



METAPHOR IN THE NOVELS OF THOMAS PYNCHON

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CONTENTS

		<u>Page Nos.</u>
Chapter 1	Introduction	1 - 7
Chapter 2	<u>V</u>	8 - 30
Chapter 3	<u>The Crying of Lot 49</u>	31 - 45
Chapter 4	<u>Gravity's Rainbow</u>	46 - 69
Chapter 5	Conclusion	70 - 79
Appendix		80 - 81
Footnotes		82 - 84
Bibliography		I - III

SYNOPSIS

Although there is a growing body of criticism on Thomas Pynchon, particularly in American literary journals, there are very few studies which attempt a methodology to explain the major aims of his three novels. Instead, particular aspects have been isolated for discussion, and generally these also tend to focus on one or other of the works. My research therefore, offers a reading which, while allowing the novels to be discussed for their individual differences, concentrates on the common thematic pattern which does not change.

Metaphor is the single most significant aspect of Pynchon's writing. His novels not only include a system of metaphors that extend and enrich the meaning of the action, but are themselves thematically concerned with metaphor as a structure of experience. Thus a distinction exists between the metaphors of the text and the message in the text about metaphor. Obviously the two are closely linked; individual metaphors illustrate Pynchon's theories about metaphor, while his ideas about structure influence the kind of metaphors used.

As a writer himself, one of Pynchon's concerns is with the literary use of metaphor as the primary analytical and descriptive unit. He closely identifies this with the general problem of interpretation, which he characteristically illustrates with examples drawn from literary criticism and more particularly, the Puritans' interpretative use of the Bible to uncover God's design.

The central theme of all the novels is that of the arrangement of knowledge. Pynchon's major characters are all engaged on quests which involve an interpretation of events and signs around them. As they struggle to order an essentially mysterious and hostile world - manmade and natural - they encounter various ways of perceiving. One of the most important of these is the scientific, and it is Pynchon's use of science which makes his work unique even in the fiction of the sixties. Scientific explanation is an extremely important means of structuring the universe. Several of Pynchon's characters learn from scientific analogy as a further example of the fertility of metaphorical thinking.

The third important region is that of historical explanation. The perception of the past strongly influences the view of the present, which in turn predisposes human beings to certain kinds of action. Events have no meaning, it

is the analysis of them, and the influence on them of analysis, which gives human history a meaning. With such a view, it is Pynchon's feeling that our commonly held beliefs have a more arbitrary aspect than is generally accepted.

Pynchon's radical and pessimistic vision of the twentieth century is contained within his use of metaphor, which reveals his view of the importance of interpretation and perception. In this study, I have attempted to show how this works through each novel, as well as discussing it as the major preoccupation of all of Pynchon's work to date.

The first chapter introduces some aspects of metaphor, and looks at some of the criticism that has sought a simple explanation for Pynchon's novels. The next three chapters deal in turn with the novels, in chronological order: V, The Crying of Lot 49, Gravity's Rainbow. The conclusion briefly places the novels in a contemporary context and suggests some critical problems in their evaluation.

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university, and to the best of my knowledge, no material previously published or written by any other person except where duly acknowledged in the text and bibliography.

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I want to thank all my friends and helpers, especially those who read the books and didn't have to, and who gave me so many ideas, and Paul who apart from much else kept me straight on the science.

*All at once I understood how illusions and
mistaken identities give rise to metaphor.*

Peter Handke Short Letter, Long Farewell

*I guess one of the reasons I've never been a
very good private detective is that I spend
too much time dreaming of Babylon.*

Richard Brautigan Dreaming of Babylon



INTRODUCTION

There is a good deal of criticism on Thomas Pynchon, almost all of it appearing in journals. It is difficult to know in the Australian context how many more doctorates and articles are being written on an author who continues to baffle and intrigue his countrymen.

Yet, as Mark R. Siegel points out :

*'While ...they... have shed some light on Pynchon's sources, on the precision and magnitude of the cultural landscape which Pynchon has created, and on specific but discontinuous aspects of the novel(s) thus far no-one has suggested an analysis of the work(s) which accounts equally for all its diverse parts.'*¹

There are exceptions to this. Siegel himself offers a system to account at least for the complexities of Gravity's Rainbow. There are also others who have suggested the proposition offered in this thesis, namely that metaphor is the single most important element in Pynchon's work. Generally, however, it is true to say that while there are useful, thoughtful commentaries on Pynchon, they tend to deal with and emphasise particular aspects of his work. It is rare that a critic attempts to set out a methodology with which to examine Pynchon's novels as entireties.

Nevertheless, his novels have attracted much interest, comment and prizes. V, which first appeared in 1963, was awarded the William Faulkner Foundation award for the best first novel of the year. The Crying of Lot 49 which was published in 1966 won the Richard and Hilda Rosenthal Foundation Award of the National Institute of Arts and Letters. Gravity's Rainbow, 1973, was nominated for the Pulitzer Prize, but rejected by the Pulitzer advisory board despite the unanimity of the judges' decision because it was thought that the novel was "unreadable", "turgid", "overwritten" and "obscene".² However, it was awarded the National Book Award (with Isaac Bashevis Singer), and the Howells Medal of the American Academy of Arts and Letters. Moreover he is taught in many American universities and beginning to be taught in Australia. Pynchon is certainly not an ignored author, so that the field, though new in many ways, is by no means untouched.

The incomplete nature of the criticism therefore, is inherent to a certain extent, in the difficulties of this kind of contemporary fiction, particularly where it lays a claim to being experimental. These problems, which arise mainly from the lack of a context and tradition of reading, have convinced many scholars in the past and in the present that studying modern literature is too inexact a pursuit for serious students. It is claimed that art requires a maturing period before its appreciation can be properly delineated.

Indeed, an extremely delicate balance is required between a slavish enthusiasm for anything new and a judicious willingness to take contemporary fiction seriously. It is not the intention here to argue for or against the merits of studying modern literature in universities. The argument will continue, no doubt, as long as fiction, and English departments, exist. However, some justification can be given for not merely appreciating and acknowledging new works, but learning the means to examine them closely as well.

Two notable and very different modernists have set out the problem quite precisely of fitting a new work into the expectations that already exist. T. S. Eliot in "Tradition and the individual talent" now regarded as a classic of its kind, deals with the role of the critic as well as the role of the writer. The modern writer is also a part of the tradition which underlies and informs his originality. It is the task of the critic and of history to determine the nature of the relationship between the two.

The existing order is complete before the new work arrives; for order to persist after the supervention of novelty the whole existing order must be, if every so slightly, altered; and so the relations, proportions, values of each work towards the whole are readjusted; and this is the conformity between old and new. ³

Eliot is speaking of the processes involved in a very impersonal manner, as if they form a closed system which one can stand outside and see in its final and ideal state. He obviously cannot be expected to point out the precise nature of the responsibilities and actions involved in the process, yet they must exist for the harmony he envisages to take place. Impersonal forces will not bring it about.

Alain Robbe-Grillet, French novelist and critic, has a different, complementary view. He sees the new writer as trying to escape from tradition as if it were a trap, and the critic as being unable to see anything in originality apart from the tradition and the expectations that it engenders. The relationship between tradition and the writer, and the writer and the critic, is thus far from harmonious.

The stammering new born work will always be regarded as a monster, even by those who find experiment fascinating. There will be some curiosity, of course, some gesture of interest, always some provision for the future, and some praise though what is sincere will always be addressed to the vestiges of the familiar, to all those bonds from which the new work has not yet broken free and which desperately seeks to imprison it - the past. ⁴

Robbe-Grillet's irritation may well seem to support the case of those who argue against the systematic examination of contemporary fiction, and who might prefer the calm inevitability of Eliot's vision of literary progress. I prefer to see an implied challenge for new rigour and constructive scepticism in both these views.

The work of actively participating in Eliot's order while avoiding Robbe-Grillet's description of the faults of new criticism is part of the excitement of reconciling the "conformity between old and new." The experience of examining the fiction which is the creative voice of our own time, as well as of its author, is uniquely important. Moreover, we can bring to it a perspective that no amount of historical hindsight and objectivity can recreate.

The proposition of this work is that Pynchon's novels should be read as critiques of metaphor. His works not only include a system of metaphors with which he colours and extends the actions of the characters in the plot, but are thematically concerned with the imaginative structures of perception and experience. As I have already mentioned this methodology has not been entirely ignored. M. R. Leder in his thesis "The Use and Theory of Metaphor in the Works of Thomas Pynchon" points out that metaphor and the study of it must be the "central pillar" of scholarship on Pynchon.⁵ As indicated in his title, he draws the distinction between the metaphors of the text, and the message in the text about metaphor. Such a distinction is vital to the understanding of Pynchon's work and is the fundamental idea of this thesis. My emphasis tends to be on Pynchon's view of metaphor rather than the explication of particular metaphors. Secondly, I shall be examining his general metaphor system in each novel, although the details of the sources of the metaphor are not always considered.

It is not intended here to introduce a lengthy discussion of the nature of metaphor or a history of the criticism on it. As my interest lies in how Pynchon sees metaphor, a working definition and understanding of its theory will be offered. Wimsatt claims that W. B. Stanford in his Greek Metaphor : Studies in Theory and Practice (Oxford, 1936) has one of the most precise definitions of metaphor.⁶ As a technical definition it is certainly very clear and forms a good basis for further discussion of the nature and effect of metaphor.

Metaphor, he says, is :

"the process and result of using a term (X) normally signifying an object or concept (A) in such a context that it must refer to another object or concept (B) which is distinct enough in characteristics from A to ensure that in the composite idea formed by the synthesis of the concepts A and B and now symbolised :- the word X, the factors A and B retain their conceptual independence even while they merge :- the unity symbolised by X."

Wimsatt adopts I. A. Richards' terms, the tenor and the vehicle, and applies them to the notations A and B to distinguish between the two ideas that form the simplest metaphor. He further extends and explains Stanford's stiff description:

*"... in understanding imaginative metaphor we are often required to consider not how B (vehicle) explains A (tenor) but what meanings are generated when A and B are confronted or seen each in the light of the other."*⁷

Cleanth Brooks also defines metaphor in terms of a transfer of meaning between two components A and B. The imaginative component in metaphor is made up of "likeness amid heterogeneity".⁸ I. A. Richards in The Philosophy of Rhetoric (New York 1936) defines metaphor further as involving a transaction between contexts. The transaction illuminates the original context as well as forming a new suggestive context from the meanings of the original. It is obvious that what is required for such a widening of context is a set of linguistic conventions that will make the implied similarity, as well as the apparent contrast, intelligible. A good metaphor, however, uses such conventions to create tension by the originality of the likeness implied. As I. A. Richards puts it :

*'As the two things put together are more remote, the tension created is, of course, greater.'*⁹

The disparity is thus as important as the similarity, as only then does the third range acquire its richness. Harmony and difference, order and strangeness are simultaneously implied.

Metaphors can also be reabsorbed back into the convention and become 'dead' or, as Wimsatt prefers, collapsed, metaphors. This occurs when the element of difference between A and B becomes lost. The two come together in such a way that the similarity of contexts seems to have a semantic equality. Brooks uses the example of 'the bed of the river' as a figure of speech which has become mistaken for a literal description without any of its former surprise or tension. Wimsatt points out also that a metaphor loses its power when it is used out of context.

*It is a structure of verbal meaning which keeps metaphor alive, that is, which holds the vocal terms A and B in such a way that they remain distinct and illuminate each other, instead of collapsing into literalness.*¹⁰

Metaphor adds to the possibilities of the structure of verbal meaning. It extends the language available by adding new relations to it, taking qualities and associations from one area into another, illuminating both and creating a further set of possibilities.

Sir Herbert Read calls the effect of metaphor "a sudden perception of an objective relation". He suggests in fact far more than a linguistic device, and his terminology implies that metaphor is related to hidden structures in reality.

Metaphor is indeed more than a literary embellishment. It is a part of the process of thought from the known to the unknown through the recognition and identification of similarities. Metaphor becomes a means of ordering experience by using terminology already understood to impose order on the strange through the perceptions. A new terminology can therefore come into existence to explain complex, abstract or new kinds of experience. Thus an important component of metaphor lies in interpretation. The limitations of metaphor as explanation

emerge when it collapses into literalness also. Constant re-ordering and questioning of the differences keeps the metaphor functioning; that is, the metaphor goes on revealing a new sense of relations, and its tension remains as an alert to the mind. The dangers of metaphor lies in its concentration, where the mode of explanation can end in being mistaken for the thing itself.¹¹

It is here, as well as in the individual 'literary' use of metaphor, that Pynchon's view of metaphor emerges. In the first place, he uses a richness of individual metaphors to reveal how metaphor works. He extends the range of the transactions he makes through his knowledge of non-literary fields such as science and mathematics. His metaphors are attempts in one way to form bridges between different kinds of knowledge: historical, scientific, literary. The integration of such varying fields has impressed many readers, and attracted work on these particularised aspects of his allusive powers. However, it has led many astray, too. Here, I want to discuss one of the major critical errors that resulted from attempting to explain Pynchon's canon in terms of a single metaphor and its source.

Pynchon's recurring use of the term entropy^{*}, allied with an apparent pessimism about the future, has decided a lot of commentators to identify it as his central metaphor. Critics such as Anne Mangel,¹² Peter Abernethy¹³ and John Leland¹⁴ have taken the cue from Pynchon's short story called Entropy¹⁵ and have used it as the basis of methodology to explain the aims and themes of the novels. The story certainly uses an extended metaphor based on entropy and applies it to two different human situations in the same locality: a chaotic party, on which however order is eventually imposed, and a couple living in an artificially maintained environment which allows no outside influence to penetrate its "closed system". Moreover, Oedipa's major discovery of it in The Crying of Lot 49 through Maxwell's Demon, as well as stray references in V and Gravity's Rainbow¹⁶, seem to lend evidence to the belief that it is Pynchon's chief metaphor.

Indeed, entropy has become, in some ways, a fashionable term to use when dealing with American literature. Tony Tanner, for instance, sees it as the major image of the contemporary writer, tracing references to entropy in Kurt Vonnegut, Norman Mailer, Donald Barthelme and John Barth, among others. Taking the term "in its broadest sense as meaning the increasing disorder of energy moving at random within a closed system" he even goes on to apply it to works of the past such as the Dunciad and Bleak House.¹⁷ Similarly, where the term is not invoked at all, but a fear is evinced in the literature of an increasingly non-human landscape in the post-industrial world, Tanner detects entropy. The absurdity which the over-zealous and ignorant application of the metaphor as a methodology can lead to is

* See Appendix

for me exemplified in this quotation from Levi-Strauss:

Entropology ... should be the word for that discipline that devotes itself to the study of this process of disintegration in its most highly developed form.

From this, Tony Tanner goes on to say that "we may say that American novelists of the past two decades have shown themselves to be diligent entropologists."¹⁸ The term is apparently suggestive, and seems to be a successful transfer of information between disciplines. The coinage does not in fact stand up to an examination, as its real meaning is extremely vague outside its proper scientific context. Moreover, it gives no indication at all of the major themes of American writers in the last twenty years. An artistic interest and concern with the possible degeneracy of culture can, and obviously has been, quite distinct from the knowledge of statistical laws describing a process that projects into an unimaginably huge future and which, in any case, cannot be altered by human action.

Pynchon's evocation of his concern over the proliferation of things, his doubts about art in the modern world, his exploration of decadence in modern history, does indeed place him thematically with many other of his contemporaries. However, his is too complex a view, and his use of metaphor too varied, to be reduced to a single mode of explanation. Tanner admits too, that :

It is my impression that the term taken from its context of the Second Law of Thermodynamics, is used now with a looseness which any scientist would deplore and is in any case regarded as a rather old fashioned idea. ¹⁹

Other readers of Pynchon have also been critical of this manifest abuse of knowledge through bad metaphor. Scott Simmons refers dismissively to the "wrong-headed reviews" which have used "entropy that much over-quoted concept (...) to pigeon-hole Pynchon's work. Such a catchword way of dealing with the novel(s) is hardly necessary".²⁰ Mark Siegel again puts the objection best and in doing so incidentally well summarises Pynchon's use of metaphor.

The Crying of Lot 49 is not merely an application of the process of entropy to contemporary American culture, but an examination of the loophole in the metaphor itself. ²¹

The nature of metaphor in the novels directly involves scepticism about the willingness to put too much faith into an all inclusive system. Pynchon's novels cannot therefore be understood in terms of a single stranded metaphor. He is exactly arguing for the necessity of richness and flexibility in the ways experience should be structured and interpreted. It is this feature of Pynchon's metaphor which will be dealt with here. By reading his work in this way, the mystery and ambiguity of his texts are seen to have a deliberate function.

This study looks at the individual use of metaphor in each novel. Pynchon's preoccupation with the problems of perception remains basically the same in each,

and is expressed broadly in all three novels by the quest motif. A search of any kind requires interpretation of clues and thus forms an ideal basis for a fictional enquiry into the means of interpretation through metaphor. Each novel is located in the twentieth century and is concerned with what have come to be seen as major features of the age. The impact of technology and the implications of mass society underlie the themes of all the novels. Half of V and all of Lot 49 is set in America, the centre of world power since the war; the other half of V and GR. (which has an American as its chief protagonist) is set in Europe, the old centre of world power before the war. Power and its implications in modern history through war, colonisation and industrialisation are other major themes that run through all three novels.

As an author, Pynchon retains and pursues the same kinds of themes in all his novels. However, it is important to see that each novel deals with aspects of metaphor very differently. They are very separate and distinct works utilising differing systems of symbolism and image, which require being dealt with individually. Pynchon has not written a trilogy, though he re-uses some of his characters across all the novels. In this sense, he resembles Günter Grass, the post-war German author, whose characters recur briefly and tantalisingly in some of his novels, and whose themes and settings are frequently the same; however, his novels are clearly differentiated from the others and no-one could call them a series without seriously overlooking the uniqueness of each.

It has been most useful to deal with the novels chronologically, because in some ways they form a pleasing symmetry. Lot 49, his middle work, is structurally the simplest. It is an extremely concise and compressed novel, the suggestiveness of which rests on its density of plot rather than its variety of plots. GR. as the current latest novel echoes the first novel V in its structure and some of its plots, but is the most complex, most diversely plotted and certainly the most difficult of the three. V combines elements of both without necessarily integrating them.

The structure of this study has been kept simple. Each novel will be examined in chronological order in separate chapters. The argument will be drawn together in a final chapter which will form the conclusion of the thesis. In that chapter, further general critical problems not directly relevant to the exposition of the individual novels but important to the thesis as a whole, will be discussed.

CHAPTER 2

V

I

The major temptations in reading V is to follow the quest as obsessively as Stencil does and to interpret the novel by tracking down every clue in order to find out what V the novel means through V. the figure. Contained within the text itself, however, are several warnings about a literal critical quest. Quite early there is the suggestion that the pursuit of V

'was merely a scholarly quest after all, an adventure of the mind, in the tradition of The Golden Bough or The White Goddess.¹

Though such a possibility is made ambiguous by Stencil's feeling that he

(would) wake up the second, real time, to make again the tiresome discovery that it hadn't really every stopped being the same simpleminded, literal pursuit.

We are also told of the discoveries of Stencil:

"The rest was impersonation and dream." 63

The quest for V. by Stencil, which forms the main structure of the novel, is thus ambiguous in the extreme, and like fiction itself, has only the certainty of "an adventure of the mind". Stencil's quest is a highly artificial one. Though V. may exist in all sorts of tantalising forms and exists in the novel itself, she has virtually disappeared by the end of the novel. The references to her become more and more aphoristic, the narrator's voice becomes more sceptical:

"V.'s is a country of coincidence, ruled by a ministry of myth" 450

"God knows how many Stencils have chased V. about the world." 451

The quest is completely self-contained, that is, it exists by perpetuating its own clues, and its movement rather than its end provides an essential life force for Stencil. As a character he is nearly indistinguishable from his quest. We perceive Stencil through a disembodied voice that alternates between remoteness and intimacy. Stencil is explained to us; it is rare in a Pynchon novel that a reader is allowed to deduce character from action. From the start therefore we are given various explanations of Stencil's motivation:

Finding her : what then? Only what love there was to Stencil had become directed entirely inward, toward this acquired sense of animateness To sustain it, he had to hunt V.; but if he should find her, what else would there be but to go back into

half-consciousness? He tried not to think, therefore, about any end to the search. Approach and avoid. 55.

It is not a unique discovery, perhaps, in life or fiction, that action is preferable to an end. The point is that a reader may never know if the quest is "real" or not, or only exists in Stencil's mind.

The quest and the novel become the same thing through the author's exploitation of our curiosity about it. If Stencil's quest is a metaphor for anything single and concrete it is for the very act of fiction itself. It becomes ultimately irrelevant whether the quest has a legitimate object or not. Pynchon's use of the traditional quest motif, and the metaphorical construction of it, is meant not only to show, but also to take the reader through the ways in which interpretation and perception work.

The search for V. is a search through time, and more specifically a search through the twentieth century. The historical jumps from 1899 to 1956 superficially complicate the continuity of the novel. However, the structure of the quest and the possible meanings of V. are determined by the historical reconstructions. Through them Pynchon offers a species of historical explanation - a Genesis of the twentieth century. In the light of this, it would be easy to see V. as some kind of zeitgeist and Stencil's search as a desperate attempt to locate the meaning of life in his time. There is obviously much evidence for such an interpretation. Pynchon uses and exploits history, however, in order to reveal that it is in itself a metaphor.

History is similar to fiction in that it is largely a created perspective. The difference between historical explanation and art lies in that perspectives of the past are verified by consensus within, of course, a framework of enquiry. History is not fiction, because we have a past which we can know to a problematical extent. Pynchon 'fictionalises' certain aspects of history, partly to show that our vision of it is uncertain, but also to seek his own explanation for what he sees as the mainspring of modern times. Violence is obviously one of these.

