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FICTION MODELS: CARLYLE'S SARTOR RESARTUS, MELVILLE'S THE CONFIDENCE-MAN, GADDIS' THE RECOGNITIONS, AND PYNCHON'S GRAVITY'S RAINBOW

by

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ABSTRACT

Fictive Models: Carlyle's Sartor Resartus, Melville's The Confidence-Man, Gaddis' The Recognitions, and Pynchon's Gravity's Rainbow

Gary Thompson

Reader-response criticism addresses the analysis of literary works from the perspective of the reader's consciousness as the work is read in time; its application to longer prose works has been problematical, because the number of details present for analysis becomes unworkably large. Reader-response criticism may, however, be profitably combined with analysis of symbols, since symbols must by their nature be both presented by author and perceived by reader; as a result, reader-response criticism which analyzes symbolic systems has a legitimate focus for organizing potentially overwhelming numbers of details into systems neither forced by the author nor imposed by the reader.

The idea of a fictive model is taken from scientific models, by which the action of larger systems may be studied: Sartor Resartus, The Confidence-Man, The Recognitions, and Gravity's Rainbow present such models which demonstrate how perception works within their worlds. By means of such fictive models, the reader is allowed to grasp systems of organization other than those to which he may be accustomed, to see the application of such alternative systems within the novel's world,
and to consider the extension of such a model to his own world and its perception. A fictive model, then, draws on Romantic theories about the ability of symbols to mediate between perceiving self and the natural world, without participating in quasi-mystical explanations of how symbols work; works which present fictive models demonstrate their efficacy within the novel's world itself.

Carlyle's Sartor Resartus presents such a fictive model in its "clothes," which becomes an experientially defined and modified metaphor by which the facts of the novel's world signify. The model of "clothes" redeems Teufelsdröckh's experience, and conversely, his experience revivifies metaphor. A non-transcendental fictive model may be found in Melville's The Confidence-Man, which presents "confidence" as a purely abstract term having no necessary significance; the implication, that phenomena may not signify at all, transforms the reader's expectations of meaning in the novel and potentially in his own world. Comparable uses of fictive models are found in Gaddis' The Recognitions, which presents "recognition" as an unachievable model for our engagement with the literary work, and in Pynchon's Gravity's Rainbow, which presents a physically verifiable model for the workings of metaphor in "the interface."

These fictive models are the basis for an alternate account of how some literary works mean; they are based on parallel activities of author, character, and reader, all engaged in making sense of their worlds; and they all promote transformations in human systems of knowledge.
To:

Doug, my own pointsman;

--Bob Patten, Wes Morris, Terry Doody, David Minter, and Walter Isle, for years of teaching and friendship;

--John, James, Thad, Ruth, Stephanie, Andy, and SueEllen, for community and love;

--especially Pam and Andy, who deserve it all; and

--Thomas Pynchon, in hopes that his routinization may be slow in coming.
**Table of Contents**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carlyle's <em>Sartor Resartus</em></td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melville's <em>The Confidence-Man</em></td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gaddis' <em>The Recognitions</em></td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pynchon's <em>Gravity's Rainbow</em></td>
<td>267</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
"[M]an is an analogist and studies relations in all objects."

--Emerson
Introduction

We may approach the definition of fictive models through recourse to a recurrent analogy in neoclassical theory, that of the microcosm. Behind the appearance of the English novel in the eighteenth century is an analogy whose persistence into our own century furnishes a measure of encouragement and despair. Present in neoclassical theories about art is the assertion that art should be a microcosm of the world proper: thus we see the eighteenth-century stage pulled back from the Restoration thrust stage into the proscenium arch, its stereotyped characters drawn within the frame so as to resemble portraiture; the same emphasis on characterizing types may be seen within the novel itself. An analogical relationship between the novel and the world to which it refers may be seen in the novels of Fielding, generally taken as the quintessential eighteenth-century English novelist. In Fielding's novels, and in others', to a degree, the analogy is more or less explicit: the author is to the characters in his novel as God is to the world proper; the sense of control over the novel's events, the novel's plot, resembles the divine plan or providence; and men's behavior inside the novel is drawn from and describes that of the world outside. The author's controlling presence is most strongly felt in works by such authors as Fielding, Thackeray, and Dickens,
who break through the fictive level of events in their novels to comment upon the significance of events, in the process giving a sense of authorial control. One implication of the analogy between novel and world is that men have characters—the term may have developed from the sense of character, some group of qualities which may be observed—and that their description will have the entertaining and corrective effects of satire. The analogy, then, assumes that men are rationally governed, and will change their behavior when shown its erratic nature.

As soon as we describe this analogy, however, it must be qualified: Fielding's authorial persona is one not over his characters like a god, or like Joyce's artist paring his fingernails, but one which takes a warm and humanistic interest in their actions, noting their follies even as he plans the plot's complications. And Fielding's contemporary and rival, Samuel Richardson, avoids for the most part authorial manipulation of the plot. By the time of *Tristram Shandy*, the element of playfulness in Sterne's narrative interpolations seriously qualifies the apparent providential order suggested by the analogy: Tristram's insistence on recounting the full history of his life, beginning with his conception, and imitating in its recounting the comic and random shifts of consciousness, make it questionable, indeed, to what extent the analogy between novel and world fits even the eighteenth century. The fact, then, that this analogy
persists into our own period—that fictional works are expected to be "realistic"—is a constraint to which several novelists have responded, either through essays criticizing this model or through alternative constructions.³

It may be oversimplifying to suggest that the neoclassical preference for highly ordered works of art derived from a growing sense of loss at the diminishing power of the Christian myth; and important individual exceptions to this historical trend persist into our own time. Nevertheless, the historical change in values, from a hierarchy established at the top by God, to a system with the individual man at the center, testing events by his response to them, corresponds with the general shift from the novel-as-world analogy to internally developed systems of interpretation.⁴ The composite movement, over three centuries, has been toward . internally rather than externally defined schemes of ordering events: rather than adhering to a system of values defined by society as a whole, the novel moves toward establishing a system occasionally derived from, but more often in conflict with, the culture's predominant system. The analogy persists, however, as the appeals to "realism" in any number of book reviews will attest, as a standard against which subsequent variations may be measured. The history of the novel could probably be written as an oscillation between writers' desires to provide fictional works sufficiently surprising to be interesting and readers' desires to have works sufficient-
ly like what they already know to make sense of the novels' events. As readers, we now expect less dogmatically defined systems of behavior, albeit systems still responsive to the external constraints of society.

The very act of writing fiction implies some desire to reorder the events of the world according to some private system of order; in practice, however, some of these private systems will coexist more or less easily with those of the culture at large. Writers whose works are organized according to accepted modes, such as Smollett, Trollope, and Roth, coexist with writers whose works suggest some reorganization in perceptual systems, such as Sterne, Carlyle, and Pynchon. Quite apart from the length or complexity of the novels involved, these place on their readers a demand for personal reform or change that others do not. The risks felt by the readers often cause these novels to be unpopular; when they develop a following, it is often through literally creating their audience.

Despite the fact, then, that writers have departed from the suggestive analogy between text and world, characters and men, plot and providence, author and God almost from its inception, the analogy still persists as a point of departure. "Realistic" writers, through the later nineteenth century and well into our own, are often measured by how well the events they describe fit the reader's sense of his own world, a persistence both encouraging and unsettling, depending on one's
perspective toward change. One way that writers cope with this persistence is to work within the reader's expectations, creating characters and events which follow expected lines: as the novels of Henry James, for example, show, quite satisfactory works may follow this procedure. Another way of adapting to this analogy is to undermine it, thereby causing the reader to reexamine his own assumptions about how his world works.

We may define the world in its widest possible terms, as a system of relations between human beings; and the novel as such a system, comparable but slightly skew from the world. The world proper I take to be so large that no description, however complex, can adequately fit it: at any given time, cultures have systems of rules governing the behavior of their composite individuals, rules which change with time as the culture changes. We may borrow an analogy from scientific procedure and take fiction to be a series of models or paradigms for the world at large, models which inherently distort by simplifying, but which are unavoidable alternatives to the chaos of events without models. In this description, certain models will be more consonant with and others more dissonant with received notions of how the world works: when the model is shown to be inappropriate, it is set aside for another. This thesis will consider works which present models for human behavior significantly divergent from received versions of the world, whose ambition
is to reshape those received versions through presenting more appropriate models—and which are themselves organized by presenting such models as their own organizing principles will furnish for the world at large.

Reshaping the reader's perception of how his world works is a considerable ambition; its execution places certain requirements on the novelist. First, the primary aim in literary works of this type is to produce a kind of transformation in the reader, causing him to reevaluate his schema of the world. While this intention will be better served if the work is entertaining or enjoyable—often the primary method of attempting to reform others' follies is by ridicule—it is subsidiary to the transformational strategy. Second, there will often be some theoretical discussion about the aims of fiction, discussion which is exemplified in some fashion by the work itself. Third, the transformation often will be associated with a single character whose experiences within the novel serve as a locus for the reader's experiences of the novel. Fourth, the perceptual changes required should be neither so great as to alienate the reader and cause him to stop reading it altogether, nor so slight as to go unperceived. Fifth, the novel should bear, in some sense, a projective relationship to the world at large: consequently, the change in the character's schema of his world should have an effect in the novel itself. There is, then, an inherent
parallelism in the argument of such works: what happens to the character within the novel happens, in a sense, to the reader as well, since the organizational strategies used to make sense of the novel will presumably apply to the world at large. The action of reading, according to this model, is itself analogical, in a sense; but rather than being the familiar analogy of text and world, author and God, which essentially leaves the reader out of the novel, this model gives the reader a position as participant in the attempt to order his world.

This model of transformation is distinct from previous models of reading. It is developed within a novel, for use in that novel, rather than being an analogy which may be applied repeatedly. Both reader and character, rather than undergoing a gradual and rational series of experiences which culminate in some reaffirmation of the common vision, are led to a point of crisis, at which former systems or schemata do not suffice to account for events; consequently, some moment of insight occurs which enlightens events, both preceding and following, in the novel. For example, Carlyle's Professor Teufelsdröckh, author of Die Kleider, the philo-treatise which the Editor translates and edits into Sartor Resartus, describes such a fundamental insight into the nature of the world in "The Everlasting Yea": after protracted Romantic agonies and wanderings, contemplating the landscape, Teufelsdröckh grasps the concept that, literally
behind the phenomena of the universe is God, analogous to 
the way in which a body is behind clothes. As a result, 
Teufelsdröckh perceives the world in terms of such an ana-
logy: clothes become symbolic of man's capability to per-
ceive symbols. As he later declares, symbols partially 
reveal and partially conceal⁹: and his insight into the 
phenomena of the novel comes to invest clothes in Sartor 
itself with symbolic qualities. Teufelsdröckh's moment of 
insight, clearly, is a model for the reader's own relation-
ship with the text: the expectation seems to be that, like 
the Editor who reacts with a mixture of chagrin and enthu-
siasm to Teufelsdrockh's volume, the reader will work through 
Sartor's own stylistic difficulties and apparent chaos to an 
insight about its own procedure, and that this will be seen 
as characteristic of reordering the world at large. Carlyle 
does not present this model in terms of rational argument—a 
fact which causes his many detractors to accuse him of mys-
ticism or obscurantism—but in a fiction which itself works 
by a process of insight into the nature of its symbols. Its 
arization underscores its assertion that truth is only so 
when validated by experience, not when dispassionately put 
forth as rational statement.

The value of change is emphasized in such works as Sar-
tor, change effected in the reader by presenting events which 
lead to change in a character or characters. The metaphor
which Carlyle finds for a model—clothes as symbols, and conversely, symbols as clothes—enables him both to vivify "dead" metaphors by resorting to Teufelsdröckh's experience, and to transform that experience by insisting on its metaphorical nature. All the events in Teufelsdröckh's life come to be seen as preparation for this "clothes-philosophy," and thus come to refer beyond themselves to some end. But fictive models need not be either so positive or so transcendent as Sartor's: Melville's The Confidence-Man opposes Teufelsdröckh's realization that God is behind phenomena, by presenting phenomena for which we cannot say there is any sufficient explanation. Characters in The Confidence-Man continually try to form schemata to explain the "metaphysical scamps" present on their steamboat, the Fidèle; the author tantalizes the reader of the novel, as he does the characters within the novel, by presenting details which appear to be significant, but whose significance remains unclear. As modern editions of Melville's novel show, there are recurrent allusions to non-Western systems of mythology, allusions whose accumulation never reaches a moment of insight comparable to Teufelsdröckh's. Yet the very play upon the reader's expectations, and their repeated disappointment, has an effect comparable to that in Carlyle's book, in that a change in our fictional model occurs: no longer do we feel safe in assuming that all events will be explained;
there are some phenomena, the novel implies, whose explanation is unknowable for men.

The movements of The Confidence-Man's plot center on encounters between its characters and its title-character, who is represented by a series of spokesmen (excepting, of course, the deaf-mute) on behalf of "confidence." Associated only by the title and by this common appeal, some of these figures are transparently con men in the usual sense; but others give no indication of being anything but sincere in their appeals on behalf of human trust and community. The term's recurrence, and the narrator's reticence at giving support either to those who doubt "confidence" or those who support it, produce a kind of parallelism between the reader's situation and that of the characters aboard the Fidèle: neither they nor we can be secure in our essayed interpretations of the novel's events. Rather than seeing some ordering spirit behind the phenomena of the universe, then, the result of Melville's model is to cause us to see the impossibility of moving from phenomena to any coherent interpretation of those phenomena: the interpretation is necessarily imposed rather than inherent. Such a change is foreign to our expectations of fictional works--ordinarily we anticipate that a novel will indeed set forth one possible interpretation, not a state in which nothing can be concluded--and it is therefore a significant change, potential-
ly, in how we interpret events outside the novel.

The Confidence-Man works by dividing its audience into interpretive communities, each characterized by a response to appeals for confidence, and then showing the insufficiency of that response: responses based on simple trust, simple distrust, or an inconsistent movement between the two, are all shown to be invalid at different times in the novel. The community which results, finally, is characterized by a willingness to tolerate inconclusive fiction; it accepts the novel's "Something further may follow of this Masquerade" as a sufficient conclusion, given its model. A technique which the confidence man employs in the novel, placing his potential victim into a dilemma whose poles admit no compromise, is therefore that of the novel itself; and such a division between extreme positions characterizes William Gaddis' The Recognitions. As in The Confidence-Man, characters are judged in comparison to an abstraction, in this case "recognition"; the opposition is not between responses to confidence, however, but between trivial and significant qualities of recognition. In trivial recognition, characters see what they expected to see and are reassured; in significant recognition, they have an insight into the unfamiliar and are disturbed, but disturbed in ways with beneficial results. The novel's many quotidian characters read newspapers, for example, primarily to see projections of themselves, in order to confirm their schemata of the world;
but those who avoid trivial recognitions do so by revaluations which question the principles of order in their worlds. Such recognitions as that which the novel's artist, Wyatt Gwyon, undergoes before a Picasso painting, are made the basis for the creation or understanding of any significant art: recognition thus comes to be a metaphor for the encounter with the artistic work, an encounter which itself serves as the model for reading the text.

Any reading of The Recognitions, however, is likely to conclude that the novel does not succeed by its own standard: the career of its own central character demonstrates that such transformations as recognition makes possible are limited to the esthetic framework, and have no ultimate effect on the world itself except dissatisfaction with its limitations. "Paintings are metaphors for reality," one of its characters, Esme, concludes; and as with Wittgenstein's concept of the picture, paintings have in common with the world "pictorial form." There is no intersection between paintings and reality, however, except for this perception of pictorial form; and this perception, whose result is frustration at the impossibility of achieving "significant form," is the operative principle in The Recognitions' model. Like The Confidence-Man and unlike Sartor, then, The Recognitions works by setting forth, then showing the limitations of, its model.
Whereas *The Recognitions* sets forth an esthetic model of perception, recognition, which pervades its world (principally by its absence), Thomas Pynchon establishes in *Gravity's Rainbow* a mathematical/physical model, the interface, which governs events in his world. Interfaces are defined as intersections between literal and figurative spaces: the term is first developed in a psychological context, applying to a dog's cortex, which joins inside and outside; later the term is used to apply to a variety of intersections, including skin, surfaces between liquids, death, the end of the war, and the edges of thunderstorms. In its development from physical processes, the interface is a metaphorical association between two systems or spaces which may be confirmed, which therefore is neither fantasized nor unavoidably private. In this way, the process of internalization which we have seen in the novel's development, which at times threatens to become so private as to be incommunicable (as in *The Recognitions*), is made once again generally available.

Interfaces, as the novel's models for the possibility of change, provide a kind of metaphor for metaphor which transforms such processes within the novel: the reader's own encounter with the text comes to be defined by such an interface, emphasized by the narrator's use of first-person plural and second-person address, by the claim to be reacting to the readers' fantasies, and by the rocket which metaphorically bursts over the readers' heads at the novel's conclu-
sion. *Gravity's Rainbow* culminates the series of novels, then, in terms of its projective relationship to the world proper: in its argument we see the intention to redefine the world outside its limits by adjusting the perceptive processes which make possible its ordering.

These works may be read in association, then, on the basis of a common attitude toward the reading experience, and a common set of strategies designed to bring about modification of the reader's assumptions about that experience. Their presentation here, though sequential, is not meant to be a historical account; similarly, though common elements are discussed, these are not listed in an attempt to define a new genre. Generic concerns—works' classification according to certain expectations—are part of the systems which these works set out to escape. Rather than meeting expectations, they set out to exceed or violate expectations; they are, therefore, in Herbert Schneidau's terms, *kerygmatic* rather than *cybernetic*. These works are approached here from the perspective of affective analysis, at least in principle: texts exist in language, and language only in interaction with some human consciousness which contains language. They are brought together here by a desire to join techniques of affective analysis with a basis for asserting some authorial control: the concept of the fictive model is the result of this compromise, one which logically may be extended to a
large number of other works, not only novelistic but dramatic or poetic as well. The governing principle behind affective analysis, that a work means not by what it is but by what it does, is potentially liberating for a large number of literary works, containing difficult or obscure passages which may be analyzed, then, by the fact of their difficulty or obscurity. 16 The concept of the model, adapted loosely from scientific procedures, describes how these terms function in the novels; additionally, it fits with the emphasis on experience found in all four texts.
Notes to Introduction:


2 Art as microcosm is a commonplace throughout the Renaissance and into the eighteenth century.

3 See Herman Melville, The Confidence-Man, ed. by H. Bruce Franklin (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1967), chapter 33, for Melville's response to the constraints of "realism."


5 Compare John Barth's statement that he prefers to "rebel along traditional lines," in "The Literature of Exhaustion," Atlantic, Aug. 1967, pp. 29-34.


7 These themes, and others, will be developed in the appropriate chapters.

8 See Kuhn for the comparison with scientific revolutions, as for example in "Crisis and the Emergence of Scientific Theories," in Kuhn, pp. 66-71.


The concept of interpretive communities is developed by Stanley Fish in "Interpreting the Variorum," *Critical Inquiry* 2 (Spring, 1976), pp. 465-85. According to Fish, these interpretive communities are characterized by common linguistic competence, common adjustment to the cultural context, and common agreement about how to read the particular text. For further discussion of *The Confidence-Man*, see that chapter.


2.14 What constitutes a picture is that its elements are related to one another in a determinate way.

2.15 The fact that the elements of a picture are related to one another in a determinate way represents that things are related to one another in the same way. Let us call this connexion of its elements the structure of the picture, and let us call the possibility of this structure the pictorial form of the picture.
2.151 Pictorial form is the possibility that things are related to one another in the same way as the elements of the picture.

2.1511 That is how a picture is attached to reality; it reaches right out to it.

14 Gaddis' term; see chapter two.


16 Fish, p. 469-70.
Chapter One: Carlyle's Sartor Resartus
I. The Earliest Garment

Most essays on *Sartor Resartus* consider at some point the book's first sentence, with its labyrinthine syntax, its metaphorical development, in terms increasingly comic, of the familiar trope on the Torch of Science, and its triumphant and whimsical announcement that so far, inexplicably, there is no Philosophy of Clothes.¹ Important themes of *Sartor* are developed from the opening, though of course these are only clear on subsequent readings: the literalization and extension of a familiar metaphor, or truism, until it is given new currency and force; the well-intentioned but comic pedantry of the Editor, and sometimes of Teufelsdröckh; and the partly archaic English, partly Germanic style, since christened Carlylese, through whose densities it is necessary to penetrate in order to read *Sartor* at all. But while much of the experience of *Sartor* is implicit in the first sentence, perhaps it may be useful to start further back, with the title, since under the aegis of that "Sartor Resartus" the apparent biography-autobiography of the text presents itself—or more precisely, since the title is the first entry in that text.

The title, first, is a triumphant declaration of con-
tinuing process: depending on where one goes for translation, he may find either "tailor mended" or "weeder re-patched." Certainly the title means in part by teasing, presenting itself in the traditional language of learning, Latin, but in terms apparently simple to interpret. The apparent simplicity, however, becomes complicated as we learn the ramifications, in the text, given to clothes and tailors. Clothes, in Teufelsdrockh's formulation, are not simply tissues to keep the body warm: they come to be translated, first, into signs of one's rank in society (since by their clothes the judge is distinguished from the condemned man); second, into signs of phenomena at large in the universe; and finally, by the import of their symbolizing, into signs of how the seriousness of even trivial or humble activities can be seen [60]. "The tailor retailed" applies to the reawakening of religion which Teufelsdrockh advocates after his conversion. The second word, resartus, derives from and redefines its first: the process of experience, we see from the very title, is a development through time, a development recapitulated throughout the book's process. Its very nature is of a transformation, and a transformation performed in the mode of language. There is in the very appropriateness of words to their referents a quality of magic, an assertion Sartor makes in regard to names.

The Name is the earliest Garment you wrap round the earth-visiting ME; to which it thenceforth cleaves, more tenaciously (for there are Names that have
lasted nigh thirty centuries) than the very skin. And now from without, what mystic influences does it not send inwards, even to the centre; . . . In a very plain sense the Proverb says, Call one a thief, and he will steal; in an almost similar sense may we not perhaps say, Call one Diogenes Teufelsdröckh, and he will open the Philosophy of Clothes? [87-88]

Carlyle provides the expectation, then, in Sartor Resartus, of a pun perhaps as consequential as that attributed to Christ: "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock (petra) I will build my church." ³

The title may apply appropriately as well to Carlyle's own use of autobiographical material in the novel.⁴ The facts are apparently faithful to the spirit, if not autobiographical to the letter--another pun, brought out by the Editor's task of presenting the "spirit" of Die Kleider, Teufelsdröckh's volume, from the literal letters delivered, in six paper bags marked with signs of the zodiac, by Herr Hofrath Heuschrecke [77-78]. This use of autobiographical material follows Carlyle's assertion that history is in its essence biographical: what better means to present, and to reshape, history than by resorting to a biography which is in its facts fictional but in its spirit accurate to Carlyle's own experience?

It is useful that the translation of "Sartor Resartus" points several ways, since the title itself suggests several applications within the novel: besides the question of Carlyle's own biography repatched, there is the Editor's
presentation, in form appropriate to his "British reader," of the matter of the "Life and Opinions of Herr Teufelsdromkh":

Considered as an Author, Herr Teufelsdromkh has one scarcely pardonable fault, doubtless his worst: an almost total want of arrangement. . . . Apart from its multifarious sections and subdivisions, the Work naturally falls into two Parts: a Historical-Descriptive and a Philosophical-Speculative: but falls, unhappily, by no firm line of demarcation; in that labyrinthic combination, each Part overlaps, and indents, and indeed runs quite through the other. . . . the Book not only loses in accessibility, but too often distresses us like some mad-banquet, wherein all courses had been confounded, and fish and flesh, soup and solid, oyster-sauce, lettuces, Rhine-wine and French mustard, were hurled into one huge tureen or trough, and the hungry Public invited to help itself. To bring what order we can out of this Chaos shall be part of our endeavour.

[34]

The extraction of "serious" matter from chaotic or comic material, then, which the Editor claims to do in rewriting the clothes-philosophy, and which the reader of Sartor itself must surely duplicate, is clearly another application for the work's title. Perhaps most importantly, the title refers to Teufelsdrockh's perception that the forms of religion, both the institutions and the symbols by which they are maintained, are outdated and need to be reborn.

The title's Latin assertion, then, is that tailors can be mended, weeders repatched—in short, that the new can come from the old. This action, this transformation, occurs with the same ease (and dis-ease) as the title's translation: just as one is never quite sure which meaning ought to apply, so one is at least initially unsure whether new may come from old. In its affirmation of the possibility of rebirth, Sartor
asserts that signifier may fit signified; and its title demonstrates such a relation.

But this perception is never an easy one: as Teufelsdröckh describes the symbol, which mediates between concealment and revelation [219-20], so we may infer the sign mediator between thing signified and perceiver. "Not a Hut he builds but is the visible embodiment of a Thought; but bears visible record of invisible things; but is, in the transcendental sense, symbolical as well as real" [220]. Sartor itself, by analogy, mediates between Teufelsdröckh's Die Kleider and the reader, and the Editor between Teufelsdröckh himself and the reader. Central to Sartor, then, are the assertions that mediation by symbols is necessary to perception, and that one must accept this mediation on faith. The Editor's repeated assurances that beneath all its stylistic inadequacies are materials worth the effort, and his implicit reliance on the reader to get through difficult material to read Sartor at all, both rise from this sense that knowledge of the world is achieved both by "revelation" and by work. The revelation, the perception of order, is discernible in phenomena, but only to those with the will to find or to create order. And it matters not at all to Carlyle which is cause and which effect, since the self is formed by the same Nature it perceives.

Sartor leaves Carlyle open to charges of "obscurantism," simplistic thought, and circular logic. One might think
that it would be simpler to present the "good parts" of Sartor—for example, the three core chapters of the second book, and perhaps the chapter on symbols—and leave the rest. According to this view, Teufelsdröckh's clothes-philosophy is the content of Sartor, hesitantly rendered by the device of the Editor, who is merely a stand-in for Carlyle. By this argument, Sartor is difficult to read merely because of Carlyle's stylistic inadequacies: infected with German syntax, he simply was unable to write decent English. The ideas Teufelsdröckh expresses (the argument continues) are painfully simple; and this fact is less common acknowledged only because Carlyle's observations seem more profound when phrased in his jargon. Moreover, what is said in Sartor is circular: Teufelsdröckh perceives the world as symbolic only after he learns to see symbols in everything; his "revelation" is, therefore, self-generating and not in the least "transcendental," his hut symbolical only because he sees it as so. One must of course pay Carlyle a grudging respect due to his historical role in the development of English prose, but as an object of serious study Sartor may be disregarded entirely.

Those who follow the line that there is a clear relation between expression and clarity of thought may well find in Sartor all the warning they need. If we assume that writers by definition communicate ideas, and find a writer who does not straightforwardly do so, we are justified in concluding that he had no ideas, muddled ideas, or ideas best left un-
clarified. Those who consider Carlyle from such a perspective, however, seriously misread Sartor: while it is meant to persuade, it does not exist primarily as persuasive essay, but as fiction. Its stylistic intricacies and verbal thicket are due neither to perversity on Carlyle's part nor to inability to write clearly, but to conviction that experience validates ideas. As Teufelsdröckh's history shows, Carlyle's conception of knowledge is that it occurs through a cycle of long periods of travail interspersed with flashes of insight. Neither travail nor insight can function without the other. It is no accident, then, that the "truths" of Die Kleider do not order themselves according to "common school logic" [52]. If Teufelsdröckh's work had done so, there would be no need for an Editor; but more importantly, the Editor's act of bringing order out of chaos parallels Teufelsdröckh's, and must be seconded by the reader before its insights have worth.

Sartor is therefore no more obscure than it has to be: were it to present its conclusions directly, the reader would have no opportunity to validate them experientially. Our interest in Sartor comes from this process of experiential validation: scoffing at Sartor's ideas is rather like pointing out Shakespearian anachronisms--hardly the most profitable use of the text. And rejecting its style as unreadable is tantamount to refusing to undergo its experience for purposes of analyzing its process. Sartor's value for us lies in its fictive strategy: its presentation of an enigmatic philo-
sophical work, supplemented by some biographical material on Teufelsdröckh, presented by a quirky and not disinterested Editor, and its insistence that each level must validate the others by resorting to common symbolic practice, all work in parallel to create the experience of the text. Sartor's narrative frame looks back to Tristram Shandy and forward to Nabokov's Pale Fire and Borges' Ficciones; its content, stressing the relation between signifier and signified which make up the symbol, and its reliance on transformation which comes from engagement with the symbol, transformation both of individual figures in time and of the reader's schema, all suggest developments in contemporary criticism; and its persistent address to the reader through the Editor's persona makes it available to affective analysis.
II. A Firm Bridge for British Travellers

The very act of reading Sartor Resartus, then, is a discovery of what one thinks he already knows: in reading and re-reading the title, the reader performs an action corresponding to his reading of events in Sartor as their meaning is changed by their consequences. The clothes-volume seems to the Editor "lucid and lucent" in the second chapter, even as Teufelsdröckh's personality has become "more and more enigmatic" [14]. On the strength of Heuschrecke's promised biographical data, the Editor undertakes Sartor; but as the task unfolds, he places more reliance on this new material.

Often, also, we have to exclaim: Would to Heaven those same Biographical Documents were come! For it seems as if the demonstration lay much in the Author's individuality, as if it were not Argument that had taught him, but Experience.

[52]

With the arrival of the six paper bags, and the Editor's consequent despair, the lucidity of his earlier perspective becomes suspect; and only through sympathetic labor will any version at all be available.

Biography or Autobiography of Teufelsdröckh there is, clearly enough, none to be gleaned here: at most some sketchy, shadowy fugitive likeness of him may, by unheard-of efforts, partly of intellect, partly of imagination, on the side of Editor and of Reader, rise up between them.

[79]
The Editor's earlier reliance on his understanding of Teufelsdröckh's volume, then, seems to have been hasty: we may infer that his forced reconsideration has its counterpart in the reader's response.

As he works through the documents to construct some version of Teufelsdröckh's life, the Editor comes to qualify still further his reliance on his reading of Die Kleider. Materials which had seemed clear later suggest the possibility of satire; and what previously seemed "rusticity and academic seclusion" [29], perhaps inevitable in a work from "learned, indefatigable, deep-thinking Germany" [6], comes to be qualified by suspicion. "An idle wire-drawing spirit, sometimes even a tone of levity, approaching to conventional satire, is too clearly discernible" [43]; "Our Professor, whether he have humour himself or not, manifests a certain feeling of the Ludicrous, a sly observance of it, which, could emotion of any kind be predicated of so still a man, we might call a real love" [49]; "Art thou the malignest of Sansculotists, or only the maddest?" [62]; "The Professor, in whom truly we more and more discern a certain satirical turn, and deep undercurrents of roguish whim . . ." [89]; "And yet, as usual, it ever remains doubtful whether he is laughing in his sleeve at these Autobiographical times of ours, or writing from the abundance of his own fond ineptitude" [94]. Reading, then, is presented as an activity directed toward finding some principle of order in a normal state of chaos: the Editor's
activity in presenting Die Kleider, and later some biography of Teufelsdröckh, is emblematic of human activity in the face of chaotic phenomena. One is called upon to sift through materials, to test hypotheses, perhaps suspecting a bad joke on Someone's part, with no better equipment than

the Diligence and feeble thinking Faculty of an English Editor, endeavouring to evolve printed Création out of a German printed and written Chaos, wherein, as he shoots to and fro in it, gathering, clutching, piecing the Why to the far-distant Wherefore, his whole Faculty and Self are like to be swallowed up. [80]

The Editor has by this time already voiced the possibility that one may return from these "boundless, almost formless contents, a very Sea of Thought . . . not only with sea-wreck but with true orients" [10]. We must assume that Carlyle's choice of conjunctions here is intentional: not only pearls, but also wreck, will be the result.

Some change in oneself, then, is consequent on the labor of interpretation: thus the volume, from its first arrival, has stimulated the Editor's self-activity [28]; thus the Editor cites as one of his motives the desire to proselytize, that is, to modify others' views, presumably those of his readers [10]; and, most importantly, thus does the Editor put into practice the same call to Duty that Teufelsdröckh himself finds in "The Everlasting Yea" [80; 196-97]. In short, it is through the Editor's reactions to Teufelsdröckh's volume and to the "biographical documents" of the paper bags that Carlyle presents us with a model for the reader's reactions.
There are in fact two models in Sartor, one conceptual and one dynamic—the symbolic perception of clothes and the Editor's persona in the text. Carlyle uses the last to excite the reader to the correct perception of the first. Both models are complementary; and the Editor provides Carlyle with a means of forestalling rejection of Teufelsdröckh's volume on grounds of its difficulty or its complexity or its revolutionary content. The Editor's reactions to Teufelsdröckh, then, provide useful information on its model of symbolic perception by showing that model first discovered and then applied.

It is clear, then, that the Editor provides a pattern for the reader in their mutual endeavor to bring order from chaos. The end of the Editor's labors changes in response to the text of Die Kleider and to events which occur during his editing: his initial intention is to be "a voice publishing tidings of the Philosophy of Clothes" [13], but a voice "animated with a true though perhaps a feeble attachment to the Institutions of our Ancestors"; later, after the complexities of his task have become clear, the Editor proposes "to build a firm Bridge for British travellers" [79], perhaps like the bridge built by Milton's Sin and Death—in short, perhaps disastrous in the short run, but in the long run part of God's plan. The work which results is in part that of Teufels- dröckh, in part that of the Editor, and in part that of the reader: all three engage in its creation or re-creation.
Wild as it looks, this Philosophy of Clothes, can we ever reach its real meaning, promises to reveal new-coming Eras, the first dim rudiments and already budding germs of a nobler Era, in Universal History. Is not such a prize worth some striving? Forward with us, courageous reader; be it towards failure, or towards success!

[80]

The implications of this mutual effort to bring order from chaos are that comparable activities and efforts occur in association with all three potential ordering agents: Teufelsdröckh's chaos of events (in "The Everlasting No," and other passages), the Editor's chaos of texts (Die Kleider and the paper bags), and the reader's chaos (Sartor itself), distinct though they may be in some respects, are closely parallel in this way. All three present a perceptual and organizational challenge that must be met, if Teufelsdröckh, Editor, and reader are to be who they are, literally. (This is the converse of Teufelsdröckh's declaration on naming [87-88]: if one ceases to open the Philosophy of Clothes, he thenceforth ceases to be Teufelsdröckh; and the same is literally true of Editor and reader.) Carlyle's view of experience, then, is that bewildering events, after much work, yield a significant and holistic vision of the world. The validity of his belief, and its appropriateness to one's experience of the world, are not at issue here; our purpose is to clarify Carlyle's work, not to argue for or against its assertions.

The Editor not only discusses freely his difficulties in organizing Teufelsdröckh's volume for English readers, but
also reacts freely and enthusiastically to his excerpts. He claims that his personal connections with Teufelsdröckh will not color his judgment—"Teufelsdröckh is our friend, Truth is our divinity" [13-14]—but Teufelsdröckh's learning, at times, exacts acclaim from him:

> It is here that to the antiquarian, to the Historian, we can triumphantly say: Fall to! Here is learning: an irregular Treasury, if you will; but inexhaustible as the Hoard of King Nibelung ... For most part, too, we must admit that the Learning, heterogeneous as it is, and tumbled-down quite pell-mell, is true concentrated and purified Learning, the drossy parts smelted out and thrown aside.

[38-39]

Such evaluative statements as this significantly affect our perception of Teufelsdröckh's work. Occasionally, the Editor interjects his own ideas or opinions about a subject, sometimes going off the point entirely. For example, he remarks on the possibility that the Stranger who delivered the infant Teufelsdröckh to Andreas and Gretchen Futteral, Teufelsdröckh's foster-parents, may now hear of his charge's whereabouts, instead of taking the editorial opportunity to point out the mythic significance of Teufelsdröckh's birth. The Editor also exults over the definition of man as "a Tool-using Animal," adding other, less satisfactory definitions, when Teufelsdröckh's apparent intention is to discuss clothes as tools [41-42]; and he suggests the possibility of combining Die Kleider with On Ancient Armour, surely an inappropriate venture [46-47]. These enthusiasms establish the Editor as a fictional character in his own right, and provide a
further layer of distance between Carlyle and Teufelsdröckh.

One effect of this distance is to protect Carlyle from being held responsible for Teufelsdröckh's opinions. The Editor's warning that "It must now be apparent enough that our Professor, as above hinted, is a speculative Radical, and of the very darkest tinge" [63] has the dual effect of calling attention to the potentially revolutionary nature of Teufelsdröckh's ideas, and of absolving Carlyle personally from their effects. 7 At times, the Editor's remarks forestall the reader's objections, as in "Adamitism":

Consider, thou foolish Teufelsdröckh, what benefits unspeakable all ages and sexes derive from Clothes. . . .

Or, cries the courteous reader, has your Teufelsdröckh forgotten what he said lately about 'Aboriginal Savages,' and their 'condition miserable indeed'? . . .

Nowise, courteous reader! The Professor knows full well what he is saying; and both thou and we, in our haste, do him wrong.

[58-59]

Such interjections, then, both suggest possible interpretations and protect from their attribution to Carlyle himself; they internalize the reader in the person of the Editor, and suggest that an active passivity (like Teufelsdröckh's in Weissnichtwo) is desirable to read Sartor profitably. 8

It is vital to Sartor's argument that it not be "lucid and lucent": the action which Carlyle presents for the reader's model is full of pitfalls and incorrect assumptions, and the implication is that one's reading of experience, like Teufelsdröckh's, is similarly likely to provide difficulties.
Within the book proper there must be the possibility that one's faith has been misplaced: the reader must, therefore, undergo a kind of conversion experience analogous to that of Teufelsdröckh and the Editor.  

In summary, characteristic of the Editor's activity in the first part of Sartor, especially, is literal-minded presentation of material from Teufelsdröckh's volume, together with occasional inappropriate commentary. Since the Editor is not yet fully in sympathy with his subject, his interpretations tend to stray from the mark, and his readings follow the letter rather than the spirit. Only after his encounter with the biographical documents--only after he works at what he can--is the Editor able to engage himself more fully with the spirit of Teufelsdröckh's writings, and with the clothes-philosophy which they embody. It is the Editor's function periodically to deflate Teufelsdröckh's figures, to point out the impracticalities of his social reforms, to draw back in horror at such pictures as that of the "Naked House of Lords" [61-62]--in short, to be a surrogate-reader, placing our anticipated responses into the text proper, and at times to be a dark glass through which the transcendental brightness of the clothes-philosophy may be viewed. Insofar as he resists the attraction of Teufelsdröckh's ideas, the Editor satisfies that impulse on the part of the reader to assert his own autonomy from the text; and insofar as he gives in to Teufelsdröckh's attractions, the Editor indicates the
attraction of community for the reader.

Sartor's imitation of the editorial process, then, is an attempt to provide within its narrative a model of its own reading. Its own apparent chaos, its fragmentary nature, its snatches of philosophy and strange pseudo-Germanic syntax and German diction all work to estrange the comfortable English reader so as to impress him with the novelty of Sartor's content. Its apparent chaos invites his participation in the process of bringing order from chaos, necessarily, since a reader not so interested ceases to be a reader. The Editor offers himself variously as companion, authority, and buffoon through his several reactions to the Life and Opinions of Herr Teufelsdröckh; and the whole process that is Sartor Resartus stresses action to be produced outside its covers.
III. The Beginning of all Wisdom

The experience of reading Sartor Resartus turns on what William Gaddis' artist figure, Wyatt Gwyon, calls recognition--on seeing what was there all along, but seeing it with a renewed sense of its importance and its function in a larger frame of activity. In The Recognitions this insight is associated with artistic vision; in Sartor it is compacted into Teufelsdröckh's "clothes."

In the street everything was unfamiliar, everything and everyone I saw was unreal, I felt like I was going to lose my balance out there, this feeling was getting all knotted up inside me and I went in there just to stop for a minute. And then I saw this thing. When I saw it all of a sudden everything was freed into one recognition, really freed into reality that we never see, you never see it. You don't see it in paintings because most of the time you can't see beyond a painting. Most paintings, the instant you see them they become familiar, and then it's too late.

Wyatt, like Teufelsdröckh, comes from a moment of extreme disorientation to a place of brief meditation; both characters find that what they see before them is expressive of some alternate, more important order, which Wyatt calls "reality," Teufelsdröckh "God." The distinctions, however, may be more important than the similarities. What Wyatt contemplates is an esthetic object, a Picasso painting, while Teufelsdröckh sees a landscape: the recognition in one case, therefore, makes a statement about art, the other about one's
perception of the universe. (This is not to say, of course, that Carlyle's vision is more important than Gaddis', only that it claims a more fundamental application in the novel.) Gaddis claims only that his character's recognition is available; Carlyle seems to imply its possibility for anyone with persistence. And Gaddis' recognition finally is available "maybe seven times in a lifetime," whereas the effects of Carlyle's insight are a lasting transformation in Teufelsdröckh.

In both cases, however, the possibility of some transformation based on recognition is held out to the reader; in Carlyle's novel it is seconded by the activities of the Editor, which often afford him some kind of insight comparable to Teufelsdröckh's. The Editor expresses such a moment in the very first sentence of Sartor, when he acknowledges that "hitherto little or nothing of a fundamental character, whether in the way of Philosophy or History, has been written on the subject of Clothes" [3]. The significance of this realization must be gradual in its unfolding: initially appearing to be whimsical, the statement becomes more substantial when we are told that clothes are symbols. Carlyle maintains the reader's curiosity in the first book of Sartor by keeping always before him the idea of a Philosophy of Clothes, while deferring any justification for its importance until "The World in Clothes," the fifth chapter, with its Shandean catalogues.
To the First Chapter, which turns on Paradise and Fig-leaves, and leads us into interminable disquisitions of a mythological, metaphorical, cabalistico-sartorial and quite antediluvian cast, we shall content ourselves with giving an unconcerned approval. Still less have we to do with 'Lilis, Adam's first wife, whom, according to the Talmudists, he had before Eve, and who bore him, in that wedlock, the Whole progeny of aerial, aquatic, and terrestrial Devils,'--quite needlessly, we think. On this portion of the Work, with its profound glances into the Adam-Kadmon, or Primeval Element, here strangely brought into relation with the Nifl and Muspel (Darkness and Light) of the antique North, it may be enough to say, that its correctness of deduction, and depth of Talmudic and Rabbinical lore have filled perhaps not the worst Hebraist in Britain with something like astonishment.

[37]

Teufelsdröckh "strives to give us in compressed shape . . . an Orbis Vestitus, or view of the costumes of all mankind, in all countries, in all times" [38]. The sense conveyed from this encyclopedic if rather disorganized material is one of bewildering fact without any governing structure; but what the Editor finds in the flourishing variety of costumes in Teufelsdröckh's Orbis Vestitus is an image of the organic universe.

If in the Descriptive-Historical portion of this Volume, Teufelsdröckh . . . has astonished many a reader, much more will he in the Speculative-Philosophical portion, which treats of their Wirken, or Influences. It is here that the present Editor first feels the pressure of his task; for here properly the higher and new Philosophy of Clothes commences: an untried, almost inconceivable region, or chaos; in venturing upon which, how difficult, yet how unceasingly important is it to know what course, of survey and conquest, is the true one; . . . Teufelsdröckh undertakes no less than to expound the moral, political, even religious Influences of Clothes, he
undertakes to make manifest, in its thousandfold bearings, this grand Proposition, that Man's earthly interests, 'are all hooked and buttoned together, and held up, by Clothes.'

[51]

It is because of their costumes that the Judge may condemn the Prisoner [60]; and the consequent insubstantiality and flux of human relations places a considerable weight on clothes as symbols—strictly speaking, as symbols for symbolizing processes. This insight enables Teufelsdröckh to envision the "Naked House of Lords" which so upsets the Editor [61-62]. It is recognition, then, not only of a fact but of its possible range of applications which follows the term clothes throughout Sartor: these applications come to include such contemporary phenomena as tailors' riots and the possible overthrow of all cultural institutions. By this means we see how an idea (Carlyle would say Idea) can come to have ramifications far beyond its original applications: the locomotive is spoken of as Watt's Idea made concrete, a fact Carlyle may admire in the abstract, however much he detested its results in the neighborhood. The printing press, too, is said to have defeated more men than had armies, and presumably Teufelsdröckh's (perhaps Carlyle's) work will have similar effects. The sense of clothes, then, is cumulative: as readers we read backwards and forwards, adding new implications and senses to previous events—recognizing them—as their significance in the light of later events becomes clear.
What had seemed merely eccentric or comic takes on a more serious meaning.

The clothes-philosophy is the result of Teufelsdröckh's insight. Insight is a literal and real term in Carlyle's work: "'The beginning of all Wisdom is to look fixedly on Clothes, or even with armed eyesight, till they become transparent.'" This sentence provides a useful basis for what we might call (in Carlylese) the serio-comic aspect of Sartor's language. Although the Editor does not take the clear opportunity to point out the ludicrous second meaning, the reader has by now had ample preparation to supply it (encouraged by the proximity of the "Naked House of Lords"). Thus the likely sequence is from figurative reading to literal reading and back to figurative, after the serious import of what Teufelsdröckh has said registers.

"Happy he who can look through the Clothes of a Man (the woolen, and fleshly, and official Bank-paper and State-paper Clothes) into the Man himself; and discern, it may be, in this or the other Dread Potentate, a more or less incompetent Digestive-apparatus; yet also an inscrutable venerable Mystery, in the meanest Tinker that sees with eyes!"

[67]

The beginning of all wisdom, I would suggest, is not what Teufelsdröckh says—seeing through "clothes," in either literal or figurative senses—but passing through this sequence from metaphorical and familiar sense (transparent) to amusement at the literal reading (transparent), and back
to the figurative sense, with a renewed sense of its depth and truth based on the overlaid joke. This experience recapitulates in miniature an important part of Sartor: the revivifying of metaphor through experience, and, in turn, the revivifying of experience by metaphor.

The symbolic value given to "clothes" by Teufelsdröckh follows precisely this pattern of derivation: the idea may have been suggested by the French "Sansculottists" whom Teufelsdrockh and the Editor cite frequently [16]. Teufelsdröckh's view from his apartment in Weissnichttwo includes such a movement:

These are Apparitions: what else? Are they not Souls rendered visible: in Bodies, that took shape and will lose it, melting into air? . . . Or fanciest thou, the red and yellow Clothes-screen yonder, with spurs on its heels and feather in its crown, is but of Today, without a Yesterday or a Tomorrow; and had not rather its Ancestor alive when Hengst and Horsa overran thy Island? Friend, thou seest here a living link in that Tissue of History, which inweaves all Being: watch well, or it will be past thee, and seen no more. [21-22]

The movement here is from Teufelsdröckh's inference (bodies as tissue of clothes) to one example (the "Clothes-screen") and back to metaphorical again (tissue of history). Overall, the difference in the society Teufelsdröckh sees about him moves from clothes as sign of office to clothes as metaphor for that office, then back to clothes themselves, their metaphoric import inferred by the reader.11
Such alternations as these infuse both the literal and metaphorical aspects of "clothes" with each others' qualities: the literal mention of clothes comes to take on aspects of the "transcendental," just as the "transcendental" is humanized by the literal.\(^{12}\) This interpiercing is the justification for such comic misstatements as "the beginning of all wisdom . . . is to look upon clothes until they become transparent": eventually it becomes a proof of the reader's sympathy with Teufelsdröckh's insight that he see both the humorous and the philosophical aspects in both categories. The mixing of humorous and metaphorical can be seen in Sartor's names, for example, Diogenes Teufelsdröckh. "'For indeed, as Walter Shandy often insisted, there is much, nay almost all, in Names. The Name is the earliest Garment you wrap round the earth-visiting ME " [87]. Carlyle probably recognizes, as Teufelsdröckh probably does not, the irony of Walter Shandy's concern—that his intention to fix on his new son the most fortunate name, Trismegistus, resulted in the least fortunate name, Tristram. Sterne obviously treats Walter Shandy's concern with a good deal of levity; Carlyle apparently creates a duplicity in which the seriousness is undercut by levity, then re-established again on a serious level. Thus Diogenes Teufelsdröckh is light-born devil's-shit, but this name as an emblem of man's duality penetrates to the center of its referent [87].
One implication of this interpiercing is that Carlyle's universe mixes indiscriminately the comic and the profound, the quotidian and the metaphorical. Should one look receptively at the Occupations, they become representative types of Humanity at Work [21-23]; and should one look receptively at a landscape, it may become the Tissue of the Deity [187-88]. The universe is fundamentally simple, in Carlyle's view (at least as expressed in Sartor): a clear sight of the universe reveals God at work. Now the version of God thus presented is not particularly complex or detailed: rather than the mechanistic God of the deist, watching from a distance his watch-like creation, Carlyle's God is present in his creation. Carlyle was of course content to leave the pantheistic implications of this position unspecified, preferring to take from it the optimism he needed to inspirit his character (and perhaps himself) without pressing the matter. Insight below the symbolic level of clothes, then, transforms society by showing man's essential kinship; but as a revelation this is hardly very surprising. It is not the content of the "revelation," but the result which interests Teufelsdröckh: what he finds is motivation to "Do that Duty that lies next" him. It is not what is revealed that is important; rather, it is the fact of revelation that transforms. Clearly Carlyle's temperament is opposed to that of writers such as Pope or James, whose observations of society
were directed not to the essential sameness of all men, but to the fine discriminations which constitute manners. Carlyle is more inclined, like his character, to see the Universe as "a mighty Sphinx-riddle, which I knew so little of, yet must rede, or be devoured" [125]. His universe (the prefix is apt) is truly catastrophic, in a special, quasi-mathematical sense: changes occur suddenly, out of all proportion to any linear function involved in the change.\textsuperscript{13} 

Teufelsdröckh falls in love once and once only; only one high-souled brunette may exist; her marriage to another, and the sight of them on the road, results in a basilisk-glance [152]; and the resultant despair, countered by the perception that God is present behind the phenomenal clothes, dissolves suddenly. "The Professor says, he here first got eye on the Knot that had been strangling him, and straight-way could un-fasten it, and was free" [189]. Both entanglements and their solutions, then, happen with great suddenness.

This pattern of insight which transforms catastrophically is present, too, in the Editor's decision to present Teufelsdröckh's volume to Englishmen.

As in some chemical mixture, that has stood long evaporating, but would not crystallize, instantly when the wire or other fixed substance is introduced, crystallisation commences, and rapidly proceeds till the whole is finished, so was it with the Editor's mind and this offer of Heuschrecke's. Form rose out of void solution and discontinuity; like united itself with like in definite arrangement; and soon either in
actual vision and possession, or in fixed reasonable hope, the image of the whole Enterprise had shaped itself, so to speak, into a solid mass.

[12]

The conception of *Sartor* is described, at least initially, as a chemical reaction, and one which (the analogy implies) occurs as directly and naturally and "organically" as can be conceived. By the nature of the analogy, too, Carlyle under-
scores his transcendentalism: *someone* had to put the cata-
lyst into the experiment. We find, of course, that the Editor discovers many more difficulties than he had original-
ly perceived, owing to the nature of the promised "bio-
graphical documents"; but the initial insight is one which transforms and organizes directly.

*Sartor* expresses the process of knowledge through a paradox: knowledge is both revealed and gained through experience. Some of its metaphors for knowledge imply that insight is easily gained; one simply looks, and there it is, God present in the Garment of Nature. Other metaphors, however, acknowledge the need to work at the process of deriving such revelations. My belief here is not that Carlyle was confused, asserting contradictory notions of epistemology because of some failure to recognize their fundamental oppo-
sition--but that Carlyle intended to encourage a state in which the reader is impelled to look beyond apparent contra-
dictions to some formulation which embraces them. Again it is useful to look to scripture for a model: Carlyle's paradox
here is precisely that of the New Testament, which asserts both that man is saved by faith, and that good works are necessary to salvation. Which is it? Both--works are the evidence, the clothes, of faith.

An alternative formulation might point out that insight is not a reward for one's work but a revelation. Teufelsdröckh might easily have wandered until his death without seeing the Garment of Nature; and thus the fact that the "revelation" is without particular content is less troublesome, since so much of Teufelsdröckh's experience depends on its qualities as a sign. What is revealed is not so much anything about the nature of the signified, but what is revealed is the fact of some relation between signifier and signified. Once this relation has been established, by phenomena or by leap of faith, systems may be constructed. Without this relation, no system is possible. It is precisely this "revelation" which is lacking in Melville's The Confidence-Man: events in that text have no acknowledged meaning, and one is left with no basis for any faith in the relation between word and event.

One may well say, then, that "the beginning of all wisdom . . . is to look upon clothes until they become transparent": that transparency becomes equated in Sartor with the process of symbolic meaning. Symbolic meaning, the basis of equating language with fact, is the fundament of human
knowledge, of "all wisdom." It is easy to see why Carlyle's work takes on religious overtones ("A voice publishing tid-
ing of the Philosophy of Clothes" [13]) since Sartor's effect is that of a secular gospel. And the element of humor in Sartor and its central character only underscores the common human significance in so exaggerated a type as Teufelsdröckh. Carlyle's universe is organic, homogeneous, and beneficent: and these qualities derive from its con-
struction on the basis of elementary symbols.
IV. The World out of Clothes

Repeatedly Sartor asserts that one's effects in the world are the only possible measure of his character. Thus Teufelsdröckh's malaise leading up to "The Everlasting No" is caused in part by the fact that he has no outlet adequate to his spiritual anguish. Turning from student to Auscul-tator to wanderer, he finds a fit position only in the role of Professor of Things in General. Sartor expresses the need for physical, experiential validation in terms midway between existentialism and Christianity.

"The painfulllest feeling," writes he, "is that of your own Feebleness (Unkraft); ever, as the English Milton says, to be weak is the true misery. And yet of your Strength there is and can be no clear feeling, save by what you have prospered in, by what you have done. Between vague wavering Capability and fixed indubitable Performance, what a difference! A certain inarticulate Self-consciousness dwells dimly in us; which only our Works can render articulate and decisively discernible. Our Works are the mirror wherein the spirit first sees its natural lineaments. Hence, too, the folly of that impossible Precept, Know thyself; till it be translated into this partially possible one, Know what thou canst work at. [162-63]

One implication of this position is that the value of one's being depends on his effect on others: a wanderer, such as Teufelsdröckh becomes, is of no account unless he returns to Weissnichtwo to fill the chair of Things in General.
Carlyle provides in Teufelsdröckh a significant change between late English Romanticism and Victorianism: Teufelsdröckh fits all the requirements for a Byronic wanderer, except that he determines to do something, anything, to change his situation, instead of taking his inaction as a sign of his angst. "'Do the Duty which lies nearest thee,' which thou knowest to be a Duty! Thy second Duty will already have become clearer'" [196]. This call to action, no matter what sort, is a significant transformation from the Romantic mal de siècle; and Carlyle is not only aware that his perspective is a departure, but is glad of the chance to build a new system.

But indeed Conviction, were it never so excellent, is worthless till it convert itself into Conduct. Nay properly Conviction is not possible till then; inasmuch as all Speculation is by nature endless, formless, a vortex amid vortices: only by a felt indubitable certainty of Experience does it find any centre to revolve round, and so fashion itself into a system.

[195-96]

It may be useful to set beside this a comparable passage:

What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding, ye give them not those things which are needful to the body, what doth it profit? Even so, faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works; show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works.

The Calvinist version of this, familiar to Carlyle from his earliest days, is that men are predestined to be saved or
lost, but that the saved will show their condition by their works, since those who do not do so are damned a fortiori.

Carlyle extends the idea of works as evidence of faith to a wider system of reference: works are not only evidence of faith, but evidence of one's very existence, his inner state. (Thus it is that Teufelsdröckh's "passive activity" misleads the Editor into thinking that nothing was happening.) And conversely, Teufelsdröckh asserts that, in the absence of faith, the only acceptable procedure is to continue to work as though faith still existed. This change in perspective is show by the shift from "works" to "work," a notable change: Usually when one works the cause is the faith, the effect what is produced; but Carlyle claims reciprocity in the relations between outer and inner states—that is, between sign and signified. Even without faith, one must work, as a means of reviving that faith which no longer moves from within. Belief follows as a validation of what one has been doing: this observation supplies a remedy for the ebbing power of Christianity:

Wilt thou help us to embody the divine Spirit of that Religion in a new Mythus, in a new vehicle and vesture, that our Souls, otherwise too like perishing, may live? What! thou has no faculty in that kind? Only a torch for burning, no hammer for building? Take our thanks, then, and—thyself away.

[194]

The insistence on work/works, then, underscores the movement we have already seen between metaphorical and
literal senses of a term: the works done are vehicle for the inferred tenor, the faith or character or experience, and this faith is not an initial qualification for doing works, but is in part created by those works.

As we have seen elsewhere in Sartor, qualities which apply to one part apply to others: the text, like its universe, is homogeneous. Sartor itself is to be valued by the effects it produces, rather than for qualities it has in isolation. The apparent impossibility of a text's being able to respond to effects it brings about is modified by precedents in literary history and by the periodical printing of Sartor, which itself gives an image for a world in change. Carlyle could draw on such examples as Don Quixote, which shows characters in part II who have read part I, and who expect certain behavior of Don Quixote and Sancho Panza on the basis of their reading; and Tristram Shandy, whose text also changes in the very act of its writing. The Editor's task in Sartor is subject to such fluidity as Sterne's narrator experiences: his task, presenting a suitable English version of Die Kleider, depends on his understanding of Teufelsdröckh's volume; and this understanding, originally sufficient to engage with Frazer's, seems to be on inspection more and more tenuous. The Editor looks to Heuschrecke for the documents necessary to supplement his understanding, and
finds, in the six paper bags, an Editorial version of chaos. As his encounter with his text (not our text) becomes more extensive, the Editor finds that he needs to understand not Teufelsdröckh's text in itself, but its origin.

