The Autonomous and the Determined: 
Perceptions of Historical Consciousness 
and the Quest for Individuation in Recent American Fiction 
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Abstract

This thesis explores various representations of individuation within the narrative structures of several twentieth-century American writers. An examination of these notions of individual consciousness, however, leads to a consideration of authorial attitudes towards historical consciousness and the American historical experience. The perception of individuation is to be understood in relation to a continuing debate over the American experience which involves the idea of America itself. On the one hand, individual experience is viewed in relation to the transcendental image of an ideal America freed from historical processes. Conversely, the individual is seen in the context of a continuing historical development.

The opening chapter of the thesis, therefore, outlines this crucial controversy within the culture. Transcendentalist and idealist perspectives have had a constant appeal for the American writer. Literary transcendentalism, for example, has been matched by an idealist historiography which proposes an ideal American "space" existing beyond historical pattern. One part of the first chapter traces both the continuity of this idealism and also a more contemporary criticism which maintains the idealist position in a rejection of historicist considerations. The thesis also argues, however, that a reawakened historical consciousness may be detected in a number of major twentieth-century writers. With this recovery of a historical sense, consequently, such writers challenge a characteristic American idealism which has influenced much of the nation's cultural experience. In doing so, they have rejected the idealist conception of individuation as an unbounded possibility founded upon a general existential condition of ahistorical uniqueness. Rather, individual identity and autonomy are created in relation to social and
historical patterns of being.

Chapters two to seven examine this debate as it has informed the materials and stylistic form of the work of six novelists: F. Scott Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemingway, Bernard Malamud, Ken Kesey, Joseph Heller and Thomas Pynchon. Chapter three argues that Hemingway presents an example of the fate of the transcendental ideal in the present century, as it has diminished to Hemingway's narrow behavioural ideal. The work of Fitzgerald and Malamud, conversely, discussed respectively in chapters two and four, forms around an internal tension between idealist and historicist perspectives in which the transcendental ideal is rejected in favour of a recovered historical sense. Chapter five, again, discusses a pattern of positive character development in Kesey's work in which a recovery of individual autonomy accompanies a rediscovery of historical consciousness. Such a recovered autonomy may be compared with the determinist world which Heller views as a product of an ahistorical perception, as is argued in chapter six. Finally, chapter seven turns to the tension between ahistorical idealism and historical sensibility which forms a central dialectic in Pynchon's novels. For Pynchon, the idealist impulse is itself a historical phenomenon, in so far as the attempt to idealize historical events has influenced subsequent social-historical events. The idealist vision, as a result, now emerges as itself a historical ideology rather than as a universal existential condition. This conclusion, indeed, is the ultimate consequence of the reawakened historical sense discussed in this thesis.
Chapter 1

Antihistoricism in American Letters

1

In any weather, at any hour of the day or night, I have been anxious to improve the nick of time, and notch it on my stick too; to stand on the meeting of two eternities, the past and the future, which is precisely the present moment; to toe that line.

H.D. Thoreau

Look ... reality is greater than the sum of its parts, also a damn sight holier. And the lives of such things as dreams are made of may be rounded with a sleep but they are not tied neatly with a red bow. Truth doesn't run on time like a commuter train, though time may run on truth. And the Scenes Gone By and the Scenes to Come flow blending together in the sea-green deep while Now spreads in circles on the surface.

Ken Kesey

Although these two quotations are taken from works separated by a century of history, they reveal a shared concern crucial to any examination of the formation of American culture. For Thoreau and Kesey, it is the perception of temporal existence which becomes their major concern, and their studied deliberation and self-consciousness on this subject goes beyond the mere truism that human existence is temporal. Theirs is a heightened awareness prominent at many stages of American history, and, indeed, the question of historical consciousness has assumed


forms of prominence in America quite dissimilar to anything in the Old World of the original settlers. The search for a national history itself, one might say, becomes American culture's historical subject.

Between Thoreau and Kesey, however, there is also a difference of perspective equally important for understanding more recent cultural developments. Thoreau exemplifies a characteristic, though perhaps idiosyncratic, American idea. From his stance in 'the present moment', he asserts that 'in eternity there is indeed something true and sublime' and that, since all 'times and places' are 'now and here', then 'God himself culminates in the present moment' (Walden, p.70). In the New World's specific landscape and with a nation uniquely freed from history, the dominant metaphysic is an overwhelmingly transcendent present. In Kesey, conversely, historical consciousness means the totality of historical relations, and his concern is to plunge beneath the surface 'now' in search of the historical being Thoreau would leave behind; the recovery of history, and not its end, in his endeavour.

It is in the context of this debate over historical consciousness that attitudes towards individuation have been formed within the narrative structures of American literature. In the chapters which follow, this debate will be traced through the twentieth-century in a discussion of six major novelists: F. Scott Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemingway, Bernard Malamud, Ken Kesey, Joseph Heller and Thomas Pynchon. Clearly, in selecting this limited number of case-studies within the wider context of American cultural activity as a whole, this thesis can claim only to be an exploratory stage in an examination of an extensive and complex network of cultural formations. Again, in any exhaustive study even of

3 Whitman's present-tense celebration of himself and his landscape in 'Song of Myself' evokes a similar sentiment: there 'will never be any more perfection than there is now, /Nor any more heaven and hell than there is now'. 'Song of Myself', lines 42-43, in Walt Whitman, Leaves of Grass, Comprehensive Reader's Edition, edited by H.W. Blodgett and S. Bradley (New York, 1965), p.30.
this small group of writers, attention would have to be paid to the
diversity of differences between them, which would include religion, ethnic
origins, geographical location, not to mention individual experiential
factors. The criterion of selection, however, has been their relation
to the central theme of history and historical consciousness in American
cultural life, so that the emphasis is placed on common themes rather than
differences. Each of these authors is centrally involved in this debate.
Hemingway can be seen as an important heir to Thoreau's vision, for
example, although with important alterations dependent on the changing
relation of that vision to the reality of American social life, while
Fitzgerald's exploration of this New World dream uncovers contradictions
and tensions in a national ideal which is, from the outset, anti-historical.
The remaining four writers each set themselves against the dominant anti-
historicist tradition, in seeking to reintegrate a sense of individuation
with a retrieved historical identity. It can be argued, thus, that these
contemporary authors provide evidence of a reawakened need to investigate
American history, both real and idealized, in making historical conscious¬
ness a major concern.

Kesey, for example, must reintroduce a consideration of social
relations in their historical development in order to achieve and satisfy his
avowed method which seems to exemplify what Lucien Goldmann has called
'a perpetual movement to and fro, from the whole to the parts and from
the parts back to the whole again, a movement in the course of which the
whole and the parts throw light upon one another'. In keeping with
this method, individual authors will be examined in terms of the relation
between the linguistic structures of particular texts and their
representations of consciousness. Their world-views, that is to say,
will be explored by means of a stylistic analysis of the formulation and
expression of attitudes towards society and history.

4 Lucien Goldmann, The Hidden God: A Study in the Tragic Vision in the
Pensees of Pascal and the Tragedies of Racine, translated from the
Before such an examination may take place, however, the cultural context of these views must be traced, and specifically, the dominant attitudes towards historical consciousness in the culture. In both historiography and literature there has been an urge, in Thoreau's words, to 'toe that line' of the 'present moment'. The following preliminary discussion looks at the forms this urge has taken and its development in the modern period, and so outlines the cultural framework against and within which the various writers create their fictions.

2

Any discussion of American historiography must start by stating what seems to be a paradox: American self-consciousness about history is characteristically expressed as a desire to efface history altogether. In *Historians Against History*, D.W. Noble has demonstrated the continuity of this antihistoricism from the early nineteenth-century to the present, arguing that the historian has been the nation's 'chief political theorist' in asserting its 'ahistorical uniqueness'; to such a theorist, the American people believe that their historical experience has been uniquely timeless and harmonious because they are the descendants of Puritans who, in rejecting the traditions and institutions of the Old World, promised never to establish traditions and institutions in the New World ... From 1830 to the present, each generation has seen the emergence of a historian who has become a public philosopher as he differentiates between the timeless harmony of the real America and the intrusions of artificial and alien patterns from abroad.

