PYNCHON NOTES

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Of Models, Muddles, and Middles:
Menippean Satire and Pynchon's V.
Theodore D. Kharpertian 3

Realizing Gravity's Fantasy
Beverly Lyon Clark 15

Letter to Richard Pearce in Response to
"Pynchon's Endings"
Laurence Rosenheim 35

Richard Pearce Replies 51

"Spot this Mumbo Jumbo": Thomas
Pynchon's Emblems for American Culture
in "Mortality and Mercy in Vienna"
Claire M. Tylee 52

The Clock as Metaphor in
"Mondaugen's Story"
Jimmie E. Cain, Jr. 73

The Crying of Lot 49: A Source Study
Adrian Emily Richwell 78

Further Further Notes and Sources . . .
Steven Weisenburger 81

Coincidental and Contrived Dates in
Gravity's Rainbow
William E. McCarron 84

Notes 86

Bibliography (--1986) 88

Contributors 106
Of Models, Muddles, and Middles: Menippean Satire and Pynchon's V.

Theodore D. Kharpertian

That V., The Crying of Lot 49, and Gravity's Rainbow contain satire, few sensible Pynchon critics deny; that these fictions are satires, few dare to assert, for to do so would require the development of a useful methodological model of a genre whose theoretical and practical slipperiness is a matter of historical fact and critical embarrassment. Worse yet, to propose that Pynchon's texts are satires might also entail the corollary that Pynchon is a satirist, an uncomfortably singular and tropological assertion about this writer. For Pynchon has created such polymorphous fictions that a unitary generic identification would seem to be an exercise in Procrustean folly; furthermore, these fictions are too narratively unstable to justify the critical claim of moral superiority conventionally associated with satire. (Since the genre's inception, the satirist has been viewed as speaking from a privileged moral position.) Yet Pynchon's fictions are indeed satires—Menippean satires—and Pynchon is therefore, first and foremost, a satirist.

Such an unequivocal declaration may seem to run counter to the most successful modern critical approaches to Pynchon (especially, for example, the decentering absences of deconstruction), but the opposition is, I think, a spurious one. In this essay, I hope to demonstrate that the conventional model of satire is mistakenly restrictive and that an expanded model can be more adequately applied to Pynchon's V. The problem of genre is, after all, more than trivial. A death in detective fiction, for example, evokes one kind of reading, but a similar event in tragedy evokes quite another. It is, in sum, one thing to read Pynchon's fictions as "novels" (however deformed their representations); it is quite another to read them as "satires," in which these deformations serve not as mimetic metonymy but as functional metaphor.
While many critics have applied the term "satire" casually to Pynchon's texts, there are four whose more rigorous work in this area is pioneering and significant: MacAdam,¹ Seidel,² Morgan,³ and Braha.⁴ MacAdam and Seidel concentrate respectively on The Crying of Lot 49 and Gravity's Rainbow but do not mention the satires' Menippean form. Morgan and Braha do acknowledge and explore the Menippean form, focusing their attention primarily on Gravity's Rainbow. Both the latter rely on Frye's notable delineation of the form in Anatomy of Criticism,⁵ Morgan exclusively and Braha in conjunction with Bakhtin's conception in Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics.⁶

In the Western literary tradition, the protean nature of the term "satire" is exceeded most probably only by that of the term "irony." The OED defines "satire" as "[a] poem, or in modern use sometimes a prose composition, in which prevailing vices or follies are held up to ridicule," and Webster's Third New International Dictionary defines it as "a usu[ally] topical literary composition holding up human or individual vices, folly, abuses, or shortcomings to censure by means of ridicule, derision, burlesque, irony, or other method sometimes with an intent to bring about improvement." These are seemingly adequate definitions,⁷ but "satire" has had a tortuous denotive genealogy, which such lexicons relegate of necessity to prefatory notes and capsule etymologies.

"Satire" derives, of course, from the Latin "satura," which itself underwent a denotive shift in its substantive form "satur" from "fullness" to "miscellany." In poetry, Ennius (239-169 BC) first used the term "satura" as the title of poems miscellaneous in both metrical form and content.⁸ Lucilius (180-102 BC) subsequently added personal polemicism, a technique possibly derived from Aristophanes (although it may have had roots in Greek iambics), and in his later period introduced a consistent hexameter form. Thus Horace (65-8 BC) called Ennius satire's auctor, Lucilius its inuentor.⁹ Varro (116-27 BC) mixed prose and verse, a method likely originating in the works of the Greek writer Menippus (c. 3rd cent. BC), but Quintilian (c. AD 30-96) proclaimed, "Satura
... tota nostra est."\(^{10}\) The notion that satire was exclusively Roman poses a problem if "satire" and "satura" are collapsed; that is, since Quintilian was aware of Greek "satire," such a declaration seems presumptuous at worst, contradictory at best. Nevertheless, in one sense, Quintilian was correct, for there was no Greek "satire" as such. Aristotle, for example, theorizes only that comedy originated with the authors of the phallic songs, evolving in early antiquity both from dramatizations of the ludicrous, first attempted by Homer in Margites, and from lampoons in iambic measure.\(^{11}\) Thus Quintilian was likely referring to a Roman verse form, not "satire" in our modern sense.\(^{12}\) By the time "satire" entered English during the Renaissance, an intervening body of post-Classical criticism had confused the origin of "satire" with the Greek "satyros" and thereby sanctioned the Renaissance notion of satire more or less exclusively as a rude reproval of folly.\(^{13}\) Only Casaubon and Dryden, a transmitter of Casaubon's scholarship, rectified the etymological error.\(^{14}\) Moreover, because of a declaration by Horace, post-Classical and Renaissance theories of the origin of "satire" mistakenly linked it genetically to Greek Old Comedy.\(^{15}\) Modern scholars, however, regard poetic "satura" as possibly having derived from the protodramatic, native Roman "saturae," which were plotless shows in a vaudevillian style, or more likely having developed from impulses similar to those that generated dramatic saturae.\(^{16}\)

In all of these poetic and critical writings, little is written about Menippus or Menippean satire. Quintilian ignores him utterly, declaring that Varro wrote merely an "older type" of satire, an elliptical statement that might even refer to Ennian satire. Dryden, again following Casaubon, dismisses Menippus as a writer only of dialogues and epistles, not satires, and proposes that Varro's acknowledgment of his own satires as Menippean was instead a matter of style, manner, and facetiousness. (Dryden had delimited satire, in the modern manner, to curse or invective with a reformatory function.)

Since only titles and fragments remain of Menippus' own writings, we must rely for evidence on these and
on his ancient commentators, who confirm his mixing of prose and varied meters of verse but disagree on the degree of seriousness in his works. In any case, he seems to have been the originator of spoudogeloion, the seriocomic form. A Cynic, Menippus concentrated his seriocomic efforts on ridiculing more established Greek philosophical schools like Epicureanism and Stoicism. In addition to mixing prose and verse, a technique probably derived from Cynic diatribe, he parodied learned genres like the symposium, epistle, and dialogue.

Varro expanded Menippean subject matter from philosophical presumption to social folly, and Lucian (b. c. AD 120), like Varro a self-acknowledged Menippean, served as the chief source of Menippean influence in the Renaissance, through a modern tradition initiated by Erasmus and continuing with, among others, Rabelais, Swift, and Voltaire.

While modern scholars tend either to analyze satire's form as both an attack and a vision of comic fantasy or to disassemble it into its rhetorical techniques, it is of signal importance that, since the Renaissance, the general conception of satire has excluded the genre's etymologically signified and historically practiced formal convention of variety. Clearly this exclusion came about in part because of the narrowing of the critical sense of "satire" to the mistaken etymology derived from "satyros." Satire, however, had always been a "low" kind (perhaps even more so before the Renaissance), subordinate to both tragedy and epic (and later to the novel and lyric). Its very lack of unity and decorum contributed to its marginal status, and Renaissance scholars' misguided inflation of the Aristotelian notion of unity likely helped to create a critical atmosphere further privileging genres that were in principle unified and decorous. (Dryden, however, acts somewhat as a compromiser: he is willing to allow the genre's diversity but demands primarily, nevertheless, a unity of subject matter.)

In order to correct this exclusion, we may claim justifiably that satire's elemental formal conventions are the curse (or, more generally, attack) and
variety. The first is realized by means of rhetorical
techniques and is evidenced largely in abbreviated
forms like the epigram, and the latter is manifested
principally as structural parody of other genres. The
emphasis of Menippean satire on parodistic variety
requires, therefore, a radical juxtaposition of dif-
ferent forms; and the comic and fantastic in parti-
cular, forms of the ordinary and the extraordinary
originating in Aristophanic Old Comedy, provide two
additional formal elements of satire's variety that
serve, inter alia, the following primary functions:
the comic moderates the negativism of the curse,
making the latter more acceptable, and the fantastic,
like the curse, provides a vehicle and form for the
satire's aggressive impulses.

Thus, in V., Pynchon's "plot," a comic and fan-
tastic distortion of conventional plot, parodies the
picaresque and the quest romance respectively in the
Profane and Stencil narratives and by means of these
parodies ridicules their totalizing absolutes of
disorder and order as well as the passivity and
violence of twentieth-century life. In The Crying of
Lot 49, Pynchon's "plot" parodies the detective form,
and the resulting eccentric narrative is informed by
a bitter denunciation of modern America. In Gravity's
Rainbow, Pynchon's attack extends to the institutional
pathologies of order in Western civilization from the
time of the Renaissance, and the fiction, replete with
structural and local parodies, is itself a parody of
order.

Let us attempt to apply the proposed model in more
detail to V. Like verse satire, Menippean satire
attacks by rhetorical means. In V., the dominant
narrative tone is dispassionate, but parodies, ironies,
sarcasms, and invectives serve to establish the ver-
tical perspective of the satire's curse. Folly is
represented in the text by the "inanimate," and this
representation takes three basic forms: first, pro-
tagonist Benny Profane's passivity (ridiculed in the
text as "yo-yoing" and "schlemihlhood"), which
accords him the status of reified object and functions
to attack American decadence; second, Herbert
Stencil's own escape from personality into the reifi-
cation of an impersonal quest, a satiric parody of Modernist aesthetics; and third, the incorporation of inorganic matter by V. (and others), a satire by the disabling imagery of grotesque fantasy of European decadence and violence. These three areas of representation constitute the central signifiers of the attack in V.

Menippean satire's second formal convention, variety, is manifested in the text's comedy, fantasy, and structural parody. In V., as in Pynchon's subsequent fiction, comedy takes two principal forms, paronomasia and farce. Pynchon's paronomasia, an employment of mock-significant onomastics, continues a basic tradition of poetic, dramatic, and narrative satire. Names such as Profane and Stencil have an obvious kind of denotative or referential significance; others such as Charisma have ironic significance; in certain instances, such as the name Mafia Winsome, for example, the significance is both denotative and ironic; and a fourth category of names, such as those of Porpentine and Bongo-Shaftesbury, exemplifies an inventiveness that serves to entertain and to heighten the text's artifice. The puns in V., such as "he had one foot in the Grave anyway," constitute another form of paronomasia and, like the mock-significant naming of characters, entertain the reader, emphasize textual artifice, and help to develop thematic patterns. Pynchon's second form of comedy, farce, serves comparable purposes. Associated largely with Benny Profane, it entertains as it advances textual themes, in particular that of Profane's "schlemihlhood."

Fantasy takes three basic forms in V.: first, the V. narrative itself, a parodistically historical fantasy composed of four episodes whose correspondence to actual events is an indeterminate mixture of fact and fiction; second, the grotesque, embodied in The Whole Sick Crew, in the episode of Father Fairing's rat parish in the sewers of New York City, and in the depiction of V. as increasingly inanimate; and third, the supernatural, represented in Profane's "conversations" with robots while he works as a night watchman for Anthroresearch Associates, in German engineer Kurt Mondaugen's voyeuristic dreams in South-West
Africa, and in Mehemet's tales of time-travel and of the spirit Mara. These forms of the fantastic entertain and advance rhetorical points in the satire.

The third and principal form of Menippean variety, parody, structures the narrative dualism of present and past into the Profane and V. narratives, parodies, respectively, of the Picaresque and quest romance. In effect, Pynchon parodies novelistic conventions of plot: Profane is more victim than agent of the random action in his narrative, and Stencil's quasi-scholarly, quasi-paranoid obsession with V. yields only an uncertain possibility of a constructed coherence in a V.-centered, conspiratorial, apocalyptic "plot"; moreover, the arrangement of chapters and of tales within chapters parodies chronology, causality, and closure. The text does not endorse Profane's passivity, but the status of Stencil's quest is, finally, ambiguous, revealing Pynchon's ambivalence about the effectiveness of metaphor and paranoia as modes of recognition. Profane's self-effacement without a quest object is ultimately a form of the sterile and functions as a satire on American decadence, but Stencil's self-effacement with a quest object dramatizes by caricature the ridicule only of Stencil and his totalizing method, not necessarily of its function. Despite the text's reflexive subversions of metaphor and plot, Stencil's quest functions to transform his inactivity into activity and may yield, in an unexpected way, a form of coherence.

The picaresque, parodied in the Profane plot, is a form that traditionally has an episodic structure, emphasizing accident and chance, and a protean protagonist whose ethical and emotional vacuity signifies, in the words of Stuart Miller, "a total lack of structure in the world."22 The picaro is typically a rogue of low socio-economic origins. He works little, relying chiefly on his wits to survive, and performs at best menial tasks for others who represent a wide variety of backgrounds, a situation that permits incidental satire of higher socio-economic classes. Although a source (and possibly an object) of satire, the picaro functions chiefly as a knave in a world of knaves. His morality is conventionally an amorality, and his character remains static throughout
the episodic narrative, which tends towards a detailed realism with plain and often indecorous diction.

In many of these respects, the Profane plot is picaresque, and Profane is a picaro. The plot's episodic structure, its emphasis on fortune, and Profane's menial jobs all are conventions of the picaresque. Profane's "inanimateness," however, a form of folly, signifies picaresque parody.

V.'s second structural narrative parody is that of the quest romance of Herbert Stencil, an Englishman who seeks the eponymous V. V. is an ambiguous figure who may be Stencil's mother and who comes to symbolize the paradox of Europe's entropic descent into personal and social inanimateness and its negentropic ascent towards violent apocalypse. Ultimately, V. embodies the two principal properties of fascism, attachment to the "hothouse" of the inanimate past and to the "street" of the violent present; and in "The Confessions of Fausto Maijstral," the scene of her death, ironically the result of an air raid on Valetta by the very forces of violence she encourages and represents, provides the central fantastic image and attack of the satire.23 Almost totally inanimate, she symbolizes the decadence into which Europe has fallen. Thus she serves as both the knavish object of satire and the symbolic vehicle of the satire on European decadence and violence. Like the Profane narrative, then, the V. narrative minimizes the attack and works principally by the dramatic ironies of its parody, fantasy, and comedy, but periodic rhetorical ironies signify the narrator's satiric relation to the material. Moreover, the narrative parody of quest romance serves to satirize the teleological historiography of Stencil's obsession, which, as Stencil himself comes to realize, "add[s] up only to the recurrence of an initial and a few dead objects" (419). Thus as an object of satire as well as its vehicle, Stencil, a type of philosophus gloriosus, occupies an ambiguous position in V.

In this way, Pynchon can have it both ways; that is, he can present a structure of ambivalence and as Molly Hite argues, "take the twentieth century ... and write of its devastations without committing it to a fixed and final destiny."24
The Profane narrative and the V. narrative constitute, then, a binary opposition: as the Profane narrative dramatizes entropy (and ridicules its principal exponent, Profane), so the V. narrative dramatizes the contrary effort at negentropy (and ridicules its principal exponent, Stencil), and the two narratives co-exist within the frame of the text, therefore, in ironic relation to each other. This structural irony, in which the integrity of each element of the binary opposition is subverted and yet each element seems logically to imply the other, forms a closed circuit whose only alternative is neither element but the largely unexplored gap between them. Later, Pynchon uses the phrase "excluded middles" to denote this gap, implying that such oppositions, while logically compelling, constitute inexhaustive categorizations and exclude valid epistemologies. Herein lies the essence of Pynchon's ambivalence, for although "plot" is subject to satiric parody, metaphor receives qualified textual endorsement as it serves throughout V. to bring into the foreground the decadence and violence of early twentieth-century Europe.

In V., the dominant tone of the narrator implies a dispassionate, non-evaluative stance towards the material, but this may also be read as critical Cynic detachment. The common definition of "satire" presupposes the passion of anger mediated by rhetoric: this passion motivates the curse and invective, for example, in which the form of attack is direct and explicit, and sarcasm, in which it is not. However, Pynchon's V. is not "satire" in only this restricted, conventional sense of attack. If we recall that satire denotes also a verse form and that Menippean satire denotes a prose-verse form, then the issue is clarified, for the common definition of "satire" is then seen as reductionistic; certainly (in a trivial sense), the curse and other rhetorical forms of direct attack are present in all satire because satire so defined denotes only the verse forms in which such "satire" is dominant, but in Menippean satire, it is the form of the fiction, not "satire" per se, that dominates the genre. Thus the presence in V. of
parodistic, fantastic, and comic forms constitutes the genre's signature, and the dominant attacks in the verse form, although not necessarily absent, are relegated to a secondary role and function. As Alvin Kernan suggests, in formal verse satire the satirist or his persona is stressed (and thus the mode of direct, personal attack is available), but in Menippean satire the scene or fiction is stressed (and thus the "satire" works by the implications of the narrative forms themselves). Even so, in V. the attack does appear in the narrator's and characters' rhetoric: the narrator's sarcastic remark on the sixty thousand Herero dead and the ridicule of protagonists Profane and Stencil by the narrator, by the characters, and by Profane and Stencil themselves (as well as other incidental "satires") serve to identify and reinforce the narrative stance as "satiric." Most important, the attack of Menippean satire is also necessarily diffused through the forms of variety. Thus, the two parodies that structure V. are forms of satire, ridiculing dullness in Profane, pomposity in the Whole Sick Crew and through them human and artistic sterility, and obsession in Stencil, but also more fundamentally the totalizing extremes of chance and plot.

Ultimately, the particular effect of satirizing Stencil as a fool is to deny textual endorsement to the explanatory order of the V. narrative, yet the contrary mode of disorder is equally unsupported by the textual status of the Profane narrative, its principal embodiment. Thus the irony of these contrary poles compels the reader to reject the contradiction as invalid in toto and to seek "explanations" elsewhere, in the locus of what Bakhtin calls the "joyful relativity" of Menippean satire and what Pynchon himself calls the "excluded middle."