Would to Heaven those same Biographical Documents were come! For it seems as if the demonstration lay much in the Author's individuality, as if it were not Argument that had taught him, but Experience. At present it is only in local glimpses, and by significant fragments, picked often at wide-enough intervals from the original Volume, and carefully collated, that we can hope to impart some outline or foreshadow of this Doctrine.

[52]

Sartor, then, varies in time according to the Editor's understanding of Die Kleider, which depends not only on his reading as it changes with time, but also on his understanding of Teufelsdrockh, which changes as he first anticipates, then receives, and finally reorders the chaos of information in the paper bags.

The Editor is Carlyle's device for articulating both the desire and the necessity to work through chaos to some apperception of form. But Sartor is not wholly ordered by his task: the fact of its publication in a periodical emphasizes its assertion that meaning changes with time. Part of the urgency associated with the Editor's character in Sartor is evoked by his having begun an edition for English readers in Frazer's before having gathered all the information, and by his having to try to pull things into some order regardless of what data he has. The observations
he makes about the volume, then, are perhaps less important
for what they are than for the fact that they show his chang-
ing perspective through time, and for the fact that they
demonstrate one of Sartor's principal assertions, that
knowledge is validated through experience.

A text physically cannot encompass its own relations
with the world: Sartor, however, makes the attempt by pro-
ducing a false text, Die Kleider, whose effects on the world
it can gauge, both in the character of the Editor and his
reactions, and in the discovery that Teufelsdröckh has left
his isolated tower for work in the world, perhaps in London,
in tailors' riots and in his Palingenesis, the newbirth of
society. The pretense, and the hope, seem to be that Sartor
itself will have measurable effects in its world, and that by
these effects its worth will be demonstrated. A text, like
a man, seems to be measured not by its content but by its
consequences, by the transformations it produces in others.
It may be useful, then, to consider just what is involved in
"transformation" before going on with Sartor out of its
clothes.

By transformation I mean to use a term vague enough to
be protean: Teufelsdröckh undergoes a transformation in
"The Everlasting No," when, rejected by human society and by
his Blumine, having wandered without purpose for a number or
years, he perceives the mechanistic universe as a threaten-
ing force:
it seemed as if all things in the Heavens above and the Earth beneath would hurt me; as if the Heavens and the Earth were but boundless jaws of a devouring monster, wherein I, palpitating, waited to be devoured.

[166]

Teufelsdröckh counters this despair with defiance.

"Hast thou not a heart; canst thou not suffer whatsoever it be; and, as a Child of Freedom, though outcast, trample Tophet itself under thy feet, while it consumes thee? Let it come, then; I will meed and defy it! . . . The Everlasting No had said 'Behold, thou art fatherless, outcast, and the Universe is mine (the Devil's)'; to which my whole Me now made answer: 'I am not thine, but Free, and forever hate thee!'"

[167-68]

From this transformation Teufelsdröckh dates his time as a man.

Teufelsdröckh's challenge to the Denier is generally counted as the novel's turning point. Biographically this is inaccurate, however, since Teufelsdröckh continually experiences moments of insight which change his perception of the world and his resolve to act. Father Andreas' death and the disclosure of Teufelsdröckh's birth underscore his consciousness that "I was like no other" [107]; his invitation to Aesthetic Tea and consequent meeting with Blumine, followed by her rejection of his suit and the "basilisk-glance" are three more such crises before the famous one in the Rue de St. Thomas de l'Enfer. And following it, Teufelsdröckh achieves his insight into phenomena in "The Everlasting Yea," metaphorically more significant than his defiance:
How thou fermentest and elaboratest, in thy great fermenting-vat and laboratory of an Atmosphere, of a World, O Nature!--Or what is Nature? Ha! why do I not name thee God? Art not thou the "living Garment of God"?

[188]

Before this, we have seen that clothes are emblematic of one's function in society [60], and that without clothes (sansculottes) society would not function. Here we see the converse of Teufelsdrockh's social observations: from the apparent beneficence of the natural universe, Teufelsdrockh inters a beneficent spirit, God, whose "garment" is nature. This inference is related to the familiar eighteenth-century trope of the Argument from Design—the fact that nature works in complex systems of interrelated parts implies that some Designer must have set the whole mechanism going. But Carlyle, radically opposed to mechanistic conceptions of the universe, and to the idea of a withdrawn Deity that they imply [159], transforms the Argument from Design into an organic cosmology: God is not withdrawn, watching his machine turn, but is present literally in the fabric of his creation.15 Carlyle draws from this moment of insight an astounding analogy: beneath the clothes are the body, and beneath phenomena, God.

The pattern of events, then, is clear in Sartor; it is not at all what one would be led to expect from a "conversion narrative," that is, a pattern of rising action leading to crisis, climax, and dénouement; rather, it is a series of
such crisis, all of which are turning points, all of which
effect transformations in Teufelsdröckh. What Carlyle pre-
sents is more of the pattern of theme-with-variations which
Levine cites as characteristic of Carlyle's style.\textsuperscript{16}
Teufelsdröckh lives by conversions: because it is part of
his system to be continually renewed by wonder, and since
for a thing to be wonderful it must be seen in a new way,
Teufelsdröckh is continually renewing his vision of events.
Thus Carlyle's treatment of Teufelsdröckh's sections in book
II of \textit{Sartor} is an unfolding process of conversion, a laby-
rinth of conversions. These remain rather formless for us
as for the Editor; the experience is rather like crossing a
mountain range, expecting each peak to open out into a valley
below, but finding instead another peak to ascend.

Transformation in \textit{Sartor}, then, involves a change in
how one perceives the world, together with some action con-
sequent on the perception.

In the Symbol proper, what we can call a Symbol,
there is ever, more or less distinctly and directly,
some embodiment and revelation of the Infinite; the
Infinite is made to blend itself with the Finite, to
stand visible, and as it were, attainable there. By
symbols, accordingly, is man guided and commanded,
made happy, made wretched. He everywhere finds him-
self encompassed with Symbols, recognized as such or
not recognized: the Universe is but one vast Symbol
of God. . . . Not a Hut [man] builds but is the
visible embodiment of a Thought; but bears visible
record of invisible things; but is, in the tran-
cendental sense, symbolical as well as real.
Teufelsdröckh perceives the world as symbolic, and determines action based on its symbolic quality. While it is true, as Levine says, that "In Sartor Resartus [Carlyle] established the pattern of the personal confrontation of the spiritual malaise of the century," the quality of change described in Sartor reaches outside literary history to provide a pattern of transformation each time the work is read. The reader's experience of the intentional chaos of Sartor is patterned in some sense after Teufelsdröckh's perception of the world as symbolic; but this perception is masked by Teufelsdröckh's own "wild" chaotic style, by the Editor and by various editors, each of whom may have, like the speaker in Frost's "Directive," the reader's getting lost as their intent. The figures in Sartor become clear with a little examination; just so does its universe take on something of an "open sesame" aspect. Transformation, then, is a model for the reading process in Sartor; it can take place seemingly by an act of will; and its occurrence is an expression of spiritual guidance by some force outside the ego.

Sartor, however, cannot be too explicit about the kind of transformation it aspires to produce in the reader. Just as Teufelsdröckh undergoes a period of chaotic wanderings before the realization which gives his experiences order, so the reader, reasonably or unreasonably, must experience a comparable chaos in order to validate his experience. What
is often dismissed as "imitative form" is essential to Carlyle, for this reason: what Sartor aspires to communicate is not any particular fact, but a state. "I too could now say to myself: Be no longer a Chaos, but a World, or even Worldkin. Produce! Produce!'" [197]. Because of its lack of content, this declaration is more readily transferable from Teufelsdröckh to Editor to reader: its structure is roughly comparable in all three instances. Experience in Sartor moves from confrontation by the awesome chaos of experience, depair at the difficulty of ordering this chaos, determination to work with or without hope, sudden insight into the principle of order, and affirmation both of the scheme and of the process by which it has been discovered.

Such a sequence encompasses Teufelsdröckh's rejection by Blumine, his subsequent wanderings, his vision of the great Denier, his perception of the universe as clothes, and his decision to work at the clothes-philosophy. In the Editor's case, the movement is less famous but just as linear: he undertakes to present an edition of Die Kleider, finds to his dismay that the promised data are six disordered paper bags, begins to order the materials, then finally discovers the principle of order in "Natural Supernaturalism." The threat is real, since it is as Editor that he exists [13].

Daily and nightly does the Editor sit (with green spectacles) deciphering these unimaginable Documents from their perplexed cursiv-schrift; collating them
with the almost equally unimaginable Volume, which stands in legible print. Over such a universal medley of high and low, of hot, cold, moist and dry, is he here struggling (by union of like with like, which is Method) to build a firm Bridge for British travelers. . . . nor is there any supernatural force to do it with; but simply the Diligence and feeble thinking Faculty of an English Editor, endeavouring to evolve printed Creation out of a German printed and written Chaos, wherein, as he shoots to and fro in it, gathering, clutching, piecing the Why to the far-distant Wherefore, his whole Faculty and Self are like to be swallowed up.

[79-80]

The work, although nowhere near "lucid and lucent," is at least promising: although "wild," it "promises to reveal new-coming Eras, the first dim rudiments and already-budding germs of a nobler Era, in Universal History" [80]. The Editor manages somehow to construct a unified vision from his materials; neither Die Kleider nor the documents in themselves would suffice; but both together, along with investigation by a sympathetic reader, provide some movement towards clarity. The final movement, though, is a leap of faith:

Here, therefore, properly it is that the Philosophy of Clothes attains to Transcendentalism; this last leap, can we but clear it, takes us safe into the promised land, where Palingenesia, in all senses, may be considered as beginning. . . . This stupendous Section we, after long painful meditation, have found not to be unintelligible; but, on the contrary, to grow clear, nay radiant, and all-illuminating. Let the reader, turning on it what utmost force of speculative intellect is in him, do his part; as we, by judicious selection and adjustment, shall study to do ours.

[255]

If the Editor's reading parallels Teufelsdröckh's progress, so too, presumably, does that of the reader of Sartor
itself. Literary history testifies to the initial outcries of the readers of *Frazer's Magazine*; however, historical readers are no part of our analysis here. The work itself gives ample indication of its readers' reactions, principally in the person of the Editor: the expectations and prejudices which he addresses give a sufficient account of the reader's probably response.

Initially the Editor makes an appeal for the reader's sympathy and understanding:

Let the British reader study and enjoy, in simplicity of heart, what is here presented him, and with whatever metaphysical acumen and talent for meditation he is possessed of. Let him strive to keep a free, open sense; cleared from the mists of prejudice, above all from the paralysis of cant; and directed rather to the Book itself than to the Editor of the Book. Who or what such Editor may be, must remain conjectural, and even insignificant: it is a voice publishing tidings of the Philosophy of Clothes; undoubtedly a Spirit addressing Spirits: whoso hath ears, let him hear.

[13]

The Editor here is a little disingenuous: the "mists of prejudice" are precisely what he does resort to in his account, for example, of the German professor cut off from practical realities in Weissnichttwo. One can sense Carlyle attempting, especially in the opening chapters, to reach his readers' expectations of Germany" [6]--juxtaposed with this picture of his Professor of Things in General.

Lifting his huge tumbler of Gukguk and for a moment lowering his tobacco-pipe, he stood up in full coffee-house (it was *Zur Gruenen Gans*, the largest in Weissnichtwo, where all the Virtuosity, and nearly all the
Intellect of the place assembled of an evening); and there, with low, soul-stirring tone, and the look truly of an angel, though whether of a white or of a black one might be dubious, proposed this toast: Die Sache der Armen in Gottes und Teufels Namen . . .

[15]

In addition to quasi-satirical versions of Germany, Carlyle's Editor attempts to reach his reader by claiming his own dis-interest—"Teufelsdröckh is our friend, Truth is our divinity" [14]—and by claiming his own loyalty, "animated with a true though perhaps a feeble attachment of the Institutions of our Ancestors . . .," intending "to stem, or if that be impossible, profitably to divert the current of Innovations . . ." [13].

The importance of his editorial task may be seen from the echoes of the New Testament in the first quote on the page preceding: the "voice" echoes John the Baptist, and the call to knowing listeners suggests already a division of his audience into the unsympathetic many and the sympathetic few. In practical terms, the Editor has perhaps alienated the many from the start, with his title, his opening sentence, and his choice of a "philosophical" subject. Any reader who continues beyond the first few chapters is likely already to be motivated by sympathy with the subject of interest in the Editor's exposition. Tennyson, in fact, bases his claim for Sartor as a novel on the Editor's shifts of stance throughout the book: it is in the Editor's gradual conversion to the
clothes-philosophy, Tennyson argues, that the true plot of \textit{Sartor} is to be found. My own reading of the Editor's role agrees substantially with Tennyson's, though it is important not to expect too linear a development in this "plot." As Tennyson rightly observes, the emphasis of \textit{Sartor} stays on Teufelsdröckh and on the ideas of the clothes-philosophy.

The Editor sets up our reception of Teufelsdröckh's material by being himself initially receptive; he is also the agent for warning the reader not to accept the book's material too easily. As early as the fourth chapter, he expresses discontent with \textit{Die Kleider}:

\textit{It were a piece of vain flattery to pretend that this Work on Clothes entirely contents us; that is not, like all works of genius, like the very Sun, which though the highest published creation, or work of genius has nevertheless black spots and troubled nebulosities amid its effulgence,—a mixture of insight, inspiration, with dulness, double-vision, and even utter blindness.}

[28]

He denounces Teufelsdröckh's style as mixed, just as his work is [31]: "Up to this hour we have never fully satisfied ourselves whether it is a tone and hum of real Humour, which we reckon among the very highest qualities of genius or some echo of mere Insanity and Inanity, which doubtless ranks below the very lowest" [32]. The Editor's reactions, then, are a mixture of pleading in favor of his figure, and reaction against the implications of his ideas; and it is through his reactions that we have the most reliable gauge
of the reader's probable reactions. These are likely to be mixed: and it lies chiefly with the Editor to bring out the implications of Teufelsdröckh's insight.

Finally, then, Sartor exists in its process of reading, as that process is tugged between Teufelsdröckh's ideas and biography, and the Editor's resistance. To the degree that Teufelsdröckh's "message" is perceived, the reader is attracted to a sense of community: the content of Sartor emphasizes human similarities and the unity of all phenomena sub specie aeternitatis. To the degree that the Editor persuades the reader (occasionally) to resist Teufelsdröckh's appeal, the reader is encouraged to cultivate his autonomy from the text. And while there are moments in Teufelsdröckh's passages in which the reader reasonably may be encouraged to distance himself from Teufelsdröckh's conclusions, and while there are moments in the Editor's commentary in which the reader is drawn into community with the text (especially in the last chapters), in general the Editor counsels resistance and independence while Teufelsdröckh counsels participation and merger with the All.

Sartor's form, experientially defined, is quirky, unstable, and impossible to grasp firmly: it exists in an ebb and flow according to the demands of the moment. Like novels such as Absalom, Absalom! and Pale Fire, part of its significance comes from the fact that events are framed by
the tale-teller; but unlike them, there is one official organization of phenomena, based on Teufelsdröckh's insight into symbols. The universe is organized by symbols, symbols are all clothes, and seeing clothes as symbols enables us to see the universe as the expression of an immanent God—this is the orthodoxy of Sartor. Ambiguity is not part of Carlyle's message, but rather part of the necessary process by which that message can be perceived; and once the intuitive leap is made, the ambiguity dissolves as easily as Teufelsdröckh's doubts. The style of Sartor is uncomfortable—like Milton, Carlyle often provokes disagreement about the language in which he writes. Unlike Milton, there is no inherent musicality in Carlyle: the experience which the poet demands must function as another form of "concealment" through which the reader may, if he chooses, work to a realization of Truth. Imitative form or not, the style works to emphasize Carlyle's message, just as the apparent disorder of the work involves the reader as organizer in a way comparable to Teufelsdröckh and the Editor.

Sartor is a difficult work to treat in isolation, by design: its design seems to push the reader outside its own limits and into the "real" world—past the finite into the infinite. Thus it is fitting that, at the end of book three, Teufelsdröckh has left Weissnichtwo altogether to popularize his Palingenesis outside the text altogether, among the
tailors and dandies, those who make and value clothes. The Editor apparently expects to meet him on the streets of London: Teufelsdröckh dissolves much as do Tyrone Slothrop in Gravity's Rainbow, Gaddis' Wyatt Gwyon (who isn't even called by name after the first hundred pages of The Recognitions), and perhaps the Confidence-Man of Melville's last novel. This pretense is another way of asserting the text's effects beyond its own limits.

Sartor's existence, like that of Die Kleider, is fragmentary, and must await completion by the sympathetic reader. Die Kleider exists in fragments and is presented in fragments; Teufelsdröckh's biography arrives in paper bags, marked with signs of the Zodiac; and the Editor's attempts to put things in order are only partially successful. Finally only the clothes-philosophy may be approached confidently, the Editor argues, and then only by a leap of faith. Carlyle exhorts, and when one exhorts he intends to produce action in some way; but the action to be produced is without specific direction. By this means Sartor can continue to press its readers to Work, without any specific programs to be favored. Teufelsdröckh is converted to positivism, not to any particular faith; it may be an important part of Carlyle's design that the Editor not be too interesting in himself, in order not to divert attention from Teufelsdröckh, or more precisely from the clothes-philosophy, or more pre-
cisely still from the effects of the clothes-philosophy on the Editor. Each figure has his function: as Teufelsdröckh may be seen (in Emersonian terms) as Man Perceiving, so the Editor may be Man Organizing. Readings of Sartor, therefore, which fall too heavily on either figure are inaccurate: only by the reader's oscillation between the two, between his autonomy and some community, may its message be realized.
Notes to Chapter One:

1 Among these is Wesley Morris, "In the Name of Historian: Sartor Resartus as Autobiography," unpublished paper, p. 1.

2 These are among C. F. Harrold's suggestions in his introduction to Sartor Resartus; see Thomas Carlyle, Sartor Resartus, ed. by C. F. Harrold (New York, Odyssey Press, 1937), p. xxxiii. All quotations are from this edition; subsequent references will be indicated within brackets in the text.

3 Matt. 16:18.


5 For a reading of Sartor Resartus as persuasive essay, see Gerry H. Brookes, The Rhetorical Form of Carlyle's Sartor Resartus (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972).

6 As George Levine observes in The Boundaries of Fiction (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968): "It is the fiction which keeps Carlyle from a direct attempt to impose on his readers an affirmation without requiring of them equally that they undergo their own experience in order to achieve it." Levine, p. 70.
The fictive layers were not, however, effective in shielding Carlyle from the outcries of his contemporary readers, as Tennyson's discussion shows.

See Teufelsdrockh's apparent passivity in the Editor's first description of his apartment above Weisnnichtwo, I:3; Carlyle may have drawn this aspect of Teufelsdrockh's character from Wordsworth's "wise passiveness."


This metaphorical import explains, for example, the appearance of the late chapters on dandies and tailors.


This catastrophic change is discussed, in general terms, by E. C. Zeeman, "Catastrophe Theory," Scientific American 234 (April, 1976), pp. 65-83.

James 2:14-18.

Carlyle did not press the consequences of this realization to its logical conclusion—pantheism—but merely kept organicism ready as an alternative to what he saw as the pre-
vailing mechanism of his time.

16 See Levine, p. 50; Tennyson, p. 116.

17 Levine, p. 17.

18 Tennyson, p. 175-76:

As a novel Sartor Resartus operates through the conflict of the Editor with the refractory materials he uses to arrive at a completed picture of the man and his works, or "true philosophic Biography." To sidestep the role of the Editor to get at Teufelsdröckh's ideas is to sidestep the source of action in the novel. The Editor's is a normative voice in the presentation of the strange material. At the same time the Editor is an actor in the drama of the dissemination of Teufelsdröckh's views to England. The Editor's structural function constitutes also much of his meaning for the reader. Only by knowing what the purposes of the Editor's role are, can we understand how it provides a framework for the book, but one designed to be ultimately subordinated to interest in the ideas the Editor is presenting.
Chapter Two: Melville's *The Confidence-Man: His Masquerade*
I. In the Extremest Sense of the Word, a Stranger

One may easily spend as much time analyzing the title of Melville's last novel as analyzing the title of Carlyle's first. Although "The Confidence-Man: His Masquerade" is English, not Latin, its relation to the text it heads is fully as puzzling and provocative of meaning as that of "Sar-tor Resartus." The relation between title and text is roughly parallel to that between name and character, or signifier and signified: a title indicates something about the text to follow, indicates in fact how the author wishes the work to be known. The title is the first and sometimes the most important movement in a complex, sequential dialectic between author and reader, both engaged in the attempt literally to make sense.

As readers we are familiar with the fact that there is often a significant difference between how one is called and how one behaves, or between appearance and fact in any situation, in fictive or real worlds. How fictive naming occurs is a fundamental assertion of how a work's system is constructed--that is, how the work means. Names essentially must mean something: if a writer randomly picks his characters' names from a phone directory or from his society at large, the meaning is that his characters themselves are in some sense of
that world—or at least that he maintains this illusion. Other fictional names may have a teasing significance beyond this referential quality: Roger Chillingsworth, Pearl, Young Goodman Brown, and Ethan Brand from Hawthorne; Adam Verver, Isabel Archer, Caspar Goodwood, and Christopher Newman from James; and Leopold Bloom and Stephen Dedalus from Joyce all bear as their meaning an implicit requirement that the reader attempt to relate name to character. Because Hawthorne, James, and Joyce keep most of their names within naturalistic probability, but with some possible punning correspondence to the characters' "characters," the meaning implicit in their works' systems of naming seems to be the tantalizing presence of coincidence in their worlds. The writer plays with the signs of his world as he does with its objects. We may contrast this meaning with more openly fictive names—Carlyle's Diogenes Teufelsdröckh, Blumine, Herr Towgood or Toughgut, and Herr Hofrath Heuschrecke; Melville's Stubb, Flask, Queequeg, Ishmael, Ahab; Pynchon's Stencil, Profane, Oedipa Maas, Roger Mexico—highly improbable in the world of the reader's usual experience. Every occurrence of the sign Teufelsdröckh serves to remind the reader that he is participating in an artifact, in a fiction which in one particular is not the world he sees, whatever apparent correspondences it may have.

We are conditioned, then, to expect some significances to names in narrative; when an author provides only names which seem likely to be pseudonyms, as Melville does in The
Confidence-Man, with his Frank Goodman, Mr. Truman, John Ringman, and Black Guinea, the meaning is one in which meanings may be concealed, in which signifier may not point reliably to signified at all. Most of The Confidence-Man's characters, however, are unnamed, a fact which seems even more problematical: they are identified in the text by place of origin (the Missourian, the Kentuckian), by prop or clothing (the man with the brass plate, the man with the weed, the man in gray with a white tie), or by occupation (herb-doctor, cosmopolitan). And several of these have alternate descriptions; the man with the big book is also the Black Rapids agent and Mr. Truman. Such names as we have claim a relation between signifier and signified which is too easy to be acceptable: Mr. Truman, Mark Winsome, Charlie Noble, Frank Goodman, and Pitch seem too appropriate for belief. Outside the context of names, the author himself warns us against expecting verisimilitude:

How unreal all this is! Who did ever dress or act like your cosmopolitan? And who, it might be returned, did ever dress or act like Harlequin?

Strange, that in a work of amusement, this severe fidelity to real life should be exacted by any one, who, by taking up such a work, sufficiently shows that he is not unwilling to drop real life, and turn, for a time, to something different. . . . in books of fiction, [we] look not only for more entertainment, but, at bottom, even for more reality, than real life itself can show. Thus, though they want novelty, they want nature, too; but nature unfettered, exhilarated, in effect transformed. In this way of thinking, the people in a fiction, like the people in a play, must dress as nobody exactly dresses, talk as nobody exactly talks, act as nobody exactly acts. It is with fiction as with religion: it should present another
world, and yet one to which we feel the tie.  
[259-60]

The text does not correspond to a putative "real world": in
a work of amusement, the argument goes, there ought to be no
responsibility to keep such "fidelity." The "real world" is
necessarily transformed in fiction. Melville characterizes
the relationship between fictive and real worlds through the
metaphor of the stage, which by its nature depends on a com-
munity jointly participating in its fantasy, a fantasy par-
tially in and partially out of the recognizable real world,
using actors transformed into fictive identities, speaking
words that both are and are not their own. And in the fic-
tive work, whether play or novel, the observer is sometimes
"at a loss to determine where exactly the fictitious character
had been dropped, and the real one, if any, resumed" [311].

The relation of word to thing, signifier to signified in
The Confidence-Man, then, depends to a larger degree than
in other works on the reader's participation. The reader is
made aware, to an unusual extent, of his own role in ascribing
value to facts; the result is that the novel tests its read-
ers' characters, as we shall see, exactly as the confidence
man tests those on the Fidèle. The title "The Confidence-Man:
His Masquerade" partakes of the same duplicity as the char-
acters' names and actions, though this fact becomes clear only
late in the text. The title asserts an identity between its
several figures, usually thought to begin with the deaf-mute
(chapters 1 and 2), and to include Black Guinea, the man with
the weed, the man in gray with a white tie, the man with the big book, the herb-doctor, the man with the brass plate, and the cosmopolitan; but this identity finally is left to the reader's inference. In *The Confidence-Man*, the reader is made responsible for the correspondence between signifier and signified, between appearance and fact. As we shall see, Melville stops short of providing conclusive evidence for these figures' connection: the reader is therefore held at the verbal level, and is never given the opportunity to confirm his suspicions. Melville's titular assertion of the figures' identity is only the first move in a dialectic with the reader, a dialectic moving about the novel's pre-eminent symbolic term, confidence.

The figures presented in *The Confidence-Man* are united by one common quality: each asks another figure, series of figures, or crowd for "confidence." Frequently the call for confidence is coupled with money, its material proof, in amounts ranging from a figurative shilling to a literal hundred dollars. The ramifications of the term "confidence man," familiar to the novel's contemporary readers from newspaper accounts, suggest initial distrust, and the reader reasonably regards the novel's transactions with some suspicion. This suspicion is heightened by the cumulative effect of *The Confidence-Man*'s chapters, since as readers outside the narrative frame, we see a succession of confidence men. Our suspicion extends itself almost automatically to anyone requesting con-
fidence; but this suspicion must be qualified in light of the arguments advanced by the man with the brass plate (or PIO man, for Philosophical Intelligence Office), and later by the cosmopolitan, that some form of confidence underlies all human activities. One of these activities involves the fictive relation between author and reader, and gradually as one reads The Confidence-Man it becomes clear that the position of an author who implicitly requires the reader's confidence, while demonstrating in his fiction the folly of granting confidence, is at best paradoxical. The Confidence-Man ultimately denies the equivalence of signifier and signified, as we shall see: such a denial, an inversion of Carlyle's position in Sartor Resartus, is carefully developed throughout the novel, and is manifested principally through its key term.

Most of the novel's activity is concerned with discussions between supporters and detractors of confidence. Among the earliest of these, a confrontation which is crucial to the unity of the novel's episodes, is the discussion between Black Guinea and members of the crowd in chapter 3. Apparently a crippled black man who supports himself by begging from the passengers, Black Guinea is accused (for no apparent reason) of being an impostor. The crowd drives off his accuser, the wooden-legged man, but then begins to question Black Guinea itself,

putting the negro fairly and discreetly to the question; among other things, asking him, had he any documentary proof, any plain paper about him, attesting
that his case was not a spurious one. "No, no, dis poor ole darkie haint none o' dem waloable papers," he wailed.  

Throughout this chapter, characters aboard the Fidèle, like the reader, are restricted to appearances: Black Guinea's accuser is chased away by the crowd because he "hobbled up to the negro, and, with the air of a beadle, would, to prove his alleged imposture on the spot, have stripped him and driven him away . . ." [18]; and later he wishes the opportunity of "'leaving the streaks of these fingers on his paint, as the lion leaves the streaks of his nails on a caffre'" [47]. Contact, however, is forbidden the wooden-legged man: Black Guinea must be accepted or rejected on the basis of his words, without even the aid of his "'waloable papers.'"  

No physical validation is available to those who must interpret events on the Fidèle: Black Guinea offers on his own behalf the testimony of several men, identified not by name but by clothing or occupation, all of whom are unavailable at present:  

"Oh yes, oh yes, dar is aboard here a werry nice, good ge'mman wid a weed, and a ge'mman in a gray coat and white tie, what knows all about me; and a ge'mman in a yellar west; and a ge'mman wid a brass plate; and a ge'mman in a wiolet robe; and a ge'mman as is a sodjer; and ever so many good, kind, honest ge'mmen more aboard what knows me and will speak for me, God bress 'em; yes, and what knows me as well as dis poor old darkie knows hisself, God bress him! Oh, find 'em, find 'em," he earnestly added, "and let 'em come quick, and show you all, ge'mmen, dat dis poor ole darkie is werry well wordy of all you kind ge'mmen's kind confidence."  

[19-20]
Every reader of the novel must deal with this passage, since many (but not all) of the figures named here appear in order: their orderly appearance is therefore either the confidence man's own prologue, some authorial prelude, or coincidence. Figures one through four, and six—the man with the weed, the man in the gray coat and white tie, the man with the big book, the herb-doctor, and the man with the brass plate—appear unambiguously in sequence; the others listed do not appear, at least not in the same way. (There are various attempts to account for the "ge'mman in a yellar west," the "ge'mman in a wiolet robe," and the "ge'mman as is a sodger": Bruce Franklin's introduction to The Confidence-Man is perhaps the most speculative of these.) These three types are not clearly confidence men, in the way the others are; and their presence in the list qualifies Black Guinea's authority.

The quality of the reading experience is changed by the footnotes in modern editions; rather than being unsure about the extent of our belief in the authorial presence, modern readers (accustomed to many footnotes) are far more likely to believe Melville means to tie all the references together, and to respond to this expectation by making the details fit. Bruce Franklin's edition, for example, performs too many services; Melville did not (as Eliot did in The Waste Land) provide notes to clarify his text, and it seems clear from reading The Confidence-Man that some degree of confusion is
its experience. Several critics, making an error complemen-
tary to Franklin's, have taken Black Guinea's list as evi-
dence that the novel is incomplete, since not all the figures
appear; their reading, following Yvor Winters, is that the
last sentence indicates a planned sequel which Melville was
too exhausted to write. Yet finally attempts either to find
hidden confidence men or to dismiss the novel as incomplete
are insufficient because they distort its experience, which
leads one to conclude that incompleteness is the usual state of
events. "Something further may follow of this Masquerade,"
taken from the perspective of the book's persistent demands on
the reader to attempt to integrate wholistically its frag-
ments, is a sign to prevent the reader from taking its end as
conclusive.

Signs in The Confidence-Man, then, do not follow the ref-
erential model of Sartor: rather, they are codes to the read-
er to interpret the facts of the novel non-referentially.
Masquerades are the more unsettling for the fact that not all
the participants can be identified: the incompleteness of
Guinea's list is meant, I believe, to tempt the reader into
an interpretation not explicitly justified by the text. There
is insufficient evidence to infer that the confidence man is a
type of Christ, or of the devil, or of a figure joining attrib-
utes of both—there is insufficient evidence to show that
the confidence man is even the same figure in all his "ava-
tars"—and this limitation on the reader's knowledge is the
principal meaning of *The Confidence-Man*. We cannot finally know the figures' identity, nor can we keep from making inferences about the connections between sign and inward quality.

The novel's incompleteness results in part from the fact that Melville limits us to language while suggesting the insufficiency of language. Like the characters on the Fidèle who want to confirm Black Guinea's nature, all we can judge by are appearances. As Franklin says in his introduction,

> We share the plight of the bystander who immediately wants to know, "But how are we to find all these people in this great crowd?" Apparently we are supposed to find out who people are--and who the Confidence Man is--by examining the colors each man wears, the objects he carries, and the role he plays. This is precisely what we see the people on the Fidèle doing and what we customarily do in our daily lives. This is precisely what Black Guinea--almost certainly an avatar of the Confidence Man--wants us to do, and what we have to do in order to read the book with any coherence.

One effect of the novel is to make the reader wary of what words mean--words being to the text what appearances are to the fictive world. Black Guinea's dialect obscures some possible puns, the most noteworthy of which is in his last sentence: "'dis poor ole darkie is werry well wordy of all you kind ge'mmen's kind confidence.'" One must be fairly confident in the consistency of Black Guinea's dialect, and in the serious, non-punning attitude of his author, to read "werry" as *very* rather than *wary*, and "wordy" as *worthy* rather than *wordy*. *Confidence* for the reader means placing trust in words, since words are finally all we have; yet in a text
which promotes distrust in the use of words, confidence finally becomes encoded as the opposite of its quotidian sense.

Even before Black Guinea's plea, Melville has established a division between surfaces and their implications. In the first chapter appears the novel's most mysterious figure, the deaf-mute who appears, writes variations on I Corinthians 13, falls asleep, and vanishes from the novel. His "advent," so called, happens "at sunrise on a first of April," "suddenly as Manco Capac at the lake Titicaca"--details which suggest both incarnation and an April Fool's joke. The deaf-mute stands beside a wanted poster "offering a reward for the capture of a mysterious impostor, supposed to have recently arrived from the East," with a "careful description of his person" [4]. The text, however, does not given such a description: it asserts no further connection between the deaf-mute and the subject of the poster than their proximity in words. Again, the reader is left to infer such a relation.

The crowd on the Pidèle debates the nature of the deaf-mute precisely as it does that of Black Guinea, and with similar inconclusion; but the account of other materials mentioned near the deaf-mute promotes in the reader a kind of guilt by association. The narrator goes on to cite the newly acquired civilization of the area, where numbers of bandits, pirates, Indians, and the like had been reduced, "leaving comparatively few successors; which would seem cause for unalloyed gratula-
tion, and is such to all except those who think that in new countries, where the wolves are killed off, the foxes in-
crease" [6]. We are thus put on our guard for "foxes," but without clear authorial commitment that any such will be in the text. In such passages the narrator allows the reader the opportunity to infer the worst, but without giving such inferences substantial support.

Melville evokes inferential distrust, too, through allusions:

But instinct, though knowing, is yet a teacher set below reason, which itself says, in the grave words of Lysander in the comedy, after Puck has made a sage of him with his spell:--
"The will of man is by his reason swayed."
So that, suddenly change as people may, in their dis-
positions, it is not always waywardness, but improved judgment, which, as in Lysander's case, or the present, operates with them.

[18]

Familiarity with A Midsummer Night's Dream causes one to note the irony here. A fairly innocuous statement out of context becomes quite inappropriate in the play, since it is not at all Lysander's reason, but Puck's drug which has brought about his conversion. There is no reason except instinct, or pre-
judice, for favoring Helena over Hermia, Lysander and Demet-
rius to the contrary; and there is no reason except instinct or prejudice for assuming that Black Guinea either is or is not what he says. All we have are words. The allusion, then, calls our attention to our ultimate helplessness before the text: if words may be doubted, if they cannot be interpreted
with confidence, then the text becomes meaningless—or rather, overproductive of meaning. A plurality of meanings may be entertained, any of which are acceptable or unacceptable; and the text presents a constant pressure to choose among them, while giving no basis for doing so.

When doubts in the status of the text itself are evoked, the nature of meaning becomes problematic: but an account of literary meaning which depends on experience is better able to account for The Confidence-Man. Doubts about reading the text are inspired by the novel's opening, with that consequential date, April 1—incidentally, the date of the novel's publication—predominant in the first paragraphs:

At sunrise on a first of April, there appeared, suddenly as Manco Capac at the lake Titicaca, a man in cream-colors, at the water-side in the city of St. Louis.

His cheek was fair, his chin downy, his hair flaxen, his hat a white fur one, with a long fleecy nap. He had neither trunk, valise, carpet-bag, nor parcel. No porter followed him. He was unaccompanied by friends. From the shrugged shoulders, titters, whispers, wonderings of the crowd, it was plain that he was, in the extremest sense of the word, a stranger.

[3]

In reading The Confidence-Man we find that Melville is indeed serious about his phrase: the deaf-mute is indeed "in the extremest sense of the word, a stranger," because he has no relations, as the paragraphs puts it; because he is identified solely by appearances, as with other figures of the confidence man; and most importantly because the appearances cannot be pierced. The doubt which accumulates during its reading, then,
characterizes the novel.

Locally, then, the reader has no basis for inference; but does he have evidence over the whole range of the work? If one has no clear indication that Black Guinea, the man with the weed, the man with the gray coat and white tie, and so on, are individually confidence men, can one infer from their association that they are? The reader commonly senses that he knows more than the characters within the fiction, that he enjoys a privileged position with respect to its phenomena. We are in the position of the audience in the Shakespearean play watching the eavesdropping scene, or the play within the play, confident in our fictive superiority. Yet in Melville's text, as in the play, there are occasional moments of disturbance: we know that the actors know we are present, and that they only pretend not to know, sometimes breaking the illusion by pointing out their awareness through asides and soliloquies (accepted metadramatic devices) and by ad libs or mistakes (actual departures from the script). 13 So too the apparent authorial ironies, the interpolated stories, and the authorial chapters (chapters 14, 33, and 44) suggest fictive levels as well: these devices suggest that deeper games besides the fictive ones are being played, perhaps including Melville's game of hoaxing the reader. 14 Authorial evaluations are words just as are dialogues, and both must be read with the same suspicion, once it is evoked by the text.

The chapter which contains Black Guinea's often quoted
list provides a model showing the action of confidence in the
text as a whole: the ebb and flow of the crowd's opinions
is very like the reader's own estimation both in this chapter
and throughout The Confidence-Man. Certain qualities in Black
Guinea appear to be established by the narrator: "his knotted
black fleece and good-natured, honest black face rubbing
against the upper part of people's thighs as he made shift to
shuffle about, making music, such as it was, and raising a
smile even from the gravest . . ." [15]. "Good-natured" des-
cribes a quality subject to observation, but "honest" is a
judgment better reserved. We see such authorial evaluations,
too, in the description of a clergyman, "Small in stature, but
manly; with a clear face and blue eye; innocence, tenderness,
and good sense triumvirate in his air" [19]. In the sequence
of approval and disapproval to which Black Guinea is subjec-
ted, such authorial estimations may be questioned. Initially
the crowd seems to accept him for what he seems to be; he is
then attacked by the wooden-legged man, whose lack of sympathy
for a fellow cripple is pointed out as suspicious. The crowd
supports the wooden-legged man's suspicion until he is opposed
by the Methodist minister; the wooden-legged man temporarily
chased away, that minister himself begins to suspect Black
Guinea, though not so much as to try to touch him.15 Finally
a merchant gives Black Guinea money, in the process dropping a
business card; the reader is led to infer that this card
serves as introduction for the next "avatar," but the text no-
where says so. What we are to make of the action of chapter three, then, depends on our proclivity to suspicion.

"But why not, friend, put as charitable a construction as one can upon the poor fellow?" said the soldier-like Methodist, with increased difficulty maintaining a pacific demeanor towards one whose own asperity seemed so little to entitle him to it: "he looks honest, don't he?"

"Looks are one thing, and facts are another," snapped out the other perversely; "and as to your constructions, what construction can you put upon a rascal, but that a rascal he is?"

[21]

Nothing more can be made of this exchange. Both supporters and detractors of Black Guinea—and those who accept and deny the associated premise, that appearances may be trusted to convey essences—lack evidence, and will not or cannot obtain it. Melville provides in this chapter, and throughout the novel, an opportunity for his reader to make a similar determination, with a similar lack of evidence to support his conclusions: in spite of the title, and in spite of the sequence of apparent confidence men, ultimately we cannot know their identity, since all we have is words.

Confidence, the basis of the debate in chapter three, is unattainable to the characters: apparently it is impermissible to perform any action which will verify the fact of Black Guinea's appearance. In just this way, Melville denies his reader any access to the "real" nature of the action on the Fidele—or rather, this denial is characteristic of the Fidele's "reality." It is never explicitly said that a confidence man or confidence men are at work, and the evidence,
though strong, is circumstantial. The reader may infer a connection between Black Guinea and the man with the weed because of the business card: such an inference has long been honored by the phrase *post hoc, ergo propter hoc*, and it should be recognized that any connection between these events, and all the events of *The Confidence-Man*, depends on the reader's confidence in his interpretation, a confidence frequently undermined as the novel progresses.

Confidence, then, is a term vital to the reading process itself, even more than Carlyle's "clothes." In his choice of confidence as the means of provoking the examination of perception in *The Confidence-Man*, Melville undermines the basis of Carlyle's metaphor in *Sartor*, by radically denying correspondence between appearance and fact. Clothes in *Sartor* body forth; but in *The Confidence-Man* they conceal. (It is no accident that so many avatars of the confidence man are identified by clothing.) Melville's symbolic procedure is an essential inversion of Carlyle's: characters in *The Confidence-Man* identify others only by appearance, in a world in which there can be only appearances. The PIO man has "the trust of perfect confidence": such a tautology is present in Teufelsdöckh's perception of God behind the phenomena, but is not called into question. "The trust of perfect confidence" is there for those who have it, and the means of acquisition, as in *Sartor*, is the leap of faith.

*The Confidence-Man* seems designed to lead the reader to
the same sort of leap as Sartor, but a leap opposite in direction: Melville encourages the reader not to make equivalence between signifier and signified, but to distrust any such equivalence, to have what Pitch calls "confidence in distrust." But since such confidence cannot have a foundation—how could one trust his distrust?—its assertion rests uneasily upon paradox and contradiction. If there is no such thing as confidence, then ultimately there is no justification for reading the novel's chapters as united, since confidence in the identity of the confidence man's "avatars" is necessary to such an interpretation. Confidence therefore is necessary to avert chaos, yet confidence results in the state of being gulled. The **Confidence-Man** therefore leads its reader to a contradictory state in which nothing can be concluded.

Through the sequence of events which the reader sees as the novel unfolds, and through the repeated requests for confidence by its characters, confidence is simultaneously set forth as the key element in all human transactions, and made extremely dubious as a principle for community. Melville's principal achievement in the novel, I think, is this paradoxical assertion-and-denial of the basis for the world's interpretation. The repeated uses of the term confidence both underscore the importance of the community requested by the confidence man, and deny the propriety of granting confidence, since its yielding may precede a deception. The novel thus makes contradictory claims about the wisdom of "philanthropy"
and "misanthropy," claims which develop their force in the process of reacting to the text. Dialectic may in fact be an inappropriate term to describe the novel's form, since the term implies movement by thesis and antithesis to some synthesis; and while the confidence man makes some claims to synthesis in his description of the "genial misanthrope" [253], the experience of reading The Confidence-Man does not allow any sense of resolution or measured progress through opposites to their joining. Finally it is not the local meaning or the sum of local meanings which are the meaning of The Confidence-Man: the meaning per se is indeterminate. The experience of entertaining first one conjecture, then its complement and opposite, without substance to conclude finally either way—this sequence of interpretations makes up the meaning of The Confidence-Man.
II. One Cosmopolitan and Confident Tide

Such a sequence of interpretations as we have been considering, hazarded and discarded and considered anew, comprise an important part of the experience of reading The Confidence-Man. The interpretations and reversals may be seen in almost any selection from the novel:

"ah, now," depreciating with his pipe, "irony is so unjust; never could abide irony; something Satanic about irony. God defend me from Irony, and Satire, his bosom friend."

"A right knave's prayer, and a right fool's, too," snapping his rifle-lock.

[192-93]

Like the contradictory responses to Black Guinea, these lines mean conflicting things, depending on the antecedent of that "his"—irony or God. Two possibilities are suggested: either "his" refers to the nearest noun, irony, and the cosmopolitan sincerely argues his point about social ties; or "his" is more properly "His," and the cosmopolitan opposes satire and irony on the basis of self-interest, since they frustrate his own attempts to win Pitch's confidence. A third conjecture seems to follow organically from the second: in moving from the first to the second, the reader may appreciate the paradox involved, in which "something Satanic about irony" comes to apply to the speaker, himself ironic in his duplicitous use of ambiguous syntax. Such a third possi-
bility presupposes a special readership which rejects the surface of the text in favor of more paradoxical interpretations.

The text itself proposes the question "May he not be knave, fool, and genius altogether?" [127] In this sequence, fool corresponds to reading one, knave two, and genius three. Moreover, Pitch's response is itself subject to ambiguous readings: "A right knave's prayer, and a right fool's too." Since the same figure voiced the same prayer, "and" refers not to different figures, clearly separable, but to the same figure, somehow knave and fool combined into genius. What the cosmopolitan request, what all the confidence men request, what defines their common purpose and place in the novel, is "confidence": their characters become more problematical as does the term itself. Confidence is in fact redefined by the experience of the novel; the range of connotations given it in *The Confidence-Man* eventually overwhelms its literal, denotative meaning.

Such movements between strategies are characteristic of interpretation in *The Confidence-Man*, movements without resolution. The crowd's response to Guinea is precisely that of a reader to the text at large: at any point some readers will take the central figures as substantially innocent, others as confidence men (or worse), and still others as both or neither or undecided. Critical opinions on *The Confidence-Man* illustrate something of this diversity: Elizabeth Foster, the
novel's first modern editor, reads the deaf-mute of the first chapters as a figure of innocence, Christ presenting his message to an unsympathetic world; after his departure come Black Guinea and the sequence of confidence men, by her reading.\textsuperscript{17} Others' including Bruce Franklin, take the deaf-mute as the first "avatar," signaled as such by the novel's title and by his "advent" on the first of April. Critical readings are available to support every possible perspective on \textit{The Confidence-Man}, including that which takes the confidence men as all engaged in a pursuit of man's salvation; such is Ernest Tuveson's argument.\textsuperscript{18} Tuveson argues that the confidence man is a new messiah, a "jesuit of the new religion," frustrated by those of the crowd who distrust the message he brings; his critical predisposition leads him to misread some of the novel's events, as in his gloss of "the secure Malakoff of confidence" [91]: "Here is an intimation that the new form of religion is, rather like older faiths, a sort of refuge from the terrors of confrontation by stark reality—a fortress of defence for the spirit." Malakoff, a Russian fort, had fallen in the Crimean War, after the apparent date of the events on the Fidèle but before the publication date of \textit{The Confidence-Man}.\textsuperscript{19} A more doubtful reading of the Fidèle's events than Tuveson's will take the reference to be not to Malakoff's real but to its presumed sanctity; whether or not the confidence man is being ironic here—the phrase occurs in indirect quotation, and therefore may be either that of the confidence man or the
narrator--Melville almost certainly is. Had his intent been to propose a real and solid "fortress of defence for the spirit," surely Melville would have edited the phrase out of the finished version of the novel after the fort's fall. The existence of Tuveson's reading, however, indicates to what extent what we want to see colors our interpretations.

The detail which Tuveson picks out is relatively easy to counter, since it is a contemporary reference whose relevance may be easily inferred; such details as the comparison of the mute to "Manco Capac," however, are more essentially ambivalent, and one's reading tends to make of them whatever his predispositions require. In fact, "reading" is itself a term subject to some ambivalence: often we speak of a critic's "reading" of a work as his interpretation, a use which implies that meaning is something decided after a work is read. Another possibility, however, is that "reading" is not a final judgment made somehow after the experience of the text, but an activity which begins with the text and is coextensive with it; the critical endeavor, according to this model, is to recapture for analysis the decisions made during the actual experience of the text. The process of making these decisions, rejecting some when shown to be inconsistent with later materials, and revising the interpretive schema to fit new data, depends on the interpretive community which shares certain preconceptions about the reading experience. Obviously some interpretive communities are less in harmony with the text than
others, Tuveson's critical judgments placing him in a relatively small community; unlike many texts, The Confidence-Man seems to suggest the usefulness of an interpretive community which maintains that meaning is indeterminate.

A variety of interpretive strategies, then, may be used in reading The Confidence-Man, interpretive strategies which define a community of readers for any given work or set of works; unlike the works which Stanley Fish discusses in "Literature in the Reader," however, no reader may be sufficiently "informed" about The Confidence-Man, because it is the state of not being sufficiently informed which responds most freely to the text. ²⁰ We may see how interpretive strategies characterize communities within the novel itself; one such strategy may be called that of naive American optimism, the positivism expressed by various avatars of the confidence man and occasionally, perhaps ironically, by the narrator. "Here reigned the dashing and all-fusing spirit of the West, whose type is the Mississippi itself, which, uniting the streams of the most distant and opposite zones, pours them along, helter-skelter, in one cosmopolitan and confident tide" [14]. This sentence joins the cosmopolitan—who expresses the most emphatic sentiments for the goodness of man—and the concept of confidence, which itself unites the "most distant and opposite" characters of the Fidèle. Such a naive reader might take seriously the Protean easy-chair which the man in gray describes:
"My Protean easy-chair is a chair so all over be-
jointed, behinged, and bepadded, everyway so elas-
tic, springy, and docile to the airiest touch, that
in some one of its endlessly-changeable accommoda-
tions of back, seat, footboard, and arms, the most
restless body, the body most racked, nay, I had al-
most added the most tormented conscience must, some-
how and somewhere, find rest."

[55]

The complement to the naive reader, whom we might call the
skeptic, would concentrate on indications of irony through-
out The Confidence-Man: such a reader would find satirical
the references to the chair's ability to ease "the most tor-
mented conscience." In this interpretive community, "Fidèle"
carries roughly the value of "the Rosebud" in Moby-Dick--
which had a "blasted" or decaying whale tied to its side. 21
Such a reader would look for evidence of duplicity in the nov-
el to Melville's sketch, written with the draft of The Con-
fidence-Man and published as a supplement to some editions. 22
The sketch concerns the point at which the Missouri joins the
Mississippi, just above St. Louis, which is the departure
point for the Fidèle.

The calmness is gone, the grouped isles disappear, the
shores are jagged and rent, the hue of the water is
clayed, the before moderate current is rapid and vexed.
The opium of the Upper River seems trite in the Lower,
nor is it ever renewed.

The Missouri sends rather a hostile element than
a filial flow. Longer, stronger than the father of
waters, like Jupiter he dethrones his sire and reigns
in his stead. Under the benign name Mississippi, it
is in short the Missouri that now rolls to the Gulf,
the Missouri that with the snows from his solitudes
freezes the warmth of the genial zones, the Missouri
that by open assault or artful sap sweeps away fruit
and field, graveyard and barn, the Missouri that not
a tributary but an undermine enters the sea, long dis-
daining to yield his white wave to the blue.

As in Moby-Dick, that which is underneath the water's surface
is the agent of possible destruction, as well as "truth":
and the undercurrents of the narration, the authorial irony,
receive the emphasis of the skeptic's interpretive community,
this draft providing another piece of evidence.

The best description of the experience of The Confidence-
Man is a continual movement between aspects of these two posi-
tions. There are readers who will be convinced, from the time
they read the title, that every event in the novel is caused
by a confidence man, whose actions we as readers are privi-
leged to observe and judge; other readers will typically as-
sume, as does the merchant in chapter three, the essential
innocence of its characters; still another group, initially
trusting, will follow the skeptics' doubts; a fourth group,
perhaps initially skeptical, will be persuaded by the impli-
cations of the arguments advanced by the P10 man and the cosmo-
politan that "confidence," however doubtful, is the necessary
underpinning not only of business, but of human society as
well [178]. A fifth group might resemble the fourth in re-
jecting relatively simple skepticism, but by different reason-
ing: since the author himself depends on confidence of a sort
for the reading of his text, these may well read The Confi-
dence-Man by its own apparent canons, and conclude that no
text may be read with confidence. Other combinatory relations
between reader and text are possible, and I do not mean these to be exhaustive; but all these positions, and more besides, are arguable inferences from the text, arguable by equally "informed readers." And the most restless literary critic can find comfort, can find refuge from the wearing encounter with the text, in one of these positions. No reader is sufficiently informed to make an unambiguous judgment from the text: any position may be argued with approximately equal validity, based on portions of the text emphasized. Where one reader will perceive straightforward opinion, another will read irony--for example, in his response to the following:

Lounging in armchairs or sauntering among the marble-topped tables, amused with the scene, are the comparatively few, who, instead of having hands in the games, for the most part keep their hands in their pockets. These may be the philosophes. [73]

While the text may at times suggest the inappropriateness of a given reading, in general there is insufficient material to determine one correct reading.

What the text does in making possible these variant experiences of its reading is, finally, to assert that meaning may not be reliably determined from appearances, contrary to the collegian's confident declaration that "'No appearances can deceive me'" [67]. Just as the wooden-legged man is not allowed to confirm his suspicions about Black Guinea, so the reader is not allowed the expected authorial assistance in determining what, if anything, is really present behind the
work's surface. And the principal sign or code for this statement of meaning is made through "confidence."

"Confidence," unlike the white whale in Moby-Dick, or clothes in Sartor Resartus, has no physical referent on the fictive level. It is purely verbal, an abstraction, claimed for truth by some characters and disputed by others.

"Take the wrapper from any of my vials and hold it to the light, you will see water-marked in capitals the word 'confidence,' which is the countersign of the medicine, as I wish it was of the world. The wrapper bears that mark or else the medicine is counterfeit."

... "You told me to have confidence, said that confidence was indispensabile, and here you preach to me distrust. Ah, truth will out!"

"I told you, you must have confidence, unquestioning confidence, I meant confidence in the genuine medicine, and the genuine me." 23

In this passage, the herb-doctor's exhortation to check the watermark on the medicine's wrapper is correctly perceived by the miser as a form of distrust. The herb-doctor's assurance that "Distrust is a stage to confidence" [115] does little to assure him, and it is only by requiring his silence for medical reasons that the argument is terminated. It is worth remembering that, in the position analogous to the medicine's watermark, The Confidence-Man itself bears the term confidence man; the evaluation of the relation between signifier and signified, like the use of the Counterfeit Detector in the last chapter, is problematic.

As a symbol, then, confidence takes on as connotations all the meanings attributed to it, including the naive faith
which the herb-doctor asks for—"confidence in the genuine medicine, and the genuine me"—and the "confidence in distrust" which Pitch claims [150]. As the novel is read, the term accrues its significance—unlike the experience of its characters, the experience of the novel's readers is cumulative—so that finally confidence comes to mean contradictory things, both positive and negative. Perhaps a more effective way to say this is that confidence comes to be a sign representing the impossibility of choosing between the radically opposed alternatives of ultimate confidence or ultimate distrust—that is, a sign of its own vacancy as sign.

This paradox represents an alarming development from *Sartor's* symbol: there we saw the creation of an omnibus symbol, clothes, which through the experience of the work became a sign for the symbolizing process itself; but in *The Confidence-Man*, the experience is not the confirmation of the symbolic nature of experience, but the development of a state in which no connection between signifier and signified may ever be confirmed. *Sartor* depends for its affirmation on the leap of faith made by Teufelsdröckh, parallel to one presumably made by the reader as well; *The Confidence-Man* finds its meaning in the quality of experience which denies content to the sign "confidence," first by making unavailable its naive acceptance (as in *Sartor*), and second by extending this rejection even to the special category of confidence required to read literary texts. *The Confidence-Man* thus qualifies as
one of Stanley Fish's "self-consuming artifacts"; or, phrasing this conclusion in Pynchon's later term, it enacts in its form Gödel's Theorem. 24 Confidence, then, becomes a sign representing the radical insufficiency of the symbolizing process.

This analysis is not entirely the result of reading Melville by the flickering light of Stanley Fish: on the contrary, Melville's work itself emphasizes the experiential nature of meaning. Whatever meaning the events associated with the Pequod in Moby-Dick possess can only be expressed through the subjectivity that directs us to call it Ishmael. In this respect, Moby-Dick is a significant development from Sartor: meaning in Sartor is a quality which exists apart from its apprehension by Teufelsdröckh, the Editor, or the reader. The Editor frequently points out that, in his opinion, Teufelsdröckh has gone beyond propriety; and the reader has similar reactions at times to the Editor's enthusiasms and excesses. Both Teufelsdröckh's and the Editor's discoveries, by the very organization of the book, are supposed to be supplementary: from the (literal) letter of the text, the reader is trusted to infer the spirit of the clothes-philosophy. This spirit may be equated with meaning; by it are to be judged the deviations of Sartor's dual figures. 25

All the narration of Moby-Dick comes from Ishmael, himself both editor and participant; his narrative, therefore, does not divide responsibility between two figures. His re-
search is presented not in the interest of discovering an elu-
sive but clearly existent "truth," but in providing the reader
an equivalent for his experiences. As in Sartor, the reader's
activity validates that of the narrator; but unlike Sartor,
the truth can only be apprehended in the particulars of this
voyage. God was there in Sartor's universe all the time; but
ultimate meaning in Moby-Dick may not be explained by asser-
ting faith in the beneficence of phenomena, since the whale
itself is the predominant, and hostile, fact in the novel's
world. We know about events in Moby-Dick, then, only what Ish-
mael knows; the form in which the narrative is presented, his
subjectivity, is the only form of meaning which the novel can
take.

We see both the strengths and the limitations of Mel-
ville's position in "The Whiteness of the Whale." Ishmael
never does say what it is that is frightful: "What the white
whale was to Ahab, has been hinted; what, at times, he was to
me, as yet remains unsaid." In traditional accounts of
meaning, "The Whiteness of the Whale" remains unsatisfactory,
since its meaning remains unstated throughout the chapter;
but the experienced meaning of the chapter is the evocation of
dread by compiling an interminable list of white objects
which cause terror:

There yet lurks an elusive something in the inner-
most idea of this hue, which strikes more of panic
to the soul than that redness which affrights in blood.
This elusive quality it is, which causes the
thought of whiteness, when divorced from more kindly
associations, and coupled with any object terrible in itself, to heighten that terror to the furthest bounds. 27

This conjecture, phrased abstractly, and concealed in a catalogue of white and beautiful objects, remains the only statement in the chapter; other elements are either lists of objects which possess whiteness and which are frightening, or are questions about why whiteness itself is frightening.

