"A Hand to turn the time":

Menippean Satire

and the

Postmodernist American Fiction of Thomas Pynchon

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation is a study of the major fiction of Thomas Pynchon in three contexts: Menippean satire, Postmodernism, and American writing. Chapter one explores the critical genealogy of the term "satire," constructing a model of the Menippean form, situates Pynchon's texts in the relevant Postmodernist framework, and discusses appropriate native fictional traditions. Menippean satire, technically a prose-verse medley composed of a variety of forms--parody, comedy, and fantasy--provides perhaps the dominant genre in Postmodernist American fiction, yet prototypes for its radical juxtaposition of forms exist in ancient and modern literatures. Chapters two, three, and four focus their analyses on V., The Crying of Lot 49, and Gravity's Rainbow, respectively, in light of the first chapter's generic model.

RESUME

Cette thèse est une étude de la fiction majeure de Thomas Pynchon dans trois contextes: la satire menippée, le postmodernisme, et l'ouvrage littéraire américain. Le premier chapitre explore la généalogie critique du mot "satire," en construisant une modèle de la forme menippée, situe les textes de Pynchon dans la structure pertinente du postmodernisme, et discute les traditions convenables d'imagination native. La satire menippée, en termes techniques une mélange de la prose et du vers composée d'une variété des formes--la parodie, la comédie, et la fantaisie--pourvoit peut-être le genre dominant de la fiction américaine postmoderniste, bien que les prototypes pour sa juxtaposition radicale des formes existent dans les littératures anciennes et modernes. Les deuxième, troisième, et quatrième chapitres concentrent leurs explications de texte sur V., The Crying of Lot 49, et Gravity's Rainbow, respectivement, à l'égard de la modèle générique du premier chapitre.

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Introduction

This dissertation demonstrates, through the construction and systematic elaboration of a formal-functional generic model and through the use of that model as the instrument of textual exegeses of apposite passages, that modern American writer Thomas Pynchon's three major fictions--V.(1963), The Crying of Lot 49(1966), and Gravity's Rainbow (1973)--are Menippean satires. Assuming as a primary heuristic premise that a reader's conception of a text's genre makes possible and coherent the production of its significance, I identify in the model two formal conventions, curse and variety, and two functional conventions, fertility and delight. Research indicates that the curse has its origins in iambic invectives of ancient Greek phallic rites and functions dialectically to encourage fertility and that variety originates in Aristophanic Old Comedy, is acknowledged in the dramatic and verse forms of Roman satura, and functions to delight, though its principal forms--parody, comedy, and fantasy--serve rhetorical ends as well.

Unlike tragedy, epic, lyric, and the novel, Menippean satire has been in large measure ignored by scholars and critics. In general, its structure is loose, mixing seriocomic prose and verse, and its chief emphasis is, in the terminology of this dissertation, on the forms of variety. In European literature, the chief practitioners of the Menippean form are its originator Menippus, Varro, Seneca, Petronius, Lucian, Apuleius, Boethius, Erasmus, Rabelais, Burton, Walton, Swift, Voltaire, Sterne, Landor, Peacock, and Carroll; in American literature, Melville,

West, Gaddis, Vonnegut, and Barth employ the form in differing degrees.

In brief, I argue that Pynchon's three fictions are in the Menippean form of satire. Chapter I establishes the generic model, discussing in detail satire, Postmodernism, and the native tradition and, in turn, sketches general relations of these three areas to Pynchon's fiction; in Chapters II, III, and IV, I apply the model to V., The Crying of Lot 49, and Gravity's Rainbow, respectively. (For a more detailed organizational, methodological, and thematic outline, see the opening of each chapter).

By and large, Pynchon critics do not treat the problem of genre, while the categorizations of those who do are, for the most part, spurious, superficial, or inadequate. To date, Pynchon's fiction has been the focus of numerous articles, eleven full-length studies (of which two are devoted exclusively to Gravity's Rainbow), four collections of essays (of which one is devoted exclusively to essays on Gravity's Rainbow), and a scholarly journal. In the early 1960s, as critical energies attempted to come to terms with the group of American writers of whom Pynchon was perceived to be an important member and with the group of fictions of which V. was regarded as a central text, loose formulations of affiliation between V. and contemporary fiction such as "black humor" and "absurdity" tended to govern scholarly discourse.[1] These were more issues of tone and "philosophy" than of form. As scholarly interest in Pynchon continued through the publications of The Crying of Lot 49 and Gravity's Rainbow, texts which seemed to justify initial enthusiasm, Pynchon's material became of paramount concern, and two areas in particular emerged as dominant: history and science. In reading the presence of historical material in Pynchon's texts as metaphor, critics analyzed his protagonists' quests for personal and social

significance as reflexively mirroring the process of signification in the reading of the texts themselves; thus, the protagonists' searches for connections and patterns reflected as well readers' quests for textual meaning, significance, and coherence. Similarly, the scientific material was understood as functioning to identify the "logic" of science as a form of analogy or metaphor potentially capable of organizing the otherwise apparently scattered and random data of modern experience.[2] Moreover, the critical focus on history and science helped in turn to direct attention to two formal issues, parody and encyclopedism.[3] The latter, in particular, led to the only published attempt to construct a careful and systematic generic model for Pynchon's Gravity's Rainbow. However, this dissertation will argue that Edward Mendelson's 1976 groundbreaking essay, "Gravity's Encyclopedia,"[4] is marred by a synecdochic fallacy, for Pynchon's encyclopedism is not the essence of his form but only part of it. (See below, pp. 4-5, for an elaboration).

Elliot Braha's subsequent (and unpublished) dissertation[5] on Menippean form in West's The Dream Life of Balso Snell, Gaddis' The Recognitions, Pynchon's Gravity's Rainbow, and DeLillo's Ratner's Star stands in counterpoint to Mendelson's influential essay, and in it passing reference is also made to the Menippean form of Pynchon's V. and The Crying of Lot 49, as well as to that of certain other contemporary fictions. Braha's study of Menippean form is an informative and useful corrective to Mendelson's study of encyclopedic narrative, but its model is chiefly informed by Bakhtin and Frye, while this dissertation

endeavors to construct its version of the Menippean model from a broader critical genealogy.

On the other hand, the general emphasis of Pynchon criticism has not been formal. Joseph Slade's pioneering 1974 study, Thomas Pynchon,[6] serves as a useful, if unsystematic, introduction to Pynchon and his work, covering sources, analogues, techniques, and themes. William Plater's The Grim Phoenix[7] provides extended, overlapping readings of Pynchon based on the premise that the fictions are dialectically structured by the disorder of nature and man's need for order, and Mark Siegel's Pynchon: Creative Paranoia in Gravity's Rainbow[8] locates an affirmation in the Counterforce concept of "creative paranoia," organizing around it analyses of Gravity's Rainbow's multiple themes.

In his Pynchon's Fictions,[9] John Stark analyzes Pynchon's use of information from the non-literary and literary realms as methods of organization. Ultimately, Stark's study concludes that Pynchon suggests by the incorporation and arrangement of this information that fictions are both valid and necessary.

Douglas Fowler's A Reader's Guide to Gravity's Rainbow[10] provides an extended essay on Gravity's Rainbow and a scene-by-scene guide to the text, along with several appendices on significant imagery (music, film, popular culture), Herero vocabulary, the problem of Imipolex G, and Pynchon's characters. Fowler argues that Gravity's Rainbow (as well as Pynchon's other texts) offers readers a War of the Worlds in which the realm of the fantastic threatens to overtake the realm of the empirical or realistic.

Douglas Mackey's The Rainbow Quest of Thomas Pynchon,[11] Number 28 of the Borgo Press' "The Mitford Series: Popular Writers of Today," is a brief overview, covering both Pynchon's short stories and his longer fictions. Mackey's analyses are somewhat superficial, and he gets certain facts wrong (e.g., according to Mackey, Pynchon was born in 1943); however, he argues that Pynchon's mode is satiric, using ambiguities to attack convention and to renew readers' perceptions.

In Thomas Pynchon: The Art of Allusion,[12] David Cowart attempts to rectify what he regards as the misconception that Pynchon's use of science, in particular the theory of entropy, is literal or exclusive and that as a result the three texts merely chronicle the inevitable decline of Western civilization. Dividing Pynchon's artistic allusions into those that he claims reflect the decline--painting and film--and those that suggest new possibilities--music and literature--Cowart argues that Pynchon affirms the possibilities associated with the latter pair and finally uses science to serve an aesthetics of mystery, uncertainty, and promise.

Uncertainty and ambiguity govern Pynchon's corpus of texts, Thomas Schaub argues in Pynchon: The Voice of Ambiguity.[13] Concentrating largely on The Crying of Lot 49 and Gravity's Rainbow, Schaub sees Pynchon's form as signifying a vision of contradiction and possibility.

In Thomas Pynchon,[14] Tony Tanner, one of Pynchon's most perceptive early critics, takes as his starting point Roland Barthes' essay, "The Death of the Author," draws the obvious parallel to Pynchon's renowned public invisibility, and then analyzes Pynchon's short stories

and texts in four subsequent chapters. Tanner's thematic analyses are largely reformulations of previously articulated critical approaches and his book's form (a survey or introduction) is much like Slade's pioneering study of 1974 and Mackey's subsequent 1980 study.

Peter Cooper's Signs and Symptoms[15] divides post-war writers into two basic categories, neorealism and counterrealism, and places Pynchon in the latter. Exploring his fiction as both representative and unrepresentative of counterrealist tendencies, Cooper examines Pynchon in the context of his contemporaries, stresses his ultimate ambivalence towards metaphor, and analyzes his fiction in terms of problems and solutions, scientific and literary epistemologies, and metaphor and paranoia.

In Ideas of Order in the Novels of Thomas Pynchon,[16] Molly Hite explores notions of order in Pynchon's fictions, concluding that the orders are multiple and conflicting and suggest, finally, a pluralistic universe.

As the preceding synopsis indicates, criticism has focused principally on the significance of Pynchon's vision by analyzing the fictions' themes; questions of form are largely overlooked.[17] In other words, criticism asks Pynchon's texts what they mean; this study, by addressing the issue of genre, will ask how they work. In fact, the few critics who do correctly identify the Menippean form of Pynchon's texts concentrate their attention on Gravity's Rainbow, excluding from consideration V. and The Crying of Lot 49.[18] This dissertation is thus an original attempt to provide a unifying generic model that

renders intelligible Pynchon's distinctive and enduring literary achievement.

That achievement is, inter alia, the adoption of a form that is virtually unique in American fiction. Though adumbrations and resonances appear in certain chapters of Melville's Moby Dick (and more recently in the works of West, Gaddis, Barth, and Vonnegut), Pynchon's consistent and integral Menippean form is otherwise without precedent in the established traditions of American fiction. Nevertheless, the themes and radical vision of his three texts have identifiable American sources and analogues. Thus, Pynchon's fiction adapts native materials to an historically non-native form.

A second aspect of Pynchon's achievement in fiction is its relation to Postmodernism, an international literary movement that confronts Modernism, seeking new premises, methods, and forms. In particular, Postmodernists question the Modernists' valorization of myth and metaphor as legitimate methods for the production of significance, and Pynchon's incorporation of this dialectic creates the central tension in his three texts.

As we shall see, Pynchon's three Menippean satires present questing protagonists who struggle to create meaning by the agencies of metaphor and paranoia, respectively literary and para-literary ordering techniques offering productive possibilities of significance. In the three texts, "paranoid" questers employ central symbols--V., the Tristero, the V-2 rocket--to develop possibly coherent but radical historical visions: in V., the decline of the animate in the West resulting early in the

twentieth century in a nostalgic and violent European fascism; in The Crying of Lot 49, a crypto-fascist modern America of sterile and repressive uniformity; and finally, in Gravity's Rainbow, a corporate, international fascism of technologies that supersedes V.'s anterior prototype. However, in all three texts, Pynchon's Postmodern questers create the possibility of their coherent visions of history at the expense of a personal disintegration that signifies the repudiation of Modernism's subjectivist strategies.

Furthermore, each of Pynchon's Menippean satires contains reflexive subversions of significance. These subversions, a Menippean tradition as well as the consequence and expression of the Modernist-Postmodernist dialectic, serve to identify reader with protagonist in isomorphic uncertainty. In addition, they constitute variety's principal form, parody (in form and effect, self-parody), which I will argue induces through uncertainty the "anxiety" that makes possible the renewal or fertilization of perception.

In conclusion, I am convinced that Thomas Pynchon's stature as a major American writer is assured and that future critics and scholars will regard him, along with Joyce and Faulkner, as a major writer of twentieth-century English-language fiction. Like Rabelais, who is viewed as a transitional figure between old world and new and whose Menippean text, in effect, sounds the clarion heralding the advent of a modern order, so someday Pynchon will, I believe, be similarly recognized as a transitional figure whose texts proclaim the death of that modern world and the birth of its Postmodern successor.

The limitations of this dissertation are equivalent to the two

methodologies that I think may prove most useful in future Pynchon research: political and deconstructive.[19] While Pynchon's radical vision and form are certainly not politically doctrinaire, a methodology simultaneously more sympathetic to and critical of such radicalism--for example, that of Frederick Jameson--could yield valuable insights and significant results. Similarly, a Derridean deconstruction could analyze the paradoxes and contradictions of Pynchon's fiction, perhaps combining with the findings of a political methodology to yield, ultimately, a critique of Pynchon's linguistic politics. Finally, one additional area clearly requiring more scholarly attention is that of Menippean satire. The most fruitful line of inquiry is, I think, contained in Julia Kristeva's "Word, Dialogue, and Novel,"[20] but much work remains to be done, especially (as I have suggested with regard to Pynchon in particular) in the area of the linguistic politics of Menippean discourse.

Whatever the direction or directions of future Pynchon scholarship, I wish to acknowledge the constructive criticisms of this manuscript in its more rudimentary forms by Professors Louis Dudek, Ronald Reichertz, and Lorris Elliott of McGill University, whose patience and effort on my behalf I appreciate sincerely. To my wife, Zoë, chief editor, typist, and spiritual support, the following words will perhaps suffice: il miglior fabbro.

Notes

[1] See, for example, the following: James E. Miller, Jr., Quests Surd and Absurd: Essays in American Literature (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1967), pp. 15-16 and 24-25; Don Hausdorff, "Thomas Pynchon's Multiple Absurdities," Wisconsin Studies in Contemporary Literature, 7 (1966), 258-69; and Max F. Schulz, "The Politics of Parody and the Comic Apocalypses of Jorge Luis Borges, Thomas Berger, Thomas Pynchon, and Robert Coover," in Black Humor Fiction of the Sixties: A Pluralistic Definition of Man and His World (Athens, Ohio: Ohio Univ. Press, 1973), pp.77-90. For a more recent study of "black humor" and Pynchon, see Elaine B. Safer, "The Allusive Mode and Black Humor in Pynchon's Gravity's Rainbow," Renascence, 32 (1980), 89-104; rpt. in Critical Essays on Thomas Pynchon, ed. Richard Pearce, Critical Essays on American Literature (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1981), pp. 157-68.

[2] See, for example, the following: Tony Tanner, "Caries and Cabals (Thomas Pynchon)," in City of Words: American Fiction, 1950-1970 (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), pp. 153-80; rpt. in Mindful Pleasures: Essays on Thomas Pynchon, ed. George Levine and David Leverenz (Boston: Little, Brown, 1976), pp. 49-67; and Alan J. Friedman and Manfred Puetz, "Science as Metaphor: Thomas Pynchon and Gravity's Rainbow," Contemporary Literature, 15 (1974), 345-59; rpt. in Critical Essays, pp. 69-81. For a more recent study of history and Pynchon, see Steven Weisenberger, "The End of History? Thomas Pynchon and the Uses of the Past," Twentieth Century Literature, 25 (1979), 54-72; rpt. in Critical Essays, pp. 140-56.

[3] See, for example, the following: Robert Murray Davis, "Parody, Paranoia, and the Dead End of Language in The Crying of Lot 49," Genre, 5 (1972), 367-77; and Edward Mendelson, "Encyclopedic Narrative: From Dante to Pynchon," Modern Language Notes, 91 (1976), 1267-75.

[4] Edward Mendelson, "Gravity's Encyclopedia," in Mindful Pleasures, pp. 161-95.

[5] Elliot Braha, "Menippean Form in Gravity's Rainbow and in Other Contemporary American Texts," Diss. Columbia Univ., 1979.

[6] Joseph Slade, Thomas Pynchon (New York: Warner, 1974).

[7] William Plater, The Grim Phoenix: Reconstructing Thomas Pynchon (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1978).

[8] Mark Siegel, Pynchon: Creative Paranoia in Gravity's Rainbow (Port Washington, N.Y.: Kennikat Press, 1978).

[9] John Stark, Pynchon's Fictions: Thomas Pynchon and the Literature of Information (Athens, Ohio: Ohio Univ. Press, 1980).

[10] Douglas Fowler, A Reader's Guide to Gravity's Rainbow (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1980).

[11] Douglas Mackey, The Rainbow Quest of Thomas Pynchon, Milford Series: Popular Writers of Today, No. 28 (San Bernardino, Calif.: The Borgo Press, 1980).

[12] David Cowart, Thomas Pynchon: The Art of Allusion (Carbondale: Southern Illinois Univ. Press, 1980).

[13] Thomas H. Schaub, Pynchon: The Voice of Ambiguity (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1981).

[14] Tony Tanner, Thomas Pynchon, Contemporary Writers (London: Methuen, 1982).

[15] Peter L. Cooper, Signs and Symptoms: Thomas Pynchon and the Contemporary World (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1983).

[16] Molly Hite, Ideas of Order in the Novels of Thomas Pynchon (Columbus: Ohio State Univ. Press, 1983).

[17] For other overviews of Pynchon criticism, see the following: Beverly Lyon Clark and Caryn Fuoroli, "A Review of Major Pynchon Criticism," in Critical Essays, pp. 230-54; and Thomas H. Schaub, "Where We Have Been, Where Are We Headed?: A Retrospective Review of Pynchon Criticism," Pynchon Notes, No. 7 (1981), pp. 5-21.

[18] See, for example, Speer Morgan, "Gravity's Rainbow: What's the Big Idea?" Modern Fiction Studies, 23 (1977), 199-216; rpt. in Critical Essays, pp. 82-98.

[19] As this dissertation was in its final typing, Pynchon Notes published a special issue devoted to deconstructing Gravity's Rainbow. See Pynchon Notes, No. 14 (1984), and in particular, the following: Joel D. Black, "Pynchon's Eve of Destruction," pp. 23-38; Terry Caesar, "'Trapped inside Their frame with your wastes piling up': Mindless Pleasures in Gravity's Rainbow," pp. 39-49; Bernard Duyfhuizen, "Deconstructing Gravity's Rainbow: Introduction," pp. 3-6; Bernard Duyfhuizen, "Included Middles and the Trope of the Absent Insight," rev. of Ideas of Order in the Novels of Thomas Pynchon, by Molly Hite, pp. 75-81; Louis Mackey, "Thomas Pynchon and the American Dream," pp. 7-22; and Steven P. Schuber, "Textual Orbits/Orbiting Criticism: Deconstructing Gravity's Rainbow," pp. 65-74.

[20] Julia Kristeva, "Word, Dialogue, and Novel," in her Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art, ed. Leon S. Roudiez, trans. Thomas Gora, Alice Jardine, and Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1980), pp. 64-91.

Chapter One:

Thomas Pynchon and Postmodern American Satire

Preface

In this opening chapter, after arguing for the validity of a genre-based study, I review the few attempts by Pynchon's critics to provide a generic conception of his texts and find them partial or inadequate. I then trace through selected primary and secondary texts the genealogy of the term "satire" from antiquity to the present in order to examine its various significations and to assist in the development of the model. I argue that a formal and functional model of the genre is appropriate, as etymological and anthropological research locates two formal and two functional conventions: curse, variety, fertility, and delight. These are discussed in turn, and as an introduction to the method of subsequent chapters, the model is applied in brief outline to the three Pynchon texts. The remainder of Chapter I is devoted to locating Pynchon's fiction in two significant contexts: Postmodernism and American writing. The discussion of Postmodernism focuses on its relation to Romanticism and Modernism; I argue that Postmodernist premises lead textual discourse into the Menippean form. In particular, I regard Pynchon's texts as a tropological discourse whose Postmodernist form implies the logical indeterminacy of all discourse. In the final section of Chapter I, I relate Pynchon's fiction to the relevant native traditions

of writers such as Poe, Melville, Twain, West, and Pynchon's own contemporaries.

I. Menippean Satire: Form and Function

It is a curious property of false premises that the truth content of conclusions derived from them by a valid logic is only problematic. False premises may lead to false conclusions, of course, but consider, on the other hand, the following argument:

> No insects have six legs.
> All spiders are insects.
> Therefore, no spiders have six legs.[1]

In the preceding argument (which has the form no A is B, all C is A, therefore no C is B), the conclusion is true, and the logic is valid; both premises, however, are false. Thus, in this case false premises lead to a true conclusion, but since false propositions imply both true and false propositions, false premises lead only to uncertainty.

An analogous situation of uncertainty has evolved in the criticism of Thomas Pynchon's fiction. Pynchon's critics have largely avoided or mistaken the writer's genre, and without a sound generic premise, the resultant interpretive and analytical commentary can be judged only as problematic. In literary criticism, as E.D. Hirsch argues convincingly, such a premise must inevitably be generic:

> [A]n interpreter's preliminary generic conception of a text is constitutive of everything that he subsequently understands, and . . . this remains the case unless and until that generic conception is altered.[2]

Nevertheless, this "preliminary" generic conception must be determined and refined a posteriori--and, in Julia Kristeva's term, "intertextually"--since it is self-evident that only careful readings entailing the recognition of conventions and their transformations can provide adequate proof of genre and its nuances, and although genre criticism involves a certain necessary degree of circularity, it also provides an ordering principle for textual understanding.

It is the central argument of this dissertation that Thomas Pynchon's vision does indeed synthesize material into a formally recognizable, if historically obscure, genre, and that genre is Menippean satire. However, because it is necessary to rectify a fundamental imbalance in the traditional generic conception of satire to arrive at the Menippean form's model, ensuing discussion will center first on an elaboration of satire's elemental conventions in order ultimately to define the nature of the Menippean form to which Pynchon's fiction belongs. By doing so, I hope to advance our critical understanding of form and effect in Pynchon's three major fictions: V., The Crying of Lot 49, and Gravity's Rainbow. Pynchon critics have, by and large, eschewed the construction of a generic foundation for their readings of the writer's texts, and the results have been conclusions whose status is uncertain at best and fallacious at worst.

Nevertheless, aside from the preponderant number of Pynchon critics who regard his fictions loosely as "novels," or who maintain a generic silence, a small minority has attempted more precise generic definitions of individual texts or of all three major fictions. In a 1977 study, for example, Robert Merrill categorizes Pynchon's second book, The Crying of Lot 49, as a "fable" or "apologue" that is "organized to exemplify an idea or a closely related set of ideas."[3] Clearly, such a categorization is insufficient from the point of view of this study, for it does not explain Pynchon's other texts, and secondly is, paradoxically, too sufficient: it could in practice be applied to any text being subjected to an interpretation or commentary. Thirdly, such a method entails the danger of essentialist reductionism, a method that could severely distort a text's complexity.

In his 1980 study, Douglas Fowler describes Gravity's Rainbow as both "fantastic in essence" and "a giant melodrama";[4] this latter genre conception is also that of David Leverenz.[5] However, the genre conceptions of melodrama and fantasy are not, as I will demonstrate, adequate to the variety of Pynchon's Menippean satires, especially that of Gravity's Rainbow, as these two critics argue.

On the other hand, in his seminal study "Gravity's Encyclopedia," Edward Mendelson argues that Gravity's Rainbow is an "encyclopedic narrative."[6] While many of Mendelson's local insights into the text are useful, the proposed (and invented) genre is too idiosyncratic to be of enduring value, for it comprises texts so diverse in vision and form as The Divine Comedy and Gargantua and Pantagruel. Second, as we

shall see, textual encyclopedism composes only one element of the Menippean form, not its entirety, and thus Mendelson's genre is also inadequate.

More traditionally, Michael Seidel describes the narrative of Gravity's Rainbow as "satire" because its "plots envelop and depersonalize" and "contingencies" abound that "impede narrative action."[7] These notions are close to my own; nevertheless, I will argue that such elements in contemporary satiric fiction represent a Menippean-Postmodernist deconstruction, a form of plot parody. Alfred MacAdam, concentrating largely on The Crying of Lot 49, proposes similarly that four aspects of Pynchon's texts justify reading them as "satire": Pynchon makes "use of a pasteboard, trompe l'oeil setting"; "characters are associated with ideas or idées fixes"; his scenes take precedence over his plots"; and "his characters' psychological development is reduced to a minimum."[8] While close to a generic notion that could prove adequate to Pynchon's texts, MacAdam's view, like those of Seidel and Mendelson, contains a distorting generic reduction of Pynchon's satiric form that this study will endeavor to correct.

Speer Morgan, borrowing his central concept from Northrop Frye's Anatomy of Criticism, hypothesizes that Gravity's Rainbow is "Menippean satire" or "anatomy," as are Gulliver's Travels, The Satyricon, Gargantua and Pantagruel, Candide, and Tristram Shandy.[9] Although this generic concept and its tradition come close to my own sense of Gravity's Rainbow, Morgan leaves unexplored V. and The Crying of Lot 49. Like Morgan, John Stark sees "Menippean satire" as Pynchon's form but thinks a "judicious critic should probably . . . not try to go beyond that"

because its conventions are ill-defined.[10]

In sum, few Pynchon critics have attempted to establish a vigorous generic basis for analysis, and no Pynchon critic has as yet read all three Pynchon texts as generically isomorphic.

This dissertation will serve to construct the generic model that informs Pynchon's fiction and will employ that model as the organizing principle of its textual readings. In addition to exploring the significations of satire in order to interpret V., The Crying of Lot 49, and Gravity's Rainbow in subsequent chapters, this introductory chapter will explore the two most profitable, non-generic contexts for locating the complexity of Pynchon's prose: Postmodernism and American fiction. These areas of discourse--Menippean satire, Postmodernism, and American fiction--provide, I think, the three most effective matrices in which to develop a productive reading of the fiction of Thomas Pynchon.

It is, of course, necessary to define terms as rigorously as possible. Like a scientific model or theory that presents a general law or cause to explain natural phenomena, a conception of genre must be elegant, adequate, and free from internal contradiction. With these caveats in mind, let us review the genealogy of satire as a genre.[11]

As C.A. Van Rooy points out in Studies in Classical Satire and Related Literary Theory, the history of Greek satire has never been written. Van Rooy attributes this critical gap in part to the increasing degree of specialization in modern scholarship but more to the absence in classical Greece of a formal satiric genre and an accompanying set of criteria or conventions.[12]

Aristotle tells us, however, that "satire" originates in the phallic songs and subsequently develops into dramatic comedy.[13] While "iambic invective" or "lampoon" is nearer Aristotle's original sense (there being, as Van Rooy notes, no such genre--or term, for that matter--in Greek poetics as satire), the assignment of origins is significant, for it is in ritual origins that satire's elemental form and function can be discerned.[14]

Robert Elliott writes of the phallic ritual in The Power of Satire:

> The entire rite is magical. Its purpose was to stimulate fertility, the sacred energy of life. Its method was to coerce by magical means the responsible spirits or powers. The ceremonial had two aspects, as it were: the invocation of good influences through the magic potency of the phallus, the expulsion of evil influences through the magic potency of abuse.[15]

In The Fictions of Satire, Ronald Paulson concurs with Elliott and views the antithesis between fertility and sterility as satire's primary structural principle:

> Satire's own structure is most clearly visible in its primitive shape, the curse drawn from the fertility ritual. . . . The curse naturally contrasted forces of sterility with creative and fertile images such as sun, rain, and male and female generative organs. The effect of the curse was creative through denigration of the sterile. In this way a single A-B (thesis-antithesis) structure is present in the earliest satire.[16]

In its primitive origins as epigrammatic imprecation, therefore, satire embodies a binary opposition of sterility and fertility and is

allied by its desired effect with the generative forces of man and earth. It is not surprising, then, that the dramatic offspring of the phallic songs, Aristophanic Old Comedy, contain the affirmative emphases of the fertility rite on the earthly and the bodily and that the conclusions that follow the Aristophanic agon tend towards forms of comic resolution in ritual marriage; however, the negative forms of abuse, which derive from the iambic invectives of the fertility rite, occur in the parabases, in which the chorus addresses the audience and comments, often vitriolically, upon both the dramatist's enemies and the society at large.[17] In the subsequent Menippean form, as we shall see, this attack is directed, logically enough, at the reader.

Satire's locus classicus is not Greek, however, but Roman.[18] It is in fact with the advent of Roman poetics that satire becomes an acknowledged genre, and indeed Quintilian (c. A.D. 30-96) proclaims that satire is of exclusively Roman provenance: "Satura . . . tota nostra est."[19]

This declaration poses a problem: How could Quintilian claim satire as an exclusively Roman genre when he himself was aware of and commented upon Greek satire? The answer lies in the term "satura" itself.[20]

In Latin, the term satura derives ultimately from satur or "full," and its meaning subsequently undergoes a transition from "fullness" to "miscellany" by its application to lanx. Thus, lanx satura, or a "full plate" of various kinds of fruit, comes to denote a medley. The earliest appearance of satura in Latin literature is as the title of poems by Ennius (239-169 B.C.) that are miscellaneous in metrical

form and content. Subsequently, Lucilius (180-102 B.C.) and Varro (116-27 B.C.) employ it, at least in part, to denote miscellanies. However, Lucilius modifies the developing genre of satura in two significant ways. To Ennian miscellaneous content, Lucilius adds personal polemicism, and in his later period, introduces a consistent hexameter form. Varro then adds to the miscellaneous aspect of satura a medley of prose and verse, a method that he derives from the Greek Menippus. At this stage of its development, then, satura comes to signify both Lucilian polemicism in hexameter form with miscellaneous content and the Menippean-Varronian narrative tradition in mixed prose-verse form.

In Sermones I, Horace (65-8 B.C.) uses the term "satura" only twice: first to criticize the Lucilian tone of acerbity derived from Aristophanes ("sunt quibus in satura videor nimis acer"), and second to denominate a form ("saturis musaque pedestri").[21] Generally, however, he avoids using the term. Combined with his direct criticism of Lucilius, Horace's terminological reticence signifies a general disapproval of Lucilian satura, and only in Sermones II, as Van Rooy points out, does he accept the term, having by then established a new form in the tradition.[22] Thus, it is not until Quintilian's declaration in the Institutio Oratoria that a critic refers to satura unequivocally as a literary genre.

The source of the confusion over Quintilian's pronouncement stems from a fallacious identification of "satura" with "satire." G.L. Hendrickson argues that the modern definition of "satire" and Quintilian's are essentially different. The OED defines "satire" as "a poem, or in

modern use sometimes a prose composition, in which prevailing vices or follies are held up to ridicule," but by "satura," Hendrickson asserts, Quintilian means to indicate a genre specifically Roman:

> Thus when he says satura tota nostra est he means . . . the special type of literature created by Lucilius, dominated by a certain spirit, clothed in a certain metrical form, fixed by the usage of a series of canonical writers, and finally designated by a name specifically Latin. . . . [23]

Thus, while it is likely that Quintilian would agree that "satire" in the modern sense could be applied to Aristophanic Old Comedy, in no sense would he have thought it logical to apply the term satura, which denotes a distinctly Roman genre in hexameter form.[24]

How, then, does the term metamorphose from satura, denoting an exclusively Roman form, to "satire" in its modern definition? According to Hendrickson, it is Apuleius (A.D. 125-?) who first employs the term in the modern sense when he refers to Xenocrates (396-314 B.C.) as the "author of satires."[25] Since the works of Xenocrates are neither Roman nor in hexameter verse, Apuleius is extending the meaning of satura metaphorically.

It is at this time in critical history that the original etymology and orthography of satura become confused with those of the Greek σάτυρος ("satyros" or satyr), a word that provides the mistaken root for the English derivatives of "satire."[26] This false etymology advanced by post-classical critics[27] leads Renaissance critics like Heinsius and

Scaliger[28] to assign the origins of "satire" incorrectly to the satyr-drama that follows the tragic trilogy in ancient Greece, and it is not until 1605 that Isaac Casaubon rectifies the error.[29] Gilbert Highet confirms that satura and σάτυρος are unrelated:

> The name has nothing to do with the Greek beings called satyrs, shaggy creatures partly human and partly bestial, often rudely goatish in their behavior. . . . The spelling satira, satyra, only came in long after the classical period, largely so that scholars could explain the shocking coarseness of satire by saying that it was inspired by the funny obscene satyr-folk.[30]

Moreover, Horace's linking of Lucilius and Old Comedy leads to further post-classical and Renaissance critical error: satire is confused with drama and regarded as descending directly from Old Comedy.[31] Only Dryden's Discourse concerning the Original and Progress of SATIRE (1693) attempts to transmit Casaubon's rectifying scholarship, but Dryden himself limits satire to curse, a vehicle for personal attack in the Lucilian manner.[32]

If one shifts focus from the classical, post-classical, and Renaissance periods to modern attempts to define satire, one finds theorists offering two identifying features. Ronald Paulson, quoting Northrop Frye, asserts the following:

> Contemporary definitions of satire usually join two terms: "wit or humor founded on fantasy or a sense of the grotesque or absurd" for one, and "an object of attack" for the other; or fantasy

> and a moral standard; or indirection and judgment. One is a wild, not quite stable comedy; the other a moral condemnation. Both are attitudes or tones, although implied is "an object" to be acted upon. Put into Aristotle's correlation, satire can be said to study an ugliness in a manner that is not itself painful, and its approach consists of denigration or attack.[33]

And like Frye and Paulson, Matthew Hodgart isolates "an element of aggressive attack and a fantastic vision of the world transformed."[34]

While Frye, Paulson, and Hodgart stress that the attack of moral criticism is one of two essential properties of satire, there exists another critical approach that acknowledges both the absence of teleology and the disintegration of the subject in modern literature and views the corresponding absence of a high moral stance and its signifying rhetoric as an inevitable consequence. Thus, Patricia Meyer Spacks asserts that until the eighteenth century critics who attempt to define satire focus on its "moral intent" but that in this century the focus of definition shifts to "special techniques."[35] Robert Scholes notes that contemporary satires lack "the rhetoric of moral certainty," and acknowledges that this rhetoric "has generally been a distinguishing characteristic of the satirical tradition."[36]

Does the absence of a rhetoric of moral certainty transform satire into another genre? Or can such satire be accounted for by an adequate generic definition?

Alvin Kernan contends that the satiric standard is, implicitly or explicitly, "humaneness":

> the humane ideal in satire . . . may exist in the blackest type . . . only as the unnamed opposite of the idiocy and villainy portrayed. . . .[37]

Although Kernan merely assumes the "humane ideal" (a phrase he conspicuously neglects to define) to be satire's and by implication the satirist's summum bonum, it is clear that, historically, satirists have been engaged to some degree in at least questioning prevailing notions of what constitutes "humaneness."

For example, an exegesis of Swift's "A Modest Proposal" that reads the text as mimesis and not as satire would yield an interpretive abuse because of its initial failure to provide an appropriate conception of genre; in turn, the appropriate conception serves to clarify textual form and effect. Thus, while the narrator of "A Modest Proposal" does not offer to the reader anything resembling Kernan's "humane ideal"--although it is Swift's irony that the narrator thinks he does--such an ideal must be the "unnamed opposite" of the objects of Swift's ironies: British treatment of the Irish and Enlightenment rationalism. Otherwise, Swift's narrator is, by the moral codes of the Enlightenment, merely mad, and "A Modest Proposal" merely a trivial (albeit unwitting) confession of inhumanity. Despite the absence of a Swiftian rhetoric of moral certainty (which is necessary to implicate the narrator in the satire), such an assumption of moral norms--a "humane ideal," in Kernan's phrase--can prove generically useful for a productive reading of Swift and of satire in general.

Finally, recent critical attention has been devoted to Menippean

satire. Originated by the Cynic Menippus, a Syrian slave who later became a free Greek, these satires were written primarily in prose with verse interludes. Gilbert Highet claims that Menippus used the form to ridicule philosophical opponents.[38] Varro introduced Menippean satire into Latin, and, according to Highet, wrote "narratives of fantastic adventure told in the first person."[39] Unfortunately, only a few fragments survive.

Among Classical and Renaissance critics, Quintilian cites Varronian satire as a form of the genre (although he does not name its source in Menippus),[40] and Dryden writes of the Menippean-Varronian tradition;[41] among modern scholars of Classical literature, Courtney,[42] Duff,[43] and McCarthy[44] consider the following elements as formal Menippean conventions: seriocomic (from the Greek spoudogeloion) prose and verse, extensive parodies, popular proverbs and speech, encyclopedism, fantastic narratives, and epideictic variety. Eugene Kirk offers the following description of Menippean satire's style, structure, elements, and theme:

> The chief mark of Menippean style was unconventional diction. Neologisms, portmanteau words, macaronics, preciosity, coarse vulgarity, catalogues, bombast, mixed languages, and protracted sentences were typical of the genre, sometimes appearing all together in the same work. In outward structure, Menippean satire was a medley--usually a medley of alternating prose and verse, sometimes a jumble of flagrantly digressive narrative, or again a potpourri of tales, songs, dialogues, orations, letters, lists, and other brief forms, mixed together. Menippean topical elements included outlandish fictions (i.e., fantastic voyages, dreams, visions, talking beasts) and extreme distortions of argument (often, "paradoxes"). In theme, Menippean satire was essentially concerned with right learning or right belief. That theme often

> called for ridicule or caricature of some sham-intellectual or theological fraud. Yet sometimes the theme demanded exhortation to learning, when books and studies had fallen into disuse and neglect.[45]

As Kirk points out, the genre has been the province heretofore of Classical scholars or more recently of students of modern literature, neither of whom reads the other, and a synthesis of Ancients and Moderns is unlikely, given the current degree of specialization in literary studies.

Among modern critics, Highet[46] and Kernan[47] discuss the Menippean form as a narrative prose-verse medley, but Mikhail Bakhtin,[48] Northrop Frye,[49] and Julia Kristeva[50] emphasize its central importance in the history of fiction.

