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The Varieties of Paranoia in Gravity's Rainbow

by

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Table of Contents

Abstract

This paper is an investigation into the way that paranoia is represented in Thomas Pynchon's novel *Gravity's Rainbow*. Using various definitions of paranoia which are given in the text itself, I outline how each definition is demonstrated, both in narrative events and in the structural principles of the text. As well, I show how each definition may lend a different perspective on the reading process itself, thus implicating the Pynchon's reader in the paranoid dynamic which *Gravity's Rainbow* depicts. In effect, I attempt to return the pluralism to Pynchon's definition of paranoia.

Résumé

Ce papier est une enquête dans la manière que le paranoia est représenter dans le roman de Thomas Pynchon *Gravity's Rainbow*. Avec divers des définitions de le paranoia, qui est donné dans le texte soi-même, j'acquisse comment chaque definition est démontrè, en événements de l'histoire même en les principes structurales du texte. Aussi, je monte comment chaque définition peux prêté une perspective différent sur le procédé de lecture soi-même, ainsi implique le lecteur du Pynchon dans la dynamique du paranoia qui est décrit dans *Gravity's Rainbow*. En effet, je tente retourner le pluriel à la définition de paranoia en Pynchon.

1. Connections

In this paper, I shall be discussing paranoia in Thomas Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow*, paying particular attention to its applicability as a satiric comment upon the limitations of human consciousness. I want to show that in addition to lending focus to his comic vision, paranoia enables Pynchon to express the absurdity of existence in a world with no certainties or fixed meanings. As well, I wish to show how Pynchon structures his text in such a way as to make the condition of paranoia a comment upon and analysis of his reader's condition. One effect of this latter device is aesthetic: by compelling readers to suspect themselves of paranoid patterns of thought, Pynchon is able to make their experience conform more closely to that of his characters. Another effect of the device, and one which concerns me more closely, is a philosophical one whereby readers are made more self-conscious about unquestioned assumptions and conventional frames of thought which may limit their "open-ness" to the text. By bringing the reader's consciousness into question and making it into a problem, Pynchon sets up a dialectic whereby the reader's psyche can develop in the course of its conflict with the text. Because the book is structured like this, it has the power to prompt the reader to a state of self-critical consciousness, and thence to effect viable and lasting change in the reader's sensibilities.

By way of preamble, I would like to indicate the assumptions that determine my approach to the text. First, I would point out that Pynchon provides the reader with no less than five different perspectives on paranoia, each of which I plan to examine individually. In each case, I will cite how Pynchon defines the particular type of paranoia and supply examples of how it is repesented in the text. Further, in keeping with my premise that *Gravity's Rainbow* is a consciousness-changing tool, I will suggest in what way each type of paranoia implicates the reader, the understanding being that readers, glimpsing their reflection in Pynchon's satiric mirror, feel impelled to find ways out of the

limited and arbitrary tunnel vision of their customary frames of reference.

My reasoning in using this approach is that Pynchon has taken the trouble to supply multiple definitions of paranoia, from which fact it would seem to follow that Pynchon's vision is not simply a dualism comprising paranoia and non-paranoia (or "anti-paranoia," as he calls it), but a pluralism involving a variety of paranoias or states of paranoia. It is with respect to this that I have chosen to supply representative examples from the text in order to illustrate each of the definitions; obviously, I can better support my contention that paranoia takes on many forms by showing that Pynchon has embodied each in concrete events in the narrative, or in the structure of the text itself.

Although Pynchon has provided us with many perspectives on paranoia in *Gravity's Rainbow*, to date there are no critical works which demonstrate the way that these perspectives work together to create a vision of paranoia that is nuanced and dynamic. Generally, critics focus on Pynchon's speaking of paranoia as a discovery of connectedness in the world, which they take to be Pynchon's essential statement on the matter. It is true that some critics will relate this "arche-paranoia" to one, or sometimes two, of the other perspectives; however, there is not much overlap among their works apart from their agreement that paranoia is the discovery of connectedness. Brian McHale, for instance, discusses how this arche-paranoia can be contrasted with anti-paranoia. Deborah Madsen does not write of anti-paranoia, but relates paranoia as the discovery of connectedness to paranoia as Puritanism. Mark Richard Siegel also writes of paranoia as connectedness, and counters it with "Creative paranoia"; he does not, however, discuss paranoia as Puritanism in any detail. Scott Sanders is probably one of the most ambitious critics in this respect, having discussed paranoia as connectedness, and showing how it is related to Puritanism, while at the same time suggesting how paranoia is solipsistic.

Sanders's work notwithstanding, paranoia as solipsism has not received much discussion in Pynchon criticism. Madsen speaks of the way that humans insulate themselves from reality by building systems, and David Cowart is informative on the historical solipsism that alienates Pynchon's characters from their past, but in neither of these critics is there an attempt to show how solipsism is a modulation of paranoia.

The most glaring lack in terms of discussions of paranoia in *Gravity's Rainbow* concerns the subject of projection, which is a psychic mechanism closely associated with paranoia. William Plater, Thomas Schaub, and Lawrence Wolfley each discuss projection in their respective studies, but in none of these cases is projection explicitly related to paranoia. This, I think, is an oversight. In my view, one can hardly discuss paranoia without indicating exactly what the role is that projection plays in the condition.

Thus, my work is in part a response to the critical literature on *Gravity's Rainbow* as it exists at present. I want to show how Pynchon's conception of paranoia involves multiple perspectives, rather than only one or two, as well as indicating how these various perspectives work in relation to one another. I think that the issues of Puritanism, solipsism, and projection, for instance, cannot really be discussed in isolation from one another. Further, I think a full-length treatment of the relation of projection to paranoia in *Gravity's Rainbow* will fill a gap that exists in the body of critical response to Pynchon's work as it stands at present.

As I consider each type of paranoia, I will be drawing upon Freud, Koestler, and Norman O. Brown to corroborate Pynchon's depictions of the various types of paranoia. As well, I will be supporting my own interpretations of passages from the text with the readings of other critics who have written on Pynchon or on matters germane to his literary practice. My over-arching assumption

in finding echoes of Pynchon's fictional principles in the non-fictional texts of philosophy and literary commentary is my belief that Pynchon's observations are philosophically valid and applicable to the world outside of the text. That is, I think that his text performs a diagnostic function, reading its readers in such a way that through the dialogue between the text and the reader's interpretations of it, the reader is brought to a certain heightened sense of irony and self-awareness about his or her own tendencies to paranoia, as well as about the limitations and possibilities of that paranoia. It is my opinion that the text works psychoanalytically, "curing" its readers by making them aware of their own condition. What I would like to demonstrate about Pynchon's text, then, is how it may be read as having been constructed to the end of effecting a change in the reader's consciousness. Obviously, much of my concern will be how, from what, and to what, such a reader's consciousness will be changed.

Of course, in employing such a systematic approach to Pynchon's text, I lay myself open to charges of having caught the "mania for name-giving, dividing the Creation finer and finer" (391), and of having subverted Pynchon's text to my own paranoid system of thought. This, unfortunately, is unavoidable. However, I must point out that the metafictional power of *Gravity's Rainbow* is such that it generally anticipates any critical discussion that can be directed at it, deconstructing such discussion by identifying it as another form of paranoia before that discussion has even begun. Indeed, Pynchon seems to single out the literary critic as a particular object of satire. The heroes of his first three novels (Herbert Stencil in *V.*, Oedipa Maas in *The Crying of Lot 49*, Tyrone Slothrop in *Gravity's Rainbow*) are each of them detectives, puzzling out texts and sorting information much after the fashion of a literary critic. The fact that in each of these three novels the quest ends equivocally, or in outright failure, seems to bode ill for the critic who would then choose to approach

and analyze these texts, rather than learn from the experiences depicted therein. One cannot avoid paradox here: the antipathy for systems and analysis that is expressed in Pynchon's work would seem to preclude the possibility of any discussion of that work. Even so, Pynchon's work is recognizably important, and as such merits discussion, though the text itself appears to discourage such discussion. It is with that paradox in mind, then, that I cautiously proceed to add my voice to those which have already gone counter to Pynchon's stated attitudes, and caught the "mania for name-giving."

The first brand of paranoia I wish to consider is characterized as a visionary or hallucinatory kind of paranoia. It is defined in an oft-quoted passage from *Gravity's Rainbow* concerning the fictional drug Oneirine, the psychological effects of which the narrator describes: "Like other sorts of paranoia, it is nothing less than the onset, the leading edge, of the discovery that *everything is connected*, everything in the Creation" (703) [Italics Pynchon's].

There is a certain felicity to this first definition of paranoia. According to psychologist Ernest Becker, paranoia is a response to "randomness" and "meaningless mechanical accident that takes such a heavy toll of beautifully live and pulsating, complex natural organisms" (139). Against a background of disorder and absurdity, the paranoid fantasy provides life with "a focus, a center, with lines running from others to oneself and to one's objects and loved ones" (126). Becker explicitly relates paranoia to a psychological need for connectedness:

> even if he [the paranoid] can't do anything, or especially if he can't do anything, at least he can order the world in his thought, see and make connections between things that are so unconnected; he can put concern back into a world in which there is so little concern. (126)

I should point out here that where Pynchon speaks of a discovery of connections and Becker of a production of connections, both passages nevertheless amount to saying the same thing, except that

Becker is describing events on the level of the unconscious mind, while Pynchon is describing events on the level of the conscious mind. That is, paranoids invent connections between things, but they do so in a process that is largely unconscious (Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, 124). They subsequently "discover" these connections while conveniently forgetting that it was themself that authored those connections. Not least interesting here is the implication that none of us can know how many connections we unconsciously author, and then "discover" later on. In this context, paranoia is the uncertainty principle in epistemological concerns, jeopardizing our claims to know what in the external world, if anything, is connected with what. In the event, the distinction between the paranoid mind and the normal, even the gifted mind, breaks down, and the difference between the two becomes one of degree, rather than of kind. Freud, for instance, thought that the activity of making unconscious connections was universal, rather than reserved to particular forms of psychic disturbance:

> An intellectual function in us demands the unification, coherence and comprehensibility of everything perceived and thought of, and does not hesitate to construct a false connexion if, as a result of special circumstances, it cannot grasp the right one. We know such system formation not only from the dream, but also from phobias, from compulsive thinking and from the types of delusions. The system formation is most ingenious in delusional states (paranoia). (*Totem and Taboo*, 124)

In fact, about the only way to distinguish the paranoid from the otherwise well-adjusted psyche is to recognize the connections produced by the paranoid mind as illegitimate. The problem is, who determines such a thing, and how? From a rigorously logical perspective, there is nothing to prevent even the most unquestioned of connections from being challenged as paranoiac. Something as basic as the idea of a necessary connection between a cause and an effect, for instance, may come under fire as readily as the most patent of delusions. The idea that an effect is essentially linked to a cause cannot be disproved, but, as David Hume showed, neither can it be logically demonstrated (Ayer,

138). In light of Pynchon's discussion of paranoia as a discovery of connections, then, it is possible to think of the concept of causality as an instance in which a kind of paranoia, universal in the human condition, has authored an illegitimate connection between unrelated events.

The idea that causality can be thought of as a paranoid fantasy is given some serious consideration in *Gravity's Rainbow* with Pynchon's depiction of his Pavlovian scientist Edward Pointsman. This particularly driven member of the staff at The White Visitation allows nothing, not even Slothrop's special precognitive sensitivity to rocket strikes, to bring the principle of causality into question. Incapable of having his Behaviourist belief-system challenged, Pointsman responds to the enigma presented in Slothrop's mysterious erections by resorting to diagnostic terms from Pavlov's system, calling Slothrop's behaviour "ultraparadoxical" (90), thereby reasserting, so he thinks, the explanatory power of the Pavlovian model. It is not that easy for Pointsman to fool himself, however. In the end, he is unable to reconstruct a probable mechanistic explanation for Slothrop's response to the rockets, and ultimately schemes to have Slothrop castrated. This ploy of Pointsman's is obviously an attempt to be rid of the troublesome and contradictory evidence that throws his whole system of causality into turmoil. Insofar as he tampers with the facts, rather than revising his interpretation of them, it could be said that Pointsman is driven to overtly paranoiac behaviour, all because of an idea about connections which he is loth to renounce.

A more explicit case of paranoia and the discovery (or production) of connections comes when Slothrop considers possible connections between his antagonist, the comically jingoistic Major Marvy, and the men in the Rolls Royce which Slothrop suspects is following him:

> this is really unhealthy, this Marvy persecution. Is it possible...yup, the thought has certainly occurred to him — that Marvy's in tight with those Rolls Roycers who were after him in Zurich? There may be no limit to their connections. Marvy is buddies with GE, that's Morgan money, there's Morgan money in Harvard, and surely

an interlock someplace with Lyle Bland. (332)

The linkage here is tenuous at best. The fact that there is Morgan money in both GE and Harvard may be quite independent of Marvy's connections with GE, or Lyle Bland's with Harvard, the point being that there may be no direct links between Bland, who keeps Slothrop under surveillance pursuant to the terms of a business deal, and Major Marvy, whom the reader guesses has more personal reasons for tormenting Slothrop. The existence of Morgan money in the background of both figures is not material enough out of which to forge a connection. Further, Slothrop has little idea of who the "Rolls Roycers" really were. Nor does the narrator let us in on Marvy's more recondite alliances. It is Slothrop who decides that there may be "no limit to their connections." Even so, he would have to produce one direct link.

In both of these cases, neither we, nor the characters, know whether the connections they discover or believe in are objectively there in reality. In the event that they are not, we must say of Pointsman and Slothrop that their belief in these connections amount to a distortion of reality. Perception here verges upon paranoia as a fiction or a delusion comes to supplant clarity of vision.

Admittedly, though, we do not experience the world without making connections, as Freud suggested. Perhaps it can be said that experience is not possible without some distortion. Indeed, the belief that reality can be experienced without distortions may itself be another distortion. This certainly seems to be something that both Freud and Pynchon himself would agree with. Pragmatically, the only solution would seem to be living with the knowledge that we do not apprehend reality innocently, but author it in part by introducing connections that are not objectively there. Happily, though, there are spheres of human activity in which, as far as we know, the paranoid production of connections and concomitant distortion of reality can be desirable in themselves. One

of these spheres is in the art of film.

Many commentators, and in particular Clerc, Simmon, Cowart and Moore, have written of the structural importance of films and film technology in *Gravity's Rainbow*. Indeed, *Gravity's Rainbow* is itself often compared to a film, particularly in reference to its style and to its fantasy sequences, many of which latter seem to have been influenced by the cinematic conventions of the 1930's and 40's. More important for my purposes, however, is the fact that the art of film narrative is based on the principle of montage, or the connecting together of separate pieces of film with the intention of having the viewer figure out how the two strips are related to one another. In the cinematic sphere, the spectator's discovery of connections, even the wrong ones, is germane to the communicativeness of the film. Wolfley, in a statement reminiscent of the passage from Freud quoted above, writes: "For the movie audience the mere sequence of events is sufficient; if we fail to catch the connections favored by the director, we invent others equally adequate to our needs" (101). Viewing a film, then, may be seen as being analogical to entertaining a paranoid fantasy. In both, the manufacture of connections, whether correct or not, is a necessary part of the process.

In *Gravity's Rainbow*, there is one particularly avid movie fan, a German rocket engineer named Franz Pökler, who takes this principle to the extreme. Pökler, a dreamy and idealistic man who is obsessed with the possibilities of travel by rocket, has the habit of falling asleep and waking up as he views films, thus missing whole segments of them. His wife, Leni, remonstrates with him at one point: "'You're the cause-and-effect man,' she cried. How did he connect together the fragments [of films] he saw while his eyes were open?" (159). Later, Pynchon gives us an example of the cinematic experience as it appears to Pökler:

> He kept falling asleep, waking to images he could make no sense of at all — a close-up of a face? a forest? the scales of the Dragon? a battle-scene? Often enough,

> it would resolve into Rudolf Klein-Rogge, ancient Oriental thanatomaniac Atilla [...] his wife bitched at Pökler for dozing off, ridiculed his engineer's devotion to cause-and-effect. How could he tell her that the dramatic connections were really all there, in his dreams? How could he tell her anything? (578) [Ellipses mine]

If Pökler, like Pointsman, is a "cause-and-effect man," the difference between the two is Pökler's much greater capacity for imagination, as evidenced by the non-linear fashion in which he views films.

However, Pökler's idiosyncratic manner of viewing films takes on ironic significance as it spills over from the theatre and into his real life:

> There has been this strange connection between the German mind and the rapid flashing of successive stills to counterfeit movement [...] And now Pökler was about to be given proof that these techniques had been extended past images on film, to human lives. (407) [Ellipses mine]

The "proof" the narrator alludes to comes when, by arrangement of his superior, Lieutenant Weissmann, Pökler is allowed an annual two-week furlough with a girl named "Ilse," who may or may not be Pökler's daughter, and whom he sees during "brief visits that are like the frames of a film, large portions of which he is dozing through" (Cowart, 57). Because he only sees her for two weeks out of every year, Pökler is never certain as to whether he is meeting with the same girl each time. In fact, Pökler believes that Weissmann's motives in arranging the visits are less than altruistic, and that the yearly visits are merely a ploy to establish and strengthen Pökler's obligations to Weissmann and the rocket-project. This, taken along with the fact that their visits are so greatly separated in time, raises questions in Pökler's mind as to whether it is really his daughter who is meeting him each year:

> her hair, for one thing, was definitely dark brown, and cut differently. Her eyes were longer, set differently, her complexion less fair. It seemed she'd grown a foot taller. But at that age, they shoot up overnight, don't they? If it *was* "that age..." Even as Pökler embraced her, the perverse whispering began. Is it the same one? Have they

> sent you a different child? Why didn't you look closer last time, Pökler? (417) [Italics and ellipses Pynchon's]

A scientist, he avails himself of Aristotelian logic as he lists the possibilities: "one daughter one imposter? same daughter twice? two imposters? Beginning to work out the combinations for a third visit, a fourth..." (418) [Ellipses Pynchon's].

