TECHNIQES OF SURREALISM: A STUDY IN TWO NOVELS BY THOMAS PYNCHON, *V.* AND *THE CRYING OF LOT 49*

عناصر السريالية : دراسة في رواتين لتوماس بينجون ، والنداؤ في المزاد على القطعة رقم 49

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Introduction

Surrealism is a twentieth-century literary and artistic movement oriented toward the liberation of the mind. Surrealism is a reaction to the philosophy of rationalism which was believed to be the cause of the disaster of World War I. It emphasizes the expression of the imagination as revealed in dreams and presented without conscious control, the unexpected juxtapositions of objects, the withdrawal of the self, and the exploitation of chance effects.

Surrealism began in Paris in the early 1920s, as Europe emerged from the devastation of World War I. A group of writers, artists, and filmmakers, led by the poet André Breton, adopted the word surréaliste (meaning, roughly, "super-real") as a label for their artistic activities. Influenced in part by Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theories, the group explored the irrational, unsettling, and marvelous aspects of their surroundings and their own minds. By breaking free of rationality, they sought to create a "revolution in consciousness." One important strand of their ideals was the hope that surrealism could lead to social transformation and a world free of wars. The group met regularly in Paris during

the 1920s and 1930s and sponsored manifestoes, journals, performances, and exhibitions. European surrealist activity continued after World War II.

Beginning in the 1930s, Americans could learn about surrealism in newspapers, lectures, books, journals, and exhibitions. During the 1940s, the young poet Charles Henri Ford started *View* magazine in his New York apartment in 1940. Ford considered himself a Surrealist, and had been encouraged in his work by André Breton. The magazine ran from September 1940 through March 1947. Ford wrote to his mother in 1945 that "our prestige grows by leaps and bounds. *View* is now the world's leading journal of avant-garde art & literature. And I'd like to hold the position won. . . ." (Otwell, 2007: 1) His statement was not an exaggeration. By 1945 *View* had published writings by Wallace Stevens, William Carlos Williams, Henry Miller, Paul Bowles, André Breton, Nicolas Calas, and Benjamin Peret and other contemporary artists. *VVV* was a journal devoted to the dissemination of Surrealism. It was published in New York City from 1942 through 1944. Only three issues of *VVV* were ever produced. However, it provided an outlet for European Surrealist artists, temporarily exiled from their home countries by World War II, to communicate with American artists.

Thus, Americans were able to learn about surrealism more directly, from surrealists including André Breton (French), Max Ernst (German), and Yves Tanguy (French) who sought refuge from war by moving to America. These artists added an infusion of creative energy into their new environments while making important works of their own. During the 1960s, many American writers found in European surrealism pure emotions, archetypal images, and models of anti-rational world. Most American artists focused on surrealist techniques and combined surrealistic elements to create a wide range of hybrid forms. Surrealists embraced chance; one technique involved trying to write, draw or paint with as little conscious control as possible. They often tried to jolt themselves and their

audiences out of everyday modes of perception, using tactics such as combining elements in jarring ways, creating shocking images, or depicting dream-like environments. Thus, surrealism reached the United States during World War II and became an important feature in the works of Henry Miller, William Burroughs, and Thomas Pynchon.

Thomas Pynchon's fiction is centrally concerned with the hallucinations of the mind for whom the distinction between physical reality and fantastic embellishment simply do not exist. Pynchon (1937-) was born in New York and graduated from Cornell University in 1958. In his work, a vast plot is unknown to at least one of the main characters, whose task becomes to decipher the chaotic world. This paranoid vision is extended across continents and time itself, for Pynchon employs the metaphor of entropy, a process of degradation or a trend to disorder or the gradual running down of the universe.

In depicting the dehumanizing effects of war, business, and technology, Pynchon expresses a growing fear of the time about the post-World War II and he intrudes upon the world of surrealism.

This study is designated to trace the techniques of surrealism in two novels by Thomas Pynchon: *V.* (1963)[(1)] and *The Crying of Lot 49* (1965)[(2)]. Readers of Pynchon can follow the traces of the mysterious V. character in *V.* and be tuned with Oedipa Maas, the protagonist of *The Crying of Lot 49* with greater ease if they understand the techniques of surrealism.