He has written a kind of subtext to authorised modern history. The search for V. and her equivocal appearances take place around what are regarded as the major events of the twentieth century. The novel never focuses squarely on the mass events from which the time is considered to take its character, but constructs plots around obliquely significant dates. Each conspiracy and siege, half fantasy, half fact, resonates with the historical events to which people have grown accustomed and, to a large extent, immune. Pynchon exploits standard cultural responses to history in new and partially fictionalised contexts. His history has a strange plausibility because of his metaphorical apprehension of history as conspiracy. History, like fiction, is perceived as a series of

plots set into motion by individuals and complicated by a variety of interpretations. Pynchon's view of history seems very akin to John Barth's wry line "History if not real, is at least impressive".

Pynchon feels very strongly the power of a history that violently affects masses of people. The first and second world wars particularly mark the age and most of the action takes place in times around these two conflagrations. V. becomes a convenient symbol and prophecy of violence :

He had discovered, however, what was pertinent to his purpose: that she'd been connected ... with one of those grand conspiracies or foretastes of Armageddon which seemed to have captivated all diplomatic sensibilities in the years preceding the Great War. V. and a conspiracy. Its particular shape governed only by the surface accidents of history at the time. 155.

It is important to note at this stage that Pynchon's view of history is not completely deterministic. Metaphors and conspiracies are made by men. Events can be affected to an enormous extent by how they are perceived and interpreted. One of the extraordinary things about the First World War, as Pynchon is aware, was what seemed to be a general mental acceptance of doom. The actual outbreak of war caused a curious combination of shock and ecstasy; the desire or at least expectation for war was not really considered to be a factor in its actual correspondence. One of Pynchon's major themes is that this separation of perception and event has given the twentieth century its twin aspects of mechanism and violence. This thesis is particularly extended in the section of the novel set in South West Africa.

Hence V. the fiction, quest and conspiracy symbolises and is a part of the violent history of the twentieth century that Pynchon evokes in his own strange scenarios. All the historical scenes - the V. clues that Stencil follows - only obliquely relate to the history to which we are accustomed. The major theatres of the two wars are never mentioned, nor are the names with which history tends to be underlined. Pynchon keeps away from recognisable facts that tend to numb us and concentrates on individuals and symbolically charged vignettes. As with his fiction he tries to rewrite history so that it appears new again. The menace and strangeness of his writing reawakens the reader's perceptions. Pynchon combines an apparently uncanny feel for historical authenticity with fantasy that ranges from acceptable poetic license to the completely bizarre and surreal. It is the hallmark of all three of his novels and forms the basis of his critique of metaphor as the fundamental mode of perception. The description of Stencil's expeditions into the past well fits Pynchon's own imaginative historiography:

Around each seed of dossier, therefore, had developed a nacreous mass of inference, poetic license, forcible dislocation of personality he didn't remember and had no right in, save the right of imaginative anxiety or historical care, which is recognized by no-one. 62.

In each historical section, and indeed in the whole novel, the narrative voice shifts its emphasis a good deal. Different personae are assumed, and sometimes only extremely briefly. Pynchon flows without pause from omniscient description to a very particular and limited viewpoint. For instance, the assorted diplomats and the Wren family of Cairo 1899 (Chapter 3) are observed completely from the viewpoint of minor characters: Aiel the waiter, Yusef the factotum, Rowley-Bugge the bum, Waldetar the train conductor, Gebrail the cabdriver, Girgis the mountebank, Hanne the German waitress. Pynchon's sympathies are with those whom history ignores but continually touches.

Merely train's hardware for any casual onlooker, Waldetar in private life was exactly this mist of philosophy, imagination and continual worry over his several relationships - not only with God, but also with Nita, with their children, with his own history.

78.

The effect is to emphasise the arbitrary nature of historical account and the inestimable importance of every individual.

Generally however, characters speak with Pynchon's unchanged voice. He accepts their limited perspectives, but the philosophy remains relatively constant. Eigenvalue, for instance, is sometimes more Pynchon than Eigenvalue. He comments on history and Stencil very much in the terms of the novel :

"Perhaps history this century, thought Eigenvalue, is rippled with gathers - its fabric such that if we are situated, as Stencil seemed to be, at the bottom of a fold, it's impossible to determine warp, woof or pattern anywhere else ... We ... are conned into a false memory ... We are accordingly lost to any sense of a continuous tradition. Perhaps if we lived on a crest, things would be different. We could at least see.

156.

The wisdom of some of Pynchon's characters can therefore seem extremely contrived, lacking a deeply felt characterisation but speaking too easily with Pynchon's voice. Yet this is also very necessary to the ideas of the novel. For instance, many of the stories told are a "Stencilised" version. It suggests that Stencil as a narrator, like Pynchon the novelist, fills in the gaps and supplies his own metaphors where the account becomes unsatisfactory. Mondaugen's story in particular is made subtle by such multi-narrative techniques. It is a story told to Stencil by Mondaugen after many years; the version we receive is that of Stencil's to Eigenvalue. Not only that, but within the framework of the siege are flashbacks to 1904 when Mondaugen in delirium assumes another's identity. His dreams are based on that man's interpreted memories of his participation in the Herero revolt of South West Africa. The plots are therefore highly stylised and their literal aspect extremely uncertain. Outrageous coincidences and transparent character manipulation lead to serious and factual narration. Through such methods it is clear that Pynchon does not use historical fact to make his fiction authentic, but exploits all the tricks of fiction to give his history a metaphorical depth.

One of his aims is indeed to show how little we understand the means by which we are led to interpret an event. To a large extent, this is unavoidable, but it becomes dangerous when decisions are made that are based on simplistic assumptions.

People read what news they wanted to and each accordingly built his own rathouse of history's rags and straws. In the city of New York alone there were at a rough estimate 5 million rathouses. God knew what was going on in the minds of Cabinet Ministers, heads of state and civil servants in the capitals of the world. Doubtless their private versions of history showed up in action. 225.

Pynchon's ambiguity and complication of the quest is the means by which the novel criticises a simplistic view of perception and interpretation. It is impossible to see things as they really are since everything must be submitted to a process. What is necessary is that the process is recognised and extended. The trickery of the novel therefore, with all its games and jokes is meant to force a reader to re-examine his assumptions about reading and hence interpretation in general.

II

For all its unity of metaphor, V. structurally falls unavoidably into two halves. Stencil is on the fringes of the Whole Sick Crew and several times for narrative ease, either tells or is told various stories about V.'s manifestations by people who are part of that scene. The connection is generally tenuous, even Stencil's flight to Malta with Paola and Profane remaining an unconvincing attempt to fuse the novel together through a common plot.

One section of the book appeared originally as a short story, and in many ways the novel can be seen as a collection of self contained scenarios held together by common language and motifs.² The fragmentation is true to the themes of the novel, and Pynchon vastly extends the same careful randomness in Gravity's Rainbow which also engages on a fictional quest into the consciousness of the twentieth century.

Of the sixteen chapters, ten deal mostly with Profane and the Whole Sick Crew, and six with V. at various stages of the past. The Profane half of the novel is connected quite solidly by common characters and continuing plot lines. Each section on V. is almost completely self contained, apart from the reappearance of a few characters such as the Godolphins, Stencil senior and, of course, the various identities of V. herself. The novel sets out two separated story lines: one dealing with the half-fantasised past and the other with the present of 1956.

The embattled but defiant pessimism that is the tone of the whole work emerges from a pattern of images, metaphors and events, not all of which are literally and singly explicable. Often metaphors are set up and extended for their own sake. Much of the impulse for the imagery association is unrecoverable, except as a system of internal allusion which unifies the sensibility of the novel. Moreover, the novels allusions to facts outside itself are extremely learned, drawn from science, history, art, literature.

V. as the central metaphor of the novel is the symbol of a century of violence. She presides in all her forms over all violence and decadence. As Mantissa's dream of beauty, the Botticelli Venus, she is linked to Vheissu, the place of chaos and annihilation: a mistress whose beauty promises only death, and whose divinity, the ascendance of an inhuman principle. As Vera Meroving she is once again linked with Vheissu, this time in her predatory relationship with Godolphin. Significantly here she has a clockwork eye; later as the Bad Priest in Malta nearly all of her is mechanical.

V. also exists simultaneously in her several individual ways: as Vheissu, the symbolic heart of darkness, as Vera, Victoria, Veronica, V. in love, as Valletta under siege and in the :

mercury-vapor lamps, receding in an asymmetric V. to the east where it's dark and there are no more bars. 10.

V. represents several different facets of modern life. She is the quest that becomes life's movement for Stencil, the revelation of nothingness for Godolphin, the final debasement of love into fetishism, mistress of the inanimate, Goddess of seduction and fallen Virgin. In any one of her stories therefore she can be several things at once. Even when as a character, V. may play only a minor role, as a metaphor for violence she dominates most of the historical plots.

Foppl's siege is one of the best of the fictionalised histories of the novel. As well as being a reconstruction of the violence of South West Africa of 1922 which recalls the Herero genocide of 1904, the siege also becomes a metaphor for Munich in the dying days of the Weimar Republic. Like Munich the siege is a "city dying of abandon, venality" 236. It also represents Europe before the Second World War, as well as recalling the sense of international siege prior to 1914.

A curious crew were thus thrown together. Many, of course, were German: rich neighbours, visitors from Windhoeck and Swakopmund. But there were also Dutch and English from the Union; Italians, Austrians, Belgians from the diamond fields near the coast; French, Russian, Spanish and one Pole from the various corners of the earth; all creating the appearance of a tiny European Conclave or League of Nations assembled here while political chaos howled outside. 235.

The siege is a miniaturisation of the waning of European colonial power and the desperate attempt to protect and return to a dying nineteenth century lifestyle. Because it is an artificially closed system, the siege is a perfect vehicle for revealing intimate human interactions, which reflect the larger historical relations.

Mondaugen is the Stencilised narrator of the tale, as well as being its major character. Initially, he is completely out of touch with any kind of politics because of his preoccupation with his science. Thus he is peculiarly susceptible to Foppl's and Weissman's fanaticism. Foppl is obsessed with the events of 1904 and von Trotha, the German general sent to oversee the slaughter of the Herero and Hottentot tribes after their loosely united rebellion against their colonial conquerors in that year. His murderous nostalgia reflects the rising tide of nationalism in Germany during the Depression, which reached its height under Hitler's skilful manipulations. Weissman, who assumes a major role of evil in *Gravity's Rainbow*, has already placed his faith in Hitler, Nazism and Fascism as the means by which Germany will regain the power that she had had in places like S. W. Africa before the Great War. As he tries to enlist Mondaugen's support, he accurately prophesies the future European imperial intentions of the coming regime. Nor is Mondaugen completely untouched by the recent defeat and economic humiliation of his country.

'For the first time since hearing about the Treaty of Versailles in detail, Mondaugen found himself crying. 260.

He is moreover connected with Munich at Fasching, to which the siege is frequently compared.

His gradual identification with Foppl and Weissman occurs through dream and illness. In a dream about Fasching, Vera appears as a curse laid on him and the whole city. Her name to the reader, sensitised as Stencil, is immediately suggestive. Delirious with scurvy, the atmosphere of the siege and V.'s curse, Mondaugen re-dreams Foppl's life as a soldier in 1904. The result is an imaginative construction of the possible psychology that results in mass murder.

In both *V* and *G.R.*, Pynchon visualises colonies, particularly the African colonies, as the dark places of Western civilisation, where European taboos and inhibitions can be forgotten. In South West Africa, this happens to include the sense of the sanctity of human life.

'It's impossible to describe the sudden release, the comfort, the luxury; when you knew you could safely forget all the rote-lessons you'd had to learn about the value and dignity of human life (... .

Till we've done it, we're taught that it's evil. Having done it, then's the struggle: to admit to yourself that it's not really evil at all. That like forbidden sex it's enjoyable." 253.

Von Trotha, like Hitler, permits the luxury of savagery. As with the Jews, the Hereroes are seen as an inferior race, who can be set aside and tortured as scapegoats if they do not fit the master plan. Pynchon's vision is that the genocide represents a release from all the constraints of conscience, and reduces the human world to its simplest terms: them, and us.

When a man wants to appear politically moral he speaks of human brotherhood. In the field you actually found it. You weren't ashamed. For the first time in twenty years of continuous education-to-guilt, a guilt that had never really had meaning, that the Church and secular entrenched had made out of whole cloth; after twenty years simply not to be ashamed. 257.

The underlying attraction of the violence is the simplicity of a life without moral imperatives. At the same time, the extermination of the natives becomes a mechanical one; once begun the boredom and predictability of it further erodes the sense of mutual humanity. Through Foppl's memories and in the claustrophobic siege itself, Mondaugen discovers the process of dehumanisation, from rage and luxury, through mechanism and boredom, to a sense of natural order which makes any return nearly impossible.

Usually the most you felt was annoyance; [...] You have to obliterate its life, and the physical act, the obviousness of the act, the knowledge that this is only one unit - a seemingly infinite series, that killing this one won't end it, won't relieve you from having to kill more tomorrow, and the day after, and on, and on... the futility of it irritates you and so to each individual act you bring something of the savagery of military boredom, which, as any trooper knows is mighty indeed. 264.

As well as the growing savagery of boredom which adds to the dehumanisation of the victims, a sense of a new order of relationships grows.

'It dawned on you slowly, but the conclusion was irresistible: you were in no sense killing. The voluptuous feeling of safety, the delicious lassitude you sent into the extermination with was sooner or later replaced by a very curious - not emotion because part of it was obviously a lack of what we commonly call "feeling" - "functional agreement", would come closer to it; operational sympathy. 261.

As the old moral order disappears in luxurious abandonment to killing, a relationship develops between victim and oppressor. In Foppl's mind at least, this is based on the apparent acquiescence of the oppressed to their status as things to be exterminated. A sense of fitness results from what is already happening. The killer in his own imagination becomes an instrument of destiny.

Things seemed all at once to fall into a pattern: a great cosmic fluttering in the blank, bright sky and each grain of sand, each cactus spine, each feather of the circling vulture

*above them and invisible molecule of heated air
seemed to shift imperceptibly so that this black
and he, and he and every other black he would thence-
forth have to kill slid into alignment, assumed a set
symmetry, a dancelike poise. 264.*

The native work camp to which Foppl and Mondaugen eventually go also anticipates the Nazi concentration camps. Here Foppl loses his moment of grace and the brutality resumes its impersonality and tedium. On the sterile and ugly coast, the lack of community, and senselessness of the work, brings him to the ultimate point of the destruction of human order. The loss of Sarah represents the failure of his last attempt to make contact with the people he rules. With the final triumph of the non-human principle, the whole universe reveals its indifference to him.

The true nature of mass-slaughter and its factory-like rationalisation in World War II is uncovered by these colonial adventures.

*If a season like the great Rebellion ever came to him again,
he feared it could never be in that same personal, random
array ... but rather with a logic that chilled the
comfortable perversity of the heart, that substituted
capability for character, deliberate scheme for political
epiphany ... where finally humanity was reduced ...
to a nervous, disquieted, forever inadequate but indissoluble
Popular Front against deceptively unpolitical and apparently
minor enemies, enemies that would be with him to the grave:
a sun with no shape, a beach alien as the moon's antarctic
... the inertia of rock, the frailty of flesh, the
structural unreliability of thorns; the unheard whimper
of a dying woman; the frightening but necessary cry of
the strand wolf in the fog. 273, 274.*

The destruction of human relationships through the selfdefeating one between killer and killed, affirms the random and indifferent control of the inanimate. The world of things appears to take on a hostile attitude because of the wilful assertion of death, and proves itself intractable to any human endeavour. Death becomes a victory for the indifferent world beyond the hierarchy of the concentration camp. It makes no distinction between conqueror and victim.

As Mondaugen in his illness dreams of the brutal past with its inherent prophecy for the future, the siege itself displays a similar decay of moral human order. As well as using the Bondels for torture and amusement, the guests also begin to use each other. Mondaugen begins to feel a sense of outrage, and an awakening sense that this sickness is a general one and has political as well as social consequences. He wonders :

*if he could ever escape a curse... to become surrounded
by decadence no matter what exotic region, north or south,
he wandered into. It couldn't be only Munich, he decided
at some point: nor even the fact of economic depression.
This was a soul depression which must surely infest Europe
as it infested this house. 277.*

When it seems that Vera has won even Godolphin to her evil, which is the decade's evil, Mondaugen escapes into the bush with a native.

Vera is one of the V. clues and as has been mentioned she is only one of several aspects of V.; Helga Vogelsang has a V. name, and tempts Mondaugen also. As well as Vera, Vheissu reappears as a major motif in this plot. Godolphin and his romantic adventures have appeared in the novel before; in Florence 1899 the story of Vheissu emerges from his confession to Victoria, another major V. figure, and to Mantissa who has his own obsession with V. as Botticelli's Venus.

Vheissu represents the original impulse of the colonial experience. It is important because it stands for the imaginative component in the physical discovery of the unknown. Vheissu symbolises both the truths such an exploration might be expected to hold for the idealistic, and also the ultimate denial of such epiphanies. For Godolphin, Vheissu is the final destruction of the whole notion of a central truth that can be found through quest and romance. The anarchy and chaos of its surface belies even the idea of a heart of darkness, fictionally identified by Conrad in the colonial experience. The colours and constant re-arranging of forms refer only to themselves.

The urge to explore extends beyond a desire for economic possession. It involves a search for the self, as well as a fundamental order beyond the artificial one of civilisation. Godolphin is an adventurer in this old, romantic sense. Taunted by Vera, who claims that the siege is Vheissu - that the dream leads to destruction - Godolphin denies the validity of such quests at all in the modern world.

"There's been a war, Fraulein. Vheissu was a luxury, an indulgence. We can no longer afford the likes of Vheissu."

"But the need" she protested, "its void. What can fill that?"

... The real thing ... whether we like it or not that war destroyed a kind of privacy, perhaps the privacy of dream. Committed us '...' to work out three o'clock anxieties, excess of character, political hallucinations on a live mass, a real human population. The discretion, the sense of comedy about the Vheissu comedy with us no more, our Vheissus are no longer our own, or even confined to a circle of friends; they're public property. God knows how much of it the world will see, or what lengths it will be taken to. 248.

Once Vheissu becomes part of a public illusion about the world its inherent chaos and nihilism leads to destruction. To this extent Vera is right in seeing that the events in S.W. Africa are the result of such dreams of possession and transcendence.

Like many of Pynchon's extended metaphors, Vheissu is highly suggestive, and also extremely vague. The ultimate mysterious manifestation of Vheissu occurs in the Antarctic. In the frozen wastes, Godolphin hopes to escape from his vision of the pointless movement of Vheissu. Despite the revelation of nothingness in the riot of colour, he still seeks the still heart of the world. The discovery of the Vheissuan spider monkey in the ice is his final discovery that the quest for the absolute is only a "dream of annihilation" 206. Like V. the coloured spider monkey is an unrecoverable relic. It is a part of the inexplicable alignments of the inanimate world which seem so suggestive to human destiny. However if humanity tries to pattern itself in the same way, madness and chaos results.

Godolphin's repudiation of the romantic quest teaches others who are also obsessed with their own V.'s. Mantissa leaves the Botticelli Venus in the gallery in sudden recognition of the doom involved in loving an abstraction above all else. He realises that Godolphin's discovery of the meaninglessness of his search for Truth, applies to his adoration of the painted goddess. For some, however, the knowledge is not tragic, but a source of wonder, amusement and acceptance. Cesare, involved in the plot to steal the Venus, reflects on the events with comic philosophy.

*'What an amazing world it still is, where things and people
can be found in places where they do not belong. /...
In the room of Lorenzo Monaco, he remembered amazed,
before Botticelli's Birth of Venus, still blooming purple
and gay, there is a hollow Judas tree. 212.*

Godolphin's presence at Foppl's siege, however, makes it obvious that Godolphin has not been able to escape the fatal charm of Vheissu. He has been drawn back to colonial Africa in the hope of buying a cheap boat in order to resume his Polar explorations. Although he fully realises the hallucinatory aspect of Vheissu and its terrible power once it becomes public property, he cannot resist his own need to explore. Already susceptible to V., he succumbs to Vera and the oppressive atmosphere of evil. It is this, as well as the fake Wittgenstein message contained in the spherics, that gives Mondaugen the impetus to escape. V. implicitly represents a denial of the statement "The world is all that the case is". She is a metaphor for the desires of those who seek a higher principle, or wish to lose themselves in something outside the self. As a personal dream, she is harmless and necessary, but perverted by power, V. becomes a preference for the simplicity of the inanimate over the human. In Pynchon's novels, transcendence of any kind leads to a loss of self. On a public scale, this leads to a loss of humanity. Foppl sought such a loss of self and only promoted and discovered death. V. tempts men on quests which are ultimately evil. As such, she becomes a metaphor for all aspects of the misdirected policies of the time, personal and public.

III

The 1956 New York sections of the novel take up the historical themes and metaphors in a contemporary and realistic setting. V. does not appear except as tantalising clues or in connection with Stencil. These sections centre on Profane and his temporary alliance with a bohemian section of New York, who must surely be in part a satire of the Beats in the late 50's. In this half of the novel some new themes emerge as well as new aspects of those of decadence and violence. These are explored with regard to personalities and the problems of day to day living. A contrast therefore exists between the symbolic, generalised V.-stories, and the more characterised, internalised plots set out in the novel's present.

Here Pynchon is much more concerned with the problems of creativity in the modern world. The Whole Sick Crew are the group of characters he invents partly to explore his vision of the role of art and thought. It is clear that the Whole Sick Crew's pretensions to intellect are negated by their inherent conformity. They are unable to make anything new or really escape old structures. Moreover, they use metaphor in the worst possible way. They do not perceive new realities in their art or their conversation. Their rearrangements are idle and secondhand.

But they produced nothing but talk and at that not very good talk... or this technique for the sake of technique ... or parodies on what somebody else has done. So much for Art, what of Thought? The Crew had developed a kind of shorthand whereby they could set any visions that might come their way. Conversations ... had become little more than proper nouns, literary allusions, critical or philosophical terms linked in certain ways.... This sort of arranging and rearranging was Decadence, but the exhaustion of all possible permutations and combinations was death. 298.

