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**BEYOND THE ZERO: "GRAVITY'S RAINBOW" AND MODERN CRITICAL
THEORY**

City University of New York

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BEYOND THE ZERO:

Gravity's Rainbow and
Modern Critical Theory

by

Paul Morris

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in English in partial fulfillment of the require-
ments for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The
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1982

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This manuscript has been read and accepted
for the Graduate Faculty in English in satisfaction
of the dissertation requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy.

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PREFACE

This work is patently uncritical, since it seems to me that before scholars can even begin to evaluate Pynchon and his works, they ought, at least, to understand what he is doing and how he is doing it. No one, so far, has been able to articulate the totality of Pynchon's vision or to formulate a coherent method of interpreting his work. This study, therefore, merely attempts to present the data of Pynchon's major work, Gravity's Rainbow, by examining its context and proposing a method by which to read it. If it seems as if I am adopting the vocabulary of each writer I include in this study, it is intentional. Only by entering into the world of these writers can we begin to understand what they are saying. Each writer creates a new language, a vocabulary that cannot be escaped if we are to understand what he says; and above all, this study attempts to unbiasedly present their ideas.

Most critics have failed to realize that Pynchon, a child of the 60's, is basing both his narrative and his technique upon a world view--that is perhaps an outgrowth of the war--that is outside the parameters of most conventional novels. He may or may not have read the work of Norman O. Brown (although not to would seem almost impossible), and he may or may not be aware of the writings of modern

writers like Barthes and Lacan, but his works are the result of the same tradition as theirs, which includes the works of thinkers like Hegel, Heidegger, and Saussure, who have not, until recently, been acknowledged by American critics.

This study also violates, I think, every tenet of the American tradition of practical criticism that was established by the New Critics. In fact, to justify my reading of Gravity's Rainbow, I realized that I had to develop an entirely different approach to the act of reading itself. This approach does not postulate a unified text--at least in the conventional sense of the word--but accepts the text as a decentered, fragmented whole, whose unity lies in the relationship between its fragments, whose unity is neither architechtonic nor organic, but itself a manifestation of structuring principles that are beyond both. Most importantly, it attempts to determine a method by which to read texts that, at least since Yeats, and more likely earlier, have attempted consciously to include the unconscious within the conscious and which consciously seek to undermine the imperial authority of self-consciousness. The problem of dealing with the unconscious in a literary work, which, of course, has none, is therefore, central to this study.

The other central point of this work is that Pynchon clearly rejects ego-structuration as it is presently experienced. This creates an artistic problem, since, by necessity, any narrative is at least partly an ego artifact;

and Pynchon has chosen a mode of writing that clearly contradicts his vision of reality that is beyond ego-organization. This study, therefore, also attempts to come to terms with the resulting authorial dilemma and delineate Pynchon's strategy in the writing of his text.

If any generalization can be made about post-modern fiction, it is that such works consciously force the reader to co-create with the author. Their works simply do not make sense as they are printed on the page. We can find examples of this as early as Heller's Catch-22, whose fragmented time-scheme forced the reader to recreate the sequence of the novel in order to make sense of the plot. In Fowles's The Magus, both the theme and the technique embodied the need to make sense of the text, and accept responsibility for the act, as a metaphor for making sense of our lives. In general, post-modern texts consciously attempt to undermine the distinctions between fact and fiction, as well as those between author and reader. This study attempts to demonstrate how such a unity is achieved in the union of the unconscious of the author and the reader via the medium of the text, which, in effect, makes them its co-creators.

This work, therefore, is divided into two parts. Part one outlines the context of Pynchon's thought in its contemporary literary, philosophical, and psychological matrix. Chapter one examines GR in terms of the apocalyptic tradition which critics have quickly, but in fact,

inappropriately, assigned it to. Pynchon is apocalyptic, but only in a very limited sense. Chapter two examines the basis of Pynchon's vision in terms of N.O. Brown's Love's Body. Some critics have noticed the influence of Brown on Pynchon, noting that Life Against Death details the world Pynchon parodies and rejects in his novels, but no one has yet to see that the real influence, and the real source of Pynchon's redemptive vision is in Love's Body. Chapter three uses the work of Jacques Lacan to delineate a structure of the act of reading and suggests some methods of interpretation that are applicable to works like Gravity's Rainbow. It attempts to account for the radical disjunction between the metaphoric and metonymic registers on a theoretical level.

Part two examines Gravity's Rainbow in terms of the context and theory outlined in Part one. Chapter one examines Pynchon's use of space in the novel as a paradigm of the ego's usurpation of the body and as a model of the centralization of psychic functions that results in ego structuration. Chapter two examines Pynchon's resultant concept of the nature of ego structuration in terms of his techniques of characterization. Chapter three explores the theoretical problems of writing a narrative when the author rejects the very process of narratization that such an endeavor entails. Since Pynchon sees all plots as plotting conspiracies, this chapter examines the type of text that could possibly escape such limitations.

Chapter four examines the image systems Pynchon employs in the novel, and explains how they ultimately subvert their own significance. Pynchon accomplishes this by differentiating his own text from the narrator's. After associating the narrative sequence with the narrator, who is himself equated with ego structuration, he introduces several, crucial "events" that contradict the narrator's interpretation of things and undermine his credibility. Pynchon does this through an elaborate system of mythological references that are never overtly explored in the text, but which determine the imagery the narrator uses, the events themselves, and even their sequence. Chapter five analyzes the bifurcation of the text into a metonymic plot line, which is a parody of modern existence, and a metaphoric counter-system that, while never stating it, embodies the characteristics of his redemptive vision.

Again, this analysis may seem extremely uncritical; but since almost everything that has been written about Brown and Pynchon seems to be misconceived, it is obvious that an un-evaluative analysis of their works and interrelationships is required. The theoretical parts of this study are precisely that--theoretical and tentative. They are merely suggestions for taking a different direction in our approach to modern literature.

In conclusion, I would like to express my thanks to my readers, Samuel Levin and Lillian Feder, whose comments and criticisms were, if initially disturbing, greatly appreciated

and extremely useful. I especially want to thank Frank Brady; without him, this work would never have been done. Finally, I want to thank David Brandes, who probably understands Pynchon better than anyone, including most Pynchon scholars, and whose insights I have often adopted without specific acknowledgement.

CONTENTS

Preface		iv.
PART I	<u>GRAVITY'S RAINBOW</u> AND MODERN CRITICAL THEORY	
I.	The secular Apocalyptist	1.
Notes		27.
II.	Madness and the Subversion of Form	31.
Notes		91.
III.	The United Aesthetic Field	99.
Notes		178.
PART II	<u>GRAVITY'S RAINBOW</u> : THE CELEBRATION OF SUBVERSION	
I.	Space as Medium and Metaphor	187.
Notes		228.
II.	Personality as Pornography	230.
Notes		283.
III.	Plot and Paranoia	286.
Notes		342.
IV.	Beyond the Myths of Kansas	345.
Notes		374.
V.	Anecdote, Allegory, and Apocalypse	377.
Notes		429.
Appendix	The Plot Sequence of <u>Gravity's Rainbow</u>	432.
Bibliography		442.

PART I

The Apocalyptic Context:

The Problem of Gravity's Rainbow
and Current Critical Theory

I. The Secular Apocalyptist

In the space between the initial screaming across the sky and the final silent descent of the 00000Rocket, Thomas Pynchon creates a fiction and a fictional world whose complexity defies sense. It is both a fiction and a world in which the characters and the reader are enticed by fragments of meaning only to have their sense of coherence undermined by new information. In attempting to understand their experience of reality, the characters in Gravity's Rainbow are confronted with at least two possibilities: paranoia and antiparanoia.¹ For the paranoid all things interrelate in patterns whose overall contours skirt the edges of comprehension; and since he feels alienated from those patterns, they assume for him the malevolence of a master plot that is intended to destroy, control, or at the very least, torment him. For the antiparanoïd, there is no significant pattern of events, and no meaning to experience; and he, like the paranoid, is equally alienated from all other fragments in a fragmented universe.

Both--paranoïd and antiparanoïd--inhabit a world envisioned by Henry Adams that trembles to the touch of time gone mad, its rate of passage increasing exponentially. They inhabit a world in which the individual is trapped in systems that have become so complex that they are able to perceive only

fragments of structures. They are tormented by the nightmare that the patterns they might form are real, and equally racked by the dread that they aren't. It is a world that necessitates either a paranoiac madness that attempts to comprehend all of the connections, whether possible or not, or a psychotic withdrawal that relinquishes any attempt to ascertain the principles of cohesion. All of Pynchon's characters are caught in this double-bind; all are trapped by their world and their text.

Pynchon's readers find themselves in an identical situation when they attempt to analyze the novel. Either all of the allusions and implied connections form a coherent whole, or they are all only events and sequences whose fragmented and random nature simply reflect the situation of modern man. The traps that Pynchon's fictive universe sets for its characters undo the critics as well. Most are aware of this, and the customary apology that precedes most discussions of Pynchon's work are an admission that the reader has distorted the novel in order to make his own sense of it. Regardless of their personal interpretations, most critics agree that the work eludes a totally coherent analysis.

Few, however, have inquired into this aspect of the problem of reading Gravity's Rainbow, and fewer have realized that the difficulty of locating meaning in the conventional sense is one of the novel's central concerns. Gravity's Rainbow simply does not make sense if we read it as we have learned to read most novels because Pynchon has

structured his text to present problems and questions that undermine the very assumptions we have about novels and literature: assumptions concerning the form, structure, and significance of any text, assumptions concerning the relationship of the author to his text and the role of the reader in the act of reading, and assumptions about the nature and functions of knowledge.

Pynchon has made the critic aware of something that many have suspected and feared: that modern critical theory is either in a shambles or remains a fragile amalgam of different approaches whose basic assumptions are antithetical to each other. This confusion of approaches and applications and the inability of modern critics to deal comprehensively with Gravity's Rainbow is obvious from what has been written about the novel. To some critics it is a masterpiece equal to Moby Dick and Ulysses; to others it is unreadable, inhuman, and pornographic.² More seriously, the critics can not even agree over what actually happens to the central character: whether he is among the lost or the saved, the Puritan preterite or elect. They even contradict themselves about the "facts" of the narrative's events. One thing is certain; much that has been written about the novel is accurate and informative, but a disproportionate amount is neither. And most, in terms of theoretical consistency, are merely a pastiche of conflicting techniques of interpretation. This raises a basic question of why this is so. One answer is that Pynchon's work is so complex that it can accommodate a variety of interpretations.

But this reply actually misleads an investigation of the problems by obviating them. It also misdirects the inquiry by focusing on an illusory aspect of the problem. The crux of the matter lies not in the complexity of the novel, but in the way we have learned to read literature, in our expectations of what constitutes a literary work and what its functions and form ought to be. Like Pynchon's characters, his readers are ensnared and deluded by the web of their own preconceptions; and his subversion of our conventional assumptions is an essential element of his strategy in constructing the novel, as well as emblematic of the "meaning" of the work.

Pynchon's Apocalyptic Strategy

Because Pynchon's novel subverts conventional tactics of interpretation, it seems best to approach the novel from as great a conceptual distance as possible before becoming enmeshed in its self-subverting, and often deceptive detail. Since this discussion is not a study of the form of *The Novel* but of the act of reading and the elucidation of a text's meaning, it seems best to begin by approaching the work from the broadest possible category.

Gravity's Rainbow belongs most obviously to the apocalyptic tradition. Most critics have acknowledged this, yet few have realized the significance of Pynchon's use of this tradition. Yet a careful study of Gravity's Rainbow in terms of the apocalyptic tradition reveals, with surprising clarity, the real significance of Pynchon's themes,

techniques, and strategies. It also reveals how the manner of expression and the method of organization are determined by an underlying vision. Finally, it suggests that Pynchon's use of the apocalyptic is analogous to his use of image clusters and narrative elements.

By definition and tradition, an apocalypse is a written revelation, a transcribed account of the end of things as revealed to the writer by a divine agency. Within the strict limitations of the definition, an apocalyptic text within a nontheistic context is impossible. And while Pynchon's god, if he exists, is probably a wily technocrat, his novel is clearly about the end of things, employing apocalyptic themes, attitudes, and techniques.

This conflict between the novel and its traditional context is paradigmatic of other contradictions that are a part of the fabric of Gravity's Rainbow. While the predominant, narrative elements are apocalyptic, the text establishes counter-structures, or counter-codes, that are frequently at odds with the narrative; and these counter-codes, many of which the narrator himself misunderstands, undermine the inevitability of the final holocaust. In a novel in which the law of cause and effect is frequently violated and in which the unexpected, given the least opportunity, will occur, the inevitability of the rocket's final descent over the Orpheus Theater is halted a gasp away from the final impact. It is halted by a song which implies an alternative to the inevitable and which itself assumes the power of a magic chant that can prevent the end.

The song is a metaphoric structure that stands in opposition to the linear narrative of the rocket's descent; and in general it represents a conflict between the narrative, which is concerned with the annihilation of man, and the metaphoric elements, which contain an alternative to oblivion. In linguistic terms, this juxtaposition of the two elements establishes a conflict between the linear, metonymic structures of thought and symbolic, or metaphoric structures of aesthetic discourse.³

By forestalling the end, the song reclaims a space for the alternative to the rocket--life. A truly apocalyptic writer could offer no such possibility because within his vision the end is already predetermined by God. In essence, Pynchon employs the apocalyptic situation and the apocalypticist's narrative strategy to undermine, ironically, the apocalyptic vision. He does this because the apocalyptic is only ironically and tangentially related to his visionary alternative to mass extinction.

Pynchon's novel presents an alternative, and its nature and its relationship to the apocalyptic clarifies the more elusive implications of the novel. Gravity's Rainbow implies that if man continues to exist within the present order of things, apocalypse is inevitable. But on a metaphoric level, there is an implicit alternative. This option involves a radical transformation of man's present mode of consciousness and a total reorganization of the structures of being. It is only in this sense of a total rejection of the present that the novel is apocalyptic; and although

repressed by the weight of narrative detail, glimmers of an alternative to death are apparent in Pynchon's use of the apocalyptic mode. In order to make these appearances clearer, a brief sketch of the counter-vision is useful.

Without the closure of history that the apocalyptist envisions and without a God as the cause of that closure, moments of apocalyptic fervor may be analyzed in strictly human terms. When examined in this light, they reveal striking similarities to, and are examples of, moments in time that Michel Foucault terms radical transformations of value.⁴

According to Foucault, during the nineteenth century, man, by accident, by the chance arrangements of the structures of knowledge, emerged as a self-reflexive, self-conscious entity; and the direction of speculative investigation shifted from the classification of things by their external form or socio-political position to the internal revelations of a personal psychology.⁵ The shift in the terms by which man perceived himself effected a restructuration of the self. A terminology was developed which allowed man to make comprehensible the unthought concepts of human personality; and the Romantic Movement, which culminated in Freud, charted the first metaphoric maps of the human psyche, now considered as a subject in its own right.

But this configuration of the structures of knowledge is a precarious entity, and Foucault as a modern variant of the apocalyptist concludes:

Taking a relatively short chronological sample within a restricted geographical area--European culture since the sixteenth century--one can be certain that man is a recent invention within it. It is not around him and his secrets that knowledge prowled for so long in the darkness. In fact, among all the mutations that have affected the knowledge of things and their order, the knowledge of identities, differences, characters, equivalences, words,--in short, in the midst of all episodes of that profound history of the Same--only one, that which began a century and a half ago and is now perhaps drawing to a close, has made it possible for the figure of man to appear. And that appearance was not the liberation of an old anxiety, the transition into luminous consciousness of an age-old concern, the entry into subjectivity of something that had long remained trapped within beliefs and philosophies: it was the effect of a change in the fundamental arrangements of knowledge. As the archaeology of our thought easily shows, man is an invention of recent date. And perhaps nearing its end.

If those arrangements were to disappear as they appeared, if some event of which we can at the moment do no more than sense the possibility--without knowing what its form will be or what it promises--were to cause them to crumble, as the ground of Classical thought did, at the end of the eighteenth century, then one can certainly wager that man would be erased,⁶ like the face drawn in the sand at the edge of the sea.

Pynchon's novel employs the techniques of the apocalyptic to examine the possibility, nature, and moment of the erasure of that face. But his vision of this moment is ironic, for there are, within the novel, two possible apocalypses. The one is simply the end of things: termination without transformation. The other, closely associated with a symbolic, non-theistic interpretation of the apocalyptic, envisions an end to the present mode of things and a transformation into a different order of being. The counter-structures, or subversive, metaphoric systems of the novel suggest that Pynchon rejects the religious content of the apocalyptic while retaining its structure of transformations. Thus, the novel begins with the epigram, quoting Werner von

Braun: "Nature does not know extinction; all it knows is transformation." The central, ironic choice implicit in Gravity's Rainbow is between death, mistakenly interpreted as transformation (which Pynchon relentlessly parodies), or a different kind of death that leads to life in life. In Foucault's terms, Pynchon envisions either the end of the face as we now perceive it or the destruction of the reality that lies behind its present contours. Thus, if the novel is apocalyptic, it is so only with qualifications which acknowledge the ironic overtones of Pynchon's use of apocalyptic themes and strategies.

A detailed examination of the characteristics of the apocalyptic reveals how consistently and effectively Pynchon employs the mode to subvert it. The tradition can be analyzed in terms of several categories: the apocalyptic moment in history, its vision and its attitudes toward human and divine realities, the apocalypticist's strategy, and the formal elements of apocalyptic writings.

In Western history, apocalyptic writings flourished during three periods. The first, from the second century B.C. to the first century A.D., marked the flowering of the Jewish apocalyptic tradition, which includes the Book of Daniel (165 B.C.), The Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs (c. 2nd century B.C.), and II Esdras (c. A.D. 90). The second period, overlapping the first and lasting from the first to the mid-fourth century, marked the development of the Christian apocalyptic. Although this tradition often merely grafted Christian imagery onto

their Judaic prototypes, it produced a distinctively Christian form in The Revelation of St. John the Divine. The third period, which lasted from the eleventh to the mid-fourteenth century, witnessed a resurgence of interest in, and an increased politicalization of, the apocalyptic mode.

The similarity of the historical and cultural conditions of these periods reveals the structures which promote the apocalyptic. In general, they are periods of great social unrest in which societies with conflicting religious and moral values clash. The apocalyptist both represents and addresses the masses of the oppressed who feel themselves enchained and manipulated by powers over which they have no control. He admonishes the faithful to have patience and to remain steadfast in their values since the end is near when the oppressor will be overthrown by God. In the first two cases, political action is only incidental to the apocalyptic message. In the Medieval period, however, the apocalyptist made this implicit aspect of the vision, that revelation was also revolution, explicit, and he openly promoted political action. Revolution against the oppressor was then extended to a revolt against any form of repression, including sexual inhibition. Consequently, several of the great messianic leaders were notorious for their sexual license.⁷

Pynchon, employing apocalyptic strategies, appropriately sets the novel in the apocalyptic chaos of World War II and emphasizes the sexual promiscuity that accompanies the

despair and mania of war. He sees the war as a transition between modes of consciousness. Adopting mathematical terminology, he calls such transitional periods "singularities," comparing them to points in a mathematical function at which the change from one point to the next is indeterminate and all possibilities open. Singularities, however, have the disturbing quality of being undetectable on the surface. By analogy, Pynchon's novel can describe the apocalyptic moment without the reader, or even the narrator, being aware of its apocalyptic nature. In terms of the narrative, the text creates a satiric surface which, while condemning most of modern existence, establishes a deep structure that, like a singularity point, remains hidden, and that, by rejecting the elements which compose the surface, undermines the old order of sense.

The latent political impulses of the apocalyptist, the desire for total revolution, also appear in Pynchon's manipulation of the mode and his device of narrative voice. In general, the apocalyptic is an expression of the desire for, and the inevitability of, the release from repression. Thus, it accrues personal, and hence psychological, as well as social, implications. Within this context, the apocalyptic may be seen as an infantile fantasy, a projection of oppressed distorted by symbolic displacement. The oppressor is destroyed by unspeakable suffering; gratification is immediate because the end is immanent.

The oppressor, like the apocalyptist himself, plays a double role in the scenario: one literal, the other symbolic.

He is the political enemy, but he is also repression in general. The apocalypticist is a revolutionary force which, in psychological terms, equates him with the resurgence of the repressed. Yet he is also the voice for the collective ideals of his group, and as such, he is equated with the superego. In this function he is also a repressive factor, at odds with the sexual release implicit in the apocalyptic revolt. In essence, he embodies the tension between oppression and release and employs that tension to generate the emotional intensity of his vision. This tension also produces the sense of guilt that pervades the apocalyptic, which includes the good as well as the evil in the final holocaust. It is as if even the good sense the implicit evil of total release.

The ambivalent position of the apocalypticist establishes the foundation for the multiple ironies that the non-theistic apocalypticist sees in the situation. The release of the repressed is both good and evil, depending upon one's perspective; and subjugation has both positive and negative aspects. In Gravity's Rainbow, sexual release, when manipulated by those in power, is useful to the establishment; random, uncontrolled orgasm is a dangerous undermining of the existing order. Yet the revolutionary, aware of the political overtones of free sexuality and unable to overcome his own sense of guilt, since he too is essentially a self-conscious being whose identity is based upon repression, can find release only in sado-masochistic sexuality in which the struggle for power

between the oppressor and the oppressed is reduced to personal terms. Late in Gravity's Rainbow, Thanatz explains to little Ludwig who has found his lost lemming how the State can survive only by prohibiting the natural sado-masochism of genital organization and rechanneling those energies into itself. He asks rhetorically:

Why will the Structure allow every other kind of sexual behavior but that one? Because submission and dominance are resources it needs for its very survival. They cannot be wasted in private sex. In any kind of sex. It needs our submission so that it may remain in power. It needs our lusts after dominance so that it can co-opt us into its own power game. There is no joy in it, only power. I tell you, if S and M could be established universally, at the family level, the State would wither away. (737)

The politics of the apocalyptic moment and the apocalyptic vision determine the apocalypticist's strategy. The apocalypticist attempts to explain the failure of the prophets' oral predictions in order to account for the social chaos and personal suffering of his people. Thus, he interprets symbolically what the prophets intended literally. Specific time periods predicted by the prophet are read metaphorically. A year becomes a year of years. This shift from literal to symbolic is an aspect of the apocalyptic which is also central to Pynchon's strategy. Gravity's Rainbow makes sense only if it is read as a predominantly, if not totally, metaphoric structure; and Pynchon employs the mode precisely because it requires the transformation of literal into symbolic which is analogous to the transformation of sensibility which he envisions.

While interpreting the prophetic symbolically, the

apocalyptist continues to read history literally. He attempts to explain the predominance of evil in a world that exists under a benevolent and omnipotent God, but he views the situation with a radical pessimism. Because of man's sins, God has withdrawn from any active participation in history. Action and motivation, even among the good, have sunk to such depravity that he has no hope for reversing the moral decay of his people. God's only intervention will be to terminate history itself and establish a final, atemporal kingdom.

This termination of history establishes a radical discontinuity between the two modes of past and future existence. After the destruction of the present, fallen world, God will inaugurate an entirely new mode of being. In many apocalypses even the memory of the old order is obliterated.⁹ Since the new order will be universal in scope, the apocalyptist insists upon the universality of his message: all nations and groups will be included in the destruction. Pynchon, although unconcerned with the theological determinants of history except as they appear in their secularized forms, employs these strategies in his metaphors of radical discontinuities and in his encyclopedic analysis of Western history. The two modes of his own vision of pre- and post-apocalyptic sensibilities are juxtaposed in the textual contradictions between the metonymic, narrative structure and the metaphoric counter-codes. Slothrop, the central character, enacts this transformation from literal to post-apocalyptic consciousness,

and Pynchon specifically attributes apocalyptic amnesia to Slothrop's new order of being.

This brief sketch of the apocalyptic tradition reveals a number of other similarities between it and Pynchon's novel. But it also implies some of the inconsistencies that can result from accepting Pynchon's pseudo-apocalypse literally and without an awareness of his ironic attitude toward that mode. The apocalypticist sees himself at the end of time and can therefore catalogue the course of history in terms of cause and effect. Pynchon, adopting this stance, sees himself at the end of a mode of human existence, and therefore can meticulously trace the causal course of Western history from the seventeenth century to the present. From this perspective, as Edward Mendelson notes, he can present an encyclopedic compendium of modern man's development, showing the logical inevitability of his self-destruction.¹⁰

But while the apocalyptic stance permeates the narrative surface and thematic concerns of the novel, Pynchon never fails to subvert it. Cause and effect may quite possibly lead to the end of history, but causality itself is called into question and ultimately rejected as an illusion. In the traditional apocalypse, the good inherit the new order; in Pynchon's ironic version, the afterlife, structured like the corporation, belongs to the corporate elect.

History itself is subject to this pervasive irony. In Gravity's Rainbow, the apocalyptic, closed system of

historical inevitability and decay is allied with the second law of thermodynamics, the law of entropy. According to this law, since energy seeks to establish a state of equilibrium, the hierarchical structures of life and order must inevitably decay into an equal, yet random, distribution of energy--a motionless, heatless death. In several ways, Pynchon structures his novel according to this law, and as the novel progresses the chapter divisions begin to break into fragments, each of which carries almost identical narrative importance. Aside from several metaphoric sequences which intrude into the narrative, the fragments of Book IV convey almost equal amounts of information.

Yet within this closed narrative system, Pynchon undermines the concept of entropy to undermine the apocalypse that the narrative sees as inevitable. Several characters and events defy the law by themselves becoming random entities or symbolic acts. Ursula, Ludwig's lemming who moves too fast to be caught by the camera's frame, defies the death instinct of her species by refusing to drown herself in the North Sea. Slothrop, who is obliquely associated with Ursula, also denies the death instinct of his race. Ironically, Slothrop is to the narrator as Ursula is to the lens of the camera: both escape being framed and fixed. Slothrop quite literally.

Few, if any, critics have noted this connection, but by the end of the novel, the narrator himself admits his inability to capture the real Slothrop. After presenting a reading of Slothrop's tarot in which he notes the total

pervasive mediocrity of the character's life, the narrator comments: "and heh, heh, in his chroniclers too"(738).

Most commentators have read this as a single irony since the novel is anything but mediocre. Yet Pynchon is also being accurate; for with increasing frequency toward the end of the novel, the narrator becomes a very mediocre interpreter of the action and often simply does not understand what Slothrop does. His reading of the tarot, in terms of A.E. Waite's guide to reading the tarot, the guide cited in the text, is both superficial and misleading.¹¹ Slothrop, like Ursula, seem to elude the final apocalypse because they experience a personal one, and the nature of this personal transformation is the core of the novel.

These characters establish a counter-movement to history, and like the post-apocalyptic universe, they are atemporal. They offer an alternative to the apocalyptic sense of history which the structure of the novel parodies. Thus, while the narrative suggests the inevitability of historical sequence, its central concern is with the reversal of cause and effect: the rocket precedes its aural announcement; its effect upon Slothrop precedes the cause of its firing; and, as Franz Pöckler and Von Göll discover, men who make movies that are derived from reality have their own realities shaped by their fictions. Finally, the spokesman for causality, Pointsman, is the most despicable character in the novel, and the most ridiculed. He enters the novel with his foot caught in a toilet bowl and exits in total disgrace, "left only with Cause and Effect, and the rest of his sterile

armamentarium"(752).

Although the countercodes seem to reject causality, the narrator persists in his effort to make literal sense of the action he narrates by continually seeking the causes of Slothrop's "gift" and the nature of "dissolution." And even while he chastises the reader for seeking causal explanations, he projects his own neurotic obsessions upon the reader. In the opening line of the sequence about the undertaker who wishes to be struck by lightning, he addresses the reader: "You will want cause and effect"(663). He then narrates an absurd episode which illustrates cause and effect in extremely bizarre terms.

By rejecting cause and effect, Pynchon refuses to accept the validity of the apocalyptic sense of history. His use of the mode, then, must be seen as ambivalent at least, or, more probably, extremely ironic. Yet critics have failed to realize this point, and this failure is symptomatic of other oversights. They all insist on Pynchon's apocalyptic vision and are inevitably caught with Pynchon's trap for undermining conventional assumptions about books and reality. They fail to realize that there is a contradiction, inversion, or disjunction that is a part of the very fabric of the text, and that this disjunction, or béance,^{11a} allows Pynchon's alternative to surface. To understand the significance of the béance, a closer examination of the disjunction between narrative voice and narrative structure is essential.

In his attempt to validate the oral tradition of the prophets, the apocalypticist developed a written and symbolic medium that contrasted to the literal reading of the oracular pronouncements. According to the general scenario, the writer is presented with his book, or functions as a scribe who writes the words of the vision as they are told to him, or who actually eats the book to acquire its wisdom and then transcribes it. Part of that message is to remain hidden, by the symbology, from the profane. The narrator assumes the stance of the secretary who records the events without necessarily comprehending them. Implicit in this attitude is the idea that the writer is incidental to his text. In fact, the self-consciousness of the writer is unnecessary to the discourse; and as Pynchon's narrator demonstrates, the consciousness of personal voice can actually intrude into and interfere with the message. For Pynchon, the very idea of self lies at the heart of the circumstances that precipitate the apocalyptic situation.

The irrelevance of the author to the text is reinforced by the author's pseudonymity. The apocalypticist traditionally adopted the name of an historical figure of the community to justify the validity of his vision; but he does not see this as a ruse to deceive; he experiences in the intensity of his vision an intersubjectivity with the person whom he cites as author. The individual, overcome by the apocalyptic ecstasy, experiences a continuity and identity with the other members of his type. He merges with them; as they substantiate his validity, he embodies their reality. Inherent

in this experience is the essence of Pynchon's vision: that ego-centered reality and personality is an illusion; and that since the sense of an isolated unique self is a delusion, the apocalypticist's sense of the fluidity of identity is the alternative to our present apocalyptic situation.

Finally, the apocalyptic, as a written tradition, manifests latent assumptions about writing as we now understand it. An apocalypse is superficially an historical report. To remove any taint of the fantastic or idiosyncratic, the apocalypticist adopts the technique of writing the spoken word. He writes what was said or what was said to be. His voice is always paramount because the voice of the collective speaks through him. Yet it is also always the voice of one who is giving testimony. Daniel speaks his vision in the first person, as do Ezra and John. Similarly, Pynchon's narrator intrudes his voice into the entire novel, relating what he often does not comprehend. Even purely objective reporting is often characterized by the stuttering "a-and" of the authorial voice as it merges with Slothrop's own fears.

William Plater comments that "Pynchon's novels reveal, but they do not speak," and this comment is also symptomatic of the misinterpretations of Pynchon's strategy.¹² Plater wishes to emphasize the ambiguity of Pynchon's work by stressing its objective portrayal of the complexities of modern experience without locating them within a limited authorial attitude. He equates the narrative, "show"

aspect of the novel with the closed system of the book which "tells" nothing. But Gravity's Rainbow is dominated by a voice, by the narrator's colloquial and slangy rhythms; and that voice reveals many things about the novel. The logic of this strategy is that if the voice of the narrator contains the system of the novel, and if the voice does not comprehend what it reports, and if that voice and its use of language is equated with the need to make structural significance out of reality, and if the need to make significance also leads to the manipulation of reality which has led to man's present precarious condition, then perhaps there is an alternative to that egocentric, plot-producing, narrative voice: a possible way of speaking that the narrator cannot understand, a way of speaking that is demonstrated by the counter-codes.

The technique of written speech has another significance. It establishes an interface between conventional reality and the fictional, or illusory, reality whose embodiment is the novel. Historical facts become, for the apocalypticist, a part of a vision that transcends them. His work, rooted in reality, is more comprehensive than the established concept of historical reality. Written speech also implies an important assumption about the nature of speech itself. The only way that the apocalypticist can convey his message is through language, yet his vision is beyond words; therefore he must express his vision not in, but through, language. In linguistic terms, he must make the language a self-subverting medium which, by collapsing under its own verbal weight,

reveals a message that is beyond words, or by overloading the symbolic significance of his images, convey a meaning beyond symbols.

In terms of modern communication theory, the technique of the apocalypticist is to convey information or data without necessarily conveying an understanding of that knowledge. It did not matter if the reader understood all that the writer recounted, as long as he felt the emotional imperative of the message. Pynchon deftly employs the same technique. Gravity's Rainbow overwhelms, it does not inform. It induces a state of mind in the reader; it does not inform him or make literal sense.

To communicate the emotive vision, the apocalypticist joins to his written speech a predominantly symbolic mode of expression. The literal account of the historical act, which relies upon a direct connection between the word and its referent, becomes displaced by the metaphoric structure of the vision in which words displace their conventional signifieds: the metonymic illusion of history is consumed by the metaphoric structure of being. This process of the transformation from metonymy to metaphor is so crucial to Pynchon's style that it will be the subject of a later chapter.

Writing the illusion of speech that is itself highly metaphoric augments the effect of information overload that is characteristic of the apocalyptic. By moving from a literal to a symbolic register, the apocalypticist increases the unpredictability of his message. This affects the amount

of information it contains. The rule is that the quantity of information is inversely proportional to the redundancy of the message, that purely formal aspect of the language that is necessary for the message to be understood. In an average English sentence, for example, half of the words used to express a meaning are statistically extraneous and are simply a part of the structure of the language. Thus, as a statement is being uttered, the possible choices for each succeeding element become lessened as the language itself dictates even the type of word that can come next if the message is to be meaningful to a receiver.¹³

In the metaphoric world of the apocalyptist, such limitations are lessened. Since words can accrue new meanings, the probability of any one word succeeding another is lessened. Like his vision, the apocalyptist's speech is a violation of order and form which produces a new kind of meaning. A line from Revelations illustrates this technique: "And the appearance of the locusts was like horses prepared for war, and on their heads they wore what looked like wreaths of gold, and their faces were like the countenances of men"(9,7). Clearly, the possibility of predicting any successive word in this message is less than in ordinary writing. The simile between locusts and horses stretches the imagination though it is a clever comparison; but the wreaths of gold on their heads is even more unexpected. And the final assertion that their faces were like those of men totally transforms the simile from mere comparison into a metaphoric statement as the unpredictability of each

sequence increases. The result is an increased amount of emotive information at the expense of factual, and therefore useable, knowledge. The apocalyptic message puzzles, disconcerts, and teases with implied meanings that escape conventional formulation.

The analogy of this technique to Pynchon's style is obvious. Pynchon takes a literal account of an incident and usually transforms it into a metaphoric structure. What begins as a simple narrative event often becomes a fantasy sequence or a drug-induced hallucination without the slightest clue to the reader, who must then try to interpret the event as metaphor. By the conclusion of the novel, the reader is so susceptible to reading the text metaphorically that he tends to see every event as metaphoric. This technique is so consistently employed that it seems obvious that Pynchon intends the effect. In terms of the vision that underlies the text, the vision which insists that a metaphoric view of reality is the only escape from linear cause-and-effect self-destruction, such an effect is necessary.

By teasing the reader, by disturbing his assumptions about language, conventions, and reality, Pynchon forces him to explore an area of aesthetics that has been underrated by recent Anglo-American criticism. Modern critics tend to view the work of art as a self-contained artifact whose auto-significance somehow elevates its creator above the rest of creation. Yet the apocalypticist intended to affect his reader, and Pynchon's use of the mode undermines

non-affective critical assumptions. While the apocalypticist offered the choice between his own moral system or total damnation, Pynchon offers the choice of either physical annihilation or psychic transformation. It is this central assumption of the apocalypticist that influences Pynchon to adopt the apocalyptic stance, strategy, and style while rejecting the traditional apocalyptic vision.

In summary, from analyzing Gravity's Rainbow in terms of the apocalyptic mode, several important aspects of Pynchon's artistic strategy and narrative technique become apparent. He adopts the style and radical pessimism of the apocalypticist who rejects all aspects of the present historical situation, not because the end is near, even though it is inevitable if man fails to heed his alternative, but because he has a definite choice for the reader to make: to continue on his present, self-destructive course, or to embrace a new mode of existence. Since all conventional modes of existence and ways of understanding reality are based upon the necessity of cause and effect, all these modes of perception must be consumed in the apocalyptic transformation.

Yet if Pynchon rejects cause and effect, how can he intend to affect his reader? His technical solution to this problem is to play upon the reader's belief in causality to subvert it. Gravity's Rainbow becomes an absence of a cause, a verbal vacuum filled with words but no literal, linear significance. Like the V-2 and its reversal of sound and presence, the novel is a negative cause that draws the reader into it, forcing him to arrange its data

according to his own particular neurosis--until he relinquishes the compulsion to organize experience conventionally and experience the reality of being.

Gravity's Rainbow, when understood in terms of Pynchon's ironically apocalyptic strategies, techniques, and vision, reveals its incredible complexity as a coherent whole which includes its contradictions and rifts as a part of its textual fabric. But to understand how this is accomplished requires a reassessment of what we think about texts and the nature of aesthetic communication. We must devise an aesthetic that deals with textual ruptures and establishes a method to determine the core assumptions that unify a ruptured or uncentered text and make it significant. In short, we must devise an aesthetic of the decentered text which itself is based upon the assumption of the reality of the decentered, or non-egoistic self.

Any coherent aesthetic implies an ontology and psychology of the human situation and the human personality. Therefore, before devising an aesthetic in terms of which to approach the novel, we must first explore the ontological situation of the decentered self and then the psychology that experiences it.

Notes to Chapter I

¹Thomas Pynchon, Gravity's Rainbow (New York: Viking Press, 1973). All further references in the text will be to GR.

²For the extremes of these views compare Richard Poirier, "The importance of Thomas Pynchon" in Twentieth Century Literature, 21 (May 1975), 151-62 to the Pulitzer committee's rejection of the work because of its obscenity and un-American portrait of the U.S.A.

³For a detailed discussion of the metonymic-metaphoric polarity see ch. III, pp. 131-34. In general, the metonymic aspect of language assumes a relationship between the word and its referent, as if the word is a part of the reality of the referent, one of its characteristics. The metaphoric, on the other hand, is a total substitution of one signifier for another which alters our concept of the referent or signified.

⁴Michel Foucault, The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences (New York, Pantheon Books, 1970).

⁵Foucault's dating of the "discovery" of man is indeed open to criticism, yet it does possess some validity. Chaucer, for example, could not conceive of himself outside of a hierarchical universe, nor could Dr. Johnson outside of socio-political structures. For both, an understanding

of human personality in terms of the dynamics or economics of human desire was unthinkable. Even in his most psychological biography, "The Life of Savage," Johnson offers only glimmers of a psychological analysis. Clearly, something must have happened in man's view of the nature of things that would allow Coleridge, not half a century later, to write the Biographia Literaria. The point is that, whether we accept Foucault's hypothesis or not, the belief in the possibility of radical transformations is crucial to Brown and Pynchon.

⁶Foucault, pp. 386-87.

⁷My discussion of the structural data of the apocalyptic is indebted to Walter Schmithels, The Apocalyptic Moment: Introduction and Interpretation, trans. John E. Steely (New York: Abington Press, 1975), and Norman Cohen, The Pursuit of the Millenium (New York: Harper and Row, 1961).

⁸One could propose an extremely radical reading of GR on the basis of singularities. If, as the novel suggests, WW II was a point of singularity, then perhaps Pynchon is proposing that a change in consciousness has already occurred, but that, like a singularity which remains invisible until the deep structure of the function is analyzed, the change is as yet unperceived. This could account for the radically different organizational structure of the book as well as Pynchon's ability to even write it.

⁹This would find its parallel in Slothrop's increasing

loss of memory.

¹⁰Edward Mendelson, "Gravity's Encyclopedia" in Mindful Pleasures: Essays on Thomas Pynchon, ed. Geroge Levine and David Leverenz (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1976). Mendelson's analysis is provocative, but because he sees only this aspect of the apocalyptic, he paints a far bleaker picture of Pynchon's vision and man's condition than the novel suggests and forces him to interpret Slothrop's dissolution as a negative, perhaps tragic, action.

¹¹I suggest that it is another of Pynchon's ironies and another means of dissociating himself from the narrator. Although the text cites Waite as the source of his interpretation, Alfred Douglas, who draws from another variation of Tarot lore, presents interpretations that are much more relevant to what actually happens in GR. See Douglas' The Tarot: The Origins, Meaning, and Uses of the Cards (Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1972).

^{11a}I use Jacques Lacan's term because of its appropriateness to the problem of dealing with fissures in the text that are themselves a part of its significance. Lacan uses the word to denote a rent.

resulting from the way in which the original tissue was woven: ...a sort of 'original hole,' never capable of finding its own substance again since it had never been anything other than 'hole-substance'; this hole can be filled, but never more than imperfectly, only by a 'patch'....

This is Anthony Wilden citing Serge Leclair in his notes to Lacan's The Language of the Self: The Function of Language in Psychoanalysis (New York, Dell, 1968), p. 98, n.23.

¹²This problem of determining a significant reality beyond words is the central concern of most modern theoretical investigations. If language does not anchor in reality, it is merely a free-floating structure, and literature a totally self-containing artifact, and reality remains forever unknown. Chapter III attempts to deal with this problem and establish some bases for anchoring language in reality.

¹³Communication theory becomes extremely important in any study of Pynchon since he often includes discussions of this topic in his novels. In my analysis of this aspect of the novel I draw from Abraham Moles, Information Theory and Esthetic Perception (Urbana, Ill.: U. of Illinois, 1966).

II. Madness and the Subversion of Form

"The Garden and the Map"

Although Pynchon shares many of the apocalypticist's attitudes and employs many of their techniques, he cannot be categorized as an apocalyptic writer in the exact sense of the term since the ontology of his vision is radically different from theirs. Like the traditional apocalypticist, he sees the present mode of reality as beyond redemption, but unlike them, he sees the final holocaust as man's own creation, not an act of God. Similarly, he does not see redemption in divine terms, but as a human possibility--even if a very unlikely one. This redemptive vision, although elusive in the text, influences every aspect of it: narrative technique and character development, plot structuration and thematic statement; and as he employs the apocalyptic to undermine its essence, he employs the form of his text to undermine the form of the novel.

Because Pynchon's vision is so elusive, many critics have failed to note its crucial function within the novel, and the result is that they frequently misread the significance of the text. These misreadings fall into three categories. The first, rather polemical, group overlooks the the visionary aspect completely and sees the novel only as a condemnation of Western civilization and Slothrop as the quintessential

schlemiel. The second group also fail to see the vision's unifying function and hence see the novel as extremely ambivalent about its attitude towards society and Slothrop. They praise Pynchon's ability to portray and interrelate widely divergent themes and attitudes. For them, Pynchon remains an objective, yet extremely complex author in the traditional mold. The third group intuits the redemptive processes in the novel, but misunderstand its nature. They lament the moral failure of the hero who never succeeds in transcending his environment but merely withdraws into the realm of personal fancy.¹

While it would be intellectually safer to account for the complexities and problems of the novel by appealing to its ambiguities, it would also be an evasion of a critic's responsibility to account for an important aspect of the work: that it has a meaning in some sense, and that it intends to affect the reader in some way. To prove this, it must be demonstrated that the unstructured and associational quality of the text is in fact anchored to a central controlling vision which involves definite attitudes toward reality and literature. This may seem reductionistic to those who savor the ambiguities of Pynchon's work, but it is truer to the novel.

The problem that most critics have in interpreting the novel is that Pynchon's vision is based upon a concept of reality that is divergent from the main tradition of Western thought. This predominantly rationalistic tradition is itself based upon several assumptions. The first is that

reality follows the law of cause and effect; that A can cause B. The second is that a logical understanding of reality must assume the principle of contradiction that something cannot be and not be itself; that A cannot be not-A. The third is the assumption of egocentrality in human consciousness. Implicit in these assumptions is the principle of discreteness: that reality, if it is understood in terms of mutually exclusive categories, can be logically understood and thereby manipulated. The logical extension of these principles leads to the concept of reality in which the self is a mind trapped in a body, and the person forever divided between two logically independent modalities. The principle of contradiction leads Descartes to this impasse. Since I am I, I cannot be the world, or the other. And since all that I know are my own thoughts, I cannot be my body which has no thoughts and which is not of the same logical category as thought. In essence, the Cartesian body became a machine, the same body-machine that the schizophrenic inhabits--and the schizophrenic, like many of Pynchon's characters and like many modern men, is a person in pieces, a centerless, fragmented being lost in an alien world.

Pynchon, along with a growing number of artists, philosophers, scientists, and critics, no longer accepts the basic assumptions of this epistemology. They reject the mechanics of Newtonian physics because of its artificial division of reality into the discrete categories of time and space; and they embrace the relativistic, yet

unified universe of Einsteinian theory. They reject the solipsistic, Cartesian ego in favor of a revisionistic interpretation of the Freudian model of mind. They also question many of the assumptions of Classical-Greek philosophy which is the basis of modern thought. They argue that the traditional understanding of reality has in fact created a reality that is destructive, schizophrenic, and illusory, a reality that will eventually lead to the fulfillment of man's collective death instinct. They suggest that the madness of clinical schizophrenia is simply the logical result of conventional patterns of thought carried to an extreme. Whether these attitudes are relevant or not to the actuality of life, they are crucial to Gravity's Rainbow and works like it which insist that they be confronted in their own terms. If the critic or reader is too quick to judge, he simply misses their messages.

The world of the schizophrenic pervades Pynchon's universe--even the narrator exhibits clinical symptoms of the madness--and modern studies of the disease throw light on its function in the novel. Two relevant authors who examine the schizophrenic tendencies of Western thought are John Vernon in The Garden and the Map², and Norman O. Brown in Life Against Death, "Apocalypse: The Place of Mystery in the Life of the Mind," and Love's Body.³ Both authors are relevant since they derive their thought from many of the same traditions that Pynchon taps: German idealism, phenomenology, structuralism, and non-egocentric psychologies, all combined with elements of mysticism.

Vernon's discussion of schizophrenia introduces terms and ironies that Brown also employs in Love's Body, which itself is strikingly similar, in theme and structure, to Gravity's Rainbow. Vernon uses the metaphors of the garden and the map as polarities to illustrate the schizophrenic trends in modern epistemology and literature. By examining the structure of the original garden myth and its impact on modern literature and by comparing it to the social and religious structures of primitive tribes, Vernon extrapolates the principal features of what he terms garden consciousness. Essentially, it is pre-egostructured consciousness in which all things exist in a continuum without physical and mental differentiation. Once having lost the garden, however, man experiences a dissociation from it which is paradigmatic of all other dissociations. Since man no longer participates in the plenum of being, he becomes objective; and with the discovery of objectivity, he begins his first mapping of reality.

This mapping, Vernon argues, has mental, social, and philosophical repercussions, and its causes can be explained in terms of these categories. In general, the dissociation from plenitude, the sense of a lack which characterizes map consciousness is exhibited in its predisposition to see things as mutually exclusive polarities: mind and body, self and world, and space and time. In the garden, space is relative since it is an integral component of time which by its passing modifies the space. Each space is potentially a central, holy space because all space is potentially magical

and divine. Separated from the garden, man abstracts space from time and makes it pure architecture, the basis for all map-making. When space has been fixed and static, it becomes a commodity to be possessed. It is therefore an analogue and creation of the self, since once that is discovered, it becomes an object to be possessed and protected. Pynchon repeatedly toys with this perversion of mythic or magic space as an analogue of the self in which both are reduced to commodities to be owned. The battle of the Argentine anarchists against the centralization of the Peronists and the perversion of the Herero's tribal space into the symbol for the rocket firing sequence are the most obvious examples of this literalization and mapping of space. But not only is space abstracted from time, the components of space are abstracted into the abscissas and ordinates of the Cartesian plane. Having done this, man can then objectively locate things in space, exert his power of it, and eventually make rockets to destroy it. He can make maps that help him destroy the space they represent. Thus, on the map, symbols of emotive significance are literalized and abstracted into elements with only a marginal, referential relationship to human, emotive reality.

Although Vernon only mentions Pynchon in passing, the map-garden opposition is important to Gravity's Rainbow. The map is the principal plot device which generates the narrative, and therefore associates the novel itself with map consciousness. Slothrop's "gift" for predicting the rocket's landing site by his erections is discovered by

British intelligence when they realize that the map of his sexual conquests is congruent with the map which locates the rockets' points of impact. Also, almost every major character is concerned, to varying degrees, with mapping reality. Pointsman maps it in terms of the on-off excitation of nerve cells; and Roger Mexico, although more aware of the complexity of reality, has his map of statistical probabilities. At the extreme, when map-neurosis joins with paranoia, there are the various political groups who literally obliterate entire cultures to make reality fit their mapping of it: the Germans in South West Africa, the Argentine centralists, the Russians in the Kirghiz, and, the paradigm for them all, Fritz Van der Gaff on the island of Mauritius. There are also two literal map structures in which the symbolic becomes concretized. The first is the map of the complex inhabited by the double agents, a sinister network of corridors, rooms, and building whose surreal, comicbook quality mocks the quiet frenzy and panic of the now-useless double agents. The second is the map of the City Dactylic, the world of the future in which the complex of the double agents is extended to universal proportions and all are controlled and every action supervised. It is the City which is in all of us, since in Pynchon's view we are all double agents, working for both our real selves and our sense of self which is actually a product of others.

Related to the maps of geographical space are the technological designs which are doubly removed maps of reality: the parabolic design of the entrance to Nordhausen

and the double integral shape of its interior corridors, the map of the rocket trajectory, and the chemical mapping of the benzene ring. In all cases, the map is sinister and abstract.

Opposed to the maps are the gardens. Vernon's binary opposition of these two metaphors oversimplifies the situation since both elements help comprise consciousness, but the reductive simplicity of the opposition helps clarify Pynchon's more complex use of them. As Vernon notes, gardens appear under two guises. From the perspective of the map consciousness, the garden is threatening, an amorphous space in which the self is lost and order replaced by chaos. But this, according to Vernon, is actually the map consciousness's perverted vision of the garden. The true garden is a place of indifferentiation, and of coming together and moving apart in an organic flux of energy. This garden-map dichotomy presents the same opportunity for ironic juxtapositions as does the theistic and non-theistic apocalyptic, and Pynchon often uses these possibilities. The double significance of the garden as a place of loss or a place of discovery is manifested by the Zone of post-war Germany. The Zone has no definite boundaries, only a network of interrelated conspiracies and political coalitions. In this negative aspect, the garden can literally consume the unwary traveler and obliterate all self-consciousness with its profusion of drugs.

But the Zone also has positive, edenic spaces which reveal its true nature and which Slothrop discovers on his

way to Cuxhaven. By Book IV, roaming through the garden spaces of northern Germany, he merges with garden existence and becomes a vehicle for the vision of the rainbow penis fertilizing the opulent earth. Pynchon, careful to identify these two aspects of the garden, the real garden and its perversion, establishes their respective significance by the presence of the windmill or the rocket fin, the latter being the map-perversion of natural energy.

By interpreting Gravity's Rainbow in terms of the map-garden duality, we can discern its redemptive structures. Pynchon, mutually parodying both visions of reality, employs the garden vision to determine the shape, and undermine the map structuration of the novel. This is particularly relevant in the assessment of what happens to Slothrop. Since we tend to read novels as mappings of reality or analogues to the real world, and since mapping is a central characteristic of modern consciousness, we would ordinarily interpret Slothrop's dispersal, as does the narrator, who as story-teller embodies map consciousness, to represent either a failure of his moral responsibility or a tragedy of middling consequence; the poor fool simply couldn't cope. Yet the positive aspects of the garden suggest a different assessment of Slothrop's dispersal; he enters a mode of existence that is foreign to map consciousness and eludes the map structuration even of the narrator. As we saw in Pynchon's use of the apocalyptic, he establishes a narrator who, by the very nature of his being, cannot fully comprehend his narrative.

Other aspects of the map-garden duality are significant to Gravity's Rainbow: the mythic and historical accounts of the transformation of the garden into map consciousness, the physical aspects of reality as experienced in each and the psychic structures that differentiate them, and finally the literary forms which identify each.

The mythic account of the map-garden transformation reveals further aspects of map consciousness. According to the general pattern of edenic myths, man enters a world of unity and interpenetration. Experience is full, and the individual being derives his significance from his relationships to the entire nexus of that which is not, from a map perspective, himself, i.e. from what we will call, adopting Hegel's term, "the Other."⁴ Nothing can be abstracted from this whole and retain significance. If men were not gods within this mythic space, they at least enjoyed a direct communication with the divinities, which implies a degree of reciprocity between them.

But then the fall occurs. Man severs himself from the plenitude of edenic being. The fruit of the Genesis myth is a symbol of that primal dissociation; the promise that they will be like gods lures the primal pair into the transgression. Underlying that sin, however, is a more serious lapse. The promise itself contains the first error: the belief that they are not gods, that they are separate from divinity. This first separation instigates the realization of their own lack of fullness. It is at this moment that Adam and Eve, discovering their lack of full

being, discover themselves; and only after making this first cognitive dissociation can they make the moral choice of taking the fruit. The primal sin, then, is not against God, but against reality.

Having discovered themselves by discovering their own lack, they now discover desire, the desire to overcome and possess the Other in order to fill their own emptiness. Thus the function of desire is to establish the self in a world of objects which can be controlled and owned. Adam names his first son, Cain, which means property. Given this mythic account for the beginning of man, the self can be nothing but the name given to a locus of being that is a lack of fullness which, by being named, is confirmed as a real entity.

The psychological parallels to this scenario are those of the child's loss of plenitude which results from his separation from the mother. But there is also another interpretation of the myth. The Fall is also the fall into a schizophrenic relationship between one's own fullness and the plenitude of reality. The substructure of most edenic myths is based upon severance, dislocation, and dissociation. Vernon summarizes and interrelates many of these topics in his preface. He argues that this dissociation is intrinsic in Western thought, which has sectioned off large areas of human experience and labeled them as madness in an effort to secure the predominance of what we term sanity. But the madness-sanity dichotomy is itself only another madness, another manifestation of the

schizophrenic tendencies of conventional thought, which applies the principles of contradiction and discreteness to all aspects of reality. Vernon concludes:

This is the defining characteristic of Western culture: it is schizophrenic, in that it chooses to fragment its experience and seal certain areas off from each other. It drains the fantastic, the mad, and the subjective out of their unity with the self and the world, out of the condition by which they are not even differentiated yet, and locks them in a common inaccessible space.

The advantage of this is obvious: the chunk of reality left behind, which is then the only reality, is more manageable, cleaner, safer, more "objective," since it has been cleansed of the emotional, the qualitative, the unpredictable. But the disadvantages should be obvious also: a whole area of experience, an area that should not be self-enclosed has been made inaccessible.... [In] the West it is a pure separate space, and one can connect with it only by withdrawing from reality, by becoming insane. Of course the reality one withdraws from is equally insane, equally unreal, since it is⁵ an incomplete chunk of the real feigning completeness.

The problem of discussing this situation is that insanity applies to both aspects, the garden and the map, depending upon where one chooses to anchor reality. Vernon argues that reality lies in their interpenetration, but even this appears insane to the map consciousness. As will become apparent from an extensive analysis of Gravity's Rainbow, Pynchon, although he seems to play with all aspects of the ambiguous duality, also anchors his text in this belief.

Gravity's Rainbow's controlling metaphor for examining the map-garden duality is paranoia-antiparanoia. Both seem to be equally maddening alternatives; and most critics, unable to relinquish their own map-making instincts, see Slothrop's final dissolution in terms of a lapse into

antiparanoia. Yet this is precisely the way his dissolution would appear to one dominated by map consciousness, as is the narrator. The additional problem of seeing Slothrop as antiparanoic is that the text itself ultimately reveals this to be a false disjunction.

The physical characteristics of the garden and of the map are analogous to their mythical and psychological structures. In the garden, space and time are experienced as a unity.⁶ In map structures, time and space are abstracted into discrete elements. Newtonian calculus, for example, is based upon this concept, and one of its fundamental uses is to remove the temporal factor from an equation to produce a spatial map of an object's movement. Pynchon refers to this aspect of the calculus in his discussions of the rocket and its technology and in its literal embodiment in the rocket factory at Nordhausen. Corresponding to the division of time and space is the isolation of elements of space on the Cartesian axis.

Once space is fixed, it becomes an object. The world as object, the body as object, and space as object gives rise to the need to possess objects as commodities; and the need to keep an accurate record of those commodities, according to Vernon, necessitates the invention of counting. Implicit in this need is the necessity to invent the zero which makes counting possible. Zero, however, can only be meaningful in a map structure since, like the ego of self-consciousness, it denotes a lack or absence of significance and makes it real by giving it a linguistic form and context.

The zero is unimaginable to the consciousness of the garden which experiences no such lack. The concept of zero is both immediately obvious, yet ambiguously complex, in Gravity's Rainbow, and it demands careful analysis. In general, however, an opposition is created between map-consciousness, ego-structuration, and mathematics, and garden consciousness, magic or myth, and ego-loss.

Since the schizophrenic merely reproduces, in the extreme, the dissociations and assumptions implicit in Western thought, Vernon argues that the structure of map consciousness is congruent with schizophrenia. Experiencing a radical disjunction between himself and his body, the schizophrenic becomes a commodity that others seek to manipulate, control, and possess. He develops protective masks and false-self systems to defend his secret being from the hostile world of the Other. He may either totally withdraw from the external reality or merge into it, and both alternatives seem equally absurd to the "norms" of society.⁷ There are similarities between these options and those faced by the characters of Pynchon's novel. All are faced by situations which can produce the schizophrenic reaction, situations which offer no real choice except withdrawal, situations of paranoia and antiparanoia.

The schizophrenic, experiencing the world as object, often becomes obsessed with hoarding objects and keeping catalogues of them. Pynchon's narrator is equally obsessive in his compulsive enumeration of objects and details, and this is an important signal that he is perhaps as neurotic

as the characters in his narration, and that he is not to be trusted any more than any character in the narrative.

A final equation emerges from this analysis of Gravity's Rainbow in terms of the garden-map duality. Analogous relationships are established among several components: map making, mathematics, obsession with detail, ego-structuration, and the making of narratives. The reader might reject such an equation when judged in light of his actual experience of reality: after all, society itself depends upon ego structuration; and progress, for all its limitations, is better than primitivism. Yet to understand writers like Brown and Pynchon, such objections must be held in abeyance until they have been allowed to express their vision. If one wishes to make judgments at that point, that is a personal decision. But even then, such judgments are, in a way, extraneous to Brown and Pynchon's thought which rejects the logical processes by which such judgments are made.

Love's Body: The Ontology of Madness

In his three studies of the ontology of modern man, Norman O. Brown elucidates the specific characteristics of modern consciousness, its history and ultimate failure to deal with reality, and the way out of the madness of sanity. Although he does not mention the map-garden duality, the ironic relationships between those two modes of experience

are central to his analyses of what he sees as modern mass madness in Love's Body.

This book, which is the most relevant of his works to Gravity's Rainbow, is the culmination of Brown's attempt to analyze modern man's unconscious desire for self-destruction. Brown's analysis of this impulse began in Life Against Death, which examined history as the record and result of man's neurosis. From his analysis, Brown concludes that man's sexual guilt and its resulting repression is finding a perverted release of erotic energies in an ever-increasing frenzy of self-punishment that will climax in the extinction of the race. Having followed the development of man logically and having justified his observations by a pragmatic analysis of modern experience, Brown concludes that, within conventional modes of consciousness, there is no future for human existence. His radical pessimism sees no salutary escape, but the last chapter of Life Against Death offers hints of another, perhaps mystical, alternative.

In a Phi Beta Kappa oration entitled "Apocalypse: The Place of Mystery in the Life of the Mind," Brown renews his attempt to find a way out of man's predicament. It records the new direction he will take to affirm human significance. Assuming the apocalypticist's stance, he issues his summons to madness.

Accepting Brown's assumptions, the progression from Life to "Apocalypse" follows its own logic. Since his analysis of Western history leads to the conclusion that man is destroying himself, and since that history reveals a continually increasing

repression of the anarchic, instinctual energies, Brown concludes that it is repression that is necessitating the self-destruction. Since man is civilized by virtue of his repression, and since civilization, its artifacts, its history, and its systems are products of repression, they too are projections of our self-destructive impulses. What, he asks, is it that we repress so vehemently, and why? He returns to Freud for the answer. To civilize himself and to control reality, man must define, encompass, and control the boundless reservoir of energy which operates and influences consciousness, while itself remaining unknown--the unconscious. He concludes that, although repression of the instinctual unconscious leads to civilization, it also leads to death. Like Vernon, he sees the double ambiguity of the situation, but he also sees it as a further deception. Civilization is only a ruse, devised by consciousness, to construct a more diffuse, less overtly sinister fulfillment of the ego's death instinct. Two assumptions are crucial to Brown's vision. First, and here he differs with Freud, Brown posits that the unconscious is purely an erotic force; and second, he asserts that civilization, as a product of repression and ego-structuration, since it reveals the death instinct, also reveals that the death instinct is exclusively an ego function and not a component of the unconscious. He concludes that, if the repression of the unconscious has led man to the brink of annihilation, then man has nothing to lose by choosing to re-orient his consciousness according to a different configuration of elements: the mode of unconscious

release that has been described, historically, as madness.⁸

Brown is fully aware of the dangers inherent in his statement. "It is possible to be mad and be unblest; but it is not possible to get the blessing without the madness; it is not possible to get the illumination without the derangement."⁹ He formulates his argument in the terminology of the classical Apollonian-Dionysian duality, but the rationale is based upon his empirical evaluation of modern experience. Since we are doomed the way we are going, and are inextricably a part of the cause of our doom, what is to be lost, he questions, by an attempt to reorganize our mode of existence.

Love's Body is an explanation of the nature of this new mode of consciousness; but since the vision rejects ego-structuration, the text attempts to elude rational systemization. This presents the reader with problems of interpretation that are similar to those posed by Gravity's Rainbow. By the time the reader has assembled the fragments of the text into a semblance of logical coherence, and by the time the reader has realized the argumentative edge of the essay, the argument has discarded its semblance of logical development and dissolved into its style. The style, in turn, becomes the dominant metaphor and principal thematic vehicle.

Brown alludes to the significance of style in the preface to Love's Body. Citing the radical pessimism he reached in Life, he states that "God found an opening for the unexpected," and therefore the continuity between

LAD and LB "is fractured."¹⁰ The fracture is both an opportunity for insight and a stylistic method by which to express that insight. The preface itself is the last instance of formal prose in the book, and the imagery is prophetic of its stylistic development. Both the style and the form of LB are fractured to avoid even the shape of the established systems of logical expression which he sees as the old artifacts of repression. Since this includes the very form of the essay, he employs the assumptions we have of the nature of the essay to undermine it.

A few definitions are useful in examining what Brown's strategy is in undermining the form of the genre. Although any definition of the essay can be misleading, a few generalization will serve as useful tools in outlining its essentials. The essay may be divided into two categories: the formal and the informal. The formal is characterized by seriousness of purpose and tone, by emphasis on logical organization, and by the degree and depth of its treatment of the subject. The informal essay, looser in formal structure, is characterized by an obvious authorial voice that emphasizes the personal viewpoint. It also assumes a more tentative stance in its statement of theme, while often revealing a sense of humor and a greater willingness to experiment with form. LB establishes a tension between these two categories, and employs this tension to subvert both into an ambiguous middle ground which itself is then subverted and further distanced from the conventions of the

genre. Thus, the seriousness of tone, the apparent rigor of logical development, and the scope of the content which characterize the opening chapters are replaced by the puns, the novelty of form, and the revelation of personal voice. Having been structurally blurred into an intermediate category, the essay is then revealed to be not an essay at all, but an intellectual, perhaps fictive, autobiography. This process might be termed the negative dialectical subversion of form in which elements, rather than becoming synthesized into increasingly broader units of meaning, actually subvert their significance.

The old form of the essay, then, becomes for Brown symbolic of the old mode of consciousness which was based upon ego-organization. Given these assumptions, the burden of LB is to destroy itself in an attempt to find a new mode of expression for the new mode of consciousness. Implicit in this concept of generic form as an imprisoning constraint that is symbolic of the general prison of the structure of self-consciousness is a radical re-interpretation of the concept of mimesis. Traditionally, for example, the novel is seen as a mimesis of human action and motivation which represents the physical landscape in which we experience the particulars of reality and the emotive landscape that contains, within the bounds of probability, the psychological dynamics of personality which the reader accepts as analogous to those of human experience. The essay's mimetic surface must correspond

to the intellectual landscape of our ideas. Brown, however, equates the text, as mimesis, with consciousness and ego-structuration which, in his terms, is also a mimesis. Texts and ego are of the same logical category; thus, whatever represented logical thought or perceived experience is discarded as the surface illusion of the work, the ego-projection that distorts reality.

This enables Brown to undermine the problem of a work's correspondence to reality. In essence, any conventional work of art is as illusory as the ego that creates it.¹¹ As a result, an analysis of LB requires more than a rational explanation of its thematic development; it requires an understanding of the nature of the destruction of form.

The nature of this self-subversion and its mode of presentation illustrate key elements of Brown's vision. Brown sees beyond conventional modes of experience and his language extends beyond linguistic norms, pushing them to the extreme and yet still making them convey a semblance of sense. Yet, because all linguistic artifacts entail the use of language and because language itself is a basis for ego-structuration, Brown, like Pynchon, ultimately focuses his attention on the analysis of words themselves to reveal their inherently deceptive nature. We find ourselves at the edge of language, and both Brown and Pynchon are engaged in shaping our sense of syntax in order to undermine our concept of syntax itself, and in reviving, or revealing, the latent import of words.

