PYNCHON NOTES

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PYNCHON NOTES

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For some time now, Pynchon’s work has stirred strong critical interest abroad. The editors want Pynchon Notes to convey a sense of the reception this oeuvre has received in countries that have inherited different fragments of the Western literary legacy. These cultures have constituted different novelistic canons for themselves, and have developed divergent critical methodologies and ideologies. Our colleagues have kept us aware of these differences by sending us references to such items as reviews of V. in Swedish, or to essays published by Japanese Americanists. Each issue of Pynchon Notes goes to a growing number of readers in Canada, Britain, Israel, France, Germany and Japan. We have published the work of some of these readers and have made our bibliography an international one. We hope to maintain that inclusiveness which Pynchon’s work invites.

To translate means not only to attempt to reproduce a text in a new language, but also (etymologically) to move something from one place to another and thereby to make it more accessible. This issue of Pynchon Notes bears the mark of our determination to make this journal a locus of both kinds of translation. Vincent Balitas’s essay first appeared in English, but in an Iranian University publication, now defunct. We reproduce it here, with some abridgments, because we doubt that more than a handful of university libraries in America have the original. Margaret Langford’s translation of a French essay by Marion Brugière— with its distinctive critical idiolect—is the first of several such that we will be publishing. We are grateful to Claude Richard and the Centre d’Étude et de Recherches sur les Écrivains du Sud aux États-Unis, Université Paul Valéry for permission to publish this translation.

JMK, KT
"How's your quest?"¹

Posed to the protagonist Oedipa, this question invites the reader to consider what relevance the word "quest" has in a text which is a deliberate parody, where an obsession for reference (accurate or deliberately misleading) and the proliferation of parasitic abbreviations on the one hand, the repetitiveness of the narrative as well as the uncertain status of the speaker(s) on the other, and, last of all, rather cryptic symbolism, tend to obscure the finality of narrative. The grids traditionally used in stories as reference points—morphological, narrative, symbolic structures—are there, of course, but they exist simply as moving lines that crisscross and blend into one another. The interpretation of the reality described is continually jeopardized by the ambiguity concerning the characters' and the readers' perception. The linking up of intuited and logically understood experience which we find in quest novels is here constantly deferred.

The metaphor of Maxwell's Demon can be used to describe the reader's approach to the text. The reader as well as the Demon must separate fast-moving from slow-moving molecules; i.e., he must sort out movement and meaning in a fictional universe which is in a state of total flux.

At this time we should review the novel's plot briefly. A certain Oedipa Maas is named co-executrix for the estate of her deceased lover, Pierce Inverarity. In the course of her investigations, she discovers "by accident" the existence of an alternate

¹ Originally published as "Les Avatares de la Quête Dans The Crying of Lot 49 de Thomas Pynchon," in Delta 8 (1979), 143-154, and published here by permission of Delta.
postal system--Tristano alias W.A.S.T.E.--which becomes the focal point of her effort and makes her forget her original function. A bit later, the dotted outline of this network blurs as the Tristero is placed in its historical perspective and Oedipa sets out to find the magic key which will unlock the secret door to knowledge. In following the plot's three phases the reader must choose one of these alternatatives:

--the events are real but difficult to understand, and Oedipa's hallucinations distort them until they become almost unintelligible.

--or rather, like the heroine the reader is victimized by the author's creative maliciousness, and like the heroine he finds himself unable to untangle the plot and put everything in its place. In each instance all attempts at interpretation fail: we must accept both theses.

Oedipa's wanderings in the California of the 60's start the story and set off a perpetual motion mechanism which never stops. The book's last words "... the crying of lot 49 . . ." restate the title so that once the reader has finished the book he finds that everything begins or is ready to begin again. This justifies my own title, since traditionally the quest moves in circles (an event is described, then interpreted), and it obeys, as Todorov says, the principle of the Everlasting Return.

Lot 49\(^2\) is an elaborate, learned work which proclaims its respect for the written word ironically. It teems with references to real and apocryphal texts, and to real or imaginary characters who assert themselves and destroy one another. The names Tourneur and Webster, associated with Wharfinger, make Wharfinger seem real. The Courier's Tragedy seems very like The Revenger's Tragedy or The White Devil and could be an unedited Jacobean text. Through these references Lot 49 takes its place in a historic and literary tradition which makes its presence known every once in awhile. I propose to show how it is presented.

I - The Presentation of the Quest in Lot 49

Lot 49 stands midway between the \(\text{déjà vu}\) and the \(\text{jamais vu}\), and it anticipates future forms while
relying on traditional ones. "What will be the future of western iconography?" "What role will be assigned to machines and groupings in constructing a text?" are two questions which this novel raises. In many ways Pynchon's text is in the same tradition as biblical and sacred texts (the Egyptian Book of the Dead, for example), and as medieval stories or fairy tales which open the door to disquieting occult forces that must be controlled with magic spells. Inverarity's empire, easily enough acquired from his very first investment, resembles the Marquis of Carabas' empire: factories, universities, etc.--, everything belongs to him. The insignificance of the signs marking Oedipa's path (graffiti in the toilets, tattoos, etc. . . .) reminds us that Pynchon's text is already a parody twice removed. Don Quixote already passed this way, interpreting imaginary signs while pursuing a real quest.

Moreover, Pynchon sometimes refers to certain primordial images. Thus the tapestry painted on the central panel of Remedios Varo's triptych evokes a vaguely medieval work, a work no longer hanging in a chateau or a museum, but swinging back and forth over a cosmic void that it tries desperately to fill.

. . . in the central painting of a triptych, titled "Bordando el Manto Terrestre," were 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. (10)

Doubt and anguish have seized the banner from the chivalric and humanistic faith that used to rule the world. The tapestry becomes an inner motif, a motif working in the tower/body, in the picture/consciousness. The inner void echoes the cosmic void.

In the same way, the image of Oedipa shut in the tower matches the image of the captive princess released from a spell by the prince or the knight whose reward she then becomes. But the picture doesn't match the copy exactly. The lady's long hair, which should allow the knight to climb up to her, comes off like a limp wig, thus turning the chivalric quest into
surrealistic mockery and striking it dead. The tower is a moveable, invisible prison erected by malevolent powers which can't be rendered harmless because they have no counterpart as they do in the Manichean universe where good exists to wage war against evil. The heroine's (not the hero's) deliverance will be a self-deliverance—deliverance from the very forms that our heritage is made of.

Repeated references to Tristero or the Tristero and its emblem, the muted post horn, tend to sensitize the reader to the mysterious object of the quest. Keeping everything in its proper perspective, (the) Tristero (masculine and neuter) has this in common with the Graal: it is both subject and object of the quest. (The) Tristero could be the knight Hernando Joaquin de Tristero y Calavera or a shadowy soldier; Tristero is also a secret code. The muted post horn, drawn just about everywhere, bears witness to the impossibility of communicating, to the non-existence of any type of community.

These deformed or cryptic representations translate the silence of the heroic voice.

If both the reader and Oedipa turn away from this glorious heritage to look only at the present and future, can they find a salvageable whole in all this psychological and technological paraphernalia? The heroine's name is Oedipa. She finds herself confronting an enigma that her name-sake never had to confront in quite the same terms. "Does Tristero exist?" "In what identity?" "Am I mad or sane?"

Pynchon never thinks of following the legend point by point. At most he outlines the cynical and loving paternal figure to remind us that Oedipa finds herself in a constantly changing filial dependency role vis-a-vis her author, her lover/testator father, her psychoanalyst, the two old men (the tattooed sailor and the resident of the old folks home), all those alive or dead from whom she seeks information about the immense past that preceded her. About the last will and testament and the journey's end per se, there is never any doubt. Oedipa and the reader must find out what they are through narrative techniques that are sometimes didactic, as well as through mathematical proofs. Both the reader and Oedipa must evaluate the worth of
the inheritance. At any rate, the donor (Inverarity) is absent or a practical joker (the author) or remains silent (Hilarius), as in psychoanalysis, which is one of the modern archetypes of the quest.

Pynchon's novel is a new genesis in the course of which new forms, called urban industrial complexes or electronic groupings, spring from the earth, and, if we turn to strictly human material, so do societies, associations, results of cellular divisions in the social tissue. Oedipa is recruited by the Paranoids, the Pinguid Society, the IA^3, etc.--- At every turn we discover evidence of the quest for self.

What James termed "The architectural hare" in "The Jolly Corner" hops about continuously in Lot 49, with each of its hops corresponding to a new proliferation of forms. Pierce Inverarity's motto (keep it bouncing) is not devoid of irony.

James felt the man who devotes himself to financial speculation, who invests his money in tangible structures rather than the castles in the air Hawthorne talks about, ends up resembling a brute and a monster. Can we still say the same in Lot 49? For here nature is almost totally absent---only the still unconquered ocean appears like a mirage.

Man has already established a system which parallels nature's system and has its own growth rhythms, its own heartbeat. He finds he is wedged between these two different systems which spin at two different speeds.

(Nature = living tissue made up of living beings; science = life-like tissue consisting of machines, things, etc. . . .).

The figurative world in Lot 49 brings to life an old dream described by Leonardo da Vinci, Jules Verne, and Wells. Machines and things are mutants, quickly evolving to technical perfection, which begin to compete with men. Oedipa, alarmed by the trajectory of a hair-spray can which appears to be pre-programmed, feels like the sorcerer's apprentice who can't find the right spell to gain control of forces that seize control over him---forces that keep hands from opening doors, feet from walking up the stairs, voices from speaking up.
These kinds of things (TV--car--phone) all belong to the war-machine because they constantly intrude into human life and are not so much prostheses as surrogates. Cars in particular are their owners' doubles.

Subverted forms of the traditional quest, rites for passing power from generation to generation to help the last descendent claim his identity, futuristic power circuits: all coexist in a constant state of war in Pynchon's text; hence a palpable tension in the narrative which is not resolved at the end, since Pynchon redistributes his formal structures and symbols in the mongrel lot which is Lot 49.

II - Narrative Structures of the Quest, or the Quest for Narrative

No one can deny that the story springs from realistic soil and that it moves geographically through a strictly urban space (San Narciso--Los Angeles--San Francisco). The displacement and the metamorphosis of tangible reality follow the pattern of the voyage of initiation as it appears in The Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man or in Ulysses, for example. They pave the way for the potential but constantly postponed revelation in Lot 49.

Perception in questioned here. It is hallucinated because the spectacle is hallucinogenic. The subject's eye is dazzled, and the reality perceived is no longer assimilated and stabilized through a personal alchemical process. Even more importantly, roles are reversed: the object observes and the subject sees itself being observed; soon the latter, composed of flesh and consciousness, is no more than a tiny hallucinogenic drop; witness this strange citation:

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 be no less turned on for her absence. (14)

Every step of the way the story takes detours; there
are no absolute ruptures, but lateral and/or vertical openings to new terrain, which delay the final revelation.

On the other hand, the narrative technique is often analogical or pseudo-analogical, and by placing several stories in the same equation the author attempts to redistribute the characters' roles and expand or reduce what we are forced to call the plot. In fact, we find a continual narrative and semantic slippage from plot to PLOT, that is to say from plot to conspiracy, and vice versa, to such an extent that we cannot say which, the plot or the conspiracy, has priority. The fictional work within a fictional work technique (movie--drama--comic songs) hides first one then the other. The Hollywood film showing the tragicomic adventures of Baby Igor pushes the story over the borderline into the grotesque. All this suggests that we see before our eyes a carefully planned coup, a little conspiracy; on the other hand, Whorfinger's play gives credence to the theory that all is real historic truth and great conspiracy.

Two of the characters, the actor/lawyer and the lawyer/actor, function on both the first and second levels in the work. Oedipa, depending on her degree of involvement, is both witness/actor or victim/conspirator. She can believe she is persecuted by Inverarity or that she has a sinister influence on his entourage.

The songs ease the glide of story from one mode to another. They are stereotypical transitions which pull the various parts of the text together by shifting it back to neutral position. Indeed, the hymn praising the glory of industrial competition, or Serge's song, saturates the story, bringing it to the level of appearances, i.e., to the level of official or dissident ideologies.

The introduction of Whorfinger's apocryphal text creates a new juncture, one that will allow the story to unfold, to deploy itself anew. The juxtaposition of these two texts casts Lot 49 into the lower depths. The Courier's Tragedy is a drama of the dispossessed, overflowing with cruelty: usurpers and victims alike perish.
How are these two texts joined together? First, through the intuitions of a revelation which isn't verbalized in either one, through the elusive surfacing of the unconscious in the conscious, and finally through the introduction of the key word in the story's margins, the term which is at the same time the thesis and the symbol of Lot 49: Tristano.

If we adopt a tautological argument, we can establish the following pseudo-equation: The Crying of Lot 49 = The Courier's Tragedy = The Revenger's Tragedy. Therefore, The Crying of Lot 49 = The Revenger's Tragedy. In its turn, Pynchon's text becomes a possible term of reference. At this point in the narrative, the story that emerges becomes impossible to deny: the motif of the tapestry which is woven from all the stories coming down through the centuries reveals a principle (with a variable quantum) governing the destruction of humanity. Genocides can be superimposed on wars and the two seen as one. The roles of victim and executioner become interchangeable, and Tristano fights either in one camp or another—against Thurn and Taxis (the principal stockholders of the postal monopoly) or against their usurpers. The War between factions in the Lowlands under the Holy Roman Empire, the Hungarian uprising around 1848, the California Gold Rush episode or the Second World War, all placed in the same equation form already appeared in The Wasteland as a salute to the large brotherhood of victims.

In Lot 49, the same story is repeated three times: the disappearance of the Duchy of Faggio's guards (in the play), the disappearance of the Wells Fargo men, the disappearance of the G.I.'s near Lago di Pieta during the Second World War. The story describes three genocides and the great conspiracy which weighs heavily on all of our lives.

The Everlasting Return of the story to its beginning reveals future vistas reminiscent perhaps of the many blank pages which follow the text.