Finally, however, Pökler makes an act of choice, deciding that he is seeing the same girl every year, and that the girl is his daughter: "this would have to be Ilse — truly his child, truly as he could make her. It was the real moment of conception, in which, years too late, he became her father" (421). Thus, as with the movies he sleeps through, Pökler supplies the dramatic connections to what may merely be repetition:

> The only continuity has been her name, and Zwolfkinder, and Pökler's love — love something like the persistence of vision, for They have used it to create for him the moving image of a daughter, flashing him only those summertime frames of her, leaving it to him to build the illusion of a single child. (422)

We never learn the identity of the girl, though, nor if it is even the same girl from year to year. Schaub comments that "Pökler's uncertainty over the girl's identity is left unresolved as a demonstration that continuity for mortals (here, now) is a matter of choice" (47). Pökler, however, is driven to this choice because "The continuity of an Ilse provides order and meaning to his otherwise barren, fragmented existence" (Clerc, 127). In other words, Pökler opts for paranoia as a response to his otherwise absurd existence, and as a way of putting, as Ernest Becker says, "concern back into a world in which there is so little concern" (126).

If Pökler's decision to turn a succession of girls into "the illusion of a single child" is a distortion of reality, then he is not alone in entertaining this particular type of fallacy. The Russian lieutenant Tchitcherine, for instance, wonders, following his interrogation of Slothrop: "Is there a

single root, deeper than anyone has probed, from which Slothrop's Blackwords only appear to flower separately?" (391). As well, there is the first of "Proverbs for Paranoids" to consider, which states, "You may never get to touch the Master, but you can tickle his creatures" (237). The question here is, can one infer that there is a Master, if creatures are all that one knows? What prevents there being different sources for different creatures, or for "blackwords," or for the girls which Pökler's mind has run together into one? In each case the characters do not seem to demonstrate the connections so much as merely inferring or postulating them. (I would go even further here, and say that in each case, Tchitcherine, Pökler, and Slothrop are committing the same fallacy, i.e., "Mak[ing] a statement about the whole, true only of individual parts" [Lanham, 109]; at the same time, I am aware that my own critical paranoia may have generated the principle that I have employed to connect these three isolated cases, and that, ironically, I have myself lapsed into the very fallacy with which I mean to be charging them.)

As Becker suggests and Pökler's decision illustrates, the need for a world in which things are connected to each other and to oneself is a deeply rooted one. It may be that the human animal needs to be able to situate him or herself in a network of perceived relations in order to feel at home in the world. Given this, we may suppose that the human mind will opt for fantasied plots and paranoiac connections when presented with its alternative, contingency and meaninglessness. Certainly this is suggested by Pointsman's distrust of the statistician Roger Mexico:

> he wrecks the elegant rooms of history, threatens the idea of cause and effect itself. What if Mexico's whole generation have turned out like this? Will Postwar be nothing but "events," newly created one moment to the next? No links? Is it the end of history? (56)

Pointsman's distaste for disconnected "events" could be explained as a human antipathy for "anti-paranoia." The narrator explains: "If there is something comforting — religious, if you want —

about paranoia, there is still anti-paranoia, where nothing is connected to anything, a condition not many of us can bear for long" (434). Slothrop, too, typifies this aversion to disconnectedness: "Either They have put him here for a reason, or he's just here. He isn't sure that he wouldn't, actually, rather have that *reason*...." (434) [Italics, ellipses Pynchon's].

It may be because of this aversion to anti-paranoia that characters are consistently disinclined to credit the operation of coincidence, choosing instead to take what may otherwise be casual repetition as proof that "everything is connected." To be fair, though, some of the coincidences that the characters encounter are extremely suggestive of hidden design. Greta Erdmann, for instance, meeting Slothrop, learns that his current alias is "Max Schlepzig," which happens to be the name of one of the actors who worked with her in the movie *Alpdrücken*, the abandoned set of which she and Slothrop are in at that very moment. To Slothrop's reassurance that "The name's just a random alias" (395), she replies, "Random [...] Another fairy tale word" [Ellipses mine]. Given the circumstances, it is perhaps understandable that Greta finds it a bit fantastic to suppose that Slothrop's alias is only coincidental.

Vaslav Tchitcherine, too, thinks that it is more than mere coincidence that a Georgi Tchitcherine worked on the Rapallo Treaty. Although the narrator tells us that Vaslav is "no relation at all to the Tchitcherine who dealt the Rapallo Treaty with Walter Rathenau" (338), yet Vaslav, like Greta, rules out the possibility of coincidence in the similarity of names:

> it is quite clear to him how his own namesake and the murdered Jew put together an elaborate piece of theater at Rapallo, and that the real and only purpose was to reveal to Vaslav Tchitcherine the existence of Enzian. (352)

As the most paranoid of the characters, Slothrop is by no means exempt from this general scepticism with regard to coincidences. Somewhat ironically, his most explicit doubts concerning the operation

of chance are expressed in a casino:

> Oh, the hand of a terrible croupier is that touch on the sleeves of his dreams: all in his life of what has looked free or random, is discovered to've been under some Control, all the time, the same as a fixed roulette wheel — where only destinations are important, attention is to long-term statistics, not individuals: and where the House always does, of course, keep turning a profit... (209) [Ellipses Pynchon's].

In each of these cases, it is not possible to decide whether latent design or a bizarre sort of randomness underlies these coincidences. An observation of Enzian's seems apposite: "There was no difference between the behavior of a god and the operations of pure chance" (323). This thought crops up again in Beláustegui's meditation upon that which deals him his "hand" in life, "something he calls Chance and Graciela calls God" (613). In the majority of cases, though, given the insupportability of anti-paranoia, characters will opt for the god, the plot, and the hidden design as opposed to chance and random coincidence.

This brings me to the way in which the reader is implicated in a paranoia which involves the discovery that everything is connected. Pynchon effects this by structuring his text in such a way as to put his reader in the position of having to choose between randomness and design in order to account for some of the stylistic features of the book. For instance, there is Pynchon's practice of what David Seed refers to as "a specific kind of repetition [...] apparently designed to foster confusion" (207). As an example, the text twice mentions a horse named "Snake." The first time is in connection with Greta Erdmann, who rode a horse named Snake during the filming of a movie, *Weisse Sandwüste von Neumexico.* Later, we learn that Tchitcherine also rides a horse named Snake. Seed asks at this point, "How can Tchitcherine's American horse also be the horse which Greta Erdmann used in a pre-war film [...]?" (207). To which might be added the question, why can there not be two horses named Snake in the same text? Further, since the text abounds with references

to snakes and serpents, including the *ouroboros* in Kekulé's dream, the fact that the horses are similarly named might simply be meant to direct our attention to this chain of imagery.

Nevertheless, there are readers who equate the two horses on the basis of a belief that fiction is generally a product of rigorous design. Douglas Fowler, for instance, sees the ubiquity of Snake as evidence of a conspiratorial design within the narrative design, and so understands Snake as a sign of "Their' malign web" (184). Steven Weisenberger equates the two horses as well, asserting moreover that Snake is also "the horse of Crutchfield the Westwardman in Slothrop's sodium amytal nightmare" (*Gravity's Rainbow Companion*, 190). In point of fact, however, Crutchfield's horse is not actually given a name. Weisenberger, then, like Fowler, seems to be allowing his expectations of poetic design in fiction to be guiding his response. In any case, it is easy to see that there are two alternatives — the paranoid belief that the two horses are connected, which Fowler and Weisenberger elect, and the anti-paranoid one that they are not, in which case we may need to revise our assumptions concerning fiction.

There are even more complex and confusing patterns of repetition that play fast and loose with the reader's expectations of design in fiction. One of these strands involves "Alpdrucken," a word which Fowler glosses as German for "nightmare" (184). We first encounter it in connection with Edward Pointsman, during his dream in which he is tracking down a dog named "Reichsseiger Thanatz von Alpdrucken" (142). Later, we learn of the film named *Alpdrücken*, whose star, Greta Erdmann, provides a further link with the dog's name, because the name of her husband is Miklos Thanatz. However, if Pointsman, too, is somehow connected with the film, we do not learn what that connection is:

> Pointsman presumably knows Gerhardt von Göll, since the director films the fake Schwarzkommando for Operation Black Wing, of which Pointsman is one of the

> conceivers, but nowhere does Pointsman mention or think of von Göll's movie *Alpdrücken*, or Miklos Thanatz, the husband of its star. As if to mock the Pavlovian's creed, the dog's strange name seems to surface in his dreaming mind with no cause-and-effect justification — one of those not-so-kute-korrespondences which intimate that connections may be made in ways that are invisible and not to be accounted for by Pointsman's mechanistic model of the physical world. (Cowart, 49)

As is suggested by Cowart's comment, the connections, if any, between Pointsman and *Alpdrücken*, are not represented in the text. They are, in fact, conspicuously absent, but for the puzzling fact of Pointsman's dream. The reader is left in a position analogous to that of Franz Pökler at the movies, with the option of inventing dramatic connections in order to bring the representation closer to sense.

Weisenberger has an interesting approach to the Alpdrucken mystery, suggesting in his commentary on the film *Alpdrücken* that "The dog in Edward Pointsman's dream, Reichsseiger von Thanatz Alpdrucken, has fragmented and the parts of his name now begin to metamorphose" (*Gravity's Rainbow Companion*, 189). There is an elegance to this assertion, for, thus interpreted, the "fragmenting" of the dog would seem to foreshadow or parallel the "scattering" of Slothrop later in the novel, the fragments of whom also grow into "consistent personae" (742) of their own. At the same time, Weisenberger's hypothesis comes close to Tchitcherine's possibly mistaken suspicion about Slothrop's "blackwords," and Pökler's decision to derive a single daughter from a succession of "Ilses." As with Snake the horse, and with the multiple Tchitcherines and Schlepzigs, there is nothing but a similarity of names, though the coincidence involved in the recurrence of those names may border upon the improbable.

The case of Pointsman's dream is further confused in light of the fact that reminders of the dog seem to turn up in other parts of the text. It is a Weimaraner: amidst the debris on Slothrop's desk is a jigsaw puzzle piece depicting "the amber left eye of a Weimaraner" (18). Later, we will learn that another character, with the wonderfully Pynchonesque name of Scorpia Mossmoon, breeds

champion Weimaraners (544). Again, the impulse is to see the repetition of Weimaraners as suggestive of some deeper design, either in the style, or, what is more provocative, in the plot. However, there is no reason why we cannot be talking about different, unconnected things in each case. One need not assume that there is "One of each of everything" (68).

A similar proliferation of coincidences in the text revolves around Anubis, the jackal-headed Egyptian god of death. In various places throughout the text, jackals' heads appear without logical motivation, from the bowsprit of the seafaring *Anubis*, to the masks of the men who ravished Greta Erdmann during the shooting of a climactic scene of *Alpdrücken*, to Gerhardt von Göll's plastic toilet seat. Here, as with the Alpdrucken / dream / film complex, we cannot tell whether we are detecting motifs in a pattern, or whether the figure of the jackal's head is merely coincidental.

At this point, I think we can see how this stylistic element in *Gravity's Rainbow* comes to serve as an incisive, though oblique, metafictional comment. I have considered a variety of instances in which characters in the novel have seen coincidences as a proof of "connectedness," and in some cases of a plot that is directed at them. There is not a great deal of difference between how these characters react to such coincidences, and how the reader of *Gravity's Rainbow* reacts to the comparable repetition of images and figures which for their own part may or may not be connected. The character, as a paranoid, is already convinced of a conspiratorial plot, and merely finds that conviction borne out by connecting together suspicious coincidences. Analogously, the reader, presented with a work of fiction, is predisposed to believe that a narrative plot exists, and so seizes upon suggestions of pattern and design in the fictional work in order to confirm this. There are a pair of equations being made here: in the one case, between the paranoid and the reader, and in the other, between the text and a series of coincidences.

This brings me to what I think is one of the most provocative possibilities implied by Pynchon's speaking of paranoia as a discovery of connectedness. Put bluntly, perhaps *Gravity's Rainbow* is a book without a plot, at least apart from the plot that the paranoid reader invents out of repetitions and parallels. That is, in light of the example set by its paranoid characters, there is the distinct possibility that *Gravity's Rainbow* is not a "story" in the conventional sense, but is rather a collection of textual coincidences out of which the reader writes his or her own story. It could be seen as, to use Barthes's term, a "writerly" text (*S/Z*, 4). We might even think of it as a sort of interactive game in which Pynchon has provided us with the board and pieces, leaving it to the reader to come up, not only with the play, but also with the rules of play. *Gravity's Rainbow* could be a thing formless in itself, which however appears to have form insofar as it subjected to the gaze of the connection-making mind. Plater summarizes it neatly:

> either there is a coherent structure to Pynchon's fiction or the reader imagines it; or Pynchon has deliberately launched a plot aimed at the reader to make him or her sense a structure; or the reader fantasizes such a plot. (188)

So, finally, one is left in uncertainty concerning what is really going on *Gravity's Rainbow*. As Plater's comment suggests, one arrives, not at a conclusion, but at a list of alternative hypotheses, any of which might be true. It is generally Pynchon's method, moreover, to sustain multiple possibilities, rather than to suggest that any one possibility is more likely than another. His art is more about raising questions than it is about resolving them.

It is perhaps because of this that Thomas Schaub can align Pynchon's work with fantastic literature, citing Tzvetan Todorov in his discussion. I include the relevant passage from Todorov here, not only because it applies to the experiences of Pynchon's characters, but also because it seems to have some bearing upon the analogous experiences of Pynchon's readers:

> The person who experiences the event must opt for one of two possible solutions: either he is the victim of an illusion of the sense, of a product of the imagination — and laws of the world then remain what they are; or else the event has indeed taken place, it is an integral part of reality — but then this reality is controlled by laws unknown to us [...] The fantastic occupies the duration of this uncertainty. Once we choose one answer or the other, we leave the fantastic for a neighbouring genre, the uncanny or the marvelous. The fantastic is that hesitation experienced by a person who knows only the laws of nature, confronting an apparently supernatural event. (25)

This seems an apt summary of what the experience of *Gravity's Rainbow* amounts to: not only the character, but the reader as well, is confronted with equally viable alternatives, decision concerning which is deferred. *Gravity's Rainbow*, then, is that experience of hesitation of which Todorov speaks. The difference, of course, is that Pynchon achieves this effect through metafictional, rather than supernatural means. One might say that with Pynchon, mystery is secularized. We may experience wonder with regard to Pynchon's text, but it is a wonder associated with form and technique, rather than with occult or fabulous inventions.

2. Other Orders

The second type of paranoia I wish to discuss is described as "a Puritan reflex of seeking other orders behind the visible" (188). At first glance, Pynchon's wording suggests a more complex concept of paranoia than the one in which paranoia is a discovery that "everything is connected." In the present case, there are two ideas involved, those being Puritanism, and "other orders behind the visible." I will treat these ideas separately to begin with, and work from the parts to the whole, in order to establish some sense of what this rather poetic definition signifies.

The phrase "seeking other orders behind the visible" is partly explained by the context in which it occurs. Slothrop, having just rescued Katje from the octopus, has begun to doubt that the entire scene was as innocent as it originally appeared, in light of Teddy Bloat's having produced a crab as if on cue with which to lead the octopus away. Slothrop's initial ease with his surroundings gives way to suspicion:

> Pale lines of force whirl in the sea air...pacts sworn to in rooms since shelled back to their plan views, not quite by accident of war, suggest themselves. Oh, that was no "found" crab, Ace — no random octopus or girl, uh-uh. Structure and detail come later, but the conniving around him now he feels instantly, in his heart. (188) [Ellipses Pynchon's]

That is, Slothrop begins to suspect the octopus incident for what it really is: an elaborate stratagem which was mounted in order to see how he would react, as well as in order to bring Katje, an operative for the White Visitation, into contact with him. Inasmuch as Slothrop suspects some plot beyond what he is able to apprehend directly, his suspicions may aptly be thought of as "seeking other orders behind the visible."

In characterizing paranoia in this way, Pynchon provides a concept that conforms to familiar notions of paranoia. Generally, the disorder is understood as referring to a delusional system of ideas concerning the unseen. Gene L. Coon, for instance, writes of paranoia as being characterized by

particular sorts of beliefs:

> Paranoid individuals believe they are being cheated, spied upon, followed, poisoned, harrassed, or that someone is plotting against them. Paranoids are usually intensely suspicious, believing they must be on guard at all times. (483)

Slothrop customarily has strong beliefs of this sort about the unseen. For instance, leaving St. Veronica's and his recent sodium amytol session behind, Slothrop believes that "something's different...something's...been *changed*...don't mean to bitch, folks, but — well, for instance, he could swear he's being followed, or watched anyway" (114) [Italics and ellipses Pynchon's].

To take an even more dramatic case of paranoid beliefs concerning the unseen, there is the matter of Slothrop's suspicions in the casino. Earlier, I mentioned how Slothrop's dismissal of the idea of coincidence appeared the more ironic for taking place amidst games of chance. I want to return to this scene now, as it is in the casino, more than anywhere else, that Slothrop is at his most highly sensitized to the presence of "other orders behind the visible":

> Shortly, unpleasantly so, it will come to him that everything in this room is really being used for something different. Meaning things to Them it has never meant to us. Never. Two orders of being, looking identical...but, but... (202) Ellipses Pynchon's]

What strikes me about this passage is that there is no way to show that this is anything more than idle speculation on Slothrop's part. The other order he suspects the presence of is "behind the visible," which, I imagine, means that it is invisible. The two orders coincide, moreover, and look identical, which raises the question as to how the existence of an other order can be suspected. One wonders what gives it away? The narration seems on the verge of saying, but ends by trailing off into ellipses and the repeated "but." In addition, although Slothrop will realize that everything in the casino is "being used for something different," there are no specifics given in Slothrop's suspicions as to what those uses might be. We readers know that there is a plot directed at Slothrop, but in this scene it

is hard to say whether Slothrop, senses it as well, or only imagines that he senses it. I rather think that what Slothrop senses here has its basis mostly in his own suspicious beliefs about the unseen, which for their own part may or may not depend upon any external reality. To use the term popularized by Eliot, Slothrop's suspicions lack an "objective correlative" (Abrams, 61).