This situation and strategy produces a unique problem for the poet of nontheistic apocalypse. Brown, like Pynchon, writing from a perspective which assumes a stance beyond repression and language, must write for those who are still enchained by denotation. Thus, every line, word, and image is chosen for its ability to be polyvalent, to function on several levels at once with the variant meanings often opposed to each other. It must make enough sense on a denotative level to lead the reader beyond that level to an understanding of its multi-symbolic significance. Again, as was apparent in the linguistics of the apocalyptic, Brown attempts to subvert the linear into the symbolic. To accomplish this, Brown makes every verbal element become a parody of itself. In Book X of LB he will speak of two wars and two fires, one evil and one salutary, which appear similar on the surface, yet are inherently parodic of each other. Pynchon, in a similar fashion, establishes a parallel between the bombing of England and the bombardment of Slothrop's personality, and between the ambiguity of the political geography of post-war Germany and that of personal identity. In both cases the former is a destructive process while the latter implies different, redemptive modes of being.

To appreciate, and comprehend, texts like LB the reader must adopt a perspective which can acknowledge both aspects of the parody simultaneously. This polyvalent perspective is symbolic of another aspect of both Brown's

and Pynchon's vision which appears as the tension between linear and vertical time. Linear time is the illusion created by the causal sequence of temporal phenomena that appears to lead to a logical end, while vertical, or relative, time is a fluid time-space continuum in which events that seem sequential may not be so, in which events may actually overlay each other to produce a new reality. Vertical time is not a negation of falling apart and coming together, but a negation of their non-interdependence and non-contemporaneity.

An understanding of vertical time is related to, and implies a modification of, the standard concept of analogy, in the broad sense of that word. Within the context of conventional linguistic patterns, an analogy is a temporal and spatial comparison. Two objects are set side by side, and attributes of one are applied to the other. We usually read this relationship unidirectionally. In the proposition that art is like life, we assume that art possesses certain qualities that are similar to those of reality; that it exhibits a logic of motivation and action that are similar to those of the "real" world. We never read the assertion in reverse unless we do so ironically to see how ironic and absurd the reading is. The radical vision of Brown and Pynchon and the resulting styles of their writing not only reads analogy in reverse, but insists upon the total interchangeability of the elements of an analogy. This is the basis for the linguistic tension between a word and

its many possible meanings which is the shaping force for their most important works. It is also the basis for the linguistic tension which both authors manipulate in order to force the reader to experience, if only for a moment, the reality of their vision. In general, these books utilize the conventional artifacts of man, his philosophical systems, his literary forms, and his linguistic structures to push them beyond the point of cohesion, while simultaneously denying their validity, to push them beyond reason to demonstrate their irrationality.

The formal and imagistic structure of LB is labyrinthine, yet it cannot be simplified into an analysis of separate categories, since to do so would lead to an undersatnding of parts that are undermined by the whole. The sixteen chapters coalesce into five triads and a concluding paeon to Nothing. The first triad explores the nature of the family and its social manifestations; the second examines the state as the projection and embodiment of the psychological, familial, and mythological structures detailed in the first triad; and the third explores the nature of the individual's psychology. The fourth triad presents the apocalyptic experience; and the fifth presents and delineates the nature of the post-nontheistic apocalyptic order. Although separable as distinct sections, the triads are bound to each other, interweaved as are the components of the vision they represent, and incorporate each other in the interrelation of analogous elements. Each

triad is distinguished by the predominance of a type of imagery and thematic concern, but no one triad is isolated from the others. Brown, while discussing the illusion of the ego as an artificial boundary that separates the self from the world, aptly explains the formal principles of the triadic divisions:

The existence of the "let's pretend" boundary does not prevent the continuance of the real traffic across it. Projection and introjection, the process whereby the self as distinct from the other is constituted, is not past history, an event in childhood, but a present process of continuous creation. The dualism of self and external world is built up by a constant process of reciprocal exchange between the two. (146-47)

The first triad examines the family structure as both the primal projection of mind and its paradigmatic shaper. He interprets the myth of the Primal Hoarde as the basis for all political and psychological systems, implying that myth is the latent content of history itself. The sons are ruled by the primal father, the archetypal monarch, who controls the women and the goods. Unable to endure his rule, the sons revolt, slaughter him, and devour his body. Two problems then arise: who is to possess the goods, and how are they to divide the property. The solution is the creation of the fraternal organization. This entails the formulation of the politics of democracy and, ultimately, the Marxist state--democracy's teleological ideal in which all of the children share equally the goods of the father.

But the image of the father haunts the sons, and in an act of appeasement they relegate him to the realm of ghosts,

appeasing his vengeance by making him the totem of the clan, the absolute criterion by which they define themselves. The sons have committed their crime to no avail; and ironically, they discover that they are still unable to capture the woman each wants. Unable to possess the mother, they recreate their world, imposing their own psychological structures on it, to replicate the shape of the mother's body, to possess their geographical inheritance. The objectification of space in order to possess it is, for Brown, the first displacement of the incestual fantasy, the first abstraction of reality.

Thus, the early fraternal organizations provided the protection that the mother had given them, and the sons shape the tribal territory into the body of the mother.¹² Nature becomes Mother Nature; and consequently "geography is the geography of the mother's body"(p. 36). The original geography becomes the first map of reality that attempts to make the absent figure of the mother symbolically represented in the ordering of space; and such a symbolic representation implicitly reveals a dissociation of the being from that geography, from that mother-figure, and from that world. As a result, man is born from the womb into the womb--for Brown, from the womb of being into the womb of abstracting consciousness; yet his psychological freedom is yet to be born. His consciousness is limited by the image of the uterus, the cave, and the labyrinth--the obstacle course he must conquer in order to face the ultimate demon, establish

his worth, and secure his right to propagate his own kind. Brown argues that it is, in fact, the right to be born. Thus, all wandering is wandering within the mother; and after birth, it is a wandering attempt to return to her, to finally get what he wanted when he killed the father. The son, then, becomes the hero of the impossible, the lord of contradictions, the phallic hero "in a permanent state of erection; pricking o'er the plains," unaware that the plains are the real, unconscious object of his pricking (50).¹³

The space he attempts to subjugate is the female space, the adult projection of a childish fantasy. Ironically, this projection of mental structures upon the matter of reality is perceived as a dissociation of the self from the world. This first split is then followed by another. "The split of the self from the environment, and of self into both self and environment, is also a split of self or soul from body....The dreamer sees himself, a double of himself"(51). By positing a categorical distinction between the soul and the world, we are forced into one between the concrete form and the energy that it embodies. This distinction continues despite relativity's proof that the form is energy. By positing a body discrete from a force, we distinguish a difference between a real self and another, a difference between the self and its physical manifestations. Consequently, the body becomes a mediating entity that interrelates the self with the external world. As a result, the body becomes, in both naive and sophisticated

societies, an object, inhabited by the real being who must fight for possession of that body. Consequently, the body becomes an object to be possessed, the plunder of warfare; and as possessors of bodies, we are projections of ourselves, doubles, the stuff dreams are made of.

And the ultimate dream is still to get back into the mother; but this can be accomplished only through the father, the father's penis. The penis in the womb, however, is the penis devoured by the void, and sex becomes a "battle in which the prize is the penis"(63). The parents in coitus is the woman with the penis; "Girl*phallus" becomes the resulting symbolic equation (62); every girl, like Athena, is a phallus incarnate.

To be the penis in the womb is to witness the primal scene. It is to be excited and to fear punishment, to partake from a distance in safety. The desire for excitation coupled with the fear of punishment, however, is the root of sado-masochism; it is "an endless and vicious cycle in which subject and object are confused; active and passive, male and female roles are exchanged, in the desire and pursuit of the whole, combined object"(70).

The desire to partake from a distance is also the root of the theater of the ego. In the sado-masochistic fantasy, the child is the viewer who sits in the dark corner and watches the forbidden show. The need for this protective distancing is the impulse which first establishes the distance from the "real" self which is innocent of the

"dirty" crime and the imaginary other who is guilty. This is the psychological origin of theater and the basis for the erotics of reading. All early drama is drama of the family, of the parents, of the parents in coitus. Trapped within the matrix of psychological tensions into which he is born, man cannot escape his perversions since they shape the child. The child is the first social artifact.¹⁴

In the second triad, Brown explores the molding of the child as a political act. It is the same story of the family, only introjected. The fear of the father establishes the superego; and the mother, as instrument of the reality principle, helps precipitate the ego. The being, originally nothing but a sea of energy, is repressed. And the shape of the repression is a product of the parents' own neuroses. Personality is a doubly neurotic artifact.

It is important, at this point, to realize an assumption that Brown makes that is essential to his vision and which marks his departure from Freud and rational analysis. For Brown, the shape of ego identity determines the manner in which the id energy is released because the original libido, undisturbed and unshaped, needed no particular outlet since it experienced no boundaries. Brown makes a leap of faith at this point, and it is here that his radical body mysticism breaks with traditional Freudian theory.

The unconscious is rather that immortal sea which brought us hither; intimations of which are given in moments of "oceanic feeling"; one sea of energy or instinct; embracing all mankind, without

distinction of race, language, or culture; and embracing all the generations of Adam, past, present, and future, in one phylogenic heritage; in one mystical body. (p.89)

Brown's vision is radical, not because of his belief in the collective nature of the unconscious, and not because of his vision of non-personal unity, but because of his assumption that the id is non-aggressive. By asserting that the id is solely the source of erotic impulses and that the forms of aggression are merely the outlets of erotic energy that has been perverted by the ego in the process of their release, Brown can then seek the destruction of ego-structuration and identity as we know it.

Since identity is an artifact, personality is a mask that is shaped by the public realm. The name of the mask is always the name of the tribal chieftain. It is a verbal, totemic continuation of the primal clan. Names, like the personalities they denote, are the ghosts of the dead ancestors. A personality, therefore, is a representation of another, the other; and one makes his own ghost and calls it his soul. Being a ghost with a mask, he is able to watch himself in action. The idea of theater is internalized, and life becomes a situation comedy with many loosely related episodes, much like a picaresque novel, in which he is both actor and audience. Thus:

"A PERSON, is he, whose words or actions are considered, either as his own, or as representing the words or actions of another man....When they are considered as his own, then he is called a Naturall Person; And when they are considered as representing the words or actions of another, then he is a Feigned

or Artificiall person." A person is always a feigned or artificial person, persona ficta. A person is never himself but always a mask; a person never owns his own person, but always represents another by whom he is possessed. And the other that one is, is always ancestors; one's soul is not one's own, but daddy's. This is the meaning of the Oedipus Complex. (p.98)¹⁵

And since all action is watched by a ghost, the superego, or the self, which defines and limits that action and actor:

Action is what takes place on front of the camera, with the lights turned on, to throw the rest of reality into darkness (scotomisation, repression).... To be seen is the ambition of ghosts, and to be remembered is the ambition of the dead. The public realm is the stage for heroic action, and heroes are spectres of the living dead. (p.99)

The mask of identity is a dramatic mask as well as a death mask; and since the mask is public, the action is social, and the mode of social organization is politics. The political organization is an analogue of the organization of personality. If we accept personality, politics is inevitable because we map onto the world the structures of identity. As a result we elect the representatives to govern us and to be our identity, and we watch the elected officials as we watch ourselves. Distancing ourselves from the original reality, we observe both with the transfixed intensity of viewing an accident. Yet we never see the reality, only maps of it. "The dualism which distances subjects and objects, allows the viewer only pictures" (120).

And what we watch is always a variation on the same theme: the theme of parental coitus, the penis in the womb. The politician, the ego, is always the giant phallus in the womb of space. And so, for Brown, there is no escape; the

hell of politics is the shell of the family extended.

The third triad examines personality in the metaphor of the state. Every state has its head, and the state of the person, as established by the Oedipal phase, is ruled by genital organization, the penis-king. If the desire is to return to the womb, the penis must be the representative ruler and the ego must identify with it completely. It must trick the whole being into accepting a metonymic substitution as the basis of reality. The energy of the id is therefore shaped and released by the genital structuration of consciousness.

The original ego is the body ego, diffuse throughout the body (polymorphous); but "personification of the penis is the root of the second ego." Primacy of the genital zone is then the basis of the unity of the personality; the penis is the narcissistic representative, or "double" of the total personality; the phallus, a "miniature of the total ego."...The tyranny of the genital, the soul, and the state, is one tyranny. (p.129)¹⁶

By the middle of the third triad, Brown begins to amass the elements of his vision for his final assault on conventional reality. Personality is internalized politics, and politics is repression and representation. Since representation implies a thing to be represented, it also implies a thing that may be possessed, and personality is "the original personal property"(146). Personality is a boundary of being, established by charter.¹⁷ In reality, however, the boundary is transgressed and modified by projection and introjection. Thus, "every person, then, is many persons"(147); every person is an amalgam of all the introjected others that composed his identity. Brown

then modifies the image of the ego as political representative by extending the metaphor to include the corporation as a political, as well as economic, structure; and "the unity of the person is as real, or unreal, as the unity of the corporation"(147).¹⁸

Personality, being an artifact, is also a fiction based upon the false separation of self from the world, a paradigmatic story that is the source of all other projected fictions.

Separation (on the outside) is repression (on the inside)....The boundary between the self and the external world is the model for the boundary between the ego and the id. The essence of repression, says Freud, is to treat an inner stimulus as if it were an outer one. The external world and the inner id are both the same foreign territory. (p.148)

Identity, politics, and reality as we have created them are all products of the same myth; and Brown now focuses on the crux of the problem. If our creations have led us to the brink of the void, we must realize that they are manifestations of our own self-fictions, of our fiction of the self. To do away with them, we must do away with ourselves; the artifacts of personality, politics--and the books whose only purpose is to attest to their power--must be destroyed, or transformed by the fires of enthusiasm.

The structure of LB begins to change during this sequence, paralleling its themes and incorporating them. As Brown begins to introduce the idea of release through the breakdown of structures, the work itself becomes increasingly fragmented and aphoristic. "The conclusion

of the matter is, break down the boundaries, the walls"(149). And "the solution to the problem of identity, get lost"(161). Having relinquished the need for a self, the problems are resolved; the dualities are not so much reconciled as seen for that which they really are--the emperor's new clothes. The logical distinctions between mind and body, self and other, are obviated when we realize that logic itself is but another ego-function that is based upon mistaken premises.

What remains is body, but body of a different logical category than that which we perceive through our ego-dominated sensibility. Body is an energy system which continually merges with the other, violating the distinctions of space and time.

The fallacy of the false body is Whitehead's Fallacy of Simple Location; which is the notion that "material can be said to be here in space and here in time, or here in space-time, in a perfectly definite sense which does not require for its explanation any reference to other regions of space-time." The fallacy of Simple Location is to accept the boundary as real; to accept as real that separateness which the reality principle takes to be the essence of a body or a thing....

The human body is not a thing or substance, given, but a continuous creation....The human body is an energy system, Schilder's postular model, which is never a complete structure; never static, is in perpetual inner self-construction and self-destruction.¹⁹
(pp.154-55)

Brown is describing the mode of being of the garden consciousness; and being, from this perspective, is not spirit but a physical mode of energy. Its self-destruction is not a physical suicide, but a consciously enacted destruction of a mode of being that is itself destructive.

Brown reiterates that the id, once freed from the perverting shape of identity, is a purely erotic force. "It is only as long as a distinction is made between real and imaginary murders that real murders are worth committing"(152). The point and the phraseology are important. Brown has so altered our linguistic sense of meaning, has so shifted our sense of literal and metaphorical significance, that not only has the distinction between the two adjectives, "real" and "imaginary," become blurred, but they have assumed ironic implications. On its simplest level, it asserts that as long as we make an ego differentiation between the self and the other, ego and id, and real and imaginary, we will continue to commit murders in which someone biologically dies. On its secondary level, it asserts that if we cease to make ego distinctions, no being will die. Metaphorically, it implies that if we realize that "real" is "imaginary," the real murder of the ego, not the being, is a crime well worth committing. The multiple levels of significance, the sentence's verticality, accentuates the tension between the two modes of consciousness which read the sentence in different ways: one literal, the other metaphoric.

When the boundaries are destroyed after the "real" murder is committed, we experience new modes of existence: telepathy, action at a distance, and currents of electricity.²⁰ The truth was apparent all along, but we say it always in the guise of inverted parody from the point of view of our map-consciousness. We realize that the original sin of

patricide can be exculpated and the ghost exorcized only by a re-enactment of the real crime; not a fictional representation as it occurs in each act of intercourse, but the real destruction of the true psychological father, the father-in-us; not a partial or temporary release in sex, but in going all the way.

The fourth triad, the pivotal sequence, is an account of the nature of ego-destruction. Its experience is described in the polysymbolic imagery of fraction, fire, and resurrection, in which fraction and resurrection merge in the fire. The fraction is the breaking of the old order of being, the cracking of the ego structure, and the war against the "self," the king within, of which all other war is mere parody. The war is also the apocalyptic war whose fire transmutes what it consumes. But since the fiction of the self is a public fiction, the burning must be a communal fire, a Dionysian holocaust. From the ashes of persona, from the fragments of identity, arises the unified body, itself a polysymbolic being. This resurrection of the body is described as a burning or a fire, the fire of enthusiasm, the fire of released energy. The modes of its expression are poetic, polyphonic, constantly reshaping its words, giving ever-new contexts to nourish the linguistic field, consuming metonymic referentiality in the fires of metaphoric madness.²¹ Its truths are mad exaggerations, aphorisms, and symbols.

Symbolism, or grotesque: "A fine grotesque is the

expression in a moment, by a series of symbols thrown together in bold and fearless connection, of truths which it would have taken a long time to express in any verbal way, and of which the connection is left for the beholder to work out for himself; the gaps, left or overleapt by the haste of the imagination.²²
(pp.188-89)

Brown's summons is terrifyingly simple: relinquish the perverting shell of identity in the true fire, or be consumed by a literal holocaust. It suddenly becomes apparent that the nature of this new fire is expressed in the style and aesthetics of the book Brown writes; and the style is symbolic of this vision as well as the principle of coherence which structures it. The structure is that of freedom, of free associations, of the undistorted return of the repressed.

The fifth triad delineates the aspects of this style as it describes the qualities of the new mode of experience. The political theater of identity is demolished as personal identity is consumed. The dominant metaphors are religious revelation, the polymorphous body, and the polysemic word. All things exceed their boundary in a mad co-mingling. With the release of the id, the body becomes truly plastic; and its mode of action is play. Protestant literalism and scholarly dogma are replaced by the play of words, and speech is re-sexualized. "Intercourse is what goes on in every sentence"(252). Language is "a vast pun, a free play, with unlimited substitutions. A symbol is never a symbol but always polysymbolic, overdetermined, polymorphous" (248). The ego-demand for a strict, but illusory, correspondence

between a word and a discrete aspect of experience abstracted from human significance is dismissed as but another ego function. When words have been freed from the confines of simple denotation and metonymic referentiality, language can again embody the psychic reality of the metaphoric and become fruitful.

The final chapter, entitled "Nothing," embodies the essence of the new mode of consciousness and is Brown's attempt to present the new mode of poetic activity as part of the scholarly enterprise. It is also an apology for the failure of the book; for, from his perspective, it must fail. The new mode is beyond conventional syntax and can only be approximated in this type of writing. "The true psychic reality, which is the unconscious, cannot ever be put into words, cannot every be translated from the silence into words. The unconscious is and will remain forever ineffable"(257). To experience this new realm, therefore, requires a new mode of speech and a new kind of word. The word must somehow be reconnected with the unconscious, must become analogous to it, not a mere abstract definition of what it is thought to be. This occurs only when the word becomes polysymbolic, when it can accommodate the silence of the unconscious, the contradictions that are real.

To redeem words, out of the market place, out of the barking, into the silence; instead of commodities, symbols....

To restore words to their full significance, as in dreams...is to reduce them to non-sense, to get the non-sense or nothingness or silence back into words; to transcend the antinomy of sense and nonsense, silence

and speech. (p.258)

"Nothing" is also an ironic apology, however; if language has been extended beyond its conventions and has become subversively symbolic, making its own assertions contradictions, the admission of failure is the ultimate success. If the linear meanings of the work had succeeded in expressing the new reality, the work is a failure in the sense that it had fixed or reduced the vision to verbal delineation. If the words fail to express the experience, but by their destruction of sense create the experience of sensible non-sense for the reader, they have been transformed into the new realm; and in this sense the work is successful. The final chapter emphasizes this verbally self-subversive aspect of the work, and appropriately examines the nature of language as symbolic of, and analogous to, the experience of release of the self. The reader realizes that the words have constantly subverted their conventional significance throughout the book, betraying his expectations of language and reshaping his understanding of connotation and denotation.

The book succeeds because of its failure to articulate the vision; it leads beyond the literal, however, into a world of totally symbolic meaning. It leads us back to the silence of the symbol as reality, back to the person as body, and back to language as poetry.

The way of silence leads to the extinction of the ego, mortification. To become empty, to become no-thing; to be free from the constrictions of the self, to be

of no mind, to be a dead man.

The way of silence is not only death but incest. Paracelsus says, "He who enters the kingdom of God must first enter his mother and die."

In the resurrection, in the life after death, life has one foot in the grave, and words remain wedded to silence. A reticent style; elliptical expression; that hearing they may hear, and not understand. The meaning is not in the words but between the words, in the silence; forever beyond the reach, the rape, of the literal-minded explication; forever inviolate, forever new; the still unravished bride of quietness.

The word is made flesh. To recover the world of silence, of symbolism, is to recover the human body.
(pp.264-65)

In the space of the break, the spirit, the real "spirit," moves; in the silence between the words and the gaps between the meanings of a symbol, the spirit speaks. "The antimony between mind and body, word and deed, speech and silence, overcome; there is only poetry"(266).

Love's Body concludes with a quotation from the Foundations of Tibetan Mysticism:

Hereby the duality, the discrepancy between mind and body, mundane form and supramundane formlessness is annihilated. Then the body of the Enlightened One becomes luminous in appearance, convincing and inspiring by its mere presence, while every word and every gesture, and even his silence, communicate the overwhelming reality of the Dharma. It is not the audible word through which people are converted and transformed in their innermost being, but directly from the presence of the saint; the inaudible mantric sound that emanates from his heart. Therefore the perfect saint is called "muni," the "Silent One." (p.266)

The conclusion summarizes the bases of Brown's vision and reveals the critical problems of LB. The vision, couched in mystical terms, poses a nagging question: still, what is the nature of that final vision? This entails a

subsidiary question: what are the specific characteristics of ego dissolution? Brown implies that the nature of the vision and the process of dissolution has been left unstated and unspecified--although experienced by the reader non-verbally. He also implies that an understanding of the vision is to be found in the silence, the symbolic dimension of the work, i.e. the style in which it is written, the silent shaper of syntax that transforms the literal into the symbolic.

The stress Brown places on the didactic element of his work, on conversion and transformation, offers a clue to the subversive complexity of its style. Modern critical approaches tend to de-emphasize the importance of the work's relationship to the reader. Poems are centripetal, internally self-referential constructs of a different logical category from experience and the "real" world. They make fictive assertions that create the semblance of thought or the world but remain unrelated to the practical world; they never make logical propositions.²³

The problem of interpreting LB according to such assumptions is that Brown insists that reality is real only when it is symbolic. What is purely literal is, for him, the fiction. Since propositions are inherently intended as literal statements, they are part of the ego-fiction of conventional reality. The true reality is poetic, and the individual, like the words he uses, exists in and creates a symbolic reality. Thus, while it is illogical -

to think that a symbolic structure should affect a literal one, since this would be a cross-over of categories, akin to the post-Cartesian problem of how spirit can affect matter, it is logical to expect one symbolic system to affect another. And since, in reality, we know that books do affect minds and that fictions do influence human personality, we must conclude that the essence of personality is merely a system of symbolic constructs. This is the significance of the book's title, which is taken from Donne's "The Ecstasy": "Love's mysteries in souls do grow,/ But yet the body is his book." The body, the being, and the poem is a polysymbolic essence. The analogy is not that bodies are like books, nor the simple reversal, but a mutually reversible, analogous identity. Because of this, poems are not merely about poetry, nor about the semblance of thoughts and emotions; they are "about" the reality of the author-poem-reader identity as a form of being. Murray Krieger summarizes an important trend in the theory of poetics which, with several obvious reservations, Brown would accept.

Language can be manipulated in our best poems in ways that do serious violence to the ways in which we are accustomed to find semantics, syntax, and logic operating. And yet, as the word manipulated suggests, it is language whose behavior is finally controlled or directed--perhaps more completely and efficiently so than in any other form of discourse. But it is an order of control utterly alien to what we expect to find except in poetry. It is language in rebellion against the ways in which we normally use it as a counter for things; it is language that subverts its normal auxiliary function of denying its own terminal existence in order instrumentally, to lead us to the world; it is language that proclaims itself as substance

and its own world of multiplying meanings as sovereign. ... And if we are sensitive enough to find that a poetic discourse eludes our measuring instruments, i.e. the yardstick of common discourse, we charge it with behaving "irrationally," although its behavior is proper.²⁴

Krieger insists that the poetic context alters the meanings of words, expanding their import as the linguistic structure allows the sense to accrue more meanings by intratextual references. Brown would accept this theory but extend its implications. Since people are like poems, or more radically, since personality is of the same order as a poem, what happens to the word in a poetic structure is also what happens to the person in the Brownian vision. Also, although the words are manipulated to free them from syntactic limitation, Brown would insist that the manipulation is done to subvert the conscious need for specific import. Thus, by substituting "identity" for language and "reality" for "poem," we can grasp Brown's vision, which eludes specific formulation, more easily.

By equating the poem and the person, Brown seriously undermines the autonomy of both poetry and individuality.²⁵ Because of this identification, the work and the reader are thrust into a unique relationship. This is the basis for the need to "convert" and "transform" which the text avows at the end. The book is intended to achieve its ultimate coherence in the mind of the reader, to convert him to a way of perceiving that is both suspect and dangerous.

How Brown does this and how his strategy differs from propaganda or other didactic forms becomes crucial to a

critical understanding of his work. As the book is a melding of aspects of the formal and the informal essay, it is also a blending of fictional and non-fictional modes. It seems constantly to reveal itself to be what it was not. The first chapter has the characteristics of the formal essay. It reveals a seriousness of tone and a semblance of logical formality that leads the reader to expect a tightly controlled didactic argument that will convincingly prove a thesis. The style of the initial chapters is formal, almost classical, in its Latinate balances and rhetorical devices.

Freud's myth of the rebellion of the sons against the father in the primal, prehistoric horder is not a historical explanation of origins, but a supra-historical archetype; eternally recurrent; a myth; an old, old story. (p.3)

Within these first chapters, the author explains the sources of political organization, delineating the theories of Plato and Aristotle, Locke and Hume, and Marx and Freud in terms of their mythic paradigms. Only the novelty of the spacing between paragraphs provides a hint of the radically alogical chapters to follow.

As the book progresses, Brown introduces an aphoristic style that creates a verbal tension with the classical rhythms. The longer, rhetorically balanced sentences explain things logically; they are drawn from a tradition which attempts to convince the reader's conscious opinions of their validity. Such sentences are increasingly juxtaposed, or counterpointed to the tighter, perhaps jarring, rhythms of the aphorisms and epigrams which simply assert shocking

insights into the nature of the topic and its inherent paradoxes. They do not try to convince by logic, since they are not syllogistic tautologies, but observations that cannot be tested with reference to other words and definitions, but only by reference to experience. As Francis Bacon noted: "Aphorisms, representing a knowledge broken, do invite men to enquire further."²⁶

The structure of the aphorism achieves two effects. Initially, it focuses the reader's attention upon the surface of the text only, because of the surface's patent absurdity, to lead him past that. The structure of this "broken" knowledge is a fissure or gap. Yet since the reality Brown's aphorisms direct us to is a mythic and psychological reality, we are forced to regard the fissures in our own thought processes: they make us experience the paradoxes and double-binds of our consciousness. The very structure of his aphorisms destroy, or deconstruct, themselves to reveal a reality.²⁷ Secondly, the aphoristic form liberates the reader. Rather than subjugate him with the guise of logic and fix him within the verbal structure, the aphorism, being broken, becomes an absence of meaning that the reader fills out of himself. In essence, Brown creates a tension between rhetoric which subjugates a subject via logic and aphoristic style which liberates via an absence of logical verisimilitude.

By the third triad, the aphoristic style assumes predominance, and finally, in the crucial, fourth triad, supremacy.

Chapter IX, "Fraction," begins:

To eat is to be eaten. The grain must be ground,
the wine pressed; the bread must be broken. The true
body is a body broken.

Nothing can be sole or whole
That has not been rent. (p.184)

This shift of style is crucial. The standard assumptions that we bring to a reading of a formal essay, that we will be presented with a tight, logical argument, which attempts to sway our opinion or influence our attitudes, are undermined by the increasingly informal quality of the writing. The smooth, logical surface which gave the work the semblance of a principle of coherence is distorted by the eruptions of alogical associations and aphoristic assertions. Our set of assumptions alters as we shift them to accommodate what we now assume to be an informal essay, while our modes of perception are themselves being undermined by the aphorisms. Thus, we now expect the personal, the idiosyncratic, the variety of tone, and the laxity of form that characterize the informal essay.

But the content of the essay has become aberrant, and even approaching the work as an informal essay seems inappropriate. The reader continues to find himself enmeshed in a series of paradoxes and puzzles whose solutions are felt yet not understood, whose meanings are sensed but not explained. The reader becomes actively engaged in giving the work a formal and a thematic order which it refuses to give itself. By suppressing the logical surface of thought

processes, the mimetic illusion of the essay, Brown forces the reader to supply his own. The technique might be said to resemble that of any great work of art, but the nature of the suppression is of a different kind in LB. In Brown's text, we do not seek to know the outcome, or the motivation, or even the meaning, but the nature of meaning; and in doing so, we begin to experience it. We begin to experience the union of author, work, and reader, of the conscious and the unconscious, in a communal, creative act.

The reader realizes that he is not, in fact, reading as essay at all. Having puzzled over the work, and having returned to the preface, he discovers that the work is an autobiography, and the the logical surface is actually the story of the "life of the mind." We misunderstood the significance of the preface because it is written from a perspective of collective identity. Its use of passive constructions effaced the presence of the person whose biography we are reading. In the preface, only "god" and the "book" employ the active voice; the author, effacing personal identity, does not seem to act. This realization, however, raises an additional problem of whether the book is a non-fictional biography or a private fantasy. The point of such confusion is simply that from Brown's perspective the confusion exists only as long as we insist on logically ordering literary forms and making distinctions between real and fictional identities. Ultimately, the book is all of

its generic types, and escapes classification because it places itself in an interface between categories.

There are two possible explanations for the effectiveness of Brown's technique, both of which have some value, although one is critically unsupportable. The first is that a work of art is always independent of its author and the author's conscious intention, and therefore every reader may rightfully discover in it ideas and relationships that the author did not realize. Such an explanation would be acceptable to Brown, since he wishes to free the reader from his slavery to the literary artifact and linear interpretation. The other alternative is that Brown experiences the collective so deeply and has probed the realm of the mythic, unconscious experience so profoundly that he is able to write from an awareness of the collective and can communicate with the other via symbols whose universal unconscious import he comprehends. In either case, the reader has participated in the making of the work and has bridged the artificial gap between author and reader, artifact and perceiver, and art and reality that the critic postulates and Brown rejects.

The destruction of the gap is imperative to Brown because it represents the destruction of the barrier between the ego and the id, as well as the barrier between the self and the other. In terms of these relationships, the form of the work is symbolic of the ego because it is a product of the ego's demand for organization. The syntactical

patterns of conventional prose are also symbolic of ego organization within the realm of language because prose attempts to limit the meanings of words and confine them to consciously structured thought patterns. The process of the work, then, as well as its goal, is the destruction of the givens of its generic form and its linguistic structure as an analogue to the process of personal ego destruction. The form becomes symbolic of the vision in the nature of its destruction; and it is here, in the silence that converts, that the vision is explained.

This understanding must be experienced as an insight into the reality of analogy that the work posits as the true reality, and it entails a realization of the function and meanings of the work's multiple ironies. We must be overwhelmed by them; we must become lost in them to make sense of them. The suppressed mimetic surface establishes a centripetal force that draws the reader into its fabric. He is "converted," even if only for the moment, by joining the author in the creative act. Thus, ironically, the book achieves its didactic goals most effectively when it relinquishes the form of logical structures which traditionally is employed by the ego to convey ideas and establish their validity. It is an apt irony because Brown wishes to convert the reader to "nothing" by the silence of his style.

Brown's poetics, which determine the style of his writing, illustrate the nature of ego dissolution. Needless

to say, a critical analysis, and exclusively propositional statement of his vision is far from the experience that Brown and the reader undergo; but to establish a connection between what Brown describes and what happens in Pynchon's novel, a theoretical understanding of Brown's procedure must suffice. The point of Brown's ironic and self-subversive imagery and structures is that the elements of any symbolic substitution, and those elements which are manifest and those which are latent, are equally interchangeable--that one does not metonymically displace the other totally. In terms of the ego-id relationship, the imagery of fire and of fraction seems to suggest that the ego is neither eradicated nor placed in an equilibrium with the power of the id, but that the ego is the raw material of its own continual dissolution. The dynamics may not be those of equilibrium because, as Brown notes, it is in the nature of the ego to increase its repression of the id. Since the system of mind is based upon a misplaced center of balance, it cannot be corrected by an attempt to find the ideal center of balance; it can be equalized only by a release or increase of force from the other side of the center to make it centerless. This is achieved not by an obliteration of the ego, but by its subversion. This concept of subversive transformation obviates the criticism that in Brown's ideal world man is lost in plantlike oblivion.²⁸ As the text is stylistically subversive of its literal meaning, betraying itself into

polysymbolic significance, it needs the medium of language as the fuel to be consumed in the transformation; similarly, the ego is not to be destroyed, which is pragmatically impossible since the Fall into it has already occurred and cannot be denied, but must be persistently betrayed by the unconscious into becoming itself a polysymbolic entity. Given this new mode of consciousness, the individual is tripped into releasing the being, and the being can speak for the collective by releasing the unconscious that is common to all.

It is impossible to appreciate the beauty and force of LB by this brief summary and analysis of its argument, for the book is not merely an argument but a poetic structure. An argument is an activity of the ego, a fictional construct that we refuse to see as such; but LB is an elaborate word game written in the style of the new consciousness. What appears to be logical structure is an account of the development of a mind.

One of the most common criticisms of LB is the obvious retort that writing a book is, itself, an ego-oriented enterprise, and that, as such, must be a self-defeating undertaking. Brown would accept this paradox, although ironically; but he transcends it by having his work subvert its literal meaning by the same process that it employs to subvert the reader. The transformation of the self into symbol is analogous to the suppression of logical surface and the subversion of the sentence by the

aphorism.

The style, like the structure, has several functions. It must reach the reader on a conscious level to be at least partially understood and not become mere gibberish. It must simultaneously stimulate energies and associations on an unconscious level that establish a nexus of responses which can be evoked, later, by a single image. Once this is achieved, the work has created a new lexis that generates a tension not only between the variant meanings of a word but a psychological tension between the modes of consciousness that perceive it. The style, however, must never betray itself or lapse into the mode of non-play. It must retain a constant tension between the balanced rhythms of classical prose and the contrapuntal, tense rhythms of the aphorism, between the specifics of denotation and the ambiguities of connotation and, finally, between the conscious ordering of experience and the unconscious impulse to escape boundary.

An analysis of a selection from the central chapter, "Fire," will demonstrate the transformation of style into symbolic significance.

Love is violence. The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, from hot and living hope.

Satre, Critique de la raison dialectique, 428, 439, 455.
Dante, Il Paradiso, XX, 94. Matthew XI, 12.

Birth is bursting, the shell burst. The start is violent. The great heroic deed is to be born; to slay the dragon, to kill the mother, to conquer Tiamet. Every

child, like Athena, is born fully armed; is a knife that opens the womb.

Cf. Arendt, Revolution, 10. Roheim, "The Dragon and the Hero: Part One," 43-53.

Not peace but a sword. Peace lies in finding the true war. The reconciliation of opposites, the making of friendship, takes place on the battlefield. The hieroglyph for war is Atlachimolli, "Burning Water." Burning water; effusion et ardeur; efflorescence and hemorrhage; blossoming war. In ancient Mexico, "The symbol of the world thus brought together is a cross."

Sejourne, Burning Water, 73.

Cf. Iliad, VI, 212-236. Balint, "Die mexikanisch Kriegshieroglyphe," 413-428. Richard, Mallarmé, 119, 473, 501.

By this chapter, the style has become extremely aphoristic. Each paragraph-poem employs aphorisms and epigrams which curl back upon themselves: "Love is violence"; "The start is violent" and "Birth is bursting." They seem almost redundant, yet the meanings of the words begin to shift as they are repeated. The "violence" of war is of a different denotative level than the "violence" of birth--or so it seems; and "burning water" is a blatant paradox. The images become dense evocations of an ever-increasing series of associations. The paradoxes force the reader to go beyond their literal significance and to see connections between their implications. In addition, the images and ideas are drawn from sources that are inherently potent to the western mind: religion, revelation, myth, and psychology.

Each poem-paragraph is separated by several lines of blank space. The spaces are gaps. They form real boundaries between paragraphs, but the excited mind bounds

over them. The reader's repressed energies, stimulated by an image, reverberates with a nexus of associations. The succeeding paragraph does not logically develop the ideas of the preceeding one, but, repressing the logical sequence, selects one or several of the image's unverbilized associations, specifies it, and makes it conscious. Brown's style forces the reader to experience an aspect of the new consciousness. He must interact with the space between the paragraphs, with the silence between the words, to help create the meaning. He helps destroy the logical boundary between spaces; he participates in the void and goes out of himself. In a very real sense he is concerned with mythic ideas, memories, and thought processes; and the collective moves between the meanings, between himself and the other.

But the spirit not only moves between the paragraphs, it moves within them as well. Each poem is footnoted separately in a scholarly citation, in an ironic parody of research as an ego function. It is ironic because in the context of the work, the citations emphasize that the lines are from another source, and that the voice we hear is not only Brown's. True to his metaphor of Pentacost, Brown is speaking in tongues. The style symbolically suggests that, as ego organization is subverted, the speaker becomes the medium for the race; he speaks for all. At its most profound level, LB is shaped and unified by the power of its collective voice, which unifies the drastically

fragmented image-poems.

"Love is violence." We are shocked by the paradox, and our expectations aroused by the syntactic formula of subject-verb are undermined by the complement. Syntactic and ideological distortion shocks the reader into objectivity. Of course there is an aspect of violence in love: the desire to take and to penetrate, to take and to exclose. But surely love is more than that. There is a realization that the syntax has altered not only the meaning of the complement, but also the subject. This is a different "violence" and a different "love." Our associations shift to accommodate this new significance. It is a violence of "hot love and living hope," a going beyond the boundary of things, and an extrusive exhuberance. The "hot" has been associated with fire, and fire with enthusiasm. Enthusiasm is extremism, going too far, bursting the limits.

These associations are then verbalized and developed in the next poem. "Birth is bursting, the shell is burst." But, as the book repeats, being born is being born again, and the shell is the shell of identity. The shell must be rent by love; and that entails the slaying of the dragon (father) and the mother. The father and the mother together is the womb with penis, the vaginal father. The fantasy that is the basis of the Oedipal conflict and the resultant structure of the self. In the first birth, the child is the penis in the womb. Hence, "every child, like Athena

[Athena=girl=penis], is born fully armed; is a knife that opens the womb." The description applies to the mythic dimensions of physical birth; but is also a description of the second birth of being born out of the self. The true violence is the violence against the ego, and wars are ego projections that distract us from the true war--the violence of opening the self with the knife of being, of being truly born. Thus, every birth is a rending of the old fabric of consciousness, and the newborn are the knives that cut their way out.

The transition to the next poem is clear in this context. The knife becomes the sword, and the womb becomes space. Being unborn, we project the geography of one locale upon the other. The activity of the sword in space is war. Again the paradox. We expect that war is the opposite of peace, that it is to be avoided; but the sequence continues: "Not peace but a sword. Peace lies in finding the true war." To accommodate this statement, this image and its associations, we must modify the definition of war: it is a blossoming war, a war of fruition, a battle of being born, a war that generates life. The war is the war against the ego as opposed to wars of the ego. It is a play in which the spectator is the hero and the opponent is his fake mask of identity, a way in which the hero is the full being and the murder only a game since the opponent was always a fiction. Thus, the identity is fulfilled by being split. By fracturing the ego, we

experience the unity of the world, the unity of opposites, the "burning water." The image of the fracture of the ego is the cross, the passive "cruci-fiction" in which fictions, in a symbolic re-enactment of the original fall, are subverted into truth. Since the object of the crucifixion is the self, the act is reflexive--active and passive are united. Physical masochism, we realize, is but a parody of the true war--as a movie is a parody of reality.

By effecting a shift in semantics, by reorganizing our sense of syntax to accommodate his symbols and aphorisms, and by forcing us to enter into the work to supply its suppressed surface, Brown has led us "silently" into a new mode of consciousness. By the very process of reading we are forced to perceive differently and, even if only for a moment, "converted," as we transcend the limits of conventional logic. It is perhaps this loss of self that provokes the many violent over-reactions that critics have had to the text.

Indeed, before concluding this discussion of LB, it must be noted that if one misreads the book a series of problems arise. To read the text as propositions and argumentation is both to disregard its avowed purpose and method, which acknowledges its impulse to madness, and to become embroiled in the string of paradoxes that the text flaunts, while ignoring the significance of the style as thematic vehicle. Admittedly, Brown's style is not

particularly novel, nor are his ideas, which are a culmination of a long tradition of apocalyptic mysticism. What is unique, however, is the combination of the vision and the style. Brown's style is remarkably similar to Bacon's, and the similarity is revealing. Both employ their style to serve as a call to a new mode of consciousness: but while Bacon sought to eradicate the "Idols" of the past by a new literalism, Brown seeks to eradicate the literalistic "idols" of modern consciousness by a return to the original, polysemic reality of words and beings, to institute Blake's literalism of the imagination. In this fusion of aphorism and apocalyptic mysticism, of fragmentation and Freud, Brown stands alone.

The other misinterpretations of LB involve a misreading of the nature of ego-dissolution by seeing it as the total destruction of the ego. The alternatives such critics envision are either psychosis or repression; and in the name of culture, humanity, and existence they reject Brown's summons. In aesthetic terms, they refuse to relinquish both the dominance of language, which appears to them under the guise of man's tool, and the perspective that allows them to see man as a tragic figure. But in Brown's poetics tragedy is not a viable genre; it is replaced by the satyr play. He has no room for the sado-masochistic delight of creating illusions which glorify the imperative to pain. For Brown, comedy alone is real. The alternatives his critics envisage are those of the

map-consciousness's analyses of the garden.

Other critics offer another type of rejection. They argue for a new balance between the repressive ego and the pressures of the unconscious in a form of psychological detente. This, Brown argues, is impossible because it is the nature of the ego to repress and increase the intensity of repression. Such attempts would merely delay the inevitable, neurotic consequences of ego orientation.

Herbert Marcuse's argument against the vision of LB is a variety of this second type of rejection.²⁹ Arguing against what he believes to be Brown's position, he suggests that to save man we must eliminate the "surplus repression" of our political systems. From Brown's perspective, however, this would be disastrous. The reduction of repression would allow the release of id energy; but such a release, release through the constraints imposed by the ego and the superego, would mean that id energies would be released in a manner determined by ego structures. Since the ego is inherently a perversion based upon the sado-masochistic confusion of sexual projection and incorporation, the release would simply give more energy to these manifestations.³⁰

The political argument between Brown and Marcuse could continue endlessly, but it is important because it reveals the basic problem of Brown's vision and his revision of Freudianism. Brown is making a leap of faith in asserting that the non-repressed id is a purely erotic force, and that aggression is a function of the context out of which the

ego arises; that the instinct for union in the id is not the impulse for mastery in the ego. As we will see in the next chapter, Jacques Lacan attempts to justify Brown's assumption in terms of his own reading of Freud. For Brown, this leap of faith can be justified only by a mystical insight that involves ways of knowing that are beyond the realms of either discursive or non-discursive analysis. This is the real basis for his avowed failure, and the source of his body mysticism. It is also the reason for the tendency in his work to identity language with action, with the silent word that converts.

In any case, the objections to Brown's work are aimed at the supposed argument of the thesis. But Brown's text is not an argument in the conventional sense; it is a poetic structure that attempts to re-establish a poetic sensibility on the most "personal" and universal levels. Its predominant motifs are of fraction and war, but it is a joyous fraction and a war of peace; and the cry in the wilderness is a plea for silence. Brown, again like Bacon, his revolutionary--yet antithetical--analogue, might conclude his essay by quoting Bacon's own words:

I in like manner would have my doctrine enter quietly into the minds that are fit and capable of receiving it; for confutations cannot be employed, when the difference is upon first principles and very notions and even upon forms of demonstration.³¹

Notes to Chapter II

¹Edward Mendelson is a prime example of this group. Most critics fall into the second category. Mark Richard Siegel is one of the critics who see some redemptive process, but in my opinion, fail to assess it correctly.

²John Vernon, The Garden and the Map (Chicago: U. of Illinois Press, 1973).

³Norman O. Brown, Life Against Death (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1959), hereafter referred to as LAD; "Apocalypse: The Place of Mystery in the Life of the Mind," Harper's (May, 1961), pp. 46-49; Love's Body (New York: Random House, 1966), hereafter referred to as LB.

⁴The "Other" for Hegel signifies all that which the self-conscious believes to be not itself. Man first derives self-consciousness, for example, out of his conflict with both the external world and other potential self-consciousnesses, both of which are the "Other" to it. A radical reading of Freud, as Jacques Lacan has shown, can also lead to the experience of the ego, itself developed out of contact with others, as an Other within the self. Lacan and Brown often use this term ambiguously, as in the following discussion. From the perspective of the ego, the Other can be either the unconscious id or the external

world. From the perspective of garden consciousness, the Other can be the ego as a structure developed out of the contact with others and the external world. This perspective sees the ego as a created object, an artifact that falsely separates itself from the total being and becomes an Other to it. The point is that the human personality, as it is now structured is decentered and that it is always Other to itself.

⁵Vernon, p.xi.

⁶It is ironic that we are only beginning to re-discover this unity of the universe in terms of Einsteinian relativity which has replaced the binary map coordinates of Cartesian geometry and Newtonian mechanics.

⁷There are obvious similarities between Vernon's and Foucault's analyses of the origin of self-consciousness; yet there are also inherent contradictions. Foucault dates the conception of modern self-consciousness at the beginning of the nineteenth century; while Vernon must place it in mythic time since it is a mythic phenomenon. What is interesting is that both analyses are variations on map-making, and actually their differences are slight. Foucault does not deny the existence of self-consciousness prior to the 1800s; he merely asserts that it was of a different order than modern consciousness. Vernon's concept of map-making is actually a precondition to the change Foucault postulates. Ironically, the type of analysis Vernon conducts and the categories he uses could only be

envisioned type of mind Foucault describes.

⁸Because this is a study of the meaning of GR and an analysis of the problem of determining meaning within such a text, I have avoided a discussion of the development of Pynchon's themes and techniques in his other works. Yet, if this reading of GR is accurate, there is a remarkable similarity between Brown and Pynchon, not only in the nature of their vision but in their arrival at it. V., like LAD, established the scope of the author's concerns and works itself into an intellectual corner: for Brown it is the inescapability of the death instinct, for Pynchon it is the law of entropy. "Apocalypse," like The Crying of Lot 49, marks a turning point in which the ambiguities of the ends of the works foreshadows a way out of modern madness. Finally, as I will argue, GR, like LB, not only deals with the alternative vision but embodies it structurally. If this is true, then GR does not include this alternative as merely another aspect of modern civilization to be parodied like all the others, but is actually structured by it. Most critics see GR as a linear development of Pynchon's art and, while realizing the importance of Brown's influence on Pynchon, mistakingly trace that influence to LAD. For a key example, see Lawrence C. Wolfley, "Repression's Rainbow: The Presence of Norman O. Brown in Pynchon's Big Novel," PMLA, 92 (1977), 873-89.

⁹Brown, "Apocalypse," p. 47.

¹⁰Brown, LB, p. ix.

¹¹This is perhaps the basis for Roland Barthes' distinction between readerly texts, which are ego artifacts, and writerly texts which he sees as only potentially real.

In this ideal text, the networks are many and interact, without any one of them being able to surpass the rest; this text is a galaxy of signifiers, not a structure of signifieds; it has no beginning; it is reversible....

Roland Barthes, S/Z, trans. Richard Miller (New York: Hill and Wang, 1974), p. 5.

¹²The principles and nature of the primal fraternal organization are embodied in Pynchon's depiction of the Herero's tribal structure which, even on the purely physical level of the village's design, represents the mother's body and the protection it affords. In terms of technology, the fraternal organization becomes the cartel and the corporation.

¹³The concept of the hero as always a phallic hero appears in Pynchon's depiction of the central character's most interesting ability: Slothrop's gift of becoming erect at crucial moments. Furthermore, because of his penis Slothrop assumes the dimensions of a twentieth-century Everyman since since his identity and the nature of his erections are established, in effect, by the same forces that shape all ego structures. Those shaping him are merely more overt. For example, Jamf's experiments on his penis are real causes of castration anxiety; yet, at least according to Freud, we all have them in one form or another.

¹⁴GR literally represents Brown's analysis of ego structure. Slothrop's ego is an artifact, quite concretely a product of science and technology. Key episodes and characters are based upon the idea of infantile voyeurism, transvestism, and sado-masochism. The entire novel with its overlay of a movie makes the work into a voyeuristic object. Paradigmatic of this entire complex of associations is the episode that introduces Katje in the midst of a sado-masochistic ménage-à-trois which is revealed to be a film loop. Pynchon equation of the novel with a movie also implies an aesthetic of the novel based upon projected voyeuristic fantasy. This erotics of the text sees a connection between language, ego-structuration, and the mother which the pleasure of the text is a mastery over the language and, symbolically, a domination over the mother. Ultimately, in his rejection of the conventional novel is a rejection of this ego-based, erotic esthetic.

¹⁵Brown quotes Hobbes's definition of "person" in Leviathan, Everyman Edition (New York, 1950), p.133.

¹⁶Pynchon establishes a similar connection between the penis ("the metropolitan organ"), the cartel, and the ego; and the cartel is as elusive in its structure as the ego. Unfortunately, since the cartel is the penis, no individual member can, by himself, find the head and all are given the shaft. Consequently, "the real and only fucking is done on paper"(616).

¹⁷This is why those in the Zone, which for a moment lacks

a clearly defined political boundary, experience a type of psychological disorientation.

¹⁸Slothrop's many masks and identities illustrate this point, and the key issue is that none of his manifestations is more real than any other.

¹⁹I have cited this quotation at length because of its striking relevance to the depiction of Slothrop's dispersal. Pynchon notes that the other characters can no longer get a hold on Slothrop, and that different people report seeing him in different places at the same time.

²⁰Pynchon employs Brown's metaphors of telepathy and electricity quite literally, especially in the allegory of the lightning-struck undertaker.

²¹See chaps. 1-2 in Murry Kreiger's The Play and Place of Criticism (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1967).

²²The problem of establishing a theoretical basis for interpreting the gaps in a text, Lacan's béance, is examined in detail in chapter three.

²³For a more detailed discussion of these two terms used in literary analysis see Frank Brady, "Fact and Factuality in Literature," Directions in Literary Criticism, eds. Stanley Weintraub and Philip Young (University Park, Pa.: Penn State University Press, 1973).

²⁴Krieger, pp. 7-8.

²⁵The belief in the autonomy of both the poem and the person are, in Brown's and Pynchon's perspective, the same

illusion. Both depend upon a belief in the reality of a fixed and direct relationship between the signifier and the signified: the name and the person, the word and its referent. As they see it, the being and its name are forever separate, the therefore a belief in the literal meaning of words and the reality of a "named" person or ego is a deception. Words, like loci of consciousness, are continually modified and transformed by their context. This is why Slothrop so often assumes a new identity that is based upon the circumstances at the moment.

²⁶Francis Bacon, The Advancement of Learning in Selected Writings, ed. Hugh G. Dick (New York: Modern Library, 1955).

²⁷In this sense the aphoristic style has much in common with Pynchon's narrative technique. Unlike conventional works, which critics like Jacques Derrida deconstruct by grammatological analysis, Brown and Pynchon employ a technique which anticipates deconstructive analysis by having all of their works essentially deconstruct themselves.

²⁸This point is crucial in preventing a pervasive misreading of GR. The alternatives are not between a submission to authority or a retreat into private spiritual transcendence, both of which entail ego structuration, but between those of ego structuration itself and ego subversion. Critics who fail to see this point read the episode of Lyle Bland's "transcendence" as an ideal and are unaware of the ironic tone of the sequence. Consequently they completely misread what happens to Slothrop.

²⁹Herbert Marcuse, "Love Mystified: A Critique of Norman O. Brown," Commentary, 43 (February, 1967), 71-75.

³⁰Pynchon demonstrates this in his depiction of the other characters in GR who, unlike Slothrop and unwilling to discard the self, seem to become more perverse while in the Zone.

³¹Bacon, Novum Organum in Selected Writings, p. 468.

III. The Unified Aesthetic Field

The Critical Situation

Chapter one examined GR in terms of its mode, and discovered that the novel is apocalyptic in an ironic sense; that it plays with the conventions of the mode only to undermine its central assumptions. This necessitated a shift in the perspective from which to approach the work. This necessary rearrangement of expectations was symptomatic of the general problem of interpreting the novel from any conventional approach. Chapter two outlined the salient features of two other apocalyptic stances in order to clarify some of the problems of reading Pynchon's work by establishing the psychological and ontological framework that will emerge in GR. What remains is to formulate an aesthetic that can accommodate self-subversive works and provide a method for interpreting them.

GR sets all of its textual elements in ironic opposition and seemingly lacks any central unifying structure. Yet, in order to make sense, even a decentered text must operate according to some principles--even if they may seem illogical from a conventional perspective. Thus, to conclude an investigation of GR by simply noting its ambiguities and unresolved oppositions avoids the real problem of the meaning of such a text.

If we accept, for the moment, that GR is based upon the concept of ego dissolution as a positive experience, we would expect that Pynchon would be confronted with several artistic problems. If these problems appear in the text, then, methodologically, we can treat them as traces of the buried assumptions in the work much like a physicist treats traces of elusive subatomic particles to understand the nature of the particles. If we assume that Pynchon is rejecting ego structuration, he is faced with the problem of how an author can write about, and embody in an ego artifact, the dissolution of the ego, without creating a radical contradiction between the form and the content. A possible solution would be to somehow structure the work to deconstruct itself and become emblematic of the vision beyond words and to free the words from their anchor in ego structured reality without reducing them to unintelligible utterings. This is a variation of Brown's problem of finding words that are silent. As any Pynchon reader knows, these are precisely the problems the text presents as it radically fractures itself in the last book, and as its verbal overload of meanings attached to key words seems to undermine any specific significance at all.

Our conventional assumptions about a text just do not seem to work, since formalist approaches are useful only if the work is considered as a non-intentional, non-affective, and non-referential entity. But Brown and

Pynchon are clearly both artists and polemicists; each one's style is unique, but each style has a definite affect. The critic must decide if this affective, didactic element negates the works' status as artistic objects, and if so, how the polemic is transformed by the art--or if the criteria for designating a work as an aesthetic object must be changed. Furthermore, if for Brown and Pynchon art must be affective to be effective, to what extent and to what end does affect function. And finally, given both authors' assumptions about the illusory nature of cause and effect, how do they surmount the internal contradictions between this assumption and their desire to affect the reader.

The answers to these problems must articulate what is being affected and how. Since such a solution is beyond the means of formalistic approaches, it must be derived from theories that have superseded them: structuralism, phenomenology, and deconstruction. This avenue of approach is more appropriate since Continental theories are derived from the German intellectual traditions of Kant, Hegel, Nietzsche, and Husserl, and the writings of French theorists like Saussure, Kojève, and Merleau Ponty, all of whom are clearly more relevant to Brown and Pynchon than the empiricism that has dominated Anglo-American thought.

Although the Continental critics disagree on many issues, they share basic assumptions that challenge the basis of empiricism. Structuralists, basing their arguments

on linguistic principles, assert that all of man's expressions of significance--ritual actions, social orders, and artistic artifacts--are actually codes or symbolic systems that function according to specific laws, and that language and literary objects are no different, and no more valuable, than any other code. Phenomenologists see the opus of an author as a manifestation of his deepest structures of being. The former approach undermines the central assumption of traditional criticism, which elevates the aesthetic object above all others because it is a unique manifestation of human consciousness and culture; and the latter reduces the work to a position of only secondary importance to the reality of the artist's consciousness. Even more fundamentally, the deconstructionists attack the assumption that a text can mean anything, apart from its status as a trace of the real significance or a pretext for the critical activity itself. All implicitly or overtly question the critic's ability to derive a specific, and limited, significance from the structure of a text, and they assault the notion that words as signifiers bear any direct relation to their assumed signifieds. The text, as signifier, becomes its own signified, or it is a free play of signifiers which is open to an unlimited number of interpretations.

This attack on the possibility of meaning in language is alien to conventional critical approaches. Anglo-American theories have assumed that the language of a text

was always, somehow, a mimesis of the real world, or the world of thought that the educated reader could decipher. Conventional critics may well wish to dismiss this attack on their assumptions, but without a careful examination of the problems it poses, such a dismissal is premature.

If criticism is to retain its belief that language and texts convey significance, it must determine the nature of the relationship of words to human meaning, of discourse to reality. Furthermore, it must establish a framework in which to situate the various components of author, reader, and text, which are involved in the act of reading, as well as the various approaches that have been developed to understand that act. Without this basis on which to organize criticism, the modern, eclectic critic confronts a problem described by Hayden White:

The contours of criticism are unclear, its geography unspecified and its topography therefore uncertain....In literary criticism, anything goes. This science of rules has no rules. It cannot even be said that it has a preferred object of study.¹

The practical critic, the critic who does not adhere to one specific dogma, is forced to confront the very validity of his endeavor, and to question the legitimacy of his methods.

It is important, therefore, to establish a framework within which to conduct the act of analysis and to determine the nature of the object of the interpretive act. This requisite becomes even more important when attempting to

analyze GR because it so overtly rejects fundamental assumptions of standard critical theory. By equating ego-structuration with its artifacts, authors like Pynchon reject the conventional understanding of both; and their works, therefore, cannot be approached in terms that assume ego centrality. By decentering themselves, their works demand an approach that sees the text as a relativistic whole which conceals its points of stability. A useful theoretical framework, then, must acknowledge that the object of its investigation, its themes, structures, and methods of characterization cannot be understood except in terms of the relativism of a decentered approach.

The formulation of a theoretical matrix that can deal with works like GR must satisfy several requirements--both in terms of the text and of literary theory in general. It must be derived from an understanding of the structures of the act of reading that are based upon pragmatic reality, not inherited assumptions. Having determined how the reader makes sense of them, the approach must then prove its relevance to works like GR. It must explain, or at least justify, the extreme fragmentation of the narrative, and the rapid, unsignaled transitions between levels of fictive reality, and the principles of selection and combination that determine the types of narrative events and strategies that are present in, and employed by, the narrative. And it must elucidate the psychological models that are implicit in the text's

method of characterization, and the significance, both thematically and structurally, of such an understanding of personality. Finally, it must deal with the function of the novel in terms of the writer and the reader in a context which questions the psychological autonomy of both.

In terms of literary theory in general, the model must accommodate and interrelate existing theories because aspects of these theories continue to be valid approaches to interpreting a narrative. Formalistic concepts of the symbol, for example, do provide assistance in understanding Pynchon's use of technological metaphors; but they must be qualified since Pynchon often employs his symbols in unconventional ways for unexpected ends. Structuralist theory is also helpful since the fragmentation of the narrative surface, while it blurs plot sequence, highlights structural parallels. The digression on the history of Byron the Lightbulb, for example, offers little to advance the plot of Slothrop's wanderings in the Zone, yet it shows striking parallels to Slothrop's personal history that supply further insights into its significance. Finally, the model must indicate the nature of the text: whether or not it is a privileged mode of discourse that is inherently different from speech, or indeed, from any symbolic structure; and whether it establishes any, let alone a unique, relationship between the author and the reader. In general, it must at least address the questions

posed by the Continental critics and determine the value--and feasibility--of critical discourse itself.

While no one critical approach is adequate to the task of interpreting GR, neither is an undisciplined amalgam of techniques. What is required is a systematic reassessment of what actually happens in the act of reading, what its components are, and how a reader can determine its meaning. On the basis of this reassessment, a unified, relativistic theory should be able to establish a coherent critical field that can at least indicate the relationships among existing theories.

Before attempting such a schematization, however, it is important to recall the limitations of all aesthetic theories in order to minimize the dangers of this type of generalizing. Aesthetic theory is not a science in the precise sense of that term. Like the scientist, the theorist deals with fact; unlike him, however, the theorists's "facts" are data of a different order of significance from scientific data. Aesthetic facts are taken from aesthetic objects which possess not literal but emotive significance, hence the "data" of aesthetic inquiry is of a different order than the neutral "facts" that are the basis of scientific hypotheses. In addition, the theorist does not intend his theory to have a predictive quality which is the basis for the physical sciences. Consequently, aesthetic theory, if it is to be valid within its own constraints, cannot assume an intrinsic evaluative

function in terms of texts, but only in terms of its ability to interpret texts.

Thus, this study will attempt to establish a general structure of the act of reading that is broad enough to account for a coherent reading of modern novels like GR without dismissing the type of novels that have preceded them. It does not imply that its specific qualities are the requisites of all art, but that all aesthetic objects may be encompassed within its structural categories. Thus, while the decentered work may seem devoid of the normal structures of plot, theme, and characterization, it is not devoid of structural relationships in general. Consequently, this reading of GR does not imply a philosophical system, but an attitude toward the text which is influenced by the rejection of ego-systems and which exhibits definite structural relationships.

The limitations of most modern theories result from their definition of the aesthetic artifact which they consider in isolation from the entire structure of the reading act. In The Mirror and the Lamp, M.H. Abrams suggests one possible way of organizing critical theories by their focus on specific aspects of what he terms "the total situation of a work of art": the work, the universe, the author, and the audience.² Mimetic theories explore the work in terms of its relationship to reality, both physical and mental, as perceived or postulated. Pragmatic

theories understand the work of art in terms of its effects upon the reader. Expressive theories explain the work in terms of authorial intention. Finally, objective theories examine the work in terms of the isolated, self-sufficient whole, and explore its internal relationships. Of course, no one approach is pure in the sense that it strictly ignores, in practice, aspects of other approaches.³ A modern variation of the objective approach, structuralism, sees the text as an isolated linguistic structure to which the author is incidental: he is only the vehicle for the language which manifests itself through him. Phenomenological approaches, as exemplified by Bachelard and Poulet, attempt to confront the reality of the text as an autonomous object that manifests the deepest realities of a human consciousness; but in practice they usually produce an analysis of either the reader's reveries or the work's relationship to the socio-historical conditions of its period.⁴ Psychoanalytic approaches have been used to uncover the unconscious motivations of the author, which is at best problematic, or attempt to read the unconscious of the text, which as a structure of words obviously has none.⁵ Furthermore, while a text can be said to demonstrate or replicate unconscious processes, since it is not a dynamic system that organically adapts in response to the need to satisfy demands, the application of strictly Freudian metaphors to an analysis of a text

often produces more confusion than insight. Finally, as is the case with any approach which is based upon one center of focus, psychoanalytic interpretations must be inherently reductive.⁶ Grammatological theory literally invalidates the independence of any text which becomes merely the pretext for the critical act which itself becomes suspect. In a similar fashion, myth and genre criticism obviates the specifics of the textual surface in an attempt to relate the text to reality by means of its general patterns.

Each theory, however, has valid insights into the nature of the literary object, yet their implicit contradictions raise serious problems in applying their insights generally. What is needed is an evaluation of "the total situation of a work of art" which does not presuppose the nature of the object to be studied--i.e. one that allows the significance and defining characteristics of the work to emerge from a study of the situation which must be present to constitute the object as a work of art. Such an approach must not fetishize the work, nor any single aspect of the situation of reading, into a symbol for the entire reality of that object and situation. This method would establish a structural paradigm of the situation that would allow the reader to substitute the various components of the situation (text, author, reader, etc.) and various texts into the paradigm

much like a mathematician establishes a formula that allows for the substitution of elements without destroying the general structure, and thereby determine the nature of the objects that can fulfill the requirements of the situation.⁷

This model must also take into account, and compensate for, the limitations of modern theories that they have inherited from their Enlightenment ancestors. Modern theories, like their predecessors, are limited by the Cartesian, binary conception of reality: the referential axis is always binary: world and work, reader and work, etc. Yet modern writers, more attuned to the realities of a relativistic, poet-Einsteinian universe, reject the binary world. They warp the clear distinctions of time and space and the precise demarcations inherent in the XY axis, and envision a world of flux and continuities. Thus, a holistic aesthetic must be based upon the interactions of all elements in the aesthetic situation, whose individual significances are a function of the structural flux of the larger system.⁸ Conversely, no one element is understandable by itself outside the field. The XY axis merely augments the fetishization of an aspect of the total system and produces either formal texts, or empty structures, or psychoanalyses of words, but never an analysis of the full speech of the aesthetic situation.

