

RIOTING, TEXTUALITY AND THE CRYING OF LOT 49

G. GANTER

"System, as such, does violence whenever it lays its hands upon us."

—William James

Explanations of the causes of the Rodney King riots were numerous: racial anger, reaction to sustained poverty, hatred of the police; one advisor to the President even blamed the Johnson administration. Government sociologists and urban specialists turned to their indexes and charts and began a familiar tale. The gist of the story is that something is terribly wrong with the country, and though government officials try to quantify it in analytic terms, they seem powerless to do much about it. Such bureaucratic shuffling followed the Watts riots as well, nearly 30 years ago, and one of Thomas Pynchon's most topical essays, "A Journey into the Mind of Watts," attempted to give America what government statisticians could not—a sense of how it feels to live in Watts. Remarkable for its political insight, Pynchon's description of what lay behind the Watts riots suggests a new reading of one of his most enigmatic novels, *The Crying of Lot 49*, and in particular, a new reading of the novel's mysterious WASTE/Trystero conspiracy.

Pynchon's Watts essay turned the tables on the prejudices of middle America by characterizing the citizens of Watts as fairly normal people, people who disliked getting dressed up to go to work, who disliked being forced to speak unnaturally, and who felt enraged, most of all, by having police shotguns trained to their faces. The poor aren't crazy, Pynchon writes; it's "The Man" who harasses them. By pulling his readership into the Mind of Watts with slang and with numerous references to "you" and "how you feel," Pynchon's informal tone obliges us to look at Watts from the rioters' point of view. It is from this position that Pynchon reveals the real "Mind" behind the riots—our own—the Mind of "well adjusted, middle class professionals, negro and white, who man the mimeographs

and the computers of the poverty war here. Sadly, they seem to be smiling themselves out of any meaningful communication with their poor" (82 emphasis mine).

It was not the poor who were unable to "feel" the conditions in Watts prior to the riots; it was the middle class. Pynchon's complaint is that mainstream culture was able to ignore the poverty in Watts by turning it into a textual problem, one abstractly defined by mimeographs, computers and newspapers. The documents, cover stories and statistics, presumably intended to alleviate suffering, only covered up its human face:

While while culture is concerned with various forms of systematized folly, [...] the black culture is pretty much stuck with the basic realities like disease, like failure, violence and death, which the whites have mostly chosen—and can afford—to ignore. (35, 78)

The indictment of white culture's "systematized folly" as a primary evil of modern life is characteristic of many scenes in Pynchon's early fiction, but Pynchon's interest in the way our culture uses systems of text to screen out "The World" is a clear reference to the novel he published two months earlier, *The Crying of Lot 49*, originally titled, *The World (This One), the Flesh (Mrs. Oedipa Maas) and the Testament of Pierce Inverarity*.

Like most of Pynchon's writing, *Lot 49* explores the causes of modern social decay. The narrative motif Pynchon employs is gait-romance, and his protagonist, Oedipa Maas, seeks a redemptive understanding of her culture's degeneration. The fact that Oedipa does not succeed in her quest is generally taken as Pynchon's skepticism of the goals of Enlightenment rationality itself. In this sense, Oedipa's futile search in *Lot 49* is a parable of the failure of the humanist desire for "meaningful communication" and for inter-subjective communion through symbols. But even though Pynchon voices these concerns about the hermetic "folly" of white culture in "Watts," his earnest tone in the essay suggests that the Enlightenment desire for "meaningful communication" (with all its emancipatory nostalgia) is nonetheless a worthwhile goal: his point is to show that real understanding does not come from systems and bureaucracies, but from personal empathy among people. In this regard, Pynchon's Watts essay draws heavily on the humanist credo that discrete human experiences can be shared and understood; used with care and sensitivity, language can bridge the gap between one and the Other.

So if Pynchon is arguing in "Watts" that America has come to believe in the products of computers and mimeographs more than it believes in the truths of human pain and experience, then Oedipa's peculiar fascination with text in *Lot 49* deserves careful scrutiny. Although Oedipa suspects that her bibliographic research of a bizarre Jacobean revenge play has put her in touch with a genuine alternative to the wasteland that has become America,¹ what she may have tripped upon in the WASTE/Trystero conspiracy is Pynchon's metaphor for a "muted" and broad ranging continuity among the principles of western society, one

which centers on mistaking "textual" reality for "world" reality.

The basis of this unorthodox interpretation of the Trystero rests on the backgrounds of Oedipa Maas's peculiar name. I believe that her name is an important reference to two 20th century Germans who both shared a fascination with books and who both had an obsession with the systematic identification of origin: Paul Maas in bibliography, and Sigmund Freud in psychology. Pynchon uses these sources of Oedipa's name to refer to a habit of western thought² that began to blur the distinction between written text and lived culture. Oedipa's decision to investigate the text of a play she attends one night, *The Courier's Tragedy*, as a means to understanding her society is a satire of the way Maas and Freud, both representative minds of Western positivist science, turned to "text" for truths about humankind. Oedipa's attempt to reveal the source of America's disease with "books" only reproduces the very plague she seeks—the heart of the Trystero conspiracy is that text has become more important than people. In light of the fact that the porous and abstract qualities of the Trystero evade such simplistic glosses, I'd emphasize here that mine is not an exclusionary hypothesis—rather it's an attempt to clarify a particular passageway that connects Pynchon's political interests to his literary ones in some startling ways.