Republica America, thus, has inherited the Puritan perspective of a 'covenant with God' which protects it from 'the vicissitudes of history' in a society based on 'natural principles' freed 'from the burdens of European history' (D.W. Noble, p.3). The 'mystical powers of virgin land' (p.39) set out by historians like Bancroft and Turner have their

origin in the Puritan rejection of the 'authority of the past' (p. 5).

In brief, Noble argues that this historiography has functioned as ideology, and calls for an alternative, accurately historical writing to be brought to the discussion of the past. Another historian, A.H. Shaffer, has traced the outgrowth of this historiography from a revolutionary ideology where historians 'self-consciously set out to form the entire American past into a pattern that contradicted the reality of American life', to form a consensus as to America's meaning. History becomes the record of a national destiny animated by a 'certain messianic quality' where 'the values of the present are themselves made the basis for the selection of materials'. This kind of historiography is basically static, as for example in Seymour Martin Lipset's contention that 'the basic value system, solidified in the early days of the new nation' can account for all subsequent development of 'American character and institutions'.

A narrower account of this antihistoricism is given by Daniel J. Boorstin, who observes the revolutionary spirit of Thomas Jefferson's break with the past: 'the dead have no rights. They are nothing, and nothing cannot own something. This corporeal globe, and everything upon it, belongs to its present corporeal inhabitants, during their generation'.

6 A.H. Shaffer, The Politics of History: Writing the History of the American Revolution, 1783-1815 (Chicago, 1975), p.2. Shaffer observes that, though 'local loyalties and internal dissensions were the persistent facts', to the historian 'national unity became the interpretative credo' (p.2).

7 J.R. Pole, Paths to the American Past (New York, 1979), pages 229, 231; with Noble, Pole argues against a utilitarian 'presentism' in history (p.255).

H.B. Henderson also discusses the continuity between Puritan and progressivist historiography which seeks to reveal 'the evolution of liberty by a process both natural and Providential'; Versions of the Past: The Historical Imagination in Historical Fiction (New York, 1974), p.10.


This vision, however, has been eroded to a debilitating 'near-sightedness' in the nation's 'chronological vision' and 'sense of time' (Boorstin, The Exploding Spirit, p. 69). Where the new republic faced unprecedented ways 'to start over, to break with the past', today its problem is 'how to keep in touch with the past' in an age of mass electronic communications (p. 82). Boorstin's conservative critique of Modern America contrasts 'the first charm and virgin promise of America' with its fulfilment in a power 'to level times and places, to erase differences between here and there, between now and then'.

While Boorstin laments the destructive achievement of this promise, he is also aware of the narrowness of the Jeffersonian viewpoint. A social philosophy which attributes primary historical value to man's 'relation to his natural environment' means that 'the past seemed both uninteresting and unreal. Only the present seemed unique'. As American historiography has been 'embraced by a closed system of ideas, a static metaphysic', it has lost historiological intelligibility. Thus, its 'destruction of the pre-existent historical order' is fixed in 'the perennial ability of Jeffersonian thought to be rediscovered with each passing generation' (Van Zandt, pages 185, 100-01).

This idealized America is given its most famous expression in F.J. Turner's frontier thesis, which argues that 'American history has been in a large degree the history of the colonization of the Great West. The existence of an area of free land, its continuous recession, and the advance of American settlement westward, explain American development'.

The virgin land is the location of a 'perennial rebirth' in the 'fluidity of American life' (F.J. Turner, p.2). Turner presents 'a kind of geographical or environmental determinism';\(^{14}\) consequently, as J.F. Lynen describes this spatial perspective, the colonial mind is resolved into 'a Lockean tabula rasa, a mind which passively accepts the imprint of external reality'.\(^{15}\) Again, Turner is a utilitarian present-centred historian: 'the rise and progress' of the forces which have shaped America are explicable if the historian will only 'rework our history from the new points of view afforded by the present' (F.J. Turner, p.1). Despite much subsequent criticism, Turner's arguments have remained an important point of reference.\(^{16}\) Henry Nash Smith maintains that American society 'has been shaped by the pull of a vacant continent drawing population westward', built on the dual myths of the 'wild west' and 'the garden of the world' which are both 'antihistorical' in proposing a unique relation 'between man and nature'.\(^{17}\) As recently as 1964, Frederick Hoffman writes that 'the American space existed as an extension of the European space but obviously free of its cultural accumulations and its congestions'.\(^{18}\)

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\(^{16}\) See L.M. Hacker, 'Sections - or Classes?', The Turner Thesis, pages 61-64, for an attack on 'the futile hunt for a unique "American spirit"' (p.61), or C. Lasch on 'the nationalistic myth of American uniqueness', 'The Cultural Cold War: A Short History of the Congress for Cultural Freedom', in Towards a New Past, edited by B.J. Bernstein (London, 1970), pages 322-59 (p. 323.) Again, Marcus Cunliffe discusses the emphasis on uniqueness which has allowed the culture 'to lose the Past altogether', in 'American Watersheds', American Quarterly, 13 (1961), 479-94 (p.490.).


Parallels to this historiography appear in literary and cultural criticism. In his *The American Adam*, R.W.B. Lewis describes the archetypal 'authentic American' as a figure 'of heroic innocence and vast potentialities, poised at the start of a new history', with the 'sovereignty of the living' as the Jeffersonian first principle of American literature.  

A recurring metaphor is the burning away of the past, where the Adamic 'hero in space ... seems to take his start outside time, or on the very outer edge of it, so that his location is essentially in space alone ... space as spaciousness, as the unbounded, the area of total possibility' (R.W.B. Lewis, p. 91). Such a formulation may correctly be described as metaphysical. Thus, Richard Poirier claims that 'the most interesting American books are an image of the creation of America itself', carrying 'the metaphoric burden of a great dream of freedom - of the expansion of national consciousness into the vast spaces of a continent and the absorption of those spaces into ourselves'. If historians have increasingly criticized Turner's thesis, the literary imagination has maintained this 'true myth of America' within a literary framework which continues Turner's idealist conception.


22 The phrase is D.H. Lawrence's in *Studies in Classic American Literature* (1924), The Phoenix edition, (London, 1964), p. 51; for Lawrence, however, this is an American flight 'from themselves' (p. 3).
Consequent upon this perspective, Ihab Hassan's work on contemporary literature continues an antihistoricist tradition. Founded on an innocence 'that is a property of the mythic American self, perhaps of every anarchic self', American culture is 'obsessively unique', unique 'in time, in space, and in dream', and 'has never really acknowledged Time'. Hassan's existentialist revulsion against history restates the transcendentalist attitude of Thoreau and, indeed, Jefferson speaks through Hassan's ideas of American 'destiny' and 'every generation' beginning 'its task anew despite the secret betrayals of history' (Hassan, Radical Innocence, p. 36).

Again, Harold Rosenberg's celebration of modern art argues that 'in the United States, fine art also lacks history and its best examples consist of individual inventions which do not carry over into the future'. Its perspective of the immediate is a 'new sentiment of eternity and eternal life' (Rosenberg, p. 213). Perhaps the most sweeping enunciation of this ideology, however, comes from Daniel Bell. In common with Hassan or Rosenberg, his proposed modern age separated by a 'disconcerting caesura' from the past, actually reiterates an old perspective:

if the intellectual history of the past hundred years has any meaning - and lesson - it is to reassert Jefferson's wisdom (aimed at removing the dead hand of the past, but which can serve as a warning against the heavy hand of the future as well), that "the present belongs to the living". 25

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Bell's 'end of ideology' signals an end of history within an achieved universal society.²⁶

Both conservative and liberal critics have attacked this dominant conception of America. While Leslie Fiedler complains that 'our writers have no history, no development' and cling to the dream of 'a present past, a primitive now',²⁷ Irving Howe sees these 'enticements of space' in relation to 'a collective desire to refuse the contaminations of history precisely at the point where the nation's history begins to seem oppressive and irreversible'.²⁸ Both W. Phillips and F.G. Friedmann lament the absence of a traditional continuity; America is a present-centred culture made up of 'momentary efforts by solitary writers or by intellectual groups to differentiate themselves',²⁹ lacking organic cultural roots and so 'outside history' in lacking 'any deep-seated consciousness of history'.³⁰ These most various of critics nonetheless share a concern over the antihistoricism of the culture.

