hierarchies, routines, kept saving him. Mabuse was the savage throwback, the charismatic flash no Sunday-afternoon Agfa plate could ever bear, the print through the rippling solution each time flaring up to the same annihilating white" (GR 579).

One more passage which gathers together several of the themes and preoccupations I have already identified, rewrites Genesis with a very different emphasis, through the consciousness of an indistinct Geli/Gottfried mélange:

canyons are opening up, at the bottoms are steaming fumaroles, steaming the tropical life there like greens in a pot, rank, dope-perfume, a hood of smell . . . human consciousness, that poor cripple, that deformed and doomed thing, is about to be born. This is the World just before men. Too violently pitched alive in constant flow ever to be seen by men directly. They are meant only to look at it dead, in still strata.... Alive, it was a threat: it was Titans, was an overpeaking of life so clan-gorous and mad, ...that some spoiler had to be brought in before it blew the whole Creation apart. So we, the crippled keepers, were sent out to multiply, to have dominion. God's spoilers. Us. Counter-... revolutionaries. It is our mission to promote death.It was something we had to work on historically

and personally. To build from scratch up to its present status as reaction, nearly as strong as life, holding down the green uprising. (GR 720)

Once more we can locate several important polarizations structuring this passage: the counter-position of "life," "green uprising," "constant flow," with "death," "human consciousness," "reaction," "holding down," the motifs of repression, suppression and death. Examples could be multiplied.

Clearly, repression in its diverse transformations is a major apparatus of control exercised by the System. It will be clear too that Pynchon's predication of similar processes operating across several dimensions of human, individual and social, order precludes the possibility of treating this issue exhaustively. A similar process functions in a political dimension with the governance of one ideology and the suppression of other, minority positions; in the social dimension with the conformation and routinization of the individual's desires and ambitions into accredited patterns of behaviour; in a religious dimension with the divisive election/preterition doctrine, to which I now wish to attend.

"ELITE AND PRETERITE, WE MOVE THROUGH A COSMIC DESIGN OF DARKNESS AND LIGHT" (GR 495)

The election/preterition dualism, adapted from Puritan theology and extended to embrace secular elects and preterites of an economic and political nature, constitutes, as I have frequently intimated elsewhere, a major dualism in Gravity's Rainbow. In accordance with its traditional application, the Elect is more or less consistently synony-

mous with the ubiquitous and inscrutable 'They' whilst the Preterite includes virtually all the visible characters in the novel. This is the broad application of the dualism in the text; however, it has frequent regional applications as well, which complicate the schema somewhat, so that the Giant Adenoid of the Pirate-managed, Lord Osmo fantasy is the occasion of "a new election, a new preterition" (GR 15), for example. The dualism articulates, once more, a process of selection and exclusion but with a major shift in emphasis from its conventional Puritan definition as William Slothrop's heretical formulation makes clear. William Slothrop, Tyrone's first American ancestor (based on William Pynchon, Thomas' first American ancestor) espouses a revised doctrine of election in his tract On Preterition (based on William's Pynchon's heretical tract The Meritorious Price of Our Redemption which was similarly condemned to be burned in the marketplace in Boston 26):

Nobody wanted to hear about all the Preterite, the many God passes over when he chooses a few for salvation. William argued holiness for these "second Sheep," without whom there'd be no elect. You can bet the Elect in Boston were pissed off about that (GR 555)

And he whispers to Tyrone, reinforcing the non-exclusive cast of this revision:

"That's what Jesus meant...venturing out on the Sea of Galilee. Without the millions who had plunged and drowned, there could have been no miracle. The successful loner was only the other part of it: the last piece of the jig-saw puzzle, whose shape had already been created by the Preterite, like the last blank space of the table" (GR 554)

²⁶ M. Winston, "The Quest for Pynchon," Mindful Pleasures: Essays on Thomas Pynchon, ed. Levine & Leverenz, p. 254. Winston's article is the most comprehensive biography to date on Thomas Pynchon and traces his genealogy back to one "Pinco...who came to England from Normandy with William the conqueror"--p. 253.

These passages indicate once again the critique of an epistemology of analysis which predicates autarkic ontological entities, and gestures instead towards a logic of difference, of "non-exclusive opposition" which prescribes a reevaluation of the oppositional conceptual field in which Western rational discourses operate. The colourful film director and black-marketeer, Gerhardt von Göll, corroborates William Slothrop's redistribution of this dualism with characteristic modesty:

Despise me, exalt them, but remember [to Slothrop], we define each other. Elite and preterite, we move through a cosmic design of darkness and light, and in all humility, I am one of the very few who can comprehend it in toto. Consider honestly therefore, young man, which side you would rather be on. (GR 495)

In direct contrast with the traditional division between elect and preterite and similarly inside and outside, light and dark, white and black etc., which predicates them as separate independent entities, characters and narrator frequently urge their reciprocity, programming a careful reconceptualization of the 'field' in which these dualisms are produced, and the lines which segregate them.

The application of this dualism in its extended sense, as noted, is frequently interchanged with political/economic conditions of enfranchisement and disenfranchisement and of course, identifies once more the ubiquitous processes of selection and exclusion. Pynchon's secular application of this dualism is often augmented by the hierarchies of feudalism; e.g. Greta Erdmann, "the power and the gravity were there--they were important men.... A meeting of nobles in the Castle" (GR 486-7); "While nobles are crying in their night's chains, the squires sing. The terrible politics of the Grail can never touch them" (GR 701).

Pynchon's articulation of this dualism does not cease here. In order to confound the schema still further, he undertakes a little 'deconstruction' of his own which recognizes that, depending on how the context in which the election/preterition division takes places, is constellated, these two terms become interchangeable. Frans van der Groov is the first to be troubled by this debilitating dilemma, "if they were chosen to come to Mauritius, why had they also been chosen to fail and leave? Is that a choosing, or is it a passing-over? Are they Elect, or are they Preterite, and doomed as the dodos? (GR 110). The same dilemma bothers Enzian, the leader of the Schwarzkommando, who miraculously survived the von Trotha 'Vernichtungsbefehl' in Südwest:

What has happened to us? If choices have never been our own, if the Zone-Hereros are meant to live in the bosom of the Angel who tried to destroy us in Südwest . . . then: have we been passed over, or have we been chosen for something even more terrible? (GR 328; I emphasize once again the conditional syntax in which these musings are couched and which perform a disruptive function in Gravity's Rainbow similar to the rhetoric of uncertainty I traced in Lot 49).

Election can just as conceivably be preterition; preterition can be a reservation, an election for something more momentous or cataclysmic. These regional applications and complications of the elect/preterite dualism dismantle any reliable arbitrating capacity we might wish to assign to it in an interpretive framework and further the irreducible indeterminacy of the text.

Through all these several processes of selection and rejection that we have scanned (and implicated in this framework is the relationship of Gravity's Rainbow to what is omitted from it, what is paradoxically 'in' the text by its absence; I draw attention to the steady stream

of ellipses through the novel²⁷), an implicit critique of the act of discrimination, of reified decision with inadequate reference to context, is sustained in conjunction with the assertion that the excluded alternatives remain engaged and implied, defining the present and valorized choices by their absence. Thus the act of decision is not per se illegitimate (it is a necessary methodological tool) but rather, the illusion that it is incontrovertible and that the excluded ceases to perform any function. I wish to discuss later how the notion of the 'implied absent' provides one significant basis of "Pynchon's" narrative technique in Gravity's Rainbow.

Clearly, too, the analytical framework of selection and exclusion which we have been following--and other transformations may certainly be found--when applied to people, provides endless grounds for the paranoia registered by most of the novel's characters. Slothrop reflects at one point, "Either They have put him here for a reason, or he's just here. He isn't sure that he wouldn't, actually, rather have that reason. . . ." (GR 434): the perennial dilemma of the paranoid; it is both his greatest desire and worst fear to confirm external control ("the Presence feared and wanted" GR 203). The recurring dilemmas are of the order: is there a process of selection or is everything simply chance? (Enzian: "He could not believe in an process of selection. . . . There was no difference between the behavior of a god and the operations of pure chance" GR 323); if there is a process of selection, am I selected/rejected?; if I am selected/rejected

²⁷ One critic has provided a very interesting account of Gravity's Rainbow based on an investigation of the thematic, rhetorical, structural and temporal applications of preterition. He notes for example, "Restored to its native Latin, praeteritio identifies a figure of rhetoric. The Greek paraleipsis, the figure of omission."--L. Mackey, "Paranoia, Pynchon and Preterition," Sub-Stance 30 1981, p. 20.

is it random selection (chance again) or is there a deliberate intention?; if there is intention and I have been selected/rejected, why me?; if I have been chosen, what am I chosen for?, is election desirable? and who is doing the selection?--and a host of similar irresolvables which are probably best not asked. Mackey, discussing the traditional theological distinction of the dualism, aptly comments, "Paranoia...is...the will of God as perceived by the Preterite." ²⁸ I leave these thematic dualisms now to concentrate on the 'psychic geographies of Gravity's Rainbow which effect the suspension of, and 'frame' the System by marking its limits: respectively, the strategic mise en scènes of War and Zone.

OOOOO

THE HYPERBOLE OF THE WAR

The selection of WW II as mise en scène for Gravity's Rainbow is strategic for several reasons of both a formal and rhetorical nature, as I shall attempt to show. In this global confrontation of industrial powers, during which killing efficiency is maximized and technological development (allegorized by the A4) given top priority, Pynchon finds a potent and convincing vehicle for his otherwise exaggerated thesis of Western necropolicy. The War constitutes an environment and culture of crisis which requires lines of power (martial law) to become more direct, more exaggerated and thus more clearly visible. Thus, apposite to Pynchon's purposes, the plutocrats (trading again on a convenient double sense) who control the System are forced to show Their hand, and the grids

²⁸ *ibid.* p. 18.

of power, the flow of Elect-ricity, usually more carefully mystified and concealed, are starkly etched. Conceding that the War is society's 'winter' as I argued earlier, this scene, recapitulating several motifs we have read, is emblematic of the War's excoriation of the System's power-grid:

Halfway between the water and the coarse sea-grass, a long stretch of pipe and barbed wire rings in the wind. The black latticework is propped up by longer slanting braces, lances pointing out to sea. An abandoned and mathematical outlook: stripped to force-vectors holding it where it is, doubled up in places one row behind another, moving as Pointsman and Mexico begin to move again, backward in thick moiré, repeated uprights in parallax against repeated diagonals, and the snarls of wire below interfering more at random. After last night's snowfall, each line of the black scrawl was etched in white. But today wind and sand have blown the dark iron bare again, salted, revealing, in places, brief streaks of rust . . . in others, ice and sunlight turn the construction to electric-white lines of energy (GR 91)

Any subtlety, any device, any courtesy normally observed by the System in the execution of its inscrutable designs is temporarily dispensed with. Tchitcherine's exile to Central Asia is the occasion of this interjection:

They would not be who or where They are without a touch of Dante to Their notions of reprisal. Simple talion may be fine for wartime, but politics between wars demands symmetry and a more elegant idea of justice, even to the point of masquerading, a bit decadently, as mercy. It is more complicated than mass execution, more difficult and less satisfying, but there are arrangements Tchitcherine can't see... that can't be disturbed very much, between wars. . . .(GR 350)

The historical war (1939-45; my qualification registers a suspicion that it is more) in effect, gives ready credibility to Pynchon's provocative overstatement that

necropolity is the prevailing condition of Western culture and also provides him with a sufficiently defamiliarized mise en scène and context to give his hyperbolic conception of Western civilization's grotesquerie plausibility. The War provides a compelling hyperbole of persistent hierarchical and centric violence: violences which we have traced in some detail already. The War is thus constituted as a hyperbolic instance of a persisting imperial System. We may confirm this from the several speculations on the 'real purposes' of the War offered by various characters.

Many of the features I have already traced and discussed under the label of 'System' hold equally for the 'War' and in fact the 'War' very readily substitutes for all I have described as System. Brigadier Pudding, remobilized from the nostalgia of his memoirs discovers himself, "set down in a new space not only of battlefield...but also of the War-state itself," and reflects on the lack of coöperation between 'The White Visitation' and "other named areas of the War, colonies of that Mother City mapped wherever the enterprise is systematic death" (GR 76). These brief passages, iterating the theme of imperialism, condense War, State, Empire, City, System in a rapid chain of figural substitutions. One may readily confirm elsewhere this system of transferences which generates an interchangeable lexicon of functionally analogous hegemonic structures emphasizing a concentration and centering of power and destruction.

The historical war becomes one trope of the numerous processes and paraphernalia of the System. We may confirm this extension at several junctures. Mexico, we will recall, declares, "he sees only the same flows of power, the same impoverishments he's been thrashing around in since '39" (GR 628); during an American colonel's last

dream-cum-T.V. show before he is murdered by 'benny' habitué Pensiero, Mr Information discloses, "the truth is that the War is keeping things alive. Things. The German-and-Japs story was only one, rather surrealistic version of the real War. The real War is always there. ...the War is still killing lots and lots of people. Only right now it is killing them in more subtle ways" (GR 655) and earlier the narrator reminds us (on the amusing presupposition that we'd simply forgotten) with characteristic cynicism:

Don't forget the real business of the War is buying and selling. The mass nature of wartime death is useful in many ways. It serves as spectacle, as diversion from the real movements of the War. It provides raw material to be recorded into History, so that children may be taught History as sequences of violence, battle after battle, and be more prepared for the adult world. Best of all, mass death's a stimulus to just ordinary folks, little fellows, to try 'n' grab a piece of that Pie while they're still here to gobble it up. The true war is a celebration of markets. (GR 105)

And so on. The War thus functions as a complex compound trope for the System and also asserts hyperbolically the destruction and waste man's creative faculties are capable of producing when perverted to the ends of power, technology and profit. One critic writes, marking again the structures of centrism, "Gravity's Rainbow jars the ego into seeing how much waste and destruction can come from the I's passion for centering energies, whether as self, nation, corporation or Elect." ²⁹ The ruined Zone left in the aftermath of the War clearly sustains the 'wasteland' geography which is something of a trademark in Pynchon's fiction.