PAUL MAAS AND METHOD IN HIS MADNESS

Oedipa Maas's last name has been widely construed for a variety of useful purposes,³ but in light of her bookish interests, the reference to the German textual critic, Paul Maas,⁴ is central. The publication of his bibliographer's handbook *Textkritik*, in 1927, was the pinnacle of a broad movement in German philology in the 19th and 20th century that was obsessed with the creation of a science, called "stemmatics," for the verification of classical manuscripts. Their goal was "to produce a text as close as possible to the original" (Maas 1), and it was based on the creation of a genealogical tree of texts, a recension, through which scholars could postulate the qualities of a text's original version—the "archetype."⁵ The stemmatic procedure itself, however, was derived from the practices of an older German scholar named Karl Lachmann (1793-1851), a critic who encouraged his students to trust the logic of method rather than the foibles of intuition. Lachmann's disciples, Maas included, eagerly complied. One student, Moritz Haupt (1808-1874), was known to begin his lectures with the statement, "the real aim of this course is to teach method," and others invented a critical Decalogue where the fourth commandment was "Thou shalt not take the name of Method in vain" (Kenney 110). By 1900, German philology had become a religion, and its gods were the principles of analytic logic.

The problem with the stemmatic method is that it is as unreliable as it is logical. There are a number of common textual quirks which distort the accuracy of the system, such as might result when scribes worked from

several copy texts at the same time.⁶ Despite the system's shortcomings, however, its claims of mathematical purity and apparent exclusion of human error were alluring. And although Maas's work was criticized by his contemporaries for confusing textual criticism with mathematics, it is a testament to the modern age's faith in the machine that the legitimacy of Maas's work is still debated among scholars even today (Patterson 80).

What makes Paul Maas so important in understanding Oedipa's enthusiastic pursuit of *The Courier's Tragedy*, however, are the echoes of German romance implicit in Maas's work. Although Maas believed in the tools of progressive science, his goal was nonetheless an antiquarian concern—a quest for a pure and holy origin, an attempt, in Nietzsche's sense, not merely to improve our understanding of the present, but to *conserve* it forever with the authority of science.⁷

It is useful also to compare the methods of archaeology, which reconstructs [sic] a lost work of art from its copies, or those of literary or folklore research, which looks [sic] for the original version of a motif. But nowhere will the road be so clear, the goal so certainly obtainable, as in the textual criticism of classical authors. (Maas 21)

Maas's system for finding origin thus had a twofold reward: not only did his science promise an easy corridor to the mysteries of the past, but the success of his approach enthroned "science" as the final redeemer of myth. Maas sought to transform history from an act of interpretation to one of verification, a type of history whose consequent goal was to justify its own methodology. Read in this fashion, Oedipa's bibliographic inquiry (as well as the scientific investigation by middle class Americans of the causes of the Watts riots) has a similarly conservative telos. Oedipa's search does not hold an alternative to her society's bureaucratic paper-shuffling as much as it promises a reputation of the same.

Although apparently Oedipa never reads Paul Maas, her subsequent experiences down the "clear" road of textual criticism form a broad satire of Maas's work—literally, personally, and thematically. On the literal level, Pynchon's use of Maas's work comes in a long footnote in one of Oedipa's editions of *The Courier's Tragedy* (Lot 49 74-75) where the passage's authentic scholarly tone comes from Pynchon's free adaptation of a similar passage taken from page 37 of Maas's book, translated into English just six years before the writing of *Lot 49*.⁸

Not content with a satire of Maas's earnest determination to "purify" corrupt text, Pynchon puts Oedipa in personal contact with a New Critical epigone⁹ of Paul Maas, the beer-soaked Professor Bortz. Bortz and his graduate students scoff at Oedipa's desire to re-imagine the play's author, the "historical Wharfinger." For them, Wharfinger is only a ghost: "What's left?" [Bortz] shrugs, "Words. Them we can talk about" (113). But as helpful as Bortz is to Oedipa, the consequences of her intimacy with him begin to worry her toward the end of the novel: when Oedipa suspects her pregnancy, she apparently considers an "abortion" to expel the influence of his textual theories.

And it is on a more theoretical level that Oedipa's textual methodology blends with the Trystero conspiracy itself. Like the women she sees in the Remedios Varo painting, she wonders if she is weaving patterns rather than discovering them.¹⁰ And like the stemmatic critics who reluctantly admit that their "archetypal version" of a text may be as much the creation of their system as it may be the creation of any classical author, Oedipa considers that she may have systematically created rather than discovered the Trystero.