Two seminal works, by J.F. Lynen and Tony Tanner, explore the persistence of this antihistorical heritage in American cultural life. Lynen outlines the inheritance of Puritan perspectives in literature, much as Noble does in historiography; the Puritan, 'in his isolated moment trying to interpret the immediate by a direct reference to the

²⁶ A view also found in Z. Brzezinski's 'America in the Technetronic Age', *Encounter*, 30 (Jan. 1968), 16-26. H. Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (London, 1964) likewise talks about a 'global village' and an expansion of 'our central nervous system itself in a global embrace abolishing both space and time' (pp. 34, 3) and is attracted to the cubist 'rejection of perspective in favour of instant sensory awareness of the whole' (p.13).


eternal', forms 'a sharp contrast between the present and eternity', in
seeing present experience 'in relation to a total history or conspectus
of all times' (Lynen, The Design of the Present, pages 31, 35-36). The
present is real mainly as a specific manifestation of a timeless
universality, and individual identity 'must be discovered anew in that
moment's particular circumstances, in its unique terms' (p.3); 'all
things exist simultaneously as elements of a single landscape' (p.4).
This repudiation of the past, Lynen argues, is characteristic of Puritan
historiography which in turn 'foreshadows many of the distinctive traits
of later narrative art in America' (p. 59), including, in particular,
an emphasis on 'the isolated moment' as implication of 'an endless
succession as well as a static eternity'. Lynen writes of Fenimore
Cooper's 'Leatherstocking' that 'the landscape creates him, just as he,
in turn, interprets it' (p. 187), while Whitman creates 'a poetry of the
now' (p. 229) and T.S. Eliot 'the eternal plan which contains the present
and yet is contained by it' (p. 343). Whether in a secular myth of
landscape, or a religious transcendence, this American landscape is shaped
by its revolt against history.

Tanner identifies in the 'strategy of the innocent eye' an advocacy
of the 'quality of the moment' in American writing 31: 'the need for a
new attitude of "wonder" towards nature: second, the conviction that any
object, however trivial, was a "symbol" of God and could serve as a
"window" to "infinitude" if viewed aright; third, the rejection of
history in favour of "the everlasting NOW"' (Tanner, Reign of Wonder,
p.9)32. Literally, the transcendentalist rejection of the past is
mirrored in such stylistic traits as Emerson's deletion of 'almost all

31 Tony Tanner, The Reign of Wonder: Naivety and Reality in American

32 Lynen also notes the American novelist's tendency 'to begin with a
symbolic episode which summarizes his action by posing the question
to be explained', deriving from Puritan historiography.
purposive complexity of syntax' or Thoreau's reliance on 'present participles and verbs in the present tense' (pages 42, 61). Again, Emerson's refusal 'to distinguish and classify', Thoreau's 'world of movement and present process', and Whitman's typical manner where 'no plan is imposed, no deductions are made' or relations recorded 'in compound sentences', have much in common (pages 37, 62, 71).

An important part of Tanner's case is that this strategy has narrowed as its social base has grown tenuous. For William Carlos Williams, the 'palpable fragment' replaces the transcendental moment, a substitution of 'momentary awe for systematic theology' (p. 92). In fiction, Twain's 'naive vision doing positive work' becomes Hemingway's defensive use of 'momentary sensory experience' against a 'horror of vacancy' (pages 101, 233, 236). The individual can no longer return to 'unspoiled mythical territories', as the 'wondering eye' becomes 'a strategy for the alienated' (pages 257, 339). Twain's The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn (1884), like Turner's frontier thesis, is perhaps the last unqualified statement of the return to a virgin land, written in the historical moment of the frontier's closure. Indeed, Huck's decision 'to light out for the Territory' is already a nostalgic look into the past, since the work is actually a historical novel set in pre-Civil War America.

As in historiography, so too in literature resonances of the unique and timeless American 'space' continue to the present day. Jack Kerouac, for example, resuscitates an ideology of perpetual motion, eulogising the 'raw land that rolls in one unbelievable huge bulge over to the West Coast'. Conversely, Dos Passos, in the closing image of the rootless 'Vag' of depression America, suggests that the reality may be very different. Thus, in Heller's Catch-22, the 'jump' beyond social and


historical constraints at the novel's close towards an idealised 'Sweden' seems a leap into the void born of desperation.\textsuperscript{36} Bernard Malamud, more certainly, attacks this rootlessness; both Yakov Bok and Frank Alpine (in \textit{The Assistant} (1957), and \textit{The Fixer} (1966)) crucially discover social and historical definition in rejecting an unconstrained fluidity which permits no stability of identity. Again, Kesey's \textit{Sometimes A Great Notion} (1964) presents a terrifying landscape against which humanity must struggle to survive, while the operations of the 'Combine' in \textit{One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest} (1962) present a graphic image of the destructive homogenizing processes which Boorstin discusses. Nonetheless, these critics of the dominant ideology testify to the fact that the myth of spatial freedom remains active in the culture.

In works as diverse as Faulkner's \textit{The Bear} and F. Scott Fitzgerald's \textit{The Great Gatsby}, the myth of the land is a central reference-point. Faulkner sees a wilderness receding before the encroachments of history and human society, and with it an entire metaphysic of innocence and direct relation with nature.\textsuperscript{37} For his part, Fitzgerald's lost 'fresh green breast of the new world'\textsuperscript{38} echoes Turner's 'pessimistic fatalism' that an America 'meant to be the garden of the world has become a wasteland'.\textsuperscript{39} The 'betrayal of the meaning of America' is a 'violation of nature, the fencing in of the meadows and the closing of the openness of

\textsuperscript{37} 'The Bear' is published in William Faulkner, \textit{Go Down, Moses and Other Stories} (London, 1942), pages 135-236.
\textsuperscript{38} F. Scott Fitzgerald, \textit{The Great Gatsby} (1926), in \textit{The Bodley Head Scott Fitzgerald} (London, 1958), 1, p. 268
the continent' (Ward, p. 40). A preoccupation with wasteland imagery in twentieth-century literature is not a new development, but rather a response to a perceived disintegration of the image of America already fixed in the culture. One result has been the transformation of the mythic land from social ethic to individual metaphysic. For Hemingway, the 'land' is rarely identifiable as America and becomes an escape from the social world, while for Gertrude Stein it has become the 'space' of her own imagination explored in 'a continuously developing present' (Tanner, The Reign of Wonder, p. 193). Stein's The Geographical History of America (1936), with its present-tense narration, reveals a solipsistic self-absorption which predicts one course to be taken in the literature by writers like John Barth. While Thomas Pynchon, for example, often coupled with Barth, explains the social and historical processes involved in the eradication of the open land, Barth rather seals himself in the hermetic space of self-conscious literary games among lexical playfields essentially removed from the social world. In this sense, such a literature continues the perspectives which Tanner outlines in The Reign of Wonder, where the dream of unbounded space becomes an unbounded imaginative space without external reference.

In the United States, the modernist period can now be viewed as a confirmation of established elements in American cultural life, rather than a radical break with the past as has been widely believed. Perspectives similar to the Jeffersonian viewpoint of Turner emerge from the organicist histories of Spengler and Toynbee, where Spengler, for example, sees culture born 'in the moment when a great soul awakens out of the protospirituality of ever-childish humanity' to bloom 'on the soil of an exactly-definable landscape to which plant-wise it remains
bound', a familiar mystical relation of a culture to its unique space. The Jeffersonian and Spenglerian schemes both lead on to Social Darwinist determinism and the organicist model of 'a regular and predictable course of birth, death, maturity and decay'. All cultures possess a 'universal symbolism' and common 'morphology'; growth and decay occur 'contemporaneously in all the Cultures' in that 'the inner structure of one corresponds strictly with that of all the others' (Spengler, I, pages 46, 112).

This has a familiar ring for readers of Pound and Eliot, as has the movement from the organic to the inorganic symbolized in 'the conception of money as an inorganic and abstract magnitude' (I, p. 33); Pound will denounce usury as the snake in the Jeffersonian garden, the augury of imminent catastrophe.