Such are Slothrop's beliefs about the unseen that he is able to capitalize on incidental differences, for instance between the heights of chairs, to reinforce his suspicions:

> Empire chairs are lined up precise and playerless. But some are taller than the rest. These are no longer quite outward and visible texts of a game of chance. There is another enterprise here, more real than that, less merciful, and systematically hidden from the likes of Slothrop. Who sits in the taller chairs? Do They have names? (202)

Even a roulette wheel is a conduit of meaning, above and beyond its ostensible function as an instrument in a game of chance: "When They chose numbers, red, black, odd, even, what did They mean by it? What Wheel did They set in motion?" (208).

In all of this, Slothrop attributes intentions to a "They," i.e., a band of individuals united in a conspiracy against him and plotting ways to exploit him. It does not matter, moreover, that Slothrop does not know, specifically, who "They" are; his conviction that there is a They is sufficient reason to believe that something sinister is going on. In this, Slothrop's paranoia accords with Ernest Becker's writing that paranoia occurs because "One feels overwhelmed and has to make sense out of his precarious position. And the way to do this is to attribute *definite* motives to *definite* people" (126) [Italics Becker's]. As Becker understands it, paranoia is a belief in a hidden and malevolent intentionality operating in the world:

> The dread of the paranoid and of modern man draws from the same source: evil must happen because somebody *cares*. And if you can find the somebody, and finger him, then your powers are not without effect in the world. (140) [Italics Becker's]

So, for Slothrop, there is some will or intention guiding things, even in a casino, by which the presence of an unspeakable "They" may be known. This is what I believe is suggested by Pynchon's calling paranoia the "seeking of other orders behind the visible."

I want to turn to the other part of Pynchon's definition now, that being the idea that paranoia is a "Puritan reflex." By denoting paranoia in such a manner, I believe that Pynchon means to take our concept of paranoia beyond commonplace ideas about the condition. It could be that Pynchon means to give more depth to his expression of paranoia by situating it in a broader historical context. Again, it is possible that certain features of paranoia can be heightened by placing them in the context of Puritanism. At any rate, one expects that what Pynchon says about Puritanism will have its implications for our understanding of paranoia.

For the most part, the material on Puritanism in *Gravity's Rainbow* bears almost exclusively upon Slothrop, whose Puritan background is mentioned in the text numerous times. Slothrop's ancestors were "WASPs in buckled black, who heard God clamoring to them, in every turn of a leaf or cow loose among apple orchards in autumn...." (281). At another point the narrator alludes to the attention given by Slothrop's ancestors to Biblical descriptions of "Arks, Temples, Visionary Thrones [...] Data behind which, always, nearer or farther, was the numinous certainty of God" (241) [Ellipses mine]. From these two passages, one thing that emerges is that the Puritan, like the paranoid, or like Slothrop himself, is committed to seeking other orders behind the visible, whether that visible be natural or textual. However, in contrast to the paranoid, who feels threatened by "Their" order, the order that the Puritan seeks is that of God's divine presence behind His visible creation. Apart from this small difference, though, one might think of the phrase "Puritan reflex" as referring to the same thing that is denoted by the phrase "seeking other orders behind the visible." The two phrases in this

second formulation of paranoia, then, seem to be have been combined to the end of having the meaning of one clarified by the meaning of the other.

Scott Sanders, in his essay "Pynchon's Paranoid History," draws Puritanism and paranoia even closer together by writing that God is "*the original conspiracy theory*" (in Levine, 139) [Italics Sanders's]. Accordingly, Sanders suggests that paranoia is a secular or latter-day counterpart of Puritanism.

> A mind that preserves Puritan expectations after the Puritan God has been discredited will naturally seek another hypothesis that explains life as the product of remote control [...] Paranoia offers the ideally suited hypothesis that the world is organized into a conspiracy, governed by shadowy figures whose powers approach omniscience and omnipotence, and whose manipulations of history may be detected in every chance gesture of their servants. (139-40)

Sanders's speaking of Puritanism and paranoia as sharing a hypothesis which "explains life as the product of remote control" isolates precisely that feature upon which the analogy between Puritanism and paranoia can be founded. Obviously, Pynchon's equation of paranoia and Puritanism is not made frivolously.

However, Pynchon's identifying paranoia with Puritanism takes our concept of the former beyond commonplace notions and into new areas of application. I do not think that paranoia in *Gravity's Rainbow* can be thought of as being limited to the conventional notions involving delusions of persecution or of grandeur. Rather, the material on the Puritans is included to direct our attention to the actual reasoning processes of paranoia. In addition, I think that by representing paranoia under the aspect of Puritanism, Pynchon contrives a Brechtian "alienation effect," whereby the distance and time between Pynchon's reader and the Puritan era comes to engage the reader in a more critically detached stance as regards paranoia.

One episode in particular stands out as a reflection upon Puritan thought, and so upon its

cognate, paranoia. It describes in some detail the ill-fated career of one William Slothrop, who was the first of the Slothrops to cross to America on the *Arbella*. A Puritan himself, he gained the enmity of his fellows by writing a tract called *On Preterition*, for which he was branded a heretic. This tract took issue with the Puritan world-view, criticizing its perception of humanity as being divided into two classes, the Elect, who were earmarked for salvation, and the Preterite, whose damnation was predestined. Further, the narrator tells us "Nobody wanted to hear about all the Preterite, the many God passes over when he chooses a few for salvation" (555). William Slothrop's heresy was a matter of his having "argued holiness for these 'Second Sheep,' without whom there'd be no elect" (555). His argument is akin to deconstructive thought:

> Without the millions who had plunged and drowned, there could have been no miracle. The successful loner was only the other part of it: the last piece to the jigsaw puzzle, whose shape had already been created by the Preterite, like the last blank space on the table. (554)

In other words, William Slothrop's heresy was his suggesting that the Elect could be seen as negatively defined by the Preterite, rather than by some positive, self-evident quality particular to itself. This amounted to demonstrating that for all of its inner consistency, the world-view of the Puritan Elect was incomplete, having no room for the concept of the Preterite within it, and yet requiring the existence of a Preterite against which to define itself. As later events proved, William's idea that the Elect was dependent upon the existence of the Preterite was not a popular one.

If I may shift the terms of the argument a little, I would suggest that the defect in the Puritan world-view which William identified was that it was, to employ modern parlance, "a closed system." This term refers to a particular kind of "cognitive structure" which,

> is based on a central axiom, postulate or dogma, to which the subject is emotionally committed, and from which the rules of processing reality are derived. The amount of distortion involved in the processing is a matter of degrees, and an important

> criterion of the value of the system. It ranges from the scientist's involuntary inclination to juggle with data as a mild form of self-deception, motivated by his commitment to a theory, to the delusional belief-systems of clinical paranoia. When Einstein made his famous pronouncement 'if the facts do not fit the theory, then the facts are wrong' he spoke with his tongue in his cheek; but he nevertheless expressed a profound feeling of the scientist committed to his theory. (Koestler, *Ghost in the Machine*, 301-2)

With this statement, Koestler gives us a concept which applies equally well to paranoia as to Puritanism, such that the analogy between the two deepens. At the same time, I think we can see that this idea of a closed system applies to the scientist Pointsman as well, who would rather ignore disturbing evidence than have his Pavlovian creed called into question. It appears, both from Pynchon's representation, and from Koestler's analysis, that the dogmas of science or religion, carried to a certain degree, can verge on paranoia. In a way, then, paranoia, Puritanism and Pavlovian psychology, may be seen as commenting upon one another, and as cognate, insofar as each is a closed system of thought.

Paranoia, because it is a closed system of thought, is notoriously hard to cure. Arthur Koestler writes "The most striking feature of the paranoiac's delusional system is its inner consistency, and the patient's uncanny persuasiveness in expounding it" (*Ghost in the Machine*, 300). It is in reference to this common feature of paranoia, I think, that Pynchon includes so many allusions to Kurt Gödel throughout the text. A mathematician, Gödel showed that no system could claim to be complete, and that any which did make such a claim could only do so at the risk of being inconsistent. In Pynchon's text, then, Gödel's Theorem functions as a sort of comic law ensuring that attempts toward systematization and completion, i.e., toward the construction of closed systems, will always fall flat on their faces. For instance, there is the episode during which some stanzas from the song "Sold on Suicide" are reproduced:

> In its complete version it represents a pretty fair renunciation of the things of the world. The trouble with it is that by Gödel's Theorem there is bound to be some item around that one has omitted from the list, and such an item is not easy to think of off the top of one's head, so that what one does most likely is go back over the whole thing, meantime correcting mistakes and inevitable repetitions, and putting in new items that will surely have occurred to one, and — well, it's easy to see that the "suicide" of the title might have to be postponed indefinitely! (320)

At another point, in a passage outlining the amount of commentary generated about *King Kong* by the eponymously named organization devoted to studying that movie, the narrator implies that their task will never be complete:

> there is Murphy's Law to consider, that brash Irish proletarian restatement of Gödel's Theorem — *when everything has been taken care of, when nothing can go wrong, or even surprise us...something will.* So the permutations 'n' combinations of Pudding's *Things That Can Happen in European Politics* for 1931, the year of Gödel's Theorem, don't give Hitler an outside chance. So, when laws of heredity are laid down, mutants will be born. Even as determinist a piece of hardware as the A4 rocket will begin spontaneously generating items like the "S-Gerat" Slothrop thinks he's chasing like a grail. (275) [Italics and ellipses Pynchon's]

Apart from these explicit mentions, Gödel is alluded to implicitly in the references throughout the book to "surprises" and "exceptions." Gottfried is an "exception," Thanatz tells the Schwarzkommando, adding that "One lives for notable exceptions" (465). Byron the immortal Bulb is "an exemption from the Karmic Hammer" (644). There is a mention of "anything that might come up by surprise, by Murphy's Law, where the salvation could be" (471). Slothrop, too, is a Gödelian exception, and is referred to as a "sudden angel, thermodynamic surprise" (143), inasmuch as he contradicts the laws of causality, thereby constituting an exception, and thus an objection, to Pointsman's Behaviourist system. Slothrop himself recognizes the value of surprise:

> there comes to Slothrop the best feeling dusk in a foreign city can bring: just where the sky's light balances the electric lamplight in the street, just before the first star, some promise of events without cause, surprises, a direction at right angles to every direction his life has been able to find up till now. (253)

In each of these latter cases, the idea of exceptions and "surprise" is linked to the idea of salvation or redemption: perhaps one is reminded in the event of William Slothrop's "successful loner" (554). The broader possibility is that Gödelian surprises and exceptions connote salvation from closed systems of thought.

Gödel's Theorem has a much broader impact, however, than merely holding the system-builders in Pynchon's text up to ridicule. It functions as well to unsettle totalizing systems outside of the text, in the real world of the reader. Our own systems of thought, although perhaps not as comic (to us) as the representations of Puritanism and Pavlovianism in Pynchon's text, are nonetheless as incomplete and woefully flawed as those, regardless of whether we recognize this or not. In view of Gödel's Theorem, then, it is a foregone conclusion that while our native systems are convenient to us, they are fallible, and potentially closed systems. Further, to the extent that we maintain and defend them, we ourselves might be considered paranoiac.

At this point it seems logical to consider how the reader of *Gravity's Rainbow* is implicated in the experience of "a Puritan reflex of seeking other orders behind the visible." Pynchon effects this in several ways. For instance, Pynchon makes the activity of reading itself a topic of discussion in his novel. Further, reading is implicitly linked to the "Puritan reflex" in the narrator's speaking of Slothrop's ancestors as "word-smitten" (207) and as "packing Bibles around the blue hilltops as part of their gear" (241). Hence, Slothrop is spoken of as "genetically predisposed" to "a bookish sort of reflex" (241). Again, the connection between reading and Puritan reflex is intimated in the language of a passage which depicts Slothrop inspecting the sites of V-2 strikes. The imagery here is predominantly religious and textual:

> Ruins he goes daily to look in are each a sermon on vanity. That he finds, as weeks wear on, no least fragment of any rocket, preaches how indivisible is the act of

> death...Slothrop's Progress: London the secular city instructs him: turn any corner and he can find himself inside a parable. (25) [Ellipses Pynchon's]

Terry Eagleton once wrote that paranoia "discerns an oppressively systematic signification in every contingent detail, 'over-reading' the world" (65). Here, the equation between paranoia and reading is patent; moreover, Eagleton provides us with a useful term, "over-reading," which seems to be called for in the case of some of Pynchon's fictional readers. Miklos Thanatz, for instance, reads whip scars (474). Säure Bummer, too, is credited with extraordinary reading abilities:

> Säure really turns out to be an adept at the difficult art of papyromancy, the ability to prophesy through contemplating the way people roll reefers -- the shape, the licking pattern, the wrinkles and folds or absence thereof in the paper. (442).

Eddie Pensiero is another example of this sort of para-literary achievement:

> Eddie is a connoisseur of shivers. He is even able, in some strange way, to read them, like Saure Bummer reads reefers, like Miklos Thanatz reads whipscars. But the gift isn't limited to Eddie's own shivers, oh no, they're other people's shivers, too! (641)

The heightened capacity for discovering meaning in such unlikely forms as shivers and whipscars does suggest a certain sensitivity on the part of those who read them, but we can never be sure, though, whether this sensitivity is an expression of keen mental acuity, or a symptom of paranoia.

Slothrop's capacity for finding meaning in unlikely places is comparable to that of Thanatz, Säure, and Eddie Pensiero, with the difference, however, that Slothrop is not limited to one specific medium from which to obtain meaning. During his fantasied descent down the toilet at the Roseland Ballroom, Slothrop can "read old agonies" (65) on the walls which bear "patterns thick with meaning." On the Riviera, he notes how "big globular raindrops, thick as honey, begin to splat into giant asterisks on the pavement, inviting him to look down at the bottom of the text of the day, where footnotes will explain all" (204). Teddy Bloat is a "text," around which Ghislaine's bottom is

"writing marginal commentaries" (188). Toward the end of the novel, Slothrop's reading materials proliferate without any reasonable bound:

> Omens grow clearer, more specific. He watches flights of birds and patterns in the ashes of his fire, he reads the guts of trout he's caught and cleaned, scraps of lost paper, graffiti on the broken walls where facing has been shot away to reveal the brick underneath —- broken in specific shapes that may also be read. (622)

We learn that he is "reading soup recipes and finding in every bone and cabbage leaf paraphrases of himself" (622). Especially here, in these latter instances, the question as to whether this is genuine discernment or Puritan paranoia becomes more pressing. One might wonder whether the strangeness of his reading materials does not come, in the end, to constitute a challenge to the reading abilities with which he is credited. The dubiousness of the entire catalog seems an invitation to an ironic reading of it.

In each of these cases, the act of reading, or over-reading, serves as a metaphor for paranoia. However, in light of Pynchon's characterizing paranoia as a "seeking of other orders behind the visible," it is never entirely sure whether the comparison between reading and paranoia is merely figurative, or whether there is, at some deeper level, a literal identity between the two, such that reading itself might justly be considered a form of paranoia. I mean by this to suggest that reading might be thought of as being another version of that process in which orders behind the visible are sought, inasmuch as reading involves interpretation, which is a process that is not strictly confined to the text as given. Foucault suggests as much:

> commentary [...] calls into being, below the existing discourse, another discourse that is more fundamental and, as it were, 'more primal', which it sets itself the task of restoring. There can be no commentary unless, below the language one is reading and deciphering, there runs the sovereignty of an original Text. (41)

Susan Sontag writes that "The modern style of interpretation excavates, and as it excavates, destroys;

it digs "behind" the text, to find a sub-text which is the true one" (16). This passage in particular is extremely suggestive of "seeking other orders behind the visible." As Pynchon's narrator puts it: "Seeing the number is supposed to be. the point. But in the game behind the game, it is not the point" (208).

In these passages from Foucault and Sontag, it is apparent how close interpretation is to paranoia. In each excerpt, the act of interpretation involves supplying an "original" or "true" text which takes the place of the one under discussion. In other words, interpretation consists of constructing an arche-fiction, which is then deployed to explain, or even replace, the text under consideration. The analogy with paranoia is clear: as Gene L. Coon writes, "Every detail of the paranoid's existence is woven into a personal version of 'what's really going on'" (483). I would add here, moreover, that such an interpretative model amounts to another example of a closed system.

In light of the affinities between paranoia and interpretation, then, the question for the reader of *Gravity's Rainbow* is not so much *what* the story behind the story is, but, more fundamentally, *if* there is a story behind the story. How can one know, moreover, that one's paranoia is not authoring this so-called story behind the story? Even if there is a story behind the story, how does one determine that it is the "true" or "original" one? Such a thing can hardly be demonstrated logically; rather, the likelihood is that it is defended paranoiacally, with supplemental fictions involving critical assumptions, methods, and plausible metaphysical assertions bearing upon the role of art. In other words, rationalization is not confined to paranoia; it can appear in literary exegesis as well.

In the event, we confront another version of the possibility I suggested earlier: just as Pynchon's text may merely be a string of coincidences amongst which readers "discover" (manufacture) connections, so by the same token it may be thought of as a haphazard aggregation

of references, allusions, and apparent parallels behind which the ingenuous or paranoid reader believes he or she discerns other orders. Paranoia, writes William Plater, is "a psychosis of interpretation" (188), and who more likely than the critical interpreter of an imaginative work of fiction to contract this condition?

