THE GREAT REPRESSION

THE GREAT REPRESSION:
A PSYCHO-SEXUAL-SOCIAL INTERPRETATION OF THE OEDIPUS COMPLEX IN THOMAS PYNCHON'S GRAVITY'S RAINBOW

By

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the impact of Norman O. Brown's Life Against Death on Thomas Pynchon's Gravity's Rainbow. More specifically, it is an examination of how repression functions in the institutions of the family and society. Brown and Pynchon, following the central psychological concepts of Sigmund Freud, see the Oedipal complex as the fundamental source of human repression in both the family and society. The Oedipal project is responsible for not only repressing the individual's natural instincts, but also for the creation of the ego which is the seat of all social and moral constraints. Brown and Pynchon see the need to "undo" the Oedipal complex in order to break free from repression, but this break necessitates the loss of the individual's ego or self.

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INTRODUCTION

Thomas Pynchon is a complex and intricate novelist. His work reflects his uncanny ability to perceive the interconnectedness of a confused and fragmented world and his capacity to bring together seemingly unconnected pieces into a unified whole. Each novel can be seen as a "house of cards": a delicate building of many different parts, each dependent on the other. Consequently, the removal of one card results in the collapse of the entire structure. This thesis will attempt to remove one card, examine it, then essay to re-insert the card back into the structure without destroying the original building. Studying one element of a Pynchon text is normally difficult and detrimental to the multi-facetness of the work because it concentrates attention on a sole interpretation. This study, however, will focus on a single element which will, in turn, provide a viable explanation of the rationale behind the interconnectedness of Pynchon's artistic vision.

This thesis, primarily, will provide an introduction to a much needed area in Pynchon studies: the dynamics of character relationships. Pynchon's dedication to his most recent novel Vineland, "For my Mother and Father", stimulates interest in Pynchon's use of parent-child

relationships especially in terms of Freud's Oedipus Complex. A careful examination of Pynchon's most notorious text, Gravity's Rainbow, reveals a fascination with the Oedipal structure and its effect on character relationships. Pynchon focuses on the central psychological concept of repression and examines how the Oedipal structure functions as the major instrument in the implementation and the continuation of repression. In Gravity's Rainbow, Pynchon takes Freud's basic Oedipal structure and explores the repressive force of not only the father-son relationship, but also the mother-son relationship, an area which Freud failed to develop to the same degree as the father-son relationship. Pynchon portrays the mother with the same ambivalence that Freud treats the father in Totem and Taboo: she is both a maternal care-giver and a co-conspirator in the repression of the child.

In Gravity's Rainbow, repression is a form of oppressive domination in what becomes a sado-masochistic relationship between parents and their children. Children must "submit" to the force or aggression of their parents and eventually conform to the parents' values and beliefs. The child "identifies" with the repressing parents, who had similarly submitted and accepted the repression of their own parents. Thus what develops is a cycle of submission and domination which is passed on through time from generation to generation. And this repeated repression and submission

of the Oedipal structure is what underlies history and civilization.

Pynchon's exploration of the relationship between the Oedipal complex and the patriarchal world-view, in many ways, resembles much of the work of the popular sixties' philosopher Norman O. Brown's. Pynchon and Brown critique their own patriarchal civilization, or what Pynchon calls "The Empire" in Gravity's Rainbow, uses the Oedipal structure to instill submission and passivity in the members of society in order to maintain power. The Empire is seen as an evil father figure who plots to separate man/woman from his/her primal mother (mother nature) and from their primal or natural (pre-Oedipal) mode of existence. By forcing the child-figure to accept social and moral codes of behaviour, the Empire curbs the child's natural tendency towards pleasure and play, and replaces it with an acceptance of reality and work.

Following Brown's thinking, Pynchon perceives pre-Oedipal childhood as the ideal existence because it is free from the father's social and moral constructions. These constructions seek to divide the child from the mother and to force the child into developing an independent ego or self. The creation of the child's ego parallels the loss of connectedness with the mother -- the real physical mother and the symbolic Mother Nature. Childhood represents a "pre-ambivalent" stage in which the conflicting dualities of

life are brought together into a unified whole or what Freud would call an "oceanic" feeling of oneness (Civilization and Its Discontents, 15). And it is this lost unity with the mother and "matriarchal consciousness" which is responsible for the repressive and aggressive nature of patriarchal civilization.

In order to subvert this patriarchal structure of sado-masochism, there must be a break from the history of the Oedipal structure in which the socialized or civilized self/ego is bequeathed from generation to generation. There must be a loss of the civilized self in order to reject the patriarchal systems which separate man from other man and man from his natural surroundings. The loss of the self is a return to the primal or natural way of being and an acceptance of the harmony of a primal unity. By embracing this primal unity, the self is freed from the repression of social and moral constructions and is able to "BE" (Brown, 19).

This thesis will explore the function of the Oedipal complex in several contexts. Chapter one will provide a basic introduction to key Freudian concepts and show how Pynchon's interpretation of these concepts parallels Norman O. Brown's interpretation. The discussion of these Freudian terms will reveal Pynchon's problems with Freud's theories, especially with the practice of psychoanalysis. The first chapter will also suggest an Oedipal explanation for

Pynchon's desire to remain anonymous by using Harold Bloom's psychoanalytic study of the interrelationships between authors in his text The Anxiety of Influence. Chapter two will concentrate on how the Oedipal complex functions on a family or character level. It will examine how Oedipal repression affects the relationships of most all the central characters and how these characters are able to be classed as either a "son figure", "mother figure", or "father figure". The final chapter will provide a societal reading of the Oedipal complex and show how a patriarchal civilization uses the Oedipal structure to maintain control over the population. This chapter will emphasize the connection between the formation of the family and formation of civilization. Also, this chapter will provide an analysis of how the repression of the death instinct (a central requirement of civilization and history) is intimately linked to the Oedipal structure. And finally, the last chapter will examine how the repressive Oedipal structures of family and society can be broken.

CHAPTER 1

THE BEGINNINGS OF A GREAT REPRESSION: PYNCHON, FREUD, BROWN, AND BLOOM

The theories and terminology of Freud's psychological work permeate the Pynchon canon. From his early short stories to his most recent novel, Vineland, Pynchon's work incorporates many Freudian concepts and explores their greatness and their limitations. His texts depict a fascination with neurotic characters and the relationship between these characters and the world around them. Pynchon's novels demonstrate a thorough knowledge of the dynamics of Freudian thinking, and he exhibits this knowledge in a playful and provocative manner. But Pynchon's knowledge of Freud is filtered through Norman O. Brown's reading of Freud in his philosophical study Life Against Death. Brown was a "popular" 1960s Freudian philosopher, and his work reflects the intellectual atmosphere of that period. In his reading of Freud, Brown foreshadows the "spirit" of the sixties by emphasizing "Love" and "Freedom", which were ideas characteristically associated with that era. Brown's emphasis on "repression" as the central Freudian concept appears throughout Pynchon's work, especially Gravity's Rainbow. Lawrence Wolfley calls

Gravity's Rainbow a "`sixties' novel born late" and argues that it reflects "the particular style of Freudian thinking represented by Brown" (876). The connections between Brown and Pynchon are strong, especially with respect to their critiques of Freud's theories.

Freud's theories are very complex, and they were developed and modified as he continued his research. It is difficult, therefore, to summarize Freud's theories without trivializing his highly elaborate and evocative ideas, but an understanding of the basic concepts is necessary. Briefly, Freud maintains that repression results from the conflict between two opposing psychological forces. In the early stages of his work, Freud perceived the root of this conflict to be the confrontation of the pleasure-principle and the reality-principle. The pleasure-principle is the individual's unconscious instinctual or "natural" drive to indulge in pleasure, the source of which is called the "id". The pleasure-principle is associated with children and play, dreams and fantasy, and art. The id's striving for pleasure does not recognize distinctions between "self and world, between fantasy and reality, between wishing and having" (Gleitman, 463). The reality-principle, on the other hand, characterizes the "ego". It represents the "real world" and thus is in conflict with the pleasure-principle: "Reality imposes on human beings the necessity of renunciation of pleasures; reality frustrates desire" (Brown, 8). The ego

marks the formation of the "self" because the individual is defined through the social, familial, moral environments of the "real world"[1]. The conflict between the pleasure-principle (id) and the reality-principle (ego) results in the "repression" of the unconscious pleasure seeking desires. Repression, for Norman O. Brown and Pynchon, is the "key" to Freudian theory dealing with both developmental psychology and human society/civilization (Brown, 1). By repressing the animal or instinctual id, the ego can redirect the pleasure seeking energy (or play) into "work", which as Freud believes is essential for the development of civilization (Civ., 53).

Later in his career, Freud expanded his conclusions stating that the individual possessed a modified set of conflicting principles -- the life instinct (Eros) and the death instinct (Thanatos). The goal of life, Freud believed, was death and all people had an unconscious desire to return to a "pre-birth" or pre-life state. This desire or death instinct, however, is repressed, and reversed, and is vented as aggression -- the desire to kill others. The repressed death instinct or Thanatos, can thus be regarded an instinct which creates tension between the individual and the outside world. Eros, on the other hand, is the life

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[1]. For the sake of simplicity and brevity, I make no distinction between the ego and the superego. They share similar characteristics and will be grouped under the title "ego".

instinct and represents the desire "for a union (being one) with objects in the world" (Brown, 44). Brown also maintains that "Eros seeks to affirm a world of love and pleasure: `Affirmation, as a substitute for union, belongs to Eros'" (46, Brown quoting Freud, underlining Brown's). Eros parallels the id in that it is an affirmation of pleasure and the "all-embracing [or "oceanic"] feeling of the limitlessness bond with the universe" (Civ, 15). And Freud viewed Eros and Thanatos as being separate instincts in conflict with each other.

Freud's discovery of repression in the unconscious workings of the mind are of major importance and mark the beginnings of modern psychology. But Pynchon and Brown believe there are many limitations to Freud's theories. In Gravity's Rainbow, Freud appears as Reg Le Froyd, who comes to the edge of the "sea" of unconscious desires, names it, and then "steps back into the void" (73). Both Pynchon and Brown appreciate the awareness of the unconscious generated by Freud, but both retain doubts about Freud's attempts to integrate his psychological theories with society and civilization. Brown's Life Against Death is both a tribute to and a criticism of Freud's theories. And many of Brown's criticisms appear in Pynchon's works as Pynchon attempts to "translate" them through art.