A holistic aesthetic must also establish some

principles to account for the complex relationships between a signifier and a signified when they participate in an aesthetic object. Most theories assume a direct relationship, and when discrepancies between the signifier and the signified do occur, they interpret it as an authorial trick or an irony. Deconstructionist techniques acknowledge the possibility of an indirect relationship but, as they do with the text, often overlook the significance of the displaced signifier in their effort to unearth the latent signified.

Finally, a holistic model must articulate and incorporate an analysis of the role of the unconscious that is relevant to the entirety of the act of reading. Most approaches have failed to do this; in fact even most psychoanalytic critics have missed the point of Freud's Jokes and their Relationship to the Unconscious, which is his major analysis of the aesthetic situation.⁹ In this work, he postulates four components of the joke; and his analysis requires a holistic discussion of the situation as each aspect participates in it: the linguistic structure of the joke, the speaker, the hearer, and the unconscious. In his examination of the economics of the joke, Freud emphasizes the techniques by which the joke releases unconscious energies which are the source of aesthetic pleasure. Underlying this release, however, is another, more profound pleasure which is

illustrated by one of his examples, but which he never makes explicit: the intuitional, time-transcending moment of insight that occurs when the barriers of the individual ego are obliterated at the moment of intersubjectivity, at the moment when the joke has united the unconscious in the teller and the hearer.

In summary, a unified field theory must be able to deal with the inadequacies of existing theories, and offer a coherent resolution to their contradictions. It must be able to delineate the nature of the aesthetic experience as well as the object which is the medium and cause of that experience. Consequently, it must involve a number of variables in a structural relationship, and no one element may be omitted, even pragmatically, in the final delineation of the total situation. Such a theory requires techniques of formal analysis, linguistics, and psychoanalytics. No single theory has yet to integrate these aspects into a model of the act of reading; yet two of the components have been related by Jacques Lacan, whose linguistic reformulation of the Freudian model has provided methods and metaphors that allow us to apply certain psychoanalytic principles to an analysis of the text without also implying an unconscious in the text. He has also formulated a structure of the psychoanalytic situation which, with some adaptations, can also accommodate the structure of the aesthetic situation.

Lacanian Psycholanalytics: A Reassessment of Ego-Structuration

Lacan's theories of the structure of modern consciousness are so relevant to Pynchon's concept of character, that before attempting a transposition of his theory into aesthetics, a brief synopsis of its salient features is useful.

Lacan asserts that he is returning to the original spirit of Freud, rejecting the mechanization of the post-Freudians and the behaviorism that is prominent in America. He attempts to reformulate Freud's principles in terms of Kojève's analysis of Hegel's Phenomenology and Saussure's structural linguistics.¹⁰ His rereading attempts to explicate the dynamics of the Freudian model while rejecting much of the reductionisms that it has acquired. Whether he is purifying Freudian thought or merely misreading it remains to be seen; but his linguistic reformulation of Freud establishes a basis for the transposition of psychoanalysis into literary criticism.

Although his critics label him as another revisionist, Lacan's most seemingly heretical concepts are solidly founded in Freud's writings. His assertion, for example, that the relationship of the conscious to the unconscious is that of the signifier to its signified--Saussure's S/s formula¹¹--seems patently contradictory to the

traditional view of the unconscious as the seat of instinctual drives because it displaces biological imperatives by their linguistic representations which, for Lacan, are all we can really know about the drives themselves. In GR, Pynchon similarly implies that drives, when not represented by their linguistic manifestations, lie in the "realm of uncertainty," forever inaccessible to articulation. Lacan's formula, however, once the linguistic transposition is accounted for, is a precise representation of several complex principles which Freud proposes in The Ego and the Id.¹² The linguistic transposition is important since Lacan insists that as the instinct passes through the medium of language in the process of its manifestation, it is in turn affected by that language. Given this modification, the formula does illustrate Freud's understanding of the relationship of the ego to the id. In the first chapter Freud postulates a barrier between the conscious and the unconscious that is similar to the bar between the signifier and the signified which distorts or conceals their apparent relationship. He also insists that the terms "conscious" and "unconscious" are functions that apply to other functions, the ego and the id. Lacan's formula is a representation of this in that the general formula depicts a relation between terms that are themselves functions that allow unlimited substitutions. Finally, Freud argues that the terms do not apply to

objective, isolated segments of the mind. The S/s formula implies that both consciousness and the unconscious are merely terms for the loci of a functional relationship and that, while the nature of the locus is itself unknowable, its manifestations are accessible to understanding.

The linguistic basis for Lacan's reading is a departure from the biological terminology of traditional Freudianism. If Freud were alive today, however, and equipped with the science of linguistics, he might, perhaps, have rephrased many of his statements since he always insisted on the "talking" basis of the cure. When Lacan speaks of ego, id, and superego, which he tries to avoid since the terms have become so reified in common practice, he refers to them merely as the loci in a structural relationship which are themselves empty of any a priori meaning outside of their relational function in any given psychic structure.

Similarly, he rejects the importance, in the psychoanalytic situation, of the instincts. He does this because it is not the instinctual drives or even the dream which is the topic of analysis, but the patient's verbal report of them. Lacan does not deny the reality of the instincts or dreams, but he insists that their nature, function, and meaning, outside of language, is inaccessible to knowledge. Thus,

it is no longer the organic mechanism which the

biologist can study and account for; for the dream, instinct, or desire is verbalized and as a result its structure is entirely different and needs different methods of analysis.¹³

Lacan's work attempts to determine what these different methods should be in terms of the science that best deals with language.

To clarify the complexities of the relationship between language and the self, Lacan reformulates, in linguistic terms, the evolution of consciousness which, he claims, can arise only in a linguistic field. This field consists of the mother as desired object and the bearer of language, the father as a symbol of power and the object of the mother's desire, and language as the medium of communication they establish and into which the child enters as a symbolic commodity, a symbolic element of their own relationships. The dynamics of this situation involve the drives of need, demand, incorporation, and aggression. Lacan postulates that need and demand are purely physical drives that any animal experiences. With consciousness, however, which is the result of language, the needs and demands must pass through language and can become desire. The analyst must try to understand what happens to needs and demands as they pass through and emerge from language, Lacan's "defile of the signifier," in order to read backwards the subject's expressions of desire and discover their source. Lacan further differentiates

these functions by noting that desire is a product of the child's entry into the symbolic field of his parents' language, and is not inherent in the child's psyche.

Aggression and incorporation are, similarly, not inherent in the subject, but are structural functions of the subject's role in the field of language. This is perhaps Lacan's most significant departure from Freudian dogma, but it is not outside the range of Freud's writings, which were often self-contradictory on this point. N.O. Brown, for example, has noted contradictions involved in differentiating among narcissism, incorporation, aggression, and desire in terms of their intrinsic or extrinsic relationship to the original givens of a consciousness.¹⁴ Lacan's assertion that they are functions of the symbolic field which are then acquired by the ego is central to his belief that neurosis is the result of an over-structured ego which must be weakened before the patient can achieve health. The implications of this are far-reaching. Lacan justifies, theoretically and within the basis of psychoanalysis, Brown's apocalyptic summons for a rejection of ego-structuration. As noted in chapter two, Brown could not make this plea without first asserting that aggression is not an inherent aspect of being, but an acquisition of ego-structuration.

Lacan makes this explicit in his discussion of psychosis. He criticizes the absurdity of asking a psychotic who

hallucinates to explain the significance of the hallucination. At first this would seem to be the most logical procedure since an hallucination is by definition a perception without an object. Consequently, one would expect to discover in the projector the explanation of its meaning. But Lacan asserts that a logical step has been omitted, because the patient does not have a "univocal" sense of the significance of the hallucination. He suggests that the significance of the hallucination resides in the imposed linguistic field that constitutes the subject's consciousness of existence and that "this signifying chain [i.e. the hallucination] imposes itself, by itself, upon the subject."¹⁵

A clear formulation of Lacan's concepts of consciousness, desire, aggression, and incorporation is detailed in one of his earlier papers which analyzes what he terms the "mirror stage" of psychological development, the stage when the child first confronts its specular image. This analysis, despite the intentionally unsystematic development of most of his thought, remains essentially the paradigm for all of his theory. It also reveals the debt he owes to Kojève's interpretation of Hegel's Phenomenology. In essence, the process of the mirror state is a Freudian reading of the first two stages of the Hegelian dialectic.¹⁶

The first level of Hegel's dialectic is the formation of consciousness. Man begins with the sense certainty of

his perceptions; and this is the basis of all his knowledge. It is, however, the most empty of significance, for the instant he attempts to comprehend what he apprehends the reality of the object is transformed into his thoughts about it, and the immediate object is relegated to a position of secondary importance. Thought, other than the mere picture of things or the mute expression of animal need, must involve language to articulate itself; and the minute man applies a word as a signifier for a thing, its essence is displaced: the word can never accede to the order of reality of the thing. At its most precise, language allows man to say only that "there is this" or "it is"; but even these words, which denote the specific object, can apply to others as well.

Hegel asserts, long before structural linguistics, that man is caught in the trap of language, which is a fabric of shifters. He can speak in the universal because he can rationalize only in the general. But this is not disastrous to knowledge, because the discrepancy between the signifier and the signified allows him to apply those signifiers to new situations and make sense of them. Having become aware of the limitations of his sense perceptions, he now searches for the general properties of things, the non-sensuous constituents of their being which sustain them and allow them to become manifest to perception. Man develops notions of laws and forces: what is essential is

that reality must exist since self-consciousness is grounded in it, but that reality is also alien to thought and knowledge. Man realizes in the dialectical synthesis of object and perception that intelligible reality is a structure of formal relationships and that the appearances are of secondary importance.

The first level of the dialectic establishes a relationship between formal and subjective realities, as well as between formal and subjective aesthetics. Hegel explains reality as the structure of the object's functional relationship to other external objects. He can retain the reality of the physical while excluding it from the realm of proof, because in the final synthesis Spirit, through physical reality, achieves a complete knowledge of itself, and justifies, post hoc, the medium of the self-discovery. Hegel can therefore assert that the structures of consciousness and those of reality are identical. In aesthetic terms, this would suggest a union between formalist and subjective approaches to the text, and it becomes an important assumption of a theory of the aesthetic situation.

But perception cannot generate self-consciousness or personal subjectivity. Kojève explains how this occurs: "the man who contemplates is 'absorbed' by what he contemplates; the 'knowing subject' 'loses' himself in the object that is known....The man who is 'absorbed' by the

object he is contemplating can be 'brought back to himself' only by a Desire, by the desire to eat, for example."¹⁷ A desire, however, is predicated upon a lack which must be filled. To satiate that desire the subject, now aware of himself as the locus of a lack, must negate or transform the object to assimilate it. The very desire to eat requires the negation of the object to be eaten. Thus, the "I" of Desire is an emptiness that receives a real positive content only by negating action that satisfies Desire by destroying, transforming, and 'assimilating' the desired non-I. And the positive content of the I, constituted by negation, is a function of the positive content of the negated non-I."¹⁸ By fulfilling its desire, the subject is constituted on the same "level of being" as the desired object, since the subject's "content" is his emptiness filled by the reality of the desired object. Consequently, the desire for natural objects can never generate human self-consciousness, which is not a natural, organic thing. For that to occur, the desire and the object of desire must be towards the non-natural. But the only non-natural object that is separate from Nature is Desire itself, since Desire is a lack of being. Thus, the object of desire that leads to human self-consciousness is Desire--the Desire of the Other.

The assertion that human self-consciousness can exist only when human desire is directed towards another desire

predicates the need for other human, potential self-consciousnesses. Hence, self-consciousness can arise only in a social context. Lacan reiterates this idea in his assertion that the child is already constituted in the symbolic field, or register, of human exchange before, and as a prerequisite to, his emergence into subjectivity: that he is a signifier in a system of exchange between the parents before he becomes a signified of himself.

Since human desire is the Desire for the Other, i.e. of all that which is not itself, and since the fulfillment of that desire entails a negation of the desired, its satisfaction necessitates a battle for recognition of the subject's human self-consciousness by another consciousness which desires its own self-recognition. This conflict becomes, as Kojève notes, a battle for pure prestige. The structure of this battle is the dialectic of the Master-Slave confrontation.

Because self-consciousness arises only of contact with another consciousness capable of desire, the one sees the other as a lack of its own being which it must negate and assimilate. The Master, realizing this, is willing to risk his biological reality for the reality of his desire. The Slave, also realizing the stakes of the risk, values his biological existence and acquiesces to the yoke of slavery. In fact, however, even the Master knows that the fight cannot be to the death, since this

would negate the self-consciousness that testifies to his own subjectivity.

The Master, having subdued the Slave, leads a life of pure pleasure, while the Slave, by his work, transforms natural objects to be used by and to satisfy the Master. The irony is that the Master's self-consciousness is only confirmed by a consciousness which, because it is that of a slave, he does not fully recognize. Thus, the satisfaction of his desire for recognition is always denied him; and he continually seeks a satisfaction he cannot recognize, a satisfaction that, by definition, must elude him. The slave, on the other hand, has an elevated image of self-consciousness to attest to his own, and experiences the power of transforming nature by his work.

Several points of the dialectic are sufficiently important to Lacan (and Pynchon) to deserve repetition. One, self-consciousness is always a function of two consciousnesses mediated by Desire. Two, Desire is always generated by the sense of a lack of being. Three, this Desire is fulfilled by capturing the other or by symbolically capturing the place of the other with respect to other's desire. Implicit in his history of the evolution of the self is the structural congruency of the perception-phenomenon dialectic of the first stage and the Master-Slave conflict of the second. Consequently, Hegel implies that consciousness of self, the ego, as a locus of Desire,

is essentially an emptiness, an absence, and a lack of being that is given both a structure and a content by the Desire of the Other.

All of these points emerge in Lacan's analysis of the mirror stage, which establishes the paradigm for the generation and structure of the ego, for the resultant structure of subjectivity, and for the structure of interrelationships with other subjects. Since this paradigm is accessible to knowledge even while the nature of the components is not, the loci of the elements (the mother, the father, language, the self, etc.) that constitute the structure of self-consciousness are, for methodological purposes, empty. Thus, in different relationships and situations, the constituent elements may assume different positions within the structure; yet the structural model itself will remain constant. This structural consistency is evident by the repetition of the structure of the mirror stage in the analytic situation.

Lacan's discussion of the mirror stage examines the child's fascination with its specular image that presents to the child, for the first time, a unified spectre of its own being that, in practical experience, it lacks. The child, sensing its own lack, symbolically assumes the locus of its image, capturing and incorporating its structural position with respect to his own consciousness. This first step toward ego construction is also the first

step towards the creation of fictional structures, i.e. components of the imaginary register. It is the first substitution of a part, the image, for the whole, the as-yet-unintegrated body. In linguistic terms, it is the first metonymic displacement of the whole by the partial image of the self, of the real by the imaginary. This acquisition of an image of the self is also the first alienation of the being from the self. In Hegel's dialectic this is not an impediment to truth, but a necessary stage in the evolution of Absolute Being knowing itself. Lacan, however, lacking the certainty of the final synthesis, views the ego as, at least partially, a fiction-fetishization which can impede the experience of the fullness of being. At best, Lacan can view this fictional construct as a necessary evil in the process of self-knowledge.

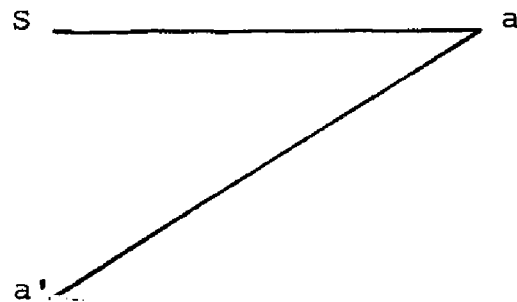
The specular image, the first fiction, created by an incorporation of the imaginary other and a domination of it, establishes the scenario which the child repeats in other situations. Jan Miel comments that:

it is an image which will govern his relations with other children, turning them frequently into games of master and slave, actor and spectator. And here the rejection of the reality principle is obvious; for the reality of one's own sporadically controlled, partially perceived body is substituted the image of a unified, controllable one.¹⁹

Implicit in this analysis is the equation of the beginnings of ego structuration with the dominance of the other which makes the being other to himself. This is similar to Brown's

idea of the self as an actor who only portrays the true being in the public realm. In also implies a reformulation of the reality principle. For Lacan, the reality principle is that of bodily non-integration while the external structure it is forced to introject is considered to be a fantasy.

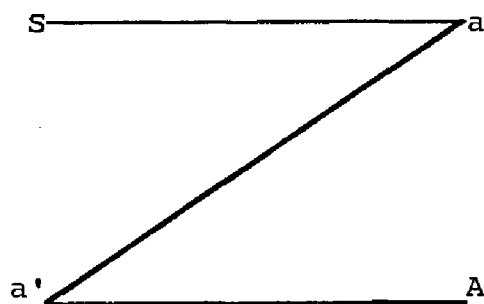
Lacan diagrams the initial stage of development in terms of the functions of self, other, and desire with the following illustration in which the S is the subject, a its specular image, and a' the resultant concept of self. The S-a axis denotes the child's narcissistic and aggressive relationship to objects, and the a-a' axis the imaginary structure of the resultant concept of the ideal self.



But the child, at this stage, is merely perceiving; and Lacan, in accord with the Hegelian dialectic, views this primary perception as only the discovery of the self, not as the formation of self-consciousness. This pattern is repeated in the child's relationship to partial objects such as the breast. This establishes the groundings for

the accession of the child into subjectivity with the introduction of the fourth term, The Phallus, or the Name of the Father, which is the symbolic value of the father as the object of the mother's desire. In all cases, the imaginary capture of another constitutes the emerging ego, and as a result, the subject and his subjectivity will always exist in a relationship of otherness to itself.

With the acquisition of the specular image and the resulting sense of self, the child enters into a new relationship which involves new elements but which is structurally similar to the first. For the specular image, he now substitutes the mother, whom Lacan terms "the significant other." It now becomes evident that the child, for the mother, is already a signifier in a pre-established symbolic field of parental relationships that consists of the mother, the father, or his symbolic value, and the child as symbol of emotional exchange between them. Thus, the diagram requires another axis, paralleling the S-a axis of the child's relationship to his mother, which connects the locus of the ideal ego to the symbolic value of the father. The diagram now illustrates the structure of the individual consciousness in terms of both its internal components and external influences. Thus, the diagram represents both the generation and structure of self-consciousness.



The schema illustrates the structural relationships of several relativistic functions. It depicts the relationship of the child to his specular image, to partial objects, and to the parents; it also illustrates the internal structure of the child's consciousness: he extends over the entire structure. The schema is to be read in all directions as the loci mutually affect each other. Thus, the diagram does not read only from S to a to a' to A, since both a and A affect the final specular image, a'. Once the formation of subjectivity is complete, all relationships become mutually interacting variables. Again, for the sake of clarity, it is important to reiterate that the points on the diagram are empty and may be filled by different elements; it is the axes denoting relationships that are fixed. Thus, in the completed structure the S can also be the barred S, or $\bar{S}$, the unconscious or split object, the object of the self that has become split off from the self. This locus can signify both the subject, in certain relationships, and that which participates in the revelation of the unconscious, in others.

If the diagram is read as the structure of the generation of self-consciousness, the *a* is the mother as the object of desire who has occupied the locus of earlier partial objects. The *A* is the Name of the Father, his symbolic value. Since the phallus is the object of the mother's desire, the Desire of the desired, as well as the authority invoked by the mother, the child's final sense of self will be a result of an interplay between these forces. Thus, the vectors in the completed diagram illustrate the direction of the forces in the constitution of the ego; and although the diagram is vertical, its structure might be easier to conceptualize by thinking of it as a plane looked at from the bottom edge; this reveals the congruency of the *S*, *a'* and the *a*, *A* loci.

As the field imposes itself upon the child, the child reacts by attempting to capture the loci of both the mother and the Name of the Father. In this case, the direction of the vectors are reversed to represent narcissism and aggression as the elements of the field by which the child seeks to capture the locus of the mother by possession and that of the Name of the Father by substitution, Lacan's equivalent to Freud's enclitic and narcissistic love.

The child's involvement in this symbolic field, however, would remain that of object, and he could never attempt to capture the locus of the other if a further

development did not transpire co-temporally with his entrance into the symbolic exchange. The child acquires, through the agency of the mother, language; and by means of language, he accedes to subjectivity. Lacan cites Freud's analysis of his grandson's "fort-da" binary opposition, which equates it with the presence and absence of his mother, as justification for asserting that the mastery of language completes the transition into subjectivity: language allows the child to conceptualize and cope with the absence of his mother, which creates his desire. For Lacan, as for Hegel, the conceptual realization of the absence of the other gives rise to both the self-awareness of the self as a lack and the discovery of language, the symbolic system that gives lack a name. Lacan tersely comments: "the moment in which desire becomes human is also that in which the child is born into language."²⁰

Lacan's structural reformulation of the Oedipal Crisis clarifies a number of previously confusing relationships. The child's acquisition of language is structurally identical to his acquisition of ego, and both are identical to the metonymic structure of the capture of the specular image. In fact, the creation of the ego as a metonymic capture elevated into a symbolic system (i.e. the image transformed into the total being, or the ego-phallus relationship transformed into the structure of the

entire consciousness) is the analogue for the acquisition of all symbolic systems.

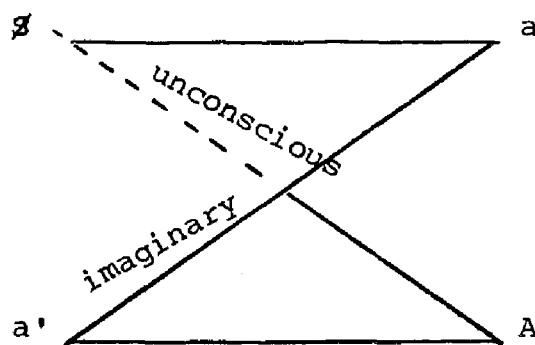
Subjectivity, then, is the creation of language and the Other (those elements that can occupy the a or A loci); and consequently the ego is always itself an other to its own being, and the being is other to the ego. Lacan notes: "I am where I am not." The ego, having subdued the other elements of being, becomes Master over the Slave of the unconscious, and experiences all the ironies of the Master's condition. Like the Master, it must continually seek its validity from that which it no longer recognizes. Not realizing that which actually establishes its reality, the subject begins its impossible quest for significance--what Lacan terms the metonymic chain of desire. The ego substitutes successions of displacements to fill its structural emptiness, unable to realize that its very existence is dependent upon the repression of that which would validate it--the language of its desire. It is significant to note the similarities between Lacan's analysis of this predicament and Brown's summons to a subversion of the ego. Neither reject the ego, but both imply that desire can be fulfilled only by using it to undermine itself and reconnect it to being. In Brown's metaphor, the only use for the ego is as fuel for the fires of being.

The latter works of Lacan have been less concerned

with the evolution of the subject and more with the relationships between the patient and the analyst in the analytic situation and with the means by which the analyst decodes the patient's speech. Here the diagram acquires additional significance, for the patient will repeat the structural patternings of the mirror stage and of his own subjectivity in his relationship to the analyst as an other. Since the analyst's primary concern is the subject's speech and since the subject is dispersed among the loci of subjectivity and the vectors of desire, aggression, and incorporation, the question the analyst must ask is where the patient is speaking from: from which position in the structure of his consciousness. The aim of the analyst is to reconnect the patient with "the language of his desire," which is ordinarily expressed only after having been distorted by the imaginary components of the a-a' axis.²¹

Lacan's scenario for a successful treatment requires a rupture of the a-a' axis. The patient originally confronts the analyst as a significant other to whom he addresses his speech. The patient occupies the $\$$ -a-a' triad, leaving the A locus, as the possible projection of the unconscious and the absent father, open. The $\$$ represents the subject barred from his own desire--the split subject. The a is his object other: his specular image, his partial objects, and his mother as the real other.

The a' is his ego ideal as constituted by both a and the Name of the Father as spoken by the mother, i.e. the mother's desire, the symbolic phallus. The a - a' axis is the imaginary relationship that acts as a barrier and prevents the subject from a direct discourse with the A , the Other, which is the locus from which the question of the subject's desire may be put to him.



The patient approaches the analyst with a double ambivalence. The analyst should occupy the position, A , of the Other as a symbolic substitution for the Name of the Father. But the analyst is both a present and an absent figure: present in his physical being and absent in his silent refusal to acquiesce to the patient's demand for recognition. The tension created by his empty presence acts as a catalyst for the creation of the patient's demand to be recognized. Adopting the metaphor from bridge, Lacan calls the analyst the dummy which the patient seeks to play. The master-slave struggle, which originally established the structure of the patient's ego,

is reestablished and the patient attempts to capture the analyst by making the doctor into a signifier of the patient. In effect, the patient tries to incorporate the analyst, the A locus, into the a-a' axis of his own imaginary being by projecting the structures of his own consciousness upon the analyst's emptiness. He attempts to augment, by this capture, the imaginary consciousness and prevent the discourse of the Other (both of the analyst and of the unconscious) from occurring. But the analyst, by his silence, refuses to be brought into the a-a' axis. As an active presence, he attempts to speak from the locus of the Other. Doing so, he attempts to help the patient discover the triangular mediation of his desire and the metaphoric substitutions and metonymic displacements that the language of his desire has undergone. The a-a' axis is not inviolate since it is constructed around an essential lack of being that is part of its structure. Thus, the tension created by the analyst's ambiguous position--both on the a-a' axis in the imaginary register and the A locus in the symbolic register, the register of metaphoric equivalents--enables him to detect fissures in the a-a' axis, to identify the gaps that are a part of the fabric of subjectivity. By doing so, he accedes to the real locus of the patient's Other, the barred S, and the unconscious of the subject begins a discourse with the Other of the analyst, the analyst's own unconscious. This is represented by the

$\mathcal{S}$ -A axis of the symbolic unconscious relationship between the barred subject and the Other; the analyst, the Name of the Father, the symbol of the phallus, and the locus which allows the unconscious to discourse with the conscious. The analyst is now in a position to put the question of the patient's desire to the patient. The question inevitably involves the phallus as the desire of the other's desire and the patient's relationship to it. We can visualize the experience of unconscious intersubjectivity by folding the symmetrical triangles, $\mathcal{S}$ -a-a' and a-a'-A, upon each other when $\mathcal{S}$ and A become congruent points.

An important aspect of this situation is the silence of the analyst, which is an absence signifying the ultimate absence--death. Thus, there are really four participants in the analytical situation; the unconscious, both that of the patient and that of the analyst which are essentially the same; the locus from which the patient speaks; the locus of the analyst's hearing; and death.

Lacan derives his concept of death from Heidegger; but to avoid a long digression into this topic, a few general comments must suffice. Death is the non-being which constitutes being, as the absence of the object constitutes the possibility of the word. It is the ultimate absence in us which is the primordial generator of desire, of the Desire which alone, according to Hegel, generates subjectivity. As the progenitor of Desire, Death is the

necessary condition for the emergence of consciousness. Since the fulfillment of desire is the impetus to the metonymic quest for adequate substitutions to fill the lack of being, death is consequently the generating impulse for the metonymic chain of language, in which and by which the subject is constituted.

Two problems are inherent in Lacan's psychoanalytic scenario. The first is the nature of the unconscious which can achieve the radical intersubjectivity of unconscious communication between two subjects; and the second is the nature of language by which this discourse is made possible.

If the unconscious as a "thing" is unknowable, what does Lacan mean by the unconscious? He says that it is the discourse of the Other. As we have seen, the term has many meanings for Lacan, but in this case he seems to mean that it is the speech of the repressed that has become other to the subject. He also says that it is "structured like language." We know of the ego by the nature of its discourse; or, more accurately, we accept a certain type of discourse and reify its locus into the metaphor which we term the ego. Similarly, we use the term "unconscious" to signify a mode of discourse which interrupts into the chain of conscious discourse and disrupts that chain. Lacan attempts to show that the linguistic structure of these interruptions follows the linguistic polarities of language which, adopting Jakobson's terms, he labels the metaphoric

and the metonymic poles. Thus, the unconscious is structured like a language, and a knowledge of linguistics helps us decode the discourse of the unconscious. The specific content of the message is of secondary importance because it is always a variation on the same theme--the desire of Desire. Of crucial importance, however, is the nature of the distortion of the language of desire, for that reveals the unique characteristics of the patient's neurosis.

In essence, then, the unconscious is merely a structuring function by which desire is expressed to another locus of desire. Both loci are structurally identical, since they are common to all human beings. The unconscious, Lacan assumes, must be collective. This must be so, he asserts, for the simple reason that without a common structuring principle of mental life the possibility of language as a mode of interpersonal communication could not arise. Lacan's implicit view of the unconscious is similar to Lévi-Strauss's description of it as a structuring repository of experience:

The subconscious, a reservoir of memories and images collected in the course of each life, becomes a simple aspect of memory. . . . On the other hand, the unconscious is always empty; or, more precisely, it is as much a stranger to images as is the stomach to the food which passes through it. As an organ of specific function, the unconscious limits itself to the imposition of structural laws. . . on unarticulated elements which come from elsewhere: pulsions, emotions, representations, memories. One could therefore say that the subconscious is the individual lexicon where each of us accumulates the vocabulary of his personal history, but that this vocabulary only acquires signification, for ourselves and for others, is so far as the unconscious organizes it according to the laws of the

unconscious and thus makes of it a discourse. . . 22. The vocabulary is less important than the structure.

The unconscious, then, gives structure and value, the components of desire, to being. It is the psychic function which sustains the moments of intersubjective communication by which the patient and the analyst communicate unconsciously. The moments of intersubjectivity allow the analyst to identify the "points of capture" in which the empty, free-floating speech of the patient anchors to the language of his desire. These points allow the analyst to assert the authority of his analysis of the patient's neurosis.

The ego, in this context, is a fetishization of the metonymic elements in the chain of desired objects. The greater the fixation on one of the elements, the greater the neurosis. The fixation is the Fall which enters humanity into history, since civilization and the very concept of time depend upon subjectivity. But the degree of fixation can reach a point of diminishing return when the strength of the neurosis exceeds the amount of repression necessary for civilization. Then, it must be transcended, or at least revealed as an artifact and not an essential element of being, in order to restore health to the individual and community. This pattern establishes a sequence of what Lacan calls perception, misunderstanding (méconnaissance), and insight (reconnaissance). The self

perceives, misconceives the perceptions in the construction of the ego, and then must have insight into the nature of misconception. This parallels Brown's view that the ego is a necessary stage in the evolution of consciousness to beyond the ego in which the ego is the material that becomes the metaphoric fuel of the transformation.

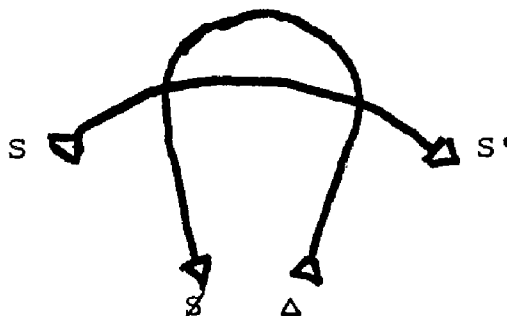
The insight into and the transcendence of ego distortions entails an understanding of how, linguistically, the ego displaces the discourse of the Other. Lacan bases his analysis of this displacement on the Saussurean formulation of the structure of language, but he makes two important adjustments to Saussure's theory. Saussure originally formulated the structure of all language as the S/s algorithm: the acoustical image over the concept or signified. Lacan inverts the relationship because in context of his theory the signifier precedes its signification since the child is born into the symbolic register before it constructs a personal signification. In addition, Lacan tends to compress both the sound and the sense into his use of the term "signifier," and reserve the term "signified" to designate the latent significance. This does not mean that he assumes that the signifier refers directly to physical reality nor that the signified is a definition of the signifier. The signifier achieves significance only in terms of the other signifiers as they establish a metonymic chain in which

each successive signifier redefines those that preceded it. This chain of signifiers floats separately above the total signified, and the only correspondence between the two modes is that of the totality of signifiers to signifieds. Thus, in a sentence, the signifiers establish their own centripetal meaning, which is unrelated to, or a distortion of, the real signified. At the basis of this view of the relationship between signifier and signified is the assumption that a word arises out of the lack or absence of its referent. Thus, Lacan reads the S/s reformulation as the signifier over the signified, separated by a bar which resists signification.

If signifiers establish a closed system, however, language can never become a basis for discourse or exchange. As Lévi-Staruss notes, the private language of personal memory could never achieve signification. At some point, the structuration of the unconscious must intrude upon the floating chain of signifiers of conscious discourse to anchor it to what is collectively human, and thereby establish a basis for language. At these "points of caption" signifiers attach themselves to their legitimate signifieds, which are actually signifiers of the repressed; and this produces a new signification. These pinnings, which Lacan compares to the points where sides of an upholstered cushion are quilted together, reveal an intelligible symbolic function. To illustrate the

mathematical possibility of these points, Anthony Wilden employs an analogy from topology: if a map is crumpled and then thrown down upon an identical map, there will be at least one point of congruency between the two maps.

By oversimplifying, we might think of these points as moments in the chain when the signifieds (i.e. the signifiers of the repressed) intrudes upon the chain of discourse and disrupts it. Lacan diagrams this process as²³ a parabola intersected by an arch.



This is a simplified version of a much more complex diagram. In its simplest form the S-S' arch represents the signifying chain of the patient's discourse; the Δ -S vector is the message read "backwards" since the subject receives and utters the message in an inverted form from that intended by the Other. In practical terms the reading backwards is the analyst's reading when he has successfully occupied the A locus, the place of the Other, where he receives the message of the patient's unconscious. The points at which the chain of discourse and the chain of

response coincide, the intersections of the two vectors, are the "points of caption," the moments when signifiers between the patient and the analyst anchor to their true signifieds.

Lacan then delineates the structure of these significant points by elaborating upon the two extremes of the relationship between the signifier and the signified in the S/s formula. Since the relationship is metaphorically vertical, Lacan rewrites the formula as $f(S)\frac{1}{s}$. This allows him to use standard mathematical formulaic expression to represent the concepts of metonymy and metaphor. Since the signifier always requires a chain of signifiers to produce any signification, the $f(S)$ is expanded in two ways to illustrate the possible relationships between the signifiers that comprise the chain. Basing his equations on the binary poles of language, metonymy and metaphor, Lacan rewrites his original formula.

By expansion, the formula for metonymy becomes

$$f(S...S') = S(-)s.$$

The $(S...S')$ is the signifying chain in which a signifier, by its contiguity to the original signifier, has replaced it. Because of this, the resultant signifying chain remains barred from the signified, the repressed signifier. The true significance of the chain lies in the displaced signifier of the metonymic function, noted by the ' which designates the latent term of the metonymy. The significance

of the patent signifier, which was empty of meaning for the patient before the displacement, is that which the latent signifier gives to it. Thus, metonymy, or displacement, repeats the structural pattern which gives rise to the ego: it invests the lack of being/significance with a signifier. As an example of this metonymic displacement, Wilden cites the case of the Wolfman's fantasy of the Wespe. The significance was not in the word as image or symbol for him, but that "castrated of its initial 'W,'" it becomes the S.P. of the Wolfman's initials.²⁴ In other words, the significance of the patent signifier is determined only with reference to the buried signifier and the distortion it experiences in becoming conscious. The metonymic function may be read in two ways, although Lacan does not explicitly state this. As he notes, it is "the most appropriate means used by the unconscious to foil censorship."²⁵ Yet it is also the linguistic function by which the repressive seeks to avoid the significance of the displaced signifier. Because of this, metonymy is more potent from the locus of the ego, and hence the bar between the S-s which represents the blocking of the conscious signification.

The algorithm for metaphor, on the other hand, is

$$f\left(\frac{S'}{S}\right) = S(+s).$$

In metaphor, one signifier has been substituted for another, not because of its contiguity but because of its equivalence. Thus, the formula represents them vertically. The plus

of the left-hand term represents the production of signification as the patent signifier enters into the signified. Thus, in metaphor, the patent term produces the signification; it is the linguistic equivalent of the symptom which must itself be read for its significance. In metaphor, lack of being/signification is not invested in the patent signifier; the patent signifier is itself symptomatic of the lack of being. The distinction between the two functions may appear confusing, but in terms of methodological approach, they are clearly distinct: in metonymy, one must seek the origin of the contiguous chain of signifiers and the increasing distortion as each displaces the previous one; in metaphor the significance lies in the particular symptom or metaphor articulated. The metaphor is polysemous and overdetermined. It has encapsulated the repressed signifier and allows for the return of the repressed since the significance lies in the patent signifier itself.

While the different approaches to decoding the two poles of language may help us understand the nature of the points of caption which anchor the signifier to the signified, these points are perhaps mythic constructs themselves. But they are methodologically necessary to explain the structure of what does constitute signification. Lacan justifies these possibly mythic constructs by referring to Lévi-Strauss's assertion that although the Oedipal Myth

or the Myth of the Primal Hoarde may have never occurred in history, we would have had to invent them to explain the structures of both mind and society. Similarly, although we designate the functional relationship of the conscious to the unconscious as analogous to the S/s algorithm in which special points coincide, in actuality it is more akin to a moebius strip, in which what appears to be a binary inside-outside construct is actually a continuum which, itself without a true center, appears to have two sides when a cut is made in it.

Several key concepts must be reiterated. For Lacan, the ego is an artifact which achieves its fullness and its subjectivity through language. It is a primal fetishization of a part for the whole, a displacement of the whole by a part, and is therefore the source of all later metonymies and desires. Since the constitution of the ego is effected by an incorporation of the language of the other and sustained a continual displacement of the objects of desire, any discourse of the subject will reveal a tripartite dynamic of the other, of the ego as its product, and of the Other that is its repressed being. This discourse will inevitably reveal the intrusion of the Other upon it since the Other was repressed only by the acquisition of language. This Other is both a locus in the subject and the basis for all intersubjectivity and communication. In addition, the Other, the unconscious, is essentially a

universal structuring principle which, in spite of its subjugation by the Master ego, does the work of structuring experience. Health, or transcendence of the original misconception which establishes the ego, can be achieved only by a realization of the power of the Slave to make of animal nature, humanity. And finally, there are two theoretical poles of communication in every discourse: a temporally unfolding, linear, communication of fact, information, or demand directed to a consciously recognized other in an attempt to make him, to varying degree, a slave of the discourse; and an atemporal outpouring of dialectical union in which an unconscious communication occurs that unites two subjects.

The Unified Approach to the Aesthetic Situation:
 Suggestions for Replying to Post-Modern Literature.

Lacan's theories are open to numerous criticisms. His notorious two-minute sessions and his rejection of the relevance of the instincts make much of his theory suspect to traditional and clinical practitioners. Yet his writings are useful in terms of literary criticism because they imply structures and insights that are applicable to defining the aesthetic situation, the nature

of the aesthetic object, and the aesthetic effect.

Since the theoretical task of creating interpretive structures is essentially an ego-activity, most critical theories reproduce the structures of ego-organization in their desire to remain accessible to other consciousnesses, and therefore they are subject to the same limitations of ego structure: the fetishization of a part for the whole. This is the source of the implicit binary nature of modern approaches to a text. At the beginning of this chapter, the binary components of most modern theoretical systems were listed, and as long as critics insist on viewing the text as an isolated object, they will never enable readers to deal with the types of literature which are now being written. Furthermore, they will never be able to explain how older works, written under different historical conditions, continue to generate emotive significance that transcends mere antiquarian interest. What is needed is not only a study of generic conventions or rhetorical forms which, while they contribute to the aesthetic effect, are merely elements of a larger discursive structure and only part of the aesthetic situation: such conventions that are elements of the text which make it understandable to consciousness and categorizable by reason, such conventions that belong only to the a-a' axis of imaginary discourse and are only a part of the entire situation. What is needed is an analysis of the entire situation of author,

text, reader, and the unconscious participating in the aesthetic act.

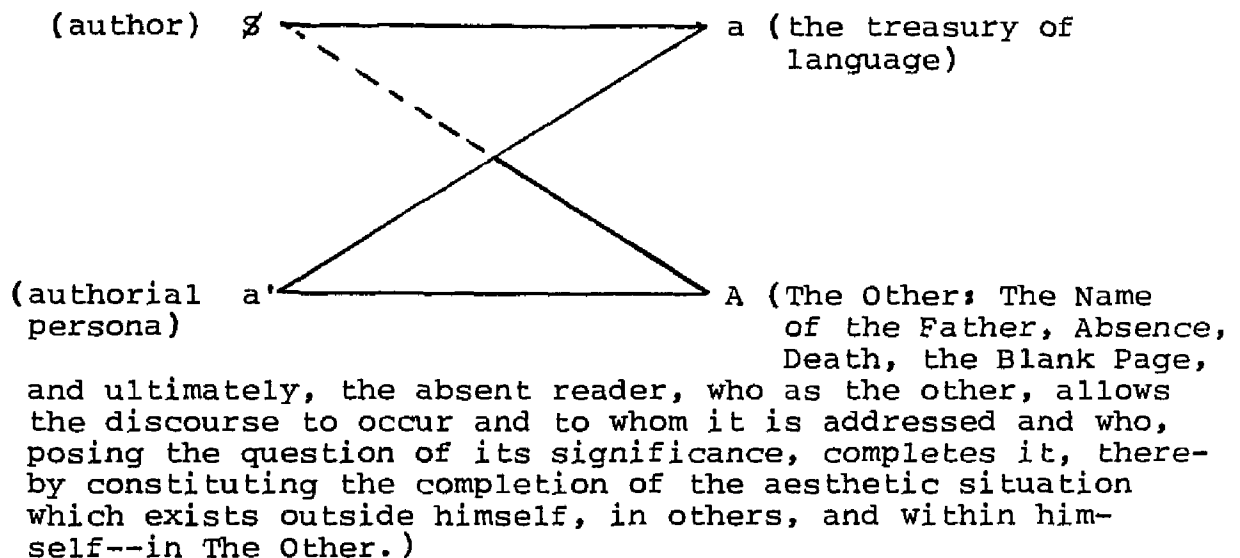
Only in the entire structure of the situation can an aesthetic object embody meaning. Any reader knows, long before he is taught about "literature" that a text is an object and, as such, is unknowable as any "thing" is unknowable. It becomes significant only when it enters a field of discourse. The naive reader may not realize, however, the role of the fourth component, the unconscious; but that does not diminish his experience of the situation since the unconscious is active without his awareness of it.

What the reader may also not consciously know, but at least unconsciously performs, is his completion of the circuit of discourse, the reading back of significance. This completion may assume the form of the simple reaction of approval or disapproval, or the more sophisticated response of attempting to articulate one's reaction, but both are actually symptoms of deeper reactions. The answer to the text is essentially an unconscious completion of the discourse which effects closure and sustains the aesthetic situation. This closure is not inherent in the object regardless of the structural devices which cue the reader to the ending of the text,²⁶ but is in the structure of the aesthetic experience which, constituted prior to the reader, demands his entrance into it, and his reply. A clear articulation of this reply and of the

closure it effects, requires a reassessment of the structure of the aesthetic situation.

If Lacan is correct in his explanation of the structure of intersubjectivity, and if this structure repeats itself in the structure of discourse, it is probable that a congruent structure might be engendered by the aesthetic situation. In Lacan's paradigm, the subject enters the field of discourse as a signifier and achieves subjectivity by the acquisition of the signifiers of the other. These signifiers are the specular image, the partial objects of desire, and the language and desire of the mother. The structural equivalent in the aesthetic situation situates language in the locus of partial objects, the *a* locus. Via the mediation of language, the author, the aesthetically unknowable being or the barred *S*, generates an authorial persona which is the literary equivalent of the ego ideal. This persona is also constituted under the play of the other in a congruent structure in terms of the author's personal life, i.e. whatever in the Name of the Father's relationship to the mother disposed the writer to write. In a broader sense, the Other, the *A* locus, as in all cases, is absence, lack of being, or Death--that which the authorial persona, as a parallel of the ego ideal, sees as an absence of being and seeks to fill with its own discourse. Thus, aesthetic discourse is a discourse to Absence, Death, and the Other, generated by the desire to

fill and be filled by them--to avoid them by incorporating them within the structure of the text.²⁷ Lacan's schema, adapted to the aesthetic situation appears as follows.



This diagram maps the field of the aesthetic situation in general terms. Although it is structurally similar to the analytic situation, there are significant differences. The ego ideal is a product of incorporated partial objects; the authorial persona is a product of the conscious and unconscious author and the treasury of language. This treasury consists not only of conventional signifiers, but of literary signifiers as well--genre, form, and convention--which are the subjects of formalist theories. Although these literary signifiers are structurally similar

to obsessive compulsions in that they determine repeated types of expressions or actions, they differ in their relationship to the A locus. Neurotic discourse, as Lacan shows, attempts to fix the A locus within the a-a' axis of its imaginary discourse, to master the Other. The authorial persona addresses its discourse to the Other at the greatest possible distance from the imaginary axis of private discourse. [Texts attempt to draw us into them to lose ourselves in the discovery of freedom, not to master us by their illusion of self-containment.] Neurotic discourse operates under the imperatives of need and demand; aesthetic under the imperatives of desire.

In addition, the treasury of language is embedded in time. This implies that to understand the discourse, the reader must know the meaning of a signifier (whether it is a word, a form, or a convention) within the historical context of its utterance. More profoundly, this implies that the authorial consciousness and the authorial persona are functions of time since they are the products of the language and their periods. Because of this, the text itself and the diachronic unfolding of the discourse is an important function in the situation. It is part of the necessary condition for the dialectic which assimilates time into being.

The blank page fulfills the structural function of the analyst in the analytic situation. Just as the analyst

by his silent presence, creates a lack which is the impetus to desire and its expression, the blank page creates a demand for discourse. Any writer who has confronted the blank page with anxiety knows the helpless, yet aggressive, despair in the presence of absence on a sheet of paper. The author attempts to fill the absence by projections of his persona which will always be a projection along the a-a' axis between the treasury of language and the authorial persona. This discourse will, of necessity, parallel the axis of ego-organization. Yet it is not directed towards a specific analyst or an ideal reader--but to the locus of the Other in all its multiplicity.²⁸

This locus, as an absent addressee, retains similar ambiguities with respect to the position of the analyst. It resists, by nature, incorporation into the private fantasy of the a-a' axis. This creates a tension which allows the discourse to sustain the double articulation of conscious and unconscious significance since the presence of the external other allows for an expression of the Other (unconscious) within the author. This empty locus also allows for, and even demands, the existence of a position to which a reader may accede. If this locus were not an integral and inherent element of the discourse, no reader could make sense of it. Implied in this existence of the Other and the possibility of the union of the Other of the author and the Other of the reader and the

independent existence of the locus of the Other is the fact that, for language to be even possible, the unconscious, as Lévi-Strauss asserts, must be collective--both a part of and apart from the individual subject. A discourse conducted purely along the a-a' axis would be meaningless, even though author and reader shared the same lexical treasury since the purely private displacement of signifiers would prohibit signification.

Given the structure of the aesthetic situation, several distinctions between neurotic and aesthetic discourse becomes apparent. The distinctions are not the result only of the formal elements of each type of discourse, but of the structural fields that they generate. Critics tend to confuse neurotic and aesthetic discourse since they are structurally similar and often overlook important differences between the two modes of discourse. In both modes, the A locus represents the Other, but in aesthetic discourse it is modified by the nature of the language treasury in the a locus, which in turn significantly alters the nature of the a-a' axis of discourse. The A locus represents, in both types of speech, the a'-A axis of the Other's relationship to the discourse or text.²⁹ Both the A locus and its relationship to the a-a' axis are elastic. In neurotic discourse the patient seeks to dominate the A locus and incorporate it into the a-a' axis of imaginary speech, while the analyst refuses or resists

this by his silent presence, which prevents a purely solipsistic monologue. In psychotic speech the patient has already collapsed the A into the a-a' axis: signifiers have become totally imaginary or, in terms of the patient, real things, and the analyst merely another element in the imaginary realm. Because the patient has collapsed the public signifier into the private signified, these words/things are unintelligible to the other.

Aesthetic discourse, on the other hand, although structurally similar to the analytic situation, is not identical, because the elements comprising the structure are different. Because it is freed from the restrictions of report and demand, aesthetic discourse does not seek to capture the A locus within the a'-A axis. At its most aggressive, aesthetic discourse attempts to convince the reader of its validity and move the A locus nearer to the a-a' axis. This is the aim of propaganda. At its least aggressive, aesthetic discourse allows for the full emptiness of the A locus, which, when addressed to it, freed from the imperatives of need and demand, opens the ways for the expression of desire, and is therefore conducive to the irruption of the Other, the collective unconscious in both the reader and author.

Aesthetic discourse, then, entails a tension between the consciously imaginary which constructs it and the consciousness which perceives it, and between the unconscious

Other of both. These double tensions are crucial for a full articulation of the expression and completion of the aesthetic circuit. Another important element of aesthetic discourse is the treasury of language, which constitutes the authorial persona and is free from the constraints of demand by virtue of its purely aesthetic signifiers: form, genre, and convention. In one sense, these requirements would seem to indicate that aesthetic discourse should be even more controlled and repressive than neurotic speech; but the freedom from the restraints of demand actually liberates aesthetic discourse from the need to dominate the perceiver: it becomes not only the expression of desire, which implies the need to master the desire of the other, but the expression of the nature of Desire, the revelation of the lack of being, in an individualistic sense, and the unity of being, in the collective, which is the essence of life and the life of the aesthetic situation. Because of this, the signifiers in aesthetic discourse never remain simple signs but always enter the symbolic register, and as Freud and Lacan argue, it is by means of the symbolic that the repressed can make itself known. As literature shows, the possibilities of the return of the repressed are increased by the structuration of aesthetic discourse because the restrictions imposed on it by the treasury of convention, when freed from the tyranny of demand, only

increase the number of points of caption where the discourse of the text is congruent to that of the unconscious.

These points, and the critic's ability to identify them, anchor the chain of signifiers, which are linguistically free-floating in terms of their signification, to an intended signification, thereby eliminating the theoretical possibility of an infinite number of interpretations of the text. The identification of these points also establishes a criterion for determining the validity of individual interpretations.

Lacan's myth of points of caption implicitly undermines the structuralists' and grammatologists' assertion that a text is plural, open to an infinity of meanings. It also suggests the nature of both the aesthetic experience and the reader's reply to it. The production and nature of the text is represented by the Z of the diagram; the completion and response is represented by the $\$$ -A vector in which the reader, occupying the locus of the Other, achieves an identity with the Other of the author. The reader reads in time: in the period of time in which he lives and in the duration in which he reads the text. Time is a constituent of his ego and of his death, the ultimate absence that is within and without him, and that is the essence of his being. Death is the support of the metonymic chain of desire and of the chain of signifiers that articulate that desire. Thus,

while it is under the aegis of time that one enters into the field of discourse, it is under the aegis of atemporality that the discourse is achieved, that the locus of the A is occupied, and that the reply is consummated. The reply is out of time simply because the unconscious does not experience time. The aesthetic effect, on its most profound level, is precisely this experience of unconscious intersubjectivity and the release of one's being from the confinements of ego-structuration.

In the aesthetic situation, which exists whenever intersubjectivity occurs via the medium of objective artifact, the reader can accede to the locus of the Other by virtue of the Other in himself. In effect, via the media of author, text, and reader, the unconscious establishes a discourse with itself. But since the aesthetic discourse is so firmly grounded in the conscious generation of the imaginary a-a' axis, i.e. the level of consciousness which constructs the discourse, the unconscious is led to an articulation on a conscious level. Obviously, this articulation can vary from the mere acknowledgement of the aesthetic experience to an analysis of it. The aesthetic experience, then, is not simply the release of unconscious energies as Freud had suggested in his analysis of jokes, which is limited by his own fixation on the autoerotic and intransitive. In his analysis, the joke, like the dream, is a manifestation of neurotic symptom, not a communication

between points of consciousness. But the dream is also a message and the joke is a medium for both release and intersubjectivity. The aesthetic situation, similarly, is a communication of a desire which effects a disruption of the isolated consciousness, uniting it with the consciousness of the other.

Lacan suggests that the analyst's reply to the patient's discourse, once intersubjectivity has been achieved, is a reading backwards of the discourse since it was delivered by the patient in a distorted, inverted form. This reading backwards entails a recognition of the moments of caption and the breaks, or *béance*, in the discourse. Lacan conceives of *béance* as gaps that are part of the fabric of the discourse like a tapestry that has rents woven into it. It is through these gaps that the unconscious can manifest itself. The critical response to an aesthetic object is similar. The critic articulates the discovery of the Other of the self in the Other of the other, the liberation from the realm of the imaginary of the ego into the plenum of being, thereby completing and constituting the aesthetic situation.

The problem of articulating the response, consciously, involves both the problem of interpretation and the problem of method. The diagram of the structure of the aesthetic situation suggests some possible approaches. The most common, at least in formalist theories, is a recapitulation

of the text, the structural analysis of the a-a' vector of consciously articulated signifiers. This reductionist reading of the letter of the law is a fetishization of the text, which assumes that a part of the situation is significant of the entire structure of intersubjectivity. A further fetishization involves the reading of the $\$$ -a-a' axes to determine the historical components of the authorial persona and its influence upon the text. A reversal of this procedure involves a reading from the a-a' axis to the $\$$ to explain the text in terms of authorial neurosis. This type of reading is misled by the structural similarities between neurotic and aesthetic discourse by attempting to shortcircuit the a'-a- $\$$ axes and read directly from the authorial ideal to the barred subject by substituting dream book reductionisms for the reply to the text.

The inadequacies of these approaches suggests that a reply to the text requires a departure from strictly logical, legalistic adherence to the letter of the law. Since the reply is validated by its articulation of the points of caption, which are perhaps mythic, the reply is also the myth of the reply. This myth is the articulation of the A- $\$$ axis that fulfils, completes, and "closes" the discourse. Closure, by terminating the temporal unfolding of the discourse, halts the metonymic displacement of signifiers and allows the work--or parts of it--to be

revealed as elements of the metaphoric register: the metaphor cannot be distinguished from the metonymy until the discourse stops. Closure also allows the text and the reply to accede to the metaphoric register since the text and the reply are essentially symbolic manifestations of intersubjectivity. Since the reply is symbolic, it can be an enunciation/annunciation of the unconscious language of desire. The reply is also a myth since, being an unconscious communication, its message is theoretically unspeakable in exclusively conscious terms. Since it is an unconscious reply, however, the conscious articulation is of secondary importance: the structure of the response fulfills the structure of the discourse of the Other--and that structure is accessible to articulation.

In The Pleasure of the Text, Roland Barthes makes a distinction between pleasure and bliss that is analogous to the difference between conventional analysis and the myth of the reply. His analysis is an erotics of reading in which the social pleasures of reading are undermined by the anarchic, orgasmic going-out-of-self that is the bliss of response.

Bliss is unspeakable, inter-dicted. I refer to Lacan ("What one must bear in mind is that bliss is forbidden to the speaker, as such, or else that it cannot be spoken except between the lines...") and to Leclaire ("...Whoever speaks, by speaking denies bliss, or correlatively, whoever experiences bliss causes the letter--and all possible speech--to collapse in the absolute degree of the annihilation he is celebrating")....

With the writer of bliss (and his reader) begins the untenable text, the impossible text. This text is outside pleasure, outside criticism, unless it is through another text of bliss: you cannot speak "on" such a text, you can only speak "in" it, in its fashion, enter into a desperate plagiarism, hysterically affirm the void of bliss (and no longer obsessively repeat the letter of pleasure).³⁰

Barthes' hysteria, which seems almost identical to Brown's Dionysic enthusiasm, may or may not be a necessary criterion of the reply, but his analysis is suggestive of important characteristics of the reply. The form of the response must articulate that which escapes verbal articulation. Interpretation, therefore, does not simply summarize the text nor merely note its formal structure. Nor does it reduce the privileged position of the aesthetic text which alone can sustain the aesthetic situation. Nor does it merely feed upon the text as a pretext for critical commentary: it insists upon its own completion of the discourse as an integral component of the total aesthetic situation which is different from all other modes of discourse in that it sustains a going-beyond-of-self.

The methodology of interpretation as reply has several characteristics. First, it requires an identification of the béances, those points of basic conflict within the structure of the text, and of the points of caption, those points where, via metaphor, the signifiers anchor to their signifieds. Barthes discusses the béances as the edges of the text.

Sade: the pleasure of reading him clearly proceeds from certain breaks (or certain collisions): anti-pathetic codes (the noble and the trivial, for example) come into contact....As textual theory has it: the language is redistributed. Now, such redistribution is always achieved by cutting. Two edges are created: an obedient, conformist, plagiarizing edge (the language established by schooling, good usage, literature, culture, and another edge, mobile, blank (ready to assume any contours), which is never anything but the site of its effect....Neither culture nor its destruction is erotic; it is the seam between them, the fault, the flaw, which becomes so.³¹

Barthes sees these edges as metaphoric pins that equal Lacan's points of caption in that they reveal the latent significance of the text--the true language of desire. Lacan develops this relationship between the cut and the caption by drawing an analogy from typology. He compares the manifest and latent content as two sides of a moebius strip, sides which appear to be in contrast but are actually part of a continuum. The break is the pin, or cut, which locates the congruity of points on both sides. Since the moebius strip has no true, localized center, the reply, to follow the metaphor, is always one of a radical decentering in an attempt to approach the impossible limit of the myth of the center, the core significance of the text from which all of its surface is generated. As in the calculus, the reply employs the myth of the center as the limit to articulate the reality of the text, the center that is the lack, the absence, and the emptiness that, generating desire, leads to the creation of the surface. In essence, the reply is a

reading of both the Z and the A- $\mathcal{Z}$ axis that places both in opposition to reveal the edges of the text.

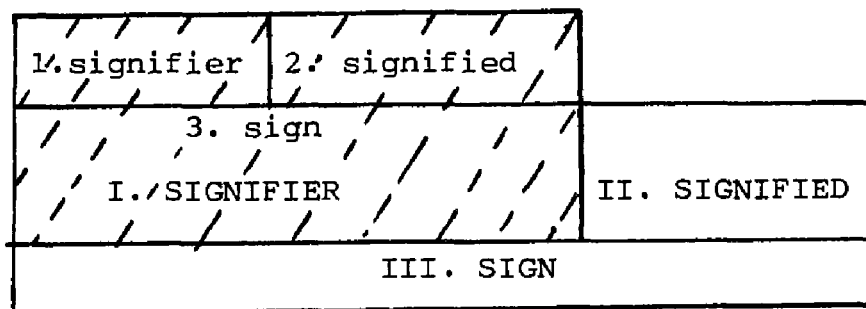
Consequently, the reply requires a close scrutiny of the surface of the text to identify the double articulation of the signifier both in the discourse of the author and in the response the reader makes to complete it, in order to identify the points of caption and the béances. This reply, therefore, does not require the conventional Master-Slave relationship between the reader and the text that is inherent in most theories of reading: it does not approach the text as object to be mastered nor as a magic artifact which demands submission, but as a discourse to be completed. This approach obviates a difficulty inherent in conventional criticism which is forced to deal with the text in two languages: the one language of the analysis of the experience which justifies a concern with the object as a focus of investigation, and the other as an analysis of the "object" itself. These two languages are reconciled only at the level of the unconscious discourse as it permeates the defile of the signifier, at the level when the reply is the fulfillment of the form. The reply, then, finds a way of speaking which, in its discussion of authorial persona, textual, surface, and internal béances tricks the discourse into the register of the unconscious.

The reply has several characteristics. It attempts

to articulate the béances both within the text and between texts, which, in theory, are the same béance since both are generated by the same lack of being. Within the discourse of the text, the metonymic slide of signifiers displaces and covers, while it creates in its very fabric, the gaps which cannot be filled, just as the beginning of every new discourse is a metonymic displacement of all previous texts which includes the gap between itself and its predecessors. The reply also differentiates between the metonymic and metaphoric registers within each text to discern the chain of displacement and the metaphoric eruptions that result in the emergence of significance.

In articulating the reply it is necessary to follow the play of signifiers in the text as they participate in successive formalizations of significance; it also notes the contradictions in the text between the conflicting significations of the various levels of formalization. The concept of successive formalizations is derived from Barthes' study of the structure of myth in "Myth Today."³² Barthes uses Saussure's signifier-signified-sign structure as a paradigm to illustrate how a sign, which requires a combined signifier-signified to become significant, can itself become a signifier in a second-level semiological system. To illustrate this point, he cites a quotation from a Latin grammar, quia ego nominor leo. As a sign at the first level of signification, the phrase signifies

something about the condition of the lion. But in a grammar, this is obviously not its significance. The phrase is absorbed into the larger structure, and as its first level signification is displaced, it acquires the signification of a principle of grammatical structures of the passive voice. Barthes uses the following diagram to illustrate the process.



In this paradigm the second-level sign-system displaces the significance of the original sign of the first-level system. It does not obliterate the first-level meaning, but merely represses it to allow the sign to acquire new signification. The new signification is a distortion of the signifier from its conventional signified, and much of its significance lies precisely in the distortion, in the tension between the conventional significance and its additional meaning. In aesthetic discourse, this distortion allows the signifier to acquire emotive import. Since the relationship between the signifier and the

signified is free-floating and, in Lacanian terms, resists signification, the anchor of the signifier to the signified lies in the distortion, and that distortion reveals the unconscious, emotive significance of the signifier. This is the linguistic manifestation of a béance. In GR, for example, when Slothrop becomes Pigman, the question is not only what he represents as Pigman (i.e. his symbolic significance as the potential sacrificial victim), but what that distortion of language itself signifies (i.e. the emotive dislocation and freedom inherent in the fluidity of identity).

Adapting Barthes' formulation with an awareness of Lacan's discussion of the relationship of the signifier to the signified, the formula becomes

$$Sn_1 = f\left(\frac{Sr}{Sd}\right)$$

in which the significant sign (Sn) is a function of the signifier (Sr) and the signified (Sd), which are related directly by the conventions of naming, the standard lexicon, and separated by metaphoric or metonymic functions. Using this formula as a basis, Barthes' second level system becomes

$$Sn_2 = f\left(\frac{Sn_1}{Sd_2}\right)$$

in which the second-level sign is a function of the first-level sign operating as a signifier of the second-level signified. Any text may be examined as a series of such formalizations of the sign, and each formal displacement can acquire emotive significance derived from the tension created by the original and resultant meaning. A schema which delineates a number of distinct operations of the signifier in the text will also reveal the realms which each existing theoretical approach can legitimately operate within.

The first level of formalization is that of sound made into significant word. This is the level of denotative meaning; and it is this level which accounts for the symbolic nature of all language. (Implicit in this aspect of language are all the complexities of the relationship of language to the unconscious: as the unconscious is structured like a language, so is language structured like the unconscious--yet at the same time, language is an element in the creation of the ego which represses and masks the discourse of the unconscious.) The second-level formalization is achieved when the word enters the context of a text and its pure denotative meaning is displaced by the chain of signifiers in the text. This displacement may be as slight as the emphasis placed on the word's conventional connotative meaning, or as drastic as a redefinition of the signifier. Here the

centrifugal direction of meaning is subsumed by the text and, gathering an internally determined meaning, becomes centripetal: words becomes symbols in a conventional sense. When such symbols themselves form structures, they may become signifiers of yet a higher structure: allegory. Any thematic analysis of a text, however, must approach this level whether the work is a self-conscious allegory or not. This is what Frye implies when he asserts that all interpretation is allegorical.³³

These first three levels deal with the text in the diachronic process of its unfolding, and they require the presence of the text in the reader's experience of it in the act of reading: the virtual presence of linguistic structures that allow the reader to enter into the discourse. These levels, therefore, demand modes of analysis which examine the displacement of the word from its denotative meaning and its acquisition of, consciously or unconsciously intended, authorial and emotive significance.

But symbolic components may also establish a structure whose significance lies not in the process of their unfolding but in the general architectonic form of their arrangement. On this level, the diachronic process of reading in time, of receiving or perceiving the discourse, is replaced by the contemplative act of abstracting, or reacting to, synchronic structures. This begins the reply to the text as its surface is effaced before its deep

structures: those determined by the Other as it erupts in either metaphoric manifestations or discrepancies between surface and deep significations. On this level, the displacement in words and images that occurs on the first three levels yields to the displacement of the normative structures of language, and unconscious determinatives and non-conscious meanings become significant. At this level, the reader begins to deconstruct the text; or, as in the case of several modern texts, they begin to deconstruct themselves by placing synchronic significance in opposition to diachronic meaning.

Finally, both surface and latent structures may become elements of a final formalized unit. At this level, the text reveals its historical significance as a manifestation of its historical period or its archetypal significance as a structural, mythic pattern. Here, the final experience of reading, the dialectical fusion of present surface, its beances, and the non-conscious or unconscious significance may be analyzed in terms of the reader's completion of the discourse.