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Notes

7 Literary critics generally agree. See, for example, Sheldon Sacks, "[From] Toward a Grammar of the Types of Fiction," in Satire: Modern Essays in Criticism, ed. Ronald Paulson (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1977), 330-39, in which Sacks defines satire as "works which ridicule particular men, the institutions of men, traits presumed to be in all men, or any combination of the three" (330).
9 Sermones 1. 10. 66; 1. 10. 48.
10 Institutio Oratoria 1. 10. 93.
11 Poetics 4. 7-12.
13 Hendrickson, 49, points out that only "satire" derives from "satura." All variants--sattiric, satirical, satirize, satirist--can be traced, mistakenly, to "satyr." See also Oscar James Campbell, Comicall Satyre and Shakespeare's Troilus and Cressida (San Marino, CA: Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery, 1938), 24-34, for a survey of Renaissance theories of satire.
15 On this muddle, see Campbell, 24-29.
18 Scholars of Menippean satire agree generally that parody is at the root of the genre. See, for example, E. Courtney, "Parody and Literary Allusion in Menippean Satire," Philologus, 106 (1962), 86-100.
19 See Robert E. Golden, "Mass Man and Modernism: Violence in Pynchon's V.," Critique, 14:2 (1972), 5-17, who considers the book a "satire on modernism" (9).
23 See Ronald Paulson, "The Fictions of Satire," in Satire: Modern Essays in Criticism, 340-59, who argues that what is memorable in satire is "a fantastic image, or a series of them" that "represent[s] the characteristic fictions through which the satirist conveys his subject matter: the corruption of an ideal and the behavior of fools, knaves, dupes, and the like" (340).
26 Problems, 107.
Realizing Gravity's Fantasy
Beverly Lyon Clark

In the nineteenth century, fantasy could be relegated to children's books, and within these books to places like Wonderland, enclosed by and subordinate to Reality. But with the increasing relativism and subjectivism of the twentieth century, fantasy has entered the mainstream, in works by Joyce, Kafka, Borges, Nabokov: if there can be no truly objective account of reality, if all accounts are subjective, then dreamland and invented worlds necessarily inform our versions of reality. Thomas Pynchon is one of these fantasy-realists whose work is shaped by such a conviction. And Gravity's Rainbow in particular describes a land where fantasy increasingly interpenetrates reality.\textsuperscript{1} The novel moves from a relatively discrete and discreet indulgence in fantasy, like Lord Blatherard Osmo's fantasy of the Giant Adenoid, to the realm of the postwar Zone, where fantasy has broken the constraints of logic and flowers everywhere, indistinguishable from so-called reality.

Fantasy literature has traditionally incorporated both fantastical and realistic elements, incorporating the realistic as a way of defining the fantastic, by contrast. Fantasy opposes reality, or at least commonly held notions of reality, notions informed by cause and effect and chronology, and the work of fantasy frequently dramatizes this opposition by incorporating the realistic. We may expect that eating a cake will make us larger—but not that it will suddenly make a seven-year-old girl more than nine feet high, as it does for Alice. By the standards of our ordinary world, such an effect of such a cause seems impossible. Fantasy inheres in such seeming impossibilities. And we are reminded of the impossibility by the presence of some remnant of realistic standards—by the presence, for instance, of "real"-world measurements in inches and feet, and above all by the presence of the commonsensical Victorian Alice, who finds her sudden growth and shrinking curioser and curioser. Wonderland seems even more impossible and fantastical when we see Alice reacting to it.
Theorists of fantasy frequently find oppositions in fantasy, whether or not they specifically address the presence of the presumably realistic in the fantasy. E. M. Forster has suggested that fantasy merges "the kingdoms of magic and common sense." Tzvetan Todorov too finds oppositions characteristic of fantasy, tensions between the uncanny and the marvelous, the poetic and the allegoric, while for Eric Rabkin the fantastic inheres in the contradiction of narrative ground rules.

In traditional fantasy fiction, with its contradictions of narrative ground rules, the realistic is present to define the fantastic, not to blend with it. The specification of Alice's varying heights in "real"-world terms--now ten inches high, now more than nine feet high--defines the fantasticality of Wonderland. And "How Doth the Little Crocodile" defines its fantasticality by its divergence from "How Doth the Little Busy Bee." Alice brings "real"-world norms with her to Wonderland, norms that define Wonderland's unreality and help to segregate it from aboveground reality.

The two realms are further segregated by the way in which the "real" world frames the fantasy realm. Alice begins and ends in the "real" world, which is thus the primary world, and the fantasy is just a diversion. And to enter the fantasy realm she must cross a threshold--fall down a rabbit hole and enter a doorway, or walk through a looking-glass. This careful framing not only underscores the boundaries between realms but also subordinates the fantasy. Wonderland is a diversion from serious "reality": it is a realm where a girl-child can play, but even she must return to the "real" world.

Carroll's Alice books are the purest of nineteenth-century fantasies, the most imaginative, the least didactic. Other nineteenth-century fantasists are more intent on teaching us, on leading us to the realm of the spirit, and thus they feel less compulsion to segregate the two realms. For if the fantasy is a metaphor for a spiritual realm, the fantasist wants to invite us to enter and to linger. Thus in George MacDonald's Phantastes the two realms merge invitingly,
the fantasy beckoning the character Anodos, when an ordinary basin is transformed into an overflowing spring and a carpet imitating grass and daisies becomes real grass and daisies; Anodos then enters the realm of the spring, following a footpath through the grass, to make his pilgrim's progress through Fairy Land. Even when Victorian fantasies are less spiritual but simply moralistic, the two realms interpenetrate. In Carroll's own Sylvie books we begin and end in the fantasy realm, and constantly shift between realms. Thus the moral virtues of Sylvie, a much more virtuous girl than Alice, can penetrate into the "real" world. The more didactic nineteenth-century fantasies blur some of the boundaries between fantasy and "reality," but only so that the moral and spiritual gems of the fantasy can enrich our everyday world.

In recent twentieth-century versions of fantasy, fantasy and "reality" interpenetrate even more--and without moral intent. And they interpenetrate not only within individual works but in the literary corpus as a whole: fantasy is no longer relegated to children's literature but has entered the mainstream of serious fiction, in Grendel and Chimera, in Pale Fire and "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius."

Such realms as Nabokov's Zembla and Borges' Tlön seep out of the underground and inundate reality. Instead of sending a "real"-world representative to Wonderland, the fantastical Zembla sends its fantastical Charles Kinbote, apparently mad, to America. Yet we should not dismiss him as a madman but should recognize his genius for flights of the imagination that create their own reality: he may not be a deposed king in exile, but the terrors and loneliness such a king would feel are his terrors, his loneliness. Fantasy invades prosaic reality and becomes a vehicle for what ordinary sanity ignores and hence cannot express. The fantastical Tlön likewise sends representatives: a compass, a metal cone. And finally "reality yielded on more than one account. . . . How could one do other than submit to Tlön, to the minute and vast evidence of an orderly planet?" Here fantasy not only retrieves the hitherto ignored but also starts to structure reality, hinting that our
comfortable structures of reality are really subjective, in their own way fantastical. Fantasy and reality interpenetrate more than we might like to admit.

Pynchon recapitulates the movement from discrete eruptions of fantasy in knock-knock reality to interpenetration of the two. I will be primarily concerned with his movement within Gravity's Rainbow, but his fiction as a whole has likewise tended toward greater interpenetration. His first novel V. contains discrete episodes loosely strung together: the Fashoda crisis, Foppl's siege party, Melanie L'Heuremaudit's decadent Paris. What connects these episodes is Stencil's search for a unifying principle, which may or may not exist in reality. And this narrative strand alternates with the Benny Profane episodes, even less clearly unified, except by the recurrence of characters. The Crying of Lot 49 also portrays the search for a unifying principle, as Oedipa Maas pieces together the clues to the Tristero. Yet, as she recognizes, the Tristero might exist, or she might be imagining that it exists, or its apparent existence could be a hoax, or she could be imagining the hoax. In Gravity's Rainbow no single quest unites episodes. The Anubis, for instance, brings together Tyrone Slothrop, Bianca, Greta Erdmann, Miklos Thanatz, and many more. And the sexual daisy chain on board the Anubis becomes a metaphor for the complex couplings of characters and events in the book as a whole. Yet no single line of connection like that sought by Stencil or Oedipa Maas connects the many strands in Gravity's Rainbow: even Slothrop, who has seemed at times the central character, disappears well before the end of the book. We must no longer think in terms of main plot and subplots, but rather in terms of multiple plots. We must no longer think in terms of episodes like beads on a string, strung together by a questing or picaresque protagonist, but rather in terms of multiple episodes, multiple characters, multiple strings.

And within Gravity's Rainbow fantasy and reality increasingly interpenetrate. To mark the changes in Pynchon's treatment of fantasy here I will examine the
four parts into which he has divided the book, even though the treatment in each part is not entirely distinct--much as the boundaries between fantasy and reality blur.

In the early pages we witness Pirate Prentice and his fantasies--in fact, the book disorients us by opening with one such dream or fantasy. One of Pirate's other fantasies contains a Giant Adenoid, which rampages in a Holmesian London: "...before the flash-powder cameras of the Press, a hideous green pseudopod crawls toward the cordon of troops and suddenly sshhlop! wipes out an entire observation post with a deluge of some disgusting orange mucus in which the unfortunate men are digested--not screaming but actually laughing, enjoying themselves..." So far it seems like a "realistic" fantasy, as it were, one person's imaginings, discrete from knock-knock reality, the stuff of a Grade B horror movie. But actually it's a little more complicated.

For one thing, the fantasy is not Prentice's own. Prentice has a talent "for getting inside the fantasies of others" (12), and the Adenoid fantasy belongs to Lord Blatherard Osmo. No longer is fantasy private. Like our assumptions about everyday reality, it can be shared with another.

For another thing, Prentice has been having these fantasies "outside any condition of known sleep" (13). The fantasy merges with reality as Prentice walks, awake, in the street: "At last, one proper Sherlock Holmes London evening, the unmistakable smell of gas came to Pirate from a dark street lamp, and out of the fog ahead materialized a giant, organlike form" (14). No longer dream or daydream, the Adenoid materializes, in a sentence that first hints at the non-realistic by evoking a literary ambience, the Sherlock Holmes evening, then sshhlops us with what seems a real-world impossibility.

The boundary between fantasy and reality is further eroded through unexpected parallels between the two. Lord Blatherard is eventually "discovered mysteriously suffocated in a bathtub full of tapioca pudding" (16), a fate remarkably like his fantasy ending: assimilation
by the pudding-like Adenoid. Such a fate also resembles our own fate in reading the novel and the fate of the novel's story; for, like the amorphous Adenoid, fantasy assimilates reality, assimilates us—it disorients us and makes us question what we have previously considered reality. Even this early in the book fantasy starts taking over. For is the fantasy much more absurd than the "reality" for which Prentice frees Lord Blatherard, where "spies with foreign hybrid names lurked in all the stations of the Ottoman rump, code messages in a dozen Slavic tongues [. . .] tattooed on bare upper lips over which the operatives then grew mustaches, to be shaved off only by authorized crypto officers and skin then grafted over the messages by the Firms! [sic] plastic surgeons . . ." (16)?

Even Prentice's fantasies, then, refuse to stay solipsized but try to infiltrate the surrounding reality. Or vice versa. Yet we can still identify what is fantasy and what is reality: Prentice's fantasies are still recognizably discrete, as are other fantasies in Part 1. It takes someone on drugs to see "Dispossessed elves run around up on the roof, gibbering" (93). Or else elves are constrained by simile, as when water bugs "emerge like elves from the wainscotting" (173). Later the elves break free of the simile to inhabit the Zone, anarchic postwar Europe, but here in London fantasy is kept, just barely, in check. Part 1 also alludes to the Hansel-and-Gretel story that materializes in the relationship among Katje and Gottfried and the German Captain Blicero, for whom fairy tale structures reality. But in the still largely "realistic" England of Part 1, fairy tale is confined to simile, as the lovers Roger Mexico and Jessica Swanlake try to find refuge from the rocket blitz "spooky as an old northern fairy tale" (54). Or Hansel and Gretel are restrained by appearing in a pantomime to which Roger brings Jessica's nieces. Although even here the pantomime can suggest, metaphorically, parents "leaving their children alone in the forest" (176), the fantasy has not entirely permeated reality.

Part 1 also witnesses Slothrop's fantasy voyage down a toilet at the Roseland Ballroom and through the
sewer, seeking his harmonica, a fantasy that merges with one of a "westwardman." In addition to detailing absurd events, absurd compared to the "real" world of Part 1, the fantasy contains phrases evocative of fantasy, phrases like "a Munchkin voice" (63) and a "sunny Disneyfied look" (70). The fantasy is set off from the rest of the narrative in other ways as well, including the square sprocket holes that separate it from the rest of the text. It also begins with—is initially framed by—the dialogue of people from PISCES psychoanalyzing Slothrop, asking him to talk about Boston; hence what follows is "mere" psychoanalytic fantasy. And before the fantasy voyage are variations of "You never did the Kenosha Kid" with different contexts and punctuation (60-61); the fantasy achieves powerful closure by ending with still another variation (71), thereby safely solipsizing the fantasy and disengaging it from commonsense reality, a solipsism reinforced by the solipsism theme in the westwardman episode.

Part 1 is thus still cousin to the Victorian fantasy and the traditional realistic novel, where fantasy can be explained as a mere dream and subordinated to "reality." Cause and effect and chronology still guide us through the narrative, more or less. Our understanding of causality may be defied on occasion, as when Prentice acquires Lord Blatherard's fantasy. But Part 1 remains relatively realistic, its fantasy more or less contained and explained. This part then becomes a norm within the book, a realistic norm against which more fantastical sequences define themselves.

In Part 2 Slothrop has moved to the Continent, away from the comparative safety of insular England, and fantasy has infiltrated his reality. Slothrop structures reality in terms of fantasy, in terms of movies he has seen (a structuring reinforced by the Firm). He "rescues" Katje Borgesius from an octopus, "the biggest fucking octopus Slothrop has ever seen outside of the movies" (186). Later, in her room, they have a pillow fight and then turn to a seltzer bottle:
The what, The Seltzer Bottle? What shit is this, now? What other interesting props have they thought to plant, and what other American reflexes are they after? Where's those banana cream pies, eh? (197)

The next morning, scrambling up a tree and trying to catch the thief who stole his clothes, Slothrop realizes that the thief and his cohorts "were counting on that damned American reflex all right, bad guy in a chase always heads up—why up? and they sawed the trunk nearly through, a-and now----" (199). The Firm is playing with Slothrop's media-inspired fantasies, reifying them, realizing them, undercutting them.

Another media-inspired fantasy, that of King Kong, also influences the world outside film: "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, whom Mitchell Prettyplace, even, could not anticipate" (275). A film of black rocket troops, inspired by King Kong, appears to have created the "real" Schwarzkommando.

Part 2 also manages to erode some of the apparent reality of Part 1. Investigators cannot locate the women encounters with whom Slothrop commemorated on his map. Did they exist? Did his sexual scores anticipate rocket strikes? Or were the encounters only fantasies? Learning of the findings, "Pointsman avoids the matter—as reflexively as he would any nightmare. Should this one turn out not to be a fantasy but real, well . . ." (272). (Later we learn that Slothrop edited some of the stories he told, changed the names, inserted fantasies [302].)

In general, the war wreaks havoc on pre-existing reality, although in toppling familiar structures it allows nascent structures, such as the Firm's neo-imperialism, to grow and organize the void. Or, more happily, it wrenches Jessica out of her old relationships and allows the fleeting joys of her love affair with Roger, a love that is sanctioned, as it were, by the war and that perishes with it. As the war becomes the War, becomes routinized, and builds its steely
structures of death and duty and austerity, "reconfiguring time and space into its own image" (257), it threatens the fragile budding of love: it "take[s] priority over love, dreams, the spirit, the senses and the other second-class trivia that are found among the idle and mindless hours of the day" (177). Thus the initial disruption by the war allows for new possibilities of growth, which are then mowed down by the impersonal machinery that the War engineers in its routinization. Then, the end of the war again leaves a void, creating a new chaos awaiting structure. The beginning of the postwar period is a time of transition, of what anthropologist Victor W. Turner in The Ritual Process calls liminality, a time when reality needs redefinition and apparent fantasies can become reality, a time of creative possibility.

In Part 3 of Gravity's Rainbow, "In the Zone," in the place and time of greatest transition, fantasy interpenetrates reality even more. This part begins appropriately with an epigraph from the Wizard of Oz, later reinforced by references to Dorothy and the yellow-brick road. The Zone is a fairytale land, inhabited by witches and vampires, dragons and gnomes, elves and trolls, to the extent that "Trolls and dryads play in the open spaces. They were blasted back in May out of bridges, out of trees into liberation, and are now long citified. 'Oh, that drip,' say the subdebb trolls about those who are not as hep, 'he just isn't out-of-the-tree about anything!'" (367). This fairytale land, where "everything's been turned inside out" (373), is no longer distinct from "reality": "here in the Zone categories have been blurred badly" (303). Everything in the Zone is infected by fantasy: even G-5 is "living its fantasy of being the only government in Germany now" (290-91). What the previous sections have hinted at, Part 3 literalizes. Or apparently so. Or we become uncertain of what is real, what is not. For when Slothrop encounters a child after seeing her mechanical toys—an orangutan, a crow—she mysteriously "vaporized from his arms" (283); is the fantasy child real? Or has reality become a fantasy?

The interpenetration of fantasy and reality in the Zone is sufficient to confuse even otherwise astute
critics. Mark Randall Leder, for example, asserts that Franz Pökler has indeed raped the young girl who is brought to him as his daughter. Yet a careful reader sees that he has not. The girl has indeed asked to sleep next to Pökler. And after his ruminations on what her presence might indicate about his importance to Them is a paragraph that describes him hitting her, making love to her, escaping with her to Denmark. Not only is the attempted escape inconsistent with the rest of their actions (they don't find themselves in Denmark or get caught attempting to escape), but the next paragraph begins with a resounding "No. What Pökler did was choose to believe she wanted comfort that night, wanted not to be alone" (421). That is why she wanted to sleep next to him. The rape-and-escape paragraph is thus Pökler's fantasy, inserted into the text with some subtlety.