²⁹ D. Leverenz, "On Trying to Read Gravity's Rainbow," Mindful Pleasures, p. 230.

Furthermore, the traditional potential of a war-situation for high adventure is not lost on Pynchon and this again, makes it a fertile mise en scène. The war, a period when the unpredictable occurs (GR 126) and the rule of chance is at a premium (for Blicero, Gottfried and Katje, "the strayed children, the wood-wife in the edible house, the captivity, the fattening, the Oven--shall be their preserving routine, their shelter, against what outside none of them can bear--the War, the absolute rule of chance, their own pitiable contingency here in its midst" GR 97), provides endless opportunity for adventure and consequently 'stories'.

Who can forget such high adventure as 'Escape from Casino Hermann Goering', 'Fugitive in Nice', 'Evading Marvy's Mothers in the Mittelwerke', 'The Airborne Custard-Pie Encounter', and never forgetting the legendary Potsdam Pickup "Already the Potsdam Pickup is part of the folklore of the Zone" (GR 596)? Pynchon strategically sets this novel in a defamiliarized geography in order to take advantage of its extra-ordinary potential and the broadened imaginative scope it offers, yet forestalling the dismissal of his work as simply fantasy, a criticism frequently levelled at V. The broken Zone provides a mise en scène where the fantastic becomes almost plausible and where 'reality' is bizarrely fantastic.

Finally, if, as I have argued, the War, in its capacity as a substitute for the System, maximizes bureaucracy, Austerity and destruction, it nevertheless also brings about, as the Argentinian anarchists recognize, an interregnum. Responding to Slothrop's artless objection "'But-but bobwire," Slothrop with his mouth full..."that's progress (GR 264), Squalidozzi explains, "In ordinary times...the center always wins. Its power grows with time, and that can't be reversed, not by ordinary means. Decentralizing, back

toward anarchism, needs extraordinary times . . . this War --this incredible War--just for the moment has wiped out the proliferation of little states that's prevailed in Germany for a thousand years. Wiped it clean. Opened it." (GR 264-5)

If the War has been an agent of division, "expediting barriers between our lives," it is also the vehicle of disruption, suspension and disorganization of these barriers, boundaries, frontiers, nationalities, ID's, insignia, passports: the currency of a bureaucratic culture, "The Nationalities are on the move. It is a great frontierless streaming out here. . . . the populations move...hauling along the detritus of an order, a European and bourgeois order they don't yet know is destroyed forever" (GR 549,551). The War thus holds a profoundly ambiguous status in the novel. Its function is both destructive and constructive, at once both the propagation of the culture of death and the occasion of its own destruction and temporary suspension, raising the chances of contrary alternatives, better alternatives, in the Zone it leaves behind.

00000

NOTES FROM THE ZONE : "Forget frontiers now. Forget subdivisions. There aren't any." (GR 294)

The War's enterprise brings about the destruction of European order, the ubiquitous Displaced Persons (cf. The Disinherited in The Crying of Lot 49), mass death and the scarred and devastated rubble of the Zone, "never a clear sense of nationality anywhere, nor even belligerent sides, only the War, a single damaged landscape" (GR 257). The Zone is a damaged landscape left in the aftermath of the

war and the killing; it is a grimly littered stage after the tragedy. However, the Zone is also a landscape where the necroculture with its awesome reified symbolic network of nationalities, boundaries, interdictions, ID's and civil-service categories has been interrupted and suspended. Kappel, fortuitously echoing Kristeva's discussion of the "carnavalesque," remarks, "The Zone is an existential carnival where national identities and allegiances can be shed and assumed, bartered like secondhand clothes because of the absence of national, civilized, ordinary, socially-defined reality."³⁰ Thus the Zone is at once the stage of a tragedy and the interval where hopes, dreams, fantasies and "other second-class trivia" (GR 177) can find temporary refuge, and blueprints for "a kinder universe, more easygoing" (GR 726), alternative distributions of power and property, find a moment and space to flourish in the interregnum before re-occupation. The Zone is a topography outside space, time, history. The Zone is projected from everything that the System implies by what it includes, recognizes and promotes.

European civilization has effectively been dislodged and inverted and similarly its intricate reified symbolic network of social codes, nationalities, bureaucracies and spatio-temporal co-ordinates disengaged, "nobody's on timetables anymore" (GR 459). Slothrop finds synecdoches of this fallen order, "Mutilated statues lie under mineral sedation: frock-coated marble torsos of bureaucrats fallen pale in the gutters" (GR 367-8). This description of a transformed Berlin, iterating some of the novel's recurrent binarisms and carefully selecting metonyms of the System in the altered context of the Zone, expresses most explicitly the System's inversion:

³⁰ Kappel, p. 234.

Where's the city Slothrop used to see back in those newsreels and that National Geographic? The emptiness of Berlin this morning is an inverse mapping of the white and geometric capital before the destruction--the fallow and long-strewn fields of rubble, the same weight of too much featureless concrete . . . except that here everything's been turned inside out. The straight-ruled boulevards built to be marched...are now winding pathways... their shapes organic now, responding like goat trails, to laws of least discomfort. The civilians are outside now, the uniforms inside. Inside is outside. Ceilingless rooms open to the sky, wall-less rooms pitched out over the sea of ruins Advertisements for shelter, clothing, the lost, the taken, once classified, folded *bürgerlich* inside newspapers to be read at one's ease in the lacquered and graceful parlors are now stuck--out in the wind, when the wind comes, stuck to trees, door-frames, planking, pieces of wall--white and fading scraps, writing spidery, trembling, smudged, thousands unseen, thousands unread or blown away. At the Winterhilfe one-course Sundays you sat outside...but outside has been brought inside and that kind of Sunday lasts all week long. (GR 372-3)

The recurring spatial dyad records the inversion; conventional circuits of discourse have been severely dislocated and their altered status is clearly visible "stuck to trees," "smudged" "blown away." Later, in Berlin, Slothrop "feels the whole city around him going back roofless, vulnerable, uncentered as he is" (GR 434).

I have discussed at some length the priority given to the line, the boundary, the distinct opposition ("ideas of the opposite") and the entire genus of reified progeny generated by the analytical discourse of the System. By contrast, in the Zone we may record a very different status of the line and the entities it delimits. We have already noted Squalidozzi's remarks, "Taking land is building more fences. We want to leave it open" (GR 265). Others reinforce his observations; Schnorp, a ballooning enthusiast and custard-pie black marketeer, tells Slothrop,

' "There are no zones,"...which is also a line of Geli's.
 "No zones but the Zone"' (GR 333). Hereafter, in contrast with the clearly divided System one confirms the suspension, lack of authority and bankruptcy of boundaries, categories, frontiers and interdictions.

Previously, we have had notice of this disassembly of boundaries, and the order of existence the Zone accommodates, shortly after Slothrop's arrival there, "Signs will find him here in the Zone, and ancestors will reassert themselves. It's like going to that Darkest Africa to study the natives there, and finding their quaint superstitions taking you over. he feels his own ancestors, stronger now as borders fall away and the Zone envelopes him, his own WASPS in buckled black.... Signs of Katje, and doubles too" (GR 281).

Slothrop's arrival at the Mittelwerke, Nordhausen--the 'womb' of the Rocket--"full of signs of recent human tenancy" becomes the pretext for this extremely compact 'Manifesto for the Zone' which predicates most of the major attributes of the Zone:

Though found adrift and haunted...this is not the legendary Marie-Celeste--it isn't bounded so neatly, these tracks underfoot run fore and aft into all stilled Europe... . . . it was always easy, in open and lonely places, to be visited by Panic wilderness fear, but these are the urban fantods here, that come to get you when you are lost or isolate in the way time is passing, when there is no more History, no time-traveling capsule to find your way back to, only the lateness and the absence that fill a great railway shed after the capital has been evacuated, and the goat-god's city cousins wait for you at the edges of the light, playing the tunes they always played, but more audible now, because everything else has gone away or fallen silent . . . barn-swallow souls, fashioned of brown twilight rise toward the white ceilings . . .they are unique to the Zone, they answer to the new Uncertainty. Ghosts used to be

either likenesses of the dead or wraiths of the living. But here in the Zone categories have been blurred badly. The status of the name you miss, love, and search for now has grown ambiguous and remote, but this is even more than the bureaucracy of mass absence--some still live, some have died, but many have forgotten which they are. Their likenesses will not serve. Down here are only wrappings left in the light, in the dark: images of the Uncertainty(GR 303)

This is the summary 'constitution' of the Zone: "categories are blurred," it is the zone of "the new Uncertainty."

In the Zone, during this interregnum whilst the rules and covenants, which always gave the System its advantage and ascendancy, are dislodged, it encounters a more concerted threat from its opponents, counter-systems of enterprise and technology--its symmetrical opposites and "dark doubles" (Lot 49 98/91). At the Casino Hermann Goering where the House, like the Firm before it, is a subsidiary, another allegory of the System, and deliberately calling attention to the artifice and doubleness of its order (whatever Their illusions, or rather, despite whatever illusions They have been at pains to maintain) through the rhetoric of game, we will have read, "The odds They played here belonged to the past, the past only. Their odds were never probabilities, but frequencies already observed (GR 208). However, with the routines disrupted, the outcomes no longer predictable, the probabilities and chance restored, the odds equalized and the game no longer loaded in Their favour, the System encounters a much stronger bid to compete from its doppel-gängers. In defiance of the suspended 'official' enterprise, black markets flourish spontaneously and ubiquitously, "Slothrop returns...to find the crowd begun to coagulate.... These little vortices appearing in a crowd out here usually mean black market" (GR 569). Officialdom however is defending its rights and moments later guardians of the white market,

the necropolice, appear, and Slothrop, still in Plechazungarig after taking the lead role in the annual Pigherofestival, is suddenly conscious that the ritual has been a "dress rehearsal":

The cops go at busting these proceedings the way they must've handled anti-Nazi street actions before the War.... The War must've been lean times for crowd control, murder and moperly was the best you could do, one suspect at a time. But now, with the White Market to be protected, here again are whole streets eager for that erste Abreibung, and you can bet the heat are happy with it. (GR 570)

On a larger scale, the Allied forces are confronted with much the same competition in the shape of the Schwarzkommando. Despite competition for the engineers and parts of the A4, and national and ideological differences, the one operation in which the Allied forces are collaborating honestly, is the extermination of the Schwarzkommando; Slothrop, it emerges, was being programmed at the Casino to subliminally locate the Schwarzkommando that it might be destroyed, but got gradually dismantled by the Zone instead, "Labour wants the American found as much as we do. We sent him out to destroy the blacks and now it's obvious he won't do the job" (GR 615). We will notice, too, the close resemblance between the Schwarzkommando (which, with its counter-technology and counter-rocket 00001, constitutes a serious threat to the cosmopolitan techno-cartel of White-command), and the Tristero. These organizations share the same heraldic colour, similar histories of oppression, opposition to Western officialdom and specialization in information, "The Schwarzkommando...had grown away from the SS structure Their power now lay not in absolute weaponry but in information and expertise" (GR 427).

The Schwarzkommando and the black markets consequently constitute negative doubles of the System; during one

Schwarzkommando manoeuvre, "Negative shadows flicker white behind the edges of everything (GR 363). Ombindi's contingent--the Empty Ones--is even dedicated, albeit with clearer foresight, to a similar self-destruction. The Zone-Hereros, although savagely acculturized, have grafted elements of their traditional culture onto a commitment to technology and implicitly present a better adjusted and more plausible technological alternative than the System (one whose existence or possibility "Pynchon" hints has been suppressed in the official histories, but whose record persists in Ethnic Jokes--like the story about the kid who hates kreplach which encodes the Secret of the Fearful Assembly, GR 737--and other disqualified discourses). The Zone thus predicates a psychic-symbolic space which accommodates and situates both System and its 'other', its negative image, in a broader context. This capacity of the Zone is remarked at frequent intervals. Geli, instructing Slothrop alias Scuffling apropos the politics of the Zone, explains:

"It's so unorganized out here. There have to be arrangements. You'll find out." Indeed he will --he'll find thousands of arrangements. Even G-5, living its fantasy of being the only government in Germany now, is just the arrangement for being victorious, is all. No more or less real than all these others so private, silent, and lost to History. (GR 290-1)

We noted a moment ago the vigorous attempts to suppress black market enterprise and the Schwarzkommando by the occupying Allied forces. These are indications that the Zone is not simply an anarchist's utopia (although this is one of the fantasies it sustains), existing in anti-thesis to the manifest dystopia of the System. Powers still prevail, "arrangements" for commerce and exploitation still proliferate: von Göll, the film director turned black marketeer, is making "exorbitant profits" (GR 386) and Blodgett Waxwing's "speciality is phonying

documents of various sorts...whilst dealing in Army hardware...as a sideline" (GR 246). However, in the Zone all these "arrangements" and fantasies are able to co-exist. There is no dominant structure, no enduring monopoly and no paperwork. The code of business is the "arrangement" and the modus operandi is ad hoc rather than projective. Several characters caught in the emprises of the System dream of this type of order; Tchitcherine muses:

He is no relation at all to the Tchitcherine who dealt the Rapallo Treaty with Walter Rathenau. There was a long-term operator...believing in a State that would outlast them all.... There is that kind of State. But...there is this other Tchitcherine's kind, a mortal State that will persist no longer than the individuals in it. (GR 338)

Much later at the Gross Suckling Conference, the Counterforce resolves, "The dearest nation of all is one that will survive no longer than you and I, a common movement at the mercy of death and time: the ad hoc adventure" (GR 706).