Bakhtin views Menippean satire as an historically significant literary tradition that, until this century, remained critically uninvestigated and virtually unknown. Seeking its defining features in antiquity, Bakhtin theorizes that the "connecting principle" of Menippean satire, which originates in oral carnival folk genres, is "carnival and the carnival attitude toward the world." Fundamental to carnival are three themes or "categories": free, familiar contact; mésalliances; and profanation. In carnival, the focus on these categories represents a subversion of official seriousness, and in the seriocomic literary genres derived from carnival, there result three original characteristics: concentration on the present; a critical relation to legend dialectically interrelated with an experiential and freely imaginative

base; and stylistic multiplicity. Bakhtin considers Menippean satire historically the most important seriocomic genre and elaborates fourteen characteristics, which, because of Bakhtin's categorial repetition and overlapping, may be condensed as follows: comedy; fantasy; philosophy; naturalism; tri-levelled construction (the presence of forms of heaven, hell, and earth); abnormal psychology and morality; indecorous scenes; oxymoron; utopianism; parody and multiplicity; and topicality. Ultimately, Bakhtin's point is that Menippean satire belongs to a tradition of literature that he terms "dialogical" and that is opposed to and subverts the "monological" tradition, one which he associates with institutional forms of absolutism, dogmatism, and repression.[51]

In Anatomy of Criticism, Frye treats the tradition of Menippean satire as one of four specific forms of fiction and cites among its principal practitioners Lucian, Petronius, Apuleius, Rabelais, Swift, and Voltaire.[52] Frye focuses on its mixed prose-verse form, claiming "we know it only as a prose form,"[53] but in his terminology the Menippean satire is, for reasons of elegance, better named "anatomy." His elaboration of its conventions is less formal than ethical:

> The Menippean satire deals less with people as such than with mental attitudes. Pedants, bigots, cranks, parvenus, virtuosi, enthusiasts, rapacious and incompetent professional men of all kinds, are handled in terms of their occupational approach to life as distinct from their social behavior.[54]

Frye argues that an extreme form of anatomy is the presentation of

"a vision of the world in terms of a single intellectual pattern," the result of which is "violent dislocations in the customary logic of narrative. . . ."[55] Finally, anatomy is, according to Frye, massively erudite, a parody of the encyclopedism of pedantry that he attributes ultimately to the artist's "exuberance."[56]

Drawing upon Frye and Bakhtin, Elliot Braha proposes a model of the Menippean form that incorporates the following defining features: "stylistic multiplicity (and the philosophical pluralism it implies), fantasy and philosophy, intellection and encyclopedism, an 'anti-book' stance, a marginal cultural position, and carnivalization."[57]

Julia Kristeva, in developing Bakhtin's monological-dialogical narrative distinction, categorizes as monological forms of discourse the epic, history, and science, and as dialogical the polyphonic novel, carnivalesque discourse, and Menippean discourse. Kristeva argues that the traditional novel tends towards epic, that is, "the representative mode of description and narration"[58] and is thus within the monological tradition, while the polyphonic novel, having evolved from Menippean discourse and thus situated within the dialogical tradition, is fundamentally ambivalent, that is, both "representative and antirepresentative."[59] Unlike the narrative absolutism of monological representation, the antirepresentative function of the dialogical tradition is, according to Kristeva, an exploration of experience <u>within</u> language. In sum, Kristeva, like Bakhtin, sees the monological tradition as ideologically repressive and the dialogical tradition as subverting the official and authoritarian forms of power: Aristotelianism, formal logic, Christianity,

Renaissance humanism, rationalism, and the privileged autonomy of subject and object.[60]

What, then, are satire and its Menippean form? More to the point, how are we to define them, and what is their precise relationship? Shall we attempt definitions from an anthropological approach as, for example, Paulson and Elliott have done, or shall we attempt definitions from an etymological approach? Shall we define them formally, since they seem to have more or less consistent, intrinsic properties, or functionally, since they are also rhetorical?[61]

These questions continue to plague scholars and critics. Elliott, for example, admits in The Power of Satire that his use of the term is "pragmatic rather than normative."[62] Such admission notwithstanding, all definitions of satire center irreducibly on either form or function, or some mixture of both, but an inclusive formal and functional method is necessary for critical totalization of form and effect in verse satire and, with regard to the fiction of Thomas Pynchon in particular, the mixed prose-verse form of Menippean satire. If there has been an egregious error historically in the definition of satire, it is this: many definitions (Dryden's, for example) limit satire's formal conventions to the curse or attack while ignoring the genre's etymologically signified and historically practiced convention of variety. The curse of satire is most clearly evidenced in abbreviated forms like invective, epigram, or lampoon; however, even in its Roman verse origin, satura embodies by definition and practice some formal variety, and when

satura evolves into the Menippean prose-verse form, variety takes on greater diversity and significance. This expansion of variety from its more limited poetic form to its more inclusive Menippean form results in an inversion of hierarchy: that is, one may for the purposes of model construction regard the Menippean form as central and prototypical and "satire" (in Dryden's more limited conventional sense) as marginal and derivative. Before turning to a further consideration of the form, significance, and function of Menippean satire's variety, let us first epitomize satire's formal and functional conventions.

First, anthropological research clarifies not only the binary form of satire but also its generative function, and second, etymological research demonstrates satire's mixed formal nature and its function as entertainment or delight. In terms of form and function, then, there are, according to anthropological and etymological research, four chief satiric conventions: curse, fertility, variety, and delight. Two of these conventions, curse and variety, are formal; two, fertility and delight, are functional. Curse and fertility, as form and function, are derived ultimately from the iambic invectives of the Greek phallic rites; variety and delight, similarly, are derived from the Roman development of satura from Ennius' miscellany of poems and ultimately from saturae, a form of primitive Roman drama that Highet describes as "variety shows on stage."[63] The implications of this four-fold set of conventions are considerable. Let us explore them in turn and from them attempt to elaborate a model of Menippean satire.

The curse, as we have seen, emanates from the fertility ritual

of ancient Greece. During the phallic procession, leaders improvised an iambic element directed at spectators. This element was in the form of personal invective and was intended to expel the influence of death by inducing contributions to the harvest. Conversely, the invocation of Phales as a benign influence ensuring life's continuity provided the ritual's positive element. Both elements passed into Aristophanic Old Comedy (and later into Lucilian satura). F.M. Cornford confirms this view:

> There can be no doubt that the element of invective and personal satire which distinguishes the Old Comedy is directly descended from the magical abuse of the phallic procession, just as its obscenity is due to the sexual magic. . . .[64]

As Paulson notes, the structure of which the abuse forms one part is an antithesis, which manifests itself in verse and narrative as an opposition of the desirable and the actualized, or in other words, of the fertile and the sterile. The poetically, dramatically, or fictionally actualized society represents, in Paulson's formulation, "either an excessively disordered or an excessively ordered society. . . ."[65] Not surprisingly, therefore, the principal vehicle and object of the satirist's curse is a vision that Kernan describes as chaotic, dense, and ugly:

> The scene of satire is always disorderly and crowded, packed to the very point of bursting. The deformed faces of depravity, stupidity, greed,

> venality, ignorance, and maliciousness group closely together. . . .[66]

Moreover, to symbolize its critical attitude towards human folly and knavery, satire concentrates on the body. The genre's corporeality derives from its ritual origins but is ultimately ambivalent, for while bodily exuberance serves as an affirmative antithesis to sterility, the satirist may focus instead on alimentation, elimination, and fornication as deflationary antitheses to lofty and hubristic delusions.[67] Paulson writes, "If punishment (as curse) is one aspect of [satire's] action, copulating, eating, and defecating are others."[68] Kernan concurs: "The author of satire always portrays the grotesque and the distorted and concentrates to an obsessive degree on the flesh."[69]

In sum, then, under satire's principal generic convention of the curse, we may summarize by naming a binary principle, antithesis, that contrasts the sterility of the actualized and the fertility of the desirable and opposes the writer to his object of attack.

Such oppositions suggest, furthermore, division of the satirist into biographical author and <u>persona</u>. Maynard Mack, in a study of Pope, counsels prudence in the hurried and too facile identification of satiric poet with poetic (or, by extension, narrative) <u>persona</u>.[70] Mack distinguishes three voices in Pope: <u>vir bonus</u>, <u>ingénu</u>, and hero. The first gains the reader's confidence and trust by his normative good sense and reasonable stability, the second accentuates the objects of attack by his naiveté, and the third attacks them. Mack acknowledges

that his categories may be overlapping and inexhaustible (he omits, for example, the foolish or knavish persona--or character--who is himself implicated in the satire), but his point about the danger of a criticism of satire that assumes naively a biographical or expressive orientation is persuasive, particularly in a post-Freudian age.

The binary concept of curse as antithesis carries us further, for the satiric hero attacks someone, man, or something, his institutions. These may be attacked individually or collectively, fictionally or actually, although this last approach has not been common since Aristophanes and Lucilius. Instead, most satirists have used fictions to mask, however transparently, their objects of ridiculing attack. Thus, Sacks defines satire as "works which ridicule particular men, the institutions of men, traits presumed to be in all men, or any combination of the three."[71] And Rosenheim states, "satire consists of an attack by means of a manifest fiction upon discernible historic particulars."[72]

Finally, satirists curse not only men and their institutions but also their readers, a traditional technique of the Menippean form. Highet notes this tactic as a favorite of Lucian and Rabelais:

> Lucian is kidding his readers, by writing rubbish and then bamboozling them into reading it. This particular trick is a favorite of Rabelais: he will go on and on, listing hundreds of games or hundreds of absurd book titles, column after column, just to see how long the suckers will go on reading them. If this is satire, it is a unique kind of satire: for the reader is himself its victim.[73]

(Such Menippean attack is best explained, I shall demonstrate, by its parodistic function.) Thus, the satirist, his vision, and his reader are set against one another, a situation for which the ideal justification is Blake's proverb endorsing the fertility of dialectic: "Without contraries there is no progression."[74] It is this dialectic of binary oppositions that marks the rhetorical function of satire and makes possible, I shall argue, the fertilization or renewal of perception.

Satire's second formal principle, variety, originates in part in the Roman saturae, primitive dramas that were first acted by Etruscan actors.[75] These saturae were intended, much like the Greek Phallic Rites, to appease the gods during a blight.[76] Livy, however, taking his account from Varro, indicates that in its Roman dramatic origin satura soon incorporated a vulgar form of parody:

> Next the young Romans began to imitate them, at the same time exchanging jests in uncouth verses, and bringing their movements into a certain harmony with the words. And so the amusement was adopted, and frequent use kept it alive.[77]

Parody, then, is the youthful and subversive companion to antithesis as a formal satiric technique, and as the curse is manifested primarily in antithesis, so variety is manifested primarily in parody.[78]

Parody may be defined as a comic and distorted imitation, normally of literature and normally designed to ridicule.[79] In Greek, it denoted "a song sung beside" and examples originate as comic "countersong" to the more serious epic and tragic forms of Greek poetry and drama.

Aristotle attributes the origin of parody to Hegemon of Thasos, but other accounts trace it to the fragmentary Margites or to The Battle of the Frogs and Mice.[80] While poetic satires may parody single works, the Menippean form does not usually restrict itself to the parody of a single work or a single type of work; in the words of Henry James in another context, these satires tend to be "loose and baggy monsters." This parodistic diversity is traceable historically to Aristophanes and to the Roman saturae's metrical and gestural variety; as the form develops into Menippean satire, parody serves not only to entertain but also to satirize pedantry and readers' common-sense simplifications of experience. Paulson remarks on such relativism of perspective in satire, calling parody of other genres a satiric convention,[81] while Hodgart similarly claims that satire "may assume a bewildering variety of sub-forms."[82] Likewise, Kristeva argues that Menippean discourse "includes all genres."[83]

Furthermore, Northrop Frye, who views the whole of imaginative literature as an autonomous and coherent structure of words, sees satire intrinsically as a parody of romance,[84] and this implicit criticism thus makes parody per se a form of satire. The implicit attack on the conventions of romance by means of parody is an inevitable consequence of satire's and romance's antithetical visions of experience. Hodgart writes that satire's principal technique is one of diminution:

> The basic technique of the satirist is reduction: the degradation or devaluation of the victim by reducing his stature and dignity. This may be done on the level of plot and will almost always be continued to the level of style and language.[85]

Hodgart's spatial metaphor is only analogical, of course, but the tendency of satirists to reduce experience, to cut it down in (or to) size, implies a curse on man's supernal aspirations. On the contrary, romance, to extend the metaphor, "expands" vision to imply greater possibilities, however improbable or impossible. Supernaturalism is available, even likely. Since each form distorts differently--one by "expansion" or "heightening" and the other by "reduction" or "lowering"--it is not surprising that satirists view the Olympian flights of romanticism as specious and inimical to the reductionistic vision of satire, which from antiquity they have defended as merely realistic.[86] Such literary pretensions to mimesis notwithstanding, satire's parodies of the conventions of romance constitute one of its basic formal elements.

Pynchon's fiction provides a corroborating example of satire's parody of romance. In The Hero with a Thousand Faces, Joseph Campbell delineates the heroic paradigm as follows:

> The standard path of the mythological adventure of the hero is a magnification of the formula represented in the rites of passage: separation--initiation--return: which might be named the nuclear unit of the monomyth.
> A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man.[87]

As Richard Chase argues, romance constitutes a principal form of American fiction,[88] and since, like other American Postmodernists, Pynchon sends his protagonists into fabulous regions (Benny Profane into the alligator-

populated sewers of New York City, Herbert Stencil into the monomania of V., Oedipa Maas into an apparent encounter with the mysterious Tristero, Tyrone Slothrop into the locus of the V-2) but denies to them the final triumph, revelation, and salvational power accorded Campbell's monomythic hero, Pynchon's texts stand in parodistic relation to romantic paradigms of heroism and thereby satirize, to use Roland Barthes' term, "readerly" expectations of closure and disclosure.[89]

Similarly, by parodying detective fiction conventions, Pynchon parodies a form of romance, for the detective is a modal displacement of the mythic hero into a member of the category Frye calls the low mimetic, that is, bound by natural law. As one who seeks to purge the fictional society of its criminal transgressor by revelation of culpability, the detective, however, is like other romantic heroes whose task is in some sense to deliver a wasteland from its plague. In the detective genre, elemental characters are the detective, criminal, and victim; in Pynchon's texts, Herbert Stencil, Oedipa Maas, and Tyrone Slothrop serve as combined detective-victim parodies; V., Pierce Inverarity, and Laszlo Jamf serve as criminal parodies that are ultimately absent causes and symbolize, therefore, the equivocal satire on historiography and on "historical" targets of Pynchon's curse: European-American decadence and violence, American fascism, and international corporate fascism.

Turning from satire's formal conventions of curse (as antithesis) and variety (as parody) to its functional conventions of fertility and delight, we find that in both its Greek and Roman origins, satire's desired effect is the same. As in the Phallic Rites, the original motive

behind the Roman development of saturae is to fructify the land by the propitiation of the gods during a blight. Livy notes:

> The pestilence lasted during both this and the following year, the consulship of Gaius Sulpicius Peticus and Gaius Licinius Stole. In the latter year nothing memorable occurred, except that with the object of appeasing the divine displeasure they made a lectisternium, or banquet to the gods, being the third in the history of the city; and when neither human wisdom nor the help of Heaven was found to mitigate the scourge, men gave way to superstitious fears, and, amongst other efforts to disarm the wrath of the gods, are said also to have instituted scenic entertainments. This was a new departure for a warlike people, whose only exhibitions had been those of the circus; but indeed it began in a small way, as most things do, and even so was imported from abroad. Without any singing, without imitating the action of singers, players who had been brought in from Etruria danced to the strains of the flautist and performed not ungraceful evolutions in the Tuscan fashion.[90]

Thus, in satire's respective Greek and Roman origins, invective and saturae served as the rhetorical means to a political end, a divine sanction of social continuity.

The reformative and propitiating goals, embodied as an imaginative transformation into poetry, drama, and fiction, necessitate satire, but Juvenal's ironic declaration, "Difficile est saturam non scribere,"[91] is for satirists more the professed rule than the exception, as in a more recent formulation, critic David Worcester calls satire "the engine of anger."[92] However, unmitigated outrage would neither sustain a vision nor make it receptible to an audience or readership. In particular,

borrowing from Aristophanic Old Comedy, the Menippean form incorporates as well elements of the comic and the fantastic, which, while immediately entertaining (and formally various), serve a more important purpose: they provide irreconcilable images of the ordinary and the extraordinary,[93] a formal contradiction that thwarts conventional expectations of mimesis and thus compels the reader to adopt different interpretive methods from those demanded by conventional mimesis. If I may paraphrase Dr. Johnson from another context, this violent (and indecorous) yoking together of heterogeneous ideas composes the Menippean form's vision and method.[94] In short, Menippean satire's variety is manifested principally in parody, but comedy and fantasy are also significant and necessary elements.

If Menippean satire is structured to reform, then in theory the functions of fertility and delight must serve to instill the reformative impulse in its readers, and these functional characteristics must in turn stem from the interaction of the reader with the formal characteristics of the Menippean text, that is, the curse and variety. The curse, as we have seen, is manifested in satire as an attack on the sterile, which in turn implies the antithesis of the sterile and the fertile, and variety is manifested as parody, although I have remarked in addition upon the presence of the significant <u>discordia concors</u> of the comic and the fantastic that also participates in Menippean satire's formal variety. Parody, comedy, and fantasy serve, <u>inter alia</u>, to entertain, and in doing so they moderate and make receptible the more negative impact of the curse, which in the Menippean narrative form is necessarily diffused into variety as well. Such diffusion is inscribed, therefore,

in the parodic, the comic, and the fantastic, defined in both Freud's and Todorov's sense as the locus of uncertainty between the binary explanations of the natural and the supernatural.[95] Furthermore, the multiplicity of visions signified by parody, comedy, and fantasy suggests the resistance of experience to the imposition of patterns that simplify and distort its complexity. In sum, the Menippean text stands in antithetical relationship to experience, or at least to what I have sometimes called common-sense simplifications of experience, and that relationship, by virtue of its quality of difference, constitutes a metaphor, the rhetorical trope that implies similarity in difference, synthesis in antithesis, and unity in diversity.

Thus, Menippean satire's generically indispensable antithesis--one whose recognition is essential for the performance of textual criticism--is that of a metaphorical interrelation between text and experience. By such an interrelation, I mean a pragmatic method that permits the reader of Menippean satire to regard the text, which offers him an image or conception of experience (or some aspect of it) that is vastly different from his own, as the vehicle of a metaphor whose rhetorical function is the interrogation or reformation of his own erroneous image or conception. Such a metaphorical structure leads the reader ultimately to seek not difference and separation but similarity and synthesis. Such a structure differs from mimetic fiction's synecdochic interrelation with experience, one in which the text is structured to represent part of experience. Thus, readers may profitably acknowledge a fundamental distinction between mimetic or realistic texts (mimetic or realistic in the sense

that such texts conform to an age's assumptions about or vision of itself) and non-realistic texts (non-realistic in the sense that such texts resistthis conformity).

Such a distinction implies necessarily as well norms from which non-realistic narratives deviate in recognizable ways. In Menippean satire, these deviations from or transformations of norms do not constitute an irresponsible attempt at mere entertainment or fantastic escapism but are rather a means of compelling the reader (or at least the reader who does not dismiss the text as only mistaken or diversionary entertainment) to regard the apparently disparate images of text and experience as metaphor. The concept of metaphor thus serves as Menippean satire's justificatory method for regarding the relationship of text to reader as one of communication.

In attacking the related issue of logical positivism's diminution of literary discourse as a degraded form of language (whose "proper" function is, according to the positivists, scientific discourse), Wolfgang Iser asserts that "the basic and misleading assumption is that fiction is an antonym of reality."[96] Iser argues of fiction what could be equally argued of Menippean satire's supposedly problematic relationship to the empirical world:

> If fiction and reality are to be linked, it must be in terms not of opposition but of communication, for the one is not the mere opposite of the other--fiction is a means of telling us something about reality.[97]

In order to transcend the logical circularities of formalist criticism, then, the criticism of Menippean satire depends upon the recognition of the dialectical nature of the genre's interrelation with experience, for it is from the antithetical interaction between text and experience in the consciousness of the reader that new syntheses become possible, even if those syntheses are only implicit interrogations of the very assumptions upon which prevailing conceptions of text and experience are based. We may put it another way: the success of any reading of Menippean satire depends upon the notion that it is not only the satire's forms that are significant; what makes the satire effective is the significance of its forms.

As a result, the aggregate textual effect of Menippean satire is a recognition of strangeness, of difference, and of the Other.[98] The perceived antinomy between text and experience induces in the reader what Patricia Meyer Spacks calls "uneasiness", or what I believe is in this century better termed a type of Kierkegaardian- Heideggerian "anxiety."[99] Tony Tanner characterizes a similar effect as "disorientation," but with a positive rhetorical function:

> to lead us to a new orientation or a state of non-orientation; both are felt to open up the possibilities of a new freedom which is unavailable within the existing categories.[100]

In sum, the reformative impulse of Menippean satire, its ancient and original goal of terrestrial fertility, is synonymous in fiction

with perceptual fertility; its avowed enemy, perceptual habitude, is destabilized, thereby permitting the possibility of regarding the object or objects of the curse--indeed all experiential objects and states of affairs--anew.

To recapitulate: Menippean satire is best defined by two formal and two functional conventions--curse, variety, fertility, and delight. The curse, presented implicitly or explicitly in narration and dialogue, attacks norms as sterile; the variety of parody, comedy, and fantasy not only relieves the potentially oppressive negativism of the curse but also further destabilizes norms by its diffusion of the curse throughout its forms; fertility or the renewal of perception is achieved by the reader's recognition of the text's form as metaphor; and delight is a function of the variety of forms intrinsic to the genre.

This generic model serves to render Thomas Pynchon's Menippean satires as meaningful communication. In V., Pynchon curses the modern condition in synoptic characterology. Benny Profane's random and passive empiricism signifies American decadence; on the other hand, Herbert Stencil's obsessive and active rationalism parodies the European, and in particular literary Modernist, endeavor to transform the apparent chaos of experience into significant configuration by means of a few Classical metaphors, but Stencil's personality disintegrates as a result of this endeavor and the V. narrative yields no coherent "plot," only a series of metaphors for decadence and violence. In The Crying of Lot 49, Pynchon curses modern America as totalitarian. Although Pynchon's quester, Oedipa Maas, does not suffer the degree and kind of

dissipation of personality that Herbert Stencil does in V., The Crying of Lot 49's vision of the potentiality of meaning is finally inconclusive. While Gravity's Rainbow embeds its curse in a textual opacity and density reminiscent of Joyce and Faulkner, Pynchon extends the curse of V. and The Crying of Lot 49 to the historical pathologies of control that represent Western man's relationship to nature from the time of the Reformation.

In all three texts, in addition, the variety of parody, comedy, and fantasy are significant forms. While the subsequent chapters devoted to textual readings will elaborate the different degrees of variety in each, it is important to note at this point that these three forms of variety serve to define Pynchon's genre unequivocially as Menippean satire and not as some ill-defined or dimly conceived alternative.

II. Postmodernism

Furthermore, the fiction of Thomas Pynchon participates in the broader movement that has come to be known as Postmodernism.[101] As the term suggests, Postmodernism bears an obvious temporal relation to Modernism,[102] but of greater import are the ways in which it reshapes the literary map of Modernist assumptions and methods. In some respects, this reshaping returns Postmodernism to pre-Modernist techniques, but in others, it signifies a revolutionary stance.[103]

Modernism has its roots in a Romanticism that replaces antiquity's veneration of tragedy and the epic with its own exaltation of the lyric

as poetry's privileged form. Thus Romanticism supplants the Neo-Classic concept of poetry as imitation, either of the empirical world or of models, with one of expression, in which the poet's creative imagination becomes paramount and succeeds in animating nature.

Patterning their theory of poetry after that of Coleridge, Eliot and Pound concur that the method of poetry is the reconciliation of opposites in metaphor. Eliot argues that "amalgamating disparate experience" constitutes the poet's task,[104] and Pound's ideographic method is similarly a form of metaphor that juxtaposes "material images to suggest immaterial relations."[105] Moreover, Pound's view that poetry should ideally resemble a precise prose conforms with Wordsworth's endeavor to eliminate artificial tropes from poetic diction. In both these respects, Modernism's affiliation with and debt to Romanticism are clear.

However, while Romanticism stresses the affective nature of the poet and his ability to animate nature, Modernism advocates the impersonality of the poet. Adumbrating this position, Pound likens poetry to a mathematics that offers "equations for the human emotions,"[106] and Eliot, the doctrine's principal exponent, asserts that the poet expresses not his personality but "a particular medium" that represents "an escape from personality."[107] Thus, despite having roots in Romantic theory, Modernism departs from its progenitor in a significant way.

This concept of the impersonality of the poet occurs as well in Joyce's A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, in which protagonist Stephen Daedalus delineates an anatomy of possible relationships between the literary artist and his art. According to Daedalus, the highest

form is the "dramatic," by which he means a relationship of artist to art similar to that of an indifferent god to his creation:

> The artist, like the God of the creation, remains within or behind or beyond or above his handiwork, invisible, refined out of existence, indifferent, paring his fingernails.[108]

Thus, Modernism retains the Romantic notion of the reconciliation of opposites in metaphor as the poet's principal formal task but shifts the emphasis of attention from the poet as expressive force to the poem as construct.

These aspects of poetic theory are manifested in both Modernist poetry and prose. Pound's Imagist poem, "In a Station of the Metro," for example, juxtaposes the material images of faces and petals to suggest immaterial relations; Eliot's "The Wasteland" juxtaposes images of a degenerated modern world with a myth of regeneration; and Joyce's Ulysses juxtaposes modern Dublin with a Homeric myth. These juxtapositions constitute metaphors, but the theoretical detachment of the artist from his material suggests that Romanticism's theory of the poet as the lyric's only audience is further reduced in Modernism to a theoretically absolute absence of audience or readership.

This theoretical absence of audience or readership corresponds to the intrinsic criticism that Modernism encourages; the poem's relation to the auditor or reader is excluded as a matter of critical consideration, and attention is directed to the poem itself, which aspires to a condition of autonomy that is perhaps dependent initially on the empirical world for

its primary materials but is not ultimately accountable to it for its synthesized images. In theory, connections between the poem itself, the empirical world, the poet, and the audience or readership are dissolved. The poem is not imitation, expression, pragmatic rhetoric, or any combination of these orientations; on the contrary, it is exclusively poetry.

Nevertheless, the Modernist writer does have a purpose: to transform the apparent chaos of materials into a unified form by means of his power of synthesis. In actual practice, this synthesizing process results principally in the radical juxtaposition of images in the manner of the metaphysical poets, but, to the Modernist, juxtaposition constitutes the very essence and method of order. Eliot, for example, extols the achievement of Joyce's Ulysses as akin to a scientific discovery because the paradigm of Classical myth imposes a structure on the inherently formless images of contemporaneity:

> It is simply a way of controlling, of ordering, of giving a shape to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history.[109]

In the same essay, Eliot advocates Joyce's "mythical method" and proclaims as obsolete the "narrative method" of the traditional novel, which he asserts ends with Flaubert and James. Referring obliquely to Freud and Jung, and directly to Frazer, Eliot sees the Joycean method ultimately as the conflation of contemporary theories of psychology and ethnology. In sum, then, Modernism postulates a vitiated and

disintegrated present that confronts the artist with the problem of artistic structure. Through a variety of ordering techniques such as metaphor, myth, and impersonality, the Modernist unifies the disparate materials with which he deals.

Some Modernist predecessors, contemporaries, and successors, however, reject the imposition of order on chaos; indeed, they embrace disorder and plunge into the "nightmare" of history from which Joyce's Daedalus is trying to awaken.[110] Dostoyevsky initiates this alienated sensibility in 1864 with Notes From Underground;[111] Kafka subverts in effect his own contemporaries during the Modernist period and is followed by Céline in France; in England, Wyndham Lewis' fiction marks a violent break with Modernism; and in the 1930s Nathanael West writes fictions that adumbrate by twenty years the appearance in America of Postmodernist Menippean satire.[112]

After Modernism, fiction faces the problem of how to follow Joyce and in America of how to follow Hemingway and Faulkner. Albert Guérard identifies Hemingway's journalistic diction with an outmoded stoicism and argues that Faulkner's "high rhetoric" makes a return to the Hemingway mode inconceivable:

> The crisis in language (or one crisis) began with the fact that the Hemingway language, whatever one's sympathy for the "manliness", would no longer do. For it was a language designed to express stoic withdrawal and an acceptance of defeat. And it was an instrument for conveying delicate nuances of feeling. Moreover, the Faulknerian revolution with its high rhetoric and running rhythms made a return of any form of monosyllabic simplicity impossible.

> One way or another (it seemed in the 1950s) language had to be awakened, enriched, intensified.[113]

Furthermore, American realism's function as the instrument of social edification is usurped by the mass media, and as a result fictionists feel the need to discover new forms.[114]

This confluence of European Modernism with the tradition of American realism constitutes one aspect of a linguistic and literary impasse that confronts American fiction in the 1950s. At this time, an influx of radical European philosophy incurs on the American imagination,[115] and as post-war American sensibility becomes receptive to French existentialism, it also becomes receptive to its accompanying literature and criticism.

Aside from the obvious influence of Sartre, Camus, Beckett, and Ionesco, it is Robbe-Grillet in particular whose radical phenomenonology offers a new theory of the novel.[116] He begins by questioning the privileged status of metaphor and from this interrogation goes on to repudiate metaphor and all other analogical vocabularly as delusive. In succession he rejects humanism, tragedy, and transcendence, finding in each a hidden metaphor of anthropomorphism that disguises the radical "otherness" of the world. Predicating that the purpose of fiction is "to invent man," Robbe-Grillet envisions a less anthropocentric fiction in the future, one that abjures plot as naive, contents itself with visual surfaces, and by exploring itself as it proceeds, invents its own significations.

The influence of existentialism is profound, for it contributes

to an erosion of confidence in the efficacy of traditional American forms.[117] In the 1950s, fiction thus begins to shed the premises and forms of Modernism and realism.[118] There is uncertainty about the assumption that myth and metaphor can order the raw chaos of experience, and as a consequence Postmodernists come to see fiction as a means for exploring arbitrariness without such mediation.[119] In the 1960s, a dialectical progression is evident as writers attempt to achieve form while simultaneously aware of the delusive aspect of figurative, and by implication of all, language.[120]

While it is difficult to pinpoint precisely the inception of Postmodernism in American fiction, a likely approximate date is 1955, the year that sees the publication of William Gaddis' The Recognitions. In the next twenty-five years, the works of Barth, Barthelme, Borges, Burroughs, Donleavy, Friedman, Gaddis, Hawkes, Heller, Nabokov, Purdy, Pynchon, Southern, and Vonnegut represent a collective repudiation of Modernism and realism. In rejecting conventional realism and sacerdotal Modernism as outmoded, Postmodernists turn to the most unconventional and iconoclastic of forms, Menippean satire.

Moreover, the undermining of moral certainty, a result of post-war European influence and contemporary history, is reflected in large degree in the absence of a rhetoric signifying the traditional superiority of the satirist towards his material. Although the curse of satire appears in the rhetoric of narrators and in characters' dialogue, a situation that is especially true in the fiction of Donleavy, Heller, Purdy, and Southern, the protagonists are frequently implicated in the

representations of the sterile that they attack, while in the most radical forms, the curse is virtually absent, replaced almost entirely by fantastic images of the sterile and the grotesque. In such forms, Menippean satire appears non-normative, or "amoral," the concentration falling on the second formal convention, variety. Because of the focus on variety, modern American writers thus increasingly use the Menippean form, and its parody, comedy, and fantasy signify on one level a dialectical reaction to the forms and methods of Modernism and realism.[121]

John Aldridge focuses on the problem of fiction's appropriate form in a time of perceived disorder:

> How, in such a situation, is a writer to operate, how is he to make coherence out of a world which is typified precisely by its incoherence? How is he to make sense of a world, the essence of which is that it is senseless, if not patently insane?[122]

How, indeed, is a writer to create form out of apparent formlessness? One solution is to reflect formlessness in art itself. The Postmodernist thus may adopt aleatory forms such as that of Menippean satire, renouncing as delusive both the structure imposed by myth and the significance implied by metaphor.[123]

Nevertheless, this renunciation does not render myth and metaphor utterly without function. In John Barth's The End of the Road, for example, a doctor prescribes to the central character a form of self-fictionalizing called "mythotherapy" in order to cure him of abulia. The doctor compares mythotherapy to plotting in fiction, and the text

endorses the view that life necessarily imitates art.[124] Similarly, the theme of paranoia in Pynchon's fiction is a complex and ambiguous metaphor for the imagination, and Pynchon's irony is that although paranoia constitutes a social ordering activity, its ultimate personal effect may be disorder and disintegration.

Pynchon's Menippean satire, in particular, attempts to surmount, by dialectical synthesis, the argument between the Modernists, who valorize metaphor as truth, and Robbe-Grillet, who regards it as lie. Pynchon acknowledges the delusive aspect of figurative language, and the reflexive logic of this assumption leads to the subversion of his own fiction. Pynchon's plots, a metaphor for meaning, lack conclusiveness,[125] but metaphor in general is represented as a method of escaping from an entropic, "plotless" world into vitalizing creativity.

This attention to literary artifice and its analogues signifies parody, which, as the Russian Formalists demonstrate, is achieved by the "laying bare of the device."[126] The Formalists claim that parody becomes necessary when a tradition is felt to confine rather than liberate the artist's creative energies. Parody is thus viewed as a transformational technique, a means of ridiculing stultifying conventions.

The ridiculing aspect of parody forms a reflexive satiric attack by which literary cliché and convention are themselves cursed as sterile. Parody, then, is functional and frequently results in the creation of new forms: in his parody of Amadis of Gaul and the chivalric romances, Cervantes creates the prototype of subsequent realism; similarly, in parodying Richardson's Pamela, Fielding creates Joseph Andrews,

initiating the English comic novel.

According to Russian Formalist Victor Shklovsky, furthermore, this type of stress on literary artifice functions to achieve a "bestrangement" or "defamiliarization" of convention.[127] Shklovsky conceives of "defamiliarization" as a technique for making the commonplace strange by relocating the conventional in unconventional contexts. This technique may be realized in point of view, style, plot, and other ways; its function is the renewal of perception itself. In Pynchon's Menippean satire, for example, the presence of encyclopedism in an unconventional fictional context constitutes parody and implies that knowledge is an unconventional signifying process, not a conventional signified product. Thus, the satirical target of such parody is the reader himself, and its function is the fertilization of his perception.[128]

Irresolution of plot and focus on the uncertainty of metaphor imply as well both a resistance of experience to coherent arrangement by language and ultimately a problematic correlation between the two. In Barth's The End of the Road, for example, protagonist Jacob Horner acknowledges that language is a misrepresentative, albeit inspirational, transformation of experience:

> To turn experience into speech--that is, to classify, to categorize, to conceptualize, to grammarize, to syntactify it--is always a betrayal of experience, a falsification of it; but only so betrayed can it be dealt with at all, and only in so dealing with it did I ever feel a man, alive and kicking.[129]

This dilemma of linguistic uncertainty facing Postmodernism emanates in part from its evident rejection of Romantic-Modernist assumptions about the validity of literary uses of language, but the dilemma is in fact as old as literary criticism itself.[130] Historically, the anti-poetic stance begins with Plato, who argues in favor of the expulsion of poets from his republic because the literary use of language entails three errors: it imitates only imitations of the ideal Platonic Forms; it opposes philosophy's aim of the truth; and by stimulating the passions, it militates against virtue in the polis. On the other hand, Aristotle defends poetry on three grounds: its content is more philosophical than that of history; its instinctual method of imitation is conducive to pleasure and instruction; and its purgation of emotions in tragic catharsis is proper. Moreover, Aristotle regards good metaphors as demonstrating genius because they imply an ability to detect similarities.

While Christian theologians like Augustine and Aquinas are equivocal apologists for figurative language, particularly in scripture, Sidney argues in the Renaissance that poetry affirms nothing and therefore does not lie; rather it presents a newer or better nature than nature itself and teaches by virtue of a moral content. During the Enlightenment, the age's growing scientism, foreshadowed by Ramist logic and Baconian induction, culminates in the rationalism and empiricism of Hobbes, Descartes, Locke, and Newton, engendering an assault on unphilosophical and unscientific uses of language.

In Neo-Classic criticism, then, truth to a nature increasingly

conceived as the world disclosed by scientific inquiry becomes the criterion. On the other hand, the Romantics, as we have seen, locate truth not in the relationship between poem and world but in the relationship between poem and poet, and the criterion of truth is met by the sincere passion of the poet. Ultimately, Romanticism leads to Symbolism, Aestheticism, and Modernism, all of which are marked by the growing tendency to encourage a conception of poetry as autonomous.

The separation of poetic or literary discourse from that of science distinguishes two apparently distinct kinds of truth. Although it has a Classical source in Plato's opposition of poetry to philosophy, the cleavage begins in effect in the late Renaissance and is aggravated during the Enlightenment. While the Neo-Classic tradition endorses a qualified correspondence of poetry to the natural order, Romanticism and in particular the inheritors of its tradition feel increasingly compelled to withdraw poetry altogether from the criterion of empirical verisimilitude. Even though Coleridge, Wordsworth, and Shelley regard science as an unthreatening complement to the vision of poetry, Blake and Keats inaugurate an anti-scientific stance just prior to an age whose positivism assumes the status of ideology.[131]

Subsequently, the positivism of Comte influences Mill, who as a result of his effort to defend poetry excludes it from logic's criteria of truth and falsity. Like the Romantics, Mill asserts that the end of poetry is the expression of feeling, and like Sidney, therefore, he withholds poetry from considerations of assent and denial. Mill's strategy does not imply a criticism, but the premises of twentieth-century

positivists such as Rudolph Carnap lead them to treat the expressive nature of poetic statements as devoid of knowledge, and even influential psychologistic critic I.A. Richards calls the emotive use of language in poetry "pseudo-statements," implying paradoxically that literature is simultaneously valuable and senseless.