Yet the fantasy is nonetheless real in another sense. For Pökler has metaphorically committed incest. Although he has not physically raped his putative daughter, he engages in mental intercourse. First, by imagining the rape. Second, by conceiving his daughter, through this girl who claims to be his daughter, more truly than he ever had before: "It was the real moment of conception, in which, years too late, he became her father" (421). Thus Pökler's fantasy becomes metaphorically true; metaphoric fantasy is eroding literal reality.

And Tyrone Slothrop is part of the literal reality being eroded. For he is feeling early glimmerings of anti-paranoia, "where nothing is connected to anything, a condition not many of us can bear for long" (434). If paranoia gave Slothrop an identity, anti-paranoia disperses it. Slothrop himself becomes a fantasy. As Rocketman, he and his exploits have become legendary, "part of the folklore of the Zone" (596).

Slothrop's dispersal continues in Part 4. Fantasy permeates reality. Or vice versa—we wonder which has priority. Like Slothrop's personality, fantasy and reality are "Scattered all over the Zone. It's doubtful if [they] can ever be 'found' again, in the conventional sense of 'positively identified and detained'" (712). And as in the description of the
Rocket-capital, "Outside and Inside [are] interpiercing one another too fast, too finely labyrinthine, for either category to have much hegemony any more" (681). The physical dispersal of Slothrop and of the Rocket-capital echoes the dispersal of linear narrative in the text and the reader's attendant difficulty in distinguishing fantasy from reality.

Part 4 hints that what seemed so clearly fantasy in Part 1, the trip down the Roseland Ballroom toilet, or some elements of that trip, might have been "real," real at least in terms of Part 4. Slothrop finds the harmonica "he lost in 1938 or -9 down the toilet at the Roseland Ballroom" (623). And there is reference to "the men's toilet at the Roseland Ballroom, the place Slothrop departed from on his trip down the toilet, as revealed in the St. Veronica Papers (preserved, mysteriously, from that hospital's great holocaust)" (688). Perhaps writing something down makes it real. Perhaps imagining it gives it reality. Or perhaps reality has become a fantasy. Part 1's distinctions between reality and fantasy have broken down. Against the realistic norm established in Part 1, Part 4 defines itself as fantasy and redefines fantasy as reality.

A representative section of Part 4, a section where fantasy and reality become almost inextricably intertwined, starts with the story of the Floundering Four and continues with a series of twelve brief titled passages, from "The Low-Frequency Listener" to "Some Characteristics of Impolex G." Like the Roseland Ballroom and westwardman section, this one is set off from the rest of the text by square sprocket holes. It begins as if chronicling more of the "reality" of the Zone, describing the scenery: "Unexpectedly, this country is pleasant, yes, once inside it, quite pleasant after all" (674). Yet soon we realize that this country" is populated by fantasy characters, a peculiarly alliterative trio: Myrtle Miraculous, Maximilian, Marcel. Further, still on the first page, a father tries to kill his son in "episode after episode," as if what follows were merely a performance, a berserk Father Knows Best. Later we are repeatedly reminded that we are witnessing a performance, with
its "familiar music-box theme" (675), its proposed "chase-scene" (676), and people craning "to see if a new episode's come on yet" (680). The style is at times more like that of a fairy tale than like that customary in Slothrop's "real" world, for he is described as "a cheerful and a plucky enough lad."

Or the style suggests science fiction, "full of extrapolated 1930s swoop-facaded and balconied skyscrapers" (674). Punctuating the episode are alliterative pairs, helpfully capitalized, signals of inventive fantasy: Paternal Peril, Mary Marvel, Wonder Woman, Fatal Flaw, Golden Gate, Brooklyn Bridge, Rolls Royces, Pernicious Pop, Sniveling Slothrop, Transvestites' Toilet. The episode tries to shape itself as a fantasy set off from the "real" world of the book, like one of Prentice's fantasies.

Yet this Floundering Four fantasy is repeatedly punctured by digressions, violating its self-containment—even before the twelve titled sections. There is a digression to the Puritans' glozing neuters; then Slothrop's trip into Iceboxland; then, most damaging of all to the integrity of the fantasy, a digression to the audience, accompanied by the recognition that this "struggle is not the only, or even the ultimate one. Indeed, not only are there many other struggles, but there are also spectators" (679). This digression is actually a leap out of the frame of the story, a leap that reminds us that the fantasy is mere fiction, the Floundering Four and their escapades merely a performance. Yet Marcel shows up among the spectators, he and the others "infiltrating their own audience." Marcel has transgressed the boundary between performance and audience, blurring the boundary between fantasy and "reality." The narrator does try to naturalize this intrusion, does try to pretend that the audience is not watching the Floundering Four but other spectacles: "It's somebody else's audience at the moment, and these nightly spectacles are an appreciable part of the darkside-hours life of the Rocket-capital" (680). Yet what does the narrator mean by "at the moment"? Does the audience shift its focus of attention? Is it sometimes the focus of attention itself? Furthermore, there are disorienting implications for the audience outside the book. For
the internal audience is our surrogate, watching scenes in the book. And if it is on the same plane as the Floundering Four, do we become equivalent too? Do we become as fictional, as fantastical, as Marcel and company?

Further complicating the incestuous relations between fantasy and reality is the appearance of the series of brief titled passages, as if each describes a performance in the "nonstop revue" (681) on the Rocket-City stage. They turn out to be, or at least the first five turn out to be, glimpses of what we have hitherto considered the novel's real world: Slothrop encountering the keeper of a communications antenna in Magdeburg, his mother's letter to Ambassador Kennedy to ask for news of Slothrop, Säure Bummer questioning Slothrop about "ass-backwards," then "Shit from Shinola." Instead of enclosing a subordinate fantasy, the real world would seem to become subordinate and enclosed within a fantasy. Even our own real world outside the book becomes part of the Rocket-City revue: the discussion of Shit 'n' Shinola flashes back to the Roseland Ballroom, where a young Jack Kennedy and a young Malcolm X might have met, and a narrative voice belonging not to Slothrop but to someone who weathered the 1960's tells us, "Eventually Jack and Malcolm both got murdered" (688).12 The levels of fantasy and reality interpenetrate, so that a "realistic"-seeming episode, incorporating a snippet of our own reality outside the book, appears as a performance within the chronicle of the fantastical adventures of the Floundering Four.

The next titled passage, the sixth, continues the Floundering Four fantasy, picking up Slothrop where we had left him—in the Transvestites' Toilet. Then comes "A Moment of Fun with Takeshi and Ichizo, the Komical Kamikazes," with characters inspired by a book belonging to one of the Floundering Four: The Wisdom of the Great Kamikaze Pilots. The Kamikazes are a fantasy within a fantasy, with their own alliterative pairs, Scatterbrained Suicidekicks and Nonsensical Nips, and are eventually explained (in part) as part of a movie, which in turn seems to be part of a game show. Yet since this section is one of the titled
passages, like the earlier passages that are presumably glimpses of the real world (such as the one entitled "Mom Slothrop's Letter to Ambassador Kennedy"), fantasy and reality are in some sense equated. Much as the reality of this section is undermined by a sudden excursion into the audience—"Well, Captain—yes you, Marine Captain Esberg from Pasadena—you, have just had, the Mystery Insight! (gasps and a burst of premonitory applause)" (691)—and by the revelation that Takeshi and Ichizo are in a game show movie, so too the mere existence of this fantastical section starts undermining the apparent reality of the preceding sections.

A later titled episode, the ninth, likewise shows a complex intermingling of fantasy and reality. "Listening to the Toilet," an echo of the earlier toilet fantasy, starts by demonstrating how "you are trapped inside Their frame" (694), for They can cut off the water to your toilet. They engineer, in other words, our versions of "reality." Another way in which They may trap is with the concept that sound does not travel through space. Suppose, though, that it does. Suppose that there is "a medium [. . .], what used to be called an 'aether,' which can carry sound to every part of the Earth" (695). Suppose that the sun makes a steady roaring that we wouldn't know about unless it changed. Pockets of no-sound, where the roaring stops, could shadow stray corners of the earth, enveloping the Sentimental Surrealist, the Kenosha Kid (more fantastical alliterative pairs and an allusion to the frame of the Roseland Ballroom fantasy). Such a sound-shadow could bring with it "bits of sound-debris," including some Japanese, the slogan of an Ohka outfit—and we are back with the Kamikazes. That presumed fantasy acquires substance in this one. And this fantasy is in fact preferable to Their reality, "better than cringing the rest of your life under the great Vacuum in the sky they have taught you, and a sun whose silence you never get to hear" (697). This hypothetical fantasy raises questions about reality: "What if there is no Vacuum? Or if there is--what if They're using it on you? What if They find it convenient to preach an island of life surrounded by a void? Not just the Earth in space,
but your own individual life in time? What if it's in Their interest to have you believing that?" (697).
What if, in short, our so-called reality is simply a fantasy They have authorized? Pynchon here undermines our faith in Their authoritative reality--and, analogously, in his own. He portentously intones the names of American towns (Apalachicola, Florida; Phillipsburg, Kansas), a Roll of Honor, it seems, commemorating "the towns of the war dead"--only to turn on his own pontificating: "Well, you're wrong, champ--these happen to be towns all located on the borders of Time Zones, is all. Ha, ha! Caught you with your hand in your pants! [. . .] There's nothing so loathsome as a sentimental surrealist" (695-96).

The next titled passage, "Witty Repartee," demonstrates another facet of Pynchon's interweaving of fantasy and reality: his penchant for straying into the fantasy-land of digression. This section starts with an interchange between Takeshi and Ichizo, itself perhaps a digression from the preceding section, where a Kamikaze slogan makes a cameo appearance. Then in the midst of one sentence we switch from a melted Hotchkiss in the home of James Jello to Hotchkisses trained on Crown Prince Porfirio, or perhaps on his attackers (this uncertainty itself undermining the stability of presumed reality). The switch in the sentence is effected by literalizing a metaphoric king: Jello is "that year's king of Bohemian clowns--but a minor king, from a branch prone to those loathsome inbred diseases, idiocy in the family, sexual peculiarities" (698). In his comic exuberance the narrator leaps from the temporary "that year's king" to hereditary royalty like Crown Prince Porfirio, thus digressing into the realm of the metaphoric "king" and literalizing it. After a long parenthesis we return to James Jello, as if to work our way back up through the layers of digression to the level of textual "reality," back to the Kamikazes, back to . . . But we stop with the aptly named Jello, a solid without solidity. We do not work back through all the layers to--to what? What reality is there to work back to?

The next passage, "Heart-to-Heart, Man-to-Man," comments on this aborted process: Pop and Son discuss how Pop used to turn on to dope on "vacations;" but
always returned to Realityland, like Alice straying into Wonderland and back again, yet Son Tyrone thinks of "screwing in" and not returning: "A-and who sez it's a dream, huh? M-maybe it exists" (699). Just as the Jello digression does not return to the level of textual reality, Son contemplates turning on and not returning to Realityland—and something like that is what Slothrop does in the course of the novel, what Blicero attempts in firing his rocket, and what the novel itself does as it immerses itself more and more in so-called fantasy, which becomes more and more real.

The Pop and Son section also brings some hints of closure to the series of titled passages from "The Low-Frequency Listener" through "Heart-to-Heart, Man-to-Man," by returning to Pernicious Pop, with whom the initial Floundering Four section began. Yet the closure is nowhere near as complete as the Kenosha-Kid framing of the trip down the toilet in Part 1. For one thing, there is no direct reference to the Floundering Four but only a recurrence of Pop (not especially Pernicious here) and Son. And their interchange is only the penultimate titled passage of the section. The last is a disquisition on Imipolex G—germane to the concerns of the novel, certainly, and also reflecting some elements of the father conspiracy, but not parallel to the beginning of this series of episodes, nor even to the other episodes, and therefore not closing the series. Nor is the Imipolex G passage even in the same tone as earlier ones: the Floundering Four emerge out of a fantasy story, while the Imipolex G passage, despite the appearance of an alliterative pair, reads like a textbook, or a parody of one: "Under suitable stimuli, the chains grow cross-links, which stiffen the molecule and increase intermolecular attraction so that this Peculiar Polymer runs far outside the known phase diagrams, from limp rubbery amorphous to amazing perfect tessellation, hardness, brilliant transparency, high resistance to temperature, weather, vacuum, shock of any kind" (699).

Thus in this section of Part 4, from the Floundering Four through "Some Characteristics of Imipolex G," the fantasy is not neatly framed; it has inundated reality, much as Slothrop himself seems to be doing, as "He is
being broken down [. . .], and scattered" (738). The frames They try to impose on reality fit rather poorly. And our hope lies in that very fact: we can evade Their frames. Their Reality is mutable. The merging of fantasy and reality, the recognition that reality is subjective, can become a weapon against the Firm and its death-dealing routinizations.

And we are encouraged to use that weapon outside the book. For the toppling of barriers between fantasy and reality within Gravity's Rainbow informs the relationship between the book and our world outside it. The book tries to encroach on our world, much as fantasy permeates reality within the book. In the first place, the book encroaches on the realms of Pynchon's previous fiction, for characters like Weissmann and Bloody Chiclitz and Hogan Slothrop, from V. and The Crying of Lot 49 and "The Secret Integration," surface again in Gravity's Rainbow. Pynchon also smuggles in historical facts, then juxtaposes them to invented facts, often making it difficult to separate fact from invention. As Joseph W. Slade notes, "Pynchon possesses the enviable ability to blend fact and fantasy in such a way that the facts seem less credible than the fantasies." 14 The result is that we start to question our sense of reality. What was IG Farben really like? Or Laszlo Jamf? And is there an Imipolex G? Is there a They who structure our lives?

One of the routinizing structures that the book teaches us to question is the edifice built by literary criticism—such as the gazebo I here perch on the edge of Pynchon's wilderness. Criticism of Gravity's Rainbow always rationalizes the book's complexity. And, fortunately, the book always eludes such routinizations. Criticism should thus be provisional, recognizing its inadequacy, tracing patterns that never quite cohere. And recognizing that the book eludes our patterns, escapes our net, allows us to gauge depth and complexity only indirectly. We can never fully chart it.

Provisionally, then, we can conclude that Pynchon has written a fiction in which fantasy and reality interpenetrate with increasing (more or less) com-
plexity, reminding us that reality is fantasy (for our perceptions are subjective) and fantasy—since it helps to shape our perception and interpretation of it—reality. Like Slothrop, and like the invisible, underground Pynchon himself, we can elude the confining strictures of reality. Yet we do not escape reality. For when the fiction encroaches on our "real" world, refusing to remain safely solipsized within the confines of its covers, then, like the Giant Adenoid, it assimilates reality, assimilates us.

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Notes

1 As Lawrence Kappel also notes, in "Psychic Geography in Gravity's Rainbow," Contemporary Literature, 21, no. 2 (1980), 225-51. Kappel describes the change in somewhat different terms ("myth" more than "fantasy") and is more concerned with geographical than textual realms, with the "mythic journey through the underworld" (235) than with stylistic interpenetration. He also oversimplifies a little, minimizing the chaos of war-torn London, the extent to which it too is fantastical, the extent to which it allows not only rationalized efficiency but also irrationality.

2 Aspects of the Novel (1927; rpt. New York: Harcourt, 1955), 116. See also W. R. Irwin, who notes that the fantastic requires "a competition for credence in which an assertive 'antireal' plays against an established 'real'" (The Game of the Impossible: A Rhetoric of Fantasy [Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1976], 8). C. N. Manlove sees fantasy as "containing a substantial and irreducible element of the supernatural with which the mortal characters in the story or the readers become on at least partly familiar terms" (Modern Fantasy: Five Studies [Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1975], 7, in italics in the original).


Gravity's Rainbow (New York: Viking, 1973), 15. Subsequent references are given parenthetically. All italics in quotations are Pynchon's, as are ellipses, except for ellipses enclosed by brackets.

Edward Mendelson notes, in "Gravity's Encyclopedia," in Mindful Pleasures: Essays on Thomas Pynchon, ed. George Levine and David Leverenz (Boston: Little, Brown, 1976), 193, n. 4, that the choice of square sprocket holes was not Pynchon's. But presumably the change of section was, however it was to be marked.

For a similar argument, more fully developed, see Bernard Duyfhuizen, "Starry-Eyed Semiotics: Learning to Read Slothrop's Map and Gravity's Rainbow," Pynchon Notes, 6 (1981), 5-33.


Five pages later is another clue from the non-Slothropian narrator, another clue requiring reference to our real "real" world: a newspaper "wirephoto of a giant white cock, dangling in the sky straight downward out of a white pubic bush," accompanied by the headline fragment, meaningless to Slothrop:

MB DRO

ROSHI (693).

Barbara Herrnstein Smith's discussion of closure in poetry, in Poetic Closure: A Study of How Poems End (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1968), is germane to Pynchon's playing with closure here. The recurrence of Pop and Son re-establishes an earlier norm, yet the subsequent Imipolex G passage, structurally coordinated with the preceding passages by being titled like them and by preceding the closing square sprocket holes, diverges from the norm in both content and style.

Letter to Richard Pearce
in Response to "Pynchon's Endings"

Laurence Rosenheim

First I should ask you to excuse this letter, which I have little or no business writing, not being a literary scholar of any sort. But I guess I have a bit of Moses Herzog in me, mentally composing letters to people in misguided attempts to improve the world, and sometimes I even send them.

I read your essay "Pynchon's Endings" in Novel [18:2 (1985), 145-53] and was disturbed by the connections you try to make between modern physics and Pynchon's themes. I don't claim to understand his novels all that well, although I do like them enormously. Perhaps, as a scientist myself, I have a somewhat proprietary feeling about quantum mechanics, although I don't claim to understand that all that well either. If anything, I think I am out to save it from misapplication: this is not, I think, the first time I have seen a confusion about the philosophical significance of quantum mechanics, so I want to see if I can express what bothers me.

You write that Pynchon's mind is "imbued with quantum mechanics"; this is no doubt true. But it is important to remember that Pynchon's mind is imbued with a lot of things—from world history to opera to the New York subway system. Personally, I think that technology occupies a far more prominent place in Pynchon's mind than do the various facets of theoretical physics. Yet because it is his style to let his novels embrace as much of Western civilization as possible, and maybe because he loves to needle the reader with playful tropes, modern physics with its non-intuitive character does make its presence felt in his oeuvre. And because we are so unused to seeing references to hard science in literature, we are perhaps encouraged to overemphasize its importance here.

There are two issues to consider: first, whether the developments in quantum physics of this century
really can help us interpret the world we live in, and second, whether Pynchon makes use, rightly or wrongly, of such relationships. I claim the answer to both is no.