Both Pynchon and Brown are suspicious of the scientific nature of Freud's work. There is an inherent

contradiction in Freud's rationalistic and intellectual treatment of the emotional and instinctual dimension of an individual. Freud intellectualizes the psychic development of humanity and its history to achieve some kind of "clinical understanding" (Brown, 47). In his theories, there is the triumph of reason over instinct, or rather, a rational justification of repression. The scientific treatment of psychology in general is dramatically undercut in Pynchon's portrayal of the behaviourist Edward Pointsman. Pointsman's behaviourism marks the extreme limit of a biological or scientific approach to the understanding of human personality. Pointsman is "The Cause and Effect Man" who must find a concrete answer to all psychological problems: "Pavlov believed that the ideal, the end we all struggle toward in science, is true mechanical explanation...His faith ultimately lay in the pure physiological basis for the life of the psyche. No effect without a cause, and a clear train of linkages" (G.R., 89). By being able to explain the world in rational terms, Pointsman is able to keep "control" over his environment (144). Pointsman's cause and effect universe helps him to believe in a predetermined world: the connection between Slothrop and the rockets will show the "stone determinacy of everything, of every soul" (86). Scientific determinism overshadows the impulsive instinctual "soul" (unconscious) of the individual and thus acts as a rational and repressive

"ego".

Discussing Gaston Bachelard, Brown reveals another fundamental problem with Freud: "he [Bachelard] sees science (and psychoanalysis) as sternly committed to the task of demythologizing our view of nature" (317). In Civilization and Its Discontents, Freud presents nature as something which must be overcome for the good of civilization: with the help of a technique guided by science, man should join the "attack against nature" and subject "her to the human will. Then one is working with all for the good of all" (27). Civilization was created in order to "protect men against nature" and Freud notes that "the first acts of civilization were the use of tools, the gaining control over fire and the construction of dwellings" (42). The separation of man from the external world and the creation of civilization parallel the creation of the ego and the separation of the individual from the pleasure-principle. The pleasure-principle is the "natural" state of each individual which is repressed by reality/society. Brown notes that "it is the privilege of man to revolt against nature and make himself sick [or neurotic]" (84).

Brown sees man's separation from Nature and the subsequent privileging of intellect and reason as crucial weaknesses in Freud's work. By rising above the animal or natural realm, man has entered into a state of conflict (or what Freud would call "ambivalence") -- between reason and

instinct, between pleasure and reality, and between Eros and Thanatos (or as Brown's title suggests Life Against Death). These conflicts are responsible for repression. As mentioned earlier, Eros represents the "unifying" aspect of personality which is repressed after the separation of man from nature. And it is this state of instinctual unity, or Eros, towards which man is always striving. Because Freud separates or individuates nature and reason, Brown classes Freud's instinctual theories as "dualistic". Freud interprets "the unity of life and death in all organisms as an eternal conflict of two distinct and completely opposed forces" (Brown, 100). Brown sees Freud's theories as being "borderland" concepts "between the mental and the biological, because Freud is seeking an explanation of man as neurotic or repressed in terms which would relate man's specifically human characteristic (repression) to his animal (bodily) nature" (79). Brown continues: "Freud postulates an ultimate duality grounded in the very nature of life itself" (79). In other words, in Freud's dualistic perception, neurosis is "inevitable" and "permanent": "Freud's dualism also leads to suicidal therapeutic pessimism, because it results in representing conflict not as human aberration but as universal biological necessity" (84).

Brown insists that all psychoanalysis must be dedicated to "the commitment to restore to man his animal

nature and to eliminate the mystery of the soul" (82). Brown argues that the animal instincts must exist in a "dialectical" harmony with reason -- a co-existence in which there is "difference" between the two "forces", but not "separation": "Man is distinguished from animals by having separated, ultimately into a state of mutual conflict, aspects of life (instincts) which in animals exist in some condition of undifferentiated unity or harmony" (83, underlining mine). By perceiving the aspects of life in dialectical terms, Brown asserts that humans, like animals, can return to the state of "undifferentiated unity or harmony", which Brown calls the "pre-ambivalent stage" of human development. And this "pre-ambivalent" stage is associated with children and infancy: "the fixation to that first pre-ambivalent experience commits mankind to the unconscious project of overcoming the instinctual ambivalence which is his actual condition and of restoring the unity of opposites that existed in childhood and exists in animals" (85)[2]. Because Brown is able to recognize the various opposites (the pleasure and the reality principles, and Eros and Thanatos) as parts of a dialectical unity, he can maintain that there would be no repression because the psychic conflict necessary for repression would not exist.

Pynchon's critique of Freud's mind-body dualism is

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[2]. A further discussion of children and pre-ambivalent unity will appear in the second chapter in relation to the Oedipal complex.

organized around the structure of binary opposites in Gravity's Rainbow. For example, Pointsman can only think in concrete dualistic terms:

> Pointsman can only possess the zero and the one. He cannot, like Roger Mexico, survive anyplace in between. Like his master I.P. Pavlov before him, he imagines the cortex of the brain as a mosaic of tiny on/off elements. Some are always in bright excitation, others darkly inhibited. The contours, bright and dark keep changing. But each point is allowed only the two states: waking or sleep. One or zero. (55)

Pointsman's inability to see between the one and the zero (or see both simultaneously) fuels his desire to discover concrete explanations for the randomness of the outside world. Lyle Bland and young Tyrone Slothrop similarly exhibit the separateness or duality of the body and the mind (spirit) (589, 699). Both these characters leave their bodies and float off to another world -- a world which is linked with immortality and cleanliness: "Dope never gave you immortality. You hadda come back, every time, into a dying hunk of smelly meat! But We can live forever, in a clean, honest, purified Electroworld" (699, underlining Pynchon's). This dualistic outlook leads to a denial of Thanatos and the physicality of the body.

But perhaps Pynchon's knowledge of Freud's theories and Freud's limitations are best exemplified in his treatment of psychoanalysis and psychoanalysts. Pynchon would agree with Norman O. Brown that psychoanalysis has the potential to offer man a way out of repression and history.

Brown states that the "goal of psychoanalytical therapy is to free [the neurotic individual] from the burden of his past" or "from the burden of his history" (19). Psychoanalysis has the power to enable the individual to reach "psychoanalytical consciousness" which is a level of consciousness that "loosens the grip of the dead hand of the past on life in the present" and permit the individual to "live instead of making history... and to enter that state of Being which was the goal of his Becoming" (19, underlining mine). Psychoanalysis provides the individual with the opportunity to acknowledge the existence of hidden instinctual desires which have been repressed by the ego and society: "psychoanalysis is a consciousness of the unconscious" (Brown, 171). By recognizing these repressed desires, the individual frees them from repression and is able to indulge in "Being".

But Pynchon, starting with his early short stories and continuing to his most recent novel, Vineland, has portrayed psychoanalysts or psychotherapists with great derision and contempt. The psychoanalysts are themselves mentally deranged or emotionally insecure and fail to provide psychological help to the characters who are the patients. In the short story "Low-Lands", the main character Dennis Flange is a patient of Geronimo Diaz, an analyst who was "clearly insane" and who gives Flange support through martinis rather than advice (S.L., 58).

Similarly, in The Crying of Lot 49, Oedipa Maas's psychotherapist, Dr. Hilarius is insecure and neurotic and supplies Oedipa, and other typical American housewives, with pills to suppress their problems rather than deal with them. Dr. Eigenvalue, the psychoanalyst/dentist in V. deals with his patients' psychological problems by treating their teeth. These analysts seem to be in need of help themselves rather than in a position to offer help. But their patients, for some reason, feel a dependent need to remain patients.

The psychoanalysts in Pynchon's works are "Freud-substitutes" in that they exemplify several of the problems Pynchon sees in Freudian theory. And in many ways, the psychoanalysts share similar characteristics of the Oedipal father and the father's attempts to dominate the son. The central goal of psychoanalysis is to allow the patient to release unconscious desires which have been repressed. Initially, this role would appear positive, but when these repressed desires are set free, they fall once again under the repressive control of the ego. Discussing psychoanalysis, Lionel Trilling writes:

> The aim of psychoanalysis is the control of the night side of life. It is to strengthen the ego... and to extend the organization of the id. `Where id was' - that is where all the irrational, non-logical, pleasure-seeking dark forces were - `there shall ego be' - that is, intelligence and control. (40-1)

By allowing the repressed unconscious desires or impulses of the patient to be articulated into language, the

psychoanalyst provides the ego with something "concrete" which empowers it to re-repress the desires. Norman O. Brown writes:

> And what is the psychoanalytically conscious ego going to do with its newly discovered desires? Once the limitations of sublimation and the impossibility of rising above the crude life of the instincts are recognized, orthodox psychoanalysis, as a result of its inability to transform itself into social criticism, has to send human desire back into repression again. (152)

Brown also states that psychoanalysis redirects the id or libido from "the macrocosm of the external world" to "the microcosm of the internal world" (151). This redirection parallels the shift from the "universal" (or cosmic) id to the separate and independent ego, which marks the accepted termination of the Oedipal complex.

In The Crying of Lot 49, Dr. Hilarius has a mental break-down and rejects his allegiance to Freud. He then sums up the prevailing attitude in Pynchon's works towards psychoanalysts. When Oedipa Maas approaches him to be talked out of a "fantasy", he replies:

> Cherish it! What else do any of you have? Hold it tightly by its little tentacle, don't let the Freudians coax it away or the pharmacists poison it out of you. Whatever it is, hold it dear, for when you lose it you go over by that much to the others. You begin to cease to be. (138, underlining mine)

Hilarius's comment suggests that Pynchon is familiar with Brown's concept of "Being" mentioned above. "Being" is associated with a connectedness, or a "dialectic" of mind (reality-principle) and body (pleasure-principle) which

avoids the duality necessary for repression. The psychoanalytic desire to eliminate fantasy and other aspects of the pleasure principle reinforces the separation of the id from the "external" and shifts the source of repression from an unconscious to a conscious one.