However, more than simply sustaining Command and counter-command, white market and black market, the Zone sustains besides, all the subcultures, discourses, minorities, modes of cognition and consciousness which, interdicted, suppressed and disqualified, mark the margins and limits of the System's order ("all these men were caught in the spectrum, trapped among frequencies of their own voices and words" GR 110); by contrast, Slothrop learns, "the Zone can sustain many other plots besides those polarized upon himself" (GR 603). Possibilities, alternatives, "frequencies" which the System has discarded, repudiated and excluded in the framing of its order but which nevertheless remain implied by their absence, compile the conceptual economy of the Zone.

In the place of the uniformity and identity (note the regular obsession with IDs) of the System's dispensation, the Zone is the theatre of the double ("Pynchon" plays on the convenient abbreviation, E.T.O. - European Theatre of Operations, referring to "every occupation town in the Theatre" GR 246, and "the Mediterranean theatre" GR 438). It is an endless costume drama where ego-centric models of 'character' and fixed identity are continually modulated and dislocated by ex-centric models. The sources of Slothrop's motivation and volition are frequently posed, "Looks like there are sub-Slothrop needs They know about, and he doesn't: this is humiliating on the face of it, but now there's also the even more annoying question, What do I need that badly?" (GR 490). If this passage points to external forces of determination, Tchitcherine's hypothesis suggests unconscious impetus, "It's your Schwarzphänomen. It choreographs you" (GR 513).

Besides these sociological and psychoanalytic de-centerings, characters in the Zone frequently change identity, adopt disguises, inherit mythic attributes ("Slothrop's dumb idling heart sez: The Schwarzgerät is no Grail, Ace, And you are no knightly hero. The best you can compare with is Tannhäuser, the Singing Nincompoop" GR 364), and intersect with the 'personality-galleries' which assemble a variety of characters and archetypes--male and female--beneath a lexicon of transferrable and shared epithets. Greta Erdmann, as we noted previously, is one such character, so we may generalize the remark that "images of herself...survive in an indeterminate number of release prints here and there about the Zone" (GR 364). These several representations stage a total dissolution of any ontological or mimetic paradigms of 'character' in the traditional sense. These instances prepare us for the wholesale dissemination of Slothrop towards the end of the novel (I shall come back to this point). In contrast to

the System, the denizens of the Zone recognize the double-ness of identity, that identity is one role among others, hence Bodine assumes "some of Magda's old disguises. Good-natured and penetrable disguises.... It is a trans-vestitism of caring, and the first time in his life it's happened" (GR 742).

The Zone accommodates 'democratically' possibilities and alternatives which are unthinkable in the rational order of the System. As Slothrop alias Rocketman alias Max Schlepzig infiltrates the White House in Potsdam, centre of the System's power in the Zone, "Pynchon" interjects, elaborating the different 'laws' projecting Zonal space:

Their preoccupation is with forms of danger the War has taught them.... Fine for Slothrop...-- it's a set of threats he doesn't belong to. They are still back in geographical space, drawing deadlines and authorizing personnel, and the only beings who can violate their space are safely caught and paralyzed in comic books. They think. They don't know about Rocketman here. They keep passing him and he remains alone...if they do see him his image is shunted immediately out to the boondocks of the brain where it remains in exile with other critters of the night. . . . (GR379)

And adding another clause to the Zone manifesto is this ambiguously phrased amendment, concerning one of Bianca/Ilse's personae conceived from the film Alpdrücken:

Ilse, some Ilse, has persisted beyond her cinema mother, beyond film's end, and so have the shadows of shadows. In the Zone, all will be moving under the Old Dispensation, inside the Cainist's light and space...because the Double Light was always there, outside all film.... So that summer Ilse passed herself by.... (GR 429)

The congruence and coincidence of at least two dimensions of order within every identity, every entity is once more averred.

The Zone is a space where past ("ancestors will reassert themselves"), present and future (the several projections of Raketen-Stadt) co-exist, where living and dead, real and fantasy coincide: several Zone characters have 'real' and legendary personae, "Waxwing is already a legend around the Zone. So is Tchitcherine" (GR 294, cf. GR 596). Indeed, as the 'Zone Manifesto' warned (GR 303), categories are intolerably blurred; a general "confusion of ideas of the opposite" (GR 90) undertaken and the boundaries no longer possible to draw with any assurance, certainty or faith. The Zone (which becomes a problematic allegory of the text itself, paradoxically the stage of the text in which it is staged), assembles in its space possibilities and alternatives which supplement, infiltrate and delimit the order of the System and its attendant discourses, and situates both System and supplement in a broader framework, a more general economy which no order, no discourse can completely master or comprehend, but simply suppress in a relation of figure to ground. Ontological forms and products, mimetic considerations are preserved and submerged, disassembled and disseminated in the confusion of boundaries the text practises. Consequently the ontological rule, the rule of the One (vide. Kristeva, n. 20 and passim.) discloses itself as patently inadequate to deal with a text like Gravity's Rainbow. In asymmetrical contrast to a logic of identity and mimesis, one can distinguish a textual practice which partakes indiscriminately of several different narrative 'logics': a logic of the double, a logic of the 'implied absent', a logic of paradox, a logic of difference. We may discover one 'theoretical' basis for the logics of the double and the 'implied absent' in the doctrine espoused by Edwin Treacle (predictably ridiculed and discredited by his colleagues):

he would show the critter to many of us, though we would not look. He had...meant...only to show the others...that their feelings about blackness were tied to feelings about shit, and feelings about shit to feelings about putrefaction and death. Why wouldn't they admit that their repressions had, in a sense that Europe in the last weary stages of its perversion of magic has lost, had incarnated real and living men
(GR 276-7)

Treacle is, of course, trying to rationalize the disclosure of the Schwarzkommando's existence in the Zone; however, his theory identifies one basis of the narrative practices which express the Zone. I am thus suggesting that the Zone is assembled from discourses which have been repudiated and discarded by the System; discourses which have been dismissed as 'trivial' and non-serious in contrast to the gravity of its own discourses. Let us briefly record some of these Zonal discourses.

Zonal Discourses

We can recognize that several of these officially 'offbeat' theoretical and metaphysical perspectives describe textual practices according to which the Zone and Gravity's Rainbow are predicated. In the elaboration of the Zone, "Pynchon" assembles the doctrines, predications and 'logics' of those discourses devalorized, trivialized and dismissed by Western science, Christian theology, metaphysics and a long tradition of rationalism. In similar fashion to his textual adaptations and dramatizations of the ideas of Henry Adams and thermodynamics and communications theorists in V. and The Crying of Lot 49, "Pynchon" makes these devalorized (Zonal) discourses the basis of his narrative and textual practices in Gravity's Rainbow.

The doctrines of various occult sciences (Gnosticism, Kabbalah, Tarot); occult phenomena; oriental philosophy (the Yang-Yin discourse); a metaphysics of experience and primitivism, popular with the American counter-culture of the 1960's; certain psycho-analytic trends and predications; and games, films, myths, legends, astrology and comics, provide a heterogeneous framework of textual bases for the narrative techniques and events of Gravity's Rainbow. Hence, incidents and phenomena in the Zone and elsewhere frequently follow the kinds of 'logic', the conditions of possibility generally only permissible in mysticism, comics, films, myths, archetypes etc.

"Pynchon" preoccupies himself with several alternative modes of cognition, grafting these onto various characters, communities and 'happenings' in the Zone and implicitly interrogates the rationale for trivializing these 'pre-rite', these 'other' modes of cognition and discourse in the West. He attempts to excavate alternative epistemologies which do not affirm or follow procedures of analysis, rationality and logic, but are nevertheless not invalid (especially when contrasted with the devastation wrought by the rational theologism which has dictated the direction of Western imperial history). Of these discredited discourses I rudimentarily classify five major sub-types which I trace in further detail: a popular culture-derived narrative form which characterizes Slothrop's Progress, and adapts and burlesques film and comic forms; doctrines of atavism and return to origins; mandalic and contemplative modes of cognition; a metaphysics of experience; and various 'logics' of difference, or non-exclusive opposition.

Several critics have called attention to the frequent cinematic rhetoric of the novel, even proposing that Gravity's Rainbow be conceived as a film, "the novel's

overall structure represents us in the 1970's watching a movie made in the 1940's" ³¹ Aside from the fact that "Pynchon's" assertion (on which this claim is primarily based) is once more dislodged by the characteristic rhetorical question, "us, old fans who've always been at the movies (haven't we?)" (GR 760), this seems a rather neat oversimplification. However, it is notable that most of Slothrop's adventures and experiences are dictated by the 'logic' of cinema and comics and the absurd and super-real possibilities these media admit. Slothrop's entire sojourn with Katje is punctuated by the exaggerated mannerisms and sound effects of a 1940's romantic movie:

Knowing what is expected of her, she waits with a vapid look till he's done [Slothrop is singing a foxtrot tune, "Too Soon To Know"], mellow close-harmony reeds humming a moment in the air, then reaches out a hand, melting toward him as he topples in slow-motion toward her mouth (GR 196)

Out at sea a single clarinet begins to play, a droll melody joined in on after a few bars by guitars and mandolins. Birds huddle bright-eyed on the beach. Katje's heart lightens, a little, at the sound. (GR 225)

Other episodes follow the style of slapstick comedy: there are chase scenes through the Mittelwerke and in a balloon, a custard-pie fight and several similar scenes; the marvellous deeds of the comic-strip Rocketman; and Slothrop frequently claiming to be Cary Grant, Errol Flynn et al. The punctuation of the sojourn at the Casino with cinema rhetoric, counterpointed with a rhetoric of gaming emphasizes Slothrop's emerging awareness of the artificiality of the order he has been moving in and the extent of Their control. Elsewhere, film and comic forms are used to advertise the fictive qualities of Gravity's Rainbow itself.

³¹ Simmon, p. 57.

A second group of discourses in the Zone and elsewhere in the novel articulate a pre-occupation with modes of atavism and a return to origins. Several Zonal characters express this desire, most notably the Argentinian anarchists, "the Argentine heart...longs for a return to that first unscrambled serenity . . . that anarchic oneness of pampas and sky" (GR 264). Schnorp the balloonist similarly exults, "This is like the very earliest days of the mercantile system. We're back to that again. A second chance. Passages are long and hazardous. Loss in transit is a part of life. You have had a glimpse of the Ur-Markt" (GR 336). Enzian wistfully hopes that, "Somewhere, among the wastes of the World, is the key that will bring us back, restore us to our Earth and to our freedom" (GR 525). Slothrop, too, entertains this hope:

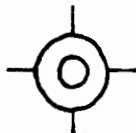
It seems to Tyrone Slothrop that there might be a route back--maybe that anarchist...was right, maybe for a little while all the fences are down, one road as good as another, the whole space of the Zone cleared, depolarized, and somewhere inside the waste of it a single set of coordinates from which to proceed, without elect, without preterite, without even nationality to fuck it up. . . .
(GR 556)

This faint hope finds its psychic parallel in the Kabbalist's doctrine of return, "To return to God, the soul must negotiate each of the Sephiroth, from ten back to one" (GR 753), and faith in parousia and a home-gathering; multiplying allegorical layers "Pynchon" describes the Hereros Rocket assembly, "So the assembly of the 00001 is occurring also in a geographical way, a Diaspora running backwards, seeds of exile flying inward in a modest preview of gravitational collapse, of the Messiah gathering in the fallen sparks. . . ." (GR 737). I draw attention to the ambivalence of the allegories supervising this movement, annihilation ("preview of gravitational collapse") or salvation ("the Messiah

gathering in the fallen sparks")? Elsewhere, describing another assembly, we read, "It's a Collection Day, and the garbage trucks are all heading north.... Returning to the Center, with all the gathered fragments of the Vessels. . . ." (GR 757). This transference points again to a deliberate confusion of opposites and a blurring of categories.

A third group of discourses including Herero cosmology, Jungian psychology and certain Eastern religions of contemplation and meditation are implicated in the recurrence of four-fold mandalic forms in the novel. I briefly note some of their occurrences. The first is a reference to Novi Pazar as a "croix mystique" (GR 16), the Herero village is described as "the gathered purity of opposites, the village built like a mandala" (GR 321) and finally, drawing together several disparate four-fold forms, Slothrop writes on a latrine wall:

next to the other graffiti, with a piece of rock, he scratches this sign:



Slothrop besieged. Only after he'd left it half a dozen more places did it dawn on him that what he was really drawing was the A4 rocket, seen from below. By which time he had become tuned to other fourfold expressions--variations on Frans van der Groov's cosmic windmill--swastikas, gymnastic symbols FFFF in a circle symmetrically upside down and backward, Frisch Fromm Frölich Frei over neat doorways in quiet streets, and crossroads....