Is it that by its indefiniteness it shadows forth the heartless voids and immensities of the universe, and thus stabs us from behind with the thought of annihilation, when beholding the white depths of the milky way? Or is it, that as in essence whiteness is not so much a color as the visible absence of color, and at the same time the concrete of all colors; is it for these reasons that there is such a dumb blankness, full of meaning, in a wide landscape of snows—a colorless, all-color of atheism from which we shrink? . . . pondering all this, the palsyed universe lies before us a leper; and like wilful travellers in Lap-land, who refuse to wear colored and coloring glasses upon their eyes, so the wretched infidel gazes himself blind at the monumental white shroud that wraps all the prospect around him. And of all these things the Albino whale was the symbol. 28

It is the experience, not the logic, of this chapter which gives it its effect. Ishmael says that whiteness intensifies that which is already terrifying, but presents whiteness as terrifying only because it is the one quality which these terrifying objects have in common. Whiteness therefore serves as the abstraction of terror; it comes to be a symbol for non-phenomenal qualities ("voids and immensities of the universe"), and this quality is expressed by indirection. 29 Ishmael says in his first chapter, "Surely all this is not without meaning": this statement is at once the faith and the
doubt that underwrites Ishmael's experiences in *Moby-Dick*; the quality of whiteness here appears in fact to be Melville's sign of being void of significance.\(^\text{30}\)

Like Carlyle, Melville conveys through *Moby-Dick* the sense that life is ultimately mysterious and unified; unlike Carlyle, he conveys this not by impassioned statement but by questions unresolved and unresolvable. Where Teufelsdröckh concludes (in "The Everlasting Yea") with ". . . what is Nature? Ha! why do I not name thee God? Art not thou the "Living Garment of God'?"\(^\text{31}\) Ishmael finds in the landscape that story of Narcissus, who because he could not grasp the tormenting, mild image he saw in the fountain, plunged into it and was drowned. But that same image, we ourselves see in all rivers and oceans. It is the image of the ungraspable phantom of life; and this is the key to it all.

The distinction between the phenomenal world as God's clothing and the phenomenal world as "ungraspable phantom of life" is considerable; and the distinction comes from the limitation on meaning as experienced, not as substantial in itself. Both *Sartor* and *Moby-Dick* require the reader's participation; but in *Moby-Dick* the process of finding out meaning is not only part of the work's construction, which validates the conclusions of its characters, but is itself intrinsic to that meaning. Melville's position even in *Moby-Dick*, then, is very different from Carlyle's. There is a sharp distinction between *Sartor*'s argument by example that whatever sorrows one goes through will be justified by the insights won, and
Moby-Dick's argument by assertion that some value surely exists, an argument seriously qualified by Ahab's end.

We see experience qualifying the observation of phenomena in the characters' response to the doubloon which Ahab has nailed to the mast.

But one morning, turning to pass the doubloon, he seemed to be newly attracted by the strange figures and inscriptions stamped on it, as though now for the first time beginning to interpret for himself in some monomaniac way whatever significance might lurk in them. And some certain significance lurks in all things, else all things are little worth, and the round world itself but an empty cipher, except to sell by the cartload, as they do hills around Boston, to fill up some morass in the Milky Way. 33

"The Doubloon" shows a series of characters looking at the symbolic coin: each character is tested by his reaction to the coin, the sign of the pursuit of the white whale, exactly as in The Confidence-Man each character is "lit up" by the confidence man. 34 The series of monologues here concludes with Pip's "'I look, you look, he looks; we look, ye look, they look.'" 35 What we see in "The Doubloon" is an image for those who would read the world, to extract its significance: each of us unavoidably tries to do so, Moby-Dick seems to say --as Fish says, interpretation cannot be withheld 36--and our responses are each colored by our inescapable subjectivity (the "shadow of ourselves," as Teufelsdröckh calls it), by the sum of our experiences, which may or may not suffice.

"Some certain significance lurks in all things," then, is a statement of faith from Ishmael (not necessarily from Mel-
ville): the value of the sign "Ishmael" is to displace the necessity of commitment to the events of *Moby-Dick* as they bring about meaning.

A movement from *Sartor* to *Moby-Dick* qualifies the necessary affirmation in the significance of all things by framing it in a persona whose subjectivity qualifies his affirmation, more than the Editor does that of Teufelsdröckh; but *The Confidence-Man* makes any such affirmation extremely problematic. We have seen this qualification operating in the continuity of the novel's events; another means by which events' significance is questioned is by the authorial voice. The author interrupts the fictional flow to comment both on that fiction and on theoretical issues which it raises; but the relationship between his commentary and the fictional action is difficult to interpret. Melville's irony in *The Confidence-Man*, as we have seen—unlike irony in *Moby-Dick*, which becomes Ishmael's—is particularly non-committal. Under the surest of circumstances, irony is a thorny problem for the reader; but in a work which places responsibility on the reader not only for interpreting the irony, but for perceiving it as well, the problems become almost insoluble. Where the author pointedly neglects to draw significances from events, the reader quite rightly feels reticent to do so.

The significance of events in *The Confidence-Man* is doubtful, a fact of its experience which tends to be obscured
by its editors, as we have seen. The reader is posed further questions by Melville's allusive practice in The Confidence-Man. Both Foster's and Franklin's editions of the novel point out the enormous range of possible significances behind the details of its fictive surface—structures based not only on the familiar Christian mythology, but on contemporary accounts of Inca and Hindu mythology as well. Unlike modern readers, Melville's contemporaries did not have the benefit of notes glossing Manco Capac, for example; and while no one now would like to do without such information, the footnotes do change considerably the experience of reading, both by suppressing doubt about details, and by making The Confidence-Man obviously an erudite text. Any work with six explanatory notes on its first two paragraphs requires a different quality of attention than the novel as first printed. Melville's allusions are different in one important respect from Eliot's, the principal allusive modern writer and our norm for literary allusion: whereas Eliot's allusions are meant to bring the context of another, antecedent world into this one, qualifying the experience of both, and thus implicitly weighing modern values against the whole of civilization, Melville's allusions are cumulative, creating a texture of in-jokes which are likely not to be understood, and which certainly do not cause the recurrent revaluation one senses in Eliot's allusions. Melville's allusions, then, intensify the confusing nature of the text. The confusion which follows unexplained echoes
from Eastern mythologies causes difficulty in maintaining the significance of the novel's events; finally the temptation is strong to assume that events mean, without examination.

Of further interest in The Confidence-Man's affirmation, or lack of affirmation, of its events' significance are the interpolated stories, which like the authorial chapters create an appearance of interruption in the fiction. Its interpolated stories seem always to be told with a purpose:

"Well, what do you think of the story of Charlemont?" mildly asked he who had told it.
"A very strange one," answered the auditor, who had been such not with perfect ease, "but is it true?"
"Of course not; it is a story which I told you with the purpose of every story-teller—to amuse. Hence, if it seem strange to you, that strangeness is the romance; it is what contrasts it with real life; it is the invention, in brief, the fiction as opposed to the fact. For do but ask yourself, my dear Charlie," lovingly leaning over towards him, "I rest it with your own heart now, whether such a forereaching motive as Charlemont hinted he had acted on in his change—whether such a motive, I say, were a sort of one at all justified by the nature of human society? Would you, for one, turn the cold shoulder to a friend—a convivial one, say, whose pennilessness should be suddenly revealed to you?"

[264]

The cosmopolitan has made just such a declaration, to Charlie Noble's consternation (in chapters 29 through 31); and in the last sentence, as in other appeals made by the confidence man, the point becomes clear to the listener that the purpose of the story, far from being simply to amuse—unless a special sense of amusement is intended—has a practical end in mind. Before this renewed attack, Charlie retires quickly.
A narrative in which stories are told in order to enhance the tellers' purposes—usually to gain money, always to gain "confidence"—such a narrative must necessarily raise questions about its own status. Far from having "significance" inherent in all things, the implications are that the fictive level of the book is entirely and solely that, fictive, a story told by an author to gain some advantage. The authorial interpolations in a writer such as Fielding underscore the analogy between the author who presides over his characters, and God, Who presides over His: coincidence then is taken as evidence of the actions of providence. However, a novel whose intrusive authorial presence makes no such claims about the significance of events in his work, and whose work itself shows no sense of a highly ordered plot—the Fidèle begins at St. Louis and drifts to some point downstream past Cairo, ending in darkness—such a novel makes contrary assertions about the divine ordering of the world at large. Events on the ship, then, have no necessary relationship to "reality," and by extension, events in "real life" may have no necessary relationship to some universal order or providence. In order to believe any relationship exists between the fictive world and the "real" one—and such a relationship is part of our generic expectations, as well as being inherent in our habits of language—some form of "confidence" is required. Every use of the term on the fictive level of The Confidence-Man has an effect on how the novel is related to the reader's
experience, and thus to the world at large: when Charlie says "Come, this little episode of fictitious estrangement will but enhance the delightful reality"[258], we sense as well some relation between the fiction itself, estranging as it may be, and our own "delightful reality."

The quintessential sense of confidence is that which confirms our expectations from the title: one example will stand for many. The man with the weed finds the collegian reading Tacitus, and exhorts him to put the book away, since it undermines one's confidence:

"But Tacitus--he is the most extraordinary example of a heretic; not one iota of confidence in his kind. . . . comparatively inexperienced as you are, my dear young friend, did you never observe how little, very little, confidence, there is? I mean between man and man--more particularly between stranger and stranger. In a sad world it is the saddest fact. Confidence! I have sometimes almost thought that confidence is fled; that confidence is the New Astrea--emigrated--vanished--gone." Then softly sliding nearer, with the softest air, quivering down and looking up, "could you, now, my dear young sir, under such circumstances, by way of experiment, simply have confidence in me?"

[40-41]

This example is typical in several respects: the confidence man works from whatever subject his conversant is engaged in, bringing the subject around to a general discussion of the desirability of having confidence in men, even--especially--strangers. Often, particularly in the first half of The Confidence-Man, this confidence is validated by the sign of money, in various amounts; however, the confidence man occasionally returns part or all of his gain. The herb-doctor returns
half his sales [125-27]; and the PIO man goes to a great deal of trouble for his "two or three dirty dollars," as Pitch notes [182]. The effect is to confuse the audience, as well as to complicate the reader's interpretation; this complication of motive reaches its climax in the cosmopolitan, whose half of the novel is devoted to dialogues with Charlie Noble, who seems basically to agree with him, and with Mark Winsome and Egbert, who do not—but whom there can be no question of money. Clearly the "confidence," whatever the sign represents, is the primary motive in most of the transactions, as the wooden-legged man points out: "'You two greenhorns! Money, you think, is the sole motive to pains and hazard, deception and deviltry, in this world. How much money did the devil make by gulling Eve?'" [48].

The more sinister implications of confidence are developed in those passages in which the term takes on overtones of faith. In his discussion with the "charitable lady," the man in gray sounds one of these:

"Though I here but register the amount, there is another register, where is set down the motive. Good-bye; you have confidence. Yea, you can say to me as the apostle said to the Corinthians, 'I rejoice that I have confidence in you in all things.'"

[64]

Confidence, then, begins to take on the overtones of a bargain with the devil: etymologically faith with, its apparently serious use here is cheapened by its other associations, particularly by the suggestions of parody in the last chap-
ter. The cosmopolitan offers the old man, in lieu of a life-preserver, a bed-pan:

"That's the very stool I was sitting on, ain't it?"

"It is. And that shows that one's life is looked out for, when he ain't looking out for it himself.
In fact, any of these stools here will float you, sir, should the boat hit a snag, and go down in the dark.
But, since you want one in your room, pray take this one," handing it to him. "I think I can recommend this one; the tin part," rapping it with his knuckles, "seems so perfect--sounds so very hollow. . . . I never use this sort of thing, myself. Still, I think that in case of a wreck, barring sharp-pointed timbers, you could have confidence in that stool for a special providence."

[349]

The picture of the old man in the darkness, clutching to the stool, water swirling around him, is not easily dissociated from the claims for a "special providence." In fact, a good part of the reader's experience in The Confidence-Man, and its difference from the characters' experience of and reaction to "confidence," comes from our position outside the fictive frame. For us, the meaning of confidence is cumulative, while for the characters it tests their nature once and once only.39

The easiest response to the overwhelming presence of confidence in The Confidence-Man--some form of the term appears nearly 200 times--is to reject it in all its forms. Yet some confidence men present arguments which may not be so lightly dismissed. The PIO man, for example, rightly points out that "'Confidence is the indispensable basis of all sorts of business transactions. Without it, commerce between man and man, as between country and country, would, like a watch,
run down and stop" [178]. The ultimate extension of the denial of confidence would be the position of the misanthrope, that of Timon, Pitch, or Col. Moredock. Ultimately, rejecting confidence means rejecting the legitimate appeals of the text for its community, as well as rejecting society; and this fact complicates the reader's response to the novel. How the reader reacts to the recurrent pleas for confidence, and to the implied requests on its behalf by the author, depends on how he reads its fictive action. "Confidence" is, after all, a grossly oversimplified criterion for community. My contention is that finally there is no firm basis for reacting either way, that is, either rejecting confidence in the fictive act, or confidently asserting it. The PIO man explains the basis for his confidence in circular terms: "Very fine theory," scornfully exclaimed the bachelor, yet in secret, perhaps, not entirely undisturbed by these strange new views of the matter; 'but what trust is to be placed in it?' 'The trust of perfect confidence, sir'" [169]. And later, he says, "'whoever talks in that strain, whoever has no confidence in human reason, whoever despises human reason, in vain to reason with him'" [171]. Those who have confidence have it because they have it. Such is the claim of the PIO man, expressed in almost as circular a form; and perception of this circularity is finally responsible for the novel's subversive quality. For if confidence is the sole basis of human community, business transactions, and all the interrelationships that com-
prise society, and the basis for joining appearance and fact, and if this confidence depends on a kind of self-generation for its existence, a self-generation which is logically invalid—doubt in its existence results in a situation in which nothing, including perception of oneself, is legitimate. In *The Confidence-Man*, Melville has led the reader to ask questions about the ultimate nature of knowledge: the state of doubt which Hawthorne ascribes to Melville, after the composition of *The Confidence-Man*, may underlie its symbolic activity.

Melville, as he always does, began to reason of Providence and futurity, and of everything that lies beyond human ken, and informed me that he had "pretty much made up his mind to be annihilated"; but still he does not seem to rest in that anticipation; and, I think, will never rest until he gets hold of a definite belief. It is strange how he persists—and has persisted ever since I knew him, and probably long before—in wandering to-and-fro over these deserts, as dismal and monotonous as the sand hills amid which we were sitting. He can neither believe, nor be comfortable in his unbelief; and he is too honest and courageous not to try to do one or the other.  

Hawthorne may have simplified Melville's outlook for esthetic purposes; but the state he describes seems relevant to the novel's effects. The characters, and the reader as well, can neither say there is a basis for "confidence," nor say there is a basis for "confidence in distrust." Melville holds the reader between these poles, giving him insufficient information to choose either alternative; the fact that several readers have done so indicates a predisposition on their parts. One choice presupposes a commitment of self, which is
what the confidence man asks for in his "'one small commis-
sion of confidence'" [141]; the other choice presupposes a re-
jection of this commitment, an equally unacceptable position
because it denies all possibility of human community. 41
The reader cannot choose either position—and he cannot resist
the necessity to choose. "The solution of Phaenomena can never
be derived from Phaenomena"—this is Coleridge's statement on
finding order in the world—and yet the human impulse to
derive such solutions cannot be subdued. 42 This is the dilem-
ma The Confidence-Man poses its readers, by which it means to
reach "beyond human ken."

Yvor Winters' dismissal of The Confidence-Man in Maule's
Curse clinches the point:

This morality is that of the book: that the final
truth is absolute ambiguity, and that nothing can be judged. It frustrates all action, including that of
the artist and that of the critic. . . . It is small
wonder that a book composed in this temporary twilight
should have been so unsatisfactory as a whole and in
detail; for a work of art, like each detail comprising
it, is by definition a judgment.

Auden's remark that "a good book reads us" seems appropriate
here: The Confidence-Man certainly has read Winters. Like
Melville's description of the original character's effects
on others, Winters lights up in reaction to the questions
posed by The Confidence-Man. Such an effect will be the sub-
ject of the next section.
III. A Metamorphosis More Surprising Than Any In Ovid

"The reader" is, of course, not the same as all a work's readers: here the term is a compromise between my own reading (1979) and the interpretations of some definable historical readers, those who have read Melville's last novel productively. Such an alternation between one's own perspective and others' who have written on the work is inevitable due to two factors which govern the meaning of a literary work: each of reads alone, initially; and our reading of a work is necessarily predetermined to some extent by what has been said about it. The dual perspective on "the reader" is not, however, as crippling as it might seem, since individual readers--both critics writing on a work and each literal reader--give in their responses examples of what the text provokes all readers to, in some degree; and in the case of The Confidence-Man, the fictive model which the text provides for its reading precludes an ideal reader of the sort Fish suggests, because any reading of the text is based on "confidence," which as we have seen is untenable. No one on the fictive level of the work manages to deal successfully with the challenge presented by the confidence-man: those who supply the requested confidence are in some sense gulled; those who reject the appeal have rejected all community, likewise an insufficient response; and
those who try to be confidence men themselves (Charlie Noble, Mark Winsome, and Egbert) are frustrated by the cosmopolitan. The characters' attempts and failures to find what is beneath appearances indicates a likelihood that the reader's similar endeavor may meet with a like fate; The Confidence-Man itself may be neither naively accepted nor naively rejected, since both the material of the novel and its implied author are ultimately subversive of the basis of their existence.

The Confidence-Man tests its characters and its readers in comparable ways: such a relation is, I think, common to works of fiction. Its presence in The Confidence-Man indicates the author's role as confidence man: this character of the authorial role may be seen in Melville's description of the "original character":

The original character, essentially such, is like a revolving Drummond light, raying away from itself all round it—everything is lit by it, everything starts up to it (mark how it is with Hamlet), so that, in certain minds, there follows upon the adequate conception of such a character, an effect, in its way, akin to that which in Genesis attends upon the beginning of things.

[330]

Like "Diogenes in disguise" [195], the confidence man searches for an honest (if gullible) man; by his equivocal nature he provokes a response; and in that response each character's nature is revealed to him and to the reader. We may look to other writers for similar concepts; for example, in a Hopkins poem, each natural object "selves—goes itself," and God's grandeur "will flame out" of the world\textsuperscript{46}; and this moment of
discovery has similarities to Joyce's epiphanies. "Diogenes in disguise" recalls that Teufelsdröckh's Christian name is Diogenes: Pitch's observation suggests some grounds for comparing the confidence man and Teufelsdröckh. In The Confidence-Man, self-revelation is a result of encounters with the confidence man; ultimately threatening, this commitment bears no promise of transcendence. We may infer similar qualities about the act of reading.

Carlyle, Melville, Gaddis, and Pynchon are all comparable in this respect: that, in each work, a moment or moments occur in which characters are unexpectedly brought up against situations involving a discontinuity in the development of their lives, through which they perceive how their world works. We have seen such a moment already in Sartor's "The Everlasting Yea," Teufelsdröckh'svisión of God behind the universe; and we will see such a moment in Gaddis' artist, Wyatt Gwyon, who sees "reality" before a Picasso painting; and Pynchon's Tyrone Slothrop characteristically looks for the real explanation behind the "theater." Only in Carlyle's novel is such a vision unreservedly positive: in Melville's novel, this moment of revelation coincides with the realization that one may have been had; and in Slothrop's case in Gravity's Rainbow, his insight makes him more, not less suspicious. Wyatt's recognition before the painting, while a good experience in itself, does not transform his quotidian life as Teufelsdröckh's vision does. These moments of insight are
breaks in the normal course of events: they assert themselves as disruptions, beyond control, often with unfortunate results. 49

Each text asserts an analogical relation between its characters' experience, within the work, and the reader's experience in its reading: moments comparable to these insights necessarily address each reader individually, alone with the text, and may therefore receive divergent responses. Just as the confidence man receives widely variant reactions to his proposals, so the text will provoke variant reactions as well. What we readers do have in common, though, is narrative address which points out (for example) Slothrop's paranoia; Melville's Pitch, too, echoes such suspicions ("'You are another of them. Somehow I meet with the most extraordinary metaphysical scamps to-day'" [191-92].). Such perceptions by characters, duplicated by the reader, provide a check on our interpretation of the work. The reader has more information, certainly, than do Slothrop and Pitch, but no more firm insight than they have into the significance of events in the novels' worlds. All we have is the expectation that the text will make all details relevant, and this expectation may be meant to tempt us into completing details into a schema of events which we hope will suffice. 50

Those familiar with system-builders in literature know that there are considerably more ways to go wrong than to go right; this remains true whether the system-builders be char-
acters or readers. Most of The Confidence-Man's contemporary readers, as well as many since, dismissed it as not worthy of serious consideration. Elizabeth Foster affords an ample selection of these: "'Nonsensical people talking nonsense, . . . [the composition of] a March hare with a literary turn of mind'; "'You might, without sensible inconvenience, read it backwards'; "'a kind of bastard, to be passed over without mention or to be disposed of with an annihilating phrase'."51 Van Wyck Brooks "called it 'an abortion . . . broken off in the middle, apparently, but not before the author has lost the thread of his original idea'; 'the product of premature artistic senility.'"52 Such dismissals make Yvor Winters seem quite fair by comparison, for Winters has the grace at least to acknowledge his own subjectivity. Even after Foster's edition, the misapprehension of The Confidence-Man continues:

in Literary History of the United States, Willard Thorp shows himself out of sympathy with its workings:

Melville [in Pierre] seems to be struggling to stave off the disenchantment to which he finally gave way in The Confidence-Man. . . .

This strange series of conversations among the passengers on a Mississippi steamboat--The Confidence-Man cannot be called a novel . . . begins cryptically with the emergence on deck of a deaf mute who bears before him a shieldlike slate on which he has written "Charity," followed, after several erasures of the scriptural phrases belonging to the word, with his final version: "never faileth." While this is going on, the ship's barber puts up his sign--"No Trust." The ironic theme of the book has been stated, and the action, or what there is of it, begins. . . . Those who are taken in are as stupid as the confidence man is vicious.
The most persistent error in Melville criticism, one which Thorp continues here, has been the transposition of biographical material into a reading of the works themselves; consequently, the experience of encountering the work is resisted by appeal to Melville's subsequent breakdown. This is comparable to the romanticization of Keats or Plath because of their early deaths; it differs only in degree from Griswold's posthumous hatchet job on Poe. Melville's claim in The Confidence-Man, one which should be at least entertained, is for "real life . . . transformed." The biographical critic of Melville must fight to avoid simplification:

For once again in a book not unified by the continuity of his own adventures, Melville changed his course before he had finished the work he had planned. In his last masquerade, the confidence man became a talkative figure in motley, and he remained in that role for the entire second part of the book. . . . Melville did not have this balance in mind when he began writing The Confidence-Man, and he did not give it a calculated balance in structure. The change of course observable in the book is more nearly explicable in terms of the author's life than in terms of his art.

Such a passage assumes that it was Melville's artistic intent to present a work whose "balance in structure" is calculated; surely the fact that The Confidence-Man changed in the writing is not to be faulted, when this very fact is applauded by other critics in Moby-Dick. Leon Howard, in his standard biographical account of The Confidence-Man quoted here, has exhibited what might be called the Stencil syndrome, after Pynchon's character: he sees what his thesis leads him to see in
the novel. Attractive as such formulations as this are to the biographer—"a book not unified by the continuity of his own adventures"—they lead to its long series of dismissals as "the bitter book of a bitter man," dismissals which refuse to consider the novel's complexity, preferring to explain it (away) in terms of the author's life: "But where Mardi had 'dead-desert chapters' because its youthful author had overreached himself, The Confidence-Man's reflect a tired author's vision of a world that was itself a dead desert. . . . The Confidence-Man is a grim book and a tedious one."55

A more appropriate response to the novel has been to assume that its present form is as intended by the author, and to proceed with its interpretation on that basis: such is Foster's assumption, which divides confidence men (after Black Guinea) according to New Testament suggestions made in the text; thus, too, Franklin gives the text its due, supplementing Foster's Christian scheme with Eastern figures mentioned in the text. Both Franklin and Foster see the confidence man as a supernatural figure, Foster a clearly diabolic one, Franklin a figure combining attributes of Satan and Christ with Siva and Krishna. Inherent in both interpretations is a complex relationship between surface and underlying meaning: as Foster says, "an obscurity that was perhaps intentional has always hung like a smoke screen between the bright, clear, aimless story in the foreground and the somber, close-knit ulterior drama on which the form and ten-
sion of the novel depend."56 Yet as we have seen, one characteristic of The Confidence-Man must be to evoke doubt in one's ability to perceive what is below the surface. In Moby-Dick, certainly, "truth" is problematical, being associated with the white whale, below the surface of the ocean: attempts to state truth must be phrased in Ishmael's subjectivity. But in The Confidence-Man, the image of truth is no longer based on the metaphor of the sea, but on that of geological strata.

Without sending a single fume to his head, the wine seemed to shoot to [the merchant's] heart, and begin sooth-saying there. "Ah," he cried, pushing his glass from him, "Ah, wine is good, and confidence is good; but can wine or confidence percolate down through all the stony strata of hard considerations, and drop warmly and Ruddily into the cold cave of truth? Truth will not be comforted. Led by dear charity, lured by sweet hope, fond fancy essays this feat; but in vain; mere dreams and ideals, they explode in your hand, leaving naught but the scorching behind!"

[92]

One implication of the merchant's observations—as well as the novel's generally—is to question the human capability to move from appearances to underlying significance: such a movement is at the heart of critical interpretation, as it is of knowledge in general. The basis of all criticism is therefore questioned by The Confidence-Man. Yet if we cannot confidently conclude anything about the relationship between the novel's foreground and that which appears to support it, nevertheless we may concentrate on the fact that The Confidence-Man appears to suggest such a relationship, such unreachable depths behind its surface—and by that relationship to signify.
If we cannot find meaning as content, we can at least analyze meaning as experience.

The principal effect of The Confidence-Man, in my version of its events, is its series of transformations in the characters, and by implication, in the reader. These transformations form a sequence which is ambiguous at best. Melville points out the circular nature of confidence, and the indispensability of such confidence to human transactions; in doing so, he places the reader in a paradoxical relation to the text: the reader is not precisely confused about events, because the author seems to place him in a privileged position with regard to the fiction; and yet the significance of events is not clear either, because of the impossible demands that the text's apparent irony places on him for interpretation. The solution to this problem depends on the "interpretative community": Melville's aim is, I think, to bring about a change in the interpretive strategies by which a reader aligns himself with a given community. When these must be changed, when they no longer fit what is the case, the reader has changed communities, and no longer reads the same book. This shift is here described as a transformation.

From the very first word of the text--even from the title, which is in a sense antecedent to the text--the author begins to build a system, or, rather, to allow the reader to participate in its joint construction; this joint activity allows for the work's interpretation simultaneous with its reading.
(As Fish suggests, the frequent objection between critics, that one has not read the same work as the other, is precisely true, as our selections above may show: in a sense, the reader does not read the text, he writes it.) It is the sequence of choices in response to the text, based on the reader's interpretive strategies, which results in the experience that we call (colloquially) reading. To follow Fish strictly on this point, however, would result in a model of reading which effaces any semblance of control from the author, placing the sole activity with the reader. The text does give some basis for its own interpretation, through its sequential construction, through its choice of metaphors, and through its internalized versions of transformations which parallel the reader's responses. The reader may not know, by the end of the sequence "The Confidence-Man: His Masquerade," exactly the ramifications that will be given to confidence; but he does have certain expectations attached to the term "confidence man," reinforced by "masquerade," which are further strengthened by details of the setting (the Fidèle, the deaf-mute, April 1), and which are extended by others (Manco Capac, lamb-like), all of which are present in the text. Confidence, then, is initially a not quite empty term, which Melville begins to extend with its every appearance, with the paradoxical results we have seen.

Critical disagreements are more easily explained than resolved: each critic simply reads the book he is predisposed
to read. Winters is predisposed to see all literary works as bringing the reader to make a moral judgment, and consequently he cannot accept a work which complicates clear-cut moral judgments. Feidelson is predisposed to read The Confidence-Man in light of the American symbolists contemporary with Melville, and thus he finds it intrinsically less interesting than Moby-Dick or Pierre. Edward Rosenberry, on the other hand, in looking for American humor, finds its satire wonderfully rich. It is not a question finally of being right or wrong (Winters to the contrary), or even a question of being closer to some right version, as with Faulkner's Absalom, Absalom!: each critic writes the text he needs to find. As Melville's barber says, "every trade or pursuit which brings one into contact with the facts, sir, such trade is equally an avenue to those facts" [320]. If such a stance leads to critical anarchy, it is an anarchy justified by the work itself.

Critical anarchy is perhaps an inappropriate term: what is preferred would be a middle ground between anarchy and consensus. Obviously no consensus exists, in The Confidence-Man or in most other works; yet certain readings are more productive than others, and certain works more provocative than others for given periods; and the readers' common experiences with The Confidence-Man are, therefore, the best starting points for analysis. One common experience seems to be the sense of being challenged by The Confidence-Man, personally
challenged to get the point. One of its English reviewers touched this note in saying "readers will find it the hardest nut to crack . . . We are not quite sure whether we have cracked it ourselves--whether there is not another meaning hidden." 57

One of the means by which the reader is tested is through the parallelism between the novel's events and the text's interpretation. In the confrontation between Pitch and the PIO man, much of the discourse turns on argument by analogy; and in their discussion a metaphor is developed, that of the caterpillar's metamorphosis into the butterfly, which applies to transformations in general throughout the novel:

"Madam, or sir, would you visit on the butterfly the sins of the caterpillar? In the natural advance of all creatures, do they not bury themselves over and over again in the endless resurrection of better and better? Madam, or sir, take back this adult; he may have been a caterpillar, but is now a butterfly." [172]

Argument by analogy, the PIO man's principal technique here, is perceived as invalid by Pitch; he accuses the agent of punning with ideas:

"Pun away; but even accepting your analogical pun, what does it amount to? Was the caterpillar one creature, and is the butterfly another? The butterfly is the caterpillar in a gaudy cloak; stripped of which, there lies the impostor's long spindle of a body, pretty much worm-shaped as before." [172]

In the sequence of its chapters, moving from lamb-like deaf-mute to Black Guinea through herb-doctor and the rest to the PIO man, the segmented flow of The Confidence-Man and the
relative unsophistication of its characters' appeals suggest the caterpillar, while the sunny disposition and motley costume of the cosmopolitan, who occupies almost half the book's length, suggest the butterfly. To point out or even to perceive this analogy between the sequence of chapters and the PIO man's metaphor is to pun with ideas; and this realization is just such a moment of insight as we have been describing earlier. Perceiving a relation between the butterfly's development and the novel's is seeing its movement from an entirely new perspective; Melville achieves a comparable effect in Benito Cereno when Don Benito leaps from the San Dominick to Captain Delano's boat, and Captain Delano's entire perspective, heretofore that of the narrative, is shown to be insufficient. The reader's perspective is reversed as events receive an entirely new explanation; and, being led to consider similarities between the confidence man's development and the butterfly's, the reader is tempted exactly as is Pitch.

Transformations in The Confidence-Man occur with just the suddenness of this metaphor. Much of the novel's material is devoted to showing individuals or crowds moving from distrust to trust, or vice versa; in chapter three, such is the effect first of Black Guinea, then of the wooden-legged man who opposes his attempts to beg; the wooden-legged man's activity remains after his departure.

"Look you, ... I have been called a Canada thistle. Very good. And a seedy one: still better. And the seedy Canada thistle has been pretty well shaken among
ye: best of all. Dare say some seed has been shaken out; and won't it spring though? And when it does spring, do you cut down the young thistles, and won't they spring the more?"

[23]

The response is immediate: as Guinea asks for their confidence, the crowd's members say "'Fact is, I begin to feel a little qualmish about the darkie myself. Something queer about this darkie, depend upon it'" [25]. Later, the very merchant who gives Guinea a coin comes to doubt his charitable action, as a result of the wooden-legged man's words [43-44]:

"That but one man, and he with one leg, should have such ill power given him; his one sour word leavening into congenial sourness (as, to my knowledge, it did) the dispositions, before sweet enough, of a numerous company. But, as I hinted, with me at the time his ill words went for nothing; the same as now; only afterwards they had effect; and I confess, this puzzles me."

[48]

Movements from trust to distrust, as here, or from distrust to trust, as with Pitch [177-78], are sudden and without rational basis: they take on something of the air of conversion, though the only dogma is confidence. This movement is literally conversion (turning with), since in such a movement one passes to a different interpretive community: it is in so moving between standards of interpretation that The Confidence-Man becomes translatable to the reader's experience.

The comparison with Sartor Resartus is instructive: its metaphor for conversion is the phoenix:
Did we not hear [Teufelsdröckh] complain that the World was a "huge Ragfair," and the "rags and tatters of old Symbols" were raining-down everywhere, like to drift him in, and suffocate him? . . .

'Society,' says he, 'is not dead: that Carcass, which you call dead Society, is but her mortal coil which she has shuffled-off, to assume a nobler; she herself, through perpetual metamorphoses, in fairer and fairer development, has to live till Time also merge in Eternity. . . .

'The golden age, which a blind tradition has hitherto placed in the Past, is Before us.'

This transformation depends on resurrection, draws from a mythological model, and is a fairly rare event; but The Confidence-Man's metaphor depends on emergence from a cocoon, draws from a biological model, and happens all the time. The phoenix is unambiguously optimistic: from society's discords will come a new society, living, and better in every respect than the old; but the butterfly may be seen as simply the parent of hundreds more caterpillars, as Pitch's objection indicates; and inasmuch as these prey on society, its development is not entirely beneficial. Such a conversion experience as Carlyle describes by his metaphor is behind Teufelsdröckh's reordered world-view: from his fragmented life comes the unified vision expressed in "The Everlasting Yea," and from his equally fragmented biography comes the supplementary information necessary to the Editor's reconstruction of the clothes-philosophy, both transformations which imitate the phoenix metaphor. But there are many more transformations in The Confidence-Man than in Sartor, all of seemingly less moment: every movement to another "avatar," every sudden change
of motive, even movements to and from interpolated stories may be described by such a change.

If the confidence man's development has a *terminus a quo*, it is the "genial misanthrope" which the cosmopolitan describes to Charlie Noble:

"My eccentric friend, whom you call Coonskins, is an example [of the surly philanthropist]. Does he not, as I explained to you, hide under a surly air a philanthropic heart? Now, the genial misanthrope, when, in the process of eras, he shall turn up, will be the converse of this; under an affable air, he will hide a misanthropical heart. In short, the genial misanthrope will be a new kind of monster, but still no small improvement upon the original one, since, instead of making faces and throwing stones at people, like that poor old crazy man, Timon, he will take steps, fiddle in hand, and set the tickled world a dancing. In a word, as the progress of Christianization mellows those in manner whom it cannot mend in mind, much the same will it prove with the progress of genialization.

[253]

Diogenes Teufelsdröckh's insight shows divine purpose behind disordered phenomena; the suggestion of the cosmopolitan here --Diogenes in disguise--is that, beneath apparent cheerfulness, there may be misanthropic intent. Thus, the "metamorphosis more surprising than any in Ovid" may be taken to refer not to Charlie Noble's change of heart, as in the text [256], but to that metamorphosis in the confidence man as he develops into the genial misanthrope, and to the corresponding metamorphosis which the reader undergoes.

The metaphor for transformation, then, appears to govern the sequence of events in *The Confidence-Man*: with their rela-
tively gross and evident confidence men, its earlier chapters are trial grounds for the evolving cosmopolitan. With his emergence, the novel changes its direction (a change now explicable in terms of Melville's art, not his life), moving from the sequence of imperfect confidence men to the discourse of ideas. The fallacies upon which preceding confidence men have based their appeals for confidence are now found not in the cosmopolitan but in the characters whom he encounters. The cosmopolitan clearly is Melville's attempt at an original character—and another of The Confidence-Man's many puns operates in the term. Original refers not only to his unique status in the novel (and perhaps in literature as well), but also to his status as the cause of ideas in others. Both fictive characters and the reader "start up" to the cosmopolitan, in both senses.

Pitch rejects the PIO man's analogy, saying "'You pun with ideas as another man may with words'" [171]; yet in the end he accepts the improbable assertion that the rake is but raw material for the saint, and that perverse boys grow into admirable men. Melville takes evident delight not only in punning with ideas—that is, structuring his fiction according to some external concept, as in "The Paradise of Bachelors and the Tartarus of Maids"—but also in the more usual sort of wordy pun. Those who read the confidence man as Satan at work base much of their argument on such details as the "Black Rapids Coal Company," whose stock panic is described
in language which echoes Satan's fall in *Paradise Lost* [33]; its agent's discussion of stocks in the "New Jerusalem," founded by "two fugitives, who had swum over naked from the opposite shore" [71]; and the PIO man's departure at a bluff called "the Devil's joke." There also is China Aster's cobbler friend, "whose calling it is to defend the understandings of men from naked contact with the substance of things" [292].

Puns depend on linguistic play, on the author's confidence that the reader will see two levels of discourse (at least), and on the possibility that there are readers who will not. In other words, the fictive transaction involved in a pun is precisely that of a confidence man to his audience, who may or may not understand other senses of confidence than the literal. All the authors being considered here have an evident enjoyment in puns of one sort or another; in fact, the quality of pun in each work has much to do with that work's texture. Consider Carlyle's German-English puns--Teufelsdreck (devil's dreck, asafoetida), Weisnnichtwo (know-not-where), and Heuschrecke (grasshopper)--in which the playful movement between German metaphysics and the stodgy British readership to whom the Editor appeals is a measure of Carlyle's amusement at both extremes. Also German in origin, but not dependent on translation, are some of Pynchon's puns in *Gravity's Rainbow*: Bad Karma, Apprentice Hupla, Säure (acid) Bummer, and Geli Tripping come to mind. (Not to men-
tion the pun on hübschräuber, "cute-looking robber," and hubschrauber, liftscrewer or helicopter.) These imply even less literary sophistication, if that is possible, than Carlyle's puns. Gaddis' puns are more clearly Joycean in style, with multiple significances to his Recktall Brown, Mr. Sinisterra, and Agnes Deigh. Additionally, there is the debate which begins The Recognitions, between advocates of homoiosian and homooisian—essentially a pun, but one which heretics died for. Melville's puns are pointed out in Franklin's edition—for example, those hidden in Black Guinea's dialect, such as ob—which Franklin surmises is a reference to the river Ob, which flows into the arctic ("cold Cossacks")—and they implicitly include the reader as one who will get the joke, that is, one in confidence.

Puns with ideas, however, are based on an extension of wordplay into the physical world, such as the analogical correspondence between human development and that of the butterfly. Such punning senses range throughout Moby-Dick, as in the correspondence between "surface" and "deep" in man's relation with the sea, and with the metaphysical overtones in the terms; and "The Paradise of Bachelors and the Tartarus of Maids," which takes the unwitting reader on a factory tour which is at the same time a tour of the female reproductive system. Such play is not foreign to Melville; and another such pun is present in The Confidence-Man, one whose effects are I think crucial to its reception—that of an implicit
pre-text of seduction. In the connotations of words, in the basic situation, and in the settings of the transactions, the interactions between the confidence man and his victims derive from associations with sexual approach. The roles beneath the surface transactions of The Confidence-Man are those of seducer and victims; and voices in opposition to the confidence man suggest the schematic opposite of seduction, masturbation. 61

Reading various phrases for their sexual overtones seems, on the face of it, to be precisely the sort of unjustified inference the novel's critics have made. It may be defended on two grounds: it is an interpretive strategy so far largely unexplored, and therefore a reading yet unwritten; and the implications of the language, undeniably there if only in a metaphorical sense (whoever said metaphorical senses are "only"?) strengthen the reader's feeling that something is going on behind the wordy surface, and that that something is threatening.

Perhaps the initial point to be made about The Confidence-Man concerns its numerous solicitations for confidence. We are accustomed to take "confidence," in the twentieth century, as almost automatically self-confidence; yet nowhere in the novel is the term so used. The herb-doctor claims to be "'One who has confidence in nature, and confidence in man, with some little modest confidence in himself'" [148], but this statement is made to advance his own qualifications,
rather than to assert that others ought to do likewise. No one of the confidence man's listeners is told to put confidence in himself: rather, each of them separately is told to trust in the confidence man himself or in appearances or in other men or in nature or in Jehovah. This curious restriction on confidence may in part derive from the word's roots; but its limited use connects significantly with the confidence man's emphasis on community, whether to build up or ultimately to undermine. It is not in the confidence man's interest to encourage his victims' self-reliance: besides Melville's opposition to Emerson (in the Winsome/Egbert chapters), such self-reliance is connected thematically with the "misanthropy" of figures such as Pitch and Col. Moredock.62

The confidence man's appeals to the Fidèle's passengers often take the form of literal seductions:

At the sofa's further end sits a plump and pleasant person, whose aspect seems to hint that, if she have any weak point, it must be anything rather than her excellent heart. From her twilight dress, neither dawn nor dark, apparently she is a widow just breaking the chrysalis of her mourning... Meantime, the expression of the stranger is such as ere long to attract her glance. But no responsive one. Presently, in her somewhat inquisitive survey, her volume drops. It is restored. No encroaching politeness in the act, but kindness, unadorned. The eyes of the lady sparkle. Evidently, she is not now unprepossessed. Soon, bending over, in a low, sad tone, full of deference, the stranger breathes, "Madam, pardon my freedom, but there is something in that face which strangely draws me. May I ask, are you a sister of the Church?... It is very solitary for a brother here... I find none to mingle souls with."

[61-62]
These phrases, and many more besides, aptly characterize the confidence man as the classic seducer: the fact that actual sex does not enter The Confidence-Man only strengthens its metaphorical presence, since it therefore becomes sublimated into "confidence." The cosmopolitan, who is the confidence man's highest development, has a voice "sweet as a seraph's": he

"federates, in heart as well as in costume, something of the various gallantries of men under various suns. Oh, one roams not onver the gallant globe in vain. Bred by it, is a fraternal and fusing feeling. No man is a stranger. You accost anybody. Warm and confiding, you wait not for measured advances."

[186]

To Pitch's challenge, "'Hands off!'", he responds "'Hands off? that sort of label won't do in our Fair'" [184]. Pitch asks him whether he might be "'Jeremy Diddler No. 3'": "diddling" was and is slang for both financial and sexual swindling, and here as elsewhere Melville strengthens the threatening qualities of the one through the connotations of the other.63 Perhaps the cosmopolitan's most ringing declaration of his role is made before the barber: "'I am Philanthropos, and love mankind'"; and this love has connotations beyond the platonick--"'Served up à la Pole, or à la Moor, à la Ladrone, or à la Yankee, that good dish, man, still delights me'" [186-87]. And perhaps much of the cosmopolitan's "increase in seriousness" is perceived through his leading the old man away in the darkness.
"Ah, my way now," cried the old man, peering before him, "where lies my way to my state-room?"
"I have indifferent eyes, and will show you; but, first, for the good of all lungs, let me extinguish this lamp."
The next moment, the waning light expired, and with it the waning flames of the horned altar, and the waning halo round the robed man's brow; while in the darkness which ensued, the cosmopolitan kindly led the old man away. Something further may follow of this Masquerade.

[350]

Other figures of the confidence man contribute even more suggestive connotations than these. Black Guinea's initial appearance may take some of its elements of distrust from his description as he moves through the crowd: his "honest black face rubbed against the upper part of people's thighs as he made shift to shuffle about . . ." [15]; and he moves off "like a half-frozen black sheep nudging itself a cozy berth in the heart of the white flock" [16].64 The other confidence man whose exhortations seem directly sexual in orientation is the herb-doctor: he instructs the sick man to "'Turn not away. This may be the last time of health's asking. Work upon yourself; invoke confidence, though from ashes; rouse it; for your life, rouse it, and invoke it, I say." The sick man is "a juiceless, joyless form," and "'when the body is prostrated, the mind is not erect'" [110-111].
And finally, the Black Rapids agent so excites the collegian about the prospects of a business transaction that the collegian says in exasperation, "'Let the unfortunate man relieve himself'" [67].
More operates in this dialectic than the connotations of the confidence man's words: the staging, too, reinforces the aspects of seduction. Almost always the "business" on the Fidèle is conducted in private.

"Pardon me, Mr. Roberts," respectfully interrupting him, "but time is short, and I have something private and particular to say to you. Allow me."

Mr. Roberts, good man, could but acquiesce, and the two having silently walked to a less public spot, the manner of the man with the weed suddenly assumed a seriousness almost painful.

[31]

Having confided in him to some extent, the man with the weed continues: "Sir, we are masons, one more step aside; I will tell you my story." And here the narrative imitates the action performed, because that "one more step" takes them out of direct quotation:

In a low, half-suppressed tone, he began it. Judging from his auditor's expression, it seemed to be a tale of singular interest, involving calamities against which no integrity, no forethought, no energy, no genius, no piety, could guard.

At every disclosure, the hearer's commiseration increased.

[32]

Here Melville has cast his readers as voyeurs: "in the present case he really felt something like being tempted." In other passages, the businessmen withdraw from the public, and often from the reader as well. All this privacy necessarily lends itself to suspicion. As in literary treatments of sexual engagements, the text provides preparation and dialogue, while the significant action--money changing hands, or consummation, or discovery--is deferred until some indefinite
time in the future. In fact, discovery is for the reader what consummation is for the seducer.

Like seductions, too, the engagements between confidence man and victim are one-on-one, with few exceptions (the mute's encounter with the crowd, Black Guinea's opening attempt, and the herb-doctor's address to a crowd). Occasionally second parties are present, as when Pitch interrupts the herb-doctor's relations with his patient, or when the wooden-legged man interjects his story (one about a wife "liberal to a fault" [45]) into the man in gray's talk with the merchant; and Mark Winsome stays into a chapter to introduce his disciple, Egbert. By far the majority of the encounters with the confidence man, however, are made (as the saying goes) in confidence.

Seducers gain trust through their introductions: and the confidence man does so as best he can. We have seen already one example in the encounter with the widow of chapter eight; and the Black Rapids agent, like several others, drops the descriptions (not the names) of his predecessors.

"Pray, sir, have you seen a gentleman with a weed hereabouts, rather a saddish gentleman? Strange where he can have gone to. I was talking with him not twenty minutes since. . . .

"Then the man in the gray coat, whom I just met, said right: he must have gone ashore. How unlucky." [65]

The collegian has of course been prepared for the Black Rapids agent by preceding avatars; several confidence men give anterior testimony for Black Guinea, who has cited them all in-
Initially; the man with the weed, besides giving support to Guinea, mentions the man in gray; the herb-doctor supports the Black Rapids agent and the man in gray; the Black Rapids agent sets up the miser for the herb-doctor's sale; and the cosmopolitan approves of the PIO man's manner of thought, though not of his style of dress. If all these references and cross-references seem confusing, there is probably good reason. Besides common introductions, all the confidence men are engaged in substantially the same trade, encouraging men's confidence, confidence which is shown by various signs—the "coin of confidence" [62-64; 141] is precisely that of the classic seducer. Confidence is the sine qua non of seduction.

In literature generally, if not in life, most seduction occurs not for the sex alone, but for some additional end. This ulterior motive may be due to the demands of narrative interest, which require more than immediate gratification, and which preclude repetition. There is usually some progression in the sequence: education of the individual, as in Don Juan; seduction as a means to power, as in innumerable spy stories; seduction as an expression of ennui, as in Madame Bovary or Looking for Mr. Goodbar. In The Confidence-Man as in these, the money is not the primary goal: that is, what is taken popularly as the principal goal is in fact only the sign of that goal. The "coin of confidence" is physically coin, but its importance comes in the attached phrase; and "confidence,"
as we have seen, may be an extremely difficult concept to confirm. The coin signifies confidence; what the confidence signifies is open to question.

Roughly the first half of *The Confidence-Man* involves the fairly comfortable transaction, offering words in exchange for money.\(^{66}\) From Black Guinea through the herb-doctor, the pursuit of money is the principal activity in the novel. The PIO man, though he fits the same pattern, complicates it through his arguments, which are the first real attempt to sway the reader. With the cosmopolitan's opening words—"'A penny for your thoughts, my fine fellow'"—this pattern is reversed, and with it is reversed the reader's own confidence in the nature of what he has read. The cosmopolitan tries to get money from Charlie Noble in one chapter, an attempt which seems consistent with earlier confidence men; but by showing Charlie Noble, and the reader, that he has the requested sum, his motives again become difficult to understand. The herb-doctor has earlier caused a stir in the crowd by returning half his profits, provoking a discussion on whether he may be fool, knave, genius, or all three together; the corresponding effect on the reader, with the herb-doctor or with the cosmopolitan, is to suggest that events in *The Confidence-Man* may not be what they seem. The address to the reader, then, follows the process of seduction (familiar pattern) and discovery (failure to follow pattern).

Such complications of the confidence man's activities
are furthered as well by phrasings reminiscent of Biblical passages. The overtones given these suggest that there is much more at stake than "a few dirty dollars." For example, the distinction between the collegian's eager investment in the Black Rapids Coal Company and his reluctance to buy stock in the New Jerusalem--"Hardly think I should read my title clear, as the law students say,' yawned the collegian" [71]--and the herb-doctor's excuse to the miser about his investment with Mr. Truman both suggest the ironic conversion of Biblical terminology to secular uses: "'Aye, now, I begin to understand; ten to one you mean my worthy friend, who in pure goodness of heart, makes people's fortunes for them--their everlasting fortunes, as the phrase goes--only charging his one small commission of confidence'" [141]. And we have already mentioned the wooden-legged man's question, "'How much money did the Devil make by gulling Eve?" [48]. The language obviously suggests the equation of "confidence" with soul; in such passages those who take the confidence man for the devil have textual support. But assuming that the confidence man simply plays Mephistopheles to various characters' Faust makes The Confidence-Man less original and interesting than it can be: the reader finally corresponds more closely than the characters to Faust, being led on always by the anticipation of more complete information about how the world is ordered in The Confidence-Man.

What the confidence man performs is a seduction, then,
seduction in the interest of community. Particularly in the character of the cosmopolitan, he stresses the values of society, good fellowship, conviviality, gregariousness, and so on. Opposed to these states of relatively bland cheerfulness are those states favored by the few misanthropes—the Kentucky man who strikes the herb-doctor, the wooden-legged man, Pitch, perhaps Winsome, Egbert, Col. Moredock, and the voices from the bunks in the last chapter. The description of the backwoodsman applies to all these:

"The backwoodsman is a lonely man. He is a thoughtful man. He is a man strong and unsophisticated. Impulsive, he is what some might call unprincipled. At any rate, he is self-willed; being one who less hearkens to what others may say about things, than looks for himself, to see what are things themselves."

[203]

In other words, one content neither to rely on appearances nor to accept others' descriptions, and therefore one antipathetic to requests for confidence. "Hence self-reliance" [204] describes this figure perfectly, and is precisely what the confidence man wishes to discourage. Self-reliance is not, of course, an untainted virtue; in the caricatures of Emerson and Thoreau it becomes coldness. ("Ice it well, waiter," the cosmopolitan instructs when ordering water for Winsome.) The opposition of these figures to the confidence man's insistent theme of human companionship and community suggests that the converse of seduction, masturbation, may also be present in The Confidence-Man.

Again, the connotations of terms add this element to the
novel's description: a few figures in the game-room on the Fidèle take no part in the games of "whist, cribbage, and brag," preferring "instead of having hands in the games, for the most part [to] keep their hands in their pockets. These may be the philosophes" [73]. Members of the crowd surrounding the deaf-mute in the first chapter, like these, have their fingers "enveloped in some myth; though, during a chance interval, one of these chevaliers somewhat showed his hand in purchasing from another chevalier, ex-officio a peddler of money-belts, one of his popular safeguards . . . ." [4-5]. Hands in pockets are a familiar iconographic detail for those who wish to ensure the safety of valuable items inside pockets. There is, too, the miser, a reluctant investor with the Black Rapids agent:

Revived at last, he inclined towards his ministrant, and, in a voice disastrous with a cough, said:--"I am old and miserable, a poor beggar, not worth a shoe-string--how can I repay you?"
"By giving me your confidence."
"Confidence!" he squeaked, with changed manner, while the pallet swung, "little left at my age, but take the stale remains, and welcome."
"Such as it is, though, you give it. Very good. Now give me a hundred dollars."
Upon this the miser was all panic. His hands groped towards his waist, then suddenly flew upward beneath his moleskin pillow, and there lay clutching something out of sight.

[101]
The cosmopolitan, by comparison, says "'my money I carry loose!'" [343]; the boy replies "'Loose bait ain't bad.'" (And compare above: "'No man is a stranger. You accost anybody.'") As elsewhere in Melville, those who are self-
reliant are described, as is Pitch, as bachelors: the cosmopolitan points out to him that, by insulting the human race, of which he is a part, Pitch is practicing self-abuse. "'You are abusive!' cried the bachelor, evidently touched' [190]. Pitch has questioned himself in obliquely sexual terms before the cosmopolitan's entry; "But where was slipped in the entering wedge? . . . he thinks he must be a little splenetic in his intercourse henceforth" [182]. Now, almost no reader of The Confidence-Man is going to take this "intercourse" in its most frequent meaning as now used; but unless the reader's censor is very well developed indeed (and no censor prevents the term's registering), there is a momentary entertainment of the usual sense, which becomes part of the experience. It is my contention that, from such momentary, fleeting suggestions as this, that The Confidence-Man establishes a pre-text drawing on sexuality for its connotations.

Earlier the merchant has discussed confidence in terms of a wet-dream: "'mere dreams and ideals, they explode in your hand, leaving naught but the scorching behind!'" [92]. Dreams, ideals, finally significances themselves are symbolically dismissed by the pre-text; the voices of the last chapter advise the old man and the cosmopolitan "'if you want to know what wisdom is, go find it under your blankets.' . . . 'To bed with ye, ye divils, and don't be after burning your fingers with the likes of wisdom.'" [338]. The implications are clear enough: the cosmopolitan does not pursue wisdom, but good
fellowship and geniality. Opposed to him, these voices counsel "wisdom" in solitude and darkness. "Wisdom" is even less definable than "confidence"; ultimately it may only mean opposition to "confidence." What one is to make of these voices is problematical, but the place in which they seek wisdom is worthy of mention.

Frequently, then, the language which the cosmopolitan and his opponents choose to punctuate their quasi-philosophical disputes echoes terms which apply to masturbation or ejaculation. The effect of this language is, I think, primarily to add a threatening aspect to the idea of confidence, while remaining inexplicit about what exactly the term means. The sexual pre-text adds to the novel's argument extra dimensions, which may be perceived (all or some) by the reader, or may unconsciously threaten him. First and least threatening, there is the civilized private joke—wisdom under your blankets, indeed. Private jokes entail a surreptitious confidence in the reader's sagacity, thus reinforcing an alliance with the narrator. We have already seen how such alliances are tempered with doubt in The Confidence-Man. But there is to the joke, secondly, a disturbing serious element: these are dreams the merchant describes as exploding in your hand, dreams of fellowship and human kindness. To dismiss these metaphorically as wet-dreams is both intellectually and emotionally threatening, since it allies to the expression of such ideals and dreams the possibility of guilt which is usu-
ally linked to sexual release. Besides adding complicated reactions to sexuality, the pre-text adds a vocabulary to the peculiar wordy seductions involved in *The Confidence-Man*, a vocabulary which reaches below the surface of words to reach emotions, in a way not logically required by those words.

Finally these factors all combine to produce in the reader an ambivalence toward the workings of the novel, and in the aggregate readership of *The Confidence-Man* a marked divergence of opinions about its meaning and value. Just as any group of people will have violent disagreements about sexuality, so Melville exploits such differences in the novel, while keeping them below the surface of the fiction. It is a subtle, disturbing book, whose effects surface long after its reading, as with the merchant, to disrupt our bland, daily confidence.
Notes to Chapter Two:

1 Herman Melville, *The Confidence-Man: His Masquerade*, ed. by H. Bruce Franklin (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1967). All quotations are from this edition; subsequent references will be indicated within brackets in the text.

2 See Wallace Stevens, "The Blue Guitar," for a later version of Melville's point in this chapter.

3 A partial list of connections between confidence men includes these occasions: There is a close association between the mute's apparently innocent use of "charity" and later uses of the same word—for example, Black Guinea's more literal requests, the "charitable lady" of chapter 8, and the "World's Charity" of chapter 13. The first connection we see between confidence men comes when Black Guinea covers the merchant's card, in chapter 3, and in chapter 4 the merchant meets the man in gray, who virtually recites his business card to him. Several confidence men claim to have seen their predecessors leaving the boat [141-42] or to have just been talking to them [65]. Confidence men uniformly testify in each other's behalf, in absentia: Black Guinea receives support from the man in gray [43, 46-47] and the Black Rapids agent [65]; the Black Rapids agent refers back to the man with the weed and the man in gray; the man with the weed already has referred to the Black Rapids agent [32-24]; the Black Rapids agent supports the herb-doctor [101-02], who returns the favor [141]. Their
connections are substantiated by Pitch's intuition about the "metaphysical scamps" [192].

The strongest evidence for their association is, of course, their universal appeal for "confidence." None of these data, however, is finally conclusive; whether taken separately or cumulatively.