Pynchon might also have difficulty with the scientific nature of psychoanalytical readings of art. In his essay on "Freud and Literature", Lionel Trilling denounces Freud's reading of art and literature as being singular and exclusive. Trilling agrees that the Oedipus motive is interesting in Hamlet, but he strongly disagrees that it is "the meaning" of Hamlet (48). Trilling sees psychoanalytic readings as too narrow and prejudiced: "We must rather object to the conclusions of Freud and Dr. Jones on the ground that their proponents do not have an adequate conception of what an artistic meaning is. There is no single meaning to any work of art..." (48). Pynchon's reaction against the singularity of Freudian or psychoanalytic meaning is evident in the plurality of meaning and interpretation possible in Gravity's Rainbow. Some critics, such as Brian McHale, see Gravity's Rainbow as a postmodernist text, and as a postmodernist text it can be seen as a reaction against the limited nature of all singular readings of literary texts, including the Freudian. Trilling comments that Freud "confesses to a theoretical indifference to the form of art and restricts himself to its

content. Tone, feeling, style, and the modification that part makes upon the part he does not consider" (47).

Trilling's major disagreement with Freud's treatment of art, however, is Freud's desire to psychoanalyze the artist. Freud believed that art is a projection of the unconscious repressed desires of the artist "wrapped by the author in a dreamlike obscurity" (Trilling, 48). Trilling declares that "research into the mind of the artist is simply not practicable, however legitimate it may theoretically be. That is, the investigation of his unconscious intention as it exists apart from the work itself" (49-50). Information derived from a study of the artist's unconscious is deemed by Trilling as hardly "conclusive or scientific" (50). Pynchon, however, argues that there is a strong connection between the artist's life and his art. In the introduction to Slow Learner, Pynchon outlines the relationship between personal life and 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" (S. L., 21).

Pynchon's reluctance to divulge any information dealing with his life and experience is noteworthy in light of his obvious dislike of psychoanalysts and his declared knowledge of the relationship between personal life and fiction. Pynchon's desire to remain anonymous can be seen as an attempt to avoid personal psychoanalysis, which, as

Trilling suggests, could distract the critic from the more important messages within the text itself. For example, in order to deter psychoanalytic readings, Pynchon makes a disclaimer under the copyright in Vineland: "The characters and events in this book are fictitious. Any similarity to real persons, living or dead, is coincidental and not intended by the author." Vineland is the first of Pynchon's texts to have this disclaimer which suggests a conscious effort to discourage biographical connections. By not providing details about his life, Pynchon eliminates potential psychoanalytic criticism about himself and concentrates the reader's attention on the text itself. But this idea seems to contradict Pynchon's acknowledgement of the connection between personal life and fiction. If Pynchon agrees that one's personal life has nearly everything to do with fiction, then one would think that he would provide more information about himself in order to strengthen the reader's understanding of the text.

A convincing explanation of the contradictory nature of Pynchon's passion for anonymity can be explored by examining how Pynchon's status as author relates to Freud's Oedipal structure. The connection between the Oedipal complex and patterns of influence amongst poets was established by the contemporary American literary critic Harold Bloom in The Anxiety of Influence. Terry Eagleton calls Bloom's influence theory "one of the most daringly

original literary theories of the past decade" (183). Bloom writes: "Poetry is Family Romance. Poetry is the enchantment of incest, disciplined by resistance to that enchantment" (95). As Bloom sees it, all "present" poets (or ephebes) are influenced by the great poets of the "past" (the parent or precursor poets). In order to establish oneself as a great poet, the ephebe must break free from the precursor's influence and create his or her own identity or poetic voice. And this breaking free involves a modification of the parent poet's influence either by a distortion or a transformation of the object of influence (119). Bloom's understanding of the dynamics of influence parallels the Oedipal development of an individual in that the son must free himself from his instinctual relationship with his parents in order to establish his own separate ego.

But Bloom, like Pynchon, sees the negative aspects of this "genealogy of imagination" (139). Quoting Oscar Wilde, Bloom writes:

> Influence is simply a transference of personality, a mode of giving away what is most precious to one's self, and its exercise produces a sense, and, it may be, a reality of loss. Every disciple takes away something from his master. ...
> Because to influence a person is to give him one's own soul. He does not think his natural thoughts, or burn with his natural passions.... He becomes an echo of someone else's music, an actor of a part that has not been written for him. (6)

The ephebes cannot truly establish their own identity because they cannot completely escape the influence of the past: "Reality reduces to the Emersonian Me and Not-Me (my

body and nature), and excludes all others, except insofar as the precursors have become inescapable components of Me" (Bloom, 133). The literature of the past has become inseparable from the literature of the present, or as Bloom writes: "The identity of past and present is at one with the essential identity of all objects. This is Milton's `universe of death' and with it poetry cannot live..." (34). Literature becomes a "universe of death" because nothing "new" can be produced: the ephebe is trapped in a repetition compulsion which Bloom says is "Doom" for the new artist (107).

In The Anxiety of Influence Bloom outlines six stages for the development of the ephebe. But the most important of these stages is the third stage Kenosis or "repetition and discontinuity". According to Bloom, "Discontinuity is freedom" because it enables the ephebe to break from the parent poets (34). Kenosis marks a "movement towards discontinuity with the precursor" which "appears to be an act of self-abnegation" (14, 91). The poetic stage of Kenosis parallels the "undoing" of Freudian (Oedipal) mechanisms because it is by losing the self that the transference of ego is disrupted. By overcoming the precursor or parent, "one asserts that one has overcome oneself" (126). And this loss of self is representative of poetic genius which Bloom, following Blake, calls "Tharmas". Tharmas is "a unifying process making for undivided

consciousness; the innocence, pre-reflexive, of a state without subjects and objects, yet in no danger of solipsism, for it lacked a consciousness of self" (24). But, unfortunately, both Bloom and Freud see this stage only as a part of developmental phase: "Any departure from initial narcissism, according to Freud, leads to the development of the ego, or in our terms, every exercise of a revisionary ratio, away from identification, is the process generally called poetic development" (147).

Pynchon, however, does not progress beyond Bloom's kenosis stage; that is, he refrains from developing an independent ego, or in Gravity's Rainbow one distinguishable poetic voice. Pynchon's failure to provide personal details obscures the reader's ability to detect Pynchon's voice in the novel. Jacqueline Smetak, for example, in "Who's Talking Here: Finding the Voice in Gravity's Rainbow", comments on the difficulty in determining which voice belongs to the author. By avoiding becoming an "ego-centric" writer, Pynchon refuses to separate himself from the "external"; that is, to separate Bloom's "Emersonian Me and Not Me" -- Body and Nature. And by not developing his separate "poetic identity", Pynchon is able to break from the literary parents or precursors.

It is true, however, that Pynchon uses extensively various literary traditions, such as the quest motif, and that his works are saturated with allusions to past writers

and texts. But the obviousness of Pynchon's "literary theft" has decreased since his early short stories, especially "The Small Rain." And even though one can detect sources in Pynchon, it still remains difficult to determine the author's sincere attitude towards these sources. Rather, the reader receives a multitude of perspectives from various characters. Pynchon's avoidance of any authoritative judgements on his sources, or his literary ancestors, allows him to escape from Milton's "universe of death" and the repetition compulsion because he is not repeating or perpetuating anything definite or concrete. In this sense, Pynchon and his postmodern text "undoes" his Oedipal relationship with his parental author figures of the past and especially the modernists.

Postmodernist texts rely on humour, parody, and narrative play to counter the seriousness of high modernists. Norman O. Brown argues that "play" is closely related to the reorganization of "human society and human nature" (34). Brown sees the incorporation of the "spirit of play" into human nature as a "realistic necessity" rather than a "speculative possibility" (34). Play represents a mode of releasing repressed (literary) desires without the suppression of the ego (or the parents or the precursors). Play is associated with the pleasure principle or what Freud would call the "primary process", which is similar to Bloom's "Tharmas". Brown writes: "The artist is the man who

refuses initiation through education into the existing order, remains faithful to his own childhood being [ie. play], and thus becomes a `human being in the spirit of all times, an artist' (67, Brown quoting Rilke, underlining mine).

Postmodernism and play have also been linked in terms of meaning and language. In his discussion of several postmodern writers (Barth, Barthelme, and Robbe-Grillet), Charles Russell writes: "These writers' preoccupation with language, especially with the ceaseless dialectic of assertion and collapse of meaning -- of creation and deconstruction -- generates the self-reflexive linguistic play that has become the primary aesthetic style of our period, the period known as the postmodern" (252, underlining mine). In Gravity's Rainbow, Pynchon exemplifies this postmodern "playful" style in his use of word play and rhyme ("Double-declutchingly, heel-and-toe, away goes Roger Mexico" [626]) and in his frequent undermining of interpretation ("Well, you're wrong, champ - these happen to be towns all located on the borders of Time Zones, is all. Ha, ha! [695]).

Pynchon's play as artist may be seen as a "Bacchanalian revel", embracing what Brown, Bloom, and Nietzsche would call "Dionysian consciousness." Nietzsche's Dionysus represents life -- "complete and immediate" (Brown, 175). Nietzsche focuses on the physical dimension of life

and stresses the element of play with emphasis on the body (Brown, 175). "Dionysian consciousness" is particularly relevant to Pynchon because, as Norman O. Brown indicates, it is equivalent to "psychoanalytical consciousness" which is a "consciousness embracing and affirming instinctual reality" (176). Dionysian consciousness "affirms the dialectical unity of the great instinctual opposites: he [Dionysus] reunifies male and female, Self and Other, life and death" (Brown, 175, underlining mine). But, more importantly, Brown notes that the Dionysian destroys "self-consciousness" (175). By adopting this Dionysian "system" in his fiction, Pynchon is able not only to indulge the instinctual dimension of his writing, but also lose his identity as author and break from the writers of the past. Harold Bloom notes this Dionysian connection between authors. Quoting Nietzsche, Bloom writes: "While the transport of the Dionysiac state, with its suspension of all the ordinary barriers of existence, lasts, it carries with it a Lethean element in which everything that has been experienced by the individual is drowned" (Bloom, 108). The Lethean element of Dionysian consciousness emphasizes its relationship to "psychoanalytical consciousness" because, as stated above, psychoanalysis is an attempt to free the patient from the dead grasp of the past.