The denouement's silence, or the ambiguity of any given moment in the story, does not allow us to provide a categorical solution to our narrative. "Ritual Reluctance" describes the hesitations, the shilly-shallyings of a narrative shying away from any new
developments. Just as the doers of great deeds are not named in Wharfinger's play, so Pynchon's text gets lost in the end among preparations for an estate auction sale--lost in ambiguity. Who are these men in black or these black men seated, behind closed doors, around Oedipa? Are not all the corpses in the story, the pluralistic incarnation of Death which is never called by name? Pynchon chooses a narrative technique quite different from the one used by detective story writers who point out each clue and prepare us for the big scene when the mystery will be solved. His technique is more like James'. James always puts the solution off until later. Lot 49's binary rhythm: question/incomplete or irrelevant answer, new question/new incomplete answer, etc. is what really forms the reader's quest—all the more so because the book switches from one thing to another, and the work is only open to interpretation once the book is closed. The auctioneer raises his arms and opens a ghostly session where the reader can make his bid.

III - The Quest for the Word and the Metaphoric Hypothesis

Pynchon's text, therefore, has no final word; it begins and ends in silence. While the writing and reading process is going on, electrically charged words vibrate; they energize one another. The "word" is electrified; it has sound as well as meaning. Thus word currents surge through the high tension wires Pynchon creates:

... squatters who ... spent the night up some pole in a lineman's tent like caterpillars, swung among a web of telephone wires ... untroubled by the dumb voltages flickering their miles ... (135)

Undoubtedly Pynchon's greatest originality lies in this effort to modulate language through processes reminiscent of sound-mixing. He takes shop-worn sophisticated language off the shelf, puts it in new circuits where it hob-nobs with slang, technical terms, abbreviations.

Indeed, many of the characters talk like computers. Their words seem to be surrounded by invisible balloons just like in a comic strip; it seems that it
isn't the words which burst to the surface, but the balloon which, responding to external stimuli, automatically expels its contents.

Moreover, the media have so distorted language at this point that the speaker must say Edna Mosh into the microphone so that the electromagnetic waves will transmit Oedipa Maas at the other end of the circuit. This example recalls the "Serious Pleasantries" created at Berkeley or Princeton which all revolve around the "Paradoxical Number."

Ex.: Caesar's last breath
"Are we still breathing some of the same molecules of air that Julius Caesar breathed out when he was assassinated? The answer is, according to a very simple calculation, "Probabley yes, a few tens of them every time we breathe in." 

This slipping from the hypothetical to the probable seems to characterize Pynchon's gait: how then shall we talk about incorporating in a live circuit these molecules of stale air or these decrepit, feeble words? Where can we find the formula to stop linguistic entropy?

In the absence of the god Thoth or the secularized and aging Mr. Thoth, Oedipa goes to two miracle workers to try to wrest the secret for that formula from them. She also turns to Maxwell's Demon and the producer Driblette's ghost, but their silence shows that scientific procedures and spiritualist intuition are both powerless. The subject of enunciation (Oedipa herself, in these circumstances) is an attempt to establish a relationship with the "other" without which the discovery of the "word" can be no more than the symbol for paranoia.

Pynchon offers his reader a simplistic, mystifying code to act as the thread which will guide him through the labyrinth (a word/a sketch/an anagram such as Tristero/the muted post horn/W.A.S.T.E.).

The intermittent appearance of the word Tristero or W.A.S.T.E. stimulates the curiosity of the reader who sees them as intruders in the text and capable of changing its meaning. The same technique is sometimes used in poetry. The recurrent appearance of a color
or unknown word creates semantic changes and expands imaginative possibilities. Tristero's presence is a signal and a sign which is both a harbinger of things to come and a compensation for what is never revealed since the revelation is always just about but never quite ready to happen.

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)

The text's real quest is for a metaphoric alternative. Tristero's existence threatens the rhetorical figure most frequently used since Homer in its reassuring bipolarity of signifier/signified:

Now here was Oedipa, faced with a metaphor of God knew how many parts; more than two, anyway. With coincidences blossoming these days wherever she looked, she had nothing but a sound, a word, Trystero, to hold them together. (80)

Indeed, the story which Tristero tells follows the experimental and theoretical phases of the metaphor. Tristero is a signifier or rather a chain of signifiers which mark secret plots, clandestine operations, a way of masking but also of seeking out and discovering the truth. Often it is identified a posteriori.

But Tristero, whose emblem appears just about everywhere, is also a potential but as yet unknown signified whose signifiers must be catalogued by using the mystic's ecstasy, the madman's and the dreamer's vision, the artist's intuition, and, in literature, the process of poetic creation.

The description of the old seaman's delirium tremens can be considered a humorous demonstration of the metaphoric process (the act of metaphor).

The metaphoric process operates through the juxtaposition of two metaphors, one traditional, the other the product of Oedipa's spur-of-the-moment inspiration. Thinking of Viking funerals (the old man could very well set fire to his mattress with his cigarette) she sees the burning mattress stuffed with all the human
suffering it has absorbed as a metaphor for suffering, paralysis and death. Everything will go up in flame, even the metaphor which only tells us what we already know and which will turn to ashes and residue.

On the other hand, the second metaphor which the letters DT (delirium tremens) hide is very dynamic. It makes it possible to communicate from both the outer and inner worlds and to establish new connections with other worlds—the breath of God, joyful and threatening spheres—all this restores the relevance of the word. In a trance, Oedipa herself discovers the second term of the metaphor, thanks to a bad pun on DT (delirium tremens) and dt (differential time; death nearing, for example). dt acts as a trajectory for the metaphor which launches itself off into space in search of new worlds. DT contains dt and vice versa. The distinction between signifier and signified tends to disappear.

The two movements, the trembling accompanying the delirium and the path of approaching death, will soon annihilate one another, thus freeing a source of verbal energy which drives death out of the story and its language.

Notes
2 The title has been reduced to the two last words.
3 Inamorati Anonymous.
4 An example among others in the Princeton Gnosis by Raymond Ruyer.
5 Pynchon's character, Mr. Thoth, is the modern version of Thoth, the Egyptian God of Arts and the Humanities.
The Paracineumatic Reality of *Gravity's Rainbow*

Mack Smith

"History," Pynchon writes in *Gravity's Rainbow*, "is not woven by innocent hands."

According to Pynchon, history—or historical reality as a system of commonly agreed upon "facts"—is a manufactured product, an act of conscious creation similar to the creation of art; in fact, Pynchon treats the creation of art as the first step in the fabrication of reality. The contrived "realities," plots, and insidious grand designs in *Gravity's Rainbow* are actually the artifices of a ubiquitous "Them," who manipulate lives by producing illusory realities which become accepted as the empirically "real."

"They" posit illusions as reality in a variety of ways. Kekulé's dream of the aromatic Ring is used to illustrate the manner in which this is done, and to provide a central metaphor of dream-manufacture and distribution. The narrator wonders: "how is it we are each visited [in dreams] as individuals, each by exactly and only what he needs? Doesn't that imply a switching-path of some kind? a bureaucracy?" (410). Laszlo Jamf, in lecturing on Kekulé, whom Pynchon calls "Their brilliant employee" (413), specifically questions who "They" are: "'who, sent, the Dream?'' (413). One of the most developed characters exemplifying "Them" in *Gravity's Rainbow* is Gerhardt von Göll, a creator of a kindred form of dream—the dream world of film, the products of Hollywood and Ufa dream factories. Through references to von Göll and popular cinema, Pynchon posits that film is one of the primary means "They" have used to make reality out of illusion.

The film director von Göll, like "Them," is ubiquitous, apolitical, and amoral. He works for both the Germans and the Allies; he has business connections with both the scientists Laszlo Jamf and the drug-friend Seaman Bodine. He is the "white knight of the black market" (492), but he also has established financial arrangements with the American tycoon Lyle Bland and with IG Farben. He explicitly defines himself as one of the elite, the chosen ones for whose
benefit the preterite must suffer and die. With a .45, he guards a stolen turkey from the hungry masses, gleefully commenting that by tomorrow, many of them will have starved, and there will be fewer with which to contend. When Slothrop expresses disgust at his heartless remark, von Göll (a.k.a. "Der Springer") says:

"Despise me, exalt them [the poor], but remember, 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. While they suffer in perpetual shadows, it's . . . always . . . [breaking into song] bright days for the black mar-ket [fox trot]."

(495)

The insidiousness of von Göll's purpose in Gravity's Rainbow becomes more apparent when he attempts to transform his role from a director of films to a creator of reality itself. One of his missions for the Allies is to stage and film, with actors "in plausible blackface" (113), images of black rocketeers to represent "the fictional Schwarzkommando" (113), Südwest Africans in Germany, in whose real existence no one yet believes. But later, when it is proven that the Schwarzkommando indeed exist, von Göll is overcome with the belief that he and his film have created them:

Since discovering that Schwarzkommando are really in the Zone, leading real, paracinematic lives that have nothing to do with him or the phony Schwarzkommando footage he shot last winter in England for Operation Black Wing, Springer has been zooming around in a controlled ecstasy of megalomania. He is convinced that his film has somehow brought them into being. (388) [my emphasis]

Von Göll believes that the real Schwarzkommando are "paracinematic" versions of the fictional, cinematic ones filmed by him. His film has engendered reality.
Obviously, Pynchon is engaging in a profound play upon the concepts of art and reality. To von Göll, the creations of his imagination, which once had only a cinematic existence, have now become tangible, physical, real—or in his terms, paracinematic. Using the prefix "para-" in the sense of beyond or above, he believes that his creations have risen above a mere imaginative or subjective existence and have actually intruded into objective reality. He has begun to populate the external world, the empirically perceived objective life, with the products of his subjective imagination. When von Göll discovers that his cinematic Schwarzkommando have given birth to real, paracinematic ones, he is overcome with a megalomaniac urge to make all of life paracinematic by encompassing it entirely within a film. Francisco Squalidozzi, the leader of the Argentine anarchists, expresses to von Göll his desire to recreate the myth of Martin Fierro, the gaucho of the once-open pampas; von Göll assures Squalidozzi that by making a film, Martin Fierro, he can make the mythical gaucho and his free plains real by creating paracinematic versions of them, just as he had done with the Schwarzkommando:

"It is my mission[... to sow in the Zone seeds of reality. The historical moment demands this, and I can only be its servant. My images, somehow, have been chosen for incarnation. What I can do for the Schwarzkommando I can do for your dream of pampas and sky. ..." (388)

From the Schwarzkommando to Martin Fierro, von Göll enlarges his ambition to create a world. This dream of God-like omnipotence becomes clear when Slothrop jokingly complains to von Göll that life is not a film. Von Göll replies: "'Not yet. Maybe not quite yet. You'd better enjoy it while you can. Someday, when the film is fast enough, the equipment pocket-size and burdenless and selling at people's prices, the lights and booms no longer necessary, then ... then ...'"(527). The seemingly mad director envisions a time when technological advances will make possible the filming of every important detail of life, so that all reality will become his paracinematic version of it. The irrepressible Springer is not one
to wait for technology to catch up with his ambitions, however, and, by the end of the novel, he has started his project of making reality paracinematic: "There is a movie going on, under the rug. On the floor, 24 hours a day, pull back the rug sure enough there's that damn movie! A really offensive and tasteless film by Gerhardt von Göll, daily rushes in fact from a project which will never be completed" (745).

Von Göll's endless film of reality is similar to another all-encompassing encyclopedic narrative described within the pages of Gravity's Rainbow—Brigadier Pudding's history:

He started in on a mammoth work entitled Things That Can Happen in European Politics. Begin, of course, with England. "First," he wrote, "Bereshith, as it were: Ramsay MacDonald can die." By the time he went through resulting party alignments and possible permutations of cabinet posts, Ramsay MacDonald had died. "Never make it," he found himself muttering at the beginning of each day's work—"it's changing out from under me. Oh, dodgy—very dodgy." (77)

Pudding's project fails because he tries to meet reality on its own terms. By trying to anticipate and chronicle the mercurial sequence of unforeseen events, Pudding is at the mercy of causality and always lags one step behind. Von Göll, on the other hand, believes that he himself is the causal agent of a reality that he can create; he can control the cause and effect sequence of his movies, and when they become paracinematic or "real," he has actually affected an alteration of empirical reality. He makes a film about life by making life into a film. As the novel progresses toward its conclusion, von Göll's film of Martin Fierro is more an empirical than cinematic reality:

The sets for the movie-to-be help some. The buildings are real, not a false front in sight. The boliche is stocked with real liquor, the pulpería with real food. The sheep, cattle, horses, and corrals
are real. The huts are weatherproof and are being slept in. When von Göll leaves—if he ever comes—nothing will be struck. Any of the extras who want to stay are welcome. (613)

William Plater, in his book on Pynchon, The Grim Phoenix, writes that Pynchon uses film to illustrate that "life and illusion are both a matter of form." Pudding, a less ambitious version of the artist, tries to follow the form of reality as it unfolds in its random, haphazard causal design, whereas von Göll imposes his own form upon reality and forces it to conform to his own design. He becomes an absurd example of Wallace Stevens' singer at Key West who is "the single artificer of the world."

II

Although "Der Springer" seems cast in the role of mad artist-inventor, popularized in horror films, Pynchon does not allow his reader to disregard the director's intentions, for he has left an enormous amount of cumulative evidence that film reality and historical reality have indeed become one and the same. The literally dozens of films mentioned in Gravity's Rainbow are not used merely to complete an encyclopedia of popular culture; they are consistently used to show that art creates reality as surely as what is "real" creates art. Furthermore, the bulk of the textual evidence indicates that art, particularly the cinema, has created and is creating a world of imprisonment and victimization. As Edward Mendelson notes: "The popular modes that Pynchon assimilates into his encyclopedia of styles are never modes of liberation from the systems of oppression, but are instead a means of oppression and extinguishing." To see how art has oppressed, one needs only to look at the films most frequently referred to in Gravity's Rainbow and observe how Pynchon interprets their effects on modern life.