Pynchon's view of the modern urban intelligentsia is extremely scathing. The importance of shifting pieces of knowledge around is acknowledged - silence and death are at least held off - but the lack of depth and unity in the Crew's philosophies and lifestyles reflects his pessimism with the state of the intellectual. In this sense, he would oppose within his fiction the notion of other writers like John Barth of a "literature of exhaustion". To decorate laziness or decadence with names is to condone intellectual defeat. What chances there might be for new insights and originality are smothered before they are born. The Whole Sick Crew's decadence is tied back to the historical decadence that surrounds V. In this way, their inability to create takes on important social consequences. Stencil sees a similarity between the Catatonic Expressionists and the people of the siege at Foppl's :

(...) he saw here the same leprous pointillism of orris root, weak jaws and bloodshot eyes, tongues and backs of teeth stained purple by this morning's homemade wine ... tossed to the earth to join a trail of similar jetsam - the disembodied pouts or smiles which might serve, perhaps, as spoor for next generation's Crew (...). 296.

The mechanical pleasures which lead into cruelty and slaughter at the siege are linked to the lack of intellectual rigour and vision of the Whole Sick Crew. Both end in a degradation of the vital functions of humanity.

A summary of the major themes of the second section involving Profane and his companions further illustrates those already discussed in detail in the first two sections of this chapter. The theme of decadence and its cult of the less-than-human is a part of the imagery of the 'inanimate' which pervades the novel and which affects nearly every character. As has been shown, decadence and violence contribute to and are the result of a sense of history that is both arbitrary and impersonal. In these sections, the metaphors of the machine and mechanism reflect the dehumanisation of modern history with its violence and mass terror. The mark of evil in a character is deliberate alignment with the mechanical. V. herself becomes more robotlike, and in one of her possible disguises as the Bad Priest, is able to dismantle completely. The diplomat Bongo-Shaftesbury frightens Victoria's sister on the train by the switch in his arm. Waldemar, the conductor, thinks of him :

If they are what I think; what sort of world is it when they must let children suffer.

Even sympathetic characters are tainted with an object-fetishism; Rachel has her M. G., although her ability to love makes her one of the most successful human beings of the novel. Benny Profane, on the other hand, regards himself as a schliemihl precisely because he cannot make the mechanical work for him :

'he couldn't work a transit, crane, payloader, couldn't lay bricks ... hadn't even learned to drive a car. He walked; walked he thought sometimes, the aisles of a great bright supermarket, his only function to want.' 37.

Violence is seen as the most profoundly anti-human activity, not only because it deals in death, but, as discussed in Foppl's siege, the killer forgets his own humanity through the destruction of others and becomes machine-like. Profane's imaginary conversations with the S.H.O.C.K. and S.H.R.O.U.D. robots at Anthroresearch Associates is the exposition and summary of Pynchon's vision of the twentieth century:

S.H.R.O.U.D. begins :

'Acres of old cars piled up ten high in rusting tiers. A graveyard for cars. If I could die, that's what my graveyard would look like.

(Benny) *"I wish you would. Look at you, masquerading like a human being. You ought to be junked. Not burned or cremated."*

(Shroud) *"Of course. Like a human being. Now remember, right after the war, the Nurenburg war trials? Remember the photographs of Auschwitz? Thousands of Jewish corpses, stacked up like those poor old car bodies. Schliemihl. It's already started." 295.*

Where individual deaths become genocide, human life as a principle becomes unimportant and like machines, junkable if necessary.

Schoenmaker, on a smaller scale, regards the human body as an assembly of not-quite-perfect parts. His original mission, to alleviate suffering, which comes out of his horror about war mutilations, becomes perverted into a near pathological inability to accept the appearance of people. Yet his deterioration of purpose is linked with his helplessness as one individual in the face of the world, and the continuing aggression of humanity.

Having heard his vocation on the embattled wind, Schoenmaker's dedication was toward repairing the havoc wrought by agencies outside his own sphere of responsibility. Others - politicians and machines - carried on wars; ... others - on the highways, in the factories - undid the work of nature with automobiles, milling machines, other instruments of civilian disfigurement. What could he do toward eliminating the causes? They existed, formed a body of things-as-they-are; he came to be afflicted with a conservative laziness. It was a social awareness of a sort ... 101.

It is clear that we cannot condemn such a compromise, given the sheer limitations of personal influence. Where Schoenmaker goes wrong is in further preying upon the insecurity of others in the world. Pynchon's pessimistic realism extends to the world of natural objects. He begins the fourth part of Chapter 10 with an interlude of statistics about natural disasters. Some of them are machine induced, but most of them deal with floods, fires, earthquakes, typhoons. He concludes :

These were the mass-deaths. There were the attendant maimed, malfunctioning, homeless, lorn. It happens every month in a succession of encounters between groups of living and a congruent world which simply doesn't care. 291.

Pynchon's achievement in the contemporary sections of the novel is in building up a subculture out of bar rooms, tenements, sewers, clubs, to evoke an atmosphere of frenetic aimlessness and deprivation. The chapters that deal with Profane are thus cyclical. It all begins with Benny in a bar which he then has to flee:

"Where we going" Profane said.

"The way we're heading" said Pig. "Move your ass." 17.

and ends with him running in Malta :

Later out in the street, near the sea steps she inexplicably took his hand and began to run ... Hand in hand with Brenda whom he'd met yesterday Profane ran down the street ... momentum alone carrying them toward the edge of Malta, and the Mediterranean beyond. 455.

There is no exposition, only continuing movement, the predominant image for which is yo-yoing. Profane is a bum, an anti-hero who can never be turned back into a hero as tends to happen to anti-heroes.³ Lazy, he derives his sense of life and his purpose from perpetual movement. Though he does not change, there is a growing sense of decay through his and the Crew's stories. At the end, Profane is alone again, collecting stray acquaintances, but having left the only society he knew in New York. Much happens, but at the end Profane is very honest about what it has all meant :

*"Profane didn't have to think long.
"No" he said "offhand I'd say I haven't learned a
goddam thing."*

The novelistic assumption that life teaches progressively is destroyed in all of Pynchon's fiction. Things happen to Profane because he is alive and keeps moving, but that is all. Pynchon believes in neither romance nor adventure in the swashbuckling sense. Sadness is the most dominant feeling between the parties. All the characters live in a twilight world where the safe assumptions of an established society - for instance, that love exists, that relationships last forever, that life has a discoverable point - do not apply.

The difficulties of defining love is one of the novel's themes; there are many couplings, but little affection. Where it exists, keeping the autonomy of the individual alive becomes very difficult. Women are still very much the holders and givers of love and caring, but ambivalence exists about their motives and the results of their emotions.⁴ There are several references to their passivity which makes them dangerously close to inanimate objects. Fina and Esther become victims, allowing their integrity to be destroyed, unable to survive for themselves. Rachel wonders whether it is the only way that relationships exist.

*What is it, she thought, is the way Nueva York is set up,
then, freeloaders and victims? Is there this long
daisy chain of victimisers and victims, screwers and screwees? 49.*

Rachel is one of the most successful lovers of the novel. Significantly, she remains aloof from the Whole Sick Crew, except for those who are underdogs. Paola, who provides the link to Malta, one of the centres of Stencil's quest, is also capable of deep tenderness. She too escapes from the atmosphere of the Whole Sick Crew, although her reunion with her husband, Pappy Hod, seems an

equivocal solution. The debased consciousness of the Whole Sick Crew robs them of any capacity for real feeling, or indeed real love for anything at all.

The pattern would have been familiar - bohemian, creative, arty - except that it was even further removed from reality. Romanticism in its furthest decadence: being only an exhausted impersonation of poverty, rebellion and artistic 'soul'. For it was the unhappy fact that most of them worked for a living and obtained the substance of their conversation from the pages of Time magazine and like publications. 57.

They are specifically linked to and contrasted with Stencil through his disgusted analysis of them :

Perhaps the only reason they survived, Stencil reasoned, was that they were not alone. God knew how many more there were with a hothouse sense of time, no knowledge of life, and at the mercy of Fortune. 57.

The irony is, of course, that Stencil is not ultimately so very different. His sense of time is hothouse because it centres around V., he is nearly as much at the mercy of fortune as Profane, except for his belief in the meaning of his life. Stencil's unity comes from his faith in conspiracy: his sense that there is an underground organisation for which V. is the priestess. Eigenvalue sees his paranoia in a metaphor of teeth, which incidentally is one of the bizarre minor elements of the novel.

Cavities - the teeth occur for good reason, Eigenvalue reflected. But even if there are several per tooth, there's no conscious organisation there against the life of the pulp, no conspiracy. Yet we have men like Stencil, who must go about grouping the world's random caries into cabals. 153.

Superstition and paranoia are protective devices for other characters too. Profane's portrayal of himself as a schliemihl is a defense against his helplessness against a hostile world. Rachel is dubious about it as a way of looking at life :

You've taken your own flabby, clumsy soul and amplified it into a universal principle. 383.

Profane's fear of inanimate things leads him to endow them with life opposed to his own. Yet while he appears to be afraid of the mechanical and non-living world, he is attracted to it by its simplicity. Profane is wary of people and of commitment to them.

Could any of their resistance be measured in ohms? Some day, please God, there would be in all - electronic woman. Maybe her name would be Violet. Any problems with her, you could look it up in the maintenance manual. Module concept: finger's weight, heart's temperature, mouth's size out of tolerance? Remove and replace was all. 385.

Benny tends to see women as accidental objects that happen to him in the way broken shoelaces and dropped dishes do. He feels threatened by love because it is an insistence of his humanity.

*Why did she have to behave like he was a human being?
Why couldn't he be just an object of mercy.*

Thus Profane half wants to sink into the non-living world. It is the fear of it too which keeps him on the street. He is terrified of being dismantled like a machine. His version of the quest is linked with the recurring image of the street where he seeks a painless merging with the world.

*To Profane, alone in the street, it would always seem
maybe he was looking for something too to make the
fact of his disassembly plausible as that of any
machine. 40.*

Profane's search for transcendence is thus similar to the quests of other characters. As well as his ambivalent paranoia about the objective world, he attempts to construct a sense of myth, in the same way as Stencil.

In one of his alligator chases in the sewers, the underground of the street, Profane hopes for an epiphany brought on by the memories of a story told about the sewer. The legend of Father Fairing and Veronica the rat links to Stencil's histories of V. Completely reduced to absurdity, the story is a satire on religion and faith.

*The stories by the time Profane heard them, were pretty
much apocryphal and more fantasy than the record itself
warranted. At no point in the twenty or so years the
legend had been handed on did it occur to anyone to
question the old priest's sanity. It is this way with
sewer stories. They just are. Truth or falsity doesn't
apply. 120.*

Like myths, the story simply exists and relies on acceptance and tradition for its force. Unlike myth the sewer story does not explain anything fundamental about life; faith has become credulity, imagination has turned to bizarre and unsupported fiction making. Profane tries to link the story with his own American tradition to concoct a sense of wonder in himself:

*In Independence Hall in Philly, when the floor was rebuilt,
they left part of the original, a foot square, to show the
tourists. "Maybe" the guide would tell you "Benjamin
Franklin stood right there or even George Washington".
Profane on an eighth grade trip had been suitably impressed.
He got that feeling now. 123.*

Lacking a real sense of history, which has been replaced by cheap commercialism, Profane cannot have the revelation he hopes for. Instead he does his job: kills the alligator which has found itself there through the whims of fashion.

Profane does try to make the most of his occupation, and to derive from it a sense of purpose and unity. Angel and he attempt to impress two girls with their stories of alligator shooting.

*Together on the stoop they hammered together a myth.
Because it wasn't born from fear of thunder, dreams,
astonishment at how the crops kept dying after harvest
and coming up again every spring, or anything else very
permanent, only a temporary interest, a spur-of-the-
moment tumescence, it was a myth rickety and transient
as the bandstands and the sausage pepper booths of
Mulberry Street.* 142.

Because Profane and most of the characters with which he is surrounded are rootless and urbanised they are incapable of imaginatively apprehending a structure outside their own transience. Sewer stories and fake intellectualism take the place of real creativity. Either they live at odds with the world, like Profane, or can only face it through paranoia, like Stencil.

Some of the characters do their best to struggle free and find a golden mean in which they can live. Rachel tries it through love and by taking in the sad and incomplete and helping them through their lives. McClintic Sphere, too, attempts to find love, and is in many ways one of the sanest characters in the novel. He is musically talented, and is moreover dedicated to experimentation and finding new forms. Despite the fact that he is patronised by whites and the phonies at the V-note club, he maintains a certain dignity and integrity. He sees that it is not necessary to be crazy to be artistic and creative. In his affair with Paola-as-Ruby-the-prostitute, he tries to balance involvement with respect and friendship. He too has trouble believing in love, but he tries to care and to remain stable within himself.

Significantly, he develops his own private metaphor to help him. It is derived from the electrical components of a computer brain, the processes of which he does not entirely understand. What is important, is that he perceives a certain similarity of terms and of process between a computer brain and human behaviour. Even though his facts may be a little wrong, the point is that the metaphor becomes true. It is a way of thinking in its own right and remains valid as long as it enables him to perceive something he was unable to formulate clearly before. Like Schoenmaker, Sphere does not understand why humanity has to swing between extremes, or as he puts it in his new terminology, between "flip and flop". Although Schoenmaker is corrupt, he has seen the extremism of history very clearly:

*All of which went to support his private thesis that
correction - along all dimensions : social, political,
economic - entails retreat to a diametric opposite
rather than any reasonable search for a golden mean.* 103.

Sphere wants to find the mean between neurosis and indifference. The fake cool of the postwar years has supplanted love and honesty, but the opposite of cool seems to be personal craziness and public war.

*'Ruby, what happened after the war? That war,
the world flipped. But come '45 and they flopped
... no love, no hate, no worries, no excitement. 293.*

Yet love too can be a species of neurosis and unbridled emotions lead to chaos. The idea of love is an insufficient panacea for the complicated affairs of the world. He cannot find a real answer to the dilemmas he defines. Ruby becomes Paola and leaves him for Pappy Hod and Malta, further emphasising the lack of a "happily ever after" ending.

*... the only way clear of the cool/crazy flip flop was
obviously slow, frustrating and hard work. Love with
your mouth shut, help without breaking your ass or
publicising it: keep cool, but care."*

Sphere's realism will not allow him to fall for any mystical solutions to the problems of the world.

*... taking for granted some wonder drug someplace to
cure that town, to cure me. Now there isn't and never
will be. Nobody is going to step down from heaven and
square away Rooney and his woman, or Alabama, or South
Africa, or us and Russia. There's no magic words. Not
even I love you is magic enough. Can you see Eisenhower
telling Malenkov or Kruschev that? Ho-ho'. 366.*

IV

As has been shown, the stories of V. are more elaborate metaphors for the themes of the rest of the novel. In the following section of this chapter, close examination will be given to the Fausto Maijstral story in the V. tradition, as one of the central episodes of the novel. His voice is the most personal and coherent of both parts of the novel. His diary account of his wartime experiences in Valleta, Malta, is crucial to the whole. As a writer who deals with the past through language and metaphor, he fuses together the repetitive preoccupations of the novel. Significantly too, Maijstral's diary is in the form of a confession left as a legacy to Paola his daughter. Legacies are the most important kinds of gifts in Pynchon's canon.

As an artist, Maijstral is extremely preoccupied with the problems of process. His self consciousness is heightened by being Maltese. Malta is, with Vheissu as its symbolic chaotic other, the central place of the novel. Historically it

is famous for its sieges and its periodic struggles for independence from various masters. By a trick of geography, an otherwise insignificant and inhospitable rock has had an important role in the history of Western civilisation, at times as much symbolic as actual. Maijstral lives through the last great siege of Malta. During the Second World War, the importance of retaining Malta as part of the allied forces was due to its position allowing key passage to British shipping through the waist of the Mediterranean. Victory in North Africa against Rommel was linked to Malta's extraordinary resistance to Italian and Luftwaffe bombing.

Maijstral and Paola are seen as an integral part of Malta, and their endurance in life is linked to the island's endurance through a very long history. Maijstral is the name of the prevailing seasonal wind that blows from the north-east; Paola is the name of a town first laid out in 1626. They have, therefore, a locus and a tradition that very few of the other characters possess.

The confessions begin with an attempt to define the writer and his environment. The human being has significance, the room none, except for the activities of the consciousness within it. Maijstral is concerned with identity and the past, and his relationship to both through metaphor.

We can justify any apologia simply by calling life a successive rejection of personalities. No apologia is any more than a romance - half a fiction - in which all the successive identities taken in and rejected by the writer are treated as separate characters.

The writing itself even constitutes another rejection, another 'character' added to the past. So we do sell our souls : prying them away to history in little instalments. It isn't so much to pay for eyes clear enough to see past the fiction of continuity, the fiction of cause and effect, the fiction of a humanised history endowed with 'reason'. 306.

This idea of history that is not organised and cannot be explained by simple structures of cause and effect is taken up and extended in G.R. It is also the summary of the vision of history in V, which is shown as being unreasonable, inhumane and accidental.

The themes of history, decadence and inanimateness are worked through the various stages of Fausto's personality, which he perceives and names as four stages. The encounter with the Bad Priest is the climax of and the motivation for the confession. The Bad Priest exists as an "actual" character, but is in fact a kind of walking symbol given the attributions of a physical being, and whose very bizarreness is a part of her metaphorical dimension. Fausto's loss of faith is linked to the battering of Malta and to the dismantling of the Bad Priest, who is completely decadent. The poisoning effects of the priest's

notions of sin are specifically linked to the misuse of metaphor.

This was parable, the Bad Priest told her, metaphor for spirit's cancer. But the Maltese mind, conditioned by its language is unreceptive to such talk. All my Elena saw was the disease, the literal sickness. Afraid I, or our children would reap its ravages. 314.

Fausto's sense of what art is, is also a summary of the novel's attempts to come to terms with fiction and creativity. Through his experience of war, Maijstral moves away from epiphanies and metaphors into a different kind of poetry.

"Poetry had to be as hasty and rough as eating, sleep or sex. Jury rigged and not as graceful as it might have been. But it did the job. Put the truth on record. 'Truth' I mean in the sense of attainable accuracy. No metaphysics. Poetry is not communication with angels or with the 'subconscious'. It is communication with the guts, genitals and five portals of sense. Nothing more. 318.

The problems of personal identity, which includes that of the poet, are linked to and are a part of the problem of historical humanism.

I know machines that are more complex than people. If this is apostasy, hekk ikun. To have humanism we must first be convinced of our humanity. As we move further into decadence this becomes more difficult. 322.

Fausto traces his personal development in the same metaphorical terms expressed in the rest of the novel. His self-consciousness leads him to the same images half articulated by other characters. One of the minor metaphors for modern life is that of the street, which Fausto sees in much the same ways as Profane.

'The street of the 20th century, at whose end or turning - we hope - is some sense of home or safety... A street we are put at the wrong end of, for reasons best known to the agents who put us there. If there are agents. But a street we must walk ... a desert, or a row of false shop fronts; a slag pile, a forge where the fires are banked, these and the street and the dreamer, only an inconsequential shadow himself in the landscape, partaking of the soullessness of these other masses and shadows: this is the 20th century nightmare. 324.

Maijstral's vision is an extremely pessimistic one, and where it is the same as Pynchon's, tends to make the novel a little self-indulgent. The romantic view of the artist as hero has been reduced to the idea of an impotent ghost in the twentieth century.

Fausto lives with metaphor as a constant problem of perception and self-determination. Through considering it, his bleak idea of the poet is strengthened.

Living as he does much of the time in a world of metaphor, the poet is acutely conscious that metaphor has no value apart from its function; that it is device, an artifice Fausto's kind are alone with the task of living in a universe of things which simply are, and cloaking that innate mindlessness with comfortable and pious metaphor so that the 'practical' half of humanity may continue in the great lie, confident that their machines, dwellings, streets and weather, share the same human motives, personal traits and fits of contrariness as they . . . It is the 'role' of the poet, this 20th century. To lie. 325-6.

It is this minor strain in the novel, the possibility of acceptance of things as they are, which provides a little balance to the fear of the world often evinced by the characters. To Maijstral, metaphor is opposed to such a recognition. Knowledge of metaphor may lead through to such an acceptance, but its function is to protect rather than reveal. The poet is the true knower but he must be a deceiver and maintain the illusion of metaphor rather than using metaphor to reveal the reality. Maijstral's view of humanity is a low one; western man is too feeble and frightened to accept his place among things, and has used art as a myth to keep the truth from penetrating.

Linked to this disillusion with art is a truth finding act, is Maijstral's loss of faith, which also does not occur as the poets might wish us to see it.

Losing faith is a complicated business and takes time. There are no epiphanies, no 'moments of truth'. It takes much thought and concentration in the later phases which themselves come about through an accumulation of small accidents: examples of general injustice, misfortune falling upon the godly, prayers of one's own unanswered. 330.

Fausto is of the older generation and still has a faith to lose. The children of the siege, and by analogy of the twentieth century, inherit a different cast of mind. They independently construct an underground society of their own and interpret their universe in functional rather than anthropomorphic ways.

For all their dirt, noise and roughnecking the kids of Malta served a poetic function. The R.A.F. game was only one metaphor they devised to veil the world that was... It was biding time; it was poetry in a vacuum . . . These children knew what was happening: knew that bombs killed. But what's human after all? No different from a church, obelisk, statue. Only one thing matters: its the bomb that wins. Their view of death was non-human. One wonders if our grown-up attitudes hopelessly entangled as they were with love, social forms and metaphysics worked any better. Certainly there was more common sense about the children's way. 332.

At the same time that the twentieth century is a slide into decadence, a move away from trying to answer the question "What's human?", its legacy is this common sense and acceptance of the sheer existence of the universe. The

children are free from the trappings that burden perception: free to make their own metaphors. Their reaction to the disassembly of the Bad Priest, callous at the physical level, at the symbolic level is a refusal to be impressed by artefacts. "She comes apart" is a statement of fact that reflects their scepticism about God, the agents of faith and myths in general.