Frank Kermode has traced the continuity between modernist poetics and romantic transcendentalism in 'the Image as a radiant truth out of space and time' and 'the necessary isolation and estrangement' of those able to perceive it. Yeats's 'universal history', for example, recalls both Spengler's 'universal symbolism' (Kermode, Romantic Image, p. 41) and Puritan historiography, while Wallace Stevens's idea that 'beauty is momentary in the mind -/The fitful tracing of a portal;/But in the flesh it is immortal' is a transcendentalist conceit. In another form, this

40 Oswald Spengler, The Decline of the West, translated by C.F. Atkinson, 2 Vols (New York, 1926); I, p. 106.


42 This idea recurs in A.J. Toynbee, Civilization on Trial (London, 1948) as 'the philosophical contemporaneity of all civilizations' (p. 8).


44 Wallace Stevens, 'Peter Quince at the Clavier', lines 51-54, in Harmonium (New York, 1923), p. 134. It might be argued that Walter Pater's secular immediacy represents an intermediate stage between Emerson and Hemingway; for Pater, there is 'a kind of religion' in living one's days 'lovely and pleasant' in themselves, here and now', a life of 'realized consciousness in the present' (Marius the Epicurean, 1885; fourth edition, London, 1898; p. 112).
'universal' finds expression in the modernist interest in myth, and the influence of Fraser's *The Golden Bough* (1890) or Weston's *From Ritual to Romance* (1920). Weston, for example, produces a pseudo-anthropological argument for a continuity of mystic ritual harking back to 'the shadowy background of the history of our Aryan race'. This racial universal, of dubious historical validity, does record a statement of belief: 'the Grail Quest was actually possible then, it is actually possible today, for the indication of two of our romances as to the final location of the Grail is not imagination, but the record of actual fact' (Weston, p. 193).

As Hoffman puts it in discussing Thomas Mann, 'the repetitive value of the myth ... constitutes its true historical importance', namely 'a suspension of historical time, in favour of a time governed by racial, unconscious rhythms'. History presented as myth reveals the past 'as an extended present' and 'the "identity of human character in all ages"'.

Hoffman also observes Mann's attraction to Freud, whom Mann placed in a line of modern psychology, running from Schopenhauer through Nietzsche to Freud, and which Hoffman characterizes as a 'romantic-irrational revolt against the sanctity of consciousness' (Hoffman, p. 214). Freud's conception of the id, in particular, attracted the modernist mind, for 'in the id there is nothing corresponding to the idea of time, no recognition of the passage of time, and ... no alteration of mental processes by the passage of time'. This seems to support the notion of a racial universal subconscious, a "layer of antiquity" which persists

48 Sigmund Freud, *New Introductory Lectures in Psycho-Analysis*, translated by W.T.H. Sprott (London, 1933), p. 99. In *Moses and Monotheism*, translated by K. Jones (London, 1939), Freud talks of a 'mental residue' which forms a racial heritage 'which, with each new generation needs only to be reawakened, not to be re-acquired' (p. 208)
through the centuries as a basis for folk-thinking and dream expression' (Hoffman, *Freudianism and the Literary Mind*, p. 16), and the Nietzschean idea of eternal recurrence where 'all things pass, all things return; eternally turns the wheel of being ... In each Now, Being begins; round each here turns the sphere of There. The centre is everywhere'. In an analogous argument to Kermode, Henri Lefebvre traces a parallel philosophic continuity; since Kiergegaard and Schopenhauer 'there has been a secret, a revelation, a mystery which was going to unveil itself in a magical illumination. The world is going to be given to us in an instant, in a flash. The saving instant is going to install us in the absolute'. This 'mystery' is not unlike Marinetti's futurist manifesto, which proclaims 'we stand on the far promontory of centuries!... Time and space died yesterday. We live already in the absolute, since we have already created the eternal omnipresent speed'. Even admitting the very different social milieux of Jefferson and Marinetti, they clearly share an assumption of a liberation from the past.


This modernist antihistoricism is, accordingly, expressed in an apocalyptic vision of a collapsing civilization. Eliot's famous 'disassociation of sensibility' depends upon the idea of a lost organic unity, so that 'some original moral catastrophe' which dislocated seventeenth-century sensibility is adduced as support for the belief 'that another crisis ... was at hand' (Kermode, *Romantic Image*, p. 138). This theory is more important as an ideological than as a historical reality, Kermode argues, with Eliot responding to contemporary social upheaval by being ready 'to rewrite the history of all that interested him in order to have the past and the present conform'.

Irving Howe talks of 'a sense of historical impasse', where 'the modernist sensibility posits a blockage, if not an end, of history (Howe, *Decline of the New*, p.5), while Malcolm Bradbury notes the modernist 'apocalyptic, crisis-centred views of history' and the abandonment of 'the sequence of historical time' so as 'to work spatially or through layers of consciousness'. In this respect, Lukács's contention that the modernist hero 'is strictly confined within the limits of his own experience' and is 'without personal history' are centrally relevant; this 'negation of history' can no longer be successfully projected onto an external reality, as it could for the transcendentalist, save in images of catastrophe and fragmentation.

Among the major figures of modernism, Eliot has been most influential in popularizing the idea of cultural crisis, locating the loss of a 'unification of sensibility' somewhere 'between the time of Donne ... and the time of Tennyson and Browning'.

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organicist scheme of Notes Towards a Definition of a Culture; culture depends on an 'organic (not merely planned but growing) structure' for the 'hereditary transmission of culture within a culture'. 56 Eliot, like Spengler, sees the established social hierarchy threatened, and responds with an organicist ideology of the development of social classes according to putative natural laws.

At the heart of Eliot's concern is the notion of tradition, for without a continuity of great authors 'culture will deteriorate'. 57 Therefore, he sees as indispensable a 'historical sense', an awareness 'not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence', 58; he demands a universality, 'a sense of the timeless and of the temporal together', since all culture 'has a simultaneous existence and composes a simultaneous order' (The Sacred Wood, p. 49). A tradition is 'an ideal order' outside history (p. 50); Pound's method of 'acquiring the entire past' in order to make his poetry 'more universal', therefore, exemplifies Eliot's sense of such an ideal structure. 59

Pound himself echoes Eliot in declaring that 'all ages are contemporaneous'. 60 His notion of the 'image' as 'an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time', moreover, restates the transcendental ideal (Sullivan, p. 41). Against this universal structure, Pound sets his own images of decay in 'a botched civilization' where 'usury age-old and age-thick' stands as its central symbol. 61 This obsession with usury

again, amplifies Spengler's symbol of inorganic society, but also echoes a Jeffersonian perspective; Pound's attraction to the Monte del Paschi bank of Siena, for example, is that, being based on land holdings, their credit 'rests in ultimate on the abundance of nature'. However idiosyncratic Pound's views may be, nonetheless they take their origins from familiar American perspectives. While the important differences between this reactionary modernist historiography and the ideals of a progressivist historian like Turner should not be overlooked, nonetheless both Pound and Turner equally might claim to draw on their American heritage; both men see the mystical land as the source of value, and each builds an idealist philosophy on this. It is this common ground which concerns us here.

4

Two ordaining factors, relating to the American fictive enterprise in the present century as it interacts with the characteristic antihistoricist stance, require comment. These are the influence of Brooks Adams and Henry Adams on both historiography and fiction, and the line of American psychological theory from William James to B.F. Skinner. Both Pound and Spengler find an important precursor in Brooks Adams, and his imagination of cultural decay. There is a 'law of force and energy' of 'universal application in nature', where 'the velocity of the social movement of any community is proportionate to its energy and mass, and its centralization is proportionate to its velocity'. In any given society, as 'energy' is accumulated, a general law of 'acceleration' predicts a centralizing process. In 'primitive' societies, this centralization is small; 'fear',


the human analogue of social energy, generates religious, artistic, and military types of society. In a highly centralized society, however, 'fear yields to greed' and a preponderance of 'surplus energy' over 'productive energy', so that economic competition replaces military competition ending in the domination of capital and the 'usurer'. 'Usury', the most unproductive energy, is a decay of the 'emotional, the martial, and the artistic types of manhood' (Brooks Adams, pages 60-61). The basic movement of society, thus, is towards a centralized edifice which must disintegrate 'because the energy of the race has been exhausted', and supplanted by 'usury'; only an infusion of 'fresh energetic material' promises a cultural revival. Spengler will later talk of the conclusive 'last conflict' of civilization 'between money and blood' (Spengler, 2, p. 506), in which the inorganic regime of money will be defeated by 'the pristine facts of the blood eternal that is one and the same as the ever-circling cosmic process' (2, p. 507).