One director/creator with whom von Göll must compete for the creation of the Schwarzkommando is Merian Cooper, whose King Kong is constantly referred to in Gravity's Rainbow. Cooper's words to Fay Wray, his leading actress, form an epigraph to Part Two of the
novel: "You will have the tallest, darkest leading man in Hollywood" (179). Pynchon develops Jessica Swanlake as a Fay Wray character. In the concluding pages of Part Two, she goes again into her "Fay Wray number" (275) which Pynchon describes as "a kind of protective paralysis[. . .] for the fist of the Ape, for the lights of electric New York white-waying into the room you thought was safe, could never be penetrated... for the coarse black hair, the tendons of need, of tragic love" (275). But later in the novel, Slothrop assumes the same role when he wears "a blonde wig and the same long flowing white cross-banded number Fay Wray wears in her screen test scene with Robert Armstrong on the boat" (688). Immediately after Slothrop is transformed into Fay Wray, Pynchon modulates the prose of his novel into verse, a poem that David Cowart interprets as Fay Wray's soliloquy which she delivers while tied to the sacrificial altar, waiting to be taken by the fist of the ape, King Kong:

At that first moment, long before our flight:
Ravine, tyrannosaurus (flying-mares
And jaws cracked out of joint), the buzzing serpent
That jumped you in your own stone living space,
The pterodactyl or the Fall, no--just . . .
While I first hung there, forest and night at one,
Hung waiting with the torches on the wall.
And waiting for the night's one Shape to come,
I prayed then, not for Jack, still mooning sappy
Along the weather-decks--no. I was thinking
Of Denham--only him, with gun and camera
Wisecracking in his best bum actor's way
Through Darkest Earth, making the unreal reel.

(689) [my emphasis]

In this section, Pynchon makes one further reference to Fay Wray, implicitly alluding to all the characters of the novel who are models of her archetype: "We've seen them under a thousand names... 'Greta [Margherita] Erdmann' is only one, these dames whose job it is always to cringe from the Terror"(689). In their own contexts, Fay Wray, Slothrop, Jessica Swanlake, and Margherita Erdmann are sexual symbols of a civilization founded upon structures of power and powerlessness, here described sadomasochistically.
pale and blonde, they also represent white society's fear of the power and danger of darkness, alternately described as "the Fist of the Ape," "the night's one Shape," and "the Terror."

Cowart remarks that the Fay Wray soliloquy alludes to "the magical ability of directors to make the unreal real."

The pun, "making the unreal reel," indicates that throughout Gravity's Rainbow the unreal or fictional hovers in the filmic imagination, ready to be made real. Pynchon suggests that civilized man's primordial fear of primitive darkness has created the film King Kong, and now the process of creation has been reversed—the film has created, in the context of the novel, an empirical reality: "the legend of the black scapegoat we cast down like Lucifer from the tallest erection in the world has come, in the fullness of time, to generate its own children, running around inside Germany even now—the Schwarzkommando" (275). As the "unreal" King Kong was abducted from his primitive lair, mounted the Empire State Building, and threatened to destroy the entire city, so the Herero tribesmen, the "real" Schwarzkommando, were abducted from Südwest Afrika and brought to Germany, where they erected and mounted civilization's most powerful tower—the 00001 Rocket—and threatened to destroy the entire world.

Edwin Treacle tries to convince his colleagues in the Allied psychological warfare section that their repressed fear of darkness, so aptly manifest in King Kong, had created the Schwarzkommando: "Why wouldn't they admit that their repressions had incarnated real and living men, likely (according to the best intelligence) in possession of real and living weapons they are real, they are living, as you pretend to scream inside the Fist of the Ape..." (276-77).

As one of the researchers in "The White Visitation," Treacle is probably more aware than most how the sadomasochistic implications of the film were fertile seeds in the subconscious of a generation of viewers. Treacle works with the behaviorists who use a related, film-based form of conditioning on Grigori, the octopus that is trained to attack "The White Visitation's" agent, Katje Borgesius: "The reel is threaded, the lights are switched off, Grigori's attention is directed to the screen, where an image already walks"
(113). Treacle correctly suspects that the film of Katje walking worked on Grigori's primitive consciousness as King Kong worked on the dreams of viewers—they both are forms of conditioning: one specifically neurological, the other broadly cultural.

It is ironic that while von Göll gloats about his supposed creation of life in the Schwarzkommando, he is totally unaware of his greatest success—the case of Franz Pökler. As he must share creative honors with Merian Cooper for the Schwarzkommando, von Göll must compete with Pökler's favorite director, Fritz Lang. A Lang film which has left a strong imprint on Gravity's Rainbow is his 1929 Die Frau im Mond (The Woman in the Moon). Produced in the gestation period of Germany's rocket program, the film, which tells the story of a rocket trip to the moon, employed as technical advisors some scientists who later worked on the V-2; indeed, Pynchon's rocket engineer Pökler "knew some of the people who'd worked on the special effects" (159). In Gravity's Rainbow there are two rockets, the 00000 and the 00001, "a good Rocket to take us to the stars[ and] an evil Rocket for the World's suicide" (727). Die Frau im Mond is Gravity's Rainbow's hopeful fantasy of the good rocket, and, like King Kong, it is another example of film myth becoming reality—the fictional reality of the 00000 and the historical reality of the first V-2, which, according to David Cowart, bore the emblem "Die Frau im Mond."

Other Lang films which play significant roles in Gravity's Rainbow are those that Siegfried Kracauer calls, in From Caligari to Hitler, the "tyrant films" that depict "the unavoidable alternative of tyranny or chaos," or, in Pynchon's terms, paranoia or anti-paranoia. Kracauer's sometimes doctrinaire thesis is that Weimar Germany, buffeted by the winds of economic and political chaos, yearned for an omnipotent controlling power similar to the "supermen-tyrants" depicted in films, and that the Germans were conditioned by these cinematic figures to accept the real tyrant-figure that came in the form of Adolf Hitler. Lang's favorite actor for the criminal supermen roles was Rudolf Klein-Rogge, "whom Pökler idolized and wanted to be like" (578). Klein-Rogge is most famous for his role as Dr. Mabuse, a hypnotist like Dr. Caligari who commits crimes by mind control. Of his roles, the one
which most impresses Pökler is that of Rotwang, the mad scientist inventor in Metropolis, Lang's 1927 masterpiece. Of Metropolis, and its effect on Pökler, Pynchon writes:

Klein-Rogge was carrying nubile actresses off to rooftops when King Kong was still on the tit. with no motor skills to speak of. Well, one nubile actress anyway, Brigitte Helm in Metropolis. Great movie. Exactly the world Pökler and evidently quite a few others were dreaming about those days, a Corporate City-state where technology was the source of power, the engineer worked closely with the administrator, the masses labored unseen far underground, and ultimate power lay with a single leader at the top, fatherly and benevolent and just, who wore magnificent-looking suits and whose name Pökler couldn't remember, being too taken with Klein-Rogge playing the mad inventor that Pökler and his codisciples under Jamf longed to be--indispensable to those who ran the Metropolis, yet, at the end, the untamable lion who could let it all crash, girl, State, masses, himself, asserting his reality against them all in one last roaring plunge from rooftop to street.

(578)

In Nazi Germany, Pökler got a part in the world he had dreamed of, although the "single leader at the top," Adolf Hitler, was hardly "fatherly and benevolent." And Pynchon's view of modern society, as chronicled in Gravity's Rainbow, is based on a Metropolis model. According to Pynchon, the world has been transformed into an immense, caste-conscious corporate state, governed not by a single leader but by cartels, of which IG Farben and Shell are the most powerful. The scientists and engineers work with the administrators of these cartels--Laszlo Jamf's relationship with Lyle Bland seems to duplicate Rotwang's with his leader--but the lot of the average engineer like Pökler is not much better than that of the workers. Pökler is far from the "untamable lion" that he envisions himself to be. And Pynchon's view of future society is also based on Lang's model:
It's a giant factory-state here, a City of the Future full of extrapolated 1930s swoop-façaded and balconied skyscrapers, lean chrome Caryatids with bobbed hairdos, classy airships of all descriptions drifting in the boom and hush of the city abysses, golden lovelies sunning in roof-gardens and turning to wave as you pass. (674)

The Herero tribesmen working on the apocalyptic 00001 for the "World's Suicide," are analogues for King Kong; they are also the workers in Metropolis. From Africa, they were brought "to the Metropolis, that great dull zoo, as specimens of a possibly doomed race" (315), and after the war, they live "around Nordhausen [the German rocket factory site] and Bleicherode, down in abandoned mine shafts" (315). In these "underground communities" (315), they use the technology of the elite, the V-2 rocket, to bring destruction upon themselves and their masters, just as the underground workers in Metropolis turned their machines against their rulers and themselves.

As the film myth of King Kong generated the Herero tribesmen, so Die Frau im Mond gave birth to the V-2, and Metropolis created the image of a feudal economic and social system, bent on self-destruction. An even more explicit example of this process is Horst Achtfaden's description of the secret 00000 project: "We were given code-names. Characters from a movie, somebody said. The other aerodynamics people were "Spörri" and "Hawasch." I was called "Wenk"" (455). The characters are from Lang's Dr. Mabuse der Spieler. And though Achtfaden's version does not state it, the reader can assume that the project supervisor Weissmann/Blicero probably gave himself the name "Mabuse," in an attempt to impose the reality of this story of a superman-tyrant upon the project, with himself cast in the omnipotent role.

With Pökler, the cultural, neurological, and psychological effects of film are brought together. When Franz and his wife Leni go to see Lang's 1924 epic Die Nibelungen, he cannot stay awake, for his days in inflation-ridden Weimar Germany are filled by scavenging for coal. "Pökler would nod back into sleep with bursts of destroying beauty there for his
dreams to work on, speaking barbaric gutturals for the silent mouths . . ." (578). Film works on Pökler's dreams as it does on the primitive consciousness of Grigori. His acute sensitivity to the subliminal effects of film makes him a likely choice for von Göll's greatest paracinematic success.

Pökler is deeply implicated in the process by which film makes reality, for his personal reality is repeatedly appropriated and made the locus for the transactions of film and reality. During the filming of one scene in von Göll's Alpdrücken, Margherita Erdmann conceives a child, Bianca, with her co-star Max Schlepzig, and when the film is shown at the Ufa theatre, Pökler, in the audience, leaves with the scene still on his mind, thinking:

God, Erdmann was beautiful. How many other men, shuffling out again into depression Berlin, carried the same image from Alpdrücken to some drab fat excuse for a bride? How many shadow-children would be fathered on Erdmann that night? (397)

The shadow-child Pökler fathers, Ilse, eventually becomes a film vision to him, as the Nazis allow him to see her for only short intervals, spaced over long periods of time, so that he is not even sure she is the same child as before:

The only continuity has been her name, and Zwölfkinder, and Pökler's love--love something like the persistence of vision, for they have used it to create for him the moving image of a daughter, flashing him only these summertime frames of her, leaving it to him to build the illusion of a single child . . . what would the time scale matter, a 24th of a second or a year? (422)

Pynchon implies that the presentation of an arranged series of images, which creates the illusion of movement and life in a film, can be used empirically to create the illusion of a child's life in reality; in this case, the process is used insidiously for control and manipulation. Pökler's terrifying
realization—"Isn't that what they made of my child, a film?" (398)—represents how often art can be pressed into service in order to alter life and to perpetuate contrived and unnatural structures. As Richard Poirier writes: "The loved child was . . . begotten of a film and has since become as if 'framed' by film, just as Gottfried is at last 'framed' by the Rocket that Pökler helped develop." Poirier's use of "framed" can be seen in two senses: framed by the movie still and "framed" in the colloquial sense of being unjustly implicated in a contrived plot. Both senses of the word apply to Pökler in his real relationship with his daughter and his involvement with the rocket project. Pynchon makes the connection when he describes the photographing of experimental rocket descents:

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. (407)

The flashing of stills that counterfeits movement in a film also counterfeits a life, that of Pökler's daughter. Ilse, conceived in sexual dreams inspired by "frames" of a film, is herself placed in a "frame" of experience created by Weissmann and the Nazis to "frame" her father.

III.

As a final, more forceful illustration that our reality is indeed paracinematic, Pynchon presents evidence that the novel presents a view, not of reality, but of film reality—that the novel is indeed a film.11

In his sudden shifts from scene to scene and character to character without the connective material readers have come to expect from realistic narration, Pynchon emulates the cinematic technique of montage, and this juxtaposition of seemingly unrelated episodes achieves the montage effect that Sergei Eisenstein
defines as "the conflict of two pieces in opposition to each other." 12

Also, Pynchon is one of the few novelists to have orchestrated a musical score for his novels, in the manner of background music for a film. Scenes are accompanied by "mellow close-harmony reeds humming a moment in the air" (196), or "bridge music here, bright with xylophones" (222), or "conga drums and a peppy tropical orchestra" (229). When Slothrop, in the guise of Ian Scuffling, is chased through Zurich, Pynchon makes sure that we know that the music is: "Zunnggg! diddilung, diddila-ta-ta-ta, ya-ta-ta-ta William Tell Overture here" (262). The most common form of music in Gravity's Rainbow is song. Characters will, if the occasion arises, croon a ballad, as in a romantic musical. Slothrop woos Katje Borgesius with "It's still too soon, It's not as if we'd kissed and kindled . . ." (195), and Roger Mexico laments his loss of Jessica Swanlake with "I dream that I have found us both again, With spring so many strangers' lives away . . ." (627). The abundance of song gives credence to Simmon's contention that "basically Gravity's Rainbow is a musical." 13

Pynchon incorporates into Gravity's Rainbow many stock conventions of popular films. Roger and Jessica's affair is "a typical WWII romantic intrigue" (247), begun with "what Hollywood likes to call a 'cute meet'" (38). Jessica has "a Fay Wray look" (57). They speak to each other in a "flip film-dialogue" (121). Pirate Prentice's favorite expression was "learned . . .at the films . . .the exact mischievous Irish grin your Dennis Morgan chap goes about cocking down" (32). Slothrop asks his friend Tantivy Mucker-Maffick, "'what are you telling him? . . .I'm some kind of a Van Johnson or something?''' (182). But later he is "Errol Flynn frisk[ing] his mustache" (248). He speaks in a "Groucho Marx voice" (246). This encyclopedia of stock characters in popular films and of their mannerisms is part of Pynchon's commentary on the effect of films on character in the twentieth century. Ours is a generation which has learned to kiss by the example of Clark Gable and Elizabeth Taylor, to walk like Gary Cooper, and to talk with affected "coolness" and nonchalance like Marlon Brando.
Film stars, Pynchon suggests, have set standards for manners which all levels of our society have been quick to emulate.14

Pynchon also borrows the technical terminology of the cinema in many of his descriptive passages. This is how he describes the former actress Margherita Erdmann approaching Slothrop who waits for her at the spa Bad Karma: "When she materializes it is a shy fade-in, as Gerhardt von Göll [her director] must have brought her on a time or two, not moving so much as Slothrop's own vantage swooping to her silent closeup stabilized presently across from him, finishing his beer, bumming a cigarette" (459). Another scene is described "from a German camera-angle" (229). Pirate Prentice's daydreams of his former lover, Scorpio Mossmoon, are triggered by a drawing which is "a DeMille set really, slender and oiled girls in attendance, a suggestion of midday light coming through from overhead" (71). The abandoned German rocket firing range is camouflaged by "German Expressionist ripples streaming gray and black all over it" (513).