Techniques of Surrealism in *V.* and *The Crying of Lot 49*

In his introduction to *Slow Learner*, Thomas Pynchon acknowledges the influence of surrealism on an early short story entitled "Under the Rose":

> Another influence in "Under the Rose," too recent for me then to abuse to the extent I have done since, is Surrealism. I had been taking one of those elective courses in Modern Art, and it was the Surrealists who'd really caught my attention. Having as yet virtually no access to my dream life, I missed the main point of the movement, and became fascinated instead with the simple idea that one could combine inside the same frame elements not normally found together to produce illogical and startling effects. (Pynchon, 1984:20)

In the *Second Manifesto of Surrealism*, André Breton portrayed the belief that surrealism creates "a key capable of opening indefinitely that box of many bottoms called man." (Breton, 1972:163) Surrealists aspired to move beyond reality and into the territory of the wondrous, where they believed humankind's clearest vision of itself and its world subsisted.

Michael Vella believes Pynchon sets this key within his texts:

> If Pynchon had only a superficial connection with surrealism he would not engage in such candid self-criticism. What is important here, above all, is Pynchon's avowal of his interest in, his efforts at, and his enthusiasm for at least two of surrealism's techniques--the exploration of one's dreams and assemblage. (Vella, 1989:132)

Breton and the surrealists were greatly influenced by Freud's scientific study of dreams, mainly his work *The Interpretation of Dreams*, as well as the intrinsic status he gave to the term "unconscious." However, as J. H. Matthews observes, Breton's "attention was taken and held by only certain features of Freud's ideas. Thus, for example, the therapeut[illegible]eud set for analysts implementing his theories really had no appeal for [illegible]ton." (Matthews, 1986:94) As a poet, Breton, accompanied by the painters in his surreal collective, was more interested in the literary applications of dreams and explorations of the subconscious as keys

for opening minds to the laws of inexplicable worlds. Correspondingly, Pynchon reiterates the surreal quest for a new consciousness in his readers by refusing to give them a rational world based upon experiential beliefs.

Vella uses the word "assemblage" to indicate Pynchon's "simple idea that one could combine inside the same frame elements not normally found together to produce illogical and startling results." (Pynchon, 1984:20) Angus Fletcher terms this element the "surrealist isolation of parts,"[(3)] to indicate the deformation of natural shapes, for instance, images consist of anatomical impossibilities: human heads, animal limbs, beard beaks, tree limbs, and inanimate objects. These deformed categories are described grotesque. The grotesque is a powerful esthetic category involving disruption and distortion of hierarchical or canonical assumptions, such as the oddly decadent V. in *V.* and the animated existence of inanimate objects in *The Crying of Lot 49*.

Depending on the second technique, a third technique could be added, that is autism. In the 1950's, L. Kanner described childhood autism as, ". . . profound withdrawal from contact with people… a skillful relation to objects . . . and…the kind of language that does not seem intended to serve the purpose of interpersonal communication. . . . " (Bettelheim, 1967: 386) Pynchon's first two novels describe a world in which technology is a manifestation of what might be called a general autism, where individuals act in ways similar to those of clinically autistic children. Autism distributes evidence of a modern humanity subverted by machinery.

Alongside the three techniques of surrealism, there is a fourth one: the exploration of chance effects. In his study of Breton, Clifford Browder refers to this aspect of surrealism:

> …sometimes the Surreal is experienced as a startling intuition, a sudden awareness of mysterious forces in one's life, as in the case of a curious coincidence or the chance discovery of a fascinating object or work of art; this is the phenomenon of objective chance, whereby the synthesis is achieved through the irruption of wonder in the midst of the ordinary world. (Browder, 1967: 72)

Unlike epiphany, the exploration of chance effects leads not to understanding the essential meaning of something but to making the impossible possible, giving nature metaphysical properties and allowing sensuality to take on new proportions:

> …visions dispersed on the face of the earth…undiscerned in their individual solitudes, are drawn to the new linguistic magnet and brought together into a new synthesis of imagery, which in turn creates a new synthesis of existence. (Balakian, 1986: 49)

Pynchon uses this technique of surrealism to create a sharp sense of paranoia, such as that felt by the chance appearances of V. in *V.* and the weirdly repetitious appearances of the Trystero muted post horn in *The Crying of Lot 49*.

Hence, there are four techniques of surrealism: the exploration of dreams, the grotesque, autism, and the exploration of chance effects.