The sand-colored churchtops rear up on Slothrop's horizons, apses out to four sides like rocket fins guiding the streamlined spires. . . chiseled in the sandstone he finds waiting the mark of consecration, a cross in a circle. At last, lying one afternoon spread-eagled at his ease in the sun...he becomes a cross himself, a crossroads, a living intersection where the judges have come to set up a gibbet for a common criminal who is to be hanged at noon. (GR 624-5)

This cluster of "fourfold expressions" draws attention to the recurrent motif of crossroads and generally, moments of intersection. These fourfold shapes, which multiply as the novel progresses, even implicating the four-part structure of the text itself, arbitrarily link very disparate images, symbols and slogans in a manner which would map a distinctly uncommon order of 'theme'. Raketen-Stadt, which appears to alter accordingly to every conception of the shape of the future is, for Enzian, "the ceremonial City, fourfold as expected...built in mandalic form like a Herero village" (GR 725) (cf. the description of Raketen-Stadt GR 297, "this Rocket-City...is set up deliberately To Avoid Symmetry, Allow Complexity, Introduce Terror... but tourists have to connect the look of it back to things they remember...the wine bottle smashed in the basin, the bristlecone pines outracing Death for millennia, concrete roads abandoned years ago. hairdos of the late 1930's, indole molecules").

This aggregate of fourfold shapes, like the meaningless, graphic V-shapes, like the graphic post horn in Lot 49, communicating with other non-semantic patterns in Gravity's Rainbow (the play of S-shapes for example) stages a graphic and non-phono(logo)centric pattern of writing (arche-writing) which, once more, marks the limits of a logocentric semantics and thematics which claim to recuperate the text in a framework of full meaning and presence. The fourfold mandalic ensemble identities for us, another disseminative force operating in the text and gestures toward non-rational, contemplative modes of cognition which are anathema to Western cognitive practices.

We can also detect, running in contrast to the overwhelming reified structures of the System, a 'metaphysics of experience' best represented by left-wing street-revolutionary, Leni Pökler. She espouses her idea of 'penetrating the

moment' (GR 158), "there is the moment, and its possibilities" (GR 159). The 'moment' identifies that crucial and problematic interface between past and future in which change occurs and decisions are made, the passing instant of a spatio-temporal trace. We may frequently read this quiet but insistent hope that, despite the debilitating effects of enduring structures, there might still be accidental, privileged and unredactable moments of analogic and visceral communication. After Christian and Enzian settle their hostilities and their paths cross again, "the two palms do slide and brush, do touch, and it is touch and trust enough, for this moment. . . ." (GR 673). Previously, we will have read of a similar instance of exchange in the anonymous wish after Advent's evensong, "you wish you'd picked him up, held him a bit. Just held him, very close to your heart.... As if it were you who could, somehow, save him. For the moment not caring who you're supposed to be registered as. For the moment anyway, no longer who the Caesars say you are" (GR 136). One more moment conjoins this hope with the desire for return which we sketched above, in the episode entitled STREETS:

in each of these streets, some vestige of humanity, of Earth, has to remain. No matter what has been done to it, no matter what it's been used for. . . .
 At least one moment of passage, one it will hurt to lose, ought to be found for every street now indifferently gray with commerce, with war, with repression . . . finding it, learning to cherish what was lost, mightn't we find some way back?
 (GR 693)

To trace this theme any further would replicate George Levine's excellent discussion of it. He concludes, although over-stressing the importance of this particular theme in Pynchon's fiction, "The moment becomes the enactment of the anarchic visionary ideal that animates much of

Pynchon's fictions." ³² I progress now to discuss what I have termed 'logics-of difference', where we will encounter again "Pynchon's" tacit endorsement of a logic of "non-exclusive opposition" or "dialogue."

Leni Pökler, provoked by her husband, "the cause-and-effect man," also attempts to defend astrology and remarks, "not cause. It all goes along together. Parallel, not series. Metaphor. Signs and symptoms. Mapping on to different coordinate systems, I don't know . . ." She didn't know, all she was trying to do was reach" (GR 159). Watching Fritz Lang's movie, Die Frau im Mond, "Leni saw a dream of flight. One of many possible. Real flight and dreams of flight go together. Both are part of the same movement. Not A before B, but all together. . . ." (GR 159) The rationalistic Franz simply sneers at this notion that "it all goes along together," "Try to design anything that way and have it work" (GR 159).

Pynchon's text itself, I suggest, is a response to precisely this challenge, if a text can be said to "work" in any way. Leni's remarks, regardless of their application to astrology, are one instance of a frequently recurring Zonal "anthem" and identify in their own way, the multiply allegorical technique of the novel, "Parallel, not series. Metaphor. Signs and Symptoms. Mapping on to different coordinate systems" and "it all goes along together". Contained here is an implicit instruction to the reader of the way Gravity's Rainbow should be apprehended. Counterpointing this motif is the recurring chorus of "Opposites

³² G. Levine, "Risking the Moment: Anarchy and Possibility in Pynchon's Fiction," Mindful Pleasures, p. 135. Levine's essay is particularly valuable for the attention it gives to the roles of risk and chance in Pynchon's fiction.

together," or what Pointsman would have described as "the confusion of ideas of the opposite". Let us trace this principle in some of its more substantial thematic and textual applications emphasizing its conjunction with the principle of allegory and simultaneity.

Kevin Spectro, as we recorded, first articulates this principle apropos behaviourist psychology, "Kevin Spectro did not differentiate as much as he between Outside and Inside. He saw the cortex as an interface organ, mediating between the two, but part of them both" (GR 142), raising the profoundly undecidable status of the boundary which is neither Inside nor Outside (what Derrida describes as the 'hymen' in his reading of Mallarmé in Dissemination 173-286).

Hereafter, this design of "non-exclusive opposition" is frequently elaborated, especially in exegeses of Herero culture and cosmology. Enzian's attendance at a séance with Blicero in Germany prompts his memory, "The dead have talked with him...told stories of ancestors, or of spirits from other parts of the veld--for time and space on their side have no meaning, all is together" (GR 153). And making an abrupt shift in perspective to Edwin Treacle at Psychological Research pleading respect for a sociology which includes living and dead, we read:

There are peoples--these Hereros for example--who carry on business every day with their ancestors. The dead are as real as the living. How can you understand them without treating both sides of the wall of death with the same scientific approach?
(GR 153)

How indeed. Setting aside whatever prejudices we might have about the co-existence of living and dead, it is necessary to recognize that both these categories are

held to exist within the 'logic of the Zone' and the text co-extensive with it.

Later, near Nordhausen, in the Erdschweinhöhle of the Schwarzkommando, Enzian, reflecting on the ideological differences which divide the Zone Hereros (elsewhere distinguished as "Empty, Neutral and Green" GR 673), makes this assimilation:

Vectors in the night underground, all trying to flee a center, a force, which appears to be the Rocket: some immagination, whether of journey or of destiny, which is able to gather violent political opposites together in the Erdschweinhöhle as it gathers fuel and oxidizer in its thrust chamber---- (GR 318)

The introduction of Mondaugen is the occasion of the Oriental extensions of this 'theme' in the Yin-Yang dialogue:

Kurt Mondaugen.... One of these German mystics who grew up reading Hesse, Stefan George, and Richard Wilhelm...he seemed to look at fuel and oxidizer as paired opposites, male and female principles uniting in the mystical egg of the combustion chamber: creation and destruction, fire and water, chemical plus and chemical minus-- (GR 403)

("Valency" the prosaic Pökler protests, "a condition of the outer shells that's all" GR 403).

Returning to the Hereros, in a passage I cited above, Ombindi preaches his doctrine of tribal suicide with a nostalgia for the primitive, uncontaminated Herero culture, "Yes it is a little bit jive of Ombindi here to look back toward an innocence he's really only heard about, can't himself believe in--the gathered purity of opposites, the village built like a mandala. . . ." (GR 321). We can detect some overlap between this 'theme' we are tracing and the ensemble of "fourfold expressions" recorded earlier.

The Herero cosmology receives its fullest elaboration when Andreas interprets the mandalic KEVZH insigne for Slothrop:

Andreas sets it on the ground, turns it till the K points northwest. "Klar," touching each letter, "Entlüftung, these are the female letters. North letters. In our villages the women lived in huts on the northern half of the circle, the men on the south. The village itself was a mandala. Klar is fertilization and birth, Entlüftung is the breath, the soul. Zündung and Vorstufe are male signs, the activities, fire and preparation or building. And the center, here, Hauptstufe. It is the pen where we kept the sacred cattle. The souls of the ancestors. All the same here. Birth, soul, fire, building. Male and female, together.

"The four fins of the Rocket made a cross, another mandala. Number one pointed the way it would fly. Two for pitch, three for yaw and roll, four for pitch. Each opposite pair of vanes worked together, and moved in opposite senses. Opposites together. You can see how we might feel it speak to us, even if we don't set one up on its fins and worship it. (GR 563).

This is, of course, a highly imaginative graft of Herero cosmology onto "Pynchon's" own Rocket iconography and to some extent a burlesque of these cosmological and mystical discourses; however, the principle of "opposites together" clearly constitutes a prominent 'theme' of the novel. We have already remarked this pattern in the 'Yin-Yang' dialogue which, as Kristeva notes, stages a logic of "non-exclusive" opposition, and once again, grafting the doctrines of the Kabbalah to the Rocket, a character explains:

"Now the Sephiroth fall into a pattern, which is called the Tree of Life. It is also the body of God. Drawn among the ten spheres are 22 paths. Each path corresponds to a letter of the Hebrew alphabet, and also to one of the cards called 'Major Arcana' in the Tarot. So although the Rocket countdown appears to be serial, it actually conceals the Tree of Life, which must be apprehended all at once, together, in parallel.

"Some Sephiroth are active or masculine, others passive or feminine. But the Tree itself is a unity, rooted exactly at the Bodenplatte." (GR 753)

Which brings us back roughly, to where we started, "It all goes along together. Parallel, not series. Metaphor." Other instances of this 'theme' can be found. Thus, I argue, "Pynchon" takes the predicates of a culture and cosmology he evidently admires for its ability to reconcile differences and accommodate paradox, and makes this a major basis for the 'logic of the Zone' and co-extensively Gravity's Rainbow.³³

However, if this logic of "opposites together" supervises the 'serious' issues of the novel, "Pynchon" nevertheless does not treat it entirely seriously, or alternatively, having conditioned a new respect for the 'non-serious, trivial and preterite' discourses, inaugurates an altogether different dimension at the "interface" between these contraries. I suggest that this 'theme' is also the principle motivating the wild juxtaposition and plurivocal quality of the text, showing total disrespect for boundaries of decorum, style, taboo etc.; to recite

³³ For what it may be worth, Joseph Slade summarizes Pynchon's comments concerning Herero cosmology in a letter to a friend, 8 January 1968, "One cannot think of the Hereros without reference to their religion, Pynchon told his correspondent, for thanks to that religion, which stresses a unified and integrated tribal life and a pantheistic approach to the universe, the pre-literate, pre-colonialized, pre-rationalized Hereros view the world as a metaphysical whole. Within that world paradox is the law of experience: opposites can be reconciled, stones can be inhabited by souls, men can be individual selves and yet parts of the larger self, members of a human and a cosmic community." This does not of course suggest that Herero cosmology discloses the 'real meaning' of the novel and Slade's prefacing remark is a necessary caution, "In Gravity's Rainbow, the Hereros represent one mode of perception and interpretation."--Joseph Slade, "Escaping Rationalization: Options for the Self in Gravity's Rainbow," Critique: Studies in Modern Fiction 18 (3) 1977, p. 29.

Kristeva, 'The "inopportune" expression, with its cynical frankness, its desecration of the sacred, and its attack on etiquette, is quite characteristic. It uses abrupt transitions and changes; high and low, rise and fall, and misalliances of all kinds.'³⁴ Thus a linguistic discussion on the phrase 'Ass Backwards' (!) becomes point of departure for a totally unrelated digression concerning Minnie Khlaetsch's congenital indisposition to perceive umlauts over vowels (GR 683). A logic of "opposites together" also supervises the banal Japanese sit-com with Takeshi and Ichizo, "They are as different as peanut butter and jelly, these two" (GR 690). One begins to understand the importance of the toilet in Pynchon's iconography; it is mise en scène for several episodes late in the novel and one locus where opposites come together in Western culture. Tracing another polarization, this 'theme' emerges once more, "One implication is that Shit and Shinola are wildly different categories. ...no way for Shit and Shinola to coexist. Simply impossible" (GR 687). The toilet is one place where they converge. "Well there's one place where Shit 'n' Shinola do come together, and that's in the men's toilet at the Roseland Ballroom, the place where Slothrop departed from on his trip down the toilet as revealed in the St. Veronica papers" (GR 688). Once again, if the 'theme' of "opposites together" appears to articulate one of the serious concerns of the novel, it is also burlesque in episodes like the one we have just read.

In these several episodes through which I have traced the principle of "opposites together" and "all together" "Pynchon" invokes widely different discourses and I do not pretend to reconcile their differences; however, it seems

³⁴ Kristeva, p. 83.

to me that they articulate the common principle of heterogeneous 'unity' ('unity' in the sense that this heterogeneity is accommodated in an infinite context), and the recognition of the 'implied absent' which marks the limits and therefore constitutes the 'present' identity. For the logic of identity, "Pynchon" substitutes and engages a 'logic of difference' or "logic of the mandala":

The Rocket was fired southward, westward, eastward. But not northward--not so far. Fired south, at Antwerp, the bearing was about 173° East, during testing at Peenemünde, 072°. Fired west, at London, about 260°. Working it out with parallel rulers, the missing (or, if you want, "resultant") bearing comes out to something like 354°. This would be the firing implied by all the others, a ghost-firing which, in the logic of mandalas, either has occurred, most-secretly, or will occur. (GR 707)

This "logic of mandalas" seems to underly a substantial proportion of the unconventional orders of causality, being and genesis averred in the Zone and Gravity's Rainbow generally.