The abundance of Pynchon's references to film and film technique causes George Levine to write that Gravity's Rainbow is virtually an encyclopedia of the myths of popular and non-literary culture, and that "these myths appear in the frames of motion pictures so that we are at once entertained, engaged, and conscious of the potential artificiality."15 Pynchon includes an episode which might suggest the reader's response to Gravity's Rainbow's potential reality and artificiality: the story of Takeshi and Ichizo. When the two Komical Kamikazes improvise a haiku to describe the epileptic thrashings of Old Kenosho, the loony radarman, Pynchon intrudes to address his readers:

You didn't like the haiku. It wasn't ethereal enough? Not Japanese at all? In fact it sounded like something right outa Hollywood? Well, Captain--yes you, Marine Captain Esberg from Pasadena--you, have just had, the Mystery Insight! [. . .] Yes, it is a movie! (691)

Captain Esberg's Mystery Insight is a possible model for the insight Pynchon expects to elicit from many of his perceptive readers—that they are reading a movie.
With the evidence that the novel is a film, the reader can accept Slothrop's own explanation of his disappearance from the pages of the novel-as-film; according to him, he has been edited out of the movie Gravity's Rainbow:

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. Reminded, too late, of how dependent you are on Them, for neglect if not good will: Their neglect is your freedom. (694)

After he has been edited from the film, Slothrop's real existence is denied by the fictional characters of the novel. His name is "apocryphal" (696), and he is "being broken down [.] and scattered" (738). Even the reality of his arch-enemy is doubted: "Jamf was only a fiction ..." (738). At the end, only Seaman Bodine "can still see Slothrop as any sort of integral creature any more" (740). Like the fictional characters, the "real" characters of the novel deny Slothrop's reality. Earlier in the novel, Slothrop sees Mickey Rooney (a private in the Army then), and Pynchon writes: "He knows he is seeing Mickey Rooney, though Mickey Rooney, wherever he may go, will repress the fact that he ever saw Slothrop" (382). By mixing real characters (from Mickey Rooney to Walter Rathenau) with fictional characters (who themselves are divided into categories of real and fictional), Pynchon further blurs the distinctions between reality and fiction, or paracinematic and cinematic.

IV

Pynchon presents reality as a series of fictional Chinese boxes that the reader opens one by one until he reaches the last one, in which he himself is contained. In the course of reading Gravity's Rainbow, which situates itself in World War Two, the reader, in the beginning, attempts to assume a conventional role outside the novel, observing from the comfortable distance of his own moment this fiction which describes this "theatre" of war. From the beginning, however, the word "theatre" signifies two distinct meanings in
Gravity's Rainbow—it denotes specifically the locus of battle, but it also connotes the sense of the war as staged or directed, a conspiracy about which the ordinary participants or actors are ignorant. On the first page the narrator hints—"The Evacuation still proceeds, but it's all theatre" (3). And later the main character, Tyrone Slothrop, concludes, "none of it was real before this moment: only elaborate theatre to fool you" (267). Another character, Enzian, suspects, "Perhaps it's theatre, but they seem no longer to be Allies" (326), and later realizes, "this War was never political at all, the politics was all theatre" (521).

Then, on the last page of the novel, the narrator addresses his readers directly with the implication that they have been drawn unwittingly within the fictional boundaries of the novel and are now characters in another "Theatre of War"--a movie theatre in contemporary Los Angeles, over which a nuclear missile is poised, ready to strike the first blow of the Final Apocalypse. Why a movie theatre? We, the readers, are what Pynchon calls, "old fans who've always been at the movies (haven't we?)" (760). And we, now doomed moviegoers, have been lured to this particular theatre, the Orpheus, by the machinations of its manager Richard H. Zhlubb, a thinly disguised version of Richard Nixon, who has staged a Bengt Ekerot/Maria Casarés Film Festival celebrating the actor and actress who played the roles of Death in Bergman's The Seventh Seal and Cocteau's Orphée.16 The movie we "old fans" have been seeing before the "film has broken, or a projector bulb has burned out" (760) might be entitled Gravity's Rainbow--"The screen is a dim page spread before us" (760). But it is more fitting to think that we have "read a movie," a movie-novel whose pages are a dim screen spread before us. Characters in the novel have become, through the interface of the screen, characters in a movie, and vice-versa. And now, finding ourselves characters in the novel, watching a movie until the "film has broken, or a projector bulb has burned out," we learn that "in the darkening and awful expanse of screen something has kept on, a film we have not learned to see ... it is now a closeup of the face, a face we all know--" (760). The implication is that the face is our own,
the cinematic version of our paracinematic selves in
the theatre.

V

Tony Tanner calls the Orpheus "the old theatre of
our civilization." The cumulative effect of
pynchon's theatre metaphors and cinematic references
is to see not only the novel as film but the world as
film as well. The ancestry of these metaphors is very
old, and Pynchon shares some purposes with these
ancient usages. In Calderón's Eucharistic play El
gran teatro del mundo, Mankind is represented as the
leading actor of the play of life directed by God. Alonso de Orozco, Gracían, and Jaime Falcó all elabo-
rate this convention, which is probably best expressed
in Spanish classical literature by Quevedo's interpre-
tation of Epictetus: "Life is a comedy; the world, a
theatre, and all men players; God, the author. It is
He who distributes the roles; it is mankind's duty to
play them well." A subsidiary theme of this con-
vention is that popularized by Calderón's La vida es
sueño—life is a dream from which we awaken only to
enter divine reality.

To Pynchon, life is both a play (or film) and a
dream. What passes for reality is not the creation
of God but the paracinematic artifices of the elite,
be they directors like von Goll, behaviorists like
Pointsman, or theatre owners like Zhlubb. This re-
ality is the product of the "dream factories" of the
movie industry. The dream-makers of the elite push
films as they do drugs, since both elicit illusions.
Wimpe, the omnipresent agent for IG Farben, traffics
in oneirine, which he hopes can be a universal pain-
killer. The word oneirine is derived from the Greek
oneiros, dream. In explaining oneirine to Tchitcher-
ine, Wimpe says: "'There is nearly complete parallel-
ism between analgesia and addiction. The more pain
it takes away, the more we desire it'" (348). The
dreams created by drugs and films are analgesic and,
hence, addictive, because they create artificial
realities less painful than the natural one, which is
a relentless cycle of suffering and death. Pynchon
illustrates how films can ease the pain of death by
citing the example of John Dillinger, who was killed
after seeing Clark Gable's Manhattan Melodrama:
John Dillinger, at the end, found a few seconds' strange mercy in the movie images that hadn't quite yet faded from his eyeballs—Clark Gable going off unregenerate to fry in the chair, voices gentle out of the deathrow steel so long, Blackie[...]. . .] there was still for the doomed man some shift of personality in effect—the way you've felt for a little while afterward in the real muscles of your face and voice, that you were Gable, the ironic eyebrows, the proud, shining, snakelike head—to help Dillinger through the bushwhacking, and a little easier into death. (516)

Dillinger's fate is made easier because he has become a paracinematic Clark Gable and is able to accept death with the same arrogance and nonchalance as Gable's cinematic character. Pynchon compares Dillinger with Närirsch, who also suspects that he might be the victim of a bushwhacking, arranged by the self-serving Springer. But unlike Dillinger, whose fate was made easier by a movie, "Närirsch hasn't been to a movie since Der Müde Tod. That's so long ago he's forgotten its ending, the last Rilke-elegiac shot of weary Death leading the two lovers away hand in hand through the forget-me-nots" (516). Pynchon implies that Närirsch's inability to remember the end of Lang's 1921 film is unfortunate; for in it, the actor Bernard Goetzke, according to Kracauer, "brings the humane character of Death to the fore," a character showing "tenderness" and "an inner opposition to the duty enjoined on him."21 If Närirsch could remember these characteristics of Death, he might be able to accept his fate more easily. But... . . .

Films and drugs are shown to be analgesic because of their ability to transform reality and history into more palatable forms; yet there is no salvation in them. William Plater notes: "Films, drugs, and sado-masochism are typical systems... used to create illusions that victimize their adherents."22 For example, Slothrop, like other characters given illusory views of reality, has believed "every wretched Hollywood lie down to and including this year's big hit, A Tree Grows in Brooklyn" (641). The effect has been that "They" have been able to "'put him on the Dream,'" (697) a Hollywood Dream of "Happyville, in-
stead of [ ] Pain City" (644-45).

Pynchon reveals how both film and drugs work similarly to mask a brutal reality when one of Slothrop's drug-induced visions of the war takes on a Disney-like innocence. Under the influence of the sodium amytal given him by the behaviorists of "The White Visitation," Slothrop sees this: "For a moment, ten thousand stiffs humped under the snow in the Ardennes take on the sunny Disneyfied look of numbered babies under white wool blankets, waiting to be sent to blessed parents in places like Newton Upper Falls" (70). During the Advent Mass, a sober Roger Mexico has a similar vision, yet he sees through the illusion: "the lads in Hollywood telling us how grand it all is over here, how much fun, Walt Disney causing Dumbo the elephant to clutch to that feather like how many carcasses under the snow tonight among the white-painted tanks" (135). The reality of the war is too painful to accept, so the directors of the new "theatre of the world" provide a paracinematic reality in the form of analgesic illusion.

According to Pynchon, films have become a new opiate of the masses. It is no accident that von Göll's endless film, which will make reality paracinematic, is entitled "New Dope" (745). The Hollywood Dream, like von Göll's "new dope" and oneirine, is an artificially contrived perception of the way things are. It is a mode of control used by "Them" to divert the attention of the masses from the self-destructive direction in which they are being led. And toward the conclusion of the novel, Pynchon correlates the Hollywood Dream with the American Dream when he makes a caricature of President Nixon, the manager of a movie theatre who takes "you" on a fatal ride on the Hollywood Freeway. Before "you" are taken to your predestined encounter with the rocket at the Orpheus Theatre, Richard M. Zhlubb points out all the social outcasts and says: "'Relax' [ ] 'There'll be a nice secure home for them all, down in Orange County. Richt next to Disneyland'" (756). With the dream images of Disney, Gable, Klein-Rogge, Bengt Ekerot, and Maria Casares, the reality of the Western world has been manufactured, made paracinematic. No drug, Pynchon suggests, could have been more universal than film. "They" have lured "us" into the "Orpheus," "the old theatre of our civi-
"lization," where unless "the film has broken, or a projector bulb has burned out," manufactured dreams will blind us to our encounter with destruction.

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Notes

1 Thomas Pynchon, Gravity's Rainbow (New York: Viking, 1973), 277. All further quotations will be from this edition; references will be in parentheses.


5 Cowart, Thomas Pynchon, 36.

6 Ibid.


8 Siegfried Kracauer, From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of the German Film (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1947), 77.

9 Alpdrücken is German for nightmare. This reinforces Pynchon's belief that films work on the same level as dreams.


11 Because of the concluding scene in which the reader seems to have become a viewer of a film, as well as Gravity's Rainbow's adoption of some of the formal characteristics of film, it is now almost a commonplace of Pynchon criticism to call his novel a


13 Scott Simmon, "Beyond the Theater of War: Gravity's Rainbow as Film," Literature/Film Quarterly, 6, No. 4 (1978), 352.

14 The manner in which many Americans have been unable to distinguish their lives and mannerisms from film and movie stars' is treated comically in Woody Allen's movie, Play It Again, Sam.


16 Simmon, 349.


19 A helpful synopsis of the Spanish classical convention of the world as a stage can be found in Otis H. Green, Spain and the Western Tradition: The Castilian Mind in Literature from El Cid to Calderón (Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1966).

20 Francisco de Quevedo, Obras en Verso, ed. L. Astrana Marín (Madrid, 1932), 732b.

21 Kracauer, 91.

22 plater, 209.
Charismatic Figures in Gravity's Rainbow

Vincent D. Balitas

Gravity's Rainbow is a novel containing as many threads and knots as a finely made Isfahan carpet, but unlike those in such a carpet, many of the novel's threads appear to be untied, beginning and ending (as they seem to do) in themselves. However, the thread I hope to unravel in the following pages—the relationship between Max Weber's theory of charisma and Pynchon's most recent novel—is quite central to an understanding of one element of Gravity's Rainbow.

Because Weber's theories are rather specialized and complex, my approach to his influence on Pynchon will be divided into two sections. The first section will consider Weber's treatment of charisma, charismatic authority, charismatic figures, and the routinization of charisma.¹ In the second section, Pynchon's use of these theories will be inspected.² It should be remembered that my approach to Weberian elements in Gravity's Rainbow is restricted to Weber's work on charisma. This limitation, of course, excludes his valuable studies of religion and of capitalism. Also, just because aspects of Weber's brand of sociology can, more or less, be found in Pynchon's novel does not mean that Pynchon structured his novel around Weber's theories. Indeed, it is apparent that he doubts their validity.