The results of quantum mechanics, field theory and relativity are indeed startling and worthy of note, even by a non-scientific public. They also have little, if anything, to do with everyday experience. Only when we do experiments involving subatomic particles does the uncertainty principle step through the curtains into the footlights. However, we do not gain any direct insight into human nature from subatomic particles. This much, I assume, we can agree upon. The question then is whether the development of the uncertainty principle and whatever other aspects of theoretical physics you want to include help us to understand ourselves and our relationship to nature, in what must be a metaphorical way. Do they give us insight into something we did not know before their discovery? Can our feeling for the uncertainty of life be rationalized by the existence of a corresponding principle of physics? Is the fact that we come up with different explanations for events illuminated by the dual nature of matter?

We often think of the Newtonian, billiard-ball picture of nature as deterministic; and it is, in a theoretical sense. We can compute the motions of planets (and rockets) to any level of precision corresponding to our ability to measure them. But for complex systems in which many particles interact, there can be no prediction of the outcome. We cannot forecast the shape of a breaking wave, and it is unlikely that we will be able to even with another generation or two of computers. Progress marches on in this area: a book [The Eudaemonic Pie] was published this year, based on fact, about a group of scientists who had a system for beating Las Vegas by transmitting the initial conditions of a roulette wheel throw to a hidden computer, which would return a good number to bet on. Instead of reaching the purgatory of Heisenberg, we are approaching Newton's paradise. But we obviously cannot arrive there. In the (almost) limiting case, who would ask the most
powerful computer to calculate from a mass of cooling gases (assuming we knew the initial position and velocity of each molecule) the synthesis of life, the form of intelligent life, the letter I am writing to you now? Pynchon specifically acknowledges this: the can of hair spray which, early in The Crying of Lot 49, takes an unscheduled journey (parodying Oedipa's own?) has a predetermined trajectory: "God or a digital machine might have computed in advance the complex web of its travel; but she wasn't fast enough.*

In their very interesting but frustrating book, Order Out of Chaos, Ilya Prigogine (Nobel Laureate in chemistry) and Isabelle Stengers make the claim that this sort of computation is theoretically impossible, on the basis of microscopic arguments and not simply aggregate behavior. Although I frankly don't understand their discussion of the key part of this argu-

* Does the rather peculiar emphasis on detail in this scene mean that now Pynchon is invoking the kinetic theory of gases as an important metaphor too? Later, in the Berkeley hotel, Oedipa briefly becomes a molecule in a sample of ideal gas. A freshman chemistry student, making his way through the giddy juxtaposition of topics deemed important for the first semester, will learn about ideal gases just before atomic theory, and might well think of them as equally significant in every sense—and why not? Henry Adams: "... he was led to think that the final synthesis of science and its ultimate triumph was the kinetic theory of gases; which seemed to cover all motion in space, and to furnish the measure of time... Thus, unless one mistook the meaning of motion, which might well be, the scientific synthesis commonly called Unity was the scientific analysis commonly called Multiplicity. The two things were the same, all forms being shifting phases of motion." This sets off a prolonged stream of pessimism that moves into psychology: "The mind, like the body, kept its unity unless it happened to lose balance, but the professor of physics, who slipped on a pavement and hurt himself, knew no more than an idiot what knocked him down, though he did know—what the idiot could hardly do—that his normal condition was idiocy, or want of balance, and that his sanity was unstable artifice," and proceeds accordingly so that a couple of chapters later he writes, "The child born in 1900 would, then, be born into a new world which would not be a unity but a multiple... He could not deny that the law of the new multiverse explained much
ment, it does not seem to require quantum behavior of matter, despite some parallels they find with quantum formalism. (On the other hand, I believe that a current area of research entails linking the second law of thermodynamics to quantum mechanics. And it is also true that, at some level, the uncertainty principle prevents us from knowing the position and velocity of particles accurately enough to enable us to calculate their future as aggregate. These points are academic.)

To bring my case to a more human scale, it can be noted that the Titanic sank in 1912—a decade and a half before the uncertainty principle was announced. That disaster has been a symbol of the mistake we make when we claim absolute certainty—and as ever, our lives are filled with Titantics (some of them miniature, of course); and public officials decline to be certain about anything, a case in point being the invocation of cost-benefit studies in analyzing the risks of a nuclear power plant accident.

It is hard to make a similar argument about complementarity because I would say it is not part of our everyday experience; we know very well that contradictory impressions of objects, people, or events are really perceptual problems due to our limited capacity to collect and process information, or due to the use of differing criteria, depending on time

that had been most obscure, especially the persistently fiendish treatment of man by man; the perpetual effort of society to establish law, and the perpetual revolt of society against the law it had established; the perpetual building up of authority by force, and the perpetual appeal to force to overthrow it..." etc.,"...but the staggering problem was the outlook ahead into the despotism of artificial order which nature abhorred." But by this point, the observations are being derived from something more fundamental than just kinetic theory, and I will warm to this subject below.

At any rate, even if his notion of the science was not quite on track, he seems to have pulled out the "significant" ideas anyway. Had he lived another decade, one wonders what new depths of gloom Adams—who didn't hesitate to generalize from atoms to society—would have been thrust into by the advent of quantum theory.
frame, value systems, past experience, etc. We know Hitler cannot have been a hero and a monster, although it may have been hard for some people to tell at one time. We know that the use of atomic weapons to end WWII cannot have been a godsend and the beginning of the end of the world.

Writers may indeed highlight the problems we have in making choices by designing fictions in which the choices are more prominent than the resolutions. This becomes a literary device and should be taken as a comment on our psychology rather than on the world we live in. Novelists did not have to await the revelations of modern physics to know this. In The Turn of the Screw (1898), we cannot decide on internal evidence whether the children are in communion with ghosts or even whether the ghosts are real. In The Bridge of San Luis Rey, the characters, according to the narrator (who is not Wilder, exactly), die either by sheer accident or by the will of God. Yet when the novel is done, the dilemma is not resolvable, though it may have become unimportant. (Interestingly, the Friar who conducts an experiment which will pin down one explanation not only fails in this attempt, but is burned at the stake for his efforts. And the governor who tries to force the truth in a final confrontation with Miles apparently causes his death. There is the uncertainty principle with a vengeance!) Wilder's novel appeared in 1928, one year after the diffraction experiment demonstrating the dual nature of electrons, but it is doubtful that he was current enough on physics to have been influenced by that result.*

* One might play this game ad infinitum, I would imagine, limited only by one's reading, which in my case doesn't allow me to get too far. But for instance, I could wonder if part of the resonance (a word which is itself borrowed from science) The Secret Sharer (1910) had for me was connected in a metaphorical way at all with the phenomenon of virtual particles, so important to current physics and possibly intimately related to the existence of the universe. I mean, if it had been written today, wouldn't it be only a matter of time before someone pointed this out?

It occurs to me that part of the appeal of the three short works I've dragged into this discussion is their depth, even in the absence of a clear moral judgment on the part of the author; that
But is Pynchon influenced by such phenomena? It would be easy to say that he is influenced by everything, his manner tending toward the encyclopedic. There is a distinction to be made between those parts of our culture that really have influenced him and that he chooses to incorporate as important themes in his plots, and the other parts which he seems to think ought to be part of his narratives because they are "there": in a sense, nothing that is part of our consciousness can be unimportant. I guess Joyce pioneered that proposition, and indeed an interest in science does appear in Bloom's thoughts. (I wouldn't know about the use of science in Finnegans Wake, but Gell-Mann has given that novel a kind of retroactive relevance by fishing the word "quark" out of it.) Because he includes the equation for the catenary in V. does not, unusual as it is to find mathematics inserted into a novel, necessarily mean Pynchon sees some deep significance in this. Nor does it mean even that he has a deep understanding of the science of statics; anyone can look up such an equation. It may be that he included it to give verisimilitude to Maijstral's narrative. It does reinforce one of the themes of the chapter and the novel: "From the quick to the inanimate," and in a characteristically clever way. But I think also involved is an appreciation for the esthetic value of the equation--both for how it looks on the page and for the elegance of what it expresses. This is part of his style.

The influences which are fundamentally important to him seem to be directly acknowledged in his books--Henry Adams, Machiavelli, Weber.**

**To be honest about it, I get this mainly from the critical essays I have read, not from a reading--a first reading, anyway--of the texts.
Actual references to modern physics are, I think, minimal. One character is named Eigenvalue. Another (Mexico) deals in the mathematics of probability, but his is a strictly classical approach. If Pynchon were particularly interested in quantum mechanics, one might expect to see some characters doing research in that field, which would provide a natural opportunity to do some riffs on it. But actually, while scientists of various sorts populate his books, none are of the basic, theoretical breed. Instead, he brings on engineers, technologists, doctors, applied scientists and quacks of all sorts, none of whom show any evidence of even knowing about quantum mechanics. Schoenmaker, Mondaugen, Chiclitz, Hilarius, Koteks, Nefastis, Pointsman, Mexico, Pökler, Jamf. I think this is very significant because it reflects where Pynchon's true interests lie. (In a way, the only "pure" researchers are his main characters, Stencil, Oedipa Maas, and Slothrop. They are driven by an intense need to know, but are not sure of what they are looking to find.) There is little internal evidence to indicate otherwise, and we ought to be careful about "stencilizing."

Science has, of course, changed our lives in ways that are much easier to elucidate than whatever deep symbolic difference Newtonian vs. wave mechanics may make to us. I think it should be evident that the fact that a superior culture can destroy an inferior one (I use the terms in the military sense) as completely as necessary, or the fact that one can have the shape of one's physiognomy changed at will interests Pynchon much more than what goes on in the sub-microscopic world of matter.*

What is it about our culture then that makes

* Auden ("After Reading A Child's Guide to Modern Physics") expressed a humanist disdain for a preoccupation with "magnitude's extremes," celebrating the fact that the things of everyday experience at least are not subject to uncertainty: "Though the face at which I stare/While shaving it be cruel,/Since year after year it repels/ An aging suitor, it has,/ Thank God, sufficient mass/To be altogether there,/Not an indeterminate gruel/Which is partly somewhere else." (I don't know what he would have thought about nose jobs.)
modern and postmodern novels (I use these labels having only a vague idea of what novels they refer to) different from what went before? Well. I realize that to answer this would take a much broader knowledge of history and literature than I possess. For it won't do to say just that we have an increased sense of the precariousness of our lives (given the War to End All Wars, its successor, the knowledge of the Holocaust, the fear of nuclear war and the real possibility of the extinction of the human race); I suspect that such thoughts of precariousness would sound trite to a fourteenth-century peasant. Perhaps our concern has more to do with our knowledge of these things being ever renewed, in the face of increased expectations about the quality of life and increased awareness about life in other parts of the world. It becomes harder and harder to reconcile all the different facets of the world, but equally hard to ignore them. We must feel in less control of our own lives, and in more confusion about how we relate to the rest of the world (certainly a good enough subject for literature). As you say, we may be both spectators and participants in our own destruction, but why even think of, say, the dual nature of matter in this context when there are quite literal ways to analyze the dilemma? The 1960s, when V. was written, was the decade when war was introduced live-on-tape to television. In earlier decades, there were of course newsreels, but they tended to be more heavily produced, with a point of view, and TV is a truer mass medium. We were able to watch the Vietnam war even while paying for it. Now we watch made-for-TV movies that depict the human effects of a nuclear war with little regard for art but a high emphasis on realism; they are not just science fiction. As Tom Lehrer might say, if there are going to be any good movies to come out of WWIII, we'd better make them now.

It is not just the course of history or even the effect of mass media that has made novels modern. I can only speculate on some other things briefly: the information explosion; the cinema (when we dream in jump-cuts, we know that film techniques have penetrated our consciousness in a deep way); the scientific scrutiny of human thought processes and the
widespread popular discussion (almost amounting to an obsession) thereof; the intrusion of popular culture into our daily lives. All these things involve technology in one way or another, and I maintain that they are all more important than quantum physics, and that the modern novel could be more profitably analyzed along lines suggested by these developments.

It must also be added that the novel probably tends to evolve in the direction of looking at the darker or at least less full explored corners of our experience—and its own artistic "space"—just because it can. All art does this. Should one blame Abstract Expressionism on field theory? Or the information explosion? We seem to be in a period of retrenchment now in all the arts. Perhaps that is a good thing, as they might have been perceived as approaching a state of maximum entropy. Perhaps they've gone about as far as they can go... but that's what they said about Kansas City.

I mentioned entropy. In thermodynamics, that most classical of sciences, one finds certain empirical laws that are based directly on observations on the laboratory scale. Conservation of energy doesn't seem to surprise anyone, but the production of entropy, with all its mathematical necessity, has been the cause of much comment, not all aspects of which (such as its relation to the direction of time) are relevant here. In contrast to quantum behavior, entropy has little meaning (as far as we know) on the subatomic scale. Only when one is describing ensembles large enough to be considered ordered or disordered does the Second Law emerge as a measurable driving force. If one is looking for ways to find insights from science into human problems, a study of entropy is, I think, more rewarding than quantum behavior. Of course, the simple fact that there is a natural tendency toward disorder is not news; rather, an understanding of the complexity of life and the entropy it strives against renews our wonder at this world. If one regards the chaos that tends to appear in one's life as an inevitable outcome of the laws of nature, however, there is some justification for this, as there is for regarding the tendency toward sameness as a poignant result of the same laws.
Pynchon has no monopoly on this subject (in fact, in the unnervingly humble introduction to Slow Learner, he remarks that he does not have a deep understanding of the mathematics). One story I am especially fond of, for its compressed, precise treatment, is "The Heat Death of the Universe," by P. A. Zoline. It has been anthologized more than once, usually for some reason in the science fiction genre, and is worth looking up if you don't know it.

In Pynchon's mind, it seems to be the information theory side of entropy that is the more interesting as one to be mined for meaning. He deals with both aspects directly, of course, in his short story "Entropy." In V., the references are oblique, but the whole novel is, on at least two levels, about the processing of information (by the characters and the reader). Hugh Godolphin, trying to make sense out of his Vheissu experience, wonders, "But why? Have you never been harrowed halfway to--disorder--with that single word? Why." Here the word "disorder" is to be taken as a euphemism for madness, but the choice of language is significant. The problem we have of assembling our information (which comes in abundance although there is never enough) into a meaningful picture of the world will either drive us crazy or lead us to the verge of some new insight. Later, Herbert Stencil, who is, if not insane, certainly a monomaniac, having finally come to Malta for further revelations, perceives that "Events seem to be ordered into an ominous logic." But he is untroubled by doubts about his sanity even though his ability to find meaning in his research is inferior to Godolphin's. The search for meaning as in "meaning of life" strains somewhat the information theory metaphor. Yet in V. the link is made stronger by Mondaugen's story, in which he records what he believes may be a coded message from atmospheric disturbances (a surrealistc proposition, but the relation between the medium and the message is provocative) and is unable to interpret it. That is left to Weissmann, one of the princes of the inanimate. The message, consisting of Mondaugen's name and "The world is all that the case is," is a curious blend of the overly
general and specific; it seems to mean little to him, even though he apparently has read Wittgenstein. Mondaugen's response to the horrors of Foppl's villa is to leave, but he does so without analysis. Later, he will work on Hitler's rockets, the particular horrors of which he does not have to view, and still later, on Chichlitz's. If the "world" had a message for him, it was lost not in electronic noise but somewhere in his brain.

In The Crying of Lot 49, the entropy motive is explicit, and again, information is of prime interest. The "sorting it all out" looks innocuous in that first sentence until we begin to find out what Inverarity's estate really implies. In the novel, Oedipa, after being sensitized by Metzger, collects information almost exclusively (it would make a poor movie). The abounding coincidences, which in a Dickens novel might foreshadow a proper, if contrived, resolution of the story lines, here mock the mundane expectations we might bring as readers. Although we are encouraged not to exclude middles, I don't think that means we have to accept the idea of simultaneous realities; rather, we are only to leave our minds open to the experiences the world provides, no matter how bizarre or uncomfortable (this, if anything, may be the real lesson revealed by a study of science--but not just modern physics, for heliocentrism and Darwinism caused even more discomfort).

The Second Law is confronted in scenes which do not notably advance the action, forcing us to consider their thematic intent. The most prominent of these is Oedipa's visit to Nefastis, in which the entropy problem is presented, along with a mythical solution, Maxwell's Demon. In her wanderings later, she observes a poker player who complains that he recovers better than 99% of his money but never makes any. In this otherwise pointless scene lies a clear reference to the Second Law: the first two laws of thermodynamics are sometimes popularly stated as: 1) you can't win, and 2) you can't even break even.

Even though Oedipa doesn't really have much faith in Nefastis's contraption, she finds herself "about to cry with frustration" when she cannot make it work.
One interpretation could be that the Second Law can indeed come as a depressing revelation, especially to someone like Oedipa, who is trying to sort out information of her own. But apart from this, might not Oedipa be frustrated with her own passivity? When the novel began, she was the "captive maiden" in the tower, attender of Tupperware parties. After her failure, Nefastis cruelly tries to make her, and she flees. She would be justified in suspecting that the explanation of his machine is all just a very fancy line Nefastis uses to make women feel helpless and susceptible. Has the theme of passivity and assertiveness in the book been written about? Later, she participates in a strange ballroom dance where deaf people are all doing different steps. She allows herself to be led by her partner, yet the collisions she expects never occur. The dancers seem to be ordered ("a choreography where each couple meshed easy, predestined"), but in some way she cannot determine. By being a participant, she is "in" the Nefastis machine instead of an impotent observer outside it and is given a glimpse of the order of the world. But she is still a passive participant: is it this that causes her, at the end of the dance, again to flee?

The tantalizing symmetry of her research demoralizes her; but at the end of the novel, we leave her prepared to conduct an experiment which will, she hopes, at last demonstrate conclusively the existence of the conspiracy. Her choice is to shed her passivity, despite the obvious cost. She is standing her ground; she will not flee. Couldn't the zipper incident, with its sexual overtones, be, besides a last joke from Pynchon, an affectionate parody of an example from one of those self-help books? Oedipa's response is the healthy, assertive one.