1. The Exploration of Dreams

Dream is a basic key word to approach Pynchon's texts because it offers a link to an alternative reality: it is a second level whose limits with daylight reality are systematically blurred. “[D]reams [...] do seem more real." (Pynchon, 1986: 181-182) Balakian notes that "[t]he objective of surrealism was the infinite expansion of reality as a substitute for the previously accepted dichotomy between the real and the imaginary." (Balakian, 1986: 14)

The exploration of dreams occurs intermittently in *V.* between the narrative present of 1956, 1957, and shocking bursts of the past. This juxtaposition of time

congeals around the wanderings of Herbert Stencil and Benny Profane. Stencil searches for the mysterious lady V. throughout the world. For his part, Stencil keeps putting off going to Malta, near which his father drowned and where the mystery of V. could possibly be resolved. When he finally reaches Malta, he soon dashes off to Sweden, pursuing a “much weaker clue, escaping that moment of ultimate despair, when we realize that we have . . . achieved nothing.” (New, 1986: 101) Stencil realizes that he does not dare find V.:

> Finding her: what then? Only that what love there was to Stencil had become directed entirely inward. . . . To sustain it he had to hunt for V.; but if he should find her, where else would there be to go but back into half-consciousness? (Pynchon, 1986: 51)

To solve his mystery would be to risk returning to a life that lacked intensity. The prospect frightens him enough that even when he reads the account of death and dismemberment of V. –as Bad Priest, Stencil still insists, "'She cannot be dead,'" (Pynchon, 1986: 497), and leaves Valetta, Malta for Stockholm, in pursuit of Madame Viola who is rumored to use V.'s distinctive clock-face glass eye "for an hypnotic aid" (Pynchon, 1986: 502).

Devoting his life to following V.'s trail keeps Stencil living in his dream, and in the world of unconsciousness. “‘Dreams will keep you safe and strong,’” but “‘should the angel come this night,’” then “‘Dreams will help you not at all.’”(Pynchon, 1986: 275)

While Profane simply "yo-yos," riding the subway aimlessly throughout New York, his dreams echo this disconnection and isolation. One of his dreams occurs while yo-yoing:

> In this dream, he was all alone, as usual. Walking on a street at night where there was nothing but his own field of vision alive. It had

> to be night on that street. The lights gleamed unflickering on hydrants; manhole covers which lay around in the street. There were neon signs scattered here and there, spelling out words he wouldn't remember when he woke. (Pynchon, 1986: 34)

In this dream, inanimate objects, neon signs, street hydrants and manhole covers, surround Profane. The indeterminate glow of lights at night mirrors Profane's unclear vision which is created by his existence in an unsteady world. The fact that Profane cannot remember the words spelled by the neon sign reveals Profane's inability to get the message. For Pynchon, this is the surreal personification of the twentieth-century nightmare to which he later refers:

> …the street and the dreamer, only an inconsequential shadow of himself in the landscape, partaking of the soullessness of these other masses and shadows; this is Twentieth Century nightmare. (Pynchon, 1986: 358)

Surrealists believe that dreams are "the authentic voice of the human unconsciousness," (Browder, 1967: 90) and Pynchon uses surrealistic dream perception to intensify the frightening uncertainty of the twentieth century where technological advances have the world coming dangerously close to the brink of the inanimate.

More complex than Profane's yo-yoing and just as obsessive as Stencil's search for V., Oedipa's journey in *The Crying of Lot 49* begins when she is named executrix of her ex-lover, Pierce Inverarity's estate. She soon finds herself stumbling:

> …onto a secret richness and concealed density of dream; onto a network by which X number of Americans are truly communicating whilst reserving their lies [...] for the official government delivery system; maybe even onto a real alternative to the exitlessness, to the absence of surprise to life [...]. Or [...] [she is] hallucinating it. Or a plot has been mounted against [...] [her] [...] planting [...] post horn

> images all over San Francisco [...]. Or [...] [she is] fantasying some such plot. (Pynchon, 2006: 69)

In what may be a fragment of a dream on a twenty-four hour sleepless search for the one true choice, Oedipa endlessly follows muted post horn signs and wanders into Golden State Park and finds a circle of children who stay awake all night in their dreams and feel very tired when they awake the next morning that they spend their days searching for places to sleep. In the children's dream world the "night was empty of all terror for them, they had inside their circle an imaginary fire, and needed nothing but their own unpenetrated sense of community." (Pynchon, 2006: 47)