Thus, in addition to the sense that Modernism and realism are outmoded, there exists the linguistic impasse facing Postmodernism that derives from this positivist conception of literature as a degraded use of language. In positivism, the representative or referential use of language in science is privileged and proper; it is the means by which knowledge is communicated. On the other hand, implicit in positivism's banishment of metaphysics and poetry to the expressive domain of language is the belief that the expressive use of language lacks empirical content; such a use of language is not a form of knowledge, and therefore, no knowledge is communicated in or by it. George Steiner argues that this split of Western culture into incommensurable realms of art and science occurs in the seventeenth century as mathematics begins to develop into an autonomous language,[132] and this situation, according to C.P. Snow, leads to the dichotomy of the two cultures, scientific and literary, in the intellectual life of the twentieth century.[133]

The movement from deductive Aristotelian scholasticism and Christian theology to empiricism, rationalism, and positivism constitutes the transformation of the ancient world into the modern one in the West, but twentieth-century science itself provides the alternative to positivist dogmatism. Einstein discovers that the Newtonian absolutes

of space, time, and motion are relative; Heisenberg asserts that the perceiver of sub-atomic events ineluctably alters the perceived by the very act of perception and that absolute certainty of both the position and velocity of particles is therefore unattainable; Bohr's Principle of Complementarity states that classical and quantum physics are subject to reciprocal limitations and that as a result only probability or statistical causality (and not deterministic certainty) is attainable; and Goedel subverts the autonomy of formal systems altogether--especially mathematics, formerly the cornerstone of certainty--by proving that there must exist in any formal system at least one undecidable proposition, a situation that necessitates an endless hierarchy of systems.

Recent French criticism also suggests a way out of the impasse created by logical positivism's linguistic dualism.[134] Roland Barthes, refuting the idealist notion of the unitary transcendent subject or ego, argues that the subject is plural and that language should conform to this plurality. Barthes' opposition to positivism leads to his rejection of the notion that scientific discourse is privileged; for Barthes, no form of discourse has such privileged or "natural" status. Similarly, Michel Foucault seeks to liberate all discourse from the artificial restraints of "intrinsic" rules and extrinsic repressions. Jacques Lacan, like Barthes, denies the unity and integrity of the ego and asserts that the unconscious is represented by the language of the other, a term signifying the unavoidable incompleteness or gap in consciousness. This language approximates poetry in its polysemy, and its emphasis, in Saussurean terminology, is on the chain of

signifiers, not their signifieds. In like manner, Jacques Derrida advocates dissémination, a surfeit of signifieds that escape conclusive formalization, and "deconstruction", a mode of interpretation that locates and identifies but does not seek to resolve in any final sense implicit and explicit textual inconsistencies and contradictions.

The anti-poetic stance originated by Plato, sanctioned by the scientific revolution of the seventeenth century, and ideologized by positivism, assumes that only the referential or representative use of language is primary, proper, and capable of the communication of knowledge. The figurative or expressive use of language is construed as secondary, improper, and incapable of such communication. However, theoretical science in the twentieth century subverts the absolute distinction between perceiver and perceived necessary for the scientific use of a referential or representative language as a transparent medium for signification of essences, properties, and universals. Similarly, the French critics Barthes, Foucault, Lacan, and Derrida see positivism and idealism as ideologies and discard their linguistic corollaries as arbitrary norms concealing a structure of power. These critics are mutually engaged in a "deconstruction"of privileged forms of discourse, and their support of an erotic discourse of play constitutes a crisis, if not a revolution, in language and culture.

In form and effect, the Menippean satire of Thomas Pynchon participates in and accelerates this crisis. The indeterminacies of Pynchon's plots and of his figurative language couple with a tropical and parodistic use of scientific language to create a vision of uncertainty in both

so-called referential and emotive linguistic patternings of experience; the result is that the unequivalent dualism of the positivist conception of language is replaced by a Postmodernist equivalence.

Moreover, Pynchon's "deconstructions" and "foregroundings" (as the Prague Linguistic Circle terms the technique)[135] are not only metaphors for uncertainty but also the rhetorical means of achieving a fertilization of perception. As the Russian Formalists argue of literary devices that are "laid bare" or "made strange," such deconstructions and foregroundings serve to renew perception:

> Art is conceived as a way of breaking down automatism in perception, and the aim of the image is held to be, not making a meaning more accessible for our comprehension, but bringing about a special perception of a thing, bringing about the 'seeing,' and not just the 'recognizing,' of it.[136]

In frustrating the most conventional expectations of all, that of determinate linguistic significance and formal closure, Pynchon implies the open-endedness and indeterminacies of perception. Thus, Pynchon's texts constitute a satiric attack on mimesis as a static, closed form; in its place, Pynchon offers a dynamic and open form, and the functional end of satire, a perceptual fertility, is thereby integrated with the end of all literature, delight.

III. American Traditions

Pynchon's Postmodernist form of satire is, as I have demonstrated, European in origin; nevertheless, Thomas Pynchon is an American writer, and his European form incorporates native materials and traditions. Although America has its indigenous satiric verse tradition, such as the Connecticut Wits, and its indigenous satiric prose tradition, such as Brackenridge's Modern Chivalry and the works of Twain and Lewis, Pynchon's texts embody the only available form commensurate with the radical nature of his vision. With the exceptions of Melville's The Confidence Man, sections of Moby Dick, and certain texts by West and Gaddis, the Menippean form of satire has no extensive history in the United States prior to the 1960s, a fact attributable in part to the relative youth of the republic and its literature.[137]

The original Menippean form arose in early Hellenistic Greece as both a philosophical outgrowth of Cynicism[138] and a literary development through parody of the epistle, symposium, and Bionean diatribe.[139] In America, however, cynicism has not been historically consistent with official forms of the American imagination. Cynicism's distrust of the worldly corresponds somewhat to colonial America's Puritan asceticism, but the former's irreverent contempt of gods in any form make it religiously objectionable to the Puritan mind. Subsequently, the materialist tendencies of the Enlightenment, while profoundly influencing the founding fathers of the republic and subsequent generations in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, cannot accommodate

Cynicism's rejection of materiality; nor can Transcendentalism, despite its immaterialism and emphasis on self-reliance, prove conducive to a philosophy that in principle rejects Emersonian optimism, Thoreauvian hermeticism, and Whitmanesque exuberance.

It is not, in fact, until Hawthorne's allegorical satire on Transcendentalism, "The Celestial Railroad," his subsequent critiques of Utopianism and Puritanism, and Melville's The Confidence Man and quasi-Menippean Moby Dick that American writers begin to practice fictional forms that discard American progressivist optimism. While they cannot be classified as Cynics in the ancient philosophical sense, Hawthorne and Melville initiate a profound shift in American fiction away from naive forms like the Gothic romance, and the evolving realism and naturalism of subsequent fiction in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries mark a significant phase in the development of the national literature. It is late in this period that Twain's pessimistic satire flourishes, for example, and that the works of Bierce and Mencken, who are cynics in the more modern sense of the term, appear.

In particular, Melville's significant achievement in nineteenth-century American fiction is that Moby Dick constitutes a rejection of the Transcendentalist metaphysics of nature and its German idealist source. The whale's blankness and Ahab's horror of it have their roots in Coleridge's albatross and Poe's abhorrence of whiteness in The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym; in Gravity's Rainbow, as we shall see, Pynchon's comparable achievement in this century is the extension of this tradition into the locus of technology. Thus, both the encyclopedism of Melville's

cetology and the resistance of Ahab's quest to determinate significance provide Pynchon with his principal model in American fiction.

To Melville, the gap between mind and nature presents an epistemological, methodological, and philosophical dilemma that he explores subsequently in Pierre and The Confidence Man. In the former text, the eponymous writer experiences a realm of ambiguity, skepticism of reason and imagination (and thus of both fact and fiction), and finally desper te nihilism leading to his suicide. In the latter, a minor Menippean text, whose form is a parody of the symposium, Melville retreats from this absolutism but, like Hawthorne in "The Celestial Railroad," satirizes Transcendentalism by lampooning Emerson in the figure of Mark Winsome.

Although not a practitioner of the Menippean form, Mark Twain writes the conventional satires of Roughing It and The Innocents Abroad, but his work develops a Melvillean ambiguity that turns eventually into bleak pessimism. Such ambiguity is especially noticeable in A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court and The Tragedy of Pudd'n'head Wilson, while the Swiftian satires on "the damned human race"--The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg, What Is Man?, and The Mysterious Stranger--come last in his writing career.

The saeva indignatio that informs the final phase of Twain's work also marks the satire of Nathanael West, who is the Menippean form's progenitor in The Dream Life of Balso Snell, a transitional text in American satire between Twain's later works and the Postmodernist-Menippean emphasis on variety. William Gaddis' The Recognitions, like West's

The Dream Life of Balso Snell, is Menippean in form, and Gaddis' influence on Pynchon, so long assumed, now seems established.[140]

Finally, two of Pynchon's contemporaries, Barth and Vonnegut, conduct significant experiments in the Menippean form: the former in The Sot-Weed Factor and Giles Goat-Boy, and the latter in The Sirens of Titan and Cat's Cradle. All six texts from West's to Vonnegut's are satiric in the conventional sense of curse mediated by rhetoric but all diffuse the curse as well into the Menippean formal variety of parody, comedy, and fantasy.

Moreover, the recent predominance of Menippean satire in American fiction is a literary event of the first order. One scholar even suggests that the form may be the representative genre for the entire post-war period.[141]

Pynchon's radical vision has sources and analogues in the native tradition: Poe's mixture of humor and the grotesque, a form of the tall tale, in his early stories;[142] Poe's metaphysical prose-poem Eureka, announcing a rudimentary prototype of the theory of entropy and that "The Universe is a plot of God,"[143] two concepts that Pynchon uses and modifies; Poe's detective figure Dupin, the prototype for all subsequent detective fiction, including that of Pynchon's detective parodies; Whitman's prose pamphlet Democratic Vistas (with its own sources in De Tocqueville) in which the poet expresses his concern that the corruption of democracy may destroy individualism,[144] a forerunner of the principal curse of The Crying of Lot 49; and the anti-industrialism of Sherwood Anderson, who in his autobiography proposes a connection between

ineffectuality and materialism.[145] Thus Pynchon's form may be unique, but his vision is not without its precedents in the native tradition.

In conclusion, the Menippean form of satire, Postmodernism, and native literary traditions serve to explain, respectively, the form and function, the significance, and the vision of the fiction of Thomas Pynchon, a figure whom critic Edward Mendelson regards as "the greatest living writer in the English-speaking world."[146]

Notes

[1] L. Susan Stebbing, A Modern Elementary Logic, 5th ed. (London: Methuen, 1952), p. 7.

[2] Validity in Interpretation (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1967), p. 74.

[3] "The Form and Meaning of Pynchon's The Crying of Lot 49," Ariel, 8 (1977), 56.

[4] A Reader's Guide, pp. 12, 93.

[5] "On Trying to Read Gravity's Rainbow," in Mindful Pleasures, pp. 229-49.

[6] "Gravity's Encyclopedia," p. 161. See also "Encyclopedic Narrative," pp. 1267-69.

[7] "The Satiric Plots of Gravity's Rainbow," in Pynchon: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Edward Mendelson (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1978), p. 193.

[8] "Pynchon as Satirist: To-Write, to Mean," The Yale Review, 67 (1978), 556.

[9] "What's the Big Idea?" in Critical Essays, pp. 83-84.

[10] Pynchon's Fictions, p. 26.

[11] A paramount issue, one beyond the scope and purpose of this dissertation, is the very notion of genre itself. The term comes from a Greek root meaning "to produce" (OED). Generic criticism begins with Plato, who distinguishes imitation by description (epic) from imitation by mimicry (drama) and adds a mixed mode that conjoins narrative with dialogue. The Renaissance formally introduces the lyric, although the lyric and its accompanying expressive theory do not become prominent until the Romantic period. It is in fact during the Renaissance that the "rules" of epic and drama are concurrently formulated and broken, making genre criticism increasingly untenable, and for the last two centuries, critics have attempted to define the "novel" as a genre. In particular, see on this complex and difficult problem the following: René Wellek and Austin Warren, Theory of Literature, 3rd. ed. (New York: Harcourt, 1956), pp. 226-37; Northrop Frye, Anatomy of Criticism (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1957), pp. 131-239 and 243-337; Irvin Ehrenpreis, The "Types Approach" to Literature (New York: King's Crown Press, 1945); Norman Holmes Pearson, "Literary Forms and Types

Or a Defense of Polonius," in English Institute Annual: 1940 (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1941), pp. 61-72; and Charles E. Whitmore, "The Validity of Literary Definitions," PMLA, 39 (1924), 722-36. For a general overview and bibliography, see G. N. G. Orsini, "Genres," Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics, 1974 ed.

[12] Studies in Classical Satire and Related Literary Theory (Leiden, Netherlands: E. J. Brill, 1965), p. 90.

[13] Poetics 4. 7-12. Aristotle tells us in 5. 3 that Crates was the first Athenian to abandon the lampoon and write dramatic comedy.

[14] On this point, see Mikhail Bakhtin, Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics, ed. and trans. Caryl Emerson, Theory and History of Literature, Vol. 8 (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1984), p. 106, who argues conversely that "Always preserved in the genre are the undying elements of the archaic."

[15] The Power of Satire (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1960), p. 5.

[16] The Fictions of Satire (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1967), p. 6.

[17] F. M. Cornford, The Origin of Attic Comedy (1914; rpt. Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor-Doubleday, 1961), pp. 85, 91-99.

[18] G. L. Hendrickson, "Satura Tota Nostra Est," Classical Philology, 22 (1927), 46-60; rpt. in Satire: Modern Essays in Criticism, ed. Ronald Paulson (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1971), pp. 37-51.

[19] Institutio Oratoria 10. 1. 93.

[20] For the following discussion, I am indebted to Hendrickson and Van Rooy, esp. pp. 1-20, 78-80, 90-93, 117-23, and 168-72.

[21] Sermones 2. 1. 1; 2. 6. 17.

[22] According to Van Rooy, p. 79, Horace accepts the term in his second book "not as a collective, but to denote the genre and a single satire." Van Rooy claims that Horace is "motivated . . . by the fact that he had established a new literary standard or stylistic tradition in the genre and had emended the 'lex saturae' of Lucilius so as to exclude as a general rule the peculiarities of Lucilius, particularly censure or ridicule of contemporaries by name."

[23] Hendrickson, p. 48. See also Van Rooy, pp. 118-19, 122.

[24] Van Rooy argues, pp. 118-19, that Quintilian thus discriminates between a canonical Lucilian form of satura, with emphases on polemicism and hexameter verse, and the Ennian-Varronian form.

[25] Hendrickson, p. 49.

[26] Hendrickson, p. 49. Hendrickson points out that only "satire" derives from satura; all other derivatives--satiric, satirical, satirize, and satirist--can be traced to "satyr." Van Rooy, p. 2, argues that "the rapprochement between the two terms was completed not later than the early last century B.C."

[27] See Van Rooy, p. 3, who claims that by the fourth century A.D. the derivation of satura from satyroi was generally accepted as correct by critics and who cites as evidence Diomedes. See also William Frost, "Dryden and 'Satire,'" Studies in English Literature 1500-1900, 11 (1971), 401-16, esp. 406-11, who also discusses the satura-satyros confusion.

[28] See Peter A. Medine, Introd., De Satyrica Graecorum Poesi & Romanorum Satira (1605), by Isaac Casaubon (Delmar, N.Y.: Scholars' Facsimiles and Reprints, 1973), pp. v-xvii, esp. pp. x-xii.

[29] The history of this erroneous scholarship is traced in Van Rooy, Medine, and Frost. See also J. W. Joliffe, "Satyre: Satura: ΣΑΤΥΡΟΣ. A Study in Confusion," Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance, 18 (1956), 84-95.

[30] The Anatomy of Satire (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1962), pp. 231-32.

[31] Sermones 1. 4. 1-6. See Frost, pp. 403-05, on this critical muddle.

[32] Discourse concerning . . . SATIRE, in The Poetical Works of Dryden, ed. George R. Noyes (Cambridge, Mass.: Riverside, 1950), pp. 281-322.

[33] Fictions of Satire, p. 3.

[34] Satire (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1969), p. 12.

[35] "Some Reflections on Satire," Genre, 1 (1968), 13-20; rpt. in Satire: Modern Essays, pp. 360-61.

[36] The Fabulators (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1967), p. 54.

[37] "A Theory of Satire," in The Cankered Muse: Satire of the English Renaissance (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1959), pp. 1-36; rpt. in Satire: Modern Essays, p. 256.

[38] The Classical Tradition (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1949), p. 303. See also his Anatomy of Satire, pp. 36-37.

[39] Anatomy of Satire, p. 37.

[40] Institutio Oratoria 10. 1. 95.

[41] Dryden, pp. 302-03, claims that Menippus wrote "dialogues or epistles," not satires, but that his mixing of prose and verse, parodies, cynicism, obscenity, and facetiousness provide the model followed by Varro, Petronius, Lucian, Apuleius, Seneca, Julian, Erasmus, Barclay, Spenser, and Dryden himself.

[42] E. Courtney, "Parody and Literary Allusion in Menippean Satire," Philologus, 106 (1962), 86-100.

[43] J. Wight Duff, "Menippean Satire--Varro, Seneca, Petronius," in Roman Satire: Its Outlook on Social Life, Sather Classical Lectures, Vol. 12 (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1936), pp. 84-105.

[44] Barbara P. McCarthy, "Lucian and Menippus," Yale Classical Studies, 4 (1934), 3-55. See also Van Rooy, p. 102, who makes the valuable point about Greco-Roman satire that the serious and the comic are not blended but alternated.

[45] Eugene P. Kirk, Introd., Menippean Satire: An Annotated Catalogue of Texts and Criticism, Garland Reference Library of the Humanities, Vol. 191 (New York: Garland, 1980), p. xi.

[46] See Anatomy of Satire, p. 36, and The Classical Tradition, pp. 303-04.

[47] See "A Theory of Satire," p. 257.

[48] "Characteristics of Genre and Plot Composition in Dostoevsky's Works," in Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics, pp. 101-80.

[49] Anatomy of Criticism, pp. 308-12.

[50] "Word, Dialogue, and Novel," esp. pp. 77-89.

[51] For the source of the preceding discussion, see Bakhtin's Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics, pp. 106-09 and 112-37.

[52] Anatomy of Criticism, p. 309.

[53] Anatomy of Criticism, p. 309.

[54] Anatomy of Criticism, p. 309.

[55] Anatomy of Criticism, p. 310.

[56] Anatomy of Criticism, p. 311.

[57] "Menippean Form," p. 19.

[58]"Word, Dialogue, and Novel," p. 76.

[59] "Word, Dialogue, and Novel," p. 79.

[60] "Word, Dialogue, and Novel," pp. 70-71, 76-77, 80, and 82-89.

[61] Paulson, Fictions of Satire, p. 3, declares, "However much mimesis or representation is involved, the generic end is rhetorical." See also David Worcester, The Art of Satire (New York: Russell and Russell, 1940), p. 38.

[62] Power of Satire, p. ix.

[63] Anatomy of Satire, p. 232.

[64] Origin of Attic Comedy, p. 113.

[65] Fictions of Satire, p. 20.

[66] "A Theory of Satire," pp. 253-54.

[67] See, however, Bakhtin, Rabelais and His World, trans. Helene Iswolsky (Cambridge: M.I.T. Press, 1968), pp. 18-30, who argues that in Rabelais' "grotesque realism . . . the bodily element is deeply positive" (p. 19).

[68] Fictions of Satire, p. 16.

[69] "A Theory of Satire," p. 256.

[70] "The Muse of Satire," Yale Review, 41 (1951), 80-92; rpt. in Satire: Modern Essays, pp. 190-201.

[71] Sheldon Sacks, "Toward a Grammar of the Types of Fiction," in Fiction and the Shape of Belief: A Study of Henry Fielding with Glances at Swift, Johnson and Richardson (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press 1964), pp. 1-69; excerpted and rpt. as "From: Toward a Grammar of the Types of Fiction" in Satire: Modern Essays, p. 330.

[72] Edward W. Rosenheim, Jr., "The Satiric Spectrum," in Swift and the Satirist's Art (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1963), pp. 1-34; excerpted and rpt. as "The Satiric Spectrum" in Satire: Modern Essays, p. 323.

[73] Anatomy of Satire, pp. 176-77.

[74] "The Marriage of Heaven and Hell," in Blake: Complete Writings with Variant Readings, ed. Geoffrey Keynes (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1966), p. 149.

[75] One interesting but unproven alternative theory to the derivation of "satire" from "satura" is that it may have originated in the Etruscan word "satir" or "speech." See Highet, Anatomy of Satire, p. 277, n. 3.

[76] See Livy 7. 2. 1-2.

[77] Livy 7. 2. 5-6, Livy III: Books V, VI, and VII, trans. B. O. Foster, The Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1967), p. 361.

[78] See Courtney, "Parody and Literary Allusion," 87, who argues that parody is "at the very root" of Menippean satire as well.

[79] See Linda Hutcheon, "Parody without Ridicule: Observations on Modern Literary Parody," Canadian Review of Comparative Literature, 5 (1978), 201-21, who argues persuasively for the extension of the concept of parody to include imitation without ridicule. Hutcheon asserts, "In fact modern parody is closest to the Renaissance concept of rhetorical imitation" (202-03).

[80] Poetics 2. 2. See also Robert P. Falk and William Beare, "Parody," Princeton Encyclopedia, for a summary of its ancient history.

[81] Fictions of Satire, pp. 72-73.

[82] Satire, p. 12.

[83] "Word, Dialogue, and Novel," p. 83.

[84] Anatomy of Criticism, p. 223.

[85] Satire, p. 115. See also Bakhtin, Rabelais, p. 19, who argues that the "essential principle of grotesque realism is degradation. . . . "

[86] On this point, see, for example, Kernan, p. 260, and Highet, Anatomy of Satire, p. 3.

[87] Joseph Campbell, The Hero with a Thousand Faces, Bollingen Series, 17 (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1968), p. 30.

[88] For an exploration of this thesis, see Chase's study, The American Novel and Its Tradition (New York: Anchor-Doubleday, 1957). It is evident that recent American fiction continues to incorporate romance, albeit parodistically, as a principal element.

[89] See S/Z, trans. Richard Miller (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1974), p. 4.

[90] Livy 7. 2. 1-4, Livy III, pp. 359 and 361.

[91] Saturae 1. 30.

[92] Art of Satire, p. 18.

[93] Max Schulz, Black Humor Fiction, p. ix, defines the grotesque as "the bizarre combination of natural and unnatural forms," and Leonard Feinberg, Introduction to Satire (Ames: Iowa State Univ. Press, 1967), p. 65, asserts, "Satirists have always used grotesque materials." According to Wolfgang Kayser, The Grotesque in Art and Literature, trans. Ulrich Weisstein (Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1963), p. 188, such materials surface most frequently during periods when "the belief of the preceding ages in a perfect and protective natural order ceased to exist." In particular, Kayser names the sixteenth century, the period from Sturm und Drang to Romanticism, and the twentieth century as periods of acute stress in which "the various forms of the grotesque are the most obvious and pronounced contradictions of any kind of rationalism and any systematic use of thought."

[94] "The Life of Cowley," Samuel Johnson: Rasselas, Poems, and Selected Prose, ed. Bertrand H. Bronson (New York: Holt, 1958), p. 470.

[95] Douglas Fowler discusses the relevant observations from Freud's essay "The Uncanny" in A Reader's Guide, p. 193, and Tzvetan Todorov, in The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre, trans. Richard Howard (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1975), p. 25, defines the fantastic as "that hesitation experienced by a person who knows only the laws of nature, confronting an apparently supernatural event."

[96] "The Reality of Fiction: A Functionalist Approach to Literature," New Literary History, 7 (1975), 7.

[97] The Act of Reading (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1978), p. 53.

[98] In this respect satire may approximate Jacques Lacan's concept of the language of the unconscious. See Ecrits: A Selection, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Norton, 1977), pp. 146-78 and 292-325.

[99] "Some Reflections on Satire," p. 364.

[100] "Games American Writers Play: Ceremony, Complicity, Contestation, and Carnival," Salmagundi, No. 35 (1976), pp. 113-14.

[101] In poetry, Postmodernism begins in the 1930s in reaction to Modernism. On this point, see Jerome Mazzaro, Postmodern American Poetry (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1980), pp. 1-29; in fiction, origins are less definite, as the Postmodernist sensibility has, in Ihab Hassan's phrase, "reinvented our ancestors." See Hassan, "The Question of Postmodernism," Bucknell Review, 25, No. 2 (1980), 117-26. Also in this issue devoted in part to Postmodernism are the following: David

Antin, "Is There a Postmodernism?" 127-35; Julia Kristeva, "Postmodernism," 136-41; Wallace Martin, "Postmodernism: Ultime Thule or Seim Anew?" 142-54; Matei Calinescu, "Ways of Looking at Fiction," 155-70; Marjorie Perloff, "Contemporary/Postmodern: The 'New' Poetry?" 171-80; and Charles Russell, "The Context of the Concept," 181-93. In addition, Amerikastudien, 22 (1977), contains the following apposite discussions: Michael Köhler, "'Postmodernismus': Ein begriffsgeschichtlicher Überblick," 8-18; Gerhard Hoffmann, Alfred Hornung, and Rüdiger Kunow, "'Modern,' 'Postmodern' and 'Contemporary' as Criteria for the Analysis of 20th Century Literature," 19-46; and Jürgen Peper, "Postmodernismus: Unitary Sensibility," 65-89.

[102] Modernism developed and flourished between 1900 and 1930. See Bernard Bergonzi, "The Advent of Modernism 1900-1920," in The Twentieth Century, Sphere History of Literature in the English Language, Vol. 7 (London: Barrie and Jenkins, 1970), pp. 17-48.

[103] See Edward Mendelson, Introd., Pynchon: A Collection, pp. 1-15, who points out, for example, Pynchon's indebtedness to "older techniques that had long been pronounced obsolete" (p. 3).

[104] "The Metaphysical Poets," Selected Essays (London: Faber and Faber, 1951), p. 287.

[105] "The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry," Instigations of Ezra Pound Together with an Essay on the Chinese Written Character by Ernest Fenollosa (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1920), p. 376. Pound edited Fenollosa's essay.

[106] The Spirit of Romance: An Attempt to Define Somewhat the Charm of Pre-Renaissance Literature of Latin Europe (London: J. M. Dent, 1910), p. 5.

[107] "Tradition and the Individual Talent," Selected Essays, pp. 20 and 21.

[108] A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man (New York: Viking, 1964), p. 215.

[109] "Ulysses, Order, and Myth," The Dial, 85 (1923), 483.

[110] Ulysses (New York: Vintage, 1966), p. 34.

[111] See Bakhtin, Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics, pp. 6-8, who sees in Dostoevsky's fiction the rediscovery of the "dialogic" tradition and the invention of the "polyphonic novel."

[112] Thus, with the possible exception of West and adumbrations in Melville and Twain, the European Menippean tradition represented by Petronius, Apuleius, Lucian, Erasmus, Rabelais, Swift, Voltaire, et al. has no extensive American counterpart until the appearance of Postmodernist satire in the late 1950s.

[113] "Saul Bellow and the Activists: On The Adventures of Augie March," The Southern Review, NS 3 (1967), 591-92.

[114] On this point, see the following articles by John Aldridge: "The American Novel at the Present Time," Revue des Langues Vivantes, 40 (1974), 122-31, and "Contemporary Fiction and Mass Culture," The New Orleans Review, 1 (1968), 4-9.

[115] On this point, see William Barrett, Irrational Man: A Study in Existential Philosophy (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1958), pp. 7-10.

[116] For A New Novel: Essays on Fiction, trans. Richard Howard (New York:Grove Press, 1965). See in particular the following essays: "Use of Theory," pp. 7-14; "A Future for the Novel," pp. 15-24; "On Several Obsolete Notions," pp. 25-47; "Nature, Humanism, Tragedy," pp. 49-75; "New Novel, New Man," pp. 113-42; and "From Realism to Reality," pp. 157-68.

[117] The so-called absurd and black humor novels of the late 1950s and 1960s arise from no major American tradition and thus provide a parodistic counter-tradition to that of romance as proposed by Chase in The American Novel and Its Tradition.

[118] See Christel van Boheemen-Saaf, "The Artist as Con Man: The Reaction Against the Symbolist Aesthetic in Recent American Fiction," Dutch Quarterly Review of Anglo-American Letters, 7 (1977), 305-18, who states that by the mid-fifties "[t]here is suspicion of the constraint on the multiplicity of reality imposed by metaphor, fear of the falsification of experience by myth" (308).

[119] See Ronald Sukenick, "Thirteen Digressions," Partisan Review, 43 (1976), 90-101, who argues for a new fiction that is "subversively personal and unsystematic--Miller, Sterne, Rabelais--unruly, unpredictable" (101). Sukenick asserts, "One felt the need to incorporate the vagaries of experience, its randomness, its arbitrariness. . . . If another kind of structure seemed possible, it was the structure of the arbitrary" (92).

[120] The clearest statement of this position in Postmodernist fiction is in John Barth's The End of the Road (New York: Bantam, 1967), p. 119. See below, p. 42.

[121] Elliot Braha, p. 3, regards Menippean satire as "the representative genre of the contemporary era."

[122] "American Novel," pp. 123-24.

[123] On this point, see Sukenick, "Thirteen Digressions," 92, and Richard Wasson, "Notes on a New Sensibility," Partisan Review, 36 (1969), 460-77; rpt. in Critical Essays, pp. 13-14.

[124] The End of the Road, pp. 88-90.

[125] See Bakhtin, Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics, p. 165, who argues that the carnivalization of Menippean satire is "hostile to any sort of conclusive conclusion. . . ."

[126] Introduced by Roman Jakobson, this term, transliterated from the original Russian, is obnaženie priëma. See Victor Erlich, Russian Formalism: History-Doctrine, 3rd. ed. (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1981), p. 77.

[127] Ostranenie is Shklovsky's original term transliterated from Russian. Lee T. Lemon and Marion J. Reis, trans., Russian Formalist Criticism: Four Essays, Regents Critics Series (Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1965), p. 4, and Robert Scholes, Structuralism in Literature: An Introduction (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1974), p. 83, translate the term as "defamiliarization."

[128] Precisely how such renewal is achieved is perhaps more a matter for neurologists and psycholinguists (or critics in the I. A. Richards tradition) than for literary scholars to determine. It is interesting to note, however, that even Eliot and Pound view forms of art as the means to such renewal. Eliot writes in The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism (London: Faber and Faber, 1933), p. 155, that poetry "may help to break up the conventional modes of perception and valuation which are perpetually forming, and make people see the world afresh, or some new part of it." Similarly, Pound writes in "The Wisdom of Poetry," Ezra Pound: Selected Prose 1909-1965, ed. William Cookson (New York: New Directions, 1973), p. 360, that "the function of an art is to strengthen the perceptive faculties and free them from encumbrances, such encumbrances, for instance, as set moods, set ideas, conventions. . . ."

[129] The End of the Road, p. 119.

[130] For the following discussion of the Classical, Medieval, Renaissance, Neo-Classical, and Romantic critical attitudes towards figurative language, I am indebted to these sources: The Great Critics: An Anthology of Literary Criticism, ed. James Harry Smith and Edd Winfield Parks (New York: Norton, 1951); William K. Wimsatt, Jr., and Cleanth Brooks, Literary Criticism: A Short History (New York: Random House, 1957); Rosemund Tuve, Elizabethan and Metaphysical Imagery: Renaissance Poetic and Twentieth-Century Critics (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1961); Terence Hawkes, Metaphor, The Critical Idiom, 25 (London: Methuen, 1972); and M. H. Abrams, The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition (New York: Norton, 1958).

[131] On this point and on Mill's struggle with the nature of poetic language, see Abrams, pp. 298-312 and 320-35.

[132] "The Retreat from the Word," Kenyon Review, 23 (1961), 187-216.

[133] The Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1959).

[134] For a useful exposition of Lévi-Strauss, Barthes, Foucault, Lacan, and Derrida, see Structuralism and Since: From Lévi-Strauss to Derrida, ed. John Sturrock (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1979).

[135] "Foregrounding" is a translation from Czech of a word employed by Bohuslav Havránek, "The Functional Differentiation of the Standard Language," in A Prague School Reader on Esthetics, Literary Structure, and Style, ed. and trans. Paul L. Garvin (Washington: Georgetown Univ. Press, 1964), pp. 3-16. The original Czech word, transliterated, is aktualisace. Havránek, p. 10, defines aktualisace as "the use of the devices of the language in such a way that this use itself attracts attention and is perceived as uncommon, as deprived of automatization, as deautomatized, such as a live poetic metaphor (as opposed to a lexicalized one, which is automatized)."

[136] Boris Ejxenbaum, "The Theory of the Formal Method," in Readings in Russian Poetics: Formalist and Structuralist Views, ed. Ladislav Matejka and Krystyna Pomorska (Cambridge: M.I.T. Press, 1971), pp. 13-14.

[137] On Moby Dick's incorporation of Menippean form, see Frye, p. 313.

[138] Menippus was principally a Cynic, but McCarthy, p. 37, argues that there is a strong admixture of "Hedonism" in his works as well.

[139] See Courtney, 87, and McCarthy, 19-24, on the apparent origins of the Menippean form.

[140] See Braha, pp. 39 and 62-65, and Steven Moore, "'Parallel, Not Series': Thomas Pynchon and William Gaddis," Pynchon Notes, No. 11 (1983), pp. 6-26, for explorations of the influences of Gaddis on Pynchon.

[141] Braha, p. 3.

[142] See, for example, "Bon-Bon," "The Duc de l'Omelette," "A Tale of Jerusalem," and "Loss of Breath," The Works of Edgar Allan Poe in One Volume (New York: Walter J. Black, 1927).

[143] "Eureka: An Essay on the Material and Spiritual Universe," Works, pp. 820-90. For the entropy prototype, see esp. pp. 881-82, and for the universe-as-God's-plot metaphor, see esp. p. 878.

[144] "Democratic Vistas," Democratic Vistas and Other Papers (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1888), pp. 1-89, esp. pp. 83-86.

145 A Story-Teller's Story (New York: B. W. Huebsch, 1922), p. 375.

146 Introd., Pynchon: A Collection, p. 15.

Chapter Two:

V.: Beyond the Veil

This chapter concerns itself with Pynchon's first Menippean satire, V.[1] I use the Menippean model developed in chapter one first to disclose the objects of the curse, proposing that in V. the curse attacks through rhetoric the representations of the sterile, and second to analyze and discuss the forms of variety, focusing ultimately on the text's two principal parodies, the Profane and V. narratives, as they incorporate the curse. The curse is seen as enacted on "the inanimate" in its chief textual forms of the passive, the impersonal, and the inorganic in America and Europe, and the analysis of the two parodistic narratives results in a final identification of V. herself with the spirit of fascism, defined in the text as a nostalgic and violent mass political movement. In both narratives, the curse of V. is thus directed at the evolving violence of twentieth-century Europe and the decadence of modern America.

If V. is Menippean satire, then it should possess the conventions essential to the genre. First, it should represent and attack the

sterile. Since this formal convention of Menippean satire embodies the curse, images of the fertile (that is, affirmations) should be absent or minimal or should emerge rhetorically by the contrary implications of irony. Second, Menippean satire focuses on variety, a composite of parody, comedy, and fantasy. As I have indicated, comedy and fantasy provide antonymic and paradoxical images of the ordinary and extraordinary, and parody offers a wide stylistic and structural diversity that imitates and transforms other literary genres. Third, Menippean satire functions to encourage fertility by the elimination of the sterile through the attack of the curse. Such attack is effected on many levels by a range of rhetorical devices: irony, invective, sarcasm, travesty, burlesque, hyperbole, caricature, anticlimax, wit, and the forms of variety themselves.[2] Fourth, Menippean satire functions to delight its readers. Its parody, comedy, and fantasy serve to complement the sterile. Thus, the three forms of variety alleviate an otherwise uniformly bleak fiction.

The curse of Menippean satire attacks the sterile by rhetorical techniques. In V., the dominant narrative tone is dispassionate, but occasional narrative sarcasms, ironies, parodies, and invectives serve to establish the vertical perspective of satire's curse. The sterile is represented in the text by the "inanimate," and this representation takes three basic forms: first, protagonist Benny Profane's passivity (ridiculed in the text as "yo-yoing" and "schlemihlhood"), which accords him the status of object and functions to curse American decadence; second, Herbert Stencil's own escape from personality into an impersonal

quest, a satiric parody of Modernist aesthetics;[3] and third, the incorporation of inorganic matter by V. (and others), a satire by the disabling imagery of grotesque fantasy of European decadence and violence. These three areas of representation constitute the central objects of the curse in V. and will be discussed below in detail in the analyses of the Profane and V. narrative parodies.

Menippean satire's second formal convention, variety, is manifested in the text's comedy, fantasy, and parody. In V., as in Pynchon's subsequent fiction, comedy takes two principal forms, paronomasia and farce. Pynchon's paronomasia, an employment of mock-significant onomastics and puns, continues a basic tradition of poetic, dramatic, and narrative satire.[4] Names such as Profane and Stencil have a kind of denotative or referential significance; others such as Charisma have ironic significance; in certain instances, such as the name Mafia Winsome, for example, the significance is both denotative and ironic; and a fourth category of names, such as those of Porpentine and Bongo-Shaftesbury, exemplifies an inventiveness that serves to entertain and to heighten the text's artifice. The puns in V., such as "he had one foot in the Grave anyway" (p.2), constitute another form of paronomasia and, like the mock-significant naming of characters, entertain the reader, emphasize textual artifice, and help to develop thematic patterns. Similarly, Pynchon's second form of comedy, farce, serves comparable purposes. Associated largely with Benny Profane, it entertains and advances textual themes, in particular, that of Profane's "schlemihlhood."