As a Dionysian artist, Pynchon has much in common with Tyrone Slothrop of Gravity's Rainbow. Both are

artists - Pynchon is a writer and Slothrop is a harmonica player (the mouth harp). And both Pynchon and Slothrop lose their identity in the novel. Pynchon's voice, as author, is integrated into the text and his postmodern style marks a break from the parental or precursor writers of the past. Slothrop, similarly, is stripped of the albatross of his self and is scattered as in a Bacchanalian festival as his mother watches (G.R., 712). (This establishes a notable parallel between Pynchon, Slothrop, and Orpheus because each exhibits "Dionysian consciousness"). Slothrop, like Pynchon, can only lose his identity by breaking with the past. And Slothrop's break is with fictional parents as Pynchon's is with his literary parent figures. The remainder of this thesis will analyze the function and dynamics of Oedipal structures in Gravity's Rainbow and how the central male characters, or "son figures", must free themselves from the bonds of family and history in order to be able to return to the Dionysian or Primal unity associated with childhood.

CHAPTER 2

THE OEDIPUS COMPLEX IN GRAVITY'S RAINBOW: ROMANCE AND REPRESSION IN THE FAMILY

If Pynchon's postmodernism can be seen as an Oedipal reaction to the parent-writer figures of the past, then it is worthwhile to examine how the Oedipal structure functions in his texts. Many of Pynchon's works revolve around the dynamics of the relationships of the various characters. And the relationships between male and female characters and between child and parent characters are of primary importance. In Gravity's Rainbow the distinction between these two sets of character relationships becomes ambiguous, and certain similarities become apparent. Gravity's Rainbow, on one level, is a study of the detrimental effects of child-parent relationships and how they affect the child's interaction with others in adult life. An Oedipal reading of Gravity's Rainbow also strengthens the connection between Pynchon and Norman O. Brown, for an Oedipal reading further reveals the parallels in their thinking. An examination of the Oedipal complex divulges many similarites between Pynchon and several of Brown's major concepts, such as repression, sexuality, and most importantly, the significance of childhood. Both Brown and Pynchon see

childhood as offering the potential for a return to the "dialectical" unity discussed in the previous chapter. But this unity is threatened and then shattered by the child's relationship with the parents. The parents, via the Oedipal complex, are able to repress the pleasurable dialectical dimension of the child while, simultaneously, introducing the child into the world of work and reality. But the "son figures" in the text attempt to overcome the bonds of the Oedipal complex or parental repression and return to this primal unity associated with childhood.

A study of the function of the Oedipal structure in Gravity's Rainbow necessitates an explanation of the Oedipal complex. Freud believed that the Oedipal complex is central to the development of a personality or self (ego). The Oedipal complex is a psychological process which all males must endure in order to establish their sexual and social orientations. In basic terms, the Oedipal complex involves the sexual attraction of a male child for the mother. The son's sexual fixation on the mother is part of the child's connection with the pleasure-principle: the child's attraction is based on the erotic stimuli given to the child by the mother. But the father is an obstacle in the son's quest for sexual fulfillment with the mother. Because the impedes the son's quest, the son has feelings of jealousy and hatred in the son towards the father. The father represents the reality-principle: he embodies the

social and moral framework of society/civilization. The child realizes the conflict between his pleasure-seeking desire for his mother and the rules of reality presented by his father. And this conflict results in the child's fear and guilt for his actions. Through fear and guilt, the son's jealous hate of his father is inverted and is projected as the father's hatred of the son: "`I hate father' becomes `Father hates me'" (Gleitman, 474). This combination of fear and hate is imagined by the son to be directed towards his masturbational practices and results in "castration anxiety". Eventually, the son "identifies" with the father, realizing that "becoming like him, he will eventually enjoy an erotic partnership of the kind his father enjoys..." (Gleitman, 475). But the Oedipal complex is never quite resolved. Rather the desires and hates are simply repressed:

> According to Freud, the renunciation of the Oedipal problem is accomplished by the repression of all the urges, feelings, and memories of the family drama. One lasting residue is the superego, the internalized voice of the father admonishing his son from within. (Gleitman, 475)

This highly simplified interpretation of the Oedipal structure reveals the basic dynamics of the "family drama" which Pynchon repeats throughout Gravity's Rainbow in many different forms.

Pynchon's use of the Oedipal complex is not limited to one specific set of characters. Most of the characters fit into the categories (or what Jung would call archetypes)

of a "son figure", "mother figure", or "father figure". Because the characters can be seen as "types", they share an abundance of similar traits. Characters can thus "map onto"[1] other characters who possess corresponding characteristics. This use of character repetitions, or "redundancies" as Kathryn Hume calls them, are significant in many ways (108). Brian McHale treats "mappings as a tactic to unsettle our ontological assumptions and analyzes them as a sign of postmodernism" (Hume, 109). Hume, however, believes that repetitions or redundancies are used "for conveying meaning in myth": "It is common to all mythological systems that all important stories recur in several different versions" (108). Hume also points out that the repetition "of main ideas in several different forms make their survival more likely" (27). She adds that "repetition may be a deliberate ploy for intensifying our concern or response, or it may be unconscious, a reflection of the author's private obsessions" (27). The "compulsion to repeat", Freud argues, is linked to an individual's instinctual drive and is an attempt to release repressed instincts or emotions (Civilization and Its Discontents, 77). Repetition allows a patient to go back "to the repressed episodes and to give free vent in speech and

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[1]. The idea of mapping comes from a speech by Leni Pokler in G.R.: "It all goes along together. Parallel, not series. Metaphor. Signs and symptoms. Mapping on to different coordinate systems..." (159).

action to the feelings which were originally kept out of consciousness" (Brill, 9). And this process is called "the process of abreaction" (Brill, 9). By repeating various character types, Pynchon strives towards achieving an "abreaction" in which the son figure is able to release his repressed instincts.

The main protagonists of Gravity's Rainbow can be seen as "Son figures". They are male and several of them -- Slothrop, Roger, Franz, and Gottfried -- are described as being childish or having childish hobbies or interests. All of these characters are associated with dreams, fantasies, or active imaginations. These characters appear to be irresponsible and have seemingly apathetic or passive attitudes to what happens around them. Slothrop meanders through the novel frequently with "not a thought in his head" (626). He submits to "fate" and is directed all over the Zone. He is associated with childish or immature items such as comic books, comic-book heroes, and English tabloids. His sexual endeavors are adolescent, particularly the map of stars which show his successes. Roger, similarly, is called "an erratic self-centered boy" (127), "a little boy" (29), and "innocent as a child" (56). Roger is also associated with immature scenes such as making angels in the snow (57), the alliterative food game (715) and urinating on several IG Farben executives (636). Franz is associated with going to the movies and has a child-like

fascination/obsession with rockets. He believes in a fantasy that the rockets will take him to the moon (410). Gottfried shares this fantasy of going to the moon (723) and his world consists mainly of game playing.

Pynchon's treatment of the son figures and play resembles Norman O. Brown's discussion on play in Life Against Death. Brown sees children as being "free from work, the serious business of life, and the reality principle" (32). The child's ability to play emphasizes the child's relationship to the "pleasure principle": "Play is the essential character of activity governed by the pleasure-principle rather than the reality-principle" (Brown, 32). And, according to Jacob Boehme, play is the "perfect state": "In `play' life expresses itself in its fullness; therefore play as an end means that life itself has intrinsic value..." (Brown quoting Boehme, 33). Because play gives life "intrinsic value", it further distances life from the reality principle and the forces which tend to change play into work. But play is not free from conflict with work (the reality principle). Brown points out that "every ordinary man has tasted the paradise of play in his own childhood. Underneath the habits of work in every man lies the immortal instinct for play" (36). The instinct to play rests, alive, in the unconscious and needs only to be "recovered" by the conscious mind (36). The son figures in Gravity's Rainbow, for example, indulge in play and act

contrary to the work ethic, and this, in part, distinguishes them from the other "adult" figures in the text.

But childhood play has an important negative dimension as well. The longer the child remains isolated in the pleasure-principle, the more severe the shock of the reality-principle will be in the future[2]. Both Brown and Freud note that humans possess the unique characteristic of prolonging the infancy of their children which leads to passive "dependence" . Brown outlines the consequences of prolonged infancy:

> On the one hand, infancy is protected from the harshness of reality by parental care; it represents a period of privileged irresponsibility and freedom from the domination of the reality-principle.... On the other hand, the infant's objective dependence on parental, especially maternal care promotes a dependent attitude toward reality and inculcates a passive (dependent) need to be loved... This psychological vulnerability is subsequently exploited to extract submission to social authority and to the reality-principle in general.
>
> (24-5, underlining mine)

This lengthy quotation outlines how the child's initial relationship with the pleasure-principle can be used later to coerce the child to submit to the reality-principle. Social and familial authority figures manipulate the child's need to be dependent on external forces. But, unfortunately, this new dependence on the reality-principle

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[2]. This point is further developed in the following chapter with respect to the Oedipal complex and its relation to the death instinct.

breaks the natural bond between mother and child and replaces it with an artifical social and moral bond between "reality" and child. The acceptence of or dependence on the reality-principle marks the split from the "Brownian dialectic" discussed in the previous chapter.

Brown sees early childhood as the "hope for humanity" because it represents the period when dualistic opposites are combined in a dialectical unity (84, 110). According to Brown, there is, in infancy, a "pre-ambivalent" stage when there is no the ambivalence (or conflict) between instincts (and between the pleasure-principle and the reality-principle). Brown asserts that "in the child the conscious and the unconscious are not yet separated" (23). The "pre-ambivalent" stage remains in the adult's unconscious which results in a fixation to that stage. "And", Brown submits, "the fixation to that first pre-ambivalent experience commits mankind to the unconscious project of overcoming the instinctual ambivalence... and of restoring the unity of opposites that existed in childhood... (85). But Brown understands that "the history of childhood is the history of an organism caught in an ever widening sequence of dualism which it vainly seeks to overcome, till the end, after a climatic struggle, it acknowledges defeat and acquiesces in its own permanent impairment" (116).