Free from the chains of the enslavement of the rational waking world, these children can experience a security Oedipa never will. Her logical mind will not release her to experience the freedom offered by their world, so her response to the children is a defensive one: "Oedipa, to retaliate, stopped believing in them." (Pynchon, 2006: 47)

Such images are like words: "being the raw material of thought, it is through them primarily that one experiences the surreal and its marvelous fusion of opposites: they are the key to the reunification of opposites" in an indeterminate world. (Browder, 1967: 70)

Thus, Pynchon's "dream-wall[s] [...] seem[…] no more solid than the decorative voids--some almost like leaves or petals, some almost like bodily organs not quite human--which pierced its streaked and cobbled substance." (Pynchon, 1986: 528)

2. The Grotesque

The passage from the animate to the inanimate and to bestiality presents the grotesque. The grotesque carries the sense of distance; it emphasizes the distance more forcibly by shocking violations of natural order. Thus, to make an illogical

combination of human beings, animals, plants, inanimate objects, this will frustrate or shock our sense of spatial homogeneity of the plane to which all they belong. Pynchon sees that abnormality is taking over and quickly replacing what we rate normal. "The world started to run more and more afoul of the inanimate." (Pynchon, 1986: 316)

The union of opposites in *V.* is perhaps most vivid in the nightmarish marriages of flesh and metal. Pynchon's title character V. is a walking demonstration of underground man's contention that societies do not become more civilized and humane as they grow more advanced, but become barbaric and cruel in direct proportion to their sophistication and boredom. V. wants to be dehumanized, she slowly and willingly exchanges parts of her body with metal, jewels, and mirrors. She has acquired a mechanical eye and a sapphire in her navel which is an anatomical part of her. She has even more drastic modifications in mind:

> "See my lovely shoes." … "I would like to have an entire foot that way, a foot of amber and gold, with veins, perhaps in intaglio instead of bas-relief. How tiresome to have the same feet: one can only change one's shoes. But if a girl could have, oh, a lovely rainbow or wardrobe of different–hued, different–sized and –shaped feet." (Pynchon, 1986: 542)

Uprooted, dehumanized, and transformed from a lovely girl called Victoria Wren into the grotesque automaton, then the Bad Priest, and finally disassembled, the gradual metamorphosis of V. is made to correspond to the decline of humanity in the twentieth century. The Bad Priest, Signorina Veronica Maganese, thought to be a man by her parishioners, preaches abstinence, isolation, and, ultimately, the demise of the human race:

> The girls he advised to become nuns, avoid the sensual extremes--pleasure of intercourse, pain of childbirth. The boys he told to find strength in--and be like--the rock of their island. (Pynchon, 1986: 377-378)

The lack of humanity in this message must have been subconsciously felt by the children, who, upon finding her body trapped under a fallen beam; pick her apart like vultures feeding on dead flesh. The children are by that point products of the very force V. represents; their coldness duplicates her coldness; they have become as remote and crystalline as the Bad Priest urged them to be. Brought up in sewers as the city above them is being pulverized, they make war into a game, and hence are no longer capable of responding to real horror when they encounter it. The result is the combination of emotional atrophy and physical mutilation that are both evidences of grotesquerie in *V.* When the children discover that the Bad Priest is composed of mechanical parts that can be removed, they pull from their priest the following grotesque treasures: a long, white wig; dull, gold slippers stuck to artificial feet; a star sapphire belly button; a set of false teeth; and, a glass eye with a clock-shaped iris.

The amputation of the self through identification with technology creates the numbing effect that separates man from his conscious self. The progression of mankind, then, due to the progression of technology, effectively fulfills this destructive inclination. The body is no longer able to ward off the shock of living in a hyper-modern world, which, consequently, suffocates its humanity.It seems in *V.* that humanity as a whole is advancing technologically so as to be able to destroy itself with much more ease and efficiency.

With *The Crying of Lot 49*, Pynchon creates an America where faceless systems—society and technology—dominate and oppress the individual. Within these dominant systems, most individuals would rather submit to them, and lose

their individuality, than struggle against the system as an individual and, in essence, stand alone in a terrifying world.