Fantasy takes three basic forms in V.: first, the V. narrative,

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

The third and principal form of Menippean variety, parody, structures the narrative dualism of present and past into the Profane and V. narratives, respectively parodies of the picaresque and quest romance. In effect, Pynchon parodies novelistic conventions of plot: Profane is more victim than agent of the random action in his narrative, and Stencil's quasi-scholarly, quasi-paranoid obsession with V. yields only an uncertain possibility of a constructed coherence in a V.-centered, conspiratorial, apocalyptic "plot"; moreover, the arrangement of chapters and of tales within chapters parodies chronology, causality, and closure. As I shall argue, the text does not endorse Profane's passivity, but the textual status of Stencil's quest is, finally, ambiguous, revealing Pynchon's own ambivalence about the effectiveness of metaphor and paranoia as modes of recognition. Profane's self-effacement without a quest object

is ultimately a form of the sterile and functions as a satire on American decadence, but Stencil's self-effacement with a quest object provides ridicule by caricature of Stencil and the all-inclusive method of his quest, not necessarily its function. Despite the text's reflexive subversions of metaphor and plot, Stencil's quest functions to transform his inactivity to activity and may yield , in an unexpected way, a form of coherence. Like the curse, these forms of Menippean variety--parody, comedy, and fantasy--will be discussed next in the analysis of the Profane and V. narrative parodies.

The picaresque, parodied in the Profane plot, is a form that traditionally has an episodic structure, emphasizing accident and chance, and a protean protagonist whose ethical and emotional vacuity signifies, in the words of Stuart Miller, "a total lack of structure in the world."[5] The picaro is typically a rogue of low socio-economic origins. He works little, relying chiefly on his wits to survive, and performs at best menial tasks for others who represent a wide variety of backgrounds, a situation that permits incidental satire of higher socio-economic classes. Although a source (and possibly object) of satire, the picaro functions chiefly as a knave in a world of knaves. His morality is conventionally an amorality, and his character remains static throughout the episodic narrative, which tends towards a detailed realism with plain and often indecorous diction.

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

Profane's "inanimateness," however, a form of folly, signifies picaresque parody.

The narrator describes Profane, who was born in 1932 during the Great Depression and about whose life prior to 1954 the reader is told nothing, as "amoebalike," a simile signifying the protean nature of the conventional picaro, but the other terms of the description serve to ridicule:

> Still a great amoebalike boy, soft and fat,
> hair cropped close and growing in patches,
> eyes small like a pig's and set too far apart. (P. 27)

The narrator informs the reader that Profane's chief occupation, following his Navy discharge in mid-1954, is road-laboring, and in the text his jobs are the lowly ones of a picaro: "assistant saladman" (p. 13) at Schlozhauer's Trocadero, outside Liberty, New York in the summer of 1954; volunteer killer of alligators in the sewers of New York City in early 1955; and night watchman at Anthroresearch Associates in New York City in mid-1955. These episodes provide both comic and fantastic images that signify, inter alia, Profane's ineptitude and inanimateness.

Profane's chief at Schlozhauer's Trocadero is "a mad Brazilian" named Da Conho "who wanted to go fight Arabs in Israel " (p. 13). Because of his obsession and violence, Da Conho prefigures the obsessive Stencil and violent V., but he is made to appear ridiculous by travesty:

> Da Conho would assemble his machine gun, camouflage it with iceberg lettuce, watercress and Belgian endive, and mock-strafe the guests assembled in the dining room. "Yibble, yibble. . ." (P.14)

Subsequently, Da Conho's machine-gun is stolen, and he is fired. Mad and powerless, he disappears from the narrative a figure of comic pathos, but for Profane, Da Conho's attachment to his machine gun is a significant novelty: "Love for an object, this was new to him " (p. 14).

Also, it is in an episode of farce outside the Trocadero that Rachel Owlglass nearly runs Profane over with her MG, a parody of the love-at-first-sight encounters of mass-market romances. Thematically, the incident also serves to dramatize Profane's impotence in containing the irruption of the inanimate:

> He was wandering out the back door of the kitchen one noon carrying a garbage can overflowing with lettuce leaves Da Conho considered substandard when somewhere off to his right he heard the MG's sinister growl. Profane kept walking, secure in a faith that burdened pedestrians have the right-of-way. Next thing he knew he was clipped in the rear end by the car's right fender. Fortunately, it was only moving at 5 mph--not fast enough to break anything, only to send Profane, garbage can and lettuce leaves flying ass over teakettle in a great green shower. (Pp.14-15)

Later, as Profane reflects on the incident, the narrative establishes as well his confusion of the animate and inanimate, for he is uncertain if Rachel is one or the other: "He reflected that here was another

inanimate object that had nearly killed him. He was not sure whether he meant Rachel or the car " (p. 15).

Rachel's appearance serves as an opportunity for incidental social satire (effected by disabling imagery, irony, and sarcasm) of her privileged Long Island background, which under the illusion of freedom actually exacts a stultifying conformity of affluence:

> Daughters are constrained to pace demure and darkeyed like so many Rapunzels within the magic frontiers of a country where the elfin architecture of Chinese restaurants, seafood palaces and split-level synagogues is often enchanting as the sea; until they have ripened enough to be sent off to the mountains and colleges of the Northeast. Not to hunt husbands (for a certain parity has always obtained in the Five Towns whereby a nice boy can be predestined for husband as early as age sixteen or seventeen); but to be granted the illusion at least of having "played the field"--so necessary to a girl's emotional development.
>
> Only the brave escape. Come Sunday nights, with golfing done, the Negro maids, having rectified the disorder of last night's party, off to visit with relatives in Lawrence, and Ed Sullivan still hours away, the blood of this kingdom exit from their enormous homes, enter their automobiles and proceed to the business districts. There to divert themselves among seemingly endless vistas of butterfly shrimp and egg foo yung; Orientals bow, and smile, and flutter through summer's twilight, and in their voices are the birds of summer. And with night's fall comes a brief promenade in the street: the torso of the father solid and sure in its J. Press suit; the eyes of the daughters secret behind sunglasses rimmed in rhinestones. And as the jaguar has given its name to the mother's car, so has it given its skin-pattern to the slacks which encompass her sleek hips. Who could escape? Who could want to? (Pp.16-17)

Although Rachel seeks escape from her confinement, she is initially

implicated in the hegemony of the inanimate. Profane regards her world as "one of objects coveted or valued, an atmosphere Profane couldn't breathe" (p. 18). Later, as if in confirmation, he espies her speaking to her MG and fondling its gearshift. Thus, in these episodes involving Da Conho and Rachel Owlglass, the satires on obsession and violence work by travesty, and the satire on the love of the inanimate works by the contrary implication of irony.

Profane's killing of alligators in the sewers of New York City as a public service represents both a parody of medieval romances' dragon-slayings by knight-errants and a form of the quasi-fantastic, neither entirely probable nor entirely impossible. Street and underground provide antonymic symbols for Profane. The underground offers a haven, but the Street is associated with both the inanimate and the obsessive, violent world of the useless animate, who themselves tend towards inanimate status:

> Profane had grown a little leery of streets, especially streets like this. They had in fact all fused into a single abstracted Street, which come the full moon he would have nightmares about. East Main, a ghetto for Drunken Sailors nobody knew what to Do With, sprang on your nerves with all the abruptness of a normal night's dream turning to nightmare. (P. 2)

Later, the narrative reconfirms that "Profane was afraid of land or seascapes . . . where nothing else lived but himself" (p. 12). Thus, at least in the opening chapters in which these passages occur,

Profane is potentially a satiric hero, one who is alienated by and from the sterile world of the inanimate. The street and he are "strangers in every way" (p. 27), and "[s]treets . . . had taught him nothing" (p. 27). But Profane's apparent potential for heroism, for renewing the modern American wasteland by attacking the sterile, is instead a disguise for folly, for he is a self-styled "yo-yo" and "schlemihl." (The former metaphor derives from the toy's vacillating movement and, according to The Dictionary of American Slang, denotes "a compromising person" and "a freeloader"; more recently it denotes "a stupid, incompetent, or undesirable person." The latter term, from Yiddish, denotes "an oaf, a fool, especially a stupid, awkward, clumsy fellow; a jerk."[6])

Profane's yo-yoing represents Pynchon's form of the picaro's subjection to the caprice of Fortune, but it signifies further the protagonist's pointless automatism and mechanism. Likewise, his schlemihlhood indicates something more complex than mere clumsiness in the presence of the inanimate. At first, he fears and avoids the inanimate, but as the text progresses, he becomes increasingly identified with it. Profane's inability to deal with the inanimate allows Pynchon the entertainment of farce, but rhetorically the inanimate in V. represents an historical pattern of the non-human's intrusion into and possible absorption of the animate, an overarching Pynchon theme, especially in the V. narrative. Thus, the farce of the following scene serves a superficial comic purpose but on a deeper generic level functions to ridicule Profane:

> One morning Profane woke up early, couldn't get back to sleep and decided on a whim to spend the day like a yo-yo, shuttling on the subway back and forth underneath 42nd Street, from Times Square to Grand Central and vice versa. He made his way to the washroom of Our Home, tripping over two empty mattresses on route. Cut himself shaving, had trouble extracting the blade and gashed a finger. He took a shower to get rid of the blood. The handles wouldn't turn. When he finally found a shower that worked, the water came out hot and cold in random patterns. He danced around, yowling and shivering, slipped on a bar of soap and nearly broke his neck. Drying off, he ripped a frayed towel in half, rendering it useless. He put on his skivvy shirt backwards, took ten minutes getting his fly zipped and another fifteen repairing a shoelace which had broken as he was tying it. All the rests of his morning songs were silent cuss words. It wasn't that he was tired or even notably uncoordinated. Only something that, being a schlemihl, he'd known for years: inanimate objects and he could not live in peace. (Pp. 27-28)

When Profane descends into the sewers to combat alligators, then, his status as an object of satire has already been established.

Just as the inanimate comes to supplant the animate, so the world of the street invades the netherworld of Profane's alligator patrol. The episode serves as a political allegory both of Weberian charisma and rationalization and of domination of the preterite by the elect (with the implicit rejection of the sterility of the latter element of each pair), two models of the process and structure of power that Pynchon employs explicitly in Gravity's Rainbow.[7] The patrol begins as "pretty exciting business" (p. 101). The volunteers, who are "[m]ostly bums" (p. 100), communicate through walkie-talkies, but this temporary state of grace for the powerless succumbs to the rationalizing power of the street: first, the Federal Communications

Commission forbids the use of the walkie-talkies, and second, control of the budget, which is reduced, is transferred to a minor branch of the city's payroll department. While not directly attacked, dehumanizing power is represented and satirized in Bung:

> Bung the foreman had carried a walkie-talkie before the FCC clamped down. Now he carried a clipboard and filed daily reports with Zeitsuss. He didn't talk much except to give orders. One phrase he used always: "I'm the foreman." Sometimes "I'm Bung, the foreman." Angel's theory was that he had to keep saying this to remind himself. (P. 104)

The need to escape the doomed world of the Street motivates Father Fairing to found a parish for rats in the city's sewer system during the Depression. The interpolated tale provides a narrative fantasy within the quasi-fantastic frame of the alligator hunt:

> The stories, by the time Profane heard them, were pretty much apocryphal and more fantasy than the record itself warranted. At no point in the twenty or so years the legend had been handed on did it occur to anyone to question the old priest's sanity. It is this way with sewer stories. They just are. Truth or falsity don't apply. (P. 108)

Fairing, later revealed as V.'s confessor on Malta in 1919, abandons the human hopelessness above ground to convert to Catholicism below ground the creatures he considers the eventual inheritors of the city. The fantastic tale satirizes the mad obsession of Fairing, who also eats the rats for sustenance and engages in "an unnatural relationship" (p. 108)

with one named Veronica, the misguided impotence of Catholicism to redeem the powerless, and ultimately the very system that creates the powerless in the first place.

After the alligator patrol, Profane works as nightwatchman for Anthroresearch Associates. There, he encounters SHROUD and SHOCK, two experimental mannikins designed to test the effects of radiation absorption and accidents. In an "imaginary conversation" (p. 274), a form of the quasi-fantastic, SHROUD tells Profane about mankind's future: "Me and SHOCK are what you and everybody will be someday" (p. 266). In the exchange that follows, SHROUD informs Profane that human existence is already nearly inanimate:

> "What do you mean, we'll be like you and SHOCK someday? You mean dead?"
> Am I dead? If I am then that's what I mean.
> "If you aren't then what are you?"
> Nearly what you are. None of you have very far to go.
> "I don't understand."
> So I see. But you're not alone. That's a comfort, isn't it? (P. 267)

Both SHROUD and SHOCK represent dopplegangers of Profane's own inanimateness; moreover, the mannikins serve as symbols of the dehumanizing effects of accident and violence, two of V.'s central themes. Thus, the satire of the episode, realized by means of the fantastic, is on the folly and knavery of man's propensity for self-destruction; SHROUD, like the ancient leader of the Phallic Songs, attacks this form of sterility but unlike his ancient forbear, he possesses no redemptive vision of fertility and

resorts not to invective but to the indirect implications of bitter sarcasm and irony.

These various local and global satires from Profane's vocational world find a counterpart in the particular satire of Profane's personal world. Profane, in short, rejects love, using his fear of the inanimate at least in part as a rationalization for refusing to become involved with women, whom he regards as inanimate objects and whose need for commitment threatens him. By thus becoming the embodiment of the sterile, Profane therefore serves as an object of satire as well as its vehicle.

The narrator tells the reader that Profane's morality is "fragmentary" (p. 10) and that his fear of the so-called inanimateness of women is thus at war with his libido:

> He was visited on a lunar basis by these great unspecific waves of horniness, whereby all women within a certain age group and figure envelope became immediately and impossibly desirable. (P. 28)

Nevertheless, it is only with Rachel Owlglass that Profane does become involved, but the affair ends because of Profane's schlemihlhood.

Women, however, are not inanimate; Profane confuses the inanimate with his own voluntary passivity, which he equates both with his conception of woman's sexual role and with his own schlemihlhood:

> "Nothing heroic about a schlemihl." . . . What was a hero? Randolph Scott, who could handle

> a six-gun, horse reins, lariat. Master of the inanimate. But a schlemihl, that was hardly a man: somebody who lies back and takes it from objects, like any passive woman. (P. 268)

Near the end of the Profane narrative, Rachel Owlglass acts as Profane's foil, using invective to accuse him of rationalization: "'You've taken your own flabby, clumsy soul and amplified it into a universal Principle'" (p. 359). She argues that "'Everybody is some kind of schlemihl'" (p. 360) and that Profane uses his schlemihlhood as an excuse to continue taking from women without giving in return because he fears "'love and all that means is somebody else'" (p. 359). Nevertheless, Profane rejects the vitalizing alternative of love proferred by Rachel; he prefers his own inanimate schlemihlhood, a form of the sterile.

The conventionally static character of the picaro serves Pynchon's satiric form, for Profane remains a "yo-yo" and "schlemihl" throughout. Near the end of the Profane narrative, he leaves Rachel Owlglass and New York City at Stencil's request for Valetta, Malta. His reasons for leaving are multiple: a flight from the animate as represented by Rachel; apprehension about eventual legal prosecution (for his indifferent participation in a burglary, planned by Stencil, of a V.-clue from the office of Manhattan dentist Eigenvalue); but principally his passive indirection, which levels choices, including whether or not to go to Malta with Stencil, to equal insignificance.

In the final Profane episode, Profane and Brenda Wigglesworth, an American college girl whom he has met in Valetta, discuss the

pointlessness of existence. When she asks later whether experience has taught him anything, Profane replies, "'No . . . offhand I'd say I haven't learned a goddamn thing'" (p. 428). The persistent folly of ignorance serves to label the character of Profane as a satiric parody of the conventional picaro. Nevertheless, he regrets the loss of Rachel, "one unconnablé (therefore hi-valu) girl" (p. 427). He decides to return to sewer work in Valetta and last appears in V. running with Brenda through Valetta during a blackout, "momentum alone carrying them toward the edge of Malta, and the Mediterranean beyond" (p. 428). Profane thus remains effectively unchanged from his first appearance, a satiric fool, who, despite his professed fear of the inanimate, actually flees the animate itself.

In addition to satiric fool, Profane acts as ingénu, functioning narratively to satirize the Whole Sick Crew, a New York City group of pseudo-artists whom he meets through Rachel Owlglass (although ultimately, however, Profane is himself implicated in the satire on the group). The narrator portrays the Crew as an example of decadent Romanticism:

> The pattern would have been familiar--bohemian, creative, arty--except that it was even further removed from reality. Romanticism in its furthest decadence; being only an impersonation of poverty, rebellion, and artistic "soul." For it was the unhappy fact that most of them worked for a living and obtained the substance of their conversation from the pages of Time magazine and like publications. (Pp. 45-46)

The Crew is a symbol of artistic sterility. According to Eigenvalue,

a peripheral member, the group lacks originality, producing "'nothing but talk'" "'Cheese Danishes,'" "'technique for the sake of technique--Catatonic Expressionism,'" and "'parodies'" (p. 277). Eigenvalue categorizes the unoriginal sterility of the Crew's thought in mathematical imagery:[8]

> This sort of arranging and rearranging was Decadence, but the exhaustion of all possible permutations and combinations was death. (P. 277) [9]

One member of the crew, Fergus Mixolydian, is satirized by hyperbole:

> Fergus Myxolydian the Irish Armenian Jew and universal man laid claim to being the laziest living being in Nueva York. His creative ventures, all incomplete, ranged from a western in blank verse to a wall he'd had removed from a stall in the Penn Station men's room and entered in an art exhibition as what the old Dadaists called a "ready-made." Critical comment was not kind. Fergus got so lazy that his only activity (short of those necessary to sustain life) was once a week to fiddle around at the kitchen sink with dry cells, retorts, alembics, salt solutions. What he was doing, he was generating hydrogen; this went to fill a sturdy green balloon with a great Z printed on it. He would tie the balloon by a string to the post of the bed whenever he planned to sleep, this being the only way for visitors to tell which side of consciousness Fergus was on. (P. 45)

In a McLuhanesque parody, Mixolydian becomes semi-inanimate, a mere extension of his television:

> His other amusement was watching the TV. He'd devised an ingenious sleep-switch, receiving its signal from two

> electrodes placed on the inner skin of his forearm. When Fergus dropped below a certain level of awareness, the skin resistance increased over a preset value to operate the switch. Fergus thus became an extension of the TV set. (P. 45)

The sterility of the Whole Sick Crew is manifested in Pynchon's satire in grotesque forms of the dehumanization of love. Mafia Winsome, for example, an adulterous and racist caricature of the writers of popular romances,[10] writes books satirized by the narrator in a disabling simile:

> Her novels--three to date--ran a thousand pages each and like sanitary napkins had gathered in an immense and faithful sisterhood of consumers. (Pp. 112-13)

Obsessed with lust, she champions a theory of "Heroic Love" that involves "screwing five or six times every night, with a great many athletic, half-sadistic wrestling holds thrown in" (p. 113). The inherent hyperbole of this description by the narrator and the theory's travesty of love serve to satirize Mafia's lust. Gouverneur, her husband, uses wit to ridicule Mafia: "'You are turning our marriage into a trampoline act'" (p. 113). And the narrator ridicules the theory as "more wishful thinking than anything else" and "nothing really but a frequency" (p. 113). The imagery of statistics, like the imagery of permutation and combination, signifies the inanimate and the narrative's satiric stance.

Cosmetic surgeon Irving Schoenmaker's affair with patient Esther Harvitz, upon whom he performs rhinoplastic surgery, represents another

instance of love's dehumanization among the Crew. By the surgery, Schoenmaker desires to perfect Esther's body so that it conforms to his Platonic ideal of her "soul." Esther accuses him of loving not her but "'Yourself. Your own skill in plastic surgery'" (p. 276), but Esther herself provides an instance of the textual association of carnality with the inorganic. Because of her sense of inanimateness during the rhinoplasty, she experiences sexual arousal; in effect, the rhinoplasty is narratively treated as a violent parody of sexuality. Ultimately, she gets pregnant and goes to Cuba to have an abortion, which could be termed, in the rhetoric of V., a transformation of the animate (or the potentially animate) into the inanimate, or in the rhetoric of this dissertation, of the fertile into the sterile.

Despite the Profane narrative's satiric attention to forms of the sterile, V. offers two affirmations, centering on Rachel Owlglass and Paola Maijstral. The first affirmation is Rachel's rejection of the Whole Sick Crew. Although Profane converts fully into a Crew member, Rachel tells him, "'The Crew lost all glamour for me, I grew up, I don't know what happened'" (p. 336). The second affirmation is thematically complex, centering on Paola Maijstral but including as well a minor character named McClintic Sphere, a black and original avant-garde alto saxophonist in New York City with whom Paola has an affair.

Paola, daughter of Maltese poet Fausto Maijstral and wife of American sailor Robert "Pappy" Hod, represents a fertile antithesis to V. This status is indicated in part by her multiplicity.[11] Only

sixteen years old in V.'s opening episode (and eighteen at the book's conclusion), she is, like Sphere, an original who lacks the "stereotypes" that "American movies had given them . . . all" (p. 6). A polyglot, she "knew scraps it seemed of all tongues" (p. 6), and when Roony Winsome asks her, "'Is that what you are, something we can look at and see whatever we want?'" (p. 328),[12] her reply is that because no one knows whether the Maltese are racially pure or mixed, they elude precise definition:

> "I have read books . . . and listen, Roony, nobody knows what a Maltese is. The Maltese think they're a pure race and the Europeans think they're Semitic, Hamitic, crossbred with North Africans, Turks and God knows what all." (P. 328)

In V., Paola's freedom from the constraints of definition, a corollary of her multiplicity, signifies an affirmation.

A further indication that Paola represents a form of the fertile is her rejection of the inanimate. Rachel Owlglass remarks that Paola's life does not include "things":

> The girl lived proper nouns. Persons, places. No things. Had anyone told her about things. It seemed Rachel had had to do with nothing else. (P. 40)

Finally, during Paola and Sphere's affair, which represents a fertile antithesis to the Crew's lustful sterility, the saxophonist utters one of V.'s few direct affirmations:

> While she told him about who she was, about Stencil and Fausto--even a homesick travelogue of Malta--there came to McClintic something it was time he got round to seeing: that the only way clear of the cool/crazy flipflop was obviously slow, frustrating and hard work. Love with your mouth shut, help without breaking your ass or publicizing it: keep cool but care. He might have known, if he'd used any common sense. It didn't come as a revelation, only something he'd as soon not've admitted. (Pp. 342-43) [13]

In the end, Paola returns to Malta and to her husband Pappy Hod, giving him an ivory comb, symbolic of a promise of faithfulness.[14]

In sum, however, the Profane narrative's satire focuses principally on the sterile, employing parody, comedy, and fantasy to provide textual variety and to promote a vision of the inanimate that dominates this modicum of affirmations.

V.'s second structural narrative parody is that of the quest romance of Herbert Stencil, an Englishman who seeks the eponymous V. V. is an ambiguous figure who may be Stencil's mother and who comes to symbolize the paradox of Europe's entropic descent into personal and social inanimateness and its negentropic ascent towards violent apocalypse. Ultimately, V. embodies the two principal properties of fascism, an attachment to the "hothouse" of the inanimate past and the "street" of the violent present, and in "The Confessions of Fausto Maijstral," the scene of her death, ironically the result of an air raid on Valetta by the very forces of violence she encourages and represents, provides the central fantastic image and curse of the satire. Almost totally inanimate, she symbolizes the decadence into which Europe has fallen,

and after the Maltese children remove her inanimate parts, Maijstral imagines the disassembly as continuing indefinitely:

> Up came one of the slippers and a foot--an artifical foot--the two sliding out as a unit, lug-and-slot. . . . At her navel was a star sapphire. The boy with the knife picked at the stone. It would not come away. He dug in with the point of the bayonet, working for a few minutes before he was able to bring out the sapphire. Blood had begun to well in its place.
>
> Other children crowded round her head. One pried her jaws apart while another removed a set of false teeth. She did not struggle: only closed her eyes and waited.
>
> But she could not even keep them closed. For the children peeled back one eyelid to reveal a glass eye with the iris in the shape of a clock. This, too, they removed.
>
> I wondered if the disassembly of the Bad Priest might not go on, and on, into evening. Surely her arms and breasts could be detached; the skin of her legs be peeled away to reveal some intricate understructure of silver openwork. Perhaps the trunk itself contained other wonders: intestines of parti-coloured silk, gay balloon-lungs, a rococo heart. (Pp. 321-22)

Thus, V. serves both as the knavish object of satire and the symbolic vehicle of the satire on European decadence and violence. Like the Profane narrative, then, the V. narrative minimizes the curse and works principally by the dramatic ironies of its parody, fantasy, and comedy, but occasional rhetorical ironies, as we shall see, signify the narrator's satiric relation to the material. Moreover, the narrative parody of quest romance serves to satirize the teleological historiography of Stencil's obsession, which as Stencil himself comes to realize "add[s]up only to the recurrence of an initial and a few dead objects" (p. 419). Thus as an object of satire as well as its vehicle, Stencil,

a type of philosophus gloriosus, occupies an ambiguous position in V. In this way, Pynchon can have it both ways; that is, he can present a structure of ambivalence, and as Molly Hite argues, "take the twentieth century . . . and write of its devastations without committing it to a fixed and final destiny."[15]

Herbert Stencil is the son of the late British foreign officer Sidney Stencil, whose notebook entry about V. under "Florence, April, 1899" precipitates his son's obsession. The entry is significant, for it identifies V. from the outset with the inanimate:

> "There is more behind and inside V. than any of us had expected. Not who, but what: what is she. God grant that I may never be called upon to write the answer, either here or in any offical report." (P. 43)

Reading the entry in a café in Oran, Tunisia, just after the end of World War II, Herbert Stencil decides to embark upon a V.-quest, exchanging his "slothful" (p. 43) pre-war life,[16] which consists of "sleep" (p. 43), "random movements," and "inertness," for "an acquired sense of animateness" (p. 44). While the quest does not provide "vitality," it does offer "activity" (p. 44), a fertilizing possibility of escape from the inanimate.

Early in 1956, Stencil joins the Whole Sick Crew to investigate Crew-members Schoenmaker, Eigenvalue, and Chiclitz because he believes that they may lead him to pertinent V.-clues. During his involvement with the Crew, four largely imagined historical episodes are narrated:

the murder of one of Sidney Stencil's colleagues, Porpentine, in Egypt in 1898; an attempted theft of Botticelli's Birth of Venus from the Uffizi Gallery in Florence in 1899; the death of ballerina Mélanie l'Heuremaudit in Paris in 1913; and the experiences of German engineer Kurt Mondaugén in South-West Africa in 1922. The four apparently diverse episodes, an interweaving of historical fact with Stencil fiction, have a significant connection: V. appears in each. Ultimately, in September 1956, Stencil goes to Malta with Profane to interrogate Fausto Maijstral about the latter's encounter with V. in 1943. When further investigation reveals that V.'s glass eye went to Stockholm in 1944 with a Madame Viola, he leaves for Sweden.

The preceding synopsis of Stencil's quest for V. indicates to some degree the broad range of this fantastic parody in Pynchon's Menippean satire. Formally, this range is made possible in the V. narrative by a parody of the quest romance that complements the parody of the picaresque in the Profane narrative and implies, as we shall see, the validation of what Pynchon later names in The Crying of Lot 49 "excluded middles."

In parodying the quest romance, Pynchon satirizes not only Stencil and his quest but also Modernist aesthetics. The Modernists--Eliot, Joyce, et al.--sought to create significance metaphorically by comparing contemporaneity to and with classical myth; moreover, they viewed poetry, in Eliot's phrase, as "an escape from personality."[17] In parodying Eliot's dictum, Stencil practices not escape but "forcible dislocation," and his clothing, food, and shelter are as a result comically alien to him:

> Herbert Stencil, like small children at a certain stage and Henry Adams in the Education, as well as assorted autocrats, since time out of mind, always referred to himself in the third person. This helped "Stencil" appear as only one among a repertoire of identities. "Forcible dislocation of personality" was what he called the general technique, which is not exactly the same as "seeing the other fellow's point of view": for it involved, say, wearing clothes that Stencil wouldn't be caught dead in, eating foods that would have made Stencil gag, living in unfamiliar digs, frequenting bars or cafés of a non-Stencillián character; all this for weeks on end; and why? To keep Stencil in his place; that is, in the third person. (P. 51)

It is thus a consequence of Modernist aesthetics that Stencil disintegrates into this folly of many alien selves, and in V. the narrator, the characters, and even Stencil himself ridicule the endeavor:

> As spread thighs are to the libertine, flights of migratory birds to the ornithologist, the working part of his tool bit to the production machinist, so was the letter V to young Stencil. He would dream perhaps once a week that it had all been a dream, and that now he'd awakened to discover the pursuit of V. was merely a scholarly quest after all, an adventure of the mind, in the tradition of The Golden Bough or The White Goddess.
>
> But soon enough he'd wake up the second, real time, to make again the tiresome discovery that it hadn't really ever stopped being the same simple-minded, literal pursuit; V. ambiguously a beast of venery, chased like the hart, hind or hare, chased like an obsolete, or bizarre, or forbidden form of sexual delight. And clownish Stencil capering along behind her, bells ajingle, waving a wooden, toy oxgoad. For no one's amusement but his own. (P. 50)

Ultimately, however, Stencil's quest has ambiguous status, for although

he suffers a disintegration of personality, he may have constructed a form of coherence. Like the Modernists and like Henry Adams, Stencil seeks to "explain" the surface structure of apparent accident in modern history by V., a totalizing metaphor of its supposed deep structure or "plot." The text, however, impugns the integrity of metaphor and thereby subverts Stencil's effort. While Eliot viewed poetry as the imposition of order on disparate experiences by the agency of metaphor, Pynchon's poet Fausto Maijstral argues in his "Confessions" that metaphor is "delusion" (p. 305). Although Maijstral maintains subsequently that metaphor is valuable precisely because of its delusive function, he titles that function, nevertheless, "The Great Lie":

> Living as he does much of the time in a world of metaphor, the poet is always acutely conscious that metaphor has no value apart from its function; that it is a device, an artifice. So that while others may look on the laws of physics as legislation and God as a human form with beard measured in light-years and nebulae for sandals, Fausto's kind are alone with the task of living in a universe of things which simply are, and cloaking that innate mindlessness with comfortable and pious metaphor so that the "practical" half of humanity may continue in the Great Lie, confident that their machines, dwellings, streets and weather share the same human motives, personal traits and fits of contrariness as they.
>
> Poets have been at this for centuries. It is the only useful purpose they do serve in society: and if every poet were to vanish tomorrow, society would live no longer than the quick memories and dead books of their poetry.
>
> It is the 'role' of the poet, this 20th Century. To lie. (P. 305).[18]

Similarly, in the Profane narrative, the narrator supports this absolute distinction of animate man and inanimate world. He provides a lengthy and descriptive catalogue of "mass deaths" (p. 270) that occurred in July and August 1956 and mentions, in addition, "the attendant maimed, malfunctioning, homeless, lorn" (pp. 270-71). Claiming that his figures come from the Almanac and that the "business is transacted month after month after month" (p. 271), the narrator attributes these misfortunes to an unsympathetic, inanimate world:

> It happens every month in a succession of encounters between groups of living and a congruent world which simply doesn't care. (P. 271)

Thus in two narratives, Profane's and Maijstral's, the text proposes a significant and radical alienation of man from nature that subverts Stencil's adventure of the imagination.

Despite the textual qualifications of metaphor, Stencil attempts to create in V. a shaping metaphor capable of explaining history as a conspiracy or master cabal moving towards apocalypse:

> He had discovered, however, what was pertinent to his purpose: that she'd been connected, though perhaps only tangentially, with one of those grand conspiracies or foretastes of Armageddon which seemed to have captivated all diplomatic sensibilities in the years preceding the Great War. V. and a conspiracy. Its particular shape governed only by the surface accidents of history at the time. (P. 141)

Subsequently, however, as he discovers more about V., his preliminary vision of her historical significance gives way to confusion:

> What this mission was, however, came no clearer to him than the ultimate shape of his V-structure--no clearer, indeed, than why he should have begun pursuit of V. in the first place. (P. 209)

By the time Stencil is about to leave for Malta, V. is "a remarkably scattered concept" (p. 364).[19] On Malta, he confirms what he already knows from Maijstral's "Confessions": the Bad Priest--the last, almost totally inanimate incarnation of V.--died in Valetta in 1943 as the result of a German air raid, and the death, witnessed and attested to by Maijstral, may signify the end of his quest. To cease the search for V., however, would return Stencil to his pre-1945 state of inactivity, a condition he deems intolerable. Thus, he continues his method of "[a]pproach and avoid" (p. 44) by pursuing a clue to Sweden even though his search is in principle terminated.

Who, then, or what is V.? In terms of the text, she is the woman Stencil imagines under various names, guises, and identities in the four historical episodes that are partly fashioned from his imagination and from the "clues" uncovered during his investigations. She is Victoria Wren in Egypt and Florence, appears under the alias Vera Meroving in South-West Africa, and assumes the cipher V. in Paris.

As someone who "stencilizes" experience compulsively into the form of his obsession, Stencil practices an inclusive method. All V's

are of potential and equal significance to him. Part of Pynchon's literary gamesmanship is that the reader, by a process of naive identification, is teased into adopting this inclusive significance. However, as the profusion of "clues" mounts, Stencil and the reader see V. become "a remarkably scattered concept."

The ridicule of Stencil's quest by the narrator, by Stencil himself, and by other characters (Eigenvalue and Maijstral, for example) makes evident that the V. narrative serves as a satiric parody of the teleological historiography.

The V. narrative and the Profane narrative constitute, then, a binary opposition: as the Profane narrative dramatizes entropy (and ridicules its principal exponent, Profane), so the V. narrative dramatizes the contradictory effort at negentropy (and ridicules its principal exponent, Stencil), and the two narratives co-exist within the frame of the text, therefore, in ironic relation to each other. This structural irony, in which the integrity of each element of the binary opposition is subverted and yet each element logically implies the other, forms a closed loop whose only alternative is neither element but the largely unexplored gap between them. Later, Pynchon uses the phrase "excluded middles" to denote this gap, implying that such contradictions, while logically compelling, constitute inexhaustive categorizations and exclude valid epistemologies. Herein lies the essence of Pynchon's ambivalence, for although "plot" is subject to satiric parody, metaphor receives qualified textual support as it serves through V. to bring into the foreground the decadence and violence of early twentieth-century Europe.

The first Stencil episode, set primarily in Alexandria, Egypt, in 1898, concerns itself with eighteen-year-old British tourist Victoria Wren's first affair with an agent of the British Foreign Office named Goodfellow. As a result of the affair, a friend of Goodfellow, Porpentine, is murdered by Goodfellow's rival, Egyptologist Eric Bongo-Shaftesbury. In the background of the episode is the Fashoda Affair, a dispute that threatens to turn into armed conflict between England and France over control of the Sudan region.

Thus, two themes of the nascent V. "plot" are initially evident: first, she is associated with sensuality and death; second, she is associated with political unrest.

The episode is a stylistic tour de force by Pynchon in which the narrative is fragmented into eight points of view: Aïeul, a café waiter; Yusef, a factotum; Maxwell Rowley-Bugge, a ne'er-do-well; Waldetar, a train conductor; Gebrail, a phaeton driver; Girgis, a mountebank; Hanne Echerze, a barmaid; and a Robbe-Grillet parody lacking an identifiable "human" narrator. This fragmentation furnishes the limited, obscure, and ultimately contradictory accounts of the first seven narratives.

The eighth narrative, both a parody of Robbe-Grillet's "surfaces" and a blatant self-parody by inversion of Pynchon's own profusion of substantives, cryptically depicts Porpentine's murder by Bongo-Shaftesbury. As one Pynchon critic declares, "the culmination of the action is deliberately shrouded in mystery."[20] It is partly because the reader knows the essential details of the murder from the Profane narrative, in fact, that the eighth segment of the Egypt

episode is at all intelligible.

In sum, Pynchon deliberately fragments the narrative's perspective, thereby making a narrative reconstruction by the reader necessary; equally deliberately, he obscures the text by providing limited and contradictory information, so that a model reconstruction is ultimately frustrated.[21] This chapter's technique is, of course, a microcosm of the narrative technique of V. itself and serves to compel the reader to locate the "middle" in which the text offers coherence. This middle, a parody of plot and plotlessness, is not the locus of contiguity but of similarity, or what is later defined in Gravity's Rainbow by Leni Pokle as "Parallel . . . not series. . . . Metaphor. Signs and symptoms. Mapping onto different coordinatesystems. . . ."[22] Thus, Pynchon's attitude towards metaphor is fundamentally ambivalent, for although it is a form of delusion, it supplies the only alternative to a plotless world.

Finally, the Egypt episode contains and foreshadows as well significant themes: the inanimate, represented by an electric knife-switch implanted in Bongo-Shaftesbury's arm; the Void, represented by Gebrail's nihilism ("Nothing was coming. Nothing was already here" [p. 73].); and apocalypse, represented by Gebrail's belief that "a great battle" at Fashoda will "engulf the world" (p. 73).

Stencil's second imagined episode, a parody of espionage and utopian fictions, is set in Florence, Italy, in April 1899. The parodies serve to satirize the "plots" of the former and the illusions of the latter. Unlike the Egypt episode, there is no fragmentation of viewpoint,

although, as in the Egypt episode, V. appears as Victoria Wren and is further identified with political violence.

It is in this episode that two other significant V's appear: Vheissu, a mysterious land that British navigator Hugh Godolphin explored in 1884, and the mythological Venus of the Botticelli painting hanging in the Uffizi gallery. Vheissu, a land both fabulous and terrifying and Pynchon's parodistic utopia, thus forms one thematic focus of the episode. Its location is vague, but its significance to Godolphin is clear: it represents the void:

> "I had never penetrated to the heart of any of those wild places . . . Until Vheissu. It was not till the Southern expedition last year that I saw what was beneath her skin."
> "What did you see?" asked Signor Mantissa, leaning forward.
> "Nothing," Godolphin whispered. "It was Nothing I saw." (P. 188)

In addition, Vheissu represents apocalyptic annihilation. Godolphin tells Mantissa that when he found the corpse of a Vheissu spider-monkey at the South Pole, Vheissu became to him "a gaudy dream" and "a dream of annihilation" (p. 190). About to steal the Botticelli painting, Mantissa decides at the last moment that Venus, too, is a "gaudy dream, a dream of annihilation" (p. 193), and leaves the painting in its place.[23]

Moreover, as in the Egypt episode, V., as Victoria Wren, is associated with violence. Participating in a Venezuelan consulate riot that results

in fatalities, Victoria Wren sees herself as a "feminine principle, acting as a complement to all this bursting, explosive male energy" (p. 192). The association of V., a metaphor of growing multiplicity, with apocalypse--a form of ultimate significance--and with the void--a form of ultimate insignificance--is the V. narrative's (and the text's) principal dialectic. Beneath Vheissu's gaudy array of color--its surface skin--is the "Nothing" Godolphin discovers; perceiving and fearing the same "gaudy dream, a dream of annihilation" beneath the Birth of Venus' "gorgeous surface" (p. 193), Mantissa abandons his original plan to steal the painting; beneath the South Pole is the corpse of a Vheissu spider-monkey, "a mockery of life" (p. 189); and beneath the "surface" of the British and Venezuelan Consulates' comic and illusory crisis over the Vheissu affair, precipitated by Victoria, is "a Situation which refused to make sense no matter who looked at it, or from what angle" (p. 174). In short, V. as metaphor comes to represent dialectically both a terrifying void of insignificance and a configuration of events signifying eventual apocalypse.