The climatic struggle which Brown discusses can be

interpreted as the struggle between adult genital organization and "polymorphous perversity." Brown notes that adult sexuality is focused in one central location or that it concentrates on only one of the many "erotic potentialities" of the human body (27). But children "explore in indiscriminate and anarchistic fashion all the erotic potentialities" associated with the human body (27). Polymorphous perversity strengthens the connection between children and pre-ambivalent stage of infancy because there is no sexual organization in the human body: the entire body is unified in its receptiveness to sexual pleasure. In Gravity's Rainbow, Slothrop has a polymorphous perverse experience: during a sexual encounter with Trudi, Slothrop has a "nasal erection" (439). Slothrop's body loses its traditional genital concentration, and pleasure envelops his entire body: "Trudi is kissing him into an amazing comfort, it's an open house in here, no favoured senses or organs, all are equally at play..." (439, underlining mine). Polymorphous perversity can be seen as sexual "play" and is associated with the infant's "sexual" relationship with its mother: the central source of sexual gratification for the child is the mother. The child's entire body becomes an erogenous zone to the stimulation of the mother. But this child-mother relationship is temporary because it conflicts with the reality principle or what is socially and morally acceptable.

The result of the conflict between the child's polymorphous perverse relationship with its mother and the traditional sexual organization of the adult is a forced separation of the child from the mother. And in Gravity's Rainbow, most of the son figures are described as alone or isolated from the other characters. Tantivy is able to see the "extent of Slothrop's isolation. He seemed to have no one else in London... to talk to about anything" (22-3). Roger points out how he does not fit in with other members of PISCES (58) and Jessica, on the first day they met, "saw his loneliness" (57). Franz is "alone" after Leni leaves him (161) much like Gottfried after Katje leaves Blicero (103). This childhood isolation is also echoed in several of the children's myths or fairy tales alluded to in the novel. Otto Rank sees fairy tales as "psychological play" which are designed to adjust children to "the separation from their mothers" (22-3). Dorothy from The Wizard of Oz, Carroll's Alice, and Hansel and Gretel are all children who have been abandoned or betrayed by their parents or who encounter fantasy lands apart from their parents. But these children's myths are significant for other reasons. Hume notes:

> A number of Slothrop's analogues are heroes and heroines from tales enjoyed by children and adolescents. The common denominator of these stories is their Freudian content: all embody fantasies that allow young audiences to deal with aggressive feelings towards their parents and other authority figures. (158)

The use of displacement in these children's stories to redirect socially unacceptable behaviour (both aggressive and sexaul) into acceptable forms underlies the relationships which the main protagonists experience in the novel.

Many of the women introduced in Gravity's Rainbow share common maternal characteristics which suggest that they are some form of a displacement for the "mother." By involving themselves sexually with these women, the male characters are attempting to satisfy, or rather release, their repressed Oedipal desires for their own mothers. Jessica, for example, can be seen as one of these mother figure archetypes. Jessica frequently refers to Roger as a child, both in appearance and maturity. She knits Roger a red scarf (86). Jessica feels the maternal need to protect Roger: she "knows she can never protect him as much as she must" (58). And like the mother figure, Jessica (and Scorpia Mossmoon) is already involved with another man. Jeremy (and Clive) is a father figure, against whom Roger (and Pirate) must compete for the affections of the mother.

As with their own mothers, the son figures regard their relationship with the mother figure as a refuge or escape from the outside world. Jessica becomes Roger's meaning for living and a haven from the war: she could love death away (126). Franz believes that Leni "would carry him on her back to a place where Destiny couldn't reach" (162).

Katje comes to represent a "womb" where Slothrop can return for security and comfort: after making love under the red table-cloth the narrating voice says "it's so cozy and just as red as a womb in here..." (198). The "womb-like" atmosphere of these relationships is important because, as psycho-theorist Otto Rank indicates, children have an unconscious desire to "return into the darkness of the mother's womb" (Mullahy, 169): by experiencing sexual intercourse with the mother figure, the son figure's penis acts as an umbilical cord leading back to the womb (Rank, 20, n.2). The attachment and physical necessity of the relationships between the son figures and the mother figures parallels the protection and dependence associated with the mother's womb (Mullahy, 171). Jessica is described as "the British warm that protects his [Roger's] stooping shoulders, and the wintering sparrow he holds inside his hands" (177)[3].

But what is puzzling about the mother figures in Gravity's Rainbow is that they are described as looking like little children. Roger thinks Jessica should belong to the "girl guides" (39) and later the narrating voice remarks: "she looks only 9 or 10" (122). We learn that Leni has a "daydreaming child's face" (156) and later, as

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[3]. The image of Roger and the sparrow is reminiscent of Callisto and the "small bird" in Pynchon's short story "Entropy". Callisto is much like the son figures in Gravity's Rainbow in that he "abodes" in an isolated "womb-like" environment: "Hermetically sealed, it was a tiny enclave of regularity in the city's chaos" (Slow Learner, 83).

Solange, she is "a child brought to visit the weird pig in his cave" (603). Geli Tripping is described as having "child's eyes", "baby fingers", and a "four year old's smile" (291). Katje is introduced as a Gretel figure in the demented version of the Hansel and Gretel myth[4]. Slothrop has an obsession for "child-women": " He knows he's vulnerable, more than he should be, to little girls..." (463). The obsession for sexual encounters with children is significant especially in light of this statement by Freud: "...obsessive acts fall more and more under the sway of the instinct and approach nearer and nearer to the activity which was originally prohibited" (Totem and Taboo, 30). If this is true, then the son figure's obsession for sexual relationships with children, something which is repressed by society, may be seen as an attempt to uncover the repressed sexual desire for the mother. By engaging in sexual activity with a child, the son figure may be restaging the sexual encounter which "should" have occurred between the mother and himself as a child. This idea is strengthened by the fact that the children or "child-like" women involved in this sexual activity possess maternal qualities and can be seen as mother figures: Ilse and Bianca offer to take care of Franz and Slothrop (430, 470). Furthermore, there

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[4]. It is important to note that the first sections of the novel focus on relationships between men and women who look like children. In the later sections, however, the women in the central male-female relationships of the novel are actual children (Ilse, Bianca).

is an actual inter-familial sexual relationship between Ilse and Bianca and Franz and Slothrop who are portrayed as the fathers of these young girls[5].

But, as Erich Fromm indicates, "an older man falls in love with a young girl... because she is free from all motherly features and as long as she is infatuated with him the man has the illusion of having escaped his dependence on the mother figure" (Fromm, 30). This idea would suggest that through sexual encounters with little girls, the son figures are attempting to escape Oedipal guilt by repressing their Oedipal attraction towards the mother even further. By looking for satisfactory relationships with young children, the son figures avoid confronting or acknowledging their Oedipal guilt and thus remain under the control of the Oedipal structure.

Although the "son" figures are successful in establishing (or re-establishing) relationships with the "mother" figures in the text, they are unable to sustain these bonds. And in most of the cases, the mother figure betrays the son figure. Jessica leaves Roger to be with Jeremy; Scorpia leaves Pirate to be with Clive; Leni leaves Franz to be with Peter; Katje leaves Slothrop (and Gottfried); and even Geli betrays Slothrop for it was she

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[5]. The connection between Franz and Ilse is obvious, but the one between Slothrop and Bianca is not so clear. Greta Erdmann believes that the real father of Bianca is Max Schlepzig, which just happens to be the false identity given to Slothrop by Saure Bummer.

who "first sent word of his presence in the Zone" (391). After his break-up with Jessica, Roger says: "Ah, this must be what they mean by the `pain of separation'" (630). Roger's phrase "the pain of separation" is strickingly similar to a phrase in Otto Rank's work The Trauma of Birth (1929): "the primal trauma of separation". Rank associated birth with the "feeling of the loss of connection with the mother" (Mullahy, 179). The dissolution of the relationships in the novel, similarly, involve the loss of the protected "womb-like" environment connected with the mother figure. The separation from the female character is a repetition of the separation from the mother at birth. Many of the relationships can be seen as both an attempt to return to the mother figure and a repetition of the separation from the mother at birth. This separation at birth might also provide an explanation of the excessive (or obsessive) use of the word "shivering" throughout the text. Most of all the characters, male and female, at one time are associated with shivering. Pynchon's use of "shivering" is reminiscent of Snowden's refrain "I'm cold" in Joseph Heller's Catch 22 which emphasizes the "coldness" of the outside world. This shivering of separation emphasizes the isolation or loneliness which is associated with the "son" figures mentioned above.

The majority of the sons' attempts to return to the womb fail. But perhaps this failure is for the better

because several of the mother figures are described as having dead or deadening centers. Milton Gloaming notices Jessica's dart playing abilities: "A hiss of air, whack: into the sticky fibres, into the dead center. Milton Gloaming cocks an eyebrow. His mind, always gathering correspondences, thinks it has found a new one" (31). Gloaming's connection of Jessica with the "dead center" of the dart board parallels the narrating voice's mentioning that inside Katje "is corruption and ashes" (94). Similarly, Nora Dodson-Truck "has taken a little more of the Zero inside herself" (150). And Leni remarks that "the pure light of the zero comes nearer" (159). If the mother's center or "womb" is associated with "the zero" or with death and decay, then the son's return to the womb of these mothers will result in his own personal death. Gottfried's installment into the rocket is described as "the womb into which Gottfried returns" (750) and it is this return which results in his death[6].

Slothrop, like Gottfried, has return-to-the-womb experiences. While having sex with Bianca, Slothrop imagines himself inside his penis, penetrating into Bianca. Otto Rank's perception of intercourse is very similar: "For

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[6]. Gottfried's "coupling" with the rocket is also described in terms of a marriage. Gleitman points out that a common aspiration of the male child is the desire to actually marry the mother (475). The Rocket represents a "technological mother figure" which parallels the inanimateness of the other mother figures in the text. This will be discussed in the following chapter.

the man, penetrating into the vaginal opening, undoubtedly signifies a partial return to the womb, which by identification with the penis known as a symbol for a child becomes not only a complete but also infantile return" (39). The language used in the Slothrop-Bianca passage parallels the language used to describe Gottfried and the rocket lift-off: "his sperm roaring louder and louder, getting ready to erupt...he's helpless here in this exploding emprise...red flesh echoing ... an extraordinary sense of waiting to rise" (470)[7]. The "red flesh" is reminiscent of the red tablecloth, under which Slothrop has sex with Katje and the red scarf that Jessica knits for Roger. Soon after this experience Slothrop has another "womb encounter". According to Lawrence Kappel, Slothrop's return to the ellipse of Test Stand VII, which Kappel sees as the birthplace of the rocket, is another return to the womb. Kappel writes: "Slothrop is the penis entering the vagina, the sperm bombarding the egg, the body returning to earth" (Kappel, 246-7). Although Kappel's idea appears absurd, the test stand is referred to as "a holy center" (508) (as opposed to the "dead center" of Jessica), and it is at this point we learn of Slothrop's scattering: "Slothrop, as noted, at least as early as the Anubis era [his sexual encounter with Bianca], has begun to thin, to scatter" (509). Slothrop's

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[7]. Kathryn Hume also notes this connection between Gottfried and Slothrop (112).

scattering, however, is different from Gottfried's destruction/scattering in the rocket and these differences between the scatterings will be discussed in the following chapter.