00000

The Zone, then, is an inclusive textual space which indiscriminately assembles numerous aporial phenomena, discourses and genres trivialized and repudiated by 'serious' Western cognitive frameworks. It is a space where a "confusion of ideas of the opposite" and similarly, ideas of causality and derivativeness, is practised. The Zone comprises a textual space where numerous heterogeneous discourses are grafted together and set in play amongst each other, where both System and the discourses it denies and banishes to the margins of its order are accommodated in a space which none commands; what applies to the Zone is a fortiori the case with Gravity's Rainbow itself. No stable authorial position intervenes to situate the reader and no discourse is ultimately privileged or authoritative.

Gravity's Rainbow, I suggest, stages a text of sufficiently high logical type that it remarkably comprehends and anticipates any critical discourse, making it appear thoroughly reductive and naïve by comparison. By engaging numerous modes of explanation, multiplying coordinates of interpretation (all of which offer themselves to the critic) and deliberately refusing to adopt a consistent position, "Pynchon" both licenses the critic to develop what interpretation he can and effectively forestalls any adequate critical account by simultaneously sustaining several alternative modes of explanation. For example, by oscillating tirelessly between 'real' and 'fiction' and blurring the boundaries between 'real' and 'artifice', contingency and control (the possibility always exists that They are simulating randomness GR 586, and that the devastated Zone has been part of the plot--Enzian's paranoid fantasy--GR 520-1), the text constantly allegorizes the problematic boundary between intention and random textual effects, meaning and non-meaning, thus seriously forestalling any decisive critical conclusions. Tanner records his own reading experience:

There is deliberately too much evidence, partaking of too many orders of types of explanation and modes of experience for us to hold it all together. Reading itself thus becomes a paranoid activity which is, however, constantly breaking down under the feeling that we shall never arrive at a unitary reading, never hold the book in one 'frame': the sense of indeterminateness is constantly encroaching on us. ³⁵

The Zone and a fortiori the novel, as an inclusive textual tissue, grafting numerous discourses together, creates a space of meaning effects and dissemination. Any meaning

³⁵ Tanner, Thomas Pynchon, p. 82.

one attempts to assign to the text is constantly being interrupted and dislodged by different contextual constellations. Any pattern of coherence and meaning is continually found to radiate into other overdetermined contexts and correspondences until it no longer becomes conceivable how such chains of correspondence may be reconciled or resolved. Instead, one can only distinguish cohering-disintegrating 'themes' or anthems with no legitimate contextual boundaries; "Each word cited yields a key or grid that you can move through the text" (vide n. 14). Legible in the place of themes are "wrappings left in the light, in the dark: images of the Uncertainty," endless allegorical "wrappings" and warpings supplementing each other without closure.

LINES OF DISSEMINATION

It almost seems banal to describe Gravity's Rainbow as a textual dissemination. I have already tried to indicate how Gravity's Rainbow is disseminated thematically by directing attention to the way in which any particular trope, figure, motif, theme, radiates outwards into broader and broader contexts of inclusion which no framework of meaning (which is always ultimately ontologically determined) satisfactorily comprehends. To give meaning to the text always requires the marking of arbitrary contextual limits which the text in no way authorizes; this 'illegitimate' delimitation of contexts, (decisions) is, however, the basis of any possible critical operation. The dissemination of the text, I suggest, could be followed along several lines: that is, it stages and advertises its indeterminacy and lack of closure in several ways. Methods of disrupting certainty which we identified in V. and The Crying of Lot 49 are freely practised again here. One

notices the recurrence of unresolved rhetorical questions, allusion to apochryphal texts and sources, a frequent conditional mode, but also substantial gaps from withheld information and inconclusive narratives; we never discover what the Kirghiz Light is, what exactly Slothrop retrieves from the Anubis nor who savagely assaults him, nor why Bianca was hanged; we never discover what became of Blicero after launching Rocket 00000, not what action Enzian resolves to take after hearing Thanatz's testimony (GR 673), although it is generally assumed that he launches himself in Rocket 00001; we never discover exactly why or how Slothrop's erotic Poisson was anticipating the fall of the V-2s, nor what Laszlo Jamf's mystery stimulus was; and so on.

A second major destabilizing effect, disrupting any potential closure or retrieval of the text as a coherent signified is the total disintegration and disassembly of the main protagonist. Slothrop, of whose progressive amnesia and social de-conditioning (analogous to Oedipa's social excoriation in Lot 49) we are frequently reminded, never verifies anything, never discovers anything, never reaches any point of resolution, self-fulfilment or revelation; instead, he simply fizzles away. As his Zone-time increases so his conscious self, his memory and his ego dissolve, "Slothrop perceives that he is losing his mind" (GR 434). By the time he reaches Peenemünde, "Egg the flying Rocket hatched from" and "holy Center" (GR 509) his "personal density" (GR 509) is virtually negligible and his receptivity to revelation, nil. Hereafter, his progressive disintegration is periodically reported, "He's been changing, sure, changing, plucking **the albatross** of self now and then, half-conscious" (GR 623). Later:

Tyrone...has become one plucked albatross. Plucked, hell--stripped. Scattered all over the Zone. It's doubtful if he can ever be "found" again, in the conventional sense of "positively identified and detained." Only feathers . . . redundant or regenerable organs, "which we would be tempted to classify under the 'Hydra-Phänomen' were it not for the complete absence of hostility. . . ."--Natasha Raum, "Regions of Indeterminacy in Albatross Anatomy," (GR 712)

Eventually, any relevance, significance or conclusion Slothrop's movements may have had, is disavowed and the predicate of Slothrop cancelled, leaving his precise status and function in the text profoundly uncertain:

There is also the story about Tyrone Slothrop, who was sent into the Zone to be present at his own assembly...and there ought to be a punch line to it, but there isn't. The plan went wrong. He is being broken down instead, and scattered. His cards have been laid out...they are the cards of a tanker and feeb: they point only to a long and scuffling future, to mediocrity (not only in his life but also, heh, heh, in his chroniclers too, yes yes nothing like getting the 3 of Pentacles upside down covering the significator on the second try to send you to the tube to watch a seventh rerun of the Takeshi and Ichizo Show...)--to no clear happiness or redeeming cataclysm. (GR 738)

And a member of the Counterforce confirms (although he could be lying, he is speaking to the Wall Street Journal after all), "We were never that concerned with Slothrop qua Slothrop" (GR 738).

Another obstacle thwarting any satisfactory recuperation and conclusive meaning to the text but manifesting its disseminative force instead, is the wholly fragmented structure of the closing 100-or-so pages. The text as a coherent narrative 'System' simply disintegrates. 'The book as "system" blows apart at the end,' is as good a description as any.³⁶ Another commentator summarizes:

³⁶ Westervelt, p. 87.

There are signs--too many signs--but nothing assuredly signified; a jumble of texts, but no reliable edition [Tanner]. The language--this is the secret of its mastery--is not master of itself. It has renounced self-mastery, so that there is no "authentic" text of Gravity's Rainbow. All the questions it broaches are over-researched, over-documented, and left in the breach.³⁷

Frames of reference and orientation are obscured, spatio-temporal and narrative continuity all but suspended and all but the most rudimentary and superficial connections disengaged, leaving any coherence to be primarily the function of a paranoid ordering-faculty fastening on recurring names, places, motifs and other oblique correspondences. This disintegration cannot be easily illustrated in a critical discourse but is confirmed by a reading of the novel as the above quotations corroborate.

One trope which we have, as yet, barely considered is, of course, the Rocket. If there is any point where the myriad and disparate discourses, characters and events do converge, however obliquely, it is on the Rocket. Once more it would be possible to track its overdetermination and ramifications indefinitely and I shall limit myself to a few indications. I elaborated the theoretical case for dissemination with regard to the V-aggregate in Chapter One and the enigma of the Rocket performs an analogous function in Gravity's Rainbow; it is the point on which opposing discourses converge and from which they diverge without contextual limits, and what holds for V., holds mutatis mutandi for the Rocket.

The Rocket-trope is, I suggest, a far more successful enigma than its predecessors. Whereas V. is constructed from a tissue of myths and legends and generally fantastic

³⁷ Mackey, p. 22.

sources, and the Tristero, despite its insertion into the historical text, is nevertheless a fiction (as far as we know!), the Rocket is a substantial historical and technological entity which played a major role in WW II and has since enchanted the Western technological imagination (Pynchon was writing Gravity's Rainbow during the halcyon years of the moon-shot N.A.S.A. space programme). With V. and the Tristero, "Pynchon" takes fictive entities and develops their historical bases; with the Rocket he inverts his former practice by selecting a major twentieth century technological and historical development and extrapolating its potential mythic, allegorical and religious dimensions. The Rocket becomes the basis for a new mythology, a new religion, a new totem and a new cultural fetish.

The Rocket is enormously overdetermined in an inspissate tissue of textual grafts and the argument I developed above for the general disseminative effect of the text's 'anthemic' field holds a fortiori for the Rocket. In the genealogy, assembly, structure, design, mechanics, mathematics, co-ordination, function, flight-path, guidance and effects of the Rocket, Pynchon manages to aver or imply some relation, correspondence or relevance to "everything in the Creation" (GR 703)! The Rocket is held to be a code, an allegory for any and everything. It is rendered so inclusive and exhaustive a textual space that its meaning is left radically indeterminate. The Herero Andreas has already described it as a convergent/divergent point, "Birth, soul, fire, building. Male and female, together. Opposites together" (GR 563). Let us record some of its other important determinations.

The Rocket is, variously, an allegory for the System, "an entire system won away from the feminine darkness" (GR 324), and, grafting the Tarot's overdetermined text to it,

"The Tower. It is a puzzling card.... It shows a...tall phallic structure.... Some read ejaculation.... Others see a Gnostic or Cathar symbol for the Church of Rome, and this is generalized to mean any System which cannot tolerate heresy: a system which, by its nature, must sooner or later fall. We know by now that it is also the Rocket" (GR 747). As an allegory of the System it is linked to the lexicon we described earlier and in which we located the self-destructive War. The Rocket is also assimilated to the Messiah (GR135,464) and more generally, any anti-systematic or charismatic figure ("it really did possess a Max Weber charisma" GR 464). It is the centrifuge of an international Rocket-cartel in which opposing sides in the War are revealed to have been complicit (GR 251); Vaslav Tchitcherine apprehends "A Rocket-cartel. A structure cutting across every agency human and paper that ever touched it. Even to Russia . . . Russia bought from Krupp, didn't she, from Siemens, the IG. . . ." (GR 566).

It is furthermore grafted to the Kabbalist Tree of Life. At Blicero's rocket-battery, the launching pad is first described, "The Bodenplatte--concrete plate laid over strips of steel--is set inside a space defined by three trees" (GR 100) and the key term "Bodenplatte" grafts Rocket to Kabbalah and simultaneously several other condensations in this passage we have already cited:

"Now the Sephiroth fall into a pattern, which is called the Tree of Life. It is also the body of God. Drawn among the ten spheres are 22 paths. Each path corresponds to a letter of the Hebrew alphabet, and also to one of the cards called the 'Major Arcana' in the Tarot.

"Some Sephiroth are active or masculine, others passive or feminine. But the Tree itself is a unity, rooted exactly at the Bodenplatte. It is the axis of a particular Earth, a new dispensation, brought into being by the Great Firing." (GR 753)

Elsewhere, the Rocket becomes an allegory for the atomic bomb and the Cross through the assimilation of these latter to the Tree. Slothrop apprehends this photograph in a deserted street in northern Germany, reporting the death of Hiroshima:

plastered over two slippery cobblestones, is a scrap of newspaper headline, with a wirephoto of a giant white cock, dangling in the sky straight downward out of a white pubic bush. The letters

MB DRO

ROSHI

appear above with the logo of some occupation newspaper.... The white image has the same coherence, the hey-lookit-me smugness, as the Cross does. It is not only a sudden white genital onset in the sky--it is also, perhaps, a Tree. . . . (GR 693-4)

So the account of the development of the A4 at Peenemünde has also been a code for the gathering of the faithful at Los Alamos. Elsewhere, the Rocket is conceived as a holy Text by Enzian, "we assumed--natürlich!--that this holy Text had to be the Rocket...our Torah" (GR 520) and undermining this assumption with his own paranoia (which should bode ominously for the reader of Gravity's Rainbow searching for the 'authentic' text), he adds, "Its symmetries, its latencies, the cuteness of it enchanted and seduced us while the real Text persisted somewhere else in its darkness, our darkness.... But if I'm riding through it, the Real Text, right now, if this is it . . . or if I passed it today somewhere in the devastation of Hamburg...missing it completely. . ." (GR 520). Clearly, by assimilating the Rocket to a text, Gravity's Rainbow directly implicates itself in the overdetermination of the Rocket, making the dilemmas of the Rocket's interpretation its own. Furthermore, this generates a curious paradox whereby the Rocket is a 'text' accommodated by the

'context' of Gravity's Rainbow and Gravity's Rainbow is a 'text' belonging to the 'context' of the Rocket. The boundaries of each enclose the other and any possibility of the novel being fully present to itself is irrevocably dislocated; in this respect one might follow the pervasive tropology of writing and the numerous other forms of double which we discover once more in Gravity's Rainbow, for the dislocative and disruptive effects of self-referentiality.