This brings me to another way in which the reader is led into seeking an order behind the order of the text of *Gravity's Rainbow*. Because Pynchon has taken the trouble to include an array of references to esoteric symbolic systems, one comes to suspect that his book is structured according to such systems. The effect of Pynchon's employing this device is that the reader is tempted to read *Gravity's Rainbow* as something of a closed system itself. Throughout the book, various systems are explicitly parodied, Puritanism and Pavlovian psychology among them. At the same time, there are images and motifs drawn from other, more arcane sources, such as Greek and Teutonic myth, the Tarot, astrology, the Kabbala, and the liturgical calendar. These are woven into the fabric of the text itself, and used seemingly without ironic intent, suggesting that they could be thought of as actual structural principles underlying the organization of the material in *Gravity's Rainbow*. Weisenberger, for instance, suggests that the novel's being divided into four parts "satirizes a traditional schema from hagiographic and heroic narratives" (*Gravity's Rainbow Companion*, 7). He also writes that the novel "is plotted like a mandala, its quadrants marked by Christian feast days that happened to coincide, in 1944-45, with key historical dates and ancient pagan festivals" (9-10). However, even if the text bears out our locating of these organizational details, it is never certain whether our interpretations are not paranoiac closed systems, no matter how convinced we may be of their adequacy to the task of describing the novel. Paradoxically, the amount of evidence that can be drawn from the novel in support of one view or another is no

argument. The inner consistency may lie not in Pynchon's hints, but in our systems of thought. Just as the paranoid is convinced of his own persecutory or megalomanic delusion, it is always possible that we are convinced of an equally paranoid critical delusion.

It is hard to resist looking into Jung, Eliade, McLuhan, Weber, or any other of Pynchon's source texts for the key scheme that would magically cause *Gravity's Rainbow* to resolve into a sudden clarity. One is never sure that Pynchon is not handing one the clew to his labyrinth when he mentions, say, Heisenberg (348) or Ishmael Reed (588) in the course of his text. Sontag suggests that in some literary works, attention to such hints is a legitimate critical approach:

> Sometimes a writer will be so uneasy before the naked power of his art that he will install within the work itself — albeit with a little shyness, a touch of the good taste of irony — the clear and explicit interpretation of it. Thomas Mann is an example of such an overcooperative author. (17-8)

In the case of Pynchon, however, given the centrality of paranoia to his narrative, we can never be sure whether Pynchon is cooperating with or satirizing the reader when he provides obscure references that can be tracked down and read back into the text.

The presence of Gödel in *Gravity's Rainbow* is perhaps the ultimate argument against any interpretation, as it suggests that a logical interpretation is as closed a system as the delusional structures of paranoid beliefs. Cooper elaborates upon the ramifications of Gödel for interpretative attempts:

> Pynchon several times complicates the problem of interpreting and assessing one's interpretation by citing Goedel's [sic] theorem, a mathematical demonstration that one cannot prove any logical system free from contradictions by using only corollaries derived from the premises; one must get outside the system. In human terms, one can verify one's own perceptions only by perceiving some validation outside them. This, of course, cannot be done. Uncertainty is inescapable. (137)

In other words, we are limited by our being confined to our perspectives, outside of which we cannot

stand.

The idea that perspective determines perception may seem a bit obvious, even truistic, but as a matter of fact, it is worthy of some close attention, especially considering the attention which Pynchon accords to it. This is attested to by the many mentions of the phenomenon of parallax throughout the novel. For instance, the narrator, speaking of the Brenschluss, or burnout points, of the rockets, likens them to constellations and adds that "from different places inside the zone where they can be seen, they fall into completely different patterns...." (302) [Ellipses Pynchon's]. The metaphor of the constellation is a favourite of Pynchon's, as it aptly captures the phenomenon of parallax in a concrete figure. Thus, it crops up in a description of Blicero's experiences in Sud-West, where "the constellations, like the new stars of Pain-land, had become all unfamiliar" (98). Frans van der Groov, wandering the wilderness of Mauritius, sees "southern stars too thick for constellations teeming in faces and creatures of fable less likely than the dodo" (107). Of Graciela, aboard the hijacked U-boat, the narrator notes that "Above and beyond her the Zodiac glides, a north-hemisphere array she never saw in Argentina" (388).

In an imaginative use of concepts from the book to explain the book, Cooper co-opts Pynchon's constellation metaphor and puts it into service as metafictional comment:

> A character or a reader perceives V., the Tristero, the double S, or the Rocket in much the same way as a stargazer perceives a constellation. The configuration of each depends on one's position. From another solar system, a familiar grouping of stars would fall into different patterns, or perhaps its members would appear totally unrelated. (188)

Here, not only the characters of Pynchon's text are implicated, but the readers of the text as well. Again, one confronts the possibility that *Gravity's Rainbow* is a text without plot out of which one generates a plot by striking connections between things and inferring an order behind esoteric

references. Beyond this, though, Pynchon's constellation metaphor works not only as metafictional comment, but as epistemological statement. That is, because we cannot be more than subjective, all that we think we know about the world may be merely a trick of perspective.

The discussion of Slothrop early in the book goes far toward showing this. The narrator announces the parallax motif right away, saying of reactions to Slothrop that, "like the New World, different people thought they'd discovered different things" (85). Slothrop, as object or phenomenon, changes from observer to observer, as is evidenced by the different descriptions his rocket sensitivity elicits from different observers. There is Roger Mexico's "statistical oddity" (85), for instance, as opposed to Rollo Groast's "precognition," and Edwin Treacle's "psychokinesis." It is most likely that these pronouncements, so far from being objective summations of some essential truth, are merely generated within the respective systems of description to which each scientist subscribes. In this light, each scientist might be thought of as being bound by a partial perspective, and hence as paranoiacally subjective, discoursing out of a private system whose descriptions do not necessarily impinge upon Slothrop. For his own part, Slothrop remains an unfixable notion, changing like the constellations of the sky depending upon the position of the various observers, none of whom holds a privileged place from which to launch pronouncements upon what Slothrop's powers "really" are. As the passage from Cooper suggests, the position of the observer is creative.

Where no viewpoint is free from the limits of perspective, there can be no finality granted to any single description of reality. This is a theme common to postmodern literature:

> there are all kinds of orders and systems in our world — and [...] we create them all. That is their justification and their limitation. They do not exist "out there", fixed, given, universal, eternal: they are human constructs in history. This does not make them any the less necessary or desirable. It does, however, as we have seen, condition their "truth" value. (Hutcheon, 43) [Ellipses mine]

The problem with characters in Pynchon's world, though, is precisely that they accord finality to the orders to which they subscribe. Again, I am reminded of anti-paranoia, the condition which Pynchon tells us cannot be borne for long. The implication is that humans, given intimations of possible orders, and naturally impelled away from anti-paranoia, capitulate to these intimations and elevate them to the status of metaphysical principles. The question is whether even these intimations of order are real, or whether we do not invent even the intimations themselves, as a way of eluding anti-paranoia.

Olderman writes "When the pattern of connections is mistaken for reality, you are trapped in your paranoia at the center of your own system" (in Clerc, 216). Given the human antipathy for anti-paranoia, this outcome would seem to be inevitable. In the choice between the closed system of one's perspective on the one hand, and anti-paranoia with its full burden of absurdity on the other, Pynchon seems to be saying that the human will normally opt for the closed system, though it implies epistemological and existential confinement. The ironic sequel to this is that one ends up with a world in which everyone believes in the finality of his or her perspective, while of necessity denying the validity of everyone else's.

This brings me to a third definition of paranoia, which seems to follow logically from the intertwining themes of paranoia, perspective, and closed systems. In this case, paranoia is solipsism, as is suggested by the riddle which the narrator asks and answers when Slothrop and Greta meet for the first time: "What happens when paranoid meets paranoid? A crossing of solipsisms. Clearly. The two patterns create a third: a moiré, a new world of flowing shadows, interferences.... (395) [Ellipses Pynchon's].

The idea that paranoia is solipsism is pretty much Pynchon's own innovation, but it does

seem to follow from the concept of paranoia as a closed system of thought. Technically, solipsism is a philosophical position in which, given the premise that all one can know is one's own mind, the existence of everything else, including other minds, becomes doubtful. In a way, then, one can see how solipsism could be thought of as the extreme expression of the position that one's perspective is final and true. Sanders elaborates upon the equation of paranoia with solipsism:

> the paranoid style of understanding the world is inevitably solipsistic. The paranoiac is capable of imagining only plots which center upon himself; and since few of a society's energies are ever in fact polarized upon any given individual, the paranoiac can never understand more than a minute fraction of his world. (in Levine, 157)

The implication is that paranoia and solipsism share some identity, particularly in their being rooted in the misguided belief that the single perspective is sufficient and equal to the task of interpreting experience.

One implication of a position of solipsism is that all of reality is a mental construct. This is something that is suggested by events in Pynchon's text, but I am deferring discussion of this to my next chapter. At this time, I want to look at the idea of solipsism and the single perspective, and the way that closed systems in effect close us off from the world.

In Pynchon's fictions, the idea that we isolate ourselves in orders we construct is a central theme. Deborah Madsen writes of this:

> The sin subsequent to rationalization is insulation; it is the corruption of language, science, psychology, film, mathematics, as epistemological forms, so that rather than increase understanding they narrow the range of consciousness, insulating it against texts of the alternative world view, the pantheistic continuity, upon which opposition to "Them" is predicated. (79)

As Madsen suggests, closed systems "narrow" rather than broaden perspectives, in effect shutting the imagination down, and replacing the "fourfold vision" of the Blakean Eden with the "single vision" of Ulro (Frye, *Fearful Symmetry*, 48-9). The result of this is "insulation," which I take to

mean the existential and epistemological confinement pursuant to single perspectives and closed systems of thought.

Perhaps the most efficient of the tools with which humans engineer their insulation from reality is language. Nietzsche wrote, "For all its detachment and freedom from emotion, our science is still the dupe of linguistic habits" (*Genealogy of Morals*, 179). Koestler expanded upon this:

> A great number of the basic verbal concepts of science have turned out at various times to be both tools and traps [...] these were not simple verbal tags, as names attached to particular persons or objects are; they were artificial constructs which behind an innocent facade hid the traces of the particular kind of logic which went into their making. (*Act of Creation*, 175-6)

One may conclude with Koestler that, "Language can become a screen which stands between the thinker and reality" (*Act of Creation*, 177).

In *Gravity's Rainbow*, this obstructive effect of language is central. Clerc writes "Pynchon shows how people strive to create a meaningful world through language and how they are inevitably oppressed by the results of their effort" (28). The narrator comments of Pökler's situation, for instance, that "A screen of words between himself and the numinous was always just a tactic...it never let him feel any freer" (658) [Ellipses Pynchon's]. The connection between language and captivity is later brought up again, when Blicero speaks of "ways for getting back, but so complicated, so at the mercy of language, that presence back on Earth is only temporary, and never 'real'..." (723) [Ellipses Pynchon's].

In addition to being the engine of psychic confinement, there is the sense that language actively distorts that which it is supposed to be a faithful reflection of. In Tchitcherine's flashback to his stint with the NTA conference, for instance, he comes to recognize how the aqyn's song, being committed to written language, will not only be recorded, but will be lost in the translation: "soon

someone will come out and begin to write some of these down in the New Turkic Alphabet he helped frame...and this is how they will be lost. (357) [Ellipses Pynchon's]. The words of the song may be preserved, but the performance, of which the song is the vehicle, will be compromised. The song even addresses this issue. In one stanza, the written word is spoken of, disparagingly:

> If the place were not so distant,
> If words were known, and spoken,
> Then the God might be a gold ikon,
> Or a page in a paper book.
> But it comes as the Kirghiz Light —
> There is no other way to know It. (417).

Later, Tchitcherine himself will approach the experience of the Kirghiz Light, and yet will fail to see it, handicapped as he is by ideology:

> Tchitcherine will record the Aqyn's song of the Khirghiz Light but, ironically, the medium in which he interprets it will disrupt his cognitive access to it. For 'Their' words and the Khirgiz Light are of incompatible ontologies. (Madsen, 88)

Incidentally, we might note in passing that the Kirghiz Light is introduced during an episode in which the imposition of written language upon an oral culture is held up to criticism. A further ironic and interesting point is that the Kirghiz Light is Pynchon's own invention (Mendelson, 170), meaning that it only exists in the text of Pynchon's fiction; at the same time, the song commemorating it asserts that it represents that which cannot be contained by a text.

In an episode analogous to Tchitcherine's flashback, the director Gerhardt Von Göll proposes filming *Martin Fierro* for the Argentinian U-boat hijackers. Believing that his images "have been chosen for incarnation" (388), he suggests to the Argentinian crew that he can restore the legendary past of Argentina to them by making a film about it: "I can take down your fences and your labyrinth walls, I can lead you back to the Garden you hardly remember" (388). One of their party, however, suspects that rather than capturing the gaucho reality, the technology of film will mutilate it: "Will

the soul of the Gaucho survive the mechanics of putting him into light and sound?" (388). As a matter of fact, Graciela's doubts are more well-founded than she knows:

> The whole enterprise is deeply ironic since *Martin Fierro* [...] commemorates the transition of an oral mode into a written one. Von Göll's planned film formally distances the Argentinians yet again from the original *payada* or singing-duel which particularly fascinates the German director. (Seed, 184)

Seed adds that, "the oral tradition has been extinct too long for any of the Argentine characters to remember it except as part of a literary work" (186). Plater, too, writes that "the anarchists are paradoxical; they look forward to the chaos that accompanies the disintegration of time, but their image of the desired future is drawn from a hothouse memory of the past" (41). That is, the Argentinians long to escape from the insulation that a culture of written language represents, but their conceptions of what they are escaping to is likewise formed by that culture, and hence is merely the same insulation in a slightly different form.

Enzian as well is cut off from the past, of which he knows only through textual mediations. His thinking about the hairs on his throat leads to this chain of associations: "the south pole of his Adam's apple... pole... axis... axle-tree... Tree... Omumborombanga... Mukuru... first ancestor... Adam" (321) [Ellipses Pynchon's]. Seed's identifies Enzian as another isolated from history by language:

> The drift of Enzian's memory becomes largely notional as it enables Pynchon to insert blocks of information about the Herero's past. It is appropriate to their predicament for these facts to emerge *as information* because the Herero are virtually cut off from their tribal past. (182) [Italics Seed's]

Interestingly, Enzian's meditation occurs just at a point when the narrator is alluding to the insulating effects of language. Here, the Erdschweinhohle is referred to as being "one of the worst traps of all, a dialectic of word made flesh, flesh moving toward something else....Enzian sees the trap clearly,

but not the way out" (321) [Ellipses Pynchon's].

It is also during these thoughts that Enzian ascribes to Joseph Ombindi an insularity analogous to the one that characterized the Argentinians:

> Yes it is a little bit jive of Ombindi here to look back toward an innocence he's really only heard about, can't himself believe in — the gathered purity of opposites, the village built like a mandala...Still he will profess and proclaim it, as an image of a grail slipping through the room, radiant, though the jokers around the table be sneaking Whoopee Cushions into the Siege Perilous, under the very descending arse of the grailseeker, and though the grails come in plastic these years. (321) [Ellipses Pynchon's]

In each of these instances, Pynchon depicts insulation from reality. In the cases of the Argentinians, and the Hereroes Enzian and Ombindi, it might also be noted that this insulation is sharpened into a representation of insulation from historic reality, which insulation is effected by fictions which come to replace reality. Weisenburger comments that, "To Pynchon, the novel is a means of bridging the epistemological gap between the past we reconstruct with language and the actual events we narrate, rearrange, transform, even forget" ("End of History?," 146). History, then, is like the constellations, and like Slothrop under the lens of different scientific paradigms, insofar as it is an object subject to change dependent upon the position of the observer. As Linda Hutcheon writes, "Historiography and fiction [...] constitute their objects of attention; in other words, they decide which events will become facts" (122). She goes on to point out that even traces of history cannot revive historic reality:

> Historiographic metafiction self-consciously reminds us that, while events did occur in the real empirical past, we name and constitute those events as historical facts by selection and narrative positioning. And, even more basically, we only know of those past events through their discursive inscription, through their traces in the present. (97)

What this amounts to is a kind of textual solipsism, in which the real world, history, in these cases,

is replaced by perspectivized fictions about history.

One ironic effect of Pynchon's putting our knowledge of history in question is that his novel itself must be challenged. Pynchon's representation of 1944-5 Europe cannot claim any finality for itself, based upon its own standards. As a postmodern work, however, this cannot constitute an objection to Pynchon's representation:

> The postmodern [...] effects two simultaneous moves. It reinstalls historical contexts as significant and even determining, but in so doing, it problematizes the entire notion of historical knowledge. (Hutcheon, 89)

In other words, Pynchon seems to be asking us to challenge his own text, even as he asks us to challenge others, in the interest of making us more conscious of the pitfalls of representative media. History, like fiction, or like religious and scientific beliefs, is merely another kind of closed system. That is, it is a fictional perspective which has, however, dissembled its fictiveness.

3. Projection

In this chapter, I will be confining myself to discussing the role of projection in *Gravity's Rainbow*. Projection is not itself paranoia, but it is the psychic process which is most closely associated with paranoia. As such, it is one of the most useful of concepts that can be deployed in examining the thinking inherent to paranoid disturbances. At the same time, because projection is a mechanism that appears not only in paranoid states, but in normal patterns of thought as well, its being depicted in *Gravity's Rainbow* is another way in which the processes described in the novel can be turned around to implicate the reader. As will appear in the course of my discussion, the phenomenon of projection ultimately implicates reason itself, by virtue of which paranoia can then be seen as being not so much a divergence from reason, but as reason's parody, as its exaggeration, or even as its apotheosis. Accordingly, the use of the concept of projection in his novel can only serve to increase the cultural and philosophical relevance of Pynchon's satire.