The mother figure's ability to betray the son figure suggests a conspiratorial relationship with the father figure in the Oedipal plot to kill the son. The mother is no longer an archetypal "warming, protecting, nourishing entity" (Mullahy, 150), but rather, is now a part of the conniving, plotting force out to infiltrate the son figure's psyche. Slothrop's mother's name, Nalline, for example, "is the proprietary name of a pharmaceutical product, Nalorphine, once widely employed in police work as a diagnostic test for the presence of opiates, especially heroin, in a suspect's blood" (Weisenburger, 24). Weisenburger's interpretation of Nalline's name concurs with Leni's belief that mothers, "[are] the policemen of the soul..." (219). Mothers are able to penetrate and work "under the surface" of their children. Leni, who is a real mother, similarly "has talked to psychiatrists, she knows about the German male at puberty" (161). Other mothers appear in the text in many similar contexts. Marvy's Mothers pursue Slothrop all over the zone (287); Otto Gnahb reveals that there is "Mother Conspiracy" which unites all Mothers and allows them to exchange "key phrases to use on their children" (505).

But what is noteworthy about this negative interpretation of mothers is that the mothers themselves are being controlled. The drug Nalorphine is used by the police. Leni's policemen of the soul are a "civil-service category, Mothers work for Them!" (219, underlining Pynchon's). The "State" runs the Mother of the Year competitions and Major Marvy and his Mothers work for the American Rocket Appropriation Program. Other mother figures, such as Jessica and Katje, are also manipulated by or receive orders from an outside source: Pointsman plots to remove Jessica from Roger and he uses Katje to gain control over Slothrop. The replacement of the maternal archetypal mother by the betraying conspiratorial mother represents the "masculinization" of the mother figure which is one reason for the "terrible" state of the "Oedipal situation in the Zone these days" (747).

The shift from the maternal archetypal mother to the betraying, conspiratorial mother demonstrates the control which the father figures in the text are able to exert over them. Many of the father figures in this text, as in the Oedipal structure, are presented as "villains" and are "serious as death": "It is this typical American teenager's own Father, trying episode after episode to kill his son" (674, underlining Pynchon's). Broderick Slothrop is "just a murderin' fool" (674) who sells his son to Laszlo Jamf and Lyle Bland in exchange for Tyrone's education (286). Some

of the other father figures in the text are Pointsman, Jamf, Bland, and Blicero/Weissman. Like Broderick, Pointsman pursues Slothrop with the underlying intention of killing or castrating the son figure: "We may finally have to starve, terrorize, I don't know... it needn't come to that" (90). Blicero/Weissman, similarly, orchestrates Gottfried's death by sending him up in the rocket. And Blicero/Weissman comments that "Father are carriers of the virus of Death, and the sons are the infected" (723)[8].

Pointsman's quest to castrate Slothrop underlies the majority of the text and exemplifies a crucial component of the Oedipal complex. The castration complex marks the "final" stage of Oedipal repression because once the son figure admits "castration anxiety", he has allowed a complete separation from the mother. If the penis represents an umbilical cord returning to the mother's womb, then the threat of its removal represents the loss of possible connection with the mother. And it is this loss of connection with the mother which Norman O. Brown sees as the essential stage in the formation of the central dualities in childhood: "the castration complex establishes as absolute dualities the self and the other, the dualities

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[8]. Blicero/Weissman is a problematic figure in the Oedipal structure because he is both a mother and father figure due to his sexual orientation. He is described as the "bringer of death" father and as the caring nurturing mother: he is seen "beckoning the child Gottfried with a motherly or eager to educate look" (759).

which infantile narcissism has sought to overcome" (129). By accepting this initial duality, the child also accepts the social and moral principles which constitute the "need" for the castration complex. Brown notes that the castration complex is "the mechanism which transforms the infant's dependent love of his parents into the adult's dependent love of social, religious, and moral authority" (119). Pointsman's attempts to castrate Slothrop can thus be seen as attempts to make Slothrop accept society and the reality principle. Slothrop, however, escapes castration and therefore retains the potent possibility of a "return" to the mother.

The son figures' relationships with the father figures in Gravity's Rainbow are not developed to the same degree as the son figures's relationships with the mother figure. Instead, the father figure remains a forbidding presence which looms in the background of the novel's events as they unfold. The father figures in the text do not share the ambivalent dual-sided archetypal characteristics of the mother which results in a consistent presentation of their dark natures. And it is this single dimension of the majority of the father figures that aids Pynchon in establishing a symbolic connection between the father and society. Pynchon (and Freud and Brown) links the authoritative and repressive nature of the family with the authoritative and repressive nature of society or

civilization. If civilization, or what Pynchon would call the Empire, can be seen as the "Father", then an Oedipal reading of civilization must also be viable. The following chapter investigates society and history from an Oedipal perspective and examines how Pynchon has incorporated this psycho-social dimension in his text.

CHAPTER 3

THE OEDIPUS COMPLEX IN GRAVITY'S RAINBOW: THE PSYCHO-SEXUALITY OF SOCIETY

In Gravity's Rainbow, society and civilization come to represent the persecuting father in an enlarged social version of the Oedipal structure. Assuming the roles of the authority figures, society and morality adopt the repressive characteristic of the father in the family. Freud and Brown see striking parallels between the development of the family and the formation of civilization. They also note how the role of the individual is similar in both the family and society. Civilization, as father, acts as the barrier separating the son (the individual) from establishing a physical union with the Primal mother who in this enlarged version represents Mother Nature or a "natural existence." The separation from the maternal dimension of life, or matriarchal consciousness, is the loss of the unified vision of the interconnectedness of Being. And Pynchon sees the reunion of the son with this archetypal or universal mother as the necessary step in breaking from the patriarchal repression of the societal fathers. The reunion of the individual with Mother Nature requires an appreciation and acceptance of his or her

natural instincts, both the life instinct and death instinct. And the reunion with the primal mother also requires the loss of the distinction between self and Other created by the father with the formation of the ego. In order to lose the self, the son must endure a break with History so that he will be able to live entirely for the moment, or in the "Now".

The previous chapter illustrated how the mother figures and son figures in Gravity's Rainbow are controlled by psychological or social powers. But the father figures also share a similar "domination" because they too are controlled by outside forces. The actions and motivations of the evil fathers in the text (Pointsman, Blicero/Weissman, and even Broderick) are, to some degree, manipulated by something which is not clearly defined in the novel. The father figures in the text thus can be seen as son figures to a greater "father figure" called society/civilization/ history/technology/Them/The Empire -- the forces and systems which separate Man from Mother nature. The parental father and the societal father share similar characteristics: "it is the father as Law who comes between the mother and child to sever the psychic umbilical, establishing society, and subsequently, identity" (Ancona, 19). The Empire and the War are described as forces which need "to divide this way, and subdivide..." and want "a machine of many separate parts, not oneness" (G.R., 130-1).

Laurence Kappel says that these societal father figures are "modern reality" which "persecutes and represses eros" (232): "...it is the doing of this white European love-repressing, manipulating, death culture, its history, sociology, politics, economics, science, arts, technology that we call "reality" (233). "This is", Kappel continues, "a culture created for the sole control by evil fathers" (233). In Totem and Taboo, Freud explains that our entire civilization is based on the two taboos which underlie the Oedipal structure: incest and murder. Freud writes: "the beginnings of religion, morals, society, and art converge in the Oedipus complex" (156). And, as Kappel indicates, this society or civilization controlled by evil fathers is one of repression and of death.

But this civilization is also one which represses death itself. Norman O. Brown sees mankind's inability to accept death as part of life as leading to the repression of Thanatz (the death instinct). The repression of the death instinct and the Oedipal complex are intimately related. Brown, interpreting Freud, sees the Oedipal complex as the son's attempts "to become the father of himself" (118). Brown asserts that the "flight from death underlies both the religion of immortality and the economic institution of hereditary property" (107). Brown follows by quoting Nietzsche: "`I want heirs... I want children, I do not want myself'" (107). Later, Brown writes:

> The adult flight from death - the immortality promised in all religions, the immortality of familial corporations, the immortality of cultural achievements -perpetuates the Oedipal project of becoming father of oneself: adult sublimation continues the Oedipal project. (127)

Francesco Ancona sees immortality as a "masculine conception" which the son figure pursues in his attempts to "identify" with the father (2). Ancona interprets the need for an identification with the father as a "revolt against death": "Through identification with the father, the son seeks to cheat death by perpetuating the self eternally, avoiding a return to the oneness of the pre-Oedipal mother" (2-3).

The "masculine" creation of the self, or what becomes the "soul" in Christian terminology, results in the "etherealization - in Freud's terminology, desexualization - of the Oedipal project": "Thus man acquires a soul distinct from his body, and a superorganic culture which perpetuates the revolt against organic dependence on the mother (Brown, 128). The etherealization or desexualization of the Oedipal instincts dissociates man from his body, which, in turn, results in the repression and neglect of the body. Ancona, following Brown, perceives the connection between the formation of the "soul" and the repression of the death instinct. He writes: "...man bequeaths himself a soul. That is he sublimates, denying the body and its sexuality to avoid its mortality... Ironically, man gives up life to escape death; he denies his body in favour of embracing a

soul he does not possess" (3). Thus man represses both the life instinct and the death instinct in exchange for a hope for an eternal life. This sentiment is echoed in Gravity's Rainbow: "But this is all the impersonation of life. The real movement is not from death to any rebirth. It is from death to death-transfigured" (166).