Once again in Gravity's Rainbow we discover numerous passages which are contextually loosely anchored, referring at once to a particular context and making a general (hence self-referential) comment about the procedures of the text as a whole. One instance of this, I suggested, was Leni Pökler's remark about "Parallel, not series. Metaphor." Many similar passages of ambiguously dual reference may be found in the novel. Jonathan Culler comments on this phenomenon:

The possibility of including the text's own procedures among the objects it describes does not...lead to a presentational coherence and transparency. On the contrary, such self-inclusion blurs the boundaries of the text and renders its procedures highly problematical....
...writes Derrida, "It limps and closes badly." 38

Another technique which has a similar disruptive effect is the sustained use of a labile 2nd. pers. pronoun "you" which indiscriminately addresses reader and character alike, forcibly "installing" the reader in the text and obscuring the boundary between what is inside and what is outside the text. Furthermore, this labile "you" is applied with a tone shifting from reproach ("Phillipsburg, Kansas, or

³⁸ Culler, On Deconstruction, p. 139.

Stockton, Plainville, or Ellis, Kansas--yes sounds like a Roll of Honor don't it, being read off someplace out on the prairie.... Well, you're wrong, champ..these happen to be towns all located on the borders of Time Zones, is all. Ha, ha! Caught you with your hand in your pants! Go on, show us all what you were doing or leave the area, we don't need your kind around. There's nothing so loathsome as a sentimental surrealist" GR 695-6), to condescension ("Keep the customer happy" GR 386; "Of all her putative fathers--Max Schlepzig and masked extras on one side of the moving film, Franz Pökler and certain other pairs of hands busy through trouser cloth that Alpdrücken Night, on the other--Bianca is closest,... closest to you.... She favors you most of all. You'll never get to see her. So somebody has to tell you" GR 472; "You will want cause and effect. All right" GR 663), to challenge ("what sea is it you have plunged more than once to the bottom of, alerted, full of adrenalin, but caught really, buffaloeed under the epistemologies of these threats that paranoid you so down and out, caught in this steel pot, softening to devitaminized mush inside the soupstock of your own words, your waste submarine breath? ...what will drive you out of your soupkettle? Has it already happened? GR 389-90), to alignment ("They [the Counterforce] are as schizoid, as double-minded in the massive presence of money, as any of the rest of us, and that's the hard fact" GR 712), all of which is guaranteed to dislodge the reader's place in relation to the text and enlist a profoundly schizoid reader ("it is precisely the ultraparadoxical phase which is the base of the weakening of the ideas of the opposite in our patients." Our madmen, our paranoid, maniac, schizoid....' GR 49).

To return to the track of the Rocket,however, we note further that the Rocket constitutes an allegory of time and history, conferring its indeterminate status onto the historical event and averring (despite the massive appara-

tuses of control and ordainment based on "frequencies already observed GR 208), the subsisting unpredictability of the future; cause-and-effect is just a post facto rationalization and a "heresy"; the future conforms to Murphy's Law, "that brash Irish proletarian restatement of Gödel's Theorem--when everything has been taken care of, when nothing can go wrong, or even surprise us . . . something will" GR 275. ("His act if faith?")

Pointsman first implies the allegorical representation of history by the Rocket when he reflects on Mexico's iconoclastic remark--"Bombs are not dogs. No link. No memory. No conditioning"--'Will Postwar be nothing but "events," newly created one moment to the next? No links? Is it the end of history?' (GR 56). This meditation directs attention to the fact that the novel's first Rocket strikes Greenwich Meridian, the central reference of Western chronology, "Today it's been a long idiot chase out to zero longitude, with the usual nothing to show. This one was supposed to be another premature airburst, the lumps of burning rocket showering down for miles around" (GR 20), and later whilst Roger is keeping tryst with Jessica, "a rocket has suddenly struck. ...the entire fabric of the air, of time, is changed" (GR 59).

Elsewhere, the Rocket amasses and accommodates further opposites, bringing them together. The Rocket, pinnacle of Western technological creation, is obviously the emblem of phallocentric power ("love, among these men...had to do with masculine technologies.... Beyond simple steel erection, the Rocket was an entire system won, away from the feminine darkness" GR 324; "Cruel, hard, thrusting into the virgin-blue robes of the sky.... Oh, so phallic" GR 465), but moreover, phallus and womb ("the 00000 is the womb into which Gottfried returns" GR 750), refrigerator ("liquid oxygen runs freezing so close to your

cheek" GR 751) and oven ("The Oven...will glow" GR 751), lover ("She should not be a mystery to you, Gottfried. Find the zone of love, lick and kiss" GR 751) and killer ("The exact moment of his death will never be known" GR 751), bridal chamber ("It's a dim, whited room. A room for lying in, bridal and open to the pallid spaces of the evening" GR 754) and whited sepulchre ("Deathlace is the boy's bridal costume" GR 750), white ("His smooth feet, bound side by side, are in white satin slippers with white bows. The golden hairs on his back, alloyed German gold, pale yellow to white, run symmetric about his spine" GR 750) and black ("he fits well. They are mated to each other, Schwarzgerät and next higher assembly" GR 751), cradle ("The soft smell of Imipolex, wrapping him absolutely, is a smell he knows. It was in the room where he fell asleep so long ago, so deep in sweet paralyzed childhood" GR 754) and grave ("what is this death but a whitening" GR 759), human and machine, "creation and destruction, fire and water, chemical plus and chemical minus" (GR 403), and so on. The Rocket is all of these and none of them; no category masters this field.

Interpreting his own enigma in anticipation of, and hence forestalling, the readers and critics to come, and in fact multiplying grafts, "Pynchon" adds, confirming the Rocket's massive overdeterminacy and ultimate indeterminacy:

It Begins Infinitely Below The Earth And Goes On
Infinitely Back Into The Earth it's only the peak
that we are allowed to see...breaking upward into
this world, a controlled burning--breaking downward
again, an uncontrolled explosion....

So, yes yes this is a scholasticism here, Rocket
state-cosmology . . . the Rocket does lead that way--
among others--past these visible serpent coils that
lash up above the surface of the Earth in rainbow
light, in steel tetany....past them, through the
violence to a numbered cosmos, a quaint brownwood-
paneled, Victorian kind of Brain War.... These
sepia tones are here, certainly. But the Rocket

has to be many things, it must answer to a number of different shapes in the dreams of those who touch it--in combat, in tunnel, on paper--it must survive heresies shining, unconfoundable . . . and heretics there will be: Gnostics who have been taken in a rush of wind and fire to chambers of the Rocket-throne . . . Kabbalists who study the Rocket as Torah...its text is theirs to permute and combine into new revelations, always unfolding . . . Manichaens who see two Rockets, good and evil, who speak together in the sacred idiolalia of the Primal Twins (some say their names are Enzian and Blicero) of a good Rocket to take us to the stars, an evil Rocket for the World's suicide, the two in perpetual struggle.

But these heretics will be sought and the dominion of silence will enlarge as each one goes down . . . they will all be sought out. (GR 726-7)

Thus (before I go down!) I proclaim my personal Rocket ("Each will have his personal Rocket"), my particular heresy; I insist once more that the Rocket is a textual dissemination where alternatives and differences coincide, where meaning and non-meaning converge, but which no alternative, no meaning satisfactorily masters. Instead, the Rocket in Gravity's Rainbow is the matrix in which differences are produced, and meanings generated. The Rocket, like the V-aggregate, like the Tristero, constitutes not a determinate polysemy, but effects a general dislocation of meaning which cannot be adequately comprehended by any semantic product unless (arbitrary) contextual limits are defined: limitations, interdictions which the text cautions would be a heresy. With the linking of this profoundly undecidable trope to every other allegory in the novel, the ultimate status of these phenomena is rendered indeterminately constructive-destructive to the extent that the Rocket-trope forms a significant contextual portion of each of these allegories. The Rocket thus answers to all the myriad shapes we may deem it to have, but none defines it. Uncertainty becomes the general condition of the entire text.

The heterogeneous forces of disruption and destabilization which I have briefly traced in this sub-section, most notably the Rocket, prevent the text from ever constituting a single, satisfactorily bounded, neatly contextualized and discrete self-presence. Rather, boundaries are repeatedly marked and transgressed in the text, "Thus the text overruns all the limits assigned to it so far (not submerging or drowning them in an undifferentiated homogeneity, but rather making them more complex, dividing and multiplying strokes and lines)--all the limits."³⁹ These heterogeneous forces of rupture, sometimes working in conjunction with each other, frequently working against each other, cumulatively produce a general textual dissemination. Eventually, interrupting the novel on a diabolically equivocal note, we are seated in a darkened theatre (the Orpheus?) with the novel's last undecidable Rocket "falling nearly a mile per second, absolutely and forever without sound," reaching "its last unmeasurable gap above the roof of this old theatre, the last delta-t" (GR 760). We are enjoined to sing William Slothrop's "centuries forgotten and out of print" preterite tune prophesying the perfect dissemination, the ultimate interpenetration of opposites:⁴⁰

³⁹ Jacques Derrida, "Living On," in Deconstruction and Criticism, H. Bloom et. al., (London & Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979), p. 84.

⁴⁰ Mackey comments, "'With a face on ev'ry mountainside,/ And a Soul in ev'ry stone.'" After these words--which may predict a state of total and final entropy or prophesy the eventual renewal of the world--there is nothing but the equally ambivalent solicitation: "Now everybody--" (760).--Mackey, p. 28.

With a face on ev'ry mountainside,
And a Soul in ev'ry stone. . . .

Now everybody--

(GR 760)

It all goes along together.

ALLEGORY REVISITED

At the outset of this chapter I placed some emphasis on the concept of allegory to which I have had frequent recourse. I wish to conclude with a reconsideration of the function of this concept, drawing together some divergent issues which are loosely constellated around the allegorical textual practice of the novel.

Firstly, what the concept of allegory has been endeavouring to exaggerate is the ultimate absence of any 'transcendental signified'. Arguing that "Pynchon" persistently grafts an allegorical supplement onto (or, which amounts to the same thing, educes a supplement from) his 'literal' textual entities, I maintain that he legibly preserves the trace of the 'other' in each sign: i.e. its iterable and supplementable capacity. The allegorization of his 'textuals' maintains both literal and allegorical dimensions legible in the text with the 'literal' sign always leading away from itself, becoming allegorical and hence displaced from its 'proper' and 'natural' signified, and inversely, the allegorical axis persistently deflecting attention back towards the 'literal' infrastructure which sustains it, generating a dialectical or oscillating tension which is never reconciled or resolved: sublated. Each literal textual is constantly referring away from itself, indicating its figural or allegorical displacement and conversely,

the allegory deflects away from itself towards its literal correlative, towards other allegorical displacements. In Gravity's Rainbow, each 'literal' meaning, moreover, may have several allegorical dimensions as we have seen; "an allegory thus conceived is in no way distinguished from the structure of metaphor, of which it is in fact the most general version."

During this chapter I have frequently described aspects of the text as 'allegorical' drawing attention to the textual cast in which many scenes are couched. This 'allegorization' or 'textualization' process (involving conceiving the 'real' as a coded text) which we witnessed in scenes such as "Rathenau's" reading of technological culture (GR 166-7), and the narrator's similar reading of urban topography (GR 26) and S-imagery connected with the Rocket and Mittelwerke (GR 299-302), also crops forth in the pervasive tropology of writing and the uncertain detection of plots by the novel's many paranoid characters. These 'allegorization' processes all focus attention on one common issue, the supplementability of the 'proper' symbolic order. In Gravity's Rainbow, some of the most fundamental predicates of our natural cosmos are found to be suspicious, hence significant and constituted as allegories: allegorized. To add another example to those above, under the aspect of the A-bomb, the Rocket occasions the following 'paranoid' speculation and the becoming-significant, the allegorization of the sky's colour (in similar fashion, the predication of a vacuum in space becomes cause for paranoid skepticism and initiates audience for the singular Sound-Shadow that will betray the myth of "the great Vacuum in the sky they have taught you" GR 697):

⁴¹ Paul de Man, Allegories of Reading, p. 73.

these sunsets, out here, I don't know. Do you suppose something has exploded somewhere? Really-- somewhere in the East? Another Krakatoa?...the colors are so different now. Volcanic ash, or any finely-divided substance, suspended in the atmosphere, can diffract the colors strangely. Did you know that, son? Hard to believe, isn't it) Yes, Private, the colors change, and how! The question is, are they changing according to something? Is the sun's everyday spectrum being modulated? Not at random, but systematically, by this unknown debris in the prevailing winds? Is there information for us? Deep questions, and disturbing ones. (GR 642)

The sky is found to hold a sign to be read and interpreted: a reading process which, in the event, is functionally indistinguishable from paranoia. The 'textualization' or 'allegorization' of reality which we detect in scenes such as these (a technique which I discussed under the tropology of writing in chap. Two) directs attention to the textual quality of the perceivable 'real': its distribution as a structure of sensible difference, and the operation of the supplement. By illustrating how the accepted predicates of the cosmos are accessible to this manner of paranoid speculation (a technique which has led several critics to dismiss Pynchon as simply paranoid and Gravity's Rainbow as aberrant sociology: e.g., "Pynchon's conspiratorial imagination tends to make our social organization appear even more mysterious than it really is, tends to mystify the relations of power which in fact govern our society"; 42 despite the emphasis Pynchon's own texts place on the uncertainty and unreliability of texts, critics seem perfectly happy to assume that Pynchon's 'paranoia' is sincere and not simulation, an assumption which is rather puzzling), "Pynchon" dramatizes the phenomenological point that 'manifestation itself does not reveal a presence, it makes a sign. One may read in the Principles of Phenomenology [Lambert] that "the idea of manifestation is the idea of a sign"' (OG 49). "Pynchon" shows that,