The formalization process is schematized as follows, and the appropriate modes of analysis are placed next to the levels of the formalized signifier. Obviously, this schema is suggestive rather than prescriptive, and merely approximates which mode of analysis is most applicable, not which is exclusively employed. Any act of reply ranges

over the entire spectrum of methods.

LEVEL OF THE SIGNIFIER	MODE OF ANALYSIS
1. $Sn_1 = f(\frac{Sr}{Sd_1})$	semantic analysis
2. $Sn_2 = f(\frac{Sn_1}{Sd_2})$	formal/syntactic
3. $Sn_3 = f(\frac{Sn_2}{Sd_3})$	-----
	structural/ grammatological
4. $Sn_4 = f(\frac{Sn_3}{Sd_4})$	historical/ archetypal
5. $Sn_5 = f(\frac{Sn_4}{Sd_5})$	

This schema is useful in that, in conjunction with the adaptation of Lacan's diagram of the analytic situation, it correlates the type of approach to the level of discourse that is appropriate, while also taking into consideration the entire structural field of the play of discourse. It allows the reader to identify the displacements of meaning from one level of formalization to the next, and therefore allows him to ascertain the significance of those displacements which enable the signifier to acquire emotive significance.³⁴

The conflicts among the meanings of the different levels of formalization establish an ironic play of

signifiers within the text, a play which often subverts its metonymic linearity into the polysemous. Texts which try to disrupt conventions or escape the limitations of their conventional form, often play with these internal ironies and disruptions because the ironic mode, which requires authorial intention, a text, a reader, and a field of discourse, and which overtly demands the structure of the aesthetic situation, promotes the conditions for intersubjectivity. The irony of A Modest Proposal, for example, does not exist outside the field of the aesthetic situation, and therefore requires the completion of the discourse. If it had been written by a Nazi about Jews, it is doubtful whether a Hitler would have experienced the irony. Also, because irony tends to be self-subversive, it is an important element in contemporary texts which seek to dislocate both themselves and the reader to create the aesthetic effect. A reply, in terms of this theory, must account for the multiple ironies that permeate the situation and the response.

As important as irony is the aphorism. In an aphorism the chain of signifiers is so dense that they begin to collide and condense into metaphor. The aphoristic statement, as Brown demonstrated, becomes ambiguous and overdetermined, and the literal is transformed into the metaphoric. It parades its gaps and its contradictions before the reader; it disturbs and disrupts his assumptions;

and catching the reader off guard, it slips its meanings between the words. As Brown argues, this is like the dream, and we may think of the aphorism as the language of the dream, the mode of discourse of the Other. Brown calls aphorism the most common mode of writing by which the conscious can reveal the unconscious. "Aphorism is exaggeration, or grotesque; in psychoanalysis nothing is true except the exaggeration," because the exaggeration disrupts the conscious limitations of the discourse; and those disruptions are the gaps, the béances, through which the discourse of the Other occurs. "Systematic form attempts to evade the necessity of death in the life of the mind and of the body," while the aphorism, by the inclusion of the gap (ultimately death), "is the form of death and resurrection." It is "a mode of broken or syncopated manipulation to permit inclusive or simultaneous perception of a total or diversified field." Aphorism is the double articulation of the signifier; Brown terms this the silence in speech. "Broken speech; speech broken by silence. To let the silence in is symbolism. 'In symbolism there is concealment and yet revelation; here therefore, by Silence and by Speech acting together, come a double significance.'" The aphorism allows speech to articulate both axes of the aesthetic situation--the conscious discourse of the author and the unconscious discourse of the Other. "To reconnect consciousness with

the unconscious, to make consciousness symbolical, is to reconnect words with silence; to let the silence in. If consciousness is all words and no silence, the unconscious remains unconscious."³⁵ The aphorism, the embodiment of the gap, the silence in speech, is the essence of the decentered approach.

This methodology for analyzing the aesthetic situation is, therefore, a matter of form as well as of spirit. It obviates the current schizophrenic attitude which places the text on a cultural pedestal, only to rape it with formal and structural dissections. In lieu of the text as object, it sees the text as a medium of discourse that, uniquely, demands and contains a reply: the reply of the Other of the reader is the discourse of the Other of the author. It differs from formal and structural approaches in that it uses its irony against its own reply: it calls its assumptions and methods into question to decenter the critic from his approach to the text as object. It differs from structuralism in that it introduces the aphorism into the rationalistic analyses of structure in order to reveal the response that is essential to the discourse. It would amend phenomenological approaches by reintroducing the full text into their practical criticism. And finally, by removing the issue of instincts from psycho-analytic interpretations and by clarifying the difference between aesthetic and neurotic discourse, it would

obviate the reductive tendencies of much of psychoanalytic criticism.

In essence, the isolation of the béances in a text, the attention to the ironies between levels of formalization, the realization of the conflict between metonymic and metaphoric systems within a text, and the aphoristic style decenter the critical approach and allow it to move freely among the elements of the aesthetic situation. It frees the critic from the embarrassment of contradiction, even as the text demands it, and from the embarrassment of revealing his ecstasy when the text evokes it. This approach, to use Barthes's term, is a criticism of bliss. It employs improvisation and a play of various techniques to approach the limit and the myth of the center of the aesthetic situation--itself without a center; it allows the respondent to play over the text with various tools to elucidate the completion of the discourse--as the signifier plays over the signified. It allows for an articulation of the entire field of the aesthetic event. Finally, decentering is a methodological tool which allows for the emergence of the discourse of the Other, the language of Desire.

This approach also obviates the illusion of the text as an independent overpowering object which speaks through the reader as if he were possessed: an illusion inherent in both ego-structuration and ego-centered aesthetic

theories. Hayden White quotes George Poulet to illustrate the "ghost in the text" metaphor.

Here the work is personified in the mode of spirit, the act of reading becomes constitutive of meaning, and the exchange between work and reader is construed in the manner of an invasion of consciousness by a ghostly (though always benign) presence. It is not suprising that Poulet uses the language of schizophrenic analysis to gloss this idea:

A lag takes place, a sort of schizoid distinction between what I feel and what the other feels; a confused awareness of delay, so the work seems first to think by itself, and then to inform me what it has thought....I am a consciousness astonished by an existence which is not mine, but which I experience as though it were mine.³⁶

Poulet attempts to describe his conscious state while engaged in the act of reading; but implied in his statement, and in fact what allows him to make such a statement, is the intersubjectivity achieved by all elements in the aesthetic situation. That which is foreign and yet familiar is the unconscious, vitalized by the text into awareness. And when the text is approached as a medium of discourse, it no longer reads itself through, or imposes itself upon, the reader, but reveals itself as a discourse in which consciousness experiences intimations of unconscious intersubjectivity.

Having established the general structures of the aesthetic situation, and the basic features of the critical act, it is now possible to suggest some characteristics of the object of the critical act. Within

this framework, which is limited only to texts, the aesthetic object must be a consciously structured artifact, since an unconscious one is by definition impossible, and a non-conscious one would be unintelligible. The constraints of consciousness, which include purely formal elements from the treasury of language, provide the material by which the unconscious can manifest itself. The text must also be free from the requirements of report and command, need and demand. Finally, its ultimate intent can be only to achieve the aesthetic effect of intersubjectivity. Given these characteristics, concerns like genre and convention are of importance only as they help determine the disruptions in the text. This approach cannot predict which works will produce this affect, since the situation is also dependent upon the reader; but any text that does must be considered to be an aesthetic object. Thus, the average reader may well experience this effect in texts which a more sophisticated reader would denigrate. This, however, does not degrade the status of the aesthetic object.

In conclusion, this approach suggests an alternative understanding of the concept of closure. Instead of analyzing closure as an exclusively formal or syntactical element of the text, it approaches closure as the completion of the discourse of the Other. Consequently, closure need not logically be associated with the terminus

of the text, which is purely verbal. It is achieved only in the reply, in the reading back of the béances and the points of caption in the discourse of the Other, in which the verbal chain of signifiers reveals itself as having always been, in the end, total metaphor. Similarly, the end, under closure, reveals itself as the opposite of death; for the end, under closure, signals the completion of the text as ego-structured artifact, not of the discourse which, in the reply of the Other, returns to a beginning.

Ultimately, death is not the primary factor of the aesthetic situation, the terminus that bestows significance; it functions only as the condition out of which the ego-artifact arises. Criticism, to understand the object of its investigation, must pass beyond the reality principle, for that transcendence is precisely what the aesthetic situation achieves: it is the unconscious, intersubjective, human answer to death--it is the alternative. Perhaps that is the power of all literature, that it reminds us that the opposite of life is not death, but non-being. And criticism can only begin to understand the aesthetic text in: terms of the aesthetic situation by evolving a criticism of bliss: an erotic poetics.

Notes to Chapter Three

¹Hayden White, "The Absurdist Moment in Literary Theory," in Directions for Criticism: Structuralism and its Alternatives, eds. Murry Krieger and L.S. Dembo (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1977), p. 85.

²M.H. Abrams, The Mirror and the Lamp (New York: Oxford University Press, 1953), ch. 1.

³Although in practice each critic draws from many if not all theoretical approaches, he generally fetishizes one aspect of the situation, which he believes, like all fetish objects, magically accounts for the essence of the text.

⁴Bachelard's The Poetics of Space, tr. Maria Jolas (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964) illustrates the difficulties faced by phenomenological critics. His preface, which delineates a theory of the confrontation with the text, is at odds with his practice, which practically ignores the surface of the work he deals with.

⁵David Gordon discusses this problem in Literary Art and the Unconscious (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1976), pt. 1.

⁶While this charge may be leveled against almost any single approach, the psychoanalytic, which is of necessity

bound by a specifically biological terminology, is perhaps more guilty than most other approaches.

⁷This approach would therefore provide a criterion for discriminating between aesthetic and non-aesthetic discourse and justify aesthetic discourse as privileged discourse, a justification that much of modern theory has questioned.

⁸It is difficult to think of a structure of a flux, but that is precisely what the calculus of relativity is. Although the elements may be themselves unknowable and constant movement, the relational structure of that movement is chartable. This is similar to the physicist's knowledge of sub-atomic particles which, while their essence is unknowable, follow structural patterns that may be recognized. In aesthetics, although the various components of the aesthetic situation may vary with respect to genre, intent, affect, etc., the structure can be mapped without resorting to the illusion of a fixed, isolated object.

⁹Sigmund Freud, Jokes and their Relationship to the Unconscious, tr. James Strachey (New York: W.W. Norton, 1960).

¹⁰Alexandre Kojève, Introduction to the Reading of Hegel, tr. James H. Nichols, Jr., ed. Allan Bloom (New York: Basic Books, 1969). Kojève's analysis of Hegel is more important to Lacan than Hegel's original work. See Anthony Wilden's discussion of this importance in his

commentary on Lacan in "Lacan and the Discourse of the Other," in Jacques Lacan, The Language of the Self, tr. Anthony Wilden (New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1968), pp. 192-96.

¹¹I have previously referred to the S/s relationship as Saussure's--which is not precisely the case. Saussure actually placed the concept over its acoustical image. But most modern structuralists prefer the signifier over the signified equation. Lacan, in particular, uses this formula to represent the primacy of the signifier over the signified since he argues that the child, before he ever gains a persona--that is, his own signification--is a signifier in the relationship between the mother and the father. The S/s formula, then, represents the relationship of the signifier (S) to the signified (s) which requires that the hearer understand their connection before the signifier achieves significance. The slash separating the two components represents the conventions that must be known before they are united.

¹²Sigmund Freud, The Ego and the Id, tr. Joan Riviere, ed. James Strachey (New York: W.W. Norton, 1960).

¹³Jan Miel, "Jacques Lacan and the Structure of the Unconscious," in Structuralism, ed. Jacques Ehrmann, Yale French Studies 36-37 (1966), 108.

¹⁴Wilden comments on Brown's analysis of these contradictions in "Lacan and the Discourse of the Other," pp. 171-72.

¹⁵In other words, Lacan suggests that the hallucination's

significance is not determined by the hallucinator, but by the language which he has incorporated and by which he has been enabled to construct a verbal self that he identifies, at least in Lacan's scenario, as his ego. Thus, the ego, as the incorporated other, in this context, the language, imposes the hallucination. This is the step that is omitted when the analyst views the hallucination merely as the result of distorted repressed desires.

¹⁶Lacan, however, is not a strict Hegelian. He does not embrace Hegel's final, metaphysical, all-healing synthesis. Thus, for Hegel, the truth of being lies in the final synthesis, the telos of Being knowing itself. For Lacan, the truth of being is the union of the telos of experience, the ego, with its genesis, the unconscious. For a further analysis of this difference, see Roger Scruton's simplistic and misconceived discussion in "Incantations of the self," TLS (August 11, 1978), p. 909.

¹⁷Kojève, p. 3

¹⁸Kojève, p. 4

¹⁹Miel, p. 109.

²⁰Lacan, The Language of the Self, p. 83.

²¹The following discussion of Lacan's treatment of the analytic situation is somewhat simplified; but I am trying to explain his concepts without relying extensively on his idiosyncratic terminology which can be baffling to those not accustomed to it. Unfortunately, to clarify Lacan, one must simplify.

²²Wilden, pp. 250-51 quotes Lévi Strauss, "L'Efficacité symbolique," in Anthropologie Structurale (Paris: Plon, 1958), pp. 224-25.

²³Lacan expands this diagram to reveal the structure of the unconscious and its mode of discourse in "The Subversion of the Subject and the Dialectic of Desire in the Freudian Unconscious," in Écrits, tr. Alan Sheridan (New York: W.W. Norton, 1977), pp. 292-324.

²⁴See Wilden, p. 242.

²⁵Wilden, p. 65.

²⁶For a study of the structural clues to the closure of a work, see Barbara H. Smith, Poetic Closure (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1968). For an analysis of the theoretical implications of closure, see Frank Kermode, The Sense of an Ending (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1967).

²⁷Sterne's Tristram Shandy is perhaps the most direct treatment of the centrality of death to the written word. The novel is generated by the desire to incorporate death within its structure and therefore obviate its terror. Not only ~~does~~ death impel the novel, for as long as Sterne can keep writing he can avoid it, but it is a part of the breaks, voids, and empty pages that are incorporated into the text.

²⁸This is the problem with Stanley Fish's approach to "Affective Stylistics," in Self-Consuming Artifacts (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972). His method requires an ideal reader to experience the text,

yet obviously many less than ideal readers read texts and experience an aesthetic response. Thus, while his readings of a text may help explain the degrees of valid readings, it cannot account for the basic nature of why and how we experience a text.

²⁹I am not differentiating between oral and written discourse since both are subsumed into Jacques Derrida's concept of archewriting as developed in Of Grammatology, tr. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974). Although he does not explain the connection between speech and writing, they are both inherent in the first visual, metonymic substitution of the image for the entire being. In a way, the mirror stage represents the creation of the first specular image and the first grapheme--the archewriting which precedes all speech. The constitution of the subject in terms of his specular image is a negation of the subject's being, just as a word, which arises only out of the absence of the referent, is a negation of that referent. This first entrance into the metonymic register allows for, is precondition to, and prepares a child for, all his later encounters with both speech and writing. Derrida's difficulty of locating the origin of archewriting results from the terminology in which he poses the problem. Because he does not address it in terms of metaphor and metonymy, the polarities of discourse, he cannot see how the metonymic becomes the metaphoric; and therefore, he cannot explain how

archewriting is the first metonymic capture which accedes to the metaphoric register. Consequently, his formulation of the problem resembles the conundrum of which comes first, the chicken or the egg.

³⁰Roland Barthes, The Pleasure of the Text, tr.

Richard Miller (New York: Hill and Wang, 1975), pp. 21-22.

³¹Barthes, The Pleasure of the Text, pp. 6-7.

³²Roland Barthes, "Myth Today," in Mythologies, tr.

Annette Lavers (New York: Hill and Wang, 1972).

³³Northrop Frye, An Anatomy of Criticism (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1957). See the second essay, "Ethical Criticism: Theory of Symbols." There are some similarities between my approach to the text as a series of successive formalizations and Frye's theory of symbols. But there are important differences. My approach offers a linguistic justification of parts of his method, and it can also accommodate variant approaches to the reading of a text which he must either ignore or reject. A unified field approach can accommodate those methods which deal with the act or process of reading as well as those which treat the contemplation of what we read. It can also allow us to deal with both the surface and deep structures of a text.

³⁴To deal with the various levels of formalization and the conflicts between their significations, the critic must be able to draw, as the text requires, from the methods of the different critical approaches. Derrida calls this the

bricoleur's method. The bricoleur is a handyman who improvises with the tools of his trade, using them ingeniously to solve the problem he faces, often adapting them to the situation at hand and frequently adopting tools from other professions to serve his needs. The metaphor does not suggest sloppy work. As a handyman, the critic is an artisan. He does not employ a methodological tool which is inappropriate to the level of the signifier that is the object of his analysis.

³⁵Norman O. Brown, LB, pp. 187, 188, 190, and 258.

³⁶White, pp. 91-92.

Part II

Gravity's Rainbow:

The Celebration of Subversion

I. Space as Medium and Metaphor

Like Love's Body, Gravity's Rainbow structurally and thematically undermines our fundamental concepts of life and art. The two books are thematically interwoven, or more precisely, are two aspects of the same interface. Because of this, Pynchon's maddeningly incoherent book becomes more accessible through an understanding of Brown's vision, for the dominant motifs of the latter become the structuring principles of the former. Pynchon, in horrifyingly comic detail, creates the world that Brown rejects. It is a world in which the fragments of the whole, like an exploding bullet, are screaming around us, literally blitzing our minds.

Because Pynchon undermines the conventions by which we organize experience, a critical analysis cannot follow a conventionally logical method, nor can it isolate individual textual units and still pretend that it is an analysis of the book as it is. Every sentence contains its ironic, self-subverting element, and every technique of the conventional novel is parodied until the text is stretched beyond the point of cohesion. Plot and meaning, character and motivation, and symbol and detail are pitted in such extreme opposition to each other that the novel dissolves into seemingly random bits of information. Like Love's Body, the novel achieves coherency only if the reader alters

his mode of understanding experience and his expectations of what constitutes a literary work. Consequently, the novel, like the vision that generates it, skirts the outer edges of comprehension.

It is a truism of Pynchon criticism that GR is a condemnation of modern man and the world he has created. Within the fictional world, man is a grotesque being who destroys or is destroyed, conquers or is conquered, and inhabits a universe that never quite assumes a personal, coherent meaning. The work, however, transcends these general, satiric qualities, for it presents in detail an encyclopedic catalogue of modern experience only to reject all conceptual systems based upon modern concepts of logic and rationality. Like Brown, Pynchon views these systems as products and projections of ego organization which must inevitably destroy man unless he destroys them by obliterating the ego structures that created them. To do this, Pynchon makes the structure of the novel into a symbol for all ego-structuration, and by undermining the conventions of the novel forces the reader to experience a dislocation of his own ego structuration: by disrupting his text, he forces a disruption in the reader who attempts to understand it. Finally, like LB, the specific nature of the destruction and the style of its portrayal are symbolic of the new consciousness and its new art forms. In effect, GR is about the impossibility of writing a novel that bears any correspondence to modern reality, about the subversion of the form of the conventional novel, and about the art form that will replace it. Only by approaching the

novel in terms of these topics and with an understanding of the relationship between Brown's and Pynchon's visions can the reader begin to answer the central question of what happens to Slothrop--for what happens to Slothrop is a fictional depiction that is analagous to the "argument" of LB.

There have been numerous studies of GR, but all have approached the text from conventional perspectives which, because of the pervasive influence of formalism, focus on the narrative surface of the text, assuming a conventionally logical basis of organization while ignoring the techniques which determine the novel's structure and organization. To state the problem in formalistic terms, formal analyses have failed to see that Pynchon creates a narrator who is unable to comprehend his report-narration. Since Pynchon sees narratives, literally, as plots, he structures the text so that the narrator, obsessed with the need to make sense of events, becomes increasingly unable to comprehend the events he narrates. It is perhaps the need of the reader's ego to protect its fragile ordering of reality that seduces him to identify so blindly with the narrator and to become so easily enmeshed in the moral, social, and religious complexities of the work, while the text clearly rejects the categories of thought and the resultant social problems it raises. The Cartel, for example, is revealed as one of the central evils of the novel, yet it is also revealed as structurally analgous to, and a product of, the mode of self-consciousness which seeks to comprehend it. The text, after an extensive analysis of these structures, obviates the analysis by rejecting

both the cartel and the structure of mind that created it.

To escape the interpretive limitations of formalistic readings, the text establishes self-subversive rifts between its literal surface and metaphoric significance as an integral part of its texture. While it would be ridiculous to claim a direct relationship between Pynchon and Lacan, GR consistently creates a conflict between its uses of metonymic and metaphoric structures that is equivalent to Lacan's description of the béances in a linguistic structure. Pynchon's radically innovative and consciously controlled use of this rift is what makes his writing so difficult--and so fascinating.

The conventional novel employs the metonymic register of language to generate the fiction. The metonymic allows for the contiguity of words to generate verbal strings of discourse. Its equivalent in narrative terms in the linear chain of narrative sequence. Yet, as Lacan argues, the metonymic is also the record of neurotic displacement. This, in accord with Pynchon's view, would establish a relationship between neurosis and the generation of the novel as a neurotic object. In the conventional novel, the metaphoric, on the other hand, is kept relatively parallel to the metonymic: metaphors are heightened and condensed imagistic representations of the narrative's thematic concerns. In general, the metaphoric has been interpreted as a further development of the metonymic significance. Yet there is always some element of tension between the two--if only at the level of their linguistic structure and narrative function.

The metaphoric and the metonymic are conceptual polarities whose meanings can overlap, yet Pynchon seldom allows this to happen. He uses their distinction to demarcate two modes of consciousness. The metonymic becomes associated with the narrative surface, the chain of conscious desire, neurotic displacement, and ego structuration as a metonymic seizure by one aspect of the being of the entire being. The metaphoric becomes a means for expressing that which is repressed, which cannot consciously be articulated, and which is central to his vision of psychic redemption. The dissolution of the text reveals Pynchon's rejection of the metonymic register and all that it stands for. Thus, to read GR, the critic must constantly attune his perception to the béances that are inherent in a text that pits the metaphoric against the metonymic.

Pynchon's use of béances is best seen in his treatment of space as both medium and metaphor. As linguistic medium, it is a metonymic construct created by the narrative chain to contain the fiction. It is the medium which both supports the wanderings of the characters and is violated by the rocket's penetration. As metonymic structure, space as medium establishes the narrative relationship between Slothrop and the Rocket, since the significance of each is inherently involved with space itself. Metonymic space is also the closed space of the novel. It therefore demonstrates all the attributes of closed space: it can be mapped or abstracted, it can become a prison, and it obeys the law of entropy by which orders and structures seek a random

dissolution towards an equalized distribution of parts.¹

As metaphor, space acquires the emotive import of the particular modes of consciousness that are projected upon it. As metaphor, space reveals the nature of the corruption of being by centralized authority and ego structuration. By implication, it also reveals a way to save man from that corruption. GR, announcing both its themes and techniques, begins in media res with one of the most powerful and intricately self-subverting passages to appear in modern literature:

A screaming comes across the sky. It has happened before, but there is nothing to compare it to now.

It is too late. The Evacuation still proceeds, but it's all theater. There are no lights inside the cars. No light anywhere. Above him lift the girders old as an iron queen, and glass somewhere far above that would let the light of day through. But it's night. He's afraid of the way the glass will fall--soon--it will be a spectacle: the fall of a crystal palace. But coming down in total blackout, without one glint of light, only great invisible creashing.²

Initially, the opening seems confusing simply because the references are vague. The real confusion, however, lies in the verbal density, the quasi-allegorical quality of the "Evacuation," and the conflict between the metonymic and metaphoric structures. The text immediately juxtaposes two spaces: the open expanse of the sky and the closed space of the crystal palace. The one is the medium of the scream, the other of invisible crashing. The sky, by its scream, assumes metaphoric overtones, while the crashing palace is part of the metonymic, narrative sequence. The juxtaposition of open and closed space implies a conflict

between nature and human artifacts.

While true to some extent, this is only part of the significance of the spacial elements, since each space is itself a beance. The sky is metaphor in that it screams, which itself creates an ambiguity. The reader assumes that it is the screaming of the rocket and that the opening line is poetic license. Yet the rocket, as Pynchon reiterates, is characterized by silence--it precedes its sound. The sky is, it is suggested, screaming because of the violation of its nature by the rocket. Yet the sky is also the space of the novel; and, hence, it is a linguistic construct, a part of the closed space of the ego artifact, and hence a metonymic structure.

The crystal palace, similarly, is a bivalent image. It is most obviously part of the metonymic structure of plot development. The palace will be destroyed by the bomb. Yet the detailed description of its collapse almost immediately moves it into the metaphoric register. And even here there is a tension between the conventionally symbolic and Pynchon's use of the metaphoric. In conventional terms, the falling of the crystal palace is the image of the products of technology being destroyed by technology's ultimate product. Historically, the Crystal Palace was the supreme artifact of industrialized, 19th-century consciousness. It was the house of glass that connected man with God by dramatizing man's beneficent conquest of nature. It was the display case of the technology that would rid the world of social evil as man enclosed raw

space. A poem by Martin Tupper expresses the symbolic value of the Crystal Palace. It concludes:

All wonders of the world gladden the sight
 In that world's wonder-house the Crystal Palace;
 And everywhere is might enslaved to right.³

The enclosed space of the palace is the result of man's mapping of reality and stands in direct opposition to the open space of Space. Yet in its destruction, Pynchon catalogues the destruction of the penultimate by the ultimate. Technology's triumph is obliterated by the product of its own development.

Yet, as the source of the scream is ambiguous, so is the nature of the collapse of the palace. The image of the palace contains a countercode, a possibility of conflicting significance. The palace is not just a product of man's consciousness, but a metaphor of it. Within the destruction of the palace lies the implication of the destruction of man himself; yet again the nature of that destruction is elusive. The destruction of the palace is equated with theater; and as Brown has argued, and as Pynchon will later make explicit, theater is always associated with the theater of the self and ego structuration. Thus, the image of destruction has both psychological as well as biological implications. The shattering of the crystal palace fore-shadows, as metaphor, the destruction of the mode of consciousness that created it.

As metaphor, then, the symbol implies a latent alternative which the text ultimately offers--either man as a biological entity, or mind as now organized will be

destroyed. And the nature of the destruction is implicit in its description. The horror of the image is not that the crystal palace will shatter, but "the way the glass will fall"--in total darkness. Since the purpose of glass is to transmit light, the falling will be a complete negation of its established essence. There will be only invisible crashing: man will explode into meaningless biological fragments. But the countercode again suggests another alternative. In terms of Brown's image of birth as fragmentation of the self, the image of the shattering glass is also pure energy. Perhaps, the image implies, man might discover a way of "exploding" that will release the pure energy of his being that will stand in opposition to the other conversion of matter into energy that looms at the end of the novel. The image of the crystal palace as symbol of ego organization supplies, in imagery identical to Brown's, the alternative significance of the explosion.

The conflicts inherent in Pynchon's use of space in the opening sequence recur in all other treatments of the subject. There are always pairs in which each element is itself doubly significant, and occasionally two elements will be compressed so that the final configuration is actually a triad. These variations will be examined later, but their basis is in the contrasts which arise from the experience of space as a garden or a map and from the way each mode of consciousness perceives the other.

This structure of double pairs, or doubly significant pairs, is most evident in the relationships between the

four principal national groupings. In fact, a close examination of these groups in terms of their relationship to space reveals how each group becomes emblematic of a specific variation on the rape of space which is associated with a particular mode of ego domination over the totality of being. The four groupings, based upon geographical location are the Europeans, the Africans, the Argentinians, and the Americans, and the text establishes a relationship between one European nationality with each of the others. The Dutch, as exemplified by Franz van der Groov, the Argentine centralists, the Germans in Southwest Africa, and the Russians in the Kirghiz, each in their own way make a map of nature, space, and reality, and then proceed to rape and shape space to make it conform to their map.

It is appropriate, therefore, that the quintessential rapist, Tyrone Slothrop, the American, who, like America, embodies all the others to some degree, lies as the core of the novel. He represents, through his sexual conquests, the rapist that is American Progress which has violated both its land and its minorities and made its culture into the toilet of European Civilization. Appropriately, Slothrop's worst fear, as becomes apparent during a drug-induced fantasy, is of being sodomized by a Black in a toilet.

The plot of GR traces his history as, meandering over the spaces of America and Europe, he tries to discover the nature of his identity by determining his relationship to the V-2 Rocket. His connection to the rocket is discovered by the British because Slothrop keeps a record of his sexual

conquests on a map of London and the stars with which he honors the sites of his conquests also locate the sites of the rockets' impacts--only his stars precede the explosions by an average of two and a half days. The narrative surface details Slothrop's search for himself while various governments search for him. And all are equally unsuccessful. During his quest, he meets members of each of the national groups.

The first significant group is the Dutch who were early paradigms for European colonization. Through Katje's narrative, Pynchon introduces the story of Franz van der Groov to illustrate the religious basis for the rape of space and the ultimate paranoia--along with its modern variations--which results when the rage for order can no longer be founded upon, and justified by, a God. Franz was an early Dutch colonizer who, in the 17th century, sailed to the island of Mauritius and systematically extinguished the race of the Dodo for reasons he could not explain. His story is introduced as a digression within the sequence which introduces Katje and which, as it turns out, is actually a film clip that details Katje's sado-masochistic ménage-à-trois with Gottfried and Blicero. That sequence explores the mediated nature of desire and the sado-masochistic foundations of personal identity.⁴ Franz's narrative explores the same issues as they are manifested by nations seeking their own identity. As is usual in GR, the association of characters or events with film implies a perversion of the lived reality that is potentially open

for man, and an unspoken condemnation of his perversion of that reality. Franz's placement as a digression within a film associates him with later film perversions and implies an authorial judgment about his worth. In general, Pynchon introduces his most perverse characters in similarly introjected sequences.⁵

Franz's narrative exposes the ego's and nation's need, under the semblance of Divine aegis, to organize, justify, or obliterate the threatening opulence of being and the dangerous chaos of life. God as the ultimate creator of form and meaning, the Bestower of formal significance, could only be justified by forcing experienced reality into a logical, comprehensible pattern. For Franz, the social justification for the conquest and "normalization" of Mauritius became less important than the religious imperative to extinguish the dodo. To him, the bird was either a satanic insult or an aberration in Divine Order which caused one to question the moral rectitude of its maker. It was the old problem of how a perfect creator could possibly produce such an imperfect being. On another level, which Franz understood even less clearly, the dodo was a reminder, by its utter uselessness, of the gratuity of his own existence in the scope of the universe. If no divine plan could justify the dodo, then perhaps there was no divine plan; in that case, his own existence was simply a matter of chance. That possibility was too immensely frightening, so the dodo became the sacrifice to justify the existence of a superior species.

But the Mauritius expedition began to fail; and having succeeded in exterminating the race, the exterminators were recalled. Since the mission to colonize the island was unsuccessful, Franz had to confront the possibility that every believer in the Puritan ethic must eventually face:

if they had been chosen to come to Mauritius, why had they also been chosen to fail, and leave? Is that a choosing, or is it a passing over? Are they the Elect, or are they the Preterite, doomed as the dodoes?

(G.R., 110)

The history of the expedition provides one of the few instances where the author's stance is given explicitly. The segment concludes: "By 1681, Didus ineptus would be gone, by 1710 so would the last settler from Mauritius"(110).

Franz's interpolated story presents several problems. The first is its position within the chapter which introduces Katje. The connection between his narrative and films, between his sadistic colonization and the master-slave relationship of the *ménage-à-trois* has already been noted. But the interpolation has another significance. The technique is highly literary and artificial and therefore implies a degree of artificiality about the nature of Franz's quest and the illusory quality of its impetus, the delineated self.

Another problem is the position of the story so early in the narrative. Obviously, the connection between Franz and his descendant makes the association feasible, but many other rapes of reality are included much later, and Franz's

story is more closely associated with them. He is mentioned again, for example, in terms of the Argentines. Its position early in the novel not only suggests a profound connection between Katje and history but also establishes the philosophical context of the novel. Katje is portrayed as the essence of the modern, amoral, empty personality which needs pain to feel the reality of its own existence by being reminded of its essential lack of justification. Like her ancestor, she believes in a body and a soul--but only out of some deep nostalgia. When her culture's God absconded, He took their souls with them. Consequently, she is left only with a phsyical shell that encases a spiritual void. Franz's history charts the origins of the type of consciousness that is emblematic of the psychological universe of GR.

Franz is a product of 17th-century Dutch culture which produced, for perhaps the first time in the West, a union of the capitalist bourgeois ethic and Calvinist doctrine. This fusion produced a mode of consciousness which, as Franz realized, already sensed its own precarious structure. The ethic and the mode of consciousness could justify itself by forcing the random opulence of nature into a predetermined pattern. Implicit in the fusion of capitalism and Calvinism is the idea that the elect are marked by their economic success and mastery of nature, while the preterite, those passed over in God's Divine plan, are the economically useless and socially unacceptable. Franz's hatred of the dodo is based upon their lack of purpose and use, and the gratuity of their existence.

But the fragility of this new arrangement of ideas terrorized even its believers, and this terror was the fuel for their zeal. As the expedition failed, so might the new order of thought. In addition, if the god of this new order is himself inept, then perhaps he is not God--or perhaps there was no god. A Didus ineptus suggests a Deus ineptus, and, by extension, the Deus absconditus. The implication is a world of either mechanical order or unmanageable diversity. To opt for a world of order is to enter the universe of paranoia in which all things unite while their significance, know only to the god, is as elusive as that absent creator. To envision diversity from a previous assumption of Divine order is to enter the universe of antiparanoia in which nothing coheres. There is either the Map or the Garden of Terror. Scott Sanders develops this idea:

God is the original conspiracy theory: behind the floods, deaths in the family, the sprouting of seeds or splatter of rain,...monotheists discerned the single guiding will of a deity. An otherwise chaotic world made sense because it was perceived as a plot, narrated by God who worked through angels and lightning bolts or by subtle prods on the linings of men's souls.

Thus:

A mind that preserves Puritan expectations after the Puritan God has been discredited will naturally seek another hypothesis that explains life as the product of remote control, that situates the individual within a plot whose furthest reaches he cannot fathom, that renders the creation legible again. Paranoia offers the ideally suited hypothesis that the world is organized into a conspiracy, governed by shadowy figures whose powers approach omniscience and omnipotence, and whose manipulations in history may be detected in every gesture of their servants.⁶

For those whose mythology can no longer include God, paranoia can provide the illusion of order by rationalizing the incomprehensibility, yet possibility, of meaning. Franz's history is placed early in the novel because it provides the basis for Pynchon's world of paranoia and antiparanoia, the world of the modern structuration of consciousness which exhibits all of the characteristics of the master-slave relationship and the subjugation of the flux of being by the frenzied ego: the world of the preterite unconscious and the elect ego.

While the history of Franz van der Groov illustrates the rape of nature as a function of modern ego-organization and explores its historical and religious sources, the history of the Argentine anarchists explores the same subject in terms of open space and bounded centrality. Their history is an analogue to the seized and introjected image of a unified body that Lacan sees as the basis for the false sense of self and the first step towards ego formation. Their narrative examines the concepts of boundary, its limitations, and its artificiality in the same metaphors Brown uses in his chapter, "Boundary."

Slothrop meets the Argentines in Zurich after he has gone AWOL. They have fled from Argentina because of the increasing centralization of power and the resulting rigidification of political boundary within their homeland. Their history is another paradigm of the ego's usurpation of time and space, a variation on the previous narrative of Franz's history. Squalidozzi, their leader, explains

the problem to Slothrop who, at this point, has become Ian Scuffling, an English war-corredpondent, and who is already beginning to experience certain artificialities of personal boundary. Squalidozzi tells him of an older Argentina in which "the pampas stretched as far as man could imagine, inexhaustible, fenceless." But Buenos Aires, the center of industry and capital, sought to control the other areas. "All the neurosis about property gathered strength, and began to infect the countryside. Fences went up, and the gaucho became less free"(264). In their quest for control and order, the centralists tried to exterminate their anarchic native Indians; and they succeeded in creating their own reality, "a closed white version" of their northern neighbor.

Squalidozzi's story is the same tale of ego centralization and domination over the body in which the body becomes both the first spacial metaphor and the basis for the projection of the structures of mind upon external space itself. The story of the Argentines reveals the politicalization of the pathetic fallacy that is the basis of all centralization. And to do this, the ego, the centralist, and the colonizer will feed upon the energies of any native life force. The gaucho and the indian are but two of the many forms of the natural and the instinctive that the ego will and must consume to actualize its projections of the self onto space.

The history of the Hereros explores the results of this projection. Slothrop, on his way to Nordhausen in search of the rocket, meets Enzian, the leader of the

Schwarzkommando, the group of blacks from a Herero tribe in south-west Africa who were brought to Germany after the Christian missionaries had destroyed the matrix of their tribal society. The underlying conflict between the Hereros and the Christians, as Enzian explains, was that of the Ice Myths of the North destroying the Earth Myths of the South: the technological myths of the Deus absconditus had obliterated the human myths of continuation. Without their mythic roots and the meaningful framework of the mythic sensibility, the Hereros could no longer endure the chaotic and meaningless nature of the new realities. To prevent the continuation of human pain in such a world, they developed a philosophy of zero growth. One of the more radical elements within the tribe, the "Empty Ones," even opted for going "beyond the zero." They seek the extinction of the race itself, and like Ursula, the lost lemming, they are making their way to the North Sea in search of annihilation.

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 Game, what they were witnessing among these Hereros was a mystery potent as that of the elephant graveyard, or of the lemmings rushing into the sea. (318)

They were brought to Germany to be incorporated into the Nazi political structure as part of a secret plan to establish black juntas in Africa to take over British and French colonies. Many of them had become involved in the missile project, and after the war, they had banded together to reassess their communal validity.

This reassessment leads to an understanding of the conflict between mythologies and the nature of mythologizing itself. They witness not only the technological banalization of myth but the inherent perversity of mythology. Seeing a similarity between the sign of the rocket, the circled cross, and the structure of the mythic space of the tribal village, they have taken the rocket as an ironic totem of their lost identity. The primitive totemic projections have been replaced by the modern projection of death in the totem of the rocket. The Hereros instinctively realize the true meaning of the rocket in technological society: they realize the penis projected is no longer merely a ghost that helps establish order in a mythic way, but a concrete abstraction with the real power to kill. They experience technology's banalization of myth by which modern man represses the remaining fragments of his instinctive impulses and forces those energies into building the State.

The full irony of their situation emerges only as information fragments spanning several hundred pages are integrated. In an early sequence, Slothrop talks with Andreas, one of the Hereros, who explains the circled cross as the tribal mandala, the map of its mythical space. Four letters, "K," "E," "V," and "Z," mark the ends of the cross. "K" and "E" are the female letters that face north because that is where the women live. They are air signs. The "K" stands for "Klar" and the "E" for "Enlüftung." Andreas reads the "K" as a sign of fertility and birth and the "E" as "breath" or "soul." His reading of this is a perfect

example of the contrast between the African and the European mythologies. What he reads as "breath" is actually a technical word for "air vent," based upon the verb meaning "to draw in air" in a mechanical, rather than bodily, sense. The "Z" and the "V" stand for "Zundung" and "Vorstufe," which are male signs. He reads the first as "fire," and the second as "preparation." The mandala has an "H" in the center standing for "Hauptstufe," which is where the cattle are kept. Since the sacred cattle house the souls of the ancestors, they are the symbols of the tribal whole. "All is the same here. Birth, soul, fire, building. Male and female together"(563).

Only in the final pages of the novel is the irony made scathingly clear, as the text recounts the original firing of the 00000 Rocket. The first stage of take-off involves clearing the piloting systems; the second requires the activation of the oxygen systems; the clear and air intake. The third phase is ignition, fire; and the fourth is a temporary phase of waiting in which the rocket is prepared for launch but can still be aborted. Finally, there is lift-off when all stages merge. The parodic relationship between the two readings of reality, the mythopoetic and the technological, reveals the results in the banalization of myth; one contains the seeds of life; the other logically results in death.

Yet both myths are related by the need to create myths, to divorce the self from the world and by this to gain some power over it. The Hereros realize this in their

fashion, and sensing the inevitable destructiveness of this process, adopt the rocket as the totem of their tribal suicide. Even their attempt at a mythic interpretation of the rocket mandala is tainted by a nostalgic despondancy in the face of the inevitable outcome of their own mythic processes. Andreas explains:

You can see how we might feel it speak to us, even if we don't set it up on its fins and worship it. But it was waiting for us when we came north to Germany so long ago...even confused and uprooted as we were then, we knew that our destiny was tied up with its own. That we had been passed over by von Trotha's army so that we would find the Aggregat. (563)

It is the clarity of their insight into the nature of modern man's consciousness and self-destruction and the purity of their logic that really frightens the Western Powers, not simply the fear of the Europeans that the Hereros will use the rocket to attack them. Thus, the attempt to prevent the Hereros from finding and reassembling the pieces of the rocket is but a rationalization; the real need of the Europeans is to avoid a manifestation of the obvious direction of their own development. To do this requires a psychological scapegoat and a victim to be plundered so the economic profits of his work can justify his slavery and allow the master to ignore the real question of his own identity. Without the Dodo, how can you know if you are one of the elect?

Underlying the conflict between the mythologies are two impulses. One, held in common by both, is the need to give significance and, to some extent, control, nature. This requires a separation of the self from the world and,

hence, some degree of ego structuration which allows the self to experience its being as an independent unit. Two, and here their difference surfaces, the older mythologizing establishes a more intimate comingling of man and nature: ritual and mythic spaces still provide possibilities for interaction instead of pure manipulation and subjugation. But the Hereros sense the logical outcome of their own mythologizing in the myths of the north, and sensing this, have opted for death.

Since this need for order and control is ultimately the ego's need to shape itself by shaping and controlling the other, the impulse is universal in civilized societies. The Germans may have ravaged the South-west Africans, but the Americans have their native Indians and imported Blacks. The Argentines may have subdued their own native Indians, as well as the gauchos, but the Russians had their Central Asiatics. Whether the justification for the extinction of the different, the other, is mythic conflict or mere economic exploitation, their basis is the same: they are fairy tales that mask the latent, sadistic, ego-centric, and hence, sexual, need for mastery. The narrator, himself, comments on this fact:

Colonies are the outhouses of the European soul, where a fellow can let his pants down, relax, enjoy the smell of his own shit. Where he can fall on his slender prey roaring loud as he feels like, and guzzle her blood with open joy. (317)

The economic rationalization is simply a ruse for allowing the release of displaced sexuality. In a latter sequence, the narrator overtly associates the colonial impulse to

sexual aggression--and identifies the penis as the source of both. He refers to Slothrop's erection as that "colonial organ," equating it with Slothrop's, and western man's, very concept of the self. Thus, the stories of the repressed and the colonized are variations on the perversion that results from the formation of the ego and the resultant technological banalization of the mythic sensibility.

In the history of the last major colonizing group, the Russians, Pynchon explores the source of the master-slave conflict and the rape of reality. He examines it in terms of Tchitcherine's history and experiences in the Kirgiz when he directed the attempt to impose a codified language on the natives. Pynchon situates Tchitcherine's narrative in close proximity to Enzian's to emphasize their parallels. The Russian is an intelligence agent--and a parodic crystalization of his culture's historical development. Stylistically, the method of his introduction and depiction is similar to that of the other key figures in the novel. He, like they, are quintessential products of their cultures; but because they are such purified exaggerations of that history, they become parodies of it. Tchitcherine is the epitome of the radically modernized man--a Russian torn from the soulful, pre-revolution period and thrust into the technological age. He is a virtual robot, a man of steel who instinctively senses his loss of a heart: he has a metal plate in his head, metal teeth in his mouth, and a network of metallic threads that hold his right knee together. But the literalness of his symbolic significance as the

incarnation of technology establishes him as a parody of it. He is just too literally mechanical to be anything but a comic-book figure--until, at the very end of the novel, he begins to find a semblance of a soul. Appearing in the section whose epigram is "Toto, I have a feeling that we're not in Kansas anymore," he is literally the Iron Man looking for the wizard who will give him a heart. He will ultimately find that wizard in a witch, yet in the final analysis will still be among the lost.

Tchitcherine has been ordered by his superiors to locate the pieces of the rocket and prevent the Hereros from getting them first; but his private obsession is the wish to destroy his personal "other," his black half-brother, Enzian. Again, by being so overtly the product of his culture, he reveals more transparently its implied cultural imperative. After introducing Tchitcherine, the narrative, as in the cases of Slothrop and Katje, digresses into the adventures of his ancestors--in this case, those of his father. Since the primary concern of this sequence is with language as the medium of ego-development and colonization, these are appropriately the themes of Tchitcherine's father's history.

His father was a gunner on a Russian boat which docked in Southwest Africa to load coal. Sickened by the smell of death and the "artificially black" faces of the crew as they loaded the coal, he, like Slothrop, went AWOL. On shore he met a Herero girl and fathered a child by her; Enzian. He stayed with her long enough to learn a few words.

Together, they communicated by physical signs and a primitive pidgin, "the beginnings of a new tongue"(351). Their union, their temporary escape from the bondage of conventions, and their momentary release from the prison of pure selfhood is described as the beginnings of a new language. The essential features of this language are its fluidity, physicality, and subversion of existing languages. As a non-structured, or at least non-fixed, medium, words and touches create a poetics of sound by which both are united in a creative act. The result is Enzian. By an accidental snafu in the Russian filing system, Tchitcherine learns of the existence of his half-brother. By then, Russian history had prepared him for what must be done. Earlier, the authorities had sent him to the Kirghiz in the Central Asian plains to teach them the alphabet and writing. The Kirghiz were the Russians' Asiatic darker brothers, who had been slaughtered after their uprising in 1916, when

Russian settlers, in full vigilante panic, surrounded and killed the darker refugees with shovels, pitchforks, old rifles, any weapon to hand....They hunted Sarts, Kazakhs, and Dugans that terrible summer like wild game. Daily scores were kept. It was a competition, good-natured, but more than play. Thousands of restless natives bit the dust. (340)

The slaughter of the Asiatics repeats the slaughter of the Dodo; both are justified by the need to consolidate the nation by repressing the darker, more primitive, and more instinctual threats to the light of reason and progress.

To consolidate their power, the Russians insisted that the tribes of the Kirghiz codify their oral language into writing using Cyrillic rather than Arabic characters. But

learning to write and codify language has strange results. It begins to shape the reality of the people who learn it. By technologizing communication, the language begins to control reality--for the worse.

On sidewalks and walls the very first printed slogans start to show up, the first Central Asian...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.... (355-56)

Language as an abstraction of reality allows for an imaginary conception of reality distinct from the actual experience of being. Once the other is abstracted, it is possible to eliminate him, since as Brown also notes, "it is only as long as a distinction is made between real and imaginary murders that real murders are worth committing" (LB, 152). Pynchon's anecdote embodies Brown's observation. Language, inherently bound with self-consciousness in the Hegelian and Lacanian sense, involves an implicit recognition of the sense of the lack of reality, and the resulting rage fuels the flames of murder while allowing the fiction of the separation between the murderer and the murdered to enable the enactment of the crime without the deprivation of the fullness of self. Only when another is seen as the other, and spoken of as different, is it worthwhile or even possible to kill that other. Within this framework, language can only deceive or kill.

Implicit in this assessment of the nature and function of language is the assumption that language, like space, is a closed system which must end in entropy and death. Yet

this is only a partial exposition of the problem of language. If language creates man, it must be through language that he is redeemed. As Brown argues, it is not the destruction of the ego which is imperative, since that is impossible, but its continual subversion. Similarly, to see this episode as an allegory of man's tragic dilemma--that he cannot exist outside of language, yet is forever deceived and deceiving within it--is to miss the point and forget the example of Tchitcherine's father; it is also to miss the significance of the metonymic-metaphoric rift that is part of the text. An important example of such a misreading is Edward Mendelson's analysis of the same passage.

The shamans worked curses and blessings through incantations or spells, but now language, formulated into writing, operates "in a political way." The consequences of this realization have a tragic force. All the book's efforts at truth-telling, all its thrusts at the increase of freedom through the revelation of necessity, are infected by the inevitable fact that the book itself must use a language that is, unavoidably, a system shaped by the very powers and orders that it hopes to reveal. Language can never be liberated from lies. One cannot speak outside of language, and one cannot directly speak the truth within it--this not only in the reflexive sense proclaimed by recent theory, but in a political sense as well. To separate oneself from language, in an attempt to be free from imposed order, is to enter a world of chaos and vacancy. This tragic realization is at the ideological center as well as on the stylistic surface of the book. Gravity's Rainbow does not propose--with the romantic fervor appropriate to such proposals--that you escape those systems yet retain any decency, memory, or even life--just as it is impossible to escape from language yet communicate....Slothrop's detachment from the world's order and the order of language---may be called "anti-paranoi," where nothing is connected to anything, a condition not many of us can bear for long.

Mendelson's reading is an accurate interpretation of the

metonymic structure of the novel. Within the context of the narrative, language is a lie. Yet the metaphoric structures, which operate throughout the narrative, as well as the narrative itself--in ways that will be discussed later--do escape the imperative to deceive. It does this by subverting every metonymic element. If the reader realizes the possibility of freedom in language by transforming and subverting it, as Tchitcherine's father demonstrates, he is not duped by the narrator's presentation of Slothrop's final state as antiparanoia. The novel does present many tragic situations, and it does explore the moral complexities of modern existence, but such tragedies and complexities are inherent in the perversions of ego-structuration; and hence, for Pynchon, they are false glorifications of the human condition, grand fairy tales, told by the ego, to justify its existence as master.

The four groups of colonizers are introduced in the novel in a specific order which reveals a logical sequence. If the basic concern is the nature of ego structure and its manifestations, the logic is quite consistent. First, the ego's need for order, in a world devoid of God, establishes the condition of paranoia-antiparanoia. Next, the ego must project its paranoid vision upon others and shape their reality to fit a paranoid map of it. In terms of the individual, the ego shapes the being's concept of self and establishes itself as the central, governing agency of its being. After establishing this supremacy, the ego creates its own myths to supersede more primitive ideas.

Finally, Pynchon explores the basis of this process in the acquisition of language which, since it is the main component of ego-structuration, like the ego, creates reality.

As an alternative to language and maps, the novel presents several pure garden spaces. They are the ideal reality that existed before heightened human self-consciousness. When such spaces are presented, however, they do not preclude human existence, merely ego centrality.

It was the equinox...green spring equal nights...canyons are opening up, at the bottoms are streaming fumaroles, steaming the tropical life there like greens in a pot, rank, dope-perfume, a hood of smell...human consciousness, 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. But only nearly as strong.

Only nearly, because of the defection rate. A few keep going over to the Titans every day.... (720)

The garden consciousness experiences reality and the world so violently alive that it can be described only as a green nimbus of energy. Its gods are titans, the earlier gods which predated the classical ones, the gods of natural energy rather than their successors who had acquired a personal identity.

And then there are the defectors to the titans.

Ursula, Ludwig's lost lemming, who moves too fast to be caught by a camera, denies the suicidal impulse of her race. Slothrop, through a similar process, learns to become one of them and finally eludes even the narrator. Wandering over the German countryside on his way to Cuxhaven, he begins to realize his new relationship to nature.

As he moves on he finds these farms haunted, but amiably. The oakwork creaks in the night, honest and wooden. Unmilked cows low painfully in distant fields, others come in and get drunk on fermented silage, barging around into fences and piles of hay where Slothrop dreams, uttering moos with drunken umlauts on them. Up on the rooftops the black and white storks, long throats curved to the sky, heads upside down and looking backwards, clatter their beaks in greeting and love. Rabbits come scurrying at night to eat whatever's good in the yards. Trees, now--Slothrop's intensely alert to trees, finally. When he comes in among trees he will spend time touching them, studying them, sitting very quietly near them and understanding that each tree is a creature, carrying on its individual life, aware of what's happening around it, not just some hunk of wood to be cut down. (552)

The garden, then, is not just an ideal, forever lost, but a reality that waits to be experienced as an orgy of natural fertility, painfully exceeding its own limits, bursting the boundary of containment. Yet, ego-consciousness can only perceive this experience as romantic folly or as asocial withdrawal, and the narrator himself will eventually see Slothrop in just these terms.

But the possibility of the garden still exists, although it can be discovered only when the normal boundaries have been, for a moment, obscured. This is the function of the Zone that dominates the third book. It is the space that is the interface between the garden and the map, the space that must be entered into in order to find the garden.

Because it is an interface, the Zone has a number of conflicting characteristics, both structural and thematic. In general, it is the embodiment of the mathematical concept of singularity. In mathematics, every equation has a map-graph on a Cartesian axis. The graph itself may appear continuous and the rate of change from one point to the next be determined from the equation. Yet there are certain functions that contain points at which it is impossible to determine where the next point will be. Such points are called singularities, and Pynchon uses them as symbols of freedom and unlimited possibilities. The problem is that such points are unable to be identified except in retrospect. Pynchon suggests that Colonial America was one such point in the history of man. Ironically, the very idea of a singular point is a map construct that undermines the ability of such constructs to map reality adequately. The Zone is such a point realized in the space of post-war Germany; within it unthought possibilities may become realized.

The Zone is also similar to the peak of a parabola. At that point the change of values involved in the equation is zero while the change of direction is infinite. On either side of the zero, the values are parodically related; their values are equal in absolute terms while their directional values are reversed. Thus, in the Zone, many elements that appear similar may actually be reverse parodies of each other.

The Zone is also the embodiment of the metaphor of the

frame that dominates the novel. The metaphor is introduced as a movie frame in the sequence which first mentions Katje and which the reader finally realizes to be a film loop. Throughout the novel many instances of film are crucial to the plot as well as the themes. Franz Pökler, like the rocket he helps perfect, is intimately related to movie frames. Von Göll thinks he actually brought the Schwartzkommando into existence by his propaganda movie for the British. Greta Erdmann is a pornographic movie star. Stylistically, Pynchon uses many cinematic techniques: fade-ins and outs, montages, and overlays. The last book opens with a fantasy that introduces Slothrop in the hills and then pans out to follow Prentice's plane flying by overhead. Even the chapters are headed by squares that are the equivalent of the sprockets of a film.⁸ Finally, the frame, as a unit of action and a part of plot development, is metaphorically just that--a frame. It can implicate, trap, and, to varying degrees, destroy the one who is framed. It is part of the plot, in a literal sense, to persecute the victim. The image associates Pynchon's concept of narrative with neurosis, plot with plotting, and framing with paranoia; it also suggests Pynchon's final rejection of his narrator who ultimately embodies all of these perversions in his narrative.

As a singular point and as an instance of the frame, the Zone has ambivalent meanings and ambiguous significance. As a narrative medium, the Zone serves several important functions. Pynchon equates the novel with ego structuration,

and his attempt to destroy the formal structure of the novel is emblematic of his rejection of the ego. Analogous to his concept of the interpenetration of centers of being is his attempt to destroy the clear demarcations between novels and life, and novels and novels. Thus his text usually employs such specific and accurate data that it is sometimes difficult to determine which elements in the narrative are fictional and which factual. Within the novel, it is often impossible to determine which sequences are actual in the narrative sense, and which are mere hallucinations, since the shifts from one level of fictive reality to another are usually omitted. Pynchon even adapts and parodies the content or style of many major writers to blur the distinctions between his novel and its predecessors, while at the same time clearly establishing his text as a unique entity that overlaps others. His novel, in fact, insists upon the intertextuality of all texts.

Symbolic of his attempt to obliterate the distinction between texts is Pynchon's creation of several quasi-novels within the novel and his seeming destruction of the differences among them. The story of Franz Pökler, for instance, is itself a short novel, as is the romance of Roger Mexico and Jessica Swanlake. In addition, the histories of the ancestors of each of the major characters are often developed to the extent of themselves becoming independent short stories. These sub-novels are introduced with such ingenuity, and their interrelationships are established with such convoluted precision, that they form a seeming whole.

The "seeming" is important, however, for the reader eventually realizes that the individual plot segments never interrelate, but always remain on the verge of interacting. If characters of one sequence meet those of another, they are never aware of it. This illustrates the principle of non-intersection which, as will be discussed shortly, operates within the Zone. Countless examples of non-intersection could be mentioned, but a few will suffice. The history of Tchitcherine and Enzian culminates in their meeting--yet neither recognizes the other. Slothrop, whose quest in the Zone is to discover his connection with the V-2 Rocket, passes next to it without the slightest recognition. Franz Pökler, whose obsession is to find his real daughter, discovers that he has been living next to her throughout their years of separation. The structural function of the Zone, then, is to support the immense narrative weight of such a plethora of narratives, allowing them to seem to form a structural whole while allowing each to retain its narrative identity. In essence, the Zone, with its ambiguous status as thematic, psychological, and structural space, allows the centrifugal scattering of narrative elements to be supported by, or contained within, its centripetal suction.

The Zone, as metaphor, leads the reader through increasingly general thematic concerns. From the first to the third book, the scope of the narrative changes. In books one and two, the landscape and architecture were tightly confined; even if the vagueness of physical description blurred the fact, the first two books limited

the action to explicitly delineated spaces: a particular area of London, a ward of the White Visitation, a room in the Casino Hermann Goering. The third book allows Pynchon's recording camera to step back for a panoramic view, as the movie frame metaphor enlarges its scope to encompass all. And it is within this book that the numerous subplots are developed. Like the novel itself, the Zone has definite bounds, but once inside it, the parameters are obscure, and the Zone seems to encompass all: its boundaries elude the reader as well as the characters.

The beginnings of the three books illustrate this expanding perspective. Book one opens inside a vehicle and ends inside a room. Book two begins with a description of the streets of a Riviera resort, while book three begins with a meditation upon the seasons, the grape crops, and the open countryside. To those within the narrative of book three, however, the expanded frame seems to be no frame at all, but an absence of boundary--whatever boundary there might be seems so ambiguous or volatile that it is impossible to locate it definitely. Russians, Germans, Americans, Argentines, Hereros, and English move across the Zone-frame's surface in various quests; but because there are no finite and specific lines of demarcation, they pass and intersect as if in different time dimensions without ever meeting. The groups "occupy their own space and Zone congruent but not identical" with each other(519).

Once in the Zone, and once the concept of the frame has become obscured, the character experiences several

aspects of temporal and psychological relativity that are also ambiguous, their various meanings depending upon the map or garden perspective of the person experiencing them. In temporal terms, sequence and causality become disjointed as linear time ceases to operate. The rocket's inversion of reality is revealed as a parody of the true inversion of our conventional sense of sequence: as the rocket shows, in a destructive way, cause and effect simply don't explain the way things are. Thus, daily events yield in significance to the pattern of seasonal change, and causality gives way to analogy. The reader begins to lose the awareness of consecutive events as similarities between acts become more prominent and significant than their sequence. Without an anchor in a specific map location, time itself warps.

This relativistic sense of time is the basis for the non-intersections of actions. It is also related to the increasing fragmentation of the self. Pynchon often discusses this principle in terms of drugs and their time-altering properties. An exemplary incident of this is that of the submarine Badass and the Argentine U-boat when they meet on a collision course. The U-boat appears on the radar screen of the Badass, which "in muscular post-war reflex" begins to attack. The Argentines react by firing a torpedo at the sub. But the intersection of their respective courses is prevented by the drug, Oneirine, which "playful" Seaman Bodine has placed in the coffee everyone on the sub has drunk. Pynchon, in a comic parody of a scientific journal, explains the principle of non-intersection as caused by the

drug, but his "explanation" is also appropriate to the Zone in general.

The property of time-modulation peculiar to Oneirine was one of the first to be discovered by investigators. "It is experienced," writes Shetzline in his classic study, "in a subjective sense...uh...well. Put it this way. It's like stuffing wedges of silver sponge, right, into, your brain!" So, out in the mellow sea-return tonight, the two fatal courses do intersect in space, but not in time. (389)

Since the sense of time is an ego-function, and since the drug affects the ego, it can distort conventional temporality. Yet, from a garden perspective, it can also reintroduce the user to what might be a more accurate experience of time itself.

With the blurring of boundary and the modulation of the sense of time, characters experience a simultaneous loss of personal boundary and a resultant shift in their normal perceptions. Lacking the surety and safety of clearly defined personal boundaries, they begin to overflow the limits of their old identities and become more extremely what they are. Yet this loss of personal definition and the resultant intensification of personality is also ambiguous.

The loss of boundary and repression would appear, within the context of this analysis, to be a release from the tyranny of the ego. Yet again Pynchon's treatment of the subject is unexpected, except in terms of Brown's analysis of a similar situation. Brown argues that man does not need a reduction of political repression within a more flexible ego-system, but a constant subversion of that system.

A mere reduction of repression would result, he proposes, in an increase of neurosis; and this, in fact, is what Pynchon's characters demonstrate. Although the reduction of repression would seem to allow for a release of id energies, since that release is still channeled through the ego, even though weakened, the energies would assume all of the perverted manifestations of ego-neurosis and would become more overtly destructive and sado-masochistic than before the relaxation of repression. Consequently, most of the characters in the third book are lost in the swamps of their personal identities.

This, however, is not the worst of all possible worlds, for either Brown or Pynchon. As Brown notes, the solution to the problem of identity is to get lost; and as Pynchon demonstrates in all his novels, the only hope for mankind rests in the lost of the world, the societal underground who embody the underground of the mind. At least in the loss of their clearly defined, although exaggerated, selves, some characters move closer to the solution of the problems of modern man, which lie in the rejection of the ego by its constant subversion.

The loss of personal identity is also treated in mathematical terms, and Pynchon often uses such scientific concepts to show how science must undermine itself to represent reality accurately, how it inevitably contains its own subversive elements. Pynchon explores the solidity of identity in terms of the change in time, the Δt , that is used to measure the distance of movement from one point to another on a graph during such a change of time. Discussing

Slothrop's loss of personal identity, the narrator comments:

Slothrop, as noted, at least as early as the Anubis era, has begun to thin, to scatter. "Personal density," Kurt Mondaugen, in his Peenemunde office not too many steps away from here, enunciating the Law which will one day bear his name, "is directly proportional to temporal bandwidth."

"Temporal bandwidth" is the width of your present, your now. It is the familiar " Δt " considered as a dependent variable. The more you dwell in the past and in the future, the thicker your bandwidth, the more solid you persona. But the narrower your sense of Now, the more tenuous you are. (509)

But to live in the past is to live in the realm of ghosts and to live in the furture is to live in the realm of the absent God, the realm of cause and effect in which good actions bring good rewards, or the realm of predestination where everything is determined from the beginning. Ironically, within this context, the more Slothrop lives in the present, the more acute his sense of the Now, the less sense of Persona he has. It is important that the topic here is persona and self, not being.

Besides embodying the loss of boundary, time, and personality, the Zone is also, in contrast, the genital zone, which Pynchon equates with ego-structuration. He establishes this connection by linking the Zone to the missing 00000 Rocket. At the beginning of the third book, both the rocket and political boundaries are absent. Ego structuration and the phallus are similarly linked. In a very real sense, at least in terms of Slothrop, the rocket is the penis: it reacts like the penis, and it was partially created by the same man who shaped Slothrop's identity by conditioning his phallus. The rocket is also the consummate physical

manifestation of all ego systems and structures--the mathematical, scientific, religious, and psychological constructs that man has devised to shape his world and his identity. As the embodiment of ego projections, the rocket is the concrete projection of the penis, the universal phallus. To search for the rocket, within this context, is to look for the lost sense of self--lost, ironically, because it was projected away; it is to seek the missing totem that defined both the self and the society that protected the self. In general, it is the search for the ego and the order that man can call his own. It is naturally and ironically, although perversely, logical that, within the Zone, the genital zone, the major preoccupation of all the characters should be, in various degrees of literalism, to fuck or get fucked.

The spaces of GR, and above all the space of the Zone, are thus bivalently significant, and the double meanings are usually at odds with each other. The spaces are dangerous, yet they can offer protection and solace. They can make a person get lost, yet they can also serve as a metaphor for finding the true self. Like the novel itself, their meanings lie in their radical self-contradictions. And it is with this insight that the reader must approach the work to grasp its full significance.

Paradigmatically, Pynchon illustrates the ambivalence of the meaning of space in a sequence which crystalizes and transforms the narrative into a metaphoric image. The metonymic space of the narrative, like all closed systems,

is subject to increased disarray of elements as the law of entropy continues to operate. Opposed to this, however, is the ideal of an escape from closed, fixed space, from language, and from the self. The space that would allow an escape from entropy must be the metaphoric space of the garden, the space originally transformed into the convention of reality. Such a space is presented in a sequence which ironically juxtaposes two similar spaces, the twin concrete parabolas that the Germans built to reflect sound waves which would act as sonic bombs when sound was directed into them and aimed, on their reflection, at a certain point. In one of the parabolas Enzian and Katje, having just met, are discussing Slothrop. They are clearly still prisoners of the Zone and the Rocket Quest. In the other parabola, hidden from them, is the fat kid, Ludwig, along with his lost, now-recovered lemming, Ursula, who, having defied the impulse of her species and the laws of entropy, has, against all odds and all hope, returned, asserting the ultimate power of the forces of life. Their spaces are metonymically, architecturally, similar, yet one teems with pure being, with the impulse to life itself, while the other encloses hollow centers of personae, slaves of the Rocket, and unwitting agents of the existing order of things.