The "eternal life" hoped for by the repression of the death instinct is History. Brown sees history as the product of the repression of the instincts present in childhood (93). History is a "forward-moving recherche du temps perdu" in that the individual is always looking for the past in the future: "repression generates historical time by generating an instinct-determined fixation to the repressed past [primarily the Oedipal project], and thus setting a forward-moving dialectic which is at the same time an effort to recover the past" (92, 93, 103). Historical time is "characteristically a human mode of becoming" (104). In other words, the individual is continually striving for completion in the future by returning to the past of a pre-Oedipal childhood which is a period free from repression. Brown notes that time (and history) is a human construction and is a psychological attempt at controlling human perceptions about death and immortality: "...time is a psychological, not an ontological, problem and therefore a problem for psychoanalysis" (94). Psychoanalysis, then, offers the opportunity for a return to a state beyond time,

a state of "Being" rather than "Becoming".

Brown argues, however, that children live in a reality which is free from the workings of time and history. He suggests that if consciousness was not hindered by repression (or what is now the unconscious), then consciousness "would not be in time but in eternity" (94). And Brown links "eternity" with childhood: "...eternity seems to be the time in which childhood lives" (94). Brown remarks that "eternity is the mode of play" because play is "not generated by want or defect" and is therefore "purposeless" (96). Following Freud, Brown notes that the "instinctual processes" of the id and the pleasure-principle are "timeless": "In the id there is nothing corresponding to the idea of time" (94, Brown quoting Freud's Beyond the Pleasure Principle, 33). "Eternity" for Brown "is a way of envisaging mankind's liberation from the neurotic obsession with the past and future, it is a way of living in the present" (108). And this liberation is only possible through the abolishment of repression and the reunification of Life and Death: "The reunification of Life and Death can be envisioned only as the end of the historical process" (Brown, 91)[1].

The onset of the Oedipal structure illustrates the division, or the dualism, of the life instinct and the death

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[1]. The connection between the son figures in the text and "eternity" and timelessness is developed later in this chapter.

instinct. The child's love for the mother is differentiated from the child's aggression towards the father. The aggressiveness towards the father demonstrates the projection of the death instinct from the self to the Other. Brown writes that aggression is "the result of an extroversion of the death instinct, the desire to die, being transformed into the desire to kill, destroy, dominate" (102). According to Freud, the primary aggressive act is the first act of violence against "the primal Father" (Totem and Taboo, 141-3). And it is this act of aggression against the primal father which is the "great event with which civilization began" (T+T, 145). The murder of the primal father prompts the primal sons to recognize the need for social organization to plot the killing of the father and to prevent the uprising of another tyrant king. The killing of the primal father, then, unites the psychological Oedipal complex and the social development of society.

The connection between the psychological constitution of the individual and the political and moral constitution of society is an integral component in understanding Pynchon's use of the Oedipal structure. In both Totem and Taboo and Civilization and its Discontents, Freud explores the parallels of the development of the individual and society:

> When we look at the relation between the process of human civilization and the development or educative process of individual human beings, we shall conclude without much hesitation that the two are

> very similar in nature, if not the very same process applied to different kinds of object. (Civ., 104)

Similarly, Brown perceives that "parenthood implies family organization of some sort or another, and that family organization is the nucleus of all social organization" (24). The family represents the "level where social and natural institutions are truly joined" and might, "in the fullness of time, produce the antinomy between Master and Slave and the institution of the State" (Brown, 124-5). By using the family structure, especially in terms of the Oedipal pattern, the parents and the "founding fathers" of (patriarchal) societies are able to establish a repressive system from which it is almost impossible to break.

And like the Oedipal structure, the patriarchal system is something which is continually being passed on from generation to generation. In Freud's description of the Oedipal structure, the complex is reconciled through an "identification" of the son with the father. Norman O. Brown writes: "it is by making this identification with his parents that the child absorbs and makes his their own moral standards..." (41). Unfortunately, what is also perpetuated through this identification is submission to repression. The Oedipal complex reflects the continual psychological bequest of submission:

> The fathers have no power today and never did, but because 40 years ago we could not kill them, we are condemned now to the same passivity, the same masochist fantasies they cherished in secret, and worse, we are condemned in our own weakness to

> impersonate men of power our own infant children must hate, and wish to usurp the place of and fail....
> (G.R., 747, underlining Pynchon's)

It is important to note that this pattern of bequeathed masochism does not apply only to the male characters in the text. Greta Erdmann, for example, changes from masochist to sadist when she is in the company of her daughter: the narrating voice ponders "where's the old masochist and monument Slothrop knew back in Berlin?" (466). Greta's sadism conditions Bianca into being a masochist herself. This conditioning paralles the Oedipal conditioning by Jamf which Slothrop endures. Slothrop fears that he will be "equated" with Jamf: under "JAMF" in a dictionary of technical German Slothrop fears that "The definition would read I" (287). Lawrence Wolfley clearly outlines the connection between Slothrop's conditioning and the Oedipal structure: "Jamf's conditioning of the infant Tyrone functions as a metaphor for the Oedipal mechanism: a curse that dates from his unconscious childhood, which he cannot escape and of which he is not even aware and that impels him toward compulsion and retributive genital contacts" (882). Slothrop's Oedipal conditioning also emerges during his first sexual encounter with Greta. Slothrop has previously learned, through his sado-masochistic relationship with his parents, the sadistic techniques which he employs on Greta: he realizes "somebody has already educated him" (396).

The conditioning of individual children, Slothrop

and Bianca, is symbolic of the societal conditioning which the patriarchal Empire practises on the population. Discussing Brown's influence on Pynchon, Lawrence Wolfley notes that "individual man represses himself in the name of deferred gratifications and, through the institutions of society, collaborates in a condition of general repression. Repression of the self precedes social repression" (875). The dominating power of the father and the dominating power of the patriarchy become almost synonymous in Thanatz's Sado-anarchism: "`I tell you, if S and M could be established universally, at the family level, the State would whither away'" (G.R., 737). The Empire uses the Oedipal structure in order to instill submission and masochism in the next generation. The children of the future are born into a society based on submission and death. This is exemplified by Thomas Gwenhidwy's, a co-owner of The Book, remark that the "`ba-bies born during this Blitz are al-so following a Poisson distribution'" (173). The pattern of the births correspond to Slothrop's map of successes and to the location of rocket strikes. The babies can thus be seen as a product of submission which is associated with death, both sexual and technological.

The Empire, through technology, redefines the relationship between nature and child: "the Rocket was an entire system won, away from the feminine darkness, held against the entropies of lovable but scatterbrained Mother

Nature" (324, underlining Pynchon's, bold mine). It is this "system" of identification which has lead Roger to believe that his "mother is the War" (39). This technological mother which They are trying to get the children to desire is a mother associated with death, rather than life. Gottfried's union with his mother the rocket exemplifies this death union (750). If Lawerence Kappel's theory about the parabola at Test Stand VII being a vagina is taken seriously (see previous chapter), then the parabola of the rocket trajectory can be seen as another technological representation of a vagina. After Katje's discussion of the rocket attacks in London, the narrating voice continues:

> It is the parabola. They must have guessed, once or twice - guessed and refused to believe - that everything, always, collectively, had been moving toward that purified shape latent in the sky, that shape of no surprise, no second chances, no return. Yet they do move forever under it, reserved for its own black and white bad news certainly as if it were the Rainbow, and they its children...
> (209, underlining mine)

The Rainbow is the "natural" parabola and the dialectical opposite of the parabola of the rocket. And it is this natural parabola which is associated with Mother Nature and with Life: "Slothrop sees a very thick rainbow here, a stout rainbow cock driven down out of pubic clouds into Earth, green wet valleyed Earth, and his chest fills and he stands crying, not a thing in his head, just feeling natural...." (626). This rainbow is a myriad of colour in contrast to the "black and white bad news" of the rocket

parabola. Slothrop's "vision" of the rainbow sexually connecting with the Earth parallels his own sexual connection with Bianca Erdmann. As her last name suggests, Bianca is associated with the earth (erd) and Slothrop, as Max Schlepzig, is associated with "something sky" (395). Slothrop's union with Bianca and his witnessing of the primal union of the rainbow and the Earth enable Slothrop to return to a "natural" system repressed by the technological systems of the Empire. It is important to note that after Slothrop's witnessing of the rainbow union, he does not appear directly in the "present" of the novel. Rather, Slothrop has finally scattered and has become lost in Nature and in the novel.

Slothrop's return to nature is a symbolic return to the womb of Mother Nature. He is able to converse with the trees (553) and frolic with the animals: "...he likes to spend whole days naked, ants crawling up his legs, butterflies lighting on his shoulders, watching the life on the mountain, getting to know shrikes and capercaillie, badgers and marmots" (623). Slothrop appreciates that the "Earth is a living critter... with a body and a psyche" which makes one "feel like a <u>child</u> again" (590, underlining mine). Slothrop's union with mother nature can be seen as a union with the "primal" or "pre-Oedipal" mother. Vera von der Heydt outlines the characteristics of the pre-Oedipal mother or "mother archetype", which parallel many of the

"mother associations", both real and symbolic, that appear in Gravity's Rainbow. Von der Heydt writes:

> Mother is the bearer of new life and the birth-giver: as image she remains forever the world of origin, of timelessness, the womb to which one would return for warmth and security and fulfillment; she is the earth in which one would sleep. Mother's timelessness is nature's rhythm in which birth and death alternate. ...Mother represents the unconscious, the instinctive side of life... (133, underlining mine)

Von der Hedyt's description of the archetypal mother parallels many of the psychoanalytic mother principles mentioned by Freud, Brown, and Pynchon.

Slothrop's return to nature is also a return to what Erich Neumann, following Jung, would call "matriarchal consciousness"[2]. Neumann describes matriarchal consciousness as being a "wisdom relating to the indissoluble and paradoxical unity of life and death, of nature and spirit, to the laws of time and fate, of growth, of death and death's overcoming" (56). Neumann notes that masculinity (or "patriarchal consciousness"), with its attachment to the ego and to consciousness, has broken the relationship between nature and matriarchal consciousness

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[2]. Neumann's work on "matriarchal consciousness" is found in an essay titled "The Moon and Matriarchal Consciousness" (1950). The connection between the moon and matriarchal consciousness is important, especially in terms of the son figures. Most all of the son figures and children in the text express a desire to go to the moon as a means of escape from the patriarchal world in which they live. The relationship between the moon and the son figures strengthens the connection between the son figures and the characteristics of matriarchal consciousness outlined in the following paragraph.