Put simply, projection is the name given to the mental process whereby one's perceptions of reality are distorted by the influence of one's interests, habits, and prejudices. The assumption behind the concept of projection is that we do not see the world as it is, but are instead predisposed to interpret it idiosyncratically, according to our personality structures, our past experiences, and our expectations. There is a sense, then, in which our minds can be thought of as insulating us from the reality that they supposedly convey. This is the cost of apprehending reality through intelligible forms: we end by knowing the forms, rather than the reality that those forms are meant to mediate. Out of this arises the possibility that everything external to our minds is in itself chaotic and formless. The reason that we do not perceive it as such, according to projective theory, is that we actively order the material of our existence, imposing structure upon what might otherwise be unstructured. Koestler writes "Man has always looked at Nature by superimposing a second frame

on the retinal image — mythological, anthropomorphic, scientific frames" (*Ghost in the Machine*, 225). The activity of imposing structure on our perceptions, moreover, is for the most part an unconscious and automatic process, meaning that we cannot know how much or how little we tamper with the raw data of life as it makes its way from the senses to the understanding. In a way, the entire operation is similar to the idea I discussed earlier, in which one could be thought of as authoring connections between experiences, and subsequently "discovering" them, having conveniently forgotten in the meantime that one was originally the source of these connections. Projection is the same kind of process, but with the added qualification of being more complex, given the larger role that unconscious and irrational processes play in the operation.

In *Gravity's Rainbow*, the theory of projective testing is explained fully, if rather haltingly, by Geza Rózsavölgyi, a Hungarian psychologist and colleague of Pointsman's at the White Visitation:

> The *ba*-sic theory, is, that when given an un*struct*-ured stimulus, some shape-less *blob* of ex*per*-ience, the subject, will seek to impose, *struc*-ture *on* it. How he goes a-*bout struc*-turing this blob, will reflect his *needs*, his hopes, will pro-*vide*, us with *clues*, to his dreams, *fan*-tasies, the deepest *re*-gions of his mind. (81) [Italics Pynchon's]

Rózsavölgyi goes on to champion the virtues of the projective test as against the Thematic Apperception Test and the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Index. In his estimation, the drawback with the latter two tests is that each involves a structured stimulus:

> The sub-ject can *fal*-sify, consciously, or repress, *un*-consciously. But with the projec-tive tech*nique*, nothing he can do, conscious or otherwise, can pre-*vent* us, from fin-ding what we wish, to know. We, are in control. He, cannot *help*, himself. (82) [Italics Pynchon's]

It is fairly obvious that the "projec-tive tech*nique*" to which Rózsavölgyi subscribes is the one developed by Hermann Rohrschach, who conceived the now-familiar "ink-blot test" in which an

individual's personality is gauged according to his or her responses to a series of random shapes. The test itself, writes Weisenburger, "consists of ten cards, each printed with a bilaterally symmetrical inkblot, which the subject is asked to interpret by telling what is 'seen' in it (*Gravity's Rainbow Companion*, 55). The assumption behind the test and the theory is as follows:

> the individual organizes experience as he warps, twists, distorts and otherwise fits every situation, event, and person into the framework of his private world, giving them the affective significance which they must have for him in his private world. (Frank, 15)

In other words, projective testing is based on the idea that we do not experience reality in a pure or unmediated state; rather, we supplement and embellish upon our experiences with ideas and feelings drawn from our memories and desires. Arthur Koestler concurs with this:

> The 'innocent eye' is a fiction, based on the absurd notion that what we perceive in the present can be isolated in the mind from the influence of past experience. There is no perception of 'pure form' but meaning seeps in, and settles on the image. (*Act of Creation*, 368)

An example of the way that memory can intrude on one's perceptions occurs in *Gravity's Rainbow* when Squalidozzi, one of the anarchistic U-Boat hijackers, smells "a grassy smell, a smell of leaves burning, that was strange to the Argentine who, terminally homesick, had only the smell of freshly brewed maté after a bitter day at the racetrack to connect it to" (385). Although it is the unfamiliarity of the smell that initially impinges upon Squalidozzi's mind, the passage suggests that the novelty of the experience is to some extent lessened by Squalidozzi's homesickness, and by his having a memory of something analogous to relate the smell to. Whether or not the smell is remotely like what Squalidozzi remembers, his memory of and desire to be back in Argentina obviously influence the way that he perceives the smell.

Given that human senses are apt to process experience in this way, a novel experience cannot

remain novel for long, insofar as the mind is predisposed to attend to features of reality which are familiar, while overlooking those which do not fit into conventional or significant matrices. As Nietzsche suggests, the activity of memory radically qualifies the sensitivity of our sensory apparatus:

> our senses learn late, and never completely, to be subtle, reliable, and cautious organs of knowledge. Our eyes find it easier on a given occasion to produce a picture already often produced, than to seize upon the divergence and novely of an impression: the latter requires more force, more "morality." [...] Even in the midst of the most remarkable experiences, we still do just the same; we fabricate the greater part of the experience, and can hardly be made to contemplate any event, *except* as "inventors" thereof. (*Beyond Good and Evil*, 102-3) [Italics Nietzsche's]

In the present example, it is perhaps worthy of note that Squalidozzi does not investigate — and we do not find out — what is actually producing the grassy smell. In the event, one suspects that Squalidozzi's referring the strange sensation to something he is familiar with precludes his investigating further. He can hardly be blamed for electing to follow the path of least resistance, and yet, as Nietzsche writes, this choice to economize one's intellectual effort hampers much investigative behaviour:

> the first idea which explains that the unknown is in fact the known does so much good that one 'holds it for true'. Proof by pleasure ('by potency') as criterion of truth. — The cause-creating drive is thus conditioned and excited by the feeling of fear. (*Twilight of the Idols*, 51)

The main determinants of investigation in this view, are, obviously, one's expectations, one's desires, and a wish to economize one's intellectual effort. It follows from this that one cannot know anything but what one wants to know, the way one wants to know it. The examples of Puritanism, paranoia, and Pointsman's scientism bear out this fact. A scene in *Gravity's Rainbow* during which the spirit of Walter Rathenau is contacted also suggests itself as an illustration of the idea that inquiry is hindered by desire and expectation. In reference to that seance, the narrator says that "Whatever

comes through the medium tonight they will warp, they will edit, into a blessing. It is contempt of a rare order" (165). Obviously, those who have come to contact Rathenau on the Other Side have come to have their ideas, which are already established, reinforced rather than altered.

There are other depictions of projection in the text where the operation is rendered more explicitly paranoiac in tone, as when Roger Mexico discovers one of Jessica's hairs on his pillow. In this instance, his interpretation of the hair is not much different in tone from Slothrop's suspicions of his environment while in the Casino. For Roger, the hair is not simply an incidental physical detail, but is the annunciation of a more elaborate structure, specifically a conspiracy which targets him:

> what if it's some mauve turn-of-the-century tale of ghostly revenge and this hair here's some First Step...Oh, paranoia? [...] oh yes a most superb possibility has found seedbed in his brain, and here it is. What if they are all, all these Psi Section freaks here, ganged up on him in secret? OK? Yes: suppose they *can* see into your mind! (124) [Italics Pynchon's, parenthetical ellipses mine]

The Schwarzkommando propaganda footage shot by Gerhardt von Göll also exploits the principle of projection to the end of fostering paranoia in those who are to see the film. In this episode, the branch of PISCES dedicated to infiltrating and manipulating German intelligence contrives to use the Germans' own suspicions against them: "The Operation Black Wing strategy: to spread rumours of Herero unrest, and make the Germans uneasy thereby" (74). The plan is to have the German forces find a fragment of film which they will then interpret as proof that displaced Herero are preparing a rebellion. The film itself, though, is hardly explicit. It is brief, running only three minutes and twenty five seconds, and is "shot through pines, through snow, from distant angles that don't give away the English location" (112). Myron Grunton is "a blurry extra," as are the other participants, all of whom are in "plausible blackface." It would seem that the nebulous look of the

film is deliberate, for it is intended to act like an ink-blot in a projective test in which the Operation Black Wing operatives are hoping that Nazis will be compelled by their own latent paranoia to believe that there is a threat to their military effort in the form of a Schwarzkommando.

Obviously, the theory of projection corresponds with much which I have said about paranoia in *Gravity's Rainbow* thus far. Paranoia, in Pynchon's own terms, implies a discovery of connections or "other orders" in the external world, which, further, are tacitly recognized as being largely, if not wholly, matters of perspective and belief. If projective theory means that we cannot know the external world, but only the forms we impose on it, then it is easy to see how projection, or paranoia, is solipsism. In addition, projection can be seen as playing a role in the dynamic of closed systems. Because what is significant is largely limited to what bears upon our own interests, there is a sense in which there is little that we can know apart from what reinforces our self-absorption. Hence, there are limits to what we can know about reality. The possibility is that we ourselves are epistemologically confined in a closed system defined by our self-serving projections. As Hassan writes, "In the end, we perceive what we need to perceive, and our sense of pattern as of relation is conditioned by our deeper sense of relevance" (9). Umberto Eco, too, suggests, "Pertinence is a function of our practices" (163). In a way, then, projection is like the psychological version of Gödel's Theorem, as both concepts suggest that we cannot stand outside of our own perceptions in order to evaluate them. Diagnosis from within the condition, it would seem, is an impossibility.

The assumptions of the projective model of perception redound to our reading of *Gravity's Rainbow*, for we can, if we like, see the novel as a kind of unstructured stimulus, a Rohrschachian ink-blot, as it were, in which our predilection to project order intervenes, structuring it for us. This is analogous to my earlier suggestions that the novel could be seen as a text of coincidences out of

which we generate connections, or as a text of allusions which suggest to us other orders behind the visible. In all events, the novel seems to describe itself as something unstructured, insofar as it identifies whatever structures the reader finds with the reader's own paranoia. In this way, by proclaiming that it cannot be apprehended in itself, and that it disappears behind the orders, plots, and structures that we project upon it, the novel asserts its own unreadability.

Paradoxically, however, if our ideas about paranoia and projection do not impinge on *Gravity's Rainbow*, then what do they impinge upon? Are they merely gestures made in a void? What kind of object is it that defies our understanding, and yet seems to be a rich source of information when it comes to explaining the design flaws in the functioning of our understanding? *Gravity's Rainbow* calls up some very specific ideas in the reader's mind, and yet seems to disclaim any involvement in that process, suggesting that such ideas are the reader's own, and that these ideas are definite obstacles to apprehending the text which seemed to call them up. Projection, then, is a potent concept to deploy in the novel, as it functions to call the reader's own experiences into question.

It is interesting to note that the concept of projection is so strong that it can call itself into question, given the epistemological dilemma that results from accepting the premises of the theory. Briefly, if everyone projects, how can a patient's interpretation of an inkblot be analyzed, when the examiner's analysis itself can be seen as another case of projection? This is the problem raised within the theory itself: one can never know if one is projecting, or to what degree. The theory itself, then, can hardly be taken as objective, since it too may be a projection, and so little more than an expression of what we desire to be true. If it is a valid model of perception, then it must undermine itself, inasmuch as it can be seen as an example of the phenomenon which it describes. It is,

therefore, something of a Gödelian paradox itself. In order to know that the theory of projection is valid, we would require evidence outside of the theory. However, one's ideas about what constitutes such evidence might also be a projection. In short, even if the theory is valid, yet we cannot stand outside of our projections in order to know that it is valid. The theory of projection, then, is something of a paranoiac closed system itself.

Up to this point, I have limited my discussion of projection to the Rohrschachian use of the term. There is, however, another conception of the meaning of projection, to which I now turn. This is the psychoanalytic meaning of the term, about which Freud wrote. Although Pynchon dramatizes the Freudian concept of projection, he does not give a definition of it anywhere in *Gravity's Rainbow*. Thus, I will begin with Freud's definition of it. In this context, projection refers not merely to a general distortion of the world of the type Rohrschach hypothesized, but to a specific type of distortion, which is employed by the ego as a way of defending itself from unwelcome thoughts and wishes:

> A particular way is adopted of dealing with any internal excitations which produce too great an increase of unpleasure: there is a tendency to treat them as though they were acting, not from the inside, but from the outside [...] This is the origin of projection, which is destined to play such a large part in the causation of pathological processes. (***Beyond the Pleasure Principle***, 23)

Further, Freud associated paranoia with projection, writing that projection is "The most striking characteristic of symptom-formation in paranoia" ("Psycho-analytic notes," 66). As Freud understood it, a person might harbour hostile feelings towards those around him or herself. Freud argued that the conscious mind, finding these feelings unacceptable, would repress them. Repression is not eradication, however, which means that the subject would not be rid of the feelings of hostility, and so would have to find another way to account for them. This is where projection comes into

play. Freud said that the subject would still harbour feelings of hostility, but would project these feelings outwards, attributing them to others. It is in this way, according to psychoanalytic thought, that a delusion of persecution is initiated. Further, given that the subject believes that he or she is being persecuted, the feelings of hostility can be re-admitted to consciousness in their original form, since these feelings now seem justified in the context of the delusion.

It is this type of mental activity which is dramatized in *Gravity's Rainbow* in the meeting of Katje and Enzian:

> Shameless girl, she isn't humoring him, she's actually flirting with him now, any technique her crepe-paper and spider-italics young ladyhood ever taught her, to keep from having to move into his blackness. Understand, it isn't *his* blackness, but her own —— an admissible darkness she is making believe for the moment is Enzian's, something beyond even the center of Pan's grove [...] a city-darkness that is her own, a textured darkness in which flows go in all directions, and nothing begins, and nothing ends. But as time passes things get louder there. It is shaking itself into her consciousness. (661) [Italics Pynchon's, ellipses mine]

That is, the "blackness" which Katje attributes to Enzian is identified by the narrator as Katje's own. It is an unconscious blackness, which, however, is unacceptable to her conscious mind. She projects it upon Enzian, and in doing so, transfers the threat of a blackness within herself to an other, as a way of dissociating herself from a part of herself which she finds unacceptable. Another, and more facetious reference to the Freudian concept of projection comes when Enzian insults Ombindi by telling him that he [Enzian] is "projecting my own death-wish, and it comes out looking like you. Uglier than I ever dreamed" (732).

For Freud, as for Rohrschach, the concept of projection had wide applications:

> it makes its appearance not only in paranoia but under other psychological conditions as well, and in fact it has a regular share assigned to it in our attitude towards the external world. For when we refer the causes of certain sensations to the external world, instead of looking for them (as we do in the case of others) inside ourselves, this normal proceeding, too, deserves to be called projection. ("Psycho-analytic

notes," 66)

Even in his later works, Freud did not abandon this opinion:

> one can try to re-create the world, to build up in its stead another world in which its most unbearable features are eliminated and replaced by others that are in conformity with one's own wishes. [...] each one of us behaves in some one respect like a paranoiac, corrects some aspect of the world which is unbearable to him by the construction of a wish and introduces this delusion into reality. (*Civilization and its Discontents*, 28)

So, in *Gravity's Rainbow*, Leni Pökler projects her wishes for an ardent lover onto her passionless couplings with husband Franz:

> At first his passivity kept her from coming at all. Then she understood that she could make up anything at all to fill the freedom he allowed her. It got more comfortable: she could dream such tendernesses between them (presently she was dreaming also of other men) — but it became more solitary. (155)

Pointsman's faith in "stone determinacy" (86) and Pavlovian behaviourism might also be seen as a case of "correcting" experience. In this instance, the attempt to correct experience is much more drastic, insofar as it eventuates in Pointsman's scheme to have Slothrop castrated.

Although Pointsman with his Pavlovian beliefs is a figure of ridicule in *Gravity's Rainbow*, it is not so much Pavlovianism as the systematization involved in Pavlovianism that Pynchon is attacking in his satiric representation. Where there is system, Pynchon seems to be saying, there is paranoia. Any system of knowledge might be seen as a projection, an ego defense, and by that token, as a symptom of paranoia. In this way, Pointsman's scientism, Puritan narrowness and Slothropian paranoia appear to be very much of a piece with one another. They are not so much examples of systems which have gone bad as they are systems which have attained a high degree of development. In light of this, there seems no exaggeration in Lacan's referring to "that paranoiac structure of the ego" (20), or in his speaking of "human knowledge as paranoiac" (3).

Although projection is generally understood to be a perceptual divergence from reality, it is, however, wrong to think that reality is independent of and unaffected by projection. Rather, as Plater suggests, citing Simmel, the orders and structures we project upon the world have a real impact upon the world:

> life is a process and constant flux, it can only be experienced. However, life produces objects, institutions, theories, and beliefs that have form and can be known. Once created, these forms exist as independent entities, can be experienced, and even shape experience for others. Reality is one such form, but it is only a form and has no higher claim than any other. (102)

That is to say, if what we know is what we project, then, in a very real sense, our projections are our reality. However, in addition to suggesting that projection has epistemological implications, Plater's statement goes further by saying that it has ontological implications as well, inasmuch as he proposes that the entities created by our psyches may in fact be capable of reifying themselves into independent existence. In other words, the object that begins as a trick of perspective or hypothesized connection can turn out, sometime down the line, to be existing independently of the mind, and hence independently of the perspective or connection that created it. Our projections are real, not only in a subjective sense, but in an objective sense as well.

This is not wholly far-fetched. I have suggested that scientific and religious systems of art are projective; nonetheless, these sorts of projections have the power to change reality, mostly by changing the way we view reality. Art, too, modifies reality by modifying the way we think about it, and from perceptual change comes social change. One need only think of a political ad campaign to recognize this. There is a very real sense, then, in which our projections can impinge upon the world and effect changes in that world.