Similar patterns of deterministic thinking characterize the work of Henry Adams. Concluding his massive history of the years 1801 to 1817, he states that 'the traits of American character were fixed, the rate of physical and economic growth was established'. Henry Adams also formulates universal laws of natural force; from Democracy (1880), where the heroine Madeleine Lee seeks 'the tremendous forces of government, and the machinery of society at work', to the use of physical laws in The Degradation of the Democratic Dogma (1919), there is a continuity in Adams's thinking on this subject. He writes of himself that 'satisfied that

64. This view of crisis has a long history even by Adams's time. J. Fenimore Cooper's The Crater (1847), for example, is an anti-utopian prophecy of an agrarian world, with its benevolent patriarch, overthrown by demagogues and commercial interests. Cooper's central image is 'Vulcan's Peak', 'that sublime rock... ever the same against the changes of time, and civilization and decay' (The Crater, or Vulcan's Peak, edited by T. Philbrick (Cambridge, Mass., 1962), p.456.


the sequence of man led to nothing and that the sequence of their society could lead no further, where the mere sequence of time was artificial, and the sequence of thought was chaos, he turned at last to the sequence of force. Such a perspective should be seen in relation to Adams's growing sense of a collapsing social order - the passing of the Jeffersonian republic - threatened equally by non-European hordes and usurious conspiracies. 'The dark races are gaining on us', he asserts, 'as they have already done in Haiti'; 'the whole carcass is rotten with worms - socialist worms, anarchist worms, Jew worms, clerical worms'. In his vision of a golden age in late Mediaeval or Renaissance Europe set against the decadent modern age now entering its cataclysmic crisis, Adams is a progenitor both of Pound's view of history and Eliot's dissociated sensibility.

In his insistence that 'any controlling principle, any myth or symbol of unity, must be out of time, remote from the exigencies of history' (Rowe, p. 58), Adams is a major influence on succeeding literature. Hemingway's characteristic method is prefigured in a historiography based upon 'the immediacy of a laboratory demonstration' in which the past is set forth 'bit by bit ... as the scientist might perform an experiment' in a 'sequence of now, now, now'.

70 This apocalyptic vision is noted by M. Curti, Probing Our Past (New York, 1955), p. 13; see also J.C. Rowe, Henry Adams and Henry James (Ithaca, 1976), p. 63; D. Ketterer, New Worlds for Old: The Apocalyptic Imagination, Science Fiction, and American Literature (Bloomington, 1974), pages 207-08.
progress' is another variant of this attitude, where characters are 'reduced to the kind of pure unconnected sequentiality which Henry Adams increasingly insisted upon as the only knowable thing in history' (Henderson, pages 243-44). Similarly, Sartre remarks that in Dos Passos the great phenomena of history 'fade and crumble into an infinity of little odds and ends which can just about be set side by side'. Both Hemingway and Dos Passos share to some degree Adams's yearning for an agrarian America, and an abhorrence of the modern city. Indeed, Dos Passos might be speaking for Hemingway when he describes his 'montage' method as a recording of 'the fleeting world the way the motion picture recorded it', using 'direct snapshots of life'. In such a method, the immediate now is all-important.

An apocalyptic imagination and a 'dynamics of failure' also form part of Adams's legacy to the twentieth-century. Thus, the 'impossibility of man transcending the limits of his own consciousness', where reason can discover 'only its own reflection in its dealings with a blind universe of force seems central to both Adams's thought and later literature concerned with an absurd reality' (Rowe, p. 240). From Thoreau's optimistic transcendentalism through Hemingway's defensive individualism to Barth's nihilism, the free 'space' of unbounded possibility shifts location from an external reality to an internal imagination, from social ethos to asocial solipsism.

Hassan, a contemporary advocate of antihistoricism, champions this 'literature of silence'. A new avant-garde, alternating between a 'great silence' and 'the voice of apocalypse', proposes a 'dialectic of


violence' which is 'not temporal but spatial, not historical but ontological' in response to the existential 'void' of modern civilization.74 In 'something close to a total rejection of Western history and civilization', this literature constructs a metaphysical landscape in 'the eternal present' (Hassan, The Literature of Silence, pages 6,13). Despite the contention that this is a new phenomenon, Hassan's thesis essentially restates the mainstream antihistoricism; with the closure of the virgin land, the unbounded space of American mythic history is left as an idealised imaginative space opposed by the new social milieu, from which it becomes alienated. This threat of society has haunted the American mind almost from its first self-conscious awareness of itself. Within the literature, John Barth has provided the most quoted statement of this situation as 'the used-upness of certain forms or exhaustion of certain possibilities';75 this idea of a total exhaustion of possibility seems especially American. Barth's is a literature in which social reference is eroded towards zero, leaving only a self-reflexive sport among lexical playfields.

The substance of such fiction is perhaps best described in Kurt Vonnegut's account of novel-writing on the planet Tralfamadore:

Each clump of symbols is a brief, urgent message - describing a situation, a scene. We Tralfamadorians read them all at once, not one after the other. There isn't any particular relationship between all the messages, except that the author has chosen them carefully... There is no beginning, no middle, no end, no suspense, no moral, no causes, no effects. What we love in our books are the depths of many marvellous moments seen all at once time.76

For Vonnegut's hero, Billy Pilgrim, all times and places have become literally simultaneous.


76 Kurt Vonnegut, Slaughterhouse Five, or the Children's Crusade: A Duty-Ramone with Death (London 1970), p. 76; Ketterer discusses the Tralfamadorians 'who see all of time laid out spatially' (p. 297).
This 'literature of exhaustion' depends upon the idea of a cultural decay, taking its cue from Henry Adams, whose adoption of the concept of entropy from thermodynamics has been copied by many recent critics. Adams uses the idea 'to dramatize his destructive critique of contemporary society', and subsequently it has 'achieved a talismatic character' in critical discussion.\(^77\) This ideological function of entropy for Adams has been insufficiently regarded by many of those who have followed his example, so that a measure of distortion has entered the criticism. Thomas Pynchon, thus, has been claimed as 'a member of the school of Exhaustion'.\(^78\) Only superficially akin to Barth, Pynchon's experiments are urgent attempts to discover ways of describing the social and historical formations of the twentieth-century, and not a hermetic retreat into a solipsistic world.

Finally, Adams's legacy can be detected in the 'new journalism' and the 'non-fiction novel', in which Norman Mailer is a major figure. A sense 'of history "happening" has penetrated contemporary literary realism', so that The Armies of the Night 'epitomizes the twentieth-century tendency to view the present moment as history' (Henderson, p.300). Mailer praises a contemporary generation with 'no respect whatsoever for the unassailable logic of the next step: belief was reserved for the revelatory mystery of the happening where you did not know what was going to happen next'.\(^79\) The novelist now 'is trying to write instant history'.\(^80\)

Again Mailer's 'autobiographical history' owes much to Adams (Henderson,

There is a 'sense of ultimacy or a concern with "last things"' in Mailer, including a fear 'of the obsolescence of literature' (Hollowell, *East and Fiction*, p. 16). While Fiedler attacks these "mutants" in our midst' as 'nonparticipants in the past ... drop-outs from history', the idea of a 'discontinuous present' in the form of a "happening" has again been presented as a radical break with the past. If Mailer does not propose an Adamsian scheme of universal natural law, he is nonetheless drawn to the 'mystery' of power as Adams had been.

This attitude of Mailer's seems consonant with Norman O. Brown's mystical recasting of psychoanalysis, which claims that 'we need pray for no higher heaven than the pure senses can furnish ... our present senses are but rudiments of what they are destined to become' (Brown, p. 308). Brown's celebration of the senses may also draw upon the ideas of William James, and certainly the line of development of American psychological theory from James to the present has a crucial bearing on American cultural history. Starting with the idea that consciousness is no more than a 'function of the senses', James argues that there 'is only one primal stuff or material in the world', namely 'pure experience': 'the instant field of the present is at all times what I call the "pure"

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experience', he asserts, 'plain, unqualified actuality'.

James's radical empiricism, admitting only what is 'directly experienced' in 'the immediate flux of life', tends towards an abolition of temporal structures (James, Radical Empiricism, 22, 46); the 'stream of thought' is a 'theatre of simultaneous possibilities', for 'the specious moment, the short duration of which we are immediately and incessantly aware', is the essence of 'pure' experience.