¹ A slightly longer version of this essay was first published as "Charismatic Figures in Thomas Pynchon's Gravity's Rainbow," in the Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities, 1, No. 1 (1977), 2-29. The journal was issued at the Pahlavi University of Shiraz, in Iran, where Dr. Balitas was a visiting professor. It is probable that the journal has ceased publication; certainly the university has changed its name. The editors of PN feel that this article would remain virtually inaccessible unless reprinted here. The author has made revisions aimed at eliminating introductory material necessary for an Iranian audience but irrelevant for an American one.
As a founder of modern sociology, Max Weber's position is secure. However, although his work on law, religion, and the rise of capitalism has become an intellectual touchstone, to many he is best known for his analysis of charisma. In many cases, moreover, his name is not even associated with that very "in" word of the 1960's. Weber's definition of charisma as "a certain quality of an individual personality by virtue of which he is considered extraordinary and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities" (I, 241) certainly has been perverted by application to media-manufactured rock stars, movie stars, and athletes. On the other hand, its application to people such as John Kennedy and Malcolm X, both mentioned in Gravity's Rainbow, is warranted, since these two men were considered extraordinary by large groups of followers, and exercised authority as a result of their dedication.

In his introduction to Weber's Economy and Society, Guenther Roth states that the foundation of Weber's work is the "Sociology of Domination," and that "Domination exists insofar as there is obedience to a mixture of habit, expediency and belief in legitimacy" (I, lxxxiv). Commands, and obedience to those commands, presuppose some form of authority, and Weber defines "three pure types of legitimate domination" and sees the basis of the "validity of their claims as"

1. Rational grounds--resting on a belief in the legality of enacted rules and the right of those elevated to authority under such rules to issue commands (legal authority);

2. Traditional grounds--resting on an established belief in the sanctity of immemorial traditions and the legitimacy of those exercising authority under them (traditional authority); or, finally,

3. Charismatic grounds--resting on devotion to the exceptional sanctity, heroism or exemplary character of an individual person, and of the normative patterns or order revealed or ordained by him (charismatic authority).

(I, 215)
Pynchon's novel reveals his interest in Weber in its depiction of the specifically revolutionary nature of charismatic authority; it shows how this force is "routinized" and thereby absorbed into both rational and traditional authority.

Charisma is a "gift of Grace," and the person or object endowed with the gift cannot refuse it—the relationship between charisma and the Puritan idea of grace, a doctrine important to Gravity's Rainbow, is significant. However, according to Weber, "if those to whom he [the charismatic figure]feels sent do not recognize him, his claim collapses; if they recognize it, he is their master as long as he 'proves' himself. However, he does not derive his claims from the will of his followers, in the manner of an election; it is their duty to recognize his charisma" (III, 1112-13). A charismatic person must be recognized as charismatic by others; his charisma does not depend wholly on this recognition, even though his authority does. Because he must "prove" himself, he has tasks to perform. As Weber observes, "The mere fact of recognizing the personal mission of a charismatic master establishes his power ... his recognition derives from the surrender of the faithful to the extraordinary and unheard-of, to what is alien to all regulation and tradition and therefore is viewed as divine—surrender which arises from distress or enthusiasm."

Two new elements, "distress or enthusiasm," enter Weber's complex analysis of charisma. He suggests that charisma "may effect a subjective or internal reorientation born out of suffering, conflicts, or enthusiasm" (I, 245). S. N. Eisenstadt, while admitting that this aspect of Weber's theory is still a source of academic debate, writes: "it may seem that it is mainly the disturbed, the disoriented, the alienated that tend to respond to such [charismatic] appeals—and they necessarily will become most prominent in extreme situations of social change and disturbances. It is in situations of stress or, to use Durkheim's term, of anomie, that more and more people tend to feel helpless, alienated, disoriented and feel that the society in which they live is meaningless and normless. ..."  

In Gravity's Rainbow, the war, an obviously stressful situation, creates a society or
mini-societies in which disorientation is the norm. Those fictional characters who exhibit charismatic qualities—Enzian, Blicero, and even the rocket—become the leaders of emerging groups of alienated followers. Enzian's group is revolutionary in that its mission is, if not to destroy, then at least to warn traditional and legitimate authority. Blicero's group, which at times includes Enzian, Katje and Gottfried, as well as the homosexuals who form a mock concentration camp under his banner, is also revolutionary insofar as its "ideology" is a form of decadent Romanticism and its mission to create a new power structure is based on physical and emotional bondage such as that which a charismatic leader can impose on his followers. The Rocket, as we shall see, becomes the leader of an ever-growing group, including Blicero and Enzian, committed to achieving non-being. However, it is not only the fictional characters, or rather those at the center of power structures, whose charisma is legitimized by the war. Several of the historical personages mentioned in the novel achieved power because they emerged and were recognized in a time of "anomie." For example, Hitler rose from the ashes of the Weimar Republic; Stalin after the Revolution; Roosevelt during the Depression; John Kennedy after the reactionary 1950's; and Malcolm X during the struggle for Civil Rights.

There remain only three interdependent aspects of charisma crucial to this study: its eventual routinization, its anti-economic tendency, and its concern with successorship. According to Weber, it is because charisma "is a typical anti-economic force," as well as a politically and socially unstable quality (in its pure form), that it tends toward routinization. It is peculiar to charisma that it contains within itself, or within the nature of its authority, the germ of its own transformation. This aspect alone makes it of special interest to Pynchon; in Gravity's Rainbow, as many commentators have shown, almost every occurrence contains its own opposite or opposites: meanings proliferate not only because paranoia creates them, but also because they, in turn, create paranoia. It is not so much that either/or situations exist in the novel, but rather that an and/and relationship both is, and is projected. The nature of charisma, like that
of paranoia in the novel, is that it begins and ends in its own beginnings. As Weber writes, "Charisma is a phenomenon typical of prophetic movements or of expansive political movements in their early stages. But as soon as domination is well established, and above all, as soon as control over large masses of people exists, it gives way to the forces of everyday routine" (I, 252). This process of routinization involves (1) the alteration or transformation of its originally anti-economic tendencies, and (2) an attempt to deal with the problem of succession to authority. These are not separate functions of routinization, but rather an on-going process of organic transformation.

The basis for Weber's conclusions that "pure charisma is specifically foreign to economic considerations" is his belief that charisma "constitutes a 'call' ... a 'mission' or a 'spiritual duty'" (I, 244). The charismatic leader has a task to perform, and that task must involve his followers. However, as Weber saw, once a leader has authority over a large group, certain routines, rules and regulations are necessary. For example, the original basis for recruitment of followers is the leader's own charisma, but "with routinization, the followers or disciples may set up norms for recruitment, in particular involving training or tests for eligibility" (I, 249). Whereas in its early stages, the group is small enough for self-maintenance and can ignore ordinary economic concerns, as it grows larger, it must find a means of financial support. What was once, again in its pure form, a non-materialistic and anti-economic force is reversed, and one of the keys to this change is the problem of succession.

Just as the need for rules and regulations involves a process of routinization, so too does the search for a successor to the original charismatic ruler. The method of selection "takes the form of the appropriation of powers and of economic advantages by the followers or disciples" (I, 249). Weber defines several methods of determining successorship, including strict criteria and succession by divine or other revelation, but for our purpose only two methods are important: "Designation on the part of the original charismatic leader of his own successor and his recognition on the
part of the followers" (I, 247), and the transfer of charisma by "ritual means" including the "laying on of hands" (I, 248-49). Both methods establish routinization insofar as there is an orderly, ritualistic process during which "the charismatically ruled organization" is "largely transformed into one of the everyday authorities . . . especially in its estate type or bureaucratic variant" (I, 251).

Apparently, the transformation of charismatic authority into bureaucratic authority is part of its essential nature. Again, Weber: "Every charisma is on the road from a turbulently emotional life that knows no economic rationality to a slow death by suffocation under the weight of material interests: every hour of its existence brings it nearer to this end" (III, 1120). Charisma is absorbed into the bureaucracy by a rationally controlled transformation. As Weber notes, "When the tide that lifted a charismatically led group out of everyday routines wanes, at least the 'pure' form of charismatic domination will wane and turn into an 'institution'; it is then either mechanized, as it were, or imperceptibly displaced by other structures, or fused with them in the most diverse forms, so that it becomes a mere component of a concrete historical structure" (III, 1121). What was once a highly personal movement is depersonalized into that most rational form of authority, the bureaucratic, and ultimately becomes, like a bureaucracy, impersonal. Therefore, and Weber is quite clear on this point, "It is the fate of Charisma to recede before the powers of tradition or of rational association after it has entered the permanent structures of social action. This waning of charisma generally indicates the diminishing importance of individual action" (III, 1148-49).

I have briefly examined and summarized Weber's theory of charisma because it furnishes Pynchon with an influential sociological concept that defines a process which can be seen as a method of rational control over the individual. If even the charismatic figure must yield to the economic and technological forces that keep the bureaucratic machine oiled and operating, then what chance has the average individual? Essentially, the routinization of charisma is an
entropic social process. Moreover, the duality in Weber's system—support for a strong state bureaucracy on the one hand, and on the other, a pessimistic appraisal of the future of individual action in what Weber calls the "iron cage"—becomes in Pynchon's novel a conspiracy by power structures ("They") to transform human beings into robots whose only function is to serve the bureaucratic machine. Weber's vision of the future as an "iron cage" is subtly evoked by Pynchon's rocket state and by Gottfried's "wedding" with/within the frame of the rocket. Moreover, there can be little doubt that Pynchon sees this movement to pure rationality as a major threat to individual action. He would probably agree with Julien Freund's position that "the rationality of the West has taken the form of a progressive intellectualization of life; it has tended to strip the world of charm and of poetry; intellectualization means disenchantment. In a word, the world becomes increasingly the artificial product of man, who governs it much as one controls a machine. Hence we need not be surprised at the formidable ascendancy of technology with its corollary, specialization, as a result of the evergrowing division and subdivision of functions."

II

In Gravity's Rainbow, Pynchon creates a society dehumanized by rational economic authority and by a technology that increasingly tries to make man its servant. This projection is only one aspect of this epic novel, but in seeing history and the war as a confrontation between economic forces (GR, 521), Pynchon presents his vision of a society dominated by markets, exchanges, and machines rather than by humanistic ideals. In such a world, methods of control are imperative, and if one of these controls, rationalization, comes from intellectuals themselves, all the better.

Early in the novel, the narrator, or one of the narrators, comments on a future society envisioned by some of the functionaries at "The White Visitation," a center for agents of various competing power groups:

There must arise, and damned soon, able to draw them into a phalanx, a concentrated point
of light, some leader or program powerful enough to last them across who knows how many years of Postwar. Dr. Rózsavölgyi tends to favor a powerful program over a powerful leader. Maybe because this is 1945. It was widely believed in those days that behind the war—all the death, savagery, and destruction—lay the Führer-principle. But if personalities could be replaced by abstractions of power, if techniques developed by the corporations could be brought to bear, might not nations live rationally? One of the dearest Postwar hopes: that there should be no room for a terrible disease like charisma... that its rationalization should proceed while we had the time and resources. ... (GR, 80-81)

To rationalize charisma, then, is one goal of some of those at "The White Visitation," but a question central to this study lurks in the above statement: the immediacy of the need to rationalize charisma assumes the existence of charisma and/or a charismatic figure, but where and in whom does this "terrible disease" reside? This question seems to be answered at once: "Isn't that what's really at stake for Dr. Rózsavölgyi here in this latest scheme, centered on the figure of Lieutenant Slothrop?" (GR, 81). I am not suggesting that Slothrop is a charismatic figure, but only that Rózsavölgyi and his colleagues use him in an attempt to rationalize an existing charismatic figure and group.\(^8\) Ostensibly, Slothrop's mission is to find the rocket, but his real objective, unknown to him, is to find Enzian and the Schwarzkommando. The rocket, also charismatic but not as yet fully recognized as such, will be a bonus, an additional weapon for "Their" power structure.

That Enzian is a charismatic figure is well established in the novel.\(^9\) His life in Africa and his survival of the early German genocidal campaign against the Hereros (heroes, her eros, here o's, he rose) have been mythologized by his followers, even though the reader, seeing Enzian's story from several perspectives, knows there was nothing supernatural about either. Nevertheless, he does function in the novel as a type of charismatic leader, a master who
feels his power gradually diminishing:

Enzian knows that he is being used for his name. The name has some magic. But he has been so unable to touch, so neutral for so long... everything has flowed away but the name, Enzian, a sound for chanting. He hopes it will be magic enough for one thing, one good thing when the time comes, however short of the Center... What are these persistences among a people, these traditions and offices, but traps? (GR, 321)

What we see in Enzian, even in his use of Weber's tide metaphor (III, 1121), is the breakdown of charismatic authority, the last step before routinization. Even within Enzian's group, ominous signs announce the end of his authority: rival factions struggle for dominance, ideologies clash, and the recognition of Enzian as master weakens. One of the "Empty Ones," a sect of Hereros committed to tribal suicide, sees this process at work. Ombindi asks Enzian if "what's happened, since your first days in Europe, could be described, in Max Weber's phrase, almost as a 'routinization of charisma'" (GR, 325). Enzian denies the validity of the characterization, but Ombindi is quite correct. Enzian and his followers are slowly becoming a Zone. They are forming a society, a state, defined and limited by rational rules and regulations, by economic tendencies, and by the problem of successorship.

It is Enzian's search for the rocket and the process of assembling its iconography that hasten routinization. Enzian's growing number of followers is scattered throughout the Zone(s) and, therefore, communication codes are developed, followers are divided and subdivided according to specialized functions, new resources are needed to support new and complicated activities, and a clear chain of command is established. Enzian realizes the necessity of routines, and although he would prefer to gather his people together with a speech in Martin Luther King's style--"My people, I have had a vision" (GR, 525)--he knows the time for that has passed: "no no but there will need to be more staff, if it's to be that big a
search, quiet shifting of resources away from the Rocket, diversifying while making it look like an organic growth . . ." (GR, 525). The voice of the prophet is becoming that of the businessman.