Despite such doubts about her sanity, Oedipa manages to find out the source of the Trystero line she hears at *The Courier's Tragedy*. Ironically, however, she finds that origins are never inviolate—the couplet comes from a morally "corrupt" pornographic variant of Wharfinger's play, supposedly written by the Scurvhamites. At least with the Scurvhamites, though, she has hit bibliographic bottom. It was they who introduced the word "Trystero" (its "original" spelling) into the play, and according to their cosmology, it was an arch-enemy, a spirit of mechanical automatism. A parody of a deterministic Calvinist sect, the Scurvhamites believed that:

Creation was a vast, intricate machine. But one part of it, the Scurvhamite part, ran off the will of God, its prime mover. The rest ran off some opposite Principle, something blind, soulless; a brute automatism that led to eternal death [...] But somehow those few saved Scurvhamites found themselves looking into the gaudy clockwork of the doomed with a certain sick and fascinated horror, and this was to prove fatal. One by one the glamorous prospect of omnihilation coaxed them over, until there was no one left in the sect. (116)

The comic demise of the Scurvhamite anti-mechanical creed is that they created a system in their very effort to isolate themselves from a system. Recognizing that they had succumbed to the Trystero in their very attempt to get away from it, they all committed suicide. The warning of the dark couplet, "No hallowed skein of stars can ward, I trow, / Who's once been set his trust with Trystero," is the Scurvhamites' testament that a preoccupation with mechanical systems reproduces itself like a virus—once conceived, there is no way to "ward off" its takeover.

Thus, if the Trystero is a tendency toward excessively mechanical or systematic thought, then it is less the rival of mainstream western culture than it is a peculiarly reactive distillate of that same culture. From this perspective, the reason why the Trystero system plays such a ubiquitous role among the interweaving antinomies of the novel is that it is not a "what" but a "how." Whoever shows a tendency to assert the truths of an abstract system (the Text) over the caprices of reality (the World) is the Trystero. In examples throughout *Lot 49*, the Trystero affiliates are usually people whose desire for a rational system paradoxically destroys their own rationality¹¹: the members of Inamorati Anonymous who organize a "society of isolates" (83), the users of the Scope mail system who send letters regardless of the WASTE they generate (35), and the

anarchists who ironically "unite" to fight in the name of their philosophy (89). The best example, of course, is Oedipa's own husband, "Mucho" Maas—a man whose drug-induced belief in a universal kinship of power spectra paradoxically carries him further and further from "what has passed...for love" (114). But during Oedipa's late night travel through San Francisco she begins to see the Tystero logo everywhere and particularly among the poor—in children's hopscotch games, in people's aimless doodlings. What Oedipa fails to realize is that even the oppressed have been co-opted by the systematized principles of the Republic, and sadly, they have picked them up in the spirit of oppositional politics. The marginalized forces with whom Oedipa feels such an affinity still embody the worst aspects of the powers which brought about their exclusion. In fact, *Lot 49*, like Don DeLillo's later novel, *White Noise* is a virtual parade of characters who are so enveloped by representational systems that they can no longer recognize the material World. Although they aren't using a system to "find" anything, their entire self—"image" comes from the systems of technology that surround them. Whether they are gyrating to the rhythms of electronic music at the Scope or getting sexually turned on by watching the news or fast cars (79), even their impression of love is no longer connected to flesh and bone. Just as Paul Maas abandoned the quirky world of books for the controlled artificiality of his procedures, most of the characters in *Lot 49* have mistaken The World for a system of technology, which, in McLuhan-esque fashion, has begun to remake them. And "decorating each alienation" (91) is the Tystero's muted postal horn. No wonder Oedipa sees the Tystero everywhere once she starts looking for it.

THE INTERPRETATION OF DREAMS

As the systemization of America threatens to rob its compliant citizens of their humanity, one of Oedipa's greatest assets is that she is sensitive enough to suspect that something is wrong with her culture. Ironically, to control her anxiety about the existence of the Tystero, Oedipa turns to another complex system of social control, psychoanalysis. When she goes to her psychiatrist, however, Dr. Hilarious unexpectedly tells her to "cherish" rather than to cure her fantasies:

"I came, [Oedipa] said, hoping you could talk me out of a fantasy. 'Cherish it!' cried Hilarious fiercely. 'What else do any of you have? Hold it tightly by its little tentacle, don't let the Freudians coo it away or the pharmacists poison it out of you. Whatever it is, hold it dear, for when you lose it you go over by that much to the others. You begin to cease to be.' (103)

Although Hilarious is not a particularly reliable character, the passage is reminiscent of other scenes, such as Dribble's shower speech, where Oedipa is warned about the consequences of her search. Oedipa doesn't listen, however, and Hilarious's desperate renunciation of Freud,

the great psychic detective of the 20th century, holds an important critique not only of Oedipa's detective urges, but also of the Freudian resonance of her first name.