One is forced to conclude that Pynchon's view of modern society and the history that brought it into existence is a deeply pessimistic one. Through highly charged metaphors, his exploration of the major features of the twentieth century is one of its crimes, its emptiness and its inhumanity. Yet the purpose of such a bleak vision, and the inventive symbolism which characterises it, is a radical one. Pynchon is concerned with the quality of life and deeply concerned at the loss of the individual in a mass society. In V, flawed though it is many ways, which will be discussed in the conclusion of the thesis, Pynchon has written a new and challenging kind of historical novel.

CHAPTER 3

THE CRYING OF LOT 49

Lot 49 is the shortest of the three novels, and in its plot and imagery pattern, the most intense. Some critics have felt its brevity to be a disappointment, preferring the epic style and lavish metaphors of G.R. Others, like myself, ultimately prefer the simplicity of Lot 49, which is in fact deceptive.

Structurally the novel is markedly different from either of the other works. As has already been discussed at length in the previous chapter, V falls into two parts. Roughly one half is a continuous narrative, while the other is a "mad time search" of self contained historical scenarios. G.R. moves even further from the traditional novelistic relationships of plot - theme - character. Though Slothrop's quest runs more or less throughout the novel, there is little continuity overall. The "major" characters and plots are interspersed with many diversions. The list of characters alone is formidable and well needs the work of compilation undertaken by Scott Simmon.¹ Lot 49 however, is a continuous simple narration. The narrative direction is identical with Oedipa's quest, and there are almost no diversions from the single time span. The quality of the novel and the intriguing intellectual puzzle it presents, lie not so much in its experiments with style, as in its refusal to solve the ambiguity of its own system. The novel is therefore far from being simplistic, although it has a refreshing simplicity. It never presents a complete moral from Oedipa's obsession. The progress and end of the novel, as with the quest itself for the Tristero, lies in the discovery of its own possibilities of meaning. The intellectual challenge of the novel comes from the examination of the means of interpretation of events, which the reader discovers in turn through the novel's own riddles of interpretation.

This is achieved through metaphor. Lot 49 is the novel which is most apparently concerned with the problems of an individual's relationship with the world through explanation and description. Metaphor as one of the primary linguistic and philosophical methods for characterising existence is the basis of Pynchon's created worlds. In Lot 49 the action, the meaning and metaphor are closely intertwined. The plot both suggests and conceals meaning and, as well as containing individual metaphors, is itself a metaphor illustrating the difficult processes of the imagination. The success of the novel is almost entirely due to its ability to maintain the tension between the three elements of action,

meaning and metaphor. As with a detective story, of which Lot 49 is in some ways a parody, a reader always remains interested in the unravelling mysteries of the plot. The real purpose of its obscurity emerges from the attempt to locate its meaning. The metaphoric intentions of the novel become evident from the impenetrable ambiguity of the events. Most of all, Oedipa's status as an unreliable detective, which will be discussed later, forces the reader to reassess her conclusions and also to consider the symbolic aspects of her quest.

Oedipa Maas is started on her quest by a legacy left to her by an old lover. As co-executor of the will, her research is on one level into the extent and influence of the estate, which quickly proves to have conspiratorial and sinister connections. From here, the quest quickly expands. The quest motif as a narrative device contains an element of seeking and/or purifying the true self. For Oedipa, the legacy is the excuse to begin a search for possibility in her own life, which extends into the state of America generally. She is ripe for such a legacy, and it is this psychological readiness which makes her susceptible to the suggestiveness of the bequest.

Like Stencil before he discovers V., she is nearly asleep. Her life, swiftly but tellingly sketched in her shopping for and preparation of a meal, is ritualised and predictable. Her marriage consists of a series of tacit agreements for non-communication. The flashback to her affair with Pierce Inverarity makes it clear that her past had been no different. Even that superficially adventurous and flexible relationship failed to rescue her from her sense of captivity. She is a victim of a fractured fairytale: a Rapunzel without a prince.

There had hung the sense of a buffering, insulation, she had noticed the absence of an intensity, as if watching a movie, just perceptibly out of focus, that the projectionist refused to fix. And had also gently conned herself into the curious Rapunzel - like role of a pensive girl somehow, magically, prisoner among the pines and salt fogs of Kinneret, looking for somebody to say hey, let down your hair. 10. ²

Her situation is not entirely self-inflicted. With her recognition that the prince, Pierce, has not rescued her at all, she has realised that escape is not a matter of physical adventure. Her sense of imprisonment lies deep in the condition of life itself.

'Such a captive maiden, having plenty of time to think, soon realises that her tower, its height and architecture, are like her ego only incidental: that what really keeps her where she is is magic, anonymous and malignant, visited on her from outside and for no reason at all. Having no apparatus except gut fear and female cunning to examine this formless magic, to understand how it works, how to measure its field strength, count its lines of force,

she may fall back on superstition, or take up a useful hobby like embroidery, or go mad, or marry a disc jockey. If the tower is everywhere and the knight of deliverance no proof against its magic, what else? 11.

In a sense, the Tristero System answers her "what else?". It is itself also the outcome of a state of mind equally ready for magic, madness or escape. The romantic myths that traditionally rescue damsels in distress are dead or false. Something else is required to take their place. As with the girls in the Remedios Varos painting, Oedipa is ready to create a world, a tapestry to fill the void.

At the same time her quest actually begins to give her the apparatus with which to understand her imprisonment. It also allows her to see that others beside herself are also imprisoned in various ways. Her enquiry thus goes beyond her own ego and into the world itself. Oedipa is notably a victim of the passivity which the romantic myth of femininity requires. There are no princes and moreover they probably never existed. The very terms which cause her to wait for rescue make up the prison from which she cannot be rescued from outside. Because of her prescribed role she lacks, or is not allowed, the means to explore her state. All she has are native, instinctive gifts of fear and female cunning.

Roger B. Henckle's somewhat contemptuous dismissal of her as a bored little housewife misunderstands her characterisation as a woman trapped in a completely anachronistic, inactive role, and also as a representative of a larger malaise in America.³ It is true that the male characters do not necessarily fare any better in the novel, but they are at least expected to have activities to fill their life. Oedipa has nothing worthwhile to be, or even do. Even her high level of education has not fitted her any better for the decade in which she finds herself.

"She moved ... a stranger, wanting to feel relevant but knowing how much of a search through alternate universes it would take. For she had undergone her own educating at a time of nerves, blandness and retreat ... this having been a national reflex to certain pathologies in high places only death could cure ... Where were Secretaries James and Foster ... Among them they had managed to turn the young Oedipa into a rare creature indeed, unfit perhaps for marches and sit-ins, but just a whiz at pursuing strange words in Jacobean texts. 76.

Just as she says later that she uses the U. S. Mail because she was not taught differently, Oedipa has only been allowed to see the existence of a single system and has instead to survive in a world of variety and irrepressible accident.

The legacy serves in one way to tear away the insulation that is oppressing her. What is singly discovered in it remains problematical to the end. It is the process of discovery and the new perspectives that it engenders that is of prime

importance, although Oedipa herself is never completely aware of this. She chiefly learns throughout her movements that other people's lives contain the same vague helplessness as her own. Because it is the Tristero which forces her to look at those around her, the System can itself be seen as a metaphor for the attempts of those who seek an alternative lifestyle. For instance, the formation of the alternative mail system under the symbol of the posthorn represents methods of communication outside the pre-determined ideas and institutions of America. The nature of Oedipa's revelations comes out in her progressive discovery of a life of resistance to the apparent surface of America. This takes many forms and the further Oedipa looks the more they appear to proliferate. Up until the end of the novel the real meaning of the freaks and theorists that she meets remains unresolved.

Either you have stumbled indeed onto a secret richness and concealed density of dream; onto a network by which ... Americans are truly communicating whilst reserving their lies, recitations of routine, arid betrayals of spiritual poverty for the official government delivery system, maybe onto even an alternative to the exitlessness, to the absence of surprise to life that harrows the head of every American you know, and you too sweetie. Or you are hallucinating. Or a plot has been mounted against you.... 128

Oedipa never finds the easy answer to what she thinks she has seen. Nor does she find the way in which she can learn to belong. The search uncovers only more clearly the topography of her own aloneness, which drives her close to suicide and madness. Throughout her attempts to discover the truth in the legacy she is left, one way or another, by all of her possible allies: Metzger, her husband and Hilarius through madness, Driblette through death. Typically, Oedipa sees this too as being a possible consequence of a malignant outside force, and fears that harm will come to others with whom she tries to communicate, such as Bortz the lecturer and Cohen the stamp expert.

Like Oedipa, many of the other characters also try to determine whether the principle of the world is active or passive. If active, the dilemma is to determine whether or not it is malignant, and if passive, to fit in with coincidence, accident and impersonal patterns of laws. Most of the characters create metaphors - knowable structures - as the means of explaining their lives to themselves. They too are obsessed with signs like Oedipa. However, unlike Oedipa, many of them seem happy to accept another single point of view to replace the one they already have. She cannot be content with this. Nefastis, Fallopian and Arnold Snarb make up a version of life based upon a symbol which gives it coherence and authority.

It is on this basis of creating new versions of life that Pynchon's favourite concept, paranoia, takes its effect. Paranoia involves a sympathy with, as well as a fear of, the possibility of a power outside the obvious mainstream of life. America has become infamous in some ways for its conspiracy theories, which are an aspect of the paranoid kind of thinking. Paranoia is linked intimately with the ability to create metaphors. Mike Fallopian is the first of Oedipa's encounters with a paranoid. He has evolved an explanation of American history which is similar to some of the conspiracies in V. The society which he represents goes beyond the accepted versions of the past and believes in a new interpretation which it finds, fits more satisfactorily. The mail system they have created as a gesture against the establishment does not in the end convey any real communication. It is an incongruous and slightly comic form of resistance. Fallopian however, uses his study of private enterprise mail delivery as a metaphor to explain his view of the way in which institutionalisation in America had arisen:

He found it beyond simple coincidence that in of all years 1861 the federal government should have set out on a vigorous supression of those independent mail routes still surviving ... He saw it all as a parable of power, its feeding, growth and systematic abuse (...) 35.

He is struggling through a heightened sense of conspiracy to the detection of a motive behind separated events which may explain the manner of the rule over his life.

At the same time that Oedipa is starting to discover the extent and influence of Inverarity's estate, further coincidences blossom that feed her paranoia and lead her further into the quest. The most important of these is her discovery of Inverarity's interest in the charcoal made of the bones of G.I.'s killed in Italy during the war. This just happens to coincide with the plot of a Jacobean play being staged in San Narciso. Oedipa and Metzger, much against his will, then go to see it because of its strange fictional similarity to facts. The Courier's Tragedy, made up of course by Pynchon, is the central event of the novel. The play's bizarre and complicated plot, narrated in great and often inconsequential detail, echoes the coincidence fraught plot of the novel of which it is a part. Pynchon obviously believes in an atmospheric affinity between twentieth century America and seventeenth century England before the civil war: /

.... Oedipa found herself after five minutes sucked utterly into the landscape of evil Richard Wharfinger had fashioned for his 17th-century audiences, so pre-apocalyptic, deathwishful, sensually fatigued, unprepared, a little poignantly for that abyss of civil war that had been waiting, cold and deep, only a few years ahead of them. 44.

This could easily be a description of Pynchon's vision of his own plots and characters. It is sensual fatigue and historical unpreparedness that pervades V, for instance, in its picture of a society aligned with death and poverty stricken in love and in art.

The Courier's Tragedy is an excellent imitation and parody of a Jacobean play; it contains explicit violence, horrible and protracted vengeance, and has a pervasive sense of evil and betrayal. Similarly a growing sense of the evil is created in the novel, which results from Oedipa's fears of the malignancy of the Tristero. At the same time, it forms the landscape in which some kind of individual resistance can be expressed. This dualistic aspect, of evil and escape, is partly a consequence of Oedipa's uncertainty about how control is being exerted from outside. In the play, the silent figures of Tristero are agents and metaphors for forces of destruction and retribution outside the actions of the characters in the drama. Oedipa's research into the play is not only a miniaturisation of her search but also reflects the reader's search for meaning in Lot 49. The coincidences in the play serve to emphasise Oedipa's simultaneous desire for and fear of, connections. The curiosity that the fiction engenders in her starts the quest in earnest.

Fiction and literature are perhaps the most extended metaphors we use for interpreting and relating to the world. Pynchon is particularly concerned with the written word and its effect on the imagination. The play, as a fiction within a fiction, casts a further tantalising light on the novel because of the similarly intense atmosphere and its own ambiguity of meaning. It consumes itself in violence, and by introducing a supernatural element creates a sense of evil or destiny beyond the wills of the characters. The world of the play is at the same time essentially godless and chaotic; the continuity, if it exists, is beyond understanding and anarchistic in its nature.

Oedipa believes that the play as a fixed plot must have a discoverable motive. Driblette, the producer, is dismissive of her view of literature :

You came to talk about the play" he said "Let me discourage you. It was written to entertain people. Like horror movies. It isn't literature, it doesn't mean anything (...) 54.

The irony about literary values is extended by Driblette's impatience with Oedipa's persistence in trying to find out something about the background of the play.

"Why?" Driblette said at last, "is everybody so interested in texts?"

... "You don't understand (...) you're like Puritans about the Bible. So hung up with words, words (...) They're rote noises to hold line bashes with, to get past the bone barriers round an actor's memory, right?"

But the reality is in this head I'm the projector at the planetarium If I were to dissolve in here (...) what you saw tonight would vanish too. You, that part of you so concerned, God knows how, with that little world, would also vanish. The only residue in fact would be things Wharfinger didn't lie about But they would be traces, fossils. Dead, mineral, without value or potential You can put together clues, develop a thesis or several, about why characters reacted to the Tristero possibility the way they did, why the assassins came on, why the black costumes. You could waste your life that way and never touch the truth." 54, 55, 56.

Conspicuous among the characters of Lot 49, Driblette has a non-paranoid view of life, which derives from his refusal to read a text any more deeply than it appears. His interest is in projecting a world suggested by language, but beyond public entertainment, his view of motivation and reasons for certain kinds of behaviour is subjective. He is right to a certain extent in warning Oedipa about her simplistic ideas of truth and the human imagination. But Oedipa's curiosity about the possibility of connections is far preferable to Metzger's desertion of her, for instance, to sit in the car while she makes her enquiries. Moreover, as Bortz tells her later, words can be talked about, where people's lives are mysterious. Her search borders on hallucination yet it is a movement and represents a need to see and understand more. This is the only means she has to break out of the prison that has held her. Her courage, as well as her paranoia, lies in her willingness to tackle the fantasy and with it, the possibility of complete alienation.

It is here that Pynchon's ambivalent attitude to metaphor lies. Her quest is an affirmation of the importance of being sensitive to connections and patterns. It is also an exposure of Oedipa's desperate unwillingness to accept that the truth may well be in things as they seem. At the same time, Pynchon is not optimistic about the chances of completely escaping from the corporation mind and the conformity of society in general.

Koteks is another paranoid met by Oedipa. He is an engineer stifled by the "teamwork" ethic of Yoyodyne Enterprises. He tries to find some alternative outlet for his creative abilities, but only succeeds in finding a crackpot scheme. He, too, is part of the underground that Oedipa is gradually uncovering. His belief in the Nefastis Machine introduces Oedipa to another metaphorical system of thinking. It also re-emphasises the abuse of metaphor which ultimately forms another dead end for the believer.

Maxwell's Demon was originally an illustration to assist an investigation into the Second Law of Thermodynamics.⁴ Koteks and Nefastis have ignored or misunderstood its metaphoric intention and turned it into a literal figure which can be reached by faith. By deliberately turning the explanatory and imaginative

value of the Demon into a superstition, Pynchon shows what happens, at the most extreme edge, when metaphors are taken for reality. Oedipa instinctively distrusts their obsession :

"Sorting isn't work?" Oedipa said. "Tell them down at the post office, you'll find yourself in a mail-bag headed for Fairbanks, Alaska, without even a FRAGILE sticker going for you." 62.

Though she misses the point scientifically, which Koteks quickly corrects, her literal common sense parallels and shows the absurdity of their literal minded fantasy. At the same time, she is given more information which she can use metaphorically herself. She also gains an insight into the accidental quality of metaphor, where things are made to appear the same or similar, but are in fact so because of the external perception creating a relationship :

"Entropy is a figure of speech, then ... a metaphor. It connects the world^{of} thermodynamics to the world of information flow. The Machine uses both. The Demon makes the metaphor not only verbally graceful, but also objectively true."

"But what ... if the Demon exists only because the two equations look alike? Because of the metaphor?" 78.

Yet she wishes too that she could believe in their hallucination and thus participate in their metaphor.

The true sensitive is the one that can share in the man's hallucinations, that's all. How wonderful they might be to share. 79.

The impossibility of finding out or identifying with others' minds grows on her as she tries to discover the truth of the connections she thinks she sees. The very search itself produces more and more coincidences which give the illusion of leading the quest onward without at any stage substantiating a truth beyond itself.⁵

She could at this stage of things, recognise signals ... as the epileptic is said to - ... announcing his seizure. Afterward it is only this signal, really dross, this secular announcement, and never what is revealed during the attack, that he remembers. Oedipa wondered whether, at the end of this ... she too might not be left with only compiled memories of clues, announcements, intimations, but never know how many times such a seizure may already have visited, or how to grasp it should it visit again. She ... saw for the very first time, how far it might be possible to get lost in this. 69.

The sensitivity of Oedipa to clues and revelations is compared to the epileptic's feeling before an attack. A further ambiguity is added to the uncertainty of Oedipa's thoughts. Moreover, she continually has to rely on other individuals' memories and selective interpretations.

She thought how tenuous it was, like a long white hair, over a century long. Two very old men. All these fatigued braincells between herself and the truth. 68.

The discovery of "truth" depends heavily on the mechanics of perception. Where a character believes that he has seen an important relationship in the events around him, it is not possible to pass the quality of the insight onto somebody else. For example, the formation of Inamorati Anonymous by the executive rejected by the system that made him, illustrates the nature of idiosyncratic realisations. The founder is initially saved from suicide by recognition of absurdity. Through his interpretation of the accidentally seen posthorn as a sign meant for him, he then quite arbitrarily decides that love is the cause of his alienation. The I.A. becomes an underground society dedicated to the undermining of people's belief in love, and hence saving them from suffering.

"Think of it ... A whole underworld of suicides who failed. All keeping touch through the secret delivery system." 85.

This community of isolates is linked together by its rejection of involvement. Rather than form an alternative society, they have completely dropped all social interaction.

Oedipa wants instead to be involved. She finds, however, during her wanderings through the night, that there are only more outcasts and freaks associated with the Tristero.

'Decorating each alienation, each species of withdrawal, as cufflink, decal, aimless doodling, there was somehow always the posthorn. She grew so often to expect it that perhaps she did not see it quite as often as she was later to remember seeing it. 91

Through these repeated doubts about Oedipa's memory, the reader feels sceptical about the precise objectivity of her discoveries, while participating in an authentic atmosphere of mystery and secret life. In her search for the symbol of the post horn, Oedipa discovers an underground of forgotten people, who while ostensibly making up the society of the republic, are completely withdrawn from its activities.

Oedipa's need to reach out and communicate with one of these outcasts in the spirit of Tristero, leads her eventually to the old sailor. Made defenseless by all she has seen, she has finally a true revelation of her own through her insight into the sailor's mortality. It is here that she finally synthesises the knowledge she has learnt from others, and constructs metaphors of her own to describe the endless isolation and mystery she has discovered.

She remembered John Nefastis, talking about his machine, and massive destructions of information. So when this mattress flared up around the sailor ... the stored, coded years of uselessness, early death, self harrowing, the sure decay of hope, the set of all men who had slept, whatever their lives had been, would truly cease to be, forever, when the mattress burned ... It was as if she had just discovered the irreversible process 95.

She understands entropy and the eventual end of the universe, which the last words refer to, in her vision of the finality of the death of one man and the extinction of information in the form of memories. The burning of the mattress is a metaphor for unrecoverable loss through both death, and the unreliability and fragility of experience and history. It is at this point too, that she realises the peculiar properties of metaphor.

She knew because she had held him, that he suffered D.T.'s. Behind the initials was a metaphor, a delirium tremens, a trembling unfurrowing of the mind's plowshare. The saint whose water can light lamps, the clairvoyant whose lapse in recall is the breath of God, the true paranoid for whom all is organised in spheres joyful or threatening about the central pulse of himself, the dreamer whose puns probe ancient fetid shafts and tunnels of truth all act in the same special relevance to the word, or whatever it is the word is there, buffering, to protect us from. The act of metaphor then was a thrust at truth and a lie, depending where you were: inside, safe, or outside, lost. Oedipa did not know where she was. 95.

Miracles are attained when things or events align perfectly. A relationship is pulled together through transcendence, madness or divine inspiration. For instance to Jesus Arrabel, the Mexican revolutionary, Inverarity the American capitalist, was like a miracle because he was so perfectly in opposition to his own beliefs, and also of course, so perfectly necessary to them. By appearing so simply to be a representative of an unredeemed and visible lifestyle, Inverarity reaffirms in Jesus a cause in which to purely and permanently believe. Such simplicity and unclouded revelation are extremely rare. The novel suggests that such certainty occurs only to the mentally outcast. The drunkard, the saint, the paranoid, and the artist participate in a different world and believe in an order higher and purer than that of reality. The saint has attributed to him the powers of achieving the physically impossible; the clairvoyant is free from time and the limitations it places on the perceptions; the paranoid sees himself as the centre of the universe. The artist manipulates language and the reality it represents, creating new relationships from old and thus a testimony to the possibilities of seeing different orders within the existent one.

Whether the metaphor - the new order - appears true or not, depends upon an acceptance of its terms. Like miracles, metaphors require an act of faith.