The problem of succession is similar for both prophet and capitalist. Each must find someone capable of future leadership. Enzian wonders if one of his disciples, Christian, is qualified: "can he use the boy now, Christian's anger . . ." (GR, 525). Enzian does select Christian as his successor, but first the boy must be trained for his role. At one point, the ephebe openly challenges his leader:

"Don't sweet-talk me," Christian explodes, "you don't care about me, you don't care about my sister, she's dying out there and you just keep plugging her into your equations-- you--play this holy-father routine and inside that ego you don't even hate us, you don't care, you're not even connected any more--" (GR, 525)

When Christian strikes his leader, Enzian's reaction to this reverse laying on of hands confirms his selection of Christian: "'You just connected. Can we go after her, now?'" (GR, 525).

Christian's training is conducted mainly in conversations with his leader: "Enzian and the younger man somehow have drifted into these long walks. Nothing deliberate on either side. Is this how successions occur? Each man is suspicious. But there are no more of the old uncomfortable silences. No competing" (GR, 728). Christian is to preserve Enzian's rule and mission by accepting it as his own and by having his authority recognized and, therefore, legitimized by his followers. The young man even begins to interpret and clarify Enzian's parables and commands. For example, when Enzian tells Katje about a sonic-death mirror developed by the Germans, it is Christian who explains what Enzian specifically means. A narrator notes that Christian's act of interpretation "saves trouble later" by getting "the Texts straight soon as they're spoken" (GR, 729). Enzian's rule is almost over, but Christian, when he assumes leadership, will not be a charismatic figure. Routinization will be almost complete.
While it is relatively easy to sketch Enzian's charismatic qualities—extraordinary powers, recognition by mythmaking disciples, a mission, original anti-economic and anti-bureaucratic tendencies, and the initial stages of routinization—it is more difficult to define Blicero's charisma. In fact, it seems somehow perverse to even see him as a charismatic figure; yet he is depicted as an extraordinary, almost mythic character endowed with great power and insight. His rank as an officer in the dreaded SS, as well as his position as leader of a V-2 battery, legitimizes, at least within a certain sphere, his political and military authority. While not representing absolute evil, his authority is based, with three exceptions, on fear. The three exceptions, Enzian, Katje and Gottfried, recognize his authority out of both love and fear, i.e., because of a complex emotional commitment. They surrender to his power because he fulfills a quite basic need they share. This need, perhaps a metaphorical love of the whip, is in Pynchon's view an aspect of human nature. Therefore, although Blicero's charisma is not the pure type defined by Weber, it is a source of power and domination. It is, after all, his charisma that prevents Katje from destroying him and his rocket battery, that convinces Gottfried to "wed" the rocket, and that keeps Enzian long in awe of him. Enzian, in a conversation with Ombindi, describes Blicero's charisma:

"Did you ever, in the street, see a man that you knew, in the instant, must be Jesus Christ—not hoped he was, or caught some resemblance—but knew. The Deliverer, returned and walking among the people, just the way the old stories promised... as you approached you grew more and more certain—you could see nothing at all to contradict that first amazement... you drew near and passed, terrified that he would speak to you... your eyes grappled... it was confirmed. And most terrible of all, he knew. He saw into your soul: all your make-believe ceased to matter..." (GR, 325)

Blicero is indeed an unusual character. He possesses and dominates his kingdom. We do not have to accept his sado-masochistic bisexuality or his blackmail of Pökler to understand his disillusionment
with his world, or his desire to transcend a reality increasingly alien to his Romantic sensibilities. His elegy for Neo-Romantic humanism (GR, 722-24) allows us to sympathize with his sense of the loss of innocence and wholeness while recognizing that his megalomania has produced a brutal parody of the charismatic leader. Essentially, Blicero's appeal to us is emotional, and we are repulsed by his rationalism, best exemplified in his use of slave labor.

Enzian is a complicated other side of Blicero, not just an alter ego. Their missions are similar, in that both are symbolic gestures made in resistance to forms of traditional and bureaucratic authority, but for different reasons. Enzian wants not only to reveal to his disciples the weaknesses of their white suppressors, but also to find his own "Center," his own identity, in the rocket. Blicero is not so much bent on the destruction of an existing order as he is concerned to somehow define and legitimize his own decadent Romantic belief in his ability to transcend the unreality of his own perspective. Enzian and Blicero, then, both double and oppose each other's charismatic authority, and this duality is at work throughout the novel.

In yet another sense, the rocket is the primary charismatic metaphor and character of Gravity's Rainbow. Enzian understands the seemingly infinite symbolic possibilities of the rocket:

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, letter by letter--rivets, burner cup and brass rose, its text is theirs to permute and combine into new revelations, always unfolding . . . Manichaean who see two Rockets, good and evil, who speak together in the sacred idiosalia 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 perpetually in struggle. (GR, 727)

The rocket, then, is the new pure charismatic authority; destined to be routinized, it is first recognized by its followers. In fact, the charisma has flowed from Enzian and Blicero to the various subjective interpretations of its mission. All the characters in the novel, including most of the historical figures mentioned, are in different ways connected to the rocket and subject to its growing authority. Many of them actually view the rocket as a living power, an attitude reflected in Miklos Thanatz's comments to Slothrop:

"I think of the A4," sez he, "as a baby Jesus, with endless committees of Herods out to destroy it in infancy--Prussians, some of whom in their innermost hearts still felt artillery to be a dangerous innovation. If you'd been out there . . . inside the first minute, you saw, you grew docile under its . . . 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 . . . they did resist it, but they also allowed it to happen. We can't imagine anyone choosing a role like that. But every year, somehow, their numbers grow." (GR, 464)

The rocket does possess "a Max Weber charisma," and in the disorientation caused by the war, many answer its call, surrender to its commands (different for each disciple), and legitimize its authority.

In Gravity's Rainbow, then, we see Weber's theory of charisma carried to what might be an extreme. The new charismatic figure is an inanimate product of advancing technology, and it operates in the novel both as a symbol of man's increasing commitment to, indeed love affair with, death-giving objects, and as an apocalyptic power structure. The rocket-state is an ironic comment on a world in which people, driven by their own fascination with non-being and by unknown powers, are drawn to inanimateness. The anthropo-
morphized rocket is accepted as the legitimate leader of a new society whose mission is to transcend subjective experience and to achieve objecthood. The death of the self as perceiving subject is the ultimate goal of this new power structure. Moreover, this search for an ideal state of non-being is part of the cosmic push to entropy, and there seems no escape.

Pynchon does not call for a return to a pre-technological Eden or to a primitive irrationalism simply because he sees the impossibility of such a retreat. Whereas in Weber's sociology the charismatic figure is welcomed because he acts in opposition to impersonality, in Gravity's Rainbow man's drive to non-being is the motive for the ascribing of charisma. The characters who best understand this process, Enzian and Byron the Bulb, are powerless to resist. They know that charismatic leaders, as well as all "counterforces," although initially capable of reorienting social action, eventually must submit to existing power structures or form new ones just as destructive. As Byron knows, "Prophets traditionally don't last long--they are either killed outright, or given an accident serious enough to make them stop and think, and most often they do pull back. But on Byron has been visited an even better fate. He is condemned to go on forever, knowing the truth and powerless to change anything. No longer will he seek to get off the wheel. His anger and frustration will grow without limit, and he will find himself, poor perverse bulb, enjoying it ..." (GR, 655). However, in Pynchon's vision, this recognition might very well be all man can do to retard ever so slightly the process. If so, it is a moot point within the novel, since Gravity's Rainbow concludes with the tip of a rocket (no doubt a nuclear missile) poised above this movie theatre we call reality, and a Preterite song offered as a magical chant against Election. The Rocket, like Weber's "iron cage," pauses before bestowing its own special gift of grace.

Notes

All citations from these volumes are included in parentheses in the text.

2 All citations from *Gravity's Rainbow* will be from the 1973 Viking edition, and are included in the text in parentheses.

3 Weber, in his examination of religion, extends his definition of charisma to include objects (Cf., II, 399). Obviously, the V-2 can be a charismatic object (as we shall see).


5 Ibid., 53.


8 Slothrop might well be a comic version of the charismatic figure. He has a mission, is followed by assorted agents who consider him not only unique but also a threat, and is recognized, particularly in his Rocketman and pig-hero versions, as an extremely gifted person capable of almost magical feats. Moreover, his eventual fragmentation, his "getting off the wheel" (to borrow a notion from Byron the Bulb), might be the best example of routinization in the novel. Slothrop loses his personality and becomes, perhaps, one of Them like Blicero, Slothrop's disappearing act could be his: "crossing over" into impersonality—even, perhaps; the impersonality of myth.

9 Obviously, Enzian, though he does found his "church" not on a rock, but on a rock-eth, is not just a charismatic figure. Indeed, if we look closely at the nature of the Enzian-Christian conflict and its central problem of successorship, we can see a ritualistic reenactment of the death of the gods and myths, whose appeal was emotional until "explained" by commentators like Robert Graves. It is almost as if Pynohon is saying that the old explanations and
stories are more vital, even as fabrications, than the new ones. That Enzian falls increasingly under the spell of the Rocket, as it moves from being a symbol to becoming part of a defined power structure, is sharply ironic, even tragic.
Pynchon in Watts

David Seed

In 1966 Pynchon made his one excursion into journalism by producing an article on Watts in the aftermath of the August 1965 riots. He wrote the piece partly at the invitation of J. Kirkpatrick Sale, who was then editor of the New York Times Magazine, and partly, in the words of the current culture editor, "from his concern for Watts."¹ Pynchon had known Sale during their Cornell days, when the latter was editor of the Daily Sun.² Pynchon's article, "A Journey Into the Mind of Watts" appeared in the NYT Magazine for June 12, 1966 and was illustrated with photographs showing police cars cruising the area, street scenes, a domino parlour, etc.³ This article has received comparatively little attention in discussions of Pynchon's fiction, rarely getting more than a passing mention. The only two critics who have examined it in some detail--Joseph Slade and William Plater--both agree that it develops themes that are important in the fiction. Slade remains rather uncertain about its journalistic value, describing it on the same page as "a skillful piece of journalism" and "unremarkable."⁴

The article begins with a straightforward factual account of how a negro named Leonard Deadwyler was chased by the police and shot. It is a strategic opening because this event resembles the arrest of Marquette Frye for drunken driving which triggered the 1965 riots.⁵ All the way through the piece Pynchon is raising the possibility of recurrence and so resists any suggestion that the situation has improved. Secondly, the Deadwyler killing introduces one of the main themes of the article--the enormous gap between black and white attitudes. White officials dismisses it as an accident, whereas the blacks of Watts cling to the possibility that it was murder. The Deadwyler incident is really the only part of the article which could be described as straight journalism. From that point onwards, Pynchon gives a broad overview of the situation in Watts and uses a number of literary strategies towards this end.
Firstly, there is the question of perspective. Intermittent details in the Deadwyler narrative suggest that Pynchon is locating his point of view among the blacks; the coroner's verdict of accidental death comes "to no one's surprise." This is confirmed when the individual confrontations between police and blacks take place:

... how very often the cop does approach you with his revolver ready, so that nothing he does with it can then really be accidental; ... how, especially at night, everything can suddenly reduce to a matter of reflexes: your life trembling in the crook of a cop's finger because it is dark. (35)

On one level the "you" applies to any black out on the streets. Pynchon sees no point in trying to individualize events, since they fit into a stereotyped pattern. But also the "you" draws the reader imaginatively into the dramatic predicament of the blacks. This is certainly the main polemical thrust of the article. Writing for the NYT Magazine Pynchon must have had a primarily white readership in mind, and therefore throughout his piece, he exploits perspective to force some kind of awareness of Watts on to the reader. Here the awareness focuses on the immediate threat of shooting. Later Pynchon takes us through the visit an average black youth would make to a welfare office and his search for a job on an average day. The simple device of the pronoun "you" plays a large part in inviting the reader to participate imaginatively in these experiences so as to understand black frustration. Although the article begins predictably with the police, Pynchon moves on to the welfare services and "the white faces of personnel men" with their "uniform glaze of suspicion" (80). Here he inverts a racist perspective (they all look alike) and puns ironically on their uniformity and the fact that they represent the forces of law and order. By contrast with the police, the white middle-class ("the little man") exerts a more sinister threat to the blacks in the sense that opposition to black self-expression might be masked by smiles or smothered by well-meaning attitudes.
Pynchon is concerned above all in this article with stereotyped attitudes; he only glances briefly at particular political faults before he begins to indicate how both sides are locked into patterns of behaviour. The exchanges between police and blacks form a kind of tense ritual which may or may not lead to a shooting. The welfare workers are burdened with an anachronistic faith in social improvement, which is complicated by reflex reactions to nonconformity, violence, etc. In fact the gloomiest and shrewdest insight of Pynchon's article is that both sides react to situations automatically. Behaviour becomes a matter of physical process ("for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction" [82]), so deeply ingrained or dictated by the situation that it scarcely seems available to rational scrutiny. Even the welfare workers are presented as naively urging the young blacks to conform to an essentially white image. This is nothing new in Pynchon's writings. In V., Esther has cosmetic surgery on her nose in order to conform to an advertising stereotype of beauty. It is presented ironically as a pleasingly sexual act of violence against her self, basically an individual act which links Esther to the other self-obsessed members of the Whole Sick Crew. In "A Journey" Pynchon's attention has broadened socially in that he recognizes the political and communal consequences of such stereotyping. At its worst it can cause murder; at the very least it creates an atmosphere of threat.