And methodologically speaking, Sigmund Freud and Paul Maas had similar interests. Freud was a self-proclaimed bibliophile (*Dreams* 205) who read ancient Greek and drew on his knowledge of classical literature to provide evidence for his theories. And like Paul Maas's recensions, Freud's analyses sought the origins of psychic disorder by constructing a genealogy of events which led to an objective source. In doing this, Freud shared Maas's desire to simultaneously discover and conserve the origins of the present through the principles of natural science. The difference between Freud and Maas, however, is that Freud didn't stop at the printed word; he saw print, culture and dream as being part of the same "text," a text that even provided the theoretical principles for decoding the dream work. To this end, Freud's argument in *The Interpretation of Dreams* is primarily a "documentary" effort: texts are his proof. Armed with only a handful of critical tools, Freud acrobatically interprets everything in terms of his own "system"—so well, in fact, that for many readers, it seems Freud's genius is more in his rhetorical ability to manipulate the text to fit his system than it is in his success at uncovering the genuine apparatus of the human psyche.¹²

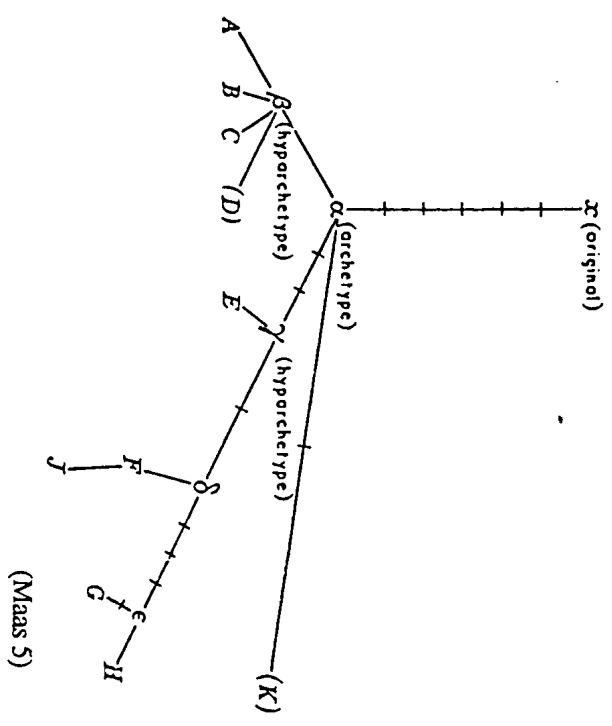
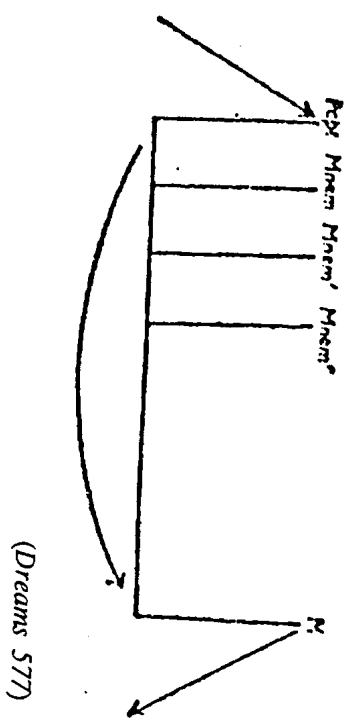
Freud's delight with the interpretive possibilities of a "system" is reflected in his repeated use of the word itself toward the end of *The Interpretation of Dreams*; even more germane to *Lot 49*, however, is Freud's use of *Oedipus The King* and *Hamlet* to validate his theories. First, Sophocles supplies to Freud what Freud supplies to *Lot 49*: a pattern of incest. Although Oedipa's sex and lack of parental history have always obscured her Oedipal family, Pynchon does give evidence of her unconscious incest with her "paternal heritage" of Paul Maas and Sigmund Freud through her liaisons with their avatars in Mucho and Bortz. And as in Sophocles, Oedipa doesn't see her mistake even as the auction doors close.

The second consequence of tracing Oedipa's name to Freud's Oedipus, however, is that she begins to dissolve into a series of palimpsests herself: name, behavior, and origins. Like Freud's documentation of the Oedipus cycle, she comes from other books,¹³ origins precisely in the textual paradigms that Pynchon critiques throughout the novel. And furthermore, as executrix of Pierce Inverarity's will, she is obliged to do what a text tells her to. In this sense, Oedipa's lack of "character" (noticed by Richard Poirier as a flaw in Pynchon's novel) is a symptom of the hypertext from which she comes—a profile as flat as the page of a book. Oedipa may think of herself as an outsider, but her culture has been writing her part for years.

The kind of script that Oedipa follows is a revenge play, the same kind of play to which, predictably enough, Freud turns when he uses *Hamlet* as an example of frustrated Oedipal wish fulfillment. Whether this

connection warrants reading Oedipa as a kind of Hamlet is arguable, but more to the point, what *Lot 49* shares with *Hamlet* and *The Interpretation of Dreams* is its use of a play-within-the-work to create a self-referential mise en abyme, or frame within a frame. All these texts refer to the plots of other plays to provide some kind of self-validation: *Hamlet* uses "The Mousetrap" to catch Claudius; Freud uses Hamlet on us; Oedipa uses *The Courier's Tragedy* on America—the disheartening connection is that all these plots recycle a pattern of death and revenge: the letter slayeth. Pynchon's illustration of the way these texts are stubbornly "conserved" by our culture suggests that the printed word has provided Western society with a script of doom for a long time, and perhaps, reading backwards, even Hamlet's mysterious complaint about "words...." is fully prescient of the baleful consequences of the printing machine: when systems of text become the main determinant of reality, there is "method" in the madness indeed.