Pynchon establishes Oedipa as the consummate outsider. Powerless within society, She occupies a role: the housewife who has dinner ready and the "twilight's whiskey sours" mixed "against the arrival of her husband, Wendell ("Mucho") Maas from work". She "shuffle[ed] back through a fat deckful of days which seemed (wouldn't she be first to admit it?) more or less identical" (Pynchon, 2006: 1). The occupation of such a role creates uniformity in her life that strips her off her individuality.

Moreover, the novel depicts surreal imagery of the inanimate:

> Oedipa stood in the living room, stared at by the greenish dead eye of the TV tube, spoke the name of God, tried to feel as drunk as possible. But this did not work. (Pynchon, 2006: 1)

Standing still, Oedipa allows the inanimate object a brief animated existence. The TV actively stares through its eye at Oedipa, who is motionless. After this confrontation, Oedipa often finds herself caught between the shocking and illogical intrusion of worlds. Writing "Shall I project a world?" (Pynchon, 2006: 33) in her memo book, Oedipa acknowledges not only her ability to create a world but also the existence of more than one world for her to encounter. One major interpretation of quantum theory is "The Many Worlds Theory." This theory suggests that there are an infinite number of worlds and possibly a version of being in each one that is different from the others because it has to pursue and develop another possible chain of events. Oedipa senses such a combination that defies all empirical thought in her weird vision of the road in Los Angeles:

> What the world really was, she fancied, was this hypodermic needle, inserted into the vein of a freeway, a vein nourishing the mainliner L.A., keeping it happy, coherent, protected from pain, or

> whatever passes, with a city, for pain. (Pynchon, 2006: 7)

The mundane world of Oedipa Maas collides with a world of steel and concrete that feed the hallucinations of the inanimate world of the city.

3. Autism

It is the daily embrace of technology in every aspect of one's life causes the individual to identify with an object, which cuts him off from humanity. The autist has a bizarre relationship to machinery. This machinery lived him, taking care of him. It expresses his fears and desires.

In *V.* we find autism manifesting itself in machinery. Lady V. is "lived" by her artificial body parts -- parts used to replace the originals which she has deliberately removed. Thus, she becomes a thing.

Herbert Stencil, a self-depersonalizing man, is invaded by obsession on V.'s account. Stencil displays autistic tendencies and entrancement by V.'s autistic mystique. He spends his life searching for V. and veering toward autism:

> Herbert Stencil, like small children...always referred to himself in the third person. This helped Stencil to appear as only one among a repertoire of identities. "Forcible dislocation of personality" was what he called the general technique…it involved, say, wearing clothes that Stencil wouldn't be caught dead in…living in unfamiliar digs, frequenting bars or cafés of a non-Stencilian character…. (Pynchon, 1986: 60)

The avoidance of the first person pronoun (a common autistic practice) involves the constant assumption of an identity other than his own.

The Crying of Lot 49 illustrates the process of how autism is spread that it manifests itself in human relationships to machinery. Oedipa Maas, though not literally a detective, plays the role of one as she tries to track down "The Trystero,"

an entity revealed to her in tantalizing clues left in the estate of the capitalist mogul Pierce Inverarity. The Trystero seems to be some kind of dispossessed system of communication, an underground mail system which opposed the Thurn and Taxis postal system in Europe and appeared again in America. It has overtones both of cruel nihilism and hopeful revolution.

Pierce "dies" (though we don't know for sure whether he is dead, which means he seems to inhabit a mysterious state resembling autism) and seems to become the emptiness at the middle of his fortress. He has little or no self, yet his empire lives on. Oedipa ponders their relationship:

> [H]er love, such as it had been, remain[ed] incommensurate with his need to possess, to alter the land, to bring new skylines, personal antagonisms, growth rates into being. (Pynchon, 2006: 66)

Pierce rejects Oedipa's inadequate love in favor of his own world. Forced by Pierce's legacy into a state of autistic obsession, Oedipa has been captured by the autist's mystique. Oedipa is compelled to follow up every clue that has to do with the Trystero system encoded in Pierce's will, for though he is absent, he is exceedingly powerful. The Trystero he leaves behind, a system of bizarre clues, significations and silences that Oedipa has not decoded even by the end of the book serves the purpose of non-communication. Indeed, not only does Pierce's language not inform Oedipa in any clear way, it manipulates and imperializes her through the paranoia which is now a characteristic aspect of their relationship. This vagueness works amidst the surreal exploration of chance effects.