The third episode tells the story of Kurt Mondaugen, a German engineer who is employed in a Long Island munitions plant by Whole Sick Crew member Bloody Chiclitz's company, Yoyodyne, Inc. Investigating the company for "some clue to the cabal" (p. 211), Stencil meets Mondaugen and discovers that the engineer helped Germany to develop the V-1 and V-2 rockets during World War II; the rockets' significant initials convince Stencil that he is on the right track. Eigenvalue notes, however, that the tale undergoes "considerable change: had become,

as Eigenvalue put it, Stencilized" (p. 211).

"Mondaugen's Story" deals with the German post-colonial presence in South-West Africa. Mondaugen is sent there in May 1922 to decode atmospheric radio disturbances (abbreviated as "sferics"). When a native rebellion threatens, he leaves his outpost for Foppl's farm, where an expatriate group of Europeans hold a "Siege Party" for two and a half months.

In the episode, V. begins to incorporate the inanimate and is further associated with violence. Possessing an artificial--that is, inanimate--left eye, Victoria Wren, alias Vera Meroving, attends the party in the company of a German, Lieutenant Weissmann (a central character in Gravity's Rainbow). V.-Victoria-Vera's presence in the South-West Africa episode during the native rebellion reinforces Stencil's notion that the "state of siege" is V.'s "natural habitat" (p. 50). Moreover, Vera longs for a return to the systematic genocide of the colonized natives fifteen years earlier, when General Lothar von Trotha slaughtered sixty thousand Hereros, a central South-West African tribe who participated with the Hottentots in the Great Rebellion of 1904-1907 against the colonial German administration. Thus, V. is increasingly implicated in the inanimate and violence. During the episode, the narrator utters a rare and therefore revealing sarcasm. Comparing the Herero massacre to the genocide of six million Jews during World War II, he interpolates, "This is only 1 per cent of six million, but still pretty good" (p. 227). The sarcasm is generically significant: it functions to locate the narrator in satiric relation to the violence in the narrative.

In addition, the fantastic serves a thematic function in "Mondaugen's Story." Partly due to the delirium of scurvy and his own voyeurism, Mondaugen experiences "dreams" of uncertain origin that recount the German colonists' genocide of the native tribes. The anonymous German soldier who acts as the principal viewpoint character in one of Mondaugen's dreams describes the metamorphosis of his perception of killing from an inanimate lack of sympathy to a sense that the natives co-operate willingly and gratefully in their murders:

> "One could as well have been a stonemason. It dawned on you slowly, but the conclusion was irresistible; you were in no sense killing. The voluptuous feeling of safety, the delicious lassitude you went into the extermination with was sooner or later replaced by a very curious--not emotion because part of it was obviously a lack of what we commonly call "feeling"--"functional agreement" would come closer to it; operational sympathy." (P. 243)

During the murder of a Hottentot, this anonymous German feels "an odd sort of peace, perhaps what the black was feeling as he gave up the ghost." The act of murder "united them" (p. 245), and, in the dream's final event, an old native woman smiles at and thanks a trooper named Konig who kills her.

The fantasy of Mondaugen's impersonal dream suggests that the inanimateness of the Germans is not replaced by, but instead replaces, the animateness of the natives. Thus, the "dream of annihilation" beneath the skin of Vheissu in the Florence 1899 episode becomes in this

episode the actual systematic annihilation of native tribes in South-West Africa. The "decadence" and "soul-depression" (p. 258) surrounding Mondaugen in South-West Africa represents a moribund European colonialism that infects its colonies with this dream. The native Hereros and Hottentots, therefore, welcome death, not because they seek escape from colonial oppression, but because they contract the Europeans' disease, "the Inanimate" (p. 253).[24]

The South-West Africa episode concludes in a profound irony. Lieutenant Weissmann decodes the sferics as "GODMEANTNUURK," which is an anagram of "Kurt Mondaugen," and "DIEWELTISTALLESWASDERFALLIST" (p. 258), the opening proposition of Wittgenstein's Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, published in 1922, the year in which the episode takes place. (The German is usually translated into English as "The World is all that is the case.") The textual ridicule of Stencil's obsessive quest for V. foreshadows and is reinforced by Mondaugen's message, which announces no transcendent meaning to the world; the world, rather, simply is.

In the context of the V. narrative, however, such an effectively circular or non-predicative assertion is, at least in part, ironic. Although it subverts Stencil's quest for significance by means of metaphor and plot, it also serves to bring to attention those events in Stencil's fantasy that correspond historically to irrational realities that are "the case." The sequence from the allusion to the bloodless Fashoda Affair in Sudan, to the bloody riot at the Venezuelan Consulate in Florence, to the genocide of sixty thousand Hereros in South-West Africa, to the allusion to the genocide of six million Jews in Germany evinces

greater and greater degrees of historical annihilation, and by the end of the South-West Africa episode, V. signifies the impending apocalypse of the inanimate.

Though antedating "Mondaugen's Story" by nine years, the final V. episode, "V. in Love," forms a later chapter in the book. Stencil acquires the rudimentary information for this chapter, which deals with an affair in Paris in 1913 between V. and ballerina Mélanie l'Heuremaudit, from Porcépic, a composer "to whom V. told much of their affair" (p. 384).

The episode serves to expand the themes of the sterile to include two forms of inanimate love: fetishism and tourism. The inanimate is first embodied in V.'s increasingly inorganic status: "Victoria was being gradually replaced by V.; something entirely different, for which the young century had as yet no name" (p. 386). The episode then defines fetishism as love of the inanimate. In particular, V. regards Mélanie as her fetish, and Mélanie, in turn, regards herself as a fetish in mirrors that V. provides for her.[25] Furthermore, these fetishes, representing the transformation of the animate into the inanimate, are disparaged as forms of "tourism," the resemblance of which to the colonialism of "Mondaugen's Story" and to the surface-depth obsessions of the Florence episode and indeed of Stencil's entire quest is evident:[26]

> . . . their love was in its way only another version of tourism; for as tourists bring into the world as it has evolved part of another, and eventually create a parallel society of their own in every

> city, so the Kingdom of Death is served by fetish-constructions like V.'s, which represent a kind of infiltration. (P. 386)

V. herself is "aware of her own progression toward inanimateness" (p. 385), and even Stencil imagines her as totally inanimate in 1956.

The climax of the chapter occurs when Mélanie dies during a performance because she forgets (or chooses not to wear) a protective device. Thus, she becomes literally inanimate. In V., love of the inanimate results not in the animation of the inanimate but in the inanimation of the animate, and it is this form of love that the V. narrative identifies ultimately with Romanticism's love of death:

> It was a variation of the Porpentine theme, the Tristan-and-Iseult theme, indeed, according to some, the single melody, banal and exasperating, of all Romanticism since the Middle Ages: "the act of love and the act of death are one." Dead at last, they would be one with the inanimate universe and with each other. Loveplay until then thus becomes an impersonation of the inanimate, a transvestism not between sexes but between quick and dead; human and fetish. (P. 385)

The four V. episodes thus point to V.'s growing inanimateness and to her historical significance. On the other hand, Pynchon subverts the text by indicating that V.--indeed, all metaphors and plots--may be without significance. This game between writer and reader continues in two other narratives: the report in Maijstral's confessions of V.'s death on Malta in 1943 and the epilogue.

V.'s epilogue, which deals with Sidney Stencil's experiences on Malta in 1919, provides equivocal confirmation of the four-part V. narrative. The epilogue is itself a parody of epilogues: it has an unidentifiable narrator and a conclusion that by maintaining the thematic suspension between chance and plot, concludes nothing.

Veronica Manganese, who is revealed to be Victoria Wren and whom Sidney Stencil calls V., acts on Malta as agent provocateur and has an informer killed in brutal fashion by professional assassins. Thus, V.'s association with violence is further developed.

Moreover, the reader discovers that Victoria Wren seduced Sidney Stencil in Florence in 1899. When Stencil renews the affair on Malta in order to spy on V., he calls it "a resumption of their hothouse time" (p. 460). This declaration is significant, for V.'s "hothouse" relationship with Stencil and simultaneous commitment to the violence of "the street" corresponds to Sidney Stencil's own dual vision of contemporary politics. He states in his journal:

> "If there is any political moral to be found in this world . . . it is that we carry on the business of this century with an intolerable double vision. Right and Left; the hothouse and the street. The Right can only live and work hermetically, in the hothouse of the past, while outside the Left prosecute their affairs in the streets by manipulated mob violence. And cannot live but in the dreamscape of the future. . . . " (P. 440)

V.'s resolution of the "intolerable double vision" of the hothouse and the street, suggesting a new political synthesis, frightens the

elder Stencil:

> Riot was her element, as surely as this dark room, almost creeping with amassed objects. The street and the hothouse; in V. were resolved, by some magic, the two extremes. She frightened him. (P. 459)

This combination of riot in the street and a hothouse attachment to the inanimateness of "amassed objects" of the past points clearly to V.'s significance as the embodiment of fascism.[27] Historically a political movement that espoused mass action and national traditionalism, fascism unites the street and the hothouse.

The identification of V. with fascism is supported by the declaration in the 1913 episode that "the century had as yet no name" for V. (p. 386). According to the OED, the term "fascist" and its derivatives were not current until 1919 and after. Furthermore, the first fascist party was organized in March 1919 in Italy, just three months prior to the time in V. of the June Disturbances on Malta. Finally, Demivolt, Sidney Stencil's associate, tells Stencil that their informant Dupiro, V.'s ragman, was killed on V.'s order by "'I Banditti . . . a gang of terrorists or professional assassins'" (p. 456) who "'are connected with the fasci di combattimento who've organized last month in Italy'" and that "'Manganese has been in intermittent contact with their leader Mussolini'" (p. 456).

In sum, the old world that Stencil knew is gone. He laments the loss of the via media in modern politics:

> "What of the real present, the men-of-no-politics, the once-respectable Golden Mean? Obsolete; in any case, lost sight of." (P. 440)

This shift in the politics of the twentieth century indicates Stencil's obsolescence and foreshadows his symbolically necessary death at the book's conclusion.

Thus, Stencil represents a moribund order, and V. represents an undesirable, nascent one.[28] Stencil envisions the apocalypse at the end of this process in a theory of history culminating in a Pentecostal revelation:

> The matter of a Paraclete's coming, the comforter, the dove; the tongues of flames, the gift of tongues: Pentecost. Third Person of the Trinity. None of it was implausible to Stencil. The Father had come and gone. In political terms, the Father was the Prince; the single leader, the dynamic figure whose virtù used to be a determinant of history. This had degenerated to the Son, genius of the liberal love-feast which had produced 1848 and lately the overthrow of the Czars. What next? What Apocalypse? (P. 444)

According to Stencil, the first two historical stages, the rules of the Father and the Son, correspond to the hothouse Right of the past and the street Left of the present. In 1919, a synthesis of Right and Left, called fascism and symbolized by V., was unfolding.

Historically, fascism as a powerful European force expired with the end of World War II, just as V. herself, its symbol, expires, according to Maijstral, on Malta in 1943. After her death, the ivory comb

that she wears is picked up and passed on to Maijstral's daughter Paola, who possesses the gift of tongues. The Pentecost that Sidney Stencil envisions as superseding the old Right and Left must have occurred, then, according to Pynchon, at the end of World War II, but for Pynchon that is another book, Gravity's Rainbow.

The epilogue counterpoises the elder Stencil's formulations with the skepticism of Mehemet, master of the xebec on which Stencil first sails to Malta. Mehemet valorizes fortune, rejects as invalid Stencil's metaphors and plots, and sees change only as decay towards eventual death. He tells, furthermore, fantastic tales of his own time-travels and of Mara, a protean Maltese spirit of fertility who performs supernatural feats of dubious virtue while in Turkish captivity and who haunts, as punishment, Malta's inhabited plain. But Stencil refuses to believe in "the Nameless Horror" as an explanation of the first world war, preferring instead to comprehend it within metaphors and plots. The similarity to son Herbert's quest for V. is not without significance, for if the text does not endorse the younger Stencil's efforts, then it must also by implication repudiate those of his father.

The epilogue thus concludes with Sidney Stencil's death, and the event suggests equivocal and contradictory explanations. Either Stencil dies as the result of an accident (the waterspout being merely a natural occurrence), or he dies because V. may be present at the harbor (the evidence is ambiguous) and, in some supernatural way, causes the waterspout--another "V "--to erupt. Chance or plot or, in the book's own Machiavellian terms, fortune or virtù--these are the twin poles

of closure in V. Neither can co-exist with the other, yet the reader is continuously manipulated between them; and if the argument of this dissertation is correct, then Pynchon's Menippean satire works by the irony of these contradictory poles.

In V., the dominant tone of the narrator seems to signify a dispassionate, non-evaluative stance towards the material. The common definition of "satire," however, presupposes the passion of anger mediated by rhetoric: this passion motivates the curse of invective, for example, in which the form of attack is direct and explicit, and that of sarcasm, in which it is not. However, Pynchon's V. is not only "satire" in this restricted, conventional sense of curse. If we recall that satire denotes instead a verse form and that Menippean satire denotes a prose-verse form, then the issue is clarified, for the common definition of "satire" is then seen as reductionistic; certainly,(in a trivial sense) the curse is present in all such "satire" because "satire" so defined denotes only the forms of the attack or curse itself. In verse satire, such "satire" is dominant, but in Menippean satire, it is the form of the fiction, not the "satire" per se, that dominates the genre. Thus, the presence in V. of parodistic, fantastic, and comic forms constitutes the genre's signature, and the dominant curse of the verse form, although not necessarily absent, is relegated to a secondary function. As Alvin Kernan suggests, in formal verse satire, the satirist or his persona is stressed (and thus the mode of direct, personal attack is available), but in Menippean satire, the scene or fiction is stressed (and thus, the "satire" works by the implications of the narrative forms themselves).[29] Even so, in V.

the curse does appear in the narrator's and characters' rhetoric: the narrator's sarcastic remark on the sixty thousand Herero dead and the ridicule of protagonists Profane and Stencil by the narrator, by the characters, and by Profane and Stencil themselves (as well as other incidental "satires") serve to identify and reinforce the narrative stance as "satiric." Most important, the curse of Menippean satire is also necessarily diffused through the forms of variety. Thus, the two parodies that structure V. are forms of satire, ridiculing dullness in Profane, pomposity in the Whole Sick Crew and through them human and artistic sterility, and obsession in Stencil, but also more fundamentally the totalizing extremes of chance and plot.

Ultimately, in particular, the effect of satirizing Stencil as a fool is to deny textual endorsement to the explanatory inclusiveness of the V. narrative, yet the disorder endorsed by Mehemet is equally unsupported by the textual status of the Profane narrative, its principal embodiment. Thus, the irony of these contradictory poles compels the reader to reject the contradiction as invalid in toto and to seek "explanations" elsewhere, in the locus of what Bahktin calls the "joyful relativity"[30] of Menippean satire and what Pynchon himself calls the "excluded middle."

Notes

[1] I shall be referring to the readily available paperback edition: Thomas Pynchon, V. (New York: Bantam, 1964). Page references to this edition will appear within the text.

[2] See Kernan, p. 252. Kernan, however, notes the limitations of a criticism of satire based only on an analysis of rhetorical devices.

[3] See Robert Golden, "Mass Man and Modernism: Violence in Pynchon's V.," Critique, 14, No. 2 (1972), 5-17, who considers the book a "satire on modernism" (9).

[4] The tradition hearkens to the label names of Aristophanes, for example. Thomas E. Berry, "Charactonyms," Word Study, 25, No. 2 (1949), 1-2, suggests "charactonyms" for this technique, and Highet, Anatomy of Satire, p. 275, n. 50, writes "Distorted or ridiculous names are always a sure sign of satire." See Kelsie B. Harder, "Names in Thomas Pynchon's V.," Literary Onomastics Studies, 5 (1978), 64-80, who points out the connection in V. between names and theme.

[5] Stuart Miller, The Picaresque Novel (Cleveland: The Press of Case Western Reserve Univ., 1967), p. 131.

[6] The Pocket Dictionary of American Slang, ed. Harold Wentworth and Stuart Berg Flexner (New York: Pocket Books, 1967).

[7] See this diss., pp.172,176-77 for an elaboration of Pynchon's use of these antinomies in Gravity's Rainbow, where the terms are made explicit.

[8] One of Pynchon's favorite sources for metaphors, as numerous critics have noted, is science. In particular, Pynchon frequently employs mathematical imagery. See Lance Ozier, "Antipointsman/Antimexico: Some Mathematical Imagery in Gravity's Rainbow," Critique, 16, No. 2 (1974), 73-90, and "The Calculus of Transformation: More Mathematical Imagery in Gravity's Rainbow," Twentieth Century Literature, 21 (1975), 193-210.

[9] See Richard Patteson, "What Stencil Knew: Structure and Certitude in Pynchon's V.,"Critique, 16, No. 2 (1974), 30-44; rpt. in Critical Essays, pp. 20-31, who mistakenly claims Pynchon uses the term "entropy" in V.; nevertheless, this passage represents the clearest expression of the concept in the book. See chapter three of this dissertation for a detailed discussion, pp. 140-41. Pynchon's first use of the term is as the title of his early short story, "Entropy," The Kenyon Review, 22 (1960), 277-92; rpt. in Slow Learner: Early Stories (Boston: Little, Brown, 1984), pp. 79-98. For Pynchon's own comments on entropy, see Introd., Slow Learner, pp. 12-15.

[10] Catherine Stimpson, "Pre-Apocalyptic Atavism: Thomas Pynchon's Early Fiction," in Mindful Pleasures, pp. 31-47, characterizes Mafia as "a racist Jacqueline Susann" (p. 38), although Molly Hite, p. 162, suggests "Mafia is a parody of Ayn Rand."

[11] See Roger Henkle, "Pynchon's Tapestries on the Western Wall," Modern Fiction Studies, 17 (1971), 207-20, rpt. in Pynchon: A Collection, pp. 97-111. Henkle agrees that Paola is meant to represent an affirmation but thinks that her characterization is a failure.

[12] In this way Paola resembles Tyrone Slothrop of Gravity's Rainbow, who becomes a kind of Rorschach test onto which various scientists project their theories.

[13] Sphere himself represents a complex of affirmations. His name suggest the perfection of the circle, and his art is represented as genuine and creative. Moreover, Pynchon's sympathy for the historical powerlessness of blacks is evident in his "A Journey into the Mind of Watts," The New York Times Magazine, 12 June 1966, pp. 34-35, 78, 80-82, 84, as well as in his depiction of the Hereros in V. and Gravity's Rainbow. Some critics have attempted to treat Sphere's declaration as irony, but as James Hall points out in "The New Pleasures of the Imagination," The Virginia Quarterly Review, 46 (1970), 596-612, "[Y]ou do not invent virtues. You earn old ones, the ones that were always there and were obscured by the flash of the new" (608).

[14] Robert Graves, The White Goddess, amended and enl. ed. (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1966), p. 395, associates the goddess' comb with heartlessness. The entire passage from Graves is relevant to Stencil's V., whom Pynchon critics, by and large, see as a debased form of the White Goddess. Pynchon himself mentions Graves's book in V. (p. 50). Paola's surrender of the comb signifies her relinquishment of the goddess' traditional heartlessness.

[15] Ideas of Order, p. 66.

[16] Besides the name Slothrop in Gravity's Rainbow, this is, to the best of my knowledge, Pynchon's only other use of the root or word "sloth" in his three books. The similarities between Stencil's and Slothrop's quests and personal scatterings imply that the modern quest may necessitate a dispersal of identity.

[17] "Tradition and the Individual Talent," p. 21. For a more detailed discussion of the Modernists, see chapter one of this diss., pp. 33-37.

[18] This view of metaphor resembles Alain Robbe-Grillet's, although Robbe-Grillet denies the functional value altogether. For a further discussion of Robbe-Grillet's theory, see chapter one of this diss., p. 38.

[19] Stencil's "scattered concept" of V. corresponds to Slothrop's "scattering" in Gravity's Rainbow and to the concept of maximum information entropy. For a discussion of entropy, see this diss., pp. 140-41.

[20] Robert Sklar, "The New Novel, USA: Thomas Pynchon," The Nation, 25 Sept. 1967, pp. 277-80; rpt. as "An Anarchist Miracle: The Novels of Thomas Pynchon," in Pynchon: A Collection, p. 91.

[21] See David Cowart, "Love and Death: Variations on a Theme in Pynchon's Early Fiction," Journal of Narrative Technique, 7 (1977), 157-69, for a comparison of the Egypt chapter with "Under the Rose," Pynchon's early short story that served as its prototype.

[22] Gravity's Rainbow (New York: Viking, 1973), p. 159.

[23] Graves, p. 395, calls Botticelli's Venus "an exact icon" of the white goddess' cult.

[24] The Hereros reappear in Germany in Gravity's Rainbow, where one group of them, the Empty Ones, assimilates the European death culture and plans tribal suicide. See this diss., pp. 174-75.

[25] Graves, p. 395, refers to the goddess' mirror as a symbol of vanity.

[26] For an exploration of Pynchon's use of "tourism" as a metaphor in V., see in particular William Plater, pp. 71-80.

[27] David Cowart, Thomas Pynchon: The Art of Allusion, p. 18, sees V. similarly as "the fascist Zeitgeist."

[28] The narrator's comparison in Gravity's Rainbow, p. 616, of the nobility of World War I with the decadence of World War II may imply Pynchon's sympathy for the elder Stencil but may be less a literal reflection of Pynchon's historical stance than a generic choice to accentuate the attack on the 1939-45 conflict.

[29] Kernan, p. 257.

[30] Problems of Dostoevksy's Poetics, p. 107.

Chapter Three:

The Crying of Lot 49: History as a Mail Conspiracy

In this chapter, after identifying similarities and dissimilarities between V. and its successor, The Crying of Lot 49,[1] I use the generic model to organize the discussion of the latter text into curse and variety. The curse is seen as directed politically at America and epistemologically at monological forms of communication. The subsequent analysis is ordered into textual elements that represent the curse as a function of the grotesque, a form of the fantastic, and into the textual elements of comedy and parody that advance the satire's rhetorical ends.

Pynchon's second Menippean satire, The Crying of Lot 49, published in 1966 three years after V., both resembles and differs from the earlier text. As in V., a protagonist becomes obsessed with a fantastic quest. Narratively, however, Pynchon does not, as in V., render the quest as a discontinuous series of interruptions of the textual present; rather, the quest forms the narrative present itself. Unlike V., then, there is no extensive narrative experimentation in Lot 49, for the tale is told in the third-person by a narrator restricted primarily to the protagonist's

point of view.

In addition, significant patterns recur in the two texts. As Herbert Stencil's fantastic quest in V. reveals a possible form of coherence in early twentieth-century Europe's decadence and violence, so the fantastic quest of Lot 49's protagonist, California housewife Oedipa Maas, reveals a possible form of coherence in mid-century America's oppression and alienation.

The sterility of America is signified as well by sterile forms of communication.[2] In Lot 49, the orthodox communicative systems--in Bakhtin's terminology, monologism--of mail, radio, and television are depicted as stifling, fraudulent, and deceptive, helping to form a wasteland of official uniformity from which diversity and meaning--in Bakhtin's terms, dialogism--are excluded. The text, however, endorses two fertilizing possibilities: metaphor (and, equivocally, paranoia) and a communicative diversity or anarchy.

Like V., Lot 49 incorporates radically different forms: a parody of the rhetoric and structure of detective fiction; a drama-within-the-fiction that is a parody of Jacobean revenge tragedy; the "low" comedy of puns and farce; grotesques who are spiritually and physically deformed; parodistic historiography and scholarship; and a metaphysical rhetoric. Pynchon's configuration of such parody, comedy, and fantasy composes Menippean satire's generic variety, which, while serving formal and thematic ends, has as its function, in addition, the reader's entertainment or delight.

Like V., then, Lot 49 is Menippean satire, encompassing the genre's

four formal and functional conventions: curse, variety, fertility, and delight, and in the discussion that follows, these elements and their interrelations will be explored.

The curse of Lot 49, expressed by the narrator but reflective of protagonist Oedipa Maas' consciousness, is directed at America, where "with the chances once so good for diversity," "excluded middles" (p. 136) have resulted instead in a form of the sterile. The following passage near the end of the narrative uses a conventional means of the curse, vulgar invective, to pit narrator-Oedipa in satiric relation to America:

> She had heard all about excluded middles; they were bad shit, to be avoided; and how had it ever happened here, with the chances once so good for diversity? (P. 136)

One of the essential principles of classical logic, the Law of the Excluded Middle states that every proposition must be either true or false, thereby eliminating the possibility that a proposition may be neither true nor false but doubtful or undecidable.[3] Such uncertainty corresponds metaphorically to the neglected "middle" of "diversity" that emerges from the narrative. The curse on logical positivism thus entails attack on the exclusion from the mainstream of American life of what the text identifies as "W.A.S.T.E.," the unofficial organization of communication for America's disinherited. America is thus the object of Lot 49's satire, and the following analysis will illustrate the manner in which Pynchon's attack is made manifest.

The text's chief symbol of America is oligopolist Pierce Inverarity, a former lover of Oedipa Maas. Though Inverarity is dead during the narrative, he is active throughout the fiction by virtue of his ownership of nearly all the land and business in San Narciso, Lot 49's chief setting, and when Oedipa is named executrix of his will, into which Inverarity may have encoded a meaning, her quest to unravel his extensive estate begins. Inverarity is presented as a compulsive autocrat. He had, according to Oedipa, a "need to possess, to alter the land, to bring new skylines, personal antagonisms, growth rates into being" (p. 134). In a mathematical metaphor, she compares his compulsion to a "fraction of him that couldn't come out even, would carry forever beyond any decimal place she might name" (p. 134). Investigating his estate, Oedipa concludes that Inverarity's virtual ownership of San Narciso typifies the domination of the republic by the few. Inverarity thus becomes a symbol of an oligopolistic, if not monopolistic, America:

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

Speculating that San Narciso and the estate may be microcosms, Oedipa realizes that the alienation she uncovers locally during her quest is likely to exist nationally:

> If San Narciso and the estate were really no different from any other town, any other estate, then by that continuity she might have found The Tristero anywhere

> in her Republic, through any of a hundred lightly-concealed entranceways, a hundred alienations, if only she'd looked. (P. 135)

Thus the quest's significance is not a final (and undisclosed) apocalypse of the subversive postal organization named Tristero but the revelatory process:

> As things developed, she was to have all manner of revelations. Hardly about Pierce Inverarity, or herself; but about what remained yet had somehow, before this, stayed away. (Pp. 9-10)

In brief, Oedipa's quest reveals America's excluded middle:

> What was left to inherit? That America coded in Inverarity's testament, whose was that? She thought of other, immobilized freight cars, where the kids sat on the floor planking and sang back, happy as fat, whatever came over the mother's pocket radio; of other squatters who stretched canvas for lean-tos behind smiling billboards along all the highways, or slept in junkyards in the stripped shells of wrecked Plymouths, or even, daring, spent the night up some pole in a lineman's tent like caterpillars, swung among a web of telephone wires, living in the very copper rigging and secular miracle of communication, untroubled by the dumb voltages flickering their miles, the night long, in the thousands of unheard messages. She remembered drifters she had listened to, Americans speaking their language carefully, scholarly, as if they were in exile from somewhere else invisible yet congruent with the cheered land she lived in; and walkers along the roads at night, zooming in and out of your headlights without looking up, too far from any town to have a real destination. (P. 135)

These disinherited, whom Oedipa also encounters one night in San

Francisco (it is not insignificant that these latter encounters take place in an "actual," not fictional, locale like San Narciso), are grotesques in comparison with "the cheered land she lived in." The dramatic irony of this discrepancy between the two Americas functions as a satire on the repressive order associated with Inverarity's America and the illusory order associated with Oedipa's America prior to the quest.

That life is rendered by Pynchon in deft satiric touches, for it takes only the first two paragraphs of Lot 49 to establish the tedious and insular conventionality of Oedipa's life in Kinneret-Among-The-Pines. A series of details--reference to a Tupperware party she has attended, shopping at a food market with a Vivaldi Kazoo Concerto on its Muzak--depicts Oedipa's routinized existence, which in a metaphor she compares to a deck of cards:

> . . . she wondered, wondered, shuffling back through a fat deckful of days which seemed (wouldn't she be first to admit it?) more or less identical, or all pointing the same way subtly like a conjurer's deck, any odd one readily clear to a trained eye. (P. 2)

However, Oedipa develops the metaphor to suggest the deck has a conjurer, implying that her ontological ennui may have a palpable source which she later names "magic, anonymous and malignant" (p. 11). Like Stencil's quest for V., Oedipa's eventual quest, which evolves from this sense that life is somehow being denied to her by external, mysterious and malevolent forces, has ambiguous status:

in a type of satiric hamartia like Stencil's (and, later, like Tyrone Slothrop's), Oedipa errs by reifying the metaphor. That is, Oedipa succeeds in revealing the significance of the Tristero but remains unsatisfied because she "reads" her experiences as conventional forms of detective fiction--with climactic disclosure of guilt--and romance--with climactic elimination of the original evil and transformation of the wasteland. Although the narrative rhetoric indicates that she desires both forms of closure, she achieves neither, but her quest has an important residual effect: the revelation of the disinherited. Like Stencil's "uncovering" of decadence and violence in V., the process of the revelation of the disinherited exposes Oedipa to "what remained yet somehow before this had stayed away," those ignored and excluded by official history. Pynchon's satire of America works by the poles of this dramatic irony of the illusion of inheritance and the reality of disinheritance, and Oedipa's quest disabuses her of political ignorance and serves as an indictment of the manipulation and control of the land and its economy by a powerful minority:

> What would the probate judge have to say about spreading some kind of a legacy among them all, all those nameless, maybe as a first installment? Oboy. He'd be on her ass in a microsecond, revoke her letters testamentary, they'd call her names, proclaim her through all Orange County as a redistributionist and pinko, slip the old man from Warpe, Wistfull, Kubitschek and McMingus in as administrator de bonis non and so much baby for code, constellations, shadow-legatees. (P. 136)

At the Scope Bar, she meets Mike Fallopian, a right-wing fanatic

who is writing a book on the federal postal monopoly's suppression of private independent mail routes in the years preceding the Civil War. Fallopian sees the suppression "as a parable of power, its feeding, growth and systematic abuse . . ." (p. 35). Later, at Yoyodyne, Inc., an aerospace company in which Inverarity owned shares, she meets engineer Stanley Koteks, who complains that when an engineer signs a Yoyodyne contract, the corporation acquires the patent rights to all his subsequent inventions. The result is a suppression of his scientific creativity:

> "This stifles your really creative engineer," Koteks said, adding bitterly, "Wherever he may be." (P. 61)[4]

In the course of attempting to disentangle Inverarity's assets, Oedipa is herself entangled in growing evidence of what may be a secret, subversive postal organization called the Tristero (or Trystero, a variant orthography), by which numerous Americans of the "excluded middle" communicate in disregard of the powerful federal postal monopoly. During a long night in San Francisco, she discovers a segment of this underground. Pynchon, in the Menippean tradition of the fantastic, depicts its members as grotesques whose unnatural forms signify "alienation" and "species of withdrawal":

> Among her other encounters were a facially-deformed welder, who cherished his ugliness; a child roaming the night who missed the death before birth as certain outcasts do the dear lulling blankness of the community; a Negro woman with

> an intricately-marbled scar along the baby-fat
> of one cheek who kept going through rituals
> of miscarriage each for a different reason,
> deliberately as others might the ritual of
> birth, dedicated not to continuity but to some
> kind of interregnum; an aging night-watchman
> nibbling at a bar of Ivory Soap, who had trained
> his virtuoso stomach to accept also lotions,
> air-fresheners, fabrics, tobaccoes, and waxes
> in a hopeless attempt to assimilate it all,
> all the promise, productivity, betrayal, ulcers,
> before it was too late; and even another voyeur,
> who hung outside one of the city's still-lighted
> windows, searching for who knew what specific
> image. (P. 91)

Ignoring the federal postal monopoly, these citizens communicate instead by "W.A.S.T.E.," which Oedipa eventually learns is an acronym for "We Await Silent Trystero's Empire" (p. 127):

> For here were God knew how many citizens,
> deliberately choosing not to communicate by
> U. S. Mail. It was not an act of treason,
> nor possibly even defiance. But it was a
> calculated withdrawal, from the life of the
> Republic, from its machinery. (P. 92)

This calculated withdrawal represents something that is, despite social, political, and economic impotence, "their own":

> Whatever else was being denied them out of
> hate, indifference to the power of their vote,
> loopholes, simple ignorance, this withdrawal
> was their own, unpublicized, private. (P. 92)

Oedipa perceives in W.A.S.T.E. a sign of the possible presence

in America of the Tristero, "a real alternative to the exitlessness, to the absence of surprise to life" (p. 128).

As she investigates Inverarity's estate, she grows increasingly obsessed with the need to confirm the Tristero's existence. Researching the organization's history, she learns that it was begun in Europe in 1577 by Tristero Y Calavera, a Spaniard who claimed to be the rightful heir to the positions of Grand Master of the Post for the Low Countries and executor of the Thurn and Taxis postal monopoly. Denied what he felt to be his rightful inheritance, Calavera established the Tristero, which terrorized Thurn and Taxis couriers along their routes. From the inception of the Tristero, therefore, "disinheritance" (p. 120) was its underlying theme. Further investigation indicates that the Tristero has been in America from the middle of the nineteenth century. While its opposition to and subversion of the U.S. Mail has obvious social, economic, and political significance, the antagonism of the two systems has communicative significance in the text as well. Just as the federal postal monopoly in Lot 49 signifies a sterile and monopolistic uniformity of communication, so the Tristero signifies the initiation of a fertile diversity and the ultimate possibility of communicative anarchy.

In Lot 49, such an ultimate possibility represents a desirable, if unattainable, end and is used as ironic satire of the status quo. After her night in San Francisco, Oedipa participates in a communicative anarchy at her hotel in Berkeley when an assemblage of deaf-mutes dances in couples--each couple following a different step--and the collisions that she considers inevitable do not occur:

> There would have to be collisions. The only alternative was some unthinkable order of music, many rhythms, all keys at once, a choreography in which each couple meshed easy, predestined. Something they all heard with an extra sense atrophied in herself. She followed her partner's lead, limp in the young mute's clasp, waiting for the collisions to begin. But none came. She was danced for half an hour before, by mysterious consensus, everybody took a break, without having felt any touch but the touch of her partner. (P. 97)[5]

That the participants in this "anarchist miracle" (p. 97) are deaf-mutes reflects their exclusion from orthodox means of communication, and their muteness corresponds in part to the W.A.S.T.E.-Tristero symbol of the muted post horn. The order and grace of the dance, despite the absence of conventional arrangement, thus offers a metaphor for a Utopian communicative condition. It is, however, only metaphor, which, like those of Swift's land of the Houyhnhnms and Voltaire's Eldorado, is structured to satirize by dramatic irony the object of the curse, America.

The satire on America has as intermediate vehicles what Northrop Frye describes as the Menippean form's interest in "rapacious and incompetent professional men of all kinds . . . handled in terms of their occupational approach to life as distinct from their social behavior."[6] This external approach to character in Menippean satire clarifies that Oedipa, lacking a profession, serves as ingénu although she possesses elements of vir bonus, hero, and fool; however, it is the knavery of professionalism that provides the curse of Lot 49 with the bulk of its vehicles of attack.

Oedipa's husband, Wendell "Mucho" Maas, "hyperaware" of the stereotypical image of unscrupulous used car salesmen--by implication, mustachioed, with padded, wide-shoulder suits and greasy pompadours--resolves not to be identified as one:

> Mucho shaved his upper lip every morning three times with, three times against the grain to remove any remotest breath of a moustache, new blades he drew blood invariably but kept at it; bought all natural-shoulder suits, then went to a tailor to have the lapels made yet more abnormally narrow, on his hair used only water, combing it like Jack Lemmon to throw them further off. (P. 4)

The satire on used car salesmen modulates from the folly of Mucho's "disguise" to the knavery of his profession:

> The sight of sawdust, evan pencil shavings, made him wince, his own kind being known to use it for hushing sick transmissions, and though he dieted he could still not as Oedipa did use honey to sweeten his coffee for like all things viscous it distressed him, recalling too poignantly what is often mixed with motor oil to ooze dishonest into gaps between piston and cylinder wall. He walked out of a party one night because somebody used the word "creampuff," it seemed maliciously, in his hearing. The man was a refugee Hungarian pastry cook talking shop, but there was your Mucho: thin-skinned. (P. 4)

The satire assumes the broader political frame of the text as the typical clients turn out to be America's disinherited:

> Yet at least he had believed in the cars. Maybe to excess: how could he not, seeing people poorer than him come in, Negro,Mexican, cracker, a parade seven days a

> week, bringing the most godawful of trade-ins: motorized, metal extensions of themselves, of their families and what their whole lives must be like, out there so naked for anybody, a stranger like himself, to look at . . . . (P. 4)

Finally, Mucho's terrifying dream of "nada" (an acronym for National Automobile Dealers' Association) identifies the profession ultimately with the void.