Pynchon expresses the gap between the blacks and whites as a contrast between reality and illusion. Once again this is a tactic with a political purpose since it de-mystifies Watts—Pynchon is careful to point out that everything there is out in the open—and it introduces two of the most important analogies in the article. As William Plater points out, "A Journey" develops Pynchon's interest in the tour and in colonialism. Partly this involves him in adopting the stance of a guide: "Pynchon deliberately builds his fictional world from the facts and artifacts of his readers' experience. In part, he fulfills the tour guide's responsibility for familiarity, but he also demonstrates the confluence of illusion and reality in form." The very title of the article confirms the analogy with a tour. Watts becomes
Raciotland just as Egypt, Italy, etc. become collectively Baedekerland in V. The difference here is that Pynchon tries to undermine the tourist's detachment by his use of perspective and by insisting on the constant presence of violence. The average white view of Watts is "panoramic" (i.e., again touristic) because it is gained from above, from the Harbor Freeway, and Pynchon invites the reader to make a different kind of actual and imaginative journey, down from the freeway into the streets of Watts. In The Crying of Lot 49 Oedipa Maas makes exactly this kind of journey down from the California freeways and out of the insulation of her car. The fact that she travels by bus and that she now looks under the freeway and not down from it gives her access to the poor and disinheritied of San Francisco. Plater is surely wrong to suggest that the inhabitants of Watts see the police as tourists. Tourism in Pynchon's works regularly shades over into colonialism. This is why he refers to the police as "white forces" (78) and the welfare offices as "the outposts of the establishment" (81). Watts is an area under siege, "a siege of persuasion" (84) which is not entirely metaphorical because it is supported by arms and demands conformity to white images.

Pynchon contrasts one mentality with another and one landscape with another; the two merge, obviously (hence the title). He emphasizes how ordinary, even in a sense how familiar Watts is, with its disused railroad tracks and two storey houses. He uses Watts as a vantage-point from where he can criticize white California, specifically Los Angeles. This place he defamiliarizes as the creation of mass media images:

It is basically a white Scene, and illusion is everywhere in it, from the giant aerospace firms that flourish or retrench at the whims of Robert McNamara, to the "action" everybody mills along the Strip on weekends looking for, unaware that they, and their search which will end, usually, unfulfilled, are the only action in town. (78)

Pynchon does not have the space to develop this suggestion that white California is in the grips of a collective self-mystification. That is taken up and developed in Lot 49, particularly in the sections dealing
with Yoyodyne and the drug scene. The repeated use in "A Journey" of terms like "conditional," "psychosis," "reflex" and "unreality" builds up a cumulative sense that the outside white world is insubstantial, somehow not solid. By contrast, Pynchon insists on the debris of Watts, the bottles which can break and cut a child's foot. As a landscape Watts has all the actuality that Los Angeles lacks, and this impression is created novelistically by a constant stress on things—on rubbish, houses, railroad tracks and so on.

The objects which culminate the references to rubbish are the Watts towers, built by Simon Rodia. As Joseph Slade points out, they are a metaphor of the wasted lives in the black ghetto. At first Pynchon seems to dismiss the towers as a private dream or fantasy of their creator. They might be a landmark, but they are juxtaposed with the nearby railroad tracks where children break more and more bottles: "... Simon Rodia is dead, and now the junk just accumulates" (78). Junk and rubbish form an important theme in Pynchon's fiction whether as an index of dehumanization or, as here, of simple human waste. In an early story, "Low-Lands," a Long Island rubbish dump figures prominently as a fascinating alternative to the monotonous suburbia that surrounds it. In that story Pynchon's treatment of junk is light and playful. In the article's conclusion, however, he returns to junk to examine what possibilities of self-expression it offers to the blacks. So, when he describes an Easter festival held in memory of Simon Rodia, he dismisses the "theatrical and symphonic events" in favor of a kind of art of salvage—the objects left behind from the rioting. These Pynchon describes as "fine, honest rebirths," and he concludes, again novelistically, with an image:

In one corner was this old, busted, hollow TV set with a rabbit-ears antenna on top; inside, where its picture tube should have been, gazing out with scorched wiring threaded like electronic ivy among its crevices and sockets, was a human skull. The name of the piece was "The Late, Late, Late Show." (84)
This image fits Pynchon's purposes so exactly that one wonders whether it ever existed. But that doesn't really matter because, as I have been arguing, his article works basically through rhetoric, and the image is plausible as a conclusion. The object makes an artistic gesture of defiance against one of the instruments of power in the white establishment—television. It both embodies the debris of Watts and at the same time transforms it into a kind of emblem of the time running out. Unlike the art of the mass media, it keeps a firm hold on the reality of things and of death.

Concluding his comments on this article, Plater fleetingly wonders how Pynchon avoided the white fantasy which seems so endemic to California. 11 A journalistic answer to this would be that he found and presented new information, but the only particular event Pynchon describes was over two months old when his article appeared in print. The answer to Plater's question really lies in the article's literary strategies. Pynchon builds up a narrative authority from the plausibility of his rhetoric; it is the cumulative effect of his exploitation of perspective, his use of contrasts, analogies and images. These strategies develop themes introduced in V, and, in their increased social concern, elaborated in Lot 49.

In conclusion, Pynchon's article suffered from a publishing irony which must have struck him when it appeared. Several of its sections jostle advertisements for luggage, wine ("known only to connoisseurs") and an obviously expensive Long Island inn. It is pointedly ironic that a piece of polemic against the white establishment should be placed side by side with expensive products of that establishment. The luggage advertisement invites the buyer to push it ("our compact Airsuitoer") under his seat, whereas two columns across the page the jets hang shining over Watts, "only the ghosts, or possibilities, of airplanes" (78).

The University of Liverpool

Notes

1 Letter from Gerald Walker, August 27, 1981.
2 Pynchon's friendship with Sale is described by Baxter Hathaway in "Hathaway Recalls Cornell Writers of the '50s," The Cornell Daily Sun (May 5, 1978), 31, 38.
3 The article was illustrated by a freelance photographer named Bill Bridges.
8 Plater, 106.
9 Slade, 45.
11 Plater, 109.
The Crying of Lot 49 and "The Shadow"
John Z. Guzlowksi

Early on in Thomas Pynchon's The Crying of Lot 49, the narrator presents a scene that reveals Pierce Inverarity's penchant for playing that mysterious hero of pulps, radio, motion pictures, and comic books and strips: The Shadow. In his best Lamont Cranston voice, Pierce, spurned by his one-time lover, Oedipa Maas, concludes a phone call to her with the ominous warning that she and her husband Mucho can expect "A little visit from the Shadow." Although the Shadow himself neither appears in the novel nor is ever mentioned again, this brief allusion is far from gratuitous. Rather, like the countless other references to pop characters in his novel and Pynchon's V. and Gravity's Rainbow, this allusion to the Shadow enriches the thematic texture of The Crying of Lot 49.

Oedipa's world is clearly a world of ambiguity, of confusion, of mysterious happenings, a world where, as one of the characters says, "Looks don't mean a thing any more" (17). Describing Oedipa's reaction to this world, David Cowart in his Thomas Pynchon: The Art of Allusion writes, "Oedipa is a mental Rapunzel, locked in the epistemological 'tower' of herself, forever unsure that what she perceives coincides with what really is." Her world is indeed a world of unsolved and possibly unsolvable puzzles. The only treasures she garners during her voyage through it are questions: How did Pierce die? Why did he call her? Why did he make her the executor of his will? What is the Trystero conspiracy? Does this conspiracy exist? Why did Dribblette commit suicide? And will Oedipa ever discover who she herself is?

This sense of the complexity and ambiguity of Oedipa's world deepens further when the reader turns from a study of Lot 49 to a study of the actual nature of the Shadow. By comparing himself to the Shadow, Pierce brings into this novel all of the rich ambiguities that surround the Shadow, his powers, his identity, and his creation. Within the traditions of popular culture in which he originated, what the Shadow could actually do in the way of super-powered heroics is as ambiguous as anything in Lot 49. Some-
times, he could cloud men's minds and become invisible; sometimes, he was only able to do the former; sometimes, he could do neither and had to rely on his twin Colt .45's to italicize his commitment to the belief that "the weed of Evil bears bitter fruit." His identity is equally problematic. Although most people still believe that he was really Lamont Cranston, the Shadow had no actual alter ego for a long time; Cranston was simply one mask in his wardrobe. And when the Shadow's real identity was finally revealed, he was said not to be Lamont Cranston, but rather Kent Allard. And despite this revelation, in his latest incarnation in DC-Comics' superb Shadow series, he is once again Mr. Cranston. Finally, the identity of the author of the Shadow pulps is also unclear, a mystery in fact as deep as the mystery of the Trystero. The books were written under the name Maxwell Grant. But Grant, for much of the Shadow's pulp career, was really Walter B. Gibson. But Gibson wasn't always Grant. Sometimes Grant was Theodore Tinsley; other times he was Bruce Elliot; and still other times he was Lester Dent, who sometimes wrote under the name Kenneth Robeson, a name at times shared by writers who called themselves Norman Daniels, Alan Hathaway, and William Bogart.  

Pynchon's use of the Shadow, however, extends beyond Pierce's allusion and the complexities it slips in through the novel's back door. The narrator of **Lot 49** compounds its sense of enveloping uncertainty by using elements associated with the Shadow and his world. Fogs, mists, and shadows permeate the stories in which the Shadow stars, creating a **mise en scène** in which nothing is seen clearly, a milieu in which people and things and landscapes are continually observed through obscuring layers. A typical Shadow story begins, for example, with the following dark, expressionistic, brooding, layered look:

Long Island Sound lay blanketed with a dense, sullen mist. From the shore, the heavy fog appeared as a grimy mass of solid blackness. The scene was one of swirling impenetrable night, for not a gleam of light disturbed the omnipresent darkness.  

Such dense, sullen mists, heavy fogs, and masses of solid blackness also fill the landscape of Lot 49, a California landscape that is far from sunny. When Genghis Cohen telephones Oedipa at one point, the morning is "soaked in rain-light," and a mist rises from the pool outside Oedipa's room (68). When she stops on the slope outside San Narciso to meditate on her experiences, smog hangs all around the horizon while the center of the circle formed by the smog is "painfully bright." This bright center generates a moment of awareness in her, a "religious instant" of revelation. But she breaks off this moment, the narrator states, "as if a cloud had approached the sun or the smog thickened" (13). Later in the novel, she is continually seen in the shadows. After finding the alcoholic sailor huddled in the shadow of his flop house, she comes "into the shadows" (92) and joins him. After leaving him, she walks among shadows and settles "back in the shadow of a column" (96). And in the novel's last scene, after she is seated in the auction room where she may or may not find the answers to her questions, an assistant closes "the heavy door on the lobby windows and the sun" (138). Again, she is in shadow, in the impenetrable night that is the Shadow's realm.

Just as the landscape is layered with obscuring mists, fogs, and shadows, many of Pynchon's characters layer themselves with masks and, thereby, add to the novel's sense of uncertainty. Masking, of course, is central to the Shadow; in his role of crime-fighter, he lives a constant masquerade. Speaking of the Shadow's love of masks, Ron Goulart writes that this character "comes across as the kind of man who would wear a mask even when he's alone in a pitch black room." The characters in Lot 49 would probably also wear masks even when alone. For example, in the forty or so lines in which he (rather, his voice) appears, Pierce Inverarity not only assumes the role of Lamont Cranston, he also disguises himself as a "second secretary at the Transylvanian Consulate," a "comic-NEGRO," a "hostile Pachuco," and a Gestapo officer. Similarly, Oedipa's psychiatrist, Dr. Hilarius, is known to have a whole repertoire of "faces" that he numbers and names. And, interestingly, some of the characters in this novel even take on what
appears to be the long, flowing black cape of the Shadow himself. At one point, the agents of the Trysterope—-a conspiracy responsible for much of the confusion and ambiguity in the novel—-appear garbed in "cloaks like black sails" (118). The relationship between these masked figures and the Shadow is further emphasized by the phrases the narrator uses to describe them and their conspiracy. They are "shadow legatees" (136) of a "shadow-state" (122).

But the master masker in Lot 49 is unquestionably Oedipa herself. As the narrator reveals, she is afraid of going into herself "further down perhaps than she could reach" (3); and when she is faced with the need to confront what lurks in her inner self, she reacts with "near panic" (4). To avoid this panic, she repeatedly creates a mask-like "buffer" (6) between herself and her inner world, and a corresponding buffer between her self and those elements in her environment that might force her to peer into her inner self. Sometimes her disguisings involve little more than the putting on of sunglasses, or the assumption of a pose she recalls from some old movie, or the use of an ID tag given her outside a bar, or the putting on of multiple layers of clothing for a game of Strip Botticelli. At other times, however, her maskings are much more elaborate.

The most pervasive and complex example of this tendency is revealed in Oedipa's obsessive commitment to the discovery of the Trysterope. By assuming the role of She-Who-Searches-for-the-Trysterope, she avoids her inner feelings; she masks herself from herself. For example, when she realizes that all those men who had been closest to her--Mucho, Hilarius, Metzger, and Driblette--are irrevocably separated from her, she does not view the loss as a personal one and, thereby, does not allow it to affect her inner self. Instead, she views the loss only from the perspective of her quest for the Trysterope. She feels no grief, only an increasing sense of this mysterious conspiracy's power to "strip" away from her--for some inexplicable reason--these lovers, helpers, and guides. Whereas the Shadow relied on his masks to discover what evil lurked in the hearts of men, Oedipa relies on her mask-like buffers to avoid discovering what lurks in her heart.
Notes


4 Quoted by Goulart, 47.

5 Goulart, 46.


7 An earlier version of this essay was presented at the Midwest Popular Culture Conference, October, 1981.
The Asymmetry of Life in *Gravity's Rainbow*

Lawrence Daw

Thomas H. Schaub notes that "the experience of ambiguity in the reading of Pynchon is essential." However, this is not necessarily the case for criticism of Pynchon's work. So, when Schaub makes a rather ambiguous statement concerning chemistry in dealing with *Gravity's Rainbow*, I feel that a minor debate about that statement should ensue. It is not that Schaub's statement is grossly in error as it stands, but the ambiguity of his phrasing leaves him open to criticism from the very field he is using to elucidate a pattern in Pynchon's novel.