4 These appear on pages 31 and 104, respectively; the amount of the stock sale to the collegian is not given.

5 Those who would evaluate Guinea's status, then, are in approximately the situation of the nineteenth-century Christian; the fact that there can be no confirmation supports the reading of The Confidence-Man as a satire on the Bible.

6 See Franklin's account, pp. xx-xxiv.

7 Among these are Willard Thorp, in Literary History of the United States, ed. by Robert E. Spiller, et al. (New York: MacMillan, 1960), and Leon Howard, Herman Melville (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1951). Their reading confuses Melville's intentions with the text as we have it; his intention to write a sequel may have been based on the novel's moderate success in England, and certainly could have been a possibility foreseen during the composition of the present text. The fact, however, that Melville left himself the possibility of writing a sequel does not mean that the novel as we have it is incomplete, any more than Cervantes' Don Quixote, part I is incomplete without part II.

8 Compare Melville's claims in chapter 33 to provide "more
reality. . . than real life itself can show."

9 The novel's conclusion may be Melville's version of Twain's later prefatory note to *Huck Finn*: "Persons attempting to find a motive in this narrative will be prosecuted; persons attempting to find a plot in it will be shot."

10 Franklin, pp. xx-xxi.

11 For the religious associations with the mute's appearance, see Franklin's introduction; for the more general discussion see H. Bruce Franklin, *The Wake of the Gods* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1963).

12 Fish, "Interpreting the Variorum."

13 See chapters 30-32 for the confidence man's "theatricality."


15 Compare Pitch's first words to the cosmopolitan, "'Hands off!'" [184].

16 This observation is a development from Franklin's note, p. 193.


Franklin, pp. 354-55; Foster, pp. 379-80.

Franklin, pp. 114-15. Again, Franklin's notes point up the partially submerged biblical parallels.

For a discussion of Godel's Theorem, see the third section of chapter four, below.

See the discussion of Teufelsdrockh and the Editor in chapter one.

Melville, Moby-Dick, chapter 42, "The Whiteness of the Whale."

Moby-Dick, pp.254-55.

Moby-Dick, p.264.

See Robert Zoellner's excellent discussion of color and metaphor in The Salt-Sea Mastodon (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973). According to Zoellner, the whale inhabits the non-phenomenal world beneath the surface of the sea, characterized by "whiteness."


Carlyle, II:9.

Moby-Dick, p. 26. Compare this with "The River," Frank-
lin, pp. 354-55.

33 Moby-Dick, p. 549.


35 Moby-Dick, p. 556. Ishmael's reaction to the characters is parallel to their reactions to the coin itself; thus "I look, you look, he looks . . ." becomes a particularly wry commentary upon what we all, characters and readers of the novel, do in the process of reading.

36 Fish, "Interpreting the Variorum," p. 485.

37 The description of this process is set forth in "Tradition and the Individual Talent."

38 We see this pattern in the confidence man's encounter with the widow in chapter 8, who is reading the Bible; in his addressing the business interests of the collegian in chapter 9; in the question of the practical application of the philosophy of Mark Winsome, chapter 37; and in the discourse with the barber, chapter 42.

39 Compare this testing action with the Drummond light in chapter 44; this aspect of The Confidence-Man is discussed in chapter two.

These alternatives are a more extreme form of the perspectives on experience held by Ishmael and Ahab in *Moby-Dick*.  


Yvor Winters, *Maule's Curse* (Norfolk, Conn.: New Directions, 1938), p. 82.

The same is not true, however, of performed arts, since usually the audience has not read the play before its performance; in these cases, however, there is a literal community around the esthetic work, and the responses of others in the audience may cue our own responses, to a degree.


"Each mortal thing does one thing and the same: Deals out that being indoors each one dwells; Selves--goes itself; myself it speaks and spells, Crying What I do is me--for that I came."


We see this in Slothrop's paranoid moments, such as his rescue of Katje, a rescue which appears to be staged:
Does she know him from someplace? Strange. A mixture of recognition and sudden shrewdness in her face...

So it is here, grouped on the beach with strangers, that voices begin to take on a touch of metal, each word a hard-edged clap, and the light, though as bright as before, is less able to illuminate... it's a Puritan reflex of seeking other orders behind the visible, also known as paranoia, filtering in. Pale lines of force whirl in the sea air... pacts sworn to in rooms since shelved back to their plan views, not quite by accident of war, suggest themselves. Oh, that was no "found" crab, Ace--no random octopus or girl, uh-uh. Structure and detail come later, but the conniving around him now he feels instantly, in his heart.

Slothrop's suspicion of strangers and his reliance on native shrewdness make him roughly comparable to Pitch, though more central to Gravity's Rainbow than Pitch is to The Confidence-Man. Thomas Pynchon, Gravity's Rainbow, p. 188.

See the next chapter for the discussion of the Picasso painting.

See the third section of the chapter on Gravity's Rainbow.

Such a perception may occur, for example, in realizing the appropriateness of Stencil's discussion in V. to our own activities as readers. See V., p. 50 especially.

Foster, pp. xxxv, xxxvii, and xxxviii.

Foster, xxxviii.


Alan Lebowitz, Progress Into Silence (Bloomington, Ind.:

56 Foster, xiii-xiv. Also, "its surface story seems aimless and without tension or climax, and . . . the central meaning and whole emotional freight of the novel, which give it form, are hidden in the vessel's dark hold," p. xvii.

57 Foster, p. xxxiv.

58 Carlyle, Sartor Resartus, III:v.

59 Compare what Falstaff says about his original genius in II Henry IV; and Gaddis' character Wyatt Gwyon, who seems to be the source of ideas in The Recognitions.

60 Such stories as "The Paradise of Bachelors and the Tartarus of Maids" are in one respect similar to the Homeric scaffolding in Ulysses: an order outside the fictive level of the story or novel governs to a degree its movements. The story's tone, however, is necessarily quite different from Joyce's novel: Joyce's analogy is there in his title, while Melville's must be pointed out; and Joyce's structural antecedent is another narrative, while Melville's is a secretive and concrete object. Both the story and the novel, however, are different from The Confidence-Man in that they do not make the doubt in the apparent system the actual basis for its experience.

61 In this section of the chapter, I am indebted to suggestions from Doug Crowell, "From Confidence-Man to Confidence, Man: Avatars of an Approach," paper, SUNY-Buffalo, 1977.
Self-reliance is in fact used to refer to Col. Moredock, as we shall see.

Stubb "diddles" the French captain of The Rosebud. See Moby-Dick, ch. 91.

The description of Black Guinea as a sheep recalls perhaps Iago's call to Desdemona's father in Othello, "a black ram is even now tupping your white ewe."

These withdrawals occur, for example, in chapter 9, and chapters 10 and 11, these last coinciding with a chapter division.

This is Franklin's observation, from p. 183.

See Fish's description of this aspect of reading in "Interpreting the Variorum."
Chapter Three: Gaddis' The Recognitions
I. To Have Copied a Copy

In moving from a work dated 1857 to one dated 1955, we expect enormous changes in material and technique. In moving from Melville's last novel, *The Confidence-Man*, to Gaddis' first, *The Recognitions*, the surprising sense is not how different but how similar are their concerns. Both writers incorporate into their texts a good measure of satire directed at their contemporaries: Melville's "Omni-Balsamic Reinvigorator" and "Protean easy-chair," from 19th-century patent medicines, find their current counterparts in Gaddis' "new scientific aids to modern family living. Necrostyle, the wafer-shaped sleeping pill, swallowed just like a wafer, no chewing, no aftertaste. Zap, the wonder-wakener. And Cuff. Remember, it's on the Cuff."¹ Both Melville and Gaddis treat with skepticism contemporary science and its claims to improve human nature: the "Protean easy-chair" will adjust to ease even the most troubled conscience, and its inventor wants to "quicken" missions with the "Wall street spirit," to convert China and be done with it.² Gaddis' newspapers look with similar ease to scientific deliverance from the maladies of everyday living.
One had only one's self to blame for catastrophe, with Science concentrating its huge forces on bettering the human lot. (Had he not read, only the week before in a newspaper, of a new medicine which would prolong human life? Men might live to be two hundred years old, unclothed perhaps and unfed since there would be so many, but Science took care of details when they arose (had he not read only this week that very palatable foods were being made from seaweed, coal, and cotton? and clothing: the same article said that very durable cloth could be made from soy beans, meat extracts, and vegetable products). Two hundred years old! and, as he understood it, alive.)

[287]

The qualifying phrase "as he understood it" in this passage receives the emphasis of equivocation. Both texts, then, reject easy solutions to complex problems by pointing out the insufficiency of rationalistic "science"—whether these solutions are the simple granting of confidence in one's fellow man or adherence to advice from How to Win Friends and Influence People. Dale Carnegie's pocketbook, which reappears throughout The Recognitions, is perhaps the best measure of the progress achieved between Melville's mid-century and our own.

A more important similarity between the novels, for our purposes, lies with the way in which they present key terms, almost unknowable for their characters, as devices for judging the significance of their events. As we have seen, travelers on the Fidèle are measured by their responses to the confidence man's demands for confidence: whether con-
confidence is granted or withheld, the encounter shows the characters at their most characteristic. Melville implicitly poses the same question to the reader: in making it possible for the reader to formulate an easy, premature schema for his encounter with the text, Melville invites the placing and consequent disillusionment of confidence in his reading. Changes in interpretation within the text provide models of such changes outside the text: such a principle brings together the four works considered in this thesis.

This measurement of the reader, brought about by the experiential redefinition of confidence in Melville's work, is comparable to that action brought about by recognition in Gaddis' novel. The word is used fully as often and in as many contexts as Melville's confidence, and it poses as severe a test for the reader as does confidence. Unlike The Confidence-Man, however, The Recognitions presents an authoritative narrative voice, and a character, Wyatt Gwyon, whose observations about art form the basis of its own esthetic. (In The Confidence-Man, not even the "authorial" chapters are to be trusted.) Rather than being a purely verbal and abstract term like confidence, impossible to confirm from the narrator's perspective, recognition has support from the narrator of The Recognitions, and exists on two contrasted levels, the trivial and the significant. Significant recognition occurs "maybe seven times in a life," as Wyatt Gwyon,
The \textit{Recognitions}' figure of the artist, says; but it does remain within possibility, unlike confidence, which is described in geological terms.\footnote{Far more common are the trivial sorts of recognitions, as in the paintings for consumers who go to Paris to buy artistic works which fit familiar categories.} [. . .] tourists, those arbiters of illustration to whom painting was a personalized representation of scenes and creatures they held dear; might not know art but they knew what they liked, hand-painted pictures (originals) for which they paid in the only currency they understood, to painters whose visions had shrunk to the same proportions. [. . .] the same painting varying from easel to easel as different versions of a misunderstood truth, but the progeny of each single easel identical reproduction, following a precept of Henner who called this the only way of being original.\footnote{[67-68]}

Wyatt's sort of recognition is most clearly seen in his account of a Picasso painting.

when I saw it, it was one of those moments of reality, of near-recognition of reality. I'd been . . . I've been worn out in this piece of work, and when I finished it I was free, free all of a sudden out in the world. In the street everything was unfamiliar, everything and everyone I saw was unreal, I felt like I was going to lose my balance out there, this feeling was getting all knotted up inside me and I went in there just to stop for a minute. And then I saw this thing. When I saw it all of a sudden everything was freed into one recognition, really freed into reality that we never see, you never see it. You don't see it in paintings because most of the time you can't see beyond a painting. Most paintings, the instant you see them they become familiar, and then it's too late.\footnote{[91-92]}

In the opposition of these two sorts of recognition we find the central theme of, and principal method of development for, \textit{The Recognitions}: the contrast between "true" and "false"
art--"gold" and "counterfeit"--and the juxtaposition of manifold examples of both.

The dichotomy between "true" and "false" art is first established thematically in the distinction between *homoousian* and *homoiousian*, of one substance and of like substance, the theological dispute settled by the council of Nicaea. From this council came the dogma that the wafer literally becomes the body of Christ; those who claim that it is merely a like substance commit heresy. The *Recognitions* suggests a comparable relation between the two sorts of recognition: "true" recognition depends on a return to "the origins of design," a return almost as unlikely as the miracle of transsubstantiation. Significant recognition is comparable to the incarnation in its presumed ability to redeem time; its activity is similarly comparable to religious experience; and it is finally an experience as impossible to confirm as any miracle, but one which transforms past and future experience. In a secular world, then, *The Recognitions* suggests the possibility of an esthetic counterpart for religion; this idea is by no means original, but the novel's achievement does not turn on the originality of its thought.

Initially, then, we may concentrate on the dualism between relatively trivial and significant recognitions in *The Recognitions*, just as we have previously considered oppo-
positions between confidence and distrust in *The Confidence-Man*, order and chaos in *Sartor Resartus*, and just as we will consider the divisions between paranoid and antiparanoic (for example) in *Gravity's Rainbow*. Dualistic modes of organization are common to the works being considered here. Teufelsdröckh leads an existence without purpose until the moment of theophany, when he perceives phenomena as animated by the divine presence: the resulting sense of purpose integrates all events into what is for him (if not for the Editor) an acceptable order. Apparently no middle ground is acceptable for Carlyle: either one must be fully committed, as Teufelsdröckh eventually is, to working on behalf of the betterment of the social order, or one must be completely adrift with no sense of order. There is no mediation between the extremes in *Sartor*: either the universe is ordered or it isn't; either God participates in human endeavors or he doesn't; and one's behavior must alter radically according to his schema, that is, what he sees as the case.

Behavior alters considerably in *The Confidence-Man*, too, according to whether or not the characters choose to place confidence in the confidence man; and our response to the significance of their actions similarly divides according to the way we interpret his activities. If, for example, one takes the Fidèle as merely satire, he is rather unlikely to commit himself. Together with a certain lack
of seriousness in satire, the reader and author usually
join in opposition to the figures being satirized—a rela-
tionship not present in The Confidence-Man. If, however,
one reads its action as relevant to the nineteenth-century
question of faith in a providential order, then the question
of whether or not to have confidence matters considerably.
The confidence man himself presses the characters towards
the extreme positions:

"I have been thinking over that supposed case of the
man with the averted face, and I cannot rid my mind
of the impression that, by your opposite replies to
my questions at the time, you showed yourself much of
a piece with a good many other men—that is, you have
confidence, and then again, you have none. Now,
what I would ask is, do you think it sensible standing
for a sensible man, one foot on confidence and the
other on suspicion? Don't you think, barber, that
you ought to elect? Don't you think consistency re-
quires that you should either say 'I have confidence
in all men,' and take down your notification [No
Trust]; or else say, 'I suspect all men,' and keep
it up."

The dualism here is an unacceptable simplification used to
cheat the barber of the price of a shave. Unlike Carlyle,
whose character Teufelsdrockh works unceasingly towards an
ordering principle essentially simplifying, Melville presents
such simplicity as undesirable, at both extremes. Either
the naive acceptance of community or its outright rejection
is questionable.

And looking beyond The Recognitions to Gravity's Rainbow,
Tyrone Slothrop's perception of his world, once he has es-
cape the control of Pointsman and "the Firm," oscillates between paranoia and antiparanoia--the sense that hostile forces are concentrated on the ego, a sense both threatening and egotistically gratifying, contrasted with the sense that nothing is concentrated on the ego, with the resulting purposelessness which we have seen in Teufelsdröckh's wanderings. As Pynchon says, "Either They have put him here for a reason, or he's just here. He isn't sure that he wouldn't, actually, rather have that reason. . . ."10 This pressure towards the extremes is present not only with Slothrop: Pynchon sets forth as well Pointsman and Mexico, behavioral psychologist and statistician:

If ever the Antipointsman existed, Roger Mexico is the man. Not so much, the doctor admits, for the psychical research. The young statistician is devoted to number and to method, not table-rapping or wishful thinking. 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. [. . .] But to Mexico belongs the domain between zero and one--the middle Pointsman has excluded from his persuasion--the probabilities. A chance of 0.37 that, by the time he stops his count, a given square on his map will have suffered only one hit, 0.17 that it will suffer two. . . ."

From this opposition derives a further one, the distinction between statistical and cause-and-effect models of history, ultimately turned by Pointsman into determinate vs. indeterminate meaning.

He goes in to Mexico each morning as to painful surgery. Spooked more and more by the choirboy look, the college pleasantries. But it's a visit he must make. How can Mexico play, so at his ease, with these
symbols of randomness and fright? Innocent as a child, perhaps unaware--perhaps--that in his play he wrecks the elegant rooms of history, threatens the idea of cause and effect itself. What if Mexico's whole generation have turned out like this? Will Postwar be nothing but "events," newly created one moment to the next? No links? Is it the end of history?\textsuperscript{12}

From this passage we can see that Pointsman's reliance on binary oppositions becomes identified not only with Pavlovian psychology, but with traditional Western science (whose keystone, cause-and-effect reasoning, is threatened) and ultimately with history. Faced with a phenomenon it cannot explain, the relation between Slothrop's map and the rocket strikes, the whole schema of rationalism which supports Pointsman breaks down. In Pynchon's novel we best see the untenability of any schema which poses a choice between extremes such as these: the "Slothrop affair" eventually brings about Pointsman's downfall, both personally and bureaucratically. We never follow events on the Fidèle past the encounters with the confidence man, but the assumption usually is that those who give him their confidence are eventually betrayed in some fashion, as is the barber; those pressed to extremes, whether confidence or distrust, fare badly. Carlyle may seem to be a counterexample, since Teufelsdröckh makes the leap of faith; but his accession is qualified for Sartor's readers by the Editor's frequent comic deflation and his reluctance to follow Teufelsdröckh's affirmation.
More important than the results of these dualistic schemata, however, is the fact that all four authors find them convenient as organizing principles for their novels. Faced with the radical loss of a system to organize events—whether this loss is described as the "disappearance of God," or the failure of Western culture—their characters fall into a system of oppositions to build replacements, oppositions as natural as right hand and left. This is true of Wyatt, Gaddis' protagonist: threatened by chaos, typified in *The Recognitions* by the decline of culture in all phases, religious, musical, artistic, financial, and linguistic, he organizes his response by an attempt to find or forge a solid basis for art, one based on a return to origins—an undefined term—and his response to origins, recognition.

Wyatt is established as a serious artist in contrast to hundreds of others: the relationship between the significant and the trivial artist is nowhere clearer than in *The Recognitions'* second chapter. Its Parisian cafes are filled with name-droppers and artistes who talk shop instead of actually painting; their works vary slightly from familiar forms and are therefore more easily acceptable than serious works which promote a revaluation of one's schema.13

Ask anybody. Nearby, a young man with a beard received compliments on his recent show. It was a group of landscapes in magenta and madder lake. Très amusant, gai, très très original (he was French). It was quite a rage. He said he had walked four kilometers out of Saint German en Laye, found he'd forgotten all of his colors but magenta and madder lake, so he went ahead and painted anyhow. He said, --Quelquefois je passe la nuit entiere a finir un tableau . . .

[65]

Others, less fortunate in improvising due to circumstance, may be seen,

the alleys infested with them painting the same picture from different angles, the same painting varying from easel to easel as different versions of a misunderstood truth, but the progeny of each single easel identical reproduction, following a precept of Henner who called this the only way of being original. [67-68]

In opposition to these artistes we have Wyatt, whose work is devoted to "controlling this damned world of shapes and smells" [126]: "He did not spend time at cafe tables talking about form, a line, color, composition, trends, materials: he worked on this painting, or did not think about it " [67]. Gaddis, then, presents his type of the artist as a solitary figure in opposition to the easy artistic and moral opinions of his culture; The Recognitions argues (the right word) that only through such oppositions is any advance made possible. Easy artistic works are admired by tourists, a convenient type of the superficial in the novel, who "had learned to admire in this neatly parcelled definition of civilization the tyrannous pretension of many founded upon the rebellious efforts of a few. . . ." [65]. Both the serious artist and the
serious connoisseur of art-related pursuits since the artist's capabilities depend on how well he can perceive "form," whether his own or someone else's--must recognize substance beneath the work as a basis of its meaning. This ability is called recognition: its exercise occurs not as an act of will but as a virtual theophany. It is made possible (but not compelled) by one's technical grasp of an art; it may occur "seven times in a life," according to Wyatt; and it is the basis of religious as well as esthetic experience in The Recognitions.

Recognition is simple to describe but difficult to achieve: far more usual are the trivial recognitions, which stand in the same relation to recognition as counterfeit coins do to real gold. The reader is asked to perform roughly the equivalent of the council of Nicaea, without the organizational support of the church—that is, to distinguish between homoousian and homoiousian, between genuine and counterfeit art and schemata. The theme of counterfeiting extends throughout The Recognitions to its ultimate question, the nature of the artist's relation to his culture, implicitly the same as how man perceives the world. It is difficult to conceive of a more fundamental and far-reaching ambition for a work of fiction.

Counterfeiting pervades The Recognitions, in main plot and subplots. The first of these involves a literal counterfeiter, Mr. Sinisterra, whose attempt to escape prosecution
by masquerading as a ship's surgeon ends in the death of Wyatt's mother, Camilla. From the novel's outset, Gaddis links counterfeiting with artistry:

Like any sensitive artist caught in the toils of unsympathetic critics, he still smarted severely from the review given his work on page one of *The National Counterfeit Detector Monthly* [. . .]; and soon enough thereafter, his passion for anonymity feeding upon his innate modesty amid walls of Malebolgian acclivity [i.e., in prison], he resolved upon a standard of such future excellence for his work, that jealous critics should never dare attack him as its author again.

[5-6]

In his later appearances, Sinisterra continues seriously the same claims for his artistry that the narrator makes here ironically:

--You don't see work like this any more, he repeated.
--Everything's cheap, everybody does things the quick cheap way. This is one of the only crafts left.
Look at the eyes, there's none of that dead quality you see in a cheap job. Look at the sensitive lips, he murmured laying the bill back with the others.

[489]

And Sinisterra introduces himself to Wyatt as "a craftsman, an artist like, see?" [785] He shows the artist's sense of tradition, reinforced by the narrator [488; 494-96], and pays tribute to one of the masters:

--Jim the Penman, he drew every bill by hand, for twenty years he was a success. And what happens? Some dumb grocery clerk smudges one of them with a wet hand. When he was tried, you know what the defense was? He was an artist. Any of his work was worth more as a work of art than what the government was shoving. An artist, a real artist.

[489]

Like any craftsman, he insists on the proper materials [489], and worries about his critics as Wyatt has earlier about the
"experts" [250]:

The minute they spot a piece of this stuff, they've got it under a microscope. They've got work of mine they picked up thirty years ago, and they can compare it. They're not dumb, with a microscope in their hand, the Secret Service, they can find the smallest resemblance, even after thirty years they can see my own hand in there, a little of myself"

[491]

Sinisterra's sense of his tradition echoes that of Wyatt, as we shall see: the first published article on The Recognitions suggests that such echoes are characteristic of Gaddis' own relations to a literary giant, James Joyce. Bernard Benstock observes that Gaddis' use of correspondences with Joyce's works is both recapitulation and original method; but we may generalize beyond Joyce to a statement about the artist's relationship with his past. There are fully as many references to T. S. Eliot as to Joyce, the most important of these being a recapitulation of Eliot's argument in "Tradition and the Individual Talent" that the artist forms the basis of culture by encountering and transforming the works of the past. The novel's artists follow Eliot's pattern by encountering (with various degrees of success) past figures from the traditions of their arts. For Gaddis this tradition includes principally Joyce and Eliot, among modern writers; The Recognitions is therefore both homage to and an attempt at validating, by surpassing, the works of Joyce and Eliot.
By numbers alone, most of The Recognitions' counterfeiters are its artistes, actual or intentional—the hundreds who populate its incessant cocktail parties, dropping names or echoing ideas we have heard before. Practitioners of "false art" in The Recognitions may be recognized by two chief characteristics: their artistic concerns are easy or trivial or perverse, and their works' value is determined primarily by market values rather than intrinsic merit. Max is the most prominent painter among the novel's figures: we see him first at a party given on behalf of his new work, "L'Ame d'un Chantier," which is the literal shirt off some worker's back. He also exhibits as abstracts magnified parts of Constable paintings [122]; and publishes a poem, taken from Esme's apartment, which turns out to be Rilke's tenth elegy. Another of his paintings is hung upside-down; the fact that no one noticed is taken as "a tribute to the coherence of the design" [940]. Another painter drops ink-soaked strings onto canvases; in general twentieth-century art comes off badly, Picasso's works excepted.

Far more people talk about art than actually create any, in The Recognitions as in the world in general. In confronting "a roomful of people who spent their lives in rooms" [176], one must learn the cybernetic requirements for survival: one party-goer is advised to talk about "the solids in Oo-chello," in any circumstances [175-76]; another brags about his new discovery, "Chavenet":
It really doesn't mean anything, but it's familiar to everyone if you say it quickly. They mention a painter's style, you nod and say rather . . . Chavenet, or, He's rather derivative of, Chavenet wouldn't you say? Spending the summer? Yes, in the south of France, a little villa near Chavenet. Poets, movie stars, perfume . . .

Like Costard's "remuneration" in Love's Labours Lost, Chavenet is a very useful term; as long as it sounds sufficiently French, no one will question it. Anything marketable, whether a familiarly styled painting or a term which sounds familiar, is likely to circulate freely in Gaddis' society. Probably the sharpest distinction between Wyatt and Max is in their attitudes towards reviewers: Wyatt originally turns to restoring, and eventually to forging, paintings because his refusal to pay a reviewer resulted in a bad review [71, 74], while Max regards bribery as a business expense. "--They came around asking for a ten per cent cut on anything he sold if they gave him good reviews, sure he said yes, any good publicity agent charges ten per cent " [940]. In the one case value is defined as what buyers are willing to pay, in the other it is present in the art work itself.

Almost everyone in The Recognitions aspires to the condition of the artist: we see this ambition (divorced from any talent or gift) principally in Otto, the novel's arch-plagiarist, who follows Wyatt around and adapts his ideas to his own uses. Principal among these is his "play":

--A play? Chræst, how unnecessary. Who's in it? asked Ed, who, though he did not know it, was himself in the play, with the unlikely name of Max.
--Well no one yet, Otto said, returning to his pocket the slip of paper on which he had just written: Gordon says nt mke thngs explcit whch shd be implict ie frndshp. --I haven't finished it. The plot still needs a little tightening up. (By this Otto meant that a plot of some sort had yet to be supplied, to motivate the series of monologues in which Gordon, a figure who resembled Otto at his better moments, and whom Otto greatly admired, said things which Otto had overheard, or thought of too late to say.)

[121]

This description of Gordon's relationship with his creator complements the description of reading as wish-fulfillment in The Recognitions; all readers, even newspaper readers like Otto's father, Mr. Pivner, have a rudimentary desire for transcendence which is essentially artistic: "Fearful of missing anything, he read on, filled with this anticipation which was half terror, of coming upon something which would touch him, not simply touch him but lift him and carry him away " [288]. Readers, like artists, may be divided into two groups; and trivial readers dominate in comparable proportions. "That is why people read novels, to identify projections of their own unconscious. The hero has to be fearfully real, to convince them of their own reality, which they rather doubt " [247]. Otto may be the artist manqué, but he is the plagiarist par excellence: his play's protagonist begins to grow more and more like Wyatt as their acquaintance develops.

Gordon's speeches were becoming more and more profound. Gordon would soon be at home only in drama; and, though his author had not considered it, possibly closet drama at that [. . .] In the past few
months, Gordon had begun to lose his debonair manner, and become more seriously inclined; he tossed off epigrams less readily, but often paused and made abrupt gestures with his hands, as though to shape his wisdom in plain view of the large audience, halting between phrases to indicate the labor they cost him; he was liable to be silent, where he had chatted amiably; and where he had paused upstage, thoughtfully silent, he was liable not to appear at all. [. . .] N. Mke Grdn pntr? sclptr? By now Gordon was some three or four inches shorter than he had been, and considerably less elegant. With this note that Gordon's profession was still open to change, Otto pushed at the outside door and found it open. He entered and climbed the stairs. He was commencing to envy Gordon.

[122-23]

Otto's attraction to Wyatt does not come solely from his usefulness; for reasons unexplained, several characters find him "real." 18

Even if he is the most "real" figure in The Recognitions, Wyatt's observations come from earlier writers—a fact that Otto ignores, to his embarrassment [185; 130]. The nature of Wyatt's art complicates the whole question of plagiarism: initially driven to restoration as a means of supplementing his income, he is tempted by Recktall Brown into painting forgeries of masterpieces. Wyatt's masterpieces, however, are neither literal copies of known works nor combinations of pieces of known paintings into easily recognized works; more precisely, he recreates an entirely new work, using Guild materials, according to the spirit of the period in which he works, 16th-century Flemish and German painting. We see Wyatt's integrity as a forger in his
relationship to his patron, Recktall Brown: Wyatt will recreate works only from a period with whose spirit he is in touch.

--He talks to me as though it was like making patent medicine. He...
--All right my boy, I...
--He heard a Fra Angelico had sold somewhere for a high price once, and he thought I should do a Fra Angelico, toss off a Fra Angelico . . .
--All right now . . .
--Like making patent medicine. He turned to Brown. --Do you know why I could never paint one, paint a Fra Angelico? Do you know why? Do you know how he painted? Fra Angelico painted down on his knees, he was on his knees and his eyes full of tears when he painted Christ on the Cross. And do you think I . . . do you think I . . .

[242]

Wyatt's ability to generate new old works depends on his recognition of some substance beneath surface phenomena, as we shall see. 19 This recognition rules out forgeries of some periods, such as Renaissance Italy (above) or the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; the quality of vision in these times is not congenial to his version of art, associated deeply with guilt.

Gaddis carefully places the beginnings of Wyatt's attitudes towards art in his New England, Calvinist background. Early in childhood, his Aunt May impresses Wyatt with the sinfulness of any attempt at original creation:

... Wyatt's first drawing, a picture, he said, of a robin, which looked like the letter E tipped to one side, brought for her approval, met with --Don't you love our Lord Jesus, after all? He said he did. --Then why do you try to take His place? Our Lord is the only true creator, and only sinful people try to emulate Him . . .

[34]
The pride which usurps a divine function brings about 
Wyatt's association of art and guilt: even after he has 
renounced his studies for the ministry, he cultivates 
solitude and paints at night "in the same frame of mind in 
which the criminal commits his deed," as the reviewer 
facilely puts it. Most important in this association is 
the Faustian desire to control "this world of shapes and 
smells" [248], a desire that combines pride with the pur-
suit of craft.

Faust is a figure behind almost any version of the 
artist; it is fitting that so self-referential a novel as 
The Recognitions should indicate the relevance of the Faust 
story by mentioning it in a phone conversation whose purpose 
is getting information for "Willie":

But you can tell your friend Willie that salvation 
is hardly the practical study it was then. What? 
... Why, simply because in the Middle Ages they 
were convinced that they had souls to save. Yes. 
The what? The Recognitions? No, it's Clement of 
Rome. Mostly talk, talk, talk. The young man's 
deepest concern is for the immortality of his soul, 
he goes to Egypt to find the magicians and learn 
their secrets. It's been referred to as the first 
Christian novel. What? Yes, it's really the begin-
ning of the whole Faust legend. But one can hardly 
... eh? My, your friend is writing for a rather 
small audience, isn't he? 

[372-73]

"Mostly talk, talk, talk," and "salvation is hardly the 
practical study it was" are comments which refer rather 
appropriately, almost transparently, to The Recognitions 
itself, as Gaddis anticipates. The Recognitions hints at
its own antecedents, then, just as it hints at antecedents for its artist-figure, Wyatt. If Wyatt corresponds to Faust, his Mephistopheles is Recktal Brown, who directs Wyatt's attention to the possibilities of re-creating art in a way that compromises art with "business." The impasse Wyatt is in doesn't come strictly from lack of money: "It's as though . . . there's no direction to act in now. [. . .] People react. That's all they do now, react, they've reacted until it's the only thing they can do, and it's . . . finally there's no room for anyone to do anything but react" [143]. One does not have to go to John Barth's essay "The Literature of Exhaustion" to find either this frustration at opportunities closed by the modern masters or the solution Barth, like Gaddis, finds: "novels which imitate the form of the Novel, by an author who imitates the role of Author."--expressed in The Recognitions under the motif of counterfeiting. (But whereas Barth literally counterfaits "even characterization! Even plot!," Gaddis writes a novel about a character who faces a comparable impasse and becomes himself a Barthian forger.)

As Barth notes, a work of art is limited by the possibilities of its culture: the purposelessness of the mid-twentieth century, amply illustrated in The Recognitions' "talk, talk, talk," frustrates Wyatt's work.

It's being surrounded by people who don't have any sense of . . . no sense that what they're doing means anything. [. . .] That there's any sense of
necessity about their work, that it has to be done, that it's theirs. And if they feel that way how can they see anything necessary in anyone else's? And it... every work of art is a work of perfect necessity. [. . .] But in the midst of all this... rootlessness, how can you... damn it, do you talk to people? Do you listen to them?"

[144]

Recktall Brown's response is instructive: "I talk business to people." In other words, Recktall Brown's Mephistophelean function is to accommodate Wyatt's desire to control the shapes and smells of the world, his desire to create "a work of perfect necessity," to economic uses.

--You know... Saint Paul tells us to redeem time.
--Does he? Recktall Brown's tone was gentle, encouraging.
--A work of art redeems time.
--And buying it redeems money, Recktall Brown said.
--Yes, yes, owning it...
--And that's why you sit around here patching up the past.

[144]

This attractive formulation later becomes a relational definition of what in fact the past is: according to Basil Valentine, Brown's associate, "'If the public believes that a picture is by Raphael, and will pay the price of a Raphael,' Valentine said, offering a cigarette, '--then it is a Raphael'" [239]. Recktall Brown is diabolical in several senses: his name has the obvious associations with rectal and brown; his approach to Wyatt's apartment is too quick for the steps he would have to take; he sponsors forgeries --"The devil is the father of false art"-- and he is The Recognitions' chief advocate of materialism, in contrast
to Wyatt ("--God damn it, my boy, if it wasn't for being in business with me, you'd float away. This God damn world of shapes and smells you say you live in, you'll turn into one of them." [363]); and he is usually associated with smoke, luxury (he wears diamond rings), laughter, and control.21

--The cost? Each foot planted upon a rose, Recktall Brown's laughter might seem to rise the entire distance of his frame, a laborious journey, complicated by ducts and veins, cavities and sedulous organs whose functions are interrupted by the passage of this billowing shape which escapes in shambles of smoke. --You can pay for anything in this town. [360]

His laughter poured in heavy smoke from his mouth and nostrils. Then he took off his glasses, looking into the perspiring face before him, and a strange thing happened. His eyes, which had all this time seemed to swim without focus behind the heavy lenses, shrank to sharp points of black, and like weapons suddenly unsheathed they penetrated instantly wherever he turned them.

[146]

Brown appears, in fact, only after conjured by Wyatt [139].

His confident declaration that "Business is cooperation with reality" [243] is precisely opposite to Wyatt's artistic ambition to subdue shapes and smells into art, and by this subjugation to form to escape physical constraints. [274]

As The Recognitions' ultimate advocate of materialism, Recktall Brown represents the modern world's drift away from values of art holistically integrated with culture, a drift towards greater fragmentation associated with "science."22

Science takes over functions formerly granted to reli-
gion, in The Recognitions: it supplants mystery with explanation, makes one feel justified rather than self-questioning, provides a debased form of "miracle," and in general contributes to what we see as decline in the novel. Science's version of miraculous events may be typified by a calculation: "the Irish mathematician Sir William Rowan Hamilton calculates that Jesus in assumption, being drawn up through space at a moderate rate, would not yet have reached the nearest of the fixed stars" [301]. Literal accounts, limited to what Eliade calls the profane world, suggest that "Christ died of asphyxiation" [288], without theological interest of any sort. The net result of rationalism in The Recognitions is a comfortable world where no one need question his schema of events at large--a comfortable state with which the novel is violently dissatisfied:

Here in the foremost shambles of time Mr. Pivner stood, heir to that colossus of self-justification, Reason, one of whose first accomplishments was to effectively sever itself from the absurd, irrational, contaminating chaos of the past. Obtruding over centuries of gestation appeared this triumphal abortion: Reason supplied means, and eliminated ends.

What followed was entirely reasonable: the means, so abruptly brought within reach, became ends in themselves. And to substitute the growth of one's bank account for the growth of one's self worked out very well. [. . .]

It was to him that these voices appealed, siding with him in this conspiracy against himself, citing him splendidly satisfactory just as he was, heralding his privileges, valuing the mass of his concurring opinion with guarantee of his protection against dissenters, justifying his limitations, and thus proving, by their own successful existence, that he was obliged to seek no further than himself for the authority
which justified them both, pledged at last to secure and defend him in all these things, which they called his rights.

[290-91]

In sharp contrast to such values are religious figures such as Wyatt and Stanley—Stanley orthodox in his adherence to the church, Wyatt approaching qualities of religious experience by way of art, as we have seen. Stanley's artistic endeavor, a high mass being composed, like Wyatt's paintings, according to standards of the old masters, is the only other work of art treated sympathetically in The Recognitions [322]. What the novel ultimately says about one's relation to the past is severely qualified by their ends: Wyatt finishes in Spain, scraping genuine paintings to "restore" them; and Stanley is killed in the cathedral's collapse which is caused by his work:

The music soared around him, from the corner of his eye he caught the glitter of his wrist watch, and even as he read the music before him, and saw his thumb and last finger come down time after time with three black keys between them, wringing out fourths, the work he had copied coming over on the Conte di Brescia, wringing that chord of the devil's interval from the full length of the thirty-foot bass pipes, he did not stop. The walls quivered, still he did not hesitate. Everything moved, and even falling, soared in atonement.

[956]

In The Recognitions some relation between past and present must be found for art to be significant; but that relation does not guarantee the work's success either in itself or in the world proper. And even success in itself, artistically, has no bearing on the life of its creator; as we shall see,
The Recognitions draws a sharp distinction between the realms of art and life. The novel's two primary artists are its two most accomplished counterfeiters, in the depth and range of their acquaintance with and sustenance from the traditions of their arts: The Recognitions seems to give serious credence to Touchstone's contention that "the truest art is the most feigning."

The cathedral's collapse suggests another dimension of counterfeiting, one which rationalism cannot account for—coincidence. If God no longer acts in the world, it seems often as though chance counterfeits his presence. The narrator describes Camilla's death in the insurance companies' phrasing, an "act of God"; and after the event, Rev. Gwyn comes to refer to "the unswerving punctuality of chance," espousing a heretical view of the sacraments—their form derives from God's "retaining the 'accidents' of bread and wine (in order not to shock His worshipers, he added)."[58] The attribution of purpose to these "accidents" of matter, characteristic of Wyatt as of his father, is an attempt to accommodate some sense of religious presence—and thus purposeful order—to a contingent world which, as Pynchon puts it, simply does not care.23 A plotted novel which counterfeits contingency, then, is perhaps Gaddis' most substantial achievement.

The most succinct general statement about the relation
between accident and purpose comes in Wyatt's relationship with his wife, who he says worries about all the things that will never happen. [126]

Moments like this (and they came more often) she had the sense that he did not exist; or, to re-examine him, sitting there looking in another direction, in terms of substance and accident, substance the imperceptible underlying reality, accident the properties inherent in the substance which are perceived by the senses: the substance is transformed by consecration, but the accidents remain what they were. The consecration has apparently taken place not, as she thought, through her, but somewhere beyond her; and here she sits attending the accidents. [94]

Substance seems to be "accident" transformed by perceiving form; most of The Recognitions' characters never quite see it at all. Esther at least feels a lack here. We may contrast the analogy between wine and confidence in The Confidence-Man: in that account confidence, like wine, makes one heady and diverts his attention from truth, which may or may not exist underneath strata of phenomena or accidents. In The Recognitions, however, a narrator is available to assure us that "substance" and "form" and like abstractions do exist, whether or not any of the novel's characters manage to reach them. (The limitation on the frequency of probable recognition is probably behind the novel's ironic jokes at the small number of its readers: the complexity of The Recognitions guarantees Gaddis his version of "fit audience though few.")

Wyatt's purposefulness, expressed in terms of his abil-
ity to perceive wholes, to recognize, or to "[touch] the origins of design with recognition," is contrasted throughout *The Recognitions* with those who cannot find continuity in all the fragments, who see no necessity in what they or anyone else does, and who do not therefore have any possibility of redeeming time [322]²⁴ The redemption of matter is a crucial concern for Wyatt: the attempt to redeem time is contrasted with Recktall Brown's statement that "Business is cooperation with reality." Traditionally revelation does not cooperate, or compromise, but transforms; and this holds true for the action of true art in *The Recognitions*. There are, then, essentially two ways of dealing with the mass of fragments conceded to comprise modern life: one, by far the more common in *The Recognitions*, is to accept popular versions of events, best described by Mr. Pivner's newspaper, which provides a sense of form through its "satisfaction which life never suggested, that of a beginning, a middle, and an end" [291]. In contrast to this rudimentary sense of order, associated with science, reason, and realism, we see Wyatt's order, derived from his own activities but not self-justifying: Wyatt is an alchemist, not a scientist, who recognizes the complexity of his artistic task and the very good chances for failure, but who nonetheless makes the attempt to redeem time [113-14].

If the art work redeems time, what of *The Recognitions*
itself? Unable to claim perfection on its own behalf, it may yet achieve the perfection of the counterfeit which duplicates another work. "--There's something about a . . . an unfinished piece of work, a . . . a thing like this [portrait of Wyatt's mother] where . . . do you see? Where perfection is still possible? Because it's there, it's there all the time, all the time you work trying to uncover it" [57]. In its manifold echoes and borrowings from past works, The Recognitions itself is either like the paintings Wyatt recreates from his "memories" [250], or else like other forgers who take "a beard [. . .] from another portrait, and a hat [. . .] from another"--depending on whether its substance is perceived, or only its accident. The relations between text and world in The Recognitions are comprised under the systems of counterfeiting; and as with any object, the responsibility for its genuineness is turned back on the reader.

Plot is duplicated by coincidence in The Recognitions in such a way as to suggest but not force its unity. We may note, for example, how many unlikely coincidences occur in the novel as if by providence. Characters meet in New York, casually: anyone who has been there will have a sense of the improbability of such occurrences. Edna Mims, Otto's old girlfriend, turns out not only to be Recktall Brown's re-
ceptionist (out when Otto visits Brown's office), but also the typist who altered an article on Rilke, making *genial* into *genital* (a change Melville might have appreciated). An Argentine wanders into the wrong cocktail party, but manages to meet Ed Feasley, who as it happens can sell him a battleship. Otto leaves by accident his green scarf—the sign by which he and his father are to recognize each other—in Esme's apartment; she ties it around Chaby Sinisterra's neck, who transports it to his home. Mr. Sinisterra wears it to his rendezvous with his fence: he is taken for Mr. Pivner (absent due to a diabetic attack) by Otto, while he himself takes Otto for his contact. Sinisterra's $5,000 is generously accepted by Otto as a Christmas present; when the truth comes out, Otto lands (by chance) in Central America, in the middle of a revolution he had pretended before. He takes Gordon, his play's hero's name, as his pseudonym, and becomes the virtual captive of the same Doctor Fell that as an intern had treated Wyatt's illness [42;732]. As Melville might say, surely all these things are not without significance.

The culminating sequence of coincidences, however, concerns Wyatt's parents. Basil Valentine refers in passing to a novel about Wyatt:
I suppose you . . . well, let's say you eat your father, canonize your mother, and . . . what happens to people in novels? I don't read them. You drown, I suppose.
   --That's too romantic.
   --Novels are romantic.
   --As though, death could end it?

Casual statement becomes prophecy: during the Spanish Civil War, Camilla's body has been interchanged with the next, that of the raped and murdered twelve-year-old, Senor Hermoso Hermoso's only candidate for a "locally spawned patron saint."

As it happens, Camilla is dug up and canonized thirty years after her death: the bones are rather large for a twelve-year-old, someone remarks. Coincidence, part two: Rev. Gwyon, after Camilla's death and interment, had sent wheat germ in oatmeal tins to the monastery where he had stayed, at San Zwingli. Confronted with his will, the new minister mails his ashes in one of these addressed tins to the monastery; taken for wheat germ, they are baked into the bread ("Looks like blood, doesn't it?" [884]) which is eaten by Wyatt. These are only the most elaborate of a labyrinth of coincidences which tie the strands of The Recognitions into the appearance of providence: thus the most important use of the counterfeiting motif is this, the imitation of intentional or providential actions by randomness. Through such a subterfuge Gaddis may write a novel, intricately plotted, giving serious attention to the fundamental human prob-
lem of making sense of a contingent and threatening universe, while at the same time maintaining the likelihood that that universe is contingent. If it is random there can be no significant form; yet a very basic human impulse is to find or create order in events. Gaddis' solution, to create a tightly plotted novel whose plot is the result of the actions of chance, is itself a finely wrought counterfeit which at once pays homage to and develops beyond the traditional novel.25
II. They Had Touched the Origins of Design With Recognition

Any claim that Wyatt's forgeries are at all distinct from the other manifold examples of forgery in The Recognitions depends on the concept of recognition: we see the term first, in its serious mode, in Wyatt's moment before the Picasso painting, when "everything was freed into one recognition, really freed into reality that we never see." Wyatt's recognition, unlike the trivial variety, depends not on seeing what is familiar in a work, but on seeing patterns of order anterior to the physical work:

--Forgery is calumny, he said. --Every piece you do is calumny on the artist you forge.

--It's not. It's not, damn it, I . . . when I'm working, I . . . Do you think I do these the way all other forging has been done? Pulling the fragments of ten paintings together, and making one, or taking a . . . a Dürer and reversing the composition so that the man looks to the right instead of the left, putting a beard on him from another portrait, and a hat, a different hat, from another, so that they look at it and recognize Dürer there? No, it's . . . the recognitions go much deeper, much further back, and I . . . this . . . the X-ray tests, and ultra-violet and infra-red, the experts with their photomicrography and . . . macrophotography, do you think that's all there is to it? Some of them aren't fools, they don't just look for a hat or a beard, or a style they can recognize, they look with memories that . . . go beyond themselves, that go back to . . . where mine goes.

Wyatt's recognitions, like his art, are a function of "necessity"; this fact distinguishes them from the trivial kinds
of recognition and of art. Their value paradoxically is personal and at the same time transcends the personal: thus Wyatt describes the anterior state, the substance, in terms of memories, memories divorced in this passage from specific content. Wyatt's forgery, as well as his recognition, is contrasted with that of other artists and artistes in *The Recognitions*: rather than simply recombining details from other works, his forgery depends largely on identification not only with the medium and materials of the period but with the spirit of the time as well. For this reason he cannot simply paint a Fra Angelico [242], and for this reason he won't paint moderns such as Van Gogh [335]; although appreciative of Picasso, he can only draw upon a given period and style--that style closest in its origins to his own New England Calvinist heritage. Wyatt's artistic practice, then, establishes the quality of recognition that Gaddis finds as the basis of significant esthetic appreciation, whether by artist or observer. (Wyatt's inclusion of the "experts" generalizes it beyond a work's creator.) In its description we may find implicit instructions about our own reading of *The Recognitions*.

We have seen already that recognition may not be forced by an act of will, that one may not compel or conjure its enlightenment; but in Wyatt's description of the craft necessary to his re-creation we see the preparation which is a
necessary condition for recognition in the novel. His work, first, depends intrinsically on overcoming physical difficulties:

Why, all this around us is for people who can keep their balance only in the light, where they move as though nothing were fragile, nothing tempered by possibility, and all of a sudden bang! something breaks. Then you have to stop and put the pieces together again. But you never can put them back together quite the same way. You stop when you can and expose things, and leave them within reach, and others come on by themselves, and they break, and even then you may put the pieces aside just out of reach until you can bring them back and show them, put together slightly different, maybe a little more enduring, until you've broken it and picked up the pieces enough times, and you have the whole thing in all its dimensions. But the discipline, the detail, it's just . . . sometimes the accumulation is too much to bear.

[113-14]

This generalized account is given specific reference to Wyatt's own art when he discusses his materials [248]; he must use materials available to the painters whose works he re-creates. The use of Prussian blue, for example, would indicate a date since the eighteenth century [339]. His preferred medium is a traditional one, egg tempura [88-89]; and occasionally he uses lavender as a medium, a smell which identifies him for the reader through the long section of The Recognitions in which he is identified only by pronoun. 27 But more important than the traditional media is the "Guild oath" he takes, "to use pure materials, to work in the sight of God . . . ." [250]; this is another indication of his resolve to duplicate or counterfeit the spirit of his works'
creation as well as the letter. The task is even more difficult, however, when he adds the necessity of aging the works so that they appear to have worn sufficiently for their dates: Wyatt insists that the duplication of wear should proceed without regard to the content of the composition itself, a resolve that results in severe damage to the Virgin's face (and lowering of the painting's market value).

--Brown won't like this, you know. The face there, how badly you've damaged it.

--But the damage? It isn't as though I'd done that. A hand was flung up before him. --The painting itself, the composition took its own form, when it was painted. And then the damage, the damage is indifferent to the composition, isn't it. The damage, you know, is . . . happens.

[333]

Wyatt, then, not only has to suppress the urge to protect his own work--this is how most forgers are caught, he says [242]--but has to duplicate "the many centuries passin respectfully over . . ." without regard to anything of himself which may be in the painting. This aspect of his forgery is the most ambitious, in a Faustian sense, of Wyatt's work, to excise the personality completely in the attempt to reproduce the ravages of time [358]. Wyatt's artistic endeavors, then, depend on a form of counterfeiting, but one inconceivably more difficult than is required simply for the forgery itself: he uses identical materials, identical methods, in pursuit of a comparable esthetic and moral vision, following the Guild oath and spirit of the time, and finally damages the work in a way comparable to the non-human and
impersonal ravages of time. Eliot's "individual talent" can do no more in accommodating the present work to a past order.  

Wyatt's distaste for nineteenth-century works may derive in part from Eliot's reaction against the Romantic artist; it is expressed as a quality of vision associated with photography. Photography presents one perspective, a view which is associated in The Recognitions with the self-sufficiency of rationalism; in contrast, the Flemish painters Wyatt recreates took multiple perspectives.  

. . . the art historians and the critics talking about every object and . . . everything having its own form and density and . . . its own character in Flemish paintings, but is that all there is to it? Do you know why everything does? Because they found God everywhere. There was nothing God did not watch over, nothing, and so this . . . and so in the painting every detail reflects . . . God's concern with the most insignificant objects in life, with everything, because God did not relax for an instant then, and neither could the painter then. Do you get the perspective in this? he demanded, thrusting the rumpled reproduction before them. --There isn't any. There isn't any single perspective, like the camera eye, the one we all look through now and call it realism, there . . . I take five or six or ten . . . the Flemish painter took twenty perspectives if he wished, and even in a small painting you can't include it all in your single vision, your one miserable pair of eyes, like you can a photograph, like you can painting when it . . . when it degenerates, and becomes conscious of being looked at.
being "conscious of being looked at": Wyatt keeps a mirror only "to correct bad art," while Otto continually studies the impression he is about to make [159-60; 506-507]. Wyatt's recognition depends not on seeing a familiar face, or a familiar world, but on cognizance not of accident but of substance; he must ascertain God's regard for his creation from the art work. Wyatt has earlier left the ministry for his art; now his art returns to a kind of religious vision, a vision abstracted or demythologized from particular theological content: this abstraction suggests the Faustian dimensions of pride inherent in his recognition.

Wyatt resembles Faust, as we have seen, in his will to create regardless of the consequences, his drive for forbidden knowledge, his identity with past masters, and his association of "original" works, including his re-creations, with guilt. "I've passed all the scientific tests," he tells Sinisterra; this statement summarizes his technical achievement and the physical poverty to which it has carried him [872]. Wyatt's relationship with the works of the past, like Faust's with magic or the Faust legend itself with the Clementine Recognitions, depends on a fusion of past work and present moment—a vital translation of "Tradition and the Individual Talent" into the artist's necessary work with "a world of shapes and smells." In his attempt to reach beyond these to "substance," Wyatt carries through an Eliotic version of a search for pattern in his antecedents.
This recognition, then, is a metaphorical expression for one's encounter with a work of art: since art works in The Recognitions are themselves "metaphors for reality," as Joseph S. Salemi has suggested, recognition is therefore an accommodation of the individual with reality, an idea of considerable significance not only in The Recognitions but in the world at large, in which individuals lack any overall schema to order events. Only by such an accommodation can one's schema of the world be checked; and one's self-justification be averted. But art transcends this functional role as a "reality checker": its recognition is the basis of Wyatt's claim that "a work of art redeems time," since in recognition the flow of minutiae characteristic of fragmented human consciousness is halted. (We have seen this already in Wyatt's moment before the Picasso painting. [91-92]) The question The Recognitions presses us towards is that of finding significance in a world no longer given order by traditional Christian belief: since it is impossible not to have a myth of some sort, Gaddis shows "enlightened" men such as Mr. Pivner as believers (their faith unarticulated) in science. The contrast between these perspectives will be further developed in the next chapter; essentially in The Recognitions, the contrast is between a holistic past and a fragmented present, while for Pynchon the split is synchronous, between rational Western history and non-rational
"cold" mythologies.\(^\text{32}\)

Carlyle and Melville present similar dichotomies between past and present, partially in reaction to the neoclassical commonplace of the Golden Age: Carlyle bears an apocalyptic faith that such a Golden Age is not somewhere in the distant past, but is just ahead.\(^\text{33}\) Melville is rather skeptical of American faith in progress, as the satirical element in *The Confidence-Man* shows; more significantly, the mythic references which Franklin and others have pointed out function like Eliot's allusions, calling attention to present cultural poverty by ironic comparisons with a mythic past.\(^\text{34}\) In Melville's novel, however, the fluidity of the narrator suggests the possibility that the confidence man just might be an incarnation, Manco Capac or Siva on the Mississippi, like Stevens' Jove among the hinds.

In Gaddis' usage as in Eliot's, however, the change seems always a loss: Mr. Pivner's progressivism is a poor replacement for the myth which sustained the Flemish painters. Given the chance to contemplate a work of art—in this case, music—while he awaits his departure to meet Otto, his son, Mr. Pivner responds quite differently from Wyatt.

--To come into the room, and see him staring, without blinking, just staring, not an insane stare but sitting and looking? Last night he was sitting there, that way, and the music on the radio, I can still hear the announcer's voice afterward because it was such a relief, it was the Suite Number One in C Major of Bach, and afterward all he said was, *such precision*. *Such precision.*
--But that's true, it's . . . Otto came down on the sofa beside her.
    --Yes, but it isn't human . . .

[125-26]

Mr. Pivner barely registers the music at all.

He hung up, and looked at the radio, waiting. The Reformation Symphony made him nervous, as all such music (called "classical") did, as the word Harvard did; but sometimes he was struck with a bar of "classical" music, a series of chords such as these which poured forth now, a sense of loneliness and confirmation together, a sense of something lost, and a sense of recognition which he did not understand. It must be time to take his medicine [insulin, since he's a diabetic] before he left to go downtown.

[501]

In general, those who miss "recognition" register "a sense of something lost " [12; 726]. Mr. Pivner feels vaguely disturbed by this music which he doesn't understand; but unlike Wyatt he doesn't have the facilities to comprehend what dissatisfies him.

Mr. Pivner is one of those Wyatt characterizes as having no sense of necessity: for The Recognitions he represents modern man as newspaper reader [144; 288]. The facts we see in his newspaper reflect the minutiae of consciousness characteristic of urban society:

Over and under the ground he hurried toward the place where he lived. No fragment of time nor space anywhere was wasted, every instant and every cubic centimeter crowded crushing outward upon the next with the concentrated activity of a continent spending itself upon a rock island, made a world to itself where no present existed. Each minute and each cubic inch was hurled against that which would follow, measured in terms of it, dictating a future as inevitable as the past, coined upon eight million counterfeits who moved with the plumbing weight of lead coated with
the frenzied hope of quicksilver, protecting at every pass the cherished falsity of their milled edges against the threat of hardness in their neighbors as they were rung together, fallen from the Hand they feared but could no longer name, upon the pitiless table stretching all about them, tumbling there in all the desperate variety of which counterfeit is capable, from the perfect alloy recast under weight to the thudding heaviness of lead, and the thinly coated brittle terror of glass.

[282-83]

Obviously the counterfeit theme is sounded again: the frenzied activity of New York is contrasted with Wyatt's purposeful work; the stoppage of time characteristic of his painting is contrasted with the accumulation of discrete moments here [274]. Wyatt is not the only character to voice the problem of establishing a meaningful continuum of time: Stanley echoes the identical sense, giving it validity beyond Wyatt's example.

we get time given to us in fragments, that's the only way we know it. Finally we can't even conceive of a continuum of time. Every fragment exists by itself, and that's why we live among palimpsests, because finally all the work should fit into one whole, and express an entire perfect action, as Aristotle says, and it's impossible now, it's impossible, because of the breakage, there are pieces everywhere.

[615-16]

The "recognitions" of Mr. Pivner and other New Yorkers occur casually, on the street and on the surface; only the most transient sense of order is available, that represented by Mr. Pivner's evening newspaper. "He summoned his attention to read the article, for it was in such 'features' that he found the satisfaction which life never suggested, that of
a beginning, a middle, and an end " [291]. This satisfaction, however, is an artificial and finally unsatisfactory substitute for the deeper recognition Wyatt describes. It is true that the experiences are not at all comparable; but they are called by the same name and seem to fulfill similar roles in ordering the lives of the characters. Obviously Pivner's "recognition" is a counterfeit of the genuine kind.

One may object that Gaddis is not really playing fair with Mr. Pivner and similar characters in The Recognitions; if even those of Wyatt's capabilities are afforded a chance at significant recognition only seven times in a life, then the satire of those who cannot approach a "religious experience" through art seems excessive. The degree of satire, however, works ultimately to the reader's discomfort; moreover, a satirist is not normally expected to be fair--Swift certainly wasn't to the Royal Society, nor was Twain to Fenimore Cooper--but to be true to his vision of the discrepancy between how the world apparently does work and how it ought to work. Such a discrepancy does exist in The Recognitions: even Wyatt cannot sustain the unfamiliarity characteristic of deep recognition. Like any visionary experience, it is not meant to be sustained, but to transform past as well as future experiences, like Teufelsdröckh's theophany--and not only one's personal but one's cultural past as well. Pivner's world is not subject to transformation, much less to theophany: in its mass of accumulating details we find the iner-
tia and entropy of Pynchon's V. Miracles have no place in
Pivner's schema; it is science's function to explain (or ex-
plain away) the mysterious. And precisely like a miracle,
recognition is unforced, unexplained, unarticulated: like
a theophany, it is presented as immediate fact which forces
all preceding data to conform to its existence. In short,
it is the accident which forces a readjustment of the schema.

Recognition necessarily carries religious overtones;
but these are divorced from religious experience in any trad-
tional context. Simple adherence to past forms of worship
is usually ridiculed in The Recognitions—as with the Fran-
ciscan brothers, the Use-Me Ladies (and their "Dick"), and so
on [9-10; 711]—and the supplanting of these forms by "sci-
ence" receives even less sympathy, as with the rosary-counting
machine ("Keep Tabs on Mystery" [826]) and scientific at-
ttempts to prove or duplicate miracle [300-301; 923]. Where
religious belief is held seriously, as with Stanley, it
receives a good deal of sympathy. Gaddis suggests a double
replacement for religion: one school sees science as re-
placing its functions, explaining what formerly was myster-
ious; the other looks to art rather than science, keeping
some aspects of the mysterious but stressing isolation [632].
Art at least succeeds better in its preparation for the un-
familiar, and generally receives better treatment in The
Recognitions.
Most of the characters in The Recognitions pursue neither of these, but drift generally towards an unexamined rationalism; such recognitions as they have are trivialized just as art and religion are trivialized. These trivial recognitions, occurring on virtually every page, merely accommodate a person or event to a system bent on self-justification, and do not enlarge that system into a larger frame of reference. These are described as "the ones who are conscious of what happens to themselves only in terms of what has happened to themselves, who recognize only things they have seen with their eyes"; no new experiences adjust the basis of their system. [384] Thus characters recognize (or fail to recognize) acquaintances, those with whom they are familiar. The general statement of this social recognition comes in connection with Otto's search for his father (a parody of Stephen Dedalus' in Ulysses): as long as he does not know what his father looks like, he is free to imagine him as anyone.36 "Otto took sudden new interest in every very successful middle-aged man who passed, coveting diamond stickpins, a bowler hat, an ascot tie, and even [. . . ] a pair of pearl-gray spats. [. . . ] For now, the father might be anyone the son chose. The instant their eyes met in forced recognition, it would be over." Otto's fantasies go so far as to include a Belgian king, Albert, dead in the mountains; when he sees Sinisterra, his prospects close:
--Two hamburger steaks, well done. And hurry it up.
Albert, King of the Belgians, careening gloriously down among the crevices of rock, gone, never to reappear and interrupt legends offered about him, to suffer translation from the fiction of selective memories to the betrayal of living reality.

[515]

Reality, Otto has said previously, he thinks of as "the things you can't do anything about"[119]: one of the things he cannot do anything about now is the man he takes as his father. Reality results from Otto's "recognition" just as from Wyatt's; but in one case it is a diminishment of possibilities as a result of fantasies which may no longer be sustained, while in the other it expands possibilities. After their meeting, even the woman Otto had been trying to pick up looks at him "without recognition or interest " [516].

Mr. Pivner's newspaper reading provides us the second paradigm for trivial recognitions. His reading seems to substantiate his continuing existence by assuring him that he has not been the victim of a natural disaster.

Mr. Pivner read carefully. Kills father with meat-ax. Sentenced for slaying of three. Christ died of asphyxiation, doctor believes. Woman dead two days, invalid daughter unable to summon help. Nothing escaped Mr. Pivner's eye, nor penetrated to his mind; nothing evaded his attention, as nothing reached his heart. [. . .] Fearful of missing anything, he read on, filled with this anticipation which was half terror, of coming upon something which would touch him, not simply touch him but lift him and carry him away. [288]

The newspaper "[externalizes] in the agony of others the
terrors and temptations inadmissible in himself " [287-88].

His reading is a catharsis, then: in its fragmented columns he finds as much pity and terror as he can accept—which is little. As we have seen, the artificial ordering of "a beginning, a middle, and an end" which the papers provide substitutes for the more substantial ordering of Wyatt's recognition. Mr. Pivner's reading allows him to recognize only what he already knows; his experience is an evasion of experience.

Often the only way he could know whether he had read a newspaper was to turn to the comic strips, where life flowed in continuum; and recognizing them, he knew that he must have read everything else closely and avidly, that nothing had evaded his eye, nor penetrated to his heart round which he had built that wall called objectivity without which he might have gone mad.

[288]

Reading a newspaper, then, provides a comforting familiarity which is the sine qua non of Mr. Pivner's life: when this familiarity is threatened, as when he fears a break-in [284-85], or disrupted entirely, at his arrest, his world is literally destroyed.

—You might as well turn off your radio, you won't be back here tonight . . . and Mr. Pivner recognized him, as he hurried back across the dark room while they waited in the den. It was the blind accordion player.

—O.K., let's go . . . But even now, habit did not desert Mr. Pivner. He waited until the radio announcer had finished his sentence.

—And now friends, stay tuned for drama with the impact of reality.

[744]

Wyatt's recognition can occur because he is freed tempor-
arily from the constraints of the familiar; Mr. Pivner's burst in on him, concealed by the familiar. As with one's own death, events take him by surprise. The familiar seems to be Gaddis' term for the domesticating world of the quotidian, which lulls each of us into the false sense that he knows the world; the eruption of the unfamiliar is in a sense a preparation for what must come, the death of the ego.

Art exists in The Recognitions (true art) to make possible such defamiliarizations as Wyatt's; false art, on the contrary, depends on the familiar for its reception. This dichotomy supports Wyatt's superiority over the artistes, and distinguishes him as forger from the many other false artists.

All this may seem rather constricting when generalized to such a degree; but it is less so in The Recognitions due to two factors. First, Wyatt's value as an artist does not depend, for the reader, on the value of his art, but on the extent to which the ideas he expresses about art are validated within the novel itself. And several of his observations are carried through the novel consistently. We find his statement, for example, that "every work of art is a work of perfect necessity" echoed by Max, who so far as we know never meets him [144; 465]. His concern for a return to artistic "origins," to recognition of "form" underlying surface detail, is echoed by Esme and Stanley, not as an idea
dropped into conversation, but as an integral part of their
own working procedures [91-92, 144, 250, 274, 67; 298-302;
322]. In ways besides the artistic, several characters desire
to return to origins; Wyatt's return to New England, Benny's
resolve to see the sun rise, and Rev. Gwyon's Mithra worship
come from such an impulse. Even characters treated satiric-
ally feel comparably, as we see from Otto's resolve to join
the Catholic Church and Ludy's pursuit for a "religious ex-
perience" [516; 857-61]. The Recognitions shows, then, not
Wyatt's art works or his ideas, but their effects on his cul-
ture; by this means we accept his importance much more freely
than we might such a person in the world.

Furthermore, Wyatt seems much more substantial when con-
trasted with figures such as Otto and Ludy: Gaddis' satire
at the expense of artistes, critics, and party-goers is so
extensive that we are inclined to accept Wyatt's observations
because in The Recognitions there is no alternative. He
presents at least an attempt to deal with "a world of shapes
and smalls," and addresses the problem of fragmentation; the
others, as Wyatt says, can only react, lacking any basis for
a holistic vision. A third possibility, sardonic refusal to
participate significantly, is presented by Basil Valentine:
as intellectually and culturally well-prepared as Wyatt, he
wilfully refuses to be engaged. "My dear fellow, remember
Emerson's advice, Basil Valentine said, and paused. [. . .]
We are advised to treat other people as though they were
real, he said then, lighting his cigarette, "--because, perhaps they are." [264]. Emerson is precisely the figure Basil Valentine should look to as a model; and Gaddis presents him in a light comparable to that of the Emerson figure in The
Confidence-Man.

"Seven times in a life," and at best three figures of some acknowledged artistic merit and ordering vision, are formulations which do not constitute very good odds for redeeming the time: and these figures themselves do not fare well in the novel. Esme dies of an infection unrelated to her drug addiction, denied even the satisfaction of suicide; Wyatt ends by scraping canvases of masterpieces and copulating to prove his existence; and Stanley dies in the collapse of the cathedral at Fenestrula, a collapse caused by his pulling out all the stops (literally, "for the work required it") in the performance of his composition [956]. The conclusion one must draw from their ends is that in The Recognitions there is an absolute distinction between work of art and world at large: the fact that one's vision permits recognition roughly equivalent to a religious experience does not mean that life is transformed or made any easier. As Esme phrases it in an idiosyncratic and almost incomprehensible letter to Wyatt: "Paintings are metaphors for reality, but instead of being an aid to realization obscure the reality which is far more profound. The only way to circumvent pain-
ting is by absolute death"[473] 38. Esme's letter reverses the metaphorical equation established earlier: rather than "reality" being conveyed by a painting, the painting supplants reality. (Her letter indicates something of the relationship between art work and world which will be discussed below.) In Wyatt's work painting is indeed a metaphor for reality; but Esme's letter conversely suggests the unavoidable limitation of metaphor, that we may postulate the "substance" beneath "the accidents of reality," but that in fact, brief and visionary recognitions aside, one cannot escape a limited perspective, a painting, or a metaphorical translation of experience, except by ceasing to exist altogether. This conclusion may explain Wyatt's eventual turn from reconstructing to deconstructing (literally) works of the past.

What Wyatt says about the problems of art applies to painting and to writing as well; in fact, more of his theoretical comments apply to literature specifically than to fine arts as a whole. Readers of "realistic" works are criticized for expecting easy recognition:

That's why most writing now, if you read it they go on one two three four and tell you what happened like newspaper accounts, no adjectives, no long sentences, no tricks they pretend, and they finally believe that they really believe that the way they saw it is the way it is, when really [. . .] it never takes your breath away, telling you things you already know, laying everything out flat, as though the terms and the time, and the nature and the movement of everything were secrets of the same magnitude. They write for people who read with the surface of their minds, people with reading habits that make the smallest demands on them, people brought up reading for facts, who
know what's going to come next and want to know what's coming next, and get angry at surprises.

The expectation of familiarity here is precisely that which Mr. Pivner brings to his reading: we may generalize this to include the buyers of French art in The Recognitions [287-92; 67-68]. Writers and painters who cultivate market values by serving their public are therefore devaluing art; The Recognitions argues in favor of art which brings its audience to some new vision, some schema more appropriate to a more varied experience. Thus Wyatt hates reproductions because they make works ineffective in producing such a new vision; we never can see the Mona Lisa "with a thousand off-center reproductions between you and it" [92]. One might reply that relatively few people get to the Louvre to see the original, but such concerns are not Wyatt's:

they have no right to try to spread one painting out like this. There's only one of them, you know, only one. [...] these reproductions, these cheap fakes is what they are, [...] It cheapens the whole . . . it's a calumny, that's what it is, on my work.

[250]

Such "cheapening" eventually results in valuation of art according to the numbers of people who can see it, rather than according to the quality of their vision; and further developed, the question becomes whether a work should be defined according to some intrinsic value or according to how it is perceived. If we take the egalitarian side of the ques-
tion and say that some mildly interesting work seen by fifty
million on television is of greater worth than a great produc-
tion seen by fifty, we must conclude, with Basil Valentine,
that "'If the public believes that a picture is by Raphael,
and will pay the price of a Raphael, [. . .] then it is a
Raphael'" [239].

The Recognitions poses through its discussions of art a
familiar philosophical question, whether things have exis-
tence in themselves or as perceived: if one sides with Ber-
keley, that esse est percipi, then valuation of art depends
on popular belief in the object rather than any intrinsic
merit. Once again we encounter the theme of counterfeiting:
if the value of art is popularly defined rather than intrin-
sic, then economic and not esthetic criteria dominate, and
best-sellers, television, radio, and advertisement supplant
more traditional--Gaddis would say more worthwhile--works
of art.39 "A work of art redeems time" only if it can give
permanence to the flux of experience--as a television program
cannot, since "it runs for twenty minutes and you can never
show it again, so you throw it out" [607]--and Wyatt's at-
tempt at permanence, given some validation by the novel,
is coincident with his attempts at recognition. We see the
flux of experience everywhere in The Recognitions, in its
mass of details and in narrative passages describing its
city-dwellers:
The streets, when [Wyatt] came out, were filled with people recently washed and dressed, people for whom time was not continuum of disease [like Wyatt] but relentless repetition of consciousness and unconsciousness, unrelated as day and night, or black and white, evil and good, in independent alternation like the life and death of insects.

These move about like Eliot's citizens, "distracted from distraction by distraction" 40, unable to concentrate on the real due to the interference of the trivial. "Now they buttoned buttons for the thousandth time without question, absorbed in pragmatic interior monologues which anticipated the successes of the day to come fostered by the failures of the day before " 203.

The Recognitions suggests that their meaningless movements are only given purpose by figures such as Wyatt, whose solitary and antagonistic works define the matrix of culture within which they move:

Before their displacement from nature, baffled by the grandeur of their own culture which they could not define, and so believed did not exist, these transatlantic visitors had learned to admire in this neatly parcelled definition of civilization the tyrannous pretension of many founded upon the rebellious efforts of a few, the ostentation of thousands presumed upon the strength of a dozen who had from time to time risen against this vain complacence with the past to which they were soon to contribute.

Civilization, then, depends on art; and art, significant art, upon recognition: Wyatt tells Basil Valentine that criticism is "the most important art now, it's the one we need most now. Criticism is the art we need most today. But not, don't
you see? not the 'if I'd done it myself . . .' Yes, a, a disciplined nostalgia, disciplined recognitions" [335]. Art produces not only artists but those who may see art intelli-
gently, those "with memories that go back to . . . where mine
goes," as Wyatt says [250]. Ultimately the question to be
asked about The Recognitions is how well it satisfies its own
criteria for significant art—-that is, how well it promotes
recognitions of the more significant kind.

My own sense of The Recognitions is that it succeeds by
failing, according to its own criteria—-that it is a counter-
feit which, like Stanley Fish's Self-Consuming Artifacts, is
meant to lead to a state beyond the work itself.41 For rea-
sons similar to those which make it impossible to show Wyatt
as artist, it is impossible to prove the deep variety of re-
cognitions in the text: recognitions depend on the reader's
receptivity and on an intrinsically valuable work, but also
on a chance occurrence much like theophany which cannot be com-
pelled, either by the will of the reader or by the text.

Gaddis does the next best thing: he holds before the reader
an unattainable ideal of recognition, along with many trivial
recognitions, which makes desirable a flash of insight tying
The Recognitions' many events holistically together—-an in-
sight always just beyond reach. We have seen a similar prob-
lem in Sartor, where Carlyle shows a character whose insight
transforms his world, but distances himself by the Editor's
objections. Melville's last novel pursues similar ends in an opposite insight, that "confidence" in reading the meaning of events can never be justified. In The Recognitions, Gaddis leads the reader to the prospect of esthetic recognition near to theophany, only to deny the likelihood--not the possibility--of that transforming experience.

Recognition, then, is a potential significantly not fulfilled in The Recognitions: it is present, like confidence, principally by its absence; and it draws the reader on, like the prospect of sin.42 It is vital to the novel, however, that we acknowledge recognition's potential existence: Wyatt's composure breaks when he finds Recktall Brown's Bosch table, subject of his first forgery and basis of his subsequent works, apparently was a copy; he generalizes this to refer to the subjects of his other forgeries and art in general: "--Now, if there was no gold? . . . continuing an effort to assemble a pattern from breakage where the features had failed. --And if what I've been forging, does not exist?" [381]. If there are only forgeries, value can only be relative; but if there is an original, then Wyatt's consequent belief: in the worth of his work has a basis in fact.

[379; 385; 689]. Gaddis uses a series of devices which underscore the sense (as with Pynchon's Tchitcherine) that the reader is being held on the edge of an illumination.43 Most easily recognized of these are the allusions: often, as with the echoes of Eliot's poetry and criticism, these briefly
support Wyatt's esthetic theories. Allusions in Eliot's poetry contribute towards the presence of the past in the present asserted by "Tradition and the Individual Talent"; in The Recognitions, however, they often suggest a context whose breadth borders on the irrelevant. An allusion which indicates that something which the reader normally would take as not relevant actually is, gives one the sense that he is being left behind, that he does not perceive the full context of what he is reading. Even easily recognizable allusions to known works may contribute to this sense of incompleteness if the relevance is not clear to the reader, as with the many references to the church fathers. And allusions even when fully recognized may not give the sense of revelation of, say, The Waste Land: this may be in part the effect of The Recognitions' length, compared to a poem; but it may additionally have to do with the quality of allusions made. The fact that Otto is recognizably similar to the "young man carbuncular" in his relations with Esther and Esme, or that his meetings with Wyatt and Sinisterra are obvious comic versions of Stephen Dedalus' with Leopold Bloom and Simon Dedalus, does not transform the novel for us; rather, it underscores The Recognitions' status as a counterfeit itself.

Specifics are always helpful in tracing such effects: Gaddis' use of, say, The Aeneid does not correspond with Joyce's of The Odyssey, as we may see:
[Otto] pulled at the roll of paper on the wall, to wipe away a smudge on his cheek, and that paper rolled out to him with a great creaking, and one small brave passenger, a cockroach, riding like Palinurus piloting the ship of Aeneas, where he went to sleep at the helm and fell overboard, to be murdered by natives ashore.

[221]

Like Eliot's allusions, this diminishes the present in comparison to the past; but the satirical thrust receives Gaddis' emphasis rather than the revaluation implied by "Tradition and the Individual Talent." We sense here the possibility that "there's no direction to act in now": the direction available to Gaddis depends heavily on "forging," in two senses. The texture of The Recognitions comes in part from phrases, not recognizable as allusions, which are repeated throughout: these include a joke (never told) about Carruthers and his horse, several limericks, an ad for study service, and Dale Carnegie's book (in its last citation translated How to Procure for Friends and Vanquishing of Everybody). Wyatt has a number of motifs, including "We're fished for," "the gold to forge," Gresham's law, and a nursery rhyme about a man of double deed. Characters often are identified solely by key phrases: one man tries to decide whether he is best described as a negative positivist or a positive negativist; a woman reappears who looks like George Washington at various stages of his career; and a tall woman has her poodle present at all times ("Bad doggie! Bad sacrilegious doggie!"). These phrases are signs which identify charac-
ters much in the way that clothes or props identify the confidence man or others on the Fidele; their recurrence evokes a kind of familiarity or sameness in most of The Recognitions, and this sameness emphasizes Wyatt's difference and importance both to the novel and to its world.

Names are dropped incessantly in the novel, just as party-goers drop names in conversation. The effect is to show their trivial integration into the flow of culture: the painters, sculptors, composers, writers, poets, and philosophers mentioned participate in only the most superficial way in the lives of those who cite them. Their frequent appearance in the text suggests that, for most of the novel's characters as for most of the modern world, their ideas have been simplified to a statement or two (like Einstein's theory of relativity, converted to "Everything is relative") and an associated name: Gresham's law thus applies to ideas as well as to coins. Like Pynchon, Gaddis seems well acquainted with information theory, particularly with the relation between the frequency of a sign and the amount of information it carries. The common use of a term—an idea which since Norbert Wiener's The Human Use of Human Beings has become a bit of a commonplace itself—necessarily divorces it of content: Gaddis, like the other writers here, carries a sense of cultural inertia. Carlyle senses a tiredness in his society,
but seems confident in Sartor that a new vision may transform it; Melville in The Confidence-Man seems to have no such confidence, but leaves events to the reader's contemplation; and Pynchon suggests that Gödel's Theorem (or Murphy's Law), actually a whimsical statement that no law will fit everything that is the case, may be the only basis for hope to escape the deadening effects of "routinization."

In The Recognitions, the effect seems to be a strong desire for recognition, if not for the reader then for some artist-as-hero.

The expectation of significance, then, leads the reader on, in much the way that Aunt May, and later Wyatt, say the prospect of sin lures him on [33; 814]: phrases, allusions, jokes, and nursery rhymes which reappear as motifs tantalize the reader into expecting more. Always this technique involves risks, principally that of missing important turns in the plot; 46 as in real life, the reader deals with an overwhelming number of details by selecting among these and building a schema which will suffice, making adjustments along the way. In this fashion The Recognitions both resembles and expresses an essential hostility to the world at large: it is a counterfeit which touches that world (by its allusions, for example), but which by its nature is distinct from it. The principal distinction I take to be the expectation that its events have meaning: in the creation of such expectations it directs the creation of a schema for its own
reading, a procedure which then may be turned to the world at large.

We may see the creation and fulfillment of expectations in *The Recognitions' first sentence: Tony Tanner notes that mask, masquerade, and reality all appear there, and form a motif carried throughout its thousand pages. The order of their appearing, however, and the sense of an alternate version against which they mean, are also significant. 47 "Even Camilla had enjoyed masquerades, of the safe sort where the mask may be dropped at that critical moment it presumes itself as reality " [3]. From the sentence's beginning it implies its opposite, an opposite as yet unknown, to be revealed when the funeral becomes recognized. What form this masquerade takes is as yet not specified—-but we know it is not of the "safe sort" that may be stopped at a critical moment. And we know that the text, besides concerning itself with masquerades and reality and their distinction, will depend as well on this critical moment or series of critical moments in which the nature of the masquerade is challenged. *The Recognitions' own prose, as we shall see, depends on comparable moments.

Such a critical moment qualifies the affirmation Wyatt describes as recognition, when he forges the signature:
--And so when you're working, it's your own work, Basil Valentine said. And when you attach the signature? [. . .]

--Yes, when I attach the signature, he said dropping his head again. --that changes everything, when I attach the signature and . . . lose it.

--Then corruption enters, is that it, my dear fellow?

The signature is the only illegal part of Wyatt's work: and all the guilt associated with the act of counterfeiting, and in Wyatt's case, with original creation, is deferred until the moment the signature is attached. In another masquerade, Otto's moment of discovery is deferred until he learns from Stanley that his "father's" money is counterfeit; after learning this, he flees to Central America, where he is caught up in the revolution he formerly had pretended. Under the dubious medical care of Doctor Fell, he calls himself Gordon, after his play's hero; thus the mask falls from one charade only to be adopted later, in a form he cannot escape [731]. Similarly, Sinisterra's forged passport, identifying him as Mr. Yak, is responsible for his assassination in Spain [648-49; 651-52; 821-22; 919; 934-35]. This moment may be the converse of recognition: whereas recognition allows an ordering of phenomena in a positive sense, dropping a masquerade when it pretends to reality is a means of escaping the consequences of a schema--like Ludy's last "religion experience," something he cannot precipitate or escape [900]. Near The Recognitions' end, another character opens a window and the
hotel's façade falls off; such catastrophic revelations occur with sufficient variety to establish a pattern.

Such a moment seems to occur only once in The Confidence-Man, when the cosmopolitan, encouraged by Charlie Noble's protestations of friendship, tells him that he is "in want, urgent want, of money." Melville devotes a chapter to his reaction: "Beggar, impostor--never so deceived in a man in my life," and the masquerade resumes when, by displaying the sum he had requested, the cosmopolitan shows that his request has been merely a pose. But the effect is ultimately unsettling: in The Confidence-Man we see only masks, never any acknowledged "reality." The Recognitions presents the opposite; there is a continual dichotomy between characters take the state of events to be and what the narrator tells us they are. Otto's preparations may make him more presentable for others in the novel, but for us they make him simply absurd. "He must remember this arrangement: left eyebrow raised, eyelids slightly drawn, lips moistened, parted, down at corners. This was the expression for New York." [160]. Because of the narrator's substantial presence in The Recognitions, we sense a "reality" behind or beneath or somehow anterior to the characters' level of experience. This anterior experience is implied from sentences such as the novel's first.

The meaning of the first sentence, then, is the exper-
ienced quality of the voice which, ontologically distinct from "Camilla," that is, from all its characters, presumes a perspective from which to judge their actions against "reality." We may contrast this with Henry James' practice in The Ambassadors: Ian Watt has remarked that "the dual presence of Strether's consciousness and that of the narrator... makes the narrative point of view both intensely individual and yet ultimately social." We sense an essential reticence about the narrator of a James novel: he will rarely if ever tell too much; he limits his perspective essentially to that of another character, one fortunate enough to know all the participants and their motivations, but there is no sharp ontological distinction between him and his characters. Camilla's sensibility, however, is no part of Gaddis' interest: she barely enters the novel at all, though her absence is substantial. The narrator seems to claim the same superiority to his characters as that of Joyce or Flaubert; but at the same time, he enters frequently to tell the reader the significance of events. What is said in the first sentence about Camilla is less important than what is said about masquerades and reality, and the critical moments in which one is taken to be the other.

The first sentences establish expectations which are both met and violated: we expect, from the funeral procession and the opening sentence, some conflict between a
character's expectations and what does in fact occur; what we
do not yet foresee is the degree to which grotesque parti-
cularity will enter into the fulfillment of those expecta-
tions. Wyatt is established, by his family's expectations
of him, and by the contrast with the artistes, as the artist-
as-hero; yet Gaddis works against these expectations in giving
him very little interaction with other characters, and in
undercutting his heroic stature by self-conscious reference
to novelistic expectations:

. . . as though I were reading a novel, yes. And
then, reading it, but the hero fails to appear, fails
to be working out some plan of comedy or, disaster?
All the materials are there, yes. The sounds, the
images, telephones and telephone numbers? [. . .]
Where is he? Listen, he's there all the time. None
of them moves, but it reflects him, none of them . . .
reacts, but to react with him, [. . .]

[263]

One thing we do not expect the hero to do is to doubt his
heroic stature; and a good deal of The Recognitions' poignan-
cy comes from our sense of Wyatt's failure to realize his
capabilities. Wyatt does in fact eat his father, and his
mother is canonized; chance fulfills the actions of
"providence," but not in the manner anticipated.

Our expectations in a novel are that the main character
will be central to most of its events. This is in a sense
true of The Recognitions: Wyatt's presence gives signifi-
cance to what otherwise would be relatively purposeless
satire. Yet after page 118, he is nowhere called by name:
the pronoun "he" is his only reference until he is renamed by Sinisterra [867]. His rechristening after an available passport—incidentally, by the name his parents had intended to give him—does in fact become his name, both for the character and for the narrator. "My friends call me Ludy. People who know me call me Ludy. --That's all right, said the man on the floor, still not looking up, his voice dull and even. --People I've never seen before in my life call me Stephen" [867]. We have then the disturbing prospect of a character whose name—his only sign in a text constructed of words—changes, being in fact absent for most of the novel's length. This namelessness echoes problems of fictive identities posed by all four texts here: "Diogenes Teufelsdröckh" appears, from its form, to be a pseudonym or fictive combination of types of the Romantic hero; by its very nature it combines opposites. The characters on Melville's Fidèle may be forms of the same character, if we follow Franklin's reading; names such as Charlie Noble, Mr. Truman, Frank Goodman, William Cream, Barber, and Mr. Ringman sound like aliases, the fictive equivalent of masks. And Pynchon's Slothrop not only changes names ("Max Schlepzig"), but literally dissolves in Gravity's Rainbow's last section. One result of such devices is to emphasize the fictional nature of the text; in The Recognitions, additionally, they set Wyatt apart from the rest of the novel's characters, but in such a fashion that its
characters do not notice the change.

The narrative voice itself creates expectations only to frustrate them. In the context of French cafe society, the narrator offers this generalization: "Paris lay by like a promise accomplished: age had not withered her, nor custom staled her infinite vulgarity" [63]. Such a sentence bears a surprise in its last word: from the sentence itself, our expectations are that the statement will be a fairly predictable tour-guide platitude, say, infinite variety. When vulgarity, not variety, is used, the reader must adjust his expectations to accommodate this counterfeit, perhaps reflecting on the fact that not all promises are particularly desirable. In a larger frame of reference, The Recognitions repeatedly forces revaluations of its meaning like this one, revaluations which create the expectation of being surprised --the converse of "realism" as Wyatt describes it.

And there is a considerable difficulty simply in recognizing characters, identified usually by first or last name only, and frequently not identified at each appearance. In two-or three-way conversations, phrases appear with tirez marks and very little "he said" identification; often such conversations are mixed, so that the reader must labor to follow diverse conversations. It is almost as though identity does not matter in The Recognitions; Wyatt and his father aside, characters often seem interchangeable, certainly
at the many cocktail parties. What matters is not self-hood but one's function as speaker for a given idea: the woman who speaks about taking a "personality course" and the monk who collects photographs of typewriters are fairly interchangeable grotesques. The effect of this interchangeability is the apparent assertion that all contemporary times are more or less equivalent, a sense reinforced by allusions in the text. Wyatt could as well be Leonardo, or Bach, or T. S. Eliot: his importance derives not from his individuality or his originality—in *The Recognitions* a Romantic delusion—but from his function in relation to his culture, that is, what he has in common with other artists who have opposed the deadening sameness of their cultures. Thus events in *The Recognitions*, like those in *Sartor* and, to a degree, in *The Confidence-Man*, are always generically the same. As in those books, the individual character, like the reader, is posed one eternally shifting, yet identical, question, the Sphinx riddle of recognition.52

Recognition, then, is a metaphor for the perception at the heart of experience, a problem Gaddis takes as always the same—the substance whose surface changes according to accident [94].

There's always the sense [. . .] of recalling something, of almost reaching it, and holding it . . . She leaned over to him, her hand caught his wrist and the coal of tobacco glowed, burning his fingers. In the darkness she did not notice. --And then it's . . . escaped again. It's escaped
again, and there's only a sense of disappointment, of something irretrievably lost.

[119]
The esthetic act is generalized beyond particular media: Wyatt could have been a composer or musician as well as a painter, with little appreciable change, beyond the convenient reference to "a world of shapes and smells" which he must control to paint. This divorce from particulars gives The Recognitions more general application to the world at large; at the same time it is the text's primary distinction from the world at large, that it is a verbal artifact. Experience tells us that art per se does not exist, only arts, very specific workings through physical or verbal or musical materials--that "significant form" exists only through the world of shapes and smells. What kind of art, then, The Recognitions does discuss is a problem which eventually confronts its reader: my contention in the next section will be that its generalization away from particular media is not only a necessary condition of its own existence as a novel, a linguistic artifact, but is also an expression of its own hostility as text to a world of particulars--that Wyatt's own frustration at a world of "accident" is to a degree his author's as well.
III. Credit from the Thing Itself

--But if Mister Fedde saw a copy of a play by Ibsen, if he loves The Wild Duck and wishes he had written it, he wants to be Ibsen for just that moment, and dedicate his play to someone who's been kind to him, is that lying? It isn't as bad as people doing work they have no respect for at all. Everybody has that feeling when they look at a work of art and it's right, as though they were creating it themselves, as though it were being created through them while they look at it or listen to it and, it shouldn't be sinful to want to have created beauty?

--Why don't you go home and read Saint Anselm before you talk like this? said Anselm sitting forward, [...] "The picture, before it is made is contained in the artificer's art itself," he said. "And any such thing, existing in the art of an artificer, is nothing but a part of his understanding itself."

--Saint Anselm. Dig him, said the haggard face bobbing over the back of the booth. --What are you trying to prove?

--I'm proving the existence of God, God damn you. Saint Augustine says a man who is going to make a box has it first in his art. The box he makes isn't life, but the one that exists in his art is life. "For the artificer's soul lives, in which all these things are, before they are produced."

--Where's God? In the box?

--You dumb son of a bitch . . .

[535]

Perhaps the most striking fact about The Recognitions, and certainly a crucial difference from Hemingway's novels and their imitators, is the mixture of ideas worked into (and through) its fictional action. Material of the greatest seriousness and consequence not only to the novel itself but to questions which have animated philosophical discourse for centuries is freely mixed with frivolous or ironic or silly conversation. Such a combination may be found, prior to The Recognitions, in Joyce's Portrait of the Artist as a
Young Man, as Stephen Dedalus' epiphany is set against the naturalistic and mundane play of his schoolfellows. Yet there is a sharp distinction between Gaddis' and Joyce's practice, for all the apparent similarities: for Joyce, the values of epiphany associated with this moment in Portrait are exactly coexistent with the naturalistic values inherent in the scene itself. Stephen's presence as artist-as-a-young-man is validated only through his qualities of vision, not through any literal artwork he creates. His artistry in Portrait is only potential, not accomplished. Whatever larger values exist beyond the individual—artisthood, godhood, cultural transformation—are completely subsumed in the individual presentation.

At a greater distance from Flaubert—and particularly after the example of Joyce himself, as well as Eliot and his articulation of the artist's ideal role in his culture—Gaddis divorces universal values from their associated individuals. Gaddis cannot find in the particulars of his culture the fascination that Joyce does in Ireland's: virtually all the details in The Recognitions—its rhythms of speech, its details in conversation, its patterns of behavior—contrast how people do behave in the world and another referential scheme, how they ought to behave. Gaddis contrasts his artist and the other characters much more sharply than does Joyce: Stephen Dedalus associates freely with Malachi Mul-
gan, Mr. Deasy, and other grimy particulars of Dublin, including Bloom; even in *Ulysses* we never see him creating an art work, itself necessarily distinct from its world. Even during the epiphany in *Portrait*, the juxtaposition indicates Stephen's emphatic presence in the particular physical confines of that world. It is no part of Joyce's work, as it is Gaddis', to show the artist, inside the work, distinct from his world, indifferent, paring his fingernails. In the few sequences during which we see Wyatt creating his works, however, physical activity is stopped, because his consciousness is possessed by the form of art. Ideally, then, the art work in Gaddis' novel is formally and intrinsically distinct from the constraints of the quotidian: we see this in the few descriptions of artistic creation and in the significant recognitions which we are told make it possible. Gaddis takes as his material, as the basic subject of *The Recognitions*, the essential, ontological distinction between art work and the life of its creator.

The distinction between Joyce and Gaddis, however, goes well beyond their different material, as the passage quoted above shows; in writing a sentence such as "'I'm proving the existence of God, God damn you,'" Gaddis achieves a mixture of styles distinct from the essential sameness of "The Oxen of the Sun." Joyce's virtuosity (the usual term) in that chapter of *Ulysses* is bent towards what Borges has des-
cribed as "the elementary idea that all periods are the same or are different." That is, the dizzying effect of this anthology of English prose leads to a sameness in all styles. Gaddis contrasts his two distinct levels throughout The Recognitions, with the apparent design of showing in action Gresham's law, applied not only specifically to currency, but broadened to include philosophy, religion, and art, including The Recognitions itself.

Gresham's law indicates that, whenever two coins of putatively equal worth are circulated, the intrinsically cheaper will displace the other. In the last few years, coins made of a copper alloy have been circulating with silver coins in the United States: the rapid disappearance of the silver quarters and dimes testifies to the accuracy of Gresham's 16th-century insight. In counterfeiting we see the same principle: the cheaper reproductions of twenty dollar bills supplants government issue, or would were it not for the Secret Service. Gresham's law becomes thematically important for The Recognitions along with the theme of counterfeiting: just as counterfeit coins in abundance will cause the disappearance of the actual gold coins (and just as intrinsically cheaper paper currency earlier replaced the gold coins of the 19th century), so counterfeit versions of art works--forgeries, reproductions, or simply conceptually easier and more familiar works--displace more valuable works. Similarly in religion,
debased versions of devotion (Ludy's pursuit of a "religious experience" or religion's increasing "popularity") are far more common than formerly in The Recognitions. (Wyatt's recurrent question, "Am I the man for whom Christ died," supposedly the question every Christian must ask, is asked only by him, though Fuller echoes it.) By their very currency, the staples of Western civilization become debased: words themselves are subject to the same decline as any other item in circulation. The implications of this debasement of language indicate part of the reason for Gaddis' evident rage at the world he portrays in The Recognitions: the very existence of his art (unlike Joyce's) is threatened by the actions his art describes.

Gaddis has recourse to one hope, however. Given the general debasement of language, and the necessary task of showing that debasement through language itself already in part debased, he nonetheless has to suggest an ideal state where language still may mean perfectly and transcendentally. As in the quote above, the real box is the one in the artisan's soul, not any physical box he builds. The recurrent phrasing in The Recognitions is that the series may not exist, but the original has to have existed [534-36; 450-51]; there must be the gold to forge [689]. Particular works of art may be imperfect—in fact, they must be imperfect: particular, physical existence necessarily requires some imperfection if only because of the work's impermanence ("inherent
vice")--but there must be "significant form," untouched by the artist himself or his subject. There must be determinate meaning for Gaddis (to use an alternate phrasing of the problem) even if unknown by any particular reader, or else chaos results [300]. This belief in the importance of such a determinate meaning is expressed with greatest emotional force by Wyatt when he falls into despair, believing that the basis of all his forgeries, the Bosch table which his father brought back from Europe and which he sold to finance his artistic studies, was in fact a copy.

--Preach to them, then, my yetzer hara, speak to them, then, my evil heart. While I fly like a piece of cloth on the wind, or the color itself, the street is filling with people like buttons in Galilee. Speak to the Am-ha-aretz, preach to them, pray. Tell them, as the composer predicted there's nothing left but knowledge and evidence, and art's become a sort of tailbone surviving in us from that good prehensile tail we held on with then. Tell them that Peter died an old man, and right side up. Tell them that Mary broke her vows to go off with a soldier named Panthera, and wandered away to give birth to his son. Tell them, the ones who are conscious of what happens to themselves only in terms of what has happened to themselves, who recognize only things they have seen with their eyes, tell them the whole thing hangs on a resurrection that only one lunatic saw, one and then twelve and then five hundred, for visions are contagious, and rescurections were a stock in trade, and the streets were full of messiahs spreading discontent, that Jesuus Christ and John the Baptist would both be arrested on the street today, and jailed, and for the same reason. Tell them the truth, then, that Christ was thrown into a pit for common malefactors, tell them the truth, then, not that power corrupts men, but men corrupt power. [. . .] The Am-ha-aretz, whose memories include nothing but their own failures, tell them their suffering belittles them, tell them that, my yetzer
hara, tell the ones who trade only in false coin where they can buy clothes to wear when they are alone. That is all, and Gresham's law, and Gresham's law, and Gresham's law for love or money. Go out among them and tell them that their nostalgia for places they have never been is sex, the sweating Am ha-aretz, and when they hear music, tell them it is their mother, tell Nicodemus, tell him there is no other way to be born again, and again and again and again of a thousand other mothers of others-to-be, tell him, my yetzer hara, tell them, tell them my evil heart, that they are hopeless tell them what damnation is, and that they are damned, that what they have been forging all this time never existed.

[384-85]

What consolations The Recognitions seems to offer are based on the existence, if not in the present, then in the past, of human activities possessing some value. Realizing that for him "there's no direction to act in now," Wyatt has chosen past masterworks created by artists for whom significant form existed, and for whom the world was ordered because everything in it was seen by God. Wyatt cannot carry this conviction in our century; but he can imitate those who did hold such convictions, whose art was therefore ordered. When he becomes convinced that the table he had forged was only a copy, the basis of his later actions is undercut. Like Peer Gynt meeting the button-maker, Wyatt's sense is that being neither very good as an "original" nor as a copier he may as well be melted down. In The Recognitions it is no longer particularly significant that the culture has lost the ordering function of a common myth; what Gaddis suggests here is that even the basis of counterfeit versions may be
lost, leaving only the purposelessness of Mr. Pivner's kind, who can recognize only the expected, not the transcendent, who look to science for explanations, and for whom art is only a kind of anachronism. The passion with which Wyatt speaks must come at least in part from his author as well. This passage sums up several important themes: Gresham's law as general statement of cultural decline; the relation between easily recognizable schemata and easy, trivial art; and the religious formulation of the need for determinate meaning, the existence of God. Ultimately, if meaning is not determinate, there is no basis for placing intrinsic value in art, and an art work's value then must be defined according to market values. This assertion of Gresham's law may be equated with the ultimate denial of art, and its effect is to make art commercial, the property of the realm of business, whose master is Recktall Brown.

What Wyatt wants—"credit . . . from the thing itself" [362]—is both recurrent desire and ultimate impossibility for the artist. The work must be distinct from the world, and in its distinctness lies any claim it might be given for determinate meaning; and if it is distinct it cannot give credit of this sort. The problem of art's essential disinterest in human concerns is a familiar one, perhaps posed definitively in Keats' odes. For Keats' poetic speaker in the "Ode on a Grecian Urn," the figures on the urn allow an
intense but temporary imaginative participation which terminates even before the conclusion of the poem. Both the intensity and the permanence come from the urn's status as art object, a status both desirable for and unattainable to the speaker; as he notes, their pursuit will continue forever, although their love cannot be consummated. In its evocations, this theme represents the ambivalence of the artist toward the work of art: his product, it is distinct from him and will (presumably) survive him; unlike a child, the qualities which give it permanence are non-human, another fact causing ambivalence.

The state of the art work, derived from the world of experience and yet distinct from it—and for Gaddis perhaps ontologically superior—is also unattainable to the narrator of The Recognitions; but in a way less poignant than in Keats' ode, The Recognitions too suggests an ideal state, "significant form" described through Wyatt's artistic epiphany, which exists in the novel as a desired state comparable to that of the figures on the urn. The narrator is both desirous of and frustrated by the existence of this significant form: he cannot arrest time—Gresham's law in The Recognitions prevents such—but he can suggest the possibility that someone else might. Keats' lovers have no physical existence at all, and may never have had—certainly, if they did, their permanence is a characteristic of the formal state
of art and has nothing to do with their physical existence in Greece.

The prevalence of similar desires in Western literature, both before and since Keats, suggests that Keats may have been touching on the universal, that there is common to many Western artists a desire to escape the physical constraints of time and circumstance and culture at large into some timeless, necessary and permanent expression of existence. Any generalization is a dangerous act; but we might note that inherent in the act of writing there is a withdrawal from quotidian fact in order to perform an action essentially organizational, an action ontologically distinct from the quotidian. (Words placed on paper are not literally spoken to anyone, however they might be read aloud at some subsequent time.) Schneidau has traced affinities between writing, an action performed alone and in secrecy, and the Yahwist prophet crying out against excesses of his culture: alienation is in both cases the common experience. Such alienation may be the basis of a generalization about the artist's role as adversary/creator of his culture, a generalization such as that Gaddis makes  [65]. Yet it is always worthwhile to recall that Keats didn't write about the urn itself—but an ode on a Grecian urn, that is, about a poetic speaker's interaction with the art object. This often overlooked fact about Keats' poem bears emphasis because it is only through
consciousness that such things as urns and eternal pursuits can exist. Wyatt's desire for tribute "from the thing itself" is the same impossible desire for permanence, then, that Keats' speaker expresses in the poem.

As a result of this tension between the potential perfection of the achieved work and the felt limitations of physical reality, we frequently see, mirrored in the art work itself, the writer's desire for this permanence, expressed as a contrast with the fragmented and contingent events that comprise quotidian life. The relationship between author and text, then, is one we perceive in part by the success of the text's organizing figures: the strategies they employ and their relative success or failure have a bearing on how we try ourselves to organize the text, or how we approach the act of reading. In Pynchon's first novel, V., for example, two characters attempt to comprise in some way the world's working: Herbert Stencil, who finds a disreputable number of coincidences linking himself to the lady V. and to "the plot of the century," suspects eventually that he cannot evaluate his schema, and flees the problem; Fausto Majjstral achieves a moderate amount of success only by the "successive rejection of personalities," thus discarding the diachronic problem of history altogether. To permit the artist-figure to succeed easily or clearly, without a struggle, is to minimize the difficulty in one's own work: thus all these figures face
enormous difficulties in finding what will suffice; and in each case their achievement is limited. In The Recognitions Wyatt succeeds only momentarily: Gaddis describes moments of authentic artistic value by continual reference to their degree of distinctness from quotidien life.

A clear indication of the transience of any artistic work, according to Gaddis, is its degree of interpiercing with accident: this interpiercing indicates that, rather than escaping the chaos of the present, the artist has been overwhelmed by its chaos. As we have seen, Wyatt's recognition is described in terms of "form" abstracted from "completed reality" which represents life. Wyatt's model in Paris, Christiane, leaves his studio with no further relationship to his work:

Christiane went on her way uncurious, uninterested in the litter of papers bearing suggestion of the order of her bones and those arrangements of her features which she left behind, unmenaced by magic, unafraid, she walked toward the Gare Saint-Lazare, unhurried, seldom reached it (for it was no destination) before she was interrupted, and down again, spread again, indifferent to the resurrection which filled her and died.

The description applies equally to the use Wyatt makes of the sketches made of her and to her own occupation as a prostitute: here art and life continue along non-intersecting paths. The same mutual disinterest may be seen with Wyatt's later model, Esme.
--Be quiet. Turn your head back. Where it was. Where it was, damn it.
--When?
--There. Yes, yes, he said in a hoarse whisper. She was silent, beyond the outlines which she fitted perfectly enough to have case them there in a quick reflection done without intent, without knowing. Some time passed. With each motion of his hand the form under it assumed a reality to exclude them both, to empty their words of content if they spoke, or, breathing, their breath of that transitory detail of living measured to one end; but left them, his motions only affirmations of this presence which projected her there in a form it imposed, in lines it dictated and colors it assumed, and the accidents of flesh which it disdained.

[274]

It is the art which "lives" Wyatt [262; 335]. Painting, then, bears only tenuous relations with the subjects painted: this schematic relationship (literally) is perhaps the basis of Wyatt's hostility toward photography [250-51], which necessarily reproduces everything in its frame, without further discrimination. And insofar as painting is a metonymy for art, and is comparable to writing--and such an assumption is basic to The Recognitions' self-reference--we may infer art's essential disinterest in the world at large. Thus Wyatt objects to people who want to meet "the artist," including those who want to learn his "tricks" [107-08]; he objects to Esther's disgust at learning that a poet she knows is homosexual [94-96]:

--Listen, this guilt, this secrecy, he burst out, --it has nothing to do with this . . . this passion for wanting to meet the latest poet, shake hands with the latest novelist, get hold of the latest painter, devour . . . what is it? What is it they want from
a man that they didn't get from his work? What's any artist but the dregs of his work? The human shambles that follows it around? What's left of the man when the work's done but a shambles of apology.

"The impersonality of art" is rather a weak phrase to describe Wyatt's attitude: it has more in common with the Biblical great gulf between heaven and hell. Art and life are necessarily, ontologically distinct, according to Gaddis—a distinction not recognized by those who talk about Rilke the man instead of his poems, for example, or by Otto, whose daily conversations are imperfectly transmuted into his play.

Late that night, Gordon stood poised in the doorway of a summer cottage, about to speak. (As a matter of fact, Gordon had been holding that screen door open for about a week now, laboring, as one hand shaped the air, to reduce Priscilla with some painful profundity.) Suddenly, in a rush of typewriter keys, he spoke. Gordon: Suffering, my dear Priscilla, is a petty luxury of mediocre people. You will find happiness a far more noble, and infinitely more refined state. Priscilla sobbed, and someone pounded on the floor from below, warning Gordon that he had said enough. There was, however, little chance of Gordon's going on tonight. At a stroke, Gordon had recovered his former assurance, and his former height. He had acquired a few new habits (could, for instance, put away a pint of brandy without showing it) but, for all urbane intents and purposes, his profundities were to be spoken with that withering detestable cleverness of old, delivered with his former ease, as he dressed with his former elegance. What was more: Gordon had discovered Art.

The accumulated effect of such passages—Otto's mixed and Wyatt's pure arts as described in The Recognitions—goes far beyond the mere elaboration of an idea gleaned from
T. S. Eliot. *The Recognitions* works toward the discomfort of paradox by advocating in uncompromising terms the absolute impermeability of the art work, ideally, measured against events from the quotidian, yet at the same time using many transient materials from the quotidian world itself; it seems to hold forth as ideal the creation of "significant form," but itself falls into didactic statement. In doing so, it activates for the reader its assertions about the necessity of recognitions which are almost unattainable. Wyatt's contention that "there's no direction to act in now" is felt as true in *The Recognitions* itself--true, that is, and false. Falsity is itself a possible direction, not unexplored before *The Recognitions*, but still relatively novel. The text continually shows a hostility to all the "surface" events it contains, while presenting them in loving detail: this is in part a recognition that what is underneath--substance--is unavailable for human kind, and partly an attempt to reach that "underneath" by indirection--by "false art" to approach the true.

The notion that "substance" exists beneath "surface" is common to all four of the works treated here, though the results are diverse. We have seen Carlyle's contention that God underlies the phenomena of the universe which Teufelsdröckh tries to order; and we have discussed as well Melville's ville's skepticism toward this analogy in *The Confidence*-
Man. In The Recognitions the terms can be organized according to the analogy of counterfeiting: "substance the imperceptible underlying reality, accident the properties inherent in the substance which are perceived by the senses: the substance is transformed by consecration, but the accidents remain what they were" [94]. That which is underneath is described as approachable by esthetic means, through art; in The Confidence-Man it was approachable by no means. Even the quotidian characters in The Recognitions have a common, almost ancestral, longing for the esthetic: a bus driver tries "to redeem, as best his numb imagination would permit him, the absurdity of reality" [206]; and Otto's ambition to be a playwright is ample indication of a desire, if no capability, to reach some potentially redemptive origin. As we saw in the quote opening this section, Mr. Feddle's desire to be Ibsen for a moment is treated with a mixture of irony and sympathy.

The Recognitions, then, counterfeits such redemption: unavailable for execution, in part due to the times, in part perhaps to the author's slightly less than Faustian ambitions, it attempts to suggest the existence of "substance"--the possibility of redeeming time--by presenting numerous examples of failure, the most detailed and prominent being Wyatt's. Eventually Wyatt's pursuit of veracity leads him to attempt the duplication not only of works of art, in the spirit of
their original creation, but their destruction as if by accident thereafter: "--But the damage? It isn't as though I'd done that. A hand was flung up before him. --The painting itself, the composition took its own form, when it was painted. And then the damage, the damage is indifferent to the composition, isn't it" [335]. Not content to imitate the original painting, based on substance, Wyatt must also duplicate subsequent accidents, the hardest part [242]. In this way counterfeiting embraces artistic ambitions more far-reaching, ultimately, than even Eliot's individual talent may have foreseen: Gaddis brings out the implications of Eliot's essay as they developed in his later career, but in a way which provides him the distance of parable from his argument.

The Recognitions may be considered a parabolic novel, in two senses: Schneidau notes the characteristic kerygma of the parable, that its nature is to exceed, not merely to fulfill, expectations about its generic nature. 58 Another common term among the works considered here is that they aspire to mean more than any text can mean--that is, to project beyond their own limitations in some way, as the rocket in Gravity's Rainbow projects (itself parabolic in the other sense) outside its own text. We know of parables that they tend to be rather schematic (not an idle term) in their versions of events; that they depend on their listeners' orientations for comprehension; that they tend to bear implicit criticisms of their cultures; and therefore that they promote
a kind of alienation from the prevailing beliefs of their culture. Parables indicate what is in fact an essential hostility to the world at large (in the sense used here), a hostility which may be characteristic of the act of writing in general, and one which certainly may be traced in The Recognitions.

I mean by parable that form of narrative epitomized by but not limited to the tales reported of Jesus in the gospels: stories which, like most of the Bible, present a bare minimum of distinguishing detail, therefore allowing wide, almost universal application. The assumption in parables is that the story is not simply an idle narrative—the refrain, "He who hath ears to hear, let him hear" indicates that some application is necessary. Like The Recognitions, the parable necessarily selects among its listeners:

And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables?
He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. . . . For this people's heart is become gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed, lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.

We may note a certain consistency between the description, by the maker of parables, of his audience (split into two groups), and the maker of paintings in The Recognitions [107; 113-14]. As Schneidau says, it is "the form which can
dramatize the most urgent kinds of meaning for those thirsting for it, which yet seems baffling or trifling to those wise in their own conceits.\textsuperscript{61} In a parable the listener or reader judges himself and his culture; in reading the newspaper or "realistic" works, however, he flatters himself, at least in Gaddis' description, into self-satisfaction both personal and cultural. The parable, then, like the symbol in Carlyle's definition, both reveals and conceals at once; and this action is characteristic not only of the works considered but of much "serious literature."

On reflection, The Recognitions seems comfortably described as a parable: Gaddis generalizes Wyatt to such an extent that we take him readily to be The Artist. He is not limited to painting, nor even to theoretical discussions of painting, his supposed medium: Wyatt's command of "form" is such as to make him competent to build bridges:

--Look at it, he said, --do you see the way it seems to come out and meet itself, does it? He held his hands up in a nervous bridge, fingertips barely touching, the piece of string still hung from one of them. --Does it look that way to you? that sense of movement in stillness, that . . . tension at rest and still . . . do you know that Arab saying, "The arch never sleeps"? . . .

[96]

and he dances well enough to be recognized as "muy flamenco" by the Spanish [110]. His dancing is a function not of technique but of understanding the spirit of the dance--like his painting, acquaintance with the spirit of suffering [111-12].
In fact, his discussions of art tend to be divorced from technical problems altogether: Gaddis resembles his character in his reticence to "talk shop" about painting:

He knew few people, and them he saw infrequently. In three years, he had not written his father, and after a year in Paris he had finished seven pictures, working with a girl named Christiane, a blond model with small figure and features. As she exposed the side of her face, or a fall of cloth from her shoulder, he found there suggestion of the lines he needed, forms which he knew but could not discover in the work without this allusion to completed reality before him.

[67]

This description of Wyatt's painting lets us "see" any value we wish; and Gaddis' own novel is "open" in comparable ways. Names give a teasing sense of significance, as we have noted previously; and Wyatt's name disappears for most of the novel. Such historical detail as we have is centered on Wyatt and his father; no one else is grounded in much detail. We know little more about these people than we do about Melville's characters on the Fidèle, or the men given five talents, two talents, or one talent. What is important in The Recognitions (Wyatt and his relations with the past aside) is not historical detail of the familiar, naturalistic kind, but relations within the period of the novel, not diachronic but synchronic.

Models are used to allude to "completed reality," both here, when Wyatt is painting "original" works, and later in his "forgeries." These allusions, like those of The Recognitions itself, illustrate the paradoxical nature of the rela-
tionship between the work of art and the world proper: the painting, like the novel, must draw from the world for its forms, its "shapes and smells" which it is Wyatt's endeavor to control, yet at the same time be distinct from these shapes and smells. Both the accounts of painting as distinct from detail--moments of possession devoted to the work of art itself, to the creation of "significant form" which excludes personality--are essentially hostile to the world of detail which Gaddis' novel itself includes, the legitimacy of which it denies. 62 These passages contrast with the party conversations and with Mr. Pivner's newspaper, awash with details presenting no ordering scheme. 63 The relation described between a world of details, possibly contingent but certainly overwhelming in their potential, and the artist's attempt to master his materials in service of an ordering vision is the essential subject of The Recognitions, one of sufficient importance to warrant overlooking its excesses.

Not only are Wyatt's paintings never described in detail --a fact we might expect in a novel, by its nature an artifact of words--but Gaddis even omits treatment of such historical details as are traditionally available to the novelist. Consider the chronology of The Recognitions: the first events of the novel, the trip overseas on the Purdue Victory and Camilla's death, are dated only through the most tenuous relation with "history": "--And Catholic, growled Aunt May, re-
fusing even to repeat the name of the ship they sailed on, as though she could sense the immediate disaster it portended, and the strife that would litter the seas with broken victories everywhere, which it anticipated by twenty years " [4]. It would be relatively easy for Gaddis to say that in September, 1919, Rev. Gwyon and his wife Camilla set sail for Spain, immediately after World War I; what is effaced from Gaddis' account is almost all reference to the larger system of events, including the wars (certainly the one just concluded)—a clear reordering of the novel's events in reference to its central figures rather than to "reality." Even the span mentioned, twenty years, is general, and could refer to 1940 as well as to 1939. Dates in The Recognitions are intentionally ill-defined: we hear that Wyatt has been in Paris for three years, in Germany sometime before; only after some calculation do we note that those years encompass the post-war rise of Nazi Germany. The Recognitions provides no dates for actions in its present, and it ignores significantly the single most thoroughly explored series of events for novelists of Gaddis' generation, World War II—which is mentioned only once in The Recognitions, so far as I can tell, as "the late hate."

It is entirely appropriate, then, that Gaddis' painter express highly developed and sophisticated opinions about artists in other media—particularly fiction—because he is in a
sense the artist divorced from media. In a parable we are not particularly concerned that the owner of a vineyard, for example, should show us through his intimate knowledge of growing grapes that he is indeed what the parable says he is. Far from it: the momentary identification with the characters in a parable is made all the easier if their "characters" are less well defined. This identification, the subject of attack and ridicule in *The Recognitions,* is paradoxically its own method of procedure—but an identification intended to bring the reader to evaluation of his own schema of the world, not merely as escape from the world. Parables lead their listeners or readers to question their own relationships with the world, relationships which are measured against the events of the parable.

Parables, like any other narrative, proceed according to an internal logic of their own. This internal logic will be at once similar and dissimilar to the primary schema of the culture as a whole—"the world"—depending on which particular set of events is taken as its subject. Christ's "Render unto Caesar what is Caesar's, and render unto God what is God's" is marvelously ambivalent in a way characteristic of parables—and in a way characteristic of *The Recognitions.* Those listeners predisposed to a literal response about tax-ation could interpret it as "yes—pay your taxes and your devotions," while those predisposed to revolt might find it
a remark far more inflammatory for its duplicity. Wyatt characteristically maintains precisely those qualities as an artist we are inclined to value: heroic opposition to received ideas and popularized concepts about art; isolation from accepted modes of quotidian life; devotion to craft; opposition to shallow people. Who, after all, can oppose the value of artistic work based on deep "recognitions"?

It is, after all, not the artistic works themselves which enter the novel, but their descriptions, how we are told they are recreated, and how they are received by the characters. Wyatt is valued relationally in the novel, not intrinsically—a fact which undermines The Recognitions' assertions about determinate meaning. What matters in reading the novel is not how valuable an artist he is, but his perceived value, seen from the narrator's support, from other characters' unconscious echoes of his declarations, and from a sense of logic in his career.

Wyatt has declared his consternation to Recktall Brown (not the most sympathetic of listeners): "There's no direction to act in now." This remark becomes poignant as we see him move from painting "original" works to restoring others' to recreating past works to destroying as a mode of creation. As we have seen, the "direction" Wyatt finds is that of counterfeiting, creating works as if done by artists of earlier
periods, an action dependent upon his success in reaching
the spirit of the past era.

--And . . . any knock at the door may be the
gold inspectors, come to see if I'm using bad materials
down there, I . . . I'm a master painter in the Guild,
in Flanders, do you see? And if they come in and
find that I'm not using the . . . gold, . . . the
demand that . . . and this exquisite color of ultra-
marine, Venice ultramarine I have to take to them for
. . . because I've taken the Guild oath, not for the
critics, the experts, the . . . you, you have no more
to do with me than if you are my descendants, nothing
to do with me, and you . . . the Guild oath, to use
pure materials, to work in the sight of God . . .
[250]

Wyatt's career, the principal "story" of The Recognitions, is
to be taken as parable: the artist with great genius and
motivation situated in a culture ruled by Gresham's law.
We see Gresham's law in The Recognitions' photographic re-
productions, in its advertisements and mass media, in its
"self-help" books, and in its rationalism in general. In-
stead of challenging the reader's valuation of himself, the
works it describes make him feel comfortable and self-suffi-
cient. These works are comparable to what Stanley Fish calls
"rhetorical" works and to what Schneidau describes as "cyber-
netic." 64

The quality of scorn which The Recognitions has for such
ey easy works leads to the similarly easy assumption that we
readers are somehow above all this, all the debased activity
of its world. Yet the implications of Wyatt's vision are
difficult to face comfortably: if life is bearable, if civ-
ilization is redeemed, only by the few great individuals who
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will resemble the world. To the extent that it seems to distort that world it will be a departure from it.

One characteristic of the world at large is its contingent quality: the world is too large for all its events to be explained by any alternate schema, such as by cause and effect, though attempts are legendary. Almost no schema is particularly tolerant of contingency: usually it attempts to press contingent events into some apparent framework of causality. In religious schemata, myth gives men reasons for being: "I've thought of it, you know. Joining the Church, I mean. [...] It's ... it kind of gives a reason for things that otherwise don't seem to have any. I mean, it legitimizes ... well, you know ... life, sort of" [516]. Behind Otto's hesitant statement is a desire treated as constant in The Recognitions, the desire to escape the limitations of egocism into a more significant sense of order. In writing fiction this desire is balanced against the Faustian attempt to bring the world into line with one's own schema, not to accommodate oneself to another framework. The particular framework Gaddis attacks in The Recognitions is that of rational empiricism, which seeks to explain all occurrences according to a resolutely profane system of values. (Gaddis' version of empiricism is itself "ordered.") Traditional systems of cause-and-effect cannot successfully cope with contingency, as Gaddis and Pynchon show: "But no one has even
begun to explain what happened at the dirt track in Langhorne, Pennsylvania about twenty-five years ago, when Jimmy Concannon's car threw a wheel, and in a crowd of eleven thousand it killed his mother " [566]. For Gaddis, cause-and-effect becomes invalid because it does not explain intangibles such as art or religion; and in The Recognitions we see a compromise between the implications of contingency, perceived as what really happens in the world, and the aesthetic need to order experience.

Fiction, then, is inherently opposed to chaos: we prefer stories with "a beginning, a middle, and an end," like Mr. Pivner, Gaddis' quintessential common reader. Yet the attempt at providing a coherent history--itself an attempt "to rescue some semblance of a system from the chaos of the past" [494]--is itself logically untenable. The writer is engaged in a private/public revenge upon the world: isolated from it, in surroundings conducive to alienation, he may substitute for its contingent events the logic of cause and effect which we call plot. Thus Gaddis' hostility to ephemeral social values, epitomized in The Recognitions' party conversations, is not simply the satirist's moral desire to castigate those trends he considers unacceptable, but comes from the nature of the act of writing itself. Like any parable, its ultimate effect depends not on whatever it in fact says, but on its effects in conjunction with the reader; a parable applauded as a good story has not been sufficiently
read. To measure its success, one must ascertain the degree to which his own schema has had to adjust in order to incorporate the new work of art—a demand at odds with traditional generic works, which mean within a relatively comfortable sense of genre. The text is then in a sense a double to the world, but a distorting mirror by whose image we may see new elements of the real thing.
Notes to Chapter Three:

1Herman Melville, *The Confidence-Man: His Masquerade*, ed. by H. Bruce Franklin (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1967), pp. 102, 55; William Gaddis, *The Recognitions* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1955), p. 372. All quotations are from this edition; subsequent references will be indicated within brackets in the text. My ellipsis will be distinguished from Gaddis' by brackets.

2Melville, p. 57.


5Compare Melville, p. 92, and Gaddis, p. 92; the terms "trivial" and "significant" are my own, the latter adapted from Gaddis' "significant form."

6Numerous passages in *The Recognitions* suggest this concern that art redeem time: among these are Stanley's discussion of the old masters [322-23]; Esme's attempts to write poetry, in phrases reminiscent of Eliot and Rilke [299-300]; and Wyatt's work in several places [67; 274; 144]. Compare the account of the afternoon before a Picasso painting [91-92]
with W. H. Auden's description of a mystical experience, in
"Shakespeare's Sonnets," in Forewords and Afterwords, selected by Edward Mendelson (London: Faber and Faber, 1973), p. 100.:

7 Herbert Schneidau, "For Interpretation," Missouri Review 2 (Fall, 1978), p. 81: "Meanings arise from systems of differentiation, even where referents are in effect identical." Schneidau is one of many to point out the dualistic character of meaning in linguistic systems.

8 There is an instructive contrast between Carlyle's account of Teufelsdrockh and Gaddis' of Wyatt; see p. 415, in which the wind is given purpose because of its opposition to the hero.


11 Pynchon, p. 55.

12 Pynchon, p. 56.

13 In this chapter I use artiste as synonymous with the trivial artist, to echo Gaddis' attitude toward French arts.


1950), pp. 3-11.

16. Here and elsewhere I follow Schneidau's distinction (after Paul Ricoeur) between cybernetic and kerygmatic functions of language: cybernetic language simply fulfills expectations, and is primarily a way of "keeping the channels open"; kerygmatic language, on the other hand, exceeds its expectations. Time is cybernetic, Keats kerygmatic. Schneidau, p. 83.

17. Compare Ed's "Chrahst, how unnecessary" with Wyatt's dictum that "Every work of art is a work of perfect necessity" [144].

18. For Esme, Wyatt is the only person she is real with [469]; his father's housekeeper, Janet, looks to Wyatt as to Christ [406-07]; Esther looks to him for support [589-94]; and Otto and Esme refer to him, unknown to each other, in conversation [450-51].


21. The name "Recktall Brown" presents an interesting transformation of "Teufelsdrockh."

22. For another perspective on the relations between "business" and the modern world, see Mircea Eliade, The Sacred and the Profane, trans. by Willard R. Trask (New York: Harcourt,


24 Characters who are dominated by quotidian concerns, however, may well wish to redeem reality: see the bus driver, p. 206, and Otto's definition of reality as "the things you can't do anything about" [119]. The plural, things, is instructive.

25 See Benstock; as Thomas S. Kuhn notes in The Structure of Scientific Revolutions (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1970), it is the unaccountable anomaly which forces us to restructure laws, as with science and coincidence. Gaddis' example is the tire thrown off a racing car which, in a crowd of 11,000, killed the driver's mother [566]. Such actions of coincidence which counterfeit design are vital to Gaddis' novel.

26 Gaddis, p. 92, quoted above.

27 Wyatt's namelessness is first pointed out by Benstock.

28 Eliot's formulation is active behind The Recognitions:

What is to be insisted upon is that the poet must develop or procure the consciousness of the past and that he should continue to develop this consciousness throughout his career.

What happens is a continual surrender of himself as he is at the moment to something which is more valuable. The progress of an artist is a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality.

Eliot, pp. 6-7. And:

The emotion of art is impersonal. And the poet cannot reach this impersonality without surrendering himself
wholly to the work to be done. And he is not likely to know what is to be done unless he lives in what is not merely the present, but the present moment of the past, unless he is conscious, not of what is dead, but of what is already living.

Eliot, p. 11.

29 Compare with this account of photography the earlier discussion of rationalism.

30 See Howard Nemerov's remarks on photography in Journal of the Fictive Life (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1965), pp. 82-83:

The camera, interested in surfaces, grew with a materialist civilization interested in "simple location in time and space" (Whitehead), and makes the constant claim that reality is visible. Language, on the contrary, constantly asserts reality to be secret, invisible, a product of relations rather than things. The camera, whether in the hands of reporter or scientist or detective, pries into secrets, wants everything exposed and developed. ... The camera wants to know. But if my hypothesis is correct, this knowledge is dialectically determined to be unsatisfying, so that there can be no end to the taking of pictures (this common phrase also now reveals a metaphorical content, where taking = stealing). Everything known becomes an object, unsatisfactory (not what you really wanted to know), hence to be treated with contempt and forgotten in the illusory thrill of taking the next picture.


33 See Herbert Schneidau, Sacred Discontent (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), on the distinction
between future-oriented Yahwists and other Near East civilizations. This contrast renews the critical commonplace about Carlyle's role as Victorian prophet.

34 These comparisons by allusion are present especially in "Prufrock," The Waste Land, and the quatrain poems. This function of allusion is distinct from, say, Yeats' allusions, which handle the myth more on its own terms.

35 Relevant to the contrast in The Recognitions between trivial and significant insights is Fish's distinction between rhetorical and dialectical texts. Stanley Fish, Self-Consuming Artifacts (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), p. 1.

36 Benstock makes this point as well.

37 Compare Robert Frost's "Provide, Provide."

38 Salemi takes his phrase "metaphors for reality" from this letter; but he does not deal satisfactorily with its content.

39 Compare pp. 384-85.


41 Fish, p. 1.

42 Perhaps, after Jacques Derrida, it should be written as recognition.

43 Pynchon, Gravity's Rainbow

44 A partial list of allusions would include the following:


It was only on the third reading of The Recognitions, for example, that I discovered that Valentine was not in fact murdered by Wyatt, since Valentine later appears overseas in a conversation with Mr. Inononu; and that Mr. Inononu has assassinated Sinisterra ("Mr. Yak") when the unfortunate counterfeiter contacts him about selling his faked mummy. See pp. 649; 651; 822; 919; 934.


See Gaddis, p. 94, on "substance" and "accident," discussed throughout this chapter.

ironically echoed by Gaddis' Americans in Paris, by Rev. Gwyn's trip to Spain and Italy, and by the tourists in Italy and Spain at the novel's close. Esme, like Daisy Miller, dies of an infection, suddenly and inexplicably; and other parallels with James could be further explored, particularly the stylistic similarities.

Camilla's presence is felt in The Recognitions especially on p. 15, and in the detail about her Byzantine earrings.

See Franklin, p. xxvi.


Jorge Luis Borges, "Pierre Menard, Author of The Quixote," in Ficciones, trans. by Anthony Kerrigan (New York: Grove Press, 1962), p. 48: "Menard detested these useless carnivals, only suitable—he used to say—for evoking plebian delight in anachronism, or (what is worse) charming us with the primary idea that all epochs are the same, or that they are different."

Pynchon, V., p. 306.

See pp. 130-31, cited below; and 299-300.

Interestingly the description of what Christiane does after leaving may apply equally well to Wyatt's continued painting from the sketches and to her principal line of work,
prostitution.

58 Schneidau, "For Interpretation"; see note 16, above.

59 See the first chapter of Erich Auerbach, Mimesis, trans. by Willard R. Trask (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953). The Recognitions may be discussed as parable, in spite of its richness of detail and its length, because of its general application to the situation of the artist.

60 Matt. 13: 10-12, 15.

61 Schneidau, Sacred Discontent, p. 254.


63 See also Esme's attempts at poetry, pp. 299-300.

64 Fish, p. 1:

A presentation is rhetorical if it satisfies the needs of its readers. The word "satisfies" is meant literally here; for it is characteristic of a rhetorical form to mirror and present for approval the opinions its readers already hold. It follows then that the experience of such a form will be flattering, for it tells the reader that what he has always thought about the world is true and that the ways of his thinking are sufficient. This is not to say that in the course of a rhetorical experience one is never told anything unpleasant, but that whatever one is told can be placed and contained within the categories and assumptions of received systems of knowledge.

65 See the efforts of Pointsman in Gravity's Rainbow to preserve cause and effect; this will be discussed in the next chapter.
Table of Contents

Introduction ......................... 1

Carlyle's Sartor Resartus ........... 19

Melville's The Confidence-Man ........ 71

Gaddis' The Recognitions ............. 158

Pynchon's Gravity's Rainbow ........... 267
Chapter Four: Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow*
I. The Points

In *City of Words*, Tony Tanner suggests that Pynchon's first novel, *V.*, may "owe quite a lot to Gaddis."\(^1\) While Pynchon's fiction developed considerably between the publication dates of *V.* and *Gravity's Rainbow* (the latter published three years after Tanner's observation), nevertheless the remark is still to some extent a valid one. Both Gaddis and Pynchon treat the contemporary wisdom with a similar mixture of ridicule and horror: Gaddis' attitude towards self-aggrandizing "self-help" books such as Dale Carnegie's finds its counterpart in Pynchon's distaste for systems of cause-and-effect reasoning.\(^2\) Both *Gravity's Rainbow* and *The Recognitions* oppose the insights of a central character to more conventionally accepted dogmas: Wyatt's artistic pronouncements are contrasted with the esthetic chit-chat at parties; and Tyrone Slothrop's paranoid intuitions of control are more accurate than the "common-sense" notions of others.\(^3\) (Gaddis' protagonist, however, achieves his insights by patiently developing his craft, while Slothrop's insights into control are intuitive, being partially a Puritan habit [26-29].) Both novels punctuate essentially serious material with potentially deflating jokes and puns—but to different proportions, since Gaddis' Agnes Deigh,
Recktall Brown, and Rev. Gilbert Sullivan are far outweighed numerically by (choosing from dozens) Pynchon's Coolidge "Hot" Short, Prentice's "batman" Corporal Wayne, DeCoverley Pox, Säure (acid) Bummer, Nikolai Ripov, Geli Tripping, and perhaps most outrageously, the law firm of Salitieri, Poore, Nash, De Brutus, and Short. In both The Recognitions and Gravity's Rainbow, the names lighten the texture of potentially heavy arguments; but Pynchon, even more than Gaddis, may be a believer in "high magic to low puns." Finally, both novels give a sense of nearly overwhelming ambition and historical scope, their mass of details immediately challenging the organizational and exegetical skills of their readers.

Perhaps most importantly, both novels pose the problem of the individual's relationship to his past. In The Recognitions this question arises in the context of esthetics: Wyatt's "past" is the tradition of visual arts (and others) from whose conventions his own art takes its meaning. The novel's argument follows closely the lines set down by T. S. Eliot in "Tradition and the Individual Talent." Gravity's Rainbow, however, suggests a more general formulation of the individual's relation with perceptual systems—almost inescapable control. Tyrone Slothrop discovers that he seems to have been under some sort of control since infancy [208-09]. Although this control is in no respect typical of the novel,
it is Pynchon's version of human relations with institutions. In comparable ways, both books are reflexive, calling attention to their own processes: Wyatt's complaint that "there's no direction to act in now" applies to The Recognitions' own composition, following basic questions outlined by Eliot and Joyce;\(^6\) in a more complex fashion, Pynchon, perhaps more than any other novelist the product of contemporary scientific and mathematical systems of technology, finds it necessary to disown these same systems because of their results--results characterized in Gravity's Rainbow under the rubric of "the War." Ultimately Pynchon writes a highly technical novel which attacks the fundamental processes of technology: the result is a kind of creative dissonance [676-77]. Pynchon's work establishes and then undermines certain expectations about its organization, a dialectic which forces the reader continually to evaluate his own schema of the work; the narrator's role in Gravity's Rainbow, therefore, is very like that described by Schneidau as the prophet's, denunciation of trends in his own culture.\(^7\). The prevailing trend Pynchon denounces, however, is "human consciousness" [720].

Starting from similar positions towards their societies, then, Gaddis and Pynchon reach very different conclusions about their works' implications: for Gaddis the need to achieve "significant form," and the ultimate impossibility of doing so, makes the artist's labor an esthetic equivalent
to that of Sisyphus, every canvas and every recognition another attempt, the whole unending but somehow cumulative. For Pynchon, however, the attempt is a matter of analysis and correction, in hopes of returning culture to a more favorable and less self-destructive course--like the system of feedback which guides the rocket's flight [239; 417]. Gravity's Rainbow, then, follows a model of reading distinct from that of The Recognitions: rather than being a work which fails by its own canons (that is, fails to present significant form), but fails instructively, it gives its readers, through its historical recreation, a return to "the points," to the place of deviation from the more desirable course.

It is characteristic of Gravity's Rainbow to present crucial information about its reading in oblique and unexpected ways: among the varied and often self-parodic voices of the novel is one formed by (or about) a Colonel from Kenosha, calling itself "Mister Information." In its description of "the points" is a vital analogy about the workings of Gravity's Rainbow itself:

Oh Jesus there they are now, unthinkable Animals running low in the light from the G-5 version of the city, red and yellow turbans, scarred dope-fiend faces, fared as the front end of a '37 Ford, same undirected eyes, same exemption from the Karmic Hammer--
A '37 Ford, exempt from the K.H.? C'mon quit fooling. They'll all end up in junkyards same as th' rest!

Oh, will they, Skippy? Why are there so many on the roads, then?

W-well gee, uh, Mister Information, th-th' War, I mean there's no new cars being built right now so
we all have to keep our Old Reliable in tiptop shape cause there's not too many mechanics left here on the home front, a-and we shouldn't hoard gas, and we should keep that A-sticker prominently displayed in the lower right--

Skippy, you little fool, you are off on another of your senseless and retrograde journeys. Come back, here, to the points. Here is where the paths divided. See the man back there. He is wearing a white hood. [...] He is the pointsman. He is called that because he throws the lever that changes the points. And we go to Happyville, instead of to Pain City. Or "Der Leid-Stadt," that's what the Germans call it. There is a mean poem about the Leid-Stadt, by a German man named Mr. Rilke. But we will not read it, because we are going to Happyville. [...] You can have your fantasy if you want, you probably don't deserve anything better, but Mister Information tonight is in a kind mood. He will show you Happyville. He will begin by reminding you of the 1937 Ford. Why is that dacoit-faced auto still on the roads? You said "the War," just as you rattled over the points onto the wrong track. The War was the set of points. Eh? Yesyes, Skippy, the truth is that the War is keeping things alive. Things. The Ford is only one of them. The Germans-and-Japs story was only one, rather surrealistic version of the real War. The real War is always there. The dying tapers off now and then, but the War is still killing lots and lots of people. Only right now it is killing them in more subtle ways.

[644-45]

Readers familiar with The Crying of Lot 49 should recognize, inside the children's-radio-show format, Pynchon's favorite fictional parable from thermodynamics, Maxwell's Demon. As Pynchon explains, the demon is Clerk Maxwell's hypothetical test of the second law of thermodynamics: according to the second law, usable energy in any system (including the universe) declines as a function of time, since some energy is always lost in transmission; in Maxwell's parable, the demon operates a gate between two equal chambers, collecting faster-moving, hot molecules in one, slower-moving, cold
molecules in the other. The resulting temperature differential may be used to produce work; and since the demon does no literal work himself, this work is free: by such a means the universal state of equivalent temperature, towards which all events move—entropy—may be reversed. As we have seen in V., this universal heat-death holds an apocalyptic fascination for Pynchon; his interest in the demon is of course playful, since the problem with Maxwell's Demon is in the information required to separate the molecules. As Oedipa says in The Crying of Lot 49, "'Sorting isn't work?'' One must be a "sensitive" to operate the machine; in Gravity's Rainbow this role, one of control, is delegated to "the pointsman."

The emphasis in Gravity's Rainbow falls not on the problem of seeing molecules but on that of choosing their ultimate destinations: the parable therefore is closely linked with the theme of elect/preterite. The figure who makes the choice is the switchman, or in English slang, the pointsman: appropriately, Pynchon's primary spokesman for control in the novel is Ned Pointsman, the Pavlovian psychologist who holds most tenaciously to the system of cause and effect attacked by the novel. "Mister Information" in this passage remarks that "Skippy" went on his own fantasy, that is, off the right track, just when he said "the War." "The War was the set of points" (without quotes around "the War") is a phrase which may apply to Gravity's Rainbow itself: it is the War, World War II and the associated machineries of death, the
interlocking markets and artificial demands for energy, which according to the novel are the points, the path where our own culture went wrong.

Could [William Slothrop] have been the fork in the road America never took, the singular point she jumped the wrong way from? [. . .] It seems to Tyrone Slothrop that there might be a route back--maybe that anarchist he met in Zürich was right, maybe for a little while all the fences are down, one road as good as another, the whole space of the Zone cleared, depolarized, and somewhere inside the waste of it a single set of coordinates from which to proceed, without elect, without preterite, without even nationality to fuck it up . . .

[556]

Such a "route back" is the procedure by which Gravity's Rainbow itself means to work: just as we have noted an essential hostility between The Recognitions and the world at large--with "significant form" an ideal held against ephemeral works as a standard of measurement and condemnation--so here in Gravity's Rainbow, Pynchon hopes to create a way back, a return to "the points" of the War, with renewed attention to the decisions made then in favor of "structures favoring death" [167], in an attempt to readjust our schemata and thereby readjust the culture. Gravity's Rainbow is therefore quite parabolic (in both senses) in its intent to reach beyond its own confines, as we shall see: it establishes its own zone, its own mode of action on the reader, and its own model for intersecting spaces, the interface. In order to perceive what is at stake in "the War," then, we must consider the development of Pynchon's fiction, to find his own
points.

Like *The Recognitions*, Pynchon's work has consistently described a culture manifested by decline; but whereas Gaddis' decline occurs in what we normally take to be the matrix of culture—art, music, religion, philosophy, and language itself—Pynchon's decline initially is associated with the thermodynamic decline in the universe's available energy—that is, entropy, a process which is outside culture but which necessarily envelops it. Pynchon's early fiction sets forth a fairly simple fictional version of thermodynamics—what we might call, after one of Slothrop's tutors, "engineer's poetry": an early short story, "Entropy," divides its plot (much as *V.* does) between a Henry Adams-like Callisto, who tries to preserve a meager existence in a literal hothouse upstairs, and a Profane-like Meatball Mulligan, who holds a "lease-breaking party," complete with the equivalent of the Whole Sick Crew and a sailor very like Pig Bodine. The noise from the anarchical party below constantly interrupts Callisto's attempts to dictate his memoirs and to bring to order what he sees as the universal drift. Callisto speaks of himself, as do Adams and Stencil, in the third person; he describes his Madison Avenue as a further falling-off from Adams' Wall Street/State Street decline. Finally, an interchange between Mulligan and one of his party guests shows that Pynchon's use of the term entropy applies to the informational as well as to the thermodynamic variety.
"No, ace, it is not a barrier. If it is anything, it's a kind of leakage. Tell a girl: 'I love you.' No trouble with two-thirds of that, it's a closed circuit. Just you and she. But that nasty four-letter word in the middle, that's the one you have to look out for. Ambiguity. Redundance. Irrelevance, even. Leakage. All this is noise. Noise screws up your signal, makes for disorganization in the circuit."

Meatball shuffled around. "Well, now, Saul," he muttered, "you're sort of, I don't know, expecting a lot from people. I mean, you know. What it is is, most of the things we say, I guess, are mostly noise."

"Ha! Half of what you just said, for example."

"Well, you do it, too."

"I know." Saul smiled grimly. "It's a bitch, ain't it?"

V. often seems to be an elaboration on the basic theme of "Entropy": its plot, divided more or less evenly between the figures of Herbert Stencil and Benny Profane, between paradigms of hothouse and street, clearly develops from the divided house of the earlier short story. V.'s fictional action explores the thermodynamic and informational decline described in "Entropy": throughout the novel, characters routinely observe a common "drift toward the inanimate" that is its equivalent for thermodynamic entropy; and from all sides, approximately the same information turns up, an indication of informational entropy. Thus the dentist Eigenvalue reflects on the Whole Sick Crew's topics of conversation:

But they produced nothing but talk and at that not very good talk. A few like Slab actually did what they professed; turned out a tangible product. But again, what? Cheese Danishes. Or this technique for the sake of technique--Catatonic Expressionism. Or parodies on what someone else had done.

So much for Art. What of Thought? The Crew had developed a kind of shorthand whereby they could set forth any visions that might come their way. Conversations at the Spoon had become little more than proper
nouns, literary allusions, critical or philosophical terms linked in certain ways. . . . The number of blocks, however, was finite.

"Mathematically, boy," he told himself, "if nobody else original comes along, they're bound to run out of arrangements someday. What then?" What indeed. This sort of arranging and rearranging was Decadence, but the exhaustion of all possible permutations and combinations was death.  

The Crew has obvious affinities with Gaddis' New York and Parisian artistes; and Eigenvalue's description follows rather closely the evaluations of The Recognitions' narrator. Gaddis does not, however, characterize his observations in terms of mathematics. The fact that we receive similar information throughout V. about the activities of the Crew indicates that such decadence is a general condition of the world—that part of it called "the Street" by Profane—and the degree of redundancy given such incidents of decadence demonstrates, in a sense, the informational entropy being asserted. In a state of high informational entropy, the ratio of signal to noise approaches zero; in thermodynamic entropy, the ratio of useful to waste energy also approaches zero; and in the Profane plot, both "noise" (literal and figurative) and useful energy are at a minimum. One Crew member shows admirably the lack of energy:

Fergus Mixolydian the Irish Armenian Jew and universal man laid claim to being the laziest living being in Nueva York. His creative ventures, all incomplete, ranged from a western in blank verse to a wall he'd had removed from a stall in the Penn Station men's room and entered in an art exhibition as what the old Dadaists called a "ready-made." Critical comment was not kind. Fergus got so lazy that his only activity
(short of those necessary to sustain life) was once
a week to fiddle around at the kitchen sink with dry
cells, retorts, alembics, salt solutions. What he
was doing, he was generating hydrogen; this went to
fill a sturdy green balloon with a great Z printed
on it. He would tie the balloon by a string to the
post of the bed whenever he planned to sleep, this
being the only way for visitors to tell which side
of consciousness Fergus was on.

[45]

More threateningly for Profane, Fergus has become an exten-
sion of his television set: a switch wired to his arm turns
off the set when he falls asleep. A certain similarity to
all its events, then, is necessarily part of V.'s world view;
whether Fergus and his television set, Rachel and her MG, or
V. and the Things in the Back Room, living beings and the in-
animate world are adopting new relations, new combinations,
which reflect a kind of decline.

In the "street" side of V.'s paradigm, including the
Crew, individual freedom is at a maximum and useful organi-
zation at a minimum. We see this state particularly in Pro-
fane's plot: he moves freely through space, from Norfolk
to Newport News to New York to Malta, but his "experience"
does not accumulate into any vision of value to him. "'The
experience, the experience. Haven't you learned?' Profane
didn't have to think long. 'No,' he said, 'offhand I'd say
I haven't learned a goddamn thing.'" [428] His typical acti-
vity throughout V. is yo-yoing—movement through space, across
the ferry or on the subway without destination or purpose.
Since his discharge from the Navy Profane had been road-laboring and when there wasn't work just traveling, up and down the east coast like a yo-yo; and this had been going on for maybe a year and a half. After that long of more named pavements than he'd care to count, Profane had grown a little leery of streets, especially streets like this. They had in fact all fused into a single abstracted Street.

Profane's plot is dominated by near-random lists of events and characters, in a way which substantiates the anarchy of the Street:¹³

Dog into wolf, light into twilight, emptiness into waiting presence, here were your underage Marine barfing in the street, barmaid with a ship's propeller tattooed on each buttock, one potential berserk studying the best technique for jumping through a plate glass window. [. . .] Underfoot, now and again, came vibration in the sidewalk from an SP streetlights away, beating out a Hey Rube with his night stick; overhead, turning everybody's face green and ugly, shone mercury-vapor lamps, receding in an asymmetric V to the east where it's dark and there are no more bars.

Freedom of movement in the street affords Profane no reason to move about, since its dizzying chaos of experiences comes to have an essential sameness: those in the street are therefore described as "tourists"—"They are the Street's own," we are told [384]. Pynchon's tourists, like Gaddis', are interested in the sights, but what they see is so dominated by what they are that no sight is truly new.¹⁴

The other extreme in Pynchon's paradigm, the "hothouse," is associated with Herbert Stencil, whose movements, unlike Profane's are highly purposeful. Stencil is defined as "He who looks for V.," the mysterious woman or female principle
of disorder who may or may not be Stencil's mother, but who is somehow bound up with the novel's movement toward the inanimate. Stencil's findings are ultimately called into question by their high degree of redundancy: all his data are enrolled into "the plot of the century," and his determination to fit all facts into his schema causes all conversations to become "Stencilized" [210]. The hothouse is dominated by the need to reconstruct, to conserve: it receives input from beyond its borders, as does a literal hothouse; but its information, though made intelligible, may be falsified by the same ordering process. Stencil may simply correlate random data into his plot, data which are thereby placed into a framework which means; in fact, Pynchon suggests in V. that human knowledge itself—based on metaphor, according to Maijstral, the novel's poet—is a necessarily false version of a non-human universe "which simply doesn't care" [271].

Living as he does much of the time in a world of metaphor, the poet is always acutely conscious that metaphor has no value apart from its function; that it is a device, an artifice. So that while others may look on the laws of physics as legislation and God as a human form with beard measured in light-years and nebulæ for sandals, Fausto's kind are alone with the task of living in a universe of things which simply are, and cloaking that innate mindlessness with comfortable and pious metaphor so that the "practical" half of humanity may continue in the Great Lie, confident that their machines, dwellings, streets and weather share the same human motives, personal traits, and fits of contrariness as they.

Stencil then is a poet, of a debased sort, in giving the random data he finds, apparently associated by the coinci-
idence of the letter V., meaning: his plot "yo-yos" through
time exactly as Profane's does through space. Stencil's ob-
servations take on an essential sameness because whatever he
sees becomes "Stencilized"; the results therefore are un-
acceptable. The only partially acceptable solution in V. to
this problem of integrating non-human events into a humanly
tolerable schema comes from Fausto, who survives in the flux
of Malta's siege, during World War II, by a "successive re-
jection of personalities" [286]. Fausto's solution, as we
shall see, is comparable to Slothrop's, whose "temporal iden-
tity" narrows to zero, thus avoiding the necessity of con-
fronting the problem.

Between street and hothouse there is no choice to be
made: both sides of the paradigm are unacceptable. Neither
the street, which permits maximum freedom but maximum dis-
order, nor the hothouse, which permits signals ordered into
a schema inappropriate because of its failure to fit "what is
the case," allows a satisfactory rendering of experience.
The universal movement toward the inanimate described in V.
cannot be accounted for by either part of the paradigm.
Having created this schematic organization for V., Pynchon
had to abandon it: the scheme of thermodynamic and infor-
mational entropy set forth is too constricting to permit
further development of the kind we see in going from "Entropy"
to V. itself. Having explored the possibility of a fictional
form bifurcated along the paths of the street and the hot-
house—the twin strands of the V.—Pynchon turns to the per-
spective which sees these divide, the "excluded middle"
inhabited by Oedipa Maas in The Crying of Lot 49.

In spite of Maxwell's Demon, there is no remedy for
thermodynamic entropy, though its effects may be countered
locally by concentrating pockets of energy, as living systems
do: both in "Entropy" and in V. such hope as there is exists
because a character or characters set out to clean up the
mess as best they can. Meatball Mulligan, at the end of "En-
tropy," chooses to tidy up other partygoers rather than hide
in a closet; and the Crew is taken care of, after a fashion,
by Rachel and Slab [337, 347; 330-332]. Granted, their ef-
forts are minimal compared to the universal decline which
the novel describes, but still they are a start. McClintic
Sphere, V.'s jazz musician, phrases this concern for others
as "Keep cool, but care," a slogan which is the best V. can
offer its characters—or its readers [345-46]. Three years
later, in The Crying of Lot 49, Pynchon's emphasis shifts
from thermodynamic to informational entropy, with consequent
changes in the novel's vision. While the effects of thermo-
dynamic entropy may not be countered, the same is not true of
informational entropy: the decline described in The Crying
of Lot 49 is personal rather than universal; it is associated
with one person, Oedipa, and may therefore be reversed, given
the proper insight. An insight into this decline makes possible its reversal: such insights, called in The Crying of Lot 49 hierophanies, are possible in a way they were not in V. That collection of forces responsible for decline in V., what we may call the opposition, is physical and universal: understanding its working helps very little in effecting a reversal in that decline. This principle of opposition we may call Augustinian, after Norbert Wiener's term based on Augustine's idea that evil is the absence of God: combating an Augustinian opponent is rather like trying to stop a flood--strategy is of little help. The opposition is easily understood, but not so easily reversed. Wiener notes the tendency to characterize forces opposed to oneself as therefore possessing purpose--that is, to give them Manichaean rather than Augustinian form, a characterization we may see in The Crying of Lot 49 and Gravity's Rainbow. The opposition in these novels possesses purposes and uses strategies, and therefore useful action may be taken against it. Stencil, in V., sees that novel's decline as a plot; but his evident paranoia invalidates what he observes, since the narrator establishes his insights as deviating from what is the case; but in The Crying of Lot 49 and Gravity's Rainbow, no such contrary formulation is given authorial support.

Oedip's quest for information about the Tristéto, then, has certain similarities to Stencil's quest for V.; but Oedip's response, and the quest's place in the novel, are
considerably different. Stencil avoids the final encounter with what may be V.: rather than lose his identity by confirming her death in the siege, he runs away after another clue [425]. Oedipa, however, awaits the last clue at the crying of lot 49, the lot of stamps which agents of the Tristero are interested in buying. Her discovery of hard information about the Tristero—the physical existence of the organization—promises to lead her out of her excluded middle:

Either you have stumbled indeed, without the aid of LSD or other indole alkaloids, onto a secret richness and concealed density of dream; [...] maybe even onto a real alternative to the exitlessness, to the absence of surprise to life, that harrows the head of everybody American you know, and you too, sweetie. Or you are hallucinating it. Or a plot has been mounted against you, so expensive and elaborate, [...] so labyrinthine that it must have meaning beyond just a practical joke. Or you are fantasizing some such plot, in which case you are a nut, Oedipa, out of your skull.

Those, now that she was looking at them, she saw to be the alternatives. Those symmetrical four. [...]”

Behind the hieroglyphic streets there would either be a transcendent meaning, or only the earth. [...] Ones and zeroes. So did the couples arrange themselves. At Vesperhaven House either an accommodation reached, insome kind of dignity, with the Angel of Death, or only death and the daily, tedious preparations for it. Another mode of meaning behind the obvious, or none. Either Oedipa in the orbiting ecstasy of a true paranoia, or a real Tristero. For there either was some Tristero beyond the appearance of the legacy America, or there was just America and if there was just America then it seemed the only way she could continue, and manage to be at all relevant to it, was as an alien, unfurrowed, assumed full circle into some paranoia. [128; 136-37]

Only here do we see the aspect of Pynchon’s work so pre-
valent in Gravity's Rainbow, the possibility of revelation, surprise, or transcendence beyond the physical, profane space of the world. We may infer that this development in Pynchon's fiction is connected with Mircea Eliade--hierophany, Eliade's invented term, appears in The Crying of Lot 49, and the revelation implied by the term is quite foreign to V.'s linear decline toward the inanimate. Still, in The Crying of Lot 49 such revelations face the qualification of solipsism: it would be possible that any revelation Oedipa might have would be simply fantasy or insanity, like her husband Mucho's LSD visions. The crying of lot 49 may bring such a vision, after the novel's close: Pynchon, like Melville, is too canny to try to write Revelation, but merely suggests its occurrence off-stage.

Revelation is the key to reversing thermodynamic entropy in The Crying of Lot 49: as Nefastis explains to Oedipa, the working of his machine, based on Maxwell's Demon, depends on being a sensitive.

"Communication is the key," cried Nefastis. "The Demon passes his data on to the sensitive, and the sensitive must reply in kind. There are untold billions of molecules in that box. The Demon collects data on each and every one. At some deep psychic level he must get through. The sensitive must receive that staggering set of energies, and feed back something like the same quantity of information. [. . .]
"Entropy is a figure of speech, then," sighed Nefastis, "a metaphor. It connects the world of thermodynamics to the world of information flow. The Machine uses both. The Demon makes the metaphor not only verbally graceful, but also objectively true."
In spite of Nefastis' assertion, however, the objectivity of the equations' correspondence—and therefore the operation of his machine and reversal of entropy—is questionable. Unfortunately for Oedipa, as for us, revelations are not available for such practical concerns as generating energy; they are subject neither to objective confirmation nor to being compelled at will. Pynchon's shift to informational paradigms in *The Crying of Lot 49*, then, makes possible a kind of transcendence which may reverse the state of decline typical of his culture; its qualification, that it may be a product of fantasy or solipsism, is overcome in *Gravity's Rainbow*.

Here now is Crutchfield or Crouchfield, the westwardman. Not "archetypical" westwardman, but the only. Understand, there was only one. There was only one Indian who ever fought him. Only one fight, one victory, one loss. And only one president, and one assassin, and one election. True. One of each of everything. You had thought of solipsism, and imagined the structure to be populated—on your level—by only, terribly, one. No count on any other levels. But it proves to be not quite that lonely. Sparse, yes, but a bood deal better than solitary. One of each of everything's not so bad. Half an Ark's better than none.

[67-68]

In *Gravity's Rainbow*, solipsism is no longer a single, isolating fact, but a common human activity: the novel's assertion that the world is not a single, homogeneous state, but is fragmented along lines of the consciousnesses which inhabit it, enables not only a multiplicity of solipsisms but also a network of paranoid visions, and ultimately a multi-
PLICITY OF REVELATIONS BEYOND THE SUPPOSED UNIFORMITY OF ITS PROFANE WORLD. 18 FOR THIS REASON, GRAVITY'S RAINBOW MAKES FREQUENT REFERENCES TO DREAMS AND FANTASIES OF ITS HUNDREDS OF CHARACTERS--AND THE READER'S EXPECTATIONS AND FANTASIES AS WELL. ITS OPENING SEQUENCE, AN EVACUATION OF LONDON, IS A DREAM OF PIRATE PRENTICE'S, WHO WE FIND IS "THE FELLOW THAT'S HAVING OTHER PEOPLE'S FANTASIES" [12]; THIS PHRASE APPLIES QUITE WELL TO PYNCHON HIMSELF.

THE PARTICULAR NATURE OF FANTASIES PYNCHON HAS FOR US, COLLECTED UNDER THE HEADING GRAVITY'S RAINBOW, HAS TO DO WITH "THE WAR." AS WE HAVE SEEN, "THE WAR WAS THE SET OF POINTS. EH?" [645]; WHAT PYNCHON MEANS BY THE WAR INVOLVES POSSIBILITIES FAR BEYOND WHAT THE HISTORIES CALL WORLD WAR II. THOSE BEHIND THE WAR ARE THE OPPOSITION IN GRAVITY'S RAINBOW, A CHANGE THAT COMBINES IMPERSONAL, UNIVERSAL DECLINE, AS IN V., WITH AN OPPONENT WHO DEVISES STRATEGIES, AS IN THE CRYING OF LOT 49: THE HOPE IN GRAVITY'S RAINBOW IS THAT, JUST AS INFORMATION ABOUT THE TRISTERO MAKES OEDIPA'S ESCAPE FROM HER EXCLUDED MIDDLE A POSSIBILITY, SO INFORMATION ABOUT THEIR ACTIVITIES IN THE WAR MAY MAKE POSSIBLE FREE, UNCONTROLLED ACTION. IN V. THE EXISTENCE OF A PLOT IS MADE QUESTIONABLE BY STENCIL'S IDIOSYNCRACIES; THE ENTIRE THIRD CHAPTER IS PRESENTED AS HIS "IMPERSONATIONS." ON THE RARE OCCASIONS WHEN WE SEE THE AGENTS OF V.'S PLOT, THEY ARE RATHER FLAT VILLAINS LIKE BONGO-SHAFTESBURY:
"But someday, Porpentine, I, or another, will catch you off guard. Loving, hating, even showing some absent-minded sympathy. I'll watch you. The moment you forget yourself enough to admit another's humanity, see him as a person and not a symbol--then perhaps--" "What is humanity."
"You ask the obvious, ha, ha. Humanity is something to destroy."

[69]

In Gravity's Rainbow, however, the plot is more mysterious, carried out by agents such as Pointsman, whose individualizing quirks distinguish them from the mechanical agents in V.:

"Pavlov thought that all the diseases of the mind could be explained, eventually, by the ultraparadoxical phase, the pathologically inert points on the cortex, the confusion of ideas of the opposite. He died at the very threshold of putting these things on an experimental basis. But I live. I have the funding, and the time, and the will. Slothrop is a strong imperturbable. It won't be easy to send him into any of the three phases. We may finally have to starve, terrorize, I don't know . . . it needn't come to that. But I will find his spots of inertia, I will find what they are if I have to open up his damned skull, and how they are isolated, and perhaps solve the mystery of why the rockets are falling as they do--"

[90]

The actions Pointsman takes in the interests of controlling Slothrop are quite consistent with his studies as a psychologist; and it is details such as Pointsman's declaration before Mexico that we sense Pynchon's increasing mastery in his fiction.

When one event happens after another with this awful regularity, of course you don't automatically assume that it's cause-and-effect. But you do look for some mechanism to make sense of it. You probe, you design a modest experiment. . . . He owes Spectro that much. Even if the American's not legally a murderer,
he is sick. The etiology ought to be traced, the treatment found. [.. . . ]

Pointsman ought to be seeking the answer at the interface . . . oughtn't he . . . on the cortex of Lieutenant Slothrop. The man will suffer--perhaps, in some clinical way, be destroyed--but how many others tonight are suffering in his name? For pity's sake, every day in Whitehall they're weighing and taking risks that make his, in this, seem almost trivial. Almost. [.. . . ] Whatever we may find, there can be no doubt that he is, physiologically, historically, a monster. We must never lose control. The thought of him lost in the world of men, after the war, fills me with a deep dread I cannot extinguish. . . ."
[144]

Pointsman's willingness to experiment with--to control--Slothrop is all the more frightening for being solidly grounded in Pointsman's character, itself given a plausible etiology in Pavlovian psychology. Bongo-Shaftesbury's evil is taken more or less for granted, Pointsman's a natural consequence of his course of study, his place in history. As a threat, Pointsman is given more depth than anyone in V.; and the fact of his eventual mistake and failure only makes the "structure" that much more frightening. As Pynchon puts it elsewhere, "the innocence of the creatures is in inverse proportion to the immorality of the Master" [241]. The fact that Pointsman's foibles are individualized and ultimately made human makes his function as part of the Structure that much more chilling. 19

The interests of the individuals in Gravity's Rainbow, then, tend to be subsumed into the Structure, or their place in history. Pynchon's view of conventional history is that it is a fiction devised by the Structure to perpetuate its
own control. Thus whatever vision occurred at the death of the German prime minister, Walter Rathenau, already dimmed by time, will be adapted to fit the uses of "history" by the Germans who attend his seance.

Why do they want Rathenau tonight? What did Caesar really whisper to his protege as he fell? Et tu, Brute, the official lie, is about what you'd expect to get from them--it says exactly nothing. The moment of assassination is the moment when power and the ignorance of power come together, with Death as validator. When one speaks to the other then it is not to pass the time of day with et-tu-Brutes. What passes is a truth so terrible that history--at best a conspiracy, not always among gentlemen, to defraud--will never admit it. The truth will be repressed or in ages of particular elegance be disguised as something else. [. . . ]

But they will see. Rathenau--according to the histories--was prophet and architect of the cartelized state. [. . . ] He saw the war in progress as a world revolution, out of which would rise neither Red communism nor an unhindered right, but a rational structure in which business would be the true, the rightful authority--a structure based, not surprisingly, on the one he'd engineered in Germany for fighting the World War.

[164-65]

This "rightful authority" is claimed as the model of nations by V-Mann Wimpe, Rathenau's drug salesman: "'our little chemical cartel is the model for the very structure of nations" [349]. The "rational structure" has no room for irrational factors such as "addiction" or the coincidence between Slothrop's sexual fantasies and the rocket strikes: the links of cause and effect must be established if history is to be valid and the Structure maintain itself. Pointsman's desperation at the statistical threat to his deterministic cause-and-effect reasoning expresses the sincere con-
cern of an Employee for the Firm:

How can Mexico play, so at his ease, with these symbols of randomness and fright? Innocent as a child, perhaps unaware—perhaps—that in his play he wrecks the elegant rooms of history, threatens the idea of cause and effect itself. What if Mexico's whole generation have turned out like this? Will Postwar be nothing but "events," newly created one moment to the next? No links? Is it the end of history?

[56]

It is the endeavor of history, then, to explain the actions of the War in rational terms: its attempts to "routinize" charismatic outbreaks like the A4 is part of a consistent endeavor devoted to enterprise [464]. The War is initially the system of enterprise which subsumes the activities of its composite individuals into the actions of death—death not only involved with World War II—as we have seen in the long quotation dealing with "the points"—although it is the primary manifestation of the War, but also with all conversions of resources into unusable forms. This conversion is given its definitive exposition later in the Rathenau seance:

"Consider coal and steel. There is a place where they meet. The interface between coal and steel is coal-tar. Imagine coal, down in the earth, dead black, no light, the very substance of death. Death ancient, prehistoric, species we will never see again. Growing older, blacker, deeper, in layers of perpetual night. Above ground, the steel rolls out fiery, bright. But to make steel, the coal tars, darker and heavier, must be taken from the original coal. Earth's excrement, purged out for the ennoblement of shining steel. Passed over.

"We thought of this as an industrial process. It was more. We passed over the coal-tars. A thousand different molecules waited in the preterite dung."
This is the sign of revealing. Of unfolding. [. . .]

"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. I mean your IG, Generaldirektor." [. . .]

"You think you'd rather hear about what you call 'life': the growing, organic Kartell. But it's only another illusion. A very clever robot. The more dynamic it seems to you, the more deep and dead, in reality, it grows. 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.

"These signs are real. They are also symptoms of a process. The process follows the same form, the same structure. To apprehend it you will follow the signs. All talk of cause and effect is secular history, and secular history is a diversionary tactic."

[166-67]

Cartels throughout Gravity's Rainbow are connected with this movement from death to death-transfigured: IG Farben heads a list of companies, American and British as well as German, devoted to the imitation of life in the service of death. 21 Their employees, like Pointsman or Jessica's fiance Jeremy, repress the irrational impulses:

Damned Beaver/Jeremy is the War, he is every assertion the fucking War has ever made—that we are meant for work and government, for austerity: and these shall take priority over love, dreams, the spirit, the senses and the other second-class trivia that are found among the idle and mindless hours of the day. . . . Damn them, they are wrong. They are insane.

[177]
The rational explanation for the seemingly inexplicable actions of company employees is that their own interests are subjugated to those of the nonhuman interests which comprise the Structure: Pynchon describes this drive to imitate life as vampirism.

It means this War was never political at all, the politics was all theatre, all just to keep the people distracted . . . secretly, it was being dictated instead by the needs of technology . . . by a conspiracy between human beings and techniques, by something that needed the energy-burst of war, crying, "Money be damned, the very life of [insert name of Nation] is at stake," but meaning, most likely, dawn is nearly here, I need my night's blood, my funding, funding, ahh more, more . . .

[521]

First Slothrop, then others such as Enzian (above) and Mexico discover the connection between the "multinationals" and the War: Slothrop realizes (while talking to "Captain Bounce, a 100% company man") that the Shell headquarters in occupied Holland has served as a guidance transmitter for the rockets fired at London [240-41]. The implications are that the War is being staged not only to create sales for a variety of chemical, metallurgical, electronic, plastic, and other interests, but to bring about a symbol for their unification, the rocket, the "soul" of the new Raketen-Stadt [566].

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.
[. . .] The true war is a celebration of markets. [105]

The Rocket in Gravity's Rainbow is the culmination of the War as a result of market forces; furthermore, it is an assertion that man exists physically in nature, in a profane system of values. Katje, present at the rockets' firing in Holland, expresses this sensation to Slothrop, present at their detonation: her description underscores the rocket's existence in Gravity's Rainbow as an imitation of life hostile to that life.

"Between you and me is not only a rocket trajectory, but also a life. You will come to understand that between the two points, in the five minutes, it lives an entire life. You haven't even learned the data on our side of the flight profile, the visible or trackable. Beyond them there's so much more, so much none of us know. . . ."

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

[209]

All the characters of the novel move under that parabola, the new shape of promise—which claims "no surprise, no second chances, no return." Its message is that given to Kekulé in a dream, a message which Gravity's Rainbow opposes:

Kekulé dreams the Great Serpent holding its own tail in its mouth, the dreaming Serpent which surrounds the World. But the meanness, the cynicism with which this dream is to be used. The Serpent that announces, "The World is a closed thing, cyclical, resonant, eternally returning," is to be delivered into a system
whose only aim is to violate the Cycle. Taking and not giving back, demanding that "productivity" and "earnings" keep on increasing with time, the System removing from the rest of the World these vast quantities of energy to keep its own tiny desperate fraction showing a profit: and not only most of humanity --most of the World, animal, vegetable and mineral, is laid waste in the process. [. . .] "Once, only once . . ." One of Their favorite slogans. No return, no salvation, no Cycle--that's not what They, nor Their brilliant employee Kekulé, have taken the Serpent to mean. No: what the Serpent means is--how's this--that the six carbon atoms of benzene are in fact curled around into a closed ring, just like that snake with its tail in its mouth, GET IT? [412-13]

"Once, only once"--synthetics--addiction to energy--personal subjugation to the larger enterprise--such observations are made by an unlikely number of characters in Gravity's Rainbow, a number which, as in V., supports the general validity of the phenomenon. Observations about the relation between the War and markets are not limited to single figures such as Stencil and Oedipa, but appear independently in connection with Slothrop, Katje, Prentice, Mexico, Tchitcherine, and Enzian. The style of existence demanded by the rocket, symbol of the War and culmination of markets, is personal submission to the larger enterprise. 23 We see this submission in Pointsman's concentrated effort to--as the cliche has it--work within the System:

By facing squarely the extinction of his program, he has gained a great bit of Wisdom; that if there is a life force operating in Nature, still there is nothing so analogous in a bureaucracy. Nothing so mystical. It all comes down, as it must, to the desires of individual men. Oh, and women too of course, bless their empty little heads. But survival depends on having
strong enough desires—on knowing the System better than the other chap, and how to use it. It's work, that's all it is, and there's no room for any extra-human anxieties—they only weaken, effeminize the will: a man either indulges them, or fights to win, und so weiter.

[228]

Bureaucracies tend to perpetuate themselves (in Pynchon's world as in ours) in a way imitative of living organisms: not only does Pointsman not have impulses to let loose—when at a Christmas party Maud Chilkes goes down on him, his reaction is to try to remember the formula which must have brought on this dream [168-69]—but his response to someone who does let loose, Mexico, is to send his girl Jessica off into post-war Germany, allowing Mexico to "Lose Himself In His Work" [277-78]. And given the problem of Slothrop's response to the rocket, Pointsman wants the rational explanation of the mystery.

Slothrop instead only gets erections when this sequence happens in reverse. Explosion first, then the sound of approach: the V-2.

But the stimulus, somehow, must be the rocket, some precursor wraith, some rocket's double present for Slothrop in the percentage of smiles on a bus, menstrual cycles being operated upon in some mysterious way—what does make the little doxies do it for free? Are there fluctuations in the sexual market, in pornography or prostitutes, perhaps tying in to prices on the Stock Exchange itself, that we clean-living lot know nothing about? Does news from the front affect the itch between their pretty thighs, does desire grow directly or inversely as the real chance of sudden death—damn it, what cue, right in front of our eyes, that we haven't the subtlety of heart to see? . . .

But if it's in the air, right here, right now, then the rockets follow from it, 100% of the time. No exceptions. When we find it, we'll have shown again the stone determinacy of everything, of every soul. There
will be precious little room for any hope at all. You can see how important a discovery like that would be.

[86]

Pointsman's voice, as expression of the impulse to control those aspects of human behavior traditionally most mysterious, is one of the great achievements of *Gravity's Rainbow*: the culmination of the impulse to control which he represents comes near the novel's end, when it is asserted that human consciousness itself is the source of the problem. Ultimately our desire to know the world makes us "God's spoilers."

human consciousness, that poor cripple, that deformed and doomed thing, is about to be born. This is the World before men. Too violently pitched alive in constant flow ever to be seen by men directly. They are meant only to look at it dead, instill strata, trans-putrefied to oil or coal. Alive, it was a threat: it was Titans, was an overpeaking of life so clangorous and mad, such a green corona about Earth's body that some spoiler had to be brought in before it blew the Creation apart. So we, the crippled keepers, were sent out to multiply, to have dominion. God's spoilers. Us. Counter-revolutionaries. It is our mission to promote death. [. . .] A few keep going over to the Titans every day, in their striving sub-creation (how can flesh tumble and flow so, and never be any less beautiful?), into the rests of the folk-song Death (empty stone rooms), out, and through, and down under the net, down down to the uprising.

[720]

Slothrop by now is such a figure, and his "defection" makes *Gravity's Rainbow*, itself a product of such human consciousness, a disturbing paradox.

Slothrop represents one form of opposition to the War, that of simple, unplanned, spontaneous opposition to its
assertions. His encounters with ladies (the map of which first brings him to Pointsman's attention) is, like Roger Mexico and Jessica's affair, an assertion of "life" in the face of the War. ("They are in love. Fuck the war" [42].) Such values are behind Säure Bummer's reasons for preferring Rossini to Beethoven:

"a person feels good listening to Rossini. All you feel like listening to Beethoven is going out and invading Poland. [. . .] With Rossini, the whole point is that lovers always get together, isolation is overcome, and like it or not that is the one great centripetal movement of the World. Through the machineries of greed, pettiness, and the abuse of power, love occurs. All the shit is transmuted to gold."

[440]

Statements such as these represent a considerable change from McClintic Sphere's "Keep cool, but care"; the War compartmentalizes rather than furnishing the basis for any real human community.

It is not death that separates these incarnations, but paper: paper specialties, paper routines. The War, the Empire, will expedite such barriers between our lives. The War needs to divide this way, and to subdivide, though its propaganda will always stress unity, alliance, pulling together. The War does not appear to want a folk-consciousness, not even of the sort the Germans have engineered, ein Volk ein Führer—it wants a machine of many separate parts, not oneness, but a complexity. . . . Yet who can presume to say what the War wants, so vast and aloof is it . . . so absentee. Perhaps the War isn't even an awareness—not a life at all, really. There may only be some cruel, accidental resemblance to life.

[130-31]

There are several hopes for countering the apparent domination of the System, this compartmentalizing of human com-
munity. The principal of these is probably the Counterforce: as Katje discovers, "Dialectically, sooner or later, some counterforce would have had to arise" [536]; as a function of history, then, an opposition is generated. The Counterforce contains Pirate Prentice, Osbie Feel, Roger Mexico, Stephen Dodson-Truck, and the deceased Brigadier Pudding (existence continues on beyond death in *Gravity's Rainbow*, as in its von Braun epigraph)—all members of the White Visitation staff—and a few additional figures such as Jeremiah "Merciful" Evans and Father Rapier, who acts as "Devil's Advocate." The resident Jesuit of the Counterforce preaches against return:

> critical mass cannot be ignored. Once the technical means of control have reached a certain size, a certain degree of being connected one to another, the chances for freedom are over for good. [. . . .]

> "To believe that each of Them will personally die is also to believe that their system will die—that some chance of renewal, some dialectic, is still operating in History. To affirm their mortality is to affirm Return. I have been pointing out certain obstacles in the way of affirming Return. . . ." It sounds like a disclaimer, and the priest sounds afraid. [539-40]

As well he might—since his sole hope is based on depriving Them of a fear of death which he infers they need. The Counterforce, as it turns out, is doomed to failure, though not for reasons of "critical mass":

> Well, if the Counterforce knew better what those categories concealed, they might be in a better position to disarm, de-penis and dismantle the Man. But they don't. Actually they do, but they don't admit it. Sad but true. They are as schizoid, as double-minded
in the massive presence of money, as any of the rest of us, and that's the hard fact. The Man has a branch office in each of our brains, his corporate emblem is a white albatross, each local rep has a cover known as the Ego, and their mission in this world is Bad Shit. [. . .]
They will use us. We will help legitimize Them, though They don't need it really, it's another dividend for Them, nice but not critical.

Every member of the Counterforce has an identity, programmed since birth by the machinery built into the culture. The dialectic of history necessarily serves the ends of history—that is, of the official version of history. This incorporation explains why an organized opposition cannot succeed in Gravity's Rainbow: organization is necessarily part of the problem in Pynchon's view. The appearance of a counterforce in Gravity's Rainbow is a function of charisma—non-rational, acting by surprise, as we shall see in the third section of this chapter—and like all other such outbreaks it will eventually become routinized into the larger enterprise.

If identity itself is responsible for one's vulnerability to the system, as the quotation above implies, then the loss of identity would be the logical escape from the system's concerns: this fact finally explains the attractions of the preterite, in Pynchon's schema. Passed over by "God and History" [299], theirs is a qualified freedom. We see this most clearly in the Schwarzkommando, who construct a rocket from salvaged materials—a rocket to reaffirm return, gathered from waste rather than constructed with the
full weight of the machinery of the War. Enzian's rocket is launched with intentions diametrically opposed to those of Blicero: at the refinery, he resolves to find "a key to the wastes of the world" [525], a key which opposes the violation of the cycle, the exhaustion of resources, energy, and ultimately life, which occurs in the War.

Also characterized by a loss of identity, at least initially, are the Argentines who come to the Zone because of its anarchy:

"In ordinary times," [Squalidozzi] wants to explain, "the center always wins. Its power grows with time, and that can't be reversed, not by ordinary means. Decentralizing, back toward anarchism, needs extraordinary times . . . this War--this incredible War--just for the moment has wiped out the proliferation of little states that's prevailed in Germany for a thousand years. Wiped it clean. Opened it."

"Sure. For how long?"

"It won't last. Of course not. But for a few months . . . perhaps there'll be peace by the autumn--disculpe me, the spring, I still haven't got used to your hemisphere--for a moment of spring, perhaps. . . ."

"Yeah, but--what're you gonna do, take over land and try to hold it? They'll run you right off, podner."

"No. Taking land is building more fences. We want to leave it open. We want it to grow, to change. In the openness of the German Zone, our hope is limitless." Then, as if struck on the forehead, a sudden fast glance, not at the door, but up at the ceiling--"So is our danger."

[264-65]

In this preference for openness (which applies to the form of fiction as well as to events within) we see another point of contrast with V.: in that novel the anarchy and openness of the street were detrimental to any organization, and to life itself; but in Gravity's Rainbow, it is more important
to throw off control than to oppose entropy.

For Slothrop this loss of identity involves his literal dissolution in the novel: 24

days when in superstition and fright he could make it all fit, seeing clearly in each an entry in a record, a history: his own, his winter’s, his country’s . . . instructing him, dunce and drifter, in ways deeper than he can explain, have been faces of children out the train windows, two bars of dance music somewhere, in some other street at night, needles and branches of a pine tree shaken clear and luminous against night clouds, one circuit diagram out of hundreds in a smudged yellowing sheaf, laughter out of a cornfield in the early morning as he was walking to school, the idling of a motorcycle at one dusk-heavy hour of the summer . . . 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 pubic clouds into Earth, green wet valleyed Earth, and his chest fills and he stands crying, not a thing in his head, just feeling natural. . . .

[626]

Midway through the novel, "In the Zone," Slothrop has lost purpose, a process expressed in terms of narrowing identity [509]; on a quest to solve the mystery of his past and much of the twentieth century—just like Herbert Stencil—Slothrop instead becomes distracted.

why is he out here, doing this? Is this Ursula the lemming’s idea too, getting mixed up in other people’s private feuds when he was supposed to be . . . whatever it was . . . uh . . .

Yeah! yeah what happened to Imipolex G, all that Jamf a-and that S-Gerät, s'posed to be a hardboiled private eye here, gonna go out all alone and beat the odds, avenge my friend that They killed, get my ID back and find that piece of mystery hardware but now aw it's JUST LIKE—

LOOK-IN' FAWR A NEEDLE IN A HAAAAAY-STACK!
Sssss--searchinfrasomethin' fulla moon-beams, (Something) got ta have yooooou!
Nonono come on, Jackson, quit fooling, you got to concentrate. . . . the S-Gerät now--O.K. if I can find that S-Gerät 'n' how Jamf was hooked in, if I can find that out, yeah yeah Imipolex now . . .

Slothrop's essential self comes to be scattered, figuratively and literally [509]--the attention span for any item approaches zero, and as it does, he approaches an identity with the green world which is his sort of transcendence. This "narrowing," or "just feeling natural," transfers Slothrop to the condition of Pan [720]--and by the novel's end, he has given rise to "consistent personae" himself, as if the mantra given him by the Schwarzkommando had had immediate results [362]. Neither Counterforce nor the Firm can reach Slothrop, for good or ill, because as we speak of such things, he no longer exists. Slothrop's dissolution is the single most striking innovation of Gravity's Rainbow, and the one concept those who write about Pynchon's fiction find hardest to accept. (In the last section we will return to Slothrop's dissolution as an instance of Gödel's Theorem.)

Such a return to "the War" as we have been describing, then, may be behind Gravity's Rainbow itself: a return to a period when "the fences [were] down" may be Pynchon's equivalent of Slothrop's conjecture about his ancestor William Slothrop and "the fork in the road America never took" [556]. A return to some moment of historical time, to some crossroads, may facilitate a readjustment of schemata which will
allow some changes to be made, some reversal of the directions things seem to have gone. The novel itself, finally, seems to be "the points" for a readjustment of history, one outside any systematic dogma such as Marxism. By presenting materials in carefully researched and imagined detail, Pynchon seems to intend the use of history to revise history: *Gravity's Rainbow* is therefore a demonstration of the fact that history is as fictive as any fiction. The novel recreates parts of the Blitz, for example, more effectively than any "realistic" novelist could, while remaining ultimately hostile to the world view usually implied by realism, that a common world exists and may be perceived by any of us. Experiences in *Gravity's Rainbow* are essentially private to any ego, and it is a measure of Pynchon's achievement that the whole coheres as well as it does. Each character inhabits his own fictive space: the movement through the novel is made possible by the intersections of these spaces—what Pynchon calls interfaces—which provide the novel's structural principle, much as Maxwell's Demon does *The Crying of Lot 49* and as the V-shape does *V*.
II. The Interface

To date, it has been characteristic of Pynchon criticism to concentrate on one or two key passages which will open up (or perhaps routinize) the novels for critical discourse. The two book-length studies published in 1978 do so even in their titles: William Plater's *The Grim Phoenix* directs our attention to Pynchon's metaphors by citing one (from *Gravity's Rainbow* [415]); and Mark R. Siegel cites "creative paranoia" in his study of *Gravity's Rainbow*.27 Earlier studies chose comparable phrases, such as Tanner's "caries into cabals" or Sklar's "anarchist miracle"; perhaps this is due less to the necessity of limiting one's subject than to some quality of Pynchon's works. Even *The Crying of Lot 49*, by far the shortest of the novels, provides enough epiphanic events, significant allusions, and luminous details to provide the satisfaction of discovery—Pynchon satirizes such discoveries in *Gravity's Rainbow*'s "Mystery Insight" [691]—but the fact that our reading experience of Pynchon's works tends to be a series of such discoveries should indicate something of the meaning of the works. Details which at first reading may seem trivial in Pynchon's novels tend, upon inspection, to open out into areas of considerable importance: the reader may, like Oedipa, find a diverse and potentially confusing world apparently organized around one improbable principle, and take his own organizational in-
sights to be either solipsistic or ingenious. Like Oedipa's discovery of the Tristero, these discoveries may bloom into a figuration beyond all reasonable expectations [36]. And our tendency so to arrange the data we find is supported by Pynchon's own characters whose idiosyncratic perspectives on their worlds characterize those worlds so sharply as to deny alternative versions. 28

The experience of reading Pynchon's novels, especially *Gravity's Rainbow*, may be characterized by this sensation that the works exceed reasonable compass or expectations. *Gravity's Rainbow's* diversity, in fact, leads Edward Mendelson to propose a new genre, encyclopedic narrative, including (besides *Gravity's Rainbow*) works such as *Tristram Shandy, Moby-Dick, Don Quixote*, and *Ulysses*. 29 But surely Pynchon's point is not to found a new genre but to escape the constraints of existing ones; and the defining characteristics, given the particular nature of *Gravity's Rainbow's* address to the reader, ought to fall into affective rather than generic categories. Such a sense that the novel is essentially unclassifiable may rise from itself, from the many series of events which develop far beyond the expectations of observers: Pointsman, for example, finds a clear escalation in the sequence of deaths of the joint owners of the Book [139]; and Katje so considers Blicero's commands in the game of captivity-- "each utterance a closed flower, capable
of exfoliation and infinite revealing (she thinks of a mathematical function that will expand for her bloom-like into a power series with no general term, endlessly, darkly, though never completely by surprise . . ." [94]. Such a development, too, is the case with the coincidence between Slothrop's map and the rocket-strikes; and, in turn, Slothrop's quest for the rocket develops into a bewildering encounter with industrial firms, their agents, such as Major Marvy, Argentine anarchists, black rocket troops, German directors, masochistic actresses, children who proclaim him their ritual pig-hero, a smuggler-mom who sings Gilbert and Sullivan-style medleys, and even more bizarre events. Rather than explicating these or other details, the question of immediate interest is in the nature of the literary form which can bring such diversity into a unified whole, and in the nature of the reading experience which results from such a work.

It is characteristic of Pynchon's vision to make the act of reading pluralistic: like V.'s newspaper readers, the novel's reader builds "his own rathouse of history's rags and straws" [209]. These "rags and straws" include, in V., the Whole Sick Crew, an Alligator Patrol, a Maltese poet, agents of disintegrating order, Stencils father and son, the lady V. in several incarnations, historical locales such as Alexandria, Southwest Africa, Malta, Paris, Venice, New York (the Village and the West Side), Norfolk, and historical periods which range from the mythical past of the White Goddess
through 1899, 1901, 1913, 1922, World War II, and V.'s present, 1955-1956—all in non-linear sequence. By its mixed chronology and plot, the novel forces the reader to participate in its ordering, much as does Stencil, and to experience its chaos of events much as does Profane; the reader must therefore internalize the dilemma Stencil faces, whether the order he perceives is solipsistic or integral to the world of the novel. In The Crying of Lot 49, the chronology remains linear, and is centered about one character; the experience, however, remains radically disorienting, as she has to contend with Peter Penguid Society members, Inamorati Anonymous, the Paranoids, Nazis, literary critics, a megalomaniac director, and the fractured subculture generally associated with Southern California. The pluralism in The Crying of Lot 49 results not so much from the diversity of Oedipa's world as from the fact that she has four equally sufficient schemata for explaining the W.A.S.T.E. system she has discovered, and no sufficient means of choosing among them. And in Gravity's Rainbow, the development (in increasing order, perhaps) from Street to Southern California culminates, for the present, in the Zone.

"It's an arrangement," she tells him. "It's so unorganized out here. There have to be arrangements. You'll find out." Indeed he will—he'll find thousands of arrangements, for warmth, love, food, simple movement along roads, tracks and canals. Even G-5, living its fantasy of being the only government in Germany, is just the arrangement for being victorious, is all. No more or less real than all these others so private,
silent, and lost to History. Slothrop, though he doesn't know it yet, is as properly constituted a state as any other in the Zone these days. Not paranoia. Just how it is. Temporary alliances, knit and undone.

[290-91]

In the Zone, as in the other provisional arrangements for making sense of chaotic data, the observer's (reader's) experience is characterized by a sequence of continually surprising characters whose names point to the artifice of their creation: the reader is thereby warned that some manipulation of ordinary experience is occurring, but is never quite assured of his ability to comprehend any system behind it. Unlike The Confidence-Man, in which the reader fairly quickly thinks he gets the point, and is subsequently disabused, in Pynchon's work the reader often never does "Get It." 30

In Gravity's Rainbow the Rocket is subject to such a multiplicity of interpretations, not only to the novel's critics but to those within the novel who search for it.

So, yes yes this is a scholasticism here, Rocket state cosmology . . . the Rocket does lead that way—among others—[. . .] the Rocket has to be many things, it must answer to a number of different shapes in the dreams of those who touch it—in combat, in tunnel, on paper—it must survive heresies shining, unconfoundable . . . and heretics there will be: Gnostics who have been taken in a rush of wind and fire to chambers of the Rocket-throne . . . Kabbalists who study the Rocket as Torah, letter by letter—rivets, burner cup and brass rose, its text is theirs to permute and combine into new revelations, always unfolding . . . Manichaean who see two Rockets, good and evil, who speak together in the sacred idiolalia of
the Primal Twins (some say their names are Enzian and Blicero) of a good Rocket to take us to the stars, an evil Rocket for the World's suicide, the two perpetually in struggle.

But these heretics will be sought and the dominion of silence will enlarge as each one goes down . . . they will all be sought out. Each will have his personal Rocket.

[726-27]

In a sense, the reader's selection among details which build towards possible significances of the rocket means that he has his own personal Rocket; such is the case in the closing of Gravity's Rainbow, as we shall see in the next section.

Perhaps the characteristic fact about Pynchon's fiction, then, is this sense of the multivalence of truth: the fact that discoveries are made by so many characters, outside of a framework of authorial support for any one view, suggests Pynchon's preference for such individually constructed systems rather than an overall, common version generally called history.

Throughout Pynchon's fiction, then, characters who share little in the way of common means of perceiving the world have come together inside a thin narrative framework: in any "normal" world Oedipa and the Tristero system would not intersect. (One cannot, for example, feature a conversation between Slothrop as Rocketman and Mickey Rooney at Potsdam [382].) The White Visitation is such a loose association of specialties, each of which provide a different perspective on Slothrop [85]. Juxtapositions of sharply contrasting schemata work in Pynchon's earlier fiction as comic material, as
in the continual new arrivals during Mulligan's party in
"Entropy." Such juxtapositions are not inappropriate to a
contemporary American novelist: the historical ideal, demo-
cracy, having been replaced first by a financial system or
hierarchy, then by the sense that other hierarchies no longer
predictably financial, one is inclined to seek out "other
orders beyond the visible" [188]. Such a sensation charac-
terizes Pynchon's Europe as well as America:

"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 ex-
tended far beyond Turl Street, past Corn-market 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. . . ."

"Sure. In that America, it's the first thing
they tell you. Harvard's there for other reasons.
The 'educating' part of it is just sort of a front."
[193]

Insights such as these expressed by Tantivy Mucker-Maffick
and Slothrop show the peculiar connection, in Gravity's Rain-
bow, between paranoia and a religious sense of some "Plan
with a shape bigger than I can see. . . ." [682]. Such a
structure is always implied, never specified, in Pynchon's
fiction; its implications always tempt the reader into some
attempt at its completion.

Pynchon places his reader at the edge of such insights,
providing enough information to give a "clear and present
miasma of evil" [305], but relatively few positive declar-
ations. The variety of fictive spaces to be found in *Gravity's Rainbow* is a consistent development from Pynchon's earlier fiction; and the means of their coexistence within *Gravity's Rainbow* is a metaphor Pynchon provides, developed from literally intersecting spaces, called the interface. For Pynchon interfaces—places where other orders of being come into contact with the profane—are places of revelation, like Oedipa's "odd, religious instant" overlooking San Narciso [13]. Slothrop has such a sensation after rescuing Katje from the octopus:

> It's a Puritan reflex of seeking other orders behind the visible, also known as paranoia, filtering in. Pale lines of force whirl in the sea air... pacts sworn to in rooms since shelled back to their plan views, not quite by accident of war, suggest themselves. Oh, that was no "found" crab, Ace—no random octopus or girl, uh-uh. Structure and detail come later, but the conniving around him now he feels instantly, in his heart. [188]

Like Carlyle's Teufelsdröckh, Slothrop perceives an order behind phenomena, an order which is all-pervasive and which is grasped by intuition, not reason: the agents of the order Slothrop sees, however, are not divine agents, much less the deity, but have questionable motives for asserting control. Repeatedly in *Gravity's Rainbow*, Slothrop undergoes such moments of perception, from moments in which "the hand of providence moves among the stars, giving Slothrop the finger" [461] to seeing roulette wheels that are (in several senses) fixed: "Seeing the number is supposed to be the
point. But in the game behind the game, it is not the point" [208]. Such intimations of order--Pynchon takes advantage of several senses, including command, level of being, and formal disposition--occur initially in the Casino Hermann Göring:

For a minute here, Slothrop, in his English uniform, is alone with the paraphernalia of an order whose presence among the ordinary debris of waking he has only lately begun to suspect. [. . . ] 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. Never. Two orders of being, looking identical, . . . but, but . . . "

[202]

The only distinction between paranoia and religious faith is in the degree of trust accorded the other order: in the profane world of Gravity's Rainbow, unlike that of Sartor Resartus, there is no reason to assume the beneficence of Providence. Thus, for the Hereros, "there was no difference between the behavior of a god and the operations of pure chance" [323]; they are nearly exterminated for "'No reason. We couldn't even find comfort in the Will of God Theory. These were Germans with names and service records, men in blue uniforms who killed clumsily and not without guilt" [362]. In V. the plot, the other order, may be Stencil's fantasy; in Gravity's Rainbow the plot certainly exists, although its purposes remain obscure, and certainly profane. Once Slothrop does manage to escape Pointsman's machinations, however, the possibility occurs to him that the escape may
be part of the plot as well, and that the illusion of freedom is just that; as a result, Slothrop oscillates between the state of paranoia, in which he assumes absolute control over his every movement in the Zone, and that of antiparanoia, in which he has absolute freedom and no purpose. "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" [434]. *Gravity's Rainbow* provides both extremes, freedom and control, profane and religious: a major theme of the novel comes from this human impulse towards "paranoia," the religious impulse which seeks intimations of order under control. Such possibilities of transcendence as appear are phrased as approaches to the "edge" of some revelation: certain characters, such as Tchitcherine, are held at the edge [703], while others, such as Lyle Bland and (distinctly) Slothrop, proceed through such edges [590-91;626].

About the paranoia often noted under [Oneirine], there is nothing remarkable. 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. . . . [703]

This sense of being at the edge or interface between two orders is not complete revelation, but it is at least an indication of the possibility of revelation (though the con-
verse, that paranoia always indicates some revelation, is not true [464]); and movements to this interface provide Gravity's Rainbow's hope for transcending the process of going from "death to death-transfigured" which are operative in "the War."

Pynchon's use of the interface comes from his discussions of metaphor in V. and in The Crying of Lot 49. In V. metaphor is discussed explicitly in Fausto's journal; writing about the poet's function, he says that "It is the 'role' of the poet, this 20th Century. To lie" [305] in order to make humanly comprehensible a congruent world "which simply doesn't care" [270-71]. In order to make "a universe of things" subject to human knowledge--to make sense of "what is the case"--it is necessary to make metaphors, which in V. are inherently distortions of the non-human world. Metaphor is necessarily a property of language, whose associations may only be a linguistic trick; and V. itself is a linguistic object which asserts that language fails to account satisfactorily for the universal decline the novel describes.

In order for this paradox to be true--in order for a work of language to describe a phenomenon outside language--it must somehow project beyond its own confines, an ambition we see developed in The Crying of Lot 49 and in Gravity's Rainbow.

Whereas in V. metaphor is a process of distortion, unfortunate but necessary to human comprehension of the world, in The Crying of Lot 49 metaphor occurs by coincidence--a
coincidence which Oedipa is responsible for perceiving. Doubt here comes not from an essential paradox which states that man must comprehend that which he cannot comprehend, but from the question—similar to Stencil's dilemma in V.—whether what he perceives can be confirmed. As in Wittgenstein's Tractatus, an important source work for V., there is no perspective outside one's own language, outside one's own picture of the world, from which it can be evaluated; both possess "logical form," which cannot itself be evaluated because it cannot be gotten outside for evaluation; and consequently one's picture of the world coincides both with solipsism and with realism.\footnote{32 V. suggests the existence of a non-human world against which its human attempts at comprehension all fall short; in The Crying of Lot 49, phenomena similarly difficult to comprehend are placed inside Oedipa's schema, suggesting that her metaphors may be projected rather than inherent in what she sees. The whimsical annotation she makes after meeting Driblette, "Shall I project a world?" becomes one of the unresolvable alternatives at the novel's close [58-59]. No longer is language insufficient to "what is the case": one cannot confirm a position outside language from which its metaphors may be evaluated. In V. the narrator, outside his characters' frameworks, has an ontological status inherently different from theirs—a status inconsistent with Wittgenstein, and one}
like that of Gaddis' narrator in *The Recognitions*—but in *The Crying of Lot 49*, the narrator does not evaluate anything apart from Oedipa's discoveries. The narrator, and his readers, are therefore placed in the same position Oedipa occupies, in regard to the objects of her world, and the metaphors by which they are associated.

A crucial development in Pynchon's fiction is that, in *The Crying of Lot 49*, metaphor comes to be associated with revelation: Oedipa's husband, Mucho, sees the universe as an integral entity (after having taken LSD, "the bridge inward"), and his perception becomes an all-encompassing metaphor:

"Whenever I put the headset on now," he'd continued, "I really do understand what I find there. When those kids sing about 'She loves you,' yeah well, you know, she does, she's any number of people, all over the world, back through time, different colors, sizes, ages, shapes, distances from death, but she loves. And the 'you' is everybody. And herself. Oedipa, the human voice, you know, it's a flipping miracle."

[106-07]

Mucho's vision alienates him from Oedipa: from any outside perspective, it appears to be insanity—his boss tells her that at work they are beginning to call Mucho "the Brothers N" —but from inside, his picture seems to fit the world. Mucho, then, has become like the old man Oedipa sees, whose "DT's" are like "dt's," "a vanishingly small instant in which change at last had to be confronted for what it was" [95].
Behind the initials was a metaphor, a delirium tremens, a trembling unfurrowing of the mind's plowshare. The saint whose water can light lamps, the clairvoyant whose lapse in recall is the breath of God, the true paranoic for whom all is organized in spheres joyful or threatening about the central pulse of himself, the dreamer whose puns probe ancient fetid shafts and tunnels of truth all act in the same special relevance to the word, or whatever it is the word is there, buffering, to protect us from. The act of metaphor then was a thrust at truth and a lie, depending where you were: inside, safe, or outside, lost.

[95]

The movement of the plot (in the literary sense) in *The Crying of Lot 49* is towards Oedipa's confirmation of her apparent paranoia, whether existing or fantasized: in so moving, it brings us towards, but not to, this confirmation. Oedipa, like *Gravity's Rainbow's* Tchitcherine, is excluded from participation in visions such as Mucho's, at least for the span of the novel, except perhaps as part of "an orbiting paranoia" [136]. She inhabits the "excluded middle," beyond her former state and not yet into the new existence implied by Tristero [136]. Pynchon manages to suggest the possibility of transcendence through metaphor, through the association of equations such as Maxwell's [77-78; 80], or phenomena such as those Oedipa turns up in her quest for the holdings of Inverarity; but this metaphor is in *The Crying of Lot 49* never detached from the accusation of solipsism: revelations cannot be confirmed from the outside, just as the metaphors which, as Pynchon says, make metaphors possible cannot be externally observed.
In *Gravity's Rainbow*, both perspectives are in a sense combined: phenomena have the general validity of a perspective not limited by solipsism, as in V._r_; and these phenomena may transcend their profane meanings, as in *The Crying of Lot 49*. Metaphor in *Gravity's Rainbow* is associated with the interface, with the intersection of spaces; and this intersection may be confirmed externally. The first appearance of the term is in the psychological context of Pointsman's lab: as in Pavlov's experiments, a bell is rung, the dog is shown food, and the dog salivates. Eventually the unconditioned reflex, salivation at the sight of food, is supplanted by the conditioned, salivation at the sound of the bell [84]. In this process (though Pynchon does not dwell on the point) an association has been made between bell and food; a metaphor has been observed from the outside. In both Pynchon's earlier novels, metaphor must be distrusted because it cannot be confirmed; but in *Gravity's Rainbow*, at least one metaphor has become verifiable, and solipsism is no longer the danger it had been formerly.

Now that he has moved into "equivalent" phase, the first of the transmarginal phases, a membrane, hardly noticeable, stretches between Dog Vanya and the outside. Inside and outside remain just as they were, but the interface— the cortex of Dog Vanya's brain—is changing, in any number of ways.

[78-79]

Here the interface connects "inside" and "outside": the cortex is therefore literally the surface connecting in-
dividual and outside world, the surface on which Oedipa contemplates projecting a world. It is the cortex of Lieu-
tenant Slothrop which interests Pointsman [144]; at this in-
terface, he thinks, he will come to understand the connection
between Slothrop's inside and the outside, the falling rock-
ets over London. Between these two appearances of the term,
interface is used literally to describe Mexico and Jessica's
literal intersection [121] and metaphorically to describe the
movement into "postwar" [80]; and Pointsman's colleague Spec-
tro describes the cortex as "interface organ, mediating be-
tween [Outside and Inside], but part of them both. 'When
you've looked at how it really is,' he asked once, 'how can
we, any of us, be separate?" [141-42] This "interface or-
gan" is the surface on which stimulus and response occur,
the locus of metaphor.

The interface rapidly is extended to refer to any inter-
section between spaces, including skin itself [148, 700], the
skins of beans [173], death [147; 666; 668], the imitation of
death involved in Brennschluss [302], psychic mediums [153;
639], the edge of thunderstorms [455], camera shutters [484],
dawn [331], the intersection between time zones [695], and
the territory between armies [731]. These interfaces may be
variously categorized: first, there are literal intersections
between spaces, as with the gasoline/water line [523], the
skins of lovers [121; cf. 302], and their perverse imitation
Included with this group might be the camera shutters [484], including der Springer's camera-interface crossed when he became a director [494]; von Göll's movement illustrates a second class of interfaces, any point at which a change occurs to "another order of being." These changes include death, not only with the term itself [147], but with the alternate form of existence implied in Gravity's Rainbow; as with the "souls across the interface," Blicero after his transcendence [666-668], or the "Fungus-Pygmys" one of the Hereros sees during a hallucination [523-24]. In general, death is treated as a rite of passage rather than a finite end in Gravity's Rainbow; we see this in the deaths of Blobadjian [354-55] and Sachsa [220].

The rocket, too, moves to "another order of being at Brennschluss:

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.

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.

Since the rocket's flight is described as a life [209], its movement from powered device to "pure ballistic" is analogous to human death. Another sort of interface makes flight possible: drafts at the edge of a thunderstorm support power-
less flight:

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?

[455]

Gravity, then, is that which opposes flight, which turns the rocket's attempt to escape into space back into a parabola doomed those beneath it—symbolically it is representative of all forces opposing transcendence. Besides literal flight, there is the flight towards the Schwarzkommando's launch, made possible by movement "at the interface, like gliding at the edge of a thunderstorm . . . all the way to the end between armies East and West" [731]. Interfaces, besides being points of departure into other orders of being, are also points of vision into those orders: thus the mediums [146; 147] and the "Fungus Pygmies" [523]: "We can see the Interface from here. It's a long rainbow, mostly indigo, if that's any help—" [524]. Pynchon, then, takes literally the epigraph to the first book about the continuity of existence after death, finding at these periods of change insights into contingent existence.

Wars have a way of overriding the days just before them. In the looking back, there is such noise and gravity. But we are conditioned to forget. So that
the war may have more importance, yes, but still
. . . isn't the hidden machinery easier to see in the
days leading up to the event? There are arrangements,
things to be expedited . . . and often the edges are
apt to lift, briefly, and we see things we were not
meant to. . . .

[474]

Such a movement into the beginning of a new order of events
is analogous to the points of death or of Brennenschluss:
the "contingent existence" which the Hereros feel depends on
viewing profane time as a series of such points:

And now his head in Christian's steel notch at
300 yards. Suddenly, this awful branching: the two
possibilities already beginning to fly apart at the
speed of thought--a new Zone in any case, now, whether
Christian fires or refrains--jump, choose--
Enzian tries his best--knocks the barrel aside,
has a few unpleasant words for the young revenger.
But both men saw the new branches. The Zone, again,
has just changed, and they are already on, into the
new one. . . .

[524]

What we have discussed above as "the points," then, are essen-
tially an interface; and a term which initially seemed fairly
limited in its possible applications to psychology, for exam-
ple, comes to have ramifications throughout Gravity's Rainbow.

Every point of connection between fictive worlds, be-
tween characters' schemata, or between text and perceiver,
then, comes to be expressed by this model of the interface.
We see fictive worlds connected throughout Gravity's Rainbow
--such intersections, in fact, have been a considerable part
of Pynchon's fictional method since "Mortality and Mercy in
Vienna," in which partygoers are decimated by an Ojibwa In-
dian in mystic trance. During its catastrophic ending mem-
bers of that party, like Slothrop while suspended above the croquet match outside the Casino Hermann Göring, may well "try to imagine a tropical island, a secure room, where this cannot be happening" [200]. Such meetings as these are so common in the novel as to seem normal: thus Mexico's revenge before Pointsman, where he begins

pissing on the shiny table, the papers, in the ashtrays and pretty soon on these poker-faced men themselves, who, although executive material all right, men of hair-trigger minds, are still not quite willing to admit that this is happening, you know, in any world that really touches, at too many points, the one they're accustomed to.

[636]

Characters meet in Gravity's Rainbow who literally inhabit different spaces: thus, although "both have perimeters they are not supposed to cross," Thanatz and Ludwig "have crept away anyhow, to a piece of the interface, a cold thicket they've pounded down a space in the middle of, to lie on" [736-37]. No list of such meetings can be exhaustive: but most of Slothrop's encounters in the Zone are of this nature. Thus his encounter with Major Marvy and Bloody Chiclitz, while wearing Tchitcherine's uniform [557-60]; the "Disgusting English Candy Drill"[115-20]; the escape from a roadblock, with Seaman Bodine, in a commandeered Red Cross van; the meeting with Franz Pökler while wearing the pig suit; the escape from "Marvy's Mothers" in a red and orange balloon, having grounded their airplane by hitting it with a custard pie; and the "Potsdam pickup" in full Rocketman regalia. The radical im-
probability of Slothrop's appearance in the middle of the fortified camp where the postwar hegemony is being decided makes him (he thinks) invisible to his pursuit:

Their preoccupation is with forms of danger the War has taught them—phantoms they may be doomed now, some of them, to carry for the rest of their lives. Fine for Slothrop, though—it's a set of threats he doesn't belong to. They are still back in geographical space, drawing deadlines and authorizing personnel, and the only beings who can violate their space are safely caught and paralyzed in comic books. They think. They don't know about Rocketman here. They keep passing him and he remains alone, blotted to evening by velvet and buckskin—if they do see him his image is shunted immediately out to the boondocks of the brain where it remains in exile with other critters of the night.

[379]

If Slothrop's improbability as Rocketman affords him partial protection from those in pursuit—note that Tchitcherine, who is "at the edge," and who has affinity with strange types, apprehends Slothrop, then turns him loose [346]—his dissolution into diverse "personae," already evident in his roles as he-who-looks-for-V-2, as Pig-hero, as Rocketman, and as American Loser [472], for example, continues until Slothrop literally does dissolve as a character. This dissolution is seen most clearly when he becomes a "crossroad" [626], and thereby is integrated with the natural world. We have already seen this process as a defection to the green world, in opposition to what Gravity's Rainbow calls the human role as "God's spoilers" [720]; Slothrop thus becomes the novel's primary means of movement between "the novel" as
generic type and the message Gravity's Rainbow is to deliver --that is, the effect it aspires to have in the world at large. As a character, Slothrop is established as the protagonist throughout most of Gravity's Rainbow: his disappearance poses the reader with obvious problems, since in the fourth section the novel's subplots begin to spin off like the sections of the Zone. ("Each alternative Zone speeds away from all the others, in fated acceleration, red-shifting, fleeing the Center" [519].) The novel's fictive spaces, once tightly integrated about Slothrop's movements through the Zone, begin to move apart as his Δt narrows [509]; and this disintegration must be interpreted in light of what Slothrop's "self" means to the novel and to the reader. Slothrop's identity, like other factors in Gravity's Rainbow, is a locus for our expectations in the text: just as Pynchon says, at one point, "You will want cause and effect. All right" [665], then proceeds to establish a most improbable series of events, so, knowing that we will want a hero to carry out an "Imipolectique" [490], Pynchon provides him, then takes him away. The function Slothrop fulfills, therefore, is that of interface between our expectations and the novel's effects.

The interface logically justifies Gravity's Rainbow's variety of stylistic modes: from its first sections, the novel integrates song and dance numbers into the text, from slow, romantic numbers ("My Doper's Cadenza," or "Too Soon to Know"), to light, up-tempo tunes (Osbie Feel's banana
song, or Pirate Prentice's fantasy song), to a tap dance number:

\[\text{Pa- ra- noi-- (clippety-clippety-clippety cl[ya,]op!)}\]
\[\text{Pa- ra- noi-- (shufflestomp! shufflestomp! shufflestomp!)}\]
\[\text{[and] cl[ya,]op! clickety cl[Ain't]ick] it grand (clop)}\]
\[\text{ta (clop) see (clippyclop) yer good-time face again!} \]

[657]

(a passage which must have given the typesetters at Viking the urban fantods)--and so on. Whatever other effects these songs may have, they punctuate the text of Pynchon's fiction, contributing to the mixing of fictional modes; the novel can be simultaneously serious and playful in this manner, in part, because of the mode of its connections--because of the interface. Gravity's Rainbow reduplicates Slothrop's facility at meeting the unexpected or uncanny:

Thanatz was washed overboard in the same storm that took Slothrop from the Anubis. He was rescued by a Polish undertaker in a rowboat, out in the storm tonight to see if he can get struck by lightning. [..] Ever since reading about Benjamin Franklin in an American propaganda leaflet, kite, thunder and key, the undertaker has been obsessed with this business of getting hit in the head by a lightning bolt. All over Europe, it came to him one night in a flash (though not the kind he wanted), at this very moment, are hundreds, who knows maybe thousands, of people walking around, who have been struck by lightning and survived.

[663]

The movement of the fiction imitates its content: just as in V, with its two plot strands, Stencil's and Profane's, which move together, then suddenly apart--so here in Gravity's Rainbow, the novel itself becomes like the interfaces it describes. One such set of interfaces is comprised
of the film episodes which provide modes of popular fiction
for the novel's imitation. One such interface is the film
Alpdrücken, a von Göll film in which Greta Erdmann, cameras
rolling, conceives her daughter Bianca during a rape. Franz
Pökler, remembering the movie later, fathers his daughter
Ilse; and, Pynchon tells us, other "shadow-children" are
fathered on Erdmann the same night [397]. The film is thus
an interface between the conceptions of all these various
children; and the chapter division in Gravity's Rainbow
imitates their connection in the change in the text:

Margherita whispering God how you hurt me and Ah,
Max . . . and just as Slothrop's about to come,
the name of her child: strained through her perfect
teeth, a clear extrusion of pain that is not in play,
she cries, Bianca. . . .

..................................................

. . . yes, bitch--yes, little bitch--poor helpless
bitch you're coming can't stop yourself now I'll
whip you again whip till you bleed. . . . Thus Pökler's
whole front surface, eyes to knees: flooded with to-
night's image of the delicious victim bound on her
dungeon rack [. . .] and Leni no longer solemn wife, em-
bittered source of strength, but Margherita Erdmann
underneath him

[397]

This conception is in fact similar to what von Göll megal-
maniacally believes has occurred with his Schwarzkommando
film [388], and what Pynchon claims (through Enzian) happens
in "the act of naming" [322; 366].

Gravity's Rainbow, then, is Pynchon's resolution of a
fundamental dilemma implied by his previous fiction: in order
to bring together possibly contradictory aims--creating a
work having a satisfying esthetic form, as in V.'s bifurcated plot or Oedipa's movement to the excluded middle that is the locus of Maxwell's Demon, and allowing his characters the desired individual freedom impossible in his earlier novels—Gravity's Rainbow originates a metaphor, the interface, which is both agent of insight for the characters and structural principle for the reader. In order to integrate a sense of contingent existence with the necessity of having a deterministic plot for the fiction, Pynchon in his own way counterfeits the novel by establishing, then erasing, a conventional hero. Unlike The Recognitions, however, which is also a counterfeit of a sort, but which makes its fiction from the difficulty of writing esthetically satisfying fiction, Gravity's Rainbow playfully adapts popular modes to its own movement as a means of self-consciously catering to the reader's presumed fantasies: when these appeals to our fantasies are violated by Slothrop's disappearance, the result is dissatisfaction much like that evoked by The Confidence-Man, and for similar reasons. Slothrop evades control both within and without the novel, both the Firm and the Author; the authorial stance required for the novel's resolution is a nice rhetorical problem. At times Pynchon must assert a strong sense of control at times, so that the reader never takes the novel's contingency as accidental; but at other times Pynchon must undercut that sense of control, so that he resembles in no way another agency of the Firm. This
undercutting is done partially through asides, such as--

"The two courses intersect in space, but not in time. Not nearly in time, heh heh" [388]--and Slothrop's tarot:

His cards have been laid down, Celtic style, in the order suggested by Mr. A. E. Waite, laid out and read, but they are the cards of a tanker and feeb: they point only to a long and scuffling future, to mediocrity (not only in his life but also, heh, heh, in his chroniclers too, yes yes nothing like getting the 3 of Pentacles upside down covering the significator on the second try to send you to the tube to watch a seventh rerun of the Takeshi and Ichizo Show, light a cigarette and try to forget the whole thing) -- to no clear happiness or redeeming cataclysm. [738]

In this passage the digression is not a movement aside from the central point of the passage: the digression is the point. That is, the conclusion of Gravity's Rainbow is a series of digressions, as the previously linear progression through the Zone turns into vectors in all directions. 35

Formerly the novel has had a fairly well defined plot, but by its last section it breaks into sub-chapters with headings such as "Shit 'n' Shinola," "Some Characteristics of Imipolex G," and "Listening to the Toilet," its characters moving into disarray. This movement indicates some scattering in the novel's overall plot comparable to Slothrop's scattering of identity; by this means, Pynchon avoids a traditional and "strong" ending to the novel, like that of The Recognitions, which would obviously be unsuitable here. There can be no knitting-together of loose ends, no satiric afterword:
Gravity's Rainbow is James' loose, baggy monster, alive and growing.

The fictional principle which allows this provisional structure—which is not confinement is the interface: mere intersection between spaces indicates no operative hierarchy, no geometric web of forces, no architecture as the novelist's governing metaphor. Rather, "spaces" may intersect at any given moment—like the Rocket:

"It comes as the Revealer. Showing that no society can protect, never could—they are as foolish as shields of paper.... They have lied to us. They can't keep us from dying, so they lie to us about death. A cooperative structure of lies. [....] 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."

[728]

In Gravity's Rainbow, structures are inherently suspicious, and the novel must find an alternative structure for its own enclosure: this structure is based on the interface, which allows phenomena such as the rocket's descent—the rocket not only can penetrate anywhere, as Enzian says, but does penetrate metaphorically the reader's space at the end. This last descent registers the novel's own interpiercing of inside and outside, its intention as a text to reach beyond its own confines.
III. Singularities

According to the previous discussion, Pynchon's novels suggest a considerable change from the traditional, Aristotelian concept of metaphor. For Pynchon's novel, metaphor is far from being simply ornament for a basic act of communication: metaphor is the fundamental act by which perception takes place.

Metaphor consists in giving the thing a name that belongs to something else; the transference being either from genus to species, or from species to genus, or from species to species, or on grounds of analogy. . . . That from analogy is possible whenever there are four terms so related that the second (B) is to the first (A), as the fourth (D) to the third (C); for one may then metaphorically put D in lieu of B, and B in lieu of D.妥善

In Aristotle's definition, these are qualities which two objects have, which in poetic usage are transferred; in Pynchon's usage, however, the qualities are associated rather with the act of their perception or association. Pynchon's concept of metaphor, particularly after V., resembles that of a model describing processes: the process is not the model, but it resembles it in ways which make the model useful for our analysis. By this view, events in the world which may be intrinsically unrelated are seen as if related by common elements--as with the V-symbols in V. [50] or the processes stopped by At in Gravity's Rainbow. We may choose common elements in both concepts of metaphor, then, by saying that metaphor is the finding of similarities in potentially dissimilar
facts, a procedure which Pynchon distrusts in *V.* because it makes possible "the Great Lie"; in *The Crying of Lot 49,* however, metaphor becomes provisionally acceptable. Such resemblances as Oedipa finds in the Tristero system are expressed in *Gravity's Rainbow* by the metaphor of the interface. The interface becomes a model for all metaphorical perceptions in *Gravity's Rainbow*—a metaphor for metaphor—and the general term for all the varied associations in the novel; it is therefore the basis of the building of schemata, an ordering procedure which makes sense of the world of facts, and which is the principal activity of Pynchon's characters. As a general term, the interface resembles the equations which describe the rocket's guidance system and the Poisson equation which describes statistical events such as the rocket strikes or the births of children [239]:

. . . nothing can really stop the Abreaction of the Lord of the Night unless the Blitz stops, rockets dismantle, the entire film runs 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: with each one the Lord further legitimizes his State [. . .] There do exist levels where chance is hardly recognized at all. But to the likes of employees such as Roger Mexico, it is music, not without its majesty, this power series

\[ N e^{-m} \left(1 + m + \frac{m^2}{2!} + \frac{m^3}{3!} + \cdots + \frac{m^{n-1}}{(n-1)!}\right), \]

terms numbered according to rocketfalls per square, the Poisson dispensation ruling not only these annihilations no man can run from, but also cavalry accidents, blood counts, radioactive decay, number of wars per year. . . .

[139-40]
In Sartor Resartus the Editor remarks that one of Teufelsdröckh's passages on metaphors is resoundingly metaphorical; what passes for a witticism in Carlyle's book is a necessary condition of perception in Pynchon's, as we see in this passage. Within a few sentences, Pynchon subsumes four metaphors—death as Lord of the Night, Blitz as Abreaction, idea as music, and real events as filmed (a concept which we shall examine later)—to the overall question of chance and control. If events can be governed by an equation, how can they not be deterministic? Such questions are asked Mexico by Pointsman [55-56]; and Gravity's Rainbow is characterized by a tension between general equations and discrete examples of functions governed by those equations. Those who, like Pointsman, are dedicated to controlling events, try to find the general equations behind human behavior, as they have for the rocket's parabola; and Slothrop's attempts to evade control are singular attempts not to fit into such equations. Pynchon's practice of structuring his fiction around laws of physics or mathematics, present in V. and The Crying of Lot 49, continues in Gravity's Rainbow; the accommodations he makes to aspirations of freedom are made acceptable by the interface, which possesses the flexibility to fit all cases without imposing a system. Like Poisson's equation, it describes a potentially infinite number of phenomena without distortion, since these are still random events.
Throughout *Gravity's Rainbow*, Pynchon suggests the existence of events which will not fit present equations, and which will not be governed by our expectations or our theories; in the novel there is a general statement of the impossibility of having equations to cover all cases. Called Gödel's Theorem, this general principle is of considerable importance to the dialectical movement in *Gravity's Rainbow* between those who would discover the principles governing all phenomena and those who would escape such principles; such instances are expressed by the term charisma, opposed by the attempts, by those linked to history, to bring these charismatic outbreaks into theoretical compass—that is, to routinize them.

And yet, and yet: there is Murphy's Law to consider, that brash Irish proletarian restatement of Gödel's Theorem—when everything has been taken care of, when nothing can go wrong, or even surprise us... something will. So the permutations 'n' combinations of Pudding's Things That Can Happen in European Politics for 1931, the year of Gödel's Theorem, don't give Hitler an outside chance. So, when laws of heredity are laid down, mutants will be born. Even as determinist a piece of hardware as the A4 rocket will begin spontaneously generating items like the "S-Gerat" Slothrop thinks he's chasing like a grail. And so, too, the legend of the black scapegoat we cast down like Lucifer from the tallest erection in the world has come, in the fullness of time, to generate its own children, running around inside Germany even now—the Schwarzkommando

[275]

Gödel's Theorem (more whimsically, Murphy's Law), then, is the general principle governing both the movement of characters and the structure of events in *Gravity's Rainbow*—a theo-
retical statement in its function comparable to the first proposition in Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* for *V.*, which says simply that no equation can satisfactorily account for what is the case, because the case will spontaneously change to evade formulation.

Here the comparison with *V.* affords illustration of both the continuity and the development of Pynchon's vision. *V.* may be seen as a development of Wittgenstein's first proposition, which Mondaugen receives in code from the "sferics" --"The world is all that is the case"--and human attempts to deal with its implications, given a non-human world inclining toward chaos. Stencil's father Sidney characterizes this inclination as a "disease" which imitates the actions of history:

"Suppose Sidney Stencil has remained constant after all--suppose instead sometime between 1859 and 1919, the world contracted a disease which no one ever took the trouble to diagnose because the symptoms were too subtle--blending in with the events of history, no different one by one but altogether--fatal."

[433]

This movement, as we have seen, is expressed by the metaphor of thermodynamic entropy, in which usable work declines as a function of increasing disorder: the primary difficulty in *V.* is to keep some expression of order among the increasing social chaos. In the novels subsequent to *V.*, however, this movement is not so predictably linear: as we see in *The Cry- ing of Lot 49*, the possibility that information may be par-
tial, erroneous, or even fantasized qualifies governing schemata of the world. Beginning with Pierce Inverarity's apparent plot or joke on Oedipa, Pynchon's books give the sense that what threatens is not physical or social disorder so much as control, which limits one's freedom to respond to threats. Pynchon's model changes from an Augustinian opponent to a Manichaean one. We have seen such a change in Stencil's version of his world, which includes a plot associated with V., incorporating events which appear to be simply random; beginning with *The Crying of Lot 49*, however, this incorporation is indistinguishable from the novel's own perspective. The general decline in the world, described in *Gravity's Rainbow* as the War, is attributed to Them, a Manichaean transformation: while the overall movement is toward increasing entropy, it is caused by opponents, not by inescapable natural phenomena. A Manichaean opponent, unlike an Augustinian one, is subject to reversals. In V., individuals vaguely interested in life were the principal hope for setting entropy back a bit; in *Gravity's Rainbow*, however, virtually all forces of organization are imitations of life, bureaucracies, interested not in countering entropic decline but in furthering it, in the interests of self-preservation. Organized opposition to the Structure, as we have seen, must be assumed into the dialectic of history and thus made ineffective; it is only through spontaneous outbreaks, unplanned
but energetic outbursts of life, that the Structure's increasing control may be countered. The Structure in *Gravity's Rainbow* is characterized by pressure to routinize these charismatic outbreaks: and this routinization is a movement toward that perspective Mircea Eliade calls the profane. Actions which promote surprise as a method for evading the expectations of those in control, then, are examples of Gödel's Theorem as it works in the novel.

Gödel's Theorem is first mentioned in *Gravity's Rainbow* with its primary example, the appearance of the Schwarzkommando, as we have seen. Originally conceived as a propaganda device for the White Visitation, in a short by the novel's German director and black marketeer, Gerhardt von Göll [112-13], the film causes von Göll to believe himself responsible for their creation [388]; however, the narrator tells us their existence is due to Murphy's Law/Gödel's Theorem, a principle which applies throughout the novel. Their creation seems to come from the center of the bureaucracy, from Pointsman's own agency, which in spite of (or perhaps because of) its bureaucratic organization cannot recreate the conditions which gave rise to the film.

Who could have guessed there'd be real black rocket troops? That a story made up to scare last year's enemy should prove to be literally true—and no way now to stuff them back in the bottle or even say the spell backward: no one ever knew the complete spell—different people knew different parts of it, that's what teamwork is. . . . By the time it occurs to them to look back through the Most Secret documentation surrounding Operation Black Wing, to try and get some
idea of how this all might've happened, they will find, curiously, that certain critical documents are either missing or have been updated past the end of the Operation, and that it is impossible at this late date to reconstruct the spell at all, though there will be the usual elegant and bad-poetic speculation.

[276]

The appearance of black rocket troops is surprising because out of normal expectations for a bureaucracy; bureaucracies work by formulated laws, generated inductively from experience, the products of history and science. For this reason, Slothrop's surveillance is to the advantage of all these organized interests:

all in his life of what has looked free or random, is discovered to've been under some Control, all the time, the same as a fixed roulette wheel--where only destinations are important, attention is to long-term statistics, not individuals: and where the House always does, of course, keep turning a profit. . . .

[209]

Pointsman notices Slothrop initially because of the correspondence between the map and the rocket strikes [85-36]; the fact that his behavior cannot be accounted for by deterministic models endangers Pointsman's conceptions about science and history [56]. Pointsman then analyzes Slothrop according to good Pavlovian practice: he is programmed to destroy the Schwarzkommando, but does not do so [615]--rather, he goes over to the green world, a defection described in terms of loss of self, of history [626; 720]. Slothrop's disassembly fits neither our expectations nor Theirs; it is, therefore, another example of Gödel's Theorem in Gravity's
Rainbow.

Statistics can only account for events above a certain number; when it comes to particular particles, statistical predictions are of no value. Thus the past record of rocket strikes is of no value in finding a safe place [55-56]; and it is in such particular events—singularities, cusps, or points at which there is no first derivative—that Gravity’s Rainbow places its hope. Slothrop’s hopes for escape ride on some such formulations, as we see throughout his journey through the Zone: his escape from Pointsman’s control at the Casino Hermann Göring puts this sense in terms of grace.

At noon Hilary Bounce comes in rubbing his eyes wearing a shit-eating grin. "How was your evening? Mine was remarkable."

"Glad to hear it." Slothrop is smiling. You’re on my list too, pal. This smile asks from him more grace than anything in his languid American life ever has, up till now. Grace he always imagined himself short on. But it’s working. He’s surprised, and so grateful that he almost starts crying then. The best part of all is not that Bounce appears fooled by the smile, but that Slothrop knows now that it will work for him again. . . .

[253]

Moreover, is is some state of "minimum grace" that Slothrop’s network of plots might let him attain [603]; and some "physical grace" associated with Dillinger’s blood which might get him through a bad time [741]. Not a theological but a desacralized, physical state associated with being "right here, right now," grace underscores Pynchon’s consistency in favoring inspired moments. Later the same evening of his escape,
Slothrop finds in the sky a sign of this grace. "[T]here comes to Slothrop the best feeling dusk in a foreign city can bring: just where the sky's light balances the electric lamplight in the street, just before the first star, some promise of events without cause, surprises, a direction at right angles to every direction his life has been able to find up till now" [253]. This "direction at right angles" is another version of Gödel's Theorem, which permits exceptions to all rules. As we see in the Zone, Slothrop's real gift is for improvisation [372], a talent which depends not on knowing the system, like Pointsman [228], but on action in the moment.39

Slothrop's status as hero in Gravity's Rainbow, then, is due in part to his talent for improvisation, for behavior which which escapes the rules, and is therefore some kind of grace; later, however, he turns away from some such salvation which arises by surprise.

What happened back there? Slothrop thinks he might cry. They have been holding each other. She's been talking about hiding out.
    "Sure. But we'll have to get off sometime, Swinemünde, someplace."
    "No. We can get away. I'm a child, I know how to hide. I can hide you too."
He knows she can. He knows. Right here, right now, under the makeup and the fancy underwear, she exists, love, invisibility. . . . For Slothrop this is some discovery.

[470]

Like Pynchon's Dennis Flange in "Low-lands," Slothrop is offered a state of potential escape, a refuge underground; unlike him, however, Slothrop turns away, and his departure is des-
cribed as a bureaucratic ritual:

But her arms about his neck are shifting now, apprehensive. For good reason. Sure he'll stay for a while, but eventually he'll go, and for this he is to be counted, after all, among the Zone's lost. The Pope's staff is always going to remain barren, like Slothrop's own unflowering cock.

So when he disentangles himself, it is extravagantly. He creates a bureaucracy of departure, inoculations against forgetting, exit visas stamped with love-bites... but coming back is something he's already forgotten about. Straightening his bow tie, brushing off the satin lapels of his jacket, buttoning up his pants, back in uniform of the day, he turns his back on her, and up the ladder he goes. The last instant their eyes were in touch is already behind him... .

[470-71]

This departure is Slothrop's evasion of what, this time, might have saved him: the things he is to do, "the days' targets," come to have "more reality than anything that might come up by surprise, by Murphy's Law, where the salvation could be. . . ." [471]. Such an opportunity is to come only once; such escapes are like charismatic outbreaks in their degree of surprise and in their evasion of descriptive rules. Charisma, however, establishes a new force which history must contend with, while escape loses a fact history has had under control.

Their relation is, in fact, much like that of elect and preterite.

The other prominent citation of Gödel's Theorem occurs when Enzian is "Sold on Suicide":

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. [. . .]

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 a charm. They calcul-
ate no cycles, no returns, they are in love with the
glamour of a whole people's suicide—the pose, the
stoicism, and the bravery. These Otukungurua are pro-
phets of masturbating, specialists in abortion and
sterilization, pitchmen for acts oral and anal, pedal
and digital, sodomistical and zoophilic—all their approach
and their game is pleasure: they are spieling earnes-
tly and well, and Erdschweinhöhlers are listening.

The Empty Ones can guarantee a day when the
last Zone-Herero will die, a final zero to a collective
history fully lived. It has appeal.

There is no outright struggle for power. It is
all seduction and counterseduction, advertising and
pornography, and the history of the Zone-Hereros is
being decided in bed.

[318]

The Empty Ones are a Herero equivalent to the mechanism of
death operative in the War, and their seductions are clearly
developed from the deviant sexuality associated with lady V.
in V. It is "collective history," not personal—and there-
fore bureaucracy, in a sense—that is their support; Enzian,
by contrast, wants to create something that will have no his-
tory [318]. His support is based on his name, and his charis-
matic presence as leader:

Enzian knows that he is being used for his name.
The name has some magic. But he has been so unable
to touch, so neutral for so long . . . everything has
flowed away but the name, Enzian, a sound for chanting.
He hopes it will be magic enough for one thing, one
good thing when the time comes, however short of the
Center [. . .] Can his name, can "Enzian" break
their power? Can his name prevail?

[321]

His interest is in the rocket, a charismatic and centralizing
force not entirely under the control of the War.

Vectors in the night underground, all trying to
flee a center, a force, which appears to be the
Rocket: some immachination, whether of journey or
of destiny, which is able to gather violent political
opposites together in the Erdschweinhöhle as it
gathers fuel and oxidizer in its thrust chamber:
metered, helmsmanlike, for the sake of its scheduled
parabola.

[318]

We will sort out the contradictory uses of the rocket, sacred
and profane, later; for now it is sufficient to contrast
Blicerio's rocket with Enzian's. The 00000, dedicated to
technological death--"Once, only once"--in Blicerio's trans-
cendence [724], is produced by the drives of the war; and the
00001, produced from captured or salvaged parts by the Schwarz-
kommando, is dedicated to finding "a key to the Wastes of the
World," that is, to reaffirming return. As it turns out,
return is reaffirmed in the very structure of the "Sold on
Suicide" song, whose format prevents the conclusion it cele-
brates:

Don't like either, the Cards or Browns,
Piss on the country and piss on the town,
But I'm S.O.S., yes well actually this goes on,
verse after verse, for quite some time. In its com-
plete 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, meantime correcting mistakes and inevitable re-
petitions, 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!

[320]
Gödel's Theorem, then, is responsible for Enzian's continuing to live in the face of logical and sensual appeals to suicide; in this we see its continued association with Pynchon's values of life.

Enzian describes his name as having a kind of magic: in general, the operations of charisma in *Gravity's Rainbow* are magical, magic being a convenient, non-rational form of surprise easily contrasted with science and history. Outbreaks of magic, like Geli Tripping's witchcraft, which hides Enzian from Tchitcherine [733-35], are not subject to cause and effect; Leni Pökler, a believer in dreams and astrology, tries to explain this to Franz in terms of metaphor.

She even tried, from what little calculus she'd picked up, to explain it to Franz as $\delta t$ approaching zero, eternally approaching, the slices of time growing thinner and thinner, a succession of rooms each with walls more silver, transparent, as the pure light of the zero comes nearer... But he shook his head. "Not the same, Leni. The important thing is taking a function to its limit. $\delta t$ is just a convenience, so that it can happen."

[. . .]

He was the cause-and-effect man: he kept at her astrology without mercy, telling her what she was supposed to believe, then denying it. "Tides, radio interference, damned little else. There is no way for changes out there to produce changes here."

"Not produce," she tried, "not cause. It all goes along together. Parallel, not series. Metaphor. Signs and symptoms. Mapping on to different coordinate systems, I don't know..."

[159]

What Lani tries to explain to her husband is "being in the moment," a concept to be identified with Slothrop's "grace": for Pynchon both states are nearer the natural world, with its
possibilities for mysticism, and are opposed to systems of "cause and effect," whether from psychologist or engineer.

Another character whose "grace" (though different from Slothrop's) removes him from a profane system—and who is therefore associated with magic—is Lyle Bland, a nearly anonymous presence whose psychological studies justify the white market [581]. Originally involved with control, in fact the agent for supervising Slothrop's childhood, Bland clearly belongs with the "bad guys"; however, he defects as a result of his associations with Masons, and this defection is expressed as an instance of Gödel's Theorem.

Just as there are, in the World, machineries committed to injustice as an enterprise, so too there seem to be provisions active for balancing things out once in a while. Not as an enterprise, exactly, but at least in the dance of things. The Masons, in the dance of things, turned out to be one of these where Bland was concerned. [. . .] The magic in these Masonic rituals is very, very old. And way back in those days, it worked. As time went on, and it started being used for spectacle, to consolidate what were only secular appearances of power, it began to lose its zip. But the words, moves, and machinery have been more or less faithfully carried down over the millennia, through the grim rationalizing of the World, and so the magic is still there, though latent, needing to touch the right sensitive head to reassert itself. [580, 588]

For Pynchon as for Gaddis, magic has been drawn into a routine frame; for Gaddis its functions were transferred into religion and thence to science, while for Pynchon the magical part is lost as a result of the profane uses of the ritual. Unlike Gaddis, however, Pynchon seems to suggest that the
magic's real power may whimsically return at any time, as another instance of Gödel's Theorem. Bland's discovery, then, has correspondences with Slothrop's "narrowing at": he finds that Earth, rather than being "a big dumb rock," is "a living critter," and the discovery results in a movement out of his body comparable to Slothrop's movement into the green world. Though Slothrop's transcendence is not into a spiritual realm, as is Bland's, both actions are distinct from the rational process of the War. Pynchon's transcendence in *Gravity's Rainbow*, then, is individually suited, having no consistent strain of orthodoxy--orthodoxy is in fact a measure of accommodation to profane flows of power, unlike heresy, which erupts charismatically. In this distinction we see another difference from *V.*, in which charisma was associated with the Catholic Church; in *Gravity's Rainbow* the Catholic Church embodies the System [747].

If his extracorporeal movement is magical, Bland's transcendence is like other rituals carried out in the novel--specifically "the act of naming" as it calls forth the thing named. "Naming" has a dual function in *Gravity's Rainbow*: naming objects results in their control according to rational systems; but as in Bland's transcendence, things named may in fact magically appear. Thus the existence of the Schwarzkommando is discovered after the propaganda film--significantly, "No one remembers who suggested the name Schwarzkom-
mando" [75; see 275]. Pynchon frequently associates the Herrer"os with the possibilities of magic: thus Blicero finds in the Südwest desert that "words are only an eye-twitch away from the things they stand for" [100]; later in Germany, Enzian reflects on the association between the name Bleichertöde and the rocket's creation. "North is death's region. There may be no gods, but there is a pattern: names by themselves may have no magic, but the act of naming, the physical utterance, obeys the pattern" [322]. The act of naming has its effect also in Säure Bummer's shout, "Raketenmensch!" [366]. Such a play upon the possibility that words are close to things may be natural for a writer so concerned as Pynchon is both with literal wordplay and with the behavior of "things" in a non-linguistic world: ultimately the conceit—the provisional belief—in Pynchon's works is that language has an effect in the world outside the text. Not only is this effect seen in the expected human framework—

On sidewalks and walls the very first printed slogans start to show up, the first Central Asian fuck you signs, the first kill-the-police-commissioner signs (and somebody does! this alphabet is really something!) and so the magic that the shamans, out in the wind, have always known, begins to operate now in a political way, and Džaqyp Qulan hears the ghost of his own lynched father with a scratchy pen in the night, practicing As and Bs. . . .

[355-56]

but it may also be seen in human relations with the non-human world: such is the case, for example, with the rocket engineers' "magic number" [406]. 41
Naming an object, placing it in language, is by the same act placing it in syntactical relation with virtually an infinite number of other objects. For this reason, at certain times, names have two opposite possibilities: particularly outside the context of society, naming objects brings them closer [100]; and given Gravity's Rainbow's version of human consciousness, naming normally tames phenomena. For example, transcribing Central Asian songs, as Tchitcherine does, makes it possible for them to become lost, not preserved [357]. And the most powerful of possible phenomena, the presence of a sacred order which impinges on this one, is of course the Word:

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

Implicit in this description is another fact relevant to names: on the many occasions that a character (usually Slothrop) feels terror, it is usually nameless terror, a terror made affectively present by its lack of named agents. One of Slothrop's dreams shows us this practice--Pynchon frequently uses dreams as a locus for contact with another order, thereby avoiding the necessity of committing himself to the accuracy of their visions.
He was in his old room, back home. A summer afternoon of lilacs and bees, and warm air through an open window. Slothrop had found a very old dictionary of technical German. It fell open to a certain page prickling with black-face type. Reading down the page, he would come to JAMF. The definition would read: I. He woke begging It no--but even after waking, he was sure, he would remain sure, that it could visit him again, any time It wanted. Perhaps you know that dream too. Perhaps It has warned you never to speak Its name. If so, you know about how Slothrop'll be feeling now.

[286-87]

Pynchon is consistent in identifying this nameless state with control. In the opening dream sequence, for example, the consciousness (eventually Pirate Prentice, but as the novel opens a voice for all its readers) describes the evacuation through "places whose names he has never heard . . . ." [3]. Later, the rocket's controlling equation is imitated, after death, by "a host of other souls feeling themselves, even now, Rocketlike, driving out toward the stone-blue lights of the Vacuum under a Control they cannot quite name . . . ." [239]. Dreams may be an indication that such controls have been internalized: the motifs of dream and illusory control are joined with the market early (too early for the importance of the passage to be fully realized):

"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, A and B are unreal, are names for parts that ought to be inseparable. . . ."

[30]

This does sound like "More Ouspenskian nonsense," as a character says; but in the context of the War, markets, and Slothrop's control it takes on more importance.

The human ability to place objects in a system of language—to separate them by naming them A and B—like the human consciousness which is coextensive with it, is not entirely positive in Gravity's Rainbow. We see this controlling aspect of language particularly in the associations with German habits of categorization. When Tchitcherine tries to extract information from Slothrop regarding the Schwarzkommando, he gets a list of "Blackwords" which are drawn from Slothrop's recently acquired German:

Black runs all through the transcript: the recurring color black. Slothrop never mentioned Enzian by name, nor the Schwarzkommando. But he did talk about the Schwarzgerät. And he also coupled "schwarz-" with some strange nouns, in the German fragments that came through. Blackwoman, Blackrocket, Blackdream. . . . The new coinages seem to be made unconsciously. Is there a single root, deeper than anyone has probed, from which Slothrop's Blackwords only appear to flower separately? Or has he by way of the language caught the German mania for name-giving, dividing the Creation finer and finer, analyzing, setting names more hopelessly apart from named, even to bringing in the mathematics of combination, tackling together established nouns to get new ones, the insanely, endlessly dicing play of a chemist whose molecules are words. . . .

[390-91]

The series of combinations which generate language, which by
the same action make it more readily available for assimila-
tion or control of the green world, also set the "namer more
hopelessly apart from named"—Pynchon's equivalent for the
Fall. What Slothrop sees after his escape from consciousness
is not relations promoted by words, but things themselves
which speak to him: 43

Crosses, swastikas, Zone-mandalas, how can they not
speak to Slothrop? He's sat in Säure Bummer's kitchen,
the air streaming with kif moirés, reading soup recipes
and finding in every bone and cabbage leaf paraphrases
of himself . . . news flashes, names of wheelhorses
that will pay him off enough for a certain getaway.
[. . .] picking up rusted beer cans, rubbers yellow
with preterite seed, Kleenex wadded to brain shapes
hiding preterite snot, preterite tears, newspapers,
broken glass, pieces of automobile, days when in super-
stition and fright he could make it all fit, seeing
clearly in each an entry in a record, a history: his
own, his winter's, his country's . . .

[625-26]

At other times Slothrop has been appreciative of the natural
world in ways no one else in Gravity's Rainbow is—for exam-
ple, after Slothrop has gotten information from Dodson-Truck,
"It may be that the champagne is still with him—for ten
extraordinary seconds there's nothing in his field but simple
love for what he's seeing. Then, perversely aware of it, he
turns away, back into the room" [221]. 44 Increasingly effi-
cient order, such as the German categories of Slothrop's in-
terrogation by Tchitcherine, contrasts with the anarchy epi-
tomized by the Zone, an anarchy which permits such simple joy
in the world as Slothrop's sight of the Brockengespenst-
phänomen [331]: in the Zone "categories have been blurred
badly. The status of the name you miss, love, and search for now has grown ambiguous and remote" [303]. In summary, then, naming natural objects brings them under control, an action associated with the human enterprise to exploit the world; in certain conditions, however, outside the context of society--in the desert, dreaming or just awake, or underground in the Mittelwerke--naming objects may bring them back, restoring to words a potency normally missing.

But naming is not effective in all cases: another passage indicates that magic is not compelled in Gravity's Rainbow, but comes spontaneously. Greta's discovery of Oneirine, the novel's drug inspiring dreams, is described as

"part of a deliberate pattern. Greta was meant to find Oneirine. Each plot carries its signature. Some are God's, some masquerade as God's. This is a very advanced kind of forgery. But still there's the same meanness and mortality to it as a falsely made check. It is only more complex. The members have names, like the Archangels. More or less common, humanly-given names whose security can be broken, and the names learned. But those names are not magic. That's the key, that's the difference. Spoken aloud, even with the purest magical intention, they do not work."

[463-64]

Pynchon's dualism, then, extends from plots such as these to names to life and its imitation [166-67], and culminates in the two possible uses for the rocket. Franz Pökler's naïve hope is in its possibilities, Leni's dread is of its probable use as military hardware:

The A4 operational-at-last hadn't crept up on him. Its coming true was no climax. That hadn't ever been the point.
"They're using you to kill people," Leni told him, as clearly as she could. "That's their only job, and you're helping them."
"We'll all use it, someday, to leave the earth. To transcend."
She laughed. "Transcend?" fromPokler?
"Someday," honestly trying, "they won't have to kill. Borders won't mean anything. We'll have all outer space. . . ."
"Oh you're blind," spitting it as she spat his blindness at him every day.

The growth of the rocket, like that of the Operation Black Wing film, is unpredictable, untraceable, and ultimately beyond the control of those who fund it. Both events are charismatic outbreaks; and in such outbreaks, we have seen, Pynchon places such hope as exists in Gravity's Rainbow.

But others had the money, others gave the orders—trying to superimpose their lusts and bickerings on something that had its own vitality, on a technologique they'd never begin to understand. As long as the Rocket was in research and development, there was no need for them to believe in it. Later, as the A4 was going operational, as they found themselves with a real rocket-in-being, the struggles for power would begin in earnest.

But from this state of mind, some force is felt beyond the corporate enterprise, some irrational, charismatic force which takes control of those participating: "something was out to get him, something here among the paper. The fear of extinction named Pokler knew it was the Rocket, beckoning him in" [405-06].

As if to triangulate this phenomenon, Pynchon introduces another rocket engineer, Horst Achtfaden, who describes a similar sensation:
"It demanded this, we didn't. So. Perhaps you used a rifle, a radio, a typewriter. Some typewriters in Whitehall, in the Pentagon, killed more civilians than our little A4 could have ever hoped to. You are either alone absolutely, alone with your own death, or you take part in the larger enterprise, and you share in the deaths of others." [453-54]

For this reason it is mistaken to hope, as Rózsavölgyi does, for bureaucratic routinization of charisma [81]: the development of the rocket, and indeed the War which it symbolizes, indicates that in Gravity's Rainbow rationalization supports the forces of death; charisma, whether Hitler's or the rocket's, is like technology, amoral.⁴⁶

The rocket's command over widely separated events is an indication of its power: it brings together all segments of wartime Germany in its creation, from the potato crop, confiscated to make alcohol [550], to potassium permanganate, the absence of which decimated the cocaine market [375-76], involving as a matter of course the political hierarchy, the Army, the SS, and the VfR, transportation systems—in short, a structure cutting across wartime Germany much like the cartel Tchitcherine finds [566]. All this activity is described as "some immanicipation, whether of journey or of destiny, which is able to gather violent political opposites together" [318]. The imitation of life we have seen associated with the rocket is sufficiently powerful to turn individual purposes, as we have seen of the War in England.⁴⁷ Some resistance is possible, individual and sporadic—but in this case
loses out. The rocket's force, then, is irrational, beyond its foreseen uses, and is comparable in this sense to the rise of Christianity. Thanatz, who was present at the firing of the 000000, describes the rocket's development in explicitly Christian terms:

"I think of the A4," sez he, "as a baby Jesus, with endless committees of Herods out to destroy it in infancy--Prussians, some of whom in their innermost hearts still felt artillery to be a dangerous innovation. If you'd been out there... inside the first minute, you saw, you grew docile under its... it really did possess a Max Weber charisma... some joyful--and deeply irrational--force the State bureaucracy could never routinize, against which it could not prevail... they did resist it, but they also allowed it to happen. We can't imagine anyone choosing a role like that. But every year, somehow, their numbers grow."

[464]

The rocket as a system, then, is an expression of life of a sort, and of a structure which cuts across classes and interests in German society much as does the War. "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" [324].

Many of the affirmative values associated with the Schwarzkommando in Gravity's Rainbow may be traced to Eliade's system in The Sacred and the Profane: the world beyond historical time to which Enzian desires to return [318-19] is close to values associated with Eliade's work; the routinizing forces characterized in the novel by the War are a product of the impulse Eliade finds in Western man to rational-
ize mystical phenomena; and Eliade's description of inter-
sections between the profane world and "another order of 
being" indicate something of Pynchon's use of the interface 
and of paranoia. Eliade's system, then, is immediately rele-
vant to understanding Pynchon's schema in Gravity's Rainbow: 
revelations or "hierophanies" are very close to the outbreaks 
of charisma we have seen resulting from Gödel's Theorem.

Eliade's work results from comparative religious studies 
and a desire to find what the religious impulse has in com-
mon in variant societies: it is, therefore, the same im-
pulse to find a general description we see in the empirical 
sciences in Gravity's Rainbow. Despite its potentially rou-
tinizing schema, however, its terms are convenient for dis-
cussing another aspect of Pynchon's dualism, that of sacred 
and profane systems of perceiving the world. The profane is 
the disposition toward accepting the world as limited to the 
here and now, with no other order of being in existence: 
in this scheme, physical, observable experiences comprise 
the total of human knowledge. The assertion of physical lim-
itations is made in the interest of control:

Modern nonreligious man . . . regards himself solely 
as the subject and agent of history, and he refuses 
all appeal to transcendence. In other words, he 
accepts no model for humanity outside the human con-
dition as it can be seen in the various historical 
situations. Man makes himself, and he only makes 
himself completely in proportion as he desacralizes 
himself and the world. The sacred is the prime ob-
stacle to his freedom. He will become himself only 
when he is totally demysticized. He will not be 
truly free until he has killed the last god.
According to this way of viewing the world, time is a continuum: the individual's existence begins with birth and terminates with death; the sum total of human experiences defines history; time is linear and unidirectional; and, we may conclude there is no prospect for regeneration or redemption. This perspective is best represented in *Gravity's Rainbow* by those behind the War, as we have seen from Pointsman's determinism [86], and from the use made of Kekule's dream ("Once, only once . . ." [413]). (And not only *Gravity's Rainbow*: the profane system fits the quotidian world in Gaddis' *The Recognitions* as well; but the opposition, as we shall see, is clearer in *Gravity's Rainbow* because it reaches outside Western ontologies with the Hereros.) In such a universe energy will drift predictably toward the entropic heat-death described in _V._, with only local reversals possible. Space is defined solely as geographical space, located by coordinates, and homogeneous in all respects.

In contrast to profane space, sacred space postulates another world, a world "above," which contacts this world: such contacts are known as hierophanies, incursions of the sacred into this world.

Man becomes aware of the sacred because it manifests itself, shows itself, as something wholly different from the profane. To designate the act of manifestation of the sacred, we have proposed the term hierophany. . . . we are confronted by the same mysterious act--the manifestation of something of a wholly different order, a reality that does not belong to our world, in objects that are an integral part of our own natural "profane" world.
According to the sacred world view, the world is not limited
to the here-and-now: the occurrence of hierophanies orders
human experience beyond the empirically observable. Time and
space are reorded by this "wholly different order": time
is made mythic and circular, not historical and linear; and
space is given a more existentially significant definition by
the existence of holy centers.

It is the break effected in space that allows the world
to be constituted, because it reveals the fixed point,
the central axis for all future orientation. . . .
The manifestation of the sacred ontologically founds
the world. In the homogeneous and infinite expanse,
in which no point of reference is possible and hence
no orientation can be established, the hierophany
reveals an absolute fixed point, a center.51

If sacred space intersects profane space, as in Eliade's
schema, there must be points of intersection—holy centers,
temples, doors, or interfaces—through which man may be trans-
lated to another order of being, no longer limited to this
one. If denied such transcendence, at least he may confirm
its existence: "the threshold is the limit, the boundary,
the frontier that distinguishes and opposes two world—
and at the same time the paradoxical place where these worlds
communicate, where passage from the profane to the sacred
world becomes possible."52 The relevance to Pynchon's use
of the interface is clear: boundaries, then, have two func-
tions, to restrain passage from one to another space, and
yet to make possible such a passage—for, if there were no
interface, how would one know he were in a different space?
We may draw the analogy with a living cell: the cell wall contains the protoplasm, and by this containment makes life possible; nutrients and oxygen may pass into the cell, waste materials out of the cell, and its living tissue be kept integral. By this means the problems of isolation (no entering nutrients and no exiting wastes) and of formlessness (no structure, no defenses) are circumvented by interfaces where some communication may take place. Interfaces thus counter the polar extremes we have seen associated with the street and the hothouse: the analogy with a living cell applies to the individual in Gravity's Rainbow, faced with polar extremes of control and purposelessness, paranoia and antiparanoia.

An affirmation such as occurs in hierophany necessarily orders what would otherwise be purposelessness: given proof that another order exists, one must respond to it, either by acquiescence or by defiance. This response implies some re-organization of one's otherwise limited schema: according to Wittgenstein, who as we have seen is the dominant philosophical presence in V., one is limited to his picture of the world; but the intersection of profane with sacred space gives Pynchon a model for seeing another picture, with important consequences. V. has no sacred space, no holy centers: the only mystical experiences in that novel are associated with the void, as in Hugh Godolphin's account of Vheissu, Esther's nose job, or the peace which follows murder in Sudwest [188; 93; 245-46]. In The Crying of Lot 49, as
we have seen, another order forces Oedipa to reorder radically her version of the world--so radically, in fact, that she has no continuity with her former experiences.53 Just as, in V., Pynchon supplies a world where there is no revelation, so in The Crying of Lot 49 he creates a world where there is a superabundance of revelation. But in Gravity's Rainbow, the ordering principle of the interface provides, at least potentially, some controlling mechanism so that these extremes are mediated.

The use of potentially religious systems in his world, however, does not require Pynchon to support any one such system; his flexibility in this regard comes in part from the multiplicity of meaning which we have seen in Gravity's Rainbow, and in part from Eliade, who discusses revelations without regard to their dogmatic content. Pynchon furnishes religious man in abundance: Puritans, both orthodox believers in predestination and heretics like Slothrop's ancestor, William; Dutch Calvinists like Katje's ancestor; Hereros, who have split into adherents to the original doctrines, the Empty Ones, and Enzian's Rocket-cosmology; Blicero's Rilkean version of transcendence; Argentine anarchists; Geli Tripping with her witchcraft; Lyle Bland, a convert to magic; Central Asian Moslems; and so on. All these have in common perhaps nothing except their essential purpose, to orient the world and its events according to some interpretive schema, predicated on some other order touching this one: for Pynchon
they have in common as well their opposition to the profane
hegemony dominating through the War.

For Pynchon, heresy is an agreeable norm: consequently
it does not matter that there may be a number of "Holy Centers,"
and therefore contradictory schemata, in Gravity's Rainbow.
Little attention is paid to institutional forms of religion
(the Advent chapter aside): in the values of the novel, these
have been routinized and are no longer a threat to history.
Pynchon's symbolic values have changed from V., in this
respect, as we have seen: the Catholic Church in that novel
fomented revolt, while in Gravity's Rainbow it is cited as a
system intolerant of heresy and therefore of revolt. "Others
see a Gnostic or Cathar symbol for the Church of Rome, and
this is generalized to mean any System which cannot tolerate
heresy: a system which, by its nature, must sooner or later
fall. We know by now that it is also the Rocket" [747]. In
Gravity's Rainbow, the sacred is always associated with non-
institutional forms: by this means Pynchon maintains consist-
tency with his use of Godel's Theorem.

Necessarily the outbreaks which oppose history in Gravity's Rainbow occur in states of anarchy: anarchy is the
characterizing term for opposition to a state, and we see in
the novel that any state governs through bureaucracy. The
Zone permits a maximum of anarchy and thus individual free-
dom; it is, therefore, ideal for charismatic outbreaks.
The Argentine Squalidozzi describes the logistics of a dialectic between outbreaks of anarchy and counter-revolution:

"In ordinary times," he wants to explain, "the center always wins. Its power grows with time, and that can't be reversed, not by ordinary means. Decentralizing, back toward anarchism, needs extraordinary times . . . this War--this incredible War--just for the moment, has wiped out the proliferation of little states that's prevailed in Germany for a thousand years. Wiped it clean. \textit{Opened it.}"

[264-65]

This center--not Eliade's holy center but a profane center whose interests are in control--normally wins; Squalidozzi's hope is that the trend may be reversed. According to V-Mann Wimpe, the cartel represents the model for the postwar State; if this is true, then the Zone may stand for the postwar state as Pynchon wishes it to be, relatively unencumbered by control. Government in the Zone consists of "arrangements," temporary alliances, with a maximum of disorder, but a maximum of chances for freedom [290-91].

Eliade, then, serves Pynchon by providing a framework from which to suggest fictionally the reversal of the decline which dominates \textit{V.}, without the necessity of claiming the efficacy of any single religious system. \textit{Gravity's Rainbow} compares favorably with \textit{The Recognitions} in this respect: Gaddis' schematic requirement to claim that "significant form" may redeem the quotidian causes the narrator of his novel to sound distinctly Christian in his model for transcendence; this Christianity causes his novel to be, in this res-
pect, a pastiche. Pynchon's schema places transcendence in the model of Gödel's Theorem; it arises by surprise, not by willed attempts at the ideal which must fail but must be tried; and it resembles Christian transcendence only in the most general terms, terms drawn consistently from Eliade's work.

Eliade's framework joining sacred and profane suggests another, from Frank Kermode's *The Sense of an Ending*, which may clarify Pynchon's practice in *Gravity's Rainbow*: his evident apocalypticism, his expectation of change which approaches revelation, and his presentation of characters whose actions throughout the novel are characterized by fictional schemata, all suggest the relevance of Kermode's book. Among the useful distinctions it draws is a demarcation between myth and fiction:

Myth operates within the diagrams of ritual, which presupposes total and adequate explanations of things as they are and were; it is a sequence of radically unchangeable gestures. Fictions are for finding things out, and they change as the needs of sense-making change. Myths are the agents of stability, fictions the agents of change. Myths call for absolute, fictions for conditional assent. Myths make sense in terms of a lost order of time, illud tempus as Eliade calls it; fictions, if successful, make sense of the here and now, hoc tempus.

Ritual has obvious importance in *Gravity's Rainbow*, from the dream evacuation which opens the novel to the precise series of commands for launching the rocket near its close: "the ritual has its velvet grip on them all. So strong, so warm. . . ." [758]. In general, however, Pynchon departs from Kermode's terms: characters who would be taken as identified
with myth, such as the Hereros, are actually engaged in "finding things out," in meeting "the needs of sense-making" for this world, as Enzian's plot shows. His desire is to return to a time like Eliade's "illud tempus," but his practice in the novel is to adapt the materials of technology to finding "a key to the wastes of the world" [525].

What Enzian wants to create will have no history. It will never need a design change. Time, as time is known to the other nations, will wither away inside this new one. The Erdschweinhöhle will not be bound, like the Rocket, to time. The people will find the Center again, the Center without time, the journey without hysteresis, where every departure is a return to the same place, the only place. . . .

[318-19]

Enzian, then, adapts practices which could be characterized as "fictions" to aims traditionally identified as "myth"; and we see in the Western figures represented in Gravity's Rainbow a comparable reversal. In Pointsman we find the novel's highest development of the orthodoxy of the profane world, "cause and effect," which in Pynchon's usage becomes as unyielding, as limited, and as concerned with keeping things as they are as any myth. Pointsman's system is a profane myth, as is the system of history which claims that existence occurs "Once, only once"; and Enzian's doctrine of return is a sacred fiction. Gravity's Rainbow, then, is itself a fiction which features characters operating under the assumptions of myth: its opposition toward those who would see the world under a profane order indicates a significant development beyond Kermode's
somewhat self-gratifying distinction.

Kermode's "fictions" call for "conditional assent": in this respect they are potentially liberating for both writer and reader. In fiction both parties participate jointly in the creative enterprise, whereas in myth the "story" exists without a creator and its listeners (at least theoretically) do not modify its contents in its transmission. (Practically, however, myths do alter in the telling: only in Hebrew, and later, Western versions of myths are there developed "authorized" or official versions of myths--texts--which are unchangeable.) Myth is more a communal, fiction more an individual enterprise; and as we have seen, Pynchon's vision in Gravity's Rainbow depends on the ability of the particular incident to escape constraints placed on it by the communal. We see such changes occurring throughout the novel, particularly in Pynchon's version of the War, which coincides in so many particulars with others' remembered and fictionalized versions of its events, yet which in its overall system of interpretation is diametrically opposed to that communal, "mythic" version. One who thinks he has experienced the War, personally or historically, and who sees the same events in Gravity's Rainbow, may find his sensations resemble those of Slothrop after being released from the Sodium Amytal treatments: "But something's different . . . something's . . . been changed . . ." [114]. Pynchon's war, to use another phrase, is congruent but not iden-
tical to the usual one.

Well, it's a matter of continuity. Most people's lives have ups and downs that are relatively gradual, a sinuous curve with first derivatives at every point. They're the ones who never get struck by lightning. No real idea of cataclysm at all. But the ones who do get hit experience a singular point, a discontinuity in the curve of life--do you know what the time rate of change is at a cusp? Infinity, that's what! And right across the point, it's minus infinity! How's that for sudden change, eh? Infinite miles per hour changing to the same speed in reverse, all in the gnat's-ass or red cunt hair of the t across the point. That's getting hit by lightning, folks. [. . .] It will look like the world you left, but it'll be different. Between congruent and identical there seems to be another class of look-alike that only finds the lightning heads. Another world laid down on the previous one and to all appearances no different. Ha-ha! But the lightning struck know, all right! Even if they may not know they know.

[664]

This distinction between congruent and identical depends on discontinuities like those described throughout Gravity's Rainbow: the novel itself aspires to be such a discontinuity, in its fictive model apt to snatch away the incautious reader from his former mode of reading, or of interpreting the world at large.58 Such passages emphasize the novel's ambitions to bear a projective relation to the world at large.

We have seen such a projective relationship between text and world earlier in Pynchon's work: Oedipa's question "Shall I project a world" as well as Stencil's "Stenciliation" both suggest the modifying effects of fictions as they "make sense" of events. Similarly, The Recognitions sought to provoke a dissatisfaction with the world at large, but with a distinct difference in the values claimed to be "reality." For Gaddis
reality ultimately depends on "significant form" which exists outside of and anterior to any human consciousness which may apprehend it; for Pynchon, however, reality is a function of the perceiving consciousness rather than something outside of consciousness. The world's space in V. actually does become filled with "the plot of the century," in Stencil's terms; but the same world, with the same events, means differently for Maijstral or for Profane. The narrator in V. gives more credence to Maijstral's version than to Stencil's; but in The Crying of Lot 49 Pynchon has adjusted the narrative framework so that there is no contrast between Oedipa's and the world's organization. And in Gravity's Rainbow, as we have seen, reality is multivalent, since there exist in the novel several conflicting schemata of its interpretation, no one version attaining dominance over others.

In the narrative texture of the novel, Pynchon gives us an equivalent to this sense that the text intends to encompass the world: Gravity's Rainbow repeatedly turns its normally third-person address into second- or even first-person, addressing the reader directly and familiarly, in a way which emphasizes this projective relation. These breaks are comparable to points at which "another order of being" touches this one—-to Eliade's hierophanies or to interfaces or discontinuities or singularities or instances of Gödel's Theorem—-since all these have in common the radical exertion of surprise.
The comparison with interfaces is instructive, since the text is itself a kind of interface with the historical world; as we have seen, Pynchon integrates historical detail into his text, down to the particular technical German and argot associated with the rocket. The novel's conclusion, in which the rocket is brought down onto the readers' collective theater, is the culmination of its readers' involvement into the texture of the novel by means of second person address, and by means of appealing to our assumed fantasies. ("She is exactly the Amazon Bitch your fantasies have called her to be." [623]) Structurally, this direct address is comparable to Carlyle's Editor's declaration that Teufelsdröckh has left Weissnichtwo and may be active in tailor's riots in England; both novels' conclusions have the effect of showing their actions right here and now.60

The development of the readers' theater is carefully developed throughout Gravity's Rainbow. The image is prepared by Pynchon's incorporation of materials from film: film appears as a convenient index to characters' behavior, as in Mexico's and Jessica's "'cute meet'" [38-39], and Katje's responses to Slothrop's love song ("Knowing what is expected of her, she waits with a vapid look till he's done, mellow close-harmony reeds humming a moment in the air, then reaches out a hand, melting toward him as he topples in slow-motion toward her mouth" [196]). Besides the romantic expectations, there are
the comic ones: "The what, The Seltzer Bottle? What shit is this, now? What other interesting props have They thought to plant, and what other American reflexes are They after? Where's those banana cream pies, eh?" [197]--or the film-heroic ones, such as John Dillinger's preparation for death [516]. Not only do characters behave in ways prepared by film; Pynchon characterizes their behavior for us in terms of film as well, in numerous song and dance numbers like that of the Schwarzkommando [657], and in references to culturally important films such as King Kong [275, 664] and silent German prints. In one of these passages we see this characterization based on films in combination with direct address:

Klein-Rogge is remembered most of all for his role as Dr. Mabuse. You were meant to think of Hugo Stinnes, the tireless operator behind the scenes of apparent Inflation, apparent history: [... ] when the rages came over him, breaking through from beneath the rationalized look, with his glacial eyes become windows into the bare savanna, then the real Mabuse surfaced, vital and proud against the gray forces surrounding him [ ... ] nothing worked, each time the great Weimar inertia, files, hierarchies, routines, kept saving [Goetzke]. Mabuse was the savage throwback, the charismatic flash no Sunday-afternoon Agfa plate could ever bear, the print through the rippling solution each time flaring up to the same annihilating white [579]

This passage precedes Jarm's last assertion in the novel, "National Socialist Chemistry," an expression of "transcendence" which is, like Blicero's, willed; nevertheless, it substantiates the movement we have traced between charisma and its routinization. What "you" were meant to think of, in the film, was a historical prototype for the film character Dr. Mabuse,
just as in *Gravity's Rainbow* the reader is presented historical prototypes for its characters—for example, Kekulé, Pavlov, or Freud for Jamf himself.

Pynchon draws from film models for his German director, von Göll, certainly in terms of his stature, and probably in terms of his megalomania [112; 753]. Von Göll comes to believe that his propaganda film has created the Schwarzkommando [388]; his promise to the Zone–Argentinians resembles the charismatic creation we have seen in "naming."

Since discovering the Schwarzkommando are really in the Zone, leading real, paracinematic lives that have nothing to do with him or the phony Schwarzkommando footage he shot last winter in England for Operation Black Wing, Springer has been zooming around in a controlled ecstasy of megalomania. He is convinced that his film has somehow brought them into being. "It is my mission," he announces to Squalidozzi, with the profound humility that only a German movie director can summon, "to sow in the Zone seeds of reality. The historical moment demands this, and I can only be its servant."

[388]

Despite his obvious comic deflations and his mania, Springer's claims have some validity because of their similarities with magical events in *Gravity's Rainbow*. He claims to see how to make it all fit, in terms very like those Pynchon uses with Slothrpp's revelation [626]:

"everything fits. One sees how it fits, ja? learns patterns, adjusts to rhythms, one day you are no longer an actor, but free now, over on the other side of the camera. No dramatic call to the front office [. . .] Be compassionate. But don't make up fantasies about them. Dispel me, exalt them, but remember, we define each other. Elite and preterite, we move through a cosmic design of darkness and light, and in all humility, I am one of the very few who can comprehend it in toto."

[494-95]
Later, Slothrop reminds him that "'this ain't the fuckin' movies now, come on,'" to which Springer replies "'Not yet. Maybe not quite yet. You'd better enjoy it while you can. Someday, when the film is fast enough, the equipment pocket-size and burdenless and selling at people's prices, the lights and booms no longer necessary, then . . . ." [527]. The "seeds of reality" which von Göll claims to be able to plant are in fact valid, given the multivalence of reality in Gravity's Rainbow: in an essentially decentered culture such as that the novel describes, ordered visions such as von Göll's are an acceptable alternative to the rationalized control which seeks to extend itself. His last project in the novel is a film, shown under the carpet 24 hours a day, entitled New Dope:

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 [. . . .]

[745]

This reversal, irrational and "mindless" though it may be, is obviously on the "right side."

Pynchon uses film—an ordered sequence of images drawn from the world, an order which may be reversed—as a model for the tantalizing possibility of time's reversal, as in New
Dope, and in an earlier passage associated with the rocket's own reversal of sound and explosion:

... rockets dismantle, the entire film runs 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: with each one the Lord further legitimizes his State ... 

[139]

Such a reversal is a pretended movement against linear entropy, here identified with Death's increasing hegemony in wartime London. Besides being simply reversible, film also may be broken into segments for analysis; the metaphor then applies to any unitary process so examined, such as the integration of functions like the rocket's parabola.

In the daily rushes you would watch the frames at around 3000 feet, where the model broke through the speed of sound. There has been this strange connection between the German mind and the rapid flashing of successive stills to counterfeit movement, for at least two centuries--since Leibniz, in the process of inventing calculus, used the same approach to break up the trajectories of cannonballs through the air. And now Pökler was about to be given proof that these techniques had been extended past images on film, to human lives.

[407]

Pökler's "proof" will be the yearly appearances of his daughter Ilse, who is made a film [398]; such analysis is in fact the deciphering of codes, like Osbie Peck's "screen test":

Osbie is looking straight into the camera: straight at her, none of your idle doper's foolery here, he's acting. There's no mistake. It is a message, in code, which after not too long she busts as follows. Say
that Basil Rathbone stands for young Osbie himself. S. Z. Sakall may be Mr. Pointsman, and the Midget sheriff the whole dark grandiose Scheme, wrapped in one small package, diminished, a clear target. Pointsman argues that it's real, but Osbie knows better. Pointsman ends up in the stagnant trough, and the plot/Midget vanishes, frightened, into the dust. A prophecy. A kindness.

[535]
The fact that Osbie's film is decoded and given an improbable allegorical meaning—which turns out to be the case—indicates that a comparable activity may be intended to occur in Gravity's Rainbow itself. As a familiar example of the interplay between conventions and fiction—an interplay emphasized by the novel's World War II setting and its use of contemporary film conventions, including those of westerns, romantic films, musicals, and German cinema—the use of films in Gravity's Rainbow provides us a convenient referent for the novel's own decodeability.

By its nature, then, film is both individual and collective: collective because we go to the movies in groups of dozens or hundreds, sit in darkness, and participate in a kind of collective fantasy—a collective fantasy which is at the same time individually perceived and ordered by each member of the audience from the materials provided in the film. Somewhat of this simultaneous collective and individual address is present in the novel's opening:

Each has been hearing a voice, one he thought was talking only to him, say, "You didn't really believe you'd be saved. Come, we all know who we are by now. No one was ever going to take the trouble to save you, old fellow..."
There is no way out. Lie and wait, lie still and be quiet. Screaming holds across the sky. When it comes, will it come in darkness, or will it bring its own light? Will the light come before or after? But it is already light.

Pynchon is able to draw on conventions of film and of dream for his opening sequence to characterize the very nature of the novel's own address; the opening sequence provides us with precedent for the numerous dreams which address the reader directly, with nightmarish familiarity.

Your task, in these dreams, is often to cross—under the trees, through the shadows—before something happens. Often you go into the fallow field just below the graveyard, full of autumn brambles and rabbits, where the gypsies live. Sometimes you fly. But you can never rise above a certain height. You may feel yourself being slowed, coming inexorably to a halt: not the keen terror of falling, only an interdiction, from which there is no appeal... and as the landscape begins to dim out... you know... that [.. .] Settling a warm kind of hood around the back of your neck and shoulders, you are about to remark to your wife, "This is the most sinister time of evening." But there's a better word than "sinister." You search for it. It is someone's name. It waits behind the twilight, the clarity, the white flowers. There comes a light tapping at the door.

You sat bolt upright in bed, your heart pounding in fright. [.. .] It was Thomas Gwenhidwy, come down all the way from London, with the news about poor Spectro.

Less imposing than these nightmare fantasies, but still a significant part of the novel's direct address, are places in the text where Pynchon claims to cater to the reader's fantasies [623], or catches him in a trap. This procedure attains its greatest emotional resonance in the "Advent" chapter [129-36]: 
Come then. Leave your war awhile, paper or iron war, petrol or flesh, come in with your love, your fear of losing, your exhaustion with it. All day it's been at you, coercing, jiving, claiming your belief in so much that isn't true. Is that who you are, that vaguely criminal face on your ID card, its soul snatched by the government camera as the guillotine shutter fell [...]. Everybody you don't suspect is in on this, everybody but you: the chaplain, the doctor, your mother hoping to hang that Gold Star, the vapid soprano last night on the Home Service programme, let's not forget Mr. Noel Coward so stylish and cute about death and the afterlife, packing them into the Duchess for the fourth year running, the lads in Hollywood telling us how grand it all is over here, how much fun, Walt Disney causing Dumbo the elephant to clutch to that feather like how many carcasses under the snow tonight among the white-painted tanks, how many hands eepr frozen around a Miraculous Medal, lucky piece of worn bone, half-dollar with the grinning sun peering up under Liberty's wispy gown, clutching, dumb, when the 88 fell—-what do you think, it's a children's story? There aren't any. The children are away dreaming, but the Empire has no place for dreams and it's Adults Only in here tonight [...]. for a baby to come in tippin' those Toledos at 7 pounds 8 ounces thinkin' he's gonna redeem it, why, he oughta have his head examined. [...]

But on the way home tonight, you wish you'd picked him up, held him a bit. Just held him, very close to your heart, his cheek by the hollow of your shoulder, full of sleep. As if it were you who could, somehow, save him. For the moment not caring who you're supposed to be registered as. For the moment anyway, no longer who the Caesars say you are.

[134-36]

In this evening church service traditional Christian values, absent from our century, are set against the contemporary equivalents of the War--movies and Noel Coward plays. As we have seen, the values of life are here set against the official, death-oriented, work-oriented values of the War: and in the passage Pynchon balances individual address and com-
moral appeal by touching rituals which, for most of us, have lost their magic, but for which we bear a certain nostalgia. In this Advent service not only Roger and Jessica, but Pynchon and the reader as well, participate in a tragic longing for values absent from our demythologized culture, values for which "nostalgia" is a poor description. The interpretation of what we find in the service depends on what we will to see—"Is the baby smiling, or is it just gas? Which do you want it to be?" [131]—a phenomenon present throughout Gravity's Rainbow. Besides address with this direct and serious emotional tone, however, we have momentary hoaxes which superficially resemble it:

At which instant, with no warning, the arousing feather-point of the Sound-Shadow has touched you, enveloping you in sun-silence for, oh, let us say 2:36:18 to 2:36:24, Central War Time, unless the location is Dungannon, Virginia, Bristol, Tennessee, Asheville or Franklin, North Carolina, [. . . ] yes sounds like a Roll of Honor don't it, being read off someplace out on the prairie, [. . . ] the names of death-towns unroll, and surely Bleicherode or Blicero will be spoken any minute now. . . .

Well, you're wrong, champ--these happen to be towns all located on the borders of Time Zones, is all. Ha, ha! Caught you with your hand in your pants! Go on, show us all what you were doing or leave the area, we don't need your kind around. There's nothing so loathsome as a sentimental surrealist.

[695-96]

No Sentimental Surrealists wanted here: besides trapping the reader—or some reader, since we continue to read beyond his departure—in an obvious fashion, and besides the play here, this passage indicates that one programmatic response to the novel's events will not suffice.
The nature of the community implied by the non-third person address in *Gravity's Rainbow* (both "you" and "we") is at times isolating and at times communal. The isolation is stressed in passages such as the opening and other dream sequences, and in the Mittelwerke—estranging moments in which no response can be wholly appropriate:

> it was always easy, in open and lonely places, to be visited by Panic wilderness fear, but these are the urban fantods here, that come to get you when you are lost or isolate inside the way time is passing, when there is no more History, no time-traveling capsule to find your way back to, only the lateness and the absence that fill a great railway shed after the capital has been evacuated, and the goat-god's city cousins wait for you at the edges of the light, playing the tunes they always played, but more audible now, because everything else has gone away or fallen silent.

[303]

In such circumstances "what you thought was a balanced mind is little help" [297]. Such isolation is characteristic of Slothrop's dreams; the second person gives these immediacy.

> Its great clock hangs over him and empty acres of streets in what he now reads as dumb malignity. It connects to Ivy League quadrangles in his distant youth, clock-towers lit so dim the hour could never be read, and a temptation, never so strong though as now, to surrender to the darkening year, to embrace what he can of real terror to the hour without a name (unless it's . . . no . . . NO . . .): it was vanity, vanity as his Puritan forerunners had known it, bones and heart alert to Nothing, Nothing underneath the college saxophones melding sweetly, [. . .] It was being come for just before dawn by pranksters younger than he, dragged from bed, blindfolded, Hey Reinhardt, led out into the autumnal cold, shadows and leaves underfoot, and the moment then of doubt, the real possibility that they are something else—that none of it was real before this moment: only elaborate theatre to fool you. But now the screen has gone dark and there is absolutely no more time left. The agents are here for you at last. . . .

[267]
That such internalization is largely associated with Slothrop may be responsible for our disappointment at his later disappearance. A similar sense of address, its result isolation and surprise, occurs when the Argentines encounter the John E. Badass, Bodine's ship [389-90], and the paranoid assurances associated with Pokler:

At first it simulates depression or non-specific anxiety. There may be esophagal spasms and unrecov- erable dreams. You find you are writing notes to yourself, first thing in the morning: calm, reasoned assurances to the screaming mental case inside—1. It is a com- bination. 1.1 It is a scalar quantity. 1.2. Its negative aspects are distributed isotropically. 2. It is not a conspiracy. 2.1. It is not a vector. 2.11 It is not aimed at anybody. 2.12 It is not aimed at me. . . . u.s.w.

[415]

Occasionally the telling generalization behind a character's presence in Gravity's Rainbow is expressed in such address, as in Achtfaden's flight at the interface [455]. Pynchon, then, takes advantage of the colloquial "you" as general address to give such passages both the communal and the individual aspects characteristic of film; their combination is vital to Gravity's Rainbow, given its version of human experience as typically oriented toward death, and its hope in discrete, individual, and surprising outbreaks against that orientation.

By comparison the first person inclusive passages are few and hesitant: this may indicate that the pressure toward isolation is stronger in Gravity's Rainbow than that toward normal expressions of community. This "we" may be related to what is
called a "We-System":

"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 as 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."

Pynchon's "we" as narrator usually expresses some shared quality between narrator's and reader's enterprise, either in creating systems or in common human characteristics: the first of these occurs with Enzian's insight into the refinery-as-text, the point of effective opposition to routinization in the novel (as compared with Slothrop's simple impulse to freedom and his dissolution):

We have to look for power sources here, and distribution networks we were never taught, routes of power our teachers never imagined, or were encouraged to avoid... we have to find meters whose scales are unknown in the world, draw our own schematics, getting feedback, making connections, reducing the error, trying to learn the real function... zeroing in on what incalculable plot? Up here, on the surface, coal-tars, hydrogenation, synthesis were always phony, dummy functions to hide the real, the planetary mission

This "we" could reasonably refer to the Schwarzkommando; however, its general application to narrator and reader is underscored by the next comparable usage, in the sensation of paranoia associated with Bland:
Indeed, there were those who could see Bland's hand in that disaster, though the Jew got blamed, fucked under by the courts, attached till he was bankrupt, and, in the fullness of time, sent east along with many others of his race. We would also have to show some interlock between Bland and the Ufa movie-distribution people who sent Pökler out with his advertising bills to Reinicken-dorf that night, to his fateful meeting with Kurt Mondaugen and the Verein für Raumschiffahrt—not to men- tion separate connections for Achtfaden, Närrisch, and the other S-Gerät people—before we'd have a paranoid structure worthy of the name. [. . .] Those like Slothrop, with the greatest interest in discovering the truth, were thrown back on dreams, psychic flashes, omens, crypt- tographies, drug-epistemologies, all dancing on a ground of terror, contradiction, absurdity. [582]

—that is, precisely the ground the reader of Gravity's Rainbow occupies. By this point the reader expects such con- necting to build toward a paranoid structure he has already seen from the inside, with Slothrop. At this point, however, Pynchon calls the reader back, pointing out that, by the nature of the enterprise, paranoid suspicions cannot confirm such knowledge—that Slothrop has only the worst of evidence to oppose his Opponent. "The rest of us" are here combined into a preterite community excluded from Bland's sort of trans- cendence [590]. And the final enclosure into this community comes at the novel's close—"It was difficult even for us, old fans who've always been at the movies (haven't we?) to tell which before the darkness swept in [. . .] in the darkening and awful expanse of screen something has kept on, a film we have not learned to see . . ." [760]—in a theater image which re- capitulates Gravity's Rainbow's opening, with its combined
motifs of communal and individual doom, motifs which comprise the War's dual threat.

The movement between individual and communal fantasy may be seen--with particular reference to the text's enclosure of its readers--in the section featuring "the 4 and the Father-conspiracy" [674-81]. Like many other parts of the novel, this segment combines serious material with parody:

Indeed, not only are there many other struggles, but there are also spectators, watching, as spectators will do, hundreds of thousands of them [...] and in the wind the dark young man, the slippery young knife who waits for your maid outside the iron gate each Sunday, who takes her away to a park, a stranger's automobile and a shape of love you can never imagine, stands now with his hair untended in the wind, his head averted from the fire, feeling the cold, the mountain cold, at his temples and high under his jaw [...] What's this? What're the antagonists doing here--infiltrating their own audience? Well, they're not, really. It's somebody else's audience at the moment, and these nightly spectacles are an appreciable part of the darkside-hours life of the Rocket-capital. The chances for any paradox here, really, are less than you think.

[679-80]

This movement between outside and inside [681] duplicates the interfaces we have seen previously, first on the cortex of Dog Vanya [78-79], later on Slothrop's cortex; on this surface, if on any, do the outside world (or its perception) and the inside (projection) intersect; and on this surface fantasy and "realism" have become so mixed as to be indistinguishable. The chances for paradox, in spite of the narrator's assurances, are quite good.

It would be tempting to provide a summary of Gravity's Rainbow's use of direct address much like the following: the
novel repeatedly reaches for non-third person modes of address in part to surprise the reader, thus duplicating the actions described in the novel under the category of Gödel's Theorem, and in part to effect the kind of enclosure we see in the presence of the historical world of World War II. Direct address comes into play primarily in such moments as "dreams, psychic flashes, omens, cryptographies, drug-epistemologies, all dancing on a ground of terror, contradiction, absurdity" as we have seen; by this means our "normal" expectations of Pynchon's world, presented in third-person address, are broken through. However, if Gravity's Rainbow teaches us anything, it is to avoid systematic summaries: the only expressions of system allowed in Pynchon's works are those which are deliberately anti-systematic or paradoxical, like Wittgenstein's propositions or Gödel's Theorem. Pynchon's hope, rather, is in the singularities which may, perhaps, eventually bring down systematic pronouncements:

"Too late" was never in their programming. They find instead a moment's suspending of their sanity--but then it's over with, whew, and it's back to the trail, back to the Daily Planet. Yes Jimmy, it must've been the day I ran into that singularity, those few seconds of absolute mystery . . . you know Jimmy, time--time is a funny thing. . . . There'll be a thousand ways to forget. The heroes will go on, kicked upstairs to oversee the development of bright new middle-line personnel, and they will watch their system falling apart, watch those singularities begin to come more and more often, proclaiming another dispensation out of the tissue of old-fashioned time, and they'll call it cancer, and just won't know what things are coming to, or what's the meaning of it all, Jimmy.

. . .
Slothrop's narrowing sense of self has enabled him to escape such anticlimax, brought on by singularities; in his denial of the role of hero, Slothrop expresses Pynchon's anti-institutional trust in a kind of saving grace.
Notes to Chapter Four:


2 "Cause-and-effect" is of more consequence in *Gravity's Rainbow*, however, than its counterpart in *The Recognitions*, the self-improvement books and the debased system of "reason" which they represent. As we shall see, "cause-and-effect" forms the basis of the system which Pynchon opposes.


4 Pynchon, *The Crying of Lot 49* (New York: Bantam Books, 1967), pp. 95-96. All quotations are from this edition; subsequent references will be indicated within brackets in the text.


8 Pynchon brings Maxwell's Demon into *The Crying of Lot 49*,.

9 For a fuller discussion of the interface, see the second section of this chapter.


Pynchon, "Entropy," Kenyon Review 22 (Spring, 1960), pp. 277-92. Pig Bodine is so named in "Low-lands," New World Writing 16 (1960), pp. 85-108; and in Gravity's Rainbow, he is consistently called Seaman Bodine, possibly because the novel is set before V.'s 1956, possibly because of the other associations with pigs in the novel, and possibly because Pynchon felt he had worked that particular joke enough.


All quotations are from this edition; subsequent references will be indicated within brackets in the text.

12 See the preceding chapter for a discussion of the narrator's presence in The Recognitions.

13 Anarchy abounds in V.: for example, the riots of the epilogue, the Sailor's Grave and Susanna Squaducci of Profane's East Main, and the Argentine Gaucho of "She Hangs on the Western Wall," forerunner of the Argentine anarchists in Gravity's Rainbow. In Pynchon's latest novel, however, the question of disorder is less pressing than that of control.
See William Plater's discussion of tourism in "Baedeker Land," *The Grim Phoenix* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1978), pp. 65-134. Hugh Godolphin does see something new in Vheissu—but it turns out to be Nothing. This vision is relevant to the motif of surprise which will be discussed in the third section, below.

Such a reversal in decline, however, may be qualified by Oedipa's questions about the actuality of her insights; *The Crying of Lot 49*, p. 136.


Compare Sir Stephen Dodson-Truck:

"My 'function' is to observe you. That's my function. You like my function? You like it? Your 'function'
... is, learn the rocket, inch by inch. I have
... to send in a daily log of your progress [...]
They're so cruel. I don't think they even know, really.
... They aren't even sadists. There's just no pas-
sion at all..." p. 216.

20 For the opposite of this conversion process, see
Gravity's Rainbow, p. 10, Pirate Prentice's bananas:

Now there grows among all the rooms, replacing the
night's old smoke, alcohol and sweat, the fragile,
musaceous odor of Breakfast: flowery, permeating,
surprising, more than the color of winter sunlight,
taking over not so much through any brute pungency or
volume as by the high intricacy to the weaving of its
molecules, sharing the conjuror's secret by which--
though it is not often Death is told so clearly to
fuck off--the living genetic chains prove even laby-
rinthine enough to preserve some human face down ten
or twenty generations... so the same assertion-
through-structure allows this war morning's banana
fragrance to meander, repossess, prevail.

21 Plater provides a list of these, p. 207:

The Firm (a common euphemism for the British Special Op-
erations Executive), AEG (German General Electric Com-
pany), Krupp, ICI (Imperial Chemicals), Shell Interna-
tional Petroleum, British Ministry of Supply, Bataaf-
sche Petroleum Maatschappij, Harvard University, IG
Farben, du Pont, Grössli Chemical Corporation, Sandoz,
Ciba, Rheineland Union, Reichsbank, General Electric, the
Russian, British, German, and American armies, govern-
ments and bureaucracies, Ostarzneikunde GmbH, National
Research Council, Alfred Nobel's various enterprises,
Anilinas Alemanas, Spotbilligfilm AG, Blohm and Voss,
Standard Oil, Business Advisory Council, Chemical Foun-
dation, Glitherius Paint and Dye, the Mafia, Masons,
Chemmyco, General Aniline and Film, Ansco, Winthrop
...

22 Compare also the movements between Psychochemie AG
and ICI, p. 250; and the movements between Phoebus and the
Grid, p. 654.

23 See also Thanatz on S and M, p. 737:
"But why are we taught to feel reflexive shame whenever the subject comes up? Why will the Structure allow every other kind of sexual behavior but that one? Because submission and dominance are resources it needs for its very survival. They cannot be wasted in private sex. In any kind of sex, 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."

24 See p. 624; 738; 740-41; and 720, discussed above.
26 And not only characters: see p. 445.

They are goofy fish, anything swimming in Berlin waters these days has to be everybody's last choice. [...] One night he puts in front of her a broiled fish, an unwholesome yellow loach with brain damage. She can't eat it, she'll get sick. [...] With a hiss, nostrils wide, she grabs the little table and wrenches it away, plates, silverware, fish flying splot against the wall where it commences to drip down toward the woodwork, still, even in death, getting all the lousy breaks.

27 Due to the vagaries of library acquisitions, I have not been able to see Siegel's book on Pynchon.
28 Besides the obvious choice, Stencil in V., there are Dr. Hilarius, Mike Fallopian, Winthrop Tremaine, and John Nefastis in The Crying of Lot 49. The list in Gravity's Rainbow is far too imposing to list here; the employees of the White Visitation will suffice—see the list of interpretations of Slothrop's relationship to the rockets, p. 85, and pp. 170-72.
30 See chapter two for a discussion of *The Confidence-Man*.

31 See below the discussion of the "lightning-struck," p. 664, and their worlds, "congruent but not identical" with the ordinary one; and Thanatz, "Which two?" p. 668.


33 Pynchon's treatment of death as interface may come from Eliade's observation that, in primitive societies, it is often viewed as a rite of passage:

[T]he man of the primitive societies has sought to conquer death by transforming it into a rite of passage. In other words, for the primitives, men die to something that was not essential; men die to the profane life. In short, death comes to be regarded as the supreme initiation, that is, as the beginning of a new spiritual existence.

Eliade, p. 196.

34 For further discussion of "naming," see the next section.

35 Compare p. 318:

Vectors in the night underground, all trying to flee a center, a force, which appears to be the Rocket: some immachination, whether of journey or of destiny, which is able to gather violent political opposites together in the Erdschweinöhle as it gathers fuel and oxidizer in its thrust chamber: metered, helmsmanlike, for the sake of its scheduled parabola.

36 For a more complete discussion of metaphor in Pynchon's works, see Thompson, "Assertion-Through-Structure"; and Plater's introduction; Aristotle's *Poetics* are quoted by Marcus B. Hester, *The Meaning of Poetic Metaphor* (The

See Pynchon's use of Weber, as on p. 325 and p. 466; and Eliade, p. 1, quoted below.

On "the moment," see Franz and Leni Pökler's discussion, p. 159. The opposite of being "in the moment" is being "the cause and effect man."

Compare, too, Profane's career as schlemihl, broken only during a brief span of time with Rachel, p. 336, 359-61.


Also V-Mann Wimpe's combinatorial narcotics, p. 348:

"NRC is synthesizing new molecules every day, most of them from pieces of the morphine molecule. Du Pont is stringing together groups such as amides into long chains. The two programs seem to be complementary, don't they? The American vice of modular repetition, combined with what is perhaps our basic search: to find something that can kill intense pain without causing addiction."

Things also speak to Profane, V.'s peripatetic--but not in a way identified with the green world.

Compare also the sunset, p. 214.

This naive version, "They won't have to kill," compares ironically with the "Mister Information" voice of pp. 644-45.

The amorality of technology in Gravity's Rainbow is precisely at issue, however: see Enzian's dilemma, p. 521.
A related issue is brought up by Fuller in *The Recognitions*, when he asks Wyatt whether it is permissible to use evil means to fight evil.

47 See part 1; also pp. 209, 223, and 362.

48 This point represents the closest similarity between Pynchon and Carlyle—especially in Teufelsdröckh's expectation of a new social order.


50 Eliade, p. 11, italics deleted.

51 Eliade, pp. 20-21.

52 Eliade, p. 25.

53 Oedipa's entire experience is a series of hierophanic moments, like the "odd, religious instant" overlooking San Narciso; these provide what is virtually a metaphysical picaresque, comparable to Teufelsdröckh's many "conversions."

54 Compare the "Gröss Suckling resolution," p. 706; and Tchitcherine's desire for a state that will not survive its composite individuals, p. 338.


56 Kermode, p. 39.

57 Such an opposition is clear in the "Advent" chapter, pp. 129-36, in which the church community is opposed to the Official, Gold Star version of the war.

58 Models of snatching the reader away appear, for exam-
ple, in Thanatz' being washed overboard, pp. 667-73, and pp. 736-37.

59 In Wittgensteinian terms, the picture of the world coincides with the world, for the perceiver who forms it; and solipsism is therefore indistinguishable from realism. "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." Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, trans. by D. F. Pears and B. J. McGuinness (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1961), p. 117.

60 There are other possible comparisons between *Gravity's Rainbow* and *Sartor Resartus*: the Editor's cautious opposition to Teufelsdorch's radicalism is comparable to figures such as Pointsman, whose efforts are to routinize charismatic out-breaks such as the tailors' riots; at times, however, the Editor supports Teufelsdorch, in a deflection of sorts comparable to that of the counterforce. *Sartor's* apparent disorganization is comparable to *Gravity's Rainbow's*, however, though it does not integrate its progression as closely as does Pynchon with the parabola. See G. B. Tennyson on the structure of *Sartor Resartus*, in *Sartor Called Resartus* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965), and Alan J. Friedman and Manfred Puetz, "Science as Metaphor," in *Contemporary*

61 Compare the Counterforce's discussion of "critical mass" and chances for freedom, pp. 539-40.

62 For further discussion of the individual/collective nature of cinema, see Siegfried Kracauer, Theory of Film (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960); and Thompson, "Assertion-Through-Structure," chapter five.

63 On these "gypsies," see p. 472, above, and Pynchon's "Low-lands"; on direct address and dreams, see also Gravity's Rainbow, pp. 286-87.
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