Pynchon's illustration of Western culture's deification of "text" is exaggerated in his use of the physically schematic pattern of the muted postal horn. Oedipa sees it everywhere, from postal watermarks to children's hopscotch games. Although the muted shape carries with it suggestions of the jazz-playing underground, which always seems to be associated with the Trystero, when Oedipa first sees the design, she thinks it is some kind of "hieroglyphic" and does not recognize its similarity to anything in the real world. Instead, she notices only its plain geometry, "a loop, a triangle, and a trapezoid" (34), and has no idea what it means or to what it refers. Rather, Oedipa's curiosity about the meaning of the shape recalls similar designs in Maas's and Freud's work, where readers are faced with enigmatic patterns presumably intended to clarify the discussion. Maas's sketch of a hypothetical recession is as familiar to new students of bibliography as it is daunting. Freud's initial sketch of the "system" of psychical activity becomes even more notorious in the later years of his writing when he actually tries to draw the location of the Oedipus complex in the *New Introductory Lectures* (70).



Similarly, Pynchon's reference to these skeletal representations of pure "systems" comes in the Trystero's logo:



(lot 49 34)

Like the experience of first looking at one of Maas's or Freud's diagrams, Oedipa's confusion is based on the fact that she lacks the specialized knowledge that would make the design meaningful. For all she knows, it could be part of an electrical diagram or a road map; it doesn't come with a user's manual. Like her culture's growing affection for acronyms like WASTE, DEATH and NADA, all of which require the knowledge of initials to give them meaning (but which nonetheless spell out the end of humanity), her culture's increasing preference for "symbol" over "word" suggests that it is moving away from a mutually spoken language. Non-mimetic diagrams and logos are more abstract than words because they can't even be spoken by the human mouth; they can only be text. Such a cultural language not only inhibits verbal communication but also points to a deep change in the culture's view of itself. As the problem-solving languages of human discourse become unspeakable, so, too, does the society come more and more to resemble the charts, graphs and schemata it uses to describe itself.

Pynchon's awareness of the extent to which systems of signification have changed the character of the lived world puts him in uneasy dialogue with the theorists of post-structuralism whose work became popular in the late 1960's. Although many writers find evidence in Pynchon's work of decentered subjectivity (Oedipa is as decentered as a character can be) and of sympathy with the textual theories of post-structuralism, they don't point out Pynchon's skepticism toward the linguistic origins of the entire post-structural movement. The Saussurian moorings, for instance, from which Derrida launches a critique of "the metaphysics of presence" are founded in the same logocentric impulses as most other late 19th century attempts to define the meaning of words via systemic understanding. From the point of view of Pynchon's argument in *Lot 49*, the irony of deconstruction is Oedipa's—they're both more indebted to a faith in the "priority of text" than they know.

For Pynchon, the relationship of words to each other is important, but words are only part of human experience. The real heroes of Pynchon's writing are those who value what exists beyond the written word—Benny Profane's shared bottles of wine, his dismay at the sight of technical jargon, the silent empathy of a look in the eyes when Elena and Fausto "share[] pain" (V. 336). The fact that Oedipa shrugs off the moments of human contact she has while listening to Mr. Thoth's moving stories about his grandfather, or while talking with somebody kind at the gay bar, underscores Pynchon's argument that the Trystero has the majority of "white culture" looking for value in all the wrong places.

THE WORLD

It might be argued at this point that Pynchon's critique of textual systems has been stretched very thin. I have connected the "systematized folly" of Pynchon's Watus essay with the Trystero conspiracy of *Lot 49* and argued that Pynchon is describing a multi-leveled phenomenon in Western life that is based on the worship of the printed word. The conspiratorial nature of this systematized folly, however, is elaborated explicitly in Pynchon's letter to Thomas Hirsch in 1969 (Secd 242), where he generalizes about the culture that produced Paul Maas and Sigmund Freud. Discussing how the native Africans tended to structure their villages in a circular mandala pattern in contrast to the boxy "Western/analytic"/"linear"/alienated shick" of "German Christianity," Pynchon holds that the basic orientation of Western thought is even embedded in its cities:

Contrast the shape of a Herero village with the Cartesian grid system layout in Windhoek or Swakopmund, read Lewis Mumford or talk to somebody in the city planning department here. The physical shape of a city is an infallible due [sic] to where the people who built it are at. (241)

Pynchon's concern with the cognitive geometry of a culture recalls

Oedipa's thwarted epiphany when she looks down on to the city grid of San Narcisco and feels that the giant transitorized shape is trying to tell her something, but she can't quite figure out that the pattern she sees is a reflection of her culture's love affair with the atemporal symbols of Cartesian diagrams. Pynchon's letter concludes with his self-conscious awareness that he may be growing paranoid himself, but he nonetheless expresses his hunch that the crises of modern political history are closely tied to the influence of people, often Germans, whose fetish for written symbols controlled not only their philosophy but also their politics:

It is no accident that Leibniz was co-inventor of calculus, trying to cope with change by stopping it dead, chopping it up into infinitesimals, going in to look at it, the cannonball frozen in midflight, little piece by little piece—no accident that Gauss, who contributed most heavily to Modern Analysis, spent his time moonlighting as a diplomatic trouble-shooter travelling from little state to little state, trying to cool off hassles among the hundred princes of the period. This may all sound irrelevant, but it's not. I don't like to use the word but what went on back in Sudwest is archetypical of every clash between west and non-west, clashes that are still going on right now in South East Asia. (242, emphasis mine)

Pynchon's discomfort with his own use of the word "archetype" recalls its favor among the very Germans whose abstract thinking he wishes to critique, but he is sure that he has uncovered a significant pattern that begins to explain the rational violence of recent western history.