In America, the most significant developments of James's ideas have come in behavioural psychology, which demands that we 'must discard all reference to consciousness' since the psychologist seeks 'to control man's reactions as physical scientists want to control and manipulate other natural phenomena'.

This quest for the 'natural' laws of human behaviour, predicted by responses to environmental stimuli, and the idea of creating personality by controlling these stimuli, is yet another mutation of the notion of building a unique self in the American space. Indeed, Watson explicitly declares that he 'should like to go one step further' than his science permits, 'to say, "Give me a dozen healthy infants, well-formed, and my own specified world to bring them up in and I'll guarantee to take any one at random and train him to become any kind of specialist I might select"'.

The most influential behaviourist theoretician within American culture, B.F. Skinner, goes on to state that 'science not only describes, it predicts. It deals not only with the past but with the future ...To the extent that relevant conditions can be altered, or otherwise controlled, the future can be controlled'.

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progressive appearance, however, Skinner's vision of an ideal society conceals the perspectives of an extreme conservatism; 'survival' is 'the only value according to which a culture is eventually to be judged'.

Far from 'controlling' the future, the behaviourist attention to immediate activity proceeds on the basis that 'there is no past, except as it is caught up and made manifest in the present, there is no future, except as is immanent in the here-and-now' (Matson, p. 106). In *Walden Two*, the behaviourist ideal is a society where 'the past and the future are both irrelevant' for, Skinner's spokesman in the novel states, "'We don't pay much attention to the apparent success of a principle in the course of history. History is honoured in *Walden Two* only as an entertainment. It isn't taken seriously as food for thought"'.

Since 'the present is the thing' (Skinner, *Walden Two*, p. 225), a deliberate policy of programmed amnesia is required to eradicate historical consciousness. Where Thoreau projected a total planning of the individual for the individual by the individual, Skinner projects a total planning of the community in substituting a mode of psychology for a mode of religious mysticism, but both hold to an antihistorical ideal.

Skinner's ideas are one factor in stimulating what Tanner calls 'an abiding American dread that someone else is patterning your life, that there are all sorts of invisible plots afoot to rob you of your autonomy of thought and action, that conditioning is ubiquitous'.


runs, in various forms, through much contemporary American literature, though in writers like Heller, Kesey and Pynchon it is related to specific social formations and historical developments, rather than being the generalized metaphysical construct which Tanner proposes. Bromden, the narrator of *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest,* talks of 'things like five thousand homes punched out identical by a machine' as emblems of a cultural homogenization, while Pynchon's image of the American city as 'printed circuit' presents an analogous idea. Both Kesey and Pynchon argue against the behaviourist concept of identity as the imprint of external environment; centrally, while they recognise the operation of external forces on the individual, these two writers, in common with Heller and Malamud, reject the Adamic myth in searching anew for a social-historical location of consciousness.

A writer like Pynchon, therefore, seeks a *continuity of inter-penetration* in time, irreducible to a mere juxtaposition in space. The spatial definitions of identity which have been repeated time and again in American cultural history depend upon the destruction of this interpenetration, and hence the destruction of a consciousness of the totality of social-historical relations. Pynchon, indeed, appears to have adopted Bergson's metaphor for the illusions of reflective consciousness, the 'cinematographical' method of perceiving reality as a succession of immediacies, when he has some of his characters see the world as a moving film-strip. Bergson's opposition of 'duration' or real time and 'simultaneity' or the immediate now is of some significance here, given


that the latter is the creation of the reflective consciousness projecting 'time into space' under the illusion that time can be quantified. The spatialized world is a 'reified world' characterized by 'a decline of dialectical temporalization' with 'a compensating prevalence of spatial functions':

Time is a dialectical dimension not only because, contrary to space, it is impossible to conceive of it in a state of rest, but also because its progression effects a dialectical synthesis constantly being reborn from its three dimensions: present, past, future. It is a totality which can be dissociated by reification of the past or the future - ideology, utopia, neurosis, madness are examples of it - but such a dissociation entails the de-realization of the whole world-view. (Gabel, p. 107).

As Kesey says, 'reality is greater than the sum of its parts', and he sets out to leave a dissociated sensibility by discovering this totality. It is at this point that Kesey, in company with writers like Pynchon and Malamud, and more ambivalently Fitzgerald, run counter to Thoreau's injunction to 'toe' the present line.

95 Henri Bergson, *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness* (1889), translated by F.L. Pogson (London, 1910), p. 101. Bergson deserves re-examination, since his conflation with William James has obscured the areas where the two men significantly differ. F. Carpenter, 'Hemingway Achieves the Fifth Dimension', *PMLA* 69 (1954), 711-18, sees Hemingway as a follower of Bergson; in fact, Hemingway's perspective is one of 'simultaneity', an illusion according to Bergson. This matter is returned to in chapter three below.

Chapter 2

F. Scott Fitzgerald: Ideal History Versus Real History.

And as the moon rose higher the inessential houses began to melt away until gradually I became aware of the old island here that flowered once for Dutch sailors' eyes - a fresh, green breast of the new world. Its vanished trees, the trees that had made way for Gatsby's house, had once pandered in whispers to the last and greatest of all human dreams; for a transitory enchanted moment man must have held his breath in the presence of this continent, compelled into an aesthetic contemplation he neither understood nor desired, face to face for the last time in history with something commensurate to his capacity for wonder.  

Many critics, while otherwise interpreting Fitzgerald differently, have agreed that this famous statement offers a key to Fitzgerald's work in its image of America, the New World, and its dependent conception of an ideal man. This dream of America, with its attendant attitude of transcendental wonder, has become a national ideal. Here the critical concensus ends, however, and controversy over Fitzgerald's treatment of the ideal, particularly regarding his own attitudes both to the ideal and the actual history of America, begins. Where one critic sees Fitzgerald as a defender of the ideal against the reality of American history, another sees him as a critic of the ideal seeking to uncover historical reality. This situation is complicated, moreover, by a tendency to conflate literary criticism with biographical speculation about Fitzgerald as the laureate of the 'Jazz Age'. Nonetheless, the image of America remains an appropriate starting-point for a discussion of Fitzgerald, with regard to which at least three critical positions may be identified: an emphasis on the ideal, an emphasis on the historical content, and the view that

1 F. Scott Fitzgerald, The Great Gatsby (1925), in The Bodley Head Scott Fitzgerald, 6 vols (London, 1958-63), 1, pages 268-69. Subsequent references to the Bodley Head edition will be identified as BH.
Fitzgerald presents a debate between the idealist and the historicist positions. The following discussion will look at these three approaches and will argue that the last approach is the most fruitful, looking initially at Fitzgerald's work as a whole and then examining this dialectical structure in greater detail as it unfolds in *The Great Gatsby*.

R.W.B. Lewis sums up the idealist position when he argues that the thematic core of Fitzgerald's work is 'attached essentially to the local tradition of the unfallen innocent - the godlike young man exempted from family and race, dreaming a pure dream nourished by the unfolding and undefined west: the hero of the vast, inchoate legend of The American Adam'.

It is this dream which Richard Poirier calls 'the theme of visionary possession in American literature', so that Carraway's 'aesthetic contemplation' in *The Great Gatsby* is but one manifestation of an ideal 'liberation from the boundaries of self and time'. In this view, Fitzgerald descends directly from the transcendentalist tradition and the ideal of the virgin land. Gatsby's dream, and Fitzgerald's implicit ideal, is 'a version of the Emersonian dream: in a great imaginative act he has created himself and set out to explore the possibilities of life'. Again, it is 'the record of an ocular initiation into the mysteries and wonders

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of a magical country' set against a background of 'an assault upon nature'.\(^5\) Basing his analysis on biography, M.R. Stern holds that Fitzgerald has made out of his own life 'a moral history' of the 'murderous disappointment' which comes from the realization that the dream is not to be found in the actuality of America, but rather in 'the fantastic sense of possibilities that drives the imagination of the archetypal American', an 'eternal pioneer in search of the golden moment dreamed in the past and to be recaptured in the imagined future'.\(^6\)

Fitzgerald, in short, inherits an American antihistoricist tradition, thus inviting an appeal to myth and universality; The Great Gatsby becomes a waste-land 'in full Spenglerian decline',\(^7\) or a myth 'with the imaginative sweep of America's historical adventure across an untamed continent'.\(^8\) Gatsby is 'a mythic character' whose reality is 'the myth that creates and sustains him';\(^9\) appropriately, therefore, the shattering of his ideal turns him into a tragic character in whose fate Carraway 'finds a universal, and tragic, significance'.\(^10\)