⁴² Scott Sanders, "Pynchon's Paranoid History," Mindful Pleasures, p. 157.

far from having an incontestable, literal face-value: an identity, the identity always harbours its own supplement, its own capacity for becoming-sign, for allegorization. Consequently, instead of paranoia being a marginal and aberrant instance of interpretation, somehow foreign and exterior to interpretation- and reading-proper, it is evident that this "paranoia" (an over-zealous and narcissistic interpretive process), and the radical uncertainty which characterizes the condition (the 'sign', which presupposes an author, might always not be a sign and therefore harbour no intention, malevolent or otherwise), are the pre-conditions of any hermeneutic activity. We may compare "Pynchon's" implicit deconstruction of the interpretation/paranoia hierarchy with those dismantled by Freud; Culler writes, identifying a strategy with which we are by now familiar:

Freudian theory is an excellent example of the way in which an apparently specialized or perverse investigation may transform a whole domain by inverting and displacing the oppositions that made its concerns marginal. Freud begins with a series of hierarchical oppositions: normal/pathological, sanity/insanity, real/imaginary, experience/dream, conscious/unconscious, life/death. In each case the first term has been conceived as prior, a plenitude of which the second is a negation or complication. Situated on the margin of the first term, the second term designates an undesirable, dispensable deviation. Freud's investigations deconstruct these oppositions by identifying what is at stake in our desire to repress the second term, which in this process is transformed. Understanding of the marginal or deviant term becomes a condition of understanding the supposedly prior term. ⁴³

Thomas Pynchon's recurrent dramatization of the activities and projections of paranoids and "Pynchon's" own tragicomic 'paranoid' decipherings offer a burlesque and satire of hermeneutic activities and operate in a similarly

⁴³ Culler, On Deconstruction, pp. 159-60.

deconstructive mode. This, I suggest, is a second major effect of the multiply allegorical technique of Gravity's Rainbow. Furthermore, this extensive allegorical practice draws attention to the capacity of the entire text to be a code; an allegory substituting for another set of co-ordinates; another text harbouring its own allegorical supplements.

If we concede the capacity for the entire text to be a code for another text, it follows that no 'transcendental signified' intercedes to arrest this process of allegorical substitutions and displacements; instead an endless circulation of allegories, of texts is set in play with none authorized as the primary or 'authentic' one, mastering the others. The text inaugurates in one movement, one stroke, an incalculable density of texts in which the place of the One, of meaning, is one derivative effect amongst others; I recall Derrida's comment, "The thickness of the text...opens upon the beyond of a whole, the nothing or the absolute outside, through which its depth is at once null and infinite--infinite in that each of its layers harbors another layer" (Diss. 357). With the recognition of this ceaseless displacement of texts within a text, the possibility of any 'transcendental signified', any autarkic and stable moment of meaningful plenitude is indefinitely deferred. We may, I believe, find several clues to make us suspect that Gravity's Rainbow has indeed been such a code.

Certain critics have remarked that Gravity's Rainbow is an imperfectly rendered period reconstruction, betraying frequent anachronistic details and have chided Pynchon accordingly. Speer Morgan writes for example:

The German youth in the twenties was similar to that in America forty years later, but frequently in Gravity's Rainbow parallels pass easily into anachronisms, especially in the realm of Bohemian habits, diction and theorizing, with characters presumably in pre- or postwar Germany acting and talking entirely like American hippies. ⁴⁴

Lawrence Wolfley writes in a similar vein with greater commendation, "Clearly GR is as much about the period during which it was written as it is about 1944-45." ⁴⁵

We may, in corroboration, draw attention to two significant dates in a remark by the Counterforce spokesman, "Between two station-marks, yellow crayon through the years of grease and passage, 1966 and 1971, I tasted my first blood" (GR 739; the years of Gravity's Rainbow's composition) and the appearance of Richard M. Nixon a.k.a. Richard M. Zhubb ('who is fiftyish and jowled, with a permanent five-o'clock shadow...and a habit of throwing his arms up into an inverted "peace sign," which also happens to be semaphore code for the letter U, exposing in the act uncounted yards of white French cuff' GR 755; sounds just like the ex-National Manager of the U.S.A. who took the lead role in Watergate), manager of the Orpheus Theatre, profoundly remarking "What?" (GR 617) in response to the disclosure of a Counterforce, urge us to discover legible in the interstices of this text another one allegorizing the social phenomena and Western culture of the 1960's. The Rocket-cartel is evidently an allegory for the current petro-chemical cartels, syndicates and multi-national corporations; one notices how many of those multi-national protagonists from the war are still around--Shell, IG-Farben,

⁴⁴ Morgan, p. 205.

⁴⁵ Wolfley, p. 875.

General Electric, Imperial Chemicals, "Psychochemie AG is still around, still doing business at the same old address in the Schokoladestrasse, in that Zurich" (GR 250).

Similarly, the numerous sub-cultures, drug-cultures, under-worlds, occult communities and black markets have their contemporary equivalents. Der Platz is equally an allegory of the Western hippie culture of the 1960's. The Empire is as much about America and Western Europe in the late 60's and today as the Allied Empire of the 1940's. The War is equally a commentary on Vietnam; the Zone as much an allegory of marginal cultures subsisting in the interstices of the System as a tale of interregnum in the 40's; Wernher von Braun and the A4 equally a parable about Robert Oppenheim and Los Alamos, Edward Teller and the H-bomb, or Saturn V. Leni Pökler's hopes for a revolution are also an allegory of the Yippies and the aspirations of the New Left, and so on. 'Each "text,"' Derrida remarks, "is a machine with multiple reading heads for other texts." ⁴⁶ With this constantly generative allegorical capacity, the closure of the text is indefinitely deferred; the text is ceaselessly broaching but irreducibly breached, "and print just goes marching on" (GR 355).

It is at this point, registering the impossibility of ever bringing any text to a satisfactory and final end, that I wish, perversely, to conclude, interrupting and suspending this interminable interpretation of Thomas Pynchon's texts. The final word we know now will never arrive: it is being held pending further interrogation, and the text, inconclusive, awaits to be resumed elsewhere.

00000

⁴⁶ Derrida, "Living On," in Bloom et. al., p. 107.

EPILOGUE

If I were, with the hindsight of this thesis, to offer an overview of Pynchon's textual achievement (and we will recognize the bankruptcy of this epilogue, this supplement which both attempts to conclude this thesis and perpetuates it; which attempts to replace this thesis by disassembling a comprehensive synoptic recapitulation of it, and adds itself to the thesis betraying the incompleteness of both; and which, referring to itself thus divides itself from itself), I might recite the following points.

Pynchon's writing mounts a penetrating and provocative diagnosis and critique of Western technocratic ("official") culture and the epistemological practices which sustain it/it sustains. Through an innovative and implacably disruptive ensemble of textual practices, Pynchon deliberately confuses and blurs the divisions, boundaries and contextual limits in which Western culture institutes, regulates and maintains itself, and which institutions in turn constitute the symbolic order of Western culture. This textual practice allegorizes symbolic order variously as the reified co-ordinate system of the "tourist" (V. 408-9), and elsewhere as the self-projected Rapunzel's towers of narcissism (solipsism), ethnocentrism and (under one aspect) the Rocket.

Within his texts he contrasts the "tourist", who comfortably inhabits the co-ordinate system predetermined for him without interrogating the presuppositions, boundaries and incongruities of such a system, with the "paranoid" quester, the "doubting Thomas"(!) who registers a dissatisfaction with these co-ordinate systems; possibly constructs a personal and alternative "delusional system", a "We-system" ("Creative paranoia means developing at least as thorough a We-system as a They-system--" GR 638), although this is optional and obviously vitiated by the same epistemological

errors as any other system of order; and maintains a healthy/obsessive (depending on one's sympathies) skepticism towards the proprieties, priorities and 'naturalness' of the culture, society, order or System which includes him/her.

Throughout his novels, Pynchon interrogates the myriad procedures of reification, rationalization, oppression and exploitation which condition and coerce people to receive, conform to, and themselves perpetuate dominating symbolic practices in metaphysical, scientific, political, religious and psycho-social domains of human culture. I have attempted to trace these procedures in some detail.

Secondly, drawing from Jacques Derrida's work on textual issues, and noting that the institutions of a symbolic order rely for their iterability and endurance on a kind of writing (a conception of writing which describes any structure of differing-difference): i.e. the establishment of covenants and conventions whose institution corresponds to the constitution of the sign (I recall, "The very idea of institution--hence of the arbitrariness of the sign--is unthinkable before the possibility of writing" OG 44), I have found legible in Pynchon's texts a practice which conceives cultures, society, history, science, order, institutions in general, as effects of this arche-writing (or différance). This practice, in doing so, recognizes the symbolic order as a function of a system of difference and becomes attuned to the 'other' which marks the margins and defines the place of the dominant symbolic order (and its massive codification of the 'real world') in a broader diacritical economy, by being excluded from, and suppressed within, that order. This is the paradoxical situation of these marginalia: they are intrinsic to the constitution of the symbolic order by being determined as extrinsic.

Thus I have remarked Pynchon's enduring concern with the margins (preterites, black markets, sub-cultures, 'blackmails') and aporias (chance, coincidence, miracle, dissemblance, impersonation and play) of Western culture and discourses of order, and "his" bleak hope--intimating the covenants of a reified symbolic order--that, "They can be changed, and new molecules assembled from the debris of the given. . . ." (GR 413; latter emphasis mine).

During the course of his novels, Pynchon engages (as I have tried to show) several important conceptual oppositions (for example, animate/inanimate, inside/outside and their various psychological and social transformations as Self/Other, Norm/Other, elect/preterite, interpretation/paranoia and so forth); illustrates how the division of these dyads, depending on the constellation of the contexts which they supervise, may be breached and transgressed by alternative contextual constellations; and manifests the arbitrariness and artificiality of these ostensibly 'natural' epistemological lines and divisions.

The interrogative mode of the texts is furthermore always conjoined with the activity of a questing-figure (Herbert Stencil, Oedipa Maas, Tyrone Slothrop) which serves as a paradigm for the hermeneutic activity and implicates the reader (because he is reading): the most determined questing character in Gravity's Rainbow (as Pynchon's extensive use of the 2nd pers. pronoun attempts to aver) is probably the reader, as Slothrop's quest for the S-Gerät is decidedly sporadic.

The novels thus constitute both a representation of the hermeneutic activity and an instance which engages this activity in the reader. Their function is to be both

a representation and a presentation, an allegory of, and a case for, interpretive activity. This situation is conjoined with a demonstration of the inconclusiveness of the character's quest and has extensive repercussions for the hermeneutic activity in general, urging the reader to examine carefully the grounds of his own certainty.

This vertiginous situation is compounded by the articulation of several major indeterminate structures on the boundary between meaning and non-meaning (V., the Tristero, the Rocket), whose significance can never be satisfactorily resolved, and of which one can only observe with an unreassuring certainty that these structures amass meanings indiscriminately, but have no legitimate meaning. The differential co-ordinates by which they might have been defined and meaningfully described, are merged and gathered within these structures.

Moreover, to complicate this schema further, Pynchon employs several syntactical, lexical and thematic devices which consistently and implacably undermine his texts, leaving them both legible and strangely 'cancelled'. Narrative causality and consecution are perpetually shafted by an emphasis on the roles of chance and coincidence. Reliability and certainty are consistently undermined by an emphasis on the possibilities of hoax, impersonation and play. A recurring lexicon of "perhaps", "seemed", "as if" effectively disrupts any certainty, and a conditional syntax, alternating with regular punctuation by suspended rhetorical questions, intervenes with similar effect.

The heterogeneous tropes, structures and themes itemized above together challenge the entire politics and legislation of signification and mark the several aporias upon whose

suppression semantic products depend but which nevertheless continue to vitiate the certainty, decision and stability of semantic products: aporias which vitiate certainty itself within prevailing conceptual and discursive practices. These aporial phenomena necessarily have an 'annihilating' effect from the perspective of a semantic conservatism seeking to preserve the symbolic status quo or determine the meaning of a text; however, they also indicate the potential for transformation and renewal of the symbolic order and constitute the pre-conditions of any symbolic order.

Conjoined with these phenomena (the 'themes' of chance, coincidence, impersonation and play, and the undecidable tropes of V., the Tristero and the Rocket), the heterogeneous lexical and syntactical markers of uncertainty equally disrupt and vitiate any certain decisions we attempt to make about Pynchon's texts themselves and thus irreducibly forestall recuperation of the texts as semantic totalities.

Pynchon's 'achievement' then, is precisely a non-achievement, a failure to reach any goal, telos, or meaningful plenitude. His texts do not counterpose an alternative which would effectively institute a counter-tyranny distributed according to different co-ordinates, but formally and functionally homologous to the systems it opposes; instead his 'achievement' is to preserve the radical ambivalence of writing, a writing which submits itself to any dream, or rage for order, but remains unmastered by them. To recall Mackey, apropos Gravity's Rainbow, 'The language--this is the secret of its mastery--is not master of itself. It has renounced self-mastery, so that there is no "authentic text".'

Pynchon's 'achievement' lies in his remarkable ability to combine a critique of the 'rage to order' and simultaneously write texts which problematize and defy any such ordering-faculties in order to remind the reader of what is at stake in the projection of order. Clearly this is not to deny that there is order or meaning (since, quite obviously, these are commonly and ceaselessly produced, and are indispensable to the functioning of the human organism) but to aver that "there is no order of things a priori" (Wittgenstein), and that we therefore recognize the artificial quality of the order we project, and of the epistemological lines we inscribe and inhabit as the normal, natural, real and proper. Paraphrasing Wilden, the epistemological line is a fiction but we behave as if it were real, immutable and absolute rather than conventional, convenient and arbitrary.