In *Gravity's Rainbow*, however, this principle operates to an extremely literal degree, and

film seems to play an important role in the illustration of it:

> In *Gravity's Rainbow* film is never merely an entertaining illusion. Always it seems to be in the process of calling itself into three-dimensional existence, or otherwise proving itself capable of interfacing with "real life." (Cowart, 36)

Here, Cowart is alluding to that pattern in *Gravity's Rainbow* whereby fictional creations framed within the fiction of the novel spill over into the "real life" represented in the novel. Perhaps the best example of this comes when, after faking Schwarzkommando footage to unsettle the German morale, PISCES learns that there are indeed "real Schwarzkommando leading paracinematic lives in the Zone" (388). Edwin Treacle, one of the scientists at PISCES suggests a psychoanalytic explanation for this:

> their feelings about blackness were tied to feelings about shit, and feelings about shit to feelings about putrefaction and death. It seemed to him so clear...why wouldn't they listen? Why wouldn't they admit that their repressions *had*, in a sense that Europe in the last weary stages of its perversion of magic has lost, *had* incarnated real and living men, likely (according to the best intelligence) in possession of real and living weapons. (276) [Italics and ellipses Pynchon's]

Cowart, too, adopts a Freudian viewpoint, commenting that "The key concept here is that the 'incarnating' (the word used by von Goll as well as Treacle) or 'generating' (the narrator's word) is effected by our repressions" (45).

This is projection at its most literal. With the appearance of the real Schwarzkommando, a structure invented by intelligence executives at PISCES has attained to an independent existence in its own right, suggesting thereby a concrete parallel with Freud's idea that "anything arising from within that seeks to become conscious must try to transform itself into external perceptions" (qtd. in Brown, 148). The surprising thing here is that instead of the external perception becoming the vehicle of the projection, the projection actually creates the external perception.

The appearance of a real Schwarzkommando is merely the most dramatic instance of a

pattern that works itself out throughout the novel:

> the presence in the book of extraordinary events is usually preceded (perhaps *triggered*) by a mistaken verbal or "textual" reference. Osbie Feel [sic] makes a film of faked Schwarzkommando before we encounter the real ones. Tchitcherine wrongly supposes there is a "counterforce in the Zone" — he has been misled by the accidents around Slothrop — before there actually is a Counterforce. (Mendelson, 193, n.9) [Italics Mendelson's]

A particularly humourous, even parodic, example of textual reference preceding actual event concerns the introduction of written language to the Khirghiz:

> On sidewalks and walls the very first printed slogans start to show up, the first Central Asian fuck you signs, the first kill-the-police-commisioner signs (and somebody does! this alphabet is really something!) and so the magic that the shamans, out in the wind, have always known, begins to operate now in a political way. (355)

Other instances of the phenomenon concern various dreams of Slothrop's, as for instance the one in which a woman has sex with various animals. Cowart calls this dream "a marvel of clairvoyance" (53), pointing out that "according to the pattern that generally obtains with movies in the book, the dream precedes its subject matter — various facts about Erdmann — into Slothrop's cognizance" (54). Further, "Slothrop's dream, containing so much information about Greta's past, both on and off screen, and about her psychological problems, allows no logical explanation" (54). Cowart cites other examples:

> His Bianca dream and Crutchfield-Whappo dream appear to be similar exercises in clairvoyance. Pynchon means, in other words, to subvert our common-sense notions about causality, as he did in allowing the name "Reichssieger von Thanatz Alpdrucken" to appear, as if by magic, in Pointsman's dream. (54)

Thus we can understand Fowler's writing, "Notice that dreams are by convention *always true* in GR" (192) [Italics Fowler's]. That is, in the world of *Gravity's Rainbow*, characters' dreams are always true because projection literally works, not only as a psychic, but as a physical reality.

In terms of Pynchon's conception, two alternatives to explaining these prefigurations suggest themselves. First, perhaps they figure as elements in a paranoid dynamic of self-fulfilling prophecy, whereby the types of things that characters learn about are invariably those which confirm their suspicions. Therefore, a real Schwarzkommando, the existence of which was hitherto unsuspected, was found because it conformed closely enough to the unconscious contents of the minds involved in faking the Schwarzkommando footage. In this kind of dynamic, the delusion determines the evidence, the interpretation of the evidence, and the direction and termination point of the investigation. This seems to be the sense of the narrator's suggestion that "Paranoids are not paranoids (Proverb 5) because they're paranoid, but because they keep putting themselves, fucking idiots, deliberately into paranoid situations" (292). That is, paranoia is to some extent a "self-induced" condition, as Friedman and Puetz suggest in reference to this proverb (80). Douglas Fowler, too, says that "the last of the five Proverbs seems to alert us to the fact that there is no *real* paranoia, only discovery" (159) [Italics Fowler's]. My point here is that paranoia determines discovery.

On the other hand, there is the possibility that the appearance of a Schwarzkommando is the extreme literalization of projection, and a concrete dramatization of Freud's dictum that "what was abolished internally returns from without" ("Psycho-analytic notes," 71). In other words, repressed desires are being projected, literally, and perhaps magically, causing real objects to materialize in the world. There may be parodic intent here, but it is also possible that Pynchon is encouraging the notion that Freudian psychology in its most literal form is Freudian psychology in its truest sense.

In either case, we create the world we know out of the world we project: "desire shapes our

fictions and our future, and dreams become fact" (Hassan, 98). In the end, it is what one believes which is paramount. As Pointsman muses, even Freud himself recognized that what the patient believed was of more significance than what actually happened:

> And what if many — even if most — of the Slothropian stars are proved, some distant day, to refer to sexual fantasies instead of real events? This would hardly invalidate our approach, any more than it did young Sigmund Freud, back there in Vienna, facing a similar violation of probability — all those Papi-has-raped-me-stories. (272)

In a world where consciousness is paranoia, and paranoia is discovery, belief *is* reality. To quote Pointsman again: "We may all be right [...] so may all we have speculated, and more" (144) [Ellipses mine].

Although other of the characters are understandably surprised, Gerhardt von Göll, the German director, is one who is not baffled by the seemingly acausal appearance of a real Schwarzkommando. Perhaps because he is an artist he is able to attain that willing suspension of disbelief which eludes the other, more empirically-minded characters, such as Pointsman. Alternatively, perhaps he is so paranoiacally insulated from reality due to his immersion in film-making that he has lost the ability to distinguish fantasy from reality. At any rate "He is convinced that his film has somehow brought them [the Schwarzkommando] into being. 'It is my mission [...] to sow in the Zone seeds of reality [...] My images, somehow, have been chosen for incarnation'" (388) [Ellipses mine]. Hence he proposes to the Argentinians, nostalgic for the time of the gauchos, that they undertake with him a film version of *Martin Fierro*, telling them that, "I can take down your fences and your labyrinth walls, I can lead you back to the Garden you hardly remember" (388). Whether or not von Göll is actually able to bring this about (he becomes involved in another film, entitled *New Dope*), we do learn that the set for *Martin Fierro* will not be "struck" (613), which, as

Cowart says, is "another example of fantasy taking on a reality of its own" (121).

A parallel can be made between the magical projections of *Gravity's Rainbow* and the "*hrönir*" of Borges' story "Uqbar, Tlön, Orbis Tertius." In that story, Borges discusses a fabricated world predicated on idealism, which by the end of the story begins to corrupt the real world in which Borges writes (and, presumably, the one in which we readers live), compromising its ontological status. In that story, *hrönir* are ideas that take on a concrete form in so far as they are objects of attention. Borges explains, giving an example: "Two people are looking for a pencil; the first one finds it and says nothing; the second finds a second pencil, no less real, but more in keeping with his expectation" (29). The mention of an "expectation" here puts the existence of the second pencil on a mental plane. That is, the second pencil is a projection of the mind of the person who found (Tlönians would say "remembered") it. John Barth, commenting upon the story, quotes Borges to the effect of suggesting that the theme of the story is the "contamination of reality by dream" (669). The issues of belief, projection, and the Schwarzkommando make it clear that this is a theme that is found as well in the world represented in *Gravity's Rainbow*.

The similarity between the Borges story and Pynchon's novel is that in both, ideas, repressed or otherwise, become real things. As Barth writes, in the Borges story, it is the nature of *hrönir* to "imagine themselves into existence" (669). Cooper makes the parallel between the two stories explicit, saying of *Gravity's Rainbow* that, "Somewhat as in Borges' Tlön, perception is "creative" in the sense that it partially forms its object" (136). In both texts, then, reality is principally a mental construct, an idea we find in Bishop Berkeley, whom Borges mentions in passing as one of the contrivers of Tlön (31). In his *Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge*, Berkeley advanced a rigourous empiricism which eventuated in his asserting that the physical world was

entirely dependent upon perception:

> as to what is said of the *absolute* existence of unthinking things, without any relation to their being perceived, that is to me perfectly unintelligible. Their *esse* is *percipi*; nor is it possible they should have any existence out of the minds or thinking things which perceive them. (125-6) [Italics Berkeley's]

Pynchon's use of projection, especially in its literalization, makes his creation analogous to Borges's, and ultimately to Berkeley's conception of existence in which "the object and the sensation are the same thing, and cannot therefore be abstracted from each other" (Berkeley, 127). *Gravity's Rainbow* represents a reality which is principally mental in substance, and hence it may be said that consciousnesses in that world are the only significant reality. Of course, this position, taken to an extreme, ends in the idea that *my* conscious is the only significant reality, which is solipsism. It would seem, in the present context, that solipsism and projection can be seen as two ways of discussing the same thing. They are, that is, complementary notions.

Various critics appear to concur upon the idea that mental realities are the only realities in Pynchon's text. Siegel, for instance, says that in electing a paradigm with which to approach *Gravity's Rainbow*: "Conrad's style of impressionism, in which external realities are manipulated in order to reveal the obsessions of the characters, is much more appropriate for Pynchon's work" (23). As Siegel formulates it, the psychically compromised ontology of Pynchon's represented world is the result of aesthetic considerations:

> expressionism, whether semirealistic or bizarre, has always involved a projection in concrete, often ritualized or mythicized terms, of inner feelings and qualities, and this is, of course, also true of the narrative method of *Gravity's Rainbow*. (29)

For other critics, Pynchon's aim is not so much aesthetic as ontological. Wolfley, for instance, writes that "The runaway symbolism in GR (e.g., the double S) sometimes just points to Pynchon's favourite notion that all of reality is invariably a mental construct" (in Pearce, 117). Chambers

echoes this idea, writing that "the external world's reconfiguration is merely an outward symptom of the inner reconfiguration of thought and language, of being itself" (151). Thus I understand the divergence between Pirate and Katje's perceptions of the "Critical Mass":

> "What did it look like out there, Katje? I saw an organized convention. Someone else saw it as a garden..." But he knows what she'll say.
> "There was nothing out there. It was a barren place." (547)

In Borges' story, the existence of Tlön comes to compromise the ontological stability of the world in which the narrator of that story writes. This has its parallel in *Gravity's Rainbow* in the way that the existence of the Schwarzkommando compromises the reality of the characters who invent/discover them. However, the discovery of the real Schwarzkommando within the novel has an unsettling parallel for the reader of Pynchon's fiction:

> Pynchon's reader often finds himself feeling paranoid long after reading the books when he stumbles on some fact he had thought was part of the (wildly improbable) fiction. It is as if these discoveries were meant to be part of the reader's experience of the book, and the effect is more than mere satire of the contemporary scene; it becomes a process whereby the work of art reaches out to shape one's immediate response to life. The time bombs of particular historical detail comprise one method Pynchon uses to get beyond the covers of his book. (Quilligan, 193)

In his essay on science in *Gravity's Rainbow*, Alan Friedman gives a list of events and concepts from the history of science which appear to have been included in Pynchon's text because of their obscurity and their apparent improbability:

> a rocket engineer standing at the target, ground zero, to watch a v-2 descent;
> a chemist devising the structure of benzene from a dream of a snake; [...]
> a single mathematical function that describes cavalry accidents, blood counts, radioactive decay, number of wars per year, and rocket strikes;
> a scientific theory that allows the impossible to happen often on an atomic scale;
> scientists seriously discussing a demon. (97)

He goes on to say that "This stylistic device, of selecting little-known but fantastic-appearing facts, is one of *Gravity's Rainbow*'s most innovative uses of science" (98). Indeed, by this device, Pynchon

is able to make the experiences of his characters mirror those of his readers, by having the dynamic of paranoid discovery operating outside of as well as within the confines of his novel. Alluding to non-fiction sources in which the reader discovers that Pynchon's "inventions" are realities, Friedman suggests that "The effect is most upsetting. There is a tinge of shock, and wonder if somehow the nonfiction [sic] has been influenced by *Gravity's Rainbow*" (98). The implication, in our world, as in Pynchon's, is that fictions and dreams can contaminate reality.

Hence we can understand why "The novel was painstakingly written from the standpoint of historical accuracy" (Weisenberger, "End of History," 141). "Phoebus," for instance, was a real organization (Seed, 210). It becomes impossible to tell what in Pynchon's novel is not true:

> There were indeed two tunnels running parallel beneath the mountain, [...] by a stretch of the imagination their shape might be said to resemble two letter S's — as in the German SS, or signifying the double integral in calculus, or calling to mind two lovers curled together, asleep. (Weisenberger, 141) [Ellipses mine]

In all events, the pattern that obtains in the novel seems to obtain in real life as well. Things that at first appearance seem to be fiction and fantasy turn out, upon later investigation, to be true. Between the covers of the book, this is innovative, but outside of the book, it is disturbing to think that our world may be "contaminated" by Pynchon's creation, just as Borges' world was contaminated by Tlön.

Complicating this, there is the possiblility that our world obeys the same rules as the world depicted in *Gravity's Rainbow*. In other words, in our own world, the fictions of film somehow spill over into our reality, such that things that first appear in movies later take on "paracinematic" lives of their own. Pynchon seems to be suggesting such a thing, given his references to Fritz Lang's film *Die Frau Im Mond*. As it turns out, this film preceded the realities it represented, making it seem prophetic in retrospect. Plater writes that "Although Lang's rocket was based on a well-articulated

theory, his illusion became reality" (104). Clerc, too, notes that, "The countdown in Lang's *The Woman in the Moon* became the countdown used by NASA in rocket-firing" (106). Cooper suggests that references to *Die Frau Im Mond* work to break down distinctions between the world of Pynchon's novel and the world of the reader: "the real film has the same effect as the fictitious ones: to confuse the relation between fiction and reality" (178).

This, then, must call special attention to the last episode of the book, in which a rocket is falling toward a theatre in which the narrator's audience is sitting. Presumably, the reader is sitting there too. Cowart suggests that the rocket is another example of things which appear to be fictional at first glance, but prove in retrospect to be factual:

> The special metaphysical status of film has been so strongly established that we feel no sense of absurdity at having apocalypse presented as the falling of a rocket that has, in effect, *escaped from the movie in which it was fired* — crossed the dimensional interface, that is, and become so "real" as to be on the point of destroying us all where we sit in the theatre watching its story. (57)

In sum, then, Pynchon has constructed his novel in such a way as to suggest that our reality obeys the same laws as those represented within his novel. The reader is explicitly textualized, made into a member of the audience in the theatre over which the rocket is dropping (the voice of the sequence shifts between the first person plural and the second person). The discovery of historical apocrypha, previously thought of as Pynchon's fictions, parallels the OBW's discovery of a real Schwarzkommando. As well, the idea of projection implicates the reader in a reality which is inescapably a matter of consciousness.

Some commentators, notably Lawrence Wolfley, have written upon Pynchon's use of the neo-Freudian Norman O. Brown's text *Life Against Death: The Psychoanalytic Meaning of History* as source material for his novel. Though I do not wish to rehearse their arguments here, which are

mostly concerned with history, anality, and the polymorphous perverse, I do want to bring in Brown's ideas on projection, which I believe have not received enough notice in the critical literature to date. Brown's suggestion, which echoes Berkeley, is that the world is primarily constituted by our mental processes:

> human culture is a set of projections of the repressed unconscious [...] human culture exists in order to project the infantile complexes into concrete reality, where they can be seen and mastered. (152)

Again, he writes that hallucinations "are projected into reality, forming that opaque medium called culture, through which we apprehend and manipulate reality" (168). As well, he suggests, citing Spender, that our projections indeed have the power to influence and even generate the reality in which we live:

> the mythological conception of the universe, which survives even in the most modern religions, is only psychology projected onto the outer world. Not just mythology but the entirety of culture is projection. In the words of Spender, "The world which we create -- the world of slums and telegrams and newspapers -- is a kind of language of our inner wishes and thoughts." (170)

In effect, reality is a mental construct. Reality is what we imagine it to be. That is to say, reality is not so much a matter of what is objectively "there," but rather one of belief. Of course, this is paranoiac, but it seems, given Pynchon's representation and the datum of projection, to be overwhelmingly the case.

4. Creative Paranoia

Throughout this discussion of paranoia in *Gravity's Rainbow*, the image that I hope has emerged is that of the paranoid as a figure cut off from the rest of the world by his or her perspective, private suspicions, and self-authenticating expectations. In my understanding of Pynchon's characterization, paranoids are hermetically closed off from a broader reality, seduced by the limited, but coherent, familiarity of their customary frames of reference and their narrow systems of thought. This solipsistic dynamic is further complicated by the paranoid's capacity for rationalization. The paranoid's delusional system rarely, if ever, undergoes revision in reference to systems of thought which diverge from it, since as a closed system, it can find ways in which to account for differences in perspective. Paranoids may be thrown off balance for a moment by appearances which are incommensurate with their delusion, but in the end the delusion normally prevails, and absorbs the contradiction into itself. In this way, paranoia sustains itself, but, by the same token, it eludes correction and revision, hence never developing into more than a private system with limited reference.