Schaub's ambiguous statement is:

Chemistry is the basis for molecular pluralism in *Gravity's Rainbow*. In the world of molecules distinctions between animal and mineral life disappear, just as the distinction between "life" and "death" is lost in the process of transmutation that joins them.

When he says "distinctions between animal and mineral life disappear" he should, I think, say: "distinctions between the animal and the mineral worlds can be disregarded at the molecular level"--and this only in the case of the thermodynamic elitists who are seeking to create a corporate City-State in *Gravity's Rainbow*. In addition, a biologist would surely ask: what is "mineral life" anyway? Schaub is too ambiguous here because he fails to take into account the real differences which exist between the animal and mineral worlds (between the organic and the inorganic) at the molecular level. His use of "molecules" is, in fact, indiscriminatory, and a more precise distinction between the molecules which comprise organic things and inorganic things can be sought. I turn to Martin Gardner's *The Ambidextrous Universe* for that purpose.

Throughout his work, Gardner stresses the fact that the main distinction between organic and inorganic molecules lies in the amount of symmetry and asymmetry to be found amongst them. Inorganic substances contain equal, or almost equal, amounts of symmetry and
asymmetry:

Whenever an asymmetric compound is found in nature, not as the result of a living process, it is always found in a racemic form; that is, in an equal mixture of left- and right-handed molecules. The reason is easy to understand. The forces of nature--gravity, inertia, and so on--have no bias for right or left. While the compound is being formed, laws of chance dictate that molecules of each handedness will be formed in equal amounts.3

Yet, due to the properties of Carbon, which is the basis for all organic molecules, this is not the case for non-mineral substances:

Almost every compound found in living things is a stereo-isomer of single-handedness that twists polarized light in one direction or another.4

In fact, if amino acids, the subunits of the proteins which comprise all living things, are created artificially, not made by another living organism, they do not exhibit the characteristics of the amino acids found in living organisms:

There are some twenty different varieties of amino acids, all but one (glycine) with an asymmetry of either right or left form. When an amino acid is synthesized in the laboratory it is a racemic mixture of both types of handedness, but in the proteins of living things (with only a few rare exceptions) it is always left-handed.5

Therefore, Schaub's statement concerning molecules is ambiguous, and the real issue here is: at the molecular level distinctions between animal life and minerals do exist.

The significance of this distinction to Pynchon's Gravity's Rainbow is clear. When he is dealing with the creation of plastic by such corporate giants as Shell, DuPont, and IG Farben, Pynchon is actually showing how organic molecules are converted into inorganic ones. Oil, the source of plastics, is comprised of the residue of simple forms of prehistoric life which have been transformed by geophysical processes.
These metamorphised molecules are further transformed by man into polymers and other hydrocarbons for use in industry. The organic carbon-hydrogen molecule becomes the inorganic hydrogen-carbon molecule of plastic. The corporate scientists are thus, in effect, radically blurring the distinction between life and death as they produce inert, non-biodegradable substances. Yet, although this is the main point here, as Schaub probably intends it, one cannot say that at the molecular level the distinction between the animal and the mineral "disappears."

London, Ontario

Notes

2 Schaub, 97.
4 Gardner, 110.
5 Gardner, 111.
Pynchon Anthologized

Bernard Duyfhuizen


Teaching Pynchon is an interesting business; graduate students often welcome the opportunity to wander in another literary labyrinth, while undergraduates react somewhat suspiciously to this strange text that was not sanctioned by the undergrad anthology's all-knowing editor. But Pynchon's writing is beginning to find its way into the anthologies, the latest example being The Crying of Lot 49 in David H. Richter's Forms of the Novella. What will insure this anthology's adoption by many Introduction to Fiction teachers is the blend of standard and not-so-standard novellas offered in addition to Lot 49: Gogol's The Overcoat, Melville's Billy Budd, James's The Aspern Papers, Chopin's The Awakening, Conrad's Heart of Darkness, Joyce's The Dead, Kafka's The Metamorphosis, Lawrence's St. Mawr, and Porter's Pale Horse, Pale Rider.

Richter opens the anthology with a twenty-six page Introduction (each writer and work also receives a three-to-six page introduction), outlining general principles for the formal study of narrative. This Introduction has a distinct Aristotelian flavor, as Richter follows some of his former mentors at the University of Chicago in presenting an adapted version of the Poetics. Richter tries to cover a lot of ground in presenting analytic principles, and for the most part his presentation is a coherent capsule of narrative theory. Too often, however, Richter seems to have forgotten the intended audience of his book—the undergraduate; indeed, Richter's "implied reader" appears to be the instructor who is conversant with the many different "novels" cited as representative of formal properties. For example, how many sophomores today could relate to the following: "In plots of this kind [where the fate of the protagonist is defined in terms of a change in consciousness], the focus of our concern may be on the protagonist's
developing capacity for making mature moral decisions (as in Dickens's Great Expectations) or, conversely, on his or her ethical degeneration (as in André Gide's The Immoralist)" (7-8).

This example would perhaps have worked if The Immoralist had been included in the collection, but as is the case with many of Richter's other examples, the reference is to a text outside the student's immediate frame of reference. Richter's Introduction would have been stronger pedagogically if he had drawn more exclusively on his own anthology for references. Moreover, Richter ignores many current theories of narrative which have built upon, superseded, and sometimes contradicted the formulations of the Chicago School. Most notable by its absence is any mention of reader-oriented approaches to narrative, particularly Wolfgang Iser's important inversions of Wayne C. Booth's categories of the narrator, which Richter relies upon heavily. On the other hand, many might find Richter's narrow focus a good foundation for generating analytical disputes in the classroom. Thankfully, the novellas are not burdened down with the baggage of "Suggestions for Papers or Discussion."

The Crying of Lot 49 is mentioned three times in the Introduction, twice in interpretive examples of formal devices: "Some authors [Pynchon in Lot 49 specifically] keep all the characters more or less remote from us, maintaining an aesthetic distance that keep [sic] the agents on a 'storybook' level and defeats our desire to 'identify with' the author's creations" (16); "And overreading [in search of symbols] can have its dangers: Oedipa Maas, the heroine of The Crying of Lot 49, is a cautionary example—a woman who sees symbolic significance in so many places that she wonders whether the world is a hieroglyph to be deciphered—or whether she herself is crazy. It is a thought that has occurred to more than one possessed seeker after meanings" (20-21). If the latter statement is true, then it contradicts the former by postulating a group of readers, and especially fanatic readers of Pynchon, who could easily "identify with" Oedipa. In the third comment on the novel, Richter suggests one way his collection can be used: he groups Lot 49 with Heart of Darkness, Odysseus's descent into Hades, Dante's Inferno, and the
Egyptian Book of the Dead among other stories depicting "the archetypal night journey from life through death to a new rebirth" (25). As mentioned earlier, Richter could have used the anthologized texts more frequently as examples of the narrative principles he discusses, and Lot 49 could have easily been cited as an example of "depiction of the writer's milieu," "Irony," "Scene vs. Summary," and the narrator's "Privilege" among other devices.

Richter's specific introduction to Lot 49 presents what little is known of Pynchon's life, as well as short précis of V., Lot 49, and Gravity's Rainbow. Readers familiar with Pynchon's writing should not expect startling insights in this four-page essay, or much information in the one-page bibliography covering all of Pynchon's production plus some of the standard secondary materials, but a few errors need correction. Richter dates V.'s history from 1901; however, her first appearance is during the Fashoda incident of 1898. The discussion of V. also neglects Benny Profane. In the bibliography of secondary materials David Cowart's Thomas Pynchon: The Art of Allusion has been left out of the general criticism, and Tony Tanner's and Frank Kermode's important essays on Lot 49 have not been singled out for special consideration among the criticism devoted to the novel.

Another special aspect of Richter's edition of Lot 49 is the addition of forty-four annotations explaining "proper names, foreign phrases, and technical terms not found in college dictionaries" (vii). However, it is not to be assumed that this is an exhaustive critical text, and some of the annotations will be trivial to most readers. For example, note 1 identifies Jay Gould--"U.S. financier and speculator (1836-1892), known for his 1869 attempt to corner the gold market, which caused a nationwide panic"--who should be familiar to any student who made it through high school American History, and who is possibly more familiar than Bartók, mentioned eight words before in the text; and note 2 informs the reader what Wendell ("Mucho") Maas's name means in Spanish. But it might be here that Richter has adequately analyzed his target audience, students. Lot 49 is a text saturated with early sixties culture, and some references--such as to Remedios Varo (here Cowart's work is essential),
Stockhausen, eschatology, a yucateco, and Biedermeyer furniture—need notation for some students. Moreover, since Richter’s purpose was not to produce a scholarly, critical edition, teachers of *Lot 49* will still have to depend on their own crowded marginalia to unlock some of the intricacies of Pynchon’s text.

Finally, Pynchonian readers will appreciate the "Note on the Type" found on the last page of *Forms of the Novella*: "The text of this book was set in Palatino, a typeface designed by the noted German Typographer Hermann Zapf"; as far as I know, any connection between this book and Zapf’s *Used Books* has yet to be proved.

The University of Tulsa
Notes

Meeting of the MLA Division on Literature and Science, 1982 Convention in Los Angeles

Topic: The Impact of Science and Technology on Language, Style, and Structure in the Work of Thomas Pynchon

Presiding: Joseph W. Slade
Communications Center
Long Island University
Brooklyn, NY 11201

Participants and Papers:

Dwight Eddins, University of Alabama at University, Alabama
Topic: Paradigms Reclaimed: The Language of Science in *Gravity's Rainbow*

N. Katherine Hayles, Dartmouth College, Hanover, New Hampshire.
Topic: Cosmology and the Point of (No) Return in *Gravity's Rainbow*

Molly Hite, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York
Topic: Pynchon's Center of Gravity

Richard Pearce, Wheaton College, Norton, Massachusetts
Topic: Pynchon's Fields of Force: Continuities, Discontinuities, and Closures

Papers can be obtained in advance from Prof. Slade in late October.

... 

John Z. Guzowski and Lynn DeVore regret to announce that plans for the journal, *Pynchon Studies*, have had to be dropped.
Bibliography

We would like to remind our readers that they are invited to contribute bibliographic information about bibliographies, dissertations, books, chapters, essays, articles, reviews, interviews, translations, newspaper and magazine stories, fragments, oddments, stray comments, conference papers, and anything else of the sort which seems significant, interesting, or otherwise valuable and worthy of wider publicity with specific reference to Pynchon. We also welcome news of work in progress, circulating manuscripts, and forthcoming works.

WORKS BY PYNCHON:


CRITICISM AND COMMENT:


"Books to Read While the Grass Grows Green." Saturday Review, 16 Apr. 1966, 33.

Mentions Lot 49.


Comments on Pynchon are repetitive and derivative. Quoting David Lodge, Brooke-Rose calls Pynchon's works "texts that cannot be unraveled, labyrinths without exit;" similarly, GR
"relentlessly, grotesquely" and "to excess" pursues the implications of the rocket/phallus analogy. Quotes Mas'ud Zavarzadeh on GR's "non-totalizing sensibility." Using Melvin New, V. and GR "are vast quests for meaning in a man-centered world where the multiplicity of interpretive systems make it impossible to envisage a whole form of which the fragments would be parts." "The novels of Pynchon are positively and even heavily rigid on the syntagmatic axis, and only the obscurity of the symbolic search gives them a sort of paradigmatic freedom." Compares Pynchon with Robbe-Grillet, Sukenick, and Delaney.


Crowell, Douglas Edward. "'When You See Someone's Head Entirely Bandaged, You Know He Is Evil': Reading Miss Lonelyhearts, The Dead Father, Lost in the Funhouse, and Gravity's Rainbow." DAI, 42 (1982), 3998A (SUNY/Buffalo).


Lists and one-liners: e.g., "Pynchon people are lines of force."

Fleischman, Louisa, and Burt Weinshanker. "Pynchon Enters the Zone, or: Almost Lost in Translation?" Rev. of Ordnung und Entropie. Zum Romanwerk von Thomas Pynchon, ed. by Heinz Ickstadt. Pynchon Notes, 8 (1982), 54-60.


Brief comments on Lot 49, compared especially with Sister Carrie.


"The act of reading Pynchon's fiction extends to that of reading the author, for the difficulties of the fiction, the dazzling and multiple incompleteness of its substance, sends us on toward the source of the power, on to a more final intelligibility, to the fuller knowledge of it that we suppose its author must have. And our difficulty in finding that author -- his own personal elusiveness -- is a perfect match for the visual resistance of his fiction. . . . Pynchon is the most visual, and so the most realistic, novelist we have."


Hite, Molly. "'Holy-Center-Approaching' in the Novels of Thomas Pynchon." Journal of Narrative Technique, 12, No. 2 (1982), 121-29.


Mentions V. and Lot 49 as reflexive novels.


Mesh, David R. "Pynchon and Nabokov's V."

Pynchon Notes, 8 (1982), 43-46.


familiar seduction plot underlie the novel [Lot 49], Pynchon uses these myths primarily to explore the implications of American culture's refusal of the fall; he is only secondarily concerned with the female experience."


   Investment advice; V. and GR priced.

"SR Recommends." Saturday Review, 7 May 1966, 86.
   Lists Lot 49.


   
   ... as Pynchon's monumental collages surely demonstrate, the result of cutting and pasting, far from being a mere exercise in arrangement, becomes, as does fiction in all times and places that finds its own formal ways to its own vision, a way of knowing." 
   
   . . . ideology may mean something in the case of Pynchon; but if it does, that peculiar entropic vision of the world seems not at all shared, at least in its particulars, by anybody else [in postrealist fiction--namely Barth, Coover, Elkin, Gass, and Barthelme]."


"I love Pynchon. I adore Pynchon. Pynchon calls me from time to time. Every time he calls me he gets me in trouble. . . . His mythos aside, I admire his work enormously."

Contributors

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