This is not to dismiss Gatsby's mythic overtones, nor to deny the transcendentalist impulses shared by numerous Fitzgerald characters. The


problem with the idealist critique, rather, is that it is only a partial critique, refusing Fitzgerald's debate by confining itself to one side of Fitzgerald's fictive project. This Adamic interpretation of Fitzgerald's central characters prejudges the issue of Fitzgerald's attitude to the mythic ideal as it appears in his writings, where a more complex situation is observed. Carraway himself, while attracted to an attitude of wonder, nonetheless talks of a New World both pandering and compelling; the reader is at least entitled to ask why Carraway should advocate an outlook whose realization, by his own admission, seems to disagree with the ideal. The very terms in which Carraway imagines the European response to the continent suggests a rather more complex dream than the one described by Lewis or Poirier. There is an observable continuity between this ambiguous ideal and Fitzgerald's first novel, *This Side of Paradise* (1920), even if this work does not successfully dramatize the tension between the ideal and the real. Here, Amory Blaine pursues the woman aware that 'every moment was precious ... she would never seem quite the same again' and of a need to 'press from the petals of the lotus flower something of this to keep, the essence of an hour' (*BH*, 3, pages 219, 156). Amory's transcendent moment, however, is darkened by his realisation that 'inseparably linked with evil was beauty', so that as he reached for the moment 'it had leered out at him with the grotesque face of evil' (*BH*, 3, p. 268). This is no unqualified affirmation of an Adamic ideal, and there may also be some emerging sense of the historical role of this ideal in America in Tom D'Invillier's sense 'of all the gorgeous youth that has rioted through here in two hundred years' (*BH*, 3, p. 155). In Fitzgerald's second novel, *The Beautiful and Damned* (1922), the 'eternal present with its promise of romance' again remains unattainable (*BH*, 4, p. 288); the impulse to possess the woman, cipher of the beautiful moment, becomes a desperate attempt to 'set her down now, as she was, as with each relentless second she could never be again' (*BH*, 4, p. 70).
If Fitzgerald's creative understanding has yet to come to terms with the reality of change and temporality discovered by the heroes of these early works, the nature of their discoveries is not substantially different from the later novels.

A similar failure of the transcendental impulse may also be observed in the short stories, as in the cut-glass bowl brooding over Evelyn Piper like a 'cold, malignant thing of beauty ... throwing out the ice-like beams of a thousand eyes, perverse glitterings each into each, never ageing, never changing'. In both 'Winter Dreams' (1922) and 'The Sensible Thing' (1924), the 'eternal present' is imagined and lost (BH, 5) The young Fitzgerald 'who had walked the streets of New York' with his dreams will cease to exist, signalling the passing of a state where 'the fulfilled future and the wistful past were mingled in a single gorgeous moment - when life was literally a dream'. By the time that Dick Diver pursues the wealthy heiress Nicole Warren in Tender is the Night (1934), the dream has clearly become destructive, as Diver abandons his medical career for a vacuous life of leisure. Corruption underlies Diver's ideal both figuratively and literally in the form of incest; Diver meets Nicole in a psychiatric clinic subsequent to her breakdown caused by her incestuous relationship with her father. Again, in The Last Tycoon (1941) Monroe Stahr is attracted to a woman who resembles his dead wife and a need 'to repeat yet not recapitulate the past', a 'midsummer restlessness' to 'live in the present - or, if there was no present, to invent one' (BH, 1, pages 408, 432). Although the novel is incomplete, Fitzgerald's notes reveal the corruption of Stahr's ideal as he uses blackmail and murder to hang onto the woman and his film studio. If Fitzgerald sees the attractions of the ideal, nonetheless he presents it


12 F. Scott Fitzgerald, 'Early Success' (1937), BH, 2, p. 44.
as consistently destructive, illusory, and corrupting.

The historicist position, again, while offering a potential framework for examining the historical aspects of Fitzgerald's creation, has often produced a partial critique. At its most reductive, this has claimed that The Great Gatsby 'culminates in a misreading of the American past' born of Fitzgerald's sentimental praise of Gatsby which distorts the actual historical quality 'of all the ambitions and virtues that have manifested themselves in the making of America'. This assumes that Carraway speaks unequivocally for Fitzgerald, and enunciates the author's historical sense. Moreover, this misses what may be the main point, namely the influence of Carraway's idealist conception of America on the developing historical experience of America. A similarly reductive view confines Fitzgerald to the role of local reporter of contemporary manners, rejecting any sense of a wider historical relevance in his work. For Maxwell Geismar, thus, 'an account of Fitzgerald's illusions', exemplifying a 'deceptive native romance', provides 'an invaluable natural history of his period'.

Fitzgerald becomes the chronicler of 'the irresponsible world of American wealth in the early Twenties', or 'the historian of his generation'. Other critics scour contemporaneous events for the specific referents of the veiled allusions in The Great Gatsby. Tom Buchanan's talk of collapsing civilizations and racial domination has invited speculation about the

13 J. Fraser, 'Dust and Dreams in The Great Gatsby', *English Literary History*, 32 (1965), 554-64 (pages 563, 564).


influence of Spengler or of contemporary racial theories, while Gatsby's 'drug' and 'oil' businesses have been related to well-known events of the period. Finally, Fitzgerald has been seen to be devoid of any historical sense whatever: 'history was not very real to him; the immediate present was'.

In isolating one aspect of Fitzgerald's creation and oversimplifying the internal tension crucial to its debate, such approaches can only damage any critical appreciation of Fitzgerald's achievement. While uncovering useful information and dealing with Fitzgerald's contemporaries, such views cannot do justice to Fitzgerald's historical consciousness, to his sense 'of the irrevocable passage of everything into the past', a 'sense of living in history' and of being 'haunted by time, as if he lived in a room full of clocks and calendars'. Both the ideal and the real history have to be understood, for example, for Carraway to be seen as 'a historical hero in his very denial of history'. Carraway's idealist antihistoricism has itself a long history in American society. Similarly, Gatsby's Franklinian schedule of self-improvement, scribbled on the fly-leaf of The Great Gatsby, gives a 'concreteness to the historical


tradition of Gatsby'; this inscription on a Dime Western further suggests that Gatsby's ideal derives from the populist mass culture of the late nineteenth-century. Again, the leisure-class which Fitzgerald describes should be seen in the wider context of a shift from 'a production ethic ... to a consumption ethic that was needed to provide markets for the new commodities endlessly streaming from the production lines'.

Fitzgerald's subject, then, is the history of an American ideal as much as American history in general, 'a cultural history of accomplished betrayal to cultural ideals, a nation's select and self-serving fictions' which include 'the populist melodrama of the westward movement'. This antihistorical ideal stands opposed to a historical sensibility, and Fitzgerald has dramatized this opposition. As Marius Bewley observes, American culture has been dominated by a 'fundamental conflict or tension' in its sense of itself and its history; the absence, or at least attenuation, of social-historical reference, has produced a society where 'the abstract idea and the concrete fact could find little common ground for creative interaction'. Fitzgerald's examination of this sensibility is 'a criticism of American experience ... of a basic historic attitude to life', of a flight 'from reality, from normality, from time, fate, and the conception of limit' which in Gatsby's case 'is the fictional

counterpart of that American philistine maxim that "history is bunk". It is a critique both of a romanticism which tries 'to transcend and escape historical responsibility' and of 'the fatal beauty of American capitalism' (Fussell, p. 302-03). To understand Fitzgerald's fictive enterprise, we must examine what Mizener calls 'the dual character of his self knowledge' and Cowley a 'doubleness' which perceives the ideal and the real simultaneously, in their dialectical interaction.