The elect and the excluded, as an inversely elect, can accept the metaphor as being a description of the truth. In the novel, most of the characters go further and perceive the metaphor and the truth as being equivalent. The new order is not a description, it exists in itself. Those outside it will only see it as a lie or delusion. Pynchon's view of the artist, who is both inside and outside the metaphor, is that his equivocal status gives him a simultaneously heroic and sordid aspect. Like Maijstral in V, the artist exists either to uncover the truth through the possibilities of language, or to create metaphors as a means of not seeing. By layering one creation over another, metaphor, indeed all language as metaphor, acts as a protection from reality - things as they are. Yet the act of metaphor, of imagining higher orders and different relationships, is a necessity to the human imagination.

With characteristic erudition, Pynchon further extends the metaphor which begins Oedipa's thought; he audaciously creates a new vision out of the similarity of the shorthand for delirium tremens and that of calculus, a favourite source of metaphor :

dt, God help this old tatoood man, meant also a time differential, a vanishingly small instant in which change had to be confronted at last for what it was, where it could no longer disguise itself as something innocuous like an average rate; where velocity dwelled in the projectile though the projectile be frozen in midflight, where death dwelled in the cell though the cell be looked in on at its most quick. She knew that the sailor has seen worlds no other man had seen if only because there was that high magic to low puns, because D.T.'s must give access to dt's of spectra beyond the known sun, music made purely of Antarctic loneliness and fright. But nothing she knew of would preserve them or him. 96.

Pynchon is prepared to take license with all kinds of knowledge. He extracts special meaning from his translation of calculus into human terms through the "low pun" which unifies the derelict's life with the laws of the non-living world. The air of the fantastic which pervades Pynchon's work is to some extent due to the lengths to which he will go to draw out a similarity between scientific explanations and a character's progress and philosophy. It is evident, too, that he regards the filtering down of esoteric, "pure" knowledge into day to day metaphors, as having a slow but certain impact on our perceptions of life. This becomes particularly evident in G.R. where the Pavlovian, mechanical view of the world is being opposed to one described in terms of randomness and statistical laws.

In any case, Oedipa recognises through the metaphor she makes, the reality of inevitable change, and inevitable loss in the form of the uniqueness of the individual. She sees that she cannot ever know another man's mind or experience. She is

reminded of this yet again while she is still attempting to find the motivation for Driblette's Tristero lines. The academic to whom she goes for help, Bortz is a believer in the reality of words. However, he too is sceptical of explanations in human affairs that rely on cause and effect.

"Then," Oedipa concluded, "something must have happened in his personal life, something must have changed for him drastically that night, and that's what made him put in the lines."

"Maybe," said Bortz, "maybe not. You think a man's mind is a pool table?" 115.

HILARIUS

Similarly, her psychiatrist, Dr. Hilarius, shows her the inauthenticity of believing in a simple system for the mind. From her night journey onwards in the novel, Oedipa has desperately tried to discover the reality of her quest. Like Nefastis and the machine, Fallopian and his society, Arrabel and his revolution, Dr. Hilarius too, had tried to believe in, and work for, a system that would solve all problems.

"I tried to submit to ... that cantankerous Jew, tried to cultivate a faith in the literal truth of everything he wrote (...). And part of me must have really wanted to believe - like a child hearing in safety a tale of horror - that the unconscious will be like any other room, once the light was let in. That the dark shapes would resolve only into toy horses and Bierdemayer furniture. That therapy could tame it after all, bringing it into society with no fear of its someday reverting. I wanted to believe, despite everything my life had been." 100.

Hilarius had become a Freudian as a penance for his part in Nazism, and in the hope that such evil could be eradicated completely from the human mind by systematic means. The system fails him because it does not allow a complex view and possibilities for mystery. Evil, too, is a peculiarly human invention that cannot be solved by mechanistic solutions. It is too aligned with the subtleties and secrets of the human mind which defies simplistic analysis.

"Buchenwald, according to Freud, once the light was let in, would become a soccer field, fat children would learn flower arranging (...) in the strangling rooms." 102.

Oedipa is guilty of emotive stereotyping when she labels him "Hitler Hilarius". In fact, the advice he gives her lines up perfectly with the sense of alienation from society she has had herself, and the discovery she has made of people's attempts to find alternative sets of beliefs:

"I came", she said, "hoping you could talk me out of a fantasy."

"Cherish it!" cried Hilarius, fiercely, "What else do any of you have? Hold it tightly by its little tentacles, don't let the Freudians coax it away or

the pharmacists poison it out of you. Whatever it is, hold it dear, for when you lose it you go over by that much to the others. You begin to cease to be." 103.

Hilarius affirms the importance of ideals, and the power to imagine other worlds and thus other ways of seeing. Without such an ability there is no defence against conformity, which eventually flattens existence into a kind of living death. Moreover, the uniqueness of each life depends upon the quality of the experiences of the person, which are essentially incommunicable. Unfortunately, Hilarius' advice does seem, to a certain extent, to be a defence of irrationality, or at the very least, non-rationality. The dangers of this as a method of self determination are shown by Oedipa's near collapse, as well as the retreat into paranoia she has observed in other characters' fantasies.

Typically, the problem of what type of action is appropriate in these circumstances remains ambiguous in the novel. Mucho's transcendence, for instance, while it relieves him of anxiety and the fear of the void symbolised by the N.A.D.A. car lot sign, also cuts him off from the world and its variety. The unity he believes he sees through L.S.D. is too complete. His new vision of the world lacks discrimination and diversity, where he erroneously believes that one thing is exactly the same as everything else. He has lost the sense of separated events, which includes the all important realisation of the unrepeatable nature of human experience. In that sense, anxiety, even paranoia, is essential to a sense of life and a large range of emotions and perceptions. Yet a retreat into complete paranoia, that is, a too firm belief in one's own version of life, is ultimately as sterile. It too rules out communication with others, by an insistence on complete solipsism, and denies variety as well as the understandable vitality of other metaphors. As in V, Pynchon is affirming a golden mean.

Oedipa tries to seek a balance, wanting to avoid a complete disappearance into paranoia, but unable at the same time to deny the mysterious possibilities contained within the blossoming of the Tristero system. To some extent, her dilemma is the result of being too accustomed to a dialectic way of categorising things. She continually sets up either/or types of explanations and has difficulty escaping from cause/effect relationships. At the same time, she feels betrayed by Fallopian's ultra-rationality, which she associates with a resurgence of neo-Nazism. His suggestion that she work out what she really knows and what she has only "assumed" seems reasonable enough and her reaction is certainly a little hysterical :

... everybody's changing on me. But it hadn't gone as far as hating me. 126.

The point is, of course, that she has gone beyond such a simplistic organisation of thinking. She has painfully learnt that it is not entirely possible to be

absolutely sure of knowledge. For instance, she becomes increasingly reluctant to even verify her sources, and though a history of Thurn and Taxis is reconstructed, she does not check its authenticity. Her frightened over-reaction serves to emphasise the idea that "knowing" is not a matter of a clearly delineated one to one relationship with reality. Constructing explanatory models depends heavily on intermediaries: convenience, language, memory, intuition, guesswork. For Oedipa, such a discovery is very nearly shattering. The tower that encapsulated her represented safety as much as a prison; the adjustment to insoluble uncertainty is very difficult for her to make.

In one way, she becomes a representative of the painful failure of the American dream and its original belief in freedom and variety.

Pierce may have owned these factories too. But did it matter now if he'd owned all of San Narciso? San Narciso was a name; an incident among our climatic records of dreams and what dreams became among our accumulated daylight ... - storm systems of group suffering and need, prevailing winds of affluence. There was the true continuity ... she had dedicated herself ... to making sense of what Inverarity had left behind, never suspecting that the legacy might be America. 134.

As she traces the growing network of the legacy, she has in fact found that its scope and complexities correspond to America itself. Inverarity's influence and philosophy thus becomes a metaphor, a parable, for American history. The corruption in his enterprises reflects the inward rot of the modern American system in its growth to power.

At the same time, Pierce's energy and defiance of the inevitable contains something of the impulse of the original dream of discovery and building.

... his need to possess, to alter the land, to bring new skylines, personal antagonisms, growth rates into being. "Keep it bouncing", he'd told her once, "that's all the secret, keep it bouncing". He must have known, writing the will, facing the spectre, how the bouncing would stop. He might have written the testament only to harass a one-time mistress, so cynically sure of being wiped out he could throw away all hope of anything more ... or he might even have tried to survive death, as a paranoia; as a pure conspiracy ... 134.

Pierce's attempt to possess, control and then perpetuate himself in the systemisation of the land, reflects Pynchon's vision of the progress of American society from exploration through to a desire for the creation of monolithic structures. Pierce's very attempt to defy death and make his mark in building has introduced death into the land.

Perhaps she'd be hounded someday as far as joining Tristero itself, if it existed in its twilight, its

aloofness, its waiting. The waiting above all; if not for another set of possibilities to replace those that had conditioned the land to accept any San Narciso among its most tender flesh without a reflex or a cry, then at the least, at the very least, waiting for a symmetry of choices to break down, to go skew. 136.

Tristero ends by being opposed to, rather than a part of, the legacy, given that Pierce's endeavours ended not only in his death, but themselves contributed to the loss of possibility and life in America. Oedipa has realised the importance of a range of choices, which has become limited in her society to sets of alternatives and vacillation between opposed extremes.

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

The exclusion of the middle range of choices partly explains her own difficulty in escaping dichotomous thinking. She lives in a world that has denied its own rich chances for diversity and has retreated to an artificial symmetry.

"For it was now like walking among matrices of a great digital computer, the zeroes and ones twinned above, hanging like balanced mobiles right and left, ahead, thick, maybe endless. 136.

The metaphor of mathematical zeroes and ones representing extremes is to be used at even greater length in G.R., where Pointsman and Mexico oppose each other on mechanistic models.

What is left unresolved and which of course accounts for Oedipa's terror, is whether Tristero is a power for "good". The choices of thought that face Oedipa are made doubly difficult by the possibility that the mystery of Tristero may well represent malignancy or at least utter indifference to human beings. However, the possibility of the non-existence of Tristero is more frightening than its possible uncontrollable existence. Without it, or something like it, Oedipa can see no way out of the deathly sameness of experience in America.

Behind the hieroglyphic streets there would either be a transcendent meaning, or only the earth (...) Another mode of meaning behind the obvious, or none (...) For either there was some Tristero beyond the appearance of the legacy America, or there was just America, and if there was just America then it seemed the only way she could continue and manage at all to be relevant to it, was as an alien, unfurrowed, assumed full circle into some paranoia. 137.

CHAPTER 4

GRAVITY'S RAINBOW

I

It has become a critical commonplace to discuss and attempt to apologise for the difficulties of G.R. It is frequently compared to Ulysses, to indicate it seems both its complexity and its potential literary importance. However, no-one seems able to have made a major comparative study. Indeed, in any discussion of it, the majority of the novel will remain largely untouched; generalisations or the exegesis of a particular part seem to be the only way to deal with it.

In some cases, sections of the novel simply cannot be explained, either because of their obscurity or because there are too many plots to deal with successfully. On the third and fourth readings it becomes apparent that the structure is not quite as difficult to detect as it may first appear. Nevertheless, any reader would have to admit to there being parts that are accepted rather than understood. It has been suggested that the novel re-establishes the notion of the naive reader.¹ Because of its bewildering density, its mixture of styles and modes, the reader ceases to look for a unified meaning and is content to read each plot as it occurs, without reference to the past or the future.

The novel is so suggestive, however, and so obsessed internally and thematically with connection, that this is in the end not a satisfactory way of reading the novel, although it may well describe the initial experience. By looking at the novel in terms of metaphor, through these connections, a certain coherence of approach and response emerges. At the same time, an apology of my own is also offered here. It is not possible to explain many of the minor, or even several of the larger, metaphorical systems. Nor is it intended to detail the more fantastic and surrealist scenes in the novel. Yet, by dealing with the theory and use of metaphor, a way of reading is offered that completely explains the major aims of G.R. By understanding its message about metaphor and the structures of modern history, the novel becomes much more than a collection of interesting pieces with apocalyptic overtones.

It is initially useful to see G.R. as dealing more extensively with the themes and metaphors of V and Lot 49. The reader is encouraged to refer back to the other novels by the recurrence of characters, company names, and even, as with the Hereroes and Pig Bodine, a continuation of stories. Structurally, it is

most like V in that it does not have one single time scale or plot line. However, in G.R. the structure is much more complicated, chiefly because there are so many characters, and the flashbacks are more than two fold. As with V, stories within the novel can be isolated for continuity, style and character analysis. G.R. is most obviously like the first two novels in its treatment of some common themes. The sense of history, for instance, continues from V, and the general summary of Modern European history is the same. The Hereroes, whose genocide^{was} described in V, foreshadows the brutality of the two world wars, continue to be symbols of the dark side of European civilisation. They have finally been completely subdued by serving, in the Rocket, the technology which destroyed them. The effects of colonisation are further extended by the Hereroes' creation of a suicide myth.

Colonies are the outhouses of the European soul, where a fellow can let his pants down and relax ... Christian Europe was always ... death and repression (...)

It was a simple choice for the Hereroes, between two kinds of death: tribal death or Christian death. Tribal death made sense ... They calculate no cycles, no returns, they are in love with the glamour of a whole people's suicide - the pose, the stoicism, the bravery. 317, 319. 2

The ultimate phase of mass killing and decadence of European colonialism seen in V, is this willing embrace of death.

The condition of paranoia, which chiefly occurs in Lot 49, becomes one of the major forces driving the characters in G.R. As in Lot 49 paranoia is important for perception, as well as for the creation of new systems. In G.R. it becomes a more dominant mode due to the extension of the theme of control. In V and Lot 49, paranoia is a defense against the possibility of powerful conspiracies, but the presence of control, particularly in Oedipa's case, remains relatively ambiguous. In G.R. the existence and nature of control is the major theme of the novel. The novel asks and attempts to answer, through all its various modes of exploration, the questions that Jamf, the scientist, poses :

"You must ask two questions.

First, what is the real nature of synthesis?

And then: what is the real nature of control?" 167.

The ideas of control and manipulation/synthesis in the twentieth century is carried to its furthest extreme: from the molecular manipulations of Jamf to the psychic manipulations that set Slothrop on his journey. Oedipa discovers the control and influence of Inverarity through his America-wide enterprise. In G.R. similar influence becomes international, and goes beyond to the attempted control of the supernatural, and to the subconscious of man. In all the novels, technology without humanity is seen as an expressive force for death. In G.R. the exploration of technology as a power goes beyond the fear of the inanimate of V, and

the landscaped ugliness of Lot 49. It gathers another dimension from the mythic metaphor of the Rocket.

Yet, though it is a guide to the mysteries of G.R., reading it as a kind of sequel to V and Lot 49 leaves unexplained most of the ways in which the metaphors are constructed. For a start, it extends and deepens the allusions to scientific explanations. It also further fictionalises and adds mythic facets to the use of history. Pynchon's preoccupations may be the same but the extended use of metaphor adds further complexity and originality to his themes.

II

There are four major loci of metaphor in G.R.: the War, the Zone, The Rocket, and The Quest. The main linking movement in V and Lot 49 is the quest; in G.R. the scope is instantly made much broader by the establishment of four areas of action. However, as with the other novels, the quest becomes the main symbolic continuity, containing and interacting with the other three areas. Not only does all the action of the novel occur in these four centres, but they also have in themselves important metaphorical significance. As such, they interact intricately with other themes in the novel: paranoia, technology, control, transcendence, love. For the purposes of analysis, they must to some extent be separated artificially.

The War as a time zone places the novel historically. All of the action of the novel takes place in its last phases and its immediate aftermath. Any flashbacks that occur, rarely go beyond its beginning. It provides the necessary sense of crisis which produces an intensity and abnormality of feeling and response in the characters. The War also represents the high point and practical demonstration of the forces postulated in the rest of the novel. The War is the lifestyle of the protagonists. It is also the outcome of a flow of history and technology towards mass control. The existence of the war allows organisation to grow and more nakedly to take control, as well as itself being the outcome of a society dominated by mechanisation.

The chief medium of the war is information. Human beings are reduced to bits of information that can be used and then discarded. Katje Borgesius, double agent for the White Visitation, who leaves Germany and Weissman to return to England, is one of the many commodities of the war. She reflects on her position :

What more do they want? She asks this seriously, as if there's a real conversion factor between information and lives. Well, strange to say there is ... Don't forget the real business of the War is buying and selling. The murdering and the violence are self-policing, and can be entrusted to non-professionals. The mass nature of wartime death is useful in many ways. It serves as spectacle, as diversion from the real movement of the War. It provides raw material to be recorded into History, so that children may be taught History as sequences of violence, battle after battle and be more prepared for the adult world ... The true war is a celebration of markets. Organic markets, carefully styled "black" by the professionals spring up everywhere ... But out here, down among the people, the truer currencies come into being. So, Jews are negotiable. 105.

The War is a self-perpetuating system which hastens the processes of power and uses human beings like currency. Pynchon invents the bizarre ability of Pirate Prentice to dream other people's fantasies to show the limitless reach of the War bureaucracy's need :

Into the dossier it goes, and eventually the firm in their tireless search for negotiable skills, will summon him under Whitehall.... The firm is patient, committed to the Long Run as They are... 14.

The War is one of the activities that promotes control using whatever skills it can, even those not immediately relevant. ACHTUNG, PISCES and The White Visitation are the extreme edge of the abilities that the War is prepared to use to its advantage. "They" are never specified exactly, but are represented by those like Pointsman, Weissman, Mondaugen and Jamf at various points in the novel. That the War is more than a temporary state of history is made clear by the effects it has on the characters. Roger Mexico, for instance, sees the War as his mother.

He's forgotten his first corpse, or when he first saw someone living die. That's how long its been going ... the city he visits nowadays is Death's antechamber: where all the paperwork's done, the contracts signed, the days numbered. 40.

The War is represented as a kind of vast conspiracy theory, where it ceases to be a series of events and assumes a life and will of its own. Enzian works for the Rocket initially, is a leader of the Hereroes, Tchitcherine's half-brother, and one of the many that Slothrop meets in his wanderings in the zone. He has a paranoid vision of the nature of the war.

It means this war was never political at all, the politics was all theatre, just to keep the people distracted. Secretly it was being dictated instead by the needs of

technology, by something that needed the energy burst of war ... dawn is nearly here, I need my night's blood, my funding, funding, ahh, more, more ... The real crises were crises of allocation and priority, not among firms - it was only staged to look that way - but among the different Technologies, Plastics, Electronics, Aircraft, and their needs which are understood only by the ruling elite... 521.

Pynchon, through Enzian, anticipates the objection to this farfetched personification of the inanimate.

'Yes, but Technology only responds ... All very well to talk about having a monster by the tail, but do you think we'd 've had the Rocket if someone ...' hadn't wanted to chuck a ton of Amatol 300 miles and blow up a block full of civilians? Go ahead, capitalise the T on technology, deify it if it'll make you feel less responsible - but it puts you in with the neutered, brother... 521.

The tentative solution to useless, rampant paranoia is the basis of Pynchon's thesis that we have to make and look for new structures for perception and knowledge.

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

The very metaphorical complexity of G.R. is a testimony to this advice. Later in the novel, the Counterforce begins to try to create a system of its own based on the same ideas to oppose the given way of organising life. It is the characters' progressive discovery of the "real" nature of the war - Katje, Prentice, Slothrop - that leads them to speculate on or suspect the nature of control and power, and, in some cases, to form the Counterforce. Roger realises for instance, largely through his love for Jessica and the knowledge that he is going to lose her, that the War is only an extreme manifestation of an already existing order.

No, we're not (at peace). It's another bit of propaganda...- no, he sees only the same flows of power, the same impoverishments he's been thrashing around in since '39. His girl is about to be taken away to Germany, when she ought to be demobbed like everyone else. No channel upward that will show either of them any escape. There's something still on ... maybe the death rate's gone down a point or two ... but Their enterprise goes on. 628.



For Roger, of course, the end of the war means the end of his relationship with Jessica. Her return back to "normal" and the acceptable relationship with Beaver is based on the assumption that there is in fact a state of affairs which is always secure and stable. The only difference that Roger can see between war and normality, is that the sense of crisis of war is more obvious.

'We're at Peace. The paranoia, the danger, the tuneless whistling of busy Death next door, are all put to sleep, back in the War... 628.

War is an exercise of power, and involves problems for the elite in that a system has to be devised which will convince possible fighters that a war is necessary. As Wimpe tells Tchitcherine, who is troubled by the need to find historical necessity:

"The basic problem," he proposes, "has always been getting other people to die for you. What's worth enough for a man to give up his life? That's where religion had the edge, for centuries. Religion was always about death." 701.

thus adding a new element to the War as conspiracy.

The War is therefore the logical outcome of a society whose drive is towards death, through religion, technology and the reduction of people to functions in a system.

The Rocket is the most mysterious presence in the novel. It is a product of the War, exists in the Zone, is connected to all the major and a good many of the minor characters, and is the ultimate aim of Slothrop's quest. Like the figure of V. and the Tristero System, it eludes a simple explanation of its meaning. It derives its mysterious significance from the amount of metaphor attached to it. As a piece of machinery, it is the most supreme technological achievement; the final expression in purpose, as well as literal existence, of the science of Jamf and the mystical madness of the German Weissman/Blicero. It is linked to Slothrop by his prior conditioning, and he is used further to find it for various groups of people, each of whom sees the Rocket in his own way.

The Rocket takes on a mythic significance which always remains vague, and which goes beyond its purpose as a V-2 rocket to destroy London in the Second World War. As the centre of so many hopes and fears, it represents not only the awesome capability of technology, but also has a new religious potential. It combines a capacity for destruction with the human desire for salvation. Such an escape, or transcendence, is not entirely expressed in conventional religious terms, but is seen as the possibility of complete living departure from the physical laws of the universe.

Yet although the Rocket is the expression of a new spiritual yearning, it is the novel's chief symbol of evil. The technological control involved in building and maintaining the Rocket, corrupts its potential as a means of salvation. Moreover, the very desire for such transcendence, and the inability to accept life that it reflects, leads to a sterile notion of salvation. Nevertheless the Rocket represents the centre around which people construct their own explanations of life and meaning. Because of its mystery, and its place in the chaos of the Zone, fictions build up around the Rocket.

'Even as determinist a piece of hardware as the A4 Rocket will begin spontaneously generating items like the 'S-Gerät' Slothrop thinks he's chasing like a grail. 275.

The Rocket represents the way in which myths, archetypes and symbols are made. It cannot be defined or apprehended as it is without the mediation of systems of metaphors. The experience of those who seek it is injected into its description. Enzian, for instance, as a Herero separated from his heritage and adopted by Weissman, sees it in terms of his understanding of the progress of European civilisation.

'Enzian has grown cold... a positive coming on of cold, a bitter taste growing across the palate of love's first hopes... It began when Weissman brought him to Europe: a discovery that love, among these men, once past the simple feel and orgasming of it, had to do with masculine technologies, with contracts, with winning and losing. Demanded in his own case that he enter the service of the Rocket... Beyond simple steel erection, the Rocket was an entire system won, away from the feminine darkness, held against the entropies of lovable but scatterbrained Mother Nature: that was the first thing he was obliged by Weissman to learn, his first step toward citizenship in the Zone. 324.

The Rocket makes an obvious phallic symbol, but the metaphor goes beyond the simple sexual likeness. The Rocket is linked to other themes of love in the novel, where power and its manifestations have replaced natural feeling. The Rocket is the result of a whole society, and not an exclusively German one, which expresses itself competitively and which seeks to subvert anything outside its own definitions. By using the traditional cultural metaphors of feminine and masculine, Pynchon is revealing the simplistic and lopsided basis of thinking that he believes underlies Western civilisation. The Rocket becomes invested with a whole organised system of cultural fears and desires. On the one hand, it is a symbol of control over nature and defiance of death. The achievement of this requires a corresponding repression of feeling and the abandonment of an easy relationship with nature. Pynchon uses our standardised understanding of the notions of feminine and masculine to illustrate that Weissman and the

others have cut themselves off from central aspects of themselves, as well as the environment.

Nature and night are personified as female, and in the canon of Western civilisation, to be overcome by more enlightened masculine endeavours. It has been noted already that Pynchon's limited optimism lies with women and what he perceives as their ability to accept and love. Women are not always right or successfully resistant to impersonal powers: Jessica's rejection of openness and possibility in favour of security and predictability is a victory for the War, and thus for the forces who control and organise.

The Rocket becomes a metaphor for the loss not only of individual determination, but also of whole ways of seeing and feeling in the human psyche. The fatal split between "masculine" and "feminine" and the fear and hate of the latter expressed in European history, sets the characters against themselves. Similarly, Pynchon explores, exploits and changes other traditions of metaphor: the cultural connotations of black and white, for instance. White is a symbol of enlightenment, and is linked with other entities which are all suggestive in a Western context: the masculine, the sun, purity, knowledge, reason, self-control, goodness, civilisation. In G.R. white, however, gradually emerges as the colour of death, which is precisely the opposite of the convention. Through Blicero, the Kirghiz Light as a false vision of salvation, and its alignment with the north as a region of evil, the reader's expectation of certain metaphors is overturned. Pynchon, also, anticipates the tendency to divide the meaning of the Rocket into traditional dichotomies: black/white, evil/good, masculine/feminine, and by writing those explanations both seriously and parodically into his text, criticises such rigid alignments.

*So... this is a scholasticism here, Rocket-state cosmology
 ... But the Rocket had to be many things, it must
 answer to a number of different shapes in the dreams of
 those who touch it - ... it must survive heresies... and
 heretics there will be: gnostics who have been taken in
 a rush of wind and fire to chambers of the Rocket throne
 ... Kabbalists who study the Rocket as Torah, letter
 by letter - rivets, burner cup and brass rose, its text
 is theirs to permute and combine into new revelations,
 always unfolding ... Manichaeans who see two Rockets,
 good and evil, who speak together in the sacred idolation
 of the Primal Twins (some say their names are Enzian and
 Blicero) of a good rocket to take us to the stars, an evil
 Rocket for the world's suicide, the two perpetually in
 struggle. 727.*

However, the sheer variety of possible interpretations is very important, and allows shifting visions of meaning, which are tied to mythic structures. As with V., and more particularly, the Tristero System, what emerges as most valuable in the Rocket is ultimately its fictional aspects. It provides the raw materials for building up shifting structures of explanation. In the end,

the hope of the Rocket for escape is not fulfilled. The furthest reach of paranoia in the novel is the description of the universe in anthromorphic terms. The Rocket is the means by which humanity can escape the controls of the planet itself.

... the rocket ... Ascending programmed in a ritual of love ... , at Brenschluss it is done - the Rocket's purely feminine counterpart, the zero point at the center of its target, has submitted. All the rest will happen according to laws of ballistics. The Rocket is helpless in it. Something else has taken over Katje has understood the great airless arc as a clear allusion to certain secret lusts that drive the planet and herself, and Those who use her - over its peak and down. 223.

The parabola of the Rocket's path has sexual connotations, and further alludes to the theme of control where things are held down to a predictable path. Katje extends the metaphor to the planet itself, bound and ruled by Gravity's law, which is related to the will to power in men. Later, when the Rocket is finally fired, with the bride-like Gottfried attached, both its promise and the inevitability of its failure are fulfilled.

This ascent will be betrayed to Gravity. But the Rocket engine, the deep cry of combustion that jars the soul, promises escape. The victim in bondage to falling, rises on a promise, a prophecy of Escape.... 758.

The Rocket may be the new Grail, but as a real escape from certain conditions inherent in life, it cannot meet the hopes of its seekers. Away from the imaginative flexibility it promotes as a symbol, its function as a new religious hope aligns it with the death systems of other religions. The Rocket rests on a base of terror and the rejection of life.

"But it isn't free out here. All the animals, the plants, the minerals, even other kinds of men, are being broken and reassembled every day to preserve an elite few... I can't even give you hope that it will be different someday - that They'll come out, and forget death, and lose their Technology's elaborate terror, and stop using every other form of life without mercy to keep what haunts men down to a tolerable level - and be like you instead, simply here, simply alive..." 230.

The cause of the elaborate system of repression in the twentieth century is due, as Pynchon sees it, to an inability to accept and live with the world - its possibilities and inevitabilities - without the vain attempt to deny mortality through domination. The Rocket is built on this terrible inadequacy, and is thus a false symbol, representing death rather than life as in true myths.

Tchitcherine is one of the few characters who progresses to a freedom from the fallacy that the Rocket represents. The description of his state sums up the philosophy of the novel:

*... he's had to fight to believe in his own mortality
... Fight down all his hopes, fight his way into
that bitterest of freedoms.*

Others, like Bodine, find joys in the Zone, and feel no need to seek any kind of promise outside themselves. Their hedonistic easiness is in marked contrast to the fanaticism of the powerful like Weissman. Their lack of status and utter uninterest in the Rocket saves them:

*While nobles are crying in their night's chains,
the squires sing. The terrible politics of
the Grail can never touch them. Song is the
magic cape. 701.*

The Zone contains the Rocket, and is the major location, apart from London and Cuxhaven, of the action of the novel. It has an historical existence at the Zone marked out after the defeat of Germany, controlled by the Americans and later, of course, the centre of the Cold War. In the immediate aftermath of the war it is disorganised by the movement of refugees and the destruction left by the Allied victory. Slothrop is one of the homeless of the Zone, and what gives his quest its layers of meaning is the mystery of the Zone. It represents a region of possibilities because of its lack of firm government and its temporary openness and lack of fixtures. Like the Rocket, it is alluded to in archetypal and mythic terms which gives it further complexity beyond its existence as a mere locality. The references to Bianca and Eurydice, and the wanderings of the ship Anubis, named for the Egyptian jackal-god of the dead, suggests that the Zone represents an underworld: a place of lost souls removed forever from the normal business of life. Although it is a place not firmly controlled by any single power, its status as Utopia or paradise is not immediately guaranteed.

The Zone is the perfect place for Slothrop's picaresque wandering. He comes across many different adventures, which allows Pynchon to change his style to suggest the several possibilities in plot:

*... he'll find thousands of arrangements for warmth, love,
food, simple movement ... Even G-5, living its fantasy
of being the only government in Germany now, is just the
arrangement for being victorious ... Slothrop ... is as
properly constituted a state as any other in the Zone these
days. Not paranoia. Just how it is. Temporary alliances,
knit and undone. 290.*

The Zone is a place of discovery and potential freedom, allowing many arrangements and permutations. While it has many dangers and risks, it allows

change and does not exclude or forbid choices. It is possible, however, to get lost or to be destroyed by the Zone, for it in no way guarantees happiness or safety. Slothrop does not completely rid himself of his obsession or his pre-conditioning; he can rarely take the Zone as it is as completely as others can. Yet the Zone teaches him a good deal. He learns, for instance, that fanaticism is not confined to particular scapegoat nationalities as he has been taught.

For possibly the first time he is hearing America as it must sound to a non American ... what surprised him most was the fanaticism, the reliance not just on flat force but on the rightness of what they planned to do... he'd been told long ago to expect this sort of thing from Nazis and especially from Japs" 256.

The lack of permanence in the Zone encourages physical adventure, but more importantly, a movement in the imagination. The anarchy can be used by a creative mind for freedom. At the same time, because of the Zone's lack of limits, extremes blossom. Slothrop only meets paranoia that matches the intensity of his own in the Zone. To some extent that is due to the ambience of the Zone itself :

"We have a word that we whisper, a mantra for times that threaten to be bad, Mba-Kayere It means 'I am passed over' Stay in the Zone long enough and you'll start getting ideas about Destiny yourself." 362.

The people in the Zone feel themselves to be apart from the rest of the world and even from fate itself. Though that leads them to be able to choose their own style, madness is included in the range of choices.

Moreover, things that are only imagined elsewhere actually happen in the Zone.

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

'It is my mission', he announces ... 'to sow in the Zone seeds of reality.' 388.

The imaginary control and propaganda of the elite in England cannot apply in the Zone and is only a pale imitation of the reality. It is stronger, more profuse and more fertile than any of their fictions. The further irony is that von GÖll (Springer) proposed to make the Zone 'real' by introducing film into it. The plots of the Zone are more fantastic and more vivid than any of

the fantasies that he could make, and they will not conform to any rules of reality or power.

The Zone contains evil also, not only in the ambiguities of the Rocket, but also in the settled fanaticism of these who chase and direct Slothrop. Blicero, for instance, as the Rocket's chief believer and builder assumes a greater stature of evil because he is so opposed in principle and action to everything the Zone represents.

'At the top of the complex is Schutzhäftlingsführer Blicero ... He is the Zone's worst specter. He is malignant, he pervades the lengthening summer nights. Like a cankered root he is changing, growing toward winter, growing whiter, toward idleness and famine ... His power is absolute. 666.

The Zone will also be invaded further by those who seek to make a profit out of it, because of its past as Nazi Germany.

Hunger, compromise, money, paranoia, memory, comfort, guilt. Guilt [...] is becoming quite a commodity in the Zone. Remittance men from all over the world will come to Heidelberg before long to major in guilt. There will be bars and nightclubs catering especially to guilt enthusiasts. Extermination camps will be turned into tourist attractions, foreigners with cameras will come piling in droves, tickled and shivering with guilt. 453.

The Zone is therefore assailable by the corrupting influences that lead to a use of emotions and people in the way of the war.

The Zone is full of symbols, signs and connections. Any number of new arrangements and new insights can be constructed from them. At the same time the Zone is also the region of those who have lost the battle against systematised thinking. As such, the Zone becomes much more than a particularised location, but represents the Western world of the twentieth century.

He is the father you will never quite manage to kill. The Oedipal situation in the Zone these days is terrible. There is no dignity. The mothers have been masculinized to old worn moneybags of no sexual interest to anyone, and yet here are their sons, still trapped inside inertias of lust that are 40 years out of date. The fathers have no power today and never did, but because 40 years ago we could not kill them, we are condemned now to the same passivity, the same masochist fantasies they cherished in secret, and worse, we are condemned in our weakness to impersonate men of power our own infant children must hate, and wish to usurp the place of, and fail... So generation after generation of men in love with pain and passivity serve out their time in the Zone, silent, redolent of faded sperm, terrified of dying, desperately addicted to the comforts others sell them, however useless, ugly or shallow, willing to have life defined for them by men whose only talent is for death. 747.

The "father" is Weissman, who represents in himself all the masculine technologies and men of power and tyrannical fathers. Pynchon again uses sexual metaphor, and the familiar aspect of Freudian psychology, to illustrate the cyclical history of the weaknesses of the powerful. Generations of men repeat a compromise with life and the corruption of its energies. The people of the Zone - the modern world - cannot free themselves from this kind of thinking and cannot conquer their own passivity which is a result of a paralysing fear of death. They end in becoming men of power themselves, as well as being perfect tools for those who wish to control and manipulate.

Yet the Zone, like America when it was first settled, held the promise of a freer way of being. Slothrop's travels through the Zone parallel Oedipa's discoveries of the new America which has turned away from the possibilities it contained and lost its own dream through the abuse of the land. Similarly Slothrop's American Puritan heritage partly bestows upon him the capacity to interpret what he sees. The ultimate phase is, of course, a sensitivity to conspiracy which results in paranoia. In the Zone, the more positive aspects of Puritanism have their chance. Slothrop draws an analogy between the situation in the Zone and the early days of America using his American settler forbear, William Slothrop, an heretical Puritan, as an example.

William wrote a tract speculating on the fate of those that God forgets in the conventional Puritan canon, and constructed an inverse salvation for them. The Zone, too, has room for the overlooked, the freaks, the lost, and offers a new kind of freedom away from the severe categories of the establishment.

The notion of those chosen, either for salvation in religious terms, or for leadership in secular terms, breaks down. Without an elite and the necessity that any elite has to maintain its position, a new equality emerges.

Could he have been the fork in the road America never took, the singular point she jumped the wrong way from? Suppose the Slothropite heresy had had time to consolidate and prosper? Might there have been fewer crimes in the name of Jesus, and more mercy in the name of Judas Iscariot? It seems to Tyrone Slothrop that there might be a route back - maybe that anarchist he met in Zurich was right, maybe for a little all the fences are down, one road as good as another, the whole space of the Zone cleared, depolarized, and somewhere inside of it a single set of co-ordinates from which to proceed without elect, without preterite, without even nationality ...'. 556.

The Hereroes' prayer "I am passed over" and Slothrop's escapes from his tormentors in the Zone's anonymity are illustrations of the advantages for freedom of not being noticed by Destiny, God or the powerful on earth.

Slothrop's quest is the linking movement between the Zone, the Rocket and the War. In Slothrop, the themes and suggestions of the whole are brought together. His physiological link to the Rocket is the result of, and a metaphor for, the influences that have embedded certain needs in his unconscious. Furthermore, these needs are useful to those in power.

Slothrop's quest is in one sense the search for his "true" self. This has been true of all the quests we have seen in Pynchon. His only aid and defence is fear, which transforms itself through the crisis of war into paranoia. The fear of death which the war brings to the fore concentrates on the V-2 rockets falling on London during the Blitz. He begins to believe that there is a rocket with his name on it, a bizarre version of the Puritan's sense of being chosen by God. Slothrop's view of his life and of destruction particularly designed for him, is essentially solipsistic; he has all the marks of extreme paranoia. This is heightened by the continued use of semi-religious imagery:

*It's nothing he can see or lay hands on - sudden gases,
a violence upon the air and no trace afterward...
A word spoken with no warning in your ear, and then
silence forever. Beyond its invisibility, beyond
hammerfall and doomcrack, here is its real horror,
mocking, promising him death with German and precise
confidence, laughing down all of Tantivy's quiet
decencies... no, no bullet with fins, Ace... not
the Word, the one Word that rips apart the day... 25.*

Like Oedipa, Slothrop both fears and desires the possibility of an extra creational sign, and the possibility of another order behind the one he can see. The shell shock of war triggers his latent paranoia, but he has been justified already by the psychic controls established over him when he was a helpless infant. He is also prepared for it by his heritage, as we have seen :

*... it's a Puritan reflex of seeking other orders
behind the visible, also known as paranoia, filtering
in. 188.*

As in Lot 49, this Puritan reflex is connected to literary criticism and a passion for the Word. Slothrop thinks of Dodson-Truck sent to France to teach him about A-4 rockets :

*Did they choose him because of all those wordsmitten
Puritans dangling off of Slothrop's family tree?
Were they trying to seduce his brain now, his reading
eye too? 207.*

The irony is, of course, that his brain has already been seduced. He is set in motion by the megalomania of Pointsman and let loose in the Zone with only temporary arrangements to help him, like Oedipa; he is stripped of all his friends and proof of identity.

Some genuine realisations are allowed to him, but generally he has only his paranoia as a guide.

"... he knows as well as he has to that it's the S-Gerät after all that's following him, it and the pale, plastic ubiquity of Laszlo Jamf. That if he's been seeker and sought, well, he's also been baited and bait. The Imipolex question was planted for him by somebody, back at the Casino Hermann Goering ... They knew Slothrop would jump for it. Looks like there are sub-Slothrop needs they know about ... now there's also the even more annoying question,

What do I need that badly?" 490

What Slothrop needs is contained in the metaphor of the Rocket and the paranoia system he uses to reach it. Nor are those needs entirely planted in him from outside. Slothrop is pre-disposed to want personal grace. His only sense of connection and significance comes from his hope for different orders, even if those orders are conspiracies.

If there is something comforting - religious, if you want - about paranoia, there is still also anti-paranoia, where nothing is connected to anything, a condition not many of us can bear for long ... Either they have put him here for a reason, or he's just here. He isn't sure that he wouldn't, actually, rather that reason... 434.

Like the elite of power represented by Pointsman and the Elect of the Puritan system, Slothrop needs to feel that he is significant in a personally directed scheme. He would almost prefer to be under control so long as he still requires the belief that he has been noticed and chosen. As for other characters in the novel, Slothrop's quest is also for the salvation that is promised in the Rocket. Slothrop may think that he is seeking his identity and his freedom but his need for external control and connection, considerably complicates the fear he feels about the conspiracy he progressively discovers. To that extent, he is a willing member of the system, and does not pose a particularly successful threat to the power of Pointsman, Weissman and Jamf. Tchitcherine sums up the ambivalence of Slothrop's attitude and actions.

That man is one unhappy loner. He's got problems. He's more useful running round the Zone thinking he's free, but he'd be better locked up somewhere. He doesn't even know what freedom is, much less what it's worth. So I get to fix the price, which doesn't matter to begin with. 390.

Slothrop's susceptibility to paranoia is at the same time useful and even desirable. Both Mexico and Tchitcherine are enabled to make choices for freedom by paranoid thinking. An ability to perceive conspiracies as well as make connections - imaginary and actual - is vitally important. They are the primary talents required for resisting the forces of control and seeing the true nature of its

manifestations, like the War and the Rocket. Only by clearly seeing the structures in life that already exist, can new structures be made. Slothrop, however, is severely flawed in this capacity. Although his isolation is not entirely voluntary, his progress through the Zone is masked by an increasing inability to connect with other people. His desertion of Bianca, who offered to hide him from his pursuers, is accompanied by their language of bureaucracy. His growing numbness foreshadows his eventual disappearance as an ego.

"But nowadays some kind of space he cannot go against has opened behind Slothrop, bridges that might have led back are down now for good. He is growing less anxious about betraying those who trust him. He feels obligations less immediately. There is, in fact, a general loss of emotion, a numbness he ought to be alarmed at... 490.

His paranoia is not a creative or a discriminating one. His inability to distinguish between plots and use the arrangements of the Zone results in the dissolution of his personality. At certain stages of his haphazard quest, he does become aware of its potential destruction of relationships. At one point shortly before his personality completely scatters, Slothrop meets Seaman Bodine again, and Leni Pöckler as Solange, at Cuxhaven. He is extremely suspicious of what they offer, and justifiably to some extent, as he has had so many near misses and chase scenes.

"This is some kind of plot, right?" (...)

"Everything is some kind of plot, man," Bodine laughed.

"And yes but, the arrows are pointing all different ways,"

Solange illustrating (...), which is Slothrop's first news out loud, that the Zone can sustain many other plots besides those polarised on himself (...). He understands that he should not be so paranoid of either Bodine or Solange, but ride instead their kind underground awhile, see where it takes him... 603.

Slothrop is rarely able to see outside his own perception of plots, nor does he understand that there are others beside himself who may have the same problem. Earlier, Slothrop has been surprised at the paranoia of Margherita Erdmann which is not really less bizarre or intense than his own.

Well. What happens when paranoia meets paranoia? A crossing of solipsisms. Clearly. The two patterns create a third : a moire, a new world of flowing shadows, interferences...

But the solipsisms only cross and no third pattern is achieved. Margherita is mad, and if not evil, has at least done many evil things. As a passenger of the Anubis and its "screaming Fascist cargo" she is decadent, deathmarked and lost.

Slothrop has other warnings. His is a parodic romantic quest and he becomes partly aware of its incongruity in the modern world.

... Slothrop's dumb idling heart sez : The Schwarzgerät is no Grail, Ace, that's not what the G in Imipolex G stands for. The best you can compare with is Tannhauser, the Singing Nincompoop - you've been under one mountain at Nordhausen, been known to sing a song or two with uke accompaniment ... You know that in some irreducible way it's an evil game. 364.

The old myths can no longer apply, and by participating in the quest, Slothrop extends the illusions that help to hide the evil. Because Slothrop's paranoia is not creative, he can only use it to interpret connections without being able to use them. At the same time, the difficulties of finding what he seeks - a truth and an identity - redeem him a good deal from blame.

Cut off from possible allies, crippled through control from birth and directed by a system whose reach and influence seems limitless, Slothrop deserves his status as the comic hero Rocketman, and the divinely sent pig.

He cannot go straight to his target and it is impossible for him to be sure of what he really seeks.

Those like Slothrop, with the greatest interest in discovering the truth, were thrown back on dreams, psychic flashes, omens, cryptographies, drug-epistemologies, all dancing on a ground of terror, contradiction, absurdity. 582.

Not only is this Slothrop's apologia, but it is a perfect description of the style and system of Gravity's Rainbow itself. Slothrop is also indirectly responsible for the enlightenment of others; the Counterforce is formed on his behalf. Though it is weakly held together and relies mostly on individual irrational acts for its resistance, it is made up of alliances against the system. People like Roger Mexico who can love and use paranoia as a means of making counter-conspiracies "against power and indifference", are influenced by Slothrop's fate.

His end is ambiguous in the extreme. Although he is to be "counted among the Zone's lost, after all" he achieves the state that Webley Silvernail's animals have : simple existence.

... 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 pubis 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 quest was for the Rocket and the technology-inspired salvation it stood for.

Instead, Slothrop finds in the rainbow, a Biblical promise of peace, a simplicity and fertility of being that is earthbound and real. The prophecy of gravity's rainbow is unspecific, but it at least partly promises the possibility of harmony with what exists for itself. Slothrop's dissipation, then, is not a matter of sorrow, or evil. With the achievement of complete acceptance, he finally transcends his tampered personality and simply becomes indistinguishable from everything. It is death, but it is at least a peaceful death and holds the promise of cycles and returns in the earth.

III

The quest as a system of metaphor in the novel is inseparable from Slothrop or the Zone. Through Pynchon's idea of paranoia, the quest is seen as an inadequate attempt to discover the real source of power in the world and to make up arrangements to oppose it. Other characters apart from Slothrop are occupied with the same kind of quest, although on a lesser scale than his picaresque adventuring. Certain kinds of metaphors important to the ideological system of the novel gain resonance from different plots and conflicts which intersperse with Slothrop's story.

One of the most important sources of such a metaphor is the intellectual conflict between Pointsman and Mexico. A very useful article by Lance Ozier sets out the nature of the difference between them and places it in the context of the rest of the novel.⁴ Moreover, Ozier is aware that metaphorical range rather than detailed characterisation gives Pynchon's work its interest. In both his articles, Ozier's particular interest is in the mathematical source of metaphor and imagery in G.R.⁵ The difference between Mexico and Pointsman is initially scientific, but the implications of that difference is the focus of the general themes of all the novels. As two representative scientists with apparently opposed, but not necessarily mutually exclusive ideas about the construction of science, they present an argument about observation and thinking which is taken up in many different ways in all three works.⁶ Ozier states that the use of imagery drawn from maths and science and applied to the characters "significantly strengthens the thematic structure of G.R.". The characters, according to Ozier, "now acquire thematic and personal substance when the scientific images and allusions are applied to their description."⁷ Mexico and Pointsman have a symbolic importance as spokesmen for different systems. Their specificity provides a balance, and fills in the mythic ambiguities of the Rocket and the Zone.

Both are scientists working for PISCES (Psychological Intelligence Schemes for Expediting Surrender) and are thus working for much the same aim. Yet they evaluate the situation of war and blitz in which they find themselves in very different ways. This extends ultimately to a cast iron opposition in all situations, which is foreshadowed in their personal lives as well as their scientific beliefs.

Pointsman is a Pavlovian. Though he continues Pavlov's original stimulus/response experimentation in dogs, he has extended his biological approach to a belief in cause and effect mechanics for the whole universe. He is also attempting in his experiments to discover the theoretical "ultra-paradoxical stage", where a stimulus applied often enough produces a completely opposite effect to the original response. Thus, as with Newtonian Mechanics, his processes are reversible, such that every action has an observable reaction. Pointsman's whole thinking and outlook has been effected by his scientific training. Every event, according to his beliefs, must have a discoverable cause. He also divides the world into a series of paired opposites that ultimately goes beyond stimulus/response, cause/effect, action/reaction. Because of his feeling of apparent control over these processes, which are the only ones in his universe, it gives him an over-inflated notion of his own power. From theoretical scientific control, he moves through his experiments on living things, to a desire for a more general control. His chief fanatic aim is to experiment on a human being and uncover the mechanics of the brain so that complete understanding and then complete control is possible. His interest in Slothrop stems from this desire, just as he wishes to have Mexico in his service because he finds his ideas so disturbing. The structures by which Pointsman think give him a will to power.

Mexico, on the other hand, is a statistician, used to dealing with probabilities and randomness.

"If ever the Antipointsman existed, Roger Mexico is the man ... in the domain of zero to one, not-something to something, Pointsman can only possess the zero and the one. He cannot, like Mexico, survive anyplace in between. Like his master I.P. Pavlov before him, he imagines the cortex of the brain as a mosaic of tiny on/off elements ... each point is allowed only the two states: waking or sleep. One or zero. "Summation", "transition", "irradiation", "concentration", "reciprocal induction" - all Pavlovian brain mechanics - assumes the presence of these bi-stable points. But to Mexico belongs the domain between zero and one - the middle Pointsman has excluded from his persuasion - the probabilities. 55.

Mexico's science is used for prediction, but each future event is separated from the one before it. The Poisson equation he uses to plot the probable landings of rockets is an accurate formula but depends on randomness: the statistical probability of each hit.

The social implications of the difference between the two men become the most important ones. Mexico can live with the fine gradations of possibility in his observation of the objective world, and thus learns to accept uncertainty in life generally. Pointsman over reacts to the possible implications of Mexico's science, but at the same time shows something important about it :

How can Mexico play, so at ease, with these symbols of randomness and fright? What if Mexico's whole generation has turned out like this? Will Postwar be nothing but "events", newly created one moment to the next? No links? Is this the end of history?" 56.

Pointsman's conservative fears show that he is not "objective" about science at all, but takes any departure from his system very personally. Both kinds of science can exist in the same world as valid methods of explanation, but Pointsman cannot bear variety. This would seem to argue that he is in fact a very bad scientist. He expects the world to fit his predictions.

Although Mexico is unfairly alluded to as a "cheap nihilist", he is in fact realistic about the lack of absolutes in the world. At the same time that he refuses to invest the inanimate world with values, he can accept the irrational and non rational. This is taken up and illustrated by the most important argument between Pointsman and Mexico, which though it deals with scientific assumption, reveals the impact of their ideas on the imagination.

"I don't want to get into a religious argument with you", absence of sleep has made Mexico more cranky today than usual, "but I wonder if you people aren't a bit too - well, strong, on the virtues of analysis. I mean once you've taken it all apart, fine. I'll be the first to applaud your industry. But other than a lot of bits and pieces lying about, what have you said?"

It isn't the sort of argument Pointsman relishes either. But he glances sharply at this young anarchist in the red scarf. "Pavlov believed that the ideal, the end we all struggle toward in science, is the true mechanical explanation. He was realistic enough not to expect it in his lifetime. Or in several lifetimes more. But his hope was for a long chain of better and better approximations. His faith ultimately lay in a pure physiological basis for the life of the psyche. No effect without cause, and a clear train of linkages."

"It's not my forte, of course," Mexico honestly wishing not to offend the man, but really, "but there's a feeling about that cause and effect may have been taken as far as it can go. That for science to carry on at all it must look for a less narrow, a less ... sterile set of assumptions. The next great breakthrough may come when we have the courage to junk cause-and-effect entirely and strike off at some other angle." 88-89.

It is in his relationship with Jessica that Roger proves his ability to accept and live with the variety and uncertainty of life. The problem of love: what it is and how to live with it, haunts many of Pynchon's characters. Roger is shown to be able to combine the recognition of a love with independence of spirit. He can move even beyond statistical determinism:

In a life he has cursed, again and again, for its needs to believe so much in the transobservable, here is the first, the very first real magic: data he can't argue away. Roger in love. 38.

When Roger meets something new he neither tries to control it by fitting it into a system of pre-determined beliefs, nor tries to escape it. It is true too, that Jessica fills a need in him. She becomes a talisman of hope against the horror of the war and his vision of it as the inevitable outcome of the society he lives in.

His life had been tied to the past. He'd seen himself a point on a moving wavefront, propagating through sterile history - a known past, a projectable future. But Jessica was the breaking of the wave. Suddenly there was a beach, the unpredictable ... new life. (...) he wanted to believe it too, the same way he loved her, past all words - believe that no matter how bad the time, nothing was fixed, everything could be changed and she could always deny the dark sea at his back, love it away. 126.

They form a personal alliance together against the war, but despite her vividness, courage and optimism, Jessica falls victim to the desire for security. Roger sees that he will lose her; despite his grief he does not deny to himself that it will happen. Similarly in tune with his recognition of the fluidity of life, partly discovered through her, he does not seek a scapegoat in her.

If the rockets don't get her there's still her lieutenant. Damned Beaver/Jeremy IS the War, he is every assertion - that we are meant for work and government, for austerity: and these shall take priority over love, dreams, the spirit, the senses and the other second class trivia that are found among the idle and mindless hours of the day Jeremy will take her like the Angel itself, in his joyless weasel-worded come-along, and Roger will be forgotten, an amusing maniac, but with no place in the rationalized power - ritual that will be the coming peace. She will take her husband's orders, she will become a domestic bureaucrat, a junior partner (...). 177.

Jessica will give away her freedom for safety without being aware of it, because she is becoming a victim of the kind of thinking that deals in predictability and control. Her fate is sadder than Roger's, a fact of which he is well aware. Her genuine need for hope, innocence and trust is used by those like Beaver for her submission. She is not aware that she has to take risks in order to discover those things, and look outside the apparently solid and safe faith presented to her. The security is a trap. At the same time that Roger loves

her and can see what he is losing her to, he does not allow himself to be destroyed. Roger uses the insights he gets from Jessica to extend his knowledge, which results in him joining the counterforce and its war. He directs his anger at the situation rather than at her, which would be an easier thing to do. Roger's scientific ability to go beyond cause and effect, with his love for another individual, enables him to escape the power structures of the War and see through the illusions of peace. Because he can live with changing arrangements he develops wider structures of perception.

Another plot which uses the scientific imagery of cause and effect and is a foil to the Mexico-Jessica/Pointsman story, is that of Franz Pöckler. His fate through the War is a German one. He is one of the adversaries of those in London, as a chief rocket technician. His service to the Rocket is the outcome of his passivity and dependence. Leni, his wife, calls him "the cause and effect man" which is an important clue to his psychology and what makes him amenable to evil purposes. In Pointsman, the "dialectic curse" makes him into a power. In Franz, his faith in simple systems of thought coupled with his submissiveness, leads him to co-operate in the German war-effort. Leni tries to introduce him to a more creative perspective and at the same time sets out clearly the purpose of the novel:

"Not produce," she tried, "not cause. It all goes along together. Parallel, not series. Metaphor. Signs and symptoms. Mapping onto different co-ordinate systems..." 159.

Franz remains a victim, however, because he cannot determine himself in this way. A description of him resembles that of the lost citizens of the Zone:

her Piscean husband, swimming his seas of fantasy, death wish, rocket-mysticism-Franz is just the type they want. They know how to use THAT. They know how to use nearly everybody. 154.

A dialectic way of looking at things does not produce a sense of realism or objectivity. Mexico's acceptance of the non-rational and uncertain means that he can be both objective and realistic about the limits of that objectivity. Pöckler's training allows quasi-religious and dreaming states of mind that are ultimately destructive. Moreover, Franz cannot live for himself. His love for Leni is a substitute for independence and when she leaves him, he collapses.

But Leni was wrong: no-one was using him. Pöckler was an extension of the Rocket long before it was ever built. She'd seen to that ... when she left him, he fell apart. 402.

Without her support, Franz dedicates himself completely to the Rocket in order to maintain a sense of purpose. He is unable to escape from that even when he is half aware of the danger, simply because of the intellectual limitations of

his habit of seeing everything in pairs.

The fear of extinction named Pöckler knew it was the Rocket, beckoning him in. If he also knew that in something like this extinction he could be free of his loneliness and his failure, still he wasn't quite convinced... So he hunted across the Zero, between the two desires, personal identity and impersonal salvation. 406.

It is this very scale which makes him defenceless against those who know how to use such a weakness for their missions of destruction. Franz becomes fanatically dedicated to the building of the Rocket as a way of transcending his self. In order to be even surer of him, Weissman fulfils his need for a human object by sending him copies of his daughter Ilse. By learning to need her visits, however contrived or false, Pöckler is further blackmailed and bound.

In a corporate state, a place must be made for innocence, and its many uses. In developing an official version of innocence, the culture of childhood has proven invaluable.

Though his love for Ilse is probably genuine, he is deceived into preferring the myth of childhood, which is more convenient and less complicated, to the real thing. Made completely subservient by his fear and his need, Franz allows himself the luxury of selective thinking, and not noticing anything which might disturb him. Because he requires that the world be as he wishes it for his personal security, he becomes an accessory to the murder of the concentration camps.

He is, in a limited sense, a symbol for the people of Germany who permitted themselves to be used, and who, it seems, ignored what was often in front of them out of fear and an extraordinary process of unseeing. Pynchon's view of this is neither judgemental nor self righteous. What rules Franz is very real fear, and a personal inadequacy of being that is the result of a sterile set of mental co-ordinates. Pöckler is moreover redeemed, to an extent, by his eventual recognition of his responsibility.

Weissman's cruelty was no less resourceful than Pöckler's own engineering skill, the gift of Daedulus that allowed him to put as much labyrinth as required between himself and the inconvenience of caring. They had sold him convenience, so much of it, all on credit, and now They were collecting. 428.

The final realisation of what he, and Germany, has forfeited comes as he walks through the concentration camp. He cannot change what has occurred, and he is aware of the unproductivity of guilt in face of the enormity of the crime.

The walls did not dissolve - no prison wall ever did, not from tears, not at this finding, on

*every pallet, in every cell, that the faces
are ones he knows after all, and holds dear as
himself, and cannot, then, let them return to
silence... But what can he ever do about it?
How can he ever keep them? Impotence, mirror-
rotation of sorrow, works him terribly as runa-
way heartbeating, and with hardly any chances
left him for good rage, or for turning... 433.*

He emerges from his solipsism of fear into a realisation of the harsh realities that cannot be changed and which make considerations of salvation irrelevant and pernicious; suffering, waste, needless death. It is at this point that he recognises his humanity and becomes free because of the fact of his mortality. By the time that Slothrop meets him in the Zone, he has an uncanny resemblance to his, Tyrone's, ancestor William the Puritan heretic. With his pigs he travels anonymously around the Zone, finding refuge in its spaces and uncertainties.

Ultimately the whole structure of G.R. refuses to conform to the principles of cause and effect. It rejects linear constructions of plot and detailed examination of characters' motivation as a method of understanding. At one point, Pynchon says in his most unadorned narrative voice: "You will want cause-and-effect. Alright", in reference to a reader's expectations. The internal experimentation with style and systems of metaphor reflects by example the novel's examination of the world we have created for ourselves. Pynchon believes that what happens in history is not dictated merely by events but by the building blocks of any society: the manner in which perceptions are ordered. There is no such thing as a pure relationship with the world or a pure set of observations. It is extremely important, therefore, that the explanations used to structure observations are themselves critically examinable. In G.R., Pynchon attempts to look at as many cultural myths as possible, from the religious to the movie-inspired. The obscurity and intellectual intricacies of the novel serve to reawaken the curiosity by altering the act of interpretation involved in reading. The novel's critique of metaphor therefore works in two ways. It is embedded in the structure, and it is illustrated by the plots and metaphors, some of which have been looked at here.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

An aspect of metaphor not treated in this study of Pynchon's novels, is the question of the effectiveness of his examination of modern society through a critique of metaphor. The critical purpose of this study has not been primarily evaluative. Instead, a methodology has been offered which explains the basic themes and structures of the novels through analysis and description. It has been shown that the artifice and ambiguity of the novels are the means by which Pynchon reveals his vision of the need for widened processes of interpretation. Yet the problem of the persuasiveness of Pynchon's vision remains, even when we have understood how it works. As Pynchon himself points out through *Oedipa* and *Maijstral*, the vitality of a metaphor depends upon the inclusion of others into its system.

A metaphor creates a region of possibility and unseen similarity, but its ability to reveal a hidden pattern, or spark a sudden recognition, also depends upon a base of willing credulity about shared experience. Some of the criticism on Pynchon expresses scepticism about the ultimate success of the novels in making their vision plausible and urgent to the reader.

Roger B. Henckle, in one of the best journal articles on Pynchon, claims that Pynchon's metaphors fail to transform in this way.¹ Henckle draws a distinction between the sheer invention of new structures and allusions, and the power of imagination which in the Coleridgean sense, provides a true illumination into hidden relationships. His expectations of metaphor echo the description given in the Introduction of this thesis:

*... to transform its material so that new relationships are created and new insights can be achieved by the use of the transmuting, molding power of the mind.*²

However, Henckle does not believe Pynchon achieves this transmutation. He feels this is to some extent due to Pynchon's view of the world as a system of mere phenomena in which mankind is imprisoned. Henckle's most telling criticism, given this approach, is that the very metaphorical system of the novels is the cause of their failure to reach their imaginative potential.

*... Pynchon's own art turns frequently to purely mechanical and sometimes accidental resemblances for its source of metaphor and relies upon complicated invention to do its work.*³

Henckle claims that inventiveness, in the sense of making up resemblances between things, is only the beginning of a successful metaphor, and without an imaginative

transfer, metaphor remains "simply elaborate amusements". Thus Pynchon's notion of a low pun, which relies on accidental or sheerly linguistic resemblances to make elaborate metaphors, is unacceptable to Henckle; it does not show anything new in the world but remains as an idle whimsy of the author.

Ozier, too, as we have seen, agrees with Henckle as far as V and Lot 49 are concerned. He points out that the critical consensus on these novels at least, was that

*Pynchon's characters were not substantial enough to bear the burden of his stylistic and inventive tours de force.*⁴

He felt that this was rectified in G.R. by the more deeply felt application of metaphor to the characters of Pointsman and Mexico. Earl Novit's early article relied on satire for its review of experimentation and what he felt to be the faults in modern trends in American prose. It is an extremely effective article which is not afraid to poke fun at the pompous theorising of some American novelists about their own art. Novit says of G.R.:

*... concerning the prodigiousness of Pynchon's extraordinary gifts I have no argument. He has the intelligence, the stylistic dedication to do anything with language that language can do. But I am convinced that the 760 dense pages of Gravity's Rainbow are virtually unreadable for a normally motivated reader of novels (...).*⁵

His further criticism of G.R. agrees in essence with Henckle and other critics who feel that Pynchon's workslack feeling or commitment:

*... The reader (...) turns the last pages of the book in relief, recalls some clever episodes or notions, and ponders at the root of his spirit on the odd combination of self-indulgence and compulsiveness (...). Unlike Joyce, that true master of gigantism, Pynchon lacks the ability or the desire to make a reader care (...). The result, I feel, is an awesome mechanical construction (...).*⁶

These criticisms and expectations are partially invalidated by an understanding of Pynchon's view of metaphor revealed in his novels. The farfetched nature of some of his allusions is an integral part of his system of paranoia. Hypersensitivity to connections is the means by which problems of meaning are uncovered and illustrated. Moreover, in all the novels, Pynchon makes it clear that the low pun is only the trigger for a fuller revelation. The metaphor itself may be absurd or trivial. It is the process of creating it which allows a greater flexibility of thought. In the confused and unhappy settings in which his characters move, such trickery and mental games are one of the few ways in which the imagination can escape. Metaphor, too, has a dual aspect: of risk as well as possibility. Maijstral makes it clear that metaphor is merely a device and not an end in itself, and it can be used for delusion as well as

discovering new relationships.

The reader's distance from the characters, so often complained of by commentators, is appropriate to the novel's pessimism about communication between people. In Lot 49, for instance, the unreliability of Oedipa as the narrator means that we cannot fully identify with her anxieties and conclusions. Henckle is mistaken, too, in trying to identify the emotions pertaining to realism in Pynchon, even though he acknowledges himself that Pynchon's vision demands "a more open novelistic expression than we are used to". In any case, intense curiosity about Oedipa and what she might find out seems to be a common experience among readers of Lot 49. Her paranoia and sense of extreme isolation are recognisable parodies of the search of many, particularly in a Californian context, for the Answer that will solve all problems in their lifestyle. As has been discussed, the clues and doubts of the reader parallel those of Oedipa; thus an identification is felt through a common problem of interpretation.

The metaphor is more important than character. Henckle is right in seeing that the ideas and abstractions of the novels are more significant than dramatisation. Yet the minor characterisation in V, and the sympathy evoked for individuals in a powerfully fictionalised historical setting, shows that the metaphors are meant to have a humanistic application. In G.R., the novel of the most mechanical aspect, there are lyrical and tender scenes. Jessica and Roger's poignant romance, for instance, and the brief but evocative description of Slothrop's most loyal friend Tantivy, interweave with the more bizarre, non-human plots of the novel.

Henckle's article is one of the few which attempts to set a value on Pynchon's work as well as describing it. Much of his criticism, however, and more particularly those of others about Pynchon, arises from a lack of understanding about the purpose of Pynchon's overwrought style. His urgency about the necessity to re-examine our motivations, ideals, philosophies and beliefs in favour of a more open and humane imagination, requires a corresponding variety and indeterminacy of treatment.

This underlying force in his work corresponds with other contemporary experimental fiction in America. The criticism represented above can be tempered by an understanding of the trend in modern American writing.