It would now be logical for me to try to make a connection between the notions of entropy and assertiveness. I can almost do it. Our conventional understanding of entropy and disorder comes from a study of systems near equilibrium, that is, almost reversible. But actually, as Prigogine and Stengers point out in their book, a complete understanding of nature depends on understanding systems that are far from equilibrium.
as well. It is in such systems that random fluctuations can lead to the evolution of radically differing paths, resulting in the breaking of symmetries and the creation of organization where none might have existed before. Far from equilibrium, random events can be a source of diversity. Sociologically speaking, America is probably the country furthest from equilibrium, having been a home for Puritans and Catholics, natives and slaves, libertarians and communists, and, who knows, conspiracies such as the Tristero. It would seem that we would have the resources for many kinds of lives and perhaps even realities, which explains why Oedipa is appalled at the end to think that the sinister Tristero is the only alternative to the suburbia she was a part of: "how had it ever happened here, with the chances once so good for diversity?" (a lovely phrase).*

To quote a passage from the end of _Order and Chaos:_

"We know now that societies are immensely complex systems involving a potentially enormous number of bifurcations exemplified by the variety of cultures that have evolved in the relatively short span of human history. We know that such systems are highly sensitive to fluctuations. This leads both to hope and a threat: hope, since even small fluctuations may grow and change the overall structure. As a result, individual activity is not doomed to insignificance. On the other hand, this is also a threat, since in our universe the security of stable, permanent rule seems gone forever. We are living in a dangerous and unstable world that inspires . . . qualified hope."

It is an oversimplification to think of entropy as a threat to us, as necessarily something to be fought

* One of the problems the book leaves us with is, where are those other alternatives? Oedipa has at least found one; the novel is short and compressed enough to suggest that others may be waiting out there. In his next novel, with its concern for "interface," Pynchon was to enumerate such possibilities, although the picture is not pretty. In fact, after _Gravity's Rainbow_, suburbia doesn't look so bad. But with the hands of the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists' clock at three minutes to midnight, is it an alternative?
against constantly—we are destined to fight it, of course, but not at every hour and every front. It is a fact of nature, locked into our universe through purely mathematical arguments as is perhaps no other fundamental law, and without it, we would be living in an unrecognizable world.

I wonder if the auctioneer who is the focus around which the San Narciso/Tristero symmetry may be broken, and who is described as a "descending angel," is meant as a counterpart to the Maxwell's Demon Oedipa fails to commune with in Nefastis's apartment. She has been resisting the clues about the Tristero which she has come upon almost at random, but she decides apparently on a whim (or fluctuation), "the courage you find you have when there is nothing more to lose," to follow up the stamp collection lead. It may be nothing, but she does have a plan. In the enclosed room, she is now an active participant in an entropy machine where she can make a difference. In the picture on Nefastis's machine, Maxwell "would not meet her eyes . . . he gazed away, into some vista of Victorian England," whereas Passerine "stared at her, smiling, as if saying, I'm surprised you actually came." There are many things in that smile, but not least is, I suspect, approval, even though the tone of the paragraph is one of dread. Instead of futilely trying to manipulate molecules in a worthless device or to conduct a well-defined but thermodynamically impossible procedure, she will take a much greater chance, which may lead to less predictable but useful results.

All this leads back around to your conclusions, which I basically agree with, about the importance of choice in these books. But I have made a case for looking at thermodynamics rather than quantum mechanics as the scientific thread in the tapestry. There is one more thing I want to quibble about: I can't see the use of "you"s in the endings as being related to the uncertainty principle. For one thing, in Gravity's Rainbow, there are some sentences addressed to "you" scattered throughout the book, although they may not refer to the reader, exactly. However, one passage, well before the end, does, unmistakably. In the scene where Slothrop takes leave of Bianca (Viking 472), we
are reminded that she was conceived during the filming of a pornographic movie. The viewers of that movie are implicated in her conception as well. "We" are accused not only of attending the movie and masturbating in public, but also of fathering and abandoning an illegitimate child. "You'll never get to see her. So somebody has to tell you." Now that's what I call involving the reader! It is especially effective since many readers probably have sat through at least one porno movie, or if not, we can always go to another level and say that probably everyone has accepted the benefits of some kind of exploitation of people, but not the consequences. For me, these are the most startling lines in the book.

In the "Orpheus Puts Down Harp" scene, it is tempting to me to read the "you"s as prepared reaction statements, appropriately enough of the kind often used in movie reviews, particularly those of Pauline Kael. The segment is actually written as a wire service report, by "your correspondent." Could it be, in part, a parody of this style of reviewing? Critics seem to like to write in that mode, in order to put us "in" the review as much as possible; maybe this is important because when we watch movies, we are "in" the movie (in our fantasy), and to read a review of someone else's reactions might seem too removed from the actual experience. (Movies which put "your guts in a spasm" are the kind Kael is fondest of.) The involvement of ordinary citizens with movies and TV and the identification with movie stars is a potent phenomenon, whose implications probably have not been fully explored. (Among other things, movies are a quick, easy--and very transient--way of jumping into the kind of other world that Oedipa works so hard to verify. Pynchon is very sensitive to the distinction between the earned and the vicarious, however, and plans to have harsh reality crash through our movie theater.) But whatever deep meanings we may discover behind this, I don't think we need go so deep as particle physics.

I guess I ought to stop before I start sounding like a broken record. I didn't realize this would go on so long. But like a polymer (my head is filled
with scientific imagery) one section just seemed to want to have another tacked on to it. I think it's reasonable to say that one of the beautiful things about Pynchon's novels is that there is so much to wonder about, and talk about.

--Indiana State University
Richard Pearce Replies

How great to receive your letter out of the blue, arguing, informing, opening up new perspectives on physics and on Pynchon.

Actually, I have a hard time keeping up on modern physics as well as literature since my literature students go blank when I even begin to think about physics, and most scientists I know won't read Pynchon, or any modern literature for that matter. And they keep insisting that the study of subatomic particles doesn't tell us anything about ordinary experience—though Heisenberg argues to the contrary.

I don't want to argue that modern physics helps us interpret the world we live in or that Pynchon was influenced more by quantum mechanics than he was by thermodynamics, etc. (I dealt with that and other aspects of modern physics, as well as Henry Adams, in the introduction to my Critical Essays on Thomas Pynchon), though I really appreciate what you do with entropy. What I think is important is that some of the same impulses govern science and literature—or, to put it in a way that's more fashionable and perhaps more precise, they share a similar discourse. As I'm discovering in my work on a book called The Politics of Narration, similar discourses share similar epistemological, social, and indeed political assumptions.

Thanks so much for your thoughtful letter. If you ever get to Boston, I hope you'll give us a call.

--Wheaton College
"Spot this Mumbo Jumbo": Thomas Pynchon's Emblems for American Culture in "Mortality and Mercy in Vienna"*

Claire M. Tylee

Before World War I, as early as 1910, Bertrand Russell, one of the founders of logical positivism, had characterised "the world which science presents for our belief" as "purposeless" and "void of meaning." He claimed that "Man is the product of causes which had no prevision of the end they were achieving; that his origin, his growth, his hopes and fears, his loves and his beliefs, are but the outcome of accidental atoms; that no fire, no heroism, no intensity of thought and feeling, can preserve an individual life beyond the grave; ... and that the whole temple of Man's achievement must inevitably be buried beneath the debris of a universe in ruins." Such things are not beyond dispute, but "so nearly certain" that "only within the scaffolding of these truths, only on the firm foundation of unyielding despair, can the soul's habitation be safely built" ("A Free Man's Worship"). But worse was to come. After World War II, Gilbert Ryle claimed that even the belief in the soul was a logical error, a category mistake. The soul was insubstantial, not even "the ghost in the machine" of the human body (Concept of Mind [1949]). Following that lead, the influential Norbert Wiener, in his The Human Use of Human Beings (1954), resolved to avoid "all question-begging epithets such as 'life,' 'soul,' 'vitalism,' and the like," since "such words as life, purpose and soul are grossly inadequate to precise scientific thinking." It was no longer even to be possible coherently to state Russell's original "unyielding despair" concerning the soul's proper habitation in a purposeless life.

Not only was talk of the soul and the purpose of life banned from the domains of philosophical and

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scientific discourse, but also the whole realm of poetry, which might have sustained it, was declared to be empty of sense. In his paper "The Rejection of Metaphysics" (1935), Rudolph Carnap distinguishes "two functions of language, which we may call the expressive function and the representative function." The representative function is "to assert something" or "represent a certain state of affairs which must be verifiable;" if it is not, "your assertion is no assertion at all; it does not speak about anything; it is nothing but a series of empty words; it is simply without sense." On the other hand, "many linguistic utterances are analogous to laughing in that they have only an expressive function, no representative function. Examples of this are cries like "Oh, Oh" or on a higher level, lyrical verses. The aim of a lyrical poem in which occur the words 'sunshine' and 'clouds' is not to inform us of certain meteorological facts, but to express certain feelings of the poet and to excite similar feelings in us." A lyrical poem has no assertional sense, it does not contain knowledge." As Carnap pointed out, he and the other members of the Vienna Circle owed much to Ludwig Wittgenstein and his Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus (1922), written under the influence of Russell and Frege. At that time Wittgenstein considered, like Russell, that language ought to be "precise," avoiding all ambiguity such as puns or metaphors.

Thomas Pynchon's aim in his early short stories is clearly to reinstate the language of poetry. Puns and metaphors revitalise language, giving new life to clichés. Poetry itself is the scaffolding of the world of the soul, enabling man to articulate the value of his life at the metaphysical interface between the sacred and the profane, between "cosmos" and "chaos."

In The Sacred and the Profane (1959), Mircea Eliade showed that, for religious man, the world (that is, "our world") is a universe within which the sacred has already manifested itself; "it exists, it is there and it has a structure; it is not a chaos but a cosmos." The existence of the world itself "means" something; it is not an inert thing without purpose or significance. Eliade believed that something of the religious
conception of the world still persists for profane man; the paradigmatic sacred images live on in his language and clichés, although he is not always conscious of this "inmemorial heritage." For instance, we still use the same images as are to be found in the Old Testament and writings of the Middle Ages to formulate the dangers that threaten a certain type of civilisation: we speak of chaos, the disorder, the darkness that will overwhelm "our world." (Even Russell, in his declaration of himself as a Free Man, still talks of a "hostile universe.") For religious man "the reactualisation of mythical events is an eternal return to the sources of the sacred and the real" by which "human existence appears to be saved from nothingness and death." For the non-religious man every existential crisis once again puts into question both the reality of the world and man's presence in the world. Pynchon's heroes are all non-religious men undergoing existential crises in a profane world. For them the vital experiences such as death and sexuality have been desacralised. Their acts are deprived of spiritual significance and thus of "their truly human dimension." But Eliade believed, like Nietzsche and Jung, that the non-religious man of modern society is still nourished and aided by the activity of his unconscious: although "his religious sense has fallen even below the level of divided consciousness" into the depths of the unconscious, "in his deepest being he still retains a memory" of religion. Thus "going native" is an attempt to return to that primitive sense of sacred reality which Pynchon's character Irving Loon still lives in but which urban civilised man only retains in the detritus of his language--where he still talks of "home" as special. Man cannot really feel at home in a desacralised, "hostile" universe, and this existential alienation, this "cosmic insecurity," is the source of the destructive paranoia in "Mortality and Mercy in Vienna," Pynchon's second short story.

"Mortality and Mercy in Vienna" centres on an idea that was dropped casually in the first paragraph of Pynchon's first short story, "The Small Rain"--the idea of "going native." Like "The Small Rain," this second story was also published in early 1959, but the
style is more assured, the content more idiosyncratic. "Mortality and Mercy in Vienna" may also have been intended for an undergraduate readership, but whereas the earlier story was explicitly critical of college habits, perhaps even didactically so, the later one at first appears to feed the undergraduate sense of superiority and actually to encourage the game of Spot This Quote that "The Small Rain" so despises. The sick sense of humour it panders to is particularly adolescent.

Sure, it's amusing, in a twisted sort of way. And it gives literary critics something to write about and people at parties something to talk about: "So by use of literary references or intertextuality..." "Fascinating, this Windigo psychosis." "And we'd both laugh and laugh because it was so much fun." "O, ha, ha." But by the end Pynchon seems to have preempted all possible responses except a horrified, puzzled silence. He has deliberately taken the laughter out of our sails, and the black humored anticlimax forces us back into the deadly earnest question posed by Siegel's response to his "moment of truth"—why would the matador casually stroll off, whistling, from the massacre about to result inside the bull-ring? Nor will the literary clews that litter the sand help us; they merely show us that old literary ideas are no key to contemporary maps: the clew to Pynchon's labyrinth is not to be found in Dante or Shakespeare, Conrad or Eliot. (Nor is it to be found in Weber, although the story confronts Weber's ideas about types and groups, bureaucracy and authority and charisma.) Despite having arrived near duPont Circle, the "gloomy circle of some inferno," Siegel in Washington is not a guideless Dante in Hell: Rachel is not Beatrice to summon him on to Paradise; and despite the source of the title (Measure for Measure: I.i.44), he is not Angelo in Vienna: there is no Duke to return and dispense divine mercy. Neither is Siegel Marlow, who reached self-knowledge, nor Kurtz, who, far from being "in his way a father confessor," "presented himself as a voice." Above all, Siegel is clearly not the fisher-king come in Spring to redeem his people from their wasteland. Although part of the richness of the theme comes from these resonances, the counterpoint of
Vienna and Paris, the dark jungle and the wasteland, the chord composed of Dante, Angelo and Marlow is a dominant seventh leading us back to the tonic of Siegel in Washington.

The narrative recounts how Siegel, a young career diplomat recently returned to Washington from Europe, arrives early for a party at which he was to have met up with another guest, his girlfriend Rachel. He finds he bears a strong resemblance to his Rumanian host, Lupescu, whom he has never met before. Lupescu impulsively delegates Siegel to be host in his stead and abruptly leaves, with the parting words "Mistah Kurtz--he dead." Siegel, stunned, phones Rachel to discover she is not coming after all, but, before he can make his escape, the other guests begin to arrive. She has described them as a "curious" crowd, and they are certainly odd. Siegel, fighting panic, adopts the role of suave host only to find he is gradually, reluctantly, pushed to assume the role of father confessor for revelations of obsessional sexual relationships. In the course of the party he realises that one of the guests, a silent Ojibwa Indian named Irving Loon, is in the early paranoid stages of a psychosis peculiar to his tribe, Windigo psychosis. Siegel flippantly triggers his movement towards the violence characteristic of the next stage, where the sufferer perceives other humans as beaver to be killed and eaten. The only person to recognise that a massacre is about to ensue, Siegel then quietly leaves the party, and has strolled down to the street by the time he hears the sounds of rifle fire.

Commencing with a shower of spring rain, and then mentioning that Siegel had regarded himself as a healer and prophet, the story, by the time it reaches Lupescu's use of Baudelaire's words "mon semblable, mon frère," has the literary reader, like Siegel, "flipping over a stack of mental IBM cards frantically" to complete the quote from T. S. Eliot's "The Waste Land": "You! hypocrite lecteur!" and recognise Siegel as the redeemer of the wasteland of Washington. The thirty-year-old Jewish Siegel has come, bearing under his arm a bottle of whisky (uisge beath--the water of life), to replace the "wild-looking, rangy man with fierce eyebrows," Lupescu, depicted as a kind of ill St. John Baptist. (The connection could even be stretched to Siegel's college friends' having nick-
named him "Stephen," like Joyce's Stephen Dedalus, who also saw himself as a Christ figure and his friend Cranly as St. John. How frantic can a reader get?) Furthermore, if Kurtz has died, Washington is not only the Waste Land, but also the Heart of Darkness; and Siegel, like Marlow, is going to follow Dante's descent into one of the dark places, the infernal condition of the human soul. The title begins to make sense; it is not an obscure compliment to Freud. As priggish as Angelo in Measure for Measure, the young lawyer Siegel finds he has the power of dispensing mortality or mercy in a city which, although not Vienna, yet suffers from sexual depravity. The rain, then, which Shakespeare celebrates in The Merchant of Venice, seems to symbolise that unstrained quality of mercy and compassion which Measure for Measure demonstrates as essential to the wise legislator and ruler. Like J. W. Slade, we too can just catch "the near audible clicks of motifs falling neatly into place" (Thomas Pynchon [1974]).

Yet Angelo was neither a wise ruler nor a healer. And where is the good Duke? He does not appear on the scene to counteract Siegel's decisions. As Siegel speculates on the similarities between Kurtz and Lupescu, the catastrophe gathers momentum, and an apocalypse takes place that the literary allusions had not prepared for. The critic can quickly recover himself, mock heroic; we have, after all, the perfect parody of an out-of-date myth: "Poetic? Religious? Ha, ha."

Forced to retrace our steps through the story by the final literary paradox, the non-joke that in the Heart of Darkest Washington a savage, Loon, is about to follow Kurtz's injunction to "exterminate all the brutes" and may even go as far as his example of the "unspeakable rites" of cannibalism, we readers--half-suspecting that the joke is on us all the time--find it all much less of a shaggy dog than it at first appeared. On first reading, we tend to share Siegel's jokes; but as these grow increasingly cheap, more and more we not only appreciate the discrepancy between other people's expectations and his private reactions, but we also laugh at Siegel's growing discomfiture.
We enjoy his remembered cartoons and funny stories, the puns, wry remarks and sardonic comments, but we also enjoy the incongruity of this uptight petty bureaucrat's being left to host such a bizarre, hung-loose party. On our second reading, Siegel's paranoia is more apparent. Also, the recurrent patterns, the reinforcing of certain ideas Siegel is anxious to evade, become more prominent. We gradually realise that the story is profoundly ironic, and that the events and the obvious literary allusions gain their value negatively. If our previous laughter now sounds hollow, and Siegel more and more resembles Eliot's hollow men--like Kurtz, he is "hollow at the core"--we begin to recognise the nature of that hollowness.

A marked feature of Pynchon's style is his frequent punning, which at times has the reader groaning as at a Goons/Marx Brothers script. For instance, his choice of the name Loon, the Canadian word for a diving-bird of the North, is appropriate for an Indian, but over-appropriate for an Indian who is, crudely, going murderously loony. Sometimes the word-play seems randomly humorous, as when Lupescu's girlfriend is named Sybil, reminding us of "The Waste Land," or just plain coincidental, as when the word for the Jewish mourning ceremony "shivah" resembles the name of the Hindu god of destruction, Shiva, the third aspect of the Hindu trinity. At other times the play on the multiple senses of a word seems artfully pointless, as when Lupescu appoints Siegel to be the host in his place and tells him that this makes him a trinity: (a) a receiver of guests, (b) an enemy, and (c) an outward manifestation "for them" of the divine body and blood. Is he to play God? The punning makes the reader more aware of words and lures him half-expectantly into filling in gaps and connections that Pynchon leaves open. (Doesn't every reader correct him when he says that Harvey [Donald?] Duckworth, who arrived "in a sailor suit"--he is in the navy after all--spilled wine all over his "whites": "Don't you mean 'ducks'? Haw, haw.") And then we wonder whether there is some point to the puns. During the party Siegel is reminded of a "whole host of trodden-on and disaffected" who have unburdened themselves to him over the years. Is he unconsciously thinking of them
in a hostile way, as enemies? And however pointless the pun may seem to us, it takes on a madly dangerous meaning when Siegel decides to "miraculously" allow his fellow guests to become body and blood for Loon to partake of, although not a holy eucharist.