In desperate flight from the oneric significance of the used car business, Mucho becomes a disk jockey but in this profession discovers only a travesty of communication and love--"all the fraudulent dream of teenage appetites" (p. 6). On the air, he communicates "'naked lust'" (p. 6) to his adolescent audience and off the air has affairs with them. Unable to "believe" in the station, he takes LSD regularly and disintegrates into multiple cheery personalities. The comic pathos of his disintegration serves satiric effects: the loss of a distinctive personality, of even a token discomfort or resentment at being assimilated into structures of fraudulence and deception, embodies by grotesque hyperbole the narrative satire on an American culture that encourages forms of insanity as the only satisfactory means of accommodation.

Mucho's drugs are provided by Oedipa's psychiatrist, Dr. Hilarius, who originally wants Oedipa to take the LSD, which he tells her are tranquilizers, as part of an experiment on suburban housewives. During a nocturnal call to Oedipa in which he tries to convince her to take the drug, Hilarius utters the phrase, "We want you," prompting Oedipa to hallucinate a sick, violent Uncle Sam:

> Hanging in the air over her bed she now beheld the well-known portrait of Uncle that appears in front of all our post offices, his eyes gleaming unhealthily, his sunken yellow cheeks most violently rouged, his finger pointing between her eyes. I want you. (P. 7)

A metaphorical identity is thus established between Hilarius, Freudianism, and the psychiatric office, on the one hand, and America, militarism, and the post office, on the other. The implications are that Freudian psychiatry functions as a method of tranquilizing normalization within the monopolistic political structure symbolized by the postal service and that drugs serve as the weapons of pacification. This satire on America and its ideological handmaiden, Freudian psychiatry, employs the imagery of disease to describe the face of the portrait, a technique of the satiric tradition from antiquity and especially popular during the Renaissance.[7] Moreover, Hilarius "sounded like Pierce doing a Gestapo officer," (p. 7) a foreshadowing linkage of psychiatry, America, and fascism confirmed by Oedipa's subsequent discovery that Hilarius worked at Buchenwald on experimentally-induced insanity. The revelation of Hilarius' past occurs when the psychiatrist becomes paranoid and imagines Israeli agents are pursuing him. Like Mucho Maas, he suffers from profound professional disillusion, which turns into personal dissolution:

> "Yes, you hate me. But didn't I try to atone? If I'd been a real Nazi I'd have chosen Jung, nicht wahr? But I chose Freud instead, the Jew. Freud's vision of the world had no Buchenwalds in it. Buchenwald, according to Freud, once the light was let in, would

> become a soccer field, fat children would learn flower-arranging and solfeggio in the strangling rooms. At Auschwitz the ovens would be converted over to petit fours and wedding cakes, and the V-2 missiles to public housing for the elves. I tried to believe it all. I slept three hours a night trying not to dream, and spent the other 21 at the forcible acquisition of faith. And yet my penance hasn't been enough. They've come like angels of death to get me, despite all I tried to do." (P. 102)

By performing experiments on Jews in Germany and on suburban housewives in America, Hilarius exchanges, in effect, one form of totalitarianism for another. In particular, the fundamental weakness of Freudianism, according to Hilarius, lies in its Enlightenment assumption of the omnipotence of reason. Hilarius' experience of the holocaust attests to the incapacity of the Freudian ego to repress and transform its Other, the unconscious, and, as a result, he declines to help rid Oedipa of her fantasy:

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

Thus, a set of binary metaphors reflecting Menippean satire's dialogism is established: on the one hand, the monologism of only America and its synecdoches (the postal service, for example) and, on the other hand, the dialogism of the Tristero and its synecdoches (the W.A.S.T.E. system, for example). In the domain of psychology, this dialogism

is represented by fantasy, not of the alienating, drug-induced, inward variety, which through Mucho's disintegration the text ridicules as narcissistic and counter-productive, but of the outward type, which compels the fantasist to communicate. In this regard, the Tristero, as metaphor, performs the function attributed to all metaphor by Fausto Maijstral in V. but with one significant difference: it serves to connect Oedipa not in a delusory relation with nature but in an authentic relation with the community.

The satire on America by the vahicle of rapacious professionalism culminates in an archetype of American economic "freedom"--racist, sexist, and fascist entrepreneur Winthrop Tremaine, whose government surplus store sells rifles, swastika armbands, and SS uniforms. (Among his customers is Mike Fallopian.) The ironic descriptions of Tremaine--"this worthy," (p. 111) "spirited entrepreneur," (p. 112) and "You had the feeling that it was only his good upbringing kept him from spitting" (p. 111)--are narrative interpolations in the dialogue that signify an ambiguous conflation of Oedipa's and the narrator's points of view; nevertheless, Oedipa, like her ancient namesake, recognizes that the responsibility for the wasteland is hers.

Thus, the curse of America contained in the grotesque vision of the disinherited is reflected by these caricatures of apparent beneficiaries of America who are themselves, in their very professionalism, insane. Oedipa experiences a "stripping" (p. 114) of such men from her, and the subsequent erosion of her interpersonal social identities leaves her to develop alone the courage to face the unknown.

The ecdysiastical metaphor occurs first in an episode of farce, a form of the comic, which as an element of the Menippean form's generic variety, serves to entertain while advancing theme. Juxtaposed with the element of the fantastic, the comic element of farce offers a structural alternation of the ordinary and the extraordinary, a radical discontinuity that, as Bakhtin argues of the "moral-psychological experimentation" in Menippean satire, functions like such experimentation to "destroy the epic and tragic wholeness of a person and his fate."[8] The farce of Oedipa's multiple layers of clothes and her collapse into helpless laughter at the sight of herself in a mirror--"a beach ball with feet" (p. 22)--prefigures the far more serious and elaborate conceit that compares the revelation of the Tristero to a striptease. In its posing of the Tristero's binary implications for Oedipa--"its terrible nakedness" (p. 36) either innocuous or pernicious--the conceit contains in miniature the binary structure of the book itself, which moves ambiguously and simultaneously toward the mutually exclusive closures of utter triviality or total significance. Moreover, Oedipa's attribution of self-awareness to the can of hair spray that she accidentally sets off signifies personification, metaphor, and paranoia:

> The can knew where it was going, she sensed, or something fast enough, God or a digital machine, might have computed in advance the complex web of its travel; but she wasn't fast enough, and knew only that it might hit them at any moment, at whatever clip it was doing, a hundred miles an hour. (P. 23)

Like her living room in the book's opening, "which knew" that her fantasy of

Inverarity's death is "so sick" (p. 2), Oedipa's personification of the hair spray can continues her tendency to animate the inanimate. Similarly, when she first sees San Narciso, she compares its arrangement of houses and streets to a transistor radio's printed circuit and deduces from this act of metaphor that "there were to both outward patterns a hieroglyphic sense of concealed meaning, of an intent to communicate" (p. 13). But at this point in the narrative Oedipa's lack of effort excludes her from the "concealed meaning":

> There'd seemed no limit to what the printed circuit could have told her (if she had tried to find out); so in her first minute of San Narciso, a revelation also trembled just past the threshold of her understanding. (P. 13)

She finally compares herself to Mucho and wonders if his lack of belief in the radio station corresponds to her own sense of disconnection from San Narciso's secret message. In sum, the textual problem of belief is contained in the farcical episode involving Oedipa's slapstick fall and the hair spray can: if Oedipa does not "believe" in the act of metaphor and its attendant paranoia, then it seems that no communication, pattern, or significance is at all possible, yet if she does and these do emerge as a result, such forms of meaning may be after all only delusion and insanity. The problem reflects, again, the dual momenta of the text towards contradictory absolutes, but it is important to recall that in satire such textual elements have primarily extra-textual functions: that is, the elements do not represent novelistic coherence, for in satire they operate according to another organizing principle. The

question is not whether the text finally abandons its equivocations in favor of an unequivocal endorsement of one view over the other (it does not) but rather in what way such equivocations serve to facilitate ridicule and attack of the curse object, America. Thus, Oedipa's method allows her to explore and to detect real or imagined connections that reveal in the process a sub rosa world of disinheritance; second, her choice of paranoia at the book's end (should the non-existence of the Tristero be confirmed) serves to focus the satire even more desperately on America, whose repression compels its citizenry into either alienation or insanity or both in order to survive.

Endorsed by a narrative declaration that "there was that high magic to low puns" (p. 96), Pynchon's second type of the comic, paronomasia, takes the form of parodistic, mock-significant onomastics.[9] Paronomasias like Manny di Presso, Emory Bortz, and Genghis Cohen contribute to a Menippean form that functions both as entertainment per se and textual denaturalization so that the reader regards the text not as synecdoche but as metaphor. The text thus becomes a puzzle or game of decoding,[10] one that may nevertheless lead only to the frustrations of ambiguity in Pynchon's radical questioning of meaning.[11]

Oedipa Maas' name has been interpreted both as literal and ironic forms of Oedipus and "mass," and one critic has even suggested the reading "Oedipus, my ass."[12] In any case, the name Oedipa derives from the Sophoclean tragic figure whose kingdom is afflicted with a plague. Like Thebes, San Francisco is an "infected city" (p. 86), and as Oedipus discovers that he himself is the agent of the crime

plaguing the land, Oedipa decides that she herself is responsible for allowing America to become a fascistic republic in which government surplus stores sell swastikas and insurance fires such as the one that razes Zapf's bookstore may be the American form of book-burning:

> You're chicken, she told herself. . . . This is America, you live in it, you let it happen. Let it unfurl. (P. 112)

Mike Fallopian and Stanley Koteks, whose names are female metaphors (the former a synecdoche, the latter metonymy) also regard America as oppressive. Their names and opposition correspond to Oedipa's sex and her own growing resistance. Thus, the possibility of fertility in Lot 49 is proffered by Pynchon in tropes of femaleness, and this endorsement of the feminine both anticipates the figurative language of Gravity's Rainbow and repudiates the ancient satiric tradition of misogyny.[13]

The name of the satire's principal setting, San Narciso, alludes to the Greek mythological misogynist who dies of love of his own image, as well as to the Christian saint whose prayers over water transform it into oil for deacons' lamps.[14] Narcissus is thus an ambiguous metaphor, for on the one hand, textual imagery presents San Narciso as an instrument of female America's violation--"possibilities . . . that had conditioned the land to accept any San Narciso among its most tender flesh without a reflex or a cry" (p. 136)--while references to Saint Narcissus imply the possibility of redemption by miraculous transformation. Moreover, as Echo loves Narcissus, so Oedipa, staying at the Echo-Courts Motel,

loves San Narciso. This love, which extends to America itself, leads her to construct an alternative vision of America by the imposition of the significant connections of metaphor and paranoia upon coincidence.

Pierce Inverarity, like Narcissus, is an ambiguous metaphorical figure. "Inverarity" plays upon "inverse rarity"--a type of stamp--and Moriarty, Sherlock Holmes' antagonist. In the context of Lot 49, his "piercing" of America is clearly villainous, but his piercing of Oedipa results in her enlightenment. Such piercing takes two forms: Oedipa's pre-textual affair with Inverarity, and his selection of her as executrix of the will.

The narrator characterizes the affair by a farcical parody of the Rapunzel fairy tale.[15] Inverarity comically and unheroically "fell, on his ass" as he climbed up Oedipa-Rapunzel's hair, which "sinister sorcery" had transformed into an "unanchored wig" (p. 10). At the beginning of Lot 49, Oedipa realizes that despite Inverarity's influence, she remains a prisoner in "the confinement of that tower" (p. 10). Her method of escape is foreshadowed in a flashback to a Remedios Varo painting that Inverarity and she see at an exhibition in Mexico.[16] In the painting, girls who are also prisoners in a tower weave a tapestry that fills the void and is the world. Similarly, Oedipa will weave her tapestry through the use of metaphor and paranoia to connect (the etymology of "connect" is "to bind") unconnected events.

The second form of Oedipa's piercing is foreshadowed in another flashback. Oedipa is awakened by an irritating telephone call from Inverarity, who speaks English to her in various foreign and domestic accents. By virtue of this "gift of tongues," Inverarity is thus

implicitly identified with the "zany Paraclete" and the "malign, Unholy Ghost" (p. 47) mentioned later in The Courier's Tragedy, Pynchon's parody of Jacobean tragedy. His last voice is that of "The Shadow" (p. 3), a Paracletian ghostly figure who threatens Oedipa's husband Mucho with a visit, which takes the form of a letter one year later that announces Inverarity's death and the naming of Oedipa as his executrix. "The Shadow" is also radio's Lamont Cranston, a detective (which Oedipa will herself become), and in the book's final scene, the image of the Paraclete recurs in Oedipa's vison of the auctioneer as a "descending angel" (p. 138), indicating perhaps an apocalyptic "piercing."[17]

The term Tristero derives from tryst and tristesse;[18] thus, Oedipa's exposure to the Tristero denotes a lovers' meeting and an accompanying sadness, expressed as "crying." Oedipa cries when she views the Varo painting and later when she meets a dying sailor. The book's final "crying" is "the crying of Lot 49" at the auction where Oedipa may at last come face to face with the Tristero. As I shall demonstrate, Pynchon's vision of humaneness in Lot 49 entails a sobering incorporation of the void and death, and such an incorporation is accompanied by the creation of significance. As a result, Oedipa "executes the will" in two senses: recognizing Inverarity's America, she rejects it and, desiring an alternative, she chooses paranoia.

Like comedy and fantasy, parody in Lot 49 serves formal and functional ends. One may categorize Pynchon's Menippean satire, in Michael Holquist's felicitous phrase, as a "metaphysical detective story."[19] Pynchon parodies both the metaphysical quest and the detective

form in three ways: through the conjunction of metaphysical and detective rhetorics; through the supplanting of the nineteenth-century detective's logical method by twentieth-century analogical methods; and through the suspension of a conventionally conclusive structure in favor of inconclusiveness.

Pynchon's metaphysical rhetoric, a form of the fantastic, is chiefly a rhetoric of the sacred.[20] The narrator discloses that Oedipa is to have "all manner of revelations" (p. 9) and as we have already mentioned, she sees in the pattern of San Narciso's streets and houses and in a transistor radio's printed circuit "a hieroglyphic sense of concealed meaning, of an intent to communicate" (p 13). She identifies this sense as "some promise of hierophany" (p. 18), and as she copies the W.A.S.T.E. message's address and the symbol of the muted post horn from the wall of the ladies' room at the Scope Bar, she thinks, "God, hieroglyphics" (p. 34). Similarly, Oedipa's anarchist aquaintance, Jesus Arrabal, defines a "miracle" as "another world's intrusion into this one" (p. 88), and Oedipa herself describes the deaf-mute dance as "an anarchist miracle" (p. 97). When, at the end of the narrative, she attends the auction at which the Tristero may be revealed, she describes the auctioneer's gesture as one that "seemed to belong to the priesthood of some remote culture; perhaps to a descending angel" (p. 138). This angel, the Paraclete of the Pentecost, signifies the terrifying approach of the communicative anarchy of the gift of tongues, another image of the fantastic.

Pynchon's rhetoric of the sacred is supported by a rhetoric of the mystical signifying the ultimate incommunicability of revelation or

apocalypse. Oedipa regards the goal of her investigation into Inverarity's estate--the "central truth" of the Tristero's revelation--as perhaps too blindingly brilliant to retain:

> Oedipa wondered whether, at the end of this (if it were supposed to end), she too might not be left with only compiled memories of clues, announcements, intimations, but never the central truth itself, which must somehow each time be too bright for her memory to hold; which must always blaze out, destroying its own message irreversibly, leaving an overexposed blank when the ordinary world came back. (P. 69)

She names and personifies this "central truth" as "the direct, epileptic Word":

> But then she wondered if the gemlike "clues" were only some kind of compensation. To make up for her having lost the direct, epileptic Word, the cry that might abolish the night. (P. 87)[21]

Later, in another context of revelation, she refers to "that magical Other," and "the unnameable act, the recognition, the Word" (p. 136).

Opposed to the rhetorics of the sacred and the mystical is a rhetoric of the profane and demonic. Oedipa identifies the forces that encapsulate her in the tower as "sinister sorcery" (p. 10) and "magic, anonymous and malignant" (p. 11), and she likens her "fat deckful of days" to "a conjurer's deck . . . " (p. 2). Mike Fallopian refers to an indeterminate "They" (p. 31) who accuse his right-wing group of being paranoid, and Oedipa refers to a similar "They" who will describe her

own perceptions as "paranoia" (p. 128).

Combined with these forms of metaphysical rhetoric is a parody of the rhetoric of detective fiction. Oedipa deduces the existence of the Tristero from "clues" (pp. 69, 87) and is described in a simile as

> like the private eye in any long-ago radio drama, believing all you needed was grit, resourcefulness, exemption from hidebound cops' rules, to solve any great mystery. (P. 91)

Conventionally, the character of the detective is an embodiment of ingenuity and logic. His rationality exhibits itself in the skillful use of induction and deduction to solve a puzzle, and his principal epistemological assumption is that of positivism: no effect without a cause, no cause without effect. Oedipa, however, practices a different method: metaphor. As positivism sanctions the cause-and-effect epistemology of the nineteenth-century detective, so indeterminacy sanctions the metaphorical epistemology of his twentieth-century counterpart.[22]

Metaphor comes to serve Oedipa as a method of connecting in a meaningful way the profusion of coincidences she perceives. Following her visit with eccentric inventor John Nefastis, who regards "entropy" as a metaphor linking information and thermodynamic theories, she begins to view the Tristero as a metaphor as well:

> Now here was Oedipa, faced with a metaphor of God knew how many parts; more than two, anyway.

> With coincidences blossoming these days wherever she looked, she had nothing but a sound, a word, Trystero, to hold them together. (P. 80)

In a significant, difficult, and controversial episode,[23] Oedipa encounters an old, dying sailor who suffers from the DT's. In the abbreviation, she recognizes a metaphor:

> Behind the initials was a metaphor, a delirium tremens, a trembling unfurrowing of the mind's plowshare. (P. 95)

The image of the "mind's plowshare" implies the imposition of furrows of habitual perception onto experience, and as Oedipa feels her own customary habits of perception "unfurrowing," the metaphor DT leads her to recall the dt's of college calculus, which signify moments of infinitesmal duration. She interprets these moments as representing the immanence of death and decay:

> "dt," God help this old tattooed man, meant also a time differential, a vanishingly small instant in which change had to be confronted at last for what it was, where it could no longer disguise itself as something innocuous like an average rate; where velocity dwelled in the projectile though the projectile be frozen in midflight, where death dwelled in the cell though the cell be looked in on at its most quick. (Pp. 95-96)

Oedipa's further association of the unfurrowing of delirium tremens with the activities of those whose existence is predicated on metaphor

leads to her endorsement of metaphor as a means to enlightenment; for those who do not experience this unfurrowing, metaphor remains an unserviceable delusion:

> The saint whose water can light lamps, the clairvoyant whose lapse in recall is the breath of God, the true paranoid for whom all is organized in spheres joyful or threatening about the central pulse of himself, the dreamer whose puns probe ancient fetid shafts and tunnels of truth all act in the same special relevance to the word, or whatever it is the word is there, buffering, to protect us from. The act of metaphor then was a thrust at truth and a lie, depending where you were: inside, safe, or outside, lost. Oedipa did not know where she was. (P. 95)

For Oedipa, whose position is initially uncertain, the act of metaphor represents both "a thrust at truth and a lie." Thus, when she first espies San Narciso and is outside belief, no revelation occurs, but her subsequent linking of delirium tremens with the dt's of calculus signifies her transformation from one whose perception of coincidence leads to the employment of metaphor to one whose perception of metaphor leads to the significant connection of coincidence.[24] By the end of the episode, Oedipa has come as close as she can to the "same special relevance to the word, or whatever it is the word is there, buffering, to protect us from." She discovers "the irreversible process" (p. 95) of decay towards death, and so the episode functions as Lot 49's anagnorisis or scene of recognition. Thus, Oedipa's method of "detection" parodies the traditional method, but it functions to reveal to her the

repressed existential fact of mortality.

Pynchon parodies not only the rhetoric of detective fiction but its plot form as well. He abhieves this in part by suspending the narrative as the possible revelation of the Tristero is about to occur. This inconclusiveness, preceded by a parody of detective fiction's final "gathering of the suspects" at the auction, is foreshadowed by Oedipa's premonition that she may never experience the "central truth." Moreover, the lack of conclusiveness in the text, and indeed the entire pattern of the narrative itself, corresponds to one of Lot 49's central metaphors, that of entropy.[25]

The Second Law of Thermodynamics, which states that a closed system (i.e. one that receives no outside energy) moves inevitably from order, activity, and differentiation to disorder, inactivity, and uniformity, furnishes the concept of entropy, a measurement of unavailable energy (or disorder) in a system. In information theory, on the other hand, the concept of entropy is a measurement of a message's uncertainty as a function of the number of possible messages that can replace it. Since information about a system increases as the system moves thermodynamically from a state of maximum entropy to a state of minimum entropy and decreases as the system moves in the opposite direction, the two entropies can be seen as inversions of each other. In other words, at maximum thermodynamic entropy, systemic uniformity results in minimum information and maximum certainty. Uncertainty and information entropy as a measure of this uncertainty are therefore at a minimum. Conversely, at minimum thermodynamic entropy, systemic differentiation results in maximum

information and minimum certainty. Uncertainty is then at a maximum, and information entropy is at a maximum as well.

Oedipa encounters this concept when she visits Berkeley inventor John Nefastis, a type of philosophus gloriosus who claims to have designed and built a perpetual motion machine that houses Maxwell's Demon, an invisible intelligence originally hypothesized by nineteenth-century Scottish scientist James Clerk Maxwell. The Demon separates fast molecules from slow molecules, creating as a result regions of different temperatures capable of driving a heat engine. Nefastis believes not only that the Demon inhabits his machine but also that only a "sensitive" (p. 77), someone capable of communicating with the Demon, can operate it. Thus, both thermodynamics and information flow are involved in the machine's operation. As the Demon transforms the system thermodynamically from maximum to minimum entropy by ordering it through the acquisition of information, information entropy increases, as greater information results in greater uncertainty.

Nefastis explains that the equations for thermodynamic and information entropy resembled each other in the 1930s, but he calls the resemblance a "coincidence," with the Demon providing the single connection between them:

> The equation for one, back in the '30's,
> had looked very like the equation for the other.
> It was a coincidence. The two fields were
> entirely unconnected, except at one point: Maxwell's
> Demon. (P. 77)

Entropy, Nefastis tells Oedipa, acts as a linking metaphor between thermodynamic and information theory, and the Demon provides an embodiment of this metaphor, transforming the mere coincidence into empirical fact:

> "Entropy is a figure of speech, then," sighed Nefastis, "a metaphor. It connects the world of thermodynamics to the world of information flow. The Machine uses both. The Demon makes the metaphor not only verbally graceful but also objectively true." (P. 77)

Oedipa, however, is skeptical of the Demon's existence. She asks Nefastis in effect whether the Demon or the metaphor came first:

> "But what," she felt like some kind of heretic, "if the Demon exists only because the two equations look alike? Because of the metaphor?" (Pp. 77-78)

When Nefastis replies that the Demon existed for Maxwell prior to the metaphor of entropy, Oedipa wonders privately, "But had Clerk Maxwell been such a fanatic about his Demon's reality?" (p. 78). At this point in the text, she is left to ponder the relationship between metaphor and reality.

The concept of entropy, furthermore, serves as Pynchon's central metaphor for Oedipa's quest of the Tristero. In terms of thermodynamic entropy, Oedipa moves from a state of greater entropy, a condition of uniformity in which her "days seemed . . . more or less identical" (p. 2) to a state of lesser entropy, a condition of rudimentary diversity

made possible by the Tristero. In terms of information entropy, however, she moves from lesser to greater entropy, as the expanding information she gathers about the Tristero increases the uncertainty of the information's ultimate significance. The text, then, signifies the transformation from an unknowledgeable certainty to a knowledgeable uncertainty.

Ultimately, this knowledgeable uncertainty is represented as a puzzle that points back to Pierce Inverarity. Not only does Oedipa's encounter with Nefastis provide in the concept of entropy a metaphor for the quest, but it also provides in Maxwell's Demon a metaphor for Oedipa, who, like the Demon, accumulates data in the process of attempting to bring order to Inverarity's estate. Through her questioning of Nefastis, however, Oedipa implies that the Demon may exist only because of the metaphor. If such is the case, then Oedipa herself may "exist" only because of the metaphor of the Tristero; moreover, the Tristero may in turn exist only because of Pierce Inverarity.

Early in the book, the possibility of a "plot" is foreshadowed by Oedipa's apprehension that Metzger may have engineered a plot to seduce her. Later, the speculation that the Tristero may simply be Inverarity's hoax on Oedipa is introduced by Mike Fallopian:

> "Has it ever occurred to you, Oedipa, that somebody's putting you on? That this is all a hoax, maybe something Inverarity set up before he died?" (P. 126)

Oedipa claims to have considered the possibility, but like her own

death, refuses to acknowledge it:

> It had occurred to her. But like the thought that someday she would have to die, Oedipa had been steadfastly refusing to look at that possibility directly, or in any but the most accidental of lights. "No," she said, "that's ridiculous." (P. 126)

Moreover, Oedipa fears the possibility not only that Trystero may be a hoax but also that it may be real:

> She wanted Hilarius to tell her she was some kind of a nut and needed a rest, and that there was no Trystero. She also wanted to know why the chance of its being real should menace her so. (P. 98)

In sum, Oedipa faces a double bind: if the Tristero is only a hoax, she must accept meaninglessness along with the repressed fact of her own mortality and, as we shall see, choose paranoia as the only available means of relevance; if, on the other hand, the Tristero is real, Oedipa must recognize that, for her, its meaning is utter alienation from America. In each case, she confronts a terrifying possibility. When she finally lists the four possibilities that face her--a real Tristero, an hallucination, a plot, or the fantasy of a plot--she significantly substitutes "plot" for Fallopian's idea of "hoax," for she believes that the sheer extent of the Tristero "must have meaning beyond just a practical joke " (p. 128).

Although the text neither confirms nor denies with finality the existence of the Tristero, Oedipa rejects the idea that it

is only Inverarity's elaborate joke. During a lengthy rumination on Inverarity, the Tristero, and America, she categorizes America as "a symmetry of choices" (p 136) represented by the binary opposition of a thorough plenitude of meaning--the Tristero--or an utter lack of meaning--"just America":

> For it was now like walking among matrices of a great digital computer, the zeroes and ones twinned above, hanging like balanced mobiles right and left, ahead, thick, maybe endless. Behind the hieroglyphic streets there would either be a transcendent meaning, or only the earth. In the songs Miles, Dean, Serge and Leonard sang was either some fraction of the truth's numinous beauty (as Mucho now believed) or only a power spectrum. Tremaine the Swastika Salesman's reprieve from holocaust was either an injustice, or the absence of a wind; the bones of the GI's at the bottom of Lake Inverarity were there either for a reason that mattered to the world, or for skin divers and cigarette smokers. Ones and zeroes. So did the couples arrange themselves. At Vesperhaven House either an accommodation reached, in some kind of dignity, with the Angel of Death, or only death and the daily, tedious preparation for it. Another mode of meaning behind the obvious, or none. Either Oedipa in the orbiting ecstasy of a true paranoia, or a real Tristero. (Pp. 136-37)

She laments America's lack of "diversity" and its "excluded middles," finally embracing the Tristero, regardless of whether it exists or not, as representing the possibility of meaning. If the Tristero does not exist, she is then determined to choose "paranoia" as a means of relevance to America, not unlike the "special relevance" to the word achieved by believers in metaphor:

> For there was either some Tristero beyond the appearance of the legacy America, or there was just America and if there was just America then it seemed the only way she could continue, and manage to be at all relevant to it, was as an alien, unfurrowed, assumed full circle into some paranoia. (P. 137)

Oedipa's decision to choose paranoia implies her substitution of an active creation of significance for the passive acceptance of apparent insignificance; she thereby determines to assimilate the republic in a comprehensive vision.[26]

Nevertheless, Pynchon's satire does not reveal the Tristero, and whether Inverarity has duped Oedipa or whether the Tristero is real represents, finally, a moot question that Pynchon has chosen to leave unanswered. As Sheldon Sacks points out, choices in satire are made to "maximize the ridicule directed at the external world."[27] Thus, critical discussions of Oedipa's paranoia miss the point if they fail to take into account that her paranoia is a device that is meant to facilitate the curse directed at America; Oedipa's choice, like the insanity of other characters in Lot 49, serves to depict America as a nation that requires the insanity of its citizens if they are to survive.

Lot 49's inconclusiveness is thus not part of a Pynchon hoax on the reader, and the scientific and mathematical metaphors of entropy and dt's combine with the metaphysical and detective rhetorics to provide the tropes that signify this structure. As entropy offers a metaphor for the progression of Oedipa's quest (more information, greater uncertainty), so calculus offers in its concept of limits a metaphor for

the ultimate inaccessibility of the revelation or apocalypse. Just as the final dt of calculus is attainable only in theory, so too the ultimate revelation of the Tristero and its metaphysical significance can only be approached; like all metaphors, it remains paradoxically a "thrust at truth and a lie," and not the truth itself.

Conventionally, both the metaphysical quest and detective fiction are conclusive: one achieves its sacred goal; the other, its secular goal. Through his inconclusiveness, Pynchon parodies both. The epistemological implication is that the virtue of the quest is not in the product of signification but in its process. Pynchon points to metaphor as a fertilizing process that frees communication from the sterility of conventional, orthodox strategies. The attention to process suggests finally that paranoia, like Oedipa's need to "know" the Tristero, misses the point, that what "mattered to the world" is Oedipa's uncovering during the quest of disinheritance, alienation, and death as ubiquitous facts of American life.

Notes

[1] I shall be referring to the paperback edition: Thomas Pynchon, The Crying of Lot 49 (New York: Bantam, 1966). Page references to this edition, to which I will refer henceforth as Lot 49, will appear within the text.

[2] Similarly, Thomas Hill Schaub, "Open Letter in Response to Edward Mendelson's 'The Sacred, the Profane, and The Crying of Lot 49,'" Boundary 2, 5 (1976), 93-104, views Lot 49 as "a parable of perception" (96).

[3] I am indebted to L. Susan Stebbing's discussion of The Law of the Excluded Middle in A Modern Elementary Logic, pp. 146-52. In Lot 49, it is evident that Pynchon begins an attack on logical positivism.

[4] Pynchon's sympathy for engineers' loss of patent rights to corporations stems most probably from his experience in Seattle at Boeing Aircraft. Mathew Winston writes that Pynchon worked there as "an 'engineering aide' who collaborated with others on writing technical documents." See his "The Quest for Pynchon," Twentieth Century Literature, 21 (1975), 278-87; rpt. as "Appendix: The Quest for Pynchon," in Mindful Pleasures, pp. 251-63, esp. p. 260.

[5] This metaphor of an unthinkable but fertile anarchy is prefigured in V.'s jazz alto saxophonist McClintic Sphere's ability to play notes missed by Charlie Parker and culminates in Gravity's Rainbow's debate between Saure Bummer and Gustav Schlabone over the relative merits of Rossini and Beethoven. The latter is defended by Gustav for having expanded the number of notes in the musical scale. See V., pp. 48-49, and Gravity's Rainbow, pp. 440-41. For an analysis of the debate, see Cowart, Thomas Pynchon: The Art of Allusion, pp. 82-88. On how the concept of an unthinkable anarchy may prove fertilizing, see George Levine, "Risking the Moment: Anarchy and Possibility in Pynchon's Fiction," in Mindful Pleasures, pp. 113-36.

[6] Frye, p. 309.

[7] See Mary Claire Randolph, "The Medical Concept in English Renaissance Satiric Theory," Studies in Philology, 38 (1941), 125-57; rpt. in Satire: Modern Essays, pp. 135-70, esp. pp. 135-36.

[8] Bakhtin, Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics, p. 116.

[9] Lot 49 thus incorporates Pynchon's only categorical statement on puns, a form of metaphor he clearly endorses. See also his Letter, The New York Times Book Review, 17 July 1966, pp. 22, 24, in which he castigates Romain Gary for having accused him, unjustly, Pynchon claims, of the theft of the "trivial" pun Genghis Cohen from one of Gary's books.

[10] See Elizabeth W. Bruss, "The Game of Literature and Some Literary Games," New Literary History, 9 (1977), 153-72 for some valuable games theory approaches to fiction. See also Tanner, "Games American Writers Play," Salmagundi, No. 35 (1976), pp. 110-40.

[11] See Terry P. Caesar, "A Note on Pynchon's Naming," Pynchon Notes, No. 5 (1981), pp. 5-10, who argues that "Pynchon's naming must be frivolous" (p. 8) but that it manages to interrelate dialectically a complex of codes and the "impure, free-spirited play of signification itself" (p. 9).

[12] Caesar, p. 5.

[13] See Linda Wagner, "A Note on Oedipa the Roadrunner," Journal of Narrative Technique, 4 (1974), 155-61, who argues that Pynchon anticipates feminism by his "significant" choice of protagonist. See also Cathy N. Davidson on Oedipa as "protofeminist" and "androgyne" in "Oedipa as Androgyne in Thomas Pynchon's The Crying of Lot 49," Contemporary Literature, 18 (1977), 38-50.

[14] See Butler's Lives of the Saints: Complete Edition, ed. Herbert Thurston, S. J., and Donald Attwater (New York: Paul J. Kenedy and Sons, 1956), IV, 217.

[15] Pynchon parodies forms of the romance--the fairy tale and myth, for example--more openly in Lot 49 than in V. (and will expand romantic parody to a principal element in Gravity's Rainbow). These parodied forms serve Pynchon as an image of the imprisonment of consciousness; thus Oedipa's initial perceptual passivity represents a romantic "confinement in that tower" (p. 10). In V., on the other hand, Pynchon satirizes Romanticism's effects on behavior rather than its epistemology. On Pynchon's use of quest romance conventions, see Cowart, Thomas Pynchon: The Art of Allusion, pp. 96-133.

[16] Varo is an actual artist whose exhibits Pynchon may have seen in Mexico City. Her name, in keeping with Lot 49's principal theme, means "various answers." See David Cowart, "Pynchon's The Crying of Lot 49 and the Paintings of Remedios Varo," Critique, 18, No. 3 (1977), 19-26, and his Thomas Pynchon: The Art of Allusion, pp. 24-30.

[17] The Paraclete is thus an ambiguous metaphor. In V., Sidney Stencil fears it; in Lot 49, it signifies a terrifying intrusion from another world. Yet as W. T. Lhamon points out in "Pentecost, Promiscuity, and Pynchon's V.: From the Scaffold to the Impulsive," Twentieth Century Literature, 21 (1975), 163-76; rpt. in Mindful Pleasures, pp. 69-86, Pentecost has its positive aspect as well, that of "communication." See also Edward Mendelson, "The Sacred, the Profane, and The Crying of Lot 49," in Individual and Community: Variations on a Theme in American Fiction, ed. Kenneth Baldwin and David Kirby (Durham, N.C.: Duke

Univ. Press, 1975), pp. 182-222; rpt. in Pynchon: A Collection, pp. 112-46, in which Mendelson argues that since Pentecost derives from the Greek word for "fiftieth," the crying of lot 49 at the auction is "the miracle . . . in a state of potential" (p. 135). See also in the same collection James Nohrnberg, "Pynchon's Paraclete," pp. 147-61, for an extensive comparison of the Biblical Pentecost and Lot 49.

[18] Tony Tanner, Thomas Pynchon, p. 65, suggests that the term "Tristero" combines "a meeting with sadness and terror. . . . "

[19] Michael Holquist, "Whodunit and Other Questions: Metaphysical Detective Stories in Post-War Fiction," New Literary History, 3 (1971), 135-56.

[20] On this point, see Mendelson, "The Sacred, the Profane, and The Crying of Lot 49," pp. 118-20, 122-23, and 126-27.

[21] Mendelson, "The Sacred, the Profane, and The Crying of Lot 49," p. 133, points out the traditionally sacred status of epilepsy.

[22] See Holquist, 147-56, for an elaboration of traditional detective conventions and the ways that Postmodernists use and parody them. Of particular interest is Holquist's argument that the essence of the world of Postmodernist metaphysical detective fiction lies in its emphases on process, strangeness, and irresolution. With conventional detective fiction as a "subtext" (155), the Postmodernist is thus able, Holquist argues, to attack the reader in "a kind of calisthenics of perception" (153-54).

[23] Mendelson, "The Sacred, the Profane, and The Crying of Lot 49," and Schaub, "Open Letter," for example, differ in their respective interpretations of the passage. Schaub argues that in the passage the text endorses "the outside." Unfortunately, he sees that this premise puts metaphor into the category of "lie" and attempts to escape the dilemma, I think unsuccessfully, by proposing that Lot 49 exists instead, as does Oedipa, in the uncertain middle. Mendelson argues, as I do, that metaphor is truth for those "inside," that is, those who in Mendelson's terms, are within a "hieratic vision" (p. 142), or in my terms, are within "belief."

[24] Mendelson, "The Sacred, the Profane, and The Crying of Lot 49," p. 142, makes the interesting point that metaphor may itself be the delirium to which Oedipa refers.

[25] For the following discussion, I am indebted to Mendelson; Peter Abernethy, "Entropy in Pynchon's The Crying of Lot 49," Critique, 14, No. 2 (1972), 18-33; and Thomas R. Lyons and Allan D. Franklin, "Thomas Pynchon's 'Classic' Presentation of the Second Law of Thermodynamics,"

Bulletin of the Rocky Mountain Modern Language Association, 27 (1973), 195-204. Mendelson describes entropy as "a central motif in satire" (p. 113), and Lyons and Franklin suggest that it is a modern form of "fate" (p. 195). For the opposing view, which I would argue Pynchon endorses, see the following: Norbert Wiener, The Human Use of Human Beings: Cybernetics and Society, 2nd rev. ed. (New York: Avon, 1967), in which he asserts that "local enclaves" resist entropy (p. 202); Malcolm Browne, "A Decade of Planets and DNA and Bottom Quarks," The New York Times, 1 January 1980, p. 13, who points out that the 1977 Nobel Prize for Chemistry was awarded to Belgian scientist Ilya Prigogine, who proved that life, by interacting with its surroundings, is anti-entropic; and Stephen P. Schuber, "Rereading Pynchon: Negative Entropy and 'Entropy,'" Pynchon Notes, No. 13 (1983), pp. 47-60.