Much of Fitzgerald's best work, from the beginning, fits this pattern. In 'May Day' (1920), the 'magical, breathless dawn, silhouetting the great statue of the immortal Christopher' contrasts with Gordon Sterrett's despair beneath 'the fading yellow electric light' of an all-night cafe (BH, 5, p. 189), the ideal set against the May Day riots of 1919 which usher in 'the most expensive orgy in history' ('Echoes of the Jazz Age' (1931), BH, 2, p. 11). The pioneer myth is re-examined in the parabolic 'The Diamond as Big as the Ritz' (1922), in the fantastic kingdom of the Montana Washingtons built on fratricide, slavery and corruption to which John T. Unger brings his 'incomparable, unattainable young dream' (BH, 5, p. 57). The land itself mirrors this violence in a sunset 'like a gigantic bruise from which dark arteries spread themselves over a poisoned sky' (BH, 5, p. 43). Even the famous statement that the rich 'are different from you and me' is no unequivocal


enunciation of an ideal ('The Rich Boy', BH, 5, p. 286), for the narrator knows he is 'lost' if he accepts the rich boy's viewpoint; again, there is a suggestive 'blood-red sun over Columbus Circle' (BH, 5, p. 320).

This dialectical configuration recurs in Fitzgerald's three major novels, The Great Gatsby, Tender is the Night, and The Last Tycoon. Gatsby's 'Platonic conception of himself' links him to the Puritan-transcendentalist tradition (BH, 1, p. 202). The earliest manifestation of the ideal, however, is Dan Cody, the millionaire 'pioneer debauchee' (BH, 1, p. 202); if, as Carraway suggests, this is a story of the West, then Gatsby's wonder' has attached itself to a decadent variant of the ideal. Cody also recalls William F. Cody, the Buffalo Bill of the Dime western and appropriate idol, perhaps, for the James Gatz who reads Hopalong Cassidy.30 Gatsby himself is far removed from the pioneer ideal; his own name, moreover, suggests Jay Gould (1836-92), whose ruthless acquisition of a western railroad empire points to the reality of the westward expansion. Carraway's own association of health and 'young breath-giving air' with his 'dozen volumes on banking and credit and investment securities' promising the secrets of 'Midas and Morgan and Maecenas' focuses attention onto both the corruption of the ideal and its historical actuality (BH, 1, p. 127).

Dick Diver arrives in Zurich replete with 'the illusions of a nation, the lies of generations of frontier mothers who had to croon falsely that there were no wolves outside the cabin door' (BH, 2, p. 194). These illusions of eternal strength and health, and of the essential goodness of people' are Diver's ideal, but are contradicted by the violence and insecurity of the new world as it has actually existed. Nicole Warren,

30 The 'invention' of Buffalo Bill in western pulp fiction is traced in Henry Nash Smith, Virgin Land, pages 113-25.
his 'scarcely saved waif of disaster bringing him the essence of a continent' (BH, 2, p. 216), brings a history of violence, capital accumulation, incest, and psychic fragmentation. Significantly, Rosemary Hoyt, Diver's mistress, idealizes him in turn as an escape 'from the derisive and salacious improvisations of the frontier' (BH, 2, p. 105). Again, Diver's biography is without 'the satisfaction of knowing that the hero, like Grant, lolling in his general store in Galena, is ready to be called to an intricate destiny' (BH, 2, p. 194), referring to Grant's short period as a storekeeper prior to his military recall at the outbreak of the Civil War. Diver will have no such storybook restoration, and Nicole's idea at the close of the novel that his career 'was biding its time, again like Grant's in Galena', is at odds with the reality of his dissipation (BH, 2, p. 406).

The specific emblem of Dick's lost ideal, perhaps, is his loss of Nicole to Barban, the mercenary soldier. It is in this affair that Nicole recovers psychic health and her true heritage of the robber baron becoming 'a sane crook' rather than 'a mad puritan' (BH, 2, p. 383). Nicole's recovery implies the possibility that Diver's ideal depends on her instability, and a functioning consciousness of incest. Certainly, at this point, her release from Diver's idealization is symbolized by the prostitute signalling with her underclothes to the American fleet anchored offshore; this pink flag 'fluttered against the blue sky. Oh, say can you see the tender colour of remembered flesh? - while at the stern of the battleship rose in rivalry the Star Spangled Banner' (BH, 2, p. 387). The emblem of the ideal, in the words of the national anthem, is directly contrasted with the material reality as Nicole comes 'ever closer to what she was in the beginning; the anthem's patriotism counterpoints Barban's mercenary commerce just as an ideal of beauty is set against the prostitutes' sexual commerce.

31 The author of 'The Star-Spangled Banner', Francis Scott Key, was a cousin of Fitzgerald's maternal grandmother, and provides Fitzgerald with his own three forenames; see Arthur Mizener, The *Rrr Side of Paradise* (London, 1951), p. 2.
The continuity of this opposition appears, finally, in Cecilia Brady's westward journey in *The Last Tycoon*. En route, Wylie White and Manny Schwartz, a failed film producer, take her to Andrew Jackson's house near Nashville, now 'a nice big white box, but a little lonely and vacated still after a hundred years' (*BH*, 1, p. 326); there is an implication that the populist ideal of the Jacksonian agrarian republic has been similarly abandoned. Cecilia tries to fit Schwartz into 'that early hour and into that landscape. He had come a long way from some Ghetto to present himself at that raw shrine' (*BH*, 1, p. 326); coherence remains elusive, however, and Schwartz chooses this site for his suicide. In asking herself what she 'looked like in that dawn, five years ago', Cecilia looks back on both a lost youth and a lost revolution, echoing Wordsworth's sentiment 'Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive/But to be young was very heaven'.

This sense of lost ideals, and ideals contradicted by historical actuality, also attaches to the 'tycoon', Monroe Stahr. Stahr is linked to Lincoln, for example, whose portrait hangs in the studio. Fitzgerald's notes indicate that a visit by Stahr to Washington was to have reintroduced the Jacksonian theme of a lost republican ideal. Stahr will fail to find his ideal, producing a 'reiteration of a fluid society's a-historical blindness' making the novel 'an image of American experience, not only in our time, but through the country's history'. The pursuit of the ideal is a flight from historical understanding.


33 For discussion of the Lincoln theme, see Michael Millgate, 'The Last Tycoon' in Eble, 127-134 (p. 131).

Any examination of the tension between the ideal and the real historical content of *The Great Gatsby* must begin with the narrator of the story, Nick Carraway, the mediator between the reader and the events in question. Fitzgerald criticism has long recognized this, and has divided into two broad groupings: the view that Carraway is basically a reliable narrator, and the view that he is basically unreliable. Crucially, Fitzgerald's own attitude has been seen to depend upon the resolution of Carraway's reliability; a reliable Carraway has been taken as proof of Fitzgerald's commitment to the ideal, while an unreliable Carraway has suggested a critique of this ideal. Carraway, as the detached spectator and commentator, appears as the chronicler of Gatsby's dream; his participation in the events he describes, however, demands a more complex characterization of the narrative, and resolves the debate into a discussion of Carraway's role in the novel.

The interpretation of Carraway carries with it an attitude towards the novel as a whole, as becomes evident when critics talk of 'the perfect narrator' able to see 'the tragic and symbolic dimensions of the story, to bring forth its moral and universal significance' (Perosa, pages 62, 66), or a narrative tone 'never offensively positive' and, therefore, open-minded and honest. 35 Carraway becomes 'the chorus to Gatsby's tragedy', and is 'basically a passive person', a presence rather than an actor in the novel. This gives him a 'freedom from crucial dramatic involvement', allowing 'the internalities of poetic vision to widen and deepen the implications of the ostensibly shallow


world The Great Gatsby deals with' (Westbrook, p. 79). Carraway is to be taken at his word. Indeed, narrative form has been designed to validate Carraway's perception of events: 'the movement of the book is circular', its action and symbolism 'designed to illustrate, emphasize, and justify' Carraway's initial distinction between Gatsby's heightened sensibility and the foul dust which attaches to his ideal.

Conversely, Carraway's own involvement in the story can be seen to refute the notion that he is merely a cipher, redirecting attention to Carraway as the centre of the novel as the reader encounters it. Thus, Carraway 'is deeply implicated in the story he is telling and ... in a sense what The Great Gatsby is about is what happens to Nick'. Gatsby is 'Nick's surrogate, creating for Nick moments of overwhelming imaginative transcendence', while the Dutch sailors at the end of the novel embody 'Nick's own wonder'. The meaning of Gatsby's story, thus, is to be found in Carraway's representation of that story.

Too direct an identification of Fitzgerald with Carraway, his fictional creation, does not do justice to the subtlety and complexity of the

37 Troy talks, for example, of 'the ