

THE DEMON AND THE GODDESS

THE DEMON AND THE GODDESS:
ENTROPY AND THE FAMILY
IN THE
WORKS OF THOMAS PYNCHON

By
JAMES STEVENSON QUIGLEY, B.A.

A Thesis
Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies
in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements
for the Degree
Master of Arts

McMaster University

(c) Copyright by J.S. Quigley, November 1997

MASTER OF ARTS (1998)
(English)

McMASTER UNIVERSITY
Hamilton, Ontario

TITLE: The Demon and the Goddess: Entropy and the Family in
 the Works of Thomas Pynchon

AUTHOR: James Stevenson Quigley, B.A. (McMaster University)

SUPERVISOR: Dr. J. Sigman

NUMBER OF PAGES: v, 126

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the entropy paradigm in the works of Thomas Pynchon and explores the manner in which Pynchon's protagonists attempt to reverse or delete entropy from their exhausted and deteriorating worlds. It will be suggested that there are two separate ways to accomplish this task. The first method is the use of human intellect and energy to restore order to the universe. In Pynchon's fiction this method is symbolized by James Clerk Maxwell's Demon, a hypothetical intelligence who counters entropy in closed systems. The second way is the presence of human creativity and inspiration that resists the natural tendency of social systems to verge towards the mean and the resultant mediocrity and homogeneity. This method is represented in Pynchon's texts by Robert Graves' White Goddess, a conjectural figure in European prehistory who inspires poetry. Moreover, the first method will be shown to be a primarily patriarchal phenomenon, while the second method is inherently matriarchal in nature. Pynchon unites both patriarchal and matriarchal manners in his overarching metaphor of the family.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my gratitude to Dr. Joseph Sigman, who has been both extraordinarily helpful and patient over the last two years. Thanks are also due to Robert Meeks of Hamilton -- without his hospitality I would have found the completion of this work much more difficult. Finally, I would like to acknowledge the generous support my parents have provided me over the course of this project.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....	1
I. Stencil's Quest and the Family Metaphor in V.	15
II. Motherhood, Revolution and Redemption.....	72
III. Motherhood and the Family in <i>Vineland</i>	105
Conclusion.....	118
Sources Cited.....	122

INTRODUCTION

The early nineteen-sixties saw the emergence of a new literature -- fiction that eschewed prewar naturalism and instead explored the surreal landscapes of fantasy and dream. The cultural complacency of Eisenhower-era America had prompted poet Robert Lowell to christen those years "the tranquillized *Fifties*." The appearance of novels such as John Barth's *The Sot-Weed Factor* (1961), Joseph Heller's *Catch-22* (1961) and later efforts like Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.'s *Slaughterhouse-Five* (1969) confirmed that the artistic doldrums of the fifties were over. Self-reflective and wholly ironic, the new writing parodied other literary styles, engaged in black humour, and combined pop culture and high Modernism, producing an eclectic mixture of past techniques and tastes with contemporary trends.

Around this time a remarkable novel surfaced, 1963's *V.*, written by an equally remarkable author. Thomas Pynchon has since probably garnered more critical acclaim than any other living writer in America, a feat all the more

extraordinary considering his penchant for privacy and anonymity. Surprisingly little is known about the man who has received an impressive host of accolades, including the William Faulkner Prize, the Rosenthal Award and the unanimous nomination of the Pulitzer fiction jury. No biography exists, and critics who wish to gain insight into the life of the elusive author have been forced to focus solely on Pynchon's writings, a modest body comprising five novels, a few short stories, and sundry articles, blurbs and introductions. Any attempt to understand Pynchon's psychology through a study of his works becomes a daunting task, however, due to the overlapping density of reference that characterizes everything he has written. As George Levine and David Leverenz maintain, "one has to know an awful lot to learn what it is that Pynchon feels -- not only about Zap comics and horror movies, but about physics, mathematics, Puritan theology, and a library of literature that he uses or parodies or both" (4). With the recent publication of *Mason & Dixon*, even greater effort will undoubtedly be required for an understanding of the influences behind Pynchon's writing.

Pynchon's unprecedented anonymity, which exceeds even J.D. Salinger's in degree, has resulted in most critical appraisals of his work ignoring the author completely. The greatest praise that Richard Poirier can confer upon Pynchon, for instance, is to extol the writer's "Johnsonian capacities

to 'work up' a subject ... wholly remote from his own personal experiences" (17). The possibility that the author's life may shed light on the author's writings is indeed one bugbear some Pynchon critics would rather not wrestle. Pynchon himself, however, in contradiction to Poirier, attests the validity of a biographical approach. In the "Introduction" to *Slow Learner* he draws attention to a failing of his early, pre-V., fiction:

Somewhere I had come up with the notion that one's personal life had nothing to do with fiction, when the truth, as everyone knows, is nearly the direct opposite (21).

Certainly the scant nature of existing information hampers explorations in this area, but that is not to say, however, that this avenue of investigation is entirely unavailing -- on the contrary, even with the few biographical details available such research has already borne fruit.

Take, for example, the "psychodontist" Dudley Eigenvalue, D.D.S., who appears as a minor character in V. This dentist is imbued with a perceptiveness and wisdom that well exceeds his peripheral role in the novel. In an unique 1977 tell-all article entitled "Who Is Thomas Pynchon... And Why Did He Take Off With My Wife?", former acquaintance Jules Siegel mentions Pynchon's "misshapen chompers", believes "extensive and painful dental restoration" was performed on Pynchon in Mexico, and even claims that the author once

admitted that his teeth "had determined his life in some unspecified way that seemed very important to him" (122). Siegel's allegations cinched it -- Pynchon probably writes more from his own personal experiences than we normally credit.

Among the few details that are definitely known about Pynchon are the bibliography and chronology of his literary career. Pynchon's novels to date include *V.* (1963), *The Crying of Lot 49* (1966), *Gravity's Rainbow* (1973), *Vineland* (1990) and this year's monumental *Mason & Dixon*. Curiously, the dedication of *Vineland* reads "*For my mother and father*", highlighting an area of Pynchon's life for which we have only the briefest of sketches. Considering the fact that two of Pynchon's novels are devoted to chronicling the exploits of families across several generations -- the Stencils and Godolphins in *V.*, the Wheelers, Gates and Traverses in *Vineland* -- it would seem that new and fertile ground for study lies in observing how Pynchon deals with familial relationships in his fictions.

We know that Thomas Ruggles Pynchon, Jr. was born on the 8th of May, 1937 in Glen Cove, Long Island. Siegel informs us that Pynchon is from "an old American family" that is "prominent in New England historical literature" (122). In Matthew Winston's biographical outline, "The Quest for Pynchon", we learn that prominent Pynchon ancestors include

some of the original settlers of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, a few New England magistrates, and various merchants, doctors, clergymen and academics (253-4). Pynchon was born to Katherine Frances Bennett Pynchon, whom Siegel describes as "an exceptionally beautiful woman, all cut glass, ivory and sable" (122), and Thomas Ruggles Pynchon, Sr., an industrial surveyor. Clearly family is important to the Pynchon clan -- not only was the Pynchon homestead furnished with "some excellent Colonial portraits of ancient Pynchons" (Siegel, 122), but when Nathaniel Hawthorne unwittingly made an unflattering portrayal of a family named Pynchon central to *The House of the Seven Gables*, he was chastised by extant Pynchons for "holding up ... the good name of our Ancestors to the derision and contempt of our countrymen" (Winston, 255).

Over the thirty-eight years of Pynchon's literary career, both his marital and parenthood status seem to have undergone significant change. In the "Introduction" to *Slow Learner*, Pynchon reports that at the time he was writing the short story "Low-lands" (circa 1960) he had "no direct experience with either marriage or parenting" (10) and implies that in the intervening years he has gained that experience. This change seems to have been reflected in his fiction. Pynchon himself criticizes his early work for pandering to "adolescent values" (*Slow Learner*, hereafter *SL*, 9). In *The Crying of Lot 49* it is interesting to note how easily the

protagonist, the twentysomething Oedipa Maas, can assume a "studentlike" appearance at will (148). By the time *Vineland* was published in 1990, however, Pynchon was producing characters like Zoyd Wheeler, who, possessing an admixture of parental concern and fatherly affection for his teenage daughter Prairie, seems at odds with earlier characters like Meatball Mulligan, Pig Bodine, Dennis Flange and Benny Profane¹.

Before we attempt to explore the dynamics of familial relationships in Pynchon's works, it is crucial to address the nature of the imagined universe described by his fictions. Douglas A. Mackey, expressing a common view, has remarked that in Pynchon's fiction there is "a disintegration of consciousness, an increasing disorderliness in the modern psyche" (8). Pynchon expresses this idea through the metaphorical use of a scientific notion known as "entropy" -- in fact, the author's first important short story is actually entitled "Entropy" (1960). In a purely scientific sense, the

¹Meatball Mulligan appears in the short story "Entropy", where he holds a drunken, forty hour "lease-breaking party" (81); Pig Bodine, who resembles "an ape in a naval uniform" ("Low-lands", 60) shows up in "Low-lands", V. and Gravity's Rainbow as a picaresque rogue; Dennis Flange, meanwhile, being the protagonist from "Low-lands", guzzles wine with the garbageman all day and misses his honeymoon because he goes on a wild drinking binge with his navy friends -- at the time Pynchon "thought he was pretty cool" (SL, 10). Finally, Benny Profane is the wanderer from V. who cannot hold down a job (not that he particularly wants to) and resorts to sleeping in bathtubs.

term denotes a quantity that is the measure of the amount of energy not available for doing work. In *The Human Use of Human Beings*, a volume Pynchon cites as being influential to his thinking (*SL*, 13), Norbert Wiener explains that

as entropy increases, the universe, and all closed systems in the universe, tend naturally to deteriorate and lose their distinctiveness, to move from the least to the most probable state, from a state of organization and differentiation in which distinctions and forms exist, to a state of chaos and sameness (12).

As J. Kerry Grant has perceptively observed, however, "entropy as it applies to thermodynamic systems is by no means a straightforward concept" (82). The notion becomes even more muddled when we transfer its application from the sciences to the humanities.

According to Tony Tanner, entropy is "a word ... taken to mean that everything in the universe is running down" ("V. and V-2", 47). Tanner claims, furthermore, that "the vision of a world in decline, heading irreversibly for the terminal wasteland and scrap heap, permeates Pynchon's work" ("V. and V-2", 47). Pynchon himself admits in *Slow Learner* to possessing a "somber glee at any idea of mass destruction or decline" during his early years as a writer (13). Hence we have the destruction of Callisto's hothouse enclave in "Entropy", the tunnel-riddled garbage dump in "Low-lands", and a world overrun by wars and insurrections in V. William M.

Plater asserts that of all the closed systems Pynchon describes (whether doomed hothouse, vast junkyard or death camp) "the one that subsumes all others is the world, and it is moving in only one direction -- towards death" (3).

In addition to the physical exhaustion of the universe, entropy is also seen to adversely affect the two related areas of intellectual discourse and originality. Pynchon takes his cue here from theorists like Wiener, who believe that in "communication we are always fighting nature's tendency to degrade the organized and to destroy the meaningful" (Wiener, 17). As Mackey points out while summarizing the Second Law of Thermodynamics, "greater disorder is associated with greater homogeneity" (8). Compare Wiener's description of the physical entropic process to Callisto's pessimistic vision in "Entropy":

[Callisto] found entropy ... an adequate metaphor to apply to certain phenomena in his own world. He saw ... in American 'consumerism' ... a similar tendency from the least to the most probable, from differentiation to sameness, from ordered individuality to a kind of chaos. He found himself, in short, restating Gibbs' prediction in social terms, and envisioned a heat-death for his culture in which ideas, like heat-energy, would no longer be transferred, since each point in it would ultimately have the same quantity of energy; and intellectual motion would, accordingly, cease (88-9).

The entropy paradigm becomes an increasingly convoluted metaphor in Pynchon's work, becoming linked with ideas of mass

marketing, corporate culture, and monopolized communications media. As we can see here in Callisto's monologue, entropy is approximated finally with the socially homogenizing effects of postwar American culture.

Pynchon, however, does not stop at this dismal characterization of American cultural life. He illustrates the consequences of social entropy in his fictions, but he also describes characters who seek to reverse and erase the deleterious effects of this entropy. As Mackey explains, "human energy and intelligence are the regenerative potential in an otherwise decaying closed system" (10). Thus we see Meatball Mulligan attempting to restore order to his burnt-out party, Rachel Owlglass endeavouring to extricate Benny Profane from the devouring Street, and Oedipa Maas trying to make sense out of Pierce Inverarity's tangled legacy.

In this regard these characters act like Maxwell's Demon, a hypothetical tiny intelligence who counters entropy and is alleged to actually reside inside John Nefastis's box-like invention in *The Crying of Lot 49*. Scientist James Clerk Maxwell originally proposed the Demon as a form of perpetual energy machine. Both Maxwell's hypothesis and Nefastis's improbable device feature a box with two chambers and a piston located on top. The Demon is placed at a small opening between the two chambers and acts as a "sorter" for molecules located inside the box. Faster molecules are allowed to pass

in a single direction into one chamber, while slower molecules are only allowed to pass one way into the other chamber.

Grant explains that

common sense and the second law of thermodynamics tell us that ... the faster-moving molecules in the box would ... gradually surrender energy to the slower ones until ... the energy of the system would have degraded to the point that it could not do anything useful -- to drive a piston, for example ... Any process that brings about an ordering of the system thus brings about a reduction in entropy, and this is of course what the demon is supposedly capable of doing (82).

Generally speaking then, the Demon's sorting action maintains order and enforces heterogeneity. Both Oedipa Maas and V.'s anti-hero Herbert Stencil seem to be representatives of the Demon in their quests to organize seemingly random and coincidental pieces of information into evidence of grand cabals.

Some critics, however, view the regenerative effort in Pynchon's work in quite a different way. Judith Chambers, for instance, sees the ordering process celebrated by Mackey as inherently harmful. She argues that the entropic decline witnessed in Pynchon's works "can be traced to the shift [from] language informed by paradox and ambiguity ... to language that orders things, that brings meaning under control, the language of mastery and clarity" (1). Chambers' argument looks back to Robert Graves' distinction between

matriarchal and patriarchal language. According to Graves, matriarchal language, the language of poetry and imagination, was once the dominant mode of human thought. Now, however, human thought is dominated by the patriarchal language of abstraction and control. As Chambers sees it, the dominance achieved by patriarchal language is responsible for the widespread deterioration that afflicts Pynchon's imagined worlds. Although Chambers' position would seem directly opposed to that of critics like Tanner and Mackey, it will be part of the purpose of this thesis to show that this opposition is more apparent than real.

In fact, Pynchon himself seems to have no difficulty allowing both theoretical strains to reside within his fiction. While the influence of Norbert Wiener and James Clerk Maxwell is obvious in Pynchon's work, the presence of Graves and his treatise, *The White Goddess*, is both undeniable and explicit. At one point in *V.* we are told that Herbert Stencil

would dream perhaps once a week that [his search] had all been a dream, and that now he'd awakened to discover the pursuit of *V.* was merely a scholarly quest after all, an adventure of the mind, in the tradition of ... *The White Goddess* (61).

In this "poetic grammar of poetic myth" Graves examines the nature of "the capricious and all powerful Threefold Goddess" (24). Her roles are variously mother, bride, and "layer-out"

of man; she is seen correspondingly as woman, girl, and hag. The White Goddess is both a representation of the divine feminine and a threefold archetype of woman. Pynchon's reference to Graves's study immediately associates the enigmatic woman V., who also shifts through a repertoire of identities, with this conjectural Goddess of Graves.

It seems clear, therefore, that both Maxwell's Demon and Graves' White Goddess are present in Pynchon's work. As we have seen, critics like Tanner and Mackey hold that human energy and intelligence have regenerative potential in Pynchon's entropic world-systems. However, the creative forces unleashed by the human imagination also have redemptive potential. This is where the characteristics of Maxwell's Demon begin to converge with those of Graves' White Goddess. Characters identified with either the Demon or the Goddess (or both) combat the tendency in contemporary society towards cultural sterility and sameness.

Moreover, throughout Pynchon's work, a single metaphor embraces the struggle of the Demon and the Goddess against this stifling homogeneity: "The Family" (V., 54). The domain of order and analysis, identified as patriarchal in character and epitomized by Maxwell's Demon, becomes associated with the father. The realm of paradox and ambiguity, perceived as innately feminine and presided over by the White Goddess, becomes identified with the mother. The children resulting

from the union between Demon and Goddess are the questers of Pynchon's fictions, who attempt to save the universe from an intellectual "heat-death."

Chapter One will examine the family metaphor in *V.* Stencil's quest will be shown to accomplish two tasks: in the first place, his desire to locate a woman who may be his mother is also an allegorical pursuit of the White Goddess; in the second, his reconstruction of his father's life through the inherited notebooks becomes an attempt to impose order on an increasingly chaotic and unintelligible world. Both objectives have as their ultimate goal redemption from the entropy of the twentieth century. Chapter Two will look at Pynchon's second novel, *The Crying of Lot 49*. Oedipa Maas searches for a secret organization known as the Tristero, unearthing transcendent meaning in the process and seeking, at the same time, salvation for her entropic California. While Oedipa is not a literal mother, I will show that during her quest she becomes transformed into a metaphorical mother. In fact, I will demonstrate that the novella is populated by an entire metaphorical family, consisting of mother, father and child. Unlike *V.* where the representatives of the Demon and the Goddess are separate from the novel's protagonist, I will demonstrate that Oedipa herself embodies both of these forces. Finally, in Chapter Three I shall demonstrate how Pynchon's fourth novel, *Vineland*, published twenty-four years after *The*

Crying of Lot 49, remains consistent in its use of the familial metaphor. The only change will be shown to be a growing optimism in the characters' ability to combat entropy, which distinguishes this later work from Pynchon's early efforts.

In the end, I hope to prove that familial structures in Pynchon's writings have very definite reasons to exist. Families will be shown to be the means by which the entropic decline of Pynchon's imagined worlds may be countered.

CHAPTER I

"A GENERATION WHICH STILL BELIEVED IN THE FAMILY": STENCIL'S QUEST AND THE FAMILY METAPHOR IN V.

In *The Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution* (1959), C.P. Snow advanced his now famous thesis that in the twentieth century science and literature have become separated by a significant cultural breach and that communication is difficult, if not impossible, between the two. It is interesting to keep this notion in mind when contemplating Thomas Pynchon's first novel, *V*. In fact, Snow's hypothesis goes a long way toward explaining the recurring oppositions between father figures and mother figures that characterize the novel. They are the natural outgrowths of the science/art dichotomy of the Snowian argument.

In Pynchon's earliest writings we find intimations of this duality that will become central to his later works. In the short story "Entropy" Pynchon first introduced us to his vision of a wound-down universe -- portrayed as a burnt-out party -- and suggested that the situation could be remedied through the application of human intelligence to re-order the growing chaos. In "Low-lands", however, the solution to the sterility and redundancy of modern life, epitomized by Dennis

Flange's loveless marriage and metaphorically represented as a vast garbage dump, seems to lie in Flange's renunciation of his unimaginative existence and his subsequent escape into myth symbolized by his discovery of a diminutive nymph under the dump. Both stories describe a redemption or respite from the entropic deterioration that threatens to engulf and overwhelm the central characters. In the first instance the entropy of Pynchon's imperfect world is countered by analysis and order, with host Meatball Mulligan becoming like Maxwell's Demon. In the second case, protagonist Flange escapes his predicament only after descending into an underground labyrinth of tunnels where he meets nymph Nerissa and receives a revelation or inspiration.

In both short stories the main characters achieve a similar victory over their exhausted and declining surroundings but the means employed are in direct opposition. On the one hand, Mulligan's method of ordering his environment (analogous to Snow's scientific culture) has been deemed an inherently masculine or patriarchal function by some commentators². On the other hand Flange experiences a descent or regression into the realm of myth (i.e. Snow's artistic culture) that characterized the pre-industrial world and that Robert Graves has argued is an innately feminine or

²Notably Judith Chambers in *Thomas Pynchon*, p. 42.

matriarchal phenomenon -- hence the encounter with Nerissa, the White Goddess incarnate. In *V.* Pynchon further refines these categorizations, causing Mulligan's ordering method to become the entropy-combatting means associated with the father, while Flange's return to myth is similarly linked to the mother.

With this in mind, much of the confusion normally generated by the novel can be dispelled. *V.* chronicles the search by Herbert Stencil for a mysterious woman known only by the initial "V." When the novel first appeared in 1963 it was greeted on the one hand by general puzzlement and on the other by critical derision. Edward Mendelson, for instance, claimed that *V.* was only an "overgrown elaboration of a simple idea", and Robert Sklar, perhaps even more unkindly, went on record that "*V.* is like a riddle that, once correctly answered, never taxes the mind again" (Tanner, *Thomas Pynchon*, 40). Even those critics most enthusiastic about the new novel at the time, such as Tony Tanner, viewed *V.* as simply an extended fable about cultural entropy -- a world with "everything running down" (*City of Words*, 141). Several years would pass before the true complexity of the novel would be recognized.

It is no wonder then that first-time readers of this novel are often understandably mystified as to the nature of Stencil's quest. While it seems feasible that *V.* might be the adventurer's mother, Stencil right away brands the idea

"ridiculous" (54). Stencil, in fact, refuses to speculate at all as to why he hunts V., offering "no other reason than that V. was there to track down" (55). Even as the end of the novel approaches the adventurer seems to be as puzzled as we are regarding the manifest rationale for his quest. When Benny Profane questions him about his proposed trip to Malta, for example, Stencil remains characteristically vague:

"You are expecting to find this chick in Malta?" Profane said. "Or how your father died? Or something? Wha."

"How does Stencil know," Stencil yelled. "How does he know what he'll do once he finds her? They're all stupid questions" (387).

Profane's question is quite legitimate, for Stencil's quest does seem one part search for a mother and one part attempt to understand the father. Yet Profane's "or something" is equally perceptive, as the adventurer's investigations also appear to have an unvoiced, unacknowledged or unconscious dimension to them. As readers we are confronted by a traditional quest narrative in which the final goal, V., persists till the end as only an ill-defined, poorly understood concept. Stencil himself seems to consciously value the V.-quest solely for the reason that it has moved him from "inertness to ... activity" (55), substituting his previous state of sloth for one of wakefulness. As Stencil cannot conceive of a resolution to his hunt the search can easily be regarded as being simply as manifestation of the

absurd³. Indeed, there has been no lack of critics who have viewed Stencil's paranoid vision in essentially this way, speculating that the adventurer represents some sort of comedic foil to V.'s impersonation of decline and destruction. However, in the following pages I will endeavour to expose a latent subtext in which the hunt for V. takes on a much greater significance: indeed, Stencil's search represents modern man's desire to discover origins and realize a cultural continuity with his nineteenth century antecedents while at the same time reflecting the difficulty of accomplishing this in a mechanistic era more given to discontinuity than tradition.

It is in this context that V. can be envisioned, ultimately, as a novel about the twentieth century itself. While the novel's main action takes place in the mid 1950s, repeated flashbacks and recreations take us from 1898 through to the final days of the Second World War. Stencil, born in 1901 and therefore christened the "century's child" (52) by the narrator, is the embodiment of twentieth century man, caught between the Victorian sensibilities of his late father Sydney and the postwar ennui of the Beat Generation. At one point the narrator reports that Stencil himself insists he is

³Certainly this categorization is not discouraged by Pynchon. Stencil's quest begins "at a café in Oran" (54), associating the adventurer at once with Albert Camus and the twin disciplines of existentialism and absurdism.

"the century's man" (226). Simultaneously, Stencil is also representative of the artist, with his propensity for tale telling and his wild dreaming imagination. Like Robert Graves, the adventurer attempts to track the course of the White Goddesses across history, but in Stencil's fragmented postmodern world the Goddess has been reduced to the lunatic machine woman V., bent only upon overthrow and destruction. In this way Stencil's quest can be perceived as a desire to redeem recent history, a longing to comprehend the incomprehensible "darkened world" (26) of the twentieth century. To accomplish this task, Stencil must symbolically reunite the cultural family, reestablishing the lost connections between himself, the father who is patron of the sciences devoted to "mastery" (Chambers, 1) or "Analysis" (*Gravity's Rainbow*, 722)⁴ sciences (i.e. politics and history) and the mother, mistress of those arts characterized by "paradox and ambiguity" (Chambers, 1) (i.e. myth and literature).

Hence in its simplest form, Stencil's quest is characterized by the triangular (or V-shaped) relationship that exists between three of the novel's principle characters: Stencil himself, his spy father Sydney, and the capricious

⁴Please see p. 51 of this thesis for the complete passage from *Gravity's Rainbow*. "Analysis" is equated with the scientific method and metaphysics, and ultimately to the ordering process.

being known as V. The insinuation arises early on that V. may well be the quester's mother. When we are first introduced to Stencil and his search the adventurer intentionally calls this possibility to our attention -- he remarks "You'll ask next if he believes her to be his mother" (54). While Stencil immediately dismisses this notion, the intimation nevertheless remains. Certainly the whole matter of Stencil's missing mother constitutes a curious omission within the text. Why, for instance, does that narrator not recognize the inherent contradiction when he tells us that Stencil had been "raised motherless" with "no facts on the mother's disappearance" (52) but then goes on to assert that Stencil was surrounded by "a generation which still believed in The Family" (54)? The fact that Sydney seems to have met V. in Florence at the turn of the century (1899 -- within two years of Stencil's birth) in the persona of Victoria Wren can only heighten our suspicions. Regardless of the ambiguity surrounding this issue, it seems entirely reasonable to view V. as Stencil's mother at least on a symbolic plane. In this case the triangular relationship that I have previously mentioned as characterizing the quest takes the form of a family: in Herbert, Sydney and V. we have child, father and mother.

In V. Pynchon employs "The Family" (54) as the great overarching metaphor that encompasses and subsumes many of the novel's different themes, language and entropy being the two

more obvious and (as we shall soon see) intertwined examples. Indeed, critics such as Richard Patteson have previously observed that within *V.* "the issue of parentage operates on important thematic and narrative levels" (28). Certainly it cannot be denied that Stencil's search is immediately concerned with his own parentage. The adventurer can be conceived as the point of intersection where the lives of his father Sydney and plausible mother *V.* converge, causing his quest to take on a two-pronged aspect. In the first place Stencil's quest is explicitly stated to be "a legacy from his father" (155). Here Stencil carefully attempts to reconstruct the past through his father's journals. In this instance he plays the role of orderer, a being analogous to Maxwell's Demon, who through intellectual effort hopes to deliver history from its entropic predicament. In the second place Stencil's quest is also a search for a woman who could be his mother. Here Stencil searches for an individual who may have succumbed to the perils of the century before he even began his hunt, for the single alleged reason that it rescues him from a state of "half-consciousness" (55). In this case he approximates Grave's poet, a person who seeks the matriarchal White Goddess for the imaginative inspiration needed to counter an increasingly unimaginative world. Hence we are left with the following dichotomy in the novel: on the one hand there is the language of order and analysis associated

with the father -- patriarchal language or the "ominous logic" (449) that informs Stencil's horrified revelation at the end of the novel; on the other we have the language of poetry and ambiguity associated with the mother -- matriarchal language or the "ministry of myth" (450) that governs V.'s mystical realm. This dichotomy is indicative of that same cultural divide that ails Western society mentioned by C.P. Snow. In V. twentieth century man suffers from a harmful form of cultural schizophrenia:

If he is going into management, he writes. If he is an engineer or architect why he paints or sculpts. He will straddle the line, aware up to the point of knowing he is getting the worst of both worlds ... He will learn how to be a twinned man and will go on at the game, straddling until he splits up the crotch and in half from the prolonged tension, and then will be destroyed (58)⁵.

Both Stencil's investigations into his father's life and his simultaneous search for his mother's existence therefore become a reintegrating quest, an attempt to quash this

⁵This symmetry is again recognized in the text when Fausto Maijstral notes the appearance in the twentieth century of "a new sort of being, a dual man, aimed two ways at once" (309). Fausto refers here to the Maltese people, caught between their own culture and the more patriarchal British, but the Maltese might as well stand for the European experience, for as Fausto acknowledges "we are western men" (451). One half of this duality recognizes "love, fear, motherhood" (309), while the other half is said to handle "intellectual states of mind" (309). Fausto believes this division to be unhealthy: "What monsters shall rise in our wake" (309) he asks.

division and reestablish continuity in a world that has neither, but desperately needs both. As Molly Hite observes, Pynchon's "characters look for hidden structures in their experience that will reveal how events are connected, how everything adds up, what it all means" (*Ideas of Order*, 4). *V.* can be seen as a novel attempting to bridge the rift between the two cultures of Western civilization, hoping to heal the fragmented quality of postmodern society.

This dilemma of division manifests itself in the novel as the exhausted and deteriorating world of Stencil's investigations -- an indication, in other words, of a universe overcome by entropy. Pynchon's early presentation of entropy in terms of a chaotic and deteriorating party reappears in the revels at the Sailor's Grave in Norfolk, the New Year's party onboard the *Susanna Squaducci*, drinking bouts at Scheissvogel's Biergarten und Rathskellar in Florence and Boeblich's bierhalle in Cairo, Foppl's "seige party" and the Whole Sick Crew's maddening bashes⁶. The garbage dump of "Low-lands" remains as well, and the plot of the novel weaves through a sequence of parties and devastated landscapes. Tony Tanner has observed that in *V.* "every situation reveals some

⁶Pynchon makes this connection between parties and the entropy principle more explicit than ever in *V.* During one of the Whole Sick Crew's festivities we hear how "the party ... unwind like a clock's mainspring ... seeking ... some equilibrium" (52). As the party unwinds focus is lost, reaching an equilibrium of deadening homogeneity.

new aspect of decay or decline, some move further into chaos or nearer death" ("City", 157). Pynchon relies heavily on the imagery of his modernist predecessors to accomplish this portrayal. Eliot's waste land is only thinly concealed throughout the novel, taking on a profusion of different forms. We hear, for instance, of Captain Hugh Godolphin and his voyage to the "entirely lifeless and empty" Antarctic, which he calls "a dream of annihilation" (206). Later Kurt Mondaugen describes his experiences on the edge of the Kalahari, "that vast death" (229). In Cairo the Arab Gebrail observes how "the desert creeps in" and that "soon only the desert" will exist (82). Surely these locales are all part of the "dead land" or "cactus land" of Eliot's stark modernist vision in "The Hollow Men". Egypt especially epitomizes the entropic decline experienced in V. It is the land of the dead, as the presence of Egyptologist Hugh Bongo-Shaftsbury indicates, becoming in essence a physical analogue to the "death's dream kingdom" of "The Hollow Men". Impending doom hangs over the characters that inhabit this section: secret agent Porpentine, "dead skin peeling off [his] burned face in white rags" (83), destined to die in Egypt, is metaphorically transformed into a mummy or one of the walking dead; Hanne the German barmaid, meanwhile, believes at one point that the expatriate customers at Boeblich's bierhalle in Cairo are "beginning to show the blotches of disease" (90). In the

background of this section is the Fashoda crisis, threatening to spark the killing fields of World War I sixteen years prematurely.

A more contemporaneous waste land is encountered in the form of the alligator-infested sewers of New York City. Profane finds employment with the Alligator Patrol, a motley collection of bums paid to eliminate the subterranean alligators that live off the rats and raw sewage. During this period Profane learns that these sewers were prophesied to be the spawning grounds for "the new rat-order" (226) predicted "to take over after New York died" (117). The author of this revelation, Father Fairing, took to the sewers in the 1930s to convert the rats and subsequently vanished. Profane later stumbles upon "Fairing's Parish", an area of enlarged sewer pipes shaped "like the nave of a church" whose contents glow with phosphorescent light (122). Profane's discovery represents one of the more caustic observations of the novel: in contemporary America, tradition, such as institutional religion, has been flushed down the drain along with all the sewers' other contents, among them "pornographic pictures, coffee grounds, contraceptives used and unused, shit" (122)⁷. Profane, momentarily awed by the presence of the sacred,

⁷Could this be a jab at Eliot's conversion to Anglo-Catholicism in the 1930s and the subsequent religious poetry he offered as an alternative to his earlier portrayal of the "waste land" of the twentieth century?

regains his composure in time to blast a cornered alligator.

Beyond the literal waste lands of icefield, desert or sewer, the entropic degradation of society is evident in the subtle presence of the Great Depression that lingers as a backdrop to the novel's many settings. Prior to Father Fairing's disappearance sometime before 1934 the priest foresaw New York becoming "a city of starved corpses, covering the sidewalks and the grass of the parks, lying belly up in the fountains, hanging wrynecked from the streetlamps" (118). While Fairing's nightmare vision fails to prove literally true, the Depression never does seem to leave the city for some of its inhabitants. At the Space/Time Employment Agency Profane notices "a family who might have stepped through time's hanging arras directly out of the Great Depression" (215). The members of the Alligator Patrol, meanwhile, seem like the transient workers depicted in John Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men* (1937): they are "mostly bums", with "one beggar", several "nomads from the end of bean-picking season" and a few "wanderers" (112-3). Profane, who is himself a drifter, is a cultural relic from the Depression. He feels he is living in "some private depression days" when he dons a borrowed George Raft suit, "circa mid-'30's" (148). Earlier Profane sings "a song of the Great Depression ... they were singing ... in 1932" (141) and later claims to have a "great temporal homesickness" for the '30's (148). Mondaugen flees

"depression-time in Munich" for the South-West Protectorate (230). There he dreams of the Germany he left behind (243):

Depression hung in the gray strata of the clouds, looked at you out of the faces waiting in bread queues and dehumanized by the bitter cold. Depression stalked the Liebigstrasse, where Mondaugen had an attic room in a mansarde: a figure with an old woman's face, bent against the wind off the Isar and wrapped tightly in a frayed black coat; who might, like some angel of death, mark in pink spittle the doorsteps of those who'd starve tomorrow.

For Mondaugen depression-time Weimar inspires harsh images of cold, dehumanization, and death. Economic depression metaphorically represents a run-down system, its energy -- mental, spiritual, even physical -- depleted, its vitality all but expended.

Indeed, the world in *V.* is moving towards condition absolute zero, the final and complete dominance of the waste land over the realm of the living. Apocalypse is the ultimate conclusion to the devitalising malaise inflicting the twentieth century. The earliest suggestion of impending doom in the novel comes during the 1898 Egyptian sequence. During a drunken conversation with a fig-hawker who believes in "the Last Day", Gebrail is told of "a place called Fashoda" where the English and French "will fight a great battle ... which will spread in all directions to engulf the world" (85). This prophecy comes true, albeit in modified form, with the eruption in 1914 of the First World War. Later, in 1922

Africa we witness Foppl's wild siege party which obviously echoes Edgar Allan Poe's short story "Masque of the Red Death", a tale of the end of the world where in the final sentence we are told "Darkness and Decay ... held illimitable dominion over all" (102). At the end of the Egyptian chapter we are left with another and more final prefigurement of the end of things. When Bongo-Shaftsbury shoots Porpentine at the opera we are told "the flames are colored a brighter orange than the sun" (94) -- the description mirroring the language used by Oppenheimer to describe the A-bomb test in the New Mexico desert decades later. The threat of nuclear devastation continues into the contemporary portions of the novel, as evidenced by Gouverneur ("Roony") Winsome's bizarre dream to produce a new version of Tchaikovsky's 1812 Overture using as a substitute for the cannon finale an H-bomb dropped on Moscow (124). Chronologically, *V.* ends with the mounting Suez crisis of 1956, in Egypt fittingly where the novel also chronologically begins with the Fashoda crisis of 1898. As one British Commando on Malta comments, the "world's going to hell" (434). The fact that apocalypse in the novel appears not as a grand disaster but instead as a series of recurring crises suggests that the world of *V.* is ending not in a bang but a whimper. The final contemporary scene, appropriately, has Profane running downed a ruined street and hurtling into "absolute night" (455).

In the South-West Protectorate we first glimpse another phenomenon associated with the growing darkness of the twentieth century: holocaust. Here we encounter Lieutenant Weissmann, a German army officer who wields the name "Hitler" as easily as if it were the title of "an avant-garde play" (242). In the same section we also hear of General Lothar von Trotha's *Vernichtungs Befehl*, in which the colonial master of Deutschesüdwestafrika ordered in 1904 the German Army "to exterminate systematically every Herero man, woman and child," resulting in the deaths of 60,000 people (245). After relaying this information, the narrator sarcastically notes: "This is only 1 per cent of six million, but still pretty good" (245). Manikin SHROUD compares Auschwitz to an automobile junkpile with its "thousands of Jewish corpses, stacked up like those poor car-bodies" (295). SHROUD suggests here that the systematic and large-scale murder which occurred during the Second World War has dehumanized people, reducing them to the "junk" found in trash heaps. The manikin makes clear that this process did not end with the Allied victory in 1945: in the contrary, it has only just "started" (295).

In fact, this metamorphosis of the animate into the inanimate can be found with increasingly regularity as the novel runs its course. As Tanner notes, "the proliferation of inert things is another way of hastening the entropic process" (*City of Words*, 158). During the summer of 1956 we are told

that "the world started to run more and more afoul of the inanimate" (290). Pynchon then proceeds to give us an almanac-like listing of disasters, enumerating incidents where victims are swept into "the kingdom of death" (290). Profane witnesses a variation of this process in a phenomena he calls "love for an object" (23): human sentiment being misplaced onto inanimate objects as in the case of Da Conho's fierce obsession for his machine gun (22) and Rachel's unnatural relationship with her MG (29). These occurrences can all be considered part of a program of objectification that has V. at its centre -- indeed, it is ultimately the manifestation of the cabal that Stencil seeks to expose.

This proliferation of the inanimate affects the people in V. as well. We see several characters who are reduced, metaphorically or otherwise, to robots. For exiled pedophile Maxwell Rowley-Bugge, for instance, 1898 Egypt becomes a highly objectified tourist world whose inhabitants are regulated to the status of "automata" (70). He notably includes himself in that category. In the same chapter Hugh Bongo-Shaftsbury reveals that he is literally "an electro-mechanical doll" (80). Later we hear how a German engineer designs several "automata" (396) to play various roles for the 1913 Parisian opera *L'Enlèvement des Vierges Chinoises* ('Rape of the Chinese Virgins'). In 1956 Fergus Mixolydian implants electrodes in his forearm in order to switch off his TV when

he falls asleep and "thus became an extension of the TV set" (56). At Anthroresearch Associates, home of experimental and inanimate manikins SHROUD and SHOCK, SHROUD tells Profane, "Me and SHOCK are what you and everybody will be someday" (286). Indeed, Profane seems well on his way to joining the inanimate. As David Seed observes, "Profane deliberately tries to minimize his own humanity and reduce himself to an amoeba-like passivity" (73). Profane's alias, interestingly, is Sfacimento -- "in Italian it meant destruction or decay" (140) -- suggesting that Profane's passivity is leading him toward death.

Certainly the most consequential causalities of the entropic process in *V.* are ideas, all of which are affected in a similar fashion to the people who conceive them. As the novel progresses we witness ideologies like D'Annunzio's romantic irredentism give way to the virulent National Socialism of transvestite schemer Lieutenant Weissmann; later we see Father Fairing's Roman Catholicism eroded by the Marxist communism championed by sewer rat Ignatius. At the heart of novel lies the Whole Sick Crew, a community of intellectuals who are said to suffer from a general "lethargy" (56). Their art is characterized as "removed from reality, Romanticism in its furthest decadence; being only an exhausted impersonation of poverty, rebellion and artistic 'soul'" (56). Their philosophies are likewise bankrupt, as evidenced by

painter Slab's Catatonic Expressionism or novelist Mafia Winsome's racist and sexist literary Theory. At the same time, conversations among the Crew "had become little more than proper nouns, literary allusions, critical or philosophical terms linked in certain ways" (297). Tanner points out that "language has suffered an inevitable decline in the mouths of these stencilized and objectified figures" (*City of Words*, 160). Rachel Owlglass, to cite one example, is said to speak "nothing but MG-words, inanimate words" (27). All of the phenomena we have so far explored in *V.* -- from wastelands, economic depression, apocalypse and holocaust through to the ongoing objectification of humanity -- add up to deliver a shrewd commentary on the state of twentieth century society. The novel's chief focus is firmly fixed on the artistic and intellectual life of '50's America, and these disparate manifestations of entropy are ultimately metaphors that reflect this fact. As Don Hausdorff remarks, "the symbolism provides an ingenious perspective on a culturally depleted landscape" (268). Ihab Hassan, in his postmodernist manifesto *The Dismemberment of Orpheus*, observes that many people feel the postmodern era is one "of artistic duress or diminishment, of fracture or failure in modern fiction" (253), and certainly in his portrayal of the Crew Pynchon seems to agree. Judith Chambers, meanwhile, shares Hausdorff's perspective, believing that the degraded language employed by

the Crew is inexorably linked to the entropic events portrayed in the novel. She claims that

language becomes both manipulative and fallow, as does also the culture that uses it. The demise of this poetic faculty is specifically related to oppression, to war, and to the scientific exploration that led to the discovery, assembly, and use of the atomic bomb and the development of thermonuclear weaponry (47).

The decline of language is in fact tied to the increasing brutality and barbarity of ideas, ushering humanity towards the terminal scrapheap of pointless wars or even nuclear Armageddon⁸. The Whole Sick Crew, along with postwar American society as a whole, completely fails to escape this deadly trend. Seed claims that the only artistic options open to the Crew "are repetition or permutations of the already familiar, both of which will carry them nearer towards ultimate inertia" (76). Soul-dentist Eigenvalue makes the ultimate consequences of this intellectual malaise even more clear: "this sort of arranging and rearranging was Decadence, but the exhaustion of all possible permutations and combinations was death" (298). If the deteriorating world of V. is to be saved from this fate, the intellectual life of the Whole Sick Crew, and

⁸Pynchon's treatment of the connection between language and ideas obviously owes much to Orwell's thesis in 1984: without the presence of words denoting abstract notions (such as freedom, conspicuously absent in the state-sponsored Newspeak) it is practically impossible to think about them.

America by extension, will have to be reinvigorated by the infusion of creative -- or shall we say rather *animate* -- ideologies.

Stencil's quest, as previously suggested, is an attempt to accomplish just that. Earlier I delineated "the ultimate shape of his V-structure" (226), proposing that the adventurer's search has two separate aspects, a patriarchal dimension and a matriarchal dimension. Certainly paternity seems to play a large role in *V*. Stencil specifically notes, for instance, that his quest is "a legacy from his father" (155). The novel is also populated by a number of what I shall call filial pairs. Beyond the obvious example of Sydney and Herbert Stencil, there is Hugh and Evan Godolphin, and the father-daughter duo of Fausto and Paola Maijstral. The suggestively named characters *Pappy* Hod and *Father* Fairing further hint at a patriarchal dimension. Then there are those characters who only act like a father, who take on the role of *patriarch*, with the German colonial farmer Foppl being the obvious example. We learn Foppl "felt like the father colonial policy wanted you to be when it spoke of Väterliche Züchtigung; fatherly chastisement" (267). As he beats an unfortunate African, the maniacal German commands his victim to "love me as your parent" (240). Foppl becomes even more entrenched in a fatherly role as the plot of "Mondaugen's Story" progresses. Kurt Mondaugen, who becomes "the sad

imitation of a strayed son" (256) to a befuddled Hugh Godolphin, subsequently begins to have delusions himself, suffering "an increasing inability to distinguish Godolphin from Foppl" (255). Either in metaphor or in consanguinity, the most predominate relationship between characters in the novel tends to be the paternal.

These relationships, however prevalent, tend to be discontinuous, interrupted, or extinct. For instance, we frequently witness in V. the replacement of the father by the son, a progression likened to the "apostolic succession" (63) of spies envisioned by Stencil⁹. Herbert and Sydney Stencil's relationship is most indicative of this type, as Sydney has been dead for 36 of Herbert's 54 years (exactly two thirds of Stencil's life). Meanwhile, both Paola and Evan become estranged from their fathers. While in Paola's case her marriage to Pappy Hod merely interrupts the relationship she had enjoyed with Fausto due to the consequences of geography, in Evan's case he absents himself purposively from his father's presence because of differences in ideologies, "to

⁹This pattern of filial succession becomes an ubiquitous occurrence in V., one in which we see the family names introduced to us in the historical chapters recur with uncanny regularity in the contemporary narrative. Incredibly, the son of villain Bongo-Shaftsbury appears in the '50's New York as one of Stencil's contacts. His other contacts, acquainted to him through his father's journals, are said to be a "population coming more and more to comprise sons and friends of the originals" (55).

get away from the Establishment" (156). In all three of these instances, however, the child seeks to return to the father in some manner. As Stencil retraces his father's footsteps he is in effect paying homage to a father who has long been lost to him. Paola, in similar fashion, returns to Malta to visit Fausto late in the novel. Finally, Evan joins his father in nineteenth century Florence after years of living apart. So while these paternal relationships can be characterized as discontinuous, a secondary dynamic of reconciliation is also at work: these prodigal sons and daughters are attempting to restore their interrupted relationships.

The father figure in *V.* is consistently seen as an *orderer*: he defines, specifies, circumscribes. In this role the father is a quantifier (not a qualifier) and his actions resemble the scientific method more than anything else. Anne Mangel has remarked that "of the many scientific concepts which occur in Pynchon's fictions, three intrude most dramatically: thermodynamics and Maxwell's Demon, entropy, and information theory" (87). These three scientific notions constitute the working dynamics for Pynchon's father figures -- the ordering activities of these characters reduce the intellectual chaos of their declining world-system. In effect, they become metaphorical Maxwell's Demons in their ability to uncorrupt ideas and purify information. While the Demon is never directly mentioned in *V.* (unlike in *The Crying*

of Lot 49), its presence clearly permeates the text. Foppl, host of the debauched revelry within his palatial estate while insurrection rages outside, is actually called "the siege party's demon" (255). This description immediately identifies him with Meatball Mulligan, the protagonist of "Entropy" who seeks to restore order to the chaos of his dying party. Foppl's association with the molecule-sorting Maxwell's Demon grows as he reminisces about the period after the Hottentot genocide: when the survivors of von Trotha's extermination order arrived at the concentration camp, Foppl would "go down to the staging area and assist in the sorting-out" (267). The other father figures in *V.* act in similar, if more abstract, ways. Instead of sorting party-goers or concentration camp inmates, they organize ideas. British Foreign Office man Sydney Stencil, for instance, is employed to make sense of "Situations", his term for political emergencies where events spin out of control. Sydney comes up with "a neat theory" (189) that allows him to comprehend these potentially damaging predicaments and ultimately to suppress them. So in 1899 when he appears in Florence during the impossible imbroglio involving the Venezuelans and Vheissu, "the only consolation he drew from the present chaos was that his theory managed to explain it" (189-90). Bongo-Shaftsbury also follows this pattern, as he is a spy who collects information and sorts truths from untruths. Captain Hugh Godolphin, meanwhile, is

an explorer, a man who was in charge of the Vheissu "surveying expedition" (190) and who later charts the Antarctic, fitting the world into the neat squares inscribed by the lines of latitude and longitude. On Malta, Fausto Maijstral's Generation of '37 desire to place "all major areas of human struggle" under their scrutiny (306), listing only those disciplines -- politics, engineering, religion -- which organize or institutionalize. Lieutenant Weissmann's political manoeuvrings also put him into this category. As a proto-Nazi sympathizer he attempts to intrigue on Hitler's behalf while in Africa. When Mondaugen is confronted by Weissmann's clandestine activities, he quips to the lieutenant, "Organizing, you'd call it?" (243). In the final analysis, all of the activities performed by fathers in V. centre on three basic pursuits: organizing, categorizing or demarcating. The ultimate goal of these activities is to delete or reverse the effects of entropy. The entropy-combatting role of the father becomes clear in the Paris chapter. While Mélanie l'Heuremaudit's "Papa" sexually abuses her in real life, she dreams of a more amiable father: in the dream "sure fingers move to the center of her back, search, find a small key, which he began to wind" upon which her Papa breathes, "You would have stopped, had I not ..." (402). Here she envisions herself as a wind-up doll with the coiled spring inside her slowly winding down, and her father, who holds the

key to restoring her, manages to catch her just in time. This is the ideal role for all the father figures in the novel. As if to fuel the skepticism of some critics (such as Chambers) concerning the benevolence of the patriarchal role, however, Pynchon offers a variety of fatherly orderers who are both positive and negative figures: fathers like Sydney and Hugh Godolphin are contrasted by characters like Foppl and "Papa."

I have already mentioned Fausto's "major areas of the human struggle", but the two realms of human endeavour most completely governed by the father in *V.* are politics and history. The repeated motif witnessed in the novel of the return of the prodigal son can be translated into metaphorical terms: it is an attempt at conciliation with the political systems and historical interpretations of the father. Certainly the link between fathers and politics is one of the more obvious connections in the novel. Chambers claims that patriarchal language is partially given to mastery and control, and hence politics, particularly bureaucracy, would seem the natural domain of the father.

Many of the father figures in *V.* are engaged in activities that can be deemed political. Sydney Stencil is a Foreign Office man, a cross between a bureaucrat and a spy. Lieutenant Weissmann, meanwhile, is engaged in the politics of Adolf Hitler's nascent German Workers' Party. Captain Hugh Godolphin, a member of what son Evan calls the "Establishment"

(156) becomes caught in a web of espionage between the British and Italian governments in Florence. Then there is Fausto's father on Malta, who acts as a double agent during the 1919 public unrest. Even "Father" Fairing operates as a spy during this episode. Government, bureaucracy and espionage are all means to obtain mastery over the world, the inherent sorting and ordering activities resembling the intellectual effort expended by Maxwell's Demon to decrease entropy. During his quest Herbert Stencil imitates the spy activities of these men. Tanner has pointed out that "Stencil is the copy of his father" (*City of Words*, 163). Another character goes so far as to describe the adventurer in terms of a spy or secret agent, "quite mysterious and Dashiell Hammettlike" (127). Herbert begins his quest on the Spanish island of Mallorca, where the Margravine di Chiave Lowenstein suspects the Englishman is engaged in espionage. Stencil denies the accusation, responding,

Shall he tell you: he works for no Whitehall, none conceivable unless, ha, ha, the network of white halls in his own brain: these featureless corridors he keeps swept and correct for the occasional visiting agent (53).

This motif of entering one's own mind appears again near the end of the novel in a nightmare experienced by Stencil's father. Sydney Stencil, sent to investigate disturbances on Malta in 1919, has a repeated dream where he shrinks "to

submicroscopic size" and enters "a brain" which is "perhaps his own" (471). These hallucinations are described as "fever dreams: the kind where one is given an impossibly complex problem to solve, and keeps chasing deep ends, following random promises, frustrated at every turn" (471). What this passage does not explicitly recognize is that Sydney has dreamt that he actually *becomes* Maxwell's Demon. In this incarnation of the Demon, however, the father sorts not gaseous molecules but actual ideas and information within the human mind. Unfortunately, this ordering process seems frustrated and ineffectual. The political sphere, as well, is an unproductive arena in which to save V.'s deteriorating, entropy-plagued world. Certainly some of the political systems subscribed to by individual father figures, such as Weissmann's National Socialism and the clandestine British Foreign Office, suggest that the political realm is not necessarily benevolent. In fact, these political organizations in the end encourage rather than reverse the entropy endemic to Herbert's world, contributing to the almost total devastation of Europe in World War II, the liquidation of European Jewry, and the tensions of the subsequent Cold War. This lends some credence to Chambers argument that the rise of patriarchal language at the expense of matriarchal language may have exacerbated the growing entropy in V.

The father figure also dominates the concept of

history in the novel. By history I mean the written, scholarly versions of humanity's past, in which history operates according to certain precepts or axioms, as in treatments like *The Education of Henry Adams* or Oswald Spengler's *The Decline of the West*. History in *V.* is not a collection of sequential, random occurrences placed on a linear time line, but rather a phenomenon that can be charted, predicted, perhaps in some ways even controlled. History becomes imbued with meaning. As Thomas H. Schaub observes, "in each of Pynchon's books the search for meaning is a quest for 'history'" (214), and Stencil's pursuit of *V.* -- his "mad time-search" (406) -- is ultimately tied to this historical vision. Just as Stencil is cast implicitly as bureaucrat by the text, he also receives the veiled identity of historian. We are told that Herbert Stencil, "like small children at a certain stage and Henry Adams in the *Education*" (62), refers to himself only in the third person. Stencil then goes on to behave like a historian, much in the manner of Henry Adams, as he analyzes past events in a quest to deduct patterns. Theodore D. Kharpertian claims that Stencil "seeks to 'explain' the surface structure of apparent accident in modern history by *V.*, a totalizing metaphor of its supposed deep structure or 'plot'" (73). Moreover, in Stencil's search for meaning we also see a parallel desire to achieve order, with the adventurer taking on many of the characteristics of

Maxwell's Demon. Molly Hite notes that

in the midst of multiple patterns of connectedness, Stencil feverishly sorts, subordinates, and rejects data like a chronologizing Maxwell's Demon, committed to the proposition that events must be strung on that notorious narrative thread if they are to have any order at all. His vision of history is teleological: either incidents add up to something or they are wholly meaningless" (*Ideas*, 50).

In fact, Stencil's tendency to view history as cabal means that he is answering Spengler's opening question in *The Decline of the West*: "Is there a logic of history?" or, to put it more succinctly, is there "a metaphysical structure of historic humanity?" (13). The adventurer's hypothesis that a vast plot has governed recent history -- "The Big One, the century's master cabal" (226) -- places Stencil in the same category as both Adams and Spengler.

However, the person most closely approximated with these two men, who actually becomes metaphorically identified with them, is father Sydney, whom Herbert is in fact trying to emulate -- Tanner for one has noted that "Stencil is the copy of his father" (*City of Words*, 163). Sydney Stencil is a composite Adams/Spengler character, a model late Victorian commentator who outlives the nineteenth century long enough to glimpse the character of the twentieth. There are several similarities between Sydney and the two historians that seem somewhat more than coincidental. The elder Stencil and Adams are almost completely contemporaneous, with Adams dying in

1918, Sydney a year later. Sydney also shares Spengler's gloomy outlook for Western civilization -- at the end of World War I both Sydney and Spengler fail to see cause for celebration. While Spengler sounds the alarm in *The Decline of the West* concerning the impending collapse of civilization, Sydney recalls Viscount Grey's famous remark "about the lamps going out all over Europe" (458). Furthermore, these scholars seek a "metaphysical structure" of history, a point which Chambers would equate with a culture permeated by patriarchal language, the language of the order. In fact, history in *V.*, like politics, is seen as an exclusive patriarchal domain: near the end of the novel Sydney makes clear that "in political terms, the Father was ... the dynamic figure whose virtú used to be a determinant of history" (472). When Herbert copies his father in this regard he aspires to succeed to his father's historical capacity as a metaphysical historian/orderer, establishing continuity with Sydney's bygone era.

Herbert's self-imposed task to comprehend his father's time is a daunting undertaking due to his postmodern perspective. The world that Stencil inherits is very different from his father's, an age where once the axioms of Adams and Spengler were able to explain the currents of history in mechanistic, almost clockwork, fashion. On one hand Sydney's world saw war as romantic, imperialism as

viable, racism if not moral then certainly excusable, and the universe as Newtonian. Herbert's world, on the other hand, sees armed conflict tainted by the spectre of nuclear annihilation, a Third World recently freed from the yoke of European domination, racism and nationalism condemned by the Nazi death camps, and the universe hopelessly fragmented into infinite perspectives with the widespread acceptance of Einsteinian relativity. Sydney's death in 1919 coincides with the succession of this new world over the old. World War I has demonstrated the romantic fallacy of war. More importantly, 1919 also sees the first aspects of general relativity proven correct (light is bent by intense gravitational fields -- in no way compatible with Newtonian notions of physics)¹⁰. This transition is equated by Sydney to a revolution as important in effect as the liberal revolts of the mid-nineteenth century or the rise of communism: just days before the elder Stencil's death, he reflects that the Father's role in history "has degenerated to the Son, genius of the liberal love-feast which had produced 1848 and lately the overthrow of the Czars" (472). Sydney's death marks more than the demise of the father, but the ascendancy of the "Son"

¹⁰Note the appearance of the Space/Time Employment Agency where Rachel Owlglass works in New York. This is Pynchon's nod to relativity in the novel, as space/time is a frequent item in Einsteinian jargon.

in history¹¹.

Herbert's attempt to experience the time before this revolutionary event is only partially successful. At the end of the novel, the quest does reveal to him that "events seem to be ordered into an ominous logic" (449). What it demonstrates, however, is that the patriarchal ordering system no longer works to combat the increasing entropy manifesting itself everywhere in the twentieth century. The "metaphysical structure of historic humanity" (Spengler, 13) sought by Stencil unfolds as a sinister sequence of genocide: from von Trotha we progress to Foppl, and from there to Weissmann and the draconian machinations of the Third Reich. In this case the totalizing metaphor of V. stands for Vergeltungswaffe Eins and Zwei, prototypes of the intercontinental ballistic missiles that threaten the world with absolute entropy. Deborah L. Madsen concludes that "Stencil's history of V ... does not tell him anything about the future direction of Western culture" (114-5) -- or certainly nothing to inspire hope for the survival of Western civilization. Stencil has actually encountered old Godolphin's "dream of annihilation" (206). The adventurer finally admits as much when he states that he "has never encountered history at all, but something

¹¹Coinciding with this development, by 1922 Mondaugen must admit his "own father had died not so many years ago, somehow involved in the Kiel revolt" (260).

more appalling" (450). In fact, Stencil's pursuit of history is finally characterized as a dead end. While the climax to the quest occurs "in Malta where all history seemed simultaneously present" (481), ironically it is also in Malta where the quest finally collapses -- the adventurer's chance to conciliate with Sydney ends prior to the commencement of Herbert's quest, with the elder Stencil's death and later in 1956 with the apparent end of the V-trail.

Stencil's time-search fails primarily due to the new philosophy that appears after the filial ascendancy is complete. The nineteenth century scientific outlook that produced Maxwell's Demon (and ultimately Pynchon's metaphor) gives way to the particle physics of the twentieth century (and hence a new scientific metaphor). Richard Pearce claims that "Pynchon, his mind imbued with quantum mechanics, develops a narrative strategy consistent with Heisenberg's uncertainty principle" (149). In 1927 Werner Heisenberg proposed that the simultaneous determination of a precise position and velocity of a particle is impossible, as the means used to detect this information has altered those characteristics of the particle. When applied as a metaphor this theory would suggest any objective vision of history is patently impossible. All observations made by the viewer will always be subjective. Paradoxically, Sydney recognizes as much when he writes his Punch article "The Situation as an N-

Dimensional Mishmash" (470). The gist of Sydney's theory is that for any given Situation there are multiple perspectives; in order to achieve a near-objective view of a Situation one must consider as many perspectives (n-dimensions) as possible. His conclusion: "What hope has anyone of understanding a Situation?" (470)¹². Stencil's historical recreations in this regard must be considered to be just *one* version of *how* it may have happened. As Richard Pearce comments, "Pynchon's world is continually uncertain" to the point where "we can never grasp the relationship between past and present" ("Pynchon's Endings", 152). What Stencil has collected, therefore, is nothing but a "grand Gothic pile of inferences" (226) and not an objective account of history at all. As a result Stencil is unable to make any definite conclusions from his historical study.

What we as the reader do witness is the fact that the reprieve from entropy attained by the Maxwell's Demon ordering method is essentially ineffectual. It only creates hothouses, temporary postponements against the inevitable "heat-death" in store for Western civilization. In Pynchon's writings we see a long line of these failures beginning with Callisto's hothouse enclave in "Entropy" which by the end of the story is

¹²Sydney also implies that his Foreign Office role is therefore redundant. I find this information useful to explain Sydney's subsequent demise.

destroyed. Fausto Maijstral describes his room on Malta as "a hothouse" (305), a cocoon for the insular existence he adopts after the War as the world, in his words, is now "physically and spiritually broken" (307). Winsome's Outlandish Records office, which signs on the only genuinely creative artist in the novel (black jazz musician McClintic Sphere), is described as being "full of tropical hothouse growths while the wind streamed bleak and heatsucking past the windows" (148) -- obviously it does too little too late. Finally, Stencil's quest is called "a hothouse" too: "constant temperature, windless, too crowded with particolored sports, unnatural blooms" (448). This admission is one of the first suggestions that the paternal aspect of Stencil's quest is as ineffective as Callisto's bid to stave off entropy.

As the plot develops the paternal ordering system even dons some negative implications. Chambers claims that the patriarchal language employed by this system "brings meaning under control" and is "the language of mastery" (10). These characteristics graphically emerge in the novel in the forms of colonialization and mechanization. Certainly most readers will note the presence of *Heart of Darkness* in V. with the appearance of Vheissu. Later we hear of the Germans' colonial efforts in South-West Africa and the horrible repercussions that result. Foppl was one of the colonizers; he is also the character in the novel most directly connected with Maxwell's

Demon. Foppl becomes blurred in the text with Weissmann and the burgeoning National Socialist movement back in Europe which will later create a military-industrial complex designed to perpetuate death in an orderly, efficient fashion. Blicero (a.k.a. Weissmann) perhaps best summarizes the effect of these parallel processes in *Gravity's Rainbow*. At one point he says to Gottfried:

In Africa, Asia, Amerindia, Oceania, Europe came and established its order of Analysis and Death. What it could not use, it killed or altered. In time the death-colonies grew strong enough to break away. But the impulse to empire, the mission to propagate death, the structure of it, kept on (722).

In effect, the patriarchal ordering method (analysis is its primary tool) ultimately contributes to the twentieth century waste land instead of remedying it.

The attack against patriarchal systems of ordering is intensified in the section entitled "Confessions of Fausto Maijstral". Fausto speaks of "the fiction of continuity ... the fiction of a humanized history endowed with 'reason'" (306). Fausto goes on to proclaim that the gulf between prewar and postwar cultures is both irrefutable and unbridgeable -- "we have now reached an interregnum," he says (307). After Fausto reaches this conclusion even Herbert seems to abandon the precise, scientific ordering method associated with the father. Late in the novel we learn that

"Stencil would rather depend on the imperfect vision of humans for his history ... somehow government reports, bar graphs, mass movements are too treacherous" (388). Herbert further claims that "old Sydney never said anything of use to his son" (386). Stencil's discrediting of his father's usefulness is also a denouncement of the patriarchal monoculture that characterizes the twentieth century. If a solution is to be found to the impending "heat-death" of mid-century cultural life, it will have to be discovered in an intellectual quarter separate from that controlled by the father/Maxwell's Demon. Indeed, the father system is almost completely rejected in *V.* As Sydney notes just prior to his death: "The Father had come and gone" (472).

This is where the second aspect of Stencil's search takes on great importance. Until now I have concentrated on the patriarchal quality of the quest, but there are in fact two opposing elements -- one masculine, one feminine -- inherent to the adventurer's pursuit. Pynchon clearly emphasizes this fact when in Florence a young Victoria Wren sees herself "embodying a feminine principle, acting as complement to all this bursting, explosive male energy" (209). Whereas the entropy-opposing system of the father fails by itself to prevent the world's slow spiral into cultural homogeneity and sterility, the system of the mother now offers potential hope. The decline of Western culture might be

remedied by combining the opposing matriarchal method with the father's technique of order and analysis, what Molly Hite calls "an imposition of the synthesizing intellect" and "the harmonizing imagination" (5). Instead of a sole source of cultural salvation there exists in V. two alternatives. Hite has commented that Pynchon's fictional worlds "evoke a multilayered reality in which multiple means of putting things together manage to coexist without resolving into a single, definitive system of organization" (10). It is in this manner that the maternal dimension to Stencil's quest is paramount if Stencil is to uncover a solution to his dying world's dilemma.

The search for the mother is the most difficult part of Stencil's dichotomous quest. While the presence of the father is explicit and undeniable in the text, the mother lies obscured and easily overlooked. Hers is a presence facing erasure. As I have already noted, Stencil was "raised motherless" with "no facts on the mother's disappearance" (52). Three vague speculations are offered to explain this maternal omission yet each one rings hollow: she either "died in childbirth", "ran off with someone", or "committed suicide" (52). In a similar manner we learn that both Paola's mother and grandmother were killed during the Axis bombing of Malta in World War II, while Fausto's mother dies sometime shortly after. At the same time there is absolutely no mention made of a Mrs. Alastair Wren (V.'s mother) or a Mrs. Hugh

Godolphin, each being a figure whose absence seems significant. Only two solid facts emerge from an overview of motherhood in the novel: either they are dead (which at least concedes their prior existence) or they have been curiously omitted.

This maternal absence is incongruous due to the fact that Stencil's search, although tangentially concerned with his father, is primarily focused on his mother. Moreover, the quest is devoted to uncovering a maternal legacy that has been denied to Stencil, and by extension (as Stencil is a sort of universal man), to twentieth century civilization. This inheritance, as I have suggested, is a second and alternative method of opposing the West's slow slide into cultural darkness. Our first clue as to V.'s true identity comes when we learn that Stencil has dreams where "he'd awakened to discover the pursuit of V. was merely a scholarly quest ... in the tradition of *The White Goddess*" (61). This fact implies, in effect, that the object of Stencil's search is analogous to the quarry of Robert Graves: that is, the White Goddess, embodiment of poetic inspiration and human creativity. In V., she is portrayed as the feminine opposite of the masculine Maxwell's Demon; just as the Demon becomes a metaphor for the patriarchal ordering system, the White Goddess becomes an apt symbol of the synthesizing imagination that may eliminate the epidemic entropy afflicting society. Both Robert Graves and

Herbert Stencil begin their respective quests -- rather coincidentally -- on the Spanish island of Mallorca, which immediately strengthens the association between the two searches. Simultaneously, V. is also implicitly recognized as Stencil's mother (as I have pointed out at the beginning of this chapter), hence creating a hybrid identification for V. of both White Goddess and mother.

Just as V. is described as a "remarkably scattered concept" (389), the White Goddess exists as a similarly scattered presence in the text. She appears in abundant and diverse forms throughout the novel. The White Goddess is revealed preeminently in V. and her multiple aliases, including Victoria Wren, Veronica Manganese and Vera Meroving. Yet she is also expressed in such disparate figures as Veronica the rat, the goddess Venus, and the pubescent Hedwig Vogelsang whose sole "purpose on earth is to tantalize and send raving the race of man" (239). Joseph Fahy concludes that "the varied and strange manifestations of V. are consistent with the behaviour of the Goddess" (9). Perhaps the most obvious suggestion of the White Goddess' presence in V. is found in the depiction of the Maltese goddess Mara (which in the Maltese language means simply "woman".) Mara represents an undamaged version of the White Goddess from when matriarchal language was dominant. The elderly seafarer Mehemet, who seems like he comes from the ancient world,

describes her thus:

Now she never was pictured as a raving beauty. She shows up as a number of different goddesses, minor deities. Disguise is one of her attributes. But one curious thing about those images: jar ornaments, friezes, sculptures, no matter: she's always tall, slim, small-breasted and bellied. No matter what the prevalent fashion in females, she remains constant. In her face is always a slight bow to the nose, a wide spacing of the eyes, which are small. (462)

Compare this description to Graves' own characterization of the White Goddess, which bears an uncanny similarity:

The Goddess is a lovely, slender woman with a hooked nose, deathly pale face, lips red as rowan-berries, startlingly blue eyes and long fair hair; she will suddenly transform herself into a sow, mare, bitch, vixen, she-ass, weasel, serpent, owl, she-wolf, tigress, mermaid or loathsome hag. Her names and titles are innumerable. (24)

Graves' surmised that all feminine divinity has as its origin the White Goddess, which perhaps explains the presence of the several goddesses that populate the novel: there is "Astarte, goddess of sexual love" (456), "Fortune ... an inconstant goddess" (457), and "Venus ... a goddess" (210). This archetypal deity proposed by Graves is foremost a Moon-goddess (386). Significantly, Kurt Mondaugen's surname is composed of the German words *mond* (moon) and *augen* (eyes), suggesting he is an observer of the Moon-goddess, revealed to him as Vera Meroving and also, to a lesser extent, Hedwig, who dances

beside the planet Venus in Foppl's planetarium (239). The appearance of Botticelli's "Birth of Venus" in V., depicting Venus "standing in half of what looked like a scungille shell; fat and blond" (178), points to the presence of the White Goddess as well: Graves claims that

Botticelli's *Birth of Venus* is an exact icon of her cult. Tall, golden-haired, blue-eyed, pale-faced, the Love-goddess arrives in her scallop-shell. (395)

This Venus' genesis in the sea also points to the second great domain of the White Goddess after the moon which is the ocean, whose tides are the point of commonality. Graves describes the aquatic incarnation as such:

The conventional figure of the mermaid -- a beautiful woman with a round mirror, a golden comb and a fish-tail -- expresses 'The Love-goddess rises from the Sea' ... the mirror did ... form part of the sacred furniture of the Mysteries, and probably stood for 'know thyself.' The comb was originally a plectrum for plucking lyre-strings... Her most famous temples were built by the sea-side, so it is easy to understand the symbolic fish-tail. She can be identified with the Moon-goddess Eurynome whose statue at Phigalia in Arcadia was a mermaid carved in wood. (395)

In the novel the woman V. possesses both mirrors and a comb, if not the fish-tail. During her lesbian affair with Mélanie l'Heuremaudit the physical relationship is conducted entirely through the agency of mirrors at V.'s bohemian loft. V. likewise, interestingly, carries with her throughout the novel

"an ivory comb" (167) attained at a Cairo bazaar during the first historical recreation.

We also see the presence of the White Goddess echoed in many of the feminine figures that can be found throughout the novel. Douglas A. Mackey has noted that various characters "embody different archetypal feminine aspects" (13). In the characters of Rachel Owlglass, Fina Mendoza and Esther Harvitz particularly we see represented a wide range of feminine experience that corresponds with attributes of the White Goddess. Graves originally conceived the White Goddess as a tripartite entity, calling her the "Threefold Goddess" (24) or "Triple Muse" (383). He imagined her as possessing three distinct societal roles or incarnations: as mother of man she is seen as woman, as bride to man she is the young girl, and finally as mankind's "layer-out" (to use Graves' term) she is the death-dealing hag. The Rachel-Fina-Esther trinity coincides amicably to this scheme. Rachel Owlglass represents, of course, the divine mother. Interestingly, Graves identifies one of the White Goddess' alias as "Blodeuwedd the Owl, lamp-eyed and hooting dismally" (448). Described as "little" but "voluptuous" (22), Rachel tries to mother both her roommate Esther and acquaintance Profane, who both feel her "invisible, umbilical tug" (29). Josefina Mendoza, meanwhile, is what Mackey labels "the holy virgin" (13) but which I prefer to call sexualized woman. She

attempts to seduce Profane (145) and later willingly allows herself to be gangbanged by the Playboys, a group of wayward street youths (151). This archetype that Fina exemplifies is also sometimes paradoxically conceived as the whore. Esther Harvitz, finally, is the hag, a version of woman as destructress as opposed to creatress. We last see her leaving for Battista's Cuba to seek an abortion for her unwanted pregnancy (363). However, the White Goddess' presence in *V.* is not just limited to these three characters and her symbolic embodiment as *V.*, but rather extends to countless other characters. The maternal archetype can be observed in both Profane's nameless mother who in her absence has left him food at her empty apartment (379) to Fausto's wife Elena who worries about Paola's future; the whore appears first as Victoria Wren, followed by sexual gymnast Mafia Winsome, teen temptress Hedwig Vogelsung and even Veronica the rat; the hag finally is seen in *V.*'s final identity as the Bad Priest, who advocates abortions, and in Vera Meroving, with her appetite for sado-masochist sex. The curious thing about this dispersion of the White Goddess' three roles is that they never reconnect; instead of a tripartite unity -- a whole divinity -- the White Goddess in *V.* has been divided in three, and then further divided until she only exists in discontinuous fragments and isolated cultural debris. The

White Goddess of Pynchon's novel is obviously unwell¹³.

In fact, David Seed goes so far as to characterize the White Goddess' chief incarnation V. "a travesty of femineity" (82). V., who is the White Goddess made manifest in the novel, forfeits her femineity with each new incorporation into her body of the inanimate, transforming over time into a soulless machine-woman. This phenomena results from a blending of metaphor by Pynchon, where Grave's notion of the White Goddess is combined with Henry Adams' theory of the progression of Western cultural history. Many commentators have indicated *The Education of Henry Adams* as Pynchon's inspiration in part for the enigmatic woman of Stencil's hunt. In *The Education* Adams argues that the beginning of the

¹³Paola Maijstral seems to be the sole exception to this trend. Mackey claims Paola is "the inheritor of the positive aspects of V.'s mythic role" (13). Like the unadulterated White Goddess of Graves' vision, Paola possesses a mutability or universality that none of the other females seem to have. We are told that Paola "could be any age she wanted" and "any nationality" (14). She appears as African to Sphere, Puerto Rican to Rooney, German to Mafia (350). Fausto, meanwhile, implores his daughter to "be only Paola, one girl: a single heart, a whole mind at peace" (314), which is the utter opposite of the splintered and damaged White Goddess of the text. At the same time Plater claims that "Pynchon intends Paola to represent a humanized reconciliation of dualities" (178). She returns to her husband Pappy Hod at the end of the novel, suggesting that through Paola the masculine/feminine dichotomy that characterizes the novel may be overcome. There is also the suggestion too, however, that Paola is beginning the V.-cycle anew: she is 18 in 1956 during the Suez crisis, while V. was 18 in 1898 during the Fashoda crisis; Paola also inherits V.'s comb, the initial piece of inanimate matter V. incorporates into her body in 1898.

twentieth century inaugurated a new era of human history, one in which the very nature of culture itself was radically altered. Adams claims that at the turn of the century "his historical neck" was "broken by the sudden interruption of forces totally new" (382) epitomized by the brute power of the dynamo. When Fausto talks about "the 'force' we read of in history texts" (322) it is easy to suppose he has in mind Adams. Don Hausdorff notes that "the great cultural polarity in *The Education* was of course the Virgin (or Virgin-Venus) and the Dynamo" (259) and believes that Pynchon has essentially followed this same polarity in *V*. As both Venus and the Virgin (representing the ancient and medieval worlds respectively) were the feminine embodiments of their eras, Pynchon transforms the Dynamo into a woman as well, labelling her for consistency's sake by the initial "V." This woman does not share the benign characteristics of her predecessors, however, but represents instead the unfathomable and destructive power of the new engines of industry. As Don Hausdorff points out, "the song of the future was not Ave Maria but the whirr of the machine" (260). *V.*, in reflecting the new era of mechanization and industrialization, symbolically becomes a machine. Hence when we see *V.* incorporating bits of inanimate matter into her body, such as the comb, the glass eye, the prosthetic feet, the sapphire, or the metal dentures, we are in fact witnessing the Virgin's

transformation into the next historical incarnation. Herbert Stencil imagines that by 1956 this metamorphosis would be complete, as V. at 76 would have:

... skin radiant with the bloom of some new plastic; both eyes glass but now containing photoelectric cells, connected by silver electrodes to optic nerves of purest copper wire and leading to a brain exquisitely wrought as a diode matrix could ever be. Solenoid relays would be her ganglia, servo-actuators move her flawless nylon limbs, hydraulic fluid be sent by platinum heartpump through butyrate veins and arteries. Perhaps ... even a complex system of pressure transducers located in a marvellous vagina of polyethylene; the variable arms of their Wheatstone bridges all leading to a single silver cable which fed pleasure-voltages direct to the correct register of the digital machine in her skull. (412)

In this regard V. becomes antithetical to Graves' concept: instead of being a means to counter the mechanization and growing inanimateness of the modern world, V. seems to actually embody those qualities. The two previous feminine representatives for past eras envisioned by Adams -- Venus and the Virgin -- are actually included in Graves' list of the White Goddesses incarnations; by extension we must surmise that the machine-woman V. is the twentieth century version of the Graves' Goddess. As we see multiple intimations of V.'s sinister transformation scattered throughout the text -- such as the Space/Time receptionist who moves "like an automatic card-dealing machine" (216), and the girls Profane meets at

the street festival who are described as "three jailbait, all lipstick and shiny-machined breast- and buttock-surfaces" (139) -- we are reminded of the multifariousness of the White Goddess. Yet however much V. seems to duplicate the White Goddess she also possesses antipodal or inverted qualities. Seed, in recognizing this fact, comments that Pynchon has turned "his attention mainly to parodying Graves' study" (86). At the end of the novel we are left with one of V.'s potential successors, an American WASP named Brenda Wigglesworth who likes to write poetry: "I am the twentieth century" (454) she claims in one poem that she recites to Profane. Brenda then adds honestly that "it's a phony college-girl poem" (454), abolishing at once any chance that she is the White Goddess reborn, or anything more than a fraudulent imitator. The White Goddess remains dead.

While the father in V. rules the two scientific disciplines of politics and history, the mother dominates the complimentary and oppositional domains of myth and literature. These two areas exist, however, only in an enfeebled and subjugated state, symptoms of the greater malady inflicting this century's diminished White Goddess. Unlike the paternal cultural sphere which is seen to operate both openly and freely in the novel, the province of the mother is submerged and repressed. Indeed, myth is almost wholly absent in V., with its final bastion in the modern world being the mythic

Vheissu, which we are meant to identify with the "country of coincidence, ruled by a ministry of myth" (450) and which is claimed by the narrator to be V.'s true realm. Note also that Vheissu is described by Godolphin as "a dark woman tattoed from head to toes" (171). Vheissu's marginalized locale beyond all outposts of Western civilization can hence be explained by its symbolic identity as myth's refuge -- it is considered outside Western experience. Similarly, we also see myth in its connection with Vheissu functioning in both a literal and metaphorical sense as a subterranean phenomena. Some of the legends related in V., interesting, are the sewer stories concerning Father Fairing's ministry to the rats. In addition, the Vheissu natives are said to live inside "volcanoes" (193) and are believed to have entered "a subterranean network of natural tunnels" (197). Each metaphorical placement of myth, whether outside or beneath, suggests that myth's central role in society has been usurped. At the same time, however, myth when it does exist is demonstrated to be diluted or reduced. This depleted nature can most clearly be discerned when Profane and his friends Angel and Geronimo attempt to impress girls with tall tales. We are told that the friends "together on the stoop they hammered together a myth" (142). The myth that emerges, however, is both diminished and flimsy compared to the myths that flourished prior to the technological age in earlier

premodern times:

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)

The old motivations behind myth -- fear of thunder, dreams, seasons -- have now been rationalized away with the antagonistic science of the father. Seed, who espouses one view, believes that Pynchon presents "mythic allusion in modern secular contexts in order to remind the reader that myth is now only available as a kind of detritus" (86). However, there is also the suggestion that myth is now extinct in the twentieth century: when asked what he saw under Vheissu's skin, Godolphin replies, "It was Nothing I saw" (204).

Likewise, literature in V. exists in a diminished and warped state. The lady V., in her role as a wounded White Goddess, sponsors aberrant literary or quasi-literary endeavours: she becomes patron of a decadent Parisian ballet in 1913, for example, and is somehow connected to the proto-fascist Italian poet Gabriele D'Annunzio. While literature remains a sphere ruled by the White Goddess, it is apparent that something has gone seriously wrong. As the novel makes

clear, though, this has not always been the case. The earliest poet we hear about in the novel is the jongleur Falconière, who "fell into belief and possibly love for Mara" (464-5). As stated earlier, the Maltese goddess Mara is a healthy and undamaged version of the White Goddess. Her follower Falconière, not surprisingly then, possesses a vitality unseen elsewhere in the novel. During the siege of Malta he brains "four Janissaries with his lute before someone handed him a sword" (465). The jongleur's modern successors, however, are only mere shadows of this. Fifties folk-singer Dewey Gland, for instance, is walloped by his own guitar during a bar brawl (16), and another successor, Melvin the folk-singer, simply "has no talent" (360).

Stencil's quest is acutely tied to the literature of the twentieth century. The adventurer enters his majority in 1922, the same year that Eliot inaugurates the Modernist era *de facto* with the publication of "The Waste Land". This is also the year, interestingly, that he comes into possession of the journals that provide many of the clues concerning V.'s existence. John Dugdale regards it as no small coincidence that "Stencil receives them in 1922, the *annus mirabilis* of Modernism" (77). These "manuscript books" (53) are Stencil's primary source for facts concerning V., and the adventurer's reliance of them cause his physical search to become a simultaneous literary exploration. When Stencil makes the

assertion that his quest is a "literal pursuit" (61), it is easy to see the presence of an unconscious pun. During his search for V. Stencil is seen imaginatively recreating scenes from Modernist fiction. The Florence chapter, concerning an anarchist plot where a South American revolutionary called the Gaucho detonates a grenade inside the Uffizi Gallery (210), resembles Adolf Verloc's misguided attempt to blow up the Greenwich Observatory in Conrad's *The Secret Agent*. Old Godolphin's expedition into Vheissu, a jungle locale described as "godforsakenly remote" and full of "barbarity, insurrection, internecine feud" (170), brings to mind Marlowe's journey into the Belgian Congo in *Heart of Darkness*. Even Eigenvalue's sole interruption during Stencil's South-West Africa narration recalls Shreve McCannon's interjections during Quentin Compson's tale of the South. However, Stencil's quest only begins in 1946, well past the peak of the Modernist movement. He does not create but only recycles already overdone literary themes. As such, Dugdale calls Stencil "a composite parody of a Modernist writer" (100).

Beginning with the early nineteen-forties we begin to see signs of a complete literary failure. Fausto Maijstral's early poetic endeavours are not original but only Eliot-esque imitations to the point of lampoon: "we were full of lyrical lines like 'At the Phoenicia Hotel'" he self-consciously admits years later (318). By 1956 a postmodern Fausto claims

"T.S. Eliot ruined us all" (308) and believes his previous enthusiasm for English Modernism was only "an exhausted intellectual searching" (309). Madsen points out that "a 'Modernist' reading of the fictional world ... fails to indicate a diagnosis of the postmodern malaise" (155). Significantly, V., who is the White Goddess albeit mutilated, perishes at the end of World War II (coinciding with the Hiroshima blast and the Final Solution). The literary tradition in the West, bereft of the White Goddess, is seen as finally reaching a dead end or stalemate after years of slow decline.

Stencil, of course, never does find V. Fausto claims to have watched her die after a severe bombing raid on Malta at the end of the War. While Stencil fervently denies that V. could be gone -- "she cannot be dead" he cries in disbelief (447) -- her demise certainly coincides with the overall pattern of metaphor in the novel. Indeed, by 1956, which at this point is either self-consciously postmodern or at least aware that something has changed from the modernist era, the influence of the White Goddess has all but dissipated, much in the same way that Fausto witnesses V. being dismantled piecemeal in her final moments of agony. The sort of art now dominant and championed by the Whole Sick Crew, characterized by satire and absurdity and informed by the *logos* of the father, is antithetical to the divinely inspired poetry of the

Triple Muse, which Mehemet notes "no Renaissance had ever touched" (465). The creative imagination has all but evaporated in the spiritually-bankrupt environment of fifties Nueva York. There is certainly a small chance that something of the White Goddess persists -- in the "Mme. Viola, oneiromancer and hypnotist" (451) whom Stencil imagines may have succeeded to V.'s role prior to her death -- but at best the Muse has been regulated to a shadowy status without a voice. This impotence is perhaps best observed in one of Profane's dreams in which something attempts to reach him: "there were neon signs scattered here and there, spelling out words he couldn't remember when he woke" (39). Fahy, however, believes that "the emphasis on holocaust in the final chapters, coupled with the symbolic death of Victoria in 1945, fully supports Graves' own feeling that European civilization has been 'tilted off balance' by the death of the White Goddess" (17). In this sense Stencil's search for his mother, and all that it metaphorically denotes, is a failure.

The adventurer's overall quest is a failure as well. As I have previously noted, Stencil comes no closer to relating to his father than he was at the outset of the novel. Stencil's attempt to redeem his enervated world through the application of human intelligence to order his surroundings into a comprehensible format flounders due to the indeterminate nature of the universe. Unable to glean any

certainties from his father's texts, Herbert eventually claims that "old Sidney had never said anything of use to his son" (386). The quest's parallel purpose to rediscover the White Goddess in postmodern society likewise ends in disappointment. The mythic figure of V. always remains just one step ahead of Stencil, elusive and intangible. After witnessing evidence of her existence in a variety of diffuse and unconnected cultural detritus, we must come to the conclusion that her presence is too diffuse to pinpoint. George Levine remarks that overall "Pynchon denies resolution into myth by wandering among all the available myths, from those of the Greeks to those of modern science, technology, film, comic books, radio" (114). Indeed, by the end of the novel, V. has become a "remarkably scattered concept" (389). Hence the sought-after integration of the West's two cultures -- patriarchal intellect and matriarchal creativity -- fails to materialize in V. The representatives of the West's two cultural factions, symbolized in the novel by the figures of father and mother, do not come together. Fausto observantly comments during his Confessions that there is a "bad lookout for the Family" (325), and this is certainly the case in V.

Elaine B. Safer notes that the trend in postmodern fiction is to "satirize rather than extol" (14) and by the end of V. Pynchon's ironic seeker Stencil becomes a parody of the traditional quester. When delineating the traditional quest

structure, Jessie L. Weston claims that the goal of the archetypal Grail quest is "the restoration of the Waste Land" (12). Northrop Frye, furthermore, asserts that "translated into ritual terms, the quest-romance is the victory of fertility over the waste land" (193). In the literature of Pynchon's Modernist predecessors the symbol of cultural salvation became the rejuvenating rain. Pynchon's novel is patterned, however, on Eliot's ironic counterimage to this life-giving water; the dominant vision is not the rainstorm but the deadly "whirlpool" where Phlebas perishes in *The Waste Land*. V. ends likewise with an "Epilogue" describing the elder Stencil's death by water, emphasizing, it seems, the younger Stencil's failure to restore the postmodern "Waste Land" of the mid twentieth century. Lance Olsen explains that "postmodernism can no longer find any response adequate to the situation in which it finds itself, a situation consisting in the ultimate denaturalization of the planet and a deep belief in the imminent end of humanity ... : a universe under physical and metaphysical erasure" (8). Pynchon returns to this theme in *The Crying of Lot 49* where he reexamines this notion of cultural redemption.

CHAPTER II

"YOUR GYNECOLOGIST HAS NO TEST FOR WHAT SHE WAS PREGNANT WITH": MOTHERHOOD, REVOLUTION AND REDEMPTION IN *THE CRYING OF LOT 49*

Thomas Pynchon's second novel, *The Crying of Lot 49*, seems at first glance curiously devoid of the familial relationships that so characterized *V.* The protagonist, Mrs. Oedipa Maas, is locked into a childless and sterile marriage and, unlike her *V.* counterpart Herbert Stencil, we learn absolutely nothing of her parents. At the same time, Oedipa's extramarital affairs -- one with a millionaire tycoon who subsequently expires, the other with a child-actor-turned-lawyer who seduces her and then absconds with a teenaged girl -- seem no more than a succession of misadventures. A second and more detailed examination of the novella, however, soon reveals a text laden with references to familial relationships. There is, to name some of the obvious examples, Metzger's odd on-screen family in *Cashiered*, the

incestuous alliance between mother and son in *The Courier's Tragedy*, and the harried middle-class Bortz clan. In this chapter I will attempt to offer a new reading of *The Crying of Lot 49* that centres on the motif of Oedipa as *mother* -- not, as I will show, a literal parent but as a potential mother of social revolution. Indeed, Oedipa is the quiescent saviour of the novel, her unborn redemptive power wrapped in layers of maternal metaphor.

The plot of *The Crying of Lot 49* revolves around Oedipa's "conception" of The Tristero, the nourishing of her theory of a "second America" that might redeem her listless suburbia, and finally, her attempt to disseminate this theory to the American mainstream consciousness. Oedipa is impregnated with the notion of The Tristero by Pierce Inverarity through clues discovered in his will. The ultimate goal of Oedipa's quest, we are told, is to bring Inverarity's legacy "into pulsing stelliferous Meaning" (82). This aim is frustrated, however, by the closed intellectual systems Oedipa encounters, represented in the novel by narcissism, homosexuality, and incest -- concepts that are all inconsistent with the notion of unselfish maternal love. William M. Plater notes that "the structure of death tends to pervert love to its own form -- homosexuality, fetishism, narcissism" (175). This chapter will examine both the subtleties and implications of the quest and conclude by

offering an explanation about why Oedipa's endeavour becomes hopelessly stalemated by the novel's end.

We find the maternal theme running throughout *The Crying of Lot 49* on an interpretive plane that is primarily symbolic or psychological in nature. Such a reading of the text is obviously encouraged by such disparate phenomena as the presence of Oedipa's neurotic psychoanalyst Dr. Hilarius, the repeated references to the Narcissus myth, and the "loaded" name Oedipa itself. Hilarius claims to be "a good enough Freudian" who has "tried to cultivate a faith in the literal truth of everything [Freud] wrote, even the idiocies and contradictions" (134). Likewise, Pynchon appears to have conceived *The Crying of Lot 49* as a Freudian allegory of sorts, where, regardless of the recognized shortcomings of psychoanalytic theory, Freudian psychology plays an important role in developing the thematic content of the novel. Oedipa, her name itself bound to psychoanalysis in the popular mind, becomes the main player in this latent "dream quest" of Pynchon's, a search that exists simultaneously and side-by-side with her overt quest for The Tristero.

Throughout *The Crying of Lot 49* there are certainly some real or manifest familial relationships described, though in the grand scheme these are relatively minor; the implicit or symbolic familial relationships, however, are of the utmost importance to the novel. Regardless of their relative

magnitude, however, both types of relationships contribute to the greater development of the novel's theme of intellectual sterility and social monotony. The *Crying of Lot 49* describes a suburban "waste land", where, to echo Hilarius, "the distinctions begin to vanish" (136) resulting in what Oedipa's husband Wendell ("Mucho") Maas will term a "vision of consensus" (143) -- a consensus, that is, which reduces personal initiative and represses individuality. The Southern California portrayed in the novel is headed toward a cultural homogeneity not unlike the entropic effects experienced by any closed system where the energy available to do work slowly decreases as the system winds down. Pynchon represents this phenomenon in *The Crying of Lot 49* as a general disintegration of societal heterogeneity, resulting in an ever lessening plurality and diversity of ideas.

This homogenizing and levelling phenomenon can be first glimpsed in Oedipa's hometown of Kinneret-Among-The-Pines. Tony Tanner notes that we initially encounter Oedipa "among the eclectic bric-a-brac of contemporary Californian culture" ("Crying", 177), a collection that includes Tupperware, Muzak and "the greenish dead eye of the TV tube" (9). J. Kerry Grant labels this Kinneret existence as "banal and predictable, a not-quite parody of a middle-class suburban routine" (12). Lois Tyson goes one further, claiming that Oedipa's pre-quest life is but "a profusion of empty

commodity-signs, signs that mark an absence rather than a presence -- an absence of art, of history, of myth -- and therefore require no existential engagement" (8-9). There are few things in Oedipa's life at this point in the novel that distinguish her from countless other suburban housewives.

If Oedipa's trite existence epitomizes the domestic side of Kinneret life, then Mucho's experience represents the economic. At one point Mucho recalls the "gray dressing of ash ... the unvarying gray sickness" (14) that shrouds the used car business where he previously worked. Here the "preterite"¹⁴ poor (which in this case includes blacks, Mexicans, and poor whites) "exchange a dented, malfunctioning version of [themselves] for another, just as futureless, automotive projection of somebody else's life" (14). Economic transactions result in a dehumanizing process where the participants are reduced, metaphorically, to the dilapidated commodities they wish to exchange. This human diminishment is what Mucho will later label his "N.A.D.A." nightmare (144).

¹⁴Pynchon borrows this term from Reformation theology to describe those individuals who have been marginalized by mainstream society. The *OED* defines a "preterite" as "one who is passed over or not elected by God" (from the Latin verb *praeterire*, to go by, pass over). "Preterition" is a Calvinist doctrine asserting that God has damned those not counted among the elect to eternal death. Mark Irwin, for one, has characterized one of the novel's major themes as being "the Calvinist soteriology of preterite vs. elect" (56). Robert D. Newman, furthermore, suggests that "the Calvinist approach to enterprise" in the novel has led to "an industrial society fallen into inertia and homogeneity" (75).

Mucho's nihilistic vision coincides with the seventeenth-century Scurvhamite theology Oedipa uncovers during her Tristero research: the radical sect of Puritans imagined a "gaudy clockwork of the doomed" that is described as being "a brute automatism that led to eternal death" (155). Similar to Mucho's "nothing" (nada) behind modern commerce, this Scurvhamite principle of predestination is driven by "something blind" and "soulless" (155).

The city of San Narciso is an even greater caricature of modern existence. It is, in fact, the ultimate expression of suburbia: begun in earnest only ten years before, the city is composed of "census tracts, special purpose bond-issue districts, [and] shopping nuclei" that are all somehow "rickety or grotesque" (24). We learn that there is no "vital difference between it and the rest of Southern California" (24). San Narciso in many ways suffers more from the effects of social entropy than Kinneret. Reminiscent of the cool uniformity of the outdoor temperature in "Entropy", San Narciso is surrounded by "dead-still air" (27). Grant claims this landscape of "silence and paralysis" (26) is "congruent ... with the stagnation of highly entropic systems" (33). San Narciso is hence, more than any other setting in the novel, an example of the debilitating effects of social entropy on suburban California society.

An alternate image employed by Pynchon in his

descriptions of southern California is the mechanization, sometimes quite literally, of society at large. Both San Narciso and Pierce Inverarity's Fangoso Lagoons development remind Oedipa of a "printed circuit" (24, 31). But this concept of societal mechanization goes far beyond the level of mere metaphor. As Oedipa traverses the entropic landscape of the novel, it soon becomes clear that the real centre of power in this suburban fantasyland is the arms manufacturer Yoyodyne, Inc., "one of the giants of the aerospace industry" (25). In a article for the *New York Times Book Review*, entitled "Is It O.K. to Be a Luddite?", Pynchon warns of "an emerging technopolitical order that might or might not know what it was doing" (41). Ominously, the Yoyodyne facility is guarded over by "two sixty-foot missiles", both the scourge of the '60s and yet "San Narciso's big source of employment" (25). Indeed, the missile here becomes the most apt symbol of mainstream authority, a variant, surely, of the Scurvhamite "blind, automatic anti-God" (165), set up in contradistinction to a just and caring deity¹⁵. In his *N.Y. Times* article Pynchon also notes that "by 1945, the factory system -- which, more than any piece of machinery, was the real and major result of the Industrial Revolution -- had been extended to include the Manhattan Project, the German long-range rocket

¹⁵Not surprisingly, the Yoyodyne missile also combines the two Calvinist traditions of mercantilism and damnation.

program and the death camps, such as Auschwitz" (41). Likewise, corporate California -- the "technopolitical order" in *The Crying of Lot 49* -- is similarly tainted with insinuations of fascist inclinations and death cult sympathies. At one point in the novel Oedipa enters a government surplus outlet where she learns from the owner Winthrop Tremaine of a "little factory down outside of San Diego" producing swastika armbands and in the future SS uniforms ("teenage kid sizes" as part of a "back-to-school campaign", 149). Pynchon's condemnation of the contemporary Californian mainstream seems fairly replete here, and it will take his heroine, Oedipa, all her energy to uncover the underground, hidden culture that might be the redemption of American society.

In opposition to the mainstream America portrayed in *The Crying of Lot 49* is an alternate America, a subculture composed of secret societies, swingers, anarchists, and Pynchon's preterite poor. These groups are connected to one another through The Tristero System, forming a "shadow-state" (163) that both mirrors mainstream society and simultaneously subverts it. In fact, The Tristero seems to be the embodiment of an opposition principle that has characterized Pynchon's general thinking. In "Is It O.K. to Be a Luddite?" Pynchon cites the attributes of an archetypal character he designates the "Badass". He claims that this character is "not morally

evil, more like able to work mischief on a large scale" (40). Furthermore, the "Badass" employs "means which are nocturnal and deal in disguise, to *deny the machine*" (emphasis Pynchon's, 40). It is easy, given its association with night and secrecy, to see The Tristero System as the Badass writ large, providing an alternative to the mechanized and banal America of Yoyodyne. Some critics have remarked upon this opposition before. Grant, for instance, has observed that "the shadowy organization might in fact represent some positive alternative to the confining structures of the government's communications monopoly" (97). Tanner, venturing more, notes that "The Tristero System might represent some secret, second America, which in many ways may be preferable or more genuine than the surface society" (*City of Words*, 177). Furthermore, Tanner claims that "the possible existence of The Tristero is also associated with the possible existence of 'transcendent' meaning, almost equivalent to a redemptive vision of another America behind the material concretions of the land" (*City of Words*, 178). Oedipa's quest then becomes a search for this second America.

If this explanation of her quest is accepted, however, we must abandon literal interpretation and instead begin to analyze Oedipa's investigations as a symbolic search. There is ample evidence in the text to justify such an approach. I have previously claimed that Oedipa's detective work amounts

to a dream quest where much of the action occurs on a psychological level. It is important to note that various forms of "dream" occur frequently throughout the novel. The following is an enumeration of the individual references to dreams in the text (by no means exhaustive). To begin, Oedipa wonders if Pierce Inverarity died "among dreams" (10). Later, we are told Mucho often wakes "crying out in the language of bad dreams" (15). In fact, Oedipa believes Mucho panders to "all the fraudulent dreams of teenage appetites" at the radio station where he works (15). Still later, Niccolò, the Thurn and Taxis messenger in *The Courier's Tragedy*, is caught up in "some dream's paralysis" (73) when the Tristero assassins approach. Soon after, Oedipa comes to the conclusion that "everything she ... dreamed ... would somehow be woven into The Tristero" (81). Later, at the stockholders meeting, old men are said to have "hands out roaming dream-scapes" (82). Then comes an odd Eliot-esque sequence, a nightwalking episode reminiscent of "Rhapsody on a Windy Night", where Oedipa will "later ... have trouble sorting the night into real and dreamed" (117). During this nocturnal wandering she encounters "fragments of dreams" (117) resembling Eliot's "crowd of twisted things" (544), all somehow having "to do with the post horn" (117), symbol of The Tristero System. Oedipa meets "a circle of children in their nightclothes, who t[ell] her they [are] dreaming the gathering" (118). They

claim, however, that "the dream [is] really no different from being awake" (118). Soon after this encounter, Oedipa witnesses a "dreamy cloud of delinquents in summer-weight gang jackets with the post horn stitched on" (121). Later, when theorizing about The Tristero, she wonders if she has not stumbled "onto a secret richness and concealed density of dream" (170). Subsequently we are told that the city of "San Narciso was a name; an incident among our climatic records of dreams and what dreams became among our accumulated daylight" (178). Indeed, the narrative's concentration on "dream" phenomena immediately suggests that a psychoanalytical exegesis of the quest, particularly a Freudian one (cf. 1900's *The Interpretation of Dreams*), is entirely proper.

Employing a psychological reading of the text becomes even more apt when one considers the fact that Oedipa is already undergoing psychoanalysis. At the beginning of the novel it becomes clear that Oedipa is seeing Dr. Hilarius on a regular basis, though we are never told the exact reason. Grant supposes that she "suffers from some nonspecific anxiety" (19). Before her final visit to Hilarius, though, Oedipa does hint at "her several wounds, needs, dark doubles" (132). Oedipa even wonders, after witnessing so much of the WASTE system, if "she might well be in the cold and sweatless meathooks of a psychosis" (132). She hopes that Hilarius will declare The Tristero to be a mere "fantasy" (132). Of course

Pynchon is engaging in some metafictional wit here, as everything in the novel is already a "fantasy." This word play illustrates an important point however. Regardless of whether or not The Tristero System actually exists, Oedipa's search for the secret organization is certainly not outside the bounds of psychoanalysis when viewed from outside the narrative¹⁶.

The name "Oedipa", obviously a feminized version of "Oedipus", connects our protagonist immediately to both Freudian psychoanalysis (the Oedipus complex) and the Sophoclean detective-king of Thebes. In truth Oedipa is no Oedipal figure¹⁷. Her personal relationships betray no hint of the "triangular character" that characterizes Freud's "Oedipus situation" (see *The Ego and the Id*, 21). At the same time I contest the position held by some critics that Oedipa's name is only an example of Pynchon's habit of producing purposefully misleading names. Tanner, for instance, asserts that Oedipus's riddle included "parents, parricide and incest" and alleges that Oedipa's puzzle, in contradistinction,

¹⁶Interestingly, Oedipa believes Hilarius would dismiss the 'coincidental' aspects of her quest, accusing her instead of acting upon "subliminal cues" (84). In this way Oedipa herself allows for a psychoanalytic approach.

¹⁷Christopher Lasch would have us believe otherwise, declaring Oedipa a "devouring mother of pre-Oedipal fantasy" who is associated with male castration anxiety (see Couturier, 22), but I remain unconvinced by his argument.

involves none of these ("Crying", 178). Not quite. He is only correct about the lack of parricide. Oedipa encounters both parents and incest in the production she witnesses of *The Courier's Tragedy*, to cite just one example. In fact, the majority view among critics is that the allusiveness of Oedipa's name does indeed make sense on both the mythic and the psychoanalytic levels. Edward Mendelson, for one, maintains that Oedipa's name "refers back to the Sophoclean Oedipus who begins his search for the solution of a problem (a problem, like Oedipa's, involving a dead man) as an almost detached observer, only to discover how deeply implicated he is in what he finds" (118). David Cowart, meanwhile, attests the psychoanalytic connection by simply terming "Oedipa" "a suitably neurotic name" (20). Paul Coates unites both traditions (mythic, psychoanalytic) when he claims that "*The Crying of Lot 49* is an attempt to bring the American consciousness, personified in Oedipa Maas (nothing is more American than Freudianism), to an awareness of all it has repressed" (125). Pynchon's naming of his heroine "Oedipa" is not meant as a specific reference at all but rather as a general intertextual signpost pointing out to the reader that a latent dimension to the novel also exists.

It is certainly difficult to avoid the Freudian connotations of *The Tristero* quest. In the simplest terms, *The Tristero* is an "underground" organization in opposition to

a "surface" society. These descriptions are easily interchangeable with such psychoanalytic nomenclature as "subconscious" and "conscious", or alternatively, "dreaming" and "waking". To simplify further, what American society has repressed can be found at a lower strata amongst "The Disinherited" (160) of *The Tristero*. This preterite element has no place in the waking world. It makes sense then that Oedipa discerns the shadowy organization most clearly when, during her nocturnal wandering, she encounters repeated references to *The Tristero* among "fragments of dreams" (117). *The Tristero's* identification as the repository for society's repressed constituent does not end here however. Take, for instance, the muted post horn symbol of WASTE:



Oedipa's first thought is that "it might be something sexual" (52). While Oedipa dismisses this idea, it would be rash to discard outright the clandestine sexual colouring of this symbol. In fact, its status as signifying *something* sexual seems to be established the first time Oedipa sees the post horn, when it accompanies a scrawled sexual proposal from one "Kirby" (52). At the same time it is hard to escape the visual suggestiveness of the drawn symbol -- indeed, the

passage is ambiguous whether Oedipa's first instinct to view the post horn as "something sexual" stems from the proximity of the accompanying message or the fact that the horn resembles a crudely sketched phallus.

In addition to the post horn there are numerous characters, places and events that contribute to form the overall Freudian landscape of *The Crying of Lot 49*. As part of this, Pynchon employs a feminine symbology in the novel, comprising references to what Robert N. Watson has termed "the anatomy and sanitation of strictly female processes" (60). The Yoyodyne employees Mike Fallopiian and Stanley Koteks are certainly the most conspicuous examples of this symbology, yet they are merely peripheral. More important to the novel is the repeated leitmotif of menstruation (which is, interestingly, where the anatomical Fallopiian converges with the sanitary Koteks). On a manifest level, this theme surfaces in the novel only as Oedipa's quest is reaching its culmination, when we are told that the heroine begins to suffer from "menstrual pains" (171). We encounter veiled references to menstrual blood well before this point however, appearing in the recurring image of the bloody sea. There is a scene in *Cashiered*, for instance, portraying the massacre on the beaches of Sedd-el-Bahr of the River Clyde troops during the Gallipoli campaign. Metzger attests that "for fifty yards out the sea was red with blood" (36). This early depiction of

blood in the sea foreshadows a later metaphorical instance. Oedipa imagines Randolph Driblette's suicide as a "night's walk away into that vast sink of the primal blood the Pacific" (162). This equation of Pacific waters with "primal blood" is baffling until we take into account both Freud's conviction that death is unconsciously conceived as a return to the womb (i.e. to water) (*Complete Introductory Lectures*, 488)¹⁸, and Oedipa's previously espoused belief "in some principle of the sea as redemption for Southern California" (55). In the Freudian iconography of the novel the Pacific becomes a womb; the blood is "primal" because it is the menstrual blood derived from the womb where all things have their genesis; and finally, the sea is potentially "redemptive" because Southern California may yet be reborn¹⁹. The Pacific therefore embodies a redemptive principle solely because of its Freudian identification as womb and the blood imagery associated with

¹⁸This concept of the womb as receptacle of both life and death has surfaced once before in the novel: in San Francisco Oedipa notes "a child roaming the night who missed the death before birth" (123).

¹⁹Consider the fact too that Dennis Flange in "Lowlands" has "read or heard somewhere ... that the sea was a woman" (59). His analyst, Geronimo Diaz, later observes that "since all life had started from protozoa who lived in the sea, and since, as life forms had grown more complicated, sea water had begun to serve the function of blood until eventually corpuscles and a lot of other junk were added to produce the red stuff we know today; since this was true, the sea was quite literally in our blood, and more important, the sea -- rather than, as is popularly held, the earth -- is the true mother of us all" (59).

it hence becomes a symbol of that womb's fertility²⁰.

Oedipa, likewise, shares this redemptive principle with the sea. In many ways she becomes an incarnate version of Robert Graves' White Goddess, specifically that third of the "all-powerful Threefold Goddess" who is the "Mother of All Living" (24). As *The Crying of Lot 49* unfolds Oedipa is portrayed as the potential 'vessel' out of which an enriched and invigorated California may be reborn. She is, in fact, the embodiment of the "Muse" (qv. Graves, 24), the wellspring of creativity and inspiration. Indeed, this interpretation of Oedipa's role explains several aspects of the novel which otherwise might seem curious or even puzzling. Late in the novel Oedipa chooses a doctor at random out of the phone book and tells her that she thinks she is "pregnant" (171). Oedipa fails to show up for the tests that are subsequently arranged, no doubt because, as we later learn, a "gynecologist has no test for what she was pregnant with" (175). She is actually pregnant with the notion of the concealed and suppressed America championed by The Tristero, which she may or may not bring to term. It is telling that Oedipa receives the name of the covert organization through Driblette's theatrical production of *The Courier's Tragedy*, while Emory Bortz and his graduate students, who saw the same play but on a different

²⁰Note too that in V. Pynchon's narrator speaks of "the Mediterranean womb" (474).

night, heard nothing (153). This affirms Oedipa's role as Muse, since her presence (what else was different?) inspires Driblette to communicate the secret name to the only person -- Oedipa herself -- to whom it might have meaning.

I have previously mentioned that The Tristero represents an opposition principle to mainstream American society; at the same time, the surreptitious postal system also embodies a male principle in opposition to Oedipa's redemptive femininity. Catherine R. Stimpson suggests that Pynchon "may want us to think of mail as male" (44). Indeed, Stimpson claims that Pynchon is "exploiting the puns natural language is heir to, literalizing a sexual metaphor" (44). It is an interesting proposition. We can take this punning even further. The character of Pierce Inverarity, whose testament initiates Oedipa's quest and whom Oedipa suspects may have been collaborating with The Tristero, immediately suggests a "piercing." Synonyms of this evocative word include both "penetrate" and "prick." When we combine this evidence with the fact that Inverarity visits Oedipa nocturnally -- he phones her while she is in bed "at three or so one morning" (11) with the possible intention to discuss his codicil (12) -- it seems plausible that some sort of sexual act has metaphorically taken place.

Stimpson too has noted this inference of a figurative sexual union. She draws attention to where the text relates

that Oedipa's insight into The Tristero comes in fragmented, ambiguous clues since she has "lost the direct, epileptic Word" (118). Stimpson interprets this statement in light of her theory of the sexual metaphor: "Pynchon may be going on to give 'the Word' special meaning. Some theoreticians of Logos -- the Stoics, the Jewish philosopher Philo, the early Christian apologist Justin Martyr -- thought of the divine principle as germinating, seminal, the '*spermatikos logos*'. Justin writes of 'the seed of reason ... implanted in every race of man.' He mentions the 'spermatic word'" (44). Stimpson concludes her argument by suggesting that "as Oedipa succumbs to the languid, sinister attraction of the Tristero, she represents the female body being pierced and receiving some sacred seed" (44). Oedipa is seen as a fit receptacle to harbour, like Graves' tripartite goddess, a "divine principle" or truth.

One does not have to delve very deeply into the text of *The Crying of Lot 49* to unearth the maternal aspects to Oedipa's character. While she is childless, Oedipa is nonetheless mistaken for a mother. When Oedipa initially arrives at Bortz's residence, his wife Grace assumes Oedipa has children because she exhibits "a certain harassed style" caused, Grace claims, only by children (150). In reply Oedipa emphatically declares, "I don't have any" (150). Yet Oedipa quite clearly displays maternal characteristics. In San

Francisco, for instance, she holds the tattooed sailor against her breast and rocks him like an infant (126). When Oedipa must let go of him, she is "reluctant as if he were her own child" (127). Grace Bortz's instincts are not wholly inaccurate.

This scene between Oedipa and the elderly sailor, moreover, is particularly revealing about the role Oedipa is to play in the novel. When she first notices the old man he is "shaking with grief" (125). As the arthritic Ramírez later explains, the ancient seaman keeps attempting "to look for his old lady" but fails each time (127). Oedipa is given a letter addressed to the aged seafarer's wife and is asked to place it in the WASTE mailbox (125). In fulfilling this request Oedipa performs an important task: she attempts the restoration of fertility to "The Waste Land" by symbolically reuniting the male and female counterparts who have suffered from the general diminishment and banality of post-mythic modern life²¹. Bernard Duyfhuizen proposes that in *The Crying of Lot 49* "Odysseus has become the decrepit sailor Oedipa encounters on

²¹This is a theme frequently represented in Modernist literature, specifically by T.S. Eliot's poem "The Waste Land" (qv.). Here Eliot stresses the sterility of improper sexual union, expressed both in the episode where the indifferent typist is seduced by "the young man carbuncular" (which also, coincidentally, resembles Oedipa's seduction by Metzger) and in the character of Lil, the woman who gets an abortion and who is afterwards accusingly asked, "What you get married for if you don't want children?"

the rooming-house steps, a seaman who will never make it home to his wife in Fresno and who asks Oedipa to post 'a letter that looked like he'd been carrying it around for years'" (86). The fact that Oedipa does post the letter shows that a reunion, to some limited extent at least, is entirely possible²². In a novel depicting the cultural sterility of the modern world, Oedipa's help in reuniting a man with his lost wife -- a ritual restoration of fertility -- indicates that our heroine possesses the power to save society from the impotent malaise in which it finds itself. Oedipa too may be thought of representing that point of overlap where the feminine principle of redemption embodied in the Pacific meets the germinating and seminal power of The Tristero, her phantom pregnancy being the result of this rendezvous.

At the same time, The Tristero also seems devoted to the possibility of reunion or rendezvous. It is certainly no coincidence that the old man decides to utilize WASTE as his medium to contact his wife. Without the secret postal network the man would be unable to reconnect with the lost spouse. In fact, the concept that WASTE is an institution devoted to allowing individuals to come together who otherwise might not seems to be inherent to The Tristero. In the copy of *The*

²²The Odysseus motif surfaces in *V.* as well. At the end of the novel Paola returns to Norfolk to await Pappy Hod's return from a sea voyage.

Courier's Tragedy Oedipa purchases from Zapf's Used Books, the "colorless administrator" Gennaro declares at the end of Act IV, Scene 8 (75):

*No hallowed skein of stars can ward, I trow,
Who's once been set his tryst with Trystero.*

This is the first articulation in the novel of the name "Tristero"; observe that the couplet would indicate that the appellation "Trystero" is derived in part from the word "tryst", denoting a meeting or rendezvous specifically with sexual intent. *Webster's Third New International Dictionary* defines one meaning of the word "tryst" as being "an agreement between lovers to meet at a specified time and place." Hence, this interpretation of the name "Tristero" lends strength to the theory that a figurative sexual union has transpired.

This is where problems begin to occur for Oedipa and her growing insight. The ambivalent ending, leaving Oedipa stranded without knowing the true nature of The Tristero, suggests that Oedipa's redemptive vision may very well be stillborn. On a manifest level, the only pregnant female we hear about in the novel is the scarred Negro woman who repeatedly miscarries, the process "dedicated not to continuity but to some kind of interregnum" (123). This woman is another embodiment of the "Threefold Goddess" and hence an alternative version of Oedipa. She is in fact no "Mother" at all, but rather the "Hag" who represents not procreation but

death. If Oedipa does not counter the effects of her closed, entropic society she runs the risk of becoming like this woman. During the course of Oedipa's quest, forces even conspire against our heroine to derail her redemptive vision and prevent a reborn America.

The initial effort to pacify Oedipa is undertaken at the onset of her quest by her shrink Dr. Hilarius. We first encounter this paranoid psychiatrist early in the novel where he is attempting to recruit Oedipa for his pet experiment, christened "the bridge" (or "die Brücke" in the psychoanalyst's native German). This study involves placing numerous suburban housewives on a variety of psychedelic drugs, including LSD-25, mescaline, and psilocybin. Grant has proposed that "Die Brücke" is a reference to a group of Expressionist painters by the same name who gathered in Dresden around 1905 and were known for their experimentation with drugs as a source of artistic inspiration (19). How this might be relevant to the novel is unclear. One might safely conjecture that the reference foreshadows Oedipa's speculation that The Tristero is a mere hallucinogenic fantasy²³.

²³Then again, the Expressionist allusion may contain another dimension uncredited by Grant. In a 1906 letter to Emil Nolde, the group's founder Karl Schmidt-Rottluff explained that "one of the aims of Die Brücke is, as the name implies, to conduct toward it all the revolutionary and fermenting elements" (quoted in *The New Encyclopædia Britannica: Micropædia*, 15th Ed., Vol. 2, 569). Likewise, Oedipa's quest will conduct similar elements towards her.

Alternatively, and perhaps more appropriately considering Hilarius's psychoanalytic bias, the multifarious allusiveness of the title also suggests a Freudian interpretation of the project's nature. "The bridge" designation, for instance, could just as reasonably be meant to echo the name of physiologist Ernest Brücke (1819-92), a mentor and friend of Freud. In addition, bridges have several psychoanalytical connotations as well: the bridge, according to Freud, represents the male organ which connects the two parents in sexual intercourse; owing to this function, the bridge also becomes a crossing from an unborn state to a living one; likewise, as death has been conceived as a return to the womb (i.e. to water)²⁴ the bridge hence "acquires the meaning of something that leads to death, and finally ... it stands for transitions or changes in condition generally" (*Complete Introductory Lectures*, 488). Significantly, Freud mentions the bridge as a symbol observed in those dreams where a woman desires to become a man (488). Perhaps not so coincidentally then, Hilarius wishes (at least initially) to use only housewives in his research. When viewed in this light, the doctor's experiment becomes an attempt to subdue the feminine, to quench womankind's sexual and hence reproductive functions, to neuter and placate the potentially redemptive and life-

²⁴N.B. Randolph Driblette's suicide.

giving power of the female. Hilarius specifically wants Oedipa to take part in this experiment: "We still need a hundred-and-fourth for the bridge" he goads (17). Oedipa, suspicious of her shrink's motives, flatly refuses²⁵.

Nevertheless, Oedipa does become *un-gendered* as the novel progresses. Pynchon plays on San Francisco's reputation as a centre of homosexuality to represent -- metaphorically -- that type of closed ideological system inherent to modern society which presents an obstacle to the fulfilment of Oedipa's quest. During her night wanderings in the city Oedipa is introduced to "the third sex" (110). After coming across a bar called "The Greek Way", Oedipa unintentionally finds herself "in a room full of drunken male homosexuals" (116) while sporting a name tag identifying her as "Arnold Snarb" (110). This odd setting and comic transmogrification carry with them some serious implications. Oedipa has finally reached a point where "nobody around has any sexual relevance to [her]" (116) and likewise, she is no longer sexually relevant to anyone else. Maurice Couturier claims that the ID badge is an indication that Oedipa "is acknowledging the fact that she has turned into a man in San Francisco among all the homosexuals" (24). Her femininity, spared from Hilarius's

²⁵Wisely, too, as it turns out. After Mucho accepts LSD from Hilarius, he begins to be "less himself and more generic" (140) -- in many ways approximating the homogenous suburban landscape that surrounds him.

dubious experiment, now falls victim to contemporary society's suppressing and repressing onslaught. In *The White Goddess*, Graves comments that Socrates, in renouncing poetic myth, was rejecting the Moon-goddess and hence escaping "into intellectual homosexuality" (11). Likewise, here in the "fag joint" (110) Oedipa's association with Graves' mother goddess and Muse goes unrecognized, and she might as well be a man as her feminine power of redemption is temporarily extinguished.

Oedipa's final sexual irrelevance is the culmination, no doubt, of a process begun at the novel's commencement where we see Oedipa with her self-absorbed husband Mucho. Frank Palmeri points out that almost all the men Oedipa has encountered up to this point have abandoned her and retreated "into a self-contained state of fascination with themselves" (986) -- a narcissism comparable to the homosexuality that surrounds her in San Francisco. Needless to say, Oedipa's meeting with a member of the "Immorati Anonymous" at this point in the novel (who humorously takes to addressing her as "Arnold") is congruous with her increasing sexual irrelevancy: indeed, the IA adherent argues for an end to romantic love and the formation of a society of isolates. Ironically, this "sense of ... insulation" (20) is exactly what Oedipa hopes to escape during the novel, her quest being the means to forsake the "Rapunzel-like role" she initially inhabits (20).

Oedipa's confrontations with narcissism present the

second great threat, after homosexuality, to her redemptive vision. References to the Narcissus myth in *The Crying of Lot 49* are both frequent and explicit: indeed, the central setting is a city called *San Narciso* where Oedipa stays at the *Echo Courts* motel. In addition, there is also "the calm surface of the motel pool" (109) that evokes the pool that mesmerizes Narcissus with his own reflection. This pool goes on to become a repeated motif, different versions appearing on four other occasions throughout the novel: we encounter Lake Inverarity at Fangoso Lagoons, the "Lago di Pietà" where the American GI's perish in World War II, the lake in *The Courier's Tragedy* where the Lost Guard of Faggio disappear, and finally, Diocletian Blobb's "Lake of Piety" encountered during his Italian travels. All these instances reflect the fact that Oedipa's society is not only entropic but narcissistic as well. Lastly, there is even a painted sheet metal nymph at the motel. It is interesting to note that "the face of the nymph was much like Oedipa's" (26), clearly suggesting that one of Oedipa's identities may also be that of Echo²⁶.

²⁶Hanjo Berressem claims that the resemblance "implies that ... Oedipa is in love with a narcissistic culture of which she herself is so much a part" (95). I think that this is a rather poor interpretation, considering Oedipa's elaborate fantasy about escaping from the magic tower that insulates her from others (20). Instead, I think it would be fair to say that Oedipa abhors her narcissistic culture, in much the same way that the nymph Echo might well have loathed

No doubt Pynchon includes these obvious allusions to indicate that the Narcissus story is being retold at one level. In *The Crying of Lot 49* Oedipa becomes the tragic nymph Echo and the men in her life, by extension, become the evasive Narcissus. Specifically, Pynchon presents the Narcissus story as a parable about communication. According to the myth, "Echo fell in love with the handsome youth Narcissus, but her love was unrequited, for *she was unable to communicate with him* because she could only repeat his last words, and Narcissus, in abnormal self-love, rejected the love of all women" (emphasis added, Reinhold, 335). Oedipa's trysts with Pierce, Mucho and Metzger invariably end with a complete breakdown of understanding: Pierce cannot fathom Oedipa's desire to escape, Mucho becomes lost in an LSD-induced bliss, and Metzger is unable to comprehend Oedipa's need for the quest. Part of Oedipa's fascination with The Tristero and the WASTE postal system must lie in the fact that it *allows for communication*. Meanwhile, the narcissism Oedipa encounters is also another representation of a closed, entropic system -- we discover, for instance, that Oedipa's relationship with Inverarity "had really never escaped the confinement of [the fantasy] tower" (20). Like the IA adherents Oedipa hears about in San Francisco, the men in her

Narcissus's self-absorbtion and conceit.

life are closed and self-contained. This unavailability of a male counterpart represents metaphorically the novel's dilemma once again: as in the situation with the homosexuals Oedipa's "feminine principle of redemption" has a difficult time connecting with a "germinating" and enabling "male" principle.

Oedipa's character could then be said to be echolalic. Freud explains that "loss of love and failure leave behind them a permanent injury to self-regard in the form of a narcissistic scar" (*Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, 21-2). Furthermore, Freud tells us that "the impression [the injured] give is of being pursued by a malignant fate or possessed by some 'daemonic' power" (23). Oedipa demonstrates symptoms of this "narcissistic scar" -- she believes that a "they" are responsible for loss of Driblette, Hilarius, Metzger and Mucho (161). In fact, Oedipa begins to demonize The Tristero, seeing signs of a negative side to the shadowy organization -- as when she discovers the acronym DEATH and its sinister meaning "DON'T EVER ANTAGONIZE THE HORN" (121) -- just as much as she recognizes The Tristero's positive characteristics. The psychoanalyst Victoria Hamilton in her interpretation of the Narcissus myth says that Echo, because of her rejection, "falls prey to fits of unmitigated anxiety and to self-absorbed, compulsive ruminations" (128-9). Moreover, "her anxiety renders her insomniac which further exacerbates the repetitiveness of her thoughts" (129). Correspondingly, we

learn that Oedipa is bothered by insomnia, headaches and nightmares (171). Oedipa furthermore dreams of "disembodied voices from whose malignance there was no appeal, the soft dusk of mirrors out of which something was about to walk" (175). Her failure to connect with her narcissistic male counterparts threatens the viability of her redemptive power.

There can be no doubt that the two men involved with Oedipa romantically are lost to narcissistic self-absorption. Metzger, on the one hand, demonstrates all the preconditions needed to form a narcissistic complex. When explaining to Oedipa that his childhood acting career was encouraged by his mother, he remarks, "You know what mothers like that turn their male children into" (29). Hamilton attests that a narcissistic individual "has suffered from having a 'doting' mother whom, inevitably, he has scorned" (114). (In the myth the nymph Leiriope doted on the infant Narcissus.) Mucho, on the other hand, becomes increasingly, in the words of the program director Caesar Funch, "less himself and more generic" (140). His answer to his "N.A.D.A." nightmare is to withdraw into himself. Even Oedipa betrays hints as the novel winds down that she, too, may succumb to her narcissistic society. As Oedipa's quest begins to overwhelm her, we see our heroine tempted by "her reflection in the half-light of that afternoon's vanity mirror" (170). By the novel's end, it is difficult to say whether she has successfully resisted this

temptation.

The third and final hurdle in the way of Oedipa's quest in *The Crying of Lot 49* is the repeated occurrence of incest. We first witness a reference to it when we hear about the "endless, convoluted incest" of Mucho's used car lot reminiscences (14). Grant observes that "incest's inwardness, its denial of the need for connection with that which is utterly other than the self, is a useful figure for another, connected aspect of the novel" (17). He explains further that this "figurative usage suggests the kind of closed system that is most susceptible to the inexorable dissipation of energy measured by an increase in the system's entropy" (17). Mucho's "endless, convoluted incest" takes a literal form in the relationships between Duke Angelo, his sister Francesca and her son Pasquale in *The Courier's Tragedy*. When Angelo demands that Francesca marry Pasquale, she cites "the social taboos against incest" (67). Angelo then mentions their own affair between brother and sister, which silences Francesca. Finally Angelo begins "feeling his sister up and nibbling at her neck" (67). We learn from Bortz that in the corrupted Vatican copy of *The Courier's Tragedy* Pasquale "actually does marry his mother, and there's a whole scene on their wedding night" (155). The events of the play seem an appropriate metaphor for the closed intellectual systems of contemporary America.

Oedipa's quest, which is a rejection of these closed systems, becomes a civilizing and preserving mission. Freud tells us that "incest is anti-social and civilization consists in progressive renunciation of it" (*Civilization And Its Discontents*, 6). At the San Francisco airport, Oedipa notices "an uncoordinated boy" headed to Miami to begin negotiations with the dolphins there, who in the meanwhile is "kissing his mother passionately goodbye, using his tongue" (123). We learn that these negotiations revolve around the expected downfall of mankind (the dolphins would be our successors) and it would follow then that the incestuous mother and son are also contemplating the end of civilization. Once again, there creeps into the text some suggestion that Oedipa's dealings with The Tristero may be undergoing a process of subversion: the mother tells her son to "write by WASTE" (123).

In the spirit of the binary oppositions that populate the novel, Stimpson claims that Oedipa's "pregnancy" might either represent a birth of a redemptive process or the reinforcement of the isolation and stagnation that predated her quest existence (44). Grant, pessimistically, favours the former (134). The fact that the acronym W.A.S.T.E. stands for "WE AWAIT SILENT TRISTERO'S EMPIRE" (169) is especially revealing: it suggests that the social revolutionary elements of The Tristero must at present tolerate an interregnum until they can establish their own vision of society. Near the end of

the novel, then, Oedipa "trie[s] to face toward the sea ... but she'd lost her bearings" (177). The vision of redemption that Oedipa has fostered, embodied both by the sea and her unborn "child", is at the novel's end lost.

CHAPTER III

"A NATION OF MOMS": MOTHERHOOD AND THE FAMILY IN *VINELAND*

Pynchon's second to latest novel, 1990's *Vineland*, picks up at the point where *The Crying of Lot 49* left off. In the intervening twenty years between Oedipa's quest and Zoyd Wheeler's flight from the federal Drug Enforcement Agency a relentless progression has occurred within American society--the presence of simple swastika armbands in government surplus stores has been transformed into the brute stormtroopers of CAMP (Campaign Against Marijuana Production) and the secret PREP (Political Re-Education Program) camps where kidnapped citizens are indoctrinated in official state ideology. The ultimate nightmare of America's liberal left has finally been realized, for this is both literally and figuratively 1984. The American government now practices the politics of repression, for as one character in the novel maintains, the objective of "the Reagan program" is to "dismantle the New Deal, reverse the effects of World War II, restore fascism at home and around the world" (265). Indeed, "the perennial question" has now become only "whether the United States still

lingered in a prefascist twilight, or whether that darkness had fallen long stupefied years ago" (371). The three eras of American history visited in *Vineland*, from the suppression of the trade unions in the 1940's, to the crackdown on the human rights movement in the 1960's, and finally through to the domination of the self-styled "Moral Majority" in the 1980's, point to an increasingly regimented and ruthless America. This slide into totalitarianism is another manifestation of Pynchon's entropy parable: whereas sixties activism and defiance at least forged hope, eighties inactivity and acquiescence has spawned tyranny.

Nowhere is the entropic malaise of America more pronounced than at the artistic level. In *V.* we have already encountered the Whole Sick Crew, a dysfunctional group of artists whose enervated and ill-used talents produce only parodies of painting, sculpture and literature; in *Vineland* Pynchon continues this theme, choosing instead, however, to chronicle the slow decline of American movie-making. In the early recollections of Hubbell Gates, for instance, we witness the conflict between the stagehand unions and the California studios in the late '40's. By the '60's the myth of a universal Hollywood has been irreparably shattered, and we see disillusioned students forming their own "guerilla" film collective known as 24fps (24 frames per second) whose sole purpose is to illuminate what the mainstream "Action News"

teams could never show -- to take one example, "the repression of farm workers in this country who've been trying to organize" (195). The American image-making industry, therefore, is seen to have been increasingly tainted by politics, paranoia, and subterfuge. The situation is not a complete loss though, for the presence of 24fps does generate actual discourse and create meaningful communication about the American experience and condition, and in doing so keeps a certain vivacity alive in the cinema.

By 1984, however, the scope and vision of the silver screen has been reduced to the oppressive dimensions of the all-pervasive "Tube". Indeed, cinematic culture seems to have reached its *reductiones ad absurdum* in '80's America. The "TV movies" Pynchon mentions seem absurd, if not outright inane: Pat Sajak in *The Frank Gorshin Story*, Woody Allen in *Young Kissinger*, even Pee-wee Herman in *The Robert Musil Story*. Beyond this we hear of the oddly popular Japanese television series "Babies of Wackiness" and an African-American version of "Star Trek" called "Say, Jim" where crew members go about the bridge "high-threeing" each other. Certainly the Tube is not the vehicle of enlightenment 24fps conceived film to be. Pynchon implies that the purpose of television is to numb the intellect, discourage discourse, and pacify the masses. Eighties teenager Isaiah Two Four perceptively observes that the failure of the sixties generation to achieve their

revolution can be attributed directly to the pervasiveness of television culture. Near the end of the novel he tells Zoyd that the "minute the Tube got hold of you folks that was it, that whole alternative America, el deado meato" (373). Not coincidentally then, television is also envisioned as a means to exert political control, for as the Tubaldetox song suggests, the Tube is *Vineland's* equivalent of Orwell's omnipresent telescreens: "It sees you in your bedroom,/ And-- on th' toi-let too!/ Yoo Hoo! The/ Tube.../ It knows, your ev'ry thought" (336-7). In many ways the greatest achievement of television has been the formation of "Thanatoid" communities across the U.S., whose listless inhabitants impersonate a state of "death, only different" and "watch a lot of Tube" (170) -- in other words, the ultimate passive citizen. The deterioration of cinematic culture from the late '40's to the early '80's is just one indication of America's entropic sickness, a symptom to be classed along with the Whole Sick Crew's degenerate art in *V.*, and Oedipa's banal suburban existence in *The Crying of Lot 49*.

The growing darkness described in *Vineland*, like the general running down portrayed in earlier novels, is presided over by a host of Manichaeian characters. N. Katherine Hayles has noted the convoluted "networks of government agents that seek to gain information, incarcerate dissidents, and control the population" (15). This web extends from lowly DEA field

agent Hector Zuñiga (hopelessly addicted to his television set), to CAMP director Karl Bopp -- "former Nazi *Luftwaffe* officer and subsequently useful American citizen" (221) -- through to federal prosecutor Brock Vond, and ultimately onwards, perhaps, to "some Cosmic Fascist" (83). These characters both perpetuate and exacerbate the declining morality and diminishing vision of the American republic. Furthermore, Zuñiga's DEA, Bopp's CAMP and Vond's PREP all have identical charters: restrict thought, repress expression, stamp out heterogeneity.

In opposition to this network of government agents and informers is an opposite and parallel network composed of family and friends that Hayles calls "the kinship system" (15). Zoyd does not face his repressive government alone; on the contrary, during his flight from various government agencies he is comforted by his daughter Prairie, aided by his friend Van Meter, even supported by his once-estranged mother-in-law Sasha Gates. Through Sasha he is also eventually adopted into the vast Gates-Traverse-Becker family, an anti-government clan that becomes a community of sympathizers for Zoyd to reside in. Certainly this "kinship system" is another version of the alternative America embodied by The Tristero in *The Crying of Lot 49*: anti-Reagan, pro-union, and unapologetically radical, the family in *Vineland* represents a slumbering redemptive element in American society, a

revolutionary group that wields the potential to counter those Manichaeian forces that threaten to destroy the vitality of American life.

For this reason alone the family becomes the primary target of the agents of entropy. Throughout the novel the family suffers various intrusions and attacks from government sources. For example, the Wheeler's family home is seized by CAMP troops, we hear how family patriarch Jess Traverse was crippled by union buster Crocker "Bud" Scantling, and Hector Zuñiga cruises the Californian coast attempting to abduct Prairie. Zoyd's family, in particular, is scattered and all but destroyed, with Zoyd himself in hiding from CAMP, Prairie on the run from a television junkie, Frenesi absconded to parts unknown, and the dog Desmond vanished into the Vineland woods.

Undoubtedly the event that most damages the family is Frenesi's defection to Brock Vond. Her absence leaves Zoyd wifeless, Sasha childless and Prairie motherless. This gap in the familial web is serious, for it separates Zoyd from his mother-in-law, Prairie from her grandmother, and both Wheelers from the larger family network beyond. In her role as the missing mother Frenesi becomes comparable to the mystery woman in V., as both Frenesi and V. (who may be Stencil's mother) are each co-opted from the familial domain to the opposing Manichaeian realm. At the same time, Stencil's "mad time

search" and Prairie's education about Frenesi's past are both attempts, at one level, to quell the anxiety suffered as a result of the absence of a mother.

In this regard Stencil and Prairie can be considered analogous characters -- similarly motherless, Stencil's father Sydney falls victim to history and a waterspout, while Prairie's father, Zoyd, succumbs to history and a vast government repression. Each character is unnaturally alienated from normal familial ties. Khachig Tölölyan claims that "parent-child bonds are evanescent in Pynchon's fiction precisely because he wants us to attend to a harder truth, namely, that like [*Gravity Rainbow's*] Slothrop we are all children of a society, a technocracy, a power-structure whose influence in shaping us is disproportionately larger than that of our biological progenitors" (14). At the same time, the desire to search for biological progenitors, as evidenced by Stencil's quest and Prairie's inquiry, is a renunciation of the techno-political order.

The three quests we have so far discussed (i.e. those of Stencil, Oedipa, and Prairie) revolve around figures that may be considered -- to employ Judith Chambers' evocative phrase -- "mutilated white goddesses." These characters occupy positions in their respective novels that approximate the inspirational role of Graves' White Goddess. At the same time, however, they are "mutilated" in the sense that they are

either ironic parodies or failed and frustrated versions of the true White Goddess. In *V.*, for instance, we witness Victoria Wren's tortured transformation from a young woman into the androgynous, quasi-mechanical Bad Priest, who still, nevertheless, inspires the nightmare hallucinations of Stencil. In *The Crying of Lot 49*, meanwhile, Oedipa Maas struggles to give birth to a redemptive vision that could redeem her static suburbia only to realize in the end that this vision may have been merely a phantom pregnancy. Finally, in *Vineland* we have the character of Frenesi Gates, a woman who possesses many of the White Goddess's prime attributes --she is simultaneously cinematic artist, sex vamp, and mother. The sixties reminisces of both Zoyd and Darryl Louise ("DL") Chastain (recreations that can be considered a form of storytelling) are inspired by and largely focus on Frenesi. Nevertheless, Frenesi's early history is marred by her cooperation with Vond and her betrayal of the People's Republic of Rock and Roll, culminating in Weed Atman's curiously non-fatal murder²⁷. Afterwards, however, Prairie's birth gives Frenesi a chance to repent and reintegrate into the societal fabric, to be a "mom in the nation of moms" (292). She ultimately refuses this path. In fact, Frenesi seems to lack any maternal conviction at all after the birth

²⁷After Weed is "murdered" he returns as a Thanatoid.

of her daughter, having instead only "hatred for the tiny life" which she sees as "raw [and] parasitic, using her body through the wearying months and now still looking to control her" (286). Eventually she abandons her infant daughter altogether, seduced by right-winger Vond, whom David Porush has described as "the Darth Vader of *Vineland*" (33)²⁸. Frenesi rejects the liberal politics of her flower power generation, becoming instead increasingly infatuated with the neo-fascist cult first perpetuated by Nixon and later revived under Reagan, masturbating to "CHiPs" reruns and experiencing "the dark joys of social control" (83)²⁹.

In a fashion similar to that in which Stencil pieces

²⁸Pynchon refers to the *Star Wars* trilogy early in the novel (7), a movie series concerned to a large extent with paternity. In the second film, *The Empire Strikes Back* (1981), mechanized villain Darth Vader ("dark father"?) tells Luke Skywalker that he is actually the hero's true father, and subsequently attempts to seduce young Skywalker to join the 'Dark Side' of the Force. In *Vineland*, Brock Vond successfully turns Frenesi to the novel's dark side, but when Vond tries convincing Prairie that he is her real father he experiences his first real failure: "But you can't be my father, Mr. Vond," Prairie objects, "my blood type is A. Yours is Preparation H." (376).

²⁹Molly Hite relates an interesting story concerning Pynchon and his undergraduate mentor Walter Slatoff. Apparently inside the copy of *Vineland* Pynchon sent to Slatoff he scribbled that this new novel was "a story where the parents are progressive and the kids are fascists" ("Feminist Theory", 140). This is just another example of the strange series of inversions that accompany Frenesi's character -- she is beautiful but her actions are ugly, she gives birth but is no mother to her daughter, etc. In the end she can be considered to be an inverted White Goddess.

together the story of V., Prairie attempts to unearth the true history of her mother. In fact, both of these searches are part of the entropy-countering ordering motif that is common to all three novels. Stencil's quest for V. is, at one level, a drive to order and comprehend both his personal existence and the chaotic tragedy of the twentieth-century. Oedipa's search for The Tristero is likewise a means to nullify the encroaching effects of entropy on her empty life. In *Vineland*, Prairie's investigation into her mother's past is similarly a way to transcend the banality of her run-down society. More than that even, Prairie's task of sorting and ordering her mother's life is an attempt to heal the mutilated White Goddess' wounds, inflicted upon her by a world that is sliding into undifferentiation and creative stagnation. After hearing some details about Frenesi's questionable activities in the sixties from DL, Prairie comes to the sad realization that "if you put those facts together ... they spell Mother" (189). Instead of detesting Frenesi, however, Prairie strives instead to understand why her mother choose that particular path. This is the point in the novel where the entropic decline begins to be reversed, for Prairie in this role is the White Goddess reborn, a mother-confessor who absolves Frenesi of her crimes as she learns about them. At the end of the novel, then, Frenesi can rejoin "the Family" at the Becker- Traverse reunion, her past misdeeds perhaps not forgotten, but

clearly forgiven.

However, this attempt to characterize Prairie as an inspirational White Goddess figure and an information-sorting Maxwell's Demon analogue seems completely contradictory, if not paradoxical. Pynchon himself recognizes the apparent incompatibility between the language of order, or patrilinear language, and the language of ambiguity, the proper language of the White Goddess. The Sisterhood of Kunoichi Attentives, which Pynchon describes as "a sort of Esalen Institute for lady asskickers" (107), duly notes this contradiction. The Head Ninjette Rochelle tells Takeshi Fumimota that "paradise was female" (166) and argues that men "dragged us all down into this wreck they'd made of the Creation, all sub-divided and labeled" (166). What Rochelle's theory fails to acknowledge, however, is that the patriarchal desire to order in fact dovetails neatly with the matriarchal need for ambiguity: indeed, without divisions and distinctions there exists only an amorphous homogeneity antithetical to the shades of meaning necessary for the presence of poetic language. Prairie's Demon role hence ensures a heterogeneous environment for the Goddess to flourish. One of the beneficial outcomes of Prairie's ordering quest is to transform Frenesi from Manichaen foe to familial victim.

While it is the language of order that redeems Frenesi Gates, it is the language of ambiguity, encapsulated in myth,

that finally defeats Brock Vond. Near the end of the novel, tow-truck operator Eusebio ("Vato") Gomez tells Vond "an old Yurok story about a man ... who lost the young woman he loved and pursued her into the country of death" (379). While he is relating this mythical tale, Vato and his partner Cleveland ("Blood") Bonnifoy drive Vond down the Ghosts' Trail mentioned in the story to the land of death. There is only one way in which to interrupt the suddenly surrealistic tone that intrudes into the novel here. In *Slow Learner* Pynchon notes that in the early sixties "John Kennedy's role model James Bond was about to make his name by kicking third-world people around" (11). By the eighties, James Bond had become Brock Vond. In our last glimpse of the prosecutor, prior to the extraction of his bones by vengeful aboriginal spirits, Vato exclaims to Vond, "Give these third-worlders a chance, you know, they can be a lotta fun" (380). The language of the third-world is also the language of poetic myth, and Vato and Blood, representing the hispanic and black peoples respectively, move easily within this medium. That is not the case with Brock Vond. In the end Vond literally succumbs to the White Goddess' poetic language, torn apart by Indian spirits on the banks of a mythical underworld river.

Back in 1980 Mark Siegel asserted that "Pynchon nowhere suggests that any particular quest which would accomplish the traditional task of personal and social

reintegration even can be found" (6). That rule appears to have changed with the publication of *Vineland*. Near the end of the novel old Jess Traverse reads from William James' *The Varieties of Religious Experience*: "Secret retributions are always restoring the level, when disturbed, of the divine justice" (369). In *Vineland* divine justice indeed prevails. Not only is Brock Vond justly punished by those he wished to repress, and Frenesi returned to the fold, but, perhaps most importantly, the Wheeler family, separated by Vond at the novel's beginning, are reunited, with Zoyd and Prairie rejoined and even Desmond the dog staggering out of the *Vineland* woods at the novel's finale. *Vineland* properly ends with the Traverse-Becker reunion, the ascendance of the family over the envoys of entropy complete.

CONCLUSION

The imagined worlds of Pynchon's fictions behave according to the Second Law of Thermodynamics: namely, disorder is constantly on the rise, with the universe in a perpetual state of "running down" (Tanner, "V. and V-2", 47). The pervasive theme running through all of Pynchon's work is that Western civilization is headed toward the terminal junkyard. This entropy paradigm is applied primarily to culture and intellectualism, where meaning and clarity are supplanted by banality and absurdity. In *V.* Pynchon depicts a group of fifties artists whose work is described as both degenerate and nonsensical. Later in *The Crying of Lot 49* Pynchon demonstrates the obtuse and superficial character of postwar culture, lampooning commercialism, corporatism and suburban lifestyles. Pynchon continues this unfavourable portrayal of American cultural life into *Vineland*, where a crypto-fascist government feeds an unassuming populace mind-numbing television while attempting to eliminate any opposing perspectives. In all three novels society moves from a state where distinctions and differentiation exist, to a state where

sameness and homogeneity dominate. The result is a diminishment or dilution of ideas. Pynchon's protagonists oppose this damaging transformation.

There are two separate means by which these protagonists attempt to halt or reverse the homogenizing process. On the one hand there is human imagination and creativity, symbolized in the novels by Robert Graves' *White Goddess*. On the other hand there is human intellect and energy, which is exemplified in Pynchon's fictions by James Clerk Maxwell's *Demon*. While the first means is associated with matriarchal language, the language of poetry and inspiration, the second means is identified with patriarchal language, the language of mastery and abstraction. Some critics point to the ascendancy of patriarchal language over matriarchal language as the cause of the entropic decline witnessed in Pynchon's works. This allegation seems unfounded, however, as Pynchon lends equal credibility to both patriarchal and matriarchal means. In fact, Pynchon creates an overarching metaphor in his fiction to demonstrate how both means can work in concert: the family.

Hence, the patriarchal means become associated with father figures, while the matriarchal means, in a similar fashion, become identified with mother figures. The children of the unions between these figures are either the questers who seek a solution to the entropy that afflicts their

societies, or the solutions themselves. In V. Herbert Stencil seeks salvation from his exhausted pre-quest existence by searching for a woman who may be his lost mother and who also may be a wounded incarnation of the White Goddess. At the same time, his quest is fuelled by information gleaned from his spy father's journals, whose ordering activities approximate Maxwell's Demon. Oedipa Maas of *The Crying of Lot 49* searches for The Tristero, a shadowy organization devoted to opposing mainstream American culture. Along the way she meets a man who literally believes in the existence of Maxwell's Demon, and witnesses various incarnations of a damaged White Goddess. In Oedipa these two principles, male and female, attempt to connect, and the redemptive vision that results is metaphorically depicted as a phantom pregnancy. Finally, in *Vineland*, the family is fragmented, with father Zoyd chased by government agents and mother Frenesi seduced by fascist prosecutor Brock Vond. Zoyd is ineffective as patriarchal orderer and Frenesi is unfit as matriarchal inspirer. In *Prairie*, however, both patriarchal and matriarchal means unite successfully to delete the effects of entropy and the family is restored.

The family is a powerful and important metaphor in Pynchon's writings. While Pynchon is universally recognized for his employment of the entropy paradigm, little has been written on the topic of how Pynchon seeks to counter and

reverse the effects of this entropy. His solutions include both patriarchal and matriarchal means, which instead of being oppositional or exclusive as some critics have suggested, are in fact complementary. While at first glance families seem to be a modest or even insignificant factor in Pynchon's work, an analysis of the entropy paradigm and how it is countered reveals the prominent role Pynchon reserves for the family.

SOURCES CITED

- Adams, Henry. *The Education of Henry Adams*. New York: Random House, Inc., 1931.
- Berressem, Hanjo. *Pynchon's Poetics*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993.
- Bloom, Harold, ed. *Thomas Pynchon: Modern Critical Views*. New York: Chelsea House, 1986.
- Chambers, Judith. *Thomas Pynchon*. New York: Twayne Publishers, 1992.
- Coates, Paul. "Unfinished Business: Thomas Pynchon and the Quest for Revolution." *New Left Review* 160 (November-December 1986): 122-28.
- Couturier, Maurice. "The Death of the Real in *The Crying of Lot 49*." *Pynchon Notes* 20-21 (1987): 5-29.
- Cowart, David. "Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49* and the Paintings of Remedios Varo." *Critique* 18, no. 3 (1977): 19-26.
- Dugdale, John. *Thomas Pynchon: Allusive Parables of Power*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990.
- Duyfhuizen, Bernard. "'Hushing Sick Transmissions': Disrupting Story in *The Crying of Lot 49*." In *New Essays*, ed. O'Donnell, 79-96.
- Eliot, T.S. *Complete Poems and Plays 1909-1950*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc.: 1952.
- Fayh, Joseph. "Thomas Pynchon's V. and Mythology." *Critique* 18.iii (1977): 5-18.
- Freud, Sigmund. *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. Trans. & ed. James Strachey. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1989.
- . *Civilization and Its Discontents*. Trans. & ed. James Strachey. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1962.
- . *The Complete Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*. Trans. & ed. James Strachey. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1966.

- Freud, Sigmund. *The Ego and the Id*. Trans. Joan Riviere. Ed. James Strachey. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1962.
- Frye, Northrop. *Anatomy of Criticism*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1957.
- Grant, J. Kerry. *A Companion to The Crying of Lot 49*. Athens, Georgia: The University of Georgia Press, 1994.
- Graves, Robert. *The White Goddess*. London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1961.
- Green, Geoffrey et al, eds. *The Vineland Papers: Critical Takes on Pynchon's Novel*. Normal, Illinois: Dalkey Archive Press, 1994.
- Hamilton, Victoria. *Narcissus and Oedipus: The Children of Psychoanalysis*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982.
- Hassan, Ihab. *The Dismemberment of Orpheus: Towards a Postmodern Literature*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1971.
- Hausdorff, Don. "Thomas Pynchon's Multiple Absurdities." *Wisconsin Studies in Contemporary Literature* vii, no. 3 (1966): 258-269.
- Hayles, N. Katherine. "'Who Was Saved?': Families, Snitches, and Recuperation in Pynchon's *Vineland*." In *The Vineland Papers*, eds. Green et al, 14-30.
- Hite, Molly. "Feminist Theory and the Politics of *Vineland*." In *The Vineland Papers*, eds. Green et al, 135-153.
- . *Ideas of Order in the Novels of Thomas Pynchon*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1983.
- Irwin, Mark. "A Note on 'Porky Pig and the Anarchist' in *The Crying Lot 49* and *Gravity's Rainbow*." *Pynchon Notes* 28-29 (Spring-Fall 1991): 55-57.
- Kharpertian, Theodore D. *A Hand to Turn the Time: The Menippean Satires of Thomas Pynchon*. Mississauga: Associated University Presses, 1990.
- Levine, George and Leverenz, David, eds. *Mindful Pleasures: Essays on Thomas Pynchon*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1976.

- Lowell, Robert. "Memories of West Street and Lepke." In *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*. Eds. Nina Baym et al. 2 vols. 3rd ed. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1989: vol. 2, 2495-2496.
- Mackey, Douglas A. *The Rainbow Quest of Thomas Pynchon*. San Bernardino, California: The Borgo Press, 1980.
- Madsen, Deborah L. *The Postmodern Allegories of Thomas Pynchon*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991.
- Mangel, Anne. "Maxwell's Demon, Entropy, Information: The Crying of Lot 49." In *Mindful Pleasures*, eds. Levine and Leverenz, 87-100.
- Mendelson, Edward, ed. *Pynchon: A Collection of Critical Essays*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1978.
- . "The Sacred, the Profane, and The Crying of Lot 49." In *Pynchon: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Mendelson, 97-111.
- Newman, Robert D. *Understanding Thomas Pynchon*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1986.
- O'Donnell, Patrick, ed. *New Essays on the Crying of Lot 49*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.
- Olsen, Lance. *Ellipse of Uncertainty: An Introduction to Postmodern Fantasy*. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1987.
- Palmeri, Frank. "Neither Literally nor as Metaphor: Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49* and the Structure of Scientific Revolutions." *ELH* 54 (1987): 979-99.
- Patteson, Richard. "What Stencil Knew: Structure and Certitude in Pynchon's *V.*" In *Critical Essays on Thomas Pynchon*, ed. Pearce, 20-31.
- Pearce, Richard, ed. *Critical Essays on Thomas Pynchon*. Boston: G.K. Hall & Co., 1981.
- . "Pynchon's Endings." *Novel: A Forum On Fiction* 18:2 (Winter 1985): 145-53.
- Petillon, Pierre-Yves. "A Re-cognition of Her Errand into the Wilderness." In *New Essays on the Crying of Lot 49*, ed. O'Donnell, 127-170.

- Plater, William M. *The Grim Phoenix: Reconstructing Thomas Pynchon*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978.
- Poe, Edgar Allan. "The Masque of the Red Death." In *Tales of Mystery & Imagination*. New York: Portland House Illustrated Classics, 1987, 97-102.
- Poirier, Richard. "The Importance of Thomas Pynchon." In *Mindful Pleasures: Essays on Thomas Pynchon*, eds. George Levine and David Leverenz, 15-29.
- Porush, David. "'Purring into Transcendence': Pynchon's Puncutron Machine." In *The Vineland Papers*, eds. Green et al., 31-45.
- Pynchon, Thomas. *The Crying of Lot 49*. Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1966.
- _____. "Entropy." In *Slow Learner*, 79-98.
- _____. *Gravity's Rainbow*. New York: The Viking Press, 1973.
- _____. "Is it O.K. to Be a Luddite?" *New York Times Book Review* (Oct. 28, 1984): 1, 40-1.
- _____. "Low-lands." In *Slow Learner*, 53-77.
- _____. *Mason & Dixon*. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1997.
- _____. *Slow Learner*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1984.
- _____. V. New York: Harper & Row, 1990.
- _____. *Vineland*. London: Secker & Warbug, 1990.
- Reinhold, Meyer. *Past and Present: The Continuity of Classical Myths*. Toronto: A.M. Hakkert Ltd., 1972.
- Safer, Elaine B. *The Contemporary American Comic Epic: The Novels of Barth, Pynchon, Gaddis, and Kesey*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1988.
- Schaub, Thomas H. *Pynchon: Voice of Amiguity*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988.
- Seed, David. *The Fictional Labyrinths of Thomas Pynchon*. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1988.

- Siegel, Jules. "Who Is Thomas Pynchon... And Why Did He Take Off With My Wife?" *Playboy* 24:3 (March 1977): 97, 122, 168-74.
- Siegel, Mark. "Pynchon's Anti-Questers." *Pynchon Notes* 3 (June 1980): 5-9.
- Spengler, Oswald. *The Decline of the West*. 2 Vols. Trans. Charles Francis Atkinson. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1973.
- Stimpson, Catherine R. "Pre-Apocalyptic Atavism: Thomas Pynchon's Early Fiction." In *Mindful Pleasures*, ed. Levine and Leverenz, 31-47. Reprinted in *Modern Critical Views*, ed. Bloom, 79-81.
- Tanner, Tony. *City of Words: American Fiction 1950-1970*. New York: Harper & Row, 1971.
- _____. "The Crying of Lot 49." In *Modern Critical Views*, ed. Bloom, 175-89.
- _____. *Thomas Pynchon*. London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1982.
- _____. "V. and V-2." In *Pynchon: A Collection of Critical Essays*. ed. Edward Mendelson, 16-55.
- Tölölyan, Khachig. "Some Remarks on Professor Mark Siegel's 'Pynchon's Anti-Quests'." *Pynchon Notes* 3 (June 1980): 10-14.
- Tyson, Lois. "Existential Subjectivity on Trial: *The Crying of Lot 49* and the Politics of Despair." *Pynchon Notes* 28-29 (Spring-Fall 1991): 5-25.
- Watson, Robert N. "Who Bids for Tristero? The Conversion of Pynchon's Oedipa Maas." *Southern Humanities Review* 17 (Winter 1983): 59-75.
- Weiner, Norbert. *The Human Use of Human Beings: Cybernetics and Society*. Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1954.
- Weston, Jessie L. *From Ritual to Romance*. Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1957.
- Winston, Matthew. "The Quest for Pynchon." In *Mindful Pleasures: Essays on Thomas Pynchon*. eds. George Levine and David Leverenz, 251-263.