The irony behind *The New York Times's* initial statements about the Watus riots, "officials were at a loss to explain the cause of the rioting" (Bart 1), was that journalists, like most of the sociologists they quoted, treated the violence as an unexplainable "aberration" from the norm, as many people still consider the systematic genocide of the Holocaust. Pynchon's argument, however, is that such horrors are the logical outcome of a "literate" culture that no longer respects the cry of a human voice. Although Pynchon satires the efforts of the Stencil family in V. and Oedipa Maas in *Lot 49* to see a pattern in their culture, Pynchon's entire corpus of work is a careful exposition of what really did link the Boer War with the World Wars, with Vietnam, and finally with Watus: the symbol has taken over the human. When the Los Angeles Chief of Police, William Parker, blamed the Watus riots on people with "no respect for the law" (Bart 26), he seemed unaware that from the point of view of the rioters, the written law had no respect for them. As in the case of Rodney King, nearly 30 years later, the government's response was to set up various commissions and panels to investigate the causes of the riots (as if no one knew what the causes were), panels which curiously vindicated the use of scientific inquiry as much as they criticized minor aspects of its deployment in the culture at large. The result, in 1992, was not a governmental decision to completely re-evaluate its responsibility to urban life, but rather a serious

consideration that the riots may have been caused by the genetic make-up of the rioters. The "systematized folly" creates more technological ghosts to chase, and Oedipa Maas and the Trystero are reborn time and time again.

Demonstrated in this fashion, *Lot 49* apparently argues to annihilate itself (as a text), but it is not text itself that is dangerous. Technological systems themselves are useful and often monuments of true beauty in Pynchon's work; it is when they obscure human realities and needs that they strengthen the Trystero. As Pynchon argues in "Watts," meaningful technology is the key, and rather than nostalgically reject the expression, Pynchon's later fiction describes the moments of modern experience where individuals "live" with the machinery at their disposal. Although none of his later protagonists escape the control of being mapped by myriads of textual grids, bureaucracies or scientific principles ("representation," being, after all, the only game in town), the funding does get cut from some of the greater bureaucratic evils they face, and sometimes, there are people, like Prairie in *Vineland*, who won't settle for the monological simplicity of cooking a "New England Boiled Dinosaur" (110): theory is one thing and living is another. But in a backward look over the mystery of *The Courier's Tragedy*, the typewritten name of Oedipa Maas still cautions in the ghostly tone of Hamlet's father as if to say, "Remember me."

NOTES

- 1 Following Edward Mendelson's influential essay, "The Sacred and the Profane," most critics have united Oedipa and the Tristero (a variant spelling) Kharperion argues that the "Tristero signifies the initiation of a fertile diversity and the ultimate possibility of an anarchic plenitude of communication" (91), Tanner (186), Yves-Petillon (150) and Cooper (93-4), although Cooper admits the Tristero has some "irreconcilable" meanings (178), and Tanner recognizes that the Tristero "might be a revelation of ultimate terror" (186). Thomas Schaub has written that "WASTE/Tristero system, however, medium of our society, its message is plain" (40). I agree with Schaub.
- 2 A "habiti" beginning with the Egyptian god Thoth but crystallizing with the invention of mechanical printing in the late fifteenth-century, and whose dates correspond with the shadowy dawn of the the Trystero conspiracy.
- 3 Oedipa's last name has been interpreted as referring to the Afrikaans word for "web" (Davidson 43); to "mass" communications systems (Duyffhuizen 84); Oedipal behavior (Young 72); to "what in Newtonian times was called a 'masse grave,' feeling the downward pull of gravity and going 'all the way

RIOTING, TEXTUALITY AND THE CRYING OF LOT 49

down to the flesh,' heavy (gravity) in more ways than one" (Petillon 137). All seem appropriate at various points in the novel.

4 Steiner's fine article on the relationship of the mythic backgrounds of Eliot's *The Waste Land* to *Lot 49* is the first to mention the significance of Paul Maas.

5 Paul Maas's system relies on the premise that texts contain traces of their origins much in the same way children show traits of their parents. For instance, Maas states that several manuscripts possessing the same "peculiar error" (an error he defines as one whose likelihood of being duplicated in several manuscripts seems unlikely) can be assumed to have been copies from the same source (4). He then places them on several forks stemming from a hypothetical ancestor, called the hyparchetype. These extant manuscripts are then excluded from having much authority in themselves, and only bear witness that there must have been a more trustworthy hyparchetype. The scholar may never actually see this hyparchetype, but by schematizing the various extant manuscripts into family stemma based on similarities (a recension), often times the scholar can hypothesize many nonextant links between certain families of extant manuscripts, and perhaps even "reconstruct" (as opposed to create) a nonextant manuscript, called the archetype, through the contributions of its nearest assumed ancestors (which, interestingly, might also be nonextant!).