Robert Scholes in his article Metafiction⁷ attempts like other critics such as Schulz⁸ and Olderman⁹ to set out a scheme that will account for some of the major directions of new fiction. Although Scholes' chief examples are John Barth, William Gass, Robert Coover and Donald Barthelme, some of his discussion obviously pertains to Pynchon. He points out that those faced with Henckle's critical

problem, of requiring fiction to be a way of imaginatively viewing reality, misunderstand this fiction which sees itself an addition to the world of phenomena. Scholes coins the word metafiction, which, he says, is a kind of fiction that among other things "assimilates all the perspectives of criticism into the fictional process itself". Pynchon's parodies of literary criticism in all the novels, as well as his metaphor of the Puritan and historical obsession with the Word, are clearly examples of such assimilation. Moreover, Pynchon's concern with communication and creativity includes the problems of fiction making and art generally within his critique of the forms of thinking. Metafiction uses old forms such as myth and fairytale to seek a fictional essence, and at the same time, expresses comic and inventive despair over exhausted forms of thought. This corresponds very well to Pynchon's theory of metaphor. In G.R. in particular, he uses fields of knowledge ranging from the fairytale of Hansel and Gretel to calculus in his search for new and surprising forms of metaphor.

Margaret Heckard takes up Scholes' definition and elaborates on its chief points.¹⁰ She claims that self consciousness and irony are two of the characteristic features of this kind of writing. Furthermore she points out that metafiction arises out of a certain philosophical stance, familiar to us now in the twentieth century, where truth is subjective and uncertain; form rather than content assumes an important part of discovery. The results in fiction are devices such as unreliable narrators, self-conscious scepticism, elaborate artifice and open ended plots. Archetypes, stereotypes, and Freudian symbols become targets of humour and irony; as Heckard points out, once we are aware of the purpose of myths and become "conscious of the unconscious", they can no longer be used straightforwardly in fiction.

Similarly, popular culture and its slogans and songs are used side by side with fairytales and references to other works of art. The purpose of using such material is to expose the cultural cliches which, authors claim, deaden the sensibilities, and leave us unable to discriminate in a world overloaded with information. One of the best elements of metafiction is that of playfulness. Trickery and the concoction of elaborate jokes are the devices by which the metafictionalists or fabulators, to use Scholes' term, reveal the games inherent in life. To some extent, this is true of Pynchon. He uses comic songs, ridiculous and suggestive names, as well as metaphors that are obviously not meant to be taken seriously, because of their extravagant extensions. By deliberately exaggerating the customary techniques and tools of fiction, Pynchon with other fabulators like Barthelme, Coover and Vonnegut, extends his scepticism about belief to the creative act itself. Metafiction depends upon upsetting expectations, to mirror its philosophy of uncertainty.

Pynchon differs from metafiction in several important ways, too. Although he expresses his scepticism and pessimism through joking, his narrative voice shifts frequently in G.R. to direct, serious preaching. He also uses the familiar techniques of the surrealist and absurd writers. Scholes and Heckard make a distinction between those writers who see the universe as comic, such as the fabulators, and those who see it as absurd, such as Beckett or Camus. Pynchon moves between the two poles, and his pessimism and inverted Puritanism are closer to an absurd than a comic view.

Richard Pearce moves beyond a potentially cramping definition in his excellent discussion of the fiction of the sixties.¹² This includes literature beyond the short comic fiction which Scholes claims is the essence of metafiction. Pearce, too, points out the preoccupation with ambiguity, not merely in content but all importantly with form. Furthermore, his article has the added value of actually including Pynchon in his list of important works. He calls G.R. the "major experience of the age". He widens the categories to include fictional devices that tend to be excluded by Scholes and Heckard.

*The 'structural' black humorists - Joseph Heller, Kurt Vonnegut, Thomas Pynchon and Donald Barthelme - develop over-articulated forms and insanely comprehensive plots, they reinvent old fictional conventions or make disturbingly imaginative use of topical materials*¹³

Pearce sees this as being not only appropriate to a certain philosophy, but also to the turbulent culture of the 60's. Indeed, he could be describing Pynchon's work directly in his analysis of the new fiction's disturbance of :

*those of us conditioned by Western literature and philosophy to believe in the integrity powers of the human mind and in the integrity of the human self.*¹⁴

He also uses the helpful phrase "non-interpretive fiction" to describe the novels that form a contemporary context for Pynchon's work. Through "a baroque over-interpretation of the human situation" the novels "parodically repudiate the implicit claim of the traditional novels to integrate existing realities".¹⁵

Thus Pynchon's use of metaphor is similar in many ways to other experimental novels of the 60's in America, relying as it does on extravagance and surprise. This is particularly true of G.R., which is, as Pearce points out in his article, characteristically baroque, insanely comprehensive, and makes new use of topical materials. G.R. is really a multiplicity of plots, where even a lightbulb has its own story and its own perception of conspiracy. The mysteries and complexities of G.R. and to a lesser extent of V and Lot 49 represent an attempt to awaken perceptions to the frequently grotesque variety of life.

Furthermore, Pynchon's two novels V and G.R. include a perspective that is not characteristic of metafiction or even non-interpretive fiction, as delineated by Pearce. The historical focus and reconstruction of both these works extends the implicit criticism of modern culture into an attempt to reconstruct the major trends of twentieth century history through its violence and explosive technological progress. Albert Camus, who as a philosopher attempts to understand his own time in his essays, says of the twentieth century :

*One might think that a period which within fifty years uproots, enslaves or kills seventy million human beings, should only and forthwith be condemned.*¹⁶

Like Pynchon, Camus in his very different way, believes that the guilt must be understood. The apparent mark of the age of logical crime and rational murder has to be analysed to find out where ideologies and doctrines have gone wrong.

*... slave camps under the flag of freedom, massacres justified by philanthropy or the taste for the superhuman ... On the day when crime puts on the apparel of innocence, through a curious reversal peculiar to our age, it is innocence that is called on to justify itself.*¹⁷

The grotesque, absurd and ugly nature of the age justifies Pynchon's desperate inventiveness as he attempts both to contain it and escape from it. It also contradicts those critics who feel that he is too disengaged, and who find his pessimism spurious and self indulgent. Just as Camus sets out to examine rhetorically the "strange challenge" of the violence and murder and its implication for revolution, so Pynchon's novelistic concern is to examine how control, ideology and action interact. Like Camus, Pynchon sees the anti-humanism and isolation as stemming from an inability to construct principles out of genuine recognition of the limitations of life and the general experience of that fact.

*The most striking demonstration was furnished by the Hitlerian apocalypse of 1945. Self destruction meant nothing to those madmen who in their bomb-shelters, arranged their own death and apotheosis. The important thing was not to die alone, and simultaneously to destroy a whole world ... Suicide and murder are thus two aspects of a single system, the system of an unhappy intellect which rather than suffer limitation chooses the dark victory which annihilates earth ...*¹⁸

This excerpt from the Introduction to The Rebel almost perfectly describes the major theme of G.R. expressed through the Rocket builders and the elite represented by Pointsman. Camus points out that man is the only creature who refuses to be what he is, and his philosophical essay sets out to investigate whether that refusal has to inevitably lead to destruction. Pynchon seems to be pessimistic about the future. The ubiquity of control, the decadence, lack

of purpose in his characters, the isolation and loss of faith, particularly in America, all point to a dark, if not apocalyptic vision. It is balanced to some extent by the comedy which gives his novels vitality and variety.

To the outlined problems and criticisms of the nature of experimental fiction raised here, I would like to add my own criticism of the shortcomings of Pynchon's style. A detailed examination is obviously outside the scope of this particular study, but the flaws in the novels' metaphorical scheme need to be sketched out. As I have shown, an understanding of Pynchon's work in the contemporary context does answer a good deal of negative criticism. However, there are faults, particularly in V and G.R., that arise out of a failure of the novels to integrate their own experimental metaphorical aims. As such, they are serious, and not easily countered by arguments about the new types of reading required by contemporary fictions. In fact, I would tend to agree that the failure is due, to some extent, to the risks endemic to metafiction and non-interpretive fiction, as well as being particular to Pynchon.

As I have made clear, I consider Lot 49 to be the most successful and most impressive of the three novels, which is somewhat contrary to accepted views. It is not as astonishing a feat as G.R., yet precisely because of its compactness, it avoids the repetition that in the other novels, mars the dense suggestiveness that Pynchon's theory of metaphor requires. In V the failure to draw the historical and American halves of the novel together is reflected in the ultimate failure of the novel to maintain a vital sense of mystery. The Tristero system maintains its shadowy ambiguity to the end. Because it never corresponds as a metaphor with a single particularised system of things, and it is linked closely with Oedipa's thinking, it retains its power to suggest the isolation and loss of direction in Oedipa's and America's life. In V, V. appears superficially to be many things and like the Tristero may not exist at all except in Stencil's mind. Yet because it appears consistent in very similar situations, it is reducible as a metaphor to a spirit of violence or the *zeitgeist* as defined by the Whole Sick Crew. The plots, then, around V. become repetitions rather than adding to the metaphorical possibilities of the quest. Nor is the quest motif particularly effective in this case; because Stencil does not participate in it as Oedipa does, the plots are distanced in a way that robs them of the intensity of Oedipa's discoveries.

Moreover the themes of V, which as I have shown are fairly straightforward, do not warrant such repetitiveness. The novel is in fact too long for its own metaphors, which considerably dilute its attempts to create an atmosphere of complexity and mystery. The hints and jokes about V. in the text often remain contrived and are not integrated once it is obvious that V. is really a metaphor

for strife. Nor are her mythic dimensions sufficiently developed to link her to the idea of a destructive female figure like Eve or Venus. The Epilogue, for instance, seems entirely superfluous as it does not add anything further to the ideas of history already well set out in the body of the novel. As I have shown, Foppl's siege is an extremely effective allegory of pre-war Germany and contributes an important facet to the novel's themes of the consequences of decadence and excess. Chapter 14 - "V. in love" - however, only repeats in a much less effective form every proposition already well developed. The multiplicity of plots, therefore only ends in over extending otherwise extremely interesting, strong metaphors. Pynchon's philosophy of uncertainty and assertions of the need for flexibility and humanism, are contradicted by the too didactic nature of the novel attributable to unnecessary elaboration and repetition.

G.R. suffers a similar dilution for similar reasons. To some extent its problems are different; its many plots are truly differentiated and the quest is reduced to a convenient device for moving Slothrop round the Zone. By extending its metaphor base it avoids the overstated, simplistic system of V. Yet the criticisms noted earlier in this chapter of its self indulgence, unreadability and mechanical coldness are difficult to completely refute. It is my feeling too, that epics should often be distrusted, if only because stamina has little to do with quality. The novel is attempting far more than Lot 49, so although it lacks the shorter novel's intensity and beauty, it has a quality of massiveness and power which does not really disappear even at its most infuriating moments. The major criticism that should be levelled at G.R. is that again, despite its frantic mystification, its themes are readily identifiable. Technology, and its potential for destruction, the nature of power, the increase of control, the mad scientist, remain the major motifs of the novel despite all complexity.

Another disturbing feature of G.R. is its avowal of irrationality and magic as the way of resisting the system. This makes the work characteristic of its time to some extent and novels by authors like Vonnegut, Tom Robbins, Ishmael Reed and Barth.¹⁹ The Counterforce uses creative paranoia to defect and resist the conspiracies of the established system represented in the War and the Rocket. The Counterforce believes in openness, freedom, love, creativity. Yet the notion that individual acts of romantic anarchy (Pig Bodine and Mexico) and mysticism will somehow ward off the evil effects of corporate thinking seems an extraordinary feeble and sentimental one. The idea too, that rationality is inherently evil is a confusion of a quality of the human mind, with the corruption of knowledge through the actions of people. The naive and petulant rejection of reason in favour of what amounts to little more than superstition is not

worthy of an obviously intelligent and well educated artist. It seems odd too, that Pynchon can portray Mexico as a man of science, who is reasonable, self controlled and emotionally balanced, only to apparently place his faith in the novel in non-rational systems of thought.

Despite the limitations suggested here, and after all it would be extraordinary if none existed, Pynchon's novels remain as some of the best written in the last twenty years. I have attempted to show how Pynchon's radical vision emerges from a study of metaphor in his work. The emphasis in all the novels is on interpretation and the problems of creating new perspectives to deal with the modern world. Pynchon's use of metaphor in his novels works in three ways.

The major of the themes is the necessity for a new appraisal of history and the methods customarily used to construct historical explanations in order to arrive at a more humanistic and non-nationalistic vision of ourselves. This applies to other forms of explanation too, such as the scientific. Nineteenth century notions of order, of cause and effect, of simple social systems, of influence and corresponding action, are seen as inappropriate in a world where connections are complicated and hidden, rather than linear and visible.

Secondly the novels include a plea for the necessity of vitality in art itself. This is portrayed by a strand of self-consciousness, and especially by the characters of and allusions to artists and writers. The metaphor of the Biblical Word as the beginning of an enquiry into the universe and the continuing interpretation of which is the original literary criticism, appears in all the novels and is of major importance in both Lot 49 and G.R. This links with paranoia, which is the condition, and in the extreme stages, disease, of those not satisfied with the surface of things, but who set out to discover and construct new orders. An ability to make plots in the fictional sense, links with a sensitivity to conspiracy. Such an ability is a double-edged sword. It is valuable for the detection and creation of original perspectives, but it also encourages solipsism and can degenerate into a quasi-religious search for meaning. As all the quests in Pynchon's work make clear, paranoia is as much a desire to abdicate responsibility as it is a process of discovery.

Thirdly, Pynchon revitalises metaphor within his own text. By drawing on regions of knowledge not generally considered appropriate to literature, Pynchon creates new kinds of metaphors using similarities between scientific models and human behaviour. Because of his understanding of metaphor Pynchon never makes the mistake of some of his commentators. He maintains his scepticism about what metaphors allow us to see and the essentially artificial nature of the unity they imply. He does not, in other words, mistake the metaphor for the things that metaphor describe. Human behaviour is not the same as entropy, calculus

and so on, but by using accurate features of such knowledge, Pynchon re-illuminates certain kinds of action and thought.

His novels are more than literary puzzles of curiosities. The ambiguity of metaphor is linked with a deep social sense and a real concern for the self-destructive urges of the age. How palatable Pynchon's pessimism is, especially in the apocalyptic tone of G.R., is probably in the end a matter of subjective preference.

APPENDIX

Entropy simplified

One of my major protests about the use of entropy as a literary model is that critics rarely set out what they understand by it, but rely instead on an emotional response to the term. I want to give here a simple and detailed explanation as it is clear that the concept is by no means as widely understood as it is claimed.

The first statement of the Second Law of Thermodynamics is that heat tends to flow from hotter to cooler objects. Thus a warm and a cold object placed together will eventually come to the same temperature. The implications of this tendency are profound. All activity in the universe depends upon the movement of energy, which moves from higher to lower concentrations as stated above. Energy, however, tends to spread out evenly, preventing further transfer.

Another general statement that describes this tendency is that the physical world tends towards disorder. The physicist is referring to degrees of probability when he speaks of order and disorder. A particular sequence, or arrangement, is orderly if there are not many ways to obtain it. For instance, a large group of objects can be sorted out to give a limited number of specific arrangements. But the objects can be mixed randomly in almost limitless ways. If each "way" is equally likely, then randomness is most likely to occur. This probability explains why energy spreads out; that is, why we observe that things reach an equilibrium of temperature. Slow and fast molecules will tend to mix together due to the many kinds of combinations possible.

Entropy is, in fact, a measure for this disorder in a system. In the most general sense, entropy represents a lack of information in the face of a great many information possibilities. For example, if a system composed of many particles has enough energy to exist in many states, but a hypothetical observer does not know for sure which state the system is in, that system is said to have a high entropy.

The final statement of the Second Law of Thermodynamics is familiar:

"Any closed or isolated system of particles, that is, any ensemble which is shielded from either gaining or losing energy to anything outside, tends towards an equilibrium state of maximum entropy, if not already in that state."

Jagjit Singh Modern Cosmology (Penguin Books 1961,1970)

The heat death of the universe, which particularly fascinated some artists of the late nineteenth century, is the ultimate product of the process of entropy. Due to the laws governing the conservation of energy, there will still be the same amount of energy around, but it will be dissipated in such a way as to make the all-important transfer impossible. The universe is tending towards a disorder which in the final analysis is equilibrium: an eternal and unchangeable state of rest.

As a metaphor for Oedipa's quest, entropy is most appropriate in some ways. She is appalled by the lack of new arrangements possible in America. She has little information about the system she is investigating, which would suggest that it is in a high state of disorder. She becomes aware of the inevitability of dissipation and death. Yet Pynchon is careful never to absolutely equate scientific principles with human life, unlike some of his critics. The apparent resonance of words like "disorder" and "heatdeath" are misleading if taken too literally. Although human beings are subject to the laws of the universe, the universe is not an extension of human behaviour.

FOOTNOTES

Chapter 1 - Introduction

1. Mark R. Siegel "Creative Paranoia : Understanding the System of Gravity's Rainbow." *Critique* Vol. 18, No.3, pp. 39-59.
2. Mathew Winston "The Quest for Pynchon" *Twentieth Century Literature* Vol. 21, Oct. 1975, No.3, p. 278.
3. from Selected Essays (1951); collected in 20th Century Literary Criticism edited by David Lodge. (Longman 1972) pp. 69-77.
4. from "A future for the novel", For the New Novel (New York 1965); collected in 20th Century Literary Criticism, pp. 467-472.
5. PhD, Thesis, Yale University, Connecticut, 1978.
6. W.K. Wimsatt (Jr) The Verbal Icon : studies in the Meaning of Poetry (University of Kentucky Press 1954) p. 128.
7. Ibid p. 127.
8. Cleanth Brooks A Shaping Joy : Studies in the Writer's Craft (Methuen & Co. Ltd. 1971) p. 94.
9. in Wimsatt, Ibid. p. 125.
10. Wimsatt *op. cit.* p. 128.
11. This view of metaphor as an important but self-limiting device of epistemology forms the thesis of Colin Turbayne's study The Myth of Metaphor (Colonial Press Inc. 1962.)
12. "Maxwell's Demon, Entropy, Information : The Crying of Lot 49" *Triquarterly* No. 20, Winter 1971, pp. 194-208.
13. "Entropy in Pynchon's The Crying of Lot 49" *Critique* 14 No.2 1972, pp. 18-33.
14. "Pynchon's Linguistic Demon : The Crying of Lot 49" *Critique* 16 No.2 pp. 45-53.
15. *Kenyon Review* Vol. 22 1960, pp. 277-292.
16. Hereinafter referred to as Lot 49, V, G.R.
17. City of Words: American Fiction 1950 - 1970 (Jonathan Cape Ltd. p. 142.
18. Ibid p. 152.
19. Ibid p. 141.

20. "Gravity's Rainbow Described" *Critique* Vo. 16, No.2, 1974 p.55.
21. Siegel "Creative Paranoia: Understanding the system of Gravity's Rainbow" p.39.

Chapter 2 - V

1. All quotations taken from the *Picador* edition 1975.
2. "Under the Rose" *Noble Savage* 3 1961, pp.223-251. Considerably altered, this story formed the basis for Chapter 3 of V.
3. This is not to suggest that he is not an attractive character. In many ways, he is extremely likeable.
4. V. is always female.

Chapter 3 - The Crying of Lot 49

1. "A Character Index : Gravity's Rainbow" *Critique* Vo.18, No.3, p.39.
2. All quotations taken from the *Bantam* edition 1967.
3. "Pynchon's Tapestries on the Western Wall" *Modern Fiction Studies* 17 No.2 1971, P.215.
4. See W. Ehrenberg "Maxwell's Demon" *Scientific American* 217, Nov. 1967, pp.103-110.
5. In fact, the best metaphor for Oedipa's quest is not entropy, but Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle. Her observations effect the events which she is trying to explain. The phenomenon of scientific artefact also describes her situation. Briefly, this is what occurs when the apparent result of an experiment is in fact due to the nature of the experiment itself.

Chapter 4 - Gravity's Rainbow

1. Personal communication B. Westburg, English Dept., University of Adelaide.
2. All quotations taken from the *Picador* edition 1975.
3. Siegel "Creative Paranoia : Understanding the System of Gravity's Rainbow."
4. Lance W. Ozier "Antipointsman / Antimexico : Some Mathematical Imagery in Gravity's Rainbow" *Critique* Vo.16 No.2 1974, pp.73-90.
5. Also "The Calculus of Transformation: More Mathematical Imagery in Gravity's Rainbow" *Twentieth Century Literature* 21, May 1975, pp.193-210.

6. For instance, Einsteinian physics does not *replace* Newtonian physics.
7. Ozier Antipointsman / "Antimexico : Some Mathematical Imagery in Gravity's Rainbow", p.74.

Chapter 5 - Conclusion

1. Roger B. Henckle "Pynchon's Tapestries on the Western Wall" p.207.
2. Ibid p.218.
3. Ibid p.219.
4. Lance W. Ozier "Antipointsman / Antimexico : Some Mathematical Imagery in Gravity's Rainbow" p.73.
5. Earl Novit "Some Shapes in Recent American Fiction" *Contemporary Literature Vol.15, No.4, Summer 1974, p.539.*
6. Ibid p.553.
7. Robert Scholes "Metafiction" *The Iowa Review Vol.1, No.4, Fall 1970, pp.100-115.*
8. Max F. Schulz Black Humour Fiction of the Sixties (Ohio University Press 1973).
9. Raymond M. Olderman Beyond the Wasteland : The American Novel in the 1960's (Yale University Press 1972).
10. Margaret Heckard "Robert Coover, Metafiction and Freedom" *Twentieth Century Literature Vol.22, May 1976, p.210.*
11. Ibid p.213.
12. Richard Pearce "Review Essay: The Sixties: Fiction in Fact" *Novel Vol.11, No.2, Winter 1978, pp.163-172.*
13. Ibid p.166.
14. Ibid p.167.
15. Ibid p.167.
16. Albert Camus The Rebel (Penguin Modern Classics 1971 (1951)) p.11.
17. Ibid p.12.
18. Ibid p.14, 15.
19. e.g. Tom Robbins Another Roadside Attraction (Penguin 1975)
Ishmael Reed Mumbo Jumbo (Bantam 1973) The Last Days of Louisiana Red (Random House New York 1974) John Gardner The Sunlight Dialogues (Ballantine Books New York 1972).

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