In conclusion, then, Pynchon's texts draw attention to the textual quality of human institutions, the 'other' which their inscription implies, and consequently their 'artificiality', (however, it is no longer an artifice which announces itself as fictional in opposition to the true, but an 'artifice' which comprehends both these moments). His texts equally manifest their own artifice by oscillating between a representative (mimetic) mode, a representation which is more accurately a kind of citation, and a 'performative' mode which celebrates the nature of the text as double and as writing.

These complex textual practices dramatize and reproduce many of the most basic dilemmas involved in interpretation and decision and engage in the most incisive and radical way with our strategies for ordering and understanding the world we inhabit, forcing us to confront and reconsider the assurance with which we predicate ourselves in it. The final 'achievement' of Pynchon's texts is the impugn-

ment, dismantling and subversion of the means by which we create order, dissemble mastery and exert power (which is always imperial)--the consequences of which, I have attempted to evince in this thesis, are legible everywhere in the culture of phallogentrism--and simultaneously the dissemination of their own predicative power.

*

*

*

*

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources:

Pynchon, Thomas. The Crying of Lot 49. New York: Bantam Books, 1967, rpt. 1978; London: Picador Books, 1979.

- - - - - . "Entropy." Kenyon Review 22 (2) 1960, pp. 277-292.

- - - - - . Gravity's Rainbow. London: Picador Books, 1975, rpt. 1978.

- - - - - . "A Journey Into The Mind of Watts." New York Times Magazine, 12 June, 1966, pp. 34-5. 78, 80-2, 84.

- - - - - . Lowlands. London: Aloe Books, 1978.

- - - - - . Mortality and Mercy in Vienna. London: Aloe Books, n.d.

- - - - - . "The Secret Integration." Saturday Evening Post, 237: 45 (December 19-26, 1964), pp. 36, 39, 42-4, 46-9, 51-

- - - - - . "Under The Rose." Noble Savage 3 (May, 1961), pp. 223 - 251.

- - - - - . V. London: Picador Books, 1975, rpt. 1978.

Secondary Sources:

Abrams, M.H. A Glossary of Literary Terms. 4th ed. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1981.

Adams, H. The Education of Henry Adams. New York: Modern Library, 1931.

Althusser, L. and E. Balibar. Reading Capital. Trans. Ben Brewster. London: New Left Books, 1970, rpt. 1979.

Barthes, Roland. Elements of Semiology. Trans. A. Lavers & C. Smith. New York: Hill & Wang, 1968, rpt. 1979.

- - - - - . Image-Music Text. Trans. S. Heath. Glasgow: Fontana/Collins, 1977, rpt. 1979.

- - - - - . Mythologies. Trans. A. Lavers. London: Paladin Books, 1973, rpt. 1979.

- - - - - . S/Z: An Essay. Trans. R. Miller. New York: Hill & Wang, 1974

Bergonzi, Bernard. The Situation of the Novel. London: Macmillan & Co., 1970.

Borges, Jorge Luis. Labyrinths. Trans. & Ed. James Irby et. al. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970, rpt. 1972.

Coward, Rosalind and John Ellis. Language and Materialism: Developments in Semiology and the Theory of the Subject. Boston, London & Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977, rpt. 1979.

Culler, Jonathan. "Jacques Derrida." In Structuralism and Since: From Lévi-Strauss to Derrida. Ed. John Sturrock. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979.

- - - - - . On Deconstruction: Theory and Criticism after Structuralism. London, Melbourne & Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983.

- - - - - . The Pursuit of Signs: Semiotics, Literature, Deconstruction. London & Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981.

- - - - - . Structuralist Poetics: Structuralism, Linguistics and the Study of Literature. London & Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975, rpt. 1980.

De Man, Paul. Allegories of Reading. New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1979.

- - - - - . "The Rhetoric of Temporality." In Interpretation: Theory and Practice. Ed. Charles Singleton. Baltimore & London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1969, pp. 173-209.

Derrida, Jacques. Dissemination. Trans. Barbara Johnson. London: Athlone Press, 1981.

- - - - - . "Living On * Border Lines." Trans. James Hulbert. In Deconstruction and Criticism, Bloom et. al. London & Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979.

- - - - - . "Limited Inc. a b c ..." In Glyph 2. Trans. S. Weber. Baltimore & London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976, rpt. 1978.

- - - - - . Of Grammatology. Trans. Gayatri C. Spivak. Baltimore & London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976, rpt. 1978.

- - - - - . "Positions, Part I." Diacritics 2 (4) 1972, pp. 35 - 43.

- - - - - . Positions. Trans. and Annot. Alan Bass. London: Athlone Press, 1981.

- - - - - . "Signature Event Context." Glyph 1. Trans. S. Weber & J. Mehlman. Baltimore & London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977. pp. 172 - 197.

- - - - - . Speech and Phenomena and Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs. Trans. David B. Allison. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973, rpt. 1981.
- - - - - . "The White Mythology: Metaphor in the Text of Philosophy." Trans. F.C.T. Moore. New Literary History VI (1) 1974, pp. 5 - 74.
- - - - - . Writing and Difference. Trans. Alan Bass. London & Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978, rpt. 1981.
- Doctorow, E.L. The Book of Daniel. London: Picador Books, 1982.
- Eliot, Thomas Stearns. Selected Essays. London: Faber & Faber, 1932, rpt. 1976.
- Fahy, Joseph. "Thomas Pynchon's V. and Mythology." Critique: Studies in Modern Fiction 18 (3) 1977, pp. 5 - 18.
- Feldman, Irving. "Keeping Cool." Commentary 3 (36) Sept. 1963, p. 260.
- Foucault, Michel. The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences. Trans. A. Sheridan. London: Tavistock Publications, 1970, rpt. 1977.
- Frazer, James G. The New Golden Bough. Abridged Edition. Ed. T.H. Gaster. New York: Criterion Books, 1959.
- Friedman, A.J. & M. Puetz. "Science as Metaphor: Thomas Pynchon and Gravity's Rainbow." Contemporary Literature 15 (3) 1975, pp. 345 - 359.
- Frye, Northrop. Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957, rpt. 1973.
- Girard, René. Violence and the Sacred. Trans. Patrick Gregory. Baltimore & London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977.
- Graves, Robert. The White Goddess. London: Faber & Faber, 1961, rpt. 1977.
- Hendin, Josephine. Vulnerable People: A View of American Fiction Since 1945. New York: Oxford University Press, 1978, rpt. 1979.
- Herzberg, Bruce. "Selected Articles on Thomas Pynchon: An Annotated Bibliography." Twentieth Century Literature 21 (2) 1975, pp. 221 - 5.
- Hillis Miller, J. "Ariadne's Thread: Repetition and the Narrative Line." Critical Inquiry 3 1976, pp. 57 - 77.
- Hite, Molly. "'Holy-Center-Approaching" in the Novels of Thomas Pynchon.' The Journal of Narrative Technique 12 (2) 1982, pp. 121 - 129.
- Irving, David. The Mare's Nest. London: Corgi Books, 1966.

Iser, Wolfgang. "The Reality of Fiction: A Functionalist Approach to Literature." New Literary History VII (1) 1975, pp. 7 - 38.

Kappel, Lawrence. "Psychic Geography in Gravity's Rainbow." Contemporary Literature 21 (2) 1980, pp. 225 - 251.

Knight, Stephen. Form and Ideology in Crime Fiction. London & Basingstoke: The Macmillan Press, 1980.

Kolodny, Annette & Daniel J. Peters. "Pynchon's The Crying of Lot 49: The Novel as Subversive Experience." Modern Fiction Studies 19 (1) 1973, pp. 79 - 87.

Krafft, John M. "'And How Far-Fallen": Puritan Themes in Gravity's Rainbow." Critique: Studies in Modern Fiction 18 (3) 1977, pp. 55 - 73.

Kristeva, Julia. Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art. Trans. Thomas Gora et. al. Ed. Leon Roudiez. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980.

Levine, George and David Leverenz, eds. Mindful Pleasures: Essays on Thomas Pynchon. Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1977.

Mackey, Louis. "Paranoia, Pynchon and Preterition." Sub-Stance 30 1981, pp. 16 - 30.

Mangel, Anne. "Maxwell's Demon, Entropy, Information: The Crying of Lot 49." TriQuarterly 20 1971, pp. 194 - 208.

McCluhan, Marshall. Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man. Aylesbury, Bucks.: Sphere Books, 1973, rpt. 1974.

Mendelson, Edward, ed. Pynchon: A Collection of Critical Essays. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1978.

Morgan, Speer. "Gravity's Rainbow: What's The Big Idea?" Modern Fiction Studies 23 (2) 1977, pp. 199 - 216.

Nietzsche, Friedrich. "On Truth and Falsity in their Ultramoral Sense." The Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche II. Ed. O. Levy. London: Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1911, rpt. 1924. pp. 171 - 192.

- - - - - . The Will to Power. Trans. W. Kaufmann & R.J. Hollingdale. Ed. W. Kaufmann. New York: Vintage Books, 1968.

Olderman, Raymond. Beyond the Wasteland. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972.

Ozier, Lance. "Antipointsman/Antimexico: Some Mathematical Imagery in Gravity's Rainbow." Critique: Studies in Modern Fiction 16 (2) 1974, pp. 73 - 90.

- - - - - . "The Calculus of Transformation: More Mathematical Imagery in Gravity's Rainbow." Twentieth Century Literature 21 (2) 1975, pp. 193 - 210.

Plater, William. The Grim Phoenix: Reconstructing Thomas Pynchon. Bloomington & London: Indiana University Press, 1978.

Poirier, Richard. "A Literature of Law and Order." Partisan Review 36 (2) 1969, pp. 189 - 204.

Puetz, Manfred. "Thomas Pynchon's The Crying of Lot 49: The World is a Tristero System." Mosaic 7 (4) 1974, pp. 125 - 137.

Redfield, Robert and Peter L. Hays. 'Fugue as Structure in Pynchon's "Entropy".' Pacific Coast Philology 12 1977, pp. 50-5.

Riddel, Joseph. "From Heidegger to Derrida to Chance: Doubling and (Poetic) Language." Boundary 2 4 (2) 1976.

Rilke, Rainer Maria. Duino Elegies. Trans. and intro. J.B. Leishman & Stephen Spender. 4th ed. London: Chatto & Windus, 1981. Parallel German and English texts.

- - - - - . Sonnets to Orpheus. Trans. C.F. MacIntyre. Berkeley, Los Angeles & London: University of California Press, 1960. Parallel German and English texts.

Robbe-Grillet, A. Snapshots and Towards a New Novel. Trans. B. Wright. London: Calder & Boyars, 1965.

Saussure, Ferdinand de Course in General Linguistics. Trans. Wade Baskin. Glasgow: Fontana/Collins, 1959, rpt. 1978.

Schaub, Thomas H. 'Open Letter in Response to Edward Mendelson's "The Sacred, the Profane, and The Crying of Lot 49."' Boundary 2 5 (2) 1976, pp. 93 - 101.

Schmitz, Niel. "Describing the Demon: The Appeal of Thomas Pynchon." Partisan Review 42 (1) 1975, pp. 112 - 125.

Siegel, Mark. "Creative Paranoia: Understanding the System of Gravity's Rainbow." Critique: Studies in Modern Fiction 18 (3) 1977, pp. 39 - 54.

Simmon, Scott. "Gravity's Rainbow Described," and "A Character Index: Gravity's Rainbow." Critique Studies in Modern Fiction 16 (2) 1974, pp. 54 - 67, 68 - 72.

Slade, Joseph. "Escaping Rationalization: Options for the Self in Gravity's Rainbow." Critique: Studies in Modern Fiction 18 (3) 1977, pp. 27 - 38.

- - - - - . Thomas Pynchon. New York: Warner Paperback Library, 1974.

Stark, John O. Pynchon's Fictions: Thomas Pynchon and the Literature of Information. Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1980.

Tanner, Tony. Adultery in the Novel: Contract and Transgression. Baltimore & London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979.

- - - - - . Thomas Pynchon. London: Methuen & Co., 1982.

Vernant, J-P. "Ambiguity and Reversal: On The Enigmatic Structure of Oedipus Rex." Trans. P. du Bois. New Literary History IX (3) 1978, pp. 475 - 501.

Weber, Max. On Charisma and Institution Building. Chicago & London: Chicago University Press, 1968.

Westervelt, Linda. "'A Place Dependent on Ourselves": The Reader as System-BUILDER in Gravity's Rainbow.' Texas Studies in Literature and Language 22 (1) 1980, pp. 69 - 90.

White, Allon. "Ironic Equivalence: A Reading of Thomas Pynchon's Mortality and Mercy in Vienna." Critical Quarterly 23 (3) 1981, pp. 55 - 62.

Wilden, Anthony. System and Structure: Essays in Communication and Exchange. 2nd ed. London: Tavistock Publications, 1972, rpt. 1980.

Winner, Thomas G. "Problems of Alphabetic Reform among the Turkic Peoples of Soviet Central Asia, 1920-41." The Slavonic and East European Review 31 1952, pp. 133 - 147.

Wittgenstein, Ludwig. Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus. Trans. D.F. Pears & B.F. McGuinness. London, Boston & Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1922, rpt. 1981-

Wolfley, Lawrence. "Repression's Rainbow: The Presence of Norman O. Brown in Pynchon's Big Novel." PMLA 92 (7) 1977, pp. 873 - 889.

* * * *