6 The complexities which beset a genealogical recension are many. Scholars must consider that scribes often worked from several exemplars at once (cross fertilization of collateral!), that there may have been several "original" manuscripts and that errors sometimes get emended "downstream" without apparent precedent, just to sketch a few.

7 In addition to Nietzsche's "On the Advantage and Disadvantage of History for Life," my reading of Maas's "antiquarian" impulse is influenced by Foucault's "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History" and Said's *Beginnings*.

8 Although the borrowing is not explicit, compare 1) the smug editorial confidence in the two passages 2) the use of initialed names and parentheses with "s" signs 3) the use of "hunch" (Lochmann rolls over in his grave) where method falls short: "But parentes is nonsense after qui," and J. Schroder's conjecture parenti (=parentei L. Havel) is convincing. The fact that the Quintilian manuscripts also write cui and parentes is presumably due to contamination from the corrupted Vergil tradition. One will see why Vergil did not write as if one thinks of the "goddess's couch": "the graecizing [...] of the construction, which in Latin is anomalous, and the whole turn of the phrase of the closing verse are meant to remind one of Theocritus 9..." (Maas 37). "The doubtful 'Whitechapel' version (c. 1670) has 'This tryst or odious awry, O Niccolo,' which, besides bringing in a quite graceless Alexandrine, is difficult to make sense of syntactically, unless we accept the rather unorthodox though persuasive argument of J.K. Sale that the line is really a pun on 'This trystero dies free....' This, however, it must be pointed out, leaves the line as corrupt as before, owing to no clear meaning for the word trystero, unless it be a pseudo-Italianate variant on trisle (= wretched, deploved)" (Lot 49 75).

9 The connection between Maas's interest in method and that of the New Critics is intriguing. Jerome McGann argues that the New Critical editors the

uses the term New Bibliographer) sought the same goal as the stemmatic critics—the "ideal text" (56). His hypothesis is vividly supported by the flagship scholar for New Critical editions, W. W. Greg, whose *Calculus of Variants* (1927) proposes an editorial procedure so mathematically complex that, to my knowledge, no editor has ever employed it.

¹⁰ The dark figure presiding over the women at the center of the tower in Varo's painting is important not only because Oedipa does not recall it, but also because it is so important to Varo's work in general. Her distrust of male "thinkers"—all those dried up figures whose wispy beards conspire to choke the women in so many of her paintings—seems to reappear in the dark (male?) wizard who presides over the production of the tapestry of the world. The fact that Oedipa doesn't mention this figure suggests she doesn't recognize the controlling influence of the analytic patriarchy apparent in her name.

¹¹ It is at this point that the significance of the Jacobean revenge play takes on a different meaning: it is also suggestive of the "Jacobins" whose belief in emancipatory rationality led them straight to the slaughter bench.

¹² Pynchon's use of Freud as an example of uncritical Western positivist thought is problematic. On the one hand, Freud is quite aware of how misreading our conceptual scaffolding if we feel that we are in a position to replace it by something that approximates more closely the unknown reality" (648), but on the other, his whole metaphor of scaffold and object suggests that there is an objective truth out there to be approximated.

¹³ Pierre Yves-Pellion notices that Mucho's pet name for Oedipa is "Oed": "Oxford English Dictionary" (141).

WORKS CITED

- Bart, Peter. "Negro Riots Erupt on Coast: 3 Reported Shot." *The New York Times*. 13 Aug. 1965: 1, 26.
- Caesar, Terry P. "A Note on Pynchon's Naming." *Pynchon Notes* 5 (1981): 5-10.
- Cooper, Peter. *Signs and Symptoms: Thomas Pynchon and the Contemporary World*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1983.
- Duggale, John. *Thomas Pynchon: Allusive Parables of Power*. New York: St. Martin's P, 1990.
- Duyfhuizen, Bernard. "Hushing Sick Transmissions": Disrupting Story in *The Crying of lot 49*. *New Essays on The Crying of lot 49*. Ed. Patrick O'Donnell. New York: Cambridge UP, 1991. 79-95.
- Foucault, Michel. *The Foucault Reader*. Ed. Paul Rabinow. New York: Pantheon, 1984.
- Freud, Sigmund. *The Interpretation of Dreams*. Trans. James Strachey. New York: Avon, 1965.