Notes to Chapter One

¹For a further discussion of entropy and its relation to communication theory, see ch. 2, pp. 268-69 . Also see Anne Mangel, "Maxwell's Deamon, Entropy, Information: The Crying of Lot 49," in Mindful Pleasures: Essays on Thomas Pynchon, ed. George Levine and David Leverenz (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1977), pp. 87-100.

²GR, p.1. All further references will be given in the text.

³Asa Briggs, Victorian People (New York: Harper and Row, 1955), p. 15.

⁴For a detailed discussion of the concept of the ego as a product of mediated desire, and the master-slave/sado-masochistic components of personality and fictive characters, see pt. I, ch. 3 and pt. 2, ch. 2.

⁵This technique of introducing the perverse characters within introjections is the stylistic equivalent of the artificiality they have made of their own lives, and of their lack of true reality. It helps equate them with the fictiveness of modern modes of consciousness. Pökler is similarly introduced within a digression.

⁶Scott Sanders, "Pynchon's Paranoid History," in Mindful Pleasures, pp. 139-140.

⁷Edward Mendelson, "Gravity's Encyclopedia," in Mindful

Pleasures, p. 169.

⁸Mendelson points out that the sprocket squares that head each chapter were not Pynchon's idea but the work of the production department, *ibid*, p. 193, n. 4. In any case, the idea is perhaps as profound as it is clever, for they become thematic emblems, and if Pynchon had not believed in their appropriateness, they presumably would have been omitted.

II. Personality as Pornography

Gravity's Rainbow is populated by literally hundreds of characters. Besides the purely fictitious characters like Roger Mexico, Jessica Swanlake, Ned Pointsman, Katje Borgesius, and Tyrone Slothrop, it includes "real" people like the chemist, Kekulé, who discovered the benzene ring, and Mickey Rooney, who, in a complex twist of fictive-historical reality, is identified in terms of his movie persona. It also includes a vast assortment of aristocrats, dopers, soldiers, racketeers, transvestites, perverts, lost children and lost lemmings, as well as talking animals and singing canines.* And above all, it includes a monstrous, silent rocket whose absence pervades the novel and to some extent controls or influences the lives of all the characters. Yet the most frequent criticism of Pynchon's novel is that his characters lack depth, credibility, or a sense of compassion with which the reader could identify. Given the number of characters, it would seem by the sheer odds of probability that Pynchon could have created at least one character who seemed real in the conventional sense. The other alternative is that Pynchon chooses to create his characters as they are.

This criticism is significant because it does point to a basic problem of reading Pynchon: the reader's expectations of what constitutes a character and how it is developed. If

we accept Pynchon's characters and techniques of characterization on their own terms, they reveal a logical consistency. They are different from characters in other books because they must perform functions that other characters in fiction have never had to. On one level, they must demonstrate enough semblance to ordinary humans to allow the plot to be developed; on another, they become vehicles by which the very idea of character--or person or persona--is analyzed and undermined.

Like the characters in other novels, Pynchon's dramatic personae serve a number of conventional purposes. Besides serving as media for the unfolding of plot, they often represent, by their words or deeds, philosophical systems or ethical attitudes which may be juxtaposed to illustrate and examine their relevance to human experience. They are faced with decisions which require reflection, choice, and the exertion of will based upon moral--or immoral--imperatives. They confront the dilemma of being a selfconscious being in a non-human world, and experience, to varying degrees, the terrors and triumphs of the confrontation.

To a lesser, and sometimes inverted, degree, Pynchon's characters have other similarities to conventional characters. Most possess personality traits that are sufficiently normal to elicit the reader's identification with them; although some of Pynchon's personae strain this margin of normalacy. And they confront problems that are sufficiently universal to evoke the reader's sympathy: how, for example, do you cope with the loss of a loved one, how do you find

your next meal, and how do you make sense of your life.

Conventional characters have other attributes which Pynchon's often do not. In conventional novels characters exhibit qualities of mind that are within the social norms of probability--even if a specific act is extraordinary. They fit their cultural landscape, physically, socially, and morally, and mirror the basic assumptions of their community, class, and period. If a single act or character is aberrant, his idiosyncrasy is comprehensible within the terms of the norm. If the hero opposes the established order and triumphs, the reader understands why and becomes a silent accomplice in an implicit condemnation of the corrupt order. If the hero rebels and fails, the reader also understands why: the character was either a hypocrite himself or too deranged or too possessed to be an effective corrector of social injustice, or the power of society was simply too strong for him to overcome.

In conventional novels, the reader also knows the character by what he says and does and by what others say of him. Armed with a knowledge of psychology, the modern reader can even interpret what the character really "meant" by what he said or did. Even if reports by characters were false, the reader could identify the deceptions; and if the narrator himself were proven to be unreliable, the reader was given sufficient clues to make that discovery. Even highly subjective novels cued the alert reader so that, while personal associations might become murky, the levels of fictive reality, private reverie and public act, remained essentially

distinct. Conventional novels, even the most convoluted, abstract, and personal, could do this because they contained or implied an assumption common to both author and reader and which was the basis for their mutual conception of reality--the centrality and primacy of a selfconscious center of being. Conventional novels explored the complexities of the self and its relationship to others and to the world, but they rarely questioned the validity of that primary assumption. The difficulty of dealing with Gravity's Rainbow, its characters, and its mode of characterization is that, while the novel's narrator and most of his characters accept the old assumption, Pynchon does not. There are, however, anchors in the relativistic Pynchonian universe, fixed points of reference; but they are not those of the narrator and his characters. They lie deeply buried inside--or outside--of the text itself.

To find these points of reference, it is necessary to examine the type of characters Pynchon creates and how he creates them. This, in turn, requires an analysis of his use of names and their significance, of his analysis of the concept of personality and its relationship to pornography, and of his rejection of Freud, Jung, and Pavlov.

Pynchon's characters, while fulfilling, at least minimally and in the broadest sense, the functions of conventional characters, also acquire other levels of significance. Like space, they are both metonymic and metaphoric constructs. As metonymic structures, the sequence of words about them and the words they speak or think create the semblance of

identifiable personalities, exhibiting the recognizable attributes of character that we expect. But as metonymic structures, they are also flat and confusing, and strain the reader's credibility. They often border on the edge of a conventional semblance to reality, become stiff and artificial, and are at odds with their fictional environment. This forces the reader to assume that they are acquiring additional significance that is not strictly related to the development of the plot. They become subsumed into the metaphoric register. The failure to see, or understand, this shift of registers results in the misinterpretation of both the novel and Pynchon's motivation for his type of characterizations. Yet even the metaphoric register is convoluted, for Pynchon allows his narrator to construct metaphors which are undermined by others that are clearly the work of the author and not the narrator. Simply, Pynchon plays with the polarities of language, metonymy and metaphor, and allows the narrator to operate between them. It becomes crucial for the reader to realize this trick, or he will become duped by the narrator's metaphor's, confuse them with the author's, and miss the point of the novel. The narrator's metaphors can be distinguished from Pynchon's because they are always logical outgrowths of the metonymic function of the character. Pynchon's metaphors are always subversive of that component of the character's significance. In general, Pynchon's metaphoric register will always subvert the aspects of selfconsciousness that a particular character represents.

This constant shifting of registers is significant of

both Pynchon's assessment of personality in general and his authorial strategy with respect to the reader. By moving continually from the metonymic to the metaphoric register, Pynchon never lets the reader forget that his personae are fictions: linguistic artifacts which are the more deceptive the more real they may seem. The implicit irony of identifying Mickey Rooney as "Judge Hardy's madcap kid" is that one is really known by one's fictional identity and this involves a blurring of demarcations between the fiction and the "fact" of the persona. By insisting upon the artificiality of the persona, Pynchon calls into question the reality of any identity. By dangling these semi-coherent fictions before the reader, Pynchon, playing with the reader's assumptions and need for coherence, entices him into completing their psychological portraits with his own imagination and thereby fill out the flatness of the characterization in accordance with his preconceptions about how a character is supposed to be developed and how he is supposed to act. Ironically, this recreates the central problem of the narrative: of making sense of chaos and of creating a unified persona. The reader becomes another questor for the Holy Grail of personal identity much like Slothrop himself; and, like Slothrop, he is finally confronted with the possibility that there is no Grail. Pynchon employs this same strategy in his narrative technique in order to make the reader, as he fills in gaps of plot or induces connections between events, as paranoid as the characters in the text.

Pynchon's characters and the way he presents them make

sense only by assuming that he rejects ego-structured identity as a viable mode of existence. Given such an assumption, and such a vision, Pynchon, as a novelist who must write about characters, confronts several philosophical and structural problems. To explain and convey his reality he must employ the old vocabulary, but use it to undermine the assumptions that constitute the very medium of his discourse.

To write about the rejection of personality and the destructive nature of its essence, Pynchon adopts an ironic relationship to his creations. A crucial strategy of this approach is to divorce himself from the narrator of his text. The narrator is actually the central character of the text, and his compulsion to make sense of historical reality enables him to generate the fiction. But the text the narrator writes often eludes him, and the reader must assume that there is another perspective, another structuring principle, than the narrator's. Even the major character begins to escape the narrator's ability to comprehend his fiction. This has a twofold effect. It enables the author to infiltrate structures within the narrator's which contradict the plot and theme, and it forces the reader to look for principles of coherence that lie either buried within the text, as unconscious structures, or outside the text, as extrinsic systems. In either case, the sanctity of the text as isolated object is subverted. The reader must confront the problem of deciding which structures are the narrator's and which are the author's.

This establishes a triply ironic text: the ironies between events within the text, ironies between the narrator and his text, and ironies between the narrator's text and the author's interpolations.

The dissociation between the author and the narrator is maintained by the narrator's continual inability to interpret his own narrative. Even as he obviously delights in the cleverness of his names for characters, he misinterprets their metaphoric significance. In the metonymic, or purely narrative, register, the names are ironic and humorous, and allow the narrator to flaunt their artificiality. Etzel Ölsch, for example, is the designer of the rocket-construction complex at Nordhausen, and his structures, like the car whose name he mimics, are designed to fall apart shortly after their construction. Even the characters who are invested with symbolically mythic overtones are misinterpreted. Greta Erdmann is first introduced with all the symbolic associations of a Demeter figure; yet the text itself clearly associates her with Hecate, a variation of the Demeter identity which directly contradicts the fertility persona.¹

Such a misreading of his own system of names continually reminds the reader of the artifice of the creations and suggests the fictiveness of all names and, by extension, what all names represent. They remind the reader of the lack of being at the core of all of the names and the possibility that personality is perhaps an illusion which is supported and sustained merely by virtue of a name, by virtue of the

linguistic structures that allow names to exist. Like the ego they denote, names are implied to be artificial constructs, words that capture a part of the wholeness of the being and make it stand for the whole. They dupe the reader into accepting the characters' personal reality as sustained by a name.² Central characters have a multitude of names which simultaneously add dimension and artificiality to their fictive reality. Greta Erdmann, Margarita, Gerta, Lotte Lustig, is a totally fictional construct having "more identities than she knew what to do with"(482). If there is even the implication of a real, central Greta, it is soon lost in the profusion of aliases. Slothrop, the most diverse and artificial of the characters, acquires a litany of names.

The inability of the narrator to understand the metaphoric significance of his characters' names, his inability to see them outside of the metonymic structure even as he attempts to make them metaphoric, and his dissociation from the author is most evident in the character of Roger Mexico. The narrator usually pairs his characters into various binary oppositions; and the text usually proves them to be false. Mexico is placed in conspicuous juxtaposition with Pointsman when he is referred to as the "Antipointsman"(55). Pointsman's world of behavioristic conditioning operates according to the principles of stimulation and response, the excited or the relaxed nerve cell, the one of the agitated state or the zero of rest. Mexico's world of statistics operates according to the laws of probability between the zero chance of an event's occurrence

and the one of its certainty. Mexico, as his name suggests by its association with the Central American country, inhabits the middle world.

This symbolic opposition, however, is undermined by Pynchon's manipulation of the narrator's text. The reader immediately sees the narrator's symbolic opposition. Yet the reason for this intuitive recognition of the opposition to Pointsman is that Mexico is the land between North and South America. Several hundred pages later, the Argentine anarchists are introduced in close association with Slothrop. The text, not the narrator, who never even mentions the relationship, now reveals the true opposition to the Pointsman-Mexico alternatives to reality. Mexico is precisely what his name suggests on another level--he occupies not only the realm between one and zero, but he is an intermediate between Pointsman and another manner of experience. The real opposition is between Pointsman who would have reality structured by irrevocable, and therefore controllable laws of cause and effect, and the Argentines who seek to destroy all structures of boundary, control, and manipulation. And since Slothrop is so closely allied to the Argentines in terms of both their narrative contiguity and his own form of psychological anarchism, he is the true alternative to Pointsman; and he, not Mexico, is Pointsman's real enemy throughout the novel. As always in Gravity's Rainbow, Pynchon's metaphoric relationships undermine the narrator's.

In the process of subverting the narrator's text,

Pynchon examines and rejects the foundations of modern ego structuration. The Pointsman-Slothrop opposition parodies the genital basis for personality and the name. Pointsman, infuriated by Slothrop's continual evasion of both his theories and his schemes, decides to have him castrated. If he can secure Slothrop's penis, he can destroy the distressing randomness of Slothrop's actions, which violate both his own behavioristic ordering of reality as well as Mexico's world of probability. For Pointsman, the penis equals the personality. Yet Slothrop, by this point, has begun to lose his own ego structure; his penis has been liberated from its Freudian relationship to his persona. He has acquired several names and various attires, fully aware that all are mere appendages to his reality. During the mixup at Putzi's, the brothel whose name is a pun on Putz, a Yiddish slang for penis, Major Marvy dons Slothrop's pig costume since his own clothes are filled with drugs, is identified as Slothrop by the MPs, seized, and neutered. Slothrop, liberated from his name, almost at this point from naming itself, escapes unaware of the danger and remains whole. Without a name as a signifier, the signified eludes both capture and castration. Pointsman and Marvy, who equate the name with the being, personality with reality, are caught in the prison of names; and the wrong name and the wrong mask leads to the seizure and castration of the wrong man. Implicit in this sequence is the identification of the ego and the penis--which leads to disaster, and its rejection which preserves Slothrop's integrity as

a physical being.

The narrator's compulsion to make sense of things forces him to create many such oppositions that will be undermined. In the Katje-Gottfried relationship, Pynchon explores the sado-masochistic roots of identity and the inherent perversity of myth-making. This implies his rejection of both Freud and Jung. As part of General Weissman's *ménage-à-trois*, they compulsively reenact a sado-masochistic ritual by which they seek to escape the isolation of personal identity in the pain of physical anguish, to cross the threshold of the self by the sting of a whip and the tear of the psyche, as if the rent in both would allow an avenue for escape. Unfortunately, trapped by the ego structure they seek to escape from, they can experience only a perversion of release and a nostalgic memory of human and spiritual integrity in the convulsions of pain and travesty of sexual identity that remind them that the body and being is capable of more than bodily functions. In terms of Brown's vision, they demonstrate what happens to the yearning for wholeness once the body has become divorced from the soul and the soul from its anchor in a universal synthesis. In a typically Pynchonian fashion, they reveal in their neurosis the very structures of self-consciousness that, according to Hegel and Lacan, precipitate the idea of the self: since the self is a product of the master-slave relationship and the capture of the other, its modes of release will be a compulsion-repetition of its own formation.

These structures are more closely related to Hegel's

conception of the evolution of self-consciousness than to Freud's economics of the mind. The technique Pynchon employs to isolate these structures is significant because it is central both to his vision and to his analysis of ego structuration. Pynchon identifies sub-categories of a given topic, in this case the nature of self-consciousness, and then illustrates how the sub-category actually contains the implicit, yet necessary, characteristics of the general topic. Freud, for example, in Civilization and its Discontents,³ explained sadism as an aberration resulting from the dominance of the aggressive instinct over libidinal desires for union, thus perverting those desires into acts, real or imaginary, of domination over the other. The novel, however, since every relationship seems to follow this paradigm, implies that this is a component of every psyche. Even the most normal relationship in the novel, that of Roger and Jessica, is essentially a psychological, sado-masochistic struggle for possession: she toys with him to capture his affection, knowing full well that when the war is over she will marry Jeremy. In essence, the novel reveals the perversity lurking within the perverse of the Freudian model of mind. If, according to Freud, the aggressive in the healthy individual can be channelled into constructive action, the novel insists that it never really loses its destructive component: it merely forestalls the ultimate destruction of man on a universal scale under the guise of technological development which itself hides the holocaust under the semblance of progress, as the death

instinct hides self-destruction under the imperatives of self-fulfillment. The real basis for self-consciousness, in Pynchon's world, is the subjugation of the other, which by its nature implies the power to destroy.

The Katje-Gottfried duality is further emphasized by the narrator's allusion to them as Hansel and Gretel; and this dimension of their identities reveals Pynchon's rejection of Jungian concepts of human identity. As fairy-tale figures, the two are products of German fantasy, children of the oven; and, since both are Dutch, they are creations of the German mind. They reveal, in this context, the perversity of all mythologizing: the perversity of being lost and found, when there is no one to find you, and when you are not even sure that you want to be found, since the mother you return to is most likely the witch you fled from. They expose the mythologizing process by which the ego, admitting desires and memories of a pre-structured time, allows these repressed contents to be released only by camouflaging the real nature of the repression which is itself. In Lacanian terms, a myth is a fantasy which is a product of the ego and not the unconscious; like a dream, it is a linguistic structure created to conceal the real source of pain or concern from the being. Myth is thus another metonymic chain of desire-perverted that ensures the continued domination of the original metonymic chain of desire, the ego. As the Katje-Gottfried-Weissman triad demonstrates, the mythic is but another mask for the destructive nature of the

the self in which instinctual release is controlled, diverted, and perverted by the repressor. It is precisely because a myth is an attempt to understand and structure reality that Pynchon rejects mythologizing; and later in the novel, when he employs them himself, it is to undermine the very process.

In their efforts to escape the boundaries of self-hood, Katje and Gottfried project the structures of the self upon the world. She is the active masochist whose need for pain is so great that she will adopt the guise of the sadist to fulfill it. Having escaped Weissman, and having seduced Slothrop, she is used by Pointsman to become a dominatrix. The scatological nature of her relationship to General Pudding is by no means an indication of Pudding's neurosis alone, but simply a more isolated example of a component of all ego-organization. Slothrop, far from the most perverse of the novel's characters, also has his own scatological fantasies, which are evident in his hallucinatory trip down the toilet bowl. If eating feces is symbolic of consuming natural products and wastes, then the entire industrial-military complex in Gravity's Rainbow is symbolized in Pudding's act since it feeds off both nature and the wastes of mankind. Furthermore, the military-industrial complex is very much like ego organization since, as the novel later reveals, both are structured along similar lines and perform similar functions.⁴ As Brown, in his reading of Freud, notes, feces are one of the first commodities the developing ego feels

it can control and possess.⁵

While Katje is the active masochist, Gottfried is the passive one. He is Hegel's Slave incarnate and can feel intimations of reality only in total subjugation. But, like Tantalus, fulfillment is always just beyond his grasp because he can never experience it without consciously thinking about, and hence, losing, it. His thoughts become memories of events that have just passed before he could consciously experience them; and his own solace is in the awareness of losing what he has just lost. Even in his last moments, buried in the heart of the rocket, enshrouded in Imopolex-G, the experience of reality eludes, by heartbeats, his awareness of them.

He thinks of [his and Weissman's] love as illustrations for children....They're beginning to slide away now faster than he can hold, it's like falling to sleep--they begin to blur CATCH you can hold it steady enough to see a suspender-belt straining down your thighs, white straps as slender as the legs of a fawn and the points of the black CATCH you've let a number of them go by, Gottfried, important ones you didn't want to miss...you know this is the last time...CATCH when did the roaring stop? (759)

Trapped by assuming that his own self-consciousness is the center of his being, Gottfried can think only of pictures, watch, and remember his experience.

Although the narrator structures their relationship as a binary pair, the text establishes more complex relationships. They also form, with Weissman at the pinnacle, a triangle. Yet even this geometric design is altered by Slothrop, whose involvement with Katje and whose indirect relationship with Weissman and the rocket

involves him in the constellation. He stands, implicitly, in opposition to Weissman and the triad itself. By the end of the novel, Slothrop has transcended both mastery and slavery, and if this seems to entail also a loss of identity and meaning, it is perhaps because both the narrator and the reader have failed to relinquish their own assumptions about the master-slave aspects of the self. Pynchon makes this clear by having the narrator take just such a perspective.

Pynchon undermines the narrator's assessments by having him misinterpret another character to whom Slothrop, directly, and Katje, thematically, are related. While Katje seeks reality and transcendence of the self in the purely physical, another character, Lyle Bland, seeks it in the purely spiritual. His associations with business, however, along with his role as an economic manipulator who attempts to find a personal salvation among the spiritual elect should clue the reader who is familiar with Pynchon's biases that Bland is up to no good. Even his name suggests something about his world and his psyche. Ironically, several critics, approaching the novels with conventional assumptions about the nature of the self, have arisen to champion Bland's cause.⁶

Rather than demonstrate the bliss of transcendence, as the narrator suggests Bland does and Slothrop doesn't, Bland's history illustrates the absurdity of thinking that one can move beyond the physical into a purely spiritual state and retain the self. While Katje attempted to find

her own type of salvation in libidinal release, Bland seeks his in increased repression. His initiation into the secrets of transcendence requires a great deal of practice at subjugating the body to the mind. His ultimate success is one of the more flagrantly ridiculous sequences in the novel.

In context, Bland's story can be seen only as parody. He is the quintessential American Entrepreneur. Having, as an agent between IG Farben and the American business-education complex, engineered the original experiments on Slothrop, he becomes involved with the Mason's and their Rosicrucian secrets of physical transcendence. With difficulty, he learns to travel outside his own body. At first he can make only short voyages, whose triviality sorely taxes the patience of the other adepts. Soon, however, with serious work and dedication, he learns to repress anarchic distractions and voyage far enough to meet other members of "the astral IG"(590). He finally becomes a member of "the elect" who can transcend nature while the "rest of us, not chosen for enlightenment [Pynchon's small case "e"], [are] left on the outside of the Earth"(590).

The scene of his last departure is a comic parody of transcendence. It employs all the conventions of the mystical experiences, yet reduces them to farce by juxtaposing them to the reality of the relatives whose annoying physicality impinges upon the spiritual event.

Lucky Bland, to be free of it. One night he called his whole family together around the davenport in the

study, Lyle, Jr. came in from Houston, shivering with first-stage grippe from contact with a world where air-conditioning is not so essential to life. Clara drove down from Bennington and Buddy rode the MTA in from Cambridge. "As you know," Bland announced, "I have been taking these little trips lately." He was wearing a simple white smock, and holding a red rose. He looked unearthly, all were later to agree. (590-91)

Bland's spiritual election is undercut by his son's physical discomfort; and his "little trips" are contrasted to the more earthly modes of conveyance. Bland is so clearly better than the rest, so obviously one of the elect, and so thoughtful of others that even in his moment of transcendence, he has thought to take care of his family. He announces that he has arranged with his lawyers from the firm of "Salitieri, Poore, Nash, De Brutus, and Short" to take care of his earth-bounded relatives. One by one, they take their leave as he goes into his trance.

After a bit he felt himself beginning to rise. Those watching disagreed about the exact moment. Around 9:30 Buddy left to see The Bride of Frankenstein, and Mrs. Bland covered the serene face with a dusty chinz drape she'd received from a cousin who never understood her tastes. (591)

The sequence is pure travesty not only because of its tone, ironic juxtapositions, and bad puns, but even with respect to the characters' reactions to it. The name of the law firm is a pun on Hobbes's observation that man's life in a state of nature is "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short." The details are too arch to be taken seriously; and even the family seems impatient for the miraculous event to be over. Any expression of real emotion is markedly absent: Buddy makes a hasty exit from one horror show to another, and Mrs. Bland is more occupied with the

mundane problem of why people never seem to know what we really want. Why should the preterite mourn the triumphant passing of the elect?

The butt of Pynchon's satire is Bland's illusion that he is "going beyond" with some purely spiritual identity intact. From one perspective, Bland's story is a satiric commentary on Slothrop's dispersal and inability to pursue his own quest with Bland's determination. But such a view must ignore two "facts" of the novel. The first, as noted, is the satiric, reductive tone of the story. The second, implied by the narrative but not the narrator, is a related anecdote about Ursula the lemming who, defying instinct, refuses to rush to the sea and die. Bland's rush to the spiritual ethers parallels Ursula's, but even a dumb animal realizes that not all instinctual or spiritual imperatives are what they are cracked up to be. Ursula's story, a semi-interjected narrative like Bland's, forces the reader to see Bland's "going" as a travesty of Slothrop's. It also implies again that the narrator fails to understand the real nature of the narrative and Slothrop's dispersal. Pynchon suggests that transcendence, as conventionally understood, is an illusion, a parody of the real possibilities of transformation by union with earth, nature, and body. Bland, the over-achieving paragon of the Protestant ethic, moves directly from Harvard to Heaven, and his movement is a burlesque of Slothrop's opposite movement into the wastes of the world. Bland dies; Slothrop lives.

It is possible to isolate countless pairings and implicit, ironic juxtapositions of characters. Each involves or illustrates other thematic concerns. Enzian and Blicero (Weissman), the black and white lovers, represent the literal perversion of the innocent Black, who, having lost his tribal roots, becomes obsessed by power and death. In another pairing, Enzian and his half-brother, Tchitcherine, represent another aspect of the colonial relationship between Africa and Europe, as the Russian man of metal attempts to eliminate his darker, more instinctual, alter-ego.

Kekulé, who discovered the benzene ring, is paralleled to Jamf, who supervised Slothrop's conditioning. They represent man's scientific colonization of his physical world. Both experienced radical transformations in their interests. Kekulé was first an architect before projecting his archetechtonic vision on nature, and Jamf was a psychologist before becoming a chemist. Their implicit link is the need to structure reality with increasing degrees of subtlety and the evil which results from their efforts.

Pynchon and the narrator use the many character pairs to examine the nature and causes of modern mind, its structures and dynamics; and inevitably reveals them to be essentially pornographic. Pynchon's analysis of person is similar to Brown's in Love's Body. For both, personality, the persona, is a fiction that is inherently theatrical; but it is also pornographic, and an analysis of Pynchon's pornographic techniques reveals more about his view of

personality and the nature of his vision.

In an analysis of Pynchon's use of pornography, it is important to distinguish between the pornographic and the erotic. The latter term denotes a subjective reaction which is not necessarily caused by the pornographic. Pornography is a structural quality of a work. It may or may not be erotic since erotic responses may be generated by non-erotic material. If we eliminate the vagaries of personal response, and hence the erotic, from the problem of determining the quality of pornography, certain key structural principles of Pynchon's pornographic style become apparent.

A few examples will illustrate its prominent characteristics. Slothrop's first meeting with Greta Erdmann becomes a mock sado-masochistic ritual.

"Could you be [cruel]? Please. Find something to whip me with. Just a little. Just for the warmth...." He rummages around through inquisitional props, gyves, thumbscrews, leather harness, before coming up with a cat-o-nine tails....

And what's waiting for Slothrop, what unpleasant surprise past the tops of Greta's stockings here...What waits past this whine and crack of velvet lashes against her skin, long red stripes on the white ground, her mound, the bruise-colored flower that cries at her breast, the jingling of the hardware holding her down. (396-97)

In addition to the S and M pornography are the scatological episodes. Slothrop's trip down the toilet, a fantasy he has while drugged by Pointsman, begins with his fear of anal penetration. It is, for Slothrop, as if anal penetration is a violation of the self. Pynchon is invoking the association between the self as the first possession

which is owned as the child learns to control and own his own feces. As the narrator later comments, the mission of the self, of the ego is "BAD SHIT"(713). The symbolic equation of the self, shit, and penis becomes most obvious in the extended pornographic sequence about General Pudding's nocturnal visit to Katje as the "Black Goddess of the Secret." Her secret is the nature of identity.

Though she has never read any classic British pornography, she does feel herself, sure as a fish, well in the local mainstream. Six on the buttocks, six more across the nipples....She likes the way the blood leaps to cross the night's welts....

He struggles to his knees to kiss the [whip]. She stands over him now, legs astride, pelvis cocked forward, fur cape held apart on her hips. He dared to gaze up at her cunt, that fearful vortex....

"Please..."

"No. Not tonight. Kneel here and take what I give you."

Despite himself--already a reflex--he glances over at the bottles on the table, the plates, soiled with juices of meat, Hollandaise, bits of gristle and bone.... Her shadow covers his face and upper torso, her leather boots creak softly as thigh and abdominal muscles move, and then in a rush she begins to piss. He opens his mouth to catch the stream, choking, trying to keep swallowing, feeling warm urine dribble out the corners of his mouth and down his neck and shoulders, submerged in the hissing storm. When she's done he licks the last few drops from his lips. More cling, golden clear, to the glossy hairs of her quim....

She turns. "Hold up my fur." He obeys. "Don't touch my skin." Now her intestines whine softly, and she feels shit begin to slide down and out. He kneels with his arms up holding the rich cape. A dark turd appears out the crevice, out of the absolute darkness between her white buttocks. He spreads his knees awkwardly, until he can feel the leather of her boots. He leans forward to surround the hot turd with his lips, sucking on it tenderly, licking along its lower side... he is thinking, he's sorry, he can't help it, thinking of a Negro's penis.... (234-35)

Katje's feces become, for Pudding, the dark phallus as he watches her give anal birth, literally re-enacting a

common infantile fantasy. The feces-penis, in Pudding's mind, is a self about to be born; and it is to be consumed, to be incorporated, in order, as Kojève notes,⁷ to become like it--that is possess his own self by filling his lack with it. Pudding literally re-enacts the example that Kojève uses metaphorically to illustrate Hegel's principle that the self is a product of what it is filled with. Thus, Pynchon's pornographic sequence has serious concerns at its basis, since Pynchon is establishing an equation between the self as a product of the incorporated other, the penis, and feces. Again, for Pynchon, not only is the self an illusory product of genital organization; it is also "bad shit."

That is part of Katje's dark secret. She is also the mother with the penis, the combined object, the outside-inside, much like the rocket which is both phallic and, as is revealed at the end of the novel, a uterine object, since it carries Gottfried within it. She is the latent fantasy-figure that precipitates the reality of the rocket.

The sequence also demonstrates another aspect of the self. The ego is equated with penis and feces, with parts of the being. But these parts have special meaning and unique powers. They are fetish objects--and the self, the ego, is the originary fetish object. By definition, a fetish object is something that is invested with magical properties and worshiped for its power. In psychological terms, it is an object invested with erotic capabilities. The feces and the leather boots acquire this power for

Pudding, and Pynchon latter equates the boots with every mother's shoes, as well as with anality. Late in the novel, the narrator begins to discuss the Lübeck Hitler Youth Glee Club who now sing for officer's clubs under the new name, "The Lederhoseners." When "the house feels right--[they sing] with their backs turned to the audiences, their sly little faces turned over their shoulders to flirt with the fighting men"(736).

And you can bet there isn't a cock in the room doesn't stir at the sight, and scarcely an eye that can't hallucinate that maternal birch smacking down across each naked ass, the delicious red lines, the stern and beautiful female face, smiling through lowered lashes, only a glint of light off each eye--when you were first learning to crawl, it was her calves and feet you saw the most of--they replaced her breasts as sources of strength, as you learned the smell of her leather shoes, and the sovereign smell rose as far as you could see.... (736)

By implication and analogy, the Katje-Pudding episode is not merely the private perversions of two people, but a re-enactment of the psychological underpinnings of all self-consciousness. As the boots become the fetish object, the part that stands for all the power and pleasures of the mother, the self that emerges from this process is a fetish object that replaces the being that extends farther than the conscious self. Like all other fetish objects, it is imbued, to use Browns's terms, with magical properties.

Another incident, involving porno-princess Greta Erdmann as she relates her last meeting with Weissman and her experience with Imipolex-G, re-enforces the equation of self, fetish object, and pornography. Some men have taken her to the rocket launching site.

"The erections of my escort tried to crawl out the openings in their clothes.... I knelt and began unbuttoning Drohne's trousers. But two others took me by the arms and dragged me off into a warehouse area. Others followed, or entered from other doors. Great curtains of styrene or vinyl, in all colors, opaque and transparent, hung row after row from overhead.... Drohne and the men stretched me on an inflatable plastic mattress.... They took away my clothes and dressed me in an exotic costume of some black polymer, very tight at the waist, open at the crotch. It felt alive on me. 'Forget leather, forget silver,' shivered Drohne [mirroring Jamf's command to forget the organic bond]. 'This is Imipolex-G, the material of the future.'... The moment it touched them it brought my nipples up swollen and begging to be bitten. I wanted to feel it against my cunt. Nothing I ever wore, before or since, aroused me quite as much as Imipolex. They promised me brassiers, chemises, stockings, gowns of the same material. Drohne had strapped on a gigantic Imipolex penis over his own. I rubbed my face against it, it was so delicious... There was an abyss between my feet. (488)

Imipolex is erotic material: the stuff penises are made of. It is also Black, like Pudding's penis of feces. It is the new artifact of the future. It also demonstrates remarkable similarities to both the penis and the ego. The sixth chapter of Book IV concludes with a list of the properties of the chemical.

Imipolex-G is the first plastic that is actually erectile. Under suitable conditions the chains grow cross-links, which stiffen the molecule and increase intermolecular attraction so that this Peculiar Polymer runs far outside the known phase diagrams, from limp rubbers amorphous to amazing perfect tessellation, hardness, brilliant transparency, high resistance to temperature, weather, vacuum, shock of any kind. (699)

There are three ways to signal the plastic to become erect. The first is to activate a matrix of wires which establishes a co-ordinate system over the plastic and which can direct a signal to any area of the plastic. The second is a beam-scanning system that is like a video-electron stream with

receiver plates just below the surface. As the text describes it, it implies more suggestive significance. The scanning system may even be "below the outer layer of Imipolex, down at the interface with What lies just beneath; with What has been inserted or What has actually grown itself a skin of Imipolex-G, depending upon the heresy you embrace. We need not dwell here on the Primary Problem, namely that everything below the plastic film does after all lie in the Region of Uncertainty"(700). The third is the projection, onto the surface of an electronic image, analogous to a motion picture.

The characteristics of the chemical are remarkably similar to those of the ego-genital nexus. Its prime function is to erect, as the ego-genital's is to erect both structures and itself. It protects its contents. It mediates between the area of uncertainty which lies at its core and the sensory input from the external world. It transmits and receives messages through a network of wire nerves, and it receives messages that modify its behavior.

The equation of the penis with the polymer and the polymer with the ego and all with the rocket lies at the center of Pynchon's rejection of modern ego structuration as inherently deadly. The very structure of his pornographic episodes further elucidates his concept of person. It might be argued that the pornographic quality of the episodes is the result of both the specific acts described and the words used to describe them. Yet

a dirty joke might describe similar acts in similar words, and a dirty joke is rarely considered to be pornographic. This is because the joke subverts itself and its status as object into a moment of intersubjective community between the unconscious of the teller and the hearer. The similarity of words and actions, yet the resulting difference of type, suggest that the pornographic is differentiated from the joke by purely structural components. An analysis of these components reveals the psychological structures and conditions which allow for the existence of pornography.

Of all the similarities that characterize the preceding passages, their sado-masochistic content, their obsession with the physical (which is not quite true since, as became apparent in the Kaje-Pudding sequence, the physical is a mode of psychic release, even though the character is unconscious of it), and the prevalence of fetish objects, the predominant quality is the concern with pieces of things. The pornographic focuses upon parts and invests them with the reality of the whole. Pricks and cunts replace men and women. Bodily and emotional feelings are emblemized by swellings or lacerations, rips in the fabric of being. The pornographic character is literally a person in pieces whose pieces have usurped the reality of his totality. He is scattered among the fragments of his flesh: he is scarred buttocks, nipples, and penis; she her crushed breasts, vulva, a pinched corset, or gartered stocking. And the fascination and terror lies at the edges of the piece, the gap in the flesh, the

gash between the thighs, for the gap reveals both the absence at the core of being and the possibility of a rift in the structure of things. Even the non-sexual aspects of the episodes reenforce this fragmented vision. Pudding, about to consume Katje's feces, looks at the table with its "juices of meat, Hollandaise, bits of gristle and bone"(235).⁸

The stylistic equivalent of persons in pieces is an obsession with detail: urine, glistening, golden-clear, clings to glossy pubic hairs, artifacts of torture are carefully, obsessively catalogued, and details about erotic clothing carefully listed. Since detail, especially the obviously irrelevant detail,⁹ is an aspect of fiction itself, Pynchon equates fiction with obsessive pornography, and, as will be discussed in the next chapter, bases his self-conscious subversion of the form of the novel on this assumption. In his vision, fictions, like pornography, are the products of the first fiction, the ego; and, unless they subvert themselves into his concept of reality, they are as potentially harmful as the ultimate fiction-made-real, the rocket.

The pornographic is also a ruse, a deceit which allows a mode of release of repressed desire by proxy, a mode, like that of myth, which is determined by the ego and which allows the ego to retain control over the person. The viewer or reader of pornography is never a participant since the pornographic structure always distances him from the represented event. It is the luxury of voyeurs; and

as Brown has noted,¹⁰ the scene the voyeur witnesses, regardless of the surface content, is always a variation of the primal scene. By extension, in Pynchon's world, every act of reading is voyeuristic, is a looking-at from a safe distance, is participation and security. Pornography, like the novel, is a product of ego-structuration which reveals latent structures of that original source.

Since pornography depends upon the structural fracturation of the object, it is closely associated with fetishism in which a piece of something acquires erotic force. Fetishists and fetishisms permeate the novel. Katje and Greta have their whips and welts, Pudding his urine and feces, Franz Pökler his movies, and all, especially Slothrop, the archfetish, the rocket. By definition, a fetish object is something that is invested with magical powers and worshipped; in psychological terms it is an object invested with erotic capabilities. But, as Pynchon makes clear in the description of the Lubeck Glee Club sequence, a fetish is the result not of a metaphoric substitution of the fetish object for another source of erotic pleasure but a metonymic one. It is the result of a displacement of desire from the source to something contiguously associated with it: a part of the desired object. The fetish, in these terms, is implicitly connected with the pornographic. And in terms of the text, it must be related to the very core of ego structuration which is the displacement of the significance of the whole onto the ego-genital nexus.

If it were only the extremely distorted characters who

exhibited festishistic tendencies, an all-inclusive equation between personality and pornography would be unfounded. Yet the most obviously "normal" couple in the novel, Roger and Jessica, exhibit them as well. Their perversity, however, since it is more normal, more repressed, is even more deceitful. Jessica will eventually leave Roger, considering him as simply a diversion during the war. He is thinking of her with her peacetime boyfriend, Jeremy.

Roger tries not to think any more than he has to. Of course he agonizes over technical matters. She cannot possibly--can she?--be Doing The Same Things with Jeremy. Does Jeremy ever kiss her cunt, for example? Could that prig actually--does she reach around as they're fucking a--and slide a mischievous finger, his English rose, into Jeremy's asshole? (121)

Roger, the normal man in love with a woman, shows all the characteristics of every jealous lover--and all the latent concerns of the pornographer: the loved one is reduced to fragmented object; even the style of the sequence is as fragmented as any in the novel.

The vision of the person in pieces, the obsession with parts of wholes, and the displacement of those wholes by the parts are all metonymic substitutions; and they reveal another important aspect of pornography. The pornographic is always literal. Even if it is represented in pictures, the images must achieve the semblance of the literal. In texts, the word must equate with its referent as directly as the word and its relationship to its referent will permit, just as the image must assume the reality of the represented object. In fact, the only substitutions

possible are for the replacement--in fantasy, at a safe distance--of the genitals of the participant by those of the viewer; yet even this is a metonymic displacement: my genitals replace this other's, yet I retain immunity. Indeed, the literalness of pornography prevents one of the most explicit scenes of copulation, Slothrop's and Bianca's sexual excounter on the Anubis, from being truly pornographic. During this episode the acts and the reactions are invested with symbolic overtones which mitigate and subvert the pornographic structure. While having intercourse with the girl, Slothrop becomes "somehow, actually, well, inside his own cock"(470). He has embodied the pornographic structure and become a part the subsumes the whole. Yet the text immediately subverts the literalness of the equation: "inside the metropolitan organ entirely, all other colonial tissue forgotten and left to fend for itself"(470). The pornographer's obsession with detail is subverted by investing the scene with symbolic significance as the text implies the connection between fucking and colonial expansion. In general, the pornographic must retain its status as a metonymic structure just as the ego is the product of a metonymic capture.

In this context, another aspect of the pornographic becomes apparent. Since it is literal, the pornographic cannot exist outside of the metonymic register. Since the ego is itself, according to Brown and Lacan, a metonymic substitution of a part for the whole, and since it is, in Lacan's terms, a metonymic capture of the specular

image that stands for the entirety of being, pornography and the ego are essentially equivalent categories. As always in Pynchon's world, the projections of self-consciousness mirror the structures of its own repression..

The Brownian concept of persona is apparent in the nature of the formation of baby Tyrone's ego and its relation to the rocket; the Lacanian in the narrative of Franz Pökler. Slothrop's personality, and its peculiar relationship to the rocket, is the result of experiments conducted by Lazlo Jamf. Offered as a sacrificial victim to science, Slothrop is involved with conditioning experiments at Harvard that use his infant erections as signs of positive or negative responses. Even before knowing how or why, baby Tyrone's focus of being and self is his penis; his personality literally is a creation of an other. Slothrop's experience may be an extreme case, but Pynchon implies that the experience is essentially that of every male--it is simply more overt. Jamf becomes the surrogate father who can give and deny pleasure while all the time focusing the child's attention upon the organ that will later define his being. The pornography of the visual fixation on parts is the theme of the Pökler episode. Pökler, aroused by a pornographic movie, makes love to his wife, who conceives and bears a daughter. He similarly becomes involved with movies of the rocket--and helps produce a symbolic son. In both cases, it is the pictures and images that compel him; and in each case, he substitutes the image for the reality.

An even closer examination of the novel could produce an almost countless number of examples that associate the ego with the master-slave relationship, the fetish object, the imaginary capture of the other, and the elevation or substitution of a part for the whole. And they all, either structurally or thematically, follow the same paradigmatic strategy. Pynchon isolates in the projections of the ego the latent components of the development and structure of the ego itself. Like Derrida, who sees in speech, which traditionally precedes writing, a trace of writing or symbolic coding which he call archewriting, Pynchon sees the ego, which is the creator of pornography, as itslef an archepornographic structure, the originary pornography.¹¹ Because of this, to understand the nature of his characters and methods of characterization, it is necessary to turn from Freud to Brown and Lacan. Although it may seem repetitive, it is usefull to reiterate the relevant points of Brownian and Lacanian psychoanalytics and their essential disagreements with Freud.

For Lacan and, to an even greater degree, for Brown, the ego, like the polymer, the movie, and the rocket, is a product of another, an artifact of labor, not an outgrowth of nature. As illustrated by the history of the infant Slothrop, it is a product that can arise only out of contact with the other, whether that other is the specular image, the parents, or history itself. Since self-consciousness is a product of the other, it requires a conflict with the other to be captured and incorporated.

Lacan returns to Hegel's Master-Slave struggle as the prototype for this battle for the self. The other must be subdued in order to force it to attest to the significance of the self-consciousness. Yet the old Hegelian paradox remains. Once the other is subdued, it can no longer be acknowledged as a legitimate justification for, and validation of, the self-consciousness. The predominance of masters and slaves and sadism and masochism within the text continually reiterates this basic point.

But, Pynchon implies, master-slave and sadist and masochist not only sustain the novel but, as Thanatz argues, the most elemental structures of civilization, those of the state and family. As he tries to explain to Ludwig, the little boy looking for his lemming, the state itself would wither away without the S and M of the master-slave relationship. If, he argues, it were allowed on a family level, why would we need a state to do what our own families can do so much more effectively and efficiently. Thanatz explains:

"Ludwig, a little S and M never hurt anybody?"

"Who said that?"

"Sigmund Freud. How do I know? But why are we taught to feel relative shame whenever the subject comes up? Why will the Structure allow every other kind of sexual behavior but that one? Because submission and dominance are resources it needs for its very survival. They can not be wasted in private sex. It needs our submission so that it may remain in power. It needs our lust after dominance so that it can co-opt us into its own power game. There is no joy in it, only power. I tell you, if S and M would be established universally, at the family level, the State would wither away. (737)

Thanatz' argument is comically, yet perversely, logical.

The state is our projected entity, our illusion of ourselves as one, our projected ego. Therefore, it must employ the same energies by which we constitute our sense of a personal self for its own propagation.

And here lies the main reason for Pynchon's rejection of the conventional psychological models: all, Freudian, Jungian, and Behavioristic, posit as an ideal the integrated personality, the self in control of, but not necessarily in harmony with, itself and its environment. According to them, the loss of the integrated persona must result in the diminution of the being's reality. Pynchon's rejection of this assumption is encoded in a complex series of associations that involve an implied pun on several mathematical terms. This association is never made by the narrator, so it must be assumed that it is one of Pynchon's introjections.

At one point, the narrator quotes Kurt Mondaugen's discussion of personal identity in terms of the mathematical concept of temporal bandwidth. He is trying to explain Slothrop's increasing loss of personal coherence and his bewilderment at finding himself involved in a mission to rescue the black marketeer, Der Springer, from the Russians.

"Temporal bandwidth is the width of your present, your now. It is the familiar " Δt " considered as a dependent variable. The more you dwell in the past and in the future, the thicker your bandwidth, the more solid your persona. But the narrower your sense of NOW, the more tenuous you are. It may get to where you're having trouble remembering what you were doing five minutes ago, or even--as Slothrop now--what you're doing here, at the base of this colossal curved embankment....(509)

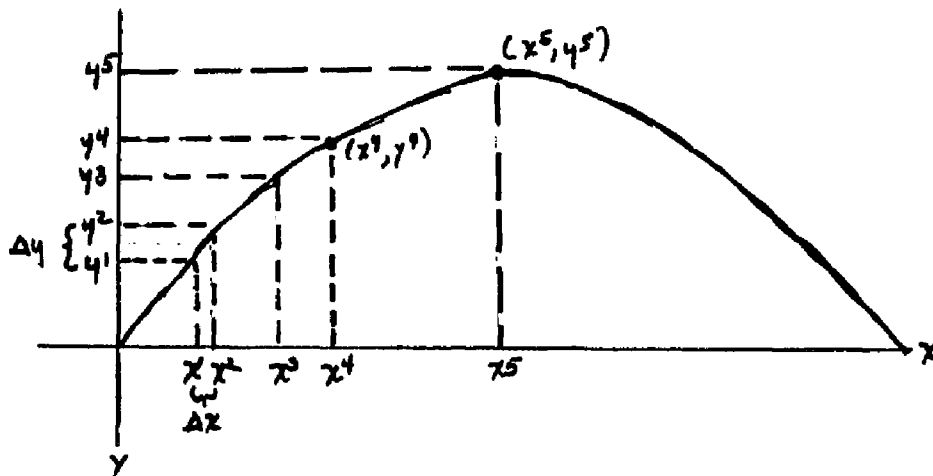
Mondaugen's theorem is clearly meant to refer to Slothrop's later dissolution. It is based upon concepts from differential

and integral calculus which theoretically allow one to isolate segments of a curve and then measure the space beneath them. The broader the segments, the larger the area they enclose, and in Mondaugen's analogy, the greater your sense of self.

The theorem, however, implies two subverting elements which make his assessment of the situation questionable. One is stated in the text, although the narrator never makes the association; the other is implicit in the terminology of the calculus itself. The first is introduced by Leni Pökler when she tries to explain her revolutionary zeal and its liberating effect.

She even tried from what little calculus she'd picked up, to explain it to Franz as Δt approaching zero, eternally approaching, the slices of time growing thinner and thinner, a succession of rooms each with walls more silver, transparent, as the pure light of the zero comes nearer.... (159)

Leni is basing her argument on the idea that it is possible to take thinner and thinner slices of the arc and hence the lines connecting the end points of the slice to the x-axis would appear to be rooms growing smaller and smaller and whose walls would be more and more transparent as the breadth of the segments approached zero, at which points the walls and rooms would disappear into the liberating timelessness of pure being, or to use her metaphor, pure light without boundary. The following diagram illustrates Leni's point. The letter and its prime indicate the end points of each successive segment of arc.



Leni's use of this concept as metaphor clearly contradicts Mondaugen's assessment of the nature of temporal bandwidth, and casts some light on the nature of Slothrop's dispersal. It could be argued that the contradiction is merely another ambiguity or paradox of the text; yet Leni assumes a latent mythic persona of such importance and power, as will be discussed in chapter 4, that it is likely that her's is the more relevant interpretation of the principle.

Leni's vision is also sustained by a pun inherent in the terminology of the calculus. If disintegration is thought of in terms of the loss of time, it must also be related to the process in the calculus which can eliminate the temporal component from an equation. The process is termed "integration." In these terms, Slothrop's loss of personal temporal bandwidth is an integrative process; and the more he "scatters" from the narrator's perspective, the more "integrated" he becomes.

In fact, within the novel, the more conventionally integrated a character is, and the stronger his persona,

the more likely is it that he is also destructive, deceitful, and manipulative.

Pynchon, along with Brown and, implicitly, Lacan disagree with Freud on an even more profound level. Freud assumed that the ego is a central factor in neurosis, but refused to believe that this, of itself, a detriment to being. It was necessary, to some extent, for the production of civilization. Furthermore, although the ego experienced the neurosis, and dealt with it as best as it could to preserve the self, the neurosis was actually caused by the superego and its excessive demands upon the ego. Pynchon and Brown see this as Freud's misreading of his own insight. They agree that the superego arises from the ego by a transformation of psychic energy into mental structures, but they rephrase the formulation of the description of the process. They see it as a transformation in which the economy of the being is deprived of some of its energy to create a super-psychic structure: Being becomes architectonic. But they also assert, as Freud himself acknowledges, that the ego itself arose out of a similar depelction of energy from being. Therefore, in their view, both ego and super-ego share responsibility for the destructiveness of self-consciousness and all of its projections and creations.

Brown's analysis of this process has already been examined, and, as has been shown, Pynchon's is quite similar to Brown's. Pynchon, however, adds another dimension to his analysis. He employs concepts of modern physics as well as those of psychology and applys the laws of thermo-

dynamics to Freud's structural model of the mind. According to the laws of thermodynamics, any structuration within a closed system results in a decrease of available energy within it. Thus, any structure can be created only out of a depletion of energy; and since much of that energy must be expended in the work of structuration, the artifact represents a greater depletion of energy than that which had been transformed into structure. In other words, structures, as Pynchon frequently notes, feed upon reality, producing less than they consume. Since, as Pynchon and history demonstrate, Man is producing increasingly complex structures, both psychological and material, the ultimate conclusion of the process by which he thinks to sustain the self will be the end of life as process and the transformation of life into an architectonic universe. This is the symbolic value of Pynchon's vision of the City Dactylic, the city man makes from the forest primeval, in which man's thumbprint on nature has been realized in self-activating structures: the large mechanical hand that shows Tchitcherine the city of the future, the cartel that runs itself in which all are expendable, and the rocket, the ultimate construct that assumes a life of its own. The implicit goal of the ego, either in terms of its obsession with structuration or its pornographic projections is the destruction of life. Pynchon attempts to refute Freud by placing the death instinct not in the unconscious, but, in terms of thermodynamics, solely with the ego's domain.

Pynchon's novel has been consistently misread because

few, if any, of his critics have realized, or accepted, the extent to which he rejects the accepted concepts and values of ego structuration. Consequently, they view the dissolution of the central character from one or more of the following oversimplified, yet essentially accurate Freudian perspectives. They see his narrative dispersal as a total regression--beyond society, beyond responsibility, beyond language, and beyond personal identity. They do not see that each category, as presently conceived, is exactly what Pynchon rejects and what his text presents alternatives to. From a Freudian perspective, they correctly see his abnegation of the self as a manifestation of the death wish and the desire to return to the womb. They could, if they had thought about it, even note that his wanderings occur within the womb of his cultural and historical ancestors, the landscape of Germany, home of the original Anglo-Saxon tribes. Since the womb he seeks is that of his mytho-historical origins, and since he is already within the general boundaries of that space, any particular womb within this landscape will suffice as his current tomb--as his many sexual relationships seem to suggest. Yet they have not realized that Slothrop is also following mythical paradigms of returning to the womb to be reborn. The Dionysian pattern of dismemberment or dispersal and his subsequent rebirth as a god, which underlies the mythical dimensions of Slothrop's dispersal, and which is even alluded to in the text, has eluded their analysis.

In addition, any Freudian analysis is continually

parodied by the narrator. The adenoid of Prentice's surrogate fantasy clearly scoffs at the Freudian meddlers (16); and Pointsman, in context of his behavioristic philosophy, dismisses Slothrop's castration anxiety as irrelevant to any system of personal behavior; and most important, in terms of the text, Pointsman's behaviorism is alligned with Freudian psychology as merely clinical constructs which cannot begin to deal with the real complexities of experience and whose only value is to reveal the artificiality of our present order of self-consciousness. The allignment of Pavlov and Freud is made by Pointsman himself when he notes that it does not really matter if Slothrop actually has sex with the girls at those locations where he puts up his stars. As he says:

This would hardly invalidate our apprach, any more than it did young Sigmund Freud's, back in old Vienna, facing a similar violation of probability--all those Papi-has-raped-me stories, which might have been lies evidentially, but were certainly the truth clinically. You must realize: we are concerned, at PTSCES, with a rather strictly defined, clinical version of truth. (272)

Pointsman's cycical, clinical view of reality is alligned, in Pynchon's view, with Freud's because both worked, as he sees it, with the reality of the illusion, not with the reality of the being: Pointsman with external actions and reactions, Freud with internal fantasies and compulsions. Neither would accept the possibility that the source of the illusions was itself an artifact; consequently they treated the illusions as fact.

A Freudian analyst might respond that, although Pynchon rejects Freudian psychology theoretically, he, as a human

self-consciousness; must inevitably manifest the same psychological structures as the rest of the species despite himself. Yet such an interpretation must disregard much of the text: not only those sequences which overtly parody Freudian psychology, but also a number of authorial intrusions which contain latent, yet specific, refutations of psychoanalytic theory and which imply a mode of consciousness that is not merely a regression into oblivion but an alternative to oblivion.

If not Freud's, there is the possibility that Jung's analysis of consciousness might be more appropriate to understanding Slothrop's dispersal. There are, admittedly, many references to archetypes and archtypical situations. Mark Richard Siegel takes this approach. He begins by arguing for a rejection of the Freudian model:

Jung saw that both our culture and the individuals of our time suffer from a lack of any central unconditional value on which to base decisions of any complexity. On the other hand, Freudian analysis paralleled the disintegrative cultural movement of the last hundred years....

Freudian psychoanalysis analyzes every psychic manifestation down to its lowest common denominator, reduces every value to a derivative of family drama or infantile sexuality. According to most modern psychologists, the result is mechanistic, materialistic, very pessimistic, and usually unhelpful....Without denying the relativity of personal experience or the Heraclitan flux of the cosmos, Jung was able to provide a constant point of reference and a pattern for psychological reintegration and salvation. Although Pynchon has not patterned his characters on Jungian stereotypes, the specific features of Jung's analytical psychology clarify the narrator's relationship to his characters in a number of ways¹²

Siegel makes a number of pertinent observations about the text, yet also fails to realize exactly when it is Jung who

is being parodied. He realizes, for example, the Jungian basis for the persona as a product of historical evolution; yet he fails to see Pynchon's parody of the ego as historical artifact:

Jung maintained, amidst great controversy, that the mind of each man is prefigured by evolution; that is, the brain itself has inheritable physical elements that prefigure the conscious and unconscious structures of mentality and thereby predetermine to an extent that every person will react to life's experiences within a certain set of parameters.¹³

In terms of the novel, the collective is indubitable; the problem is that Jung subjugates its importance to the service of the ego. Its value is only that it can add fuller dimensions to the psychic life of the self. In Pynchon's radical terms, this is, like myth, another ego ruse to misdirect our attention from the real sources of mental life. Consequently, Jungian psychology and its predetermined or prefigured structure of consciousness implicitly augments the sterility of Pointsman's behaviorism: it gives behaviorism a mythical basis. Such a view also fails to realize that the personality which is the product of history is, within the novel, a parody of that history, as Katje's descent from Franz and his Dutch Calvinism, Tchitcherine's from his father and Russian imperialism, and Slothrop's from his ancestor William and his puritanism clearly indicate.

Yet Pynchon does employ many Jungian terms and references, and Siegel notes the many mythological, cabalistic, and gnostic allusions as well as the allegorical significance of many of the characters. Yet because he does not differentiate between the narrator's text and Pynchon's

subversive introjections, he cannot see the undermining of the Jungian references. Many characters, who are invested with mythological associations, are given them only to undermine the logic of a Jungian interpretation.¹⁴ Slothrop, who experiences a series of transformations from Pigman to Orpheus to Dionysus, does so only to reveal the inadequacy of the Jungian ideal of an ego that can accommodate and integrate its mythic components.

Pynchon also employs key terms of Jungian psychology. The many women Slothrop seduces are all potential animas as he searches for the complement to his identity. The image of the shadow, the darker component of the mind, is the basis for the relationship between Tchitcherine and Enzian, the darker brother whom the Russian wishes to destroy. Yet a Jungian reading fails to realize that, in this case, the darker brother, who is determined on extinction is not so different from his lighter component. Such a view also fails to realize that the various models are actually the narrator's attempts to find ways of making sense of experience in terms of a unified center of perception. The result is a plethora of parodies of Jungian archetypes: Slothrop has too many personae; Weissman in drag is his own anima; and the shadow, when released via an integrated personality is inevitably anamalistic, since the nature of the persona is to repress and distort the shadow.

Like Freud, Jung's assessment and acceptance of the ideal of the personal, integrated ego is the basis for

Pynchon's rejection of his theory. Jung can conclude that "the ego of a highly 'individuated' person, one who is psychically whole and distinctively individual, will allow more things to become conscious than will that of a less healthy personality."¹⁵ Yet, as Brown argues and as Pynchon's novel demonstrates, it is the ego's function to continually increase the degree of repression in the service of the superego and society, and this increase of repression will lead to either the stasis of libidinal death or its explosion in biological extinction.

Admittedly, these are only assumptions or suggestions of implicit structures in Pynchon's novel; yet without them the text itself does not make sense. The inadequacies of behavioristic, Freudian, and Jungian psychology, for example, is the only plausible infrastructure of the sixth chapter of Book IV which fragments into episodes that are wildly divergent in techniques and thematic concerns. Slothrop has already dispersed, and the narrator is desperately trying to comprehend the nature of this fragmentation. Throughout the chapter he tries every possible psychological model in order to comprehend the nature of the dispersal. The opening lines demarcate the problems and the approaches that the narrator will confront and employ.

Unexpectedly, this country is pleasant, yes, once inside it, quite pleasant after all. This country, the Zone, the genital sone, the kingdom of the ego and the penis does afford certain stabilities. This is not the zone of the fragmented since the narrator is attempting to comprehend Slothrop's dispersal in

terms of conventional psychological models. It is so comfortable that we and he resist any attempts on the recent, ego-king's sovereignty. The narrator will now attempt to retell Slothrop's history in terms of Freud and Jung in order to make logical sense out of the irrational while remaining within the confines of the sensible. Yet all is not well within the kingdom of the sane.

Even though there is a villian here, serious as death. It is never clear in this section whether the real villian is daddy--the ostensible evil--or the ego itself which is the subject of the chapter and the search--or both as the same evil. After all, Pernicious Pop has stolen the Golden Hour, the sense of time that is the cornerstone of ego structuration: the one component of personality that Slothrop seems, according to Mond-agen, to have lost.

It is the typical American teenager's own Father trying episode after episode to kill his son. The narrator opts for the typical Freudian explanation of the dilemma.

And the kid really knows it. If Freud is right, how could this be?

Imagine that. It can only be imagined. The narrator entreats the reader to share the fantasy.

So far he has managed to escape his father's daily little death-plots--but nobody said he had to keep escaping. But the last chapter, in which the kid refuses to return from his little trip, suggests that he does escape.

The introductory paragraph announces the nature of the problem as the narrator sees it, and the rest of the chapter attempts to analyze or explain it from the different perspectives that have been discussed. Yet because the narrator himself refuses to relinquish the ideal of the integrated ego, which is, of necessity, the requisite of a coherent fiction, the various psychological models become parodies of their original formulation. Concepts and metaphorical techniques from each model are jumbled in a hopeless and frantic attempt to reconstruct the nature of

Slothrop's dispersal.

First, the narrator attempts to explain it in terms of the loss of identity and the still-continuing Oedipal conflict. When this fails to account for the dispersal, the narrator creates a new persona for Slothrop: Slothrop as the mythic hero. To help this mythic Slothrop in his quest for the Golden Hour, the narrator enlists the aide of several other mythic creation: Myrtle Miraculous, the shoulderpadded, flying worker of miracles, Maximilian, the Super-Spade who is a beneficent parody of the White Man's fears of the Black, and Marcel, the 19th-century robot who takes everything literally--"imagine what happened the first time Maximilian come hi-de-hoing in the door with one finger jivin' in the air sees metal-ebonite-and-plastic young Marcel sitting there and say, 'Hey man gimme some skin, man!'"(675).

The fabulous four are actually parodies of Jung's aspects of the self. Slothrop as a mythical persona is a parody of persona who reveals that all personae are parodies. Myrtle is the anima who "has lost respect for humans"(675), possibly because they have refused to acknowledge and respect her miracles. Manimilian is the incarnation of the Shadow, but tamed into a white-washed version that appears only as a jive-talking parody of what Blackness can really mean. And Marcel is the embodiment of the archetype of the self, the principle of order and integration of all of the components; he is metal, ebony, and plastic; and he is Pynchon's comment on the value of the Jungian ideal: the

self as robot.

Subsequently, the fabulous four become the floundering four since each one's gift is also its fatal flaw and made "unfit by it for human living"(675). Even with their help, the quest degenerates into chaos and the narrative into fragments. The chapter becomes the narrator's associational reverie that includes, among other things, the re-emergence of Freudian overtones in Slothrop's brother's masturbatory fantasy about the Chiquita Bananna Lady with the label glued you-know-where for ready reference. The quest leads the four to the realization that they are not central to the plot, that they are in a theater--Brown's ego as theater--that contains many other plots and characters to which they are incidental. This motif becomes central to the narrative when the narrator finally reveals that the entire text was a movie, a creation of the proto-movie, the self.

Finally, in a parodic analogue to Slothrop's dispersal, the text itself fragments. Without a viable central character, the narrator can no longer make sense of his own plot; without the mediation of a persona, reality and data become chaotic. The fragments become episodes that are treatises on a variety of subjects interspersed with vague details about Slothrop's wanderings. "The Low Frequency Listeners" recounts Slothrop's appearance in Magdeburg where the Jehovah Witnesses have their headquarters and where the Germans have constructed an antenna nine miles wide. But the only ones using this are the Argentine anarchists and "undenazified" Nazis. Slothrop is looking for the

Argentines--and finding it more difficult with each day to remember his own family and their religious affiliation.

"Mom Slothrop's Letter to Ambassador Kennedy" introduces the maternal-incest theme. It is written by a slightly tipsy Nadine Slothrop requesting the ambassador's aid in finding her lost son. But the request becomes a plea for reassurance that the old orders still exist, and the letter ends with a bad, incestual joke about Nadine's attraction to Jack.

"On the Phrase 'Ass Backwards'" implies that Slothrop is back with S'auere, the dope pusher. Yet it is actually a treatise on the redundancy factor in language, the idea that any message must contain elements that merely serve to structure the message without adding any specific meaning to it. It also suggests the significance of language in shaping our conception of reality. "My Doper's Cadenza" and "Shit'n'Shinola" continues this analysis.

From a perspective of psychic structure similar to Brown's and Lacan's, the next sequence, "An Incident in the Transvestite's Toilet," illustrates the danger of duplicity that is inherent in the structures of the self that are the result of an inversion of the whole being: what seems to be is always its opposite--the persona is always in drag. Given a bomb, Slothrop immediately flushes it down the toilet only to have it explode because it was a sodium bomb that ignites only on contact with water.