In fact, double-meaning is not simply a stylistic device. Duality is the central idea throughout. Siegel, who sees Lupescu as his Doppelgänger and later admits he's not sure he is not Lupescu's double, is continually "trying to stop seeing double," vacillating between a religious perspective and a more superficial, pragmatic one, looking for "Deeper Human Significance" or irresponsibly finding excitement and "fun."

This double-mindedness is physically manifested in the emblematic situation of facing a "slightly flawed mirror image" of a man in a tweed coat, his eyebrows raised, with something stuck under his arm. When this first occurs, Lupescu and Siegel silently face each other like mirror images. The only flaw is the difference between the bottle of whisky that Siegel brings and the Dadaist pig-foetus that Lupescu is to pin mockingly over the kitchen door in place of the druidical fertility symbol, mistletoe. (Frazer's Golden Bough is no clue to this story.) For Siegel, it is a prophetic, visionary moment. They change places, and Siegel finds himself taking on Lupescu's role, slowly changing from a nonchalant mixer of drinks to a shaman figure, a western witchdoctor. Siegel has assumed the conventional persona of a cool John Buchan-style British hero, which goes with his looks; he adopts this persona in order to play the part of apologetic guest, stood-up escort, party-swinger, reluctant confidant, who resolves "to bite the jolly old bullet and make the best of a bad job." Just how alien this is is brought home when it jars with the inner language of the American-style hero prompted in him by Debby Considine, whom he sees as a "broad" who gives him "the demure bit with the eye-lashes."

We are told that Siegel inherited this tendency to play a part from his mother, an apostate Catholic. She argued herself out of her religion (appropriately in Hell's Kitchen) by refuting Aquinas's proofs for
the existence of God, and her substitution of Jesuitical intellectual reasoning in place of faith has influenced Siegel, despite his upbringing as an orthodox Jew like his father. One of the crucially formative experiences of his life took place shortly after his bar mitzvah, when his cousin Miriam died of cancer. During the formal Jewish mourning rites of shivah, Miriam's distraught husband, as he wept, cursed the doctor and the money wasted. It was then that the adolescent Siegel became afraid that humans could be only doctors and not the healers or prophets "you had to be" "if you cared about it at all." The fear that man cannot control death or misery underlies his later life.

It is his own failure as a political healer, the insignificance and stupidity of what he does do as something less than that, that he tries not to be conscious of. The rationalising argumentative part of himself calls that consciousness "funky periods" and finds the race against time, the petty scheming and politicking, "when you came down to it," fun. This "still small Jesuit voice" of anti-conscience has cunningly convinced him that Jews are ineffective, and he conceals his guilt at the actual ineffectiveness of what he is doing under his "British" diplomat's appearance. He has cultivated a suave nonchalance to sustain his illusion, and this comes into play to cover his panic when he is confronted with the unfamiliar. His humour and role-playing distance him and dissociate him, not only from other people, but from himself and his own imaginative insight. Siegel knows that "if you cared about it at all" you have to be a prophet as well as a healer, but from the point of view of the degenerate religiosity he has inherited, the trappings of the Judeo-Christian tradition, his periods of heightened sensibility are merely hysterical aberrations. He has no faith in God to make them meaningful. Siegel believes a prophet is needed, someone who speaks with divine inspiration and expresses the divine will, but that is the one role he cannot undertake. It is not a role. (Politically speaking, America needs a charismatic leader, as Weber would put it; but the spiritual power of charisma has to be seen as divinely bestowed.)
It is only with hindsight, on re-reading, that we recognise the strangely ominous nature of his double-vision of, for instance, a dirty limerick about a beaver being "gilded with a certain transcendental light"; but this second sight makes him uneasy, and the jesuit part keeps calling him back to the "real country" where there are distracting things to do and "bon mots to be tossed out carelessly." The jesuitical, machiavellian side of his nature gets tougher in the course of the party, and he hardens into the cynical jibes about "bent souls," quite callously using language to blunt his sensibility.

By reference to a Peter Arno cartoon, Pynchon links this duplicity to the idea of "going native," rambling into what seems to be a humorous diversion; but the expression flickers sinisterly as a pun when we encounter a psychotic native. By the end of the party it has more serious implications. Needing to confide in someone, Siegel tells Lucy, the 40's style vamp, about Lupescu's sudden departure in what had appeared to be the state of a "raving lunatic." She is not worried, judging it might have been a good thing that Lupescu got out because "he was going native." This expression is significant enough for Siegel to consider it at some length before the implications arouse his jesuitical tendency to distract himself, but not before Pynchon has connected it suggestively with the image of double-mindedness.

What puzzles Siegel is whether it makes sense for Lupescu to have gone native in Washington. Still, "stranger things had happened." He remembers his roommate at Harvard, Grossman, a Jew from Chicago, who, having previously considered Cook County to be the only civilisation, gradually converted to the effete, puritan culture of Boston. This process of "degeneration" Pynchon sums up in an event that recalls Siegel, the tweed-jacketed partygoer with a bottle of whisky under his arm, who has just remembered himself as the tweed-jacketed bureaucrat with a briefcase in that position, confronting a tweed-jacketed Lupescu identical but for the pig foetus: one spring afternoon Siegel had surprised Grossman facing the mirror, in flawless and expensive tweeds, umbrella under one arm, eyebrows raised, reciting "'I
parked my car in Harvard yard." It is a good joke at the expense of New England that Grossman's deliberate change in voice and appearance in order to escape from a vaguely Jewish Chicago to puritan gentility should be equated with a colonialist's decline and fall away from "more advanced," civilised European standards to more primitive mores. But Siegel goes on picking at the idea and, referring to Gauguin and Eliot, suspects it may have more to do with some compulsion that links people than with any particular place. It comes as a surprise when Gauguin and Eliot are mentioned in connection with Grossman. Grossman went from the Midwest to New England, Eliot from New England to Europe, Gauguin from Europe to the South Seas. Gauguin escaped from being a stock-broker in what he saw as the degenerate, bourgeois society of Paris to become a great primitive painter. The Midwestern New Englander Eliot similarly saw his native culture as a dissipated waste but found significance in conversion to neo-Anglicanism. The bookish Grossman converted to a more refined culture. The question is: from which standpoint does one measure the degeneracy or primitiveness of a civilisation? Later, Siegel is also to recall his college anthropology lecturer, "perched like a sparrow," according to whose sarcastic bird's-eye view "all cultures were equally mad," only the form of madness varying, never the content. The dilemma with which Pynchon is going to confront the reader is whether the madness of the "civilised" Washingtonians is identical with that of the "primitive" Loon or is degenerate. Siegel feels "unwilling to think about it too much" and evasively tells Lucy that Lupescu seemed "sort of under the weather. Also maybe a little neurotic."

One after the other the party guests, misled by Siegel's resemblance to Lupescu into thinking he will be sympathetic, confide their anxieties to him, hoping he can aid them. Far from feeling compassionate, Siegel is "neither ready to be curious about nor confident he would be able to cope with" such unburdenings which, after he hears Lucy's own unskilled self-analysis, he feels "should never have been exposed." She reveals to him "the anatomy of a disease more serious than he had suspected: the badlands of the
heart." "Badlands" is an evocative term which both retains its sense of American barren waste land, the lawless area beyond the frontier of civilisation, and suggests a heartland (cf. "headland") where goodness or loving care cannot take root. It expresses one of Siegel's moments of penetration, but the irrationality of Lucy's confusions makes him feel hysterically edgy. This tendency to hysteria gets ever stronger during the party, and he counters it with that inner sneering and playacting which distance and dissociate him not only from other people but from his own real understanding and perception.

Interrupted during his session with Lucy, Siegel "wearily" decides to "make the best of a bad job" and stay at the party. When Debby then wants to pour out her troubles to him, his private reaction is "here we go again." He finds her confession embarrassing, even tries to change the subject. Finally he gets fed up with it and cuts the interview short. He agrees absently to see Brennan alone (on the balcony, being a little sick of the confessional bedroom perversely decorated with crossed automatic rifles), nods profoundly at what he says, but pays no attention. Then, when Vincent wants to talk, he waves him away; "Siegel had had about enough of confessions."

What is striking about the two confessions Siegel does listen to is that they reveal modes of behaviour and states of mind similar to Siegel's own. Lucy's diatribe is concerned with the convoluted relations between a number of people including herself, Lupescu, "who hates to get involved in anything," and others at the party such as Debby and Brennan. Their scheming and counter-scheming, forgery, "almost roguery" and manoeuvring resemble Siegel's time at college and with the Commission in Europe; her idea that writing poison-pen letters was "fun" echoes Siegel's own justification for petty intrigues. Debby is an economist working for the State Department; her sexual exploits in under-developed areas, the boondocks, the wilderness, sound like colonial exploitation. The manipulation which she "can't help" and her jaded sexual appetite also recall Siegel's past. (She is a man-eater--a pun Pynchon leaves up to the reader.)
Like the carrier of disease, she irresponsibly wrecks havoc in bad-heart-lands, emotional boondocks. Her emotional immaturity parallels Siegel's stunted inability to respond to other people's feelings. And the frenetic sexual activity that both she and Lucy have set about appears to be a frantic attempt to escape both their own and other people's unhappiness. The result is to spread the disease, laying other people's hearts waste too.

As Debby talks, Siegel is jolted by a chance juxtaposition of words into ferreting out of his memory an explanation for Loon's present depressed state. What Debby calls a "brooding James Dean quality," an almost mystical melancholy, Siegel recognizes as a type of madness peculiar to Ojibwa Indians, who are rooted in an ethos "saturated with anxiety." When paranoid tendencies, aroused by the isolation of the wilderness, are intensified by, for instance, a shaman's curse, an Ojibwa can become susceptible to the Windigo psychosis, in which he identifies with a god and, suffering from altered perception, becomes a cannibal. As Debby continues talking, it becomes apparent that she too suffers from paranoia, the terror that an arbitrary Act of God might destroy her. This depression has even led her to try to play God herself: to attempt suicide with an "act of Debby Considine."

At once Siegel responds to an equally paranoid desire to escape from the role of isolated confessor in this emotional wilderness. He sees "this sort of thing" as dangerous "because in the course of things it was very possible to destroy not only yourself but your flock as well." He had reflected on the idea of destruction earlier in the evening, remembering Grossman saying that Siegel's Jesuitical tendency was the seed of his destruction, but he was not "particularly aware of destruction mainly because he was unable to give it a name or a face, unless they were Rachel's and this he doubted." We know little about Rachel, but she seems to conform to Siegel's mother's recommendation of "some nice quiet Jewish girl," unselfish and open by comparison with Siegel. How she could represent destruction for Siegel is one of the problems the reader may skip over in order to get on with the story.
A half-submerged metaphor informs Pynchon's portrayal of Siegel's mind. If Gauguin and Eliot were inspired geniuses, Siegel somehow suffers from an evil genius, as if he were possessed by a devil. The idea of an evil spirit is continually present in the guise of a poltergeist, a genie, a doppelgänger; and now, as Siegel tries to escape from Debby's revelations, he is "bugged" or exasperated by the demoniacal Concerto for Orchestra by Bartok. Speech would not have provoked him, but "the nimble little Machiavel inside him" responds to the murderous frenzy of the music from the record player. He has a vision of himself going native like Lupescu "standing in front of some mirror with a pig foetus under one arm, reciting Freudian cant at himself to get the right inflection." He wonders if, in some misguided intellectual attempt to heal people who are already beyond human help ("people like Debby Considine and Lucy and himself and all the other dead), "someday he too might degenerate into a quack psychoanalytic witchdoctor, reciting mumbo jumbo." Of course, he already has; for the past hour or more he has spouted stock religious phrases: "what seems to be your trouble, my child" and "make a good Act of Contrition."

Siegel gets himself introduced to Loon. Then recklessly, like a naval destroyer going into enemy waters, Siegel quietly discharges the word "Windigo." The curse has an immediate impact on Loon, who, previously unaware of Debby's existence, now begins to treat her as his "beautiful little beaver." The full holocaust is still to come, but Siegel no longer rushes against a "deadline." Recognising the danger, he nevertheless sits in the kitchen (Hell's Kitchen?) and jesuitically manages to convince himself that his imagination is going "off the deep end." He mixes himself a drink, and it becomes apparent that his rationalising intellect has now got the upper hand over his perceptive imagination. He toys with the idea of working "a miracle involving a host," resolutely resisting any consciousness of guilt connected with his "hunch" about Loon. He has a chance to play the (Stephen) Hero in earnest and save his "parishioners." This is mere empty rhetoric. He does nothing.
It comes to him that Lupescu's parting remark was more than "a drunken witticism," and Siegel's intellectualized imagination now begins to interpret Washington in terms of Conrad's story. Falling into a kind of literary cant, he casts Lupescu as some Kurtz "possessed by the heart of darkness" and produces a brilliant but free-wheeling play on the idea of an ivory tower, a bon mot for the self-worshipping egoism of Washington society. Siegel shakes his head, trying to clear it. But he is no longer seeing double, no longer able to recognise himself in the Kurtz-Lupescu-Grossman image. The facetious Grossman went native, "refined beyond the point of civilisation" (in Eliot's phrase) into a supercilious New England intellectual; Lupescu, who became a sort of dadaist oracle, also disappeared as if refined beyond the point of meaningful discourse. Siegel has now become refined Beyond Good and Evil. He is no longer divided against himself when the disaster is about to strike; he is intoxicated with his sense of power over a "miracle" and sees any "penance" as "as good as any other." The jesuitical and Jewish sides of his nature are united in their inability to make any meaningful religious distinction. Like Kurtz, who, having played God and become a mad soul, could finally only speak what Marlow called "nonsense!" and who died uttering "The horror. The horror!", Siegel has come to the end of sense.

He has also come to the end of a tradition, a civilisation.

There is now no creativity or spontaneity. The infertility of Washington culture matches the barrenness of the people and can be measured by the debasement of the language. It is not simply that Siegel tends to speak in clichés which click automatically, unthinkingly into place: "statutory rape and all that, you know"; or that like his guests he speaks in stereotypes which have lost their cutting edge: "beautiful," "lovely," "'Zen,' 'San Francisco,' and 'Wittgenstein.'" There is a slide from these concepts to others which have been worn smooth and can be used almost indiscriminately, "saint," "good," "divine," and then to the repeated expletives which have lost their original
value so completely that the reader hardly even notices that the same terms are being used over and over again, hollowly, "God," "damn," "hell."³

The distance that this culture has fallen from Dante and Shakespeare could almost be measured by the current weightlessness of the word "God,"⁴ which now lacks even a metaphorical value by which to interpret

And earthly power doth then show likest God's
When mercy seasons justice.

By contrast, the mere whisper of the name "Windigo" has the power to swing Loon into destructive action. The name "Jesus Christ" holds no comparable magic for Siegel. Except for the slob Duckworth's pelting it with nuts, the new symbol for the decline of this republic, where these self-obsessed people rule supreme, itself goes unremarked; in place of the mystic fertility symbol of mistletoe or of a naked new-born babe, the Christmas Eve sign that Lupescu pinned up in this springtime of the year is an aborted pig. Pynchon has accounted for Siegel's paranoid schizophrenia in terms of religious concepts which were used seriously in an earlier age to refer to entities that were believed to exist but which are now dead metaphors. The scorn with which the expressions "wrestled with her soul," "Fisher of souls," "bent souls" are tossed out is also an indication of what is absent from Siegel's life, making it meaningless. Siegel shares a cosmic insecurity with Loon, an existential dread that he cannot even make sense of to himself. His culture, in which such anomic is prevalent, provides no understanding; it is as lost as the Indian's culture. Siegel is frightened that there are only human beings in charge, that there is no divine order; yet he is also excited at the idea of himself playing God, while simultaneously fearful that he "can't make this."

Siegel's world is a world of absurd verbal cant, Freudian pseudoscientific, pseudo-literary-analytic mumbo jumbo, mockingly expressed in the disconnected Dada of Lupescu:
You . . .
Of course. You're perfect . . .
Mon semblable . . . mon frère.
A sign . . .
A sign, and deliverance . . .
Only a matter of time . . .
Tonight . . .
Why.
Why not.
Pig foetus.
Symbol.
God, what a symbol.
And now.
Freedom.
Deliverance . . .
Genie.
Bottle.
Century after century, until Siegel, fisher of souls,
Pulls the cork.

Siegel lives in a world in which sacred ideas are reduced to clichés and are now disconnected from a desacralised social reality. He may be as paranoid as Loon, and his world makes even less sense.

With its similarity to a long line of gothic doppelgänger stories stretching back through Frankenstein to Faustus and including Poe's William Wilson and Stoker's Dracula as well as Heart of Darkness and The Secret Sharer, Pynchon's story is a serious and detailed attempt to replace the Freudian psychoanalytic accounts of the self, fashionable in American society in the 50's, with a Jungian account. The central pun of "going native," as Siegel suspects, does not have to do with a place so much as with an inner compulsion. A cultivated plant such as a rose, if left to itself, returns to a state of nature, to its original wild rootstock. To go native is to surrender to what is more primitive; in Jungian terms the "primitive" is the shadow behind the persona. The persona Siegel has adopted is that of the suave British officer out of a John Buchan novel (ominous if one recalls the advice given in The Thirty-Nine Steps [1914], that the secret of playing "Peter's Game," of playing a part, is to think yourself into it: "You will never keep it up
unless you convince yourself that you are it"). Siegel has repressed his childish fears, which have developed an unconscious, autonomous life behind this mask—the shadow.

The reader who has become accustomed to Freudian-style character analyses from the 20's onwards will be surprised that no information is given about Siegel's childhood. The formative influence on his adult life is not his infantile past, particularly not any Oedipal relationship with his father—although the strength of his mother's personality is important—but a religious experience in his adolescence. In "Mental Disease and the Psyche" (1928), Jung links paranoia to just such a "particular psychological moment" when "the spiritual form which the paranoid's emotions needed in order to live finally broke down." Siegel himself traces the "whole host of trodden-on and disaffected" who have sought healing comfort from him back to the "timid spindle-shanked boy in a slashed necktie" at the shivah for Miriam. According to Mitchell, the fictional anthropologist, Ojibwa Indians have such a moment culturally induced. Both cultures identify manhood with self-sufficiency, conceived as isolation.