- Davidson, Cathy N. "Oedipa as Androgyne in Thomas Pynchon's *The Crying of lot 49*." *Contemporary Literature* 18.1 (1977): 38-50.
- Kenney, E.J. *The Classical Text: Aspects of Editing in the Age of the Printed Book*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1974.
- Kharperian, Theodore. *A Hand to Turn the Time: The Menippean Satires of Thomas Pynchon*. Cranbury, NJ: Associated UP, 1990.
- Maas, Paul. *Textual Criticism*. Oxford: Clarendon P, 1958.
- McGann, Jerome. *A Critique of Modern Textual Criticism*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1983.
- Mendelson, Edward. "The Sacred, the Profane, and *The Crying of lot 49*." *Individual and Community: Variation on a Theme in American Fiction*. Ed. Kenneth Baldwin and David Kirby. Durham: Duke UP, 1975. 182-222.
- Newman, Thomas. *Understanding Thomas Pynchon*. Columbia: U of South Carolina P, 1986.
- Nietzsche, Friedrich. *On the Advantage and Disadvantage of History for Life*. Trans. Peter Preuss. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Co. Inc., 1980.
- Patterson, lee. *Negotiating the Past: The Historical Understanding of Medieval Literature*. Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1987.
- Pellion, Pierre-Yves. "A Recognition of Her Errand into the Wilderness." *New Essays on The Crying of lot 49*. Ed. Patrick O'Donnell. New York: Cambridge UP, 1991. 127-170.
- Poirier, Richard. Book review. *The Crying of lot 49*. *New York Times Book Review* 1. May, 1966: 25.
- Pynchon, Thomas. "A Journey Through the Mind of Watts." *New York Times Magazine*. 12 June, 1966: 34-35, 78, 80-82, 84.
- . *The Crying of lot 49*. New York: Bantam, 1967.
- . "To Thomas Hirsch." 8 Jan. 1969. *The Fictional Labyrinths of Thomas Pynchon*. Ed. David Seed. Iowa City: U of Iowa P, 1987. 240-243.
- . V. New York: Harper and Row, 1986.
- . *Vineland*. Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1990.
- Said, Edward. *Beginnings*. New York: Basic Books, 1975.
- Schaub, Thomas. *Pynchon: the Voice of Ambiguity*. Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1981.
- Seed, David. *The Fictional Labyrinths of Thomas Pynchon*. Iowa City: U of Iowa P, 1987.
- Stark, John O. *Pynchon's Fictions: Thomas Pynchon and the Literature of Information*. Athens: Ohio UP, 1980.
- Steiner, Wendy. "Collage or Miracle: Historicism in a Deconstructed World." *Reconstructing American Literary History*. Ed. Sacvan Bercovitch. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1987. 323-351.
- Tanner, Tony. "The Crying of lot 49." *Thomas Pynchon*. Ed. Harold Bloom. New York: Chelsea House, 1986. 175-189. (59-75 in the 1983 ed.).

FOUND OBJECT

ISSUE 2, FALL 1993

EDITORIAL COLLECTIVE:

Sam Binkley
Julie Ford
Jarrod Hayes
Loren Kozol
Barbara Martinsons
Michael Rothberg
Elliot Weisinger

ADVISORY BOARD:

Ali Jemale Ahmed
Stanley Aronowitz
Barbara Bowen
Jim Fleming
Andrew Ross
Michele Wallace
Michael Warner
George Yudice

DESIGN:

Sam Binkley

SPECIAL THANKS TO:

Megan Pugh
Jennifer Rich
Stephen Thompson
Ayisha Abrahamson
Joel S. Cohen
Lisa Dempster

Found Object would like to thank the Doctoral Students Council of The CUNY Graduate Center for their generous support.

© Found Object 1993, except for:
Renewing Feminism © bell hooks, 1993

Printed at Ragged Edge Press, NYC.

Found Object: a journal of art, theory and Cultural Studies produced by students at The Center for Cultural Studies at the CUNY Graduate Center.

Found Object is a semi-annual publication available by mail or from bookstores; subscriptions are available (see ad). Submissions should be in the form of a typed double spaced manuscript, with accompanying apple microsoft word or IBM word-perfect disk and one page abstract. Artist's work also accepted; do not send original works.

For more information on Found Object, call our office during normal business hours or write:

Found Object
The Center for Cultural Studies
CUNY Graduate Center
33 West 42nd Street
New York, NY
10036

(212) 642-1997

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ESSAYS:

STEPHEN THOMPSON
An Ontological Puzzle about the Speech of Black Folk 21

JEFFERY ESCOFFIER
Intellectuals, Identity Politics and the Contest for Cultural Authority 31

QUENTIN LEE
Between the Oriental and the Transvestite 45

G. GANTER
Rioting, Textuality and the *Crying of Lot 49* 67

CHRISTOPHER PAVSEK
The Storyteller in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction 83

MICHAEL ROTHBERG
Sites of Memory, Sites of Resistance:
Jewishness and Cultural Studies—A Review 11

INTERVIEWS:

BELL HOOKS
*Renewing Feminism:
An Interview by Barbara Bowen and Anthony O'Brien 1

SLAVOJ ŽIŽEK
To Speak about Hitchcock was a Political Act:
Thoughts on Contemporary Politics and their Vicissitudes:
An Interview by Andrew Long, Tara McGann and Michael Rothberg 92

POETRY:

ALI JEMALE AHMED
Recent Poetry: Anthem of a Nation,
Of Nations and Narratives 61

ART:

NANCY GROSSMAN
Artist's Pages 6

The Center for
Cultural Studies

CUNY Graduate School and University Center