"A Moment of Fun with Takesi and Ichizo, the Komical Kamikazies" unites the themes of the self, the death instinct, theater, and language, and undermines the illusion of the

text as reality. The narrative relates the thwarted attempts of the two "suicidal sidekicks" to get a really juicy mission. They are stationed on an island no one cares about with a radar man who taunts them about their inability to get themselves killed. Suddenly, the narrator announces that this too is theater and the first one in the audience who realized it wins a chance to experience first hand the lives of the Kamikazies. He gets "an all-expense, one-way trip for one" to the real island which our fantasies have made into a literal reality where he'll "while away [his] nights chasing vampire mosquitoes away from [his] own throat! Getting blind lost, out in the middle of torrential tropical downpours! Scooping rat turds out of the enlisted men's watter barrel!"(692). The sequence explodes the fictionality when confronted with the experience of tedium, terror, and death that lies beyond the mere words which, by distancing us from the reality, make it acceptable to the audience as voyeurs.

"Streets" continues the account of Slothrop's dispersal, even after it is apparent that language cannot accurately relate it. The narrator returns to the safety of language, however, in his attempt to continue the story. Slothrop is wandering through the streets of various cities when he sees a crumpled newspaper with a picture of the bombing of Heiroshima and one of a girl riding the cannon of a tank. The words of the text tame the horror of the event. Yet somehow Slothrop experiences the reality beyond the words as a perversion of his vision

of the rainbow phallus fertilizing the earth.

"Listening To The Toilet" is a joke on the concept of the Shadow. A strange "sound-shadow" mysteriously crosses over towns. After offering several archane meanings of the shadow and the places it appears, the narrator asks the reader to guess its significance. The reader guesses incorrectly and the jubilant narrator announces that the places are all on edges of time zones, reintroducing the theme of the stolen Golden Hour. Yet once the joke is over, the text relates how Slothrop, sitting at a table, experiences the shadow-silence of the void. The silence is a vortex that carries along its surface sound fragments of a Japanese woman chanting the slogan of a Kamikaze unit. Once this slight disturbance has passed, Slothrop hears only, in the Silence, the "Titan's drum of his heart"(697).

"Witty Repartee" returns to the desperate humor of the stranded kamekazies, who, given the imperative, like Ursula, to die, just can't seem to do it right.

The chapter ends with two closely related, yet seemingly different, sequences. "Heart-To-Heart, Man-To-Man" recounts a fantasy dialogue between Slothrop and his dad in which "Pernicious Pop" tries to entice his son back into the game of the normal world. But the son refuses, wishing to stay in Electroworld. The comicbook quality of this other world is actually a parody for a significant realm of experience that becomes central to Pynchon's vision and that the narrator never understands.¹⁶

Finally, "Some Characteristics of Imipolex G" relates the attributes of the Peculiar Polymer in terms, already discussed, that reveal the underlying themes of the chapter by finally equating the artificiality and deadliness of the chemical with ego-genital structuration.

By adopting various modes of conventional psychological approaches in order to fix the nature of Slothrop's dispersal in words, the narrator only succeeds in creating a parody of it, and the retellings become hopelessly garbled. This is Pynchon's signal to the reader that the remaining sequences, anecdotes, and treatises are actually veiled or distorted revisions of Slothrop's history in the hope that, at least for the narrator who is obsessed with making sense of reality, one of the retellings will become comprehensible.

Yet only by relinquishing the accepted norms of psychological wholeness and conventional reality does the reader begin to perceive the erratic coherence of Pynchon's substructure. The assumptions of Brown and Lacan are, to varying degrees, similar to Pynchon's concept of personality. Mom and Pop, the anima and the animus, and stimulus and response cannot alone delineate the full reality of being and the illusory nature of the self. They may influence the surface, the metonymic register of text, character, and person, but they are subverted by the metaphoric implications or intrusions that reveal the metonymic as a parody or pornography of being.

Notes to Chapter Two

¹See ch. IV, pp. 354-55.

²As such, the ego equals name equation is as fallacious as the belief in a natural and direct correspondence between the signifier and the signified--a correspondence which linguistics has long since proven to be false.

³Sigmund Freud, Civilization and its Discontents (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1962).

⁴Chapter three explores this association in detail.

⁵Brown, LAD, ch.

⁶Mark Siegel, in an otherwise fascinating discussion of GR, has made precisely this mistake. See especially his Creative Paranoia in Gravity's Rainbow (Port Washington, N.Y.: Kennikat Press, 1978), pp. 100-101, p. 110, and p. 124. As I try to demonstrate, Bland is, if anything, the supreme parody of Pynchon's vision of the "real" self.

⁷Pudding is a literal embodiment of Kojève's analysis of Hegel's postulate that we become that with which we fill our essential lack of being. See Alexandre Kojève, Introduction to the Reading of Hegel, ed. Allan Bloom, tr. James H. Nichols, Jr. (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1969), ch. 1.

⁸Vernon, in The Garden and the Map, examines modern man's obsession with details and his schizophrenic self-definition as a fragmented entity. In Hegelian terms, he

can not quite integrate all of the components that he has incorporated in the process of establishing his personal character.

⁹See Martin Price's discussion of this topic in "The Irrelevant Detail and the Emergence of Form," Aspects of Narrative, ed. J. Hillis Miller (English Institute Essays, 1970). Pynchon raises the important question of whether any detail is irrelevant. By parading so many in the text, he makes all equally relevant/irrelevant.

¹⁰Brown, LB, ch. 3, especially pp. 69-71.

¹¹Jacques Derrida, in Of Grammatology, tr. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974), sees metonymic/representational systems--such as writing--as the precursor of speech. In pt. 2, ch. 3, I attempted to show how these are both united in the ego, which is a product of the metonymic capture of the Other and the originary representational structure. If this is the case, then the ego is the first pornography, which, according to the terms of our argument, is always based upon an objective substitution of a part for the whole, upon a fetishization of an aspect of the whole.

¹²Siegel, pp. 62-63.

¹³Siegel, p. 65.

¹⁴See pt. 2, ch. 4.

¹⁵Siegel, p. 63.

¹⁶See, for example, pt. 2, ch. 5, in which I examine the different interpretations of the lightning-struck

undertaker. The narrator never refers to the Tarot reference to the Tower, a card showing a tower struck by lightning, which I show reveals a pre-animisitic sensibility about the nature of reality and energy.

III. Plot and Paranoia

Structured external space establishes a medium for characters and their actions. It is also a metaphor for the fiction of internalized psychological space which enables the character to exist and be located as an individual identity.¹ Conventional novels are actually based not upon the primacy of action or character, but on the existence of a fixed medium in which characters, who are themselves internalized spaces, can act. Conventional novels are based upon the displacement of real space by the ordering of geography and of real being by the representative of being, the named character. Every conventional novel is a script for a play, a drama which unfolds within the mind of the reader, within the internalized space of a real being. The concern with the nature of this external space and its internalized counterpart predominates Gravity's Rainbow: the novel is literally about Space and its relationship to identity, about the Rocket and its correspondence to Tyrone Slothrop. Two of its four books have titles that specifically refer to spaces, the casino and the Zone; and the novel itself opens and closes with references to the externalized space of the self, the theater.

Yet rather than accept these basic assumptions about the nature of character, action, and the novel, Pynchon makes

the possibility of their inherently illusory nature the central concern of his narrative. Gravity's Rainbow disturbs, confuses, and often loses the reader because its mythos, or plot, is based upon and generated from a vision that conceives of defined space and isolated, fixed identity as protomyths for the myth of plot.

The conventions of defined, distinct spaces and unified characters are related to other conventions of the novel and the expectations the reader brings to his reading of it. Like the characters, the conventional novel is coherent. Its parts interrelate with and augment each other. Thus, it is also inherently self-referential, and therefore a mimesis of the external world, operating according to the same laws of nature and probability that govern everyday life. Characters may experience radical changes in their personalities, and the degree of coincidence may sometimes strain the reader's credulity; yet there is always a continuity behind the changing character and a possibility for coincidence. Above all, the conventional novel makes rational sense. It is, in short, an ego artifact, a linguistic structure whose principles of structuration are similar to those by which the reader orders and understands reality. And while the reader and the novel remain distinct entities, they are so structurally similar that the former can comprehend the latter.

But what would happen if an author rejected the basic premise of the novel, if he rejected the concept of discrete spaces and individual ego structures as illusions? He would

have to confront theoretical and practical problems that lie at the heart of writing fiction itself. Coherency would be the ultimate illusion and the mimetic nature of the novel would be but another projection of the ego which is itself an incorporation of Lacan's specular image, the image of wholeness and integration that the child adopts in the early stages of ego formation. Self-referentiality and the distinction between novel and reader appear as false boundaries whose only function is to allow the ego of the reader to be a voyeur of the text, to participate, at a safe distance, in the narrative by a magical process of identification.

To hold these views and still continue to write is to confront the tragically absurd dilemma and perform the ridiculously heroic act that Samuel Beckett describes in "Three Dialogues with Georges Duthuit":

B.--The situation is that of him who is helpless, cannot act, in the event cannot paint, since he is obliged to paint. The act of him who, helpless, unable to act, acts, in the event paints, since he is obliged to paint.

D.--Why is he obliged to paint?

B.--I don't know.

D.--Why is he helpless to paint?

B.--Because there is nothing to paint and nothing to paint with.²

To hold these views of the novel and continue to write requires that the author take the illusions of the medium and employ them to undermine themselves--to de-create the medium to reveal the reality.

Pynchon, in Gravity's Rainbow, relentlessly employs this tactic. The novel is not only about the end of history, culture, and society, as well as man, as we know them; it is also about the end of the novel as the metaphor for the end of the mode of consciousness that created the form. This, however, should not imply that Pynchon is simply a nihilist. His vision simply extends beyond the parameters of ego domination. Consequently, his work does not simply undermine and reject the structures of reality; it conveys a new order of being. This is the essential dilemma of the novel. Since it is a structure of linguistic units, as is the ego--at least according to Lacan, how does the artist employ words to convey a state that theoretically rejects their present mode of syntax?

The solution to this problem requires a shift in the very processes and strategies an author employs. This analysis, so far, has taken as a given that Pynchon has a vision of human experience that eludes verbal explanation. Such an assumption, however, is open to the criticism that no such vision appears within the text and is therefore unsupportable. The criticism is justified, but it misses the point. To put the vision into the text is to undermine the very basis of the vision. But, although the vision is extrinsic to the text, it does exert its shaping pressure on the structure of the text, both in terms of the use and function of minute details and those of large plot sequences.

Without this vision, Gravity's Rainbow would only be about the absurdity of modern reality; but because of its

presence, the novel does convey a positive alternative to established reality. To convey this vision beyond words, the words of the novel and the words of the ego, it must go beyond language. It must penetrate Lacan's metonymic chain of desire that artificially bars the self from the true self, and the self from the other. It must become a new mode of language, Brown's silent speech or speech that conveys the silence.

If the reader misunderstands this basic imperative of Pynchon's vision, and if he cannot accept the possibility of a new language as a viable mode of communication, then he is trapped into a misreading of the text that will be a product of his own ego-defenses and distortions. Consequently, he will misinterpret the nature of Slothrop's textual dissolution.³ In addition to generating a new mode of language, Pynchon's vision requires that the principle of discreteness be undermined. Facts, data, and details must merge into a new type of significance governed by new principles of relational orderings. The barrier between the narrative and the reader must also be disrupted. The reader can no longer passively watch, but he must become a co-creator, with the author, of the text's deepest structures and meanings. Consequently, the reader and the author must achieve a degree of unity that conventional novels never allow. In Hegelian terms, the novel and the novelist can no longer subdue the reader into the role of slave to the imperial text but must manipulate the reader into acceding into his own freedom.⁴

The preceding chapters have explored different techniques that Pynchon employs to achieve these effects. Since the metonymic register of language is associated with the ego, it is metaphorically associated with the narrator. The author, on the other hand, rejecting the assumptions of narrator, establishes a countercode in the metaphoric register which continually undermines the narrative. The metaphoric structures, in addition, never reveal their significance directly, but remain silent images of subversion. To augment this dissociation between author and narrator, the author allows the narrator to establish what seem to be significant binary oppositions, only to have the text refute them. And the implication of this technique is that even such elemental distinctions, which are essential to conventional knowledge, are illusory projections of an illusory construct: projections of the basic opposition of the self to the other which supports the illusion of the ego.

Plot and Plotting

The essential, and perhaps most misleading opposition in the novel is the paranoia-antiparanoia duality which significantly influences both the themes and structure of the work. Since binary oppositions are projections and products of ego organization, it is appropriate that the narrator, who is in the process of creating a structured text, views his narrative as an exploration of these two possibilities. Either things come together in a pattern that makes sense,

or the fragments of experience remain unintegrated and random. The text itself seems to vacillate between these two possibilities. Bizarre relationships are revealed. Jamf, who experimented on the baby Tyrone's penis, later develops the erectile polymer which is crucial to the 00000Rocket. At the same time, the text itself, especially after Slothrop disperses, fragments into seemingly random episodes and treatises which only imply connections when the possibility exists that there are, in fact, none.

Given the narrator's definitions of paranoia and anti-paranoia, it is easy to see them as metaphoric principles of either ego structuration or ego dissolution. Things make a coherent sense or they do not; people have integrated identities or they don't. Since one of the functions of the ego is to narrate a person's actions, many of which are either non-conscious or unconscious, into a coherent, history, it is appropriate that the narrator, who must construct a coherent fiction, see these two possibilities as the basic concern of his text.

The concern with paranoia predominates the first three books of the novel, while antiparanoia assumes an increasing importance in the last. The condition of paranoia is introduced in the opening chapter. Pirate Prentice's fantasy of the V-2 Rocket poised just above his head recreates the general conditions of living in London near the end of the war. The Rocket, since it travels faster than sound, reverses the normal order of reality. If you hear the rocket, it has already passed, and you are safe.

If you don't, there are two possibilities: it is either about to hit you, or it isn't even near. Since most of the time there is no sound of the rocket, you are in a perpetual state of anxiety over which type of silence you are experiencing.

But as the novel develops, other types of paranoia, or other aspects of the condition, become significant. Since the paranoid seeks an understanding of the interrelationships that control his life, he is the ultimate narrator, the constructor of plots that revolve around himself. And since they are never fully understood, they become plots in the other sense of the word. For the paranoid, history itself, as the record of man's actions and interactions and as a story of his relationship to a power that controls those actions, becomes a parable that just might conceal his own irrelevance to the general, and perhaps divinely ordained, plan.

The narrator establishes the connections among ego structuration, genital organization, paranoia, history, and god in an early chapter that alludes to Slothrop's "gift." Pondering Slothrop's erections at future bomb sites, the narrator comically introduces these themes. "There is in his history," the narrator announces, "and likely, God help him, in his dossier, a peculiar sensitivity to what is revealed in the sky. (But a hardon?)"(26). Then, exploring the historical antecedents of Slothrop's sensitivity to the rocket in terms of his ancestors' receptivity to the Word of God, the narrator continues

with a selected history of his family tree, which is traced in the gravestones of his relatives back to William Slothrop and his wife Constance. On her stone "the hand of God emerges from a cloud, the edges of the figure eroded by 200 years of seasons' fire and ice chisels at work"(26).

This family history is also a history of the religious consciousness, but it is, above all, the history of the penis, related in terms of the Old Testament formula of X begot Y who begot Z. The penis and the language of names allows the history to be recorded as it becomes the subject of the record. The phallic God of the Tree of Life, the burning bush, and the pillar of smoke, who demands a mock castration of his sons as a symbol of their subordination to him, and who symbolized the consciousness which rewards self-control, personal integrity, and progress--in short the ego-god of genital organization, has been replaced by his modern counterpart: the Rocket as tree of life and death, the burning phallus, the ultimate creation and projection of modern civilization. It is the shape the finger of God assumes in the twentieth century; and as every paranoid suspects, it is probably his second digit. As the rocket has replaced God, Slothrop's paranoia, that one of the rockets has his name on it, replaces the belief in a world that is ordered by preordained, Divine principles. Scott Sanders, in his essay, "Pynchon's Paranoid History," develops the concept of paranoia as a modern substitute for the religious sensibility:

God is the original conspiracy theory: behind floods, deaths in the family, the sprouting of seeds or splatter of rain...monotheists discerned the single guiding will of a deity. An otherwise chaotic world made sense because it was perceived as a plot, narrated by God who worked through angels and lightning bolts or by subtle prods on the linings of men's souls.

Thus,

A mind that preserves Puritan expectations after the Puritan God has been discredited will naturally seek another hypothesis that explains life as the product of remote control, that situates the individual within a plot whose furthest reaches he cannot fathom, that renders creation legible again. Paranoia offers the ideally suited hypothesis that the world is organized into a conspiracy, governed by shadowy figures whose powers approach omniscience and omnipotence, and whose manipulations in history may be detected in every gesture of their servants.⁵

The implications of paranoia as thematic concern and historical product of the secularization of Western culture are crucial to the novel. Paranoia allows the person to see a continuity of events beneath their apparent disconnectedness. It is therefore the latent principle in every attempt at making coherent sense, either of history in general or of the personal life in particular. Admittedly, it might be argued that a belief in a coherent universe does not necessitate a paranoid fear of its order, but the very disjunction between the self and the universe carries the possibility for paranoia. Even in the integrated world of the early Greeks, there are paranoid elements. Gods were frequently unfriendly, easily insulted, and often devious. Pynchon merely reveals the latent force that helps shape any cultural ordering of reality.

Yet the narrator also sees another alternative: anti-paranoia, where nothing comes together. The antiparanoic

loses his fear of the plot since there is none; he also, given the equation between personal identity and paranoia, loses his self. Most critics see Slothrop's dissolution in Book IV as a lapse into antiparanoia. Actually, this is another instance of the narrator's tempting, yet inaccurate, distinctions, similar to those discussed in the previous chapter. There is another alternative. Paranoia is the necessary mental framework for the narrator who attempts to make sense of the events of the story; from his perspective, Slothrop's dissolution seems to fit his category of anti-paranoia. Yet the structure of the text does not support this scheme. To see how a third, alternative state of consciousness is possible and to grasp the complex ways Pynchon implies it through the narrator, requires an analysis of Pynchon's plotting techniques.

Behind all the complexity of Pynchon's style and narrative is a remarkably consistent strategy. A close examination of a single sequence illustrates how his use of specific detail is identical to his manipulation of larger narrative elements. The description of Slothrop's desk is paradigmatic of his narrative techniques and thematic concerns.

Tantivy's desk is neat, Slothrop's is a godawful mess. It hasn't been cleaned down to the original wood surface since 1942. Things have fallen roughly into layers, over a base of bureaucratic smegma that shifts steadily to the bottom, made up of millions of tiny red and brown curls of rubber erasers, pencil shavings, dried tea or coffee stains, traces of sugar and Household milk, much cigarette ash, very fine black debris picked and flung from typewriter ribbons, decomposing library paste, broken aspirins ground to powder. Then

comes a scatter of paper clips, Zippo flints, rubber bands, staples, cigarette butts and crumpled packs, stray matches, pins, nubs of pens, stubs of pencils of all colors including the hard-to-get heliotrope and raw umber, wooden coffee spoons, Thayer's Slippery Elm Throat Lozenges sent by Slothrop's mother, Nalline, all the way from Massachussets, bits of tape, string, chalk...above that a layer of forgotten memoranda, empty buff ration books, phone numbers...[my ellipsis] the scribbled ukulele chords to a dozen songs,...[my ellipsis] a busted corkscrewing ukulele string, boxes of gummed paper stars in many colors,...[my ellipsis] a dictionary of technical German,...[my ellipsis] and usually, unless its been pinched or thrown away, a News of the World, somewhere too--Slothrop's a faithful reader. (20-21)

The most obvious aspect of the description is the obsessive use of detail; nothing is too insignificant to be omitted and no one element is subordinated to another. Paradoxically, this technique implies two antagonistic attitudes. According to Vernon's analysis of modern consciousness, the obsession with detail is symptomatic of man's schizophrenic dissociation of the self from the world which enables him to see the world as parts to be possessed. Throughout the novel, the narrator, even as he satirizes the compulsion to own and manipulate, reveals similar impulses within the narrative. The catalogue of the debris on Slothrop's desk is only one of many exhaustive, compulsive lists. On the other hand, the description also implies the absolute presence and importance of the phsysicality of the sheer thingness of being. Each element is important in and of itself. This implies a contradiction between the narrator's compulsion and the author's vision; and while out of context it would be impossible to differentiate between the two, in terms of the other self-subverting elements

in the text, the distinction is significant. It implies a characteristic of Slothrop's state of mind at the end of the novel which the author continually inserts into the narrative.

The details also create several "spaces" that become metaphoric of psychological processes, narrative themes, and Pynchon's vision of natural reality. They also embody and foreshadow an authorial conception of identity, of the novel as a linguistic analogue to identity, and of the Earth as a personification of natural and universal processes.

As in a traditional novel, the details prepare the reader for the entrance of the central character. The disarray of Slothrop's desk is contrasted to Tantivy's neatness, which the reader immediately perceives as a projection of each character's personality. The reader is given some idea of Slothrop's background and of his mother's personality. There is even an indication of the level of Slothrop's literary tastes by the reference to the scandal sheet that he reads faithfully. Yet the general structure of the detail, like the central character, eludes the reader before he can integrate the components of Slothrop's desk/personality into a unified whole. This technique of character presentation is similar to that of Pynchon's narrative technique. While Slothrop is obviously a central character, he occupies rather little narrative space in Books I and IV and is always presented indirectly. In Book I, Slothrop's persona is developed primarily through his relationships

to others and their impressions of him. The technique is a literary version of intaglio. In Book IV, Slothrop quickly disappears as a viable central character; yet his absence is the subject of everyone's concern. In Book I he is the absent presence, the being who is there but only as an object whose reality is inconsequential to the sequence of narrative events; in Book IV, he is the present absence, the being whose presence is always felt, but who cannot be located even by his closest friends. The distinction between these two modes of being is symbolic of Pynchon's analysis of the nature and reality of human self-consciousness.

Yet the description of the desk is not simply a list of objects. Many of them will reappear in other episodes. The "lost pieces to different jigsaw puzzles" evokes the form of the narrative itself and should cue the reader to the fact that the novel contains fragments of many puzzles. Nalline, Slothrop's mother, makes an appearance hundreds of pages later; and the ukulele string becomes significant in terms of the mythic substructure. Pynchon is always careful, however, to keep the organizing principles hidden; and the central emblem for this technique is the desk itself. The most obvious "fact" of Slothrop's desk is that the artifacts, the details, literally overwhelm the structure that supports them. The description, then, illustrates two important narrative techniques: the suppression of the principles of coherence, or its narrative analogue, the suppression of narrative surface, and the overloading of informational data.⁶

As the structure of the desk is hidden by the inundation of detail, the narrative surface of a coherent plot line and the cues that indicate transitions and other relationships among various plot segments are either omitted or buried under the massive amount of detail used to describe them and the suggestiveness of the terms in which they are presented. The introduction of the subplot concerning Franz Pökler, for example, illustrates Pynchon's suppression of narrative links. Slothrop is whipping Greta Erdmann as the previous chapter ends. The next begins: "...yes, bitch--yes little bitch--poor helpless bitch you're coming can't stop yourself now I'll whip you till you bleed..."(397). The ellipsis counteracts the chapter break, and the reader thinks that this is still a description of Slothrop and Greta. Not until the end of the transition does it become apparent that this is a movie that Pökler is watching, a movie whose star is Greta Erdmann. Such segues undermine the linear development of the plot and imply other modes or principles of organization.

Even in clearly demarcated transitions, the repetition of key words often blurs their relationship. These key words become so suggestive that the reader expects some relationship between the narratives, only to find that most are merely analogous. The concept of preterition, that God passes over those not elect and condemns them to eternal death, is applied to numerous situations. Slothrop is finally numbered among them, but so are different molecules that wait in "the preterite dung"(166). The dodo bird

and its extinction are described in terms of preterition, and so are the Hereroes who seek tribal extinction. Perhaps the most pervasive and important use of this technique involves the word "zero." It applies to the rocket's passage over the apex of its flight when the change of its acceleration is zero. Slothrop's search for fallen rockets takes him past the zero meridian, and in the process of his deconditioning he is taken past the zero of extinguished response into the state of anticipating the stimuli. Death is the final zero, but great serenity is also a state of "informational... signal zero"(404). The result of this technique is to create the impression that all of the themes and motifs must connect in some encompassing and consistent pattern. They do--and they do not.

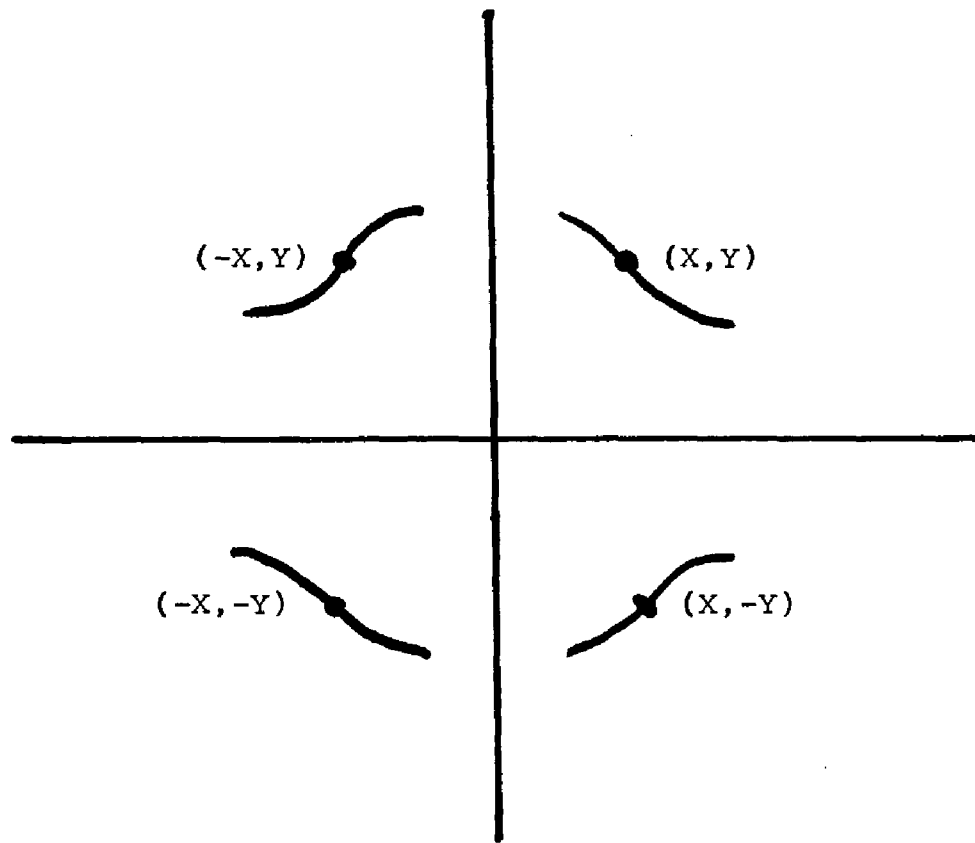
In his search for the connecting principles, the reader becomes like the characters, always feeling that he is on the edge of a meaningful structure whose gestalt he cannot quite perceive. This literary paranoia is augmented by the narrator's implicit assumption that such structures exist. Actually, when such structures appear in or are alluded to by the text, they are either parodies of structures or misleading organizing principles. For example, the principle of binary oppositions, the structuring principles of mathematics, the Tarot, and myth, when employed by the narrator, are actually parodies of other organizing principles which are extrinsic to the text.

The most common and deceptive principle of relationship

is the binary opposition. The Mexico-Pointsman duality, for example, is actually a Pointsman-Slothrop opposition. Another false polarity is the repression and release from repression opposition. The novel continually illustrates the perversity of repression and control, and the reader would expect to find release celebrated. Yet when moments of release are presented, as in the Anubis episode, the mode of release is perverse. The actual opposition to repression is Slothrop's dissolution. The manner of release permitted on the Anubis is ego-controlled, and since the ego is, according to Brown and Pynchon, the first perversion, whatever release it permits will itself be a distortion of the life instinct. In Pynchon's world, the ego can permit erotic instincts for union only in the form of sado-masochistic mastery which he sees as the basis of the self. Since the text is, by necessity, an ego structure, any organizing system that would convey Pynchon's vision, when it appears directly in the text, must be a perversion or parody of that vision.

Certain structuring principles, however, are never mentioned in the text and, by remaining extrinsic to it, are never twisted into false systems. One of these extrinsic principles, taken from mathematics, is the principle of symmetry. According to this rule, certain equations, when graphed on an XY axis, appear as mirror-imaged parodies of each other. In the diagram (p.303) each line is symmetrical to the others in shape or appearance, yet the positive and negative values of identical points on each

Symmetrical Equations



Despite their varying positive or negative value, each point contains the same absolute value. In thematic terms, despite their attitudes towards a subject, each group shares the same object of concern as the others.

line vary. Thus, while all points have the same absolute value, point A has two positive values, B a positive and a negative, C two negatives, and D a negative and a positive. Each point is similar enough to the others to establish a point of comparison, yet each is different enough to heighten the contrast: a perfectly parodic relationship.

Symmetry structures the relationships among the four main political groups in the novel: the Americans, the Europeans, the Africans, and the Argentinians. The narrator suggests that the Europeans and the Africans are in opposition; yet, since both seek the rocket and death, the pairing is a false opposition. In terms of symmetry, the actual relationships become apparent. In the novel, the XY axis is literally the equator and the prime meridian. The specific symbolic value of the x and the y in context of the novel can be almost any narrative or thematic concern, but one set of components is particularly striking. Let x equal the concept of ego structuration and Y the technology of the rocket. The logic of Pynchon's description of the four groups becomes obvious. The Europeans (+x,+y) have a strong sense of ego and possess the rocket technology. The Hereroes (+x,-y) have a sense of tribal identity, yet lack the technology which they seek to discover to destroy themselves. The Americans (-x,+y) have no sense of self, but, as they demonstrated at Hiroshima, have sophisticated technological knowledge. Slothrop, as the American Everyman, is emblematic of a country without a sure identity. And

the Argentines (-x,-y) want neither ego structuration or its political projection of centralized power over bounded space, nor the rocket technology.

The principle of symmetry is important for both technical and a thematic reasons. Because the narrator never mentions it and it remains extrinsic to the text, he never warps it to fit his own patterns of significance. This implies that similar extrinsic patterns might also be associated with the author as he undermines the narrative persona. This would imply that the real themes of the text cannot, technically, be incorporated, in a positive way, in it. Also, omitting the principle of coherence has a unique effect on the reader. By refusing to supply the organizing principle, Pynchon creates a vacuum which invites the reader to fill it by making his own patterns of significance. This stimulates a search for implied connections which Pynchon trivia experts pride themselves on knowing, and once the reader begins this search, but finds no consistent structure within the text, he adopts two modes of thought. The ego function of establishing cause and effect, or sequential, relationships is strained to the point where the reader relinquishes the quest and begins to see primarily analogical relations. Once Pynchon has effected this shift in the mode of perception, he has established the basis for the presentation of his vision of reality as a series of analogues without specific demarcations and boundaries.⁷

The suppression of narrative surface and principles of

structuration also has the effect of emphasizing the unrelated details. This leads to the equivalent of data overload. The reader is presented with too much information to correlate, and the same data seem to form different patterns. The catalogue of the debris that covers Slothrop's desk, for example, reveals several patterns. As a metaphor of Slothrop's mind, the three strata of debris correspond to the superego, the ego, and the id. The uppermost layer contains objects associated with making and utilizing, objects that are the product of civilization. The middle layer is associated with his mother and with things that hold things together. The bottom layer contains the wastes and residue, the forgotten elements that originally composed the objects above them. But the debris also represents the process of man's consumption of the goods of the earth as he robs its energy and resources to create artifacts only to have them return eventually to the earth.⁸ The artifacts on the desk decay and shift into levels that are analogous to the earth's strata as it reclaims old material to be rearranged into new forms of matter and life.

Besides presenting simultaneous structures of significance, the details refer to other significant parts of the novel. The top layer contains a ukulele string, a German dictionary, and an old newspaper. The string alludes to the instrument that is related to the harp. By the end of the novel, the discarded string is replaced by the mouth organ, and the transition reveals an implicit working backwards through the evolution of the Orphic myths. The dictionary is an

emblem of language: the language that created the rocket. The newspaper symbolizes the medium of literary works. Gravity's Rainbow, just before the launching of the original 00000Rocket, contains a newspaper account of the disturbances outside the Orpheus Theater which are caused by a kazoo (pipes?) player. Literature, as an artificial mode of projections that establishes the illusory validity of ego structures, is also placed in the pile of debris to be reclaimed by natural processes. The inclusion of these three objects in the pile conveys an implicit authorial attitude toward them.

Slothrop's desk, then, is a paradigm both of Pynchon's themes and his complex narrative technique. The principles which operate in this one description and the themes its develops are equally evident in the general plot line of the text. In the broader context of the main plot, the details are replaced by subplots and introjected episodes. Each of these plays a variation on the general theme of the perversion of reality by ego structure and its attempt to master reality. And each episode reveals an aspect of the world Pynchon rejects, his technique in constructing the novel, and the nature of Slothrop's final state of being.

To appreciate the extent of Pynchon's radical reshaping of the novel, it is helpful to compare his techniques with more conventional narrative strategies. Most novels have a logical beginning, middle, and end. If a story begins in medias res, the logical beginning will be related in a flashback. Pynchon ends his novel with its beginning.

Conventional novels develop characters, and additional information may force the reader to rearrange his perceptions of them but never to doubt their veridicality. Sequences of events are related to each other causally, even if the causes are hidden until the end. Subplots help develop the main plot. Pynchon's novel only seems to perform these narrative functions. On close examination every sequence reveals a selfsubversive element.

The novel begins, like all epics, in medias res with a description of an evacuation.

A screaming comes across the sky. It has happened before, but there is nothing to compare it to now.

It is too late. The Evacuation still proceeds, but it's all theater. There are no lights inside the cars. No light anywhere. Above him lift the girders old as an iron queen, and glass somewhere far above that would let the light of day through. But it's night. He's afraid of the way the glass will fall--soon--it will be a spectacle; the fall of a crystal palace. But coming down in total blackout, without one glint of light, only great invisible crashing. (1)

By suppressing the narrative surface to the degree that even the location is ambiguous and by inundating the text with details which only suggest interrelationships, Pynchon establishes a verbal density which seems incongruous in terms of our normal expectations about plot. Everything echoes something else. To make sense of the data, the reader begins to see them as potentially allegorical.

The density of the passage allows it to announce what will become central themes while embodying them in its structure. The location is vague, yet nightmarishly frightening. The screaming, it will be disclosed later, is the shriek of the rocket during the German bombardment

of London in 1945. But it is also, as the concluding sequence of the novel suggests, a screaming in the depths of consciousness.

In an associative process that is similar to Brown's Pynchon relates the screaming in the consciousness to theater. The theater which will not be revealed as such until the end of the novel, is the theater both of the novel and the ego. The juxtaposition of rocket, screaming, and theater is so textually dense, so evocative, that it demands an allegorical interpretation. As in his treatment of characters, Pynchon's style immediately suggests a metaphoric counterpart, which is soon revealed to be a countercode, an allegorical, subversive reading that does not coalesce until the final chapters.

While the ego component of the equation remains latent, the relationship between the rocket and theater leads to the image of the crystal palace: the Crystal Palace that was the crowning artifact of 19th-century consciousness which, according to Foucault, created modern man.⁹ It was the house of glass that connected man and God, that made man into a god through his knowledge of good and evil, and that was the display case for the epitome of technology that would enable man, godlike, to rid the world of social evil. A poem by Martin Tupper expresses the symbolic value of the Crystal Palace to the man of the 19th century. It concludes:

All Wonders of the world gladden the sight
In that world's wonder-house the Crystal Palace;
And everywhere is Might enslaved to Right.¹⁰

The sequence, by its contextually unnecessary reference to the Crystal Palace, suggests a metaphoric significance, and, as is usual with Pynchon, there are two: one related to the metonymic register, and the other purely extrinsic to the text. Within the metonymic register, the fall of the crystal palace is a symbol of the technology and the world of the 19th century being destroyed by its own product: the palace of technology is destroyed by the bomb. The palace is also a dwelling place for man, a symbol of him, his achievement, and his civilization. The rocket destroys its creators.

Yet within the metaphoric register, the symbol ironically, by being a literalized parody of it, implies a process of escape from the conflagration. Both the irony and the technique are similar to Brown's treatment of the subject of fraction. Within the image of the holocaust is the glimmer of redemption that shapes Gravity's Rainbow. Because of its association with theater and man, ego and body, the palace is symbolic both of psychological and biological processes. It is both the theater of being conscious and of pure being, that which watches images and that which is. The image of the shattering embodies and foreshadows not only the logical outcome of ego-organization but, in the metaphoric register, a solution to its ultimate self-destruction, an alternative to madness. The solution is identical to Brown's. Explode the crystal palace, the artifact, the construct of the self: either man, or mind as we now conceive it, will--and must--at least according

to Brown and Pynchon--be relinquished.

Even the process of the destruction of the palace suggests, metaphorically, the alternative process. The irony, the rational horror, of the passage is not that the palace will merely shatter, but "the way it will fall" in utter darkness. Since the purpose of glass is to transmit light, the falling will be a complete negation of its established essence. There will be only invisible crashing. Man may explode into meaningless bits. But the subversive element suggests, or implies, another type of explosion. The invisible crashing is also the conversion of matter into pure energy, an analogue to the bomb. Perhaps, the text's countercode implies, man, by negating the very structures of his consciousness, might also discover a way of "exploding" that will release the pure energy of his being.

The rest of the novel explores the nature of the destruction of man, how he arrived at this point of self-immolation, and the possible alternatives to it in a complicated main plot line and the numerous subplots. The vision which determined his use of detail and structure also controls the development of the main plot and its relationships to the subplots. The main plot relates the activities of Slothrop during the end of the war; the subplots relate the actions of people or groups he is, either marginally or intimately, associated with. Usually the subplots, as in those of Pointsman and Jamf, not only fill in background information on Slothrop's past history or current psychological condition, but also develop a

narrative integrity of their own. Often they are related to the main plot by only the slightest association. The story of Franz Pökler, for example, is related to Slothrop's only by the facts that Slothrop has intercourse with both of the women who are central to Pökler's life, his wife, Leni and his fantasy object, Greta, and that Pökler is involved with the construction of the 00000Rocket. The narratives of Enzian and Tchitcherine are similarly tangential to Slothrop's history since, although he has significant encounters with them, their interactions are only related to their mutual quest for the Rocket. In fact, aside from significant episodes like those of Byron the immortal lightbulb, Ludwig and his lost lemming, and Lyle Bland's transcendence, most of the minor plot lines actually form another narrative: the Story of the Rocket. Ironically, the less the reader understands Slothrop, the more he learns of the rocket through the various subplots. Actually the novel develops two main narratives which, although related, never really intersect: Slothrop's and the original 00000Rocket's. The more the former disperses, the more the latter comes together. As Slothrop finds a new mode of being, he eludes the narrator's ability to present him in a novel. At the same time, the rocket assumes a position of central importance and becomes the focus of the book. When the two intersect at Peenemünde, they do so without recognition.

The main and minor plot lines are also distinguished thematically. Slothrop's narrative is about the nature of

personal identity, its causes and structure, its paranoia over its own survival, and its need for a connection with other human beings. The linear narrative of his biography, once pieced out, recounts his early conditioning under Jamf at Harvard, his experiences in London at the end of the war, his R and R at the south of France, and his wanderings in Germany after the war as he tries both to understand his identity and relationship to the rocket and secure discharge papers that will enable him to go home. From the narrator's perspective, both attempts fail, and Slothrop is left wandering in the Zone, lost as both a subject of the narrative and as an identifiable personality.

Yet there are several sequences which imply his return to America. On the drug-run to Potsdam where he picks up some hash for Saüre, he meets reporters who argue over who will be the next Miss Rheingold, and the narrator comments that it will be months before "he runs into a beer advertisement featuring the six beauties, and find himself rooting for a girl named Helen Riickert: a blonde with a Dutch surname who will remind him dimly of someone..."(381). A sequence very late in the novel, "The Occupation of Mingeborough," implies that Slothrop is back in America, lurking in the shadows and alleys of his home town, but it is not certain whether the episode is the narrator's fantasy or not. Finally, the newspaper article about Richard M. Zhlubb, manager of the Orpheus Theater, who is in psychologically mortal combat with a kazoo player, suggests that Slothrop, closely associated with the instrument, has

found a home with the other social and psychological drop-outs who, in their silent and inconspicuous way, as those "below," socially and psychologically, are the forerunners of the ultimate revolution in consciousness, as they appear in their parody-form to the narrator.¹¹

The subplots examine the causes of identity, its effects on the external world in terms of the structures it imposes on reality, and the resultant, and reciprocal, effects these structures have upon the self. They have several thematic and structural functions. One is to enable the narrator to reveal aspects of Slothrop's history that would not fit into the sequence of the narrative or that are unknown to the central character. They are also the vehicles for the narrator's satire on the older and newer gods, the God of the Bible, the gods of science and technology, and the gods of the corporation and the state--all of which are really manifestations of the one god, the god of the personal self. Often the subplots, or elements of them, when read allegorically, provide an authorial commentary on the narrator's analysis of Slothrop's progress. As pointed out in the previous chapter, for example, the narrative of Lyle Bland is an implicit commentary on Slothrop's dissolution. As will be discussed in the next chapter, certain narratives become allegories which enable Pynchon to reveal, indirectly, aspects of Slothrop's final state of being.

As a paradigm for the basic structuring principle of the novel, the subplot of the Argentine anarchists is the

most important because it implies the principle by which the novel and all of its subplots are organized: the Principle of Non-intersection by which things may occupy the same map-space but not intersect in a space-time continuum. It is related to the differences between ego-structured, discrete spaces and an alternative, non-structured reality that does not acknowledge Whitehead's Fallacy of Simple Location.¹² It is appropriate that the concept be introduced in the subplot about the Argentines, who are in Germany precisely because of its lack of specific boundary. Slothrop first meets them in Zurich when he is trying to buy information about Jamf and the Schwartz-gerat, the secret component of the 00000Rocket. To get money, he agrees to carry information from Zurich to Geneva for Squallidozzi, the head of the anarchists in exile.¹³ They are in Germany planning to overthrow the centralist powers in Buenos Aires.

Within the narrative of the Argentines, two important non-intersections occur. The first is Slothrop's non-meeting with Jamf. Returning from Geneva, Slothrop buys information about the location of Jamf's grave. He spends several nights there, waiting for the visitation of Jamf's spirit that will reveal to him the nature of his relationship to the rocket. He sleeps "right on top of Mister Imipolex" (268). Yet the two never intersect, and there is no visit.

The second non-intersection occurs when the Argentine's, who have commandeered a U-boat off the coast of Spain, meet the U.S.S. Badass, and again the difference in ego structures is the basis for the non-intersection. The Argentine react

by firing a torpedo. The Badass squirms in defensive evasions needlessly, since the intersection of their respective courses is prevented by the drug, Oneirine, coincidentally invented by Jamf, which "playful" Seaman Bodine has put in the coffee that everyone on the Badass has drunk. The narrator, in a comic parody of a scientific journal, explains the principle of non-intersection as caused by the drug, but his "explanation" is also appropriate to the structure of the novel and the relationships among the subplots as well.

The property of time-modulation peculiar to Oneirine was one of the first to be discovered by investigators. "It is experienced," writes Shetzline in his classic study, "in a subjective sense...uh...well. Put it this way. It's like stuffing wedges of silver sponge, right, into, your brain!" So, out in the mellow sea-return tonight, the two fatal courses do intersect in space, but not in time. (389)

This episode is paradigmatic of many such non-meetings; and, in fact, reveals one aspect of the relationships among all of the subplots. They do not intersect. The narratives of Enzian and Tchitcherine, for example, finally intersect after they have spent years searching for each other. Enzian and his Herero tribesmen have reassembled a rocket and are towing it to a launching site when Tchitcherine, now AWOL from Russian Intelligence, approaches his half-brother and bums cigarettes from him. There is no moment of recognition. The narrator comments:

This is magic. Sure--but not necessarily fantasy. Certainly not the first time a man has passed his brother by, at the edge of the evening, often forever, without knowing it. (735).

Other groups, from other subplots, also never intersect; or if they do, they immediately repel each other.¹⁴ After

Slothrop has become lost in Germany, his previous associates at the White Visitation, Prentice, Mexico, and Katje decide to disobey the authorities and rescue him. They never do. And the only time the Blacks meet the Hereroes is when Enzian meets Major Marvy on top of a train. The two immediately repel each other and Enzian throws Marvy off the top of the car.

The most important non-intersection is between Slotrop and the rocket, the two focii of the dominant plot lines. Slothrop is dispersing and the rocket is almost reassembled. He is attempting to rescue Von Göll, who has been captured by the Russians, and passes right by the rocket without any realization of its presence. The narrator again comments:

But just over the embankment, down in the arena, what might that have been just now, waiting in this broken moonlight, camouflage paint from fins to point crazed into jigsaw...is it, then, really never to find you again." (510) ¹⁵

The principle of non-intersection is based upon the Zone's ability to be many zones depending upon the consciousnesses that perceive it. While describing the wanderings of the Hereroes, the narrator observes that, "British security are about, but that's another, encapsulated world. The British occupy their own space and Zone congruent but not identical to what these serious Schwarzkommando astride bikes unmuffled go blasting on through tonight"(519).

The possibility of the non-intersection of the subplots is strengthened by the increasing fragmentation of the text in Book IV. Slothrop dissolves as a viable focus for the

narration, and the text suddenly introjects narratives that are patently surrealistic: the history of Byron the immortal lightbulb, the story of the undertaker who wishes to be struck by lightning, the tarot readings of Slothrop's and Weissman's futures, the treatises on language, the account of the original firing of the 00000Rocket, and the anecdote of the movie house manager, Richard M. Zhlubb. The technique is similar to that which Pynchon uses in his manipulation of detail: the suppression of narrative surface and the principle of data overload. Through the repetition of key terms, the text continually suggests interconnections; yet soon another alternative arises--that the coincidences are only that. The reader slides from a paranoiac approach to reading into a framework that accepts the possibility that they really don't. The strategy of the technique, if one assumes that Pynchon is structuring the novel according to principles of non-ego organization which are intended to subvert that structuring process, aims to overload the reader and force him directly to confront the artificiality of the very process of ordering--and, by analogy and implication, the artificiality of the ordering processes by which we define and experience the artifact of the self.

Yet antiparanoia is also a category of the rational faculty. It is a state which, by its otherness, allows the self to be defined. And to merely settle for this alternative is also to miss the significance of Pynchon's vision by ignoring the fact that the sequences and subplots do relate in specific ways.

The subplots and narrative fragments relate in two ways. One is as a parody of Pynchon's vision; the other is a manifestation of one of its key characteristics. The episodes interrelate through the medium of Slothrop himself. He is the vehicle by which they intersect through most of the novel. Yet his dispersal shows that he is only an artificial and temporary medium. Once he dissolves, the text fragments, but the possibility of interconnections continues--even if in a very strained manner. The real matrix which supports the interconnections is the narrator, and it is his paranoia, essential to the novel-making process, which supports the text. Yet he is a fiction, in the same logical category as the fictions he creates. Since antiparanoia is a part of his fiction, it is implied that antiparanoia is also a fiction. By overloading the data and by suggesting too many potential connections, Pynchon undermines the narrator and the reader, revealing the artificiality of the former as an analogue of the illusory nature of the latter.

And it is in these terms that the subplots and narrative fragments do relate. Every episode, while it may contain elements that elaborate upon, or advance, the general plot line, is essentially an analogue of Slothrop's history, revealing aspects of the present order of things under the domination of the ego, or demonstrating aspects, allegorically, of Slothrop's final state of being.

A prime example of how the text induces the reader to perceive analogues rather than sequences occurs late in Book III. Slothrop, whose temporal bandwidth and individual

personality is already narrowing as he sheds his concept of self, is wandering through the countryside south of Rostock on his way to Cuxhaven where he hopes to meet Der Springer, who has promised him phoney discharge papers. While roaming the countryside, he meets Ludwig, a fat little kid who is also wandering through the Zone. Ludwig is searching for his lost lemming, Ursula. He fears that, like all lemmings, she is rushing to her self-destruction in the North Sea. The narrator suddenly digresses into the narrative of Slothrop's ancestry, William, the original Slothrop settler in the the New World, who raised pigs and every year walked them to Boston to be slaughtered. Unfortunately, William loved the pigs who trustingly followed him to their own demise, and he yearned for the appearance of the one who would refuse the "natural" and "historical" mandate for the slaughter of pigs, the one who would validate the destruction of the others. The juxtaposition of the two sequences makes sense only analogically. Ursula, like the pigs, seems to be going happily to her own death in fulfillment of a divinely ordained plan. Yet, as the reader learns a hundred pages or so later, Ursula refuses the imperative and opts for life. Significantly, within two chapters, Slothrop wanders into a town that is holding an ancient festival in honor of the Pig-God who saved them from a Viking invasion. Slothrop, unable to refuse their requests that he reenact the role, dons the costume of a pig, which will eventually save him from castration at Putzi's, a brothel in Cuxhaven. The juxtaposition of these sequences, which have no logical

or sequential connections, compels the reader to interpret them according to different principles of organization. They make "sense" only as analogies. Slothrop, like Ursula, who returns, and like the pig, who refuses to die, against all odds of probability and against the narrator's attempt to make sense of his narrative, opts for life, and survives. He, as one of the lost, justifies their very being, and implies their final state as those who are saved.

Within this framework the rest of the novel makes, if not sequential, at least analogical, sense. The subplots, in all their confusing disarray, reveal a consistently logical ordering. And since the subplots are analogues which tell parallel stories or are aspects of the same story of the perversion of reality by ego and ego structuration, the terms from any one narrative can apply to the others. And so Slothrop's family, Dodo birds, debris on Slothrop's desk, the physical wastes of material earth, and the psychological wastes of man that are central to all of Pynchon's novels, can all be called the preterite with equal appropriateness and equal irony since, as the novel suggests, it is from the wastes that the possibility of freedom arises. Late in Book III, Slothrop makes love to Leni Föklér and afterwards they dream: he about Bianca; she about Ilse, Bianca's narrative double. They both dream of freedom and mercy.

And "Solange," oddly enough, is dreaming of Bianca too, though under a different aspect: it's of her own child, Ilse, riding lost through the Zone on a long freight train that never seems to come to rest....But Leni's dream for her is coming true. She will not be

used. There is change, and departure; but there is also help when least looked for from the strangers of the day, and hiding, out among the accidents of this drifting Humility, never quite to be extinguished, a few small chances for mercy.... (610)

Because they are analogues, the episodes can overlap, characters from one moving into other sequences without actually intersecting with them in the same way terms from one sequence can appear in another. Slothrop realizes this in the Fantastic Four sequence when he discovers that it is all taking place in a theater where there are many plays being enacted which share similar characters, but in which each may have a different leading actor.

The structural principle of analogical rather than sequential relationships as the basis of reality becomes the thematic center of the story of Franz Pökler, whose perversion and inversion of analogy into cause and effect produces one of the most striking subplots in the novel. Many critics have noted that it is almost a novella in its own right. His story is important thematically, not because it is the central fiction of the novel, but because it demonstrates the central fiction from which modern man must escape. His narrative is a fiction which depicts the fictions man has made out of his life, the artificial construct which Pynchon seeks a way out of. Its central concerns are the reversibility of analogy and the technologicalization of myth.

To emphasize the fictional quality of Pökler's narrative as an emblem for modern consciousness, the narrator uses his most realistic style to relate the sequence. Yet he places

the episode within an overtly artificial and novelistic context. The episode is actually a digression within a digression. Slothrop, having made his way from Zurich to Berlin by balloon, comes down with dysentery. In a delerium, he begins to question his role in the many stories that seem to include him. Comparing himself to Tannhäuser, "the Singing Nincompoop," he realizes that the stories are always someone else's. The narrator interjects that soon Slothrop will even find his Lisaura. "This is how they met," the chapter begins(365). The narrative then begins a four chapter digression that postpones the meeting by depicting the adventures of the Argentine anarchists and Slothrop's meeting with Säure, the drug dealer. While stoned one night, Säure and Seaman Bodine convince Slothrop to become Rocketman and in this guise to infiltrate the compound at Potsdam while the Big Four Conference is in session and recover some hash that is hidden on the grounds.

The leitmotif of fictionality, both of text and person, reaches a comic apogee in this sequence. Just as Slothrop digs the hash from the ground, who does he meet, face-to-face, in person, but Mickey Rooney, "Judge Hardy's freckled madcap son"(382). The comedy is based upon the intentional confusion of realities. The fictional hero, adopting another fictional persona, meets an historical person in a fictional portrayal of a real place, and immediately identifies him by his fictional identity. As Slothrop runs away with the hashish, Tchitcherine captures, drugs, and interrogates him. Slothrop awakens in a white

room which he discovers to be part of an old movie set. He meets the masochistic, porno-movie queen, Greta Erdmann and soon Slothrop is whipping her to orgasm. The next chapter begins:

...yes, bitch--yes, little bitch--poor helpless bitch you're coming can't stop yourself now I'll whip you again till you bleed....Thus Pökler's whole front surface, eyes to knees, flooded with tonight's image of the delicious victim bound on her dungeon rack, filling the movie screen. (397)

Having introduced the theme of fictionality and elaborated upon its implications in terms of narrative and having associated it with pornography, Pynchon introjects the story of Franz Pökler. In his narrative the pornographic movie will be replaced by movies of the rocket which are "pornographies of flight." Both are pornographies because they are analogous manifestations of ego-genital organization projected into the real world. Pökler's narrative illustrates what happens when man is trapped by the belief in that structuration of human experience.

Franz's story is contained within Greta's because both are analogues. He, like Greta, partake in a pornography; he, like her, seeks a lost daughter. His was fathered in a moment on arousal after watching the movie in which Greta was impregnated with Bianca. His story is a morality fable of how technology and reality, as shaped by the projections of ego structuration, will return to torment the shapers; it is a parody of the real, beneficial interaction of the self and the other.

Since Franz's world is, for Pynchon, the embodiment

of fiction, his narrative is related not only in a digression but in a flashback. He is an important scientist whose job is to perfect the mechanics of the rocket's trajectory. He had been assigned to work at Peenemünde, the rocket-testing facilities. He became so absorbed into the rocket that he lost contact with his wife and daughter and became a slave to the project. To perfect the trajectory mechanisms, Pökler, along with other scientists, studied films of the rocket as it was dropped from a mother ship at two thousand feet. On the film they could observe its behaviour as it exceeded the speed of sound. Their method was similar to the one used by Leibnitz when he had originally formulated the integral calculus. The narrator explains the parallel:

There has been this strange connection between the German mind and the rapid flashing of successive stills to counterfeit movement, for at least two centuries--since Leibnitz, in the process of inventing calculus, used the same approach to break up the trajectories of cannonballs through the air. And now Pökler was about to give proof that those techniques had been extended past images on film, to human lives. (407)

Pökler's punishment, in the infernal world he helped to create, was to reenact, personally, his primal crime of perverting life into its movie-like, specular image and of then using that image to create a real destroyer of life.

To both punish and reward him and to secure his continued dedication to the mysterious project involving the device known as the Schwartzgerät, the German military supervisors, under the direction of Weissman, seized upon the medium of his daughter, the film child. They take her away and allow her to visit her father only once a year

during the early summer. She becomes an analogue to Bianca, not only because she is a literal child of the movies, but because she is a Persephone figure, lost in the underworld, who returns only during the season of plenty.

Each visit becomes a frame of their lives together and, only by flashing, in retrospect, mental images of their shared moments, can Pökler simulate the development and fluid reality of his daughter as a living being. Ironically, he is never even certain that it is the same girl he meets every year. Eventually, he is transferred to Nordhausen, and only after its destruction does he discover that she had been next door to him all along in a camp adjacent to the works. After the Allied invasion had begun and after the works and the camp were in ruins, he searches the wreckage for Ilse. Amid the debris, he experiences his moment of tragic insight, and, in his own feeble way, he takes responsibility for his crime.

Where it was darkest and smelled the worst, Pökler found a woman lying, a random woman. He sat for half an hour holding her bone hand. She was breathing. Before he left, he took off his gold wedding ring and put it on the woman's thin finger, curling her hand to keep it from sliding off. (433)

In this sequence of grotesque horror, Pökler confronts the results of his work. He gave up a wife and a daughter, physical reality itself, for an abstraction that created and sustained a political structure that necessitated the consumption of human life. The Nordhausen facilities generated the prison camp next door. Appropriately, Pökler finally, and literally, weds the image of death that is the

true manifestation of the rocket he helped create.

Pökler's tragedy results from a confusion of categories: the projections of the self are confused with the reality of being. Moral judgments and human responsibility are perverted into technological parodies of experience and a false sense of corporate loyalty which precipitates a universal dance of death. On one level, Pökler's narrative demonstrates how political ego structures will employ the techniques that man invents to control nature in order to control other men. In a larger sense, it illustrates how all are victims of the structure itself. The wedding between the two sides, the victor and the victim, Nordhausen and the Dora Camp, epitomizes this essential interdependence, and essential destructiveness, of the master-slave relationship.

Also important to the Pökler episode is the theme, or principle, that dominates most of the novel: the destructive results of a belief in cause and effect that rejects the reality of the reversibility of analogy. The distinction between these two modes of perception is fundamental. Pökler is a cause-and-effect man who, like Pointsman, can understand reality only on a reductive, literal level. As a product of the revolution in thought in the 17th century which replaced an analogical view of the universe with a "scientific," or causal perspective, modern man is essentially Hobbesian--sufficient causes produce an effect. In essence, the significance of the causes is displaced onto the effect. Yet the entire novel is based upon the

premise, Slothrop's anticipation of the rocket, that realms of human experience do not conform to this assumption. Pökler's episode demonstrates just how destructive such a belief can be.

Because the subplots cannot be interpreted causally, the text implies that neither can the events of real experience. They, also, must be seen as analogies--not just in the ordinary sense, but as mutually reversible relationships. Ordinarily, within the domain of logic, we think of an analogy as a unidirectional relationship. "Art imitates life" presupposes that a work of art bears some resemblance to experience, historically, ethically, psychologically, or structurally. We never, except ironically, assume that life imitates art. Yet, as Pökler's episode shows, fictions can create a life--or a destroyer of life--and analogies are totally reversible. The basis for the assumption of the unidirectional thrust of analogy and the reason that the reverse seems so patently absurd is that the ego, at least in Pynchon's, Brown's, and Lacan's psychologies, is based upon, and establishes its supremacy by, its ability to become an analogy of the other and then suppress the fact that it is only a mirror image. If, as Hegel and Lacan argue, the self is a product of the specular image or the result of a mastery of the other, it is, in effect, an analogue of that other. But that is a possibility which the self, once it has been established, cannot entertain and retain its integrity. It can project onto reality analogues of its own structure, but it cannot acknowledge

the possibility of a reverse process. Yet as Brown and Lacan propose, and as Pynchon's novel repeatedly demonstrates, everything that we have learned about the mind, even within a Freudian context, shows that the self is in a continuous state of interaction with the other, incorporating and projecting elements of the other and the self in a continuous interchange.

Given the possibility of this situation, Slothrop's relationship to the rocket is perfectly sensible and does not require scholastically Byzantine explanations. He and the rocket are analogues, although inversely related, and are therefore mutually affecting structures. It is only after Slothrop has begun to relinquish the artificial structure of the self that the rocket loses its inherent connection with him and replaces him as the central concern of the narrative. Pökler's sin, on the other hand, is that he cannot see that the analogy between projections and reality are interchangeable and reversible. But they are anyway; and because he can read experience only literally, unidirectionally, he is made to experience the reality of reversibility in an ironic and devastating manner. Since projections (of a movie) originally aroused him to create life, projections (of the rocket) return to make his one link to reality, his daughter, into yet another projection--a literal movie child.

The real basis of Pökler's sin is ego-genital organization, by which the ego, as an introjected other, secures domination over the body. As Brown points out, this is achieved by the

image-fantasy of the primal scene; and Pynchon's text apparently supports this idea. Pöckler is sexually aroused by the projected image of Greta Erdmann, who continually portrays herself as an archetypal Earth-mother, having intercourse. He projects himself into his penis literally by projecting himself into the rocket, the ultimate phallus. Thus, it is no wonder that, even though he is a part of the Nazi elect, he is a eunuch; his marriage flounders sexually because he has already given his generative energy to the rocket, becoming "an extension of the Rocket, long before it was ever built"(402).

The non-intersection of plots, except those episodes which are connected via the medium of Slothrop, and the reversibility of analogy are the basic structuring--or non-structuring--principles which shape the novel. Each subplot, in addition, also examines aspects of modern reality as a perverse ego-structured projection. The parallel plots of Enzian and Tchitcherine, as discussed earlier, examine the impulse to colonize as a master-slave struggle that is a projection of the process by which the centralized ego gains control of the more primitive being. Independently, each of these narratives explores other aspects of the self.

Tchitcherine's story explores the nature of language as a component to the process by which we shape reality. His experience with the Kirghiz comically, and perversely, demonstrates the power of language to shape our perceptions of reality. He is stationed among them to teach them the

New Turkish Alphabet and replace their old mode of communication which was "purely speech, gesture, and touch" (338). The people are peaceful, the oppressors harsh. And soon after learning the alphabet, signs of revolt appear suggesting the assassination of officials, and after the written placards appear, the officials begin to die. If, as Lacan argues, the self is a product of the other and the language of the other, then in Pynchon's world the self and language, as abstractions of reality, allow the self to destroy life. As Brown says, "it is only as long as a distinction is made between real and imaginary [or linguistic] murders that real murders are worth committing" (L.B., 152).

Within Tchitcherine's narrative, in the introjected story of his father's experience with an Herero girl, an alternative language is revealed, as well as the possibility or alternative that is an escape from the language of the self. The white man and his black love create a new mode of communication; they learn a few words of the other's tongue, "afraid, happy, sleep, love," yet this is the beginning "of a new tongue" (351). Again the text stresses the possibility of a new beginning in a new language which is a creation of, and result of, a new, non-colonial, non-egocentric, basis of being.

Enzian's narrative, while exploring the experience of the slave who wishes to rebel, but who cannot even escape the terms of the master, is also about the banalization or technologicalization of myth. The emblem of

his tribe's geographical structure becomes that of the sequence of the rocket's firing. This theme and process by which the mythic is literalized into technological and scientific constructs appears in many of the subplots. In Pökler's narrative, it appears in the interpolated story of Kekulé's discovery of the benzene ring which established the foundations of inorganic chemistry, the basis of the rocket. Kekulé was working on determining the structure of certain compounds which he viewed conventional, architectonic models. But benzene stumped him--until The Dream.

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. (412)

The potency of Kekulé's mythological imagination and his ability to tap Jung's collective unconscious so profitably, as the narrator semi-jokes, enables him to discover a secret of nature that will be routinized and utilized by the technician. This is the same process that perverts the signs of the Herero tribal map into the ignition sequence of the rocket's lift-off. It is the same process by which the mystical circled-cross becomes the swastika.

The other subplots explore these perversions in other terms, but the implicit processes and themes are analogically

repetitive. It would be possible, but repetitive and taxing, to enumerate all of the subplots and independent narrative sequences--the experiments, high-jinks, and political jostling at the White Visitation, the lunacies of Säure's drug den, the pathetic idealism of William Slothrop's journey with his pigs to the slaughterhouses in Boston, and the mania of Fritz Van der Groov's vendetta against the dodo. All of the subplots have a common concern: the ramifications of the projection of ego-genital organization as the original perversion of physical reality.

The ramifications of ego organization are explored in terms of the major categories by which we attempt to make sense of reality: history, religion, science, and art. And the confusion resulting from the plethora of narrative elements is compounded by Pynchon's use of imagery and terminology from these categories in unrelated, parallel, or merely similar episodes. The theme of history as a record of man's neurotic rape of nature and the theme of colonization involve terminology that appears not only in the narratives of Enzian's father, Weissman's subjugation of the Hereroes, and the Argentine's fight against Peronist centralization, but also in scientific and personal topics such as organic and inorganic bonding and Slothrop's orgasm with Bianca. In the episode relating Jamf's change of interest from organic to inorganic chemistry, the historical metaphors of colonialization are interwoven with those of chemistry. In organic bonding, two ions share one or more electrons as the basis for their union

and form a new chemical. But in inorganic bonding, one atom captures electrons from the other, subduing the other into a permanent subjugation. The very name, "inorganic" bonding, becomes symbolic of Pynchon's attitude to this branch of chemistry. Jamf himself ironically predicts the evil that will be the result of the breakthrough into plastics and polymers that will lie at the heart of the rocket. Fokler is telling Slothrop about the highlights of Jamf's last lecture to his students.

"You have the two choices," Jamf cried...."stay behind with carbon and hydrogen...[or] move beyond life, toward the inorganic. Here is no frailty, no morality--here is Strength, and the Timeless." Then in his well-known finale, as he wiped away the scrawled C-H on his chalkboard and wrote, in enormous letters, Si-N. (580)

Similarly, Slothrop's own psycho-biological structure is related in terms of colonialization. During his orgasm with Bianca, the "metropolitan penis" leaves "all other colonial tissue...to fend for itself"(470). The association that allows Pynchon to cross apply his terms is his central assumption that all systems of structuration, either historical and external or personal and internal, are projections of an originally introjected system of ego structuration; and the greater the threat to that introjected system, the greater its effort to enforce its own structures upon the world.