[26] See Annette Kolodny and Daniel James Peters, "Pynchon's The Crying of Lot 49: The Novel as Subversive Experience," Modern Fiction Studies, 19 (1973), 79-87, who make essentially the same point. For another point of view, see Schaub, Pynchon: The Voice of Ambiguity, esp. pp. 3-42 and 103-38, who stresses the ambiguity and uncertainty of Pynchon's characters' situation.

[27] Sacks, "From: Toward a Grammar," p. 331.

Chapter Four:

Gravity's Rainbow: The Protestant Deformation

In this final chapter, I analyze Pynchon's magnum opus, Gravity's Rainbow,[1] as Menippean satire. Beginning with introductory comments on the book's reception, method, and effect, I then summarize the chapter's basic argument about the form of the text and review the continuity of Pynchon's motifs and themes from V. to Gravity's Rainbow. The chapter then moves to an overview of the book's themes as they are realized through the conventions of the Menippean genre, and two episodes from the text serve to map the relations among writer, text, and reader. The reading of the text focuses on the object of the satiric curse, the Western world, and locates affirmations in forms of the irrational and fantastic; finally, the chapter concludes with an analysis of Pynchon's use of the forms of Menippean variety.

Gravity's Rainbow is a prodigy, a monstrous omen,[2] and perhaps the definitive Menippean satire in American Postmodernism. Published in 1973, it received two awards, "lost" a third,[3] and has since been a source of awe, disgust, and bewilderment to its readers.[4] This reaction is due in part to its length (760 pages) but more to what one critic

calls its "connected complexity,"[5] a function of its shifting sequence of perspectives. While not all the book's more than two hundred characters provide narrative viewpoints, many do; as a result, the narrator, who relates the four chapters' seventy-three scenes primarily from the limited third-person perspective of a scene's principal character, is himself a protean figure whose own perspectives become ambiguously identified with those of the characters. Furthermore, he resorts to either a conventional authorial omniscience or an unconventional limited author-as-character point of view. Coupled with numerous alterations in mood and tone, these continual destabilizations of narrative viewpoint parody conventional novelistic narration and create, in effect, a text of dizzying intricacy.[6]

The kaleidoscopic and vertiginous effect of Gravity's Rainbow's multiplicity of mood, tone, and structure is a function of its satiric form, and the apparent formal disorder[7]--violations of traditional narrative decorum, rapid shifts, radical juxtapositions, aporias, overdeterminations, profusions, indeterminacies, parodies--leads to the critical problem of formal coherence or genre. Most critics treat this problem with some degree of defensiveness as insoluble or incidental,[8] judging that the text resists critical totalization, and concentrate their attention instead on the multitude of textual patterns. In one sense, such critics are correct; the book is so vast that no one critical endeavor can possibly contain it entirely. But they are wrong to deny its generic form, for Gravity's Rainbow is, as we shall see, Menippean satire: the critical exposure of official cultural institutions

and demystification of power; the focus on the ugly, the painful, and the ridiculous; the attention to carnality, scatology, and consumption; the caricatures' paranoid obsessions--this century's psychological form of Renaissance satire's physiological humors and Enlightenment satire's ruling passions--the seriocomic prose and verse; the popular diction, proverbs, and culture; the multiple parodies; and, finally, the epideictic variety of the comic and the fantastic represent an encyclopedic extension of the genre's conventional possibilities, and any failure or refusal on the part of the book's commentators to acknowledge its Menippean genre is due primarily to the text's obscure form, an especially radical departure from conventional mimesis.[9]

Because Menippean satire has extratextual targets (although a vehicle of the curse may serve as its intermediate object as well), it is helpful to establish at the outset that despite the labyrinthine structure of the text, Gravity's Rainbow has such a unitary and identifiable, if massive, target: the Western world. Smith and Tololyan[10] regard Gravity's Rainbow as a form of jeremiad that addresses itself to global problems, and if one adds the qualification that the jeremiad is itself a type of satire[11]--in the case of Gravity's Rainbow, Menippean satire--Smith and Tololyan's essay aids in explaining the apocalyptic inclusiveness of Pynchon's lamentation, complaint, and denunciation of the Postmodern condition.

In its breadth, Pynchon's Menippean satire attacks institutions in virtually all categories of official culture: philosophy, science, art, history, politics, economics, psychology, and sociology. The mock-erudition of this parodistic encyclopedism exposes all

explanatory codes as partial, problematic, or repressive, and the rejection of the monological nature of such autonomous codes leads to radical fusions and fantastic alternatives. Pynchon's fantastic narrative explodes the spatio-temporal connections of the well-made Aristotelian plot,[12] and this narrative design clearly has ideological motives: closed, determined, metonymic plots represent for Pynchon yet another form of repressive order, and the comic, parodistic, and fantastic form of Menippean satire serves him as the narrative embodiment of the fertilizing freedom of possibilities that are open, undetermined, and metaphorical.

Since all of Pynchon's texts are in a fundamental way about signs and significances and their relations, it is important to recall that the decoding conventions of the mimetic novel are irrelevant to Menippean satire. Thus, the depiction of the fantastic does not signify a literal, referential, or existential "fact"; rather, the fantastic serves as a vehicle for releasing satire's aggressive impulses as well as providing a form for its realization. Moreover, the very release into fantasy embodies per se a metaphor of imaginative freedom from repressive personal and social codes of all kinds.

Gravity's Rainbow is in part a continuation of Pynchon's motifs and themes from V. and Lot 49. The solitary protagonists' obsessions with V. and the Tristero in the earlier texts are transformed in Gravity's Rainbow into the obsession of many characters with the German V-2 rocket.[13] Characters from V.--Mondaugen, Bodine, Weissmann, Chiclitz--reappear in Gravity's Rainbow, as does Pynchon's concern with European colonialism In addition, the metaphors of "excluded middles," "entropy," and "paranoia"

from Lot 49 appear in Gravity's Rainbow, and "metaphor" itself is again suggested as a vitalizing alternative, in this case to the more sterile determinism of cause-and-effect epistemology. Thus, in important ways, Gravity's Rainbow combines the international focus of the first Menippean satire's V. narrative with significant metaphors from Lot 49. The book represents much more, however, than a simple combination and extension of previous motifs and themes. Beginning as a tale of a corpulent and likable Benny Profane-like American, Tyrone Slothrop, who works in London for the Allies at the end of World War II, Gravity's Rainbow becomes, by its conclusion, a paranoid and apocalyptic vision of "Their" tyrannical, global "System," which has its source in the Protestant Reformation of Europe and culminates in the American republic.

In addition, as in V. and Lot 49, there are formal subversions that destroy the illusion of narrative certainty and textual autonomy and endeavor to induce in the reader an anxiety of uncertainty that fertilizes perception. The central textual symbol of this uncertainty is the V-2 rocket, an ambiguous, fetishistic object that promises escape by transcendence and that serves as the obsession of virtually all the book's characters and, by narrative implication, of the reader as well. Most important, Slothrop discovers that his own history is connected with that of the rocket, which thus becomes for him the object of a seriocomic quest for self-enlightenment that forms the narrative's principal "plot." Moreover, the rocket forms an historical dialectic with V. As V.'s death signifies a decadent and violent terminus of the conjunction of hothouse and street in fascism, so the V-2 signifies the charismatic

origin of a new, inanimate world order whose mode is rationalization,[14] and as V. is symbolically animate but incorporates the inanimate, so the V-2 is symbolically inanimate but incorporates the animate, in the form of a passive young German boy, Gottfried, a sacrificial victim who is launched by Blicero-Weissmann in Spring 1945 in a special V-2, the 00000, at the Lüneburg Heath in Germany. The rocket fails to escape gravity but does not crash, metamorphosing at book's end into an ICBM tensely poised above the roof of present-day Los Angeles' Orpheus Theatre (in which sits Pynchon's audience of readers) at the terrifying, infinitesmal moment before apocalypse.

The curse of Gravity's Rainbow is directed at the necrotic order of Western rationalization, symbolized by the V-2, that results from man's repression of mortality.[15] In the rhetoric of Gravity's Rainbow, as we shall see, the result of such ontological repression is sublimation into "synthesis" and "control," which manifest themselves as such overarching forms of rationalization as analytical science and deterministic Calvinism. Moreover, the repression of death entails necessarily the repression of life as well and the consequent expression of anality and racism. In this way, Pynchon combines Freud with Marx. On the other hand, the text affirms freedom in multiple forms: Gödel's Theorem, Murphy's Law, nature, love, spontaneity, music, comedy, magic, heresies, anarchy, metaphor, and middles; earth and gravity in particular assume paradoxical significance as the complex, mysterious, and powerful symbol of sterile repression and fertile transformation.

As in V. and Lot 49, the Menippean variety of Gravity's Rainbow

forms the narrative vision of comedy, fantasy, and parody. Pynchon juxtaposes the comic,[16] which, as in his previous texts, is presented chiefly as paronomasia and farce, and the fantastic, which appears as the supernatural and the grotesque. Finally, the satire's dominant structural parodies (among multiple subordinate parodies) are of the quest romance, cinematography, and narrative omniscience. Gravity's Rainbow's use of these fundamental conventions of Menippean satire, curse and variety, will be discussed below.

Read parabolically, two episodes from the book's final chapter, entitled "The Counterforce," help to establish the overall relationship of writer, text, and reader in Pynchon's Menippean satire. The first, "The Story of Byron the Bulb," presents a light bulb named Byron who is immortal, and the oppressive Phoebus light bulb cartel attempts to kill him. Through a series of fortunate coincidences, Byron escapes his intended assassination, and as he grows older, learns "more and more of this pattern" of oppression. Ultimately, however, he is "impotent" (p. 654):

> He is condemned to go on forever, knowing the truth and powerless to change anything. No longer will he seek to get off the wheel. His anger and frustration will grow without limit, and he will find himself, poor perverse bulb, enjoying it. . . . (P. 655)

Byron may be seen as a projection of Pynchon, the satirist, whose work also seems to illuminate and reveal more and more of a pattern to events

but who, like many satirists before him, realizes with "anger and frustration" the powerlessness of satire to reform.[17] Nevertheless, like Byron, Pynchon goes on, perversely and cynically enjoying the creation of his angry art.[18]

The second episode, from another passage in the "Counterforce" chapter, takes the form of a joke in which a psychiatrist recommends that a child who hates and fears the food kreplach be allowed to watch his mother make it. Unaware of the final product, the child expresses delight at the ingredients and the process of creation, but when the food assumes its final shape, he screams, "GAAHHHH! . . . kreplach!" (p. 737). Pynchon uses the joke as an illustration of the ways in which the "Secret of the Fearful Assembly" (p. 738) of the rocket enters the popular culture, but the anecdote also corresponds to the relationship of the text to the reader. Like much satire, and, not incidentally, like the rocket itself, Gravity's Rainbow may be innocuous, amusing, or even enjoyable in its parts, but the final configuration of its elements produces a sense of anxiety, repulsion, and terror. Thus, Gravity's Rainbow professes to be a prodigy, a monstrous, metaphorical omen that implicates the reader in a vision of circumambient evil.

Pynchon's mock-encyclopedic Menippean satire of repressed, rationalized, white, colonialist, racist, Puritan-Calvinist, European-American civilization dominates his contrary Utopian impulses, which appear in scattered local and hopeful affirmations, and the text thus seems to represent Western civilization as virtually irredeemable. There exists in the text ample evidence to regard its apparent eschatological

judgment on the past, present, and future of the Western world as unremittingly negative, unrelievedly pessimistic, and terminally apocalyptic. Blicero enunciates this position:

> "America was the edge of the World. A message for Europe, continent-sized, inescapable. Europe had found the site for its Kingdom of Death, that special Death the West had invented. Savages had their waste regions, Kalaharis, lakes so misty they could not see the other side. But Europe had gone deeper--into obsession, addiction, away from all the savage innocences. America was a gift from the invisible powers, a way of returning, But Europe refused it. It wasn't Europe's Original Sin--the latest name for that is Modern Analysis--but it happens that Subsequent Sin is harder to atone for.
>
> "In Africa, Asia, Amerindia, Oceania, Europe came and established its order of Analysis and Death. What it could not use, it killed or altered. In time the death-colonies grew strong enough to break away. But the impulse to empire, the mission to propagate death, the structure of it, kept on. Now we are in the last phase. American Death has come to occupy Europe. It has learned empire from its old metropolis. But now we have only the structure left us, none of the great rainbow plumes, no fittings of gold, no epic marches over alkali seas. The savages of other continents, corrupted but still resisting in the name of life, have gone on despite everything . . . while Death and Europe are separate as ever, their love still unconsummated. Death only rules here. It has never, in love, become one with. . . . (Pp.722-3)

As we shall see, however, Pynchon's apocalypse is ambiguous: it contains both destruction and creation, end and origin, curse and fertility. In this regard, the scattered affirmations form a necessary element in the satire; without them, the ambiguous apocalypse would be formally incoherent, functionally irrelevant, and thematically unjustified. The ensuing reading of the satire of Gravity's Rainbow will demonstrate this profound modal ambivalence in the text's recurrent shifts from sterile realities

to fertile possibilities.

Implied in and supporting Pynchon's attacks on the West are an historical critique of the post-Renaissance effort to order nature by analytical science and a critical allegory of this effort as a type of original sin and fall from ontological holism and primal unity with nature into ontological fragmentation and modern alienation from nature. In its religious form, this fragmentation and alienation are both cause and effect of Christianity, in particular of Puritanism and Calvinism, which repress the fact of corporeal mortality by sublimating it into spiritual immortality and by rationalizing the natural contingency of the world through systematic synthesis and control. In its political form, repression entails racist colonialism, which interprets its victims as symbols not only of the brute and alien other, death, but also of its dialectical antithesis, unrepressed, unsystematized life, and this dialectic compels the colonizers ambivalently to indulge and deny the natural freedom of the oppressed. In its psychological form, the text's complex overlapping and metaphorical identification of codes yields a critique of the ego as a delusive reification; hence, as we shall see, Slothrop's scattering represents a paradox: a negation and affirmation that signify respectively not only the failure of Slothrop's quest but also the death of the unitary subject and the birth of its pluralistic, Postmodern successor. Moreover, in symbolizing the attempt to transcend life and death, the fetishized rocket itself evokes a collective obsession that signifies the desperate sublimation of libido into the illusion of transcendence by the inanimate. With no colonies left to

infect, Europe attempts to further its life-and-death-denying mania into the locus of space. Blicero wonders, "'Is the cycle over now, and a new one ready to begin? Will our new Edge, our new Deathkingdom, be the Moon?'" (p. 723) but earth and gravity have the final triumph.

The narrative attitude towards these overarching subjects of the text is one of derisive satire. In the following passage, for example, the narrator utters a grave disquisition and satiric invective on the System's suicidal, anti-cyclical compulsion to maximize productivity and profit:

> Kekulé dreams the Great Serpent holding its own tail in its mouth, the dreaming Serpent which surrounds the World. But the meanness, the cynicism with which this dream is to be used. The Serpent that announces, "The World is a closed thing, cyclical, resonant, eternally-returning," is to be delivered into a system whose only aim is to violate the Cycle. Taking and not giving back, demanding that "productivity" and "earnings" keep on increasing with time, the System removing from the rest of the World these vast quantities of energy to keep its own tiny desperate fraction showing a profit: and not only most of humanity--most of the World, animal, vegetable and mineral, is laid waste in the process. The System may or may not understand that it's only buying time. And that time is an artificial resource to begin with, of no value to anyone or anything but the System, which sooner or later must crash to its death, when its addiction to energy has become more than the rest of the World can supply, dragging with it innocent souls all along the chain of life. Living inside the System is like riding across the country in a bus driven by a maniac bent on suicide . . . (P. 412)

This bitter attack is followed, in the imagined monologue of the System's bus driver, by a contrastingly ironic parody of the style of a modern nightclub comedian:

> [T]hough he's amiable enough, keeps cracking jokes back through the loudspeaker, "Good morning folks, this is Heidelberg here we're coming into now, you know the old refrain, 'I lost my heart in Heidelberg,' well I have a friend who lost both his ears here! Don't get me wrong, it's really a nice town, the people are warm and wonderful--when they're not dueling. Seriously though, they treat you just fine, they don't just give you the key to the city, they give you the bung-starter!" (P. 412)

The paradoxical caricature of the System's driver as both maniacal and amiable, embodied in the Menippean seriocomic formal alternation, suggests the seductive, ideological mystifications of power that the text demystifies as "every poor illusion of comfort the bourgeois takes for real . . . " (p. 571). Later, in a parodistic lampoon of Richard Nixon, the arch-repressor Richard M. Zhlubb is described as "like a nightclub comic, alone in his tar circle, his chalk terror " (p. 756).

The suicidal nature of the System is ironically mirrored in the Empty Ones, German Hereros who choose to commit group suicide. These "Zone" Hereros intend to bring to completion from the previous generation in colonial Africa a tribal death wish that signified a desperate and hostile rejection of European domination. In the following satiric passage, the narrator begins with a series of sarcasms on the "interest" whites feel as the native African Herero birth rate declines, then lampoons Karl Marx as racist for ignoring repression as perhaps the most significant motive for colonialism, and ends by satirizing contemptuously the sterile forms of Europe's "death and repression" in comparison with the colonies' "life and sensuality in all its forms":

> A generation earlier, the declining number of live Herero births was a topic of medical interest throughout southern Africa. The whites looked on as anxiously as they would have at an outbreak of rinderpest among the cattle. How provoking, to watch one's subject population dwindling like this, year after year. What's a colony without its dusky natives? Where's the fun if they're all going to die off? Just a big hunk of desert, no more maids, no field-hands, no laborers for the construction or the mining--wait, wait a minute there, yes it's Karl Marx, that sly old racist skipping away with his teeth together and his eyebrows up trying to make believe it's nothing but Cheap Labor and Overseas Markets. . . . Oh, no. Colonies are much, much more. Colonies are the outhouses of the European soul, where a fellow can let his pants down and relax, enjoy the smell of his own shit. Where he can fall on his slender prey roaring as loud as he feels like, and guzzle her blood with open joy. Eh? Where he can just wallow and rut and let himself go in a softness, a receptive darkness of limbs, of hair as woolly as the hair on his own forbidden genitals. Where the poppy, and cannabis and coca grow full and green, and not to the colors and style of death, as do ergot and agaric, the blight and fungus native to Europe. Christian Europe was always death, Karl, death and repression. Out and down in the colonies, life can be indulged, life and sensuality in all its forms, with no harm done to the Metropolis, nothing to soil those cathedrals, white marble statues, noble thoughts. . . . No word ever gets back. The silences down here are vast enough to absorb all behavior, no matter how dirty, how animal it gets. . . . (P. 317)

In the subsequent passage, the narrator discusses in dispassionate tone the possible medical reasons for the declining birth rate but rejects them. Instead, he proposes the existence of irrational, "sinister" motives of "a tribal mind at work," which effects through suicide a hopeless, violent repudiation of European manners and morals. The narrator then shifts to reflect equivocal European regret for mistreatment of the natives, but the passage's final effect is significantly one of

the satiric irony of an uncomprehending, supercilious, and resentful European tone towards the natives for their refusal to cooperate:

> Some of the more rational men of medicine attributed the Herero birth decline to a deficiency of Vitamin E in the diet--others to poor chances of fertilization given the peculiarly long and narrow uterus of the Herero female. But underneath all this reasonable talk, this scientific speculating, no white Afrikaner could quite put down the way it felt. . . . Something sinister was moving out in the veld: he was beginning to look at their faces, especially those of the women, lined beyond the thorn fences, and he knew beyond logical proof: there was a tribal mind at work out here, and it had chosen to commit suicide. . . . Puzzling. Perhaps we weren't as fair as we might have been, perhaps we did take their cattle and their lands away . . . and then the work-camps of course, the barbed wire and the stockades. . . , Perhaps they feel it is a world they no longer want to live in. Typical of them, though, giving up, crawling away to die . . . why won't they even negotiate? We could work out a solution, some solution. . . . (Pp. 317-8)

The African Hereros, recognizing that the European culture inflicted on them leads only to death, choose "tribal death," a paradoxical affirmation, and repudiate "Christian death," while the narrator ridicules Christianity in general as the "Baby Jesus Con Game":

> It was a simple choice for the Hereros, between two kinds of death: tribal death, or Christian death. Tribal death made sense. Christian death made none at all. It seemed an exercise they did not need. But to the Europeans, conned by their own Baby Jesus Con Game, what they were witnessing among these Hereros was a mystery potent as that of the elephant graveyard, or the lemmings rushing into the sea. (P. 318)

Since the narrator likens the succeeding generation in Germany to "a sick woman" (p. 318), the Empty Ones' subsequent planned tribal suicide, unlike that of the African Hereros, does not constitute such an affirmation.

Pynchon's satire on Western man's futile attempt to master death by rationalization takes the Menippean form of the comic, parodistic, and fantastic narrative vision of Gravity's Rainbow. After a fantastic musical comedy parody in which rats and mice emerge from scientists' cages, grow to human size, and sing and dance in the aisles of the PISCES laboratory, researcher Webley Silvernail regards the animals in their mazes as an image of man's labyrinthine rationalizations of death:

> They have had their moment of freedom. Webley has only been a guest star. Now it's back to the cages and the rationalized forms of death--death in the service of the one species cursed with the knowledge that it will die. . . . "I would set you free, if I knew how. But it isn't free out here. All the animals, the plants, the minerals, even other kinds of men, are being broken and reassembled every day, to preserve an elite few, who are the loudest to theorize on freedom, but the least free of all. I can't even give you hope that it will be different someday--that They'll come out, and forget death, and lose Their technology's elaborate terror, and stop using every other form of life without mercy to keep what haunts men down to a tolerable level--and be like you instead, simply here, simply alive. . . ." The guest star retires down the corridors. (P. 230)

Later, in a fantastic passage concerned with the Titans of Orphism[19] and associated with good witch Geli Tripping, the narrator laments that human consciousness is a "poor cripple, that deformed and doomed

thing" whose "mission[is] to promote death":

> [H]uman consciousness, that poor cripple, that deformed and doomed thing, is about to be born. This is the World just before men. Too violently pitched alive in constant flow ever to be seen by men directly. They are meant only to look at it dead, in still strata, transputrefied to oil or coal. Alive, it was a threat: it was Titans, was an overpeaking of life so clangorous and mad, such a green corona about Earth's body that some spoiler had to be brought in before it blew the Creation apart. So we, the crippled keepers, were sent out to multiply, to have dominion. God's spoilers. Us. Counter-revolutionaries. It is our mission to promote death. The way we kill, the way we die, being unique among the Creatures. It was something we had to work on, historically and personally. To build from scratch up to its present status as reaction, nearly as strong as life, holding down the green uprising. (P. 720)

Rationalized death in Gravity's Rainbow takes the form of "synthesis" and "control" by the powerful, a theme that Pynchon implies in V. and makes explicit in Lot 49. Assassinated German foreign minister Walter Rathenau communicates with corporate Nazis from IG Farben in a 1920s seance in Berlin, cautioning them that the cartel is a form of death. In life, Rathenau, described by the narrator as "prophet and architect of the cartelized State" (p. 164), had envisioned the ideal political system as "a rational structure in which business would be the true, rightful authority" (p. 165). Nevertheless, he now warns the Nazis that their beliefs are illusory and that the cartel serves to transform death not into rebirth but into "death-transfigured":

> "But this is all the impersonation of life. The real movement is not from death to any rebirth. It is from death to death-transfigured. The best you can do is to polymerize a few dead molecules. But polymerizing is not resurrection. I mean your IG, Generaldirektor."
>
> "Our IG, I should have thought," replies Smaragd with more than the usual ice and stiffness.
>
> "That's for you to work out. If you prefer to call this a liaison, do. I am here for as long as you need me. You don't have to listen. You think you'd rather hear about what you call 'life': the growing, organic Kartell. But it's only another illusion. A very clever robot. The more dynamic it seems to you, the more deep and dead, in reality, it grows. Look at the smokestacks, how they proliferate, fanning the wastes of original waste over greater and greater masses of city. Structurally, they are strongest in compression. A smokestack can survive any explosion--even the shock wave from one of the new cosmic bombs"--a bit of a murmur around the table at this--"as you all must know. The persistence, then, of structures favoring death. Death converted into more death. Perfecting its reign, just as the buried coal grows denser, and overlaid with more strata--epoch on top of epoch, city on top of ruined city. This is the sign of Death the impersonator. (Pp. 166-7)

Ultimately he tells them that in order to learn the truth, they must investigate the "real nature" of synthesis and control (p. 166), suggesting they reject the cause-and-effect of secular history as "a diversionary tactic" and study instead "the technology of these matters" (p. 167).

American businessman Lyle Bland, another of the book's elect, achieves a form of Their enlightenment when his spirit begins to leave his body regularly. He discovers that "an astral IG, whose mission [. . .] is past secular good and evil" (p. 590) operates on "the other side" to perpetuate the creation of new synthetics and that gravity attracts dead forms to the earth's "holy center":

> To find that Gravity, taken so for granted, is really something eerie, Messianic, extrasensory in Earth's mindbody . . . having hugged to its holy center the wastes of dead species, gathered, packed, transmuted, realigned, and rewoven molecules to be taken up again by the coal-tar Kabbalists of the other side, the ones Bland on his voyages has noted, taken boiled off, teased apart, explicated to every last permutation of useful magic, centuries past exhaustion still finding new molecular pieces, combining and recombining them into new synthetics [. . .] (P. 590)

The strategies of synthesis and control are typified in Gravity's Rainbow by events that contain certain future possibilities and that are manipulated by a corporate, moneyed elite in the interest of its continued domination. These events are both natural and political. Bland sees in Franklin Roosevelt such an ideal and exploitable combination of the lineaments of political power, and the narrative attributes Roosevelt's "election" in 1932 to Bland's manipulations:

> Psychological studies became, in fact, a Bland specialty. His probe into the subconscious of early-Depression America is considered a classic, and widely credited with improving the plausibility of Roosevelt's "election" in 1932. Though many of his colleagues found a posture of hatred for FDR useful, Bland was too delighted to go through the motions. For him, FDR was exactly the man: Harvard, beholden to all kinds of money old and new, commodity and retail, Harriman and Weinberg: an American synthesis which had never occurred before, and which opened the way to certain grand possibilities--all grouped under the term "control," which seemed to be a private code-word--more in line with the aspirations of Bland and others. (P. 581)

Earlier in the text, Roosevelt is described at the Yalta conference

as a tool of the powerful--"a being They assembled, a being They would dismantle" (p. 374)--and the point of "Their" Machiavellianism is, according to the Herero Enzian, the postwar realignment not of the world's geographical boundaries but of its vampiric technologies:

> It means this War was never political at all, the politics was all theatre, all just to keep the people distracted . . . secretly, it was being dictated instead by the needs of technology . . . by a conspiracy between human beings and war, crying, "Money be damned, the very life of [insert name of Nation] is at stake," but meaning, most likely, dawn is nearly here, I need my night's blood, my funding, funding, ahh more, more. . . . The real crises were crises of allocation and priority, not among firms--it was only staged to look that way--but among the different Technologies, Plastics, Electronics, Aircraft, and their needs which are understood only by the ruling elite. . . . (P. 521)

Thus, Enzian's view confirms Rathenau's recommendation to the IG Farben executives to study "the technology of these matters" to learn the truth.

In general, then, the effort to repress and master "invulnerable Death" (p. 40) leads paradoxically to a "culture of death" (p. 176), in which the elite synthesize and control both history and nature by means of a Faustian technology. This rationalization of death employs as its principal scientific method the post-Renaissance analysis of nature into its elements, which are then named and recombined. Such naming results in the desperate isolation of man from nature, "setting namer more hopelessly apart from named" (p. 391), and the sterile

futility of recombinations is described as "endlessly diddling play" (p. 391). The System that insists on such analysis and recombination violates the natural cycle of life and death, and the result of the control of nature is the ultimate death of the System itself and of the innocent victims ensnared by it.

As nature is exploited, history becomes propaganda so that "They" can maintain control. During the seance, as we have seen, Rathenau refers to the secular history of cause and effect as "a diversionary tactic" (p. 167). The narrator describes history as "at best a conspiracy, not always among gentlemen, to defraud" (p. 164). Roger Mexico, PISCES statistician, thinks of peace as similarly "another bit of propaganda," since "Their enterprise goes on" (p. 628). In short, the They-System is seen by Gravity's Rainbow's characters and narrator as an unceasing and universal venture for which the war serves as subterfuge or camouflage. In a surrealistic fantasy, Mister Information states the official War disguises "the real War," which continues to kill people and is interested only in "keeping things alive. Things" (p. 645). Thus, a complex overlay of perspectives is employed to create a vision of World War II that attacks the customary historical explanation as a delusion and affirms a counter-theory of "the real movements of the War" as commercial:

> Don't forget the real business of the War is buying and selling. The murdering and the violence are self-policing, and can be entrusted to non-professionals. The mass nature of wartime death is useful in many ways. It serves as

> spectacle, as diversion from the real movements of the War. It provides raw material to be recorded into History, so that children may be taught History as sequences of violence, battle after battle, and be more prepared for the adult world. Best of all, mass death's a stimulus to just ordinary folks, little fellows, to try 'n' grab a piece of that Pie while they're still here to gobble it up. The true war is a celebration of markets. (P. 105)

The strategies of synthesis and control arise in a European religious context whose locus is Christian, and in particular, Calvinist. In Gravity's Rainbow, Calvinism has two narrative dimensions. The first concerns itself with the Puritan American Slothrop family; the second, with the tribal Hereros of South-West Africa.

Economically and politically, Calvinism is associated with the rise of capitalism and the founding of the American republic.[20] From the Calvinist concept of predestination, Pynchon takes the dichotomy of elect and preterite, a form of excluded middle, to refer to the moneyed powerful and the unmoneyed powerless, respectively. Since, according to Calvinism, affluence and diligent labor signify election, just as poverty and idleness signify preterition, the Puritan Slothrop family's "reasoned inertia," which prevents them from relocating their paper business when the supply of trees in New England is exhausted, clearly indicates their preterition. The attack on America contained in the Slothrop's conversion of natural New England lumber into unnatural paper--"toilet paper, banknote stock, newsprint--a medium or ground for shit, money, and the Word. . . . the three

American truths" (p. 28)--foreshadows as well the subsequent papyronamia of Gravity's Rainbow. The money that Calvinism declares a sign of grace and the documents that contain the most cherished possession in the satire, information, are, as paper, both forms of rationalized nature. By associating paper satirically with the rationalized sterility of a divisive "culture of death," then, Pynchon subverts its sacrosanct status:

> It is not death that separates these incarnations, but paper: paper specialties, paper routines. The War, the Empire, will expedite such barriers between our lives. The War needs to divide this way, and to subdivide, though its propaganda will always stress unity, alliance, pulling together. (P. 130)

Calvinism's second narrative dimension provides the rationalization for genocidal colonialism. In an allegorical episode fantasized by "fantasist-surrogate" (p. 12) Pirate Prentice for the Firm, Katje Borgesius' Dutch ancestor Franz van der Groov systematically exterminates the dodoes on Mauritius in the seventeenth century because of his inability to detect in the creatures "details of Design" (p. 110). The mute birds, preterite because in addition to being clumsy, stupid, ugly, and useless, they lack speech and thus remain unassimilable into the Word and Salvation of Calvinism, represent the Satanic Other to certain members of the Dutch colony:

> To some, it made sense. They saw the stumbling birds ill-made to the point of Satanic intervention, so ugly

> as to embody argument against a Godly creation. Was Mauritius some first poison trickle through the sheltering dikes of Earth? Christians must stem it here, or perish in a second Flood, loosed this time not by God but by the Enemy. The act of ramming home the charges into their musketry became for these men a devotional act, one whose symbolism they understood. (P. 110)

Van der Groov himself fantasizes a miraculous "Conversion of the Dodoes" that grants the birds the "Gift of Speech" (p. 110). Although this transformation makes the birds and colonists "brothers in Christ," the net result is the same, for the dodoes must still face "our blade, our necessary blade." Since the birds,no longer "prey," are now "sanctified," the murderous act is justified by the appeal to spiritual salvation and immortality "in Christ's kingdom":

> Sanctified now they will feed us, sanctified their remains and droppings fertilize our crops. Did we tell them "Salvation"? Did we mean a dwelling forever in the City? Everlasting life? An earthly paradise restored, their island as it used to be given them back? Probably. Thinking all the time of the little brothers numbered among our own blessings. Indeed, if they save us from hunger in this world, then beyond, in Christ's kingdom, our salvations must be, in like measure, inextricable. Otherwise the dodoes would be only what they appear as in the world's illusory light--only our prey. God could not be that cruel. (P. 111)

The extinction of the dodoes foreshadows the extermination in 1904-07 of the South-West African Hereros by German colonists, an event to which Pynchon alludes in V. and in Gravity's Rainbow.

The Hereros subsequently come to Germany, and the Empty Ones commence their plan of tribal suicide, although Enzian repudiates "the Christian sickness" (p. 320) of Europe as "death and repression" (p. 317).

Christian Europe's imposition of this repression and death upon its colonies is reflected in the transplanted colonials' subsequent preoccupation with sexual sterility and self-annihilation. Enzian's counterpart Josef Ombindi, leader of the Empty Ones, tells Enzian that in its final suicidal act the group presumes to encompass an array of sexual deviations: bestiality, pedophilia, lesbianism, homosexuality, sadism, masochism, onanism, coprophilia, urolagnia, fetishism, and necrophilia (p. 319). Thus, with the exception of Roger Mexico and Jessica Swanlake's wartime affair and Tyrone Slothrop's promiscuous adventures, instances of heterosexuality are virtually absent from Gravity's Rainbow, which concentrates instead on the sterile deviations that Ombindi enumerates. Furthermore, Roger and Jessica's affair is doomed to end with the end of the official War and the cessation of V-2 attacks, and Slothrop himself discovers that even his own erections represent "a colonial outpost" that is "like an instrument installed, wired by Them into his body" (p. 285).

The theme of sexual deviation, especially that of fetishism, pertains in particular to the central symbol of Gravity's Rainbow, the V-2 rocket. Historically, the V-2, Vergeltungswaffe Zwei, or Reprisal Weapon Two, represented the most technologically advanced German war weapon. In Gravity's Rainbow, Pynchon uses it to represent a charismatic fetish object and a religious symbol of potential transcendence

signifying man's endeavor to escape terrestial mortality. Miklos Thanatz views it thus as an image of grace and redemption:

> There is no problem steering him onto the subject of the Rocket--"I think of the A4," sez he, "as a baby Jesus, with endless committees of Herods out to destroy it in infancy--Prussians, some of whom in their innermost hearts still felt artillery to be a dangerous innovation. If you'd been out there . . . inside the first minute, you saw, you grew docile under its . . . it really did possess a Max Weber charisma . . . some joyful--and <u>deeply</u> irrational--force the State bureaucracy could never routinize, against which it could not prevail. . . ." (P. 464)

Although sociologist Max Weber, from whom Pynchon borrows the terms "charisma" and "routinization" (or "rationalization"), applies the term "charisma" to both people and objects,[21] he analyzes charisma principally as an original and vital <u>personal</u> force, "an <u>extraordinary</u> quality of a person"[22] that inspires the devotion of more ordinary beings. This quality, real or imagined, is described by Weber as irrational and magical. Inevitably, however, the charismatic figure is unable to live up to the expectations of his devotees, and their veneration of him subsequently lessens. The leader's epigones must then, if they wish to secure a position of power, somehow transform this original, extraordinary quality into a legitimate, rationalized structure. While Weber analyzes charisma chiefly as personal, Pynchon chooses to symbolize it in the inanimate. The rocket is thus a fetish in two senses. As an object of spiritual reverence and as an object of

sexual pleasure, it unites the religious and the erotic, but the union is inorganic and sterile.

In Pynchon's theophany, the rocket is thus only an ambiguous pseudo-deity. Although its charisma makes possible such "magic" as Roger and Jessica's love, the notion of a "Holy" rocket is ridiculed by Enzian, and the death of Gottfried in the 00000 V-2 at the end of Gravity's Rainbow indicates that the transcendence offered by the rocket as "a promise, a prophecy of Escape" (p. 758) is only a temporary parody of flight; its charisma will finally be overcome by the routinizing force of gravity, as its ascent gives way to an inevitable descent.