Siegel's compensatory, artificial British persona, which he has adopted from his boyhood reading, resembles Lupescu's tweed-jacketed persona and Grossman's, merely a mirror image that takes on life as "a character in a British war flick," a moving image. Jung says: "The construction of an artificial personality becomes an unavoidable necessity" in society, but "to the degree the world invites the individual to identify with the mask, he is delivered over to influences from within," the influences of the primitive ("The Relations Between the Ego and the Unconscious" [1928]).

Jung recognises that the change from one milieu to another brings about a striking alteration of personality, even in normal individuals, but it is typical of the schizophrenic that his self doubles, or splits into a number of autonomous personalities which "know each other intimately, but they have no valid arguments against one another" (MDP). Such complexes or "personality fragments . . . behave like Descartes's devils and seem to delight in playing impish tricks" ("A
Review of Complex Theory"[1934]). Thus the nimble machiavellian jesuit and the Jewish mensch inside Siegel are not simply metaphors but the personality fragments that shadow his nonchalant mask. And the strange idea that Rachel represents destruction makes sense in Jungian terms if she is the projection of his anima. In fact, having thought of Rachel, Siegel immediately does meet the name and face of his destruction, when the door opens and the mirror-image of Lupescu confronts him and introduces himself. This is the moment of the "spell"; Lupescu is Siegel's Steppenwolf, his doppelgänger, both his likeness and the premonition of his destruction. (Rumania is the location of Transylvania, thus linking Lupescu to the vampire Dracula whose "eyebrows were massive" too.

In a ghoulishly appropriate way, Lucy is also the name of the heroine in Stoker's novel, a vamp who became a vampire like her seducer. Lupescu is derived, of course, from lupus, the Latin word for "wolf," as in wolf-man.) Grossman's quotation from the Bible, "house divided against itself," to describe Siegel's nature and to identify the seed of his destruction, imitates Jung's use of biblical parables as psychological insights. A man cannot hope to cast his self out of himself; somehow he must reconcile opposing tendencies. Otherwise, he bears his own destruction within.

Lupescu and Siegel are both double-goers in a pun in which the word mirrors itself: they are both divided selves themselves, seeing double, double dealing with other people, and they are also each other's doubles, duplicating each other's duplicity. Once Siegel identifies with Lupescu, he is "delivered over to the forces within."

Lupescu, however, had realized the part he'd been forced to play, and if Siegel redeems no one else, he releases Lupescu from his role: "Mistah Kurtz--he dead." Lupescu's comment to Siegel that, although the Washington crowd has changed, "the types are constant" recalls Jung's Psychological Types, in which he formulated his theory of introverts and extroverts. According to this theory, Nathan Levine in "The Small Rain" would be a neurotic extrovert who has sunk into depression; Siegel would be a neurotic (psychotic) introvert who has retreated into emotional isolation. It
is from this source that Pynchon derives his groan-
ful pun which is the climax of Siegel's identifica-
ion with that other mad soul, Lupescu's shadow, Kurtz:
"introverts become incapable of love and retreat into
an ivory tower of emotional isolation."

Thus the idea of "going native" and that of founding
one's identity on a conventional appearance, brilli-
antly coalesced in the image of Grossman at the
mirror converting himself into a social stereotype and
thus going native in Boston, are the two aspects of
one phenomenon: the respectable persona becoming
dissociated from its more primitive shadow, the
unconscious. The gothic terror novel had grasped a
profound psychological truth about the nature of the
self and the need to recognise evil if it is to be
restrained. Measure for Measure makes a similar point:
Angelo's respectable facade conceals a disreputable,
lecherous shadow, more sinister than the rampant
sexuality of the society he pretends to reform.
Kurtz's inner nature is more brutish than the natives
are. The primitive is powerful energy, and the final
metaphor of Siegel as a defenceless matador sums up
his psychic helplessness. Inwardly, he is still a
boy frightened of death, not the cool hero of his
public pose.

Pynchon's joke is to get his reader to identify
with Siegel, and then gradually to pull the cape away.
His last laugh is to identify Siegel's "monumental,"
"ivory tower" coolness with Washington's paranoid
administration by way of the Washington Monument of
the opening paragraph. We, the lecteurs, become hypo-
crites for laughing; the destruction that may well
occur to our lifetime is hardly a laughing matter.

--University of Malaga

Notes

1 "The Small Rain," Cornell Writer, 6, no. 2 (March 1959), 14-
32; rpt. in Slow Learner (Boston, 1984). For "Mortality and Mercy
in Vienna," Epoch, 9, no. 4 (Spring 1959), 195-213, which was
omitted from Slow Learner, I have used the Aloes Books edition
(London) undated and unpaginated.
2 Cencrastus, 5 (Summer 1981) published a "slightly shortened version" of this story, omitting the second and third pages and thus all information which explains Siegel's paranoia (and, incidentally, the dreams that link him to Shelley; see A Defence of Poetry).

3 Not as frequently as in "The Small Rain." I count twenty-eight expletives in its twenty-odd pages; "God" has a capital letter.

4 A. J. Ayer popularised the tenets of logical positivism in Language, Truth & Logic (1936), which claimed that statements purporting to be about "God" were "literally meaningless."

5 The list also includes: F. Dostoyevsky, The Double (1846); Hermann Hesse, Steppenwolf (1927); James Hogg, The Private Memoirs & Confessions of a Justified Sinner (1824); R. L. Stevenson, The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde (1886); and O. Wilde, The Picture of Dorian Gray (1891).

The Clock as Metaphor in "Mondaugen's Story"

Jimmie E. Cain, Jr.

To Tony Tanner, Pynchon's novels suggest "that the fantasies we build to help us live represent, in fact, an infiltration of that death we think we are so eager to postpone."¹ Tanner refers here to a propensity of many to "avoid confronting the human reality of other people, and of themselves, by all manner of depersonalizing strategies" (23). To avoid the specter of death, men either exchange their humanity for "inanimate objects and abstract theories"² or reduce their fellows--those reminders of age, decay, ineluctable mortality--to inconsequential, dehumanized object status. The novel V. offers manifold examples of both tendencies. Rachel's fondness for her M.G., Eigenvalue's attachment to his precious dentures, Mantissa's obsession with Botticelli's Birth of Venus, and, obviously, V.'s desire for "a foot of amber and gold" (459) illustrate how far people will go in seeking some comforting thing, some object "to pray to,"³ to quote Henry Adams. The reduction of people to "thing-status" (Tanner 23) is no less apparent in V.'s manipulation of Mélanie and the "near-inanimate barmen, taxi-drivers, bellhops, guides" (384) populating the tourist's Baedeker world.

An equally popular response to death in V. is a rage for order. Sensing that "chaos [is] the law of nature" (Adams 451), man develops an urgency for the great plan, the universal schematic which ties all of life's varied and seemingly random elements into an intelligible, thus controllable, whole. Such a notion constitutes Sidney Stencil's conception of "The Situation," and he recognizes that the organization which man deludes himself into perceiving in the world has no "objective reality" (174) and that "order [is] the dream of man" (Adams 451).

This demand for meaning and orderliness also finds expression in the image of the clock in V. Allusions to time and clocks appear throughout the novel. It is not for nothing that when seeking work and purpose
Profane visits the "Space/Time Employment Agency" (199) where he meets "a slim girl who seem[s] to be all tight--tight underwear, stockings, ligaments, tendons, mouth, a true windup woman--moving precisely" (200) through the hours of her day. Her name, Rachel Owlglass, conjures up the hourglass. Likewise, Profane feels somehow trapped in the "simple clockwork" (201) of a yo-yo's existence.

Of more interest, however, is the clock as a metaphor for the closed system, "an isolation defined by boundaries that enclose a totality and an organization that tends increasingly toward chaos." The clock, as a mechanism of redundancy operating along rigidly defined and controlled lines, is designed to record time through a fixed scale of twelve hours, creating an artificial order Pynchon terms a perpetual "mirror-time" (36), time as merely repetition, a reflection of that which has already been, not a process toward something new or different. When robbed of energy, either electrical or mechanical, the clock loses organization and slips into disorder, the eventual end of all closed systems, whether biological, mechanical, or social. Nowhere is this metaphorical function of the clock more evident than in "Mondaugen's Story." More particularly, clock imagery informs the entropic process of Foppl's siege party, an affair which moves steadily toward disorder as the fortress becomes further isolated from the people and events surrounding it.

Foppl's fortress itself has some affinity with the clock, and both can be seen as closed systems. Constructed as a redoubt of German imperialism, the fortress stands as a tribute to von Trotha's abominations of 1904 and a buttress--a means both to "confront shapeless space" (Tanner 34) and to arrest time, to replay history--against the recession of the sanguinary glory won in Deutsch-Sudwestafrika. A clock "controls" time by imposing on what is essentially a continuum an arbitrary, thus factitious, mechanical segmentation and unvarying reiteration. Like the clock, the fortress provides Foppl and his guests a means by which they may "control time . . . [and] impose their own history on the events of the world" (Plater 39), allowing them an
opportunity to recreate the events of "nearly twenty years" (223) past. Annular, with ravines and fortifications set in ever-tightening, concentric circles, the fortress appears to be a clock on a grand scale when seen from above. Also, its internal workings are as well ordered as the clock's. Moving through a series of recurring meals, parties, debaucheries, and killings, the inhabitants "mark time" in an environment hermetically sealed off from the outside world, perpetuating a redundancy of movement as thorough as that of the clock. Such repetitiveness brings about a disregard among the residents for human life. Indulging in life only as voyeurs, they step out of the realm of human compassion and into a solipsistic detachment which leads them to treat others as objects, to live in a hall of mirrors where "they experience life only as spectacle" (Tanner 25).

The clock dominates the whole story as well, and in his wanderings Mondaugen confronts numerous dehumanized characters who have become clocklike. Before his stay at Foppl's, Mondaugen meets Willem van Wijk, a petty official who sees himself and other bureaucrats as the lead weights of a fantastic clock, necessary to keep it in motion, to keep an ordered sense of history and time prevailing against chaos. (216)

In his behavioral regularity, Foppl approaches clockwork, assembling in his mirror-time fascination an array of souvenirs from the von Trotha era. Portraits of the general adorn galleries and hallways; military attire of the period garbs many revelers--especially Foppl himself--and the bloody counter-rebellion's ubiquitous emblem, the sjambok-scarred Bondel, presents itself at almost every turn. Most fittingly, in the very bowels of his home Foppl maintains a mechanical solar system. Set in motion through a complicated arrangement of belts, pulleys, and gears attached to a treadmill, the planetarium reduces its operator--usually a Bondel--to a trifling part of its mechanism, making him party to the "parody of space" (222) and time it represents. The planetarium, like the fortress, simulates a clock, "parodying" in this instance the movements of the celestial spheres on
which time is based. Yet nothing emulates the clock more poignantly than Vera Meroving, V. in one of her many guises. In mad allegiance to the clock, she replaces one of her eyes with a miniature timepiece complete with

the delicately-wrought wheels, springs, ratchets of a watch, wound by a gold key which [she] wore on a slender chain round her neck. (219)

Hoping to force "the events of life to conform to some elaborate vision known only to her" (Plater 33), Vera Meroving appropriates time and history even more deliberately than Foppl. Her assimilation of time, at least the instrument thereof, indicates a "closed world of time made personal" (Plater 34).

Only Mondaugen escapes the physically and spiritually debilitating fortress, Foppl's haven of arrested time. Mondaugen's departure, to some extent, results from his access to external events, since the "sferics" he monitors are the "only link remaining with the kind of time that continued to pass outside Foppl's" (256). Although tempted, as are Weissmann and others, to find an absolute "code" (258) in the disparate atmospheric whistles, pops, and static his apparatus records, Mondaugen refrains from interpreting them as some conscious message, a stance foreshadowing his position in Gravity's Rainbow. An older Mondaugen, after his stint in Africa, "recognizes the need for an illusion of order and sequence with which men can explain their existences," yet he rejects "a cause and effect, sequential system of time and history," subscribing instead to an "Einsteinian," relativistic view of the world (Plater 37). The seeds of such consciousness rest in the only "message," if it may be deemed such, the sferics communicate in V.: "'The world is all that the case is'" (259), the opening proposition of Wittgenstein's Tractatus.

This inkling of the essential randomness, the accidental make-up, of life leads Mondaugen to abandon the seeming, insular security of Foppl's for free-flowing time. He flees from a people, particularly Foppl and Vera Meroving, who have not only appropriated
time and history but also given it a specific, fixed geography of Germany or of desirable colonial substitutes. Opting for the living world of the present, Mondaugen leaves the fortress to the "dehumanized and aloof" (260), saved from extinction in Foppl's personal space/time continuum by the knowledge "that history is all that is the experience of time" (Plater 41), by the realization that events carry with them a multitude of possible "historical" interpretations, no one necessarily more valid than another. When he last sees them, the guests and host alike are bleached "Fasching-white" (260), their faces little more than "concave cheeks, highlighted temples, bone of the starved corpse" (226) as are those of the masses populating depression Munich. Transformed by the slant and intensity of the light of the morning sun into the ghosts haunting Mondaugen's Fasching dream--ghosts who are caught in the reach of the "black . . . clock" which ticks "terribly loud in strange waves of silence that [sweep] regularly over the company" (226)--the fortress's inhabitants are victims of "the despotism of artificial order which nature abhor[s]" (Adams 458):

--West Georgia College

Notes

The Crying of Lot 49: A Source Study
Adrian Emily Richwell

Although the heroine of Thomas Pynchon's novel The Crying of Lot 49, Oedipa Maas, has a name that has invited comparison to Sophocles' Oedipus Rex, critics have overlooked the striking parallels between Pynchon's novel and Sophocles' Oedipus at Colonus. Both The Crying of Lot 49 and Oedipus at Colonus open with a journey and end on a note of religious mysticism; and both are concerned with the wandering and exile of their major characters. In addition to these structural and thematic similarities, explicit verbal links between the two works establish the later play as a major source for the novel.

According to Edward Mendelson, "it was an act of courage [for Pynchon] to name his heroine Oedipa. [The Crying of Lot 49] contains not even a single reference to her emotional relations with her parents or her impulses toward self-creation." This view is typical of the puzzlement critics feel when they compare Oedipa to her more famous Sophoclean namesake in Oedipus Rex. Yet an examination of Oedipus at Colonus reveals that this is the play that Pynchon had in mind when he selected a name for his heroine.

When we realize that Pynchon's Oedipa is a character who "wants to right wrongs 20 years after it's all over" we see the importance of taking Oedipus at Colonus into account as a source for the novel. What appears to be merely a facetious remark by Oedipa's lover, Metzger, about her political commitment turns out to be an explicit verbal link between The Crying of Lot 49 and Oedipus at Colonus. Not only is twenty years the approximate time that has elapsed between the action of Oedipus Rex and Oedipus at Colonus, but also Metzger's words are a remarkably pithy recapitulation of the theme of the later play. For it is precisely Oedipus' determination "to right wrongs twenty years after it is all over," to lay down the burden of his guilt and restore order and justice to his conflict-torn state, that initiates the drama of Oedipus at Colonus.
Other important verbal links between the two works establish a correspondence between Oedipus' arrival at Colonus, near Athens, and the arrival of Oedipa Maas in San Narciso. Both Athens and San Narciso are characterized by the same flower: Athens is a city where "the clusters of narcissus bloom, /Time-hallowed garlands for the brows." And San Narciso, of course, refers to the narcissus. Moreover, if Athens is best known as "the land beloved of horsemen" (line 668), the San Narciso of which Pynchon writes is also a city notable for its horsemen, the Tristero riders. Thus, both works open with the arrival of their protagonists in a new city, an arrival that emphasizes the central importance in each work of a journey motif.

Structural similarities are also apparent at the conclusion of each work. Oedipus' death, like the Tristero auction, is not represented in the text, and the mystery surrounding the circumstances of Oedipus' death and burial is paralleled in The Crying of Lot 49 by the ominous air of secrecy surrounding the auction of the Tristero forgeries. It is even hinted that the auction may be Oedipa's death scene, for "The men inside the auction room wore black mohair and had pale, cruel faces. [... ] An assistant closed the heavy door on the lobby windows and the sun. She heard a lock snap shut: the sound echoed a moment" (137-38). Like the death of Oedipus, the auction is attended by religious ritual. In the closing scene of the novel, Passerine, the auctioneer, spreads his arms "in a gesture that seemed to belong to the priesthood of some remote culture, perhaps to a descending angel" (138). Hence, both works not only begin with a journey but also end on a note that emphasizes a theme of religious mysticism.

Perhaps the most compelling evidence supporting Oedipus at Colonus as a source for The Crying of Lot 49 is the fact that Oedipus' transformation into a hero at the end of the play is matched by Oedipa Maas' hard-won dignity and stature. (A nationalistic impulse informs both works, and Oedipus stands in the same relation to Thebes as Oedipa does to America.) "I am an exile," proclaims Oedipus (line 208) in response to the chorus; and in a like manner, Oedipa wonders, "How
many shared Tristero's secret as well as its exile?" (136). Yet despite their alienation, Oedipus is able to confer honor on Athens, and Oedipa realizes that the legacy she has discovered is America. Thus, the verbal, structural, and thematic links between Oedipus at Colonus and The Crying of Lot 49 indicate that the play is an important source for the novel.

--University of California/Los Angeles

Notes


4 C. M. Bowra, Sophoclean Tragedy (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1944), claims that the theme of Oedipus at Colonus is the transformation of Oedipus into a hero.
Further Notes and Sources

Steven Weisenburger

"Look down at the bottom of the text of the day, where footnotes will explain all." So advises the narrator of Gravity's Rainbow (V204, B238), who later mocks our inclination towards endless pedantic emendation of those same "footnotes." Never mind the mockery; numerous references in the novel show that Pynchon himself is a close reader of scholarly annotations. For other emendators, here then are some corrections/additions to David Seed's "Further Notes and Sources for Gravity's Rainbow" (PNotes, 16 [Spring 1985], 25-36), a quite useful addition to the textual study of the novel. Page references are to the Viking (1973) and Bantam (1974) editions.