The historical theme of colonization has its parallels in religious imagery. In Calvinistic terms, those of Slothrop's and America's heritage, the colonizer is the elect, chosen by God to rule the earth, and the colonized

is the preterite, passed over from eternity by God's redemptive grace.

Scientific metaphors can be found throughout the novel; and while the narrator is obsessively fond of using them, they always have a more sinister side than their obvious appearance as products of man's development. When literalized into maps of natural processes, the principles of science become dangerous and deadly. Pynchon comically reveals the darker side of science's literalization of reality in the description of the rocket factory at Nordhausen. The entrance to the plant is a parabola and the inside tunnels are shaped like two elongated Ss, the mathematical symbols for integration. The plant was designed by Etzel "Ölsch, and the only problem is that none of his buildings are safe. "They look normal enough, but they are designed to fall down...shortly after the last rivet is driven....This is Ölsch's "deathwish" problem here, as the little helpers call it"(300). In Gravity's Rainbow, that little problem lurks behind all of the scientific theorizing which attempts to mold and manipulate natural processes.

Perhaps the most discussed of Pynchon's scientific metaphors is that of entropy; that closed systems tend to a state of maximum disorder and randomness.¹⁶ Pynchon uses it both to structure his novel and present the alternative of modern reality or his vision. According to the principle of entropy, while systems tend to an equal distribution of energy and therefore an equal degree

of disorder, more organized structures can occur within the system, but only at the expense of increasing the entropy of the rest of the system. Pynchon's text literally follows this principle. Book IV becomes increasingly difficult to follow because, as the rocket is amassed, the closed system of the novel becomes increasingly entropic. The many fragments of the last book, in analogy to the equal distribution of energy that results from entropy, each convey the same information, since each is yet another retelling or version of the same story and the same theme. The novel then presents the alternatives in striking juxtaposition. Human life is also a complex structure and would seem also to increase the entropy of the universe by drawing energy from it. Yet in Pynchon's view, that occurs only when life attempts to force nature into its structures and draw from her without repayment. To escape this compulsion, as Slothrop does by the end of the narrative, is to escape the ultimate dead end of the entropic system. And so, the final choice is between the rocket as a higher form of structure which inevitably leads to death or Slothrop's mode of being after his "dissolution."

But the power of Pynchon's novel is not only in the radical choice it presents, it is in the degree to which he explores the opposition and the complex moral problem of who is to blame for it. The question itself is simple. In the religious metaphors, it is simply who are--or what is--the elect. Pynchon's answer involves a double twist

in which the blame is shifted from people to the corporation and technology, the soul of the cartel. But the final revelation occurs when Technology reveals its true nature. As the novel progresses, it is evident that everyone is victimized by someone else. Pynchon, however, does not see this merely as a case of circular control; there is a definite hierarchy of manipulation. The discovery of it, in fact, is almost as central to the work as Slothrop's discovery of the nature of his relationship to the rocket. Both Tchitcherine and Enzian eventually realize the ubiquitous existence of the all-powerful rocket cartel; and its existence as a corporate body reveals its true identity. It is the totemic projection of the modern god, and assumes all of the attributes of the divinity: omniscience, omnipresence, and omnipotence. It has even adapted the image of God's finger, emblematically reaching down from the sky. Slothrop sees it in the shape of the rocket; Tchitcherine as a middle finger pointing, in parody of a billboard poster, to the truth of the corporation's power.

"Say, there." It appears to be a very large white Finger, addressing him. Its Fingernail is beautifully manicured; as it rotates for him, it slowly reveals a Fingerprint that might well be an aerial view of the City Dactylic, that city of the future where every soul is known, and there is no place to hide. Right now, joints moving with soft, hydraulic sounds, the Finger is calling Tchitcherine's attention to--

 A ROCKET-CARTEL. A structure cutting across every agency human and paper that ever touched it. Even to Russia...Russia bought from Krupp, didn't she, from Sieman's, the IG.... (566)

Enzian also experiences the vision of the corporate divinity. His realization may be paranoid, but it is also

perceptive.

There doesn't exactly dawn, no but there breaks that light you're afraid will break some night at too deep an hour to explain away--there floods on Enzian what seems to him an extraordinary understanding. This serpentine slag-heap he is just about to ride into now, this ex-refinery, Jamf Olfabriken AG, is not a ruin at all. It is in perfect working order. Only waiting for the right connections to be set up, to be switched on... modified, precisely, deliberately by bombing that was never hostile, but part of a plan both sides--"sides?"--had always agreed on....[my ellipsis]

It means this War was never political at all, the politics was all theater, all just to keep the people distracted...secretly, it was being dictated by the needs of technology.... (520-21)

Enzian's insight is that there are no sides; there is only an unmentioned "thing" that conducts the war. And its name is "technology." But Pynchon does not let the blame rest solely on Technology's shoulders. Having given it narrative life as a personification, he allows Technology to reply to its accusers:

All very well to talk about having a monster by the tail, but do you think we'd've had the Rocket if someone, some specific somebody with a name and a penis hadn't wanted to chuck a ton of Amatol 300 miles and blow up a block full of civilians? Go ahead, capitalize the T on technology, deify it if it'll make you feel less responsible--but it puts you in with the neutered, brother, in with the eunuchs keeping the harem of our stolen Earth for the numb and joyless hardons of human sultans, human elite with no right at all to be where they are--. (521)

Technology's answer associates the corporation with a specific somebody, with a name, an identity, and a penis; but the implication of "specific somebody" is that it is everybody who believes in a name and an identity and who defines them in terms of the penis; everybody who believes in the fiction of the ego which is based upon genital organization. Like Pökler, to believe in this fiction is

to believe in the projections by which it shapes the world and to transfer our human energy to them. And so, the rocket becomes the communal phallus, and the community a collection of eunuchs.

In the final chapter of Book III, Pynchon presents a portrait of the eunuchs. Clive Mossmoon and Sir Marcus Scammony are meeting "to finalize plans for the Postwar Polyvinyl Chloride Raincoat, a source of great corporate fun these days" since it will dissolve in water (615). They are in control, members of the elect; but as the scene develops, it reveals their power to be mere bitchery and faggotry. They are themselves slaves to the Operation. "Are we going to fail?" questions Mossmoon referring to the problem of preventing the Hereroes from reassembling the pieces of the rocket. "'We're all going to fail,' Sir Marcus primping his curls, 'but the Operation won't'"(616). Having transferred their sexual energies into the rocket and the corporation, even the elect are powerless, and "the real and only fucking is done on paper"(616). The connection and identity of ego and corporation is re-enforced by Scammony's sado-masochism which in the novel is the root of genital organization and, as Thanatz remarks, of the state or corporation as well. It is also the appropriate mode of action for the Corporation, since the Corporation is the projection by which man will ultimately destroy himself. The Corporation cannot fail and cannot be found because it is not a "thing" but a fiction that we all believe in and it will succeed as long as there is that belief.

By accepting the myth of the ego and its resultant myths of the nature of reality, we are as responsible as Franz Pökler for the outcome of our fetish.

Appropriately, Book III, which brings together most of the characters in their individual quests for power, freedom, drugs, revenge, personal extinction, lost lemmings, lost children, and the rocket, begins with the epigraph, "Toto, I have a feeling that we're not in Kansas anymore." In the movie, Dorothy's insightful comment on the obvious is comic because, as she ponders the implications of the scene before her--a wicked witch crushed beneath her Kansas house and scores of Munchkins cheering with joy--it is apparent to the audience that Over-The-Rainbow is just Kansas writ large and viewed from a slightly skewed, but nonetheless true, perspective. Oz will make manifest what is implicit in Kansas. In Oz, the need for love, courage, and intelligence is simply more pronounced than at home.

The myth of the Land of Oz, the space ruled by a fraudulent king who claims powers far beyond his ability, is an ironic allusion when juxtaposed to the chapter title, "In the Zone." The Zone, like Oz, is a mythical dimension in which the latent structures of Western civilization are made manifest. Like Dorothy in Oz, Slothrop in the Zone will attempt to find both his true identity and his true home. The epigraph, in this context, suggests the absurdity of such a quest since the ego-king, like the Wizard, is a fake. To find his true identity, Slothrop

must move beyond the myths of Kansas, beyond those systems by which man orders and attempts to manipulate his reality.

Notes to Chapter Three

¹Julian Jaynes posits an internalized, spacial self as one of the characteristics of self-consciousness in The Origin of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1976).

²Samuel Beckett and Georges Duthuit, "Three Dialogues," in Twentieth Century Views: Samuel Beckett, ed. Martin Esslin (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1965).

³This is exactly the case with Mendelson's misreading of GR. See pt. 2, ch. 4, n. 1.

⁴This is a trend in much of modern fiction. John Fowles, for example, in The Magus, revised ed. (New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1978) makes this the central theme of the novel.

⁵Scott Sanders, "Pynchon's Paranoid History," Mindful Pleasures, pp. 139-40.

⁶The two devices make limited sense in terms of purely formal analysis, which must view them simply as formal analogues of the fragmentation of modern life and of modern man's inability to integrate the elements of his experience. Such an analysis, however, besides being rather superficial, misses the important role such devices have in affecting the reader. Thus, GR cannot be fully understood in merely formalist terms, which is one of the reasons both readers

and critics have had such difficulty in interpreting the work.

⁷The similarity of Pynchon's and Brown's vision is partly the source of their similarity of style--given the obvious differences resulting from their choice of genre. Pynchon's suppression of narrative transitions is similar in affect to Brown's suppression of the logical links between the paragraphs of his essay.

⁸Pynchon is obsessed with wastes, both material and human. In the next to last sequence, the garbage trucks are bringing the wastes of California--the ultimate American wasteland--to be dumped into the ocean.

⁹Michel Foucault, The Order of Things.

¹⁰Asa Briggs, Victorian People (New York: Harper and Row, 1955), p. 15. Martin Tupper is the author of the poem.

¹¹In The Crying of Lot 49, it is the drop-outs who communicate through the W.A.S.T.E. who have at least made a start at freeing themselves from the powers in control. And as Brown notes, the revolution must come from below, not in a political sense, but from the underground of the mind.

¹²See Brown, LB, p. 154.

¹³This narrative event is an analogue to what Slothrop does throughout the novel. He is both a medium and a vehicle for transmitting information between the narrator and the reader. In effect, Slothrop's attempts to organize

the data of his experience saves the reader from having to do it. Once Slothrop disperses, the text fragments radically, and even the narrator has problems deciding what is happening.

¹⁴It is as if the + and - values of their geographical spaces (see pt. 2, ch. 1) establish them as polarities which repel each other.

¹⁵It is ironic that the narrator's nostalgic style in this sequence is similar that in which he describes the non-meeting between Enzian and Tchitcherine. Yet Pynchon rejects the narrator and his false romanticism, as seen in the Bland episode.

¹⁶The connection between entropy and information is examined by Anne Mangel in "Maxwell's Demon, Entropy, Information," in Mindful Pleasures, pp. 87-100.

IV. Beyond the Myths of Kansas

In the final analysis, any interpretation of the meaning of Gravity's Rainbow depends upon the reader's understanding of what happens to Slothrop. His "dispersal" may be seen as a failure of courage and the result of his own mediocrity of spirit, as the narrator suggests, or as an example of the inability of man to contend with the forces that shape and control modern existence, as some critics have noted, or as a tragedy of the human dilemma in which man is undone by the very structures of civilization that he has created to advance himself.¹

There is, however, another possibility, but to see it requires a readjustment of what the reader assumes about the nature of the novel--and of reality. To validate the possibility of this alternative requires that the reader find evidence of structures within the text which are actually extrinsic to it. This evidence can be in the form of trace structures, systems which shape the narrative but are never mentioned directly, or, if so, only as a parody. The extrinsic structures provide correctives for the text within the text which are different from those of the narrator. An examination of the text in terms of the discrepancies, or contradictions, between its metonymic plot line and its purely metaphoric systems reveals precisely

the corrective that is needed. It also accounts for the bizarre and confusing structure of the last book of the novel.

Books I-III develop a number of plot lines that, although complicated, are fairly linear. Although there are numerous interjections of the histories of key characters and their ancestors, and digressions which include stories within stories, the novel follows the actions of several central figures or groups: Slothrop, Pointsman, Mexico, Katje, Enzian, Tchitcherine, Weissman, Gerta Erdmann, Leni Pökler, Franz Pökler, Squalladozzi, and Säure. But toward the end of Book III, this linear plot begins to dissolve, and in Book IV, the text radically bifurcates into episodes that are predominantly either metonymic or metaphoric. Current interpretations offer no explanation for this, nor do they begin to explain the structural significance of the text's disintegration other than as a literary device that mimics Slothrop's disintegration.

Yet an analysis of the text in terms of its metonymic and metaphoric structures clearly reveals an unarticulated system within the text which undermines the metonymic surface. For the sake of convenience, let us term the metonymic register of the text as the narrative or anecdotal level and the metaphoric as the allegorical. The anecdote relates events whose import is controlled by the narrator; the allegory relates things which the narrator himself does not fully comprehend, and it generally undermines what the narrator is saying in the anecdote. The

anecdotes relate the narrator's attempts to understand what happens to Slothrop; the allegories are Pynchon's intrusions into the text. If the narrator fails to discuss or elaborate upon an event, it is most likely in the metaphoric register. The episodes about Ursula and the lightning-struck undertaker are examples of this category.

If one reads the text in terms of the metonymic-metaphoric bifurcation, several revealing structures become apparent. Slothrop is progressing--in reverse--through a specific mythic paradigm which involves a number of identity changes in relation to the women he meets and makes love to. The nature of his final state of consciousness, since it cannot be described in purely narrative terms, is related through the allegorical-mythical episodes. An understanding of this final state, therefore, requires an analysis of the process of his "dissolution" and the women involved with it before an analysis of the allegories, which contain or reveal the elements of his new consciousness.

Slothrop's dispersal is the outcome of a series of personality transformations, and each identity reveals something about his progress in quest for self-knowledge. The Slothrop of Book I becomes Ian Scuffling, British War Correspondent, when he goes AWOL. The job is appropriate since his aim is to acquire information about the rocket and himself. Once involved in the drug scene at Säure Bummer's apartment, he becomes the comic-book parody of a superhero, Rocketman. He later dons black tie and tails to become Max Schlepzig, and later even wears Tchitcherine's clothes. Each personality

change is signalled by the change of attire, the most blatant being his identity as Pigman, the folk-hero who saves a small town from a Viking invasion. The last incarnation, only alluded to, is that of Orpheus.

The transformations underscore several thematic points. Slothrop can change personae because, for Pynchon, personality is essentially fluid. It is also a fake. Even the original identity as Tyrone Slothrop is a product of Lazlo Jamf and as artificial as any of the others. All of the identities are products of others. Der Springer makes him into Scuffling; Saure ^{into} Rocketman; the town's children into Pigman. Only the Orpheus identity seems to have emerged of its own; and it is actually merely a persona which the narrator indirectly applies to him. Since each identity is created by another character, each is an artifice; yet each shapes part of his personality, distorting it from its essential nature as pure being until all are discarded in the final dispersal. Each is a signifier which impinges upon the real signified, yet each is distinct from that signified.

The distinction between signifier and signified implies an essential Slothrop beneath the identities or names. Pynchon establishes this essential being through a number of devices. The narrator supplies the history and character portrayal that create the paranoid Slothrop, the schlemiel who is the product and butt of historical process. Yet the text itself acquires a tone that is uniquely Slothrop's. The stuttering "a-and," which

permeates the novel, and is perhaps its central metaphor, is a quintessentially Slothropian manifestation of the hope, and gut fear, that things connect. In addition to the neurotically, sexually compulsive lover is the performer of small acts of grace; one of his first acts in the story is to rescue a little girl from the rubble of a building, and the wishes he makes on a star while he is wandering towards Cuxhaven reveal his unique sense of self and compassion for others.

Partial List of Wishes on Evening Stars for This
Period

Let me find that chicken coop the old lady told me about.
 Let Tantivy really be alive.
 Let this fucking zit on my back go away.
 Let me go to Hollywood when this is over so that Rita Hayworth can see me and fall in love with me.
 Let the peace of this day be here tomorrow when I wake up.
 Let that discharge be waiting for me in Cuxhaven.
 Let Bianca be all right, a-and--
 Let me be able to take a shit soon.
 Let that only be a meteor falling.
 Let these boots hold out at least to Lübeck.
 Let that Ludwig find his lemming and be happy and leave me in peace.

The mixture of physical awareness (the zit, hunger, and constipation) with idealized and actual love (Rita Hayworth and Bianca) and true compassion for others (Tantivy, Bianca, and Ludwig) creates a portrait of a being that as yet has no name in the novel. It is a being that values life, with its positive and negative aspects, above all else, and which, by Book IV, has become something of a nature deity.

Pynchon employs another narrative technique to create this essential Slothrop. By keeping him noticeably

absent from the beginning of the novel, and by allowing the reader to learn of him only from a few direct observations while gaining most of the information about Slothrop from others, Pynchon establishes the mediated nature of the reader's knowledge about the character. This creates the impression of a "true" Slothrop that exists outside the logical parameters of the text. By doing this, Pynchon is able to create the impression that a whole character still exists even after the narrative character has dispersed.

Slothrop's dispersal, or evolution, reveals another pattern. The personae become increadingly less self-centered the more he changes. Tyrone is made by history and Jamf, and it is the most egoistic of his identities. Ian is adopted for protection from the authorities. Rocketman, although a comic parody of the hero, arises out of a desire not only to help himself get money but, in a half-baked way, to help Saure get his drugs. Pigman is a social creation which helps not only the imaginations of the village children but actually reenacts the myth-pig's attempt to save them from hostile forces. In addition to becoming less selfish, the personae become increasingly mythic. Rocketman is a modern pop-myth; Pigman is a 10th-century mythic hero; and Orpheus is a mythic figure whose significance lies at the core of Western culture and consciousness. Significantly, while the narrator occasionally alludes to certain mythic correspondences, he never comments upon this regression through mythic paradigms.

Two counter-structures, or counter-themes, are developed by this series of transformations. On the narrative level, the narrator explores the idea of the artificiality of identity, but he still sees Slothrop's progress as a regression into the loss of identity. On the metaphorical level, the regression teaches Slothrop about both the artificiality of identity and the positive nature of being. The significance of this metaphorical level is contained within the implicit counter-code of the mythic allusions, and this counter-code is conveyed not only by Slothrop's transformations but by the women who are catalysts for them.

Throughout the novel, Slothrop makes love to, or "knows," a rather large number of women. Omitting the bevy of girls he seduces in London under the compulsion of the rocket, and the Trudies of Berlin whom he seduces under the influence of drugs, five central females emerge to form a significant configuration of women with mythological overtones: Katje Borgesius, Greta Erdmann, her daughter Bianca, an anonymous printer's daughter, and Solange, Leni Pökler's alias while she works in Putzi's Brothel. The women are distinct, but their mythological analogues merge, and all are incarnations of a single force. Katje becomes the Domina Nocturna, the goddess of night and darkness. Greta Erdmann, both by her name, "earth person," and her attributes on camera as a solid, procreative force, is conspicuously emphasized as an earth goddess. Bianca is indirectly referred to as Eurydice when Slothrop leaves her for the last time. And Solange, by her name, which is

a pun on "solace" and the French for "earth angel," completes this configuration. Yet there is another figure, the anonymous girl Slothrop meets in the guise of Pigman. Her mythological identity is never stated, but she bears a striking resemblance to Pöckler's daughter, Ilse, who is also a Persephone figure since she returns only in the Spring: the unnamed girl has also lost a father.

These mythological correspondences make sense, and the rationale for the order in which Slothrop meets them establishes a consistent pattern, which the text never enunciates but which Pynchon must be aware of, if it is viewed in terms of Robert Graves's study of Greek Mythology.² The connection between Pynchon and Graves may seemed strained, but his use of The White Goddess in V., as analyzed by Roger Henkle, demonstrates how Graves influenced Pynchon. While Henkle's discussion is about V., it is relevant to the women in Gravity's Rainbow:

Woven into the opening sentences of chapter three of V. is a reference to Robert Graves' The White Goddess Graves' thesis is that the White Goddess in her many manifestations became the prevailing myth of most ancient European cultures. She represented fertility and the mysteries of femininity; she was the source of the power of early rulers and the mistress of the culture's fortunes by reason of her influence over the seasons....

Graves associates the fall of Western culture with the debasement of the religious and poetic myths which the White Goddess embodied. If, he argues, the ascendancy of technology and science as pseudo-religions₃ is not soon arrested, destruction awaits Western man.

In Gravity's Rainbow, Pynchon has developed the character of the White Goddess into her separate manifestations, and it is quite possible that he has turned to Graves for

his data about her nature. The narrator emphasizes Greta Erdmann as an earth goddess; her name, her black dress, and her search for her daughter suggest that she is a Demeter figure. But Pynchon, as usual, has a trick prepared; and, as usual, warns the reader. Greta is quick to tell Slothrop that Erdmann is not her real name. If she is not Demeter, to which figure is she related? The answer is not apparent until a sequence narrated by Ensign Morituri in which he tells Slothrop about her mania for mutilating Jewish children. She claims to be Shekina, collecting the lost children of Isreal back to their spiritual mother. In this aspect, she is a goddess of death.

The correspondences become murky, however, for her daughter, Bianca, who ought to be a Persephone figure, is overtly equated with Eurydice when Slothrop, after leaving her, is criticized for his "Eurydice-obsession"(472). The actual Persephone figure is Ilse, Pökler's daughter who is allowed to return to him only in the spring. Actually, the relationships are even more complex than this, since Bianca and Ilse are closely paralleled: both are related through the pornographic movie which was connected with their conceptions. Bianca was conceived when Greta made it; and Ilse after her father saw it. Pökler even calls Ilse his "shadow child," and Greta her movie mother. Yet Ilse's real mother is Leni who later appears as Solange. If Ilse is the Persephone figure, then Solange should be the real Demeter manifestations.

Into this interweaving of the Demeter-Persephone-

Eurydice myths, Pynchon introduces Slothrop as an Orpheus figure. Pynchon's Orpheus, however, is slightly different from the traditional mythic hero, who is associated with a stringed instrument. Slothrop has discarded the ukele string, and Pynchon specifically refers to this in the description of Slothrop's desk. At the end of the novel, Slothrop is associated with the mouth instruments--the harmonica and the kazoo. While the narrator never makes the connections, Pynchon is manipulating the plot according to his own mythological structures, actually exfoliating the myths back to their pre-mythic origins. And he uses both Graves and Jung as a basis for his own mythologizing.

Graves's analysis of both the Demeter and the Orpheus myths reveals the basis for the complex interrelationships of the female characters, as well as the rationale for the order of Slothrop's seduction of each. Behind the White Goddess is the original mother Earth goddess, Demeter. Her daughter, Persephone, is only one of her manifestations; the other two are as Core and Hecate. Graves details the specifics of their relationships:

1. Core, Persephone, and Hecate were, clearly, the Goddesses in Triad as Maiden, Nymph, and Crone, at a time when only women practiced the mysteries of agriculture. Core stands for the green corn, Persephone for the ripe ear, and Hecate for the harvested corn.... But Demeter was the Goddess's general title, and Persephone's name has been given to Core which confuses the story.

.....
3. Core's abduction by Hades forms part of the myth in which the Hellenic trinity of gods forcibly marry the pre-Hellenic Triple-goddess....It refers to the male usurpation of the female agricultural mysteries in primitive tribes.⁴

Eurydice is introduced into this triad because she is another manifestation of Core-Persephone and actually becomes associated with Hecate as Queen of the Underworld. Graves refers to her as "the serpent grasping ruler of the Underworld."⁵ The mythological associations that link these characters similarly link, with exact precision, the women in Gravity's Rainbow. Since mythological identity is fluid, the personae can overlap or parallel each other. Katje is a Hecate figure whose next manifestation is Greta Erdmann. Ilse and Bianca are both Core and Persephone, and Bianca is also a Eurydice manifestation. They are daughter and manifestation of Demeter; hence they are related by analogy. If Bianca, however, is more closely a Persephone-Eurydice figure, then Ilse, the girl who returns in spring, is Core; and Graves insists that it is the Core figure who was originally abducted, thus strengthening her association with Ilse.

Given these symbolic equations, it is significant that Slothrop makes love to each manifestation, but in an order that is the reverse of their historical development: first to Hecate, then Persephone, and finally, in the brothel, to Solange-Demeter himself. The missing persona, Core, can be seen as part of Bianca's character, or more interestingly, perhaps as the nameless young girl who saves him from the police. Like Ilse, the other Core figure, she too has lost her father. The sequence of the relationships with Slothrop then adds a new dimension to the nature of his dispersal. As Graves notes, the myth

of the seduction of Persephone is about the usurpation by the phallic gods of the power of the female mysteries. Slothrop is literally working backwards to the source of that power and the consciousness that experienced it.

The nature of this process is also revealed by the modes of religious thought that are embodied by the women. In Understanding Other Cultures, Ina Corrine Brown examines the evolution of the religious sensibility.⁶ She posits four types of magical or religious sensibilities: the belief in an impersonal power, called dynamism, animatism, or pre-animism; the belief in purely spiritual beings, called animism; the belief in the multiplicity and hierarchy of gods, polytheism; and the belief in a monotheistic deity. Katje represents the female force, even in revolt, as shaped by the monotheistic God. Pynchon establishes this by interpolating the story of her ancestor, Franz, within the sequence that introduces her. Solange, as Demeter, represents the earliest phase of the polytheistic sensibility, but as a figure who predates the male gods, she is also the interface between polytheism and animism. In knowing her, Slothrop has begun to move into even earlier forms of psychic life.

According to Brown, the pre-animistic sensibility experienced life as pure energy.

This power is a kind of force that has often been likened to electricity. It is a sort of essence, a voltage with which the universe is believed to be charged. It can flow from one thing into another.⁷

The pre-animist experiences life as energy, physical energy.

There are no divisions between bodies, since bodies are themselves forms or loci of energy participating in the flow of energy. This energy is not attributed to a separate and abstract soul, which is a projection of the animistic phase; it is the object itself. This imagery is strikingly similar to Brown's body mysticism, and to Pynchon's portrayal of Slothrop's final state. Brown, by his argument, and Pynchon, by his mythological structure, seem to embrace the view that a return to this mode of being is modern man's only alternative to, and escape from, the projections of ego structure that inevitably threaten to destroy man as a biological being. The end of Book IV clearly implies that Slothrop's way is the alternative since his growing fragmentation is directly opposed to the reconstruction of the rocket and the flashback/flashforward to its initial firing and ultimate descent on the Orpheus theater. By the end of the novel, Slothrop appears only as pure sound, pure energy, and the final descent of the rocket is frozen by the concluding song.

Since it involves moving beyond the phallic gods, Slothrop's evolution into his final state of being is made possible by the women he meets. Katje seduces and deceives him. She represents not only the sado-masochism inherent in genital organization, but a psychology and religion that are based upon it. Her manipulation of Slothrop involves the use of Pavlov's techniques of stimulation and deprivation, as well as a Freudian analysis of his psychology. Pavlov is the

manipulator of the being as a machine; Freud is the psychologist of the monotheistic god's atheistic form, the ego. Both are rejected as deceptions since they are analogously related to Katje as the center of deceit.⁸

Greta begins Slothrop's initiation into the mythological dimensions of the novel. Appropriately, the text introduces mythic or quasi-mythic heroes and settings. Slothrop acquires two personae, Rocketman and Pigman, which have mythic overtones. Even Tchitcherine, with all the metal in his body, is a parody of the "man of steel." And a crucial episode takes place on the Anubis, the ship of aristocratic fools, named after the jackal god who is said to have taught the Egyptians the art of embalming. Since the dominant religious metaphors are polytheistic, the appropriate psychologist is Jung. And while Pynchon ultimately rejects Jungian psychology, its terms play a central role in the climactic episode in which Slothrop seduces Bianca. If Greta leads the initiation into the mythic realm and Solange directs him past it, Bianca releases the power and affords Slothrop the insight which enables him to confront Solange.

She does this in her persona of Eurydice, which introduces the association between Slothrop and Orpheus. The Orpheus myth can be read as a failed attempt to retrieve the sensibility that was displaced by the phallic gods. In Jungian terms, it is the quest to retrieve the lost anima that the animus repressed in its drive to gain control over the self and the world. In the sequence with Bianca, Pynchon reworks the myth. In the episode almost every image system

in the book, every myth of Kansas, is introduced by allusion in a dizzying swirl of associations and brought into confrontation with the mythological substructure which surfaces only once--and brings the others crashing down.

On the narrative level, Bianca is presented as the consummate product of the sensibility that produced the rocket. She is a product of the movies, and in reverse analogy is related to Pokler's movie-children, Ilse and the rocket. As the product of Western decadence, she is associated with the social and sexual order that implicitly allowed the rocket to be created as a projection of the inverted desires of the self. The technological and psychological imagery solidifies the equation of Bianca and Western decadence. The rocket=the phallus is the primary equation. But as Brown has explained:

The combined object (parents in coitus) becomes the mother with a penis, The father is castrated; the mother retains the penis.

And:

The woman is a penis. "The symbolic equation, Girl=Phallus." Aphrodite, the personification of femininity, is just a penis, a penis cut off and tossed into the sea; the penis which Father Sky lost in intercourse with Mother Earth. (L.B., 61-62)

The final equation, therefore, when based on the associations established by the union of the plot with the technological imagery, is Girl=Phallus=Rocket. Bianca, however, has another symbolic identity that exists within the mythic structure and that subverts an ego-based reading of the narrative. In this aspect, she is a parody of the rocket, and, as its human equivalent, she will offer and be the vehicle for the

insight that will lead Slothrop out of the enclosure of the novel itself.

In "knowing" her, Slothrop experiences the duplicity of her identity, and, even if only unconsciously, learns of himself; and realizing the artificiality of all identity, he begins to shed his own, thereby beginning the movement into mythic and pre-mythic modes of consciousness. The moment of orgasm with Bianca is the apex of his personal parabola when ego and genital organization move beyond the zero.

The episode is related in a style that mirrors the process it is relating. It begins in a strictly reportorial manner. The narrator relates the details with a seemingly factual precision: Bianca's pornographic attire, the physical contours of her body, and the lewdness of her advances. The illusion of reality is so smooth that the reader does not question it. He even accepts the narrator's intrusion into his character's mind, for that is an accepted convention; and the narrative illusion is sustained--if slightly strained. But then the narrator exceeds his limitations. By suddenly announcing that what he is telling about Slothrop's thoughts is not what he is thinking now, but what he will think later, he makes the reader acutely aware of the artificiality of the narrative illusion. By doing this, the narrative "reality" exposes its own fictionality and comes crashing down in a structural confusion that obliterates the distinctions among Pynchon, the narrator, and the characters, as well as the distinction between the

author and the reader as shapers of the text. The reader creates, or senses, patterns that he doesn't understand. He senses that it is a moment of transcendence and co-mingling.

APPROXIMATIONS, ANALOGUES, AND CREATIONS:

Then her face, round with baby-fat, enormous night-shadowed eyes comes swooping in as she kneels, guides his penis into her and settles, slow, excruciating till he fills her, stuffs her full....: The narrative is reportorial, the action insistently active. She "swoops," "guides," and "settles," controlling her actions, manipulating the situation. He "fills," and "stuffs" in an aggressive reaction. The verbs are actions controlled by the ego and the genitals. She swallows his penis and becomes the woman with the penis. "In oral copulation the vagina is a devouring mouth. The combined object (parents in coitus) becomes the mother with a penis"(L.B.,61). She will become, within the logic of ego, the woman with penis as well as the male-mother, the male with the vagina who will lead the boy through the initiation into his new identity. Bianca is the epitome of ego projections; the parents in coitus; the active receptacle. The construct that consumes, but the framework against which the self is defined...Mondaugen's grid. "The combined object: 'the tjurunga which symbolizes both the male and the female genital organ, the primal scene and combined parent.'...The stone (tjurunga) becomes the house of the Lord, Beth El....Like the altar, which is both post erected and table spread"(L.B.,60-61). She will be the altar for the sacrifice; the place for transubstantiation.

Now something, oh, kind of funny happens here.: The narrator loses his distance and assumes the colloquial tone that is identified with Slothrop's voice. They begin to merge: Bianca, Slothrop, and the narrator. The "funny" is a cue to the irony of the situation. How "funny?" The posing of the question distances the reader and makes him more aware of the text.

Not that Slothrop is really aware of it now, while it's going on--: The narrator will lead the reader into the character's mind, but differentiates between the two by knowing more than the character. The reader becomes aware of the artificiality of the text. The narrator will project into the future; the narrative is a projection. The text emphasizes its own fabrication of reality and makes the reader conscious of it. The progressive present of "going on" stresses the reality of the enactment to counter-

act the artificiality of the action. All ego-actions possess this same ambiguity: all acts by persons are fictions of the same order. In the ambiguity of the alienation-identification process, the reader confuses the levels of reality.

but later on, it will occur to him that he was: There is a shift in temporal setting: is what we are reading past projections or future remembrances; time become relative to experience. The character of Slothrop will persist; but the question is implied: will he experience the same kind of remembering? The action is passive. Will the type of remembering be of a new order that receives, in contrast to the ego verbs of action and manipulation, the reality of existence, of actions, without forcing meanings upon them? Is this the true mode of remembering--unconscious relationships perceived passively, perceived as they are?

--this may sound odd,: Reiteration of the ironic possibilities. The reader is distanced from any possible identification that may have occurred by accepting the illusion of being within the character's mind.

but he was somehow, actually, well, inside his own cock.: The active "was" is really passive. Slothrop is drawn into his genitals. Identification with the experience of sex is counteracted by the hesitancy of the narrator which distinguishes him from Slothrop. The colloquialism of the hesitation, however, counteracts this distinction. The confusion of the locus personae emphasizes the action and its symbolic meaning, not the actor. Ego symbolism: the identity of the being with the penis. We identify with the father's penis in the mother's womb; Bianca is the mother with the penis. Redundancy makes us aware of the pre-existing situation: as "girl" she is already the penis. All action by the person is repetition compulsion, centripetally cyclic.

If you can imagine such a thing.: The reader is reminded of the separation between himself and the character, but the identification of self with penis is precisely the illusion that we share with Slothrop.

Yes, inside the metropolitan organ entirely.: The phrase contains no verb; it is the assertion of a position--the real place of the ego. And the ego is metropolitan, a city, the center of commerce and commodity. Identity is the first ownership and establishes the paradigm for all other property. But identity is the name given to the many persons within the one. "Every person, then, is many persons; a multitude made into one person; a corporate body"(L.B.,147). In addition "Psychoanalysis shows the sexual organization of the body physical to be a political organization; the body is a body politic"(L.B.,126). The city is a political structure projected by the ego upon

internal and external existence. The tyranny of the ego is projected and transformed into the tyranny of the city--the Buenos Aires that erects boundaries and destroys what it cannot define. The city must own its commodities and is the center from which directives are issued; but the issuing of orders is a non-action; there is no verb--it is habit, not decision. The non-action, the repetition-compulsion of the city is colonialization, the making of the other into the servile pattern of the self.

all other colonial tissue forgotten and left to fend for itself. This is the moment of liberation. Consciousness, being absorbed in the gratification of the self, being absorbed in time, allows the rest of the body to be free. The concentration of the ego awareness upon the satisfaction of desires for mastery leaves the body free to experience a new infinity of possibility.

...He is enclosed. The passive state of being trapped; Ego=penis, the penis in the womb; therefore, the ego is in the womb. But to lose the penis in the womb is to be castrated, to lose the ego. The womb becomes the tomb. Slothrop returns to the tomb and experiences the possibility of re-birth. "The history of mankind goes from the natural cave to the artificial cave, from the underground cave to the above-ground underground"(L.B., 39). "The cave is the self-enclosure of the self; self-imprisonment; in a shell--the shellfishness of selfishness, the cave of separation and the self"(L.B.,44). The simple subject-verb-complement sentence is laden with expectancy of the explosion out of enclosure. The "is" asserts equation; he is the shell. The sentence forms a closed circle that entraps, but it also provides a stable, circular, linguistic parapet from which to gaze into the centripetal abyss of associations and meanings, and it struggles against being itself drawn into them. It distances and pulls inward. It also reveals what every sentence is--an assertion of meaning that intrudes into our consciousness and penetrates reality: the sentence is the penis. "Intercourse is what goes on in every sentence. In every sentence the little word 'is' is the copula, the penis or bridge"(L.B.,252).

Everything is about to come, come incredibly, and he's helpless here in this exploding emprise...red flesh echoing...and extraordinary sense of waiting to rise.... The reader's expectancy is increased as the sentence begins, hesitates, and breaks into fragments. There is more than Slothrop's own orgasm involved here: "Everything is about to come." There will be an ejaculation of structures, meanings, and consciousness. There is a hint of the magical in the word "emprise" which is a romantic-chivalric term for undertaking. The strangeness of the word distances the reader from the event as the rush of words, the sexuality of verbal crescendo, draws him into it. The crescendo, the "waiting to rise"

associates the act with the last stage of the rocket-firing as it builds up enough thrust to break earth's gravitational pull. Equated, intercourse and lift off are mutual parodies; the text is becoming incorporated into the technological image structure. But to rise when one is already near the peak is to go over the apex and begin descent, to experience possibility without probability.

She posts, his pretty horsewoman, face to the overhead, quivering up and down, thightop muscles strung hard as cable, baby breasts working out the top of her garment.: Return to the objective narration results in pornography and pieces of people: she is tendon and breast. Objective narration is a pornography of being: a metonymic displacement of life. "Up and down" implies a repetition-compulsion of genital organization. Muscles strung "hard as cable" implies a mechanical aspect that is associated with the rocket, which contains within its head the chemical Imipolex-G whose molecules erect into long, cable-like chains. The girl, capturing the penis displays it to Slothrop by revealing her breasts. (Breasts=penis, L.B., 25).

Slothrop pulls Bianca to him by her nipples and bites each one very hard.: In erotic panic, the castrated seeks to recapture the penis, to reclaim the active ego. The verbal mode is the active voice, the actions are aggressions, and the character is identified by his name.

Sliding her arms around his neck, hugging him, she starts to come, and so does he, their own flood taking him up then out of his expectancy, out the eye of tower's summit and into her with a singular detonation of touch.: The sentence begins in a purely reportorial style that distances the reader from any identification so he will be aware of the linguistic shift from narrative to symbolic structure. The narrative segment of the sentence is composed of the active verbs associated with Bianca; for the first time in the episode she begins to hold on to him knowing that his orgasm is merely symbolic for another going-out-of, that the ejected sperm is also the ejected self. As incarnate symbol of ego structure, she attempts to hold him within her power. But the anecdotal level of the sentence is subverted as it becomes overtly metaphoric. The fulfillment of his waiting takes him beyond location into an unidentified space, out of eye at tower's summit. The tower is ostensibly the penis-rocket; he-it is fired by a "singular detonation of touch." It is also the tower of the tarot, later to be associated with Slothrop's pre-mythic phase. "The tower graphically describes the gift of Lucifer. His light is the fire of enlightenment which descends like a flash of lightning, destroying everything in its path which is not compatible with its own nature....[It is a] symbol of the destruction of [a material empire based on the values of

human society] by the forces of the unconscious."⁹ The "singular touch" is an image from mathematics in which a singular point partakes of infinity.¹⁰ The mythic image of the tower struck by lightning and the infinity of the singular touch subverts the metonymic into the symbolic and alludes to an alternative to the penis-rocket.

Announcing the void, what could it be but the kingly voice of the Aggregat itself? The narrator, intruding his question, distances himself from the character and implies that their interpretations of the event may differ. The narrator, seeking meaning, reads the ego-technological structure and misses the metaphoric significance of his own narration. He sees the tower as the Aggregat, the rocket-penis, the king, the ego-king within the self. But this is a question and calls attention to its own uncertainty. What announces the void could be another voice--the voice of the void itself.

Somewhere in their lying-still are her heart, buffeting, a chickadee in the snow, her hair, draping and sheltering both their faces, little tongue at his temples and eyes on and on, silk legs rubbing his flanks, cool leather of her shoes against his legs and ankles, shoulderblades rising like wings whenever she hugs him. The style simulates post-coital relaxation as the sentence expands in easy rhythms. Emotional location is vague, "somewhere," but the details are exact. Events are clear, meanings are not. She is active; she covers him with her hair. Her hair is a shroud, but also a cocoon. She is a winged creature, a projection of psyche, the anima.

What happened back there? The narrator acknowledges the problem of understanding the event; a further cue to his misunderstanding of the text.

Slothrop thinks he might cry. Slothrop does not think thoughts, he thinks actions. There is a hint at a new mode of thinking, a different reality of thought.

They have been holding each other. She's been talking about hiding out.

"Sure. But we'll have to get off sometime, Swinemünde, someplace."

"No. We can get away. I'm a child, I know how to hide. I can hide you too." The wish to escape is presented in two modes. Hiding is an ego wish: to be covered, to be masked. That is her alternative, her mode. Slothrop realizes that that is further entrapment, an illusion. To accept it is to accept the reality of time and place. She can hide him only if she can enclose him. His rejection of the offer is the other mode.

He knows she can. He knows. Right here, right now,

under the make-up and the fancy underwear, she exists, love, invisibility....; His knowing is a different psychological state than thinking; it is seeing reality. "He knows" is repeated and suggests this difference in denotation. He sees that Bianca has another meaning under the ego structures and ego perversions, another meaning that contradicts them: existence, love, invisibility. The abstract nouns are appositives to "she" and the verb "exists" asserts the reality of such "abstraction."

For Slothrop this is some discovery.; Slothrop sees the counter-meaning inherent in Bianca's symbolic existence. Discovery is recovery; like the discovery of the benzene ring, it is pre-mythic interaction.

But: The counterattack begins.

her arms about his neck are shifting now, apprehensive.; She attempts to reassert her control, but he is becoming elusive. The prelude to departure; her instinctive awareness of his self-discovery-recovery.

For good reason.; The narrator reassumes control over the situation by implying that he again knows more than the characters. The narrative re-collects itself. But the reader realizes that the narrator is unable to deal with the significance of his text from which Slothrop is about to disentangle himself.

Sure he'll stay for a while, but eventually he'll go, and for this he is to be counted, after all, among the Zone's lost.; The narrator comments as manipulator of the text, but as an unreliable interpreter. Slothrop is lost to the Zone, the zone of manipulation, the zone of the novel, the genital zone. As Brown observes: the solution to the problem of identity is to get lost.¹¹

So when he disentangles himself, it is extravagantly. He creates a bureaucracy of departure, inoculations against forgetting, exit visas stamped with love-bites... but coming back is something he's already forgotten about. Straightening his bow tie, brushing off the satin lapels of his jacket, buttoning up his pants, back in uniform of the day, he turns his back on her, and up the ladder he goes. The last instant their eyes were in touch is already behind him...

Her look now--this deepening arrest--has already broken Slothrop's seeing heart; has broken and broken....
(G.R., 469-71)

Within the anecdotal register, Bianca is lost to Slothrop. As a symbol for ego structure and, by extension,

for the structure of the novel, her disappearance and death signals the end of Slothrop's old mode of identity and the novel's conventional mode of making sense. The narrator concludes the Bianca episode with a diatribe about the American compulsion to lose what it had, to accept the artificial substitute for the real thing. The next chapter begins conventionally but soon fragments into an independent subchapter, "Ensign Morituri's Story." His story, although introjected, still retains a connection to the main plot line because it is about Greta. By the fourth book, however, the introjections have little, if any, literal connection to the plot.

On a symbolic level, however, Bianca, or rather what she symbolizes, is retrieved--she fulfills the promise implied by the name of the ship they are on, the Anubis, that there will be both death and rebirth. It is a retrieval of the mythic sensibility, and analogously the text contains an increasing number of mythic references and patterns. Pynchon alludes to this need for retrieving the mythic in the concluding passages of the Bianca episode.

...But there is this Eurydice-obsession, this bringing back out of..."Why bring her back? Why try? It's only the difference between the real boxtop and the one you draw for Them." No. How can you believe that? It's what They want him to believe, but how can that be? No difference between a boxtop and its image, all right, their whole economy is based on that...but she must be more than an image, a product, a promise to pay....(G.R., 472)

The need to bring her back is the need to retrieve the

sensibility that would destroy technology and the economics of commodity; and the cartel cannot allow that. It will permit only the facsimiles, the parodies of reality, the illusions that are substitutes for real existence; as the embodiment of ego structuration, the cartel can allow only other projections like rockets, movies, and technological systems.

According to Graves, the Orpheus myth is about the failure to retrieve the sensibility embodied in the early female cults that precede technology and male domination. But Slothrop, unconsciously, and Pynchon, intentionally, have already changed the myth; and one altered detail signifies both the nature of the change that will occur in Slothrop's consciousness, and the emergence of the counter-image cluster within the structures of the text. Pynchon specifically emphasizes that Slothrop, ascending the ladder as he leaves Bianca, does not look back. And although Slothrop is an Orpheus figure, he does not commit Orpheus's fatal crime. While he leaves and loses the Bianca of the metonymic register, he regains her as a personification of the mythic sensibility, the lost anima, and "love."

The vision which can synthesize the diverse elements and reading of the same text, and which can see loss and recovery as one, is the same vision which is revealed in Slothrop's dispersal. The mythic dimensions of personality and the consciousness that can experience them can be

retrieved only by the destruction, or the transcendence, of ego-dominated sensibility. Experiencing the artificiality of the old ego order, Slothrop begins to discard it; and by not looking back to that order, he begins to retrieve an even older mode of perception. Since this mode cannot be described in words, the only clue to its recovery is the detail that Slothrop does not look back when leaving Bianca. By not looking back, he begins to see, but in a new mode, by seeing with the heart. As Slothrop leaves, the narrator comments on "her look now--this deepening arrest--has already broken Slothrop's seeing heart" (G.R., 471). This new mode is experienced only by the broken, by those who have cracked the shell of selfishness, the shell of ego. From the old mode of perception, from the perspective established by the anecdotal structure, the breaking leads to a scattering, a diffusion, and a loss of specific location; but from the metaphoric perspective, the breaking is an opening-up: "Open is broken. There is no breakthrough without breakage" (L.B., 185). The breakage is also a scattering, but the scattering of the seeds of new possibilities. Brown speaks of Dionysus as the fertility and vegetation god, but, as Graves has noted, Dionysus and Orpheus are manifestations of the same force. "The sower soweth the word. Dionysus broken and scattered is seed scattered. But if it die it bringeth forth much fruit. The body is made whole by being broken" (L.B., 189).

The narrative of Slothrop's dispersal follows this pattern of regression from ego-dominated to mythic and

finally pre-mythic or pre-animistic mental states. The retrieval of the symbolic Eurydice signals the emergence into the mythic from the ego-dominated consciousness; the later encounter with Solange signals the transformation from the mythic to the pre-animistic mode of existence. The specifics of the transformation and the nature of Slothrop's actions within each phase further elucidate the aspects of each mode of consciousness. The process of transformation can only be fully grasped, however, by re-examining its development, as Slothrop himself can only understand the action on the Anubis in retrospect. His role as Orpheus is never overtly stated within the text because that aspect of Slothrop's being escapes verbalization. He retains, for a while, the role of Rocketman; but from that identity, which is a comic-book parody of mythic personality, he evolves, through the transitional phase of his Pigman identity, into a truly mythic being. Only after he has shed his sacrificial identity of Pigman, however, does the text allude to him as an Orpheus figure. The characteristics of Slothrop's actions in this last phase reveal aspects of the mythic imagery that eddied throughout the Bianca-Solange episodes.

By the beginning of Book IV, Slothrop has become a nature divinity. Wandering about the countryside, he is difficult, if not impossible, to locate; and his presence is revealed only by the sound of his harmonica. He had found the instrument while wandering in the mountains, and the scene which describes him reveals the nature of his new mode of consciousness. It also reveals another aspect

of the Bianca-Solange episodes that had remained latent until this point. Having found the harmonica, Slothrop places it in a stream to clean it. Returning to the creek, he notices:

Through the flowing water, the holes of the old Hohner [he] found are warped one by one, squares being bent like notes, a visual blues being played by the clear stream. There are harpmen and dulcimer players in all the rivers, wherever water moves.
(G.R., 622)

In his mythic incarnation, the Orpheus-Slothrop experiences a world populated by nature daimons whose existence is the movement of natural forces. His consciousness embodies a mode of perception that can hear the notes of the visual patterns the square mouth—holes form as their images are bent by the moving waters. He perceives not the laws of refraction but the existence of natural energy, the magic of universal being.

This mode of perception is beyond even the mythic sensibility; and Pynchon stresses arcane details to emphasize the point. Slothrop's harmonica is not a stringed instrument but a mouth organ, a pipe instrument. This detail refines, or redefines, the nature of Slothrop's identity and illustrates the process Pynchon is delineating. The harp is associated with the later development of the Orpheus myth; the earliest myths, according to Graves, have him playing "rude pipes, not the civilized lyre."¹² Pynchon's inclusion of this detail illustrates Slothrop's movement into the twilight realm when the human psyche first emerged into the earliest mythic phase from the

pre-animistic consciousness. This early-Orpheus identity is the last that Slothrop will have before he totally dissolves as a character from the narrative structure only to reappear occasionally as a vague being, a force that sporadically asserts itself within the work without interacting with its metonymic structures.

The specific attributes of this force, this mode of consciousness, cannot be related within the metonymic register that is controlled by the narrator. They irrupt into the text in the metaphors and allegories. Such a bifurcation of the text is analogous to the division between the conscious and the unconscious. To hold this view opens one to the criticism that a text cannot have an unconscious and that, therefore, the narrator is constructing both levels of significance. Such criticism, however, ignores an implication of Pynchon's rejection of Freud. Here again, Lacan's analysis of the unconscious is more useful. If, as Lacan argues, the unconscious is not instinctual but that the instincts are instinctual, and that the unconscious consists of language or similarly semiotically-structured systems based upon the conscious elements of language that have been repressed, then a text can be said to have, within its own structure, a repressed, or unconscious content that shapes the narrative surface and that appears on that surface only in a distorted form.

In this sense the allegories that appear in Book IV are the revelations of the unconscious of the narrative,

the slips that reveal what is really happening to the central character, the vehicles for Pynchon's revelation of his vision that is beyond the myths of Kansas.

Notes to Chapter Four

¹The chief proponent of this last view is Edward Mendelson in "Gravity's Encyclopedia," in Mindful Pleasures. He sees Slothrop's dispersal and his loss of language as a linguistic metaphor for man's tragic dilemma. "To separate oneself from language, in an attempt to be free from its imposed order, is to enter a world of chaos and vacancy. This tragic realization is at the ideological center as well as on the stylistic surface of the book" (p. 169). He sees language as a paradigm for all social structures. It enables man to create civilization, but since language is ultimately based upon the displacement of the reality to which it refers, it traps man in an illusory system. He cannot live without it, yet it renders his life a deception. From such a perspective, Slothrop can only be viewed as a victim, like all the other victims in the novel. Such a view, however, must ignore the counter codes that I discuss in chapter five, visions of a possibility of salvation.

²Robert Graves, The Greek Myths, 2 vols. (Middlesex, Eng.: Penguin Books, Inc., 1955).

³Roger B. Henkle, "Pynchon's Tapestries on the Western Wall," in Pynchon: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed Edward Mendelson (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall,

1978), pp. 99-100.

⁴Graves, vol. 1, sec. 24, pp. 92-93.

⁵Graves, vol. 1, sec. 33, p. 128.

⁶Ina Corrine Brown, Understanding Other Cultures (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1963), ch. 8.

⁷Ina C. Brown, p. 123.

⁸Katje, as manipulator and manipulated, is clearly an analogue of the narrator himself, and establishes a connection among deceit, narration, and desire. This calls into question the validity of the narrative itself, and is one of the hints that the narrative's assessment of Slothrop's dispersal is open to question.

⁹Alfred Douglas, The Tarot (New York, 1972; rpt. Middlesex, Eng.: Penguin Books, 1974), pp. 42, 45.

¹⁰The "singular point" occurs throughout GR. William Slothrop lived during a period when America reached a singularity; the lightning-struck experience it. Lance Ozier offers a concise explanation of the concept in "The Calculus of Transformation: More Mathematical Imagery in Gravity's Rainbow," in Twentieth Century Literature, eds. George Levine and David Leverenz, 21 (May 1975), 193-209.

A singularity is a point which, though an element of the function like other points, nevertheless possesses a property...that makes it secretly strange; one cannot tell the point is different from the rest until one tries to take the first derivative of the function there. Likewise, the characteristic that an infinite number of tangents to the curve can be constructed at a singular point gives it a potential for an infinity that other points of the function do not possess. In the novel's

terms the implications of these mathematical conditions would be that at a "singular" point in a character's experience his (or her) life would be indeterminate (not determined or controlled) and would partake of an infinity or eternity beyond the material world... (209).

¹¹In all of Pynchon's works, those small instances of connection and kindness, those graveful gestures of humanity occur only among the lost. Ilse is saved from the Nazis by getting lost in the network of railroad tracks that cover Europe. As Brown argues, only by losing the self can we find ourselves.

¹²Graves, vol. 1, sec. 28, p. 114.

V. Anecdote, Allegory, and Apocalypse

Gravity's Rainbow is not just a purely self-referential work; nor is it only a portrait of modern man's depravity and mutual subjugation. It not only creates a fictive reality to mirror, analyze, and condemn the "non-fictional" reality in which we live, it offers a solution to the problems posed and created by our reality, a solution that is based on an external vision that establishes itself as a higher moral authority than the work; and Pynchon seeks to convince us of the higher reality of that vision. The difficulty of doing this is that the vision is ultimately non-verbal; it is a mode of experience and perception. To attempt to convey the experience of the vision, the verbal elements of the work must be made to point to the vision while simultaneously altering our perceptions so that, at least in our experience of the book if not in our lives, we begin to perceive a mode of being contrary to those by which we ordinarily make sense of reality.

As Brown argues in Love's Body, for a work to go beyond itself, it must continually subvert its logical sense into nonsense. Pynchon does this with the conventions of the genre of the novel. By aping and parodying other

art forms, novels, films, comic books, dance hall songs, and by using information drawn from his other novel, V., he attempts to break down the distinctions between texts. He also attempts to break down the distinction between the reader and the text. For every narrative structure there is a counter-structure which subverts it. To make sense of the work, not only must we begin to perceive it differently, we must bring patterns of information to the work which are primarily external to it. Thus, by destroying the boundaries between elements within the novel, and by inducing a mild state of paranoia in the reader, the novel attempts to destroy the boundary between fictive and non-fictive realities.

Paradoxically, the blurring of intra-fictional elements and their analogous intersections create the disturbing disjunctions of the narrative surface. As any reader knows, the blending of characters, plot, themes, and images makes the book extremely difficult to follow from our usual perspectives. Reading, however, is an ego function, and we learn to incorporate the book into our conventional world of sense--usually by somewhere in book two. The narrative structure, contrary to first impressions, actually leads the reader to the discovery of sense; it rigorously delineates the separate plot lines by separate chapters; and although it often confuses fantasy and fictive reality, it is usually quite clear whose fantasy it is and how it relates

to the particular character. Also, after establishing the various image complexes, it remains consistent within them. Finally, it establishes a central character, Tyrone Slothrop, who mediates the seemingly chaotic fragments for us. That is why, with his emergence as the central character in book two, the text becomes easier to follow. His existence, his perceptions, and his consciousness provide a framework that protects the reader from having to confront the chaos of the work. In a profound manner, he is like the novel itself, which, as a literary form, has traditionally mediated between the reader and experience, and which, by its fictive illusion, has helped us make sense of the more ambiguous aspects of existence, of our knowing-not-why. Thus, in books one through three, Slothrop is the scapegoat not only within the realm of the fiction; he is the buffer whose paranoic search for connections frees the reader from a direct confrontation with the awesome problem of making sense.

By the conclusion of the first chapter of book four, however, Slothrop as the scapegoat for both the cartel and the reader, has disappeared, and so has any conventional principle of coherence. Without his mediation, the text literally fragments into a series of disjointed fantasies, whose true locus persona we cannot identify, into anecdotes, which have assimilated whatever is left of the narrative, and into allegories, whose meanings seem to contradict their

context. The problem for the reader is now to determine what actually is happening and to establish the nature of the relationships between anecdote and allegory.

A solution to the problem may be found if, assuming that our understanding of Pynchon's vision is correct, we assess the problems an author writing from such a perspective would confront, and how, if he were to remain consistent within his vision, he could solve them artistically. If Pynchon views traditional narrative structures as ego-artifacts, plots as plots, then it would be consistent for him to view his own narrative line as trapped by overdetermined cause and effect, as predetermined by conscious intention. The dominant theme of paranoia, the incredible number of coincidences, and the insistence on historical sequence are only a few of the text's aspects that reinforce this view of the text as an ego product that shares all of the characteristics of its maker. Any structure, therefore, that operates in the narrative must be a perversion of his vision, which must remain undefined within the text. If it should appear, it could only be in a parodic form as it is twisted through the ego-structuring process.

The only other way the vision could surface would be in the form of pure metaphor, or metaphoric sequences which seem to intrude into the narrative and which elude the narrator's ability to make sense of them. Such sequences

begin to occur with increasing frequency in book four. At one point Slothrop becomes a crossroads on which a man is hanged, and the narrator, who usually includes many possible implications of an action, remains markedly silent about the significance of this one. In fact, he never even seems to notice that all the elements are taken from the Tarot.

In essence, book four isolates the polarities of language that have always been a part of the text, of any text: the metonymic and metaphoric poles. The metonymic, associated with the chain of desire of the ego, the contiguous displacement of signifiers that constitute both the self and the text, is associated with the narrative line. Hence, the metonymic register is the foundation for the many anecdotes. As Lacan notes, the significance of the metonymic function lies in the displacement from the repressed significance.¹ Hence, the significance of the anecdotes is in their distortion of the vision, of the reality Pynchon sees. The metaphoric, on the other hand, is associated with the return of the repressed, and its significance lies in the manifest signifier. The metaphoric register supports the allegories that erupt into the text. Here there is a direct revelation beyond the control of the narrator, Brown's silent image that speaks.

We can now see the reason for Pynchon's complex narrative techniques. By distancing himself from the narrator, he can equate the narrator with ego-structuration, which he,

as author, can disrupt to present his vision. Then, by depriving the narrator of his central character, he forces him, in panic, to fill the narrative void. The narrator's predicament is like the analytic situation in which the analyst's silence forces the patient to fill the silence by repeating the verbal structures of his neurosis, which then appear in more extreme forms. This also accounts for the more radical bifurcation of the metonymic and metaphoric registers in book four. Without his central character, the narrator begins to retell the story, to recapture the text, in order to make sense of what happens to Slothrop. Pynchon has been criticized for being unable to end his novels, but such criticism misses the point by ignoring the difference between the narrator's compulsion and Pynchon's very carefully orchestrated conclusion.

To comprehend book four it is necessary to distinguish between the metonymic anecdotes which are displacements of the vision, and the metaphoric allegories that are revelations of it. This task is made more complex, however, since many of the allegories contain imagery that the narrator later tries to incorporate into his anecdotes. The sequence which describes Slothrop as the crossroads, for example, since it never mentions the fact that the hanged man and the magician are Tarot cards, can be read as a countercode that actually reveals what is happening to Slothrop. The narrator, on the other hand, seems to

be satirizing man's desire to make a profit and society's need to control everything. In a latter sequence, the narrator attempts to read Weissman's Tarot, and it becomes pure parody. Weissman's significator, the card which establishes his present condition, is the Knight of Swords. It is crossed by the Queen of Swords. "Perhaps himself, in drag," the narrator comments (748). Ironically, the parody is accurate, but only because ego-organization and its attendant perversions have already made him into a parody of his true being.

Book four, then, may be seen as an attempt by the narrator to recapture the text, and the first chapter actually attempts to write the book again from the beginning. The narrator even includes many of the elements of the opening chapter of the novel: the strange sound of Pirate Prentice's plane parallels the original screaming across the sky; Pirate himself is the first character in the book; and the "green-house canopy" of his cockpit is an overt reference to the greenhouse in which he raises his huge bananas. Both chapters actually open with a semi-fantasy: Pirate's vision of the evacuation and Slothrop's of Bette Davis and Margaret Dumont being disturbed by a kazoo player.

Since it is the nature of the ego to project structures, book four is compulsive in its repeated attempts to retell the original story. This compulsion generates the many

anecdotes, but the ego/narrator really has only one story to tell, and the anecdotes become thematically repetitious. The last sequence of the novel, in fact, is an old story, the story of the incident which set the narrative in motion: the firing of the 00000 Rocket. It is as if the narrator were becoming exhausted in his attempt to create an artificial order to subdue events into a conventional sense. Pynchon, however, uses this technique to convey his vision and make us participate, even if only for the moment, in it. The repetition of the anecdotes tends to overfeed our logical systems of order and category; and the behavioristic, computer-like ego begins to break down. The ego functions, overfed with possible connections, are subverted into an experience of the alternative mode of perception.

From this perspective, then, we can understand the narrator's description of Slothrop in book four. Having moved beyond the realm of ego-structure, Slothrop can no longer be dealt with in an ego-artifact. It can represent him only in the terms the ego knows. It can represent him as a total nothing, as in the Mingeborough episode; or from a Freudian perspective, it can analyze his unresolved Oedipal conflicts; or from a Jungian perspective it attempts to present him as a parodic, comic book character.

Although the narrator can no longer deal with Slothrop, Pynchon allows the counter codes, which can, to emerge several times in the form of allegories. These allegories,

as embodiments and direct manifestations of the pre-mythic sensibility, stand in opposition to the anecdotes. The three principle allegories, the episodes of the hanged man, the lightning-struck undertaker, and the lost lemming, appear significantly at the beginning, the middle, and the end of book four. They are all based upon counter codes that remain unmentioned by the narrative within the specific sequence and that subvert their narrative meaning. They range from the purely fantastic to the vaguely possible, but the emphasis in each is on the implausibility or absurdity of what happens. Each is so self-contained and yet so unintelligible within its context that it demands to be read as an allegory with some external point of reference. The anecdotes, the stories of Byron the immortal light bulb, of the two kamikazes, and of the manager of the Orpheus Theater, to mention but a few, are parodies of ego-structure and therefore related to it. They analyze the perversions of our reality rather than embody the alternative vision. They are in essence further analytical ego-structures that attempt to assimilate and integrate the vagrant fragments of the novel. They, too, range from the fantastic to the possible, but here the emphasis is on the reality of what they depict and on their relationship to conventional conceptions of reality. The episode of Byron, for example, at first appears to be an allegory; yet, as the fantastic elements are overpowered by the satirical thrust of the story, it becomes apparent that this is a commentary on how we are all

trapped by technological-political systems. Since the allegories and anecdotes are based upon different linguistic structures, they reveal stylistic differences as well. The allegories always point to an external vision; the anecdotes are commentaries on existing situations. The allegories are glimmers of nonsense, evanescent eruptions, explosions of the counter codes. They embody a realm of flexible and alogically structured meanings that take us from the written phrase to unspoken words and inexpressible realities. The anecdotes are sustained narrative structures which reveal an ordering principle that conveys a logical theme.

Besides manifesting characteristics of Pynchon's vision, the allegories reveal the nature of Slothrop's dissolution; and each employs the subversion of a dominant narrative or technological image-structure to reveal that other reality. The allegory of the hanged man uses the principles of correspondence inherent in the Tarot to counteract the ego process of banalizing and using mythic insights for technological purposes. The allegory of the lightning-struck undertaker uses a mythic reading of the calculus to reveal the perversion of the mathematics of the rocket. And the allegory of the lost-lemming-retrieved subverts the image structures based on physics and the second law of thermodynamics.

The allegory of the hanged man is climactic because it presents the final dissolution of Slothrop. Up to this point Slothrop has become "vaguer" as a character, but he is still

identifiable. He is plucking the "albatross" of ego, but has yet to complete the process. In the allegory, Slothrop, already a semi-mythic figure, becomes a crossroads on which a hanging is to take place. The hanged man has an orgasm at the touch of "gnädige Frau Death," and one drop of sperm drips to the ground in the exact center of the crossroad, becoming overnight a mandrake root. Soon a magician, his own "Heiligenschien rippling infrared to ultraviolet," comes by with his starving dog. He ties the dog to the root, stuffs his own ears, and offers the dog some bread. The dog lunges for the bread, tears out the root which emits its lethal shriek, and falls dead on the ground. The magician takes the root home and leaves it overnight with some money which by morning has multiplied tenfold. Along come the authorities who are both worried about the effects on the economy of this curious form of counterfeiting and curious to know how it is done.

Several aspects of the allegory are striking. It reveals a new dimension of Slothrop's being, by having him become a vehicle for allegory, an incarnate metaphor. His new consciousness allows him to exist as a polysemic entity that embodies the pre-animistic consciousness. The allegory contrasts these aspects of his new identity to the attempt by the magician and the authorities to reduce the myth to manipulative, and manipulatable, economics. The new identity is achieved by the sacrifice of the self since Slothrop is both the crossroad and the hanged man. Thus,

the allegory concludes the process of sacrifice that began when Slothrop met Solange while in his pig incarnation. Here the sacrifice is conducted on the purely symbolic level in contrast to Marvy's literal re-enactment.