Quest of the rocket provides Gravity's Rainbow's principal structuring narrative, that of Pynchon's comic American Everyman, Tyrone Slothrop, whose erections coincide with rocket strikes and whose fate in some sense embodies the meaning of the book.[23] Slothrop, whose picaresque adventures and romantic obsession with the rocket make him a combination of V.'s picaro Benny Profane and quester Herbert Stencil,[24] seeks to determine the rocket's secrets of the Schwarzgerät and Imipolex G, but unbeknownst to him, he is being used by "Them" to locate and destroy the 00001 and the Schwarzkommando. Moreover, the British Pavlovian Pointsman manipulates him as part of an experiment designed to prove the validity of determinism. Thus, signifying tainted American "innocence" (even his sexual freedom is largely under Their control) returning to its rationalized Calvinist origin, Slothrop represents, in effect, America as a failed redeemer under Europe's control. During sodium amytol experiments performed on him by Pointsman, Slothrop

reveals archetypal repressed American guilt and fear of excrement, blacks, and Indians. As he learns about the rocket, he uncovers information about Laszlo Jamf, the scientist who performed childhood experiments on him that seem to be connected in some way with the present frequency of his erections. During Pointsman's exposure of Slothrop to the rocket, Sir Stephen Dodson-Truck almost reveals the secret of his conditioning:

> But Sir Stephen is on his knees, just about, quaking at the edge of it, to tell Slothrop a terrible secret, a fatal confidence concerning:
>
> THE PENIS HE THOUGHT WAS HIS OWN
>
> (P. 216)

Discovering later that his father was paid by Jamf for the experiments to finance Tyrone's education at Harvard, and that Jamf had worked for the cartel, Slothrop comes to believe that "They" have had him under observation since his infancy:

> Nice way to find out your father made a deal 20 years ago with somebody to spring for your education. Come to think of it, Slothrop never could quite put the announcements, all through the Depression, of imminent family ruin, together with the comfort he enjoyed at Harvard. Well now, what <u>was</u> the deal between his father and Bland? I've been sold, Jesus Christ I've been sold to IG Farben like a side of beef. Surveillance? Stinnes, like every industrial emperor, had his own company spy system. So did the IG. Does this mean Slothrop has been under their observation--m-maybe since he was <u>born</u>? Yaahhh . . . (P. 286)

Slothrop realizes that Their control of him is allied with the mysterious erectile plastic Imipolex G:

> The fear balloons again inside his brain. It will not be kept down with a simple Fuck You. . . . A smell, a forbidden room, at the bottom edge of his memory. He can't see it, can't make it out. Doesn't want to. It is allied with the Worst Thing.
>
> He knows what the smell has to be: though according to these papers it would have been too early for it, though he has never come across any of the stuff among the daytime coordinates of his life, still, down here, back here in the warm dark, among early shapes where the clocks and calendars don't mean too much, he knows that what's haunting him now will prove to be the smell of Imipolex G. (P. 286)

Ultimately, Slothrop, by identifying himself in a dream as Jamf, acknowledges his enslavement to Their System:

> Then there's this recent dream he is afraid of having again. He was in his old room, back home. A summer afternoon of lilacs and bees, and warm air through an open window. Slothrop had found a very old dictionary of technical German. It fell open to a certain page prickling with black-face type. Reading down the page, he would come to JAMF. The definition would read: I. He woke begging It no--but even after waking, he was sure, he would remain sure, that It could visit him again, any time It wanted. Perhaps you know that dream too. Perhaps It has warned you never to speak Its name. If so, you know about how Slothrop'll be feeling now. (Pp. 286-7)

Paranoia, generally defined as an unjustified belief in oneself as the object of persecution, is responsible for Slothrop's escape from Their machinations. Since Slothrop's assessment of his persecution

is justified, however, Pynchon can characterize him (and indeed all the other appropriate characters) as paranoid only by redefining the term:

> . . . the onset, the leading edge, of the discovery that <u>everything is connected</u>, everything in the Creation . . . (P. 703)

However, the text's association of paranoia with Puritanism--"It's a Puritan reflex of seeking orders behind the visible, also known as paranoia" (p. 188)--results in profound narrative ambivalence about paranoia's ultimate virtues. Slothrop is a descendant of American Calvinists, and his totalizing paranoia formally resembles Calvinism's totalizing tendency to divide the world into the absolute either/or framework of elect and preterite. Moreover, the Slothrop family itself is preterite, and Tyrone's paranoia, while temporarily effective in freeing him from Their control, can lead only to ultimate failure, "to no clear happiness or redeeming cataclysm" (p. 738).[25] Missing the central tunnel where the rocket is housed in the Mittlewerke at Nordhausen, Slothrop goes astray in his quest, and he not only fails to unveil the Schwarzgerät's meaning but also is deflected from an investigation of the rocket cartel and his ultimate quest of the connections among Jamf, his own erections, and Imipolex G; in effect, he enters the anti-paranoid part of his cycle:

> If there is something comforting--religious, if

> you want--about paranoia, there is still also anti-paranoia, where nothing is connected to anything, a condition not many of us can bear for long. Well right now Slothrop feels himself sliding onto the anti-paranoid part of his cycle, feels the whole city around him going back roofless, vulnerable, uncentered as he is, and only pasteboard images now of the Listening Enemy left between him and the wet sky.
>
> 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. . . . (P. 434)

The narrator announces that Slothrop, uncaring and disconnected, "is to be counted, after all, among the Zone's lost" (p. 470). In satiric terms, he possesses the potentiality for redemptive heroism but remains instead an ingénu and fool.

Early in the final chapter, Slothrop's character literally "scatters," but because his Orphic "scattering" corresponds to "the entropies of lovable but scatterbrained Mother Nature," (p. 324) like the paranoia that first frees him it must be regarded as paradoxical.[26] Even though Slothrop does not achieve understanding of the rocket, the Schwarzgerät, Jamf, or Imipolex G, he does learn the truth of his manipulation by Them, and in his final scene as an integrated character, he becomes reconciled with the here and now of the fertile earth:

> . . . and now, in the Zone, later in the day he became a crossroad, after a heavy rain he doesn't recall, Slothrop sees a very thick rainbow here, a stout rainbow cock driven down out of pubic clouds into Earth, green wet valleyed Earth, and his chest fills and he stands crying, not a thing in his head, just feeling natural. . . . (P. 626)

Slothrop's tragicomic sacrificial "scattering" spawns an alternative to the "They-System," a "We-System" called the "Counterforce," but the Counterforce, like its method of "creative paranoia" (p. 638), provides only a temporary solution to the problem of the They-System's rationalizations.[27] When Roger Mexico hears of the They-System from Pirate Prentice, one of its chief advocates, his first reaction is to accuse Prentice of using Their methods. Later, Mexico envisions "the failed Counterforce" (p. 713) as an exploitable element of the They-System. The inevitable re-absorption of the originally charismatic but eventually and unavoidably rationalized alternative is later confirmed. In an interview with the Wall Street Journal (presumably "Their" newspaper), a Counterforce spokesman admits that the organization's differing theories of Slothrop doomed it from its inception:

> "We were never that concerned with Slothrop qua Slothrop," a spokesman for the Counterforce admitted recently in an interview with the Wall Street Journal.
> INTERVIEWER: You mean, then, that he was more a rallying-point.
> SPOKESMAN: No, not even that. Opinion even at the start was divided. It was one of our fatal weaknesses. [I'm sure you want to hear about fatal weaknesses.] Some called him a "pretext." Others felt that he was a genuine, point-for-point microcosm. (P. 738)

The spokesman admits, in an aside, that he is a traitor:

> I am betraying them all . . . the worst of it is that I know what your editors want, exactly what they want. I am a traitor. I carry it with me. Your virus. (P. 739)

The narrator, too, foreshadows the impending failure of the Counterforce by recounting the organization's ambivalence towards money, the rationalized paper source of the elite's power:

> Well, if the Counterforce knew better what those categories concealed, they might be in a better position to disarm, de-penis and dismantle the Man. But they don't. Actually they do, but they don't admit it. Sad but true. They are as schizoid, as double-minded in the massive presence of money, as any of the rest of us, and that's the hard fact. The Man has a branch office in each of our brains, his corporate emblem is a white albatross, each local rep has a cover known as the Ego, and their mission in this world is Bad Shit. We do know what's going on, and we let it go on. As long as we can see them, stare at them, those massively moneyed, once in a while. As long as they allow us a glimpse, however rarely. We need that. And how they know it--how often, under what conditions. . . . (Pp. 712-3)

Like the status of the Counterforce and paranoia, the ultimate status of the War is ambiguous.[28] On the one hand, the official history of the War is described as a deception; on the other hand, however, the War makes possible the breakdown of customary repressions: Roger Mexico and Jessica Swanlake can, as a result, engage in a temporary romance, and Germany returns to a state of disintegration or abolition of its borders, an anarchy that symbolizes a desirable, pre-rationalized condition of unity. The narrator longs for

> . . .--something to raise the possibility of another night that could actually, with love and cockrows, light the path home, banish the

> Adversary, destroy the boundaries between our lands, our bodies, our stories, all false, about who we are [. . .] (P. 135)

Similarly, the anarchist Squalidozzi envisions an "openness" to supplant his native country Argentina's "smokey labyrinths" (p. 264). These labyrinths, a symbol of borders in general, appear as well in the mazes of Webley Silvernail's experiments with rats, and as a British manifestation of the "German mania for subdividing" (p. 448) that results in the satire of the episode of the Nazi "Toiletship" Rücksichtslos, represent yet another form of the rationalization of death.

In sum, Gravity's Rainbow attacks as sterile Calvinist Europe's rationalized repression of death, for the resulting methods of synthesis and control transform the organic into the inorganic. Even the anodyne rocket fails to transcend, and the creative paranoia of the preterite in the Counterforce becomes in the end only another rationalized component of the ubiquitous They-System.

Despite the dominant representations of and attacks on the sterile, Gravity's Rainbow contains affirmations of the fertile as well. The traditional affirmations of friendship and love--Slothrop's friend Tantivy Mucker-Maffick's "quiet decencies" (p. 25), Mexico's sense in his affair with Jessica of "the very first real magic" (p. 38), Slothrop's belief of Bianca that "Right here, right now[. . .]she exists, love, invisibility" (p. 470)--counter the sterile compulsion for synthesis and control by the System, but as in much satire, these

overt affirmations are short-lived: Mucker-Maffick is killed by Them, Jessica returns to her husband Jeremy, and Slothrop leaves Bianca, who drowns.

Opposed to the Christian escatological vision of apocalypse are the cyclical Herero myths that respect the feminine earth's generative and regenerative abilities.[29] These myths focus upon recurrence, return, and centers. An Erdschweinhöhle Herero mother of four stillborn children, for example, is buried in the African ground to her shoulders to encourage fertility:

> In preterite line they have pointed her here, to be in touch with Earth's gift for genesis. The woman feels power flood in through every gate: a river between her thighs, light leaping at the ends of fingers and toes. It is sure and nourishing as sleep. ~~It is~~ a warmth. The more the daylight fades, the further she submits--to the dark, to the descent of water from the air. She is a seed in the Earth. The holy aardvark has dug her bed. (P. 316)

Moreover, Enzian realizes that his own exposure to the fetishistic penile rocket entails a radical rejection of feminine nature:

> Beyond simple steel erection, the Rocket was an entire system won, away from the feminine darkness, held against the entropies of lovable but scatterbrained Mother Nature [...] (P. 324)

This repudiation of the feminine results in "masculine technologies" (p. 324), which, as we have seen, transform love into perversion,

manipulation, and control. Thus, the feminine is associated with fertility.[30]

The Counterforce myth of the Soniferous Aether[31] represents a fantastic assertion in the form of ideological defiance:

> Imagine this very elaborate scientific lie: that sound cannot travel through outer space. Well, but suppose it can. Suppose They don't want us to know there is a medium there, what used to be called an "aether," which can carry sound to every part of the Earth. The Soniferous Aether. For millions of years, the sun has been roaring, a giant, furnace, 93 millionmile roar, so perfectly steady that generations of men have been born into it and passed out of it again, without ever hearing it. Unless it changed, how would anybody know? (P. 695)

Moreover, the narrator expresses paranoia about the official "vacuum":

> What if there is no Vacuum? Or if there is--what if They're using it on you? What if They find it convenient to preach an island of life surrounded by a void? Not just the Earth in space, but your own individual life in time? What if it's in Their interest to have you believing that? (P. 697)

The assertion of the possibility of a spatial continuity is complemented by the narrator's speculation on the possibility of a similar temporal continuity:

> this lack of symmetry leads to speculating that a presence, analogous to the Aether, flows through time, as the Aether flows through space. The assumption of a Vacuum in time tended to cut us off one from another. But an Aether sea to bear us world-to-world might bring us back a continuity, show us a kinder universe, more easygoing. . . . . (P. 726)

These Counterforce assertions function to attack the theories of institutional science as divisive, negative mystifications and to provide a dialectical, counter-ideology of unifying affirmations.

As in Lot 49, Pynchon affirms as well middles, metaphor, and, as we have already seen, anarchy. Roger Mexico's middles of probability are opposed to the cause-and-effect certainties of the Pavlovian Pointsman, whose method assumes the existence of a determinate structure in all events. Pointsman represents a nineteenth-century scientific epistemology, and Gravity's Rainbow posits in its place the twentieth-century concept of incompleteness. The text's affirmative allusions to Gödel, the originator of the Incompleteness Theorem (as well as to what the text identifies as the popular corollary of the Incompleteness Theorem, Murphy's Law) signify a vision of experience that endorses limits to knowledge's control and the consequent freedom in partialities and uncertainties.[32] It is therefore not merely coincidental that the statistician of indeterminacy, Roger Mexico, is capable of feeling genuine love, while his determinist antithesis, Pointsman, engages in nightly masturbation, a "joyless constant, an institution in his life" (p. 141), or that Gödel's Theorem makes likely the indefinite postponement of the tribal suicide of the Empty Ones:

SOLD ON SUICIDE

Well I don't care-for, th' things I eat,
Can't stand that boogie-woogie beat--
But I'm sold, on, suicide!

> You can keep Der Bingle too, a-
> And that darn "bu-bu-bu-boo,"
> Cause I'm sold on suicide!
>
> Oh! I'm not too keen on ration stamps,
> Or Mothers who used to be baby vamps,
> But I'm sold, on, suicide!
>
> Don't like either, the Cards or Browns,
> Piss on the country and piss on the town,
> But I'm S.O.S., yes well actually this goes on, verse after verse, for quite some time. 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! (P. 320)

Linear cause-and-effect determinism is also opposed at one point to metaphor. When scientist Franz Pökler, who designs the Schwarzgerät's housing, attacks his wife's interest in astrology as unscientific, she responds that cause-and-effect is itself an inadequate method:

> "Not produce," she tried, "not cause. It all goes along together. Parallel, not series. Metaphor. Signs and symptoms. Mapping on to different coordinate systems, I don't know. . . " She didn't know, all she was trying to do was reach. (P. 159)

Necessarily, Leni Pökler's struggle to articulate the non-rational, analogical methods associated with metaphor founder on the diction

and syntax available in a logical, rationalized language, which, tied ideologically to a repressive concept of linear time, has the apparatus to represent seriality but not the simultaneity of "the Other Side":

> (no serial time over there: events are all there in the same eternal moment and so certain messages don't always "make sense" back here: they lack historical structure, they sound fanciful, or insane). (P. 624)

The ideology of language also forms the thematic center of Tchitcherine's story of the New Turkic Alphabet, which the Stalinist government attempts to impose on the organic oral tradition of the Kazakh tribesmen. The Kazakhs are "darker" (p. 340) than the Russians, and like the Hereros, encounter a form of white colonialism; Pynchon, however, satirizes the effort by focusing comically on the petty struggles for power between letter and language committees, and the entire episode points back in time to an affirmation of the Kazakhs' original, pre-literate purity of "speech, gesture, touch[. . .]" (p. 338). Defiled by this Russian version of the Word, the Kazakhs resort to their own form of defiant, subversive Counterforce:

> 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-commissioner 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[. . .] (P. 355-6)

The concluding affirmation of Gravity's Rainbow occurs in the book's terrifying final scene, "Descent." In it, the rocket is about to crash into the Orpheus Theatre, where we, the "viewers" of the text, are awaiting repair before the film recommences:

> The screen is a dim page spread before us, white and silent. The film has broken, or a projector bulb has burned out. It was difficult even for us, old fans who've always been at the movies (haven't we?) to tell which before the darkness swept in. (P. 760)

In the phrase "who've always been at the movies (haven't we?)," the narrator's tone is one of ironic condescension, suggesting our persistent inability or refusal to experience the world in unmediated form. In general, in Gravity's Rainbow, film, like calculus, is parodied and attacked as "pornographies of flight" (p. 567), illusions of continuity that are actually divided into separate and frozen frames and are thus "Reminders of impotence and abstraction" (p. 567). The descent of the rocket, "a bright angel of death" (p. 760) that by fantastic time-travel and metamorphosis is presumably a modern-day nuclear missile, betokens the impending suicidal annihilation of the "theatre" of the vitiated Western world, and given the evidence of the text, the implicated reader may regard such a destructive and terminal apocalypse as frightening but inescapable, perhaps even necessary or desirable. But the screen is blank, suggesting both the imminence (and immanence) of the void and the possibility of a "scriptural" revision

for the final scene; moreover, the rocket does not quite penetrate the theatre's roof. The narrator declares, "There is time [. . .]" (p. 760), and what there is time for, evidently, is a choice:

> There is time, if you need the comfort, to touch the person next to you, or to reach between your own cold legs . . . or, if song must find you, here's one They never taught anyone to sing, a hymn by William Slothrop, centuries forgotten and out of print, sung to a simple and pleasant air of the period. (P. 760)

Pynchon's ellipsis denotes the existence of alternatives: comfortable contact and masturbation, on the one hand, or preterite song on the other:

> Follow the bouncing ball:
>
> There is a Hand to turn the time,
> Though thy Glass today be run,
> Till the Light that hath brought the Towers low
> Find the last poor Pret'rite one . . .
> Till the Riders sleep by ev'ry road,
> All through our crippl'd Zone,
> With a face on ev'ry mountainside,
> And a Soul in ev'ry stone. . . .
>
> Now everybody--
> (P. 760)

In Gravity's Rainbow, comfort is identified as an illusion, and masturbation is associated with the sterility of Pointsman, Jeremy, and rational analysis in general, but music, like the "anti-gravity" of comedy in general, represents positive freedoms. Thus, the final

aposeopesis is a summons to a new fertile form of consciousness that results from the shattering of the old sterile form. Despite the hopeless, official notion of entropy as the irreversible movement towards the absolute end of time--"the last delta-t" (p. 760)--the narrator's declaration and the hymn's first two lines suggest a Blakean eternity and possibility of redemptive reversal in every moment, and the razing of the "Tower" by the "Light" in the tarot deck symbolizes the destruction of false human institutions like the rocket by the truth.[33]

Pynchon's Menippean satire is thus unusual. Both regressive and progressive in its affirmations, Gravity's Rainbow curses rationalization by means of a dual fantasy: the nostalgia for the pre-rationalized animistic and geocentric myths of the pre-colonial African Hereros and good, "World-choosing" (p. 718) witch Geli Tripping; and the charismatic myths of irrationality of the defiant Counterforce.

In Gravity's Rainbow, Menippean satire's formal convention of variety appears as comedy and fantasy juxtaposed with extensive parody. As in V. and Lot 49, the comic is represented by paronomasia and farce, and Pynchon's employment of mock-significant onomastics, in particular, turns the experience of the text into a sometimes frustrating game of decoding between writer and reader.[34]

Some names, for example, are clearly significant. The name, Slothrop derives from "sloth" and "sleuth," echoing both the family's "reasoned inertia" that keeps it and its paper business in Massachusetts when opportunity lies elsewhere and Slothrop's own mysterious quest

of the rocket. One critic suggests that the name may also be an acronym for Second Law of Thermodynamics.[35] Similarly, the name Weissmann, meaning "white man," is connected with the text's condemnation of whiteness as an image of sterility and with the German's code name, Dominus Blicero, which translates as "Lord of Death." Weissmann-Blicero's sacrificial victim is ironically named Gottfried, or "God's peace." However, the significance of Pynchon's naming is deliberately irregular; names of witty irrelevance join those of complex overdeterminations in Gravity's Rainbow, and it is sufficient to note that Pynchon uses this form of the comic not only to entertain his reader but also, as he does in V. and Lot 49, to edify him by means of metaphor,[36] a counter-entropic linguistic device that introduces into closed systems new, non-systemic possibilities.

Like paronomasia, episodes of farce serve both to entertain and to provide textual significance. Two instances may suffice to illustrate the satiric function of farce. Early in the text, Pointsman, hunting a dog on which he wishes to experiment, steps into a toilet bowl and is unable to extricate himself from it. Roger Mexico, trying to assist him, plunges headfirst into a baby's pram. The episode is immediately humorous and ultimately satiric. Subsequently, Gravity's Rainbow connects by metaphor toilets, whiteness, paper, money, texts, racism (as a hatred of blackness), repression of excrement, and repression of death. Pointsman is thus implicated in an ensuing vision of evil. On the other hand, Mexico's entanglement in a child's carriage establishes the irony of his initial naiveté, a characteristic which only later

yields to his rejection of Pointsman and of the rationalized system to which Pointsman belongs.

For the most part, picaresque farce is also the mode by which Tyrone Slothrop's unheroic preterition is confirmed. His eventual "scattering" is foreshadowed in a series of disguises that he adopts in the Zone after the theft of his uniform and papers in France. While the episode of the theft is presented as farcical, it signifies the loss of Slothrop's identity and his subsequent attempts to reconstruct it. Slothrop, however, is preterite, and his outcome is to be "scattered":

> There is also the story about Tyrone Slothrop, who was sent into the Zone to be present at his own assembly--perhaps, heavily paranoid voices have whispered, his time's assembly--and there ought to be a punchline to it, but there isn't. The plan went wrong. He is being broken down instead, and scattered. (P. 738)

Pynchon presents the fantastic in Gravity's Rainbow in the forms of the supernatural and the grotesque.[37] Spiritualism, witchcraft, animism, heresies, and fantasies are explored as aspects of the preternatural, and, as we have seen, the text points to such irrationalisms, created in part by the Counterforce, as an alternative to systems of rationalized thought. Although the Counterforce itself eventually fails, its myths and activities--the parable of Byron the Bulb and the list of alliterative, disgusting foods catalogued by Mexico and Bodine at Stefan Utgarthaloki's dinner party, for example[38]--offer

instances of charismatic, albeit temporary, defiance.

While the supernatural provides a provisional alternative to rationalization, rationalization itself produces the satire's vision of the grotesque; indeed, the vision of Gravity's Rainbow is the very essence of psychopathological grotesquerie. Pointsman's and Tchitcherine's obsessions with Slothrop and Enzian, Brigadier Pudding's scatophagy, Weissmann's sadism and pederasty, Gottfried's masochism, Major Marvy's racism, and, of course, circumambient rocket fetishism are the most outstanding examples of a vision that is predominantly, almost exclusively, grotesque.[39]

As comedy and fantasy constitute satire's radical juxtaposition of divergent forms, parody accentuates artifice and uncertainty. In Gravity's Rainbow, Pynchon parodies the quest romance, as he does in V. and Lot 49, but he parodies in addition cinematography and narrative omniscience.

The parody of quest rhetoric embodies Slothrop's self-parody and foreshadows his ultimate failure:

> Slothrop's dumb idling heart sez: The Schwarzgerät is no Grail, Ace, that's not what the G in Imipolex G stands for. And you are no knightly hero. (P. 364)

Furthermore, Pynchon parodies the picaresque, beginning with Slothrop's loss of identity in the metonymic theft of his uniform and papers. Slothrop subsequently adopts an array of disguises: a purple bedsheet;

a mustache; a British uniform and British accent; a zoot suit; an alias--Ian Scuffling, British war correspondent; workmen's clothes; painter's coveralls; a new hairdo and trimmed mustache resembling Hitler's; a Wagnerian "Rocketman" costume of horned pointed helmet, green velvet cape, and buckskin trousers; another alias--Max Schlepzig, German film star; evening clothes; Tchitcherine's uniform; and the costume of Plechazunga, a local German pig hero. These picaresque metamorphoses both foreshadow and signify Slothrop's scattering, which is illustrated in the final chapter by the breakdown of the narrative into a series of discrete, fragmented narratives.

Thus, the failure of Slothrop's quest is the irresolution of a parodied quest romance, and from V. to Lot 49 to Gravity's Rainbow, in sum, Pynchon moves from a quester whose failure results from a refusal to acknowledge closure, to a quester suspended on the point of closure, to a quester who misses the "center" of closure altogether and then dissipates. This dissipation of both protagonist and plot parodies conventional conclusiveness and its thematic corollary, determinate significance. Slothrop's disintegration, represented formally by the "scattering" of the narrative into narratives, represents in turn the fertile anarchy of a charismatic origin. Thus, Pynchon minimizes the significance of plot as a determinate product of its final outcome and maximizes the significance of plotting as a continuous, moment-to-moment process.

Gravity's Rainbow's second formal parody, cinematography, conjoins text and film.[40] Pynchon presents the book as a musical comedy "film,"

invoking camera techniques, for example, to indicate the form of a scene's presentation and alluding to numerous actors, actresses, directors, roles, and films (some actual, some imagined). Furthermore, in the book's final scene, as we have noted, the reader is depicted as viewing the film Gravity's Rainbow in a Los Angeles theater, whose screen has momentarily gone blank and into which the 00000 rocket containing Gottfried, having magically transcended time, space, and form, is about to crash, the imminent irruption of the rocket into the viewer/reader's consciousness signifying an apocalyptic transformation.

The satire's blurring of the distinction between text and film signifies formally an innovative assimilation of film by text, a striking reversal of common practice,[41] and thematically a recognition of the profound contemporary influence of film on experience. For example, the Allies' Operation Black Wing, involving the filming of fictitious black rocket troops in Germany for propaganda purposes, becomes textual fact when the Allies subsequently discover such troops in Germany, who are described by the director of the film, Gerhardt von Göll, as "leading real, paracinematic lives" (p. 388). Similarly, Franz Pökler conceives his child Ilse while imagining his wife to be Greta Erdmann, the pornographic film star who conceives her own daughter Bianca during an orgiastic scene in the same film that arouses Pökler. Thus Ilse and Bianca are literally twin children of the cinema. In general, however, film in Gravity's Rainbow is regarded as an undesirable falsification of experience.[42]

Throughout Gravity's Rainbow, Pynchon parodies narrative omniscience.

The text's narrative and its implied protean narrator serve as an exemplification of incompleteness and indeterminacy. Thus, the book leaves unanswered basic questions: how could the stimulus Jamf used on Slothrop have been Imipolex G, since it was developed only years later?[43] What connection is there, if any, between Slothrop's erections and the rocket strikes in London? Is there in fact some vast planetary "plot" afoot orchestrated ultimately by Them? To posit these questions assumes the deterministic certainties of a paranoid epistemology that the text ridicules in the caricature of Pointsman in particular and in its parody of plot in general. In Gravity's Rainbow, no such metonymy exists, only metaphor. These uncertainties are produced by the satire's narrative form, which presents a kaleidoscopic sequence of perspectives that result in a profusion and simultaneous subversion of significance.[44] For example, the shape of the tunnels in the Mittelwerke is provided by the narrator with a multiplicity of equally valid interpretations, and Tchitcherine's rumored connection with Wimpe, an IG salesman, is elaborated for several pages and then dismissed as rumor. In certain instances the narrator himself parodies directly the conventional reader's desire for determinacy: "Is the baby smiling, or is it just gas? Which do you want it to be?" (p. 131), and "You will want cause and effect. All right" (p. 663). In other instances he acknowledges the limitations of his own knowledge: "Indeed, why did she leave Schußstelle 3? We are never told why" (p. 107). These parodies of the quest romance, cinematography, and narrative omniscience structure a fiction whose own "center" is an absence; the uncertainty of experience itself, and

such attacks on the reader as calling him a "Glozing Neuter" (p. 677) are thus structured to compel his active participation in the formulation of meaning.

In sum, synthesis, control, and rationalization in Gravity's Rainbow signify projections of an unincorporated mortality, and the result is paradoxically death's sterile propagation. Representing and attacking these forms of the sterile as they are manifested in various official institutions of the Western world, the Menippean satire endorses the possibility of redemption in the here and now, and Pynchon counters man's labyrinthine rationalizations with radical and fantastic alternatives that do not represent experiential choices as such but serve to attack the sterility of Western man's current condition.

Notes

[1] Page references are to the Viking edition and will appear within the text. My ellipses will be bracketed.

[2] Mendelson, "Gravity's Encyclopedia," p. 195, uses the term "monstra" (Latin for "omens of dire change") to describe in part his conception of Gravity's Rainbow's genre as "encyclopedic narrative," but "prodigy" also signifies "omen, monster" in Latin and is, I think, a suitable term as well.

[3] Gravity's Rainbow won the National Book Award for fiction and the Howells Medal of the National Institute of Arts and Letters and the American Academy of Arts and Letters, but "lost" the Pulitzer Prize. By now, this story, like that of Pynchon's sending double-talk comedian Professor Irwin Corey to accept the National Book Award, is legendary. Benjamin DeMott, Elizabeth Hardwick, and Alfred Kazin chose Gravity's Rainbow unanimously for the 1974 Pulitzer award, but their choice was rejected by a supervisory board. Members of the board described the book as "turgid," "overwritten," "obscene," and "unreadable," and as a result, no award was given that year. See Peter Kihss, "Pulitzer Jurors Dismayed on Pynchon," The New York Times, 8 May 1974, p. 38.

[4] For a negative evaluation of Pynchon's magnum opus, see David Thorburn, "A Dissent on Pynchon," Commentary, September 1973, pp. 68-70.

[5] Bertram Lippman, "The Reader of Movies: Thomas Pynchon's Gravity's Rainbow," The Denver Quarterly, 12, No. 1 (1977), 12.

[6] For convenience and consistency, I shall identify all non-dialogical, omniscient, or author-as-character points of view by the term "narrator."

See Mark Siegel, Pynchon: Creative Paranoia, p. 15, who enumerates the narrator's confusing stances as 1) "the deceptive appearance of 'camera-eye' objectivity"; 2) "a comrade sharing an experience with the reader or jeering at the reader's inability to keep up with him"; and 3) "a hysterical paranoid like many of his characters," and Schaub, Pynchon: The Voice of Ambiguity, pp. 123 and 128, who identifies as well a "meditative, nightmarish, oratorical" form of second-person address in Gravity's Rainbow and asserts that Pynchon's voice is "omnipresent but not omniscient." Schaub views the progression of Pynchon's narrative persona as a metamorphosis from the "relative stability" in V. to the "Orphic presence" in Gravity's Rainbow. In his "Open Letter," p. 98, he describes the narrator of Lot 49 as one who positions himself within Oedipa's consciousness but whose distance from Oedipa "fluctuates ambiguously." Other critics too numerous to mention have commented on the apparent confusion and paranoia of Pynchon's narrators, ultimately attributing such confusion and paranoia to Pynchon himself, a naive biographical orientation simply beneath criticism.

[7] Jonathan Rosenbaum, "A Reply," The New Review, July 1976, p. 64; rpt. in Pynchon: A Collection, pp. 67-68, claims that to traditional critics who regard prose "as a transparent medium rather than an artificial construction," much of Gravity's Rainbow must appear "incomprehensible." Rosenbaum argues, rightly I think, that Pynchon's "deconstructions" constitute a significant portion of the text that should not be ignored or dismissed as merely "an ironic subtext." As in V. and Lot 49, a large part of the effect of Gravity's Rainbow results from this interaction of disorder with teasing intimations of order, a dialectic that accentuates the conventional reader's assumption of textual (and perhaps experiential) coherence. The function of such a dialectic is, as I have suggested elsewhere, the renewal of perception.

[8] For example, Siegel, Pynchon: Creative Paranoia, p. 121, argues, "Any attempt to place the structure of Gravity's Rainbow in a traditional genre probably will be rendered meaningless by qualifications," while John Stark, Pynchon's Fictions, p. 26, reluctantly admits that "Menippean satire, whose features are only broadly defined," may have to suffice as a Pynchon model, and he suggests that a "judicious critic . . . not try to go beyond that."

[9] Another generic approach to Pynchon has been through melodrama. See David Leverenz, "On Trying to Read Gravity's Rainbow," in Mindful Pleasures, pp. 229-49, and Douglas Fowler, A Reader's Guide. However, the radical variety of Gravity's Rainbow places it, I believe, outside the generic boundaries of melodrama and within those of Menippean satire.

[10] Marcus Smith and Khachig Tölölyan, "The New Jeremiad: Gravity's Rainbow," in Critical Essays, pp. 169-86.

[11] See C. Hugh Holman, "Satire," in his A Handbook to Literature, 3rd ed. (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1972), p. 473.

[12] Michael Seidel, "Satiric Plots," p. 200, points to satire's convention of "literal and metaphoric impediments to narrative resolution" as the "subjects of narrative obsession" in Gravity's Rainbow.

[13] V-2 is, of course, V., too, and the rocket appears in Pynchon's earlier work as Mondaugen's project at Peenemunde.

[14] Pynchon borrows the term charisma, as he does rationalization and routinization, from Max Weber. See note 22 below and this diss., pp. 176-77.

[15] Richard Poirier, "Rocket Power," Saturday Review of the Arts, 3 March 1973, pp. 59-64; rpt. in Pynchon: A Collection, pp. 167-78, first suggests Gravity's Rainbow's linking of history with neurosis and invokes analogously Norman O. Brown's Life against Death. Lawrence Wolfley, following Poirier's lead, explores Pynchon's debt to Brown

in "Repression's Rainbow: The Presence of Norman O. Brown in Pynchon's Big Novel," PMLA, 92 (1977), 873-89; rpt. in Critical Essays, pp. 99-123.

[16] On comedy in Gravity's Rainbow, see Roger Henkle, "The Morning and the Evening Funnies: Comedy in Gravity's Rainbow," in Approaches to Gravity's Rainbow, ed. Charles Clerc (Columbus: Ohio State Univ. Press, 1983), pp. 273-90.

[17] One is reminded of Swift's epitaph, "Hic depositum est corpus Jonathan Swift, S. T. P., ubit saeva indignatio ulteris cor lacerare nequit," and its source in Juvenal, Saturae I. 79.

[18] However, George Levine, "V-2," Partisan Review, 40 (1973), 517-29; rpt. in Pynchon: A Collection, pp. 178-91, regards Pynchon's style as reflecting a "refusal of outrage" and a "dispassion in the face of the perversions, monstrosities, dehumanizations it chronicles" (p. 185). In brief, this assessment is only partly true. The narrator and at least two significant characters, Mexico and Enzian, attack institutions in various ways. See this diss., pp. 162-66, 169-70, 194-95, etc.

[19] On Pynchon's use of Orphism, see Thomas A. Bass, "Gravity's Rainbow as Orphic Text," Pynchon Notes, No. 13 (1983), pp. 25-46.

[20] See in particular Max Weber, The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, trans. Talcott Parsons (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958), and R. H. Tawney, Religion and the Rise of Capitalism: A Historical Study, Holland Memorial Lectures, 1922 (New York: Harcourt, 1926).

[21] On Pynchon's use of Weber, see Vincent D. Balitas, "Charismatic Figures in Gravity's Rainbow," Pynchon Notes, No. 9 (1982), pp. 38-53.

[22] Max Weber, "The Social Psychology of World Religions," From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology, ed. and trans. H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1958), p. 295.

[23] Most critics view Slothrop's final fate (and the book's final judgment) as indicating unambiguous failure, but for another view, see Carol Richer, "The Prismatic Character in Gravity's Rainbow," Pynchon Notes, No. 12 (1983), pp. 26-38, and Molly Hite, pp. 118-20.

[24] Unlike V.'s division of quester and picaro, Pynchon in Gravity's Rainbow combines the two in Slothrop, who represents a kind of union of Don Quixote idealism with Sancho Panza materialism.

[25] Joseph Slade, "Escaping Rationalization: Options for the Self in Gravity's Rainbow," Critique, 18, No. 3 (1977), 27-38, endorses the view that paranoia is textually repudiated. Slade argues that Pynchon rejects paranoia because it is a form of solipsism, Puritan rationalization, and mystification.

[26] Richer, p. 37, suggests that by Slothrop's fate Pynchon rejects the traditional conception of character and adopts instead "a revolutionary and strictly postmodernist conception of twentieth century man," and Hite, p. 118, suggests of Slothrop's scattering that "However unsettling this outcome may be, one implication is that he has escaped control. . . . "

[27] See Siegel, Pynchon: Creative Paranoia, pp. 18-19, for the alternative view that the Counterforce and creative paranoia are endorsed by Pynchon.

[28] See Scott Sanders, "Pynchon's Paranoid History," in Mindful Pleasures, pp. 139-59, for the alternative view that the war is a "synecdoche for history itself, the drift towards death" (p. 148).

[29] See Slade, "Escaping Rationalization," 29, who refers to a letter Pynchon wrote to Thomas F. Hirsch in 1968 in which he endorses the cyclical Herero myths.

[30] See Marjorie Kaufman, "Brünhilde and the Chemists: Women in Gravity's Rainbow," in Mindful Pleasures, pp. 197-227, for the related view that on the whole Pynchon gives "a fair shake to his women characters . . ." (p. 199).

[31] See Bass, p. 37, on the Orphic source of the spatial and temporal aether.

[32] See Slade, "Escaping Rationalization," 36, and F. S. Schwarzbach, "A Matter of Gravity," The New Review, June 1976, pp. 39-42; rpt. in Pynchon: A Collection, pp. 56-67, two critics who agree on Pynchon's endorsement of "middles" as central to Gravity's Rainbow's vision.

[33] For interpretations of the Tower card of the tarot deck, see the following: Eden Gray, A Complete Guide to the Tarot (New York: Bantam, 1972), p. 50; Alfred Douglas, The Tarot: The Origins, Meaning and Uses of the Cards (New York: Penguin, 1973), pp. 93-95; and the narrator's own readings in Gravity's Rainbow itself, pp. 747-48.

[34] For the view that Pynchon's names have "multiple connotations," see David Seed, "Pynchon's Names: Some Further Considerations," Pynchon Notes, No. 6 (1981), pp. 41-43.

[35] W. T. Lhamon, quoted in Seed, p. 42.

[36] Of ancillary interest is that the name Enzian, although textually acknowledged to be from Rilke, was also the name of an experimental manned rocket that Germany was developing during the war. See Donald Skarzenski, "Enzian and the Octopus: Fact in Pynchon's Fiction," Notes on Modern American Literature, 1 (1976), Item 35.

[37] See Schaub, Pynchon: The Voice of Ambiguity, p. 106, who sees the supernatural as one pole of an unresolved binary set of explanations, the natural and the supernatural.

[38] Pynchon thus adapts the satiric convention of the "Painful Dinner," to which Highet refers in The Anatomy of Satire, p. 221.

[39] Slade, "Escaping Rationalization," 34, argues that such deviations result from a Jungian loss of spiritual satisfaction, as opposed to a Freudian repression of sexuality.

[40] On film in Gravity's Rainbow, see Scott Simmon, "Beyond the Theater of War: Gravity's Rainbow as Film," Literature/Film Quarterly, 6 (1978), 347-63; rpt. in Critical Essays, pp. 124-39, and Charles Clerc, "Film in Gravity's Rainbow," in Approaches to Gravity's Rainbow, pp. 103-51.

[41] See Bertram Lippman, 17, who asserts, "The book is a final coming together of the movies and the novel."

[42] On this point, see Cowart, "Making the Unreal Reel: Film in Gravity's Rainbow," Thomas Pynchon: The Art of Allusion, pp. 31-62.

[43] On this problem, see Fowler, "Appendix III: The Problem of Imipolex G," A Reader's Guide, p. 273.

[44] See Pynchon's principal American epistemological model, Melville's Moby Dick, esp. Chapters 41 and 42, "Moby Dick" and "The Whiteness of the Whale," in which Ahab speculates on the possible meanings of the whale's whiteness but leaves the reader suspended inconclusively.

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