On a broader scale, paranoia seems to figure as a principle of uncertainty undermining even our most established systems of thought. This is implied by Pynchon's innovative strategy of defining paranoia in such a way as to make it barely distinguishable from reading, an activity that in most other contexts seems eminently sane and rational. In *Gravity's Rainbow*, our understanding of the text, and perhaps even of our own reality, becomes suspect. The figure of paranoia in Pynchon's fiction could be seen as acting as an indiscriminate leveller, calling all of our beliefs into question and challenging them as being little more than convenient fictions and mere matters of perspective. The possibility continually presented by Pynchon's fiction is that we are ourselves in error, paranoid, and as divorced from reality as Pynchon's grotesquely suspicious and solipsistic

characters. The question is, how do we break out of the circuit of paranoia? Further, how would we know that we had? What would a consciousness innocent of projection and delusion look like? One is in an epistemological labyrinth here, with no way to tell whether one is moving toward the center or simply going around in circles.

Perhaps, though, our position is improved by the encounter with *Gravity's Rainbow*, inasmuch as if we are indeed paranoid, we can at least become more conscious of our condition than heretofore. As philosopher Gilbert Ryle writes, "To be able to diagnose it would be to be halfway out of it (125). Further, if the possibility of being paranoid is itself cause for paranoia, this may not be a bad thing, in light of Darian Leader's allusion to Freud's suggesting that "a delusion is an attempt at self-cure" (111). In other words, paranoia might be the best weapon against paranoia. This brings me to what I want to concentrate on at present, which is, if not Pynchon's solution, then at least his alternative to solipsism, in the form of a type of paranoia that makes self-awareness its strength. This paranoia is an "operational" paranoia, and is called "Creative Paranoia." The modifiers "operational" and "Creative" I draw from different places in the text, but I think that in each instance, the paranoia under discussion is the same. In both cases, it is the consciously hypothetical or provisional foundation of the delusional system that is paramount.

The term "operational" appears early in the text when Slothrop "has become obsessed with the idea of a rocket with his name written on it" (25). To his saying "doesn't cost them a thing to paint his name *on every one, right?*" (25) [Italics Pynchon's], his friend Tantivy Mucker-Maffick replies "'Yes, well, that can be useful [...] can't it, especially in combat to, you know, pretend something like that. Jolly useful. Call it 'operational paranoia' or something. But —-'" [Ellipses mine]. The tenor of Tantivy's suggestion here is that a hypothetical delusion of persecution can be

"useful." That is, one might adopt a paranoid perspective as a matter of pragmatics. However, Tantivy is not suggesting that Slothrop should actually believe in his delusion; certainly he says nothing to reinforce Slothrop's belief that there *are* rockets with Slothrop's name on them. Further, his use of the word "pretend," and his helpful provision of a name for the condition suggests that Tantivy thinks of operational paranoia as something that should be bracketed off from life and adopted as a role, rather than as an lived mental condition. There is obviously a difference between the distanced mode of thought that Tantivy is proposing, and the participatory, even committed, mode of thought that seems to be the undoing of so many of the paranoid characters in the novel who take their delusions for truth.

"Creative paranoia," which is outlined later in the text, appears to be an elaborated statement of this principle of self-distanciation. Pirate Prentice explains it to Roger Mexico:

> You're a novice paranoid [...] Of course a well-developed They-system is necessary — but it's only half the story. For every They there ought to be a We. In our case there is. Creative paranoia means developing at least as thorough a We-system as a They-system — (638) [Ellipses mine]

Specifically, says Pirate, a "We-system" concerns a "contrary set of delusions — delusions about ourselves." Further, "We don't have to worry about questions of real or unreal" (638). His reassurance to Roger is, "You'll find you can operate quite well." Like Tantivy's "operational" paranoia, Creative paranoia involves adopting delusions as useful hypotheses which are recognized as facilitating and maximizing one's performance, but which are not taken as expressing deep truths. Creative paranoia, then, is a paranoia that is already one step out of paranoia, inasmuch as it is deliberate, conscious, and and detached rather than engaged with regard to its delusions. One might even see it as paranoia raised to the level of play; certainly it has affinities to certain kinds of play in its being conducted under the aspect of the *Als Ob*, that is, the principle of the "as if."

The ability to think ironically, under the aspect of an "as if," eludes most of the characters in *Gravity's Rainbow*. In any event, those who are not counted among the members of the Counterforce appear to be incapable of anything but near-absolute conviction in their particular delusions. Tchitcherine, for instance, thinks that his Herero half-brother Enzian is the reason his career has never advanced in the way he had envisioned, and so is consumed with the idea of killing him. Pointsman, a scientist, and presumably a seeker of truth, is dominated by the rigid categories of Pavlovian theory. Gerhardt von Göll and Greta Erdmann often seem to think that they are in the middle of a huge film shoot, rather than amidst the real dangers of war. Pökler is unable to interpret his relations with Lieutenant Weissmann as other than combatant, likening it to a chess game in which his freedom, and possibly his soul, is at stake. Weissmann himself, or Blicero, as he likes to be called, is entirely overmastered by his romantic fantasies of death, whence his perverse fascination with the rocket. Nor should Slothrop be omitted from this list, living as he does in constant apprehension of a shadowy "Them."

Because of the pervasiveness of paranoia in *Gravity's Rainbow*, the ability to view things hypothetically or under the aspect of "as if," is a rare talent, and depicted in only a few isolated instances. Friedrich August Kekulé von Stradonitz, the chemist who in a dream intuited the structure of the benzene molecule, is one of the few personages in the book who is actually portrayed as thinking in provisional terms:

> Young ex-architect Kekulé looking among the molecules of the time for the hidden shapes he knew were there, shapes he did not like to think of as real physical structures, but as "rational formulas," showing the relationships that went on in "metamorphoses," his quaint 19th century way of saying "chemical reactions" (412).

In the course of a discussion of the mysterious Imipolex, the narrator shows himself likewise capable of making such distinctions between technical convention and actual substances:

> terms referring to the Subimipolexity such as "Core" and "Centre of Internal Energy" possess, outside the theoretical, no more reality than do terms such as "Supersonic Region" or "Centre of Gravity" in other areas of Science. (700)

Akin to these provisional realities are the ad hoc states and arrangements that crop up from time to time in the book. One senses a certain respectful attitude on Pynchon's part towards the idea of "a mortal State that will persist no longer than the individuals in it" (338). An epigraph to one chapter reads, "The dearest nation of all is one that will survive no longer than you and I, a common movement at the mercy of death and time, the ad hoc adventure" (706). This quotation is taken from the "Resolutions of the Gross Suckling Conference," and so is identified with the Counterforce, itself an ad hoc state. Pirate, at the inception of the Counterforce, wonders "Could it be there's something about ad hoc arrangements, like the present mission, that must bring you in touch with the people you need to be with?" (620). The idea here is that these states are temporary bodies, whose duration will be determined by their usefulness, or "operationality." They are, then, products of Creative paranoia, which is to say, their unreality or impermanence is consciously acknowledged, though they are treated as if they are real, for the sake of the operation.

Creative paranoia is no exception to the pattern I have been indicating whereby *Gravity's Rainbow* implicates its reader in the various types of paranoia that it describes. Since there are so few examples in the text of characters experiencing this latter type of paranoia, I want to turn at this point to how *Gravity's Rainbow* induces creative paranoia in its reader. I would suggest that this is effected by the text's being constructed in such a way as to compel the reader to adopt an ironic stance in relation to it. Certainly, in dealing with a work of fiction, the reader is already implicated in an "as if" process, involving the willing suspension of disbelief. The way that *Gravity's Rainbow* turns this "as if" into an ironic and conscious one, though, is by simultaneously inducing in its reader

a willing suspension of *belief*. That is to say, even as the novel draws us into the fiction it represents, it casts doubt upon that fiction by referring to its own processes and by raising expectations that it strategically disappoints.

Pynchon often employs variations of the Brechtian *verfremdungseffekt* in order to engage the suspension of the reader's belief. One of the ways in which he deploys this "laying bare of the mechanism," is by making the limitations of the literary medium a subject for narrative comment. Sometimes, for instance, the narrator will refer to music which would accompany the narrative if, instead of being a work of literature, the text were a cinematic product. He will suggest things like, "If there is music for this it's windy strings and reed sections" (398), or "if you'd like a few bars of Madame Butterfly about here" (351). At other times, the mentioning of the boundary between film and literature will be even more pronounced, as for instance when characters break into song. Just two examples involve Bloat and Tantivy in Slothrop's hotel room (182-3), and Slothrop and Katje in her hotel room (195-6). One also recalls "Lost in Pavlovia" (229), the Busby Berkeley-esque song-and-dance number that the laboratory rats perform. Although in retrospect one might naturalize these events by thinking of *Gravity's Rainbow* as a movie masquerading as a novel, the initial effect of these devices is to cause the reader to be shocked out of the illusion of the narrative and into a critical awareness of the limitations inherent to the narrative.

In another deployment of this Brechtian device, the narrator will sometimes intrude on the narrative and make direct reference to the reader's expectations, as at one point when he offers to fill in lacunae in the plot, which subject is broached by his saying "You will want cause and effect. All right" (663). Again, when Katje and Enzian seem to be slipping into some tenderness towards each other, the narrator heads off the reader's projection of romantic fantasies upon the pair by saying

"Here's watcha came for folks" (661). Soon after, the narrator runs through a list of the names of towns and, given the context, guesses that the reader has read the list as being a list of towns of the war dead, to which he crows "Well, you're wrong, champ. These happen to be towns all located on the borders of Time Zones, is all" (695). Immediately following this, the narrator takes the reader to task for being a "sentimental surrealist" (696).

One rather inventive use of the *verfremdungseffekt* concerns Pynchon's dramatizing the distinction between narrative and representation, suggesting that there is not a one-to-one correspondence between the two. For instance, during the episode in which Roger confronts Pointsman, Pynchon's narrator strays away from the events he is relating to include a chase scene, not because it happened, but simply for the pleasure of "aficionadas of the chase scene" (637). The text becomes an interactive experience, because those who are not "aficionadas" may, presumably, skip over the chase scene and pick up the thread of the narrative further on. The status of the chase scene, then, becomes problematic inasmuch as while the text includes it, the narrative proper is apparently not meant to. Again, at the end of the chapter in which the Colonel from Kenosha receives a haircut, rather than describe the murder which the reader likely feels to be impending, the narrator says, "There is no need to bring in blood or violence here" (655). Despite the narrator's modesty, however, his merely mentioning the possibility of bringing in blood and violence has in fact ended by doing just that, since we may imagine the murder that is lacking from the representation in the way that we mentally complete the face of the moon when it is partly occluded by shadow. The distinction that is struck here between what is implicitly represented and what is explicitly represented in the text works to keep the reader detached from the fiction, and conscious of it as a hypothetical construct. In these examples, as well as in the narrator's effecting a transition

by saying, "not to cut this picturesque scene off, but" (670), the reader becomes conscious of just how arbitrary the choices underlying the construction of a representation or a narrative are. In the event, the arbitrariness of the entire text comes to be its defining feature.

By making the reader aware of the conventions of narrative, Pynchon subverts them. The narrative becomes more a narrative of its own processes, than a narrative of events. With the artifice inherent in its composition thrust to the forefront of our attention, the text ensures that we continue to see it under the aspect of the *Als Ob*. Katherine Hume alludes to this meta-linguistic dimension of Pynchon's fiction, citing Iser in her comment:

> multiplying the blanks as Pynchon does ultimately negates one normal function of the text, namely, "to provide the framework for the communication of a message -- and instead it serves to turn attention to the process of communication itself." (189)

I am reminded as well of Barthes's concept of "a 'health' of language" which makes explicit "the arbitrariness of the sign which is its grounding" (*Mythologies*, 136). *Gravity's Rainbow* aspires to such a health in its making the reader's consciousness of its artifice as much of a concern as its telling us what happens to Slothrop.

Another way in which Pynchon makes the reader conscious of his or her expectations is by setting up situations with which he conspicuously does nothing. For instance, he leads off his book with the promising premise of Pirate Prentice's ability to experience and manage the fantasies of others. Except for the fine Franz van der Groov passage (108-11), however, little comes of Pirate's special talent, at least in terms of the narrative that we have (although some have looked to Pirate as a sort of Ur-consciousness containing the entirety of *Gravity's Rainbow* as if it were an extremely protracted fantasy or collection of fantasies). Another instance of this device comes with the passage in which the rocket engineer, Narrisch, is trapped in a pipe and awaiting discovery by Tchitcherine's

men. In a lengthy and elaborate excursion, the narrator compares Narrisch to John Dillinger in his last moments. As the chapter ends, with the sound of "hunters' boots, and rifle bolts in oiled keyways" (518), we fully expect not to hear from Narrisch again, imagining that the Russians have killed him. Forty pages later, however, we discover that Narrisch was not in fact killed, meaning that our sympathies and imaginations were engaged, seemingly for nothing. One might add to this collection of examples the episode in the middle of the novel in which the time-dislocating capabilities of the fictional drug Oneirine make it possible for the U.S.S. *John E. Badass* to escape being hit by a torpedo launched by the hijacked U-boat (389). In the event, the decision to have had the torpedo fired at the *John E. Badass* in the first place seems arbitrary, which appears to be exactly the point.

As another way of toying with the reader and with narrative convention, Pynchon leaves many of his plots and subplots unresolved. Although the Tchitcherine / Enzian conflict is concluded, after a fashion, with the two men failing to recognize one another on a stretch of road, we do not find out whether Enzian fires his rocket, in imitation of Blicero's firing. Nor do we learn what Blicero's eventual fate was. We surmise that he must have died, though the narrator qualifies this:

> If you're wondering where he's gone, look among the successful academics, the Presidential advisors, the token intellectuals who sit on boards of directors. He is almost surely there. Look high, not low. (749)

We do not find out what the "Mystery Stimulus" (97) used in Slothrop's conditioning was. Slothrop's eventual disintegration and scattering itself seems to raise more questions than it settles. Again, arbitrary features in the text seem to be there in order to make the reader conscious of the arbitrary nature of the whole.

The frequent anachronisms in the text might also be seen as functioning this way, directing

the reader away from the represented tale and towards the means of representation. Although some of the anachronisms appear to be accidental, as in the reference to *The Return of Jack Slade*, which Blodgett Waxwing apparently screens a good 10 years before it was made (Weisenberger, *A Gravity's Rainbow Companion*, 131), others are too glaring to be other than deliberate. For instance, there is all of the drug subculture argot, specifically the use of terms that have been current since the 60's rather than the 30's and 40's, as in Seaman Bodine's song, which mentions being "busted" by a "narco man" for "piggin' on peyote and nutmeg tea" (369). In fact, given the historical accuracy of the majority of Pynchon's details, many of which have been checked and verified by Weisenberger's work, it seems that the anachronisms are not mistakes, but strategic distancing devices.

In addition to the anachronisms, the time span of the events represented in the text is compromised by explicit references to the period in which the novel was composed. Although the narrative returns to the post-war era of 1946 immediately following it, the epigraph for the fourth part of the text is a quotation from Richard Nixon (719), suggesting that all of a sudden we have been catapulted forward from the 1940's to the 1960's or early 70's. Shortly after returning to the immediate post-war era of the 1940's for the first few pages of "The Counterforce," the text leaps ahead again, in a flash forward, to the present of the book's composition: "Between two station-marks, yellow crayon through the years of grease and passage, 1966 and 1971, I tasted my first blood. Do you want to put this part in?" (739). The last section of the novel, "Descent," is in the present tense, but it is not entirely clear whether it is the present of the 1940's or our own present.

Various solutions have been proposed for these temporal leaps. One possibility is that the narrator is telling the story in the present day, meaning that the materials from 1945-6 are being filtered through a consciousness that has lived beyond the events of WW II. Another is that the

narrative includes the events of recent years, as a sort of epilogue to the earlier events, as Clerc suggests (10). In any case, the anachronisms and prolepses problematize the fiction in much the same way that disappointed reader expectations and narratorial intrusions do. At all events, it seems that Pynchon is emphasizing the provisionality of his representation. He continually contradicts our expectations and refers to the artifice involved in his text in order to draw our attention away from the represented and toward the mode of representation. The result, I think, is that we should not view his novel as mimetic, or representative of some thing, but rather we should see it, and all of the things in it, as vehicles for the expression of his vision. The story, that is, is incidental to what Pynchon is investigating, which latter seems to be the relationship of paranoia to the way that we represent the world to ourselves. In this context, the foregrounding of the conventions and artifice involved in the construction of his narrative would seem to be an appropriate concern. That is, the meta-fictionality of *Gravity's Rainbow* is bound up with the nature of Pynchon's subject, which is not the fiction mediated in the novel, but rather the nature of mediation itself.

This rigorously hypothetical stance of Pynchon's extends to the characters as well, who, as functions of the narrative, may themselves be seen as hypothetical entities, rather than as imitations of persons. Indeed, on a literal level, Slothrop is no more than "these eight inkmarks" (285), animated, however, by the reader's imagination. As Koestler suggests, "In order to love or hate something which exists only as a series of signs made with printer's ink, the reader must endow it with a phantom life, an emanation from his conscious or unconscious self" (*Act of Creation*, 345). Koestler's observation here is especially fortuitous, since the similarity between the inkmark in the book and the inkmark in the projective test is implicitly provided. The point is, then, that Slothrop, like the text he appears in, is merely a vehicle for Pynchon's ideas (and for the reader's), and so we

need not balk at those features in his career which seem to strain credibility.