The exact nature of the process is hidden in the symbolism of the allegory, and is revealed by the countercode. In this case the countercode is based on the Tarot. The narrator, when he reads Weissman's Tarot, specifically refers to A. E. Waite's method of interpretation, but Alfred Douglas offers an equally appropriate interpretation of the cards. He interprets the Hanged Man card by noting two associations it contains: "The Hanged Man brings to mind the self-sacrifice of Odin on the World-tree, the symbolic death of Dionysus in the Orphic mysteries."² The Tarot imagey, therefore, implies that the only proper sacrifice is the sacrifice of the self, i.e. the ego. A further reading of the Tarot symbolism expands on the nature of the sacrifice.

The Hanged Man is one of the strangest of the Tarot images. It cannot be found in any orthodox Christian symbology, and is one of the clearest indications that the Tarot trumps were designed to illustrate some non-Christian set of beliefs.

The card is numbered twelve...a combination of the numbers one and two, signifying the interaction of unity with duality which gives birth to a third dimension. The perils of number eleven have been resolved, therefore it is a symbol of renewal and salvation.

The hero...becomes agonizingly aware that he is not one person, but only a part of a greater whole....

In doing so, he realizes that in casting himself off from the solid ground of his past consciousness, he can only trust that a larger power will support him.... In order to proceed he must have courage to let go of all that he has learnt, voluntarily releasing the grip

of intellect, and allow the deeper forces within to take the reins.

To deliberately float oneself on the secret tides of the unconscious implies a deliberate reversal of the teachings and values of the outer world....²

The description of the card is astonishingly appropriate to Slothrop and even to the patterns of reversal that haunt the text, but Pynchon's allegory is even more specific about the process. It explicitly connects death with genital arousal; it also implies that the self-sacrifice entails the sacrifice of genital organization. Once having relinquished ego and genital organization, the self moves into an unstructured mode of being that partakes of unity, renewal, and salvation.

The literal reading of the allegory would interpret it merely as an example of the transformation of myth into technology, and the Tarot reading of the card of the Magician offers further insights into the nature of this process. In the story the Magician takes the mythic reality and employs it for economic ends. The Magician in the Tarot is "Hermes Trismegistos...supreme god of the Gnosis who is also a trickster."³ He is also the emblem of the individual identity.

He is assigned the number one, the number of positive action, individuality and creativity. The Magician is forceful and self-confident, and stands alone.

He can perhaps be seen as Prometheus...[and] can be said to refer to the time when man first attained self-consciousness, "stealing" it from the unconscious.⁴

The Tarot symbolism reveals the psychological process by which myth is reduced to technology and economics. It is the process by which the ego usurps the power of the id that was once dominant when the human was an integrated part of the larger world. The interaction of the allegorical and

the literal structures further reveals the ego as the basis of the cartel since the Magician, as symbol of the ego, uses the mythic reality for economic gain.

The allegories are important, however, not only for their latent content, but for the very process by which the content is expressed. They cannot be consciously understood by analyzing simple causal relationships between their narrative elements, nor by ego-perceived associations between them and other structures within the text. They have an unspecified, emotive significance that can be explained rationally only by reference to external structures in which the unknown meaning begins to undermine the contextual significance of the known meaning. Quite simply, the allegories make sense only when we begin to perceive symbolically and begin to discard the distinction between this and other books, between the book and our unconscious reaction to it. The style of the allegorical form, then, embodies the symbolic consciousness of the pre-animistic mind which perceived experience as analogues or mutually interacting loci of energy.

This new consciousness partakes in the natural opulence of energy that has always existed but that we have hidden from ourselves. Pynchon, therefore, concludes the sequence with another vision that is meant to stand in opposition to the apocalyptic holocaust of the bomb, the ultimate vision of ego projections. Slothrop experiences the alternative vision when he has again become a crossroad:

...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 public clouds into Earth, green wet valleyed Earth, and his chest fills and he stands crying, not a thing in his head, just feeling natural....
(626)

The vision is a moment of pure transcendence into the physical, where genital sexuality is a metaphor for the exuberance of natural fertility, where the awesome power of being threatens to explode all limitations in a going-beyond-of-itself in cosmic orgasm. It is a moment that transcends even the mythic consciousness which attempted to define the energy as individual gods. It is a vision that experiences the forces of nature and life as themselves unnamed titanic presences. As in the Solange episode, because the experience is pre-verbal, the event is simply related without commentary. Slothrop himself has no words for it, no things in his head. Later, however, the narrator will attempt to describe this vision of the world before it was perverted by ego-based consciousnesses.

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, transputrified to oil or coal. Alive, it was threat; it was Titans, was an overspeaking 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. (720)

The world so violently alive that its energy surrounds it like a green corona is the world experienced by the pre-animistic sensibility.

The allegory of the lightning-struck undertaker is a further examination of the discovery and the nature of the

pre-animistic experience. Structurally, it is more complex than the previous allegory because initially it seems more of an anecdote than an allegory and is therefore misleading. On the first reading, the anecdotal elements of sequence and satiric tone appear to be dominant; but as the episode continues, the surrealistic nature of the landscape and action opens up from within and subverts the anecdotal shell into allegory.

The sequence begins with an ironic question: "You will want cause and effect. All right"(663). It then relates an incident that as anecdote demonstrates the perversity of causal relationship; and as allegory undermines the entire reality of linear sequence. The chapter reintroduces Thanatz in an artificial afterthought, introduced to make the narrative seem more logical; it actually heightens the artificiality of the sequence. Thanatz, we are now told, was washed overboard in the same storm that separated Slothrop from the Anubis several hundred pages previously. He is picked up by a Polish undertaker, dressed in a bizarre metal suit, who is trying to get struck by lightning. "Why does he wish to get hit by lightning?" asks the narrator rhetorically. To experience the arcane and mysterious world of the lightning-struck which he then describes in terms of mathematical imagery involving first derivatives and singular points? Nope, the narrator answers his own question; he wants to experience it because he thinks it will help him with his job, that it will teach him how to handle bereaved families

more skillfully. Thanatz accuses him of perverting the knowledge to the "uses of commerce," and leaves him. No more than a few moments later, Thanatz hears a loud whack of lightning and the faint moans of the undertaker.

As an anecdote the episode reiterates the common theme of the literalization and manipulation of mythic knowledge by technology, the undertakers improvised suit being an appropriate symbol for the ingenious technocrat. He is the Magici  n-manqu  ; he is also remarkably similar to Franz P  kler. He wishes to probe the natural mysteries, but for personal, economic reasons. Like P  kler, since he reads reality literally, he experiences it literally as reality strikes back. As anecdote, then, the story is a satiric denunciation of the P  klerian belief in cause and effect and the manipulative power over nature such a belief implies. If you wear lightning rods on your head in a storm, you can cause nature to strike you with lightning--and indeed, so it does.

Several elements of the sequence, however, form a counter-structure to the narrative and we begin to notice a layering of imagery similar to the allegory of the hanged man. Most obvious is the mathematical imagery which becomes an intermediary system that directs our attention to the mythic sub-structure. Within the narrative of the undertaker is an explanation of what it means to be struck by lightning.

Well, it's a matter of continuity. Most people's lives have ups and downs that are relatively gradual, a sinuous curve with first derivatives at every point. They're the ones who never get struck by lightning. No

real idea of cataclysm at all. But the ones who do get hit experience a singular point, a discontinuity in the curve of life--do you know what the time rate of change is at a cusp? Infinity, that's what! A-and right across the point, it's minus infinity! (664)

The mention of the lightning and time consciousness reminds the reader of Slothrop, who is connected with lightning through the pig-god and with time distortion through his frequently noted diminishing sense of time. Then the narrator explains what it is like in the realm of the lightning-struck. At the cusp there are little men with plastic eye-masks that look like infinity symbols, and they take you to a place that

...will look like the world you left, but it'll be different. Between congruent and identical there seems to be another class of look-alike that only finds the lightning-heads. Another world laid down on the previous one and to all appearances no different. Ha-ha! But the lightning-struck know, all right! Even if they may not know they know. (664)

The implications of the mathematical terminology provides a counter-reading to the literal interpretation of its previous use. Getting struck by lightning is, as the narrator tells us, like experiencing a singular point. Lance W. Ozier explains the mathematics of singularity.

A singularity is a point which, though an element of a function like other points, nevertheless possesses a property that makes it secretly strange: one cannot tell the point is different from the rest until one tries to take the first derivative of the function there. Likewise the characteristic that an infinite number of tangents can be constructed at a singular point gives it a potential for an infinity that other points of the function do not possess. In the novel's terms the implications of these mathematical conditions would be that at a "singular point" in the character's experience his (or her) life would be indeterminate (not determined or controlled) and would partake of an infinity or eternity beyond the material world.⁵

The mathematical imagery is an intermediate level of symbolism because it is delineated within the structure of the text; but as an intermediary, it leads into the unspoken level of mythic and pre-mythic symbolic structures, both of which are latent. The image of lightning and the lightning-struck, and the insistence on the fact that the struck may not know they are struck associate the undertaker, as a narrative parody, with Slothrop and the pre-animistic sensibility. Slothrop's experience of the rainbow phallus occurs when he has not a thing in his head, and his connection with lightning was established during the pig-god episode. Yet there is an extra-textual association with lightning which further reveals Slothrop's condition, and being in the purely metaphoric register, reveals the nature of his experience.

This connection is related to Slothrop's mythical identity as Orpheus, the pipe player. According to the Greeks, the myths of Orpheus' death follow two basic patterns. In one he is dismembered and decapitated. His head is then thrown into the river where it continues to sing and begins to prophesy. In the other, perhaps earlier, version he is struck by lightning.⁶ Both readings are important to Pynchon's use of the myth. The first can be interpreted as yet another allegory of the destruction of the ego (head equals penis equals identity) in which the being becomes pure voice and is manifest by music and prophecy. In this reading, the head is symbolic of ego-consciousness and the dismemberment

is a symbol of the release from genital organization. This symbolic pattern is enacted by Slothrop in the mouth-organ sequence which culminates in the vision of the rainbow cock that is parodied by the mushroom cloud. The second, closer in its development to the pre-mythic, reveals more transparently the pre-mythic sensibility.

Slothrop, by his identification with Orpheus, is truly one of the lightning-struck. There are, however, two other allusions which support this association. The one, drawn from the calculus is the "singular" touch of Bianca which caused his orgasm that was more than an orgasm. The other, also occurring in that episode, is the description of the orgasm as "taking him up then out of his expectancy, out of the eye at tower's summit"(470). The image of the tower is obviously phallic; it is also an important card in the Tarot, which depicts a tower, rising on a grassy knoll, being struck by lightning. It means, again according to Douglas, "the flash of inner illumination which brings the freedom and enlightenment."

The top of the tower is seen to have been struck off by a fiery bolt from heaven. Symbolically the crown of an edifice frequently represents the peak of consciousness, revealing that in its flashing descent the lightning of pure selfhood, the primal energy of the psyche, strikes aside and rends all structures of the ego.

Human consciousness here is at last in direct contact with the primary forces of the hidden centre, the goal of the mythic quest.⁷

The Tarot interpretation is not only congruent with the mathematical imagery, it extends its significance by associating the tower with the consciousness with the penis.

Consequently, ego destruction is equated with the destruction of genital organization. Pynchon uses the Tarot in conjunction with the earlier myth of Orpheus' death to reinforce the interpretation of the later myth while revealing yet another, earlier meaning to both. To be struck by lightning is to experience the consciousness that lightning embodies, a form of energy that the pre-animistic consciousness experienced as reality. It is the electric force that permeates nature; it is the green corona of Earth.

The final identification of Slothrop with the lightning-struck is the insistence that they may not even know that they know what the other reality is like. Repeatedly, the narrator has stressed that Slothrop does not recall things, that he does not know why he does things, and that he has not "a thing in his head." The implication is that the lightning-struck do not know things because they "know" only in a different sense, a sense which we, as well as the narrator, cannot completely understand. The new type of knowing is intuitive and non-structured in the conventionally verbal mode. It experiences life as energy itself. As one participates in it, there are no divisions between bodies; they are merely forms of energy interacting with each other. This is not to eliminate the body of the physical, but to extend our awareness of it to encompass the complete reality and fullness of being. This energy is not attributed to a soul within a body, but is itself the body.

The allegory of the lightning-struck, then, like that

of the hanged man, but to an even greater degree, takes the reader beyond the framework of the narrative, beyond the confines of the text, to unravel its many-layered complexities. It begins as an anecdote, as an ego-narrative, but then, as the autonomy of the surface dissolves by its extrinsic references, undermining itself by a countercode, finally reveals itself as allegory. Doing so, it embodies the process of Slothrop's dispersal while further exploring the nature of his new mode of existence.

At its most immediate level, the pre-animistic cannot be expressed by logical, verbal statement. To us on this side of the parabola of consciousness, it is best conveyed by sexual metaphors released from the limitations of genital organization: by the rainbow cock fertilizing wet-valleyed Earth. The rainbow-earth union is the imagistic representation of the simple assertion of existence--the reality linguistically conveyed by the verb "to be," the verb which extends beyond itself in Dionysiac frenzy. To repeat Brown's observation:

Intercourse is what goes on in the sentence. In every sentence the little word "is" is the copula, the penis or the bridge; in every sentence magically, with a word, making the two one flesh. The little word "is" is the hallmark of Eros, ever as, Freud said, the little "no" is the hallmark of Death. Every sentence is dialectics, an act of love. (L.B., 252)

The final allegory of Ursula the lost lemming is an embodiment of the little verb "to be." It is the simplest and yet the most moving of the allegories because it implies the possibility of the reality of that little word. Even the sub-structure of the allegory, the denial of the second

law of thermodynamics, is merely a scientific justification, an afterthought, for the essentially human refusal to die.

Like the allegory of the lightning-struck, the allegory of Ursula the lemming originally appears to be an anecdote. It is divided into two fragments that frame the other allegories. The first half appears as a narrative episode, a minor subplot that Slothrop temporarily becomes involved in. Wandering towards Cuxhaven, Slothrop meets a fat little kid named Ludwig, who is searching for his lost lemming, Ursula. The kid fears that Ursula is rushing to her suicide in the North Sea. Even in the first fragment, however, the allegorical aspect quickly becomes apparent as the narrator immediately digresses by introducing the story of Slothrop's ancestor, William, who every year walked his pigs to Boston always waiting for the one pig who would refuse to die. Having established a thematic link between the pigs and Ursula, the narrative then has Slothrop become pigman, thereby establishing the equation between Ursula and Slothrop. The juxtaposition of the two figures implies that if Ursula can renounce the instinct of her species to self-destruct, so can Slothrop. Since the text cannot treat Slothrop's survival in his new state, it presents the nature of his survival through the allegory of Ursula.

When Ursula reappears, it is as a purely transparent, allegorical figure; she is the simple assertion of life.

Towards the end of book four Ludwig and Ursula emerge as apparently extraneous elements in a scene describing a meeting between Enzian and Katje. The man and woman are standing inside a large concrete parabola that the Germans had built as an experiment to use sonic waves as bombs. The aim of the experiment was to detonate an explosion in front of the parabola and then direct the shock waves to a distant focal point. In another parabola:

...watching them, is a fat kid in a gray tanker jacket. Out of his pocket peer two furry little bright eyes. It is fat Ludwig and his lost lemming Ursula-- he has found her at last and after all and despite everything.

By placing Ludwig and Ursula in another parabola than the one occupied by Enzian and Katje, the narrative transforms the anecdote into allegory. The boy and his pet are placed in a similar structure, yet Ursula's presence establishes a symbolic significance to their parabola; theirs is a parabola of life in contrast to the parabola of death.

The ambiguity of Ludwig's final state as a victim of the zone accentuates the emotional impact of the incident, but it does not negate Ursula's insistence, against all odds of probability and genetic predestination, on her right to exist. Her retrieval, her denial of the death instinct, fully establishes her symbolic identification with the Earth and its power of life. When Slothrop had first met Ludwig, he showed Slothrop some pictures of his pet.

The pictures were blurred, however, since Ursula always moved too fast for the camera's eye to catch. This inability to be located and clearly perceived, this inability to escaped being "framed" is similiar to the inability of the other characters to "locate" Slothrop, and the inability of man to perceive a world "to violently pitched alive in constant flow ever to be seen...directly" (720). The reappearance of the lemming, then, is a symbolic affirmation, within the allegorical structure, of Slothrop's analogous decision to assert his right to live, and it unites both of them with the forces of Earth.

The allegory of Ursula is unique because it does not explicate the nature of the form of life or the mode of consciousness that Slothrop experiences; it is basically an allegory without narrative--a simple assertion of being. The incidental imagery of the allegory, the parabola, vaguely associates it with physics and the laws of thermodynamics. The parabola is similar to the path of the rocket's trajectory as well as the natural process of life forms. The concept that unites such diverse processes is the second law of thermodynamics, the law of entropy. Briefly stated, the law asserts that all physical systems tend toward a state of disorder by the process of entropy in which energy attempts to establish equilibrium. Since life is based on motion, and motion on the transfer of energy from one system which has an abundance of energy to one which

is deficient, an equal distribution of energy would obviate any transferral and life would end in a state of static exhaustion.

Life, however, seems to violate this law. This violation, moreover, has been established by modern biophysics which sees life as the result of an increasingly complex ordering of chemicals from atoms to elements to complex molecules to cells and finally to animate organisms. Actually, however, this is not a violation of the law of entropy, since any sub-system may achieve a more ordered and, hence, more energized state by taking energy and order away from the larger system. It is here that the problem of reading this image-complex arises if we approach it as an isolated structure. Within this single image system, life and the rocket seem to be analogous. Life, to continue, must feed off the universal system of energy in the same way that the rocket must. To increase our confusion, for in many ways the text has placed the rocket and life in thematic opposition, Pynchon explicitly describes both in similar terms. Living organisms can exist only "by removing from the rest of the World these vast quantities of energy to keep its own time desperate fraction showing profit..."(412). Similarly, the rocket can exist because it was "an entire system won away from the femine darkness, held against the entropies of lovable but scatterbrained Mother Nature"(324). In addition, both

the rocket and life seem to follow the same parabolic pattern of synthesis out of chaos, ascent into order and life that attempts to escape the confines of nature, and then return to earth where, in an inverse process, the elements fragment in decay, becoming material for another synthesis.

The result of such a reading the logical conclusion that

If there is any single message...of Gravity's Rainbow, it is the message that order and chaos (and hence paranoia and anti-paranoia) should not be seen as antagonists of the either/or type but as elements of one and the same universal movement. And without these elements there would be no such movement, no rainbow curve of existence, and no living universe for gravity to reign over.⁸

Such a statement appears reasonable, but upon careful consideration of its implications, numerous problems arise. If we accept Pynchon's analysis of mind and its functions, to accept paranoia and antiparanoia as natural is to accept the structures that created the rocket. In fact, it is not only an acceptance of them, it is an endorsement of their inevitability. This interpretation must also accept the belief that Slothrop has merely returned to the wastes as an example of the inevitable tragedy of being human.⁹ By extension, it also implies the inevitability of the death instinct's triumph. Finally, such a reading must view the redemptive process suggested by the allegories as an illusion. Admittedly, an interpretation that has been

based upon the importance of structures not overtly stated in the narrative seems to be dubious criticism; but there is no other way to account for lemming allegory and its placement around the others.

Ursula's story simply asserts that life is possible in terms other than those of the law of entropy. Her appearance in another parabola reveals that her existence is similar to that of the rocket; but, as we have often seen before, similarity implies parody. With this realization, it is possible to reassess the narrative's earlier assertions about the relationship between life and the rocket. The description of life's need to consume the energy of the earth in order to continue as an entity occurred in a broader context. In that sequence, the narrator was describing the need of "the System" to cannibalize nature; but the System is the Cartel and the Cartel is the projection of ego-systems. What consumes, therefore, is the ego which feeds on the energy of the being and of nature to get fuel for its projections. The narrator comments that "living inside the System is like riding across the country in a bus driven by a maniac bent on suicide...though he's amiable enough"(412). The allegorical reading of Ursula's retrieval, then, especially when placed in the context of Pynchon's preanimistic vidion conveyed in the intervening allegories, provides the corrective for the purely scientific reading of the physics imagery.

Ursula's retrieval asserts that life, once freed from ego-structure, need not feed on Earth to consume her energy; but is itself a form of energy. Such a situation would be what in thermodynamics is called an ideal system, a system that involves the transfer of energy without a loss of energy in the process. Without ego, we would see that death and extinction are but parodies of the real transformations that occur in nature.

The thematic and symbolic density of the three allegories, which together consist of only a few pages, counterbalances the jagged confusion of the anecdotes which occupy the remaining narrative space of the fourth book. They are the narrator's attempts to contain the increasing irrationality of the themes and to rewrite the work into a form that seems sensible. Because of this, each anecdote is a parody of other aspects of the novel and, together, contradict themselves and confuse the reader's ordering processes. To make an analysis of them easier, it is possible to group them into three categories. First, there are the narrative fragments that deal with Slothrop as perceived by the narrator or other characters in the novel. Next, there is the group of episodes that detail the actions of the other characters. And finally, there are the purely anecdotal sequences that are concerned with characters, incidents, or topics extraneous to the main narrative, but which are actually attempts at retelling it.

The episodes that attempt to relate Slothrop's further adventures do so in terms whose bivalence is now apparent. Often they employ traditional Freudian and Jungian concepts to describe psychological states, and traditional narrative techniques to relate actions or situations. Within the narrative context, these constructs provide an accurate representation of what is happening if they are viewed as parodies. Thus, the narrator describes Slothrop as a "plucked albatros. Plucked, hell--scattered. Scattered all over the Zone. It's doubtful if he can ever be found again, in the conventional sense of positively identified and detained"(712). The similarities to Ursula who cannot be framed, however, suggests that this is not such a bad thing, that Slothrop has escaped the world of the manipulator and the manipulated. From the perspective of those who have come to rescue him, he is lost; but in Pynchon's world, being lost is the prerequisite for being found.

Being lost, in terms of those in the Zone, is also, in terms of the Pynchonian-Brownian vision, being freed from the fiction of simple location, from the fallacy that one can be located in space-time independently of other space-time regions. Slothrop, having escaped this fiction, the fiction of narrative reality and ego identity, can be seen by the characters only as a fiction; and many of them claim to see him in different places at the same time. He keeps reappearing, in stories others tell, in too many places

to be taken as a literal truth. Finally, the other characters perceive him only as a fiction. The narrator finally comments:

There is also the story about Tyrone Slothrop, who was sent out to be present at his own assembly--perhaps, heavily paranoid voices have whispered, his time's assembly--and there ought to be a punch line to it, but there isn't. The plan went wrong. He is being broken down instead, and scattered. (738)

Again, as Brown has described the situation, the condition of being broken and scattered is the way the unenlightened perceive the state of enlightenment. It is how Dionysus makes himself manifest.

Beyond atomism. Fragmentation unto dust, and the word becomes seminal again. The sower soweth the word. Dionysus broken and scattered is seed scattered. But if it die it bringeth forth much fruit. The body is made whole by being broken. (LB, 189)

Only a few remnants of Slothrop finally remain: a shirt stained with blood in the shape of a sword, and a bottle containing seven c.c.s of May wine. The fragments are symbols of the countercode. The shirt stain is also the emblem of the Ace of Swords of the Tarot, which signifies victory "despite overwhelming odds."¹⁰ The wine associates Slothrop with Dionysus, god of wine, madness, and excess.

Even Slothrop's friends have trouble locating him, even when they are with him. Bodine, one of the few who can see him "as any sort of integral creature," fears that he will soon "have to let him go"(740-41). Finally, the narrator announces, Slothrop has possibly become a member of an English rock group, The Fool.

It appears that some part of Slothrop ran into the AWOL Džabajev one night in the heart of downtown Niederschaumdorf. (Some believe that fragments of Slothrop have grown into consistent personae of their own. If so, there's no telling which of the Zone's present-day population are offshoots of his original scattering. There's supposed to be a last photograph of him on the only record album put out by The Fool, an English rock group--.) (742)

Besides the implication that Slothrop's seeds of fragmented identity have become fertile, this passage also associates Slothrop with the Fool in the Tarot. This allusion follows shortly after the narrator's reading of Slothrop's cards, and can be considered to be an authorial commentary on the narrator's reading. According to the narrator, Slothrop's significator is covered by the three of Pentangles reversed which condemns him "to mediocrity (not only in his life but also, heh, heh, in his chroniclers too)"(738). The mocking tone of the narrator's avowal of mediocrity in a novel which is anything but mediocre should cause the reader to view his other comments with some scepticism, and to see the author's joke about the inability of the narrator to see beyond the literal level of his own narration.

To emphasize this point, the narrator then relates the sequence which locates Slothrop as a member of The Fool, and never mentions that the Fool is an important card in the Tarot. He simply notes that there "is no way to tell which of the faces is Slothrop's; the only printed credit that might apply to him is 'Harmonica, kazoo--a friend'"(742). The Fool in the Tarot is the only unnumbered card which

roams freely throughout the deck and is therefore unrestrained by simple location.

When he appears at the end of the sequence, the Fool has completed his journey, and he passes gaily through the world, the appearance of which has been transformed by his own inner transformation. Where once was discord, all is now harmony....¹¹

The harmony is the harmonica player; the fool is free.

When the narrator does attempt to describe Slothrop's actions, it is only as a parody of this new, non-literal existence. He is either the comic book super-hero in the anecdote about the search for the Golden Hour, or the frightened non-entity that lurks in the alleys of Mingeborough. The Golden Hour anecdote is a rendition of what the narrator assumes to be Slothrop's main problem. Since Slothrop has lost his sense of temporality after his delta-t has been reduced to zero, the narrator envisages Slothrop in a quest to regain it. Also, since the narrator sees the problem as an unresolved Oedipal conflict, he presents the conflict between Slothrop and the Cartel as a battle between parent and child. In essence, the anecdote is a repetition of Slothrop's entire history, but since the narrator and narrative see only the literal "facts" of that history, this revisionist tale only heightens the parodic quality of the narrative as a whole.

The sequence is important thematically, however, for it introduces within the narrative the implied metaphor of

theater that has been present since the very beginning. Again, the narrator fails to realize its full significance. He simply uses the metaphor to describe Slothrop's slide from paranoia to antiparanoia as he realizes that the theater is more ubiquitous than he had previously thought and that it contains other stories than his. The deeper significance of the theater metaphor is that the theater is the image of ego-structure. It is the show whose reality we really believe in, the make-believe fantasy we accept as truth. Significantly, the image of the theater reappears in the final segments of the novel cementing the implied equation that the theater, the novel, and the ego are all similar artifacts.

In the anecdote of the quest for the Golden Hour, the narrator attempted to deal with the mythic aspects of Slothrop's development, but failed since he could conceive of them only as parodies of mythic experience. Later, when he tried to deal with the non-ego being, he simply fails to perceive it as anything but a total loss of useful social identity; Slothrop is the nothing, the least of the preterite who has fallen too low even for preterition. Again, the ego-constructed narrative is ironically accurate as a look-alike parody of the reality. In the anecdote, "The Occupation of Mingeborough," apparently Slothrop is back in the States, panhandling the home-town kids, who were "easy marks for pennies"(744). The town is being

"occupied" by troops, but the details are so vague that this is possibly only the return of the troops from the war. The essential point, in any case, is that Slothrop is outside the social fabric of the town's structure, that he maneuvers through back alleys, travelling an interface of fences and driveways in an attempt to get home. The parallel with the "freed" Ilse, who, hundreds of pages earlier, found her freedom on the web of interlocking railroad tracks, is significant.

Ironically, the narrator implies that the fabric Slothrop has ceased to be a part of is the fabric of genital organization. Mingeborough is the Zone having returned to normalcy: the fences are back up. But the mode of action is still the same: penetration and occupation. The title of the chapter is ironic. Slothrop's occupation in the town is pan-handling, the profession of the drop-out. But the occupation of the town is also sexual intercourse. Appropriately, the name of the town is based upon the British slang for the female genitalia, "minge." To emphasize this meaning of the occupation, the first part of the anecdote relates a small, comic cycle of generations in the process of mating, a cycle which will exclude Slothrop. There is an apple tree in blossom, and

sitting under it, with anyone else but Slothrop, is a barelegged girl, blonde and brown as honey. Her name is Marjorie. Hogan will come home from the Pacific and court her, but he'll lose out to Pete Dufay. She and Dufay will have a daughter named Kim, and Kim will have

her braids dipped in the school inkwells by young Hogan, Jr. It will go on, occupation or not, with or without Uncle Tyrone. (744)

In this context, the final lines of the anecdote, "It may be too late to get home," is unintentionally accurate. It is, indeed, far too late for Slothrop to get home, if this is the home he's trying to get to. Mingeborough is the middle-class illusion, the convention of cyclic deceits that is the basis of the rocket and the bomb. The lightning-struck may not know much, but they know what isn't.

A number of the anecdotes focus on the counterforce, ostensibly the group of friends who have banded together to retrieve Slothrop from Germany. It was formed when Katje, in a moment of rest after the war is over, chances upon a film of herself and Osbie Feel. It is the same film loop which introduced her into the narrative in book one. This film is then followed by another of an octopus watching the first one. As she begins to understand how They have used her, she sees another movie that has been spliced into the film. This sequence is anecdotal allegory which she interprets as an encoded history of a group that is arising to oppose Pointsman. Eventually, the film directs her to Prentice and she joins the others, Mexico, Prentice, and Feel. They set off to find Slothrop, but fail. Although the narrative continues to relate how Mexico is rejected by Jessica, how the group initially attempts to locate Slothrop, and how Katje succeeds in eliciting some information

from Enzian, the group soon disperces as a narrative concern. Pynchon gives two reasons for their failure to find Slothrop. One is that they are after something that no longer exists as a locatable entity; the other is that they contain their own self-subversive element. They are implicitly aware that the problem they confront is the corporation--the ultimate embodiment of the ego; and each is unwilling to accept the end of the corporation in himself.

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 the world is Bad Shit.
(712-13)

Being unable to give up the Man in themselves and the penis upon which the Man builds his empire, they can never hope to beat its communal projection and be free from it; they could never see Slothrop even if they found him. Within this context, we can see that Slothrop has already become a symbolic valus--to see Slothrop is the allegorical equivalent of asserting that one sees a different level of reality.

Underlying the anecdote of the counterforce is the irony that they are not really the counterforce. The title of the fourth book is misleading. The counterforce to the

Man as the emblem of the system, cartel, corporation, history, and the rocket, is Slothrop. Late in book three, Tchitcherine, perplexed over several mysterious incidents which included the castration of Major Marvy, wonders if there is a counterforce in the Zone. Since all of the mysterious incidents are directly related to Slothrop's activities as he is moving through his mythic phase, the inevitable conclusion is that the real counterforce is Slothrop himself. The clue that the title of the fourth book may be misleading is the epigram, "What?" which is a typically Slothropian question. It is also significant that the question is not "Who?"; the counterforce is a being, not a persona.

There are also the anecdotes that continue the narratives of Enzian and Tchitcherine. Both experience a moment of insight into the true reason for the war, and the true omnipresent nature of the cartel that conducts it. Both are finally rejected by the groups to which they belong. Enzian is to be replaced as head of the tribe, and Tchitcherine is to be sent to work in Siberia. Both dissolve as strongly focussed narrative concerns. Enzian is overshadowed by the rocket that the Hereros have succeeded in assembling, and Tchitcherine is lost in Geli's spell of magical sexuality. Their dispersals, however, are parodies of Slothrop's. Enzian is assumed into the rocket. Tchitcherine into genital sexuality. Having been told of his

reassignment, Tchitcherine goes AWOL; and Geli, through magic charms, draws him to her. The narrative seems to imply that he will reject the They-system, like Slothrop, but the style belies this interpretation. The sequence is related in the mocking, arch style that was employed in the description of Bland's transcendence. Geli begins to conjure Tchitcherine and everything becomes silent, including the "wind in the junipers, the wild dogs out ranging in the middle of the night"(734), which she blocks out in the intensity of her concentration. He arrives. She bites a piece of magic bread. He takes the other half. Suddenly: "The stram rushes. A bird sings"(734). The scene is a mock parody of Adam's fall worthy of any soap opera. After making love, they are disturbed by the noise of an approaching convoy. Tchitcherine puts on his pants and goes to beg for food and cigarettes. The convoy is actually the Hereros hauling their rocket, the 00001. Enzian gives Tchitcherine half a pack of cigarettes, and the two who have spent the entire novel trying to find and kill each other, pass without recognition. The narrator comments ironically:

This is magic. Sure--but not fantasy. Certainly not the first time a man has passed his brother by, at the edge of evening, often forever, without knowing it.
(735)

And Enzian is off with his assembled rocket, the tribal totem of the collective death they all seek.

Throughout the anecdotes that are associated with the original narrative, a number of additional sequences have been interjected. These are of the third type that attempt

to present on a narrative level various themes that had remained unlocalized. In this category are the anecdotes of Byron, of the "Komical Kamikazes," and of the treatises on linguistics. The story of Byron is an encapsulation of the entire novel, retold as a parody in the modern version of the animal fable in which the animal has been replaced by an appliance. Byron is a light bulb, with a name he can never forget, who is doomed to immortality, forever caught in a complex electrical grid that covers the world. In his immortality, he learns all the secrets of industrial complex that controls everyone; but as a being without a body, a disembodied intelligence, he can do nothing with his knowledge. His story, like Bland's, is a parody of Slothrop's, for Byron is also an identity that transcends the physical, and Byron shows that freedom is not just a state of mind. Unlike Slothrop, he is condemned to an ever-increasing delta-t, to a memory of the eternal sequence of history; and because he perceives eternity from the ends of time, he can never experience infinity at the cusp of a moment. Appropriately, the frame story for the Byron anecdote, the story in which Pfc. Eddie Pensiero gives his C.O. a haircut ends with Eddie sinking his scissors into the C.O.'s throat. The irony is that Byron is the light bulb that illuminates the room in which this action is occurring and we can sense Byron's pain and jealousy of the death and the action that eludes him. In a complete inversion of conventional moral attitudes, we feel sympathy for the light bulb who is forever

excluded from such natural processes as aging and death, even if it is in the form of murder.

The anecdote of the kamakaze pilots, stranded on an island no one seems to care about, is a self-consciously literary, parody of war, a "World War II situation comedy" that reveals its own literary artificiality. By realizing that it is a fiction, the narrator announces to the general reader that he has won a trip to the real island they inhabit where "you'll while your nights away chasing vampire mosquitoes away from your own throat!...Scooping rat turds out of the enlisted men's water barrel!"(692). The sequence, by emphasizing its purely literary nature, underscores the mediating safety of literature, and directs the reader's attention to the reality of war. The anecdote embodies the same procedure which Pynchon uses in writing his novel. It reveals the fictions we create about the fiction of reality and directs our attention toward the horror of that fiction.

Finally, there are the anecdotes that contain Bodine's treatises on language, aptly titled, "On the Phrase Ass-Backwards," and "Shit 'n' Shinola." The essays have the common theme of the inability of language to express the realities of experience, while at the same time shaping our perceptions of them. They are also important because they illustrate Pynchon's belief in the impossibility of communication in a conventional sense, and his resultant rejection of the conventional novel as an ordered pattern

of verbal structures intended to convey information. These treatises on language are based upon sophisticated concepts of information theory which are related to the law of entropy.¹²

The joke of the treatise on the phrase "ass-backwards" is its redundance. Säure perceptively notes that since the ass is backwards in its normal position, the phrase should mean the reverse, i.e. forwards. Bodine tries to explain to him that the "ass" is merely an intensifier, a linguistic signifier of the extent of the wrongness of the act in question. This simple joke is based on several laws of information theory. According to these laws, each language is restricted by the probabilities of the combinations of letters in its alphabet with respect to its grammatical structure. Thus, "when we write English half of what we write is determined by the structure of the language and half is chosen freely. Stated in other terms, fifty percent of the words we use to convey information have nothing to do with the content, but are merely syntactical elements that order content; fifty percent of our utterance is redundant.

Compounding this problem of conveying information is the fact that the laws of entropy are at work in every act of communication. To formulate a piece of information requires an ordering of perceptions and words which results in an increase of disorder or entropy in the larger system, since any process of ordering can occur only by

depriving the larger system of energy. By the laws of entropy, once the information is transmitted, its elements begin to return to their former state of confusion. To this problem is added the fact that the transmission of information can never occur in an ideal vacuum. Hence, there will always be interference by some other noise, some static that impedes the process of communication. Because of this, the receptor often perceives the information in a form that is significantly different from the message that was initially transmitted.¹³ This aspect of the problem of communication is presented in the joke about Minnie Khlaetsch.

Minnie is a fraulein who cannot pronounce umlauts. Once, back in his youth when he was pretty good-looking, Säure attempted to rob and rape her. Wielding a bottle of phony acid in front of her face, he warned her not to call for help.

But Minnie calls his bluff, starts hollering for help to all the ladies of the same age in her building who feel that same motherly help-help-but-make-sure-there's-time-for-him-to-rape-me ambivalence about nubile cat burglars. (683)

Now, as the narrator tells us, since Säure was good-looking in those days, the girl actually screams "cute-looking robber." But if you leave off the umlauts, as poor Minnie does, the word is interpreted as "liftscrewler," the German word for helicopter. But since the helicopter hasn't been invented yet, nobody understands what her screams mean-- nobody except "one finger-biting paranoid aerodynamics

student"(684), who sees in her scream a prophecy and stays inside for fear of what may appear in the sky.

The laws of redundancy and interference in communication theory follow mathematical formulas that are identical to those of entropy. The relationship, once realized, is obvious. To make sense of experience we must consume energy to organize the random events; this process of perception and organization, since it consumes energy, results in a loss of energy in the greater system and an increased level of entropy. Stylistically, the entirety of GR illustrates this law. As the narrator becomes increasingly anxious to make sense of what is happening to Slothrop, and as he makes repeated attempts to organize the data of Slothrop's dispersal, the entropy, or chaos, of the overall structure of the work increases. This entropy is inadvertently increased because the meanings we discover in the anecdotes, as they have done throughout the work, cross-refer to an almost infinite number of other meanings. Thus, within the work, any attempt at organizing narrative data results in an increase of confusion and entropy. This was Slothrop's original problem; and after he has been removed, the problem of the narrator and the reader.

Underlying the entire problem of interpreting the text is the realization that any attempt at logical, and therefore ego-structured, order must result in increasing disorder. This is the scientific basis for Pynchon's rejection of the conventional novel. This is why the narrative structure of his work leads only to confusion and contradiction. If any sense is to be made of GR on a narrative level, it is that there is no such thing as ordered sense. This is also why the only meaning in the work is to be found in the non-formalized countercoeds. By not including them in the narrative and by having them appear in obscure textual allusions, the information is communicated that the alternative to this nonsense is non-sense; and this communication, being non-formulated, is not subject to the laws of entropy and interference. Pynchon structures his novel to self-destruct and thereby reveal its vision of the destruction of the self. The rejection of the narrative form is necessitated by his rejection of verbal determinism which the narrative itself reveals as a fake.

These numerous anecdotes actually become the dominant narrative mode as the fourth book literally dissolves. But as the narrative dissolves, the rocket, almost as if by its own force, assumes a shape. Amid anecdotes and treatises on the nature and components of the rocket, it is reassembled before our eyes and fired for the first time. At the rocket's heart is the Schwartzgerät, Blicero's lover, Gottfried, encased in a shroud of Imoplex-G. The rocket is an embodied

projection of all the narrative imagery that went into its creation: technology, sex, movies, psychology, politics, and history. It is modern man's apocalyptic incarnation of the myth of his own ego. The man in the rocket is the consummate projection of the order of things for man in the twentieth century--man in the belly of the rocket is man in the womb, the wish fulfilled, man as pure penis. The shape of the womb, on the inside, is the rocket on the outside, the penis erect.

The rocket is ready for firing, and the narrative interrupts one apocalypse with an anecdote of another. The plot line, having regressed in time to recount the initial firing of the 00000 Rocket, suddenly projects into the future by introducing a newspaper clipping about Richard M. Zhlub, the manager of the Orpheus Theater in Los Angeles. The queues for his midnight shows have been thrown into wild confusion by an unidentified harmonica player, that may or may not be Slothrop. The "name" of the person is, by this point, irrelevant. That some part or some parallel of Slothrop remains is all that matters. Thematically, it is the music, the pure sound, of the person that is important, for it becomes juxtaposed to the eternal deadly silence of the rocket. Zhlub's narrative ends as he is driving down the Santa Monica Freeway relating his death fantasies to the reporter who is writing the article, and who slowly assumes the voice of the narrator. Zhlub dreams that while driving along the freeway, a plastic dry-cleaning bag is lifted by

the air and blows into the front of the car, coating him with a thin "plastic shroud" that smothers him to death.

The thin shroud is associated by its immediate juxtaposition to, and by its chemical similarities with, Gottfried's veil of Imipolex-G. The chemical, however, has been associated with the penis by its power to erect, and with the ego, because the erection occurs when it receives "projections, onto the Surface, of an electronic 'image' analogous to a motion picture"(700). Even this is qualified, for the Surface, the coating of Imipolex-G is merely a plastic film, and that "everything below the plastic film does after all lie in the Region of Uncertainty"(700). The entire treatise on the characteristics of the chemical is striking in that, if one replaced the "Imipolex-G" by "ego," it provides a fairly accurate description of Pynchon's model of the mind. The very name of the chemical, Imipolex-G, is almost a cryptogram, following the same accentual pattern, of Oedipus Rex, the mythic identity that gave his name to the process by which the ego is formed.

The shroud, then, that will suffocate Zhubb, is the shroud of ego, made even more trivial by technology, and consequently less obviously identified as the superfine, transparent vehicle of death that it is. As Zhubb relates his fantasy, the garbage trucks are busy collecting the technological wastes and debris of the city, headed North to the dumping grounds, "returning to the Center, with all the gathered fragments of the Vessels"(757). The trucks

carry the trivialized debris that result from the trivialization of Being into a consumable commodity. Suddenly a siren pierces the mind.

But the sound is greater than police. It wraps the concrete and the smog, it fills the basin and mountains further than any mortal could ever move...could move in time....

"I don't think that's a police siren." Your guts in a spasm, you reach for the knob on the AM radio. "I don't think--" (757)

The sequence is the apocalyptic projection of the rocket technology and the rocket sensibility, the Rocket Order of Things, into the present. The screaming in the sky recalls the opening line of the novel, and is the transition back to the original 00000 firing. The book, as a depiction of the deadly, cyclical nature of ego structure, is another film loop that ends as it began.

Having been fired, the rocket assumes a life of its own; and, at Brenschluss, is "betrayed to Gravity"(758). Gottfried, lost in the reveries of his past, misses the apex of the rocket's parabola, the peak of his life and death. Unlike Slothrop, who lives on the cusp, Gottfried misses it and is reclaimed by death. Suddenly, we are in a theater, watching a pornographic movie that is ending with the rocket's ascent. But the film breaks, or the projector bulb burns out. And it's difficult "even for us, old fans who've always been at the movies (haven't we?)" to know what's happening. Revealing itself as fiction, the text presents the image of the ultimate fiction. When the movie stops, the screen goes white. But the afterimage lingers. "It is a close-up of a

face, a face we all know--"(760). As the identity and import of that face emerges into our own consciousness, for the face is our own consciousness, we are suddenly aware that the screen is too brilliantly white, the shadow face too ominous. There is another presence; it is the rocket from the movie, materialized, falling down on us, "nearly a mile per second, absolutely and forever without sound"(760). At the last desperate moment, Pynchon arrests the descent for a final, infinitesimal delta-t, and offers the alternative. We could, he suggests, sing a song that "They never taught anyone to sing, a hymn by William Slothrop."

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 the crippled Zone,
 With a face on ev'ry mountainside,
 And a Soul in ev'ry stone. (760)

In an exceedingly dense concentration of imagery, Pynchon presents the final alternatives: the metonymic narratives of self and rocket or the metaphoric song. We are in a theater, the theater of ego-organization; and the rocket is poised above it because the rocket is composed of the same "material." They are of the same order of consciousness; and the rocket will disappear only if the theater dissolves. The image is the purest, most concise presentation of the predicament of modern man: consciousness as we now know it or man himself must go. The song Pynchon proposes is a pre-animistic celebration of energy released from repression and time transcended. The hand to turn the time is the integration

of being, the reversal of expanded temporal perception. The light that topples the tower is the "surge of power which is felt when the psychological blocks between the lower and higher selves are removed."¹⁴ The "preterite one" is the one of self and world and self and other when the "Rider," the Man in each of us, is thrown. The small cap "face" and the capital "Soul" are the pre-animistic realization of energy that permeates existence: the soul in every stone is the communal soul--the permanent soul in us, the soul that exists in the physical "being," the face of our united being.

It could be argued that the greatest literary achievements are produced during the breaks between modes of consciousness, in the interregna between modes of sensibility. It might also be argued that these achievements are inevitably parodies of the old modes of thought and their form of expression. Having seen into and hence revealed their latent assumption and implicit structures of thought, masterpieces anticipate through their parodic form new organizations of the elements of consciousness. In this sense, great works of art may be seen as a record of the leap between radical transformations in human sensibility and history. If this is true, then the artist might indeed be the vates of civilization, often himself unaware of the true nature of his vision. If this is possible, then Norman O. Brown and Thomas Pynchon may well be the prophets of the consciousness

that philosophers like Jacques Derrida and psychologists like Jacques Lacan are attempting to understand, the consciousness that, to paraphrase Foucault, will erase the face of man as we know him "like the face drawn in the sand at the edge of the sea."¹⁵ Perhaps the malaise of modern society is the result of this change having already transpired without our recognition--despite the indications to the contrary.

In literature, at least, this change has been exploring itself for several decades; and if criticism is to understand the works of this new mode of consciousness, it must establish not only a new vocabulary but also a new style or technique of analysis that can both comprehend and articulate the significance of the radical techniques, themes, and intentions of writers like Brown and Pynchon. It would be naive to assume that either man can force a change in the majority of people, or even make the majority aware that it may already have occurred, but it would also be naïve to ignore the didactic thrust of their analyses of modern man's experience or to disregard the possibility that they may be manifestations of a transformation that has been almost accomplished. Pynchon states the situation and his intentions through the vehicle of Roger Mexico early in the novel. And what Mexico says of the word "odd" is eminently appropriate to the entire novel.

Odd, odd, odd--think of the word: such white finality in its closing clap of the tongue. It implies moving past the tongue-stop--beyond the zero--and into the other realm. Of course you don't move past. But

you do realize, intellectually, that's how you ought to
be moving. (85)

Notes to Chapter Five

¹See pt. 1, ch. 3, pp.

²Alfred Douglas, The Tarot, pp. 85-86.

³Douglas, p. 34.

⁴Douglas, p. 51

⁵Because of its importance, I repeat the quotation.

See pt. 2, ch. 4, n. 10. I would qualify Ozier's statement by suggesting that the character, when experiencing a singular point, does not go beyond the material world, but beyond the conventional ordering of experience by which we shape the material world. As we have noted, whenever Pynchon describes "material transcendence," it is as a parody.

⁶Graves, vol. 1, pt. 28, pp. 112-13.

⁷Douglas, p. 100.

⁸Alan J. Friedman and Manfred Puetz, "Science and Metaphor: Thomas Pynchon and Gravity's Rainbow," in Contemporary Literature, 15 (Summer 1974). I have followed most of their argument very closely in my analysis because I wish to show that although their scientific analysis is very exact and interesting, their final assessment of "meaning," because it is derives from a single image structure examined in isolation, is slightly inaccurate. To remain accurate to their argument, I have used some of their phrases

and, rather than note each, acknowledge that much of this material is taken from their article.

⁹See pt. 2, ch. 4, n. 1.

¹⁰Douglas, p. 180.

¹¹Douglas, p. 116.

¹²For a detailed explanation of the relationship between the second law of thermodynamics and entropy in information theory see Anne Mangel, "Maxwell's Demon, Entropy, Information: The Crying of Lot 49," in Mindful Pleasures, pp. 87-99.

¹³There is a striking similarity between the concept of interference and Lacan's idea of the patient's message as a distortion of the language of his desire. This is also the case with the "message" of GR which evades conventional techniques of interpretation but becomes accessible once the interference of the narrative/metonymic structure is reduced by the metaphoric structures.

¹⁴Douglas, p. 42. An extensive quotation from his description of the Tower card reveals how completely the Tarot imagery applies to Pynchon's vision and how it explains what happens to Slothrop.

The top of the tower is seen to have been struck off by a fiery bolt from Heaven. Symbolically the crown of an edifice frequently represents the peak of consciousness, revealing that in its flashing descent the lightning of pure selfhood, the primal energy of the psyche, strikes aside and rends all structures of the ego....

Human consciousness here is at last in direct contact with the primary forces of the hidden center, the goal of the mystic quest...(100).

¹⁵Michel Foucault, The Order of Things, p. 386.

Appendix I.

Plot sequence of Gravity's Rainbow

Book I. "Beyond the Zero" (I have given numbers to the chapters for the sake of clarity.)

1. Pirate Prentice: British agent who can take over other's fantasies.
The dream/fantasy of the evacuation during an attack.
2. Osbie Feel:
Teddy Bloat: English agent who spies on Slothrop.
The banana breakfast; Pirate's "gift" explored.
3. Tantivy Mucker-Maffick: shares cubicle with Slothrop at ACHTUNG.
Bloat sneaks into, and takes pictures of, Slothrop's cubicle and the map of his sexual conquests.
4. Tyrone Slothrop: American working for the Allied Intelligence; he is sexually stimulated by the fall of the V-2 rockets before they are launched.
Slothrop searches a bomb site for the remnants of the rocket; his sexual conquests and his map; his family's history in New England; his preterition.
5. Roger Mexico: English statistician in love with Jessica Swanlake, an English nurse.
The seance which introduces the couple and their affair.
The parapsychological research at the "White Visitation," a converted rest home now used to house various projects the British are experimenting with to use as part of their psychological warfare with the Germans.
6. Roger and Jessica's relationship continued.
7. Pointsman: the behaviorist, opposed to Mexico, begins to plot against Slothrop in order to determine the nature of Slothrop's erections.
At a bomb site, Pointsman tries to capture a wild dog to use in his experiments.
8. Pointsman's interest in Slothrop is developed. Slothrop

is vaguely connected with Laszlo Jamf, a behaviorist who later becomes a chemist. Pointsman is working with an octopus.

9. Mexico and Pointsman are developed as opposites.
10. Slothrop, drugged by Pointsman at the White Visitation, hallucinates falling down the toilet at Roseland in Boston.
11. Pirate is given a secret message to retrieve an operative (Katje Borgesius).
12. The White Visitation's various schemes.
Brigadier Pudding: head of the White Visitation.
Hints about the plot to study Slothrop.
13. Pointsman and Pudding discuss Slothrop's background, his conditioning by Jamf at Harvard, and the stages of conditioning developed by Pavlov. Speculations about Slothrop's erections. Pointsman and Mexico talk.
14. Katje Borgesius: the double agent from Holland who, along with a young soldier named Gottfried, has a ménage-à-trois with Blicero (Colonel Weissman), a German in charge of the V-2's.
Katje is introduced in a film loop which traces her relationship with Gottfried and Blicero. It includes a digression of the history of Franz Van der Groov, Katje's ancestor who, when the Dutch tried to colonize the island of Mauritius, obliterated the dodo birds indigenous to the island. Katje comes over to the British.
15. Slothrop, released from the White Visitation, has tea with a girlfriend at Mrs. Quoad's, and then has sex with Darlene as a rocket falls.
16. Roger and Jessica's story continues. Their Christmas Eve together.
17. At the White Visitation, they discuss Slothrop's erections in terms of his conditioning by Jamf. Pointsman's character is developed. Slothrop is sent to the Riviera.
17. Carroll Eventyr: a medium at the White Visitation.
Gerhardt von Göll (Der Springer): A German, employed by the English to make a propaganda movie about the Schwarzkommando. Also a black marketeer.

The Schwarzkommando: a group from the Herero tribe of Southwest Africa who were trained by the Germans to help them run Africa after they had taken control.
 Leni Pöckler: wife of Franz Pöckler who worked on the development of the V-2's trajectory system. She is a communist who left Franz over political and sexual disagreements and is now working for the English.
 The chapter describes a seance and provides background information on the new characters.

19. Leni Pöckler's background further related. Another seance.
20. Pointsman, at a Christmas party, has relations with Maude Chilkes. Further discussion of Slothrop with Thomas Gwenhidwy, a fellow scientist at the White Visitation.
21. Roger and Jessica at a relative's. He takes the children to see a pantomime of Hansel and Gretel. One of the children has a visitation from her dead father. Roger realizes that Jessica, after the war, will leave him for Jeremy (Beaver), a more respectable and conventional man.

Book II. "Un Perm' au Casino Hermann Goering"

1. Slothrop and Tantivy Mucker-Maffick at the Riviera. Slothrop meets Katje, saving her from an octopus.
2. Slothrop's affair with Katje develops; he begins to suspect a conspiracy. Tantivy disappears. The casino becomes a metaphor for control of Slothrop under the guise of chance.
3. Dodson-Truck, who works for the Foreign Office, is sent to spy on Slothrop and brings him information about the V-2 rocket. Slothrop gets him drunk and Dodson-Truck confesses that he is sent to observe Slothrop. The next day, he is gone.
4. At the White Visitation, the "Slothrop group" meets to decide what to do with Slothrop, now that he has become aware of some plot. Hints that ICI, a cartel that Jamf worked for, is supporting the experiment on Slothrop. Pointsman is clearly in control. Katje is back in England as General Pudding's dominatrix.
5. Slothrop attends a party at Raoul's, who deals in political

conspiracies. He meets Blodgett Waxwing, who deals in falsified credentials. He agrees to help Slothrop if he can get to Nice.

7. Jamf's relationship to Imopolex-G is explained. Slothrop discovers that Mucker-Maffick is probably dead, goes AWOL, and arrives at Nice. He is given fake identification as Ian Scuffling, a British war correspondent. He goes to Zurich and meets Squalidozzi, an Argentine anarchist. Slothrop delivers documents to Geneva for Squzlidozzi, returns to Zurich, and discovers Jamf's grave.
8. At the White Visitation there is concern because they have lost track of Slothrop for over a month. They are concerned that other countries will try to get him because of his knowledge of the rocket.

Book III. "In the Zone"

1. Slothrop makes his way in the Zone to Nordhausen and the rocket factory. Slothrop gets a dossier on Jamf that reveals connections between Jamf, Lyle Bland, an American entrepreneur, and his own family. On a train, he meets Major Marvy of U.S. Ordnance, a stereotypical redneck and racist. Slothrop also meets Enzian, the head of the Herero-tribe, who have come to Germany to recover the rocket parts and reconstruct them. The tribe is attempting mass self-destruction. At Nordhausen, Slothrop meets Geli Tripping, a witch who is the lover of Tchitcherine, the Russian who is in charge of Soviet operations in the zone. He is Enzian's half-brother.
2. Slothrop visits the rocket factory, which is designed to embody both the arc of the parabola and the double-S symbol of integration used in the calculus. He has another encounter with Major Marvy, and after a wild chase, escapes from him.
3. The history of the Hereros is recounted. Their colonialization by the Germans and their goal of mass suicide is explained. Enzian's relationship to Tchitcherine is presented in a digression that recounts their father's trip to Southwest Africa.
4. Slothrop spends time with Geli, then takes a balloon to Berlin.
5. Slothrop, in Berlin, meets Enzian. They discuss their

mutual quest for the original V-2 rocket, the 00000. The narrator announces that he will tell how Slothrop meets Greta Erdmann, but begins a long digression that eventually leads up to their meeting. Weeks before, Slothrop had met Säure Bummer, a leading drug dealer in Berlin. Slothrop becomes Rocketman and agrees to a drug-run to Potsdam. He meets Seaman Bodine, an American Sailor.

7. Slothrop makes the drug-run. (The narrator suggests that Slothrop sees a Miss Rheingold poster months later that reminds him of a Dutch girl he once knew, thereby implying that Slothrop does return to America.) He is caught by Tchitcherine.
8. The further adventures of the Argentines, who have commandeered a U-boat. Squalidozzi meets Gerhardt von Göll, Der Springer, the man who made the movie of the Black Commandos for the English, and who is also associated with Jamf. The Argentines almost collide with the U.S.S. John E. Badass but are saved by the drug Oneirine, invented by Jamf, which alters time modulation.
9. Tchitcherine, on hash, decides he likes Slothrop.
10. Slothrop, awakening from the drug-induced state in which Tchitcherine had interrogated him, meets Greta Erdmann, the ex-pornographic movie star, who is looking for her daughter, Bianca. The child was conceived during an orgy in one of her films.
11. Slothrop's sexual encounter with Greta serves as a segue to introduce Franz Pokler's story: his relationship with Leni, their daughter, Ilse, and how the Germans use her to force Pökler to work on the rocket. Jamf's discoveries are related to Kekulé's who pioneered inorganic chemistry.
12. Slothrop's relationship with Greta is detailed. He often spends time with Bummer.
13. The history of the Toiletship is narrated. Achtfaden, who worked on the aerodynamics of the rocket, is caught by the Hereros.
14. Slothrop and Greta take a barge to Sweinemunde to meet her daughter. Slothrop is still dressed as Rocketman. At Bad Karma he falls in the river, and in order not to drown, he discards the outfit. He is picked up by The Anubis, a floating barge of decadent aristocrats. He meets Thanatz, Greta's husband.

15. In the climactic sequence of the novel, Slothrop makes love to Bianca and begins his dissolution as the central character.
16. The novel begins to fragment. A separate sequence entitled "Ensign Morituri's Story" relates Greta's compulsion to murder Jewish boys. Bianca disappears.
17. Greta's movie background explains her relationship to Weissman/Blicero and Imopolex-G.
18. Slothrop begins to lose his concern with the rocket and falls overboard the Anubis.
19. Frau Gnahn, who works in the black market, rescues Slothrop, now dressed in an evening suit. She introduces him to von Göll/Springer and Närrisch, who also worked on the aerodynamics of the rocket. She takes them to Schweinmunde and then to Penemunde, the rocket firing grounds. The Russians, already at Penemunde, seize Der Springer.
20. Slothrop's personal identity is diminishing. He, Närrisch, and Frau Gnahn's crew plan to rescue Der Springer. In the attempt, Slothrop passes the rocket unawares. They rescue Der Springer, Slothrop takes and wears Tchitcherine's clothes, and Närrisch is caught by the Russians.
21. In the Zone, all factions keep missing each other, in the same way that the Argentine U-boat missed the Badass. Enzian realizes that the War is an excuse for the development of technology.
22. Slothrop makes a deal with Springer to meet him at Putzi's, a bordello in Cuxhaven, where Springer promises to give Slothrop false discharge papers. Frau Gnahn rams the Anubis; Slothrop discovers that Bianca has been murdered. He leaves the Anubis at Stralsund.
23. Back in England, Pudding has died, and Katje discovers the movies of her that were used to condition the octopus. She goes to Osbie Feel, who has rebelled against Pointsman and the White Visitation establishment.
24. The fantasy (?) sequence of the double agents includes Pirate, Katje, von Göll, and others.
25. Slothrop, wandering south of Rostock on his way to Cuxhaven, meets Ludwig, who is looking for his lost

lemming. The narrator digresses to relate the history of Slothrop's ancestor, William, who led his pigs to slaughter in Boston while always hoping that one of them would rebel.

26. Slothrop meets Major Marvy, who thinks that Slothrop is Tchitcherine, and then Andreas, who is one of the Hereros.
27. Major Marvy, Bloody Chickliz, another American, and Tchitcherine meet. They discuss the confusing happenings which are related to Slothrop, without knowing that Slothrop is responsible for them. Tchitcherine suggests that there is a counterforce in the Zone.
28. Slothrop, still wandering to Cuxhaven, becomes Pigman to help a town celebrate a traditional festival in honor of the folk hero. The Germans try to disrupt the ceremonies. Slothrop gets involved, then flees, meets a young girl who shelters him, and then finally meets Frieda the pig, who is actually Franz Pökler's pet. She leads him to Pökler.
29. Pökler tells Slothrop about Jamf's work on Imopolex-G.
30. Pökler continues to tell Slothrop about Lyle Bland.
31. Under Pointsman's direction, the English plan to castrate Slothrop. Slothrop arrives at Cuxhave, meets Bodine, and they go to Putzi's. At the baths, Slothrop grabs Marvy's clothes as the MPs stage a raid. Marvy takes Slothrop's pig suit, is mistaken for Slothrop by the MPs, and taken away and castrated. Slothrop sleeps with the whore, Solange, who is Leni Pökler. He now wears the clothes of an American sailor.
32. In this last chapter of Book III the narrative begins to deteriorate. Previously, one chapter followed one sequence of events. This chapter begins with Tchitcherine's suspicion of a counterforce. Then it digresses to a movie made by the Argentines. Then there is the narrative of the dog town. Finally, back in England, Pointsman is in disgrace for the erroneous castration. Clive Mossman and Sir Marcus Scammony, important governmental officials, reveal that all are in the service of the Operation, which is its own head. The System perpetuates itself with no human at the head.

Book IV. "The Counterforce"

1. Slothrop, roaming the countryside, is changing. He finds his kazoo, which he lost in the toilet fantasy in Book I. The direct intersection of fantasy and reality introduces a new level of reality. Later, Slothrop becomes the crossroads for a hanged man and then envisions a rainbow penis fertilizing the earth.
2. Roger Mexico, losing Jessica, revolts against the authorities at the White Visitation and joins the other counterforce. They go to Germany to try to retrieve Slothrop.
3. Eddie Pensiero is cutting his commander's hair. The room is lit by an immortal light bulb named Byron. Byron's history is recounted. Eddie drives the scissors into the commander's throat.
4. Katje meets Enzian and they discuss their parallel relationships to Slothrop and Blicero/Weissman.
5. Thanatz, who had been washed overboard in the same storm which almost drowned Slothrop, meets a Polish undertaker who wants to be hit by lightning. Thanatz meets inmates from the homosexual prison capt at Dora. He is caught by the Hereros and tells them about the S-gerat, the secret element in the 00000 rocket. They have re-assembled an A4 rocket.
6. [This chapter is so fragmented that a mere list of topics must suffice.]
 The fantasy sequence of the search for the Golden Hour: Slothrop has become a comic-book hero.
 --Slothrop realizes there are other plots than his.
 --"The Low Frequency Listener": Slothrop tries to communicate with the Argentines.
 --"Mom Slothrop's Letter to Ambassador Kennedy."
 --"On the Phrase 'Ass Backwards'": Säure and Slothrop discuss the redundencies of English.
 --"Shit 'N' Shinola": the discussion of linguistics continues.
 --"An Incident in the Transvestites' Toilet": back to the narrative of the search for the Golden Hour.
 --"A Moment of Fun with Takeshi and Ichizo, The Komical Kamikazes": the story of the two pilots lost on a deserted island where they cannot commit suicide successfully.
 --"Streets": Slothrop discovers a newspaper article with a picture of the atomic bomb.

- "Listening to the Toilet": the narrator plays a trick on the reader's need to organize data, and discusses the possibility of vacuums.
 - "Witty Repartee": back to the Kamikazes.
 - "Heart to Heart, Man to Man": fantasy dialogue between Slothrop and his father about drugs.
 - "Some Characteristics of Imopolex-G": the intricacies of the chemical's erectile properties are described.
7. Tchitcherine is falling from power and has an Oneirine-induced "haunting."
 8. The counterforce tries to rescue Slothrop but gives up. Slothrop has dispersed. Geli uses her magic to locate Tchitcherine. The narrative segues into the history of Blicero's and Gottfried's last moments.
 9. Enzian is also losing power. The fantasy of the Rocket State and its meanings. Ludwig has found his lost lemming.
 10. Geli summons Tchitcherine. He and Enzian meet without recognition.
 11. A description of the Rocket City. Thanatz and Ludwig wander through the zone. The 00001 is being assembled. Slothrop's tarot. The counterforce acknowledges that it wasn't really interested in Slothrop. Bodine, face to face with Slothrop, must let him go as a personality. Slothrop has become a myth.
 - "The Occupation of Mingeborough": a fantasy (?) of Slothrop back in Massachusetts.
 - "Back in Der Platz": a drug sequence involving a film by von Goll based upon the reversal of cause and effect.
 - "Weissman's Tarot": the narrator offers a reading of Weissman's cards.
 - "The Last Green and Magenta"; "The Horse"; "Isaac"; "Prelaunch"; "Hardware"; "Chase Music"; "Countdown": various interpretations of the original rocket launch and Gottfried's role as the S-Gerat.
 - "Strung into the Apollonian Dream": Gottfried is placed in a shroud of Imopolex-G and fitted into the rocket.
 - "Orpheus Puts Down Harp": in modern-day Los Angeles, Richard M. Zhlubb is plagued by a harmonica player who threatens to disrupt the lines at his theater. He relates his fantasy of being killed on the freeway by a plastic clothing bag.
 - "The Clearing": the original 00000 Rocket is fired.
 - "Ascent": Gottfried experiences the rising of the rocket.

--"Descent"; the rocket descends over a theater as the screen which was showing the picture goes blank. The descent is halted a delta-t above our heads by a song.

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