(53). Matriarchal consciousness is what constitutes the unconscious, and offers the possibility of "totality" and "wholeness" (58) without the aid of the ego: "matriarchal consciousness reflects unconscious processes, sums them up, and guides itself by them; that is, it behaves more or less passively, without willed ego-intentions" (53). The revelations or "processes of cognition" of matriarchal consciousness stand in direct opposition to those of patriarchal consciousness: Neumann believes "it is an inner possession, realized and assimilated by the personality but not easily discussed, for the inner experience behind it is scarcelly capable of adequate verbal expression and can hardly be transmitted to anyone..." (54). The elusiveness or inarticulateness of matriarchal knowledge conflicts with the "patriarchal" demands for concrete explanation expressed in language. Pynchon's critique of "naming" and "The Word" suggests an awareness of the matriarchal consciousness and a rejection of patriarchal systems which attempt to repress it.

Patriarchal consciousness is, as noted above, aligned with civilization and society: the forces which separate child from mother and instill in the child an independent ego. But Freud, in Civilization and Its Discontents, remarks that the ego once possessed a unity with the external world which is reminiscent of Neumann's matriarchal consciousness. Freud writes:

> Originally the ego includes everything, later it separates off an external world from itself. Our present ego-feeling is, therefore, only a shrunken residue of a much more inclusive - indeed, an all-embracing - feeling which corresponded to a more intimate bond between the ego and the world about it. (15)

This feeling is also described as "limitless", "unbounded", a "sensation of eternity", and "oceanic" (11). Freud's oceanic feeling represents a "bond with the universe" and "makes no distinction between the self and surrounding world" (Civ.,15, L.A.D., ix).

The term "oceanic feeling" is important to note because of the multitude of "sea" references in Gravity's Rainbow. For example, Reg Le Froyd (Freud) escapes from the White Visitation and rushes to the edge of the sea (73). Froyd is "related, by blood, to the sea" and is only "visiting his relatives" (73). Froyd's return to his relative the sea may be interpreted as another symbolic return to the mother's womb: both are dark and fluid places. Similarly, Roger's mother, the war, is associated with water terminology: she is described as having "washed [Roger's mineral grave-marker self] all moaning away on her gray tide" (39)[3]. Like Ursula the Lemming, various characters

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[3]. The most powerful connection between the sea and the mother comes in Pynchon's short story "Low-Lands": "... 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 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

are drawn towards their mothers' wombs (the sea) in hopes of a union with them, and thus a return to the "oceanic feeling" of oneness with the world[4]. But, like Ursula the Lemming, this "natural" instinct can be diverted or extinguished.

Slothrop's union with Mother nature is accompanied by a loss of selfhood. By returning to the primal mother, Slothrop overcomes the independent ego established by the Oedipal structure and castration anxiety. Francesco Ancona writes: "Succinctly, what pre-Oedipal maternal dependence represents is a return to the oneness of self and other; thus, to embrace the pre-Oedipal mother is to give up the self. Essentially, to give up the self is to accept death" (2). It must be made clear that the self or independent ego is not truly independent because the son's ego is a remodeling of the father's through the process of identification. The creation of the self represents an attempt "to become independent of the totality conceived as

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earth - is the true mother image for us all" (Slow Learner, 59). But in Gravity's Rainbow, it is both the sea and the earth which is the "symbolic" Mother.

[4]. Several critics have compared Pynchon's Gravity's Rainbow to Melville's Moby Dick (Woodhead, 1, n.1). The return to the unifying sea is strikingly reminiscent of the opening chapter of Moby Dick in which Ishmael comments on the attraction of people with the water: "But look! here comes more crowds, pacing straight for the water, and seemingly bound for a dive. Strange! Nothing will content them but the extremest limit of the land...Inlanders all, they come form lanes and alleys, streets and avenues -north, east, south, and west. Yet here they all unite" (94).

a mother-principle" (Brown, 130). Brown is quoting Jacob Boehme when he writes: "Every will which enters into self-hood and seeks the ground of its life-form (sc. in itself) breaks itself off from the mystery and enters into a capriciousness" (130). Brown continues:

> According to Boehme, this fall into self-hood, Adam's fall is a fall from eternity into time, and therefore the beginning of human history; it is also the moment when Adam ceased to play and started to work. In Freudian terminology, the castration complex represses infantile sexuality and inaugurates sublimation. (130, underling mine)

In Gravity's Rainbow, Slothrop's independent self is dissolved as he becomes part of his surroundings: the albatross of Slothrop's self/ego is plucked ("Plucked, hell-stripped" 712) and scattered all over the zone.

In order for the self to be liberated, it must be freed from history or as Brown states: "historical consciousness" must be transformed into "psychoanalytical consciousness" (19). Brown writes that the "grip of the dead hand of the past on life in the present" must be loosened so that "man would be able to live instead of make history... and to enter that state of Being..." (19). The Empire uses the Oedipal structure in order to establish "a fixation to the past, which alienates [the son figure] from the present and commits him to the unconscious quest of the past in the future" (Brown, 92). Brown would argue that the Oedipal state is perpetually a state of "Becoming" rather than that of Being (19). Slothrop is able to Be when

he dissolves his self by narrowing his "temporal bandwidth":

> "Temporal bandwidth" is the width of your present, your now.... The more you dwell in the past and in the future, the thicker your bandwidth, the more solid your persona. But the narrower your sense of Now, the more tenuous you are. It may get to where you're having trouble remembering what you were doing five minutes ago, or even - as Slothrop now - what you're doing here. (509)

Earlier, Slothrop echoes the temporal bandwidth theory when he says to Katje: "it don't matter where you've been, let's not live in the past, right now's all there is" (214). And by the end of the novel Slothrop cannot even recall his parents' religion: "It's getting harder and harder to remember either of them, as Broderick progresses into Pernicious Pop and Nalline into ssshhhghhh" (682)[5]. Slothrop's ability to live entirely in the "Now" enables him to escape the repressions placed on him as a child -- the repressions used by the Empire for Their domination and control.

Roger, similarly, realizes the need for a dissociation with the past and future. Jessica, as mother substitute, offers Roger the possibility of breaking from history and reuniting with the "Now":

> His life had been tied to the past. He'd seen himself a point on a moving wavelength, propagating through sterile history - a known past, a projectable future. But Jessica was the breaking of the wave. Suddenly, there was a beach, the unpredictable...new life. Past and future stopped at the beach... (126)

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[5]. Weisenburger on "ssshhhghhh": "The word was doubtless Shekhinah, the black symbol of maternal punishment and death in Hebrew and Kabbalistic mythology" (286).

This quotation reiterates not only the connection between the mother figure and water, but also the language of the passage describing Slothrop's "temporal bandwidth". This passage also associates the "Now" with unpredictability and randomness. In his discussion with Pointsman concerning cause and effect, the narrating voice notes about Roger: "Innocent as a child, perhaps unaware - perhaps - that in his play he wrecks the elegant rooms of history... What if Mexico's whole generation have turned out like this? Will Postwar be nothing but "events", newly created one moment to the next? No links? Is it the end of history?" (56, underlining mine). As mentioned earlier, "play" in Norman O. Brown is linked with "eternity" which is a release from the bonds of history and a reunion with the pleasure-principle. Although Roger does not scatter at the end of the text, he, instead, actively subverts "the Empire" through his playful alliterative food game (715-717). But Roger, in a sense, does lose his self, like Slothrop, in that he is last seen soft-shoeing out the door of Krupp's party with Pig Bodine. His future is not projected and Krupp's party is simply an "event" in his life.

Although Slothrop (and Roger perhaps) can rid himself of the albatross of his parents and achieve a oneness with the primal mother, other characters are not so fortunate. Blicero/Weissman acts as the father figure which his "children" (Enzian, Katje, and Gottfried) are unable to

forget. Enzian says Blicero/Weissman "is an old self, a dear albatross I cannot let go" (661). Gottfried, too, cannot let go of the albatross of Blicero/Weissman and submits to his "father" and to a technological death with a technological mother. Many of the children figures have difficulties breaking from their parents because they start accepting the parental domination. Or as Wolfley says: "The slaves love their chains" (878). Byron the bulb, for example, starts "enjoying" his passivity and submission to the lightbulb cartel (655). Gottfried concedes to the domination of the Empire because he feels the same reliance and dependence on his new technological mothers as he did with his natural mothers. The Empire strives for the son figures to seek "oneness" with their new mothers in order to ensure their passivity and complacency.

Pynchon sees the majority of the characters in the novel locked in a sterile or technological Oedipal structure. Not only has the Empire conditioned man to be submissive and masochistic, but They have also transfigured the object of man's psycho-sexual drives into something unnatural. Through the Oedipal structure, They are able to control the Egos and selves of the next generation who will, in turn, control the Egos of the future generations. Pynchon is aware of the perpetuation of the pattern of repression and submission and perceives the need to break this pattern. By dissolving the self, in relation to memory

and history, the individual frees him\herself from parental and societal repression and is able to unite once again with the natural systems that were lost with the formation of the Ego.

CONCLUSION

It is difficult and detrimental to isolate one aspect of a Pynchon novel and examine it separately, for his ideas are intricately woven together like an elaborate tapestry: all threads are necessary for the complete picture. By isolating one aspect, such as the psychoanalytic aspect, the holistic quality of Pynchon's work is shattered. There is an inherent contradiction in this study, however, in that a single theory is used to profess that critics must not limit themselves to single theories, but rather they must attempt to perceive all theories and their interconnectedness simultaneously.

This thesis is lacking in that it focuses solely on a psychoanalytic reading of Gravity's Rainbow. A brief examination of the connections of the psychoanalytic reading and other literary readings would have strengthened the overall impact of the conclusions of this argument. It would be useful in a future study to explore the connections between the conclusions derived from this thesis with those derived from a feminist reading and those derived from a mythographic reading. These specific three readings share many similarities and an examination of the parallels between them would further reveal the interconnectedness of Pynchon's artistic vision.

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