(V32, B36) "'Zipf's Principle of Least Effort [. . .] sort of bow shape'"--Like Douglas Fowler (A Reader's Guide to Gravity's Rainbow), David Seed too hastily sees this as pointing anachronistically to George Kingsley Zipf's 1949 book, Human Behavior and the Principle of Least Effort. Instead, the source for this complex, arresting reference is Zipf's 1935 study, The Psycho-Biology of Language (Boston: Houghton Mifflin). Zipf was a Professor of Philology and Linguistics at Harvard during the time of Slothrop's fictional attendance, and in the 1935 book he set out to examine language-change as "a natural and biological phenomenon to be investigated in the spirit of the exact sciences." Studying everyday speech, he concluded that patterns of "abbreviation"--ways of economizing discourse that would later be put under the rubric of his "principle of least effort"--are the single most important key to unlocking the dynamics of linguistic evolution. Much of Zipf's work relies on various statistical and probabilistic tests applied to recorded samples of ordinary discourse, and the book is thus chock-a-block with "word-frequency graphs" plotting on double-logarithmic charts the frequency of occurrence of a word or abbreviational pattern: abscessas indicate the number of words/sample, ordnates the number of occurrences/sample. These,
in short, are the "axes" Milton Gloaming describes to a perplexed Jessica Swanlake.

The arresting thing is that Zipf found natural speech always yielding a straight line in the graphs, a line which could be described by a simple mathematical formula precisely analogous to that "for gravity" (Zipf 224). However, in pathological and artistic usage this law no longer holds. As Gloaming explains it to Jessica, the graphs of schizophrenic speech yield, instead of the straight line, a "sort of bow shape." This appropriation of Zipf's data thus tallies with other images in Gravity's Rainbow in which the arch, the parabola, and the bow are all signs of disturbance and pathology, often (incidentally) on the creative side.

(V90, B104), "'his MMPI. His F Scale?'"--As Seed notes, the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory "was designed" at the University of Minnesota. But this was actually in 1940; in 1943 it was released for general use by the United States Army, which had originally contracted for the test. More important, Pynchon's mention of an "F Scale" is very likely not to The Authoritarian Personality by Adorno et al. (1950). While an engaging possibility, such a reference is first of all anachronistic (as Seed notes) and second of all outside the context of Pointsman's remarks about Slothrop's MMPI results: "'Falsifications, distorted thought processes... The scores show it clearly: he's psychopathically deviant, obsessive, a latent paranoid.'"

More exactly, the "F Scale" is one of four "validity scales" intended to assist with evaluation of MMPI results, and it serves to index such "undesirable behavior" as "deliberate malingering" or "simple carelessness" by the test-taking subject. In addition, the F Scale may correlate with other indications of psychosis that crop up in the test. Or it may indicate that the subject was trying to outwit the test, perhaps for reasons of paranoid psychosis. Pynchon's probable source for this and other references to psychological testing is Anne Anastasi's standard (undergraduate) textbook in the field, Psychological Testing 3rd ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1968), here 498-505.
(V749, B874) "an Aggadic tradition [. . .] that Isaac [. . .] saw the antechambers of the Throne"--Seed vaguely cites "rabbinical scriptures" on the tradition of Isaac's near-sacrifice, but Pynchon's actual source is Gershom Scholem's Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism (1941; rpt. New York: Schocken Books, 1954), especially 53, 61-63. As Scholem explains it, in the major writings of Judaiaca two classes of text stand out: Halakah, those writings occupied with sacred law; and Aggadah, which means "narrative" and designates a hotch-potch of writings consisting of folk tales, dramatic dialogues, parables, allegories, maxims, satires, puns, anagrams, and so on. (In this sense, Gravity's Rainbow is just such a text.) The Aggadic writings are pre-Kabbalistic, dating from the first century B.C. until about the tenth century A.D. Among them is a fourth century MS, "The Apocalypse of Abraham," which Scholem connects with the Merkabah mysticism of the time, for it is concerned with a seven-fold ascent through the antechambers to Jahweh's throne. However, Pynchon has worked a significant inversion of the tradition. In "The Apocalypse of Abraham" it is the patriarch and not his son who ascends to the throne. On his way, Abraham hears a hymn "like the voice of the waters in the rushing of the streams" (Scholem 61; but recall Pynchon's numerous references, vis-a-vis Rilke, to similar "rushing waters"). Abraham is hearing the singing of angelic hosts guarding the divine throne, and he hears them from the sixth antechamber. In Pynchon's version, however, it is Isaac under the blade who has this visionary experience.

Readers should also compare the events in Episode 4, Part 2 of Gravity's Rainbow, Brigadier Pudding's coprophagia with Katje Börgesius--his Domina Nocturna. Beginning with Pynchon's allusion to "blessed Metatron" (V231, B269), there is a satirical inversion of the Kabbalistic ascent to the Merkabah, or divine throne, each of the "antechambers" Pudding moves through significantly distorting, or upending, elements of the Kabbalistic narrative (see Scholem 40-79).

---University of Kentucky
Coincidental and Contrived Dates in Gravity's Rainbow

William E. McCarron

Gravity's Rainbow gives some prominence to the year of Pynchon's birth, 1937. Pökler reminisces about the building of "Pennemünde in 1937" (Viking, 404), and a "'37 Ford" is mentioned three times (644-45). We may recall that V. was published in 1963, The Crying of Lot 49 in 1966, and Gravity's Rainbow in 1973; the separation between first and second novels is three years, between second and third novels seven years. Pynchon is equally adept with his birth year's obverse, the number 73. It marks the publication year as well as the number of "ohapters" (or film clips) in Gravity's Rainbow. Pynchon's birthday, May 8, also comes in for coincidental play. For example, V-E Day, marking the surrender of Germany, was May 8, 1945, Pynchon's eighth birthday. In addition, Pynchon's birthday is the birthday "of that President Truman" (382), whom Slothrop hopes to catch a glimpse of at Potsdam.

If we trace further the eighth day of months in Gravity's Rainbow, we find even more coincidences. The first V-2 rocket to hit London did so on September 8, 1944--the same day the real Duncan Sandys proclaimed in the London press that the German rocket blitz was at an end.1 Toward the end of Gravity's Rainbow, the reader can begin to gauge Pynchon's time scheme because of references to the atomic bombs which hastened V-J Day. Bomb number two was dropped on Nagasaki on August 8, 1945 (the eighth month of the year).

Along the same line, Pynchon's penchant for his date of birth might help explain the nagging anachronism of Blodgett Waxwing's having "seen The Return of Jack Slade twenty-seven times" (247). Could it be that Pynchon is poking fun at us by a deliberately contrived reversal of the number "10" (3+7 or 7+3)? The movie, as we know, came out in 1955, but, then again, with Pynchon's love of 73 and its reversal, one would expect that Waxwing, the aficionado of western movies, would
have seen Slade thirty-seven times. If we back up
ten years, then, of course, Slade "would" have been
made in 1945.

--USAF Academy

Notes

1 R. V. Jones, Most Secret War: British Scientific Intelligence
Notes

Philip Smith has discovered that the Van Dyke Parks 1967 LP Song Cycle (Warner Bros. WS 1727) features an allusion to Pynchon on the sleeve notes:

Botticelli and Mahler . . . , Thomas V. Pynchon and John-John the littlest Kennedy . . . could tell you more about Van Dyke Parks than I; I am only one song, they are only others.

Parks was Brian Wilson's lyricist during the 1966-67 era covered in Jules Siegel's "Goodbye Surfing, Hello God" and "Who is Thomas Pynchon?" articles. Parks may have met Pynchon at a session or perhaps at Brian Wilson's house. There are many extant photos taken in the recording studios at this time; Smith has looked at some, but no Pynchon is evident.

* * *

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Steven Moore is soliciting essays on Joseph McElroy for a special issue of The Review of Contemporary Fiction which he is guest-editing: deadline October, 1988. If interested, write him at 268 Livingston, New Brunswick, NJ 08901.
Bibliography
(--1986)

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.

PYNCHON:


CRITICISM AND COMMENT:


V. focuses on "the loss of the objective constituent of history," but reveals "the knowable general causes."


Criticizes Pynchon's "schematic conception of the movement of history, which is his subject" and his "finally not taking history very seriously."


Bell-Villada, Gene L. "Traces the indebtedness of Pynchon and other "North American fantasists" to Borges.


Briefly compares and contrasts Roth with Pynchon and West.


New material: Harold Bloom, "Introduction," 1-9; reprints essays and chapters by Kermode, Mendelson, Friedman and Puetz,
Hendin, Poirier, Levine, Stimpson, New, Quilligan, Smith and Töloolyan, Seed, fanner, Werner, and Berger.


New material: Harold Bloom, "Introduction," 1-9 [identical with the Introduction to Thomas Pynchon above]; reprints essays and chapters by Poirier, Fussell, Mendelson, Mackey, Tanner, Werner, and Schwab.


"Briefly Noted." Rev. of Slow Learner. New Yorker, 23 Apr. 1984, 130.


Cook, Don L. Rev. of Ideas of Order in the Novels of Thomas Pynchon. American Literature, 56, No. 4 (1984), 625-27.


"Inverarity's letter from the dead [his will] has forced Oedipa to look into a financial and semiotic estate... has instituted her as a privileged decipherer/reader."


GR "dramatizes on different levels the epistemological crisis of contemporary science and philosophy" on "all levels of the writing and not only that of theme or narrative."


Lot 49 is an "anagogic game of wits Pynchon is playing with the reader."


Discusses paranoia in GR ("one of the most remarkable works of fiction in our time") and relates creative paranoia to the dream work.


Places GR in literary and historical context. Discusses the "closing gap between fantasies of power and transactions of power in the twentieth century."


Cites "many and striking" similarities between GR and Under the Volcano, especially their encyclopaedism and their "strong ethical thrust . . . which attempts to close the emotional and imaginative gap between world and book, reader and text."


Includes a transcript of Corey's acceptance speech.


Mentions V. and Lot 49.


Hays, Peter L. "Pynchon's 'Entropy': A Russian Connection." Pynchon Notes, 16 (1985), 78-82.


Reports a late-night phone call from Pynchon, "outrage[d]" by British customs authorities' seizure of Larry Kramer's Faggots.


Discusses serial narrative, situationalism, fragmentation and disintegration, the transcendance of binarism, "epistemological radicalness and 'abstraction' of theme from character and plot."

Discusses ethical and epistemological values in the abstract Situation, paranoia, reflection and imagination, and the "fantastic paradox" of action.

"Social Criticism and the Deformation of Man: Satire, the Grotesque and Comic Nihilism in the Modern and Postmodern American Novel." Amerikastudien, 28 (1983), 141-203. (169, 179-82, and passim)

Pynchon "sets satire and its moral demands for order and meaningfulness against the state of social entropy."


Argues for Jakov Lind's Self-Portrait as a source for the figure of Slothrop.


Mentions Lot 49.


"It was Kafkaesque, Nabokovian, Pynchonian, a ludicrous Master Plot from the crazed imagination of some Modern Novelist high on drugs and paranoia."


Places Pynchon on the modernist/postmodernist continuum.


"V. is about how a woman is narrative's problem, about how a woman is the object of the subject-in-narrative's quest."


Pynchon "take[s] vehement stands against a technology [he feels] is seducing man into complacency and self-destruction."


Covers Pynchon, Gaddis, Barth, McElroy, and Mailer.


Cites Slothrop's "emotional-deictic that" as a sign of his "very real isolation" and as a "means of reaching out."


LaSalle, Peter. "'Sumer is icumen in, Llude sing cuccu'!" rev. of Slow Learner. America, 14 July 1984, 16-17.


In Sandstone prison, Leary read GR, "the best book I had run across since Ulysses." Later: "The next stop was the county jail in Yolo, California, where my name was Thomas Pynchon."


Quotes "[t]he eminent Cornell psycho-pharmacologist Thomas Pynchon" on the effects of X-T-C.

Lenz, William Ernest, III. "Fast Talk and Flush Times: The Rise and Fall of the Confidence Man as a Literary


On changing one's name from Tommy Pinkowitz.


Briefly discusses the city as "site" and "text" in Pynchon's novels. Pynchon and Bellow are both "symptomatic in their representation of a re-mystified world."

----------. "Reading the Illegible: Modern Representations of Urban Experience." Southern Review, 22, No. 3 (1986), 443-74. (459-64)

Expanded version of the above. Discusses Pynchon's relation to the "entire historical tradition of writing about urban experience."


"[L]ike Pynchon, MacDonald translates this sense of global disintegration into social and personal terms."


"Pynchon's novels are crucially charged by the doctrines and discoveries of modern science"; he appropriates "the mode which has grown up with that science, adapting its uniquely accommodating processes to his own uses, while removing them so far from conventional SF that they, too, are transformed."


"The dominant of Modernist writing is epistemological. . . . The dominant of Postmodernist writing is ontological." The career of Pynchon, among others, "travel[s] the entire trajectory from Modernist to Postmodernist poetics."


Compares Pynchon with Hawthorne and Melville. "In Pynchon even physical description works like research, throwing doubt on the reality it purports to detail."


"An examination of the paradoxical relationship between plastic and plasticity in [GR] yields insights which contribute to an interdisciplinary analysis of contemporary [culture]."


Molander, Roger. "How I Learned to Start Worrying and Hate the Bomb." Washington Post, 21 March 1982, D1, D5. (05) Mentions the debate in GR over probability vs. causality.


Brief comparison/contrast with GR.


Chapter 6: "Reading in the Servo-Mechanical Loop: The Machinery of Metaphor in Pynchon's Fictions."

Powers, Thomas. "Of Several Minds (Cont.)." Commonweal, 4 June 1982, 328-29. (329)

GR, "the history of the next war, written in advance."


Quotes Harold Bloom: "the living American fiction writer is Thomas Pynchon."

Rev. of Pynchon's Fictions. Antioch Review, 40, No. 1 (1982), 120.


In a discussion of artistic immortality and identifying with one's idols, quotes GR on Dilling's "few seconds' strange mercy" (516).


Pynchon's novels' "formal innovation explores literary and social discourse." He shifts "the previous social context of rebellion to the social text of ideology."


"Pynchon may be said to out-Kafka Kafka." But "[q]uest and failure, in Kafka, are there only to point to their unspecified object, a subject for reflection without end; [in Pynchon], quest and failure are the subject itself."


Lot 49 exemplifies "how the fantastic can be used to deal with truth's uncertainty."

GR is "[t]he best long read ever. . . . A monster masterpiece, denser than a dwarf star and twice as bright."


---------. "Further Notes and Sources for Gravity's Rainbow." Pynchon Notes, 16 (1985), 25-36.


Certain twentieth-century novels, including Lot 49, "possess what are surely more covert or circuitous reflections on the religious meaning of America than their great nineteenth-century predecessors."


Spirer, Ellen. "'Candidates for Survival': A Talk with Harold Bloom." Boston Review, Feb. 1986, 12-13. (13) "Probably the most powerful living Western writer is Samuel Beckett. He's certainly the most authentic. In this country, it is Thomas Pynchon in prose, and as I say Warren, Merrill, Ashbery in verse."


Thiher, Allen. Words in Reflection: Modern Language Theory and Postmodern Fiction. Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press 1984, 152-54. "[T]he absurdist novel [e.g., GR] must contest its own language and, by so doing, refuse a natural status to any contemporary discourse." In GR, "[t]he narrator/reader/viewer is inscribed in a text that culminates in the narration of its own obliteration."
Toia, Elaine M. "Thomas Pynchon's V.: A Curious Landscape." 
DAI, 47 (1986), 1731A (Lehigh).

Tölöyan, Khachig. Rev. of Slow Learner. Choice, Sept. 
1984, 100.

--------- Rev. of The Cosmic Web, by N. Katherine Hayles. 
MLN, 100, No. 5 (1985), 1174-76.

--------- "Pynchon, Thomas." In Postmodern Fiction: A 
Bio-Bibliographical Guide, ed. Larry McCaffery. Westport, 

Trachtenberg, Alan and Benjamin DeMott, eds. "Thomas 
Pynchon." In America in Literature II. New York: Wiley, 
1978, 1453-55.

Tylee, Claire M. "Thomas Pynchon: The Loss of Tragedy with 
the Spirit of Music." In Los Ultimos Veinte Años en los 
Estudios Anglo-Norteamericanos (Actas del VIII Congreso 

Vauthier, Simone. "Gravity's Rainbow à la carte: notes de 
lecture." Fabula, 3 (1984), 97-118.

Verschueren, Walter Pierre. "Literature and Repetition: 
The Case of American Postmodernism." DAI, 46 (1985), 
427A (SUNY/Binghamton).

Walker, Robert H. "Patterns in Recent American Literature." 
In American Character and Culture in a Changing World, 
ed. John A. Hague. Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1979, 
65-80. (74, 77, 79)

Pynchon engages "literature and morality constructively 
and skillfully."

Watt, Harold H. "Pynchon, Thomas." In Novelists and Prose 
Writers, ed. James Vinson. New York: St. Martin's, 1979, 
996-98.

Weisenburger, Steven. "Pynchon's Hereros: A Textual and 
Bibliographical Note." Pynchon Notes, 16 (1985) 37-45.

"Who Reads Novels? A Symposium." American Scholar, 48, 
No. 2 (1979), 165-90. (174-75)

Jeremy Bernstein reads GR.

Workman, Mark E. "The Role of Mythology in Modern 
Literature." Journal of the Folklore Institute, 18, 

In Lot 49, myth is used metaphorically "to altogether 
dissolve... our categories of cognition."


FORTHCOMING:


Contributors

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BEVERLY LYON CLARK is an associate professor at Wheaton College, having made earlier educational stops at Swarthmore, Fiji, and Brown. She is the co-editor of Critical Essays on Flannery O'Connor and the author of Talking about Writing: A Guide for Tutor and Teacher Conferences and Reflections of Fantasy: The Mirror-Worlds of Carroll, Nabokov, and Pynchon (of which the present essay might be considered a phantom chapter).

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LAURENCE ROSENHEIN is a professor of chemistry at Indiana State University--and is pretty well-read, for a chemist.
CLAIRE M. TYLEE--who is also a qualified town planner--formerly lectured in philosophy at the University of Leicester, and for the Open University, UK. She now teaches in the English Department at the University of Málaga, Spain, where she is in charge of one course on the sociology of English literature, and another on literature in the age of Shakespeare. Her MA thesis was on Pynchon's short fiction, and she is at present working on women's literary reactions to the Great War. She has published articles on Woolf, Wilde, and Joyce, as well as others on Pynchon.

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