4. The Exploration of Chance Effects

The Surrealists developed the technique of chance that is considered as a way of breaking down the barriers of logic and gaining access to the depths of the unconscious mind.

One thing that readers cannot know for sure, according to Andrew Gordon, is whether Pynchon's characters encounter evidence of actual conspiracies:

> Pynchon hints at the fictitiousness, not only of fiction, but of life itself, and of our need to find 'plots' where none may exist, and to see order and meaning where there are only chaos and chance occurrences. (Gordon, 1975: 341)

The surrealist belief in chance effects, past and present, is an example of the wondrous as well as an illustration of Pynchon's portrayals of paranoia.

Paranoia becomes an important element in Pynchon's fiction because of its relationship to that reality/expectation dichotomy. Paranoia can provide some comfort for characters, because an explanation--even an ominous one--may be less frightening than the idea of nothingness. The text *V.* itself is an example of the chance effects and of how Pynchon "parodies the compulsion of the human mind to find a pattern in events and to create a pattern where none manifests itself." (Schulz, 1973: 77) The chance appearances of V. in the text, and in Stencil's search, parody the cause-and-effect reasoning of the rational mind.

Throughout Pynchon's novel, *V.*, the central character's real stature is unclear. Stencil associates V. with a girl named Victoria Wren who appears later as Victoria Manganese, Viola and Venus. Yet, Stencil himself does not know "what sex V. might be, nor even what genus and species" (Pynchon, 1986: 244) since V. is known to be "a remarkably scattered concept." (Pynchon, 1986: 418) Thus "[t]here is more behind and inside V. than any of us had suspected. Not who, but what: what is she." (Pynchon, 1986: 49) The first time it appears in the novel it is as "mercury-vapor lamps, receding in an asymmetric V;" (Pynchon, 1986: 2) the second instance, as V-note, the name of a jazz club; and the third occurrence, as Veronica. Later, V. is pervasive in place names: Venezuela, Valletta, the land

where Stencil's father died and a strange outlandish region—Vheissu, a surreal land where:

> The trees outside the head shaman's house have spider monkeys which are iridescent. They change color in the sunlight. Everything changes. The mountains, the lowlands are never the same color from one hour to the next. No sequence of colors is the same from day to day. As if you lived inside a madman's kaleidoscope. (Pynchon, 1986: 177)

The letter V additionally has a prominent affiliation with the surrealist movement. *VVV* and *View* were significant surrealist reviews, and it is:

> …likely that VVV was referred to in Pynchon's art history elective at Cornell, but it is certain that both VVV and View were available on the open stacks of the New York Public Library where Pynchon researched and worked on V. (Vella, 1989: 133)

In *The Crying of Lot 49*, the surreal chance effects come not in the shape of a solitary letter but in circuitry, TV, and a muted post horn. Upon entering the Southern California town of San Narciso, Oedipa:

> …thought of the time she'd opened a transistor radio to replace a battery and seen her first printed circuit. The ordered swirl of houses and streets, from this high angle, sprang at her now with the same unexpected, astonishing clarity as the circuit card had. [...] [A] hieroglyphic sense of concealed meaning, of an intent to communicate. (Pynchon, 2006: 6)

Recognizing this pattern, the connection makes Oedipa feel as if "a revelation also trembled just past the threshold of her understanding" that "she ... seemed parked at [...] an odd, religious instant." (Pynchon, 2006: 6) This "odd, religious instant" illustrates the need Pynchon's characters feel to create patterns out of chance occurrences with the hope that some sort of understandable order and meaning will materialize.

Soon after Metzger, the lawyer, arrives, she turns on the television, which happens to be tuned to a station running a film called *Cashiered*. The star of the film is a much younger Metzger, formerly known as child actor Baby Igor. Immediately she thinks "he made up the whole thing . . . or he bribed the engineer over at the local station to run this, it's all part of a plot, an elaborate, seduction *plot*" (Pynchon, 2006, 9).