In fact, characters are explicitly likened to hypothetical beings at various points in the text, suggesting that they possess no reality in themselves, but exist merely as conventions in order to facilitate the movement of Pynchon's text. Because of this, Pynchon can dispose of them in any way that he wishes, since they do not correspond to natural realities, but to hypothetical constructs. For example, Slothrop has a dream of attending a party, and is pleasantly surprised to find his recently deceased friend Tantivy Mucker-Maffick present. However "Everybody understands it's only a visit: that he will be "here" only in a conditional way. At some point it will fall apart, from thinking about it too much" (551). Slothrop himself becomes something of a conditional presence upon entering the Zone: "Slothrop, though he doesn't know it yet, is as properly constituted a state as any other in the Zone these days. Not paranoia. Just how it is. Temporary alliances knit and undone" (291). Later in the novel, when Slothrop has fragmented and scattered, only Seaman Bodine can see him:

> He is looking straight at Slothrop (being one of the few who can still see Slothrop as any sort of integral creature anymore. Most of the others gave up long ago trying to hold him together, even as a concept — "It's just got too remote" 's what they usually say). (740)

Laszlo Jamf, too, the mastermind behind Slothrop's conditioning and developer of the marvelous Imipolex, is as much a narrative construct as Slothrop is, as is clear from his being dismissed by the Counterforce as one of Slothrop's convenient fictions:

> "There never was a Dr. Jamf," opines world-renowned analyst Mickey Wuxtry-Wuxtry — "Jamf was only a fiction, to help him explain what he felt so terribly, so immediately in his genitals for those rockets each time exploding in the sky, to help him deny what he could not possibly admit: that he might be in love, in sexual love, with his, and his race's death" (738).

Very shortly after this, Slothrop is spoken of as a "pretext" (740), meaning that Slothrop had the same relation to the Counterforce as Jamf is supposed by the Counterforce to have had to Slothrop.

Each of them, including the Counterforce, is identified by the text as a hypothetical convention, adopted out of expediency.

At first, one might not know how to take the revelation that Slothrop or Jamf did not exist in any "real" way. One might understandably be disinclined to credit the Counterforce spokesman, preferring instead to believe that one has not been led on a wild goose chase over 700-odd pages as regards Slothrop's and Jamf's reality. In a way, this sudden disillusionment is analogical to other episodes in the novel in which we learn, for instance, that Mrs. Quoad was not the octogenarian whom we met during the "Disgusting English Candy Drill," but in fact a "flashy divorcée" (271), or that Pökler and Ilse did not commit incest, but that Pökler merely imagined doing so. McHale refers to this feature of Pynchon's practice as "retroactive de-concretization" (70), and speaks of it as overturning reading habits developed in encounters with modernist texts such as *To the Lighthouse* and *The Sound and the Fury*. In contrast to these works "the minds of *Gravity's Rainbow* give us access only to provisional 'realities' which are always liable to be contradicted and canceled out" (66). The benefit of this device, apparently, is its undermining of paranoid reading habits, as McHale suggests. I would add that one of the paranoid reading habits that is modified is the one of according too much substantiality to the achieved delusion of the story. In the event, the reader becomes aware of his or her ability to step back from the fiction and take an ironic stance with regard to Slothrop's fate. Indeed, the ability to entertain the idea that there never was a Slothrop in any "real" sense of the word, may serve as an index to our own capacity for an operational, as opposed to a genuine, paranoia. In this way, Jamf and Slothrop become necessary hypotheses holding the text together; at the same time, their divergence from conventional ideas of character depiction foregrounds the fact that they are provisional creations, vehicles of meaning, existing only in a theoretical way.

Pynchon's undermining of the reality of his own characters would seem to follow from the principle of Creative paranoia since character, like other features of narrative, is merely another convention achieved by artificial means. Put simply, if narrative can be challenged, then character, which is a part of narrative, can be too. This accords with poststructuralist and postmodern practice, in which the concept not only of literary character, but of the ontological self as well, is problematized:

> History, the individual self, the relation of language to its referents and of texts to other texts — these are some of the notions which, at various moments, have appeared as "natural" or unproblematically common-sensical. And these are what get interrogated. (Hutcheon, xiii)

In Pynchon's case however, the undermining of the self is motivated not merely by a wish to extend the notion of convention and convenient fiction over a broader territory, but follows from the idea that the self itself is a paranoid structure which constitutes an epistemological stumbling block in regards to knowing the world. As I have mentioned, the concepts of perspective, projection, and belief all suggest that we cannot stand outside of ourselves, which further implies that our knowledge of reality must inevitably be skewed toward our frames of reference, and thereby distorted. In that these things are associated with paranoia in the text, moreover, the logical conclusion to make is that paranoia and self-reference are indeed somehow related. This equation between paranoia and identity has appeared in Pynchon before, in *The Crying of Lot 49*, when Dr. Hilarius says, "I chose to remain in relative paranoia, where at least I know who I am and who the others are" (101). Paranoia is identity, as Lacan suggests (20), and overcoming paranoia, then, means overcoming identity with its solipsistic and self-referential frame of reference which we conventionally take as a given. Indeed, Pynchon's referring to the self as an "albatross" (623, 624, 661, and 712) suggests that as a fiction, the idea of being a self has not even the redeeming feature

of being necessary.

A stance of irony towards one's self is not easily attained. Our perspectives and beliefs seem natural to us, and hence it rarely occurs to us to question them. An egocentric view of the world seems the most natural thing to us. Taken to a logical extreme, however, this faith in our self-referential perspectives is paranoia, as Sanders suggests:

> Clinical paranoia is zealously self-referential: the paranoid asserts that (1) there is an order to events, a unifying purpose, however sinister, behind the seeming chaos; and (2) this purpose is focused upon the self, the star and victim. Thus the paranoid individual becomes a hero once again, he stands at the center of a plot; but it is an incurably private one, into which others can enter only as threat. (145)

We see such self-referentiality and paranoia linked in *Gravity's Rainbow*. Pökler provides one example:

> Weissmann was *saving* him for something: some unique destiny. Somehow the man had known the British would bomb that night, known even in '39, and so arranged the tradition of an August furlough, year after year but all toward protecting Pökler from the one bad night. Not quite balanced...a bit paranoid, yes, yes... (439) [Italics and ellipses Pynchon's]

Indeed, Pökler is never quite able to convince himself that "Its [the situation's] negative aspects are distributed isotropically [i.e., in all directions]" (415) [Parentheses mine]. Slothrop, too, is similarly dominated by his self-referential interpretations of the world around him, feeling as if he is at the center of multiple plots launched by Tchitcherine and Major Marvy, as well as by GE and IG Farben. At some point, however, he comes to realize that he does not claim the entire stage to himself. For instance, to Bodine's saying, "*Everything* is some kind of plot, man" (603), and Solange's adding, "And yes but, the arrows are pointing all different ways," Slothrop receives his first notice that he is not the exclusive focus of the patterns he perceives:

> the Zone can sustain many other plots besides those polarized upon himself [...] these are the els and buses of an enormous transit system here in the Raketenstadt, more

> tangled even than Boston's — [Ellipses mine].

This revelation is followed by a similar one later in the novel:

> it becomes apparent that the 4 and the Father-conspiracy do not entirely fill their world. Their struggle is not the only, or even the ultimate one. Indeed, not only are there many *other* struggles, but there are also *spectators*, watching, as spectators will do, hundreds of thousands of them, sitting around this dingy yellow amphitheatre. (679) [Italics Pynchon's]

The reason, I think, that it is so hard to get rid of the idea of the self is that it provides a coherence that does not exist in reality. The human as a meaning-making animal is only comfortable amidst meaning, as is suggested by Pynchon's writing that paranoia is "comforting — religious, if you want," and that anti-paranoia is "a condition not many of us can bear for long" (434). Schaub suggests: "For most of the characters in *Gravity's Rainbow*, a belief in conspiracy directed at them is preferable to a Situation lacking any coherence" (88). He goes on to explain why this is, in a passage reminiscent of Ernest Becker:

> Paranoia substitutes a rigorous (though false) order for chaos, and at the same time dispels the sense of individual insignificance by making the paranoid the focus of all he sees going on around him — a natural response to the confusion of modern life. (90)

We should notice here that Schaub speaks of paranoia not as an engagement of the self with the world, but as a "false order" that is "substitute[d]" for reality. That is, paranoia may be a way of stemming off alienation, but it results in an unreal notion of the world, as well as of the self. Obviously, the coherence of one's own perspective, as a "false order," must come to constitute a definite obstacle to knowing anything outside of that perspective. Once again, the case is that we do not know the world, but only the forms through which the world is mediated. The result, as the passages from Sanders and Schaub suggest, is that over-estimation of the self is a main feature of paranoia, and as a fiction of coherence, is a stumbling block to knowing the world. We trade the

chaotic reality of the world for the false, but comforting, coherence of a self. In doing so, however, we court paranoia.

Slothrop makes a first attempt at exiting this circuit of paranoia and self-reference when he encounters a graffito reading, "WILLST DU V-2, DANN ARBEITE" (624). Slothrop's immediate reaction to this is to think that it has been placed there for his benefit ("Good evening Tyrone Slothrop," he thinks), but upon walking a little further, he corrects his first impression:

> no, no, wait, it's O.K., over on the other wall they've also painted WILLST DU V-4, DANN ARBEITE. Lucky. The brimming voices recede, the joke clarifies, he is only back with Goebbels and the man's inability to let a good thing be. But it had taken an effort to walk around and look at that other wall. (624)

In the context of the second graffito, the menace of the first is lost, and Slothrop is compelled to forego the self-referentiality of his initial apprehensions. However, as he points out: "it had taken an effort." Indeed it takes an effort to continue to investigate past the point at which one's suspicions have been confirmed. This is what Slothrop does, though, and his doing so suggests that the pattern of paranoia can be interrupted, through the continuing of the investigation even after initial confirmation of one's suspicions. This may be contrasted to the provocative possibility that any of our investigations, scientific or otherwise, participate in a paranoid dynamic, terminating not in "truth," but in a more arbitrary point determined by our wish for coherence and confirmation of our self-referential suspicions. That is to say, inquiry participates in the dynamic of the self-fulfilling prophecy. In light of this, we might well be advised to practice Creative paranoia, and remain in doubt of all conclusions and termination points, subjecting the results of our inquiries to an "as if," rather then elevating them to the status of truth.

Enzian seems to have an intuitive understanding of the fact that investigation has limitations built into it which must be overcome or at least taken into account. Encountering the Jamf

Ölfabriken Werke AG, and realizing that it and not the rocket is the "real Text" (520), it becomes clear to him that investigation has to be re-conceived if it is to be more than a solipsistic and self-authenticating mechanism:

> We have to look for power sources here, and distribution networks we were never taught, routes of power our teachers never imagined, or were encouraged to avoid...we have to find meters whose scales are unknown in the world, draw our own schematics, getting feedback, making connections, reducing the error, trying to learn the real function...zeroing in on what incalculable plot? (521)

There is a parallel here with a suggestion of Roger Mexico's from earlier in the book:

> for science to carry on at all, it must look for a less narrow, a less...sterile set of assumptions. The next great breakthrough may come when we have the courage to junk cause-and-effect entirely, and strike off at some other angle. (89) [Ellipses Pynchon's]

One suspects that in reference to these expressions of dissatisfaction with conventional modes of inquiry, the third of the Proverbs for Paranoids might be well worth citing: "If they can get you asking the wrong questions, they don't have to worry about answers" (251).

From this we have a context in which to understand the reason for Pynchon's text being so demanding. In each of the cases I have just looked at, *anagnorisis* is contingent upon a change in perspective. This redounds to Pynchon's text, wherein the reader soon learns not to be content with first impressions, but must always be changing perspective in order to negotiate amongst the many contradictions, anachronisms, and narrative disappointments that litter the narrative field. Like Slothrop revising his interpretation of the graffito, or Enzian revising his interpretation of the Jamf Ölfabriken Werke AG, we revise our own ideas about the Schwarzkommando, about Mrs. Quoad, and ultimately about Jamf and Slothrop himself. Different perspectives, rather than one, are necessary for interpretation to be effective:

> All seeing is essentially perspective, and so is all knowing. The more emotions we

> allow to speak in a given matter, the more different eyes we can put on in order to view a given spectacle, the more complete will be our conception of it, the greater our "objectivity." (Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, 255)

Although one suspects that complete objectivity eludes us, it is obvious that Pynchon has little patience for patently limited perspectives and false orders. It is this attitude that aligns *Gravity's Rainbow* with the satiric tradition in literature. In fact, Northrop Frye's explanation of the genre reads like a description of the thematic content of *Gravity's Rainbow*:

> satire may often represent the collision between a selection of standards from experience and the feeling that experience is bigger than any set of beliefs about it. The satirist demonstrates the infinite variety of what men do by showing the futility, not only of saying what they ought to do, but even of attempts to systematize or formulate a coherent scheme of what they do. Philosophies of life abstract from life, and an abstraction implies the leaving out of inconvenient data. The satirist brings up these inconvenient data, sometimes in the form of alternative and equally plausible theories. (*Anatomy of Criticism*, 229)

In Pynchon's case, "inconvenient data" include Gödel's Theorem, paranoia, projection, and the artifice that underlies the illusions we choose to entertain. Where Pynchon is in his own class, however, is in his understanding any "coherent scheme" as being a form of paranoia, whether that scheme be an interpretation of data, an idea about the self, or a quirk of perspective.

In all events, *Gravity's Rainbow* suggests that the static and unchallenged perspective can become a prison, and that one's frame of reference may end by confining one while masking the reality it was intended to mediate. Coherence compromises perception, and the imposition of order upon reality always involves the exclusion of some data. This latter point is dramatized in *Gravity's Rainbow* with the mention of one of Slothrop's heroes, the comic book character who cannot be contained by the frames in which his exploits play out: "The name of the hero — or being — was Sundial. The frames never enclosed him — or it — for long enough to tell" (472). Slothrop, too, is spoken of at one point as escaping the notice of those whose perspectives frame reality in such a

way as to occlude him:

> *Their* preoccupation is with forms of danger the War has taught them — phantoms they may be doomed now, some of them, to carry for the rest of their lives. Fine for Slothrop, though — it's a set of threats he doesn't belong to. They are still back in geographical space, drawing deadlines and authorizing personnel, and the only beings who can violate their space are safely caught and paralyzed in comic books. (379) [Italics Pynchon's]

Again, just as Gödel demonstrated that there will always be some datum that escapes any attempt to systematize knowledge, so there will always be entities that escape our frames of reference, by virtue of the fact that our approach to them is through these frames of reference. The narrator alludes to such entities at one point:

> They are all the presences we are not supposed to be seeing — wind gods, hilltop gods, sunset gods — that we train ourselves away from to keep from looking further even though enough of us do, leave Their electric voices behind in the twilight at the edge of the town and move into the constantly parted cloak of our nightwalk till (720)

This is reminiscent of Shakespeare's "we make trifles of terrors, ensconcing ourselves into seeming knowledge, when we should submit ourselves to an unknown fear" (*All's Well that Ends Well*, II.3.4-6). The question is, though, that given that these beings exist outside of our frames of reference, how can we know that they indeed exist? One has to wonder in this case whether our tendency to project interferes with our observing these presences, or whether, on the other hand, there is nothing beyond our frames of reference, and our tendency to project is in fact responsible for the construction of these presences. One may be paranoid about not seeing these presences, or one may be paranoid about the limitations of one's frame of reference, which prevents one from seeing them; again, one may be paranoid about one's suspecting the existence of these presences, when they may not exist. At any rate, Pynchon's alluding to these presences makes one paranoid about paranoia itself.

It is not entirely important in the end, though, whether there are "wind gods" or "hilltop gods"

or fantastic heroes that escape our frames of reference. Merely the suggestion that there are is enough to make us doubt not only what we see, but also the perspectives through which we see them. This seems to be the point of Creative paranoia: one learns to view one's own perspective with a healthy measure of irony. Perhaps one even becomes inspired with a Faustian restlessness with regard to one's perspective. In other words, the idea that there are things that transcend our perspectives may inspire us to try to surpass those perspectives. Pynchon may be projecting the notion of "wind gods," but the effect of such a projection challenges us, if we cannot see them.

One ends up with an interesting suspicion concerning Pynchon's text itself in view of this. If consciousness is paranoia and paranoia distorts reality, then even the narrative of *Gravity's Rainbow* itself cannot represent reality but only a distorted segment of it. Pynchon may contrast the characters' paranoid delusions against a broader reality in order to satirize them, but his own text may be measured against a broader reality which it cannot itself represent. The idea is that there may be a narrative behind the narrative — the narrative of unrepresentable reality behind the narrative of *Gravity's Rainbow*.

In sum, *Gravity's Rainbow* challenges the perspective of its reader by representing a multiplicity of perspectives, as well as suggesting the existence of others. The book itself is a product of Creative paranoia. The fact that paranoia is defined in several ways, rather than one, would seem to follow from this fact. The definitions are several in order to keep us from according too much emphasis to one, a point that becomes ironic in light of the fact that so many critics have identified paranoia with only one of the definitions, i.e., the discovery that everything is connected. Operating according to the principles of Creative paranoia, however, one will understand that a definition of paranoia is, like anything else, provisional, and simply one operational fiction among

other operational fictions. By contrast, when one unduly emphasizes one of the definitions over the others, as I think other commentators may have done, the result is precisely that situation which Creative paranoia was contrived to avoid: committment to a single axiom or perspective and concomitant lapse into a closed system of thinking.

Paranoia constitutes *Gravity's Rainbow*. Further, inasmuch as paranoia is a plurality, the novel itself should be understood as a plurality. This would seem to be the proper stance to take toward Pynchon's work, or, indeed, toward any work: "To interpret a text is not to give it a (more or less justified, more or less free) meaning, but on the contrary to appreciate what *plural* constitutes it" (Barthes, *S/Z*, 5) [Italics Barthes]. My work here has been to return the plurality to Pynchon's work, and to his conception of paranoia. As I hope I have made clear, we do not entirely understand any one of his definitions of paranoia until we consider it in the context of a dynamic which includes the others.

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