

PYNCHON: PRINCE OF PARANOIA

(STRUCTURE AS THEME AND FORM
IN GRAVITY'S RAINBOW)

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ABSTRACT

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STRUCTURE AS THEME AND FORM IN GRAVITY'S RAINBOW

The study of Structure as a multilevel theme within the narrative of Gravity's Rainbow, culminating in implications concerning the structure of the novel itself, forms the basis of this thesis. The Introduction employs Bergson's philosophy to establish and exemplify the conflict between a formless, flowing spatiotemporal reality and the Mind's proclivity to freeze that reality in static, timeless forms. Zeno's paradox of motion in time/space is posed as a tableau of the central theme: Man's desire to Structure and control a universe which moves towards its own eventual destruction and Man's personal demise.

The chapters following then examine the nature of Structure, developing the idea from the particular sense of a social system, to the universal sense of the Mind's active perception of the world. This is particularly illustrated in the theme of paranoia which is defined as the twentieth-century's outgrowth of the Puritan effort to understand and control Death. Simultaneously, the idea that a structural evolution eventually leads to its own dissolution is advanced and illustrated by the thematic development of the novel.

The conclusion of the thesis attempts to establish that the theme of the plot line supports a more universal meditation by the author about the nature of Metaphor and its relation to Structure, paranoia, and dissolution. The author directs the Structure of his novel toward

its own de-structure even as he suggests that the reader exists within Zeno's tableau of impending destruction. The final result is an eradication of the boundary between Metaphor and reality. This is regarded as the natural outcome of the aesthetic and mental processes which must point beyond the limitations of their own nature.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER I	INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER II	THE STRUCTURE OF THE MARKET	33
CHAPTER III	THE STRUCTURE OF THE ROCKET	50
CHAPTER IV	THE STRUCTURE OF PARANOIA	70
CHAPTER V	THE STRUCTURE OF STRUCTURE	100
CHAPTER VI	THE STRUCTURE OF METAPHOR	140
BIBLIOGRAPHY		154

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Zeno was the first paranoid. His second paradox, formulated by the figures of Achilles and the tortoise, poses a philosophical question about the nature of time and space. Although Achilles may run ten times as fast as the tortoise, he will never surpass the prodding creature's head start. For every unit of space which Achilles occupies, the tortoise will always be a tenth of that unit ahead: 10 1 1/10 1/100 1/1000.... Zeno's logic calmly decimates the reality of movement. The line of action becomes a series of dots or periods that sever the extension of space. Aristotle briefly dismissed the argument, practically ignoring it for its absurdity. Twenty centuries later, Borges fastened onto this absurdity as an intimation of the nature of the world as a vast hallucination. And Bergson, extending his reputation as the first philosopher to take TIME seriously, expended vast energy on a refutation of Zeno's little tale. The beholder, it seems, mirrors his own self in response to Zeno. But what of Zeno himself? Could he calmly escape the consequences of his own logic, like Johnson refuting Berkeley, by stepping forward in physical space and kicking the tortoise? Or was he perhaps revealing the landscape of the Mind? When can the conscious Mind catch up with its own consciousness? When can the self, which is thinking of its Self, unite with this reflection to form a unified being? Or is the nature of the Mind like the mountain and the lake? Always the reality on the horizon, and the symbolic image near at hand, yet shimmering in distortion and undulating in fragmentation at the slightest attempt of the hand to grasp, the net to entrap. The game becomes one of the Watcher and the Watched, with consciousness always ruled

by the realization of its own limitations and driven by the desire to see beyond the horizon of its ability. It sees itself trapped within the arena; it knows itself to be the spectator of itself -- the actor -- yet the actor can never look up into the glare of the lights to see the ~~actor~~ spectator face-to-face. But ~~if~~ he could...? Consider Einsteinian space. The curve of the universe bends light back to its source. It would be as if one suddenly saw oneself standing in front of one's Self -- perhaps the ultimate fear. This fear is transmogrified into that elusive presence within, which can never be embodied. This sense of conscience and the God above who rewards and punishes forms the basis of the Christian religion. As we shall see, Pynchon employs the Puritan vision of the world, embodied in the doctrine of preterition, as a foundation for the paranoia which grips the twentieth-century psyche. The Puritan is ever vigilant for some sign of his personal salvation even as he faces the threat of Death, the reminder of his personal sinfulness. The contemporary American similarly faces a cosmos which may present contradictory signs concerning the nature of life and the enigma of death.

In an attempt to establish a firm basis of rational objectivity from which the Mind may contemplate the world, Wittgenstein constructs a philosophy of decimal point precision.

5.631 There is no such thing as the subject that thinks or entertains ideas.
If I wrote a book called The World as I found it, I would have to include a report on my body, and should have to say which parts were subordinate to my will, and which were not, etc., this being a method of isolating the subject, or rather of showing that in an important sense there is no subject; for it alone could not be mentioned in that book.--

5.632 The subject does not belong to the world: rather it is a limit of the world.

5.633 Where in the world is a metaphysical subject to be found?

You will say that this is exactly like the case of the eye and the visual field. But really you do not see the eye.

And nothing in the visual field allows you to infer that it is seen by an eye.

5.6331 For the form of the visual field is surely not like this

Eye - 

5.634 This is connected with the fact that no part of our experience is at the same time a priori.

Whatever we see could be other than it is.

Whatever we can describe at all could be other than it is.

There is no a priori order of things.

5.64 Here it can be seen that solipsism, when its implications are followed out strictly, coincides with pure realism.

The self of solipsism shrinks to a point without extension, and there remains the reality co-ordinated with it. 1

Wittgenstein's pinpoint precision shrinks the Self to the speck of solipsism which is equated with realism. The world becomes the Self and again the seeds of paranoia are sown. The world one perceives is only the world one knows or creates. What of the world beyond oneself?² As we shall see later in a more detailed examination of the structure of paranoia, the paranoid perceives that everything in the world around him is connected, but he can never finally resolve the relationship of these connections. Instead, he can only see that the system he is bound by seems to be a structure which ultimately is governed by the principle

1. Ludwig Wittgenstein, Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus (London, 1961), p. 117.

2. See Max Black, A Companion to Wittgenstein's 'Tractatus' (Cornell University Press, 1964), p. 310, whose notes numbered "(3)" and "5.64" do much to explain Wittgenstein's meaning.

4

of entropy. As the second law of thermodynamics, entropy refers to the gradual uniformity of heat distribution throughout the universe, and this would be the point of cold, motionless death. As a metaphor in Pynchon's previous works, entropy is related to human social systems.³ In our examination we shall more particularly relate entropy to personal human death effected by the natural movement of both the elemental universe and human social structures toward their own eventual destruction. The nature of the enigma which follows will be expanded upon. The nature of life in the universe is an evolutionary movement toward structure which is eventually destructured. Therefore movement, which represents life, also signals death. The meta-structure of life and death becomes the threat of the universe which creates the paranoid, i.e., one who senses a controlling organization beyond his ken that is plotting his death.⁴ The paranoid, in this particular case Slothrop, attempts to escape via immobility, only to discover that immobility itself is the end-purpose of entropy. On the one hand, movement is expressed in a space/time configuration which draws toward its own demise. On the other hand, immobility attempts to establish a transcendent sphere beyond space/time and in so doing denies that spatiotemporal movement which gives life to the world. The paranoid vision, which encompasses both movement and immobility, may be figured in Zeno's first paradox of the arrow and the target. In Zeno's dramatic construction, the arrow

3. See Joseph W. Slade, Thomas Pynchon (New York, 1974) especially Chapter I, "Entropy and Other Calamities".

4. This may be taken on several levels. The organization threatens Slothrop; the bodily processes control the individual; the universe overwhelms Man.

is always getting closer to the target. There is an eternal movement in which the arrow is always about to strike home. But at the same time that movement, as it is divided into more and more discrete parts, is infinitely arrested. This is the paranoid experience. The victim is targeted for impending destruction. But the destruction is always about to be experienced. If the destruction did occur, then the paranoid would not be a paranoid, for his fear would be confirmed. Rather, the state of paranoia demands the frozen movement, the crest of a dark force which is just about to overwhelm. This immobile mobility is embodied in the "immobile rocket" in Gravity's Rainbow: "the Perfect Rocket is still up there, still descending." (p. 426) This is the outcome of a technology founded upon a universe which is atomized by mathematics and the cinema. As we shall consider presently, Bergson specifically relates the impulse in both philosophy and science to separate time from space and freeze into discrete, measurable units what he terms the "flux" of the universe. He specifically exemplifies this impulse with modern cinema, which imprisons reality into a 35 millimeter frame of stop-action, and then argues that the mind itself employs the cinematic technique in an attempt to understand reality. We shall apply this line of thought to Pynchon's use of cinema and attempt to relate it to the paranoid's attempt to escape or control the universe which flows about him.

Finally the relationship between paranoia and the Mind's perception of space/time will lead to a consideration of the nature of symbolism. In terms of either the Puritan's Biblical typology or the paranoid's apprehensive pathology, the world is a sign which must be destroyed in

order to reveal the true reality. Similarly the artist fabricates a symbolism which, unless it is sacrificed, can only impede the true vision. The enigma, then of a structure created to be de-structured will ultimately be presented not only by the theme, but indeed the very form of Gravity's Rainbow itself. As a novelist, Pynchon employs such traditional themes as the quest for the self and the confrontation with Death as elements which lead to an examination of the relationship between Metaphor and reality. In the tradition of Poe and Melville, Pynchon engages Metaphor as a gateway to a revelation which cannot be described; the metaphoric world must disintegrate in fearful hope of a world beyond. The hero, Slothrop, and indeed the novel itself, disintegrate at the end. But this act of destruction on Pynchon's part is an attempt to explode the limitations of his own craft.

The problem of metaphor which Pynchon invokes, especially as he manifests it with the mathematical symbols which he employs in Gravity's Rainbow, has received particular attention from Henri Bergson in his Creative Evolution. The French philosopher, as he outlines the etiology of both the ancient and the modern conception of the ideas of action, time, and space, both implicitly and explicitly evokes a scheme of elements which figure heavily in Pynchon's novel.

Bergson attempts to define the underlying framework of human perception, the "natural metaphor of the human intellect",⁵ by which the mind constructs the reality of time and space. He finds a natural

5. Henri Bergson, Creative Evolution (London, 1928), p. 344. Subsequent references, except where noted, will refer to this edition and will appear in parenthesis within the text.

7.
but erroneous tendency on the part of human perception, the "cinematographical tendency", which replaces the continuity of the stream of temporal change with a series of unchangeable forms, much like the individual pictures on a spool of film. The mind tends to freeze reality into solidly defined frames which are then viewed as the essential form of life. These forms may be captured with a static system of symbols which suggest, by manipulation of the forms, the essential dynamic of life. But ironically this artificial suggestion of movement, separated from the actual form of life, denies the acceptance of change as the inseparable expression of the life of reality, which cannot be divided into object and movement.

Such is the first proceeding of our thought: it dissociates each change into two elements -- the one stable, definable for each particular case, to wit, the Form; the other indefinable and always the same, Change in general. And such, also, is the essential operation of language. Forms are all that it is capable of expressing. It is reduced to taking as understood or is limited to suggesting a mobility which, just because it is always unexpressed, is thought to remain in all cases the same.-- Then comes in a philosophy that holds the dissociation thus effected by thought and language to be legitimate. What can it do, except objectify the distinction with more force, push it to its consequences, reduce it into a system? It will therefore construct the real, on the one hand, with definite Forms or immutable elements, and, on the other, with a principle of mobility which, being the negation of the form, will by the hypothesis, escape all definition and be the purely indeterminate.
(pp. 344-345)

The consequences of this philosophy, as Bergson demonstrates, is the division of the world into Form and Change. Form is delineated into pure concepts which ascend above the sensible world and inter-react on a "universal" level. Change descends into the realm of "non-being", vanishing from human perception in the sense that it is regarded as an ephemeral quality of human existence. Such is the point of view of

ancient philosophy. Bergson uses the example of the falling body. It was characterized as "...a movement downward; it was the tendency toward a centre; it was the natural movement of a body which, separated from the earth to which it belonged, was now going to find its place again." (p. 348). Thus the ancients were interested in the resting place, the actualization achieved. This culmination point that which actually defined the reality, was the transcendent and eternal idea. "For the ancients, indeed, time is theoretically negligible, because the duration of a thing only manifests the degradation of its essence: it is with this motionless essence that science has to deal." (p. 363). Ancient science, then, viewed the world as a mere outline or shadow sign of an ideal realm wherein change did not exist. Bergson contrasts this interpretation with what he considers modern science, beginning with Galileo:

We may formulate it (the difference) by saying that ancient science thinks it knows its object sufficiently when it has noted of it some privileged moments, whereas modern science considers the object at any moment whatever. (p. 349)

Thus since Galileo the science of gravity is "that which will determine, for any moment of time, whatever, the position of the body in space."

(p. 349) There is no privileged moment, but rather each moment of the action of the body in space is equal to any other moment. No one moment defines the essence of the action, or we may say that any one moment is of no consequence, except in relation to another moment and only if we establish a relationship of significance and change for that particular instance.

The demand of such a science is for a system of signs far more precise than the language of philosophy and the result is a description

of the world which is now quantitative rather than qualitative. Abstractly stated, this may seem to affect us but little. However if we consider that the image of the cosmos which science gives us effectively establishes the universal boundary of our thinking habits and creates an internal solar system of values and laws based on models of space and time, then there might be pause for reconsideration. Simply read Genesis as a primitive scientific text of the nature of the world and then consider how we would relate the story of human genesis today. The contemporary scientific symbol system would diagram a different field theory of the relationship between cosmos and chaos. As Bergson points out, contemporary science multiplies

....the number of moments that it isolates, but it always isolates moments. As to what happens in the interval between moments, science is no more concerned with that than are our common intelligence, our senses and our language: it does not bear on the interval, but only on the extremities. So the cinematographical method forces itself upon our science, as it did already on that of the ancients. (p. 348)

Thus the more precise science of the modern age likewise removes itself from the reality of the object of examination. The ancients telescoped past the event of reality and fled to an ideal ultramontane state of pure Being. The moderns microscope the molecule of reality into discrete atoms whose individual nature deny the holistic activity of the reality.

It is significant that when Bergson exemplifies this, he employs not an object but rather an event -- the gallop of a horse:

Of the gallop of a horse our eye perceives chiefly a characteristic, essential or rather schematic attitude, a form that appears to radiate over a whole period and so fill up a time of gallop. It is this attitude that sculpture has fixed on the frieze of the Parthenon. But instantaneous photography isolates any moment; it puts them all in the same rank, and thus the gallop of a horse spreads out for it into

as many successive attitudes as it wishes, instead of massing itself into a single attitude, which is supposed to flash out in a privileged moment and to illuminate a whole period." (p. 351)

As opposed to the frozen attitude of the frieze and the collective attitudes of photography, Bergson proposes the "flux of duration", and calls for the creation of a "second kind of knowledge". This new approach would set aside the cinematographical method of ancient and modern science which is symptomatic of the "most cherished habits" of the perceptual processes of the mind.

The first kind of knowledge (ancient and modern science) has the advantage of enabling us to foresee the future and of making us in some measure masters of events; in return, it retains of the moving reality only eventual immobilities, that is to say, views taken of it by our mind. It symbolizes the real and transposes it into the human rather than express it. (p. 362)

But Bergson would have us advance beyond symbol to reality itself.

We should no longer be asking where a moving body will be, what shape a system will take, through what state a change will pass at a given moment: the moments of time, which are only arrests of our attention, would no longer exist; it is the flow of time, it is the very flux of the real that we should be trying to follow. (p. 362)

According to Bergson's interpretation, the proclivity of the mind, as expressed in the established method of knowledge, is toward a mastering of events, rather than a following or merging into the flux. Indeed, by identifying reality as "event" and "flux", the assumption is that any summation of reality via a transcendent principle outside of the flow of events, as expressed in ancient science, is just as destructive of the nature of reality as contemporary science's attempt to freeze reality into a series of immobilities. But this, of course, is the very nature of the symbolic process, as Bergson himself illustrates.

Modern, like ancient, science proceeds according to the cinematographical method. It cannot do otherwise; all science is subject to this law. For it is of the essence of science to handle signs, which it substitutes for the objects themselves. These signs undoubtedly differ from those of language by their greater precision and their higher efficacy; they are none the less tied down to the general condition of the sign, which is to denote a fixed aspect of the reality under an arrested form. In order to think movement, a constantly renewed effort of the mind is necessary. Signs are made to dispense us with this effort by substituting, for the moving continuity of things, an artificial reconstruction which is its equivalent in practice and has the advantage of being easily handled. (p. 347)

And the purpose of this manipulation is to facilitate the essential utilitarian objective of science: "...to enlarge our influence over things." (p. 348) This propensity toward mastery is illustrated in the history of science.

Modern science is the daughter of astronomy; it has come down from heaven to earth along the inclined plane of Galileo, for it is through Galileo that Newton and his successors are connected with Kepler. Now, how did the astronomical problem present itself to Kepler? The question was, knowing the respective positions of the planets at a given moment, how to calculate their positions at any other moment. So the same question presented itself, henceforth, for every material system. Each material point became a rudimentary planet, and the main question, the ideal problem whose solution would yield the key to all the others was, the positions of these elements at a particular moment being given, how to determine their relative positions at any moment. (p. 354)

This "new kind of knowledge" which Bergson proposes, however, is "practically useless" in so far as it denies control of reality via a symbolic structure:

"...it will not extend our empire over nature, it will even go against certain natural aspirations of the intellect; but, if it succeeds, it is reality itself that it will hold in a firm and final embrace." (p. 362)

Bergson's implication then is that the "mobility of being" (his definition of "reality") cannot be captured or mastered within a system, for then its

very essence will be destroyed. It may, however, be embraced, i.e., the intellect must install itself within the mobility. It must abandon its habit of considering transition as a series of possible stops. Duration must be perceived as the essence. This is difficult since the Mind expresses itself in language (mathematical and linguistic) and the structured formalism of language weaves reality into a logical format of definitions with a perceived end in view. Bergson also seems to imply, if we may consider language to be the "natural" expression of the Mind, that the Mind's ordinary mode of perception is in fact one grand illusion. The Mind, as it remembers, juxtaposes past experience, which now exists as dead and frozen items, in an idealized space where a pattern may be formed. It then persuades itself that the duration to come likewise exists in the same mode. Thus it views the future as already existent, "rolled up, already painted on the canvas." Such an illusion, Bergson admits, is ineradicable and will last as long as the human Mind. (pp. 360-361) The Mind, in effect, is identified with system building and illusion fabrication. Mentation either confines and destroys reality within a set of symbols, or projects its symbol-set onto the world screen and accepts its own projection as reality. The assumption then is that the Mind is a solipistic, involuted universe which cannot perceive the fluxing multiverse which surrounds it. Or perhaps there are vague intimations of perception which impel man to strive vainly toward this outer world in the hope of capturing it. Such a tragic vision, if it may be so labeled, is even apparent in quantum physics and field theory, as exemplified by Heisenberg's principle of indeterminacy. For although mathematicians may schematize

reality in relatively simplified cases, it can never fully calculate the movement and position of all particles in a field. Perhaps it can be clearly stated by the paradox of field theory. In order to determine a particle's relative position in a field, it must be frozen in its movement, but thus stripped of its essential velocity, it disintegrates. Or one may plot the velocity of a particle, but then one cannot pinpoint its exact position. Despite this, there is a movement toward the final revelation, which can never be achieved:

....it is enough for us to know that these elements might be known, that their present positions might be noted, and that a superhuman intellect might, by submitting these data to mathematical operations, determine the positions of the elements at any other moment of time. This conviction is at the bottom of the questions we put to ourselves on the subject of nature, and of the methods we employ to solve them. That is why every law in static form seems to us as a provisional instalment or as a particular view of a dynamic law which alone would give us whole and definitive knowledge. (pp. 354-355)

But still, how may one define this universe of duration which persists in escaping the net of man's mind? And if one cannot simply juxtapose objects, then what terms and examples might give us some intimation of this universe of flux which exists beyond our static perceptions? When is Time not a series of points on an interval which can simply be lengthened and altered? How can one perceive an event in nature so as to perfectly embrace its form and its duration? The example supplied is that of an artist who creates a painting such that time is part and parcel of his work.

To contract or to dilate it would be to modify both the psychical evolution that fills it and the invention which is its goal. The time taken up by the invention is one with the invention itself. It is the progress of a thought which is changing in the degree and measure that it is taking form. It is a vital process, something like the ripening of an idea.

The painter is before his canvas, the colors are on the palette, the model is sitting -- all this we see, and also we know the painter's style: do we foresee what will appear on the canvas? We possess the elements of the problem; we know in an abstract way, how it will be solved, for the portrait will surely resemble the model and will surely resemble also the artist; but the concrete solution brings with it that unforeseeable nothing which is everything in a work of art. And it is this nothing that takes time. Nought as matter, it creates itself as form. The sprouting and flowering of this form are stretched out on an unshrinkable duration, which is one with their essence. So of the works of nature. Their nobility arises from an internal impetus which is progress or succession, which confers on succession a peculiar virtue or which owes to succession the whole of its virtue -- which, at any rate, makes succession, or continuity of interpenetration in time, irreducible to a mere instantaneous juxtaposition in space. This is why the idea of reading in a present state of the material universe the future of living forms, and of unfolding now their history yet to come, involves a veritable absurdity." (pp. 359-360)

Perhaps Bergson's thought could be summarized thus: The past exists, but only as an already invented, dead form. It does not presently partake of life and creation. Likewise the future does not yet exist, even as a conceived possibility, for the possible is still not yet the real. Both "past" and "future" are mere mental juxtapositions of lifeless symbols. It is the present only, the continuous interpenetration of time and form, that is the real. It is the stream that is the real, that is life, and which flows continuously past the bridges of system and thought erected and suspended by the mind.

The frustration in reading Bergson is that he proposes and discusses a mode of experiencing reality while informing the reader that this mode of thinking lies beyond the ordinary perception of the individual. For how can one intelligently consider the nature of "time-invention" and the "interpenetration of time and form" unless there is an example or experience at hand? Thus it is significant that when Bergson does employ an example of his abstraction, it is in terms of

the creation of a work of art. But still, this example is not precise enough as an object-metaphor, and Bergson seems to unconsciously remark as much in his example of the gallop of the horse, when he is discussing ancient and modern science. He mentions that the horse's gallop has been treated in two distinct yet not essentially different ways. In one instance, an "attitude" of the gallop has been fixed in a frieze on the Parthenon. Here the Mind, in his criticism, transcends the actual event and denies time with its vision of the ideal world. The other possibility is to isolate the individual moments by instantaneous photography. The result would be a collected series of frozen moments negating time.⁶ But we could consider a good photograph much like the frieze as a captured attitude which transcends (denies) time, the essence of reality. So a work of art may also be relegated, like any symbol system, to a mere bridge over the stream of life. But when Bergson speaks of the painting example, he defines it as a "vital process" and speaks of the artist in the act of creating or inventing. The idea of a finished product, in terms of either the life experience or the aesthetic experience, is a denial of the actual reality of the process. For just as the river defines itself not by its end (the ocean) but rather by its flow, so too life itself is its own end and experience. Thus the microscopic vision which dissects reality finds no true answer to the question of reality and the telescopic vision dissolves reality by

6. Duchamp's Nude Descending a Staircase is such a collection of frozen moments as is a reel of film. The painting attempts to create a transcendent experience outside of time while the film creates cinematic time, a temporal order relative to the expression of events within the film.

searching beyond it. Both lose that-which-is by attempting to schematize or freeze into a mental formulation that which is an ever self-renewing form. The end-product of art, like the end-product of science, seems to be an attempt at an "answer". But, as already stated, science cannot arrive at a final formula. Wittgenstein states it this way:

6.5 "When the answer cannot be put into words, neither can the question be put into words. The riddle does not exist.
If a question can be formed at all, it is also possible to answer it.

6.52 We feel that even when all possible scientific questions have been answered, the problems of life remain completely untouched. Of course there are no questions left, and this itself is the answer.

6.521 The solution of the problem of life is seen in the vanishing of the problem.

6.522 There are, indeed, things that cannot be put into words. They make themselves manifest. They are what is mystical.

And art must be distinguished from science. The end product must not be viewed as a formulation or statement which resolves a problem, states a solution, or even captures and expresses the reality. The emphasis must rather be on the aesthetic experience which, as such, must be paradoxical in nature. As Borges defines it, this experience is the "...imminence of a revelation that is not yet produced...."⁸ The form of the statement suggests terms of question and answer, for this is the natural linguistic form. But the content of that statement suggests a manifestation which is ongoing in time itself, the experience which is

7. Wittgenstein, pp. 149, 151.

8. Jorge Luis Borges, Other Inquisitions 1937-1952 (New York, 1966), p. 4.

the unfolding of time itself. A graphic illustration would be the statue of Venus de Milo. Various theories have been put forth to explain why a damaged statue with missing limbs can give birth to an aesthetic experience. One theory even suggests that the mind automatically assigns the missing limbs to the statue and thus completes it in an ethereal world of pure perfection. No theory employs the words "amputee" or "monster" although in a strict physical sense that is a proper description. Instead the mind leaps beyond the logical sensation to embrace a new sensation. The paradox of that work of art is the same paradox which perhaps appears as a dilemma in Bergson's writing. The linguistic form, as Wittgenstein intimates, will not permit the exposition of an experience which does not conform to the syntax of discrete parts. Thus Bergson cannot fully define in language his idea of "intuition". He can only point to a work of art as a more revealing sign of what he means. But the work of art in itself is only and still a sign pointing yet beyond. And at the edge of logical experience and exploration there is only the abyss of silence. Bergson would have us leap from the symbol and take flight into reality. Rather than have us standing on a conceptual bridge arching the river of Time, he would have us salmoning forth in the stream of embracing experience.

Pynchon is pursuing the ineffable and he squarely attacks the problem of leaping from symbol to reality. This aesthetic problem, however, has always figured as part of the American literary scene, although perhaps expressed as other than an aesthetic problem, for it is a problem of mentation, the experience of existence.⁹ It is manifested as the roots of the American dream via the writings of Melville, Hawthorne, and Poe, and even in these writers we can see that the dream is a nightmare; the pursuit leads to destruction; the pursuer becomes the pursued.

Charles Olson in his masterwork, Call Me Ishmael, immediately exposes the psyche of America:

I take SPACE to be the central fact to man born in America, from Folsom cave to now. I spell it large because it comes large here. Large and without mercy.¹⁰

It is Manifest Destiny that the nation is to stretch from sea to sea and that the mountains and the prairies are to be conquered. The conception of space, the conquest of space, informs the American psyche.

Some men ride on such space, other have to fasten themselves like a tent stake to survive. As I see it Poe dug in and Melville mounted. They are the alternatives.¹¹

Pynchon combines these alternatives as he both spans and dives. Like Poe, Pynchon pictures space as a threat which can overwhelm. Thus one must plunge into the objective security of the Mind which assumes that it can master the universe by reason. And like Melville, Pynchon envisions space as the demon challenge which can be fought in its own

9. See Charles Feidelson, Jr., Symbolism and American Literature (University of Chicago Press, 1966), especially Chapter III, "An American Tradition", which outlines the tradition founded upon the Puritan attempt to simplify the Catholic tradition of the concomitant symbolic structure of language and reality.

10. Charles Olson, Call Me Ishmael (London, 1967), p. 15.

11. Ibid., p. 15.

element. In both cases space, in order to be conquered, must be grasped. But although it is irrefutably there, it insists on remaining invisible, like the wind. As Ahab complains:

'Would now the wind but had a body; but all the things that most exasperate and outrage mortal man, all these things are bodiless....¹²

Such human exasperation kindles Bergson's philosophical attempt to stave off the Mind's desire to grasp the mobility which has no mobile, the expression of life in time. But even Bergson admits that the Mind will not or cannot change its habit of representing life spatially by demanding perceivable forms. Such forms then occupy human attention and, as in Ahab's case, become the agents responsible for the human situation. "...all these things are bodiless as objects, not as agents."¹³

The frustration is further complicated in that the magnificence which is manifested -- be it the continental sweep or the majestic white whale -- not only flaunts its own independence, but further suggests that it may be a mere external agent of an inscrutable force forever beyond Man.

"Hark ye yet again, --the little lower layer. All visible objects, man, are but as pasteboard masks. But in each event-- in the living act, the undoubted deed --there, some unknown but still reasoning thing puts forth the mouldings of its features from behind the unreasoning mask. If man will strike, strike through the mask! How can the prisoner reach outside except by thrusting through the wall? To me, the white whale is that wall, shoved near to me. Sometimes I think there's naught beyond. But 'tis enough. He tasks me; he heaps me; I see in him outrageous strength, with an inscrutable malice sinewing it. That inscrutable thing is chiefly what I hate; and be the white whale agent, or be the white whale principal, I will wreak that hate upon him."¹⁴

12. Herman Melville, Moby-Dick or The Whale (Boston, 1956), p. 424.

13. Ibid., p. 424.

14. Ibid., p. 139.

It is the silence of existence which Ahab strikes out against. He must know and to know he must conquer and possess fully. Nature, as the outside world, must be fully subjected to Man.

To Melville it was not the will to be free but the will to overwhelm nature that lies at the bottom of us as individuals and a people. Ahab is no democrat. Moby-Dick, antagonist, is only king of natural force, resource.¹⁵

But this desire to overwhelm Nature can only result in a loss of the balance of Nature which in turn assures Man of his own destruction.

Ishmael recognized that what Ahab was pursuing was more than the whale, more even than whatever force the whale might represent. Ahab was pursuing the utter inscrutability of his own human nature and what he recognized as his destiny. His pursuit was fired by the secret hatred that the dark mystery resided within his own blood; that which he wished to conquer was himself. The result, as D.H. Lawrence acknowledges, is destruction of the race.

Doom.

Doom! Doom! Doom! Something seems to whisper it in the very dark trees of America. Doom!

Doom of what?

Doom of our white day. We are doomed, doomed. And the doom is in America. The doom of our white day.

Ah, well, if my day is doomed, and I am doomed with my day, it is something greater than I which dooms me, so I accept my doom as a sign of the greatness which is more than I am, Melville knew. He knew his race was doomed. His white soul, doomed. His great white epoch, doomed. Himself, doomed.

The idealist, doomed. The spirit doomed.

The reversion. "Not so much bound to any haven ahead, as rushing from all havens astern."

That great horror of ours! It is our civilization rushing from all havens astern.

The last ghastly hunt. The White Whale.

What then is Moby Dick? He is the deepest blood-being of the white race; he is our deepest blood-nature.

15. Olson, pp. 15-16.

21.

And he is hunted, hunted, hunted by the maniacal fanaticism of our white mental consciousness. We want to hunt him down. To subject him to our will. And in this maniacal conscious hunt of ourselves we get dark races and pale to help us, red, yellow, and black, east and west, Quaker and fire worshipper, we get them all to help us in this ghastly maniacal hunt which is our doom and our suicide.

The last phallic being of the white man. Hunted into the death of upper consciousness and the ideal will. Our blood-self subjected to our will. Our blood-consciousness sapped by a parasitic mental or ideal consciousness.

Hot-blooded sea-born Moby-Dick. Hunted by monomaniacs of the idea.

Oh God, oh God, what next, when the Pequod has sunk?

She sank in the war, and we are all flotsam.

Now what next?

Who knows? Quien sabe? Quien sabe, senor? 16

And even the chronicler of this Doom suffers from the same disease --the desire to capture and possess. Ishmael precedes his account with a series of extracts from world literature, a miniature library which attempts to define the whale. He is humble concerning his efforts: "My object here is simply to project the draught of a systematization of cetology. I am the architect, not the builder."¹⁷ and "This whole book is but a draught-- nay, but the draught of a draught."¹⁸ He knows that his writing leads him further and further from the actual object of his inquiry, yet he still insists on taking "hold of the whales bodily, in their entire liberal volume, and boldly sort them that way."¹⁹ So all disappears in the end, in the vortex of a whirlpool, save for a solitary chronicler who begins his account with etymologies of the word "whale" which immediately contradict one another.

16. D.H. Lawrence, Studies in Classic American Literature (London, 1964), p. 152.

17. Melville, p. 117.

18. Ibid., p. 125.

19. Ibid., p. 121.

The introspective Ishmael recounts that he went to sea whenever he felt a "damp, drizzly November" in his soul and his experience of Ahab's struggle with the whale is a timeless manifestation of the landscape within his own soul. Poe concentrates his attention on this inner space, prefiguring Freud and dissecting the psyche with the accomplished skill of a surgeon. He is interested, as Lawrence mentions, in "a concatenation of cause and effect."²⁰ Some of Poe's characters, such as the narrator of "The Tell-Tale Heart", publically analyze their own souls, seeking the cause of their own acts, perhaps even the reasoning behind their reasoning. They often boast of their self-possession, the intense control they exert over their mind. Yet they are either under the sway of a passion which they can neither control nor understand, or they are swept up by events and experiences which overwhelm the conceptual capacities of their intellect. The result is their own doom, in a slow process of disintegration. Poe's characters, as Lawrence notes, reflect Poe's own experience: "Poe had a pretty bitter doom. Doomed to seethe down his soul in a great continuous convulsion of disintegration, and doomed to register the process."²¹ But for Poe this theme also became the form of much of his fiction, those tales which, unlike his detective stories, could not attribute simple cause and effect to the vortex of discovery within the soul. "It is evident that we are hurrying onward to some exciting knowledge — some never-to-be-imparted secret, whose attainment is destruction."²²

20. Lawrence, p. 61

21. Ibid., p. 61.

22. Edgar Allan Poe, "Manuscript Found in a Bottle", The Complete Tales and Poems (New York, 1938), p. 125.

Those detective pieces which Poe wrote created a rational world of clues and dénouement. But Poe wished to probe deeper. He could not be satisfied with merely the discovery of the murderer. The important question was, "Why murder?" But to probe even an aberrant mind was not close enough to the mysterious heart of the universe. Poe had to face Nature in the raw power of its unleashed fury. He had to have his protagonist strapped to the mast of a ship caught in an endless typhoon by which he enters the vortex of time's eternity. It is this vortex which comes to symbolize Poe's universe. Throughout the various rings of the whirlpool the flotsam of civilization orbits, bits and pieces circling slowly, seemingly in relationship with one another. The slow motion effect is mesmerizing and we disregard the shriek of the vortex until we look down the funnel and see the dark mouth engulfing every morsel of life. And yet there is still that curiosity to know, even at the cost of self.

"I positively felt a wish to explore its depths, even at the sacrifice I was going to make; and my principal grief was that I should never be able to tell my old companions on shore about the mysteries I would see.²³

This is not mad Ahab's ranting of hatred but rather the curious scientist's objective analysis. It lies beyond Ahab's religious conscience. It is the statement of an atheist. Untroubled by a Jehovah-father image haunting their conscience, Poe's characters can almost schizophrenically examine their own passion from a calm objective viewpoint or watch the magnificent horror of the whirlpool which is slowly drawing them in, and continue to take notes, much like a scientist. The characters acknowledge the mystery and are indeed overawed by it, but still they insist on understanding, that is, conquering it.

 D- 23. Poe, "A Descent into the Maelstrom", p. 135.

To conceive the horror of my sensations is, I presume, utterly impossible; yet a curiosity to penetrate the mysteries of these awful regions, predominates even over my despair, and will reconcile me to the most hideous aspect of death.²⁴

To know, then, is to die. The scene is the Garden of Eden, specifically as another early American author --Hawthorne-- reconstructs it in "Rappaccini's Daughter". Beatrice is the successful experiment of her father, who may now gaze upon her with the eyes of an artist as well as those of a scientist and demand of her: "Dost thou deem it misery...to be as terrible as thou art beautiful...?"²⁵ Beatrice has become the very essence of life. As perfect womanhood, she is beyond all description of beauty. But that beauty is just the beginning of the revelation of her nature, which destroys those who are attracted to her. Within the story she is not a metaphor but rather the actualization of the mystery. As the young Giovanni learns, to unite with Beatrice is to lose the world.

In summary, we might note that there is a confluence of themes within Melville and Poe which we hope to show will continue and develop further in Pynchon. Briefly, there is desire for mastery and control of the universe at large, both on a physical and an intellectual level. This in turn is a reflection of and is eventually manifested as the pursuit of self-identity and self-knowledge. This pursuit, which demands the ultimate knowledge, must lead to doom and self-destruction. And in terms of Metaphor, we see that the course of language is impelled by a desire to capture and reveal the reality behind itself. This can only result in the elimination of the metaphor and thus the self-destruction.

24. Poe, "Manuscript Found in a Bottle," p. 125.

25. Nathaniel Hawthorne, "Rappaccini's Daughter," The Complete Novels and Selected Tales (New York, 1937), p. 1064.

of the work of art, its characters and ultimately the author-persona of the writer who forges the metaphor.²⁶ Unless, of course, the author emasculates the metaphor to pervert the vision of reality. This is the dilemma which the author faces. "We are surely doomed to hover continually upon the brink of eternity, without taking a final plunge into the abyss."²⁷

For Poe this threshold experience was fraught with fearful but anxious expectation of a revelation in destruction. But within the twentieth-century American psyche this anxious expectation has developed into anxiety. America, the original land of religious toleration has matured beyond the point whereby it will tolerate God. The Jehovah sky-father is replaced by the machine which is visible, predictable, coherent and controllable. The process to perfect the Rocket-machine represents man's ability to conquer space and gravity, and to assume control of death. However, the perfection of the Rocket results in the creation of a force which, for its victims, is not visible or controllable. The annihilating Rocket replaces the wrath of Woden. The mathematical beauty of the Rocket's trajectory is balanced by an equation to predict statistically the chances of being destroyed by a Rocket blast.

26. Feidelson, p. 252. In this note Feidelson discusses Poe's idea that art ceases to exist when it attains its goal and, on a philosophical level, that the world is transformed into absolute nothingness when rational structure is converted into absolute unity. Within this thesis we will pursue a similar idea on the aesthetic level: the art work must cease to exist in order to achieve the reality of its vision. Poe's sense of the conversion of a heterogeneous world into a monolithic unity in which the world ceases has some relationship to the concept of entropy.

27. Poe, "Manuscript Found in a Bottle", p. 124.

Americans still fancy themselves such democrats. But their triumphs are of the machine. It is the only master of space the average person ever knows, ox-wheel to piston, muscle to jet. It gives trajectory.²⁸

Where Melville mounted and Poe dug in, Pynchon arches. The Rocket truly conquers space. It is the Messiah, coming to free man of earth, of gravity, that which draws him down into the grave. But this final control spells the everlasting doom.

The rays of the moon seemed to search the very bottom of the profound gulf; but still I could make out nothing distinctly on account of a thick mist in which everything there was enveloped, and over which there hung a magnificent rainbow, like that narrow and tottering bridge which Mussulmen say is the only pathway between Time and Eternity.²⁹

The rainbow is the sign of a promise. It leads to the kingdom of Oz. It pledges that Jehovah shall never again in wrath destroy the world by water. But in Pynchon it is a mirror-image of Noah's rainbow, for the promise is one of impending destruction. First, the world itself is to be destroyed by the Rocket, the product of man's science of space whereby he attempts to escape the confines of earth, the home which defines his being. The arch of gravity's rainbow refers to the inevitable flight path of the rocket which is approaching by degrees.

And then the rainbow represents the destruction of man's own soul, the self-identity which he pursues via psychoanalysis, the science of inner space. The experience of a rainbow is a perception within the Mind which interacts, via the eye, with light waves and the presence of water in the atmosphere. Although each drop of water itself refracts

28. Olson, p. 15.

29. Poe, "A Descent into the Maelström", p. 137.

into the total spectrum, the collective effect of all the droplets is formed by the eye and the Mind into the spectrum effect of the entire rainbow. (But the colours are simply a disguise of that whiteness which Poe and Melville were haunted by. And Pynchon's protagonist, Slothrop, will also experience the white moment.)³⁰ The mind refracts and analyzes the fearful whiteness of experience into an orderly spectrum of hierarchical colours. It formulates chaotic reality into a successive series of still photographs which it may then manipulate into a "flowing" film with defined form and an ending which gives a sense of completion... until the lights go on. The Mind attempts to soothe, but the soul is lost. Ahab is swallowed up and Slothrop disintegrates.

Finally, there is the disintegration and death of the art form, Metaphor itself. Lawrence complains that Poe does not give birth to a new consciousness after he has dutifully disintegrated the old psyche. But the new consciousness which Pynchon has rising out of the ashes of disintegration certainly would not please Lawrence. The new American psyche is now writ large as PARANOIA. The struggle against Nature and against death culminates in the trajectory of the Rocket. It is to arch from sea to sea and to conquer the outer space. But in Pynchon's novel we see its trajectory plotted as a series of points on a graph. We are in Zeno's race again. The rocket is ever approaching, it is ever arriving for its own and our disintegration -- the final analysis, an autopsy.

As a metaphor of Metaphor, Pynchon's Rocket spells the death of Metaphor and the aesthetic object, the novel itself. The art form must

30. Whiteness, of course, is an obsessive theme in Melville's Moby Dick and Poe's The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym. In Gravity's Rainbow, Slothrop similarly skirts a white center in the Rocket caves at Nordhausen. The blinding whiteness is related to the absolute zero, the edge between two different worlds of experience.

disintegrate into madness if it attempts a mimetic interpretation of reality. But to be metaphor, it must mirror, even if obliquely. Thus the form of metaphor dements itself into the form of paranoia. Paranoia, like metaphor, intimates a structure of purpose, a design to be revealed always in the ensuing moment. It is the threshold of a revelation of plot, a teleology of direction and purpose which, in the imagery of Melville and Poe, will engulf us. The discerning Mind which can venture beyond the Metaphor of the world, suffers the loss of this world, including that part of its being --his material body-- which inhabits the world. The paranoid suspects that the world he perceives is setup to conceal another reality which is a threat to his existence. The proof of his suspicions, open revelation of the nefarious hidden order, would result in his extermination. Paranoia is a genetic mutant of metaphor which always hints of the reality which will annihilate.

Thus Pynchon's novel is not only about paranoia; it's very nature is paranoid. The novel as Metaphor, the very form of the novel, is meant to both mirror and inspire a mental state of entrapment. In the age of anxiety art becomes, as one visual art critic has labeled it, the anxious object.³¹ It can mirror what is in the soul of man. But in

31. See Harold Rosenberg, The Anxious Object (New York, 1966). In the first chapter of his book, Rosenberg specifies that art after World War I became "anxious" as it developed a consciousness of its own history and began questioning its own hitherto sacrosanct premises: "'Am I a masterpiece,' it must ask itself, 'or an assemblage of junk?'" p. 17. Art underwent an identity crises, for it could no longer depend upon the canons of history. In other words, the modern art maker possesses a historical consciousness which in turn creates a consciousness of destiny. Between these two poles, the artist suspends the tension of his creation.

the case of an artist and the work which he creates, there is more than simply an external manifestation of his soul. The creation of the work entails a process which establishes an active relationship between the metaphor-maker and his metaphor. A dynamic between the work and the worker is established in the creative act. And this process between the Mind and the Metaphor proceeds, overshadowed by the mysterious third element of which the Metaphor is supposed to be the visible representation. The artist's Mind is in pursuit of, or is pursued by, the white flash of revelation, the ghost of his own Moby-Dick.

Likewise, the structure of a work of art can also entail more than a casual passivity on the part of the observer. The contemporary author, as Robbe-Grillet suggests, may demand "creative assistance" from the reader, to draw him into an active relationship with the work.³² This is the "continuity of interpenetration" which Bergson spoke of, the total fusion of time and space into the vital experience of the mobility of life. This, of course, is the purpose of Metaphor and art. This is the nature of the Mind, to reach beyond the pasteboard mask and grasp the reality. But this is also the dilemma, for the nature of the Mind is "to know", this is, to grasp via symbolization. But the moment that the Mind conceives, it realizes that it can only conceive of its own conceptualization, never the object itself. Borges describes the frustration of this process in his poem, "The Other Tiger". A man thinks of a tiger in all its vivid vitality and as he meditates upon the actions of the tiger, he suddenly realizes that this tiger only exists

32. Alain Robbe-Grillet, For a New Novel (New York, 1965), p. 152.

within his own soul. So he juxtaposes this thought of a tiger with the real tiger, imbued with the scent and spirit of life. But alas, again it is only a ghost, a collection of words and still not the real thing. And yet there is still within the human soul some force drawing man onward:

We shall seek a third tiger. This
 Will be like those others a shape
 Of my dreaming, a system of words
 A man makes and not the vertebrate tiger
 That, beyond the mythologies,
 Is treading the earth. I know well enough
 That something lays on me this quest
 Undefined, senseless and ancient, and I go on
 Seeking through the afternoon time
 The other tiger, that which is not in verse.³³

Thus there is the hunt of the tiger, the beating of the bush, which may only produce a shadow. Or the reality may leap from behind the bush and devour the hunter. This is the dilemma of Metaphor which the American psyche transforms into more desperate terms. Metaphor itself, as an acute examination and dissection can destroy the reality which it should lead to and represent. In Poe's "Ligeia", the frenzied passion of the narrator to know Ligeia, to analyze and possess every element of her soul, eventually destroys her. In "A Descent into the Maelstrom", it is the vaginal vortex of Nature's mystery which destroys the narrator. The dilemma is a choice of deaths. Death to the subject, the seeker, or death to the object, the sought. If the subject is destroyed, the sentence is ended. And if the object is destroyed, the subject has no purpose and it too of necessity is eliminated. In sexual terms the choice is to possess or to be possessed. And even here the traditional

33. Jorge Luis Borges, Dreamtigers (New York, 1970), p. 71.

metaphor of Death is employed. If the two worlds should touch there is annihilation. The arrow must never reach the target; Achilles must never occupy the same space as the turtle. Pynchon continues this tale, this paradox, in terms of sexuality and the ultimate possession -- Death. He continues the tradition which associates sexuality with Death and revelation with annihilation even as he molds it to shape his particular vision. The definition of art as an imminent revelation not yet produced is at one with the idea of the Mind always on the brink of possession/understanding. But the work of art, which seems to point to an external or metaphysical world, in fact points to the world within. The Mind, as it explores external reality, actually projects its own understanding onto the world. The mirror of the world reflects, but it is not directly focused, for if the ultimate object of inquiry -- the Self -- could be known, then the primary self, the knower, would cease to exist. But by the definition of the nature of the Mind, the self which knows, the subject, cannot be known.

5.63. I am my world. (The microcosm.)

5.631 There is no such thing as the subject that thinks or entertains ideas.

If I wrote a book called The World as I found it, I should have to say which parts were subordinate to my will, and which were not, etc., this being a method of isolating the subject, or rather of showing that in an important sense there is no subject; for it alone could not be mentioned in the book.--34

The transcendent Self which the conscious self seeks is the ghost echo of the self within the world. There is no subject; there is only the self which is the world.³⁵

34. Wittgenstein, p. 117.

35. Refer to Footnote 2, p. 3.

The fearful void opens with the implication of one's own relativity and the innuendo of a greater world beyond. Metaphor too arches to an essential realm of aesthetic beauty which would overwhelm the prosaic world. The aesthetic experience is a flirtation with self-destruction. And the Mind's desire to transcend itself is its own death-wish.

....For beauty is nothing
but the beginning of terror we can just barely endure,
and we admire it so because it calmly disdains
to destroy us. 36

CHAPTER II

THE STRUCTURE OF THE MARKET

There are two highly structured organizations in Gravity's Rainbow both of which are linked to the main character, Slothrop. IG Farben (the "fellowship of interests") is a German conglomerate of various business and scientific organizations which together control the German economic market and also have interlocking business connections with the European market. During World War II their united efforts are responsible for the existence of the German rockets. After the war Slothrop, in his search for one particular rocket discovers the intriguing business connections which IG Farben has. These discoveries lead to ominous implications about the morality of the business community.

The White Visitation, the other organization which concerns Slothrop, is a special bureau of Allied counter-intelligence. The term "White Visitation" refers to both the name of the building in which they operate and the operation in general. The operation is rather unusual in the nature of its headquarters and its members.

.....a disused hospital for the mad, a few token lunatics, an enormous pack of stolen dogs, cliques of spiritualists, vaudeville entertainers, wireless technicians, Gouéists, Ouspenskians, Skinnerites, lobotomy enthusiasts, Dale Carnegie zealots, all exiled by the outbreak of war from pet schemes and manias damned, had the peace prolonged itself, to differing degrees of failure. 37

37. Thomas Pynchon, Gravity's Rainbow (New York, 1973), p. 77. Subsequent references will refer to this edition and will appear in parenthesis within the text. Pynchon frequently employs ellipsis. To distinguish, Pynchon's ellipses will be spaced out (. . .) and mine will be contracted (...).

They struggle with their individualized conception of the maze which hints of some pattern of meaning within the psychic life of Man. The project which holds the center of their attention, however, is Tyrone Slothrop and his curious ability to predict unconsciously the pattern of the German rocket strikes in London by his sexual activity. Each one of the groups feels that their particular discipline contains the means to unravel the mystery of this connection between Slothrop's sex life and the sudden appearance of death. Slothrop himself is not aware of his uncanny ability and thus, while still in London, he does not know that he, a member of Allied intelligence, is himself under surveillance. Still later in the novel, as we shall see, Slothrop discovers that his entire life has always been under scrutiny. The White Visitation and IG Farben, then, will be viewed as two particular manifestations of what we shall term the Market Structure.³⁸ This Market Structure will involve a secularized evolution of the Puritan idea of Preterition, the division of mankind into the many who are damned and the few who are saved. Although the division may be expressed in secularized terms, its origin is still rooted in the same basic question which religion originally attempted to answer: Why must men die? The Market Structure of business and science, inheriting a populace with inborn Puritan responses such as guilt and the fear of eternal punishment from above,

38. Although the White Visitation is an intelligence operation, we are labeling it as the Market Structure in that it shares the scheme of preterition and the cult of control with IG Farben. As a spy organization it deals in information and, like the corporate conglomerate, it does not bother to recognize international boundaries in its activities. In effect the term "market" for both organizations must be reinterpreted, much as Milo Minderbinder in Catch-22 alters the idea of supply and demand.

proceeds to transform the fear of God into the general global anxiety known as paranoia. Paranoia is manifested as fear of the Rocket, the new threat from above. The Rocket itself is not merely a physical machine, but rather the visible sign of a new structuring order in the world which controls the destiny of the masses, the new preterite. But this idea of the Market Structure will also be examined as a manifestation of Man's drive to create a meaning to life by explaining and possibly controlling death, whether it be death on a personal level, on a social level in terms of societies and races, or on the universal level of the cosmos, in terms of entropy.

To study the Market Structure as exemplified by IG Farben and the White Visitation, we may begin with Slothrop who is intimately linked to both organizations. While still serving Allied intelligence in occupied France by studying all available data on the German rocket, Slothrop experiences enough events to justify his suspicions that he is under surveillance for some mysterious reason. Through intrigue on his part, he also discovers that there is something quite mysterious about the special part, the S-Gerat, which is constructed for only one particular Rocket, the 00000, which cannot be located. He learns that Allied intelligence, as well as other interested groups, are searching for this particular Rocket. And he receives clues that the mystery of his own surveillance is connected to the Rocket. Thus the Rocket be-

To solve this mystery, Slothrop must work alone for Tantivy the only friend whom he can really trust, suddenly disappears. His other "friends", such as Katje and Bloat, are characters whom he meets in suspiciously odd circumstances, or are his

commanding officers. So when he slips away from the Casino Hermann Goering in liberated France where he is stationed, he begins a mad odyssey in an effort to flee from his observers and to unravel the chance collection of clues concerning the mysterious order behind external events. As he voyages through the Zone of liberated Europe, the naive Slothrop gradually accumulates both facts and discrepancies which cause him to wonder about the interconnections of multinational corporations, political systems and the history of war. He picks up various jigsaw puzzle pieces which suggest that different national companies are interlinked to one another through financing, stock control and patent-sharing. The various corporations together form a Market Structure which has a broader base, far beyond national boundaries, and more importantly, political definitions. Even mass warfare appears to be one of the elements of this system.

Don't forget the real business of the War is buying and selling. The murdering and the violence are self-policing, and can be entrusted to non-professionals. The mass nature of wartime death is useful in many ways. It serves as spectacle, as diversion from the real movements of the War. It provides raw material to be recorded into History, so that children may be taught History as sequences of violence, battle after battle, and be more prepared for the adult world. Best of all, mass death's a stimulus to just ordinary folks, little fellows, to try 'n' grab a piece of that Pie while they're still here to gobble up. The true war is a celebration of markets. (p. 105)

This market conspiracy, however, is not readily apparent, for to the general population the market economy appears to be a collection of competing companies. In reality, however, the world market is controlled by a select few who actively cooperate to maximize their profits, no matter what the cost to the consumers, their fellow humans.

The big scandal around IG Farben this week is the unlucky subsidiary Spottbilligfilm AG, whose entire management are about to be purged for sending to OKW weapons procurement a design proposal for a new airborne ray which could turn whole populations, inside a ten-kilometer radius, stone blind. An IG review board caught the scheme in time. Poor Spottbilligfilm. It had slipped their collective mind what such a weapon would do to the dye market after the next war. (p. 163)

This controlled balance of the market forces is repeated in the fanciful story of Bryon the bulb. The monetary benefits of the electric grid are equally shared by the resources which supply the power and those which manufacture the bulbs. The light bulb manufacturers form an international cartel known as "Phoebus", which makes sure that every light bulb has only a limited life-span. The burnt out bulb is recycled to produce another one which the consumer must again purchase. However, as Bryon the immortal light bulb recounts the story, the interlock becomes quite complex.

Any talk of bulb's transcendence, of course, was clear subversion. Phoebus based everything on bulb efficiency -- the ratio of the usable power coming out, to the power put in. The Grid demanded that this ratio stay as small as possible. That way they got to sell more juice. On the other hand, low efficiency meant longer burning hours, and that cut into bulb sales for Phoebus. In the beginning Phoebus tried increasing filament resistance, reducing the hours of life on the sly and gradually -- till the Grid noticed a fall-off in revenues, and started screaming. The two parties by and by reached an accord on a compromise bulb-life figure that would bring in enough money for both of them, and to go fifty-fifty on the costs of the antibulbsnatching campaign. Along with a more subtle attack against those criminal souls who forswear bulbs entirely and use candles. Phoebus's long-standing arrangement with the Meat Cartel was to restrict the amount of tallow in circulation by keeping more fat in meat to be sold regardless of cardiac problems that might arise, and redirecting most of what was trimmed off into soap production. Soap in those days was a booming concern. Among the consumers, the Bland Institute had discovered deep feeling about shit. Even at that, meat and soap were minor interlocks to Phoebus. More important were items like tungsten. Another reason why Phoebus couldn't cut down bulb life too far. Too many tungsten filaments would eat into available stock-piles of the metal -- China being the major world source, this also

brought in very delicate questions of Eastern policy -- and disturb the arrangement between General Electric and Krupp about how much tungsten carbide could be produced, where and when and what the prices would be. The guidelines settled on were \$37-\$90 a pound in Germany, \$200-\$400 a pound in the U.S. This directly governed the production of machine tools, and thus all areas of light and heavy industry. When the War came, some people thought it unpatriotic of GE to have given Germany an edge like that. But nobody with any power. Don't worry. (p. 654)³⁹.

The Market Structure obviously exists only for itself and subsists on the population of the earth --consumers-- and the resources of the earth. But we must also note that the Market Structure is obviously controlled by human individuals, so we must seek the motivation behind their efforts, which are manifested in an earlier religious structure -- Preterition-- but we can recognize the basic motivation even in the contemporary structure of the business market with its own particular apocalypse.

Taking and not giving back, demanding that "productivity" and "earning" keep on increasing with time, the System removing from the rest of the World these vast quantities of energy to keep its own tiny desperate fraction showing profit: and not only most of humanity -- most of the World, animal, vegetable and mineral, is laid waste in the process. The System may or may not understand that it's only buying time. And that time is an artificial resource to begin with, of no value to anyone or anything but the System, which sooner or later must crash to its death, when its addiction to energy has become more than the rest of the World can supply, dragging with it innocent souls all along the chain of life. (p. 412)

The revelation here is one of inevitable death but the System or Structure creates an elite few who may escape death by living off of

39. We might note that throughout the narrative Pynchon plays on names for ironic effect. Thus we have the "Bland" Institute, and "Phoebus" (the name of the sun god) which is employed for a process of planned obsolescence and recycling in a system based on the distortion of the principle of the conservation of energy and matter.

others and squandering the earth's resources. Those select few, who control the System, arrest the advent of death for themselves, at least temporarily, even as they control the life and death of others. In this temple of divine economy, the many are the damned, and the controlling few are the saved. This religious imagery is directly apparent in the case of Phoebus, the light bulb cartel.

Look at all the propaganda. It's a moral crime. Phoebus discovered -- one of the great undiscovered discoveries of our time -- that consumers need to feel a sense of sin. That guilt in proper invisible hands, is a most powerful weapon. In America, Lyle Bland and his psychologists had figures, expert testimony and money (money in the Puritan sense -- an outward and visible O.K. on their intentions) enough to tip the Discovery of Guilt at the cusp between scientific theory and fact. Growth rates in later years were to bear Bland out... Of all the legacies Bland left around, the Bulb-snatching Heresy was perhaps grandest. It doesn't just mean that somebody isn't buying a bulb. It also means that same somebody is not putting any power in that socket! It is a sin both against Phoebus and against the Grid. Neither one is about to let that get out of hand. (p. 652)

Business may conveniently exploit the mechanism of sin and guilt, which religion had earlier established, to further their own interests. We shall have to consider more fully the exact relationship between the structural organization -- be it religion or the market -- and the sensation of guilt. We must ask what precisely is the etiology of guilt and why the Market Structure is able to manipulate guilt so easily in the twentieth century.

One story told within Gravity's Rainbow relates the tension of the Puritan scheme which greatly influences the American psyche. The tale of Frans Van de Groov concerns the period of his life spent as a colonist in Mauritius where he participates in the slaughter of dodos, not for any economic gain or even for simple survival. Rather the dodos serve as a

point of release for the men who in a drunken hysteria would often go on all-night shooting rampages, firing at anything, "trapped among frequencies of their own voices and words." (p. 110) The venture of the colony of settlers is a failure and they must vent their anger on the dodoes, innocent of blame and valueless to man's world order. But more than just a release for their frustration of failure, the slaughter of the dodoes becomes for the men a ritualistic self-annihilation. The very doctrine of religion that is supposed to supply the hope of salvation becomes a collection of words which offers a threat of damnation. They can never know if they are the elect and if all of their actions are therefore accountable toward a final reward. Their position in the world, their economic venture, seems to predict their preterition.

This furious host were losers, impersonating a race chosen by God. The colony, the venture, was dying --like the ebony trees they were stripping from the island, like the poor species they were removing totally from the earth.....

But if they were chosen to come to Mauritius, why had they also been chosen to fail, and leave? Is that a choosing, or is it a passing-over? Are they Elect, or are they Preterite, and doomed as dodoes? (p. 110)

The Puritans, in a desperate search for some external sign of their election, assumed that economic success was a positive affirmation by the God who exacted guilt and reparation for the debt of sin. The divine economy was based on a covenant by which God proclaimed His Word and Man spread the Word. Thus in his fantasy Frans imagines that the dodoes receive the gift of speech and are able to accept the pure Word. This is "the purest form of European adventuring." (p. 111) The dodoes are to become converts and in turn offer their bodies to feed humans. An economic system of salvation will thus be insured and nature will be in perfect balance and harmony.

Indeed, if they save us from hunger in this world, then beyond, in Christ's kingdom, our salvations must be, in like measure, inextricable. Otherwise the dodoes would be only what they appear as in the world's illusory light -- only our prey. God could not be that cruel. (p. 111)

There is meaning in the world and a perfect exchange system. The few are the elect who feed off of the many, the preterite. This religious scheme will thus lead directly to the market scheme. One immediate example of this is the African Hereros, whom we shall consider in more detail later. For now, we should notice their position viz a viz the dodoes. The black men are subjected to the same form of European adventuring. The doctrine of salvation which the white colonists preach to the black man is couched in terms of light and darkness. Thus the white economy of salvation creates an immediate class of black preterite, those who are lost even as they are taught about salvation. Hence the paradox of the Word of God: it seems to offer hope but ultimately assures damnation. This is readily apparent in the Puritan imagery of "the great bright hand reaching out of the cloud." (p. 29) This hand is associated with the sweep which gathers up into death and the fist which can pound into submission. It can form the pointing finger "that stone hand pointing out of the secular clouds, pointing directly at him" (p. 27) which forms the basis of the twentieth-century paranoia which we shall examine more fully later. To the Puritan, there is someone ever watching, ever pointing and accusing, ever threatening. The Puritan knows that there is a higher order which he can offend; which is charged with watching and subjugating him; which exercises the power of death. The consciousness of guilt which this religion establishes in America conditions a psyche which continues to respond even after the original belief has dissipated;

"it's a Puritan reflex of seeking other orders behind the visible, also known as paranoia." (p. 188) To the Puritan, the entire world is simply a sign of the future kingdom of heaven and hell. But the sign does not indicate whether the individual will receive reward or punishment. Thus for Frans and his companions on Mauritius, the world is a trap of "words and voices." The Puritan Text is a sign of salvation but also a promise of damnation. The Text seems to be a code which only the elect can decipher. If one can see the shape of the divine plan, then one must be numbered among the saved. If one can preach the Text to others, to dodos or to black men, then one must be destined for salvation while those others must accept the fate of damnation.

This Puritan idea of the sign which may be manipulated to establish one's election undergoes secularized modification in America, even as it continues to be motivated by the power of guilt and the fear of eternal damnation in death. Slothrop's ancestors develop "timberland whose diminishing green reaches were converted acres at a clip into paper -- toilet paper, banknote stock, newsprint -- a medium or ground for shit, money and the Word....the three American truths, powering the American mobility...." (p. 28) The American mobility is a sign of freedom and election. One rises in the world and proves his superiority through monetary success: "money in the Puritan sense-- an outward and visible O.K. on their intentions." (p. 652) Material success confirms the purity of one's intentions no matter what one does. Yet guilt still lies at the roots: "one of the great undiscovered discoveries of our time -- that consumers need to feel a sense of sin." (p. 652) The dilemma of the Word that promises yet condemns is reiterated. The material success which is

supposed to be a confirmation is not deserved. One must still pay: "It's that damned Calvinist insanity again. Payment." (p. 57) The debt of sin becomes the generic sense of debt in an economic world. Religious signs are translated into monetary symbols which are traded back and forth in an attempt to remove the debt. And the motive force behind the new structure of business is the same as the one behind the religious structure: to be released from the threat of death by substituting others as victims.

"The basic problem," he proposes, "has always been getting other people to die for you, What's worth enough for a man to give up his life? That's where religion had the edge, for centuries. Religion was always about death; It was used not as an opiate so much as a technique --- it got people to die for one particular set of beliefs about death." (p. 701)

In the twentieth century it is the Market Structure which allows a few to relieve their own anxiety concerning death. They do not seem to realize that despite any structure, everyone must still labour under and finally accept the thrust of death.

All the animals, the plants, the minerals, even other kinds of men, are being broken and reassembled every day, to preserve an elite few, who are the loudest to theorize on freedom, but the least free of all. I can't even give you hope that it will be different someday -- that They'll come out, and forget death, and lose Their technology's elaborate terror, and stop using every other form of life without mercy to keep what haunts men down to a tolerable level -- and be like you instead, simply here, simply alive (p. 230)

"They", the elite priests of the Market Structure, preach the Word to the consumers in order to convince those masses of salvation through the acquisition of the material products which the Market Structure creates.

So generation after generation of men in love with pain and passivity serve out their time in the Zone, silent, redolent of faded sperm, terrified of dying, desperately addicted to

the comforts others sell them, however useless, ugly or shallow, willing to have life defined for them by men whose only talent is for death. (p. 747)

The basic question of death is reinterpreted in Gravity's Rainbow in totally secular terms. The West creates a corporate structure of life whereby the individual feels that he can never possess the promise of the good life which is dangled before his eyes. Instead, the corporate structure offers a series of images without any reality behind them. As Slothrop notes, there is "No difference between a boxtop and its image, all right, their whole economy is based on that ...an image, a product, a promise to pay." (p. 472) But the individual still grasps at these images, for he cannot escape either the Structure or the primal fear which the Structure controls to its own advantage.

Those who control the Market Structure are obviously subjected to the same fear of death but supposedly have a means of expurgating that fear. However, as the preceding quotation suggests, they may be the "least free of all". We receive some insight into the concerns of the directors of IG Farben when they hold a séance. They contact some of their deceased members in order to ask advice concerning the means of controlling the economy. Secular society has abandoned the controlling Hand of God and the IG Farben directors wish to abandon Adam Smith's economic Invisible Hand.

"It's control. All these things arise from one difficulty: control. For the first time it was inside, do you see. The control is put inside. No more need to suffer passively under 'outside forces' -- to veer into any wind. As if . . .

"A market needed no longer be run by the Invisible Hand, but now could create itself -- its own logic, momentum, style, from inside. Putting the control inside was ratifying what de facto had happened -- that you had dispensed with God.

But you had taken on a greater, and more harmful illusion. The illusion of control. That A could do B. But that was false. Completely. No one can do. Things only happen, and B are unreal, are names for parts that ought to be inseparable. . . ." (p. 30)

The economic elite have "dispersed with God" in order that they might take control, but now they receive the fearful news that there is no such element as Control. The world is a phenomenon of events which occurs beyond the bounds of cause and effect. The movement of life must then inevitably lead to death, and even the entrepreneur, united with the scientist, cannot alter the order of Nature.

Thus when the IG Farben members consider how they will synthesize and market new products from out of the earth, they receive a warning. The spirit of Walter Rathenau, the "prophet and architect of the cartelized state," speaks at a séance to retract his philosophy that the world could be molded into a rational structure with business as the true authority. Even the new chemical creations prefigure the triumph of Death.

But this is all the impersonation of life. The real movement is not from death to any rebirth. It is from death to death-transfigured. The best you can do is to polymerize a few dead molecules. But polymerizing is not resurrection. (p. 166)

With this intrusion of the idea of Death, Rathenau then launches into his lesson and message. Even the structures which society creates, in its attempt to master the world, are manifestations of Death's inevitability.

"Look at the smokestacks, how they proliferate, fanning the wastes of original waste over greater and greater masses of city. Structurally, they are strongest in compression. A smokestack can survive any explosion - even the shock wave from one of the new cosmic bombs" -- a bit of a murmur around the table at this -- "as you all must know. The persistence,

then, of structures favoring death. Death converted into more death. Perfecting its reign; just as the buried coal grows denser, and overlaid with more strata -- epoch on top of epoch, city on top of ruined city. This is the sign of Death the impersonator." (p. 167)⁴⁰

Man, then, despite his conscious intentions, is only a collaborator in the grand design of the earth -- self-destruction. The only difference is that man will pursue Death in his own distinctive way.

This is the World just before men. Too violently pitched alive in constant flow to be seen by men directly. They are meant only to look at it dead, in still strata, transputrefied to oil or coal. Alive, it was a threat: it was Titans; was an over-peaking of life so clangorous and mad, such a green corona about Earth's body that some spoiler had to be brought in before it blew the Creation apart. So we, the crippled keepers, were sent out to multiply, to have dominion. God's spoilers. Us. Counter-revolutionaries. It is our mission to promote death. The way we kill, the way we die, being unique among the Creatures. It was something we had to work on, historically and personally. (p. 720)

The Market Structure is the successor to religion which first attempted to create a system to explain and control Death. For the Puritans, the preterite masses accepted Death as a punishment for their sins. Death was justified and the select few were relieved of the threat of Death. But they did die nevertheless, as they searched for signs to assure themselves of a life beyond the grave. Their epitaph can offer the fact of Death, but not necessarily the proof of a life beyond.

In Memory of Conftant
Slothrop who died March
7 4th 1766, in 7 29th
year of his age.

Death is a debt to nature due,
Which I have paid, and fo muft you. (p. 26)

40. We should point out that Rathenau, a historical figure, was Jewish and he was assassinated. The rational order of business he propounded for the German state was inherited by the Nazis, and the "smokestackes" in this quotation can be further taken as an allusion to the concentration camps. It is little wonder that he retracts his previous philosophy in the face of historical events.

Likewise for the Market Structure. Even those who supposedly have control discover that the very structure which they create in an attempt to save themselves only betrays them. We can see this directly manifested in two creations of the Market Structure: the ultimate machine, the Rocket; and the manipulated character, Slothrop. Each of these will be dealt with separately. But to conclude the primary idea concerning the Market Structure, we may briefly note how the Market attempts to control its creations. In the course of the narration we learn that Slothrop, as an infant, was subjected to various experiments, with a sexual response employed as an indicator of the effects: (p. 84) Now years later, during World War II, it appears that he possesses the uncanny ability to predict unconsciously the pattern of Rocket strikes over Greater London. The pattern of strikes corresponds to and follows the pattern of Slothrop's sexual activities. All of the members of the White Visitation are baffled and some insist that Slothrop perhaps even controls, although unconsciously, the Rocket's flight path. Whatever the relationship, Slothrop is considered to be a dangerous monster who must not be lost in the world of men. (p. 144) The members of the White Visitation insist that a pattern must have a meaning, and therefore be controllable. Roger Mexico, a statistician, is the only dissenter. He graphs a map of London and then employs the Poisson equation to predict statistically how often each particular square will be hit by a rocket. The others view him with suspicion because his chart is accurate. But they are frustrated when they demand to know where the next hit will be. Roger can only predict the overall pattern, not the exact location of the next hit. He can show that there is some form or order, but the shape, which the events

assume, seems to be the work of pure chance. (p. 56) This stymies their assumption that a pattern indicates a controlling order. And later when they discover that the young women whom Slothrop named on his chart of sexual conquests cannot be located, they are still adamant that the pattern indicates, as one character puts it, a point within Slothrop's brain which contains the secret. (pp. 90, 144) To them a structure or pattern in death is an assurance that death can be predicted and controlled.

In reference to their other creation, the Rocket, we find that the original motivation for creating the Rocket was to assure oneself continued life through the death of one's enemy.

Yes but Technology only responds (how often this argument has been iterated, dogged and humorless as a Gaussian reduction, among the younger Schwarzkommando especially), "All very well to talk about having a monster by the tail, but do you think we'd 've the Rocket if someone, some specific somebody with a name and a penis hadn't wanted to chuck a ton of Amatol 300 miles and blow up a block full of civilians? (p. 521)

However the Rocket, as they learned, soon achieved a life of its own. The launching site could become a demolition site if the Rocket misfired, and even once it was launched, it could turn back and strike its own launching pad. (p. 96) The Rocket, as an instrument of death, is beyond Control.

We may finally note that the Market Structure's entire impetus to control Death is well exemplified in Jamf, the scientist responsible for the creation of innumerable synthetics, including the mysterious one employed in the special G0000 Rocket.

That something so mutable, so soft, as a sharing of electrons by atoms of carbon should lie at the core of life, his life, struck Jamf as a cosmic humiliation. Sharing? How much stronger, how everlasting was the ionic bond -- where electrons are not shared, but captured. Seized! (p. 577)

As the representative of science and the Market Structure, Jamf sums up the ironic result of their attempt to control death: By pursuing the inorganic, they rush headlong into Death's embrace. The Rocket is a sign not of Technology's conquest but rather of its own eventual demise.


The Market Structure thus becomes the secularized offspring of Puritanism. In this new structure, an economic elite preach a doctrine of salvation through the manufacture of creature comforts. The preterite masses, who work to achieve deliverance from guilt and death, only confirm their slavery to an economic system which does not deliver its promise of freedom. Ultimately the Market Structure, like Puritanism, can only promise Death. And Death does not make a distinction. As the economic elite learn, the very system which they create to save themselves, leads to the supreme creation of the Rocket, which is their own destruction.

CHAPTER III.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE ROCKET

With the transformation of Puritanism into the Market Structure, the hand of God which wreaks vengeance upon man becomes the Rocket from above, which promises Death.

....slender church steeples poised up and down all these autumn hillsides, white rockets about to fire, only seconds of countdown away, rose windows taking in Sunday light, elevating and washing the faces above the pulpits defining grace, swearing this is how it does happen-- yes, the great bright hand reaching out of the cloud. (p. 29)

The twentieth century manifestation of God's accusing finger is similarly a secularized translation: "  A Rocket-cartel" (p.566). As a cartel, the Rocket will be more fully explored in the chapter on paranoia. But first we must consider the Rocket as the supreme product of the Market Structure and its expression in terms of sexual aggression. The contemporary gesture of the "finger", the vulgar "fuck you" sign, as related to the Rocket, suggests the annihilation of the victim paradoxically through the agency of the procreative organ. As an insult, the "finger" reduces the victim by attacking him in his most vital part, the center of his being. It also suggests that the seat of sexual power has some non-rational relation to the aggressive force of destruction and ultimately the power of death. In this chapter we shall note the relationship between the Rocket and the African Hereros, Slothrop, and Blicero, especially as it is manifested in sexual terms. The concept of the Rocket will suggest a relationship between Death and sexuality, and this relationship in turn will establish concepts concerning the nature of Structure developed beyond the idea of the Market Structure.

This new Structure will concern the process of mentation, i.e., how Man perceives the universe in terms of symbols. This shall be immediately applied to Paranoia, the secularized offspring of Preterition. But it shall be further developed beyond both the Puritan's and the paranoid's conception of the world as a Sign, and immediately related to the nature of Metaphor and Pynchon's Structure in Gravity's Rainbow.

1

The Hereros

Living in the territories of the German protectorate, the Hereros were an exploited tribe. They were either employed as servants or herded into compounds much like animals. Their entire culture, which formed for them the sense of life's meaning, was completely disrupted. And then, one day, for some undisclosed reason, a military order was issued:

years ago, in Südwest, we were nearly exterminated. There was no reason. Can you understand that? No reason. We couldn't even find comfort in the Will of God Theory. These Germans with names and service records, men in blue uniforms who killed clumsily and not without guilt. Search-and-destroy missions, every day. It went on for two years. The orders came down from a human being, a scrupulous butcher named von Trotha. The thumb of mercy never touched his scales." (p.362)

This sensation of an insane, purposeless death perpetuated, not by the blind forces of nature, but rather the supposedly rational species called Man, completely disrupted the psyche of the survivors. The tribe, it was expected, would of course continue to exist, but for some unexplained

reason, the birth rate among the Hereros declined.

Some of the more rational men of medicine attributed the Herero birth decline to a deficiency of Vitamin E in the diet--others to poor changes of fertilization given the peculiarly long and narrow uterus of the Herero female. But underneath all this reasonable talk, this scientific speculating, no white Afrikaner could quite put down the way it felt... Something sinister was moving out in the veld: He was beginning to look at their faces, especially those of the women, lined beyond the thorn fences, and he knew beyond logical proof: there was a tribal mind at work out here, and it had chosen to commit suicide. (p. 317)

Years later some of the surviving Hereros were "adopted" by their German masters and brought back to Germany to receive technical training. Here they discovered the Rocket and their traditional religious reflex transmogrified the Rocket into a new, sacred Text around which they could develop a ceremony to celebrate the annihilation of their race. However, it was a white man, Blicero, who first initiated them into the cult of the Rocket. He was able to precisely because he had been introduced to the non-Western structure of belief contained in the Herero's religion. We will consider Blicero more directly in Chapter V, but at present we may follow his inauguration into the African mind in order to understand the relationship which the Hereros developed with the Rocket.

As a young man, Blicero travels to the Südwest, packing a copy of Rilke's Duino Elegies. His experience there prepares him to become one of the spokesmen for the structure of Death which pervades war-torn Europe. He recognizes that the elements of savagery at the base of human nature are innocent and that the only sin is to divide oneself and deny the earthly side, a lesson he preaches some years later to his protégé, Gottfried.

America was the edge of the World. A message for Europe, continent-sized, inescapable. Europe had found the site for its Kingdom of Death, that special Death the West had invented. Savages had their waste regions, Kalaharis, lakes so misty they could not see the other side. But Europe had gone deeper into obsession, addiction, away from all the savage innocences. America was a gift from the invisible powers, a way of returning. But Europe refused it. It wasn't Europe's Original Sin - the latest name for that is Modern Analysis - but it happens that Subsequent Sin is harder to atone for. (p. 722)

White civilization, in attempting to escape Death, creates a new kind of Death, a hideous monster replication which distorts Nature's purpose in Death.

In Africa, Asia, Amerindia, Oceania, Europe came and established its order of Analysis and Death. What it could not use, it killed or altered. In time the death-colonies grew strong enough to break away. But the impulse to empire, the mission to propagate death, the structure of it, kept on. Now we are in the last phase. American Death has come to occupy Europe. It has learned empire from its old metropolis. But now we have only the structure left us, none of the great rainbow plumes, no fillings of gold, no epic marches over alkali seas. The savages of other continents, corrupted but still resisting in the name of life, have gone on despite everything...while Death and Europe are separate as ever, their love still unconsummated. Death only rules here. It has never, in love, become one with... (pp. 722-723)

Colonial America becomes the highest expression of European colonization. The native Indians are destroyed while black slaves are imported and the land is totally exploited. The European industrial revolution is perfected in America. Puritanism becomes the Technology which attempts to escape the confines of the Earth and to discard the process of life and death: "Death and Europe are separate as ever, their love still unconsummated." So the European is shocked when the Herero boy, in a sexual invitation, employs the name of God: "...for to the boy Ndjambi Karunga is what happens when they couple, that's all: God is creator and destroyer, sun and darkness, all sets of opposites brought together, including black and white, male and female." (p. 100). The European has no sensation of this primal union of the opposites, the idea of life united with Death. Thus he must flee even though this flight creates another form of Death.

Is the cycle over now, and a new one ready to begin? Will our new Edge, our new Deathkingdom, be the Moon? I dream of a great glass sphere, hollow and very high and far away . . . the colonists have learned to do without air, it's a vacuum inside and out . . . it's understood the men won't ever return...they are all men. There are ways for getting back, but so complicated, so at the mercy of language, that presence back on Earth is only temporary, and never 'real' . . . passages out there are dangerous, chances of falling so shining and deep . . . Gravity rules all the way out to the cold sphere, there is always the danger of falling. Inside

the colony, the handful of men have a frosty appearance, hardly solid, no more alive than memories, nothing to touch . . . only their remote images, black and white film-images, grained, broken year after hoarfrost year out in the white latitudes, in empty colony... (p 723).

The Rocket is built to be man's deliverer, but what it delivers is Death. Nature cannot be thwarted; she can only be distorted. The escape to the Moon is an attempt to relinquish the Earth and the reign of Gravity, which draws man back within the earth. The refuge of the Moon is an airless dismal vacuum where men only become the living dead, for Gravity rules everywhere and man, in attempting to escape the fall into Death, can only distort life.

The Zone Hereros become a further manifestation of this process of revolt. Although they are the natives who still possess the form of primitivism, they have lost the spirit. They have been ripped into the twentieth-century Metropolis and they regard the Rocket as the sacred Text which embodies the union of those opposites which have always vitalized their souls. The insignia of the launching switch of the Rocket becomes their mandala.

Andreas sets it on the ground, turns it till the K points northwest. "Klar", touching each letter, "Entluftung, these are the female letters. North letters. In our villages the women lived in huts on the northern half of the circle, the men on the south. The village itself was a mandala. Klar is fertilization and birth, Entluftung is the breath, the soul. Zundung and Vorstufe are the male signs, the activities, fire and preparation or building. And in the center, here, Hauptstufe. It is the pen where we kept the sacred cattle. The souls of the ancestors. All the same here. Birth, soul, fire, building. Male and female together.

The four fins of the Rocket made a cross, another mandala. Number one pointed the way it would fly. Two for pitch, three for yaw and roll, four for pitch. Each opposite pair of vanes worked together and moved in opposite senses. Opposites together. You can see how we might feel it speak to us, even if we don't set one up on its fins and worship it. But it was waiting for us when we came north to Germany so long ago . . . even confused and uprooted as we were then; we knew that our destiny was tied up with its own. That we had been passed over by von Trotha's army so that we would find the Aggregat. (p. 563)

Originally their villages were established in the mythological mode, marked by the four cardinal points, to represent the four directions of earth, portrayed as a square. Within the square was the circle, the sign of the infinite. The squaring of the circle represented the human effort to marry earth to heaven, the sacred to the profane. The mythological scheme portrays the monomyth, the eternal form of life and death, which is the archetype of man's existence.⁴¹ Opposites work together toward a final union. Small wonder then that the surviving Hereros, brought to the brink of extinction, project their mythology onto the Rocket, as they desperately struggle to discover the text which will proclaim the meaning of life and death. They immediately identify with the Rocket for their own history has taught them that "the slightest shift in the probabilities and we're gone--schnapp! like that." (p. 362). The Rocket likewise has a highly contingent existence:

One reason we grew so close to the Rocket, I think, was this sharp awareness of how contingent, like ourselves, the Aggregat 4 could be--how at the mercy of small things . . . dust that gets in a timer and breaks electrical contact . . . a film of grease you can't even see, oil from a touch of human fingers, left inside a liquid-oxygen valve, flaring up as soon as the stuff hits and setting the whole thing off--I've seen that happen...rain that swells the bushings in the servos or leaks out, Brennschluss too soon, and what was alive is only an Aggregat again, an Aggregat of pieces of dead matter, no longer anything that can move, or that has a Destiny with shape.... (p. 362)

But even in its contingency it still possesses a destiny, the shape of its own future. This is what seduces the Hereros and leads them on. There must be some higher order or life loses all of its meaning. There

41. The background for such a mythological scheme is fully developed in the many volumes of Mircea Eliade. See, for example, The Sacred and the Profane. The Jungian approach, centered around archetype and monomyth, is elaborated by Joseph Campbell in The Hero with a Thousand Faces.

must be some external sign, a sacred text, which gives them coded instructions for living, an explanation of the life and death process. Only later does Enzian begin to suspect that they have made a mistake.

...well we assumed--natürlich!-- that this holy Text had to be the Rocket, orururumo orunene the high, rising, dead, the blazing, the great one ("orunene" is already being modified by the Zone-Herero children to "omunene", the eldest brother)...our Torah. What else? Its symmetries, its latencies, the cuteness of it enchanted and seduced us while the real Text persisted, somewhere else, in its darkness, our darkness...even this far from Südwest we are not to be spared the ancient tragedy of lost messages, a curse that will never leave us . . . (p. 520)

The truth is that "The Rocket will have a final shape, but not its people" (p. 316). The sign to which they attributed salvation becomes instead a Rorschach ink blot revealing their own innate desire to seize control of death by suicide, since death no longer holds the mythological meaning it use to.

They call themselves Otukungura. Yes, old Africa hands, it ought to be "Omakungurua", but they are always careful--perhaps its less healthy than care-- to point out that oma-applies only to the living and human. Utu- is for the inanimate and the rising, and this is how they imagine themselves. Revolutionaries of the Zero, they mean to carry on what began among the old Hereros after the 1904 rebellion failed. They want a negative birth rate. The program is racial suicide. They would finish the extermination the Germans began in 1904. (pp.316-317)

As the new sacred text, the Rocket supplies them with a ritualized, means to death. But it does not supply them with a meaning for death.

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

Though they don't admit it, the Empty Ones now exiled in the Zone, Europeanized in language and thought, split off from the old tribal unity, have found the why of it just as mysterious. But they've seized it, as a sick woman will seize a charm. They calculate no cycles, no returns, they are in love with the glamour of a whole people's suicide--the pose, the stoicism, and the bravery. (p. 318)

They have lost the religious structure and only the secular structure is available. This new structure does not propose, as the previous old one did, a union with death. Instead it suggests an aggressive defiance of death by suicide. Life is thrust aside in an attempt to say that death is negligible. This absurd response is manifested in the equation between suicide and sexuality.

These Otukungurua are prophets of masturbating, specialists in abortion and sterilization, pitchmen for acts oral and anal, pedal and digital, sadomystical and zoophilic--their approach and their game is pleasure. (p. 318)

And when Ombindi, the leader of the Otukungurua (the Empty Ones), is talking to Enzian he indirectly makes the point: The most erotic thing there is, a non-repeatable act, which includes all the sexual deviations, is . . . suicide (p. 319). Before their culture was destroyed, the Hereros could believe in a meaning to Death. But now that they see death as senseless, they can only see life itself as a perverse act of Nature. Life has no purpose if it can so blindly be annihilated, and thus sexuality, the most intimate act of creation--being itself--likewise becomes perverse. Or to reverse the terms, suicide, which ordinarily would be labeled as a perverted act, is now an assertion of the meaning and control of both Life and Death. Thus, paradoxically, suicide becomes erotic; it is, as sexuality used to be, a declaration of vitality. The Hereros then, better than others, can read the Rocket as Technology's and the Market Structure's own death-wish. The Rocket becomes the new Text of Revelation for the Hereros by which they can understand themselves.

It began when Weissmann brought him (Enzian) to Europe: a discovery that love, among these men, once past the simple feel and orgasming of it, had to do with masculine technologies, with contracts, with winning and losing. Demanded, in his own case, that he enter the service of the Rocket.... Beyond simple steel erection, the Rocket was an entire system won, away from

the feminine darkness, held against the entropies of lovable but scatterbrained Mother Nature: that was the first thing he was obliged by Weissmann to learn, his first step toward citizenship in the Zone. He was led to believe that by understanding the Rocket, he would come to understand truly his manhood . . . (p. 324)

Life is expressed in aggressive sexual terms. The Rocket as phallic image must escape from Mother Earth. But ultimately the Rocket must return to Earth in a self-destructive crash. As revealed in the preceding chapter on the Market Structure, the elements which technology rips from the earth and synthesizes into new, stronger materials still point to their origin, which is their end.

But this is all the impersonation of life. The real movement is not from death to any rebirth. It is from death to death-transfigured. The best you can do is to polymerize a few dead molecules. (p. 166)

This message which IG Farben receives is also applicable to the Hereros. Nevertheless they persist, for the Rocket is the only means left by which they can define life. The Hereros' primitive religious response, analogous to the Puritan response, seeks a meaning in Death and a structure of symbolic interpretation in life. The Rocket supplies the Hereros with this structure.

11

Slothrop

Like the Hereros, Slothrop's self-knowledge and self-definition depend upon his pilgrimage to the mystical center of the Rocket. As the

narrative progresses, Slothrop gradually realizes that his own personal life is intimately connected to the Rocket and the Market Structure which created the Rocket. At first, however, Slothrop's primary connection with the Rocket is simply one of basic fear, which everyone shares. (p. 23)

This basic fear stems from the fact that the Rocket suddenly explodes and only then does the warning sound of its approach arrive. This reversal of the normal order, which seems to play havoc with the laws of the universe (although it is the simple fact that the Rocket travels faster than the speed of sound) frightens everyone. There is something eerie about this reversal, although as his friend Tantiy points out to Slothrop, the Rocket is no more lethal than a bullet as far as one's own death is concerned. But the whole idea of the Rocket as a blind, omnipotent doom which hangs eternally in the sky creates an atmosphere of paranoia.

Despite the fact that it is a result of man-made technology, the Rocket appears to represent that which is beyond man's control--his own Death.

The Rocket's seeming reversal of the laws appears to be mirrored in Slothrop's uncanny ability to "predict" unconsciously the pattern of hit distribution by his own sexual activity. This unnerves many of the people at the White Visitation who feel that somehow Slothrop is reversing the law of stimulus and response. They are determined to discover the nature of what they insist must be a hidden law. One insists on labeling it a precognition, another as psychokinesis (p. 85). Pointsman himself works on his theory of the "ultraparadoxical" and insists that the secret resides in Slothrop's brain (p. 90). But whatever it is, they feel that there is some governing law, some rule of control which can be discovered and thereby manipulated. All of them ignore Roger Mexico and his Poisson equation, which likewise predicts the pattern of bomb hits.

The thought that blind chance could rule threatens them. To them it is a joke which must be ignored when one character, Gwenhidwy, mentions that the birth of babies during the blitz also follows a Poisson pattern. (p. 173)⁴² A pattern must indicate a controlling order and a case here might be made for their own paranoia, even as they keep a stiff upper lip when trying to explain how many of the girls listed on Slothrop's map of sexual conquests can't be located. Whether or not the girls exist, the corresponding pattern, they insist, is what is important.

However, there is more than just a chance relationship between Slothrop and the Rocket. There is a definite correlation between Slothrop's sexual stimulation and the Rocket. When he is in bed with Darlene and the room is suddenly filled with white light and the blast of the Rocket, he is aroused. (p. 120) And even when he is simply studying the mathematics of the Rocket, he is subject to mysterious erections. (p. 211) Slothrop himself only gradually realizes that there is a connection between himself and the Rocket. When he begins to trace the mysterious S-Gérat device (which is related to the mysterious 00000 Rocket), he runs across names in the business and scientific sectors which have intercontinental connections that are linked to his own family. The suggestions are rampant that as a baby he was used as the experimental subject for a mysterious stimulant--Imipolex G--years before it was actually supposed to exist, and that it is possible that he has been under constant surveillance since his earliest years. (pp. 284-86) As the inferences

42. Poisson or fish could, of course, refer to the secret sign the early Christians used to identify themselves and covertly refer to Christ. Jour de Poisson is the name for April Fools' Day. The pattern of bomb hits could be either a cryptogram or a joke.

accumulate, Slothrop realizes that his destiny is tied up with the Rocket and in his special case, the mysterious 00000 Rocket with its unidentified S-Gérat device. His search for the Rocket becomes a search for himself and it is related in sexual terms.

The inferences suggest that Imipolex-G, a synthetic plastic capable of sexual arousal, was tested on him as a baby. The implication is that Slothrop in his sexual nature is a product of the Market Structure.

His erection hums from a certain distance, like an instrument installed, wired, by Them into his body as a colonial outpost here in our raw and clamorous world, another office representing Their white Metropolis far away . . . (p. 285)

The conglomerate structure, as earlier noted, controlled guilt and the fear of Death for its own purpose. Similarly, as one character speculates, it controls sex and it will not permit sadism and masochism.

Why will the Structure allow every other kind of sexual behavior but that one? Because submission and dominance are resources it needs for its very survival. They cannot be wasted in private sex. In any kind of sex. It needs our submission so that it may remain in power. It needs our lusts after dominance so that it can co-opt us into its own power game. There is no joy in it, only power. (p. 737)

Sexuality, like the Rocket, becomes another corporate product whereby the business structure can control the Market. But sexuality, like the Rocket, will also become a manifestation of a force which is beyond human control.

When Slothrop learns that his own vital sexuality (The Penis He Thought Was His Own [p. 216]) has been conditioned by the Market, he has a sense of self-betrayal. That which is innate, the central part of his nature, is a manifestation of a force beyond his control. So even if he should turn within himself, his own body would betray him. Such self-betrayal works perfectly to the advantage of the Market Structure.

which thus is able to control the needs and desires of the consumer. This idea shall be pursued further in the next chapter on paranoia. The particular example there will be Roger Mexico and Pirate Prentice, both of whom discover that the Market is able to use them as helpless betrayers of others and even of themselves. But in Slothrop's case, the idea of self-betrayal in sexuality has a different emphasis. As we have described it in the preceding chapter, the Market Structure attempts to control the nature of the world and its movement toward Death. From this we might conclude that the Market Structure represents the life force. But as we have already mentioned, the Market Structure's vision of life is not a natural vision, for it attempts to divorce Death from the life process. As the primitive religion of the Hereros suggested, Nature is a paradoxical union of both life and Death. But Western religion, with its "Baby Jesus Con Game" created the Christian Death which made little sense when compared to tribal Death. (p. 318). Slothrop is a full-fledged product of both the Market Structure and his Puritan heritage. His sexuality has been tampered with to the point that even members of the White Visitation consider him a monster product. (pp. 81-82, 144). But he is simply the natural offspring of the Western tradition. His response to black men, revealed in the narcosis he undergoes, displays his unconscious connection between the black race and excrement. (pp. 60-71, 688). In Puritan terms, the blacks are markedly the preterite, linked and destined by the colour of their skin to be the damned waste of the human race. Human nature, however, as well as the nature of the world, proves to be more complicated than such simple binary divisions as white and black, life and death. Slothrop experiences this in his own sexuality. As a child, his penis was employed as a measure in a simplified stimulus-response test. (p. 84).

But as an adult he experiences sexuality as an enigmatic force beyond a simple binary reaction. Human sexuality involves the physiological factor of the structure of the human body and the psychological ramifications which proceed from it. The actual erection, ejection and prostration of the male penis coupled with the mental experience of orgasm do suggest, as noted throughout history, the idea of Death. The physiological and psychological inter-reaction by which sexuality is expressed as Death leads to the idea of a release from the limits of the body and perhaps the mind as well. This is manifested in one of Slothrop's sexual acts.

....he was somehow, actually, well, inside his own cock. If you can imagine such a thing. Yes, inside the metropolitan organ entirely, all other colonial tissue forgotten and left to fend for itself, his arms and legs it seems woven among vessels and ducts, his sperm roaring louder and louder, getting ready to erupt, somewhere below his feet . . . maroon and evening twilight reaches him in a single ray through the opening at the top, refracted through the clear juices flowing up around him. He is enclosed. Everything is about to come, come incredibly, and he's helpless here in this exploding emprise . . . red flesh echoing . . . an extraordinary sense of waiting to rise . . . (p. 470)

Slothrop imagines himself as a homunculus within his own body and the orgasm threatens to expel him from himself. He feels helpless in this force which will destroy "him", yet also release him so that he is unencumbered by the body. Thus within the human being there is both a fear of Death and a drive toward it. There is a fear of the loss of self, but this loss also promises freedom and the entrance to another plane of existence. These dual instincts, paradoxically existent within the human being, are also manifested in the world at large. The round of nature appears to be cycle of birth, death, and rebirth. But there is also evidence that this cycle eventually ends. The world structure eventually leads to destruction. The universe of matter submits to the

law of entropy. And the body itself dies. There is the human struggle to control Death, to reverse the law of entropy. But as the Market Structure learns, and as the primitive tribes always knew, Death is beyond the nature of control. The body contains the seeds of its own destruction, and sexuality is a manifestation of the uncontrollable march of Death. Likewise the Rocket, which is that rising force which Slothrop experiences, is the thrust of life which must inevitably lead to Death. Katje, one of the characters who is involved with both Slothrop and Blicero, reinterprets an earlier statement by Eazian the Herero, who held the Rocket to be a masculine force freeing itself of the feminine pull of Earth. To Katje, the Rocket is beyond man's simple expression and control of Life.

Ascending, programmed in a ritual of love ... at Brennschluss it is done -- the Rocket's purely feminine counterpart, the zero point at the center of its target, has submitted. All the rest will happen according to laws of ballistics. The Rocket is helpless in it. Something else has taken over. Something beyond what was designed in.

Katje has understood the great airless arc as a clear allusion to certain secret lusts that drive the planet and herself, and those who use her -- over its peak and down, plunging, burning, toward a terminal orgasm. . . . (p. 223)

The Rocket is both male and female and the unity of those two opposites in life-engendering sexuality eventually leads to Death. The Rocket may be a creation of the Market Structure, but it expresses something beyond the conscious intentions of its creators. As we have seen in the preceding chapter on the Market Structure itself, the structures which men create in an attempt to control Nature can only ultimately express Nature's force, for Man himself is an expression of Nature and no matter what he intends, he can only ultimately manifest

the will of Nature. The essence of Life is both Growth and Death.

In searching for the Rocket, Slothrop is attempting to discover what he is. The Rocket is a sign of both his society and himself. This is a continuation of the Puritan tradition. The present world is regarded as a sign of the world to come. However, although this religious structure remains, the spirit which gave it life no longer exists. As the Hereros, who have lost their culture, testify, the contemporary world structure, embodied in the Rocket, can only lead to a perverse Death. Slothrop, who is a product of his culture, also implores the Rocket as a sign pledging a meaning to life. But the Rocket as a sign can only promise the threat of death, and nothing else. This new world structure of signs, which can only point to an eternal threat of Death, becomes the twentieth-century psychè of paranoia. The theme of paranoia will be examined in the following chapter, but first we must give consideration to the relationship between the Rocket and another character -- Blicero -- the Nazi officier-engineer-poet. Unlike Slothrop and the Hereros, Blicero is not only aware of signs; he is also fully able to manipulate them and thus he becomes the high priest of Rocket symbolism.

iii

Blicero

Captain Weissmann, who has baptized himself as "Dominus Blicero", the lord of the blank whiteness of death, is a legend in the Zone. (p. 322)
It is he who commands a rocket battery on the Heath in Holland and who

creates the mysterious 00000 Rocket. Only Blicero and his innocent junior officer, Gottfried, who is compelled to participate in Blicero's sexual rituals, know exactly what the 00000 Rocket is. But even before the creation and firing of this particular rocket, Blicero is regarded as a monstrous man because he seems to find fulfillment and self-expression in a world rent asunder by the cold annihilating forces unleashed by the war.

But their fear kept echoing: fear not of Weissmann personally, but of the time itself, a time so desperate that he could now move through the Mittelwerke as if he owned it, a time granting him a power different from that of Auschwitz or Buchenwald, a power they couldn't have borne themselves. (p. 666)

From Blicero's point of view, he feels that he is merely reacting to the new world in the only way which he feels that he can. The world, war demonstrates to him "the absolute rule of chance", (p. 96) so he attempts to create an interior world of meaning. Together with Katje (a Dutch woman who is actually a spy working for the White Visitation) and Gottfried, Blicero recreates a perverse sexual version of the fairy tale of Hansel and Gretel.

... it's better ... to enter into some formal, rationalized version of what, outside, proceeds without form or decent subterfuge, paranoid, shame ... though it is never discussed among them openly, it would seem Katje, Gottfried, and Captain Blicero have agreed that this Northern and ancient form, one they all know and are comfortable with -- the strayed children, the wood-wife in the edible house, the captivity, the fattening, the Oven -- shall be their preserving routine, their shelter, against what outside none of them can bear -- the War, the absolute rule of chance, their own pitiable contingency here in its midst.... (p. 96)

They create their own structure to shelter them from the actual destruction of the world, those very real ovens which consume the Jews. But this ritualized version of life reveals that the corruption they flee is already within them.

Katje is corruption and ashes, she belongs in a way none of them can guess cruelly to the Oven . . . to Der Kinderofen . . . remembering now his teeth, long, terrible, veined with bright brown rot as he speaks these words, the yellow teeth of Captain Blicero, the network of stained cracks, and back in his night-breath, in the dark oven of himself, always the coiled whispers of decay. (p. 94)

The sheltering, dark warmth of the Oven which they desire is their own intestinal oven which bakes the Bread of Life into sacramental shit, hidden within them, "secret as death in bed". (p. 236) And Blicero is aware of such paradoxes, for earlier in his life, as we have already mentioned, he journeys to the Südwest. He goes armed with a copy of Milke's Duino Elegies and he is forced to face the primitive conception of life and death.

...every true god must be both organizer and destroyer. Brought up into a Christian ambience, this was difficult to see until his journey to Südwest: until his own African conquest. (p. 99)

Blicero comes to this recognition only as he, the civilized European, performs the ritual of rape of the innocent. Hidden within Africa's depths, he may reveal his own perverse sexuality even as he is conditionally shocked at the native idea that "fucking" and the Herero name of God can be interchangeable.

...to the boy Ndjambi Karunga is what happens when they couple, that's all: God is creator and destroyer, sun and darkness, all sets of opposites brought together, including black and white, male and female. (p. 100)

Blicero is the very embodiment of European civilization but he also becomes conscious of the hypocrisy of the white civilization. It is he who speaks of the civilized man's failure to grasp death as the necessary end of life's rhythm. He understands the symbolism of the Rocket as a joint masculine and feminine sign of both life and death, much as Katje

did: a phallic rocket with its feminine counterpart. (p. 223) It should be noted that he thoroughly reads Rilke's Duino Elegies and he seems to fabricate himself into his own version of the Rilkean hero. He expresses the romantic melancholy which regards human love, life, and death as sad limitations upon the human spirit. But he nurtures the hope of transcendence, as he tells Gottfried: "I want to be taken in love: so taken that you and I, and death, and life, will be gathered, inseparable, into the radiance of what we would become." (p. 724) He bases his hope upon the 00000-Rocket as an effective rite which, even though it will plunge Gottfried to his death, will still liberate their yearning spirits. Blicero thus gives his own reading to the end of Rilke's Duino Elegies.

Yet, if they awakened a symbol within us, these
 endlessly
 dead, look, they'd point at the catkins
 that hang on the leafless hazels, or maybe they'd mean
 the rain that falls on black earth in the early spring.--
 Then we, who think of rising happiness,
 would feel the emotion
 that almost confounds us 43
 when a happy Thing falls.

Nature manifests a form which contradicts Man's instinctual framework of perception. Death itself, with its fall towards the Earth, can herald joy. The reversal seems to rule here; life is a manifestation of death, and this order prevails even to a successful annihilation.

"Want the Change," Rilke said, "O be inspired by the Flame!"
 To laurel, to nightingale, to wind . . . wanting it, to be
 taken, to embrace, to fall toward the flame growing to fill
 all the senses and . . . not to love because it was no longer
 possible to act . . . but to be helplessly in a condition of
 love (p. 97)

43. Rilke, p. 85.

This is Blicero's interpretation of Rilke and it forms the basis of his fascination with the destructive power of the Rocket. Death, which comes at the brink of sexual exhaustion, is the only liberation.

Blicero fully realizes the essential/symbolism of the Rocket and the new Finger of Death in the sky, which is also able to manipulate the sexual nature of man. He is the artificer of the 00000, the Rocket which becomes the mysterious key to both Slothrop and the Hereros, as well as other groups and individuals, all of whom are driven by the demons of sex and death. In Chapter V we will further consider Blicero as the highpriest of the 00000 Rocket which unites sexuality and death in a terminal orgasm. But first we must consider how Structure is employed in the novel and then we can fully comprehend what Blicero is attempting to achieve when he "sanctifies" death and sexuality in the ceremony of the Rocket.

CHAPTER IV

THE STRUCTURE OF PARANOIA

The first chapter has demonstrated the nature of the Market Structure. This conglomerate consists of an international business elite who employ science and technology to create and control the world populace of captive consumers. In this description, even war itself is merely one of the mechanisms which the Market elite employ. But "Their" needs and "Their" technology extend beyond seemingly political world events.

"There's something still on, don't call it a "war" if it makes you nervous, maybe the death rate's gone down a point or two, beer in cans is back at last and there were a lot of people in Trafalgar Square one night not so long ago . . . but Their enterprise goes on." (p.628)

This suggestion of a world conspiracy, which would be impossible to prove, lays the groundwork for the condition of paranoia experienced by the characters who make up the Zone of Gravity's Rainbow. The condition of this paranoia is linked to the "coincidence" of events which seem to form a pattern which suggest that a select few perpetrate the death of millions for some mysterious purpose.

". . .if what the IG built on this site were not at all the final shape of it, but only an arrangement of fetishes, come-ons to call down spacial tools in the form of 8th AF bombers yes the "Allied" planes all would have been, ultimately, IG-built, by way of Director Krupp, through his English interlocks - the bombing was the exact industrial process of conversion,

each release of energy placed exactly in space and time, each shock wave plotted in advance to bring precisely tonight's wreck into being." (p.520)

The final shape of the pattern would reveal the motivations of the manipulators, indeed perhaps would establish the sense of world history. But from the paranoid's point of view, the final shape never comes into view, for that would confirm the paranoid's suspicions of conspiracy, and he would no longer be a paranoid.

This circle of continuous doubt which can never be broken or resolved is the very condition of paranoia. The paranoid beholds the stage of world history and he seeks to establish a pattern of meaning, a shape which suggests a controlling force. This would satisfy the natural human desire for an orderly world which has a purpose. The problem however is that if world events are being controlled, then the controllers, who do not manifest themselves, must have nefarious purposes when the devastation which is called world history is considered. The paranoid, then, is in a bind.

"If there is something comforting - religious, if you want - about paranoia, there is still also anti-paranoia, where nothing is connected to anything, a

condition not many of us can bear for long." (p.434)⁴⁴

From this statement we would attempt to establish that paranoia is simply the condition of twentieth-century man as he attempts to confront his own nature within the modern world. We have already traced how the Market Structure employs religious reflexes, such as guilt and the fear of death, to its own benefit. We have also demonstrated how the Market Structure attempts to control death, much as the earlier religious structure of Puritanism attempted to create a system which explained the purpose of death and defined the rules for salvation. We may now reinterpret those statements in the light of paranoia. Particularly in reference to Slothrop, we will maintain that the structure of Puritanism, stripped of the spirit of belief in a God, can become the structure of paranoia. In addition to Slothrop, we must also note other aspects of paranoia as

44. The continuation of this quote might be particularly noted:

"Well right now Slothrop feels himself sliding onto the anti-paranoid part of his cycle, feels the whole city around him going back roofless, vulnerable, uncentered as he is, and only pasteboard images now of the Listening Enemy left between him and the wet sky." (p.434)

As quoted on page 19 of this paper, Melville's Ahab also speaks of the pasteboard mask of reality and voices the fear that such a mask may only disguise the "naught", a senseless void. Both Slothrop and Ahab face the dilemma of the mysterious mask which disguises either an inscrutable being or a meaningless vacuum.

manifested in some of the other characters. At this point, we may continue with the idea of the control of history and of death.

According to the paranoid vision (which we are now defining as an attempt to discover a controlling order in the world of coincidental events), the world can no longer be envisioned as a market of affairs in free trade. Instead, the paranoid suggests that modern economic theory and the new mechanisms of the market allow for control by those who possess the power and ability.

"Paranoid Systems of History (PSH), a short-lived periodical of the 1920s whose plates have all mysteriously vanished, natch, has even suggested, in more than one editorial, that the whole German Inflation was created deliberately, simply to drive young enthusiasts of the Cybernetic Tradition into Control work: after all, an economy inflating, upward bound as a balloon, its own definition of Earth's surface drifting upward in value, uncontrolled, drifting with the days, the feedback system expected to maintain the values of the mark constant having, humiliatingly, failed. . . . Unity gain around the loop, unity gain, zero change, and hush, that way, forever, these were the secret rhymes of the childhood of the Discipline of Control, secret and terrible, as the scarlet histories say." (p.238)

As suggested earlier, the purpose of this Control is the recognition of the limitation of the earth's resources. "The System may or may not understand that it's only buying time." (p.412) Sooner or later the system must crash to its death. But the system attempts to appear immortal. Indeed it must assume this facade if it is to exact control over the masses. And the twentieth-century preterite,

who must face this Market Structure which seems to control death and destiny, can never be sure of the actual reality. This is the inconclusive conclusion which Piratè arrives at in a paranoid dream fantasy in which a Jesuit priest instructs him in the new theology of existence.

. . . "I think that there is a terrible possibility now, in the World. We may not brush it away, we must look at it. It is possible that They will not die. That it is now within the state of Their art/ to go on forever - though we, of course, will keep dying as we always have. Death has been the source of Their power. It was easy enough for us to see that. If we are here once, only once, then clearly we are here to take what we can while we may. If They have taken much more, and taken not only from Earth, but also from us - well, why begrudge Them, when they're just as doomed to die as we are? All in the same boat, all under the same shadow . . . yes . . . yes. But is that really true? Or is it the best, and the most carefully propagated, of all Their lies, known and unknown?

"We have to carry on under the possibility that we die only because They want us to: because They need our terror for Their survival. We are their harvests . . .

"It must change radically the nature of our faith. To ask that we keep faith in Their mortality, faith that They also cry, and have fear, and feel pain, faith They are only pretending Death is Their Servant - faith in Death as the master of us all - is to ask for an order of courage that I know is beyond my own humanity, though I cannot speak for others.

.
 "To believe that each of Them will personally die is also to believe that Their system will die . . ."
 (pp. 539-540)

This Jesuit voice seems to hope that Their system will collapse, suggesting that there may yet be a divinity who

is the proper master of the universe. This is the religious hope - that there is a God who, in his infinite wisdom, has some purpose for the suffering and death which men must experience. The African Hereros, however, have since lost the ability to believe in their tribal religion. They have placed their total faith in Western man and his technology in exchange for a promise of a new kingdom of life. But they discover that the Metropolis of the white man is still subject to death.

... "They have lied to us. They can't keep us from dying, so They lie to us about death. A cooperative structure of lies. What have They ever given us in return for the trust, the love - They actually say 'love' - we're supposed to owe Them? Can They keep us from even catching cold? from lice, from being alone? from anything? Before the Rocket we went on believing, because we wanted to. But the Rocket can penetrate, from the sky, at any given point. Nowhere is safe. We can't believe Them any more. Not if we are still sane, and love the truth." (p.728)

The Market Structure's technological attempt to control Nature and the march of Death is a failure. The device of the Rocket which was built to liberate, instead only confirms man's destiny of demise. As we have already seen in the preceding chapter, the Market Structure's desire to master Nature can only lead to a new expression of Nature's force. The Rocket, as a manifestation of Death (and the connection between sexuality, death, and the rocket) will be considered in full in the following chapter on Structure. For the present, we must consider

how the desire to control the movement of history (and thus death) is based upon certain premises which in turn lead to the condition of paranoia.

IG Farben, the business "fellowship of interests", is determined to perpetuate itself. The individual board members may die, but the corporate structure lives on. The members believe that through economic measures, they can wrest control of history. But in a séance they are warned by Walter Rathenau, the deceased economic minister, that "history" is not what they envision with their scientific approach.

"All talk of cause and effect is secular history and secular history is a diversionary tactic."
(p.167)

Their simplified binary approach to the world via the science of cause and effect ignores the complexity of human motivation and the fact that human beings are also part of, or a manifestation of the force of Nature herself. Thus the Market Structure attempts to manipulate the masses through the fear of death but it neglects to consider the drive toward death. IG Farben has already been warned.

"The persistence, then, of structures favoring death. Death converted into more death." (p.167)

The Rocket, of course, is the technological manifestation of the unconscious drive toward death. Nature follows two laws: evolution and entropy. The law of life and the law of death may be logically contradictory, but

nature does not recognize a simple binary system of either/or. Instead she employs both/and; both life and death. So although many of the twentieth-century preterite masses may fear death, they also acknowledge the desire for demise, and not just of themselves, but of the entire world.

"The dearest nation of all is one that will survive no longer than you or I, a common movement at the mercy of death and time: the ad hoc adventure."
(p.706)

The Russian Tchitcherine, the half-brother of Enzian the African Herero, likewise recognizes this desire.

"There was a long-term operator, a Menshevik turned Bolshevik, in his exile and his return believing in a state that would outlive them all, when someone would come to sit in his seat at the table just as he had slipped into Trotsky's - sitters would come and go but the seats would remain . . . well, fine. There is that kind of state. But then again, there is this other Tchitcherine's kind, a mortal State that will persist no longer than the individuals in it." (p.338)

This desire to destroy the state is a natural human revolt against that structure which flaunts its own immortality in the face of mortals. When the religious structure held reign, it decreed death, but its death-certificates had the personal touch. In the Christian scheme, Man's sin had introduced death into the world. And after death, all men were subject to reward and punishment. But in the twentieth-century, massive world war has destroyed the meaning of death as a personal, and thus meaningful experience. Now the Rocket hovers overhead, and can destroy blindly at any instant. History, or the march of death, becomes an inevit-

ability which is beyond cause and effect. Tchitcherine receives such advice on this point.

"The basic problem," he proposes, "has always been getting other people to die for you. What's worth enough for a man to give up his life? That's where religion had the edge, for centuries. Religion was always about death. It was used not as an opiate so much as a technique - it got people to die for one particular set of beliefs about death.

Perverse, natürlich, but who are you to judge? It was a good pitch while it worked. But ever since it became impossible to die for death, we have had a secular version - yours. Die to help History grow to its predestined shape. Die knowing your act will bring a good end a bit closer. Revolutionary suicide, fine. But look: if History's changes are inevitable, why not not die? Vaslav? If it's going to happen anyway, what does it matter?" (p.701)

Political ideology has been the fountain of meaning in Tchitcherine's life. He has attempted to serve the state with devotion and loyalty. But he has suspicions that there is a controlling order hidden behind the facade of ideology.

". . . there are arrangements Tchitcherine can't see, wide as Europe, perhaps as the world, that can't be disturbed very much between wars . . ." (p.350)

Thus he begins to suspect the part he plays in this grand scheme.

"Their chronology can't be trusted. Contradictions creep in. Perfect for passing a winter in Central Asia, if you happen not to be Tchitcherine. If you are Tchitcherine, though, well, that puts you in more of a peculiar position. Doesn't it. You have to get through the winter on nothing but paranoid suspicions about why you're here . . ." (p.349)

As he crisscrosses the Zone seeking his half-brother

Enzian for revenge, Tchitcherine gradually becomes aware of the Rocket-cartel and its implications. "Every scavenger out here is in IG Raketen's employ. All except for himself, and Enzian." (p.566) But only belatedly does Vaslav Tchitcherine learn that even his own vendetta, his personal desire to find his half-brother, is employed by the state. He is asked:

"What made you think he was your target?"

"Who else's would he be?"

"Vaslav. Will you never rise above? These are old barbarisms. Blood lines, personal revenge. You think this has all been arranged for you, to ease your little, stupid lusts."

All right. All right. "Yes. Probably. What of it?"

"He isn't your target. Others want him."

"So you've been letting me --"

"So far. Yes." (p.705)

Tchitcherine is helplessly trapped. His own personal feelings of animosity are subject to the state's purposes. Thus the Russian's very soul is incorporated into the all-powerful structure. He could only revolt by refusing to follow Their dictates. But to do so would be to deny his own being, and thus to destroy himself. He realizes that he merely fills a seat at the table, and that he can easily be replaced. The state will not cease when he perishes. Death is Their scepter of power.

Two other characters - Pirate Prentice and Roger

Mexico - likewise discover that they are the pawns of a power elite and they do attempt to revolt. But they discover that even this revolt is employed by the Structure to its own ends. There will always be a constant power struggle, in life and death terms, between the individual and the structure which forms the world he lives in.

Pirate Prentice is one of the members of the White Visitation and as such he is employed in the Slothrop surveillance. However, when he discovers that the surveillance includes the whole of Slothrop's life, he is horrified at the idea that there is some hidden purpose, disguised behind the immediate war effort. He decides to denounce the White Visitation and he experiences a paranoid hallucination in which he meets many of his co-workers. At first he is puzzled, but he quickly grasps the situation.

"I've been wondering something else - are all you lot my Group or something? Have I been assigned here?"

"Yes. Are you beginning to see why?"

"I'm afraid I am." With everything else, these are, after all, people who kill each other: and Pirate has always been one of them." (p.542)

To be part of society is to be the preterite, the labour force of the elect. Rooted deep within Pirate is that supreme fear that he is totally at Their disposal, as one of the apparitions depicts it: "At the moment I'm involved with the 'Nature of Freedom' drill you know, wondering if any action of mine is truly my own, or if I

always do only what They want me to do . . . regardless of what I believe, you see . . ." (p.541) As the scene proceeds, Pirate slowly discovers the truth: "No one has ever left the Firm alive, no one in history - and no one ever will." (p.543) Thus if he escapes, it can only mean that he is being used, and perhaps is a double agent. This idea so horrifies Pirate that he can barely pronounce it.

"Being a d--"

"It's all right. 'Being a --'?"

"Being a double agent? 'Got round'?" He looks at the others, computing. Everyone here seems to be at least a double agent."

"Yes . . . you're down here now, down here with us," whispers Sammy. "Get your shame and your sniffles all out of the way, young fellow, because we don't make a practice of indulging that for too long."

"It's a shadow," cries Pirate, "it's working under a shadow, forever."

"But think of the free-dom?" sez Merciful Evans. "I can't even trust myself? can I. How much freer than that can a man be? If he's to be sold out by anyone? even by himself you see?"

"I don't want that--"

"You don't have a choice," Dodson-Truck replies. "The Firm know perfectly well that you've come here. They'll expect a full report from you now. Either voluntary or some other way."

"But I wouldn't . . . I'd never tell them--" The smiles they are putting on for him now are deliberately cruel, to help him through it a bit. "You don't, you don't trust me?"

"Of course not," Sammy sez. "Would you - really - trust any of us?" (p.543)

Facing the idea that anyone can be a spy, one can only

retreat within one's self. One comes to consider only oneself, since no one else can be trusted. But even that self within can be a traitor: "the old Radio-Control-Implanted-In-The-Head-At-Birth" idea. (p.542) Thus Pirate is constricted from both sides: There must be a contract on his own life; he has participated in the contract on Slothrop's life. And even this, his action of challenging the Structure, has no effect. They have learned how to "tip the Discovery of Guilt at the cusp between scientific theory and fact." (p.652) Thus Pirate conceives of a new form of Paranoia. He has suspicions about the spy structure, the White Visitation, and as far as he is concerned his suspicions are confirmed. But the paranoid can never be certain. He can never fully grasp the core of truth. Pirate will now have paranoid illusions about his own intentions. He may be, as far as he knows, controlled within, by the Structure. The earlier system of religion instructed men in their own interior guilt concerning sin. The twentieth-century system can employ a secularized version of guilt, so that all men, the new preterite, feel that they are at the total disposal of the Structure. Even if they should attempt to threaten the Structure by attacking it, they can never be sure whether their action is to their own or the Structure's benefit. In this way the Structure preserves its own life.

Somewhat later Pirate Prentice offers advice to another

member of the White Visitation who revolts, Roger Mexico. Mexico suspects Pointsman, the director of the White Visitation, and he feels that his suspicions are confirmed when another character, Gloaming, appears, as if sent to deceive him. But Prentice explains to Mexico that his apperception of the situation is too simplified.

"You're a novice paranoid, Roger," first time Prentice has ever used his Christian name and it touches Roger enough to check his tirade. "Of course a well-developed They-system is necessary - but it's only half the story. For every They there ought to be a We. In our case there is. Creative paranoia means developing at least as thorough a We-system as a They-system--". . . .

"I mean what They and Their hired psychiatrists call 'delusional systems.' Needless to say, 'delusions' are always officially defined. We don't have to worry about questions of real or unreal. They only talk out of expediency. It's the system that matters. How the data arrange themselves inside it. Some are consistent, others fall apart. Your idea that Pointsman send Gloaming takes a wrong fork. Without any contrary set of delusions - delusions about ourselves, which I'm calling a We-system - the Gloaming idea might have been all right--" (p.638)

Here the state of paranoia is positively embraced as if in a last-ditch effort to buck the Structure. Everyone must actively abandon any idea that positive truth or certain fact can be established. The world, the Zone of Gravity's Rainbow, is a region of uncertainty. Every object, every event, every person can only be taken as a sign which can never be confirmed. Everything is a suggestion, a pointing finger, that intimates a discovery which will never occur.

"Everything is some kind of a plot, man," Bodine laughing.

"And yes but, the arrows are pointing all different ways," Solange illustrating with a dance of hands, red-pointed fingervectors. (p.603)

Pökler is another character who confirms the world as a zone of uncertainty ruled by mass paranoia. He is one of the rocket engineers who works under Blicero. Confined to the island where the Rocket is being tested and constructed, Pökler begins having suspicions about the purpose of the Rocket and the intentions of Blicero. Before the war, Pökler was simply a rocketry enthusiast. The war itself provided government money so that he and his colleagues could continue their pursuit under government direction. Slowly he begins to feel that the bureaucracy which surrounds him is a wall constructed to hide something. His wife Leni is in the custody of the Nazis, so Pökler must be careful. And when they allow his daughter Ilse to visit him, but only his daughter, he knows that his paranoia has some basis. He even suspects that the daughter who visits him is not his own child, but rather one of Their agents.

"So it had gone for the six years since. A daughter a year, each one about a year older, each time taking up nearly from scratch. The only continuity had been her name, and Zwölfkinder, and Pökler's love - love something like the persistence of vision, for They had used it to create for him the moving image of a daughter, flashing him only these summertime frames of her, leaving it to him to build the illusion of a single child." (p.422)

To Pökler this show is a mockery of his personal life and he cannot understand Blicero's intentions, until one summer when he is off with Ilse on a short trip. Upon his

return he discovers that the rocket base has been bombed, and many of the personnel killed.

"Returning to the station, as soon as he came in sight of the 'foreign workers' quarters at Trassenheide razed and smashed, bodies still being dug from the wreckage, a terrible suspicion began, and would not be put down. Weissmann was saving him for something: some unique destiny. Somehow the man had known the British would bomb that night, known even in '39, and so arranged the tradition of an August furlough, year after year but all toward protecting Pökler from the one bad night. . . Not quite balanced . . . a bit paranoid, yes, yes . . . but the thought purred on in his brain, and he felt himself turning to stone."
(p. 423)

Pökler's paranoia at last begins to supply a meaning. There is a pattern to the war and the events of his own life. There is some goal at the end of the road. But before that point is reached, Pökler knows that he must undergo still further testing and torture. To observe some problems with the Rocket as it comes down toward its target, Pökler is stationed in a bunker at Ground Zero, the target point of the Rocket's trajectory.

"Chances are astronomically against a perfect hit, of course, that is why one is safest at the center of the target area. Rockets are supposed to be like artillery shells, they disperse about the aiming point in a giant ellipse - the Ellipse of Uncertainty." (p. 425)

Pökler knows that there is a possibility that the Rocket could directly strike his head and paranoia rushes in: Blicero has engineered all of this. The Rocket, of course, does not land on target and Pökler meekly walks away. Only toward the end of the war, when Pökler is com-

mandeered by Blicero to work on a very mysterious part for a special rocket, the OOOOO, does Pökler feel that his special destiny with Blicero has been fulfilled. But the paranoia which Blicero inspired does not disappear with Blicero's disappearance. Pökler still feels that he is at Ground Zero with the threat of the Rocket overhead.

"... the Perfect Rocket is still up there, still descending." (p.426)

This status will be confirmed even though the war may end.

"We all move in an Ellipse of Uncertainty, don't we." (p.427)

The paranoid labours under an eternal threat and the fact that that threat cannot be substantiated is merely part of the nature of the threat. The post World War II Zone, the World, is clouded by an ominous sign in the sky overhead. The sign points, but it points in many directions and can never identify the goal. There appears to be a pattern, a definite ellipse, but this ellipse itself only proclaims its own lack of certitude. This will be Slothrop's major discovery. The world is a sign, a definite pattern. But the sign or the pattern insists upon only intimating. The suspicion can never be confirmed.

We have already considered Slothrop's discovery that he is under surveillance, indeed perhaps has been since his birth, and he has some relation to the Rocket. Thus Slothrop has justifiable cause for paranoia. Throughout

the text of Gravity's Rainbow, the term "paranoid" is freely employed by the characters as well as the narrator. We might consider, for an instant, just how we might now interpret and then reinterpret this term. Thus far it has been used in the conventional sense: one who suffers from delusions of persecution. However, as we have noted not only for Slothrop, but for Prentice, Mexico, and Pökler as well, many characters do have adequate grounds for suspicion of a plot. With Prentice and Mexico (double agents and self-deluders) this suspicion becomes so totally uncontrollable that a person could even suspect himself. Pökler's war-time suspicions - the Ellipse of Uncertainty - become the normal mode of thinking. Hence the clinical definition of paranoia is not sufficient. Instead paranoia is equated to the state of consciousness of the twentieth-century psyche. This psyche perceives the universe as a collection of signs which portend a meaning. The signs, however, resist referents.

We may note one particular instance of complication in regard to Slothrop and the White Visitation, and what this complication implies. Slothrop is being watched by the White Visitation but when they begin their surveillance, they note that Slothrop already seems to be a psychopath and a paranoid. (pp. 48, 81-82) They want to study his reactions to the Rocket. And some of them, such as Pointsmen, do fear Slothrop as a mental aberrant. (p. 144) The impetus for the surveillance, however, is not simply their

clinical labeling of Slothrop, but rather the relationship between the pattern of Slothrop's sexual activities and the pattern of Rocket strikes. As we have noted earlier, the many divergent schools of thought at the White Visitation propose a variety of theories. And they all unequivocally renounce Roger Mexico's Poisson distribution equation. To them it is unthinkable that a pattern does not indicate signification, purpose, and perhaps even control. (pp. 85, 89) We might define the members of the White Visitation as paranoids in consideration of their obsession with discovering a controlling order beyond statistical chance. It should be noted that both the White Visitation and IG Farben conduct séances in order to discover the nature of the world beyond. (pp. 30-31, 165-67) In both cases, the mortals assume that there is an invisible world beyond this world. The most frequent terms employed in these séances are "control", which the spirits regard as a mere earthly illusion, and "death". We have already discussed death and control in terms of the Market Structure. We found that the new economic elite, much like the earlier spiritual elite, attempted to escape death by a structure which assured deliverance of the few at the expense of the many. The structure also provided a meaning to life - not only for the saved, but for the damned as well - by defining the purpose of death. However, as we indicated earlier, all, preterite and elite, are subjected to the fear of death.

And the very structure of salvation which the elect create - be it church, or Rocket - only becomes another manifestation of death. Hence all are subject to paranoia, for every structure, be it natural or man-made, manifests a pattern which enmeshes its victims. None of the patterns can give a meaning to death. They can only indicate the inevitable reality.

We must turn again to Puritanism to consider the mental reflex of searching for meaning in a pattern. We have already established how the Market Structure simply employed the structure left by Puritanism, which had lost its spirit of faith. The guilt reflex, the fear of death, the desire for a sign of election, are manipulated by corporate business for its own ends. The religious enterprise of reward and punishment, and now the business enterprise, is built on the basic desire to discover the meaning of life by solving the riddle of death. In religious terms, the world itself is a sign of the kingdom to come. If suffering and death oppress Man, he may still be confident that all is in God's hands. With the loss of this belief in God, there is no longer any explanation for the nature of the world. But the demand for explanation remains.

"... it's a Puritan reflex of seeking other orders behind the visible, also known as paranoia." (p.188)

Suspicion would be a natural reaction on Slothrop's part, considering some of the obvious contrivances he exper-

iences at the hands of the White Visitation. However, the paranoia as experienced in the Zone^o by many of the characters points to the entire world and all of history as one magnificent plot. Even Tantivy, Slothrop's friend, experiences this feeling.

"I don't know if you ever felt it at Harvard . . . from time to time back in Oxford, I came to sense a peculiar structure that no one admitted to - that extended far beyond Turl Street, past Cornmarket into covenants, procuring, accounts due . . . one never knew who it would be, or when, or how they'd try to collect it . . . but I thought it only idle, only at the fringes of what I was really up there for, you know . . ." (p.193)

The idea of "structure" or "other order" is identified throughout the novel with paranoia. We can easily see how the religious sensation of the world can become the paranoid sensation. In Christian terms, the bread represents Christ's body, the wine his blood. These are visible signs of an invisible kingdom of hope. But the twentieth-century vision is one of fear.

"Shortly, unpleasantly so, it will come to him that everything in this room is really being used for something different. Meaning things to Them it has never meant to us. Two orders of being, looking identical . . . but, but . . ." (p.202)

There is some hidden order, some power, which for its own secret purposes, controls Everyone. We might consider the motivation for such a fear. It seems as if the twentieth-century man, having lost the religious spirit, desperately needs some structure which, even if it cannot openly explain the world, at least intimates that there is an ex-

planation.

"If there is something comforting - religious, if you want - about paranoia, there is still also anti-paranoia, where nothing is connected to anything, a condition not many of us can bear for long." (p.434)

This religious basis of paranoia is particularly suggested throughout the novel in reference to Slothrop, whose early American ancestors - Puritans - are frequently referred to. And in this connection their religion is linked to the book, the Bible, the almighty Word. Slothrop's ancestors had their fortunes, in fact, practically and intimately tied to the Word, for they owned timberland:

". . . timberland whose diminishing green reaches were converted acres at a clip into paper - toilet paper, banknote stock, newsprint - a medium or ground for shit, money, and the Word. . . . Shit, money, and the Word, the three American truths, powering the American mobility, claimed the Slothrops, clasped them for good to the country's fate." (p.28)

We have already discussed the relationship between payment, guilt and Death. In the following chapter we shall consider how human excrement becomes a sign of Death and is in turn linked to the black race within the Christian symbol system. We will then consider the connection between the nature of word symbolism and the urge to transcend the limitations of the world. At present it is sufficient to note the Puritan idea of the Word in the Biblical sense. The Word is the sacred message of God which indicates his will and signifies his promise of punishment or reward in another

world beyond the present one. The Puritans, then, are referred to as the "word-smitten" ones who naturally search for "shape and design" as they attempt to fit everything into a "pattern". (p.207) Slothrop, the Puritan "liberated" from a belief in God, nevertheless possesses the same reflex and needs the comfort of an explanation.

"Worried, all right. By the jaws and teeth of some Creature, some Presence so large that nobody else can see it - there! that's that monster I was telling you about. - That's no monster, stupid, that's clouds! - No, can't you see? It's his feet - Well, Slothrop can feel this beast in the sky: its visible claws and scales are being mistaken for clouds and other plausibilities . . . or else everyone has agreed to call them other names when Slothrop is listening"

"It's only a 'wild coincidence,' Slothrop.

"He will learn to hear quote marks in the speech of others. It is a bookish kind of reflex, maybe he's genetically predisposed - all those earlier Slothropps packing Bibles around the blue hilltops as part of their gear, memorizing chapter and verse the structures of Arks, Temples, Visionary Thrones - all the materials and dimensions. Data behind which always, nearer or farther, was the numinous certainty of God." (pp. 241-242)

The structures or monsters which Slothrop "sees" and the quotation marks which he "hears" at first are only centered upon himself. Later Slothrop comes to realize that "the Zone can sustain many other plots besides those polarized upon himself." (p.603) And others tell him that life in the Zone contains its own set of rules: "We have to play the patterns. There must be a pattern you're in, right now." (p.257) Paranoia, then, seems to function as a

modern version of the quest.

"... that these are the els and busses of an enormous transit system here in the Raketensstadt, more tangled even than Boston's - and that by riding each branch the proper distance, knowing when to transfer, keeping some state of minimum grace though it might often look like he's headed the wrong way, this network of all plots may yet carry him to freedom. He understands that he should not be so paranoid of either Bodine or Solange, but ride instead their kind underground awhile, see where it takes him. . . ." (p.603)

The mysterious mechanical forest becomes the tangle-twist of a transit map which one hopes eventually to unravel. The task, however, may seem inane considering some of the circumstances. In Pirate Prentice's paranoid dream, he is given a strand of taffy to follow.

"... its labyrinthine path turns out, like Route One where it passes through the heart of Providence, to've been set up deliberately to give the stranger a tour of the city." (p.537)

In his travels on the transit system of the Zone, Slothrop meets many others who are "tourists" in the City Paranoid. Pirate occasionally nibbles on the collected strand of taffy as he rolls it up. The pattern or shape can be designated as an epic quest, an endless existential search, or simply a ludicrous joke. But however it is labeled, the idea of the pattern and its relationship to meaning persists. To end this discussion of paranoia, we may consider examples of the various shapes employed throughout the novel. The chapter on Structure will attempt to examine more fully the implication of shape and structure

as directly related to the plot line.

Some of the terms which are related to a particular shape directly refer to the idea of control. The term "power grid", for example, refers to the supply of electricity and suggests a picture of an area or a city crisscrossed by a graph of lines. But in the chapter relating the story of the Grid, power grid could also be interpreted as a controlling business structure which completely circumscribes an area. The consumers are at the mercy of the power grid. But even those who supposedly control can in turn be controlled. Scientists working with laboratory rats are compiling and studying data on the various controls they exert. But the working relationship of the lab may be viewed from another angle.

"From overhead, from a German camera-angle, it occurs to Webley Silvernail, this lab here is also a maze, i'n't it now . . . behaviorists run these aisles of tables and consoles just like rats 'n mice. Reinforcement for them is not a pellet of food, but a successful experiment. But who watches from above, who notes their response?" (p.229)

Men, it seems, may become trapped by the very organization they create to facilitate their pursuit of knowledge and their attempt to exercise control over external elements. This becomes evident with the creation of the Rocket, even in the primary stages of construction, as Pökler experiences.

"At first he helped out in the propulsion group. No one was specializing yet. That came later,

when the bureaus and paranoias moved in, and the organization charts became plan-views of prison cells." (p.402)

Later, when the Rocket is used against London, a new shape arises. London is divided into 576 squares, a quarter square kilometer each, and the Poisson equation is employed to predict "for a number of total hits arbitrarily chosen, how many squares will get none, how many one, two, three, and so on." (p.55) The graph curve of hit distribution is interpreted in various ways. One character notes that East London, which the poorer populace of the city occupy, receives the majority of rocket hits, and he proposes the cause of this.

"The people out here were meant to go down first. We're expendable: those in the West End, and North of the river are not"

. . . what if the City were a growing neo-plasm, across the centuries, always changing, to meet exactly the changing shape of its very worst, secret fears?" (p.173)

The shape of the graph, and indeed the very shape of the city, according to this interpretation, only reflect the truth of the class system. The workers exist simply as fodder for the march of history.

Roger Mexico, as a member of the White Visitation, attempts to explain the functioning of the Poisson equation to the others. His equation does indicate the distribution curve, but when others ask which sections are the safest, he must reply that each situation depends on statistical,

chance. To the White Visitation, this is unacceptable. A pattern must indicate control or at least the possibility of prediction. They cannot accept that a pattern may be created by chance. So they study Slothrop, since his sexual activity parallels and precedes the pattern of rocket-distribution.

The Mind insists on interpreting a pattern as indicative of purposeful causation and control. The modern or scientific approach to pattern proceeds with the ceremony of dissection and analysis. The more primitive or religious approach to pattern is a ritual of adoration and awe. In either case, man recognizes the pattern as a sign which speaks to him and imparts a meaning. With the African Hereros, we have an example of a convergence of the scientific and the religious approaches to a form. There is a figure which represents the launching switch of the Rocket.



The letters represent the five positions of the launching switch. But this figure is adopted as an insignia by the Hereros and becomes "something deep . . . maybe a little mystical," to them. (p.361) Later we learn that their villages had been built in such a mandalic form.

"Andreas sets it on the ground, turns it till the K points northwest. 'Klar,' touching each letter, 'Entlüftung, these are the female letters. North letters. In our villages the women lived in huts on the northern half of the circle, the men on the

south. The village itself was a mandala. Klar is fertilization and birth, Entlüftung is the breath, the soul. Zündung and Vorstufe are the male signs, the activities, fire and preparation or building. And in the center, here, Hauptstufe. It is the pen where we kept the sacred cattle. The souls of the ancestors. All the same here. Birth, soul, fire, building. Male and female, together." (p.563)

This coincidence of figurations is no less a special sign to the Hereros than the coincidence of the pattern of Rocket hits, and Slothrop's sexual conquests is a sign to the White Visitation. In either case, men attempt to interpret the message codified in the text of events. The supreme example of an event which assumes a shape that comes to govern the psyche of Man in Gravity's Rainbow is the flight path of the Rocket. In simplified terms, the flight path is the arc of a parabola. But to define the exact position and speed of the Rocket on that flight path, calculations centered around a double integral are needed. That is, two separate series of calculations are needed, for to pinpoint the exact position of a rocket is to deny its movement and to calculate its speed is to deny it a single position.

"To integrate here is to operate on a rate of change so that time falls away: change is stilled . . . 'Meters per second' will integrate to 'meters.' The moving vehicle is frozen, in space, to become architecture, and timeless. It was never launched. It will never fall." (p.301)

The flight path or even just the idea of the Rocket becomes a shape, that is, a form which portends meaning. This

shape can be represented mathematically as a completely abstract formula existing outside of space. And it is a shape which denies movement in time. As an idea then, what the Rocket represents to the human psyche exists beyond the perimeters of the Mind. In the older religious structure, God was the eternal, metaphysical figure. He was the mysterious force who was hidden, yet whose presence and power were evident in the universe. The lightning bolt was a sign that He controlled and employed Death. The night sky twinkled with His revelation of another order of existence beyond the earth. But now the double integral (represented as a double SS, a double lightning stroke) (p.300) rules the earth. The Brennschluss or burnout points, mathematically calculated to direct the Rocket to its target, form a new constellation of meaning in mathematical space, which now governs Man's psyche by suggesting a world above and beyond his present one.

" . . . a point in space, a point hung precise as the point where burning must end, never launched, never to fall. And what is the specific shape whose center of gravity is the Brennschluss Point? Don't jump at an infinite number of possible shapes. There's only one. It is most likely an interface between one order of things and another. There's a Brennschluss point for every firing site. They still hang up there, all of them, a constellation waiting to have a 13th sign of the Zodiac named for it . . . but they lie so close to Earth that from many places they can't be seen at all, and from different places inside the zone where they can be seen, they fall into completely different patterns. . ." (p.302)

The religious structure, which had given a meaning for

life and death, has become an empty shell. The form of the rituals remain, but the spirit of belief has died. Likewise, the human reflex remains the same. Man still perceives the universe in patterns which to him signify an underlying order of control and meaning, if not from a God, then from some other source of causation. But these patterns only project an "edge" or an "interface" which suggest but never confirm the existence of a controlling order beyond. In the next chapter we must further consider the nature of structure in the plot line and examine such terms as "edge", "interface", and "zero point", and consider their relationship to the Rocket, to Death, and to Sexuality.

CHAPTER V

THE STRUCTURE OF STRUCTURE

Thus far we have examined the religious structure as expressly manifested in the "Puritan reflex of seeking other orders behind the visible." (p.188) We have also considered the Market Structure as it attempted to manipulate and control the masses of humanity. Both structures shared the determination to create a system which ordered the world of nature and ultimately controlled the process of Death. We have seen how paranoia became the twentieth-century offshoot of the Puritan root. Indirectly our theme has been the human process of symbolization, of visualizing the world as a sign of a world beyond. We will now generically apply the term "binary system" to the dualistic perception which governs the main topics of the novel: religion, science, paranoia, the Rocket, the film form, and ultimately the question of Death. In this chapter we shall examine how the binary form is the structural feature which determines man's perception of the universe. And we shall also consider how the connection between sex and Death are related to the consequences of the binary form. This will lead us to Pynchon's definition of "structure" in Gravity's Rainbow, and we may then consider this idea in relationship

to the structure of the novel itself and its own utilization of the symbolization process.

The religious system conceived the space-time continuum as a world held in exact balance by the laws of God. The external world was a sign of the perfect equilibrium between life and death, joy and sorrow, virtue and sin. One of Slothrop's early American ancestors, a pig herder, easily saw this lesson whenever he herded his pigs to market to be slaughtered.

"Of course he took it as a parable - knew that the squealing bloody horror at the end of the pike was in exact balance to all their happy sounds, their untroubled pink eyelashes and kind eyes, their smiles, their grace in cross-country movement. It was a little early for Isaac Newton, but feelings about action and reaction were in the air." (p.555)

The religious system is thus linked to the scientific system which also desires a world of symmetry, stabilization and order. The justice of sin punished and virtue rewarded is secularized into the cause and effect law of science. The scientist, like the believer, perceives patterns in the universe. The believer employs his Bible as a set of equations to measure the meaning of the universe. "Data behind which always, nearer or farther, was the numinous certainty of God." (p.242) The scientist likewise accepts his mathematical signs and symbols as proof that causation and order rather than accident rule the uni-

verse.

"Pavlov believed that the ideal, the end we all struggle toward in science, is the true mechanical explanation. . . . No effect without cause, and a clear train of linkages." (p.89)

A binary approach to the phenomena of the world is thus established. The world is divided into discrete parts which, as symbols placed in equations, may be manipulated to discover cause and effect, and to create new effects which are totally predictable. Pointsman of the White Visitation is one of the characters who represents this science establishment, and is a faithful adherent to Pavlovian cause and effect. (p.89) Unfortunately for Pointsman, both the Rocket and Slothrop exhibit characteristics which disrupt the order of cause and effect. The V-2 rocket produces a rather curious effect. Its predecessor, the V-1, could be heard approaching long before it reached its target. Since the V-2 travels faster than the speed of sound, its approaching scream is heard only after it explodes. The physical effect is a ghost-like scream; the psychological effect on the people of London is a new form of fear, a paranoia concerning the instant annihilation. Although this reverse phenomenon of sound and explosion is scientifically explainable, the phenomenon of Slothrop, which is connected with it, is not. The correlation between Slothrop's sexual activity and the pattern of Rocket explosions has already been detailed. What mystifies Pointsman is Slothrop's reverse

reaction. Pointsman could easily understand if Slothrop was sexually aroused by the approaching sound of the Rocket. That would be a simple stimulus-effect reaction. "But, oh, no. Slothrop instead only gets erections when this sequence happens in reverse. Explosion first, then the sound of approach: the V-2." (p.86) But Pointsman is not discouraged. He works out a logical and symmetrical theory which posits certain inert points on Slothrop's brain which create Slothrop's confusion of ideas of the opposite. (p.90) Although he admits that the principle of symmetry may lead him to the wrong conclusion, Pointsman does not abandon the principle. (p.144) Despite Roger Mexico's challenge that there might be limitations to the principle of cause-and-effect and his assertion that statistical chance has application in the realm of science, Pointsman is adamant. (p.89) The Pavlovian scientist asserts that because Slothrop confuses the opposites, he reflects a "sickness to events - to History itself" by his refusal to recognize cause-and-effect. Pointsman insists that Slothrop be contained: "he is, physiologically, historically, a monster. We must never lose control." (p.144) But the Rocket, with its own reversible process, is symbolic of a universal chaos: "the War, the absolute rule of chance." (p.96) Thus Pointsman's vision is narrow as well as unfocused. He fails to see that the simple binary mechanism of cause-and-effect cannot control the enigma of world history.

As we have already seen in regard to the Market Structure, the business elite learns that the movement of Nature, which is to say Life and Death, can not be controlled by any rational structure. Ultimately Death rules, and even manifest itself through the very structures which Man creates in order to escape Death. Members of both the White Visitation and IG Farben discover that not only is Death the most obsessive topic of concern, but that it transfigures itself through the Market Structure and makes a mockery of the cause-and-effect theory of secular history. (pp. 32, 166-67) The intimation seems to be that Man's own nature, as manifested in the structures he builds, harbours its own death-wish.

One prominent example is the film Metropolis which is referred to in Gravity's Rainbow. This metropolis is the fusion of the Market Structure and the Science Structure to create "a Corporate City-state where technology was the source of power, the engineer worked closely with the administrator, the masses labored unseen far underground." (p. 578) The metropolis is the pinnacle of Western civilization from which one "could let it all crash, girl, state, masses, himself, asserting his reality against them all in one last roaring plunge from rooftop to street." (p. 578) Self-annihilation here is a means of asserting one's independence of the exigencies of life. The final exigence is the necessity of death; suicide thus becomes an

attempt to control Death and to give it a meaning. But perhaps even more than this, Death itself becomes a temptation.

"He found delight not unlike a razor sweeping his skin and nerves, scalp to soles, in ritual submission to the Master of this night space and himself, the male embodiment of a technologicque that embraced power not for its social uses but for just those chances of surrender, to the void, to delicious and screaming collapse. . ." (p.578)

Western civilization epitomizes itself in the effort to build the metropolis, the erection from which one may plunge to one's own death. The sexual implications of death will be examined shortly but first we may note the form which is now suggested. The man-made structure which arises above the groundwork of nature eventually collapses to its destruction. Thus Structure leads to De-structure. We arrive at a new formulation of the binary system, one which was unintended. The intention of the science system, the Market Structure, the Metropolis, is to assert man's dominion over Nature. Entropy management, the attempt to reverse the process which leads to death, has resulted in the creation of the modern world. And it is this modern world which flirts with its own total annihilation. Throughout the book there are oblique references to Hiroshima (pp: 480, 508, 693-94) and one of the final chapters is a scene-shift to the era of Nixon's presidency. This particular scene ends with the sirens warning of an atomic attack and a remark cut in mid-sentence. (p.757) Civil-

ization culminates in its own total self-annihilation.⁴⁵

The structure of the binary system, then, is yet a further structure by which man attempts to control the universe and instead becomes the victim of his own system. But we should note some other consequences of the binary structure. Heraclitus' law of enantiodromia certainly indicates a long history to the idea of opposites and also implies that this is Man's perceptual nature. He can only distinguish a foreground by creating a background. He must separate one from the many in order to consider the one's unique nature. Man naturally dichotomizes in order to perceive and also conceptualize the universe around him. Christianity's kingdom of death, and the spirit world indicated by the IG Farben séances are mirror worlds of matter and spirit. Pointsman notes that scientific theory relies on a sense of symmetry: "'irradiation,' for example, and 'reciprocal induction'." (p.144) The globe itself is divided by a mirror reflection with its northern and southern hemispheres (with the seasons reversed), its white and black races. (pp. 99,101) But to consider the complete

45. The setting of this particular scene with Richard M. Zhubb is the Santa Monica Freeway, "the scene of every form of automotive folly known to man." And Zhubb's death fantasy is suffocation by a plastic bag while driving. (pp.755-56)

Technology becomes the winding sheet of twentieth-century Man.

structure of the binary form, we must consider the "zero point" which lies between these two states of existence. Throughout Gravity's Rainbow there are constant references to the Edge, the Interface, the White Moment, the Cusp. Between the two contrary states, be they hypothetical or real, there exists a boundary line which does not belong to either state. This edge or interface, as it is employed throughout the novel, variously refers to a state of revelation, the entrance to death, and a symptom of paranoia. But whatever the reference, the characters are able to move up to, but never into, the edge.

" . . . such white finality in its closing clap of tongue. It implies moving past the tongue-stop - beyond the zero - and into the other realm. Of course you don't move past. But you do realize, intellectually, that's how you ought to be moving." (p.85)

We might define this area of experience of the edge - be it the revelation, after-life, or the reality behind the sign, in either religious or paranoid terms - as a continuum outside of time-space. We will return to a particular consideration of time-space shortly. But first we must consider one prevalent theme in Gravity's Rainbow, the connection between sexuality and death, in order to relate it to the idea of structure and the experience of the edge. This particular theme likewise will suggest and lead to a consideration of a realm beyond the time-space continuum, and prepare us for a discussion of the structure of metaphor in the

novel, and Pynchon's particular employment of the symbolization process.

We have already considered how the binary form suggests that the idea of structure is actually a process whereby structure is de-structured. We may now consider how a similar process is manifested in the relationship between sexuality and Death. The Western tradition, contained in the story of Genesis, reveals that the condition of sexuality and Death is manifested to Man as a result of the Original Sin. Man has incurred sin and guilt and the payment of death is demanded. At the same time, he becomes aware of his own sexual nature which simultaneously promises the propagation of his species and his own personal demise. The pleasure of sexuality leads to an ultimate payment, and thus in the Puritan tradition, sexual pleasure invokes guilt. The "damned Calvinist insanity again. Payment." (p.57) underlies not only the work ethic, but even the response to sexuality, as noted when a prostitute watches an American soldier and the madam: "She watches Marvy's face, as he pays Monika, watches him in this primal American/act, paying, more deeply himself, than when coming, or asleep, or maybe even dying." (p.605) The religious structure of guilt, now in a secular world, is so strong that even the most primary life experiences are subservient to an all-pervading structure of control. But the pressures are such that eventually the guilty one, the victim, revolts against the

structure - be it religion or society - which controls both Death and sexual mores. Thus in the quotation we have already considered on the film Metropolis, the engineer rebels and his self-assertion consists of his own suicide which is expressed and experienced in sexual terms.

"A curious potency. Whatever it was the real visionaries were picking up out of the hard tessiture of those days and city streets, whatever Käthe Kollwitz saw that brought her lean Death down to hump its women from behind, and they to love it so, seemed now and then to have touched Pökler too, in his deeper excursions into the Mare Nocturnum. He found delight not unlike a razor sweeping his skin and nerves, scalp to soles, in ritual submissions to the Master of this night space and of himself, the male embodiment of a technologicque that embraced power not for its social uses but for just those chances of surrender, personal and dark surrender, to the Void, to delicious and screaming collapse . . ." (p.578)

Death here is pictured as the terminal orgasm and civilization is the masculine element which dies in its penetration of nature. The metropolitan skyscraper is the man-made erection which must eventually collapse. These references, of course, continue the poetic tradition which links and puns on the relationship between the sexual act and physical death. Pynchon however continues the idea in terms of his own particular metaphoric structure and as we have already noted to some degree, there is an inter-relationship between sexuality and death, the religious and market systems, and the structures they create, expressed either in the sense of sin or the mechanism of the Rocket. But we may continue the idea of the union of sexuality

and Death still further. The relationship between sexuality and Death might be noted in classical Freudian terms:

"... lovers whose genitals are consecrated to shit, to endings, to the desperate nights in the streets when connection proceeds out of all personal control, proceeds or fails, a gathering of fallen - as many in acts of death as in acts of life . . ." (p.722)

Physiologically, the sexual and excretory glands share the same organs, and psychologically the seed of life can be transmogrified into the feces of Death. The primitive religions, of course, took note of such a relationship and indeed deified it.

"On the body of God, these two Sephiroth are the thighs, the pillars of the Temple, resolving together in Yesod, the sex and excretory organs." (p.748)

God above both gives forth life and takes it away. The human body itself is a sign in Nature of the Life process, the inevitable procession from Life to Death, and the mystical union of these opposites. But both the instinct of self-preservation, and the conscious consideration of corruption, find Death repulsive and unacceptable. In an earlier chapter we considered the Hereros who were herded into the Christian scheme of salvation and damnation. In terms of the Western religious symbolism of light and dark, their black skin condemned them as sinners by nature. This theme is further considered in the book when Slothrop voluntarily undergoes a drugged narcosis to reveal a white American's unconscious attitude towards the black race.

(pp. 60-71, 75) Later in the novel we are provided with an explanation of the relationship between excrement, the black race, and Death.

"Shit, now, is the color white folks are afraid of. Shit is the presence of death, not some abstract-art character with a scythe but the stiff and rotting corpse itself inside the whiteman's warm and private own asshole, which is getting pretty intimate. That's what that white toilet's for. You see many brown toilets? Nope, toilet's the color of gravestones, classical columns of mausoleums, that white porcelain's the very emblem of Odorless and Official Death. Shinola shoeshine polish happens to be the color of Shit. Shoeshine boy Malcolm's in the toilet slappin' on the Shinola, working off whiteman's penance on his sin of being born the color Shit 'n Shinola." (p.688)

This narcosis which Slothrop experiences is also replete with sexual innuendo in an aggressive anal manner. The life-engendering function of sexuality is perverted into an act of offensive destruction. We see this again when one of the characters of the White Visitation, Pudding, is engaged in a private sexual ritual.

"He leans forward to surround the hot turd with his lips, sucking on it tenderly, licking along its lower side . . . he is thinking, he's sorry, he can't help it, thinking of a Negro's penis . . ." (p.235)

The function of digestion is obviously for the continued health and well-being of the body. Likewise sexuality promises the continuation of the race. But in this instance, we note that the process of digestion is perverted into a form of poisoning. And the entire sexual ritual which Pudding participates in is a distortion of the procreative pro-

cess of love into a masturbatory violation marked by masochism. Pudding eventually dies as a result of an internal infection, a disease harboured within. (p.533) His image of excrement as a Negro's penis is a complex of many symbols. It unites a phallic and an excremental image into a distorted union of the life and death instincts and is a further confirmation of the white man's image. The black bogey man, the sensuous creature of dark desire, is enticing extinction. In the white, Puritan scheme, the black man is already condemned, but he also represents a carnal allure which confirms the fallen nature of the white man.⁴⁶

Earlier we had considered the African Hereros and how their social values had been annihilated by the white conquerors. Death, which had a ritual meaning in their culture, suddenly became a senseless violation perpetrated by the German army's slaughter. Those Hereros who were taken back to Germany and given a technical training, still felt the interior religious demand for a system or ritual which proclaimed a meaning to life. They began to view the Rocket as a new Text from which they could read a holy purpose in life and the end of life. (pp. 319, 520, 563) But

46. Pynchon refers to the black scape-ape, King Kong, throughout the novel. The ape is both an example and a parody of the idea of the white man's sublimation of a black sexual brutality which must be conquered. (pp. 179, 275, 277, 664).

some of the Hereros, the "Empty Ones", insisted upon a new ritual which they found was now imperative upon their race - their own self-annihilation. (p.318) Here we might interpret their drive toward suicide as an attempt to evade the control of the White Metropolis, that society and system which the black man felt was attempting to assert the prerogative of the gods - control of life and death. The Empty Ones' solution is analogous to the engineer in Metro-polis. He, and they, revolt against the Structure and attempt to destroy it. The Structure has perverted the life-force of Nature and they, in turn, attempt to pervert the Structure's control by their own suicide. Further, their death is related in terms of perverse sexuality. To the Empty Ones, suicide is "the most erotic thing there is." (p.319) We may first relate this to the Structure's attempt to control the sexual life of its members. Slothrop, of course, with "the Penis He Thought Was His Own", is the prime example. (pp. 285, 302) But other characters, such as Pirate Prentice, for example, are likewise conditioned by the Structure: "Like every young man growing up in England, he was conditioned to feel shame about his new reflexes." (pp. 71-72) And as one character speculates, the Structure will not permit sadism and masochism.

"Why will the Structure allow every other kind of sexual behavior but that one? Because submission and dominance are resources it needs for its very survival. They cannot be wasted in private sex.

In any kind of sex. It needs our submission so that it may remain in power. It needs our lusts after dominance so that it can co-opt us into its own power game. There is no joy in it, only power. I tell you, if S and M could be established universally, at the family level, the State would wither away." (p.737)

To revolt against this Structure which controls both death and sexuality, the individual can only assert himself by perverting these functions into their sterilized versions, suicide and sexual debasement. Thus the engineer of Metropolis takes his own life in a plunge which is associated with the image of "lean Death down to hump. Its women from behind." (p.578) The Structure is thus attacked by an anti-structure. But this idea must be pursued still further. Why should Death be erotic and why should its perversion - suicide - be considered the most erotic act? And why should sexual perversions be employed as the means of revolt and release from the Structure's control? To answer these questions we must consider Death in relationship to the idea of the Edge, that space or experience which has also been labeled as the White Moment and the Absolute Zero. These terms modify the idea of Death. Instead of simple extinction, Death might be considered as an entrance to a succeeding state. Even considered as a final zero, the implication is that the negative series begins on the opposite side. (p.664) As the threshold, Death is the point of revelation, the edge one stands upon to peer past the sign, to the meaning behind. From this point of view,

Death may be intriguing, for what it will reveal, as well as frightening, for the same purpose. And sexuality, whereby physiological reactions on the part of the body lead to a death-like point of exhaustion, also suggests a state preparatory to revelation. Slothrop has this experience when he beholds Margherita, a film actress, in a sexual pose.

"All Margherita's chains and fetters are chiming, black skirt furred back to her waist, stockings pulled up tight in classic cusps by the suspenders of the boned black rig she's wearing underneath. How the penises of Western men have leapt, for a century, to the sight of this singular point at the top of a lady's stocking, this transition from silk to bare skin and suspender! It's easy for non-fetishists to sneer about Pavlovian conditioning and let it go at that, but any underwear enthusiast worth his unwholesome giggle can tell you there is much more here - there is a cosmology: of nodes and cusps and points of osculation, mathematical kisses . . . singularities! Consider cathedral spires, holy minarets, the crunch of train-wheels over the points as you watch peeling away the track you didn't take . . . mountain peaks rising sharply to heaven, such as those to be noted at scenic Berchtesgaden . . . the edges of steel razors, always holding potent mystery . . . rose thorns that prick us by surprise . . . even, according to the Russian mathematician Friedmann, the infinitely dense point from which the present Universe expanded. . . In each case, the change from point to no point carries a luminosity and enigma at which something in us must leap and sing, or withdraw in fright. Watching the A4 pointed at the sky - just before the last firing-switch closes - watching that singular point at the very top of the Rocket, where the fuze is . . . Do all these points imply, like the Rocket's, an annihilation? What is that, detonating in the sky above the cathedral? Beneath the edge of the razor, under the rose?" (p.396)

In this instance the structure which is presented,

either abstractly, as the cusp or edge, or concretely, as the razor or the Rocket, implies a destruction or de-structuring which will lead to a new state of existence and experience. We have already traced this idea in the structure of religion - be it New England Puritanism or African Herero ritual - which implies a world beyond Death and a revelation of the present world's meaning. The succeeding structure of paranoia likewise engages a similar response - the exterior structures and coincidences of this world are a sign of a hidden controlling order which employs Death for its own purposes. The preterite masses of either the religious or the market structures can only view this world as a collection of signs which promise and ultimately deliver Death. Death, as the entrance to the other side, will confirm this world, and the approach to Death quietly resounds with an enticing promise leading one onwards to that vortex or holy center. This is Slothrop's experience with Margherita.

"And what's waiting for Slothrop, what unpleasant surprise, past the tops of Greta's stockings here? laddering suddenly the pallid streak flowing down thigh, over intricacies of knee and out of sight . . . What waits past this whine and crack of velvet lashes against her skin, long red stripes on the white ground, her moans, the bruise-colored flower that cries at her breast, the jingling of the hardware holding her down." (p.397)

The earlier relationship we made concerning the contradictory symbolism of the sexual and excretory functions with

their paradoxical situation in regard to their organ location in the body is now relevant. The mystery above the tops of Greta's stockings refers to both her excretory and sexual organs. The human fascination with both sexuality and with death may perhaps be deeply rooted to the sensation that the life and Death instincts are not mutually exclusive. We see this idea propounded throughout the plot of the novel, just as Slothrop discovers it when he is whipping Margherita. Pain, which is the warning that the body may be subject to injury and destruction, can also become erotically stimulating. Margherita demands that her husband Thanatz whip her:

"... each time Thanatz brought the whip down on her skin, she was taken off on another penetration toward the Center: each lash, a little further in . . . till someday, she knows, she will have that first glimpse of it, and from then on it will be an absolute need, a ruling target . . ."
(p.509)

Both the erotic and the lethal drive promise a revelation or a deliverance. What this revelation or deliverance is, cannot be said, for to experience it is to live within its realm, on the other side. This is why the Rocket becomes the ultimate symbol, the holy Text, the sacred Grail, which is the focal point of life in the Zone.

"Ascending, programmed in a ritual of love . . . at Brennschluss it is done - the Rocket's purely feminine counterpart, the zero point at the center of its target, has submitted. All the rest will happen according to laws of ballistics. The Rocket is helpless in it. Something else has taken over. Something beyond what was designed in.

"Katje has understood the great airless arc as a clear allusion to certain secret lusts that drive the planet and herself, and Those who use her - over its peak and down, plunging, burning, toward a terminal orgasm. . ." (p.223).

The trajectory between point of launch and final target, the Rocket's arc of flight, is its entire life.

(p.209) The purpose of its life is destruction and in fulfilling its life-purpose, it destroys itself. This pattern may also be represented as a "terminal orgasm". The Rocket as a symbol unites the life and Death drives which themselves are symbolic. They all point, as both Margherita and Katje have indicated, toward a target. They indicate a process which leads to an experience beyond. The attempt to relate this experience can only be couched in the terms particular to the symbol employed. We can see this when Slothrop has a peculiar sexual experience.

". . . he was somehow, actually, well, inside his own cock. If you can imagine such a thing. Yes, inside the metropolitan organ entirely, all other colonial tissue forgotten and left to fend for itself, his arms and legs it seems woven among vessels and ducts, his sperm roaring louder and louder, getting ready to erupt, somewhere below his feel . . . maroon and evening cunlight reaches him in a single ray through the opening at the top, refracted through the clear juices flowing up around him. He is enclosed. Everything is about to come, come incredibly, and he's helpless here in this exploding emprise . . . red flesh echoing . . . an extraordinary sense of wanting to rise . . ." (p.470)

The process of orgasm is here experienced in terms similar to the launching of a rocket. The explosion of

sperm and the rocket's thrust, a controlled explosion, both create the thrust and elevation which lead to the release. The Rocket frees itself of the pull of gravity and Slothrop relaxes his body's sexual tension. The relaxation creates the sensation of rising, which precedes the final exhaustion and collapse. The entire process is the respiration of life, the arc of tension and release.

One particular character is not only aware of the philosophical and sexual significance of the Rocket, but is able to employ it as the text for a symbolic ceremony. Blicero becomes the high priest of the Rocket because he envisions the Rocket as the vessel which can deliver Man from the chaos of a meaningless world of war, suffering and frustration. We have already delineated certain elements concerning Blicero in the chapter on paranoia. He has baptized himself as "Blicero" in honour of the white blankness of Death, and we have already mentioned the rituals he inaugurates with two other characters, Katje and Gottfried, in an attempt to create a small world of meaning against the chaos of the war. (p.96) What is extraordinary about Blicero is the means he employs to revolt against the reign of senseless Death. He is the commander of one of the Rocket bases and therefore seems to be one of those who controls that sign of omnipresent Death which haunts London. But Blicero's rocket base is liable to bombing itself and even the rockets they launch are just as likely to

explode at blast-off, or to fall back on the base itself.

(p.96) Thus everyone including Blicero is subject to blind, chaotic Death from above. But this omnipresent threat becomes, for Blicero, an "agony delightful" (p.97) and he believes that "his Destiny is the Oven." (p.98) Blicero is obsessed with Death because he sees it as the very definition of the world. Earlier, as a young man, he had witnessed the slaughter of the Hereros in Africa. At the same time he was reading Rilke's Duino Elegies which pictures the world as the "City of Pain" that man must traverse, only to come face-to-face with his own death. (pp.99-100) In the landscape of World War II and the unpredictable Rocket, he believes that he must enter into a "formal, rationalized version of what, outside, proceeds without any form or decent limit, day and night." (p.96) So Blicero creates his perverse sexual rituals by which he can channel the mad aggressive death instinct into a sexual expression which proclaims the absolute impotency of life. Blicero's supreme gesture of defiance is the special 00000 Rocket which he creates. It represents the union of many of the elements (and themes) which we have already examined: sexuality, death, paranoia, control. Blicero perfects this supreme machine of the Market Structure when he creates the 00000 Rocket. This particular Rocket, the Absolute Zero, contains a mysterious device named the S-Gerat. None of the characters who are searching for this particular Rocket

discover precisely what this device is, but it represents to them the key to their quest. Only indirectly does the reader learn what the device is. It is made of Imipolex-G, a sexually stimulating plastic in which Margherita was clothed and then gang-raped. The sensory stimulation of the plastic drives her to an extreme of sensation beyond time itself. (p.488) It is much like the pain of the lash which also leads her to the edge of an experience, a center of existence beyond ordinary reality. (p.509) Blicero's S-Gérat device employs Imipolex, a creation of Jamf's, who was determined to defy the order of nature. (pp. 249, 488) The implication in the book is that the S-Gérat is a mechanical Imipolex phallus which functions in the 00000 Rocket to create the true terminal orgasm, for a sacrificial victim is also in the Rocket. The victim, however, is not a woman but rather Gottfried who will be subjected to anal intercourse. The relationship between the sexual and excretory organs and the perversion of their functions are actually realized here. Earlier we spoke of Slothrop's particular sexual experience, in which he felt as if he were in his own penis. At the end of the novel we discover that it is actually Gottfried who is "waiting to rise" in an "exploding emprise". He is within the phallic Rocket, the steel erection which plunges to its destruction. The sexual perversion which we have already discussed, and the perversion of the Market Structure, attempting to cheat

death by building the Rocket, are now united and finally executed. Blicero creates the transfiguration of death which Rathenau had warned IG Farben about. (p.166)

Earlier we mentioned how Blicero had created another ritual with Katje and Gottfried, the Hansel and Grétel game, in an attempt to create a "rationalized version" (p.96) of the chaos of war, a form which a human being could retreat to in a world gone mad. But with his 00000 Rocket, it seems that Blicero is now reacting to the psychosexual history of mankind. Variouslly perceived as a madman and a "local diety", he perceives the outside world as a psychic landscape in which he must assume the rôle of man of action. Margherite reveals how Blicero attempts to control the elements.

"... the Kingdom of Lord Blicero. A White land.' I had a sudden understanding: he was seeing the world now in mythical regions: they had their maps, real mountains, rivers, and colors. It was not Germany he moved through. It was his own space. But he was taking us along with him! My cunt swelled with blood at the danger, the chances for our annihilation, delicious never knowing when it would come down because the space and time were Blicero's own." (p.486)

Blicero the officer-engineer is also Blicero the poet.

He has read Rilke in Africa against the background of the Herero genocide. He now experiences World War II. Death in both the White Metropolis and the anti-world of black Africa drive him within himself, but even there he finds death lurking. He must acknowledge the primitive idea of

death, the discovery of "the edge of the World," where death is the consumation of life. (pp. 722-723) And he knows of the Rilkean hero's struggle to acknowledge an order whereby the fall into death creates a "rising happiness."⁴⁷ Hence Blicero is determined to create a realm, a "mythic region" of space and time whereby he can receive the "illumination" he is seeking. (p.758) The Rocket is Blicero's poetic vehicle and he has "engineered all the symbolism." (p.750) The paranoids in the Zone detect signs pointing in a variety of directions. (p.603) Blicero, however, makes all of the signs point in one direction. While others bounce back and forth between binary opposites, Blicero calmly steps to the edge, the absolute zero of the Rocket at its white moment of destruction. He insists on grasping that point just on the cusp, where space and time cease to exist. This is the "death" with which he is in love. (pp. 96-97)

Blicero attempts "to leave this cycle of infection and death," (p.724) the world of 1945 which, with Hiroshima, is the Atomic Age. The fear is that the old world of causation and hierarchy is now lost forever.

"Will Postwar be nothing but 'events,' newly created one moment to the next? No links? Is it the end of history?" (p.56)

47. Refer to J.B. Leishman and Stephen Spender, trans. The Duino Elegies, by Rainer Marie Rilke (New York, 1939), pp. 128-30, for an extract of one of Rilke's letters dealing with this idea.

The A4 Rocket threatens to eternally hover in the sky, subjugating mankind to a perpetual life of dark fear:

"Post-A4 humanity is moving, hammering, and shouting among the tunnels." (p.304) The new space/time continuum is a trap which Blicero is determined to escape: "He had left 1945, wired his nerves back into the pre-Christian earth." (p.465) Reality, then, defined in terms of time and space, may be reconstructed to create other modes of existence.

Thus far we have examined the nature of structure in regard to the market, religion, the Rocket, and paranoia. The common theme in these chapters has been the search for meaning in death. Indirectly we have seen how each of these structuring systems create a world of their own. Now we may directly consider the idea of a realm which is outside Man's ordinary perception of reality. Man's world, as a space/time matrix is characterized as a movement which is continuous and beyond Man's control. Therefore Man will attempt to establish a controllable counter-world where space and time can be manipulated, and their continuous movement - which implies constant change and eventual death - can be frozen into the immobility of Zeno's tableau.

Endemic to the religious system we have already discussed, was the idea of another realm, the order of the eternal, of which the temporal was merely a sign. In religious terms, the temporal-spatial configuration of this world must pass into eternity. The fear of death is tempered by the hope of

salvation in a world beyond. The secular world inherited this reflex of belief, but since the death of faith, only paranoia could answer man's hopes and fears.

"The War has been reconfiguring time and space into its own image. The track runs in different networks now. What appears to be destruction is really the shaping of railroad spaces to other purposes, intentions he can only, riding through it for the first time, begin to feel the leading edges of . . ."
 (p.257)

Man's mind habitually graphs reality into "railroad spaces" of taut, intentional lines which imply direction and a goal. But the double bind of paranoia, which we have already examined, persists. Everything, including world devastation, must be for a purpose, for if there is no purpose, then life is chaos. Yet why must the purpose be both hidden and destructive. The edge can only point to two kinds of fear: fear of meaningless destruction; and fear of purposeful destruction. Since this is the only way in which the world can be interpreted, the characters seek to block out all information. They attempt to get beyond the edge, into a state of absolute zero, as Mondaugen experiences when his body becomes, as it were, a radio receiver.

"In his electro-mysticism, the triode was as basic as the cross to Christianity. Think of the ego, the self that suffers a personal history bound to time, as the grid. The deeper and true Self is the flow between cathode and plate. The constant, pure flow. Signals - sense-data, feelings, memories relocating - are put onto the grid, and modulate the flow. We live lives that are waveforms constantly changing with time, now positive, now negative. Only at moments of great serenity is it possible to find the pure, the informationless

state of signal zero." (p.404)

The attempt is to neutralize the grid that keeps one trapped. Arrows point and signs appear, but nothing can be confirmed. The form of electronics, like the form of Christianity, must lead to a state beyond. The Hereros, who have graduated from mythic primitivism to electronic rocketry, still seek that "Final Zero," the "Eternal Center" which is at the end of "the movement toward stillness." (p.319) They need a form, but the form must be surpassed, even as their life and their search assumes a shape. We see this in relationship to Slothrop, who likewise tries to "make it all fit" into a pattern of meaning.

" . . . and now, in the Zone, later in the day he became a crossroad, after a heavy rain he doesn't recall, Slothrop sees a very thick rainbow here, a stout rainbow cock driven down out of public clouds into Earth, green wet valleyed Earth, and his chest fills and he stands crying, not a thing in his head, just feeling natural . . ." (p.626)

The sexual imagery could be related to the aggressive finger in the sky, targeting Slothrop the crossroads into a victim. But instead he reads "nothing" into the scene, and he is not suspicious of a rainfall which he can't recall. Like Mondaugen in the earlier quotation, Slothrop's own body does assume a "meaningful" shape, but what he receives from this shape is defined as being "natural," with "not a thing in his head." The form here is a form for its own sake, and such an experience denies the world with its signals and symbols "now positive, now negative."

(p. 404) The serenity and naturalness of these experiences are an attempt to deny the space/time flow of reality, to achieve some zero point where existence is free of "meaning" which is comparable to "foreboding." But there are other attempts in the novel to halt the flow of life which threatens to sweep Man up into streaming oblivion.

Religion attempted to explain the edge of life-death as the gateway to an existence beyond earth. Man was promised the freedom of the heavens, the uplifting flight of his soul, upon angel wings, to the stars above. The belief in a God floundered but the desire to rise above the Earth's tomb-tugging gravity remained. Man's coming of age, his development of technology, created the Rocket, which seemed to promise the freedom of outer space, of a space beyond mother earth's womb-tomb. But as Blicero noted, the moon became merely another edge, a "new Deathkingdom" and the rules were still the same.

"Gravity rules all the way out to the cold sphere, there is always the danger of falling. Inside the colony, the handful of men have a frosty appearance, hardly solid, no more alive than memories, nothing to touch . . . only their remote images,

black and white film-images, grained." (p.723) 48

Men attempted to conquer time and space, but instead discovered that death, like the horizon, is always beyond human grasp and that it defines the boundary of his world. The call of gravity is omnipotent. And those men who make it to the moon become grainy "film-images." In an attempt to divide themselves from Nature, they destroy themselves.

The idea of the film-image is related to the technology of the Rocket and the entire metaphysic of the Western perception of reality. As we have already mentioned, the "binary system" dominates the scientific approach. Reality is dichotomized into a basic compartmental scheme which will admit of no other form of existence. We can see this in the argument between Pointsman the Pavlovian and Mexico the statistician.

"But in the domain of zero to one, not something to something, Pointsman can only possess the zero and the one. He cannot, like Mexico, survive anyplace in between. Like his master I.P. Pavlov before him, he imagines the cortex of the brain as a mosaic of tiny on/off elements. Some are always in bright excitation, others darkly inhibited. The contours, bright and dark, keep changing. But each

48. On page 65 John F. Kennedy, who inaugurated the race to the moon, is referred to as Slothrop's classmate and is envisioned in hyper-romantic imagery: "might Jack have kept it the harp from falling, violated gravity somehow?" In Gravity's Rainbow the moon is transformed from the goal of a romantic quest into the Kingdom of Death. Cf. pp. 65, 322, 410, 723.

point is allowed only the two states: waking or sleep. One or zero. "Summation," "transition," "irradiation," "concentration," "reciprocal induction" - all Pavlovian brain-mechanics - assumes the presence of these bi-stable points. But to Mexico belongs the domain between zero and one - the middle Pointsman has excluded from his persuasion - the probabilities." (p.55)

The element of chance, the idea of a realm beyond man's control, is untenable to the scientific view represented by Pointsman. He insists on pinpointing a phenomenon within a precise location. To explain the phenomenon of Slothrop and the Rocket, he posits "points of inertia" on Slothrop's cortex, and vows: "I will find out what they are if I have to open up his damned skull." (p.90) This approach of force and graphic analysis is responsible for the birth of the Rocket. The idea of flight and the conquest of gravity is approached in terms which, from another point of view, become pornographic in their intentions.

"Three hundred years ago mathematicians were learning to break the cannonball's rise and fall into stairsteps of range and height, x and y , allowing them to grow smaller and smaller, approaching zero as armies of eternally shrinking midgets galloped upstairs and down again, the patter of their diminishing feet growing finer, smoothing out into continuous sound. This analytic legacy has been handed down intact - it brought the technicians at Peenemünde to peer at the Askania films of Rocket flights, frame by frame, x by y , flightless themselves . . . film and calculus, both pornographies of flight. Reminders of impotence and abstraction . . ." (p.567)

In this attempt to discover and control the phenomena in question, both calculus and film are employed to arrive at the absolute zero point, a dimension beyond the flow of

time and space, where the essence lies. Thus attempt to capture the essence becomes self-defeating, for the method of approach destroys the subject. The implication is that an entity which is defined in terms of the time/space continuum cannot be taken out of that continuum. What this scientific approach does achieve, however, is the creation of another series of entities which exist as abstractions outside of the space/time continuum, yet alter the perception of life within the continuum. We see this with the Brennschluss (burn-out) points for the Rocket, which are mathematically calculated to determine the various targets of the Rocket.

" . . . a point in space, a point hung precise as the point where burning must end, never launched, never to fall. And what is the specific shape whose center of gravity is the Brennschluss Point? Don't jump at an infinite number of possible shapes. There's only one. It is most likely an interface between one order of things and another. There's a Brennschluss point for every firing site. They still hang up there, all of them, a constellation waiting to have a 13th sign of the Zodiac named for it . . . but they lie so close to Earth that from many places they can't be seen at all, and from different places inside the zone where they can be seen, they fall into completely different patterns" (p.302)

This new constellation is read in the twentieth-century astrological chart as paranoia. There is the constant fear of the Rocket overhead. It is not fear of rockets, but rather of the Rocket, the idea or presence from which there is no escape, either in time or space, because the Rocket exists beyond the space/time continuum. This is evident

in the mathematics of the double integral, which we mentioned earlier in the chapter on paranoia.

" . . . in the dynamic space of the living Rocket, the double integral has a different meaning. To integrate here is to operate on a rate of change so that time falls away: change is stilled . . . 'Meters per second' will integrate to 'meters.' The moving vehicle is frozen, in space, to become architecture, and timeless. It was never launched. It will never fall." (p.301)

This effort to perfectly control the Rocket, by manipulating its position in time and space into an absolute zero, only results in "the Perfect Rocket . . . still up there, still descending." (p.426) The attempt to go beyond the edge of time/space both succeeds and fails. Like both the Market Structure and the Puritan religion, science does establish this other realm, which is supposed to promise escape; but this realm, once established, instead threatens Man. The attempt to reverse the flow of entropy only hastens the demise.

Another creation of technology which is linked to time-modulation is the drug Oneirine. It is one of Jamf's synthetic creations and is meant to be an intoxicant.

"The property of time-modulation peculiar to Oneirine was one of the first to be discovered by investigators. 'It is experienced,' writes Shetzline in his classic study, 'in a subjective sense . . . uh . . . will. Put it this way. It's like stuffing wedges of silver sponge, right, into, your brain!'" (p.389)

The result of its time-modulation is to create a mental experience which leads to paranoia.

"like other sorts of paranoia, it is nothing less than the onset, the leading edge, of the discovery that everything is connected, everything in the Creation, a secondary illumination - not yet blindingly One, but at least connected, and perhaps a route in for those like Tchitcherine who are held at the edge . . ." (p.703)

Throughout Gravity's rainbow, there are frequent references to "dope" which is, of course, one means of escape from reality. But the particular reference to Oneirine suggests something more about the idea of modulating the time/space continuum in an attempt to escape the consequences of the world. As with the Rocket, Oneirine leads to paranoia, the state of being a victim. But the concept of dope is fully realized in a film entitled New Dope.

". . . and that's what it's about, a brand new kind of dope that nobody's ever heard of. One of the most annoying characteristics of the shit is that the minute you take it you are rendered incapable of ever telling anybody what it's like, or worse, where to get any. Dealers are as in the dark as anybody. All you can hope is that you'll come across somebody in the act of taking (shooting? smoking? swallowing?) some. It is the dope that finds you, apparently. Part of a reverse world whose agents run around with guns which are like vacuum cleaners operating in the direction of life - pull the trigger and bullets are sucked back out of the recently dead into the barrel, and the Great Irreversible is actually reversed as the corpse comes to life to the accompaniment of a backwards gunshot." (p.745)

This dope creates a new world in which the finality of Death is not only avoided but actually reversed. Time flows backward. But since the entire world is in reverse,

the dope seeker is now sought by the dope.⁴⁹ The dooper becomes immobile and watches the world rush past him. This state is finalized in Slothrop who, as the arch-paranoid of the novel, attempts to escape by immobility.

"... isn't that every paranoid's wish? to perfect methods of immobility?" (p.572)

The paranoid hopes to escape into the frieze of immobility. But what the paranoid feels is that "everything is connected." Thus he might begin to wonder if dope is also called "shit" (a sign of death) because it leads to an immobility which, as he will discover, does not deliver him to safety. The immobility the paranoid seeks may be another form of entropy, for the immobile Rocket - never

49. The terms of the life equation here are again related in a binary form: forward and reverse. Within these terms the first idea is one of hope; if the process of ageing could be reversed, then one could escape death. But the binary form constantly trips up Man. Instead of being the dope seeker, he becomes the sought. The film of life is then run in reverse, and Man flees, running backwards. The basic human desire to escape pain (and death) only reveal "a dilemma built in Nature" much akin to the Heisenberg situation. The search to find "something that can kill intense pain without causing addiction" only reveals "the nearly complete parallelism between analgesia and addiction. The more pain it takes away, the more we desire it. It appears we can't have one property without the other, any more than a particle physicist can specify position without suffering an uncertainty as to the particle's velocity--". (p.348)

The bi-polar structure of analgesia and addiction renders Man's attempt to reverse the movement of life completely useless.

launched, never to fall - creates a Zone of terror. As in Zeno's frieze in which the arrow is immobilized in flight, so the immobile paranoid becomes a prime target, much like Pökler's position at ground zero in the region of uncertainty. The paranoid's wish to manipulate time and space to his advantage eventually destroys him. Thus in Gravity's Rainbow Slothrop, as a character, disintegrates.

"'Temporal bandwidth' is the width of your present, your now. It is the familiar 't' considered as a dependent variable. The more you dwell in the past and in the future, the thicker your bandwidth, the more solid your persona. But the narrower your sense of Now, the more tenuous you are." (p.509)

He first begins to feel this when he is at the former rocket base at Peenemünde, approaching the Holy Center. The Rocket for Slothrop represents the revelation of what he is, but this revelation is ominous, for the implication is that Slothrop, like the Rocket, is an assemblage created by his own time. (pp. 230, 738-40, 742) To avoid this annihilation pronouncement, Slothrop attempts to escape Time and this attempt confirms his own destruction as a person. The theme we have been following throughout is again verified. In both Puritanism and the Market Structure, Man attempts to evade the consequences of Time by creating a system of escape. The system, however, only confirms a new form of annihilation. Now we must specifically consider this new annihilation.

Following upon Religion, the Market Structure attempts

to reverse entropy, to get on "the other side of the whole thing, the whole bacteria-hydrocarbon-waste cycle." (p.523)

It perceives the world of time-space as a binary system which can be broken down into specific parts which may be reassembled. The world then becomes a film strip with distinct, precise squares of space which flow in a linear time sequence. But events prove otherwise.

"... unless the Blitz stops, rockets dismantle, the entire film run backward: faired skin back to sheet steel back to pigs to white incandescence to ore, to Earth. But the reality is not reversible. Each firebloom, followed by blast then by sound of arrival, is a mockery (how can it not be deliberate?) of the reversible process." (p.139)

Death, the "Great Irreversible", cannot be contained. This is the language of Mechanical Time, which succeeds Mythic Time. From our examination of the Hereros, and Blicero's Rocket ritual, we could imply that Mythic Time accepts the presence of Death as part of the environment. Or rather, the environment is not divided into parts. Just as sexual and excretory organs are related, so too do life and death intermingle and form the world. In Mythic Time, there is not a sense of succession, but rather a state of an eternal present.⁵⁰

Mechanical Time, the time of science, is best represented by numerical progression, the binary system, or the

50. See Mircea Eliade, "Sacred Time and Myths," The Sacred and the Profane (New York, 1959).

film form. One state follows another; courses precede effects in rational order. This structure attempts to graph reality, the flow of time/space, into a grid of coordinates by which time/space can be measured and manipulated. As we have seen, Mechanical Time, attempting to control the flow of events toward death, utterly fails. The result is Paranoid Time, the state of immobility. The threat of the Rocket - never launched, never to fall - hangs perpetually overhead and creates the contemporary conception of the world. The paranoid, in response to the all pervasive fear, attempts to escape this world through immobility. Rocket and victim are thus frozen in a state at the point just before annihilation, the "last unmeasurable gap . . . the last delta-t." (p.760) This is Zeno's paradoxical edge, the state just prior to contact, a perpetual motion which is frozen into stasis. Reality is continuously broken down into discreet parts which rupture rather than relate. This postponement at the threshold is endemic to Gravity's Rainbow. We see a humorous example of it when Enzian is being "Sold on Suicide". This is a song which one sings as one renounces the world.

"But I'm S.O.S., yes well actually this goes on, verse after verse, for quite some time. In its complete version it represents a pretty fair renunciation of the things of the world. The trouble with it is that by Godel's Theorem there is bound to be some item around that one has omitted from the list, and such an item is not easy to think of off the top of one's head, so that what one does most likely is go back over the whole thing, mean-

time correcting mistakes and inevitable repetitions, and putting in new items that will surely have occurred to one, and - well, it's easy to see that the 'suicide' of the title might have to be postponed indefinitely!" (p.320)

Dénouement is never achieved. Instead the collection of items grows larger and larger and the central activity is the constant build-up for the moment which is always just on the verge of arriving. It seems that the possibility of suicide, the melting taste of death, is the essence of the thrill. There is a promise just about to be fulfilled. This sensation of danger with the temptation of release creates the experience of the edge.

"... the strokes of lightning banging all the mountains blue, the cockpit briefly filled with the light . . . right at the edge. Right here, at the interface, the air will be rising. You follow the edge of the storm, with another sense - the flight-sense, located nowhere, filling all your nerves . . . as long as you stay always right at the edge between fair lowlands and the madness of Donar it does not fail you, whatever it is that flies, this carrying drive toward - is it freedom? Does no one recognize what enslavement gravity is till he reaches the interface of the thunder?" (p.455)

As we have already noted in the quotation on the cusps just above the edges of Margherita's stockings, (p.396) the absolute point represents both a beginning and an end (sex and excretion). A revelation, which will draw one out of this world is about to be imparted. The spectator freezes as he watches the singular point of annihilation at the edge of the razor, under the rose, above the cathedral, and at the top of the Rocket. But this is an eternal point where

the action is halted. Time and space congeal into a frieze. At the very end of Gravity's Rainbow an audience is confined within the space of a theatre waiting for a film which has suddenly stopped to continue.

"And it is just here, just at this dark and silent frame, that the pointed tip of the Rocket, falling nearly a mile per second, absolutely and forever without sound, reaches its last unmeasurable gap above the roof of this old theatre; the last delta-t." (p.760)

The frieze of time/space is presented again. The film form, we have seen, is linked to calculus, to a pornographic distortion of the world's reality of time and space. The "last delta-t" and the final frame mean that the form then ceases. Presumably reality will then rush in to replace the form. But the reality which is always imminent throughout Gravity's Rainbow is Death. The implications are myriad. We may interpret this last scene as referring to the novel itself. The entire preceding plot-line has, like the film form, manipulated time and space to create the illusion of a world which should reach the dénouement of the last page. Instead, the reader is presented with a frieze implying the beginning of the real world that lies just past the edge of the last page, and the annihilation of the fictional world. But the last lines begin a song and then enjoin: "Now everybody--," (p.760) as if to invite the reader into the frieze. The structures which we have examined within the novel lead to the structure of the novel itself and a con-

sideration of the nature of metaphor. From Puritanism to paranoia we have regarded the nature of signs and remarked upon the human propensity to employ signs to interpret the world. But now we may note the paradox of signs. They are meant to point beyond themselves, to be the means, but they inevitably become the end. Metaphors, which are to convey another state of experience, can only lead to the edge of their own structure. As with mathematics and the film form, the edge of a metaphor can only lead to a void which must annihilate the metaphor. Our final chapter, then, must consider Pynchon's conscientious deployment of symbols to create a structure which comments on its own nature.

CHAPTER VI

THE STRUCTURE OF METAPHOR

Our primary approach to Gravity's Rainbow has been through the idea of Structure, that is, the manner by which the world is perceived and organized. In our opening chapter, with its references to Wittgenstein, Bergson, Poe, and Melville, we attempted to infer that to employ the term "world" (or specifically "Zone" in Gravity's Rainbow) is to acknowledge the perceptual ordering function of the Mind. We noted the struggle in these philosophers and novelists to reconcile the methodical Mind with the chaotic world. Specifically in Bergson, we noted his idea of the world in flux and the Mind's propensity to attempt to capture this flux in the frozen forms of the cinematographic method. Likewise Gravity's Rainbow, although employing other terms, examines the same question: How can the movement of life, which races to death, be controlled? We noted that the analytical binary system attempted to precisely graph the movement. This movement of life, as seen through the penchant of the Mind to perceive in terms of opposites, was related to the polarities of sex and death. These polarities, of course, could be stated in many other paired terms, depending upon the particular discipline of examination involved: physically, attraction and repulsion;

biologically, growth and decay; psychologically, the life and death instincts; cosmologically, evolution and entropy. Despite the particular terms employed, the basic structure of polar opposites remains the same. The form of the structure, however, since it establishes limited boundaries, also raises the question of existence beyond the boundaries, in some sphere where the opposites do not exist, or are possibly united in a homogeneous form. In the terms of sexuality and Death, the movement of life suggests the coming of an experience or existence beyond the ordinary mode of reality. In sexual imagery, the coming of the orgasmic spasm is related to the coming of Death. Both sexuality and Death become the threshold of another world. In either case, one is to go beyond the body and receive the revelation, the second coming, the entrance into heaven, or the world transformed into the new paradise. This physiological basis of the body in the throes of either sexuality or Death establishes the psychological basis for the mental life of symbolism. The external structure of life, which suggests a movement toward some end, creates the mental landscape which transforms external reality into a collection of signs which posit a world beyond this world. This idea has been graphically illustrated in the chapters on Puritanism and paranoia. The manifold manifestations of the energies of sexuality and Death, which define and create the world, thus lead us to a consideration of the

nature of symbolism, which is the dialogue of the Mind with the world.

As Bergson so eminently illustrated, the Mind, in attempting to experience the enigma called Life, artificially divides it into the mental entities of Form and Change. Change represents the invisible essence which is recognized yet cannot be captured by the Mind, so it is defined as the essence which animates the Forms of the world. Form in itself thus becomes a dessicated shell which can easily be perceived and manipulated to mimic the vitality of life. It is this dichotomy which permits man to analyze life and, according to Bergson and many other critics, to deceive himself into thinking that he has discovered the essence. We have already noted the criticism of this dichotomy in Pynchon: "film and calculus, both pornographies of flight." (p.567) And we have seen in Zeno's paradox a memorable depiction of a logico-mathematical analysis which never permits Achilles to reach the tortoise. Likewise it seems that analysis inevitably and interminably separates Form from Change and creates a frieze in which the essence of movement is indeed represented but hardly captured. We may consider this frieze of Achilles and the tortoise as the figure of the nature of metaphor as well, for the dilemma of perception is the dilemma of aesthetics. Like the scientist, logician, and philosopher, the artist is attempting.

to capture within a form some aspect of the nature of the world. As Bergson defines the world, it is a mobility which has no mobile, yet the artist must construct a mobile if he is to communicate his vision of reality.⁵¹ The artist must forge a metaphora (Gk. - to bear, to carry across), a vessel to mold and contain human thought and transport it from the environment of ordinary perception to the shores of a brave new world of experience. The assumption is that upon arrival the passenger will abandon the vessel and proceed spontaneously into absolute reality. Unfortunately the metaphor is the shape which the Mind molds to its own understanding; to abandon this vessel is to drown in the depths of unformed thought. At most, the Mind can substitute a new metaphor for an old one. Hence in Borges' "The Other Tiger," quoted in the first chapter, only a series of "images" of a tiger can be experienced, never the tiger itself. The Mind perceives the outside world as a series of frozen scenes which it may manipulate to suggest, in the manner of a film strip, the actual movement of life. The images themselves may come to be closer and closer approximations, but they can only come closer and closer, without ever actually arriving, just as Achilles can never overtake

 51. Henri Bergson, A Study in Metaphysics: The Creative Mind (New Jersey, 1970), p. 147.

the tortoise. The Mind could be said to resemble a movie theatre which, as at the end of Gravity's Rainbow, can only project a simulated reality onto a blank screen.

The symbol, then, must point to something beyond itself. Indeed, its very nature is to deny itself in deference to what it represents. Thus it is a structure which must de-structure itself. The symbol is that enigmatic frieze, the well-wrought urn, which must suggest movement even as it holds still. In effect a symbol is a frozen explosion, asserting itself by its own self-denial. As we have already seen with the structures of Puritanism and paranoia, the world which man perceives is but a sign of a world beyond, a higher reality of which he may only experience the brink. Thus Poe and Melville lead us to the edge of the symbol, beyond which is the engulfing void. To pass beyond is to demand self-destruction. To abandon the symbol is to abandon the Mind.

The problem then is how to assimilate the Mind into the continuum which is the flux of reality. By proclaiming a mobility without a mobile, Bergson would have us abandon the vessel of metaphor by plunging into the river of time in order to experience pure temporal flow. To help us to see this, Bergson proposes "melody" as a metaphor, for melody has form and construction, but its shape, as we listen to it, is the shape of duration. Our spatially oriented vo-

cabulary may bias and force our thought into three dimensional imagery but Bergson is quick to point out a major experience which does have Form yet occupies no space. The domain of our inner life seems to consist of a series of distinct psychological states which produce variations on our ego, and also produce an invariable ego which experiences these states.

"How could this unity and this multiplicity meet? How, without either of them having duration - the first because chance is something superadded, the second because it is made up of elements which do not change - how could they constitute an ego which endures? But the truth is that there is neither a rigid, immovable substratum nor distinct states passing over it like actors on a stage. There is simply the continuous melody of our inner life - a melody which is going on and will go on, indivisible, from the beginning to the end of our conscious existence. Our personality is precisely that." 52

In effect, then, one's own consciousness is the river of time. Unfortunately, as Bergson acknowledges, this state of perfect unity between the "I" of consciousness and the world is impossible to achieve, save in the brief instances of the aesthetic act. To conceive of an "I" is to separate one's self from the flow of time. Wittgenstein, who takes another approach, denies the existence of such a transcendent "I", but his path still invariably leads in the same direction as Bergson.

5.63 I am the world. (The microcosm.)

5.631 There is no such thing as the subject that thinks or entertains ideas.

If I wrote a book called The World as I found it, I should have to say which parts were subordinate to my will, and which were not, etc., this being a method of isolating the subject, or rather of showing that in an important sense there is no subject; for it alone could not be mentioned in the book.--

And this thus leads him to a conclusion:

5.64 Here it can be seen that solipsism, when its implications are followed out strictly, coincides with pure realism. The self of solipsism shrinks to a point without extension, and there remains the reality co-ordinate with it. 53

Wittgenstein even denies an "I" which is within the world-at-large and can meditate about the nature of this world.⁵⁴ Instead, the "I" can only meditate upon itself. The final result of his Tractatus is silence, for to attempt to speak metaphysically, i.e., beyond the solipsistic universe, is to speak non-sense.⁵⁵ Wittgenstein suggests that his own philosophical inquiry, once it has been understood, must be abandoned, for as a piece of metaphysics, it could prevent one from experiencing the truth of reality. To some degree, although with an entirely different idea in mind, Bergson arrives at the same point, for he admits that

53. Wittgenstein, p.117.

54. Black, pp. 308-309.

55. Ibid., p. 376

as long as his philosophy analyzes the world, it can only keep the reader from a proper experience.

Hence the philosophers Wittgenstein and Bergson, as well as the artists Poe and Melville, all employ their work to lead us to the edge of the void, that which is beyond the brink of the "I". Each of these minds creates a symbol which bespeaks its own limitations and calls for its own annihilation in order to reveal that which it symbolizes. As we have been tracing the idea of structure through Gravity's Rainbow, we have noted a similar moment whereby structure proceeds towards its own de-structure. This is specifically brought forth in the person of Blicero, the highpriest of the Rocket. As the conscious creator of the symbolism of the 00000 Rocket, Blicero creates what might be termed a work of art which others, who come after, attempt to reconstruct and interpret. We have already seen how Slothrop and the Hereros seek the key of their existence in Blicero's Rocket. Others, however, merely know that they must perform the ceremony of the Rocket without any realization of why, as we see in a conversation between Roger Mexico and Jeremy.

"So that leaves the fellas alone, to talk briskly about Operation Backfire, which is the British program to assemble some A4s and fire them out into the North Sea. What else are they going to talk about?"

"Why?" Roger keeps asking, trying to piss Jeremy off. "Why do you want to put them together and

and fire them?"

"We've captured them, haven't we? What does one do with a rocket?"

"But why?"

"Why? Damn it, to see, obviously." (p.709)

It is Blicero who fully realizes the power of the transcendent Rocket to unite the drives of sex and Death. He does not wish to conquer space but rather to master the flux of space/time which is expressed in everyone's body through the drives of sexuality and Death, the life and death instincts. Through the surrogate Gottfried ("God's peace"), Blicero is able to go beyond the very limitations of Life and Death and plunge into the void of the terminal orgasm. In Blicero's metaphysical poem of celebration, the vehicle is truly destroyed in order to launch the tenor into eternity. According to this ritual, Blicero may then disappear for his soul has attained the aesthetic achievement which makes this world of signs pale in comparison.

Blicero consciously models himself on Rilke and makes particular reference to the Duino Elegies. We may note that in their closing image, both men are akin to some degree. They visualize life as a journey through a landscape of pain and chaos, with love as an impossibility and death as an inevitability. Yet they both feel that the order of nature can be transcended.

"Yet, if they awakened a symbol within us; these
endlessly

dead, look, they'd point at the catkins
 that hang on the leafless hazels, or maybe
 they'd mean
 the rain that falls on black earth in the early
 spring.--

Then we, who think of rising happiness,
 would feel the emotion
 that almost confounds us
 when a happy Think falls.⁵⁶

Rilke reverses the Great Irreversible and sees Death as a fertility which can give rise to a life beyond man's biased perception. Likewise Blicero attempts to surpass, in his flaming Rocket, the human dichotomy of Life into the forces of sexuality and Death. Both men create a symbolic act in an attempt to draw themselves beyond the world which they perceive as a sign that must be transcended. They perceive the world as a stage upon which they must establish a particular relationship with themselves, others, and the forms of reality. They become self-conscious of themselves on this stage as they attempt to create an expression which will sum up and manifest the nature of life as they experience it. We may likewise note that the narrator of Gravity's Rainbow is aware that he too is fabricating an aesthetic work. He overtly refers to his relationship to the other characters, to himself, and to the readers. Like the other characters, the narrator is subject to paranoia, and he even is self-deprecating when he refers to himself as

56. Rilke (University of California Press), p. 85.

one of Slothrop's chroniclers. (p.738) It is not beneath him to tease the readers about their erotic interests:

"Ha, ha! Caught you with your hand in your pants!" (pp.695-96, 606) Or he may play with the readers' novelistic sensibilities: "You want cause and effect. All right." (p.663)

The narrator knows that he is in control of both sides: the characters and the readers. And ultimately he will attempt to make the readers into characters within the novel. The stage is set for this transition when we consider how historical characters, such as Rilke and Roosevelt, mingle with the fictional characters. The transition appears with Mickey Rooney whom Slothrop encounters at the Potsdam conference, which features Roosevelt. (pp. 371-83) Rooney is the larger-than-life figure who exists in both the real world and the cinematic world. His character as a film personality is so strong that it overrides his real-life personality, and indeed the real life of anyone who might meet him. The aura of his personality, constructed by Hollywood, makes Slothrop feel as if he were in a movie. But the real world of politics (and the war) might be considered a stage upon which Roosevelt is "dismantled" when those in control feel it is convenient. (p.374) Likewise the narrator suggests, through the guise of a "Spokesman", that much of what he conveys is merely what the editors of the outside world desire. (p.739) Thus the narrator, who stands between the inside, novelistic world, and the outside,

reader's world, breaks down the barrier between the two worlds. But what is the purpose of opening the floodgates and creating a chaos of real and fictive worlds clashing?

According to the theme we have been following, the novelistic world of Gravity's Rainbow which Pynchon creates is meant to be a symbolic interpretation of the contemporary world. But the theme of the novel has been the symbolic nature of the world itself. The finger within the novel, the sign of Sign, points out into the reader's world in an aggressive symbolic assault. This becomes evident in the last paragraphs of the novel in which the "audience" is sitting in a darkened theatre waiting for the film, which has stopped, to continue. The implication is that this audience, the readers, is waiting for the novel to continue. Pynchon, under the guise of the narrator, may dismantle his own readers, under the guise of the audience. The film form, in which this action is embodied, indicates the purpose of the author. The allusions to film and the general idea of cinematic illusion are prolific throughout the novel. But the film form is also linked to calculus in the same sense as Bergson's critique and Zeno's paradox. The film form becomes a pornography of life as it structures the flux of time/space into the frozen prison boxes of the 35mm image. Likewise the narrator freezes his audience in the box of the theatre where it waits in anticipation of the next scene. But in "the last unmeasurable gap above

the roof of this old theatre" the Rocket is suspended in "the last delta-t" before destruction. (p.760) This is the final frieze of the novel and it establishes the relationship between the novel and the reader. The symbol must destroy itself in order to manifest that which it symbolizes. But the Mind can only exist and think via the symbolic form. Thus the form then must invert itself in its own creative destruction even as it reaches out and symbolically destroys the reader, simultaneously asserting both the reader's existence and his demise. Pynchon's novel ends as if in mid-thought: "The film has broken, or a projector bulb has burned out." (p.760) The novel stops in its own movement with the suggestion that it is to continue. Time and space are held captive. But the audience also is. Their eyes, as well as the theatre wall, create the film screen. Or, as Bergson and Wittgenstein have indicated, it is the Mind which creates the time/space continuum as thus perceived. It is the Mind which is always coming closer to the reality pursued. But as Poe and Melville would have it, the embrace of the mystery of reality results in self-destruction. The self becomes identified with time/space. The box of the movie theatre, which contains both film image and actual audience, is suspended in the time/space continuum in which the Rocket, about to crash, suggests the movement of that structural continuum towards its own de-struction and a revelation

beyond. The final line of the novel invites everyone to sing - "Now everybody--" - and thus there is an intake of breath. The inhalation of life awaits the exhalation of death. The next moment, the next breath, will BE. The reader quickens in anticipation, and holds his breath.

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