The explanation Oedipa most desperately craved, however, is one that would reveal the meaning of her repeated encounters with the muted post horn sign. The muted post horn is a symbol for Trystero. After being defeated by Thurn und Taxis in the 1700s, the Trystero organization goes underground and continues to exist, with its mailboxes in the least suspected places, often appearing under their slogan W.A.S.T.E., an acronym for We Await Silent Trystero's Empire, and also a smart way of hiding their post-boxes disguised as regular waste-bins. In the plot of the novel, the existence and plans of the shadowy organization are revealed bit by bit, or, it is possible that the Trystero does not exist at all. Oedipa, is buffeted back and forth between believing and not believing in them, without ever finding firm proof either way. The Trystero may be a conspiracy, it may be a trick, or it may simply be that Oedipa is hallucinating all the arcane references to the underground network that she seems to be discovering in different places.

The sleepless twenty-four hours Oedipa spent wandering the streets of San Francisco were imploded by muted post horns in many forms: worn on the lapel of a man in a gay bar, The Greek Way; displayed through the pattern of a jump-rope game; stamped upon a 1904 edition of the paper Regeneration; stitched with silver thread upon the gang jackets of delinquents; scratched on the back of a bus seat; tacked to the bulletin board of a Laundromat; traced upon a window by a fingernail in the steam of a girl's breath; scrawled in the balance-book of a gambler who always loses; and, posted as an advertisement on a latrine for A.C.D.C., the

Alameda County Death Cult. Oedipa found that "[d]ecorating each alienation, each species of withdrawal, as cufflink, decal, aimless doodling, there was somehow always the post horn." (Pynchon, 2006: 49) Thus, unexplainable repetitions and similar occurrences happen together but all beyond human understanding.

Conclusion

The interest in literary surrealism is usually considered an outgrowth of contemporary distrust of any order and disappointment at the doom of the universe that witnessed horrible world wars.

The incorporation of Surrealism in modern literature echoes constant reappearance of a sense of dislocation, of humans being eclipsed by systems, of a fantastic world created from the acceptance of an existence beyond comprehension, and of a sarcastic, strangely calm nod in the direction of cultural threats and the impossibility of any available meaning. Thus, Surrealism projects a world, but this world is transformed. It reflects this fantastical and indeterminate state of human existence.

Pynchon approaches the techniques of surrealism: (the exploration of dreams, the creation of illogical combinations (the grotesque), autism, and the exploration of chance effects) in order to textualize the uncertainty of being that surrounds mid to late twentieth century culture, and to portray a frustrated state of confusion because the patterns, endings, and meanings are simply beyond reach. His texts project a failed modernist quest for meaning.

Notes

(1) The modern world is often a confusing and chaotic place. Thomas Pynchon has decided to incorporate this view in his fiction. In *V.* there is no narrative structure; there are fragmented plots, events told in random order, a wide variety of literary styles, and a plethora of characters and allusions to pop culture. It is Christmas Eve, 1955, *V.* focuses on Benny Profane, who has been just released from the Navy. The ex-seaman Profane--"a…human yo-yo"--is back in Norfolk, Virginia, with some old Navy buddies, The Whole Sick Crew, and Paola Maijstral, the enigmatic barmaid from Valletta, Malta. Profane roams the streets and the sewers not doing anything in particular (hunting alligators) of a city that seems to just bounce him back in forth. The story also focuses on his friend Herbert Stencil, questing son of a dead British Foreign Office man. Since 1945, he has been hunting for the utterly mysterious V., an unknown (perhaps unknowable) woman whom he knows only from an entry in his late father's journals--"Florence, April, 1899" (Pynchon, 1963:53). He never really finds her.

(2) Oedipa Maas finds herself drawn into a shadowy intrigue when an old boyfriend, the California businessman, Pierce Inverarity, dies. Inverarity's will names her as his executor. She leaves her comfortable home in a northern California village and travels south to the fictional town of San Narciso, near Los Angeles. Uncovering puzzling coincidences while exploring Inverarity's testament, Oedipa finds what might be evidence for the Trystero's existence. Sinking ever more deeply into paranoia, she finds herself torn between believing in the Trystero and believing that it is all a hoax established by Inverarity himself.

(3) As a modern instance of isolation, the surrealist Paul Nougé describes the work of René Magritte: "The method itself consists in isolating the object by breaking off its ties with the rest of the world in a more or less brutal or in a more

or less insidious manner. …. We may isolate…by a deformation, or a modification, in the subject of an object – a woman without head, a hand of glass. …. Or by a change in scenery – …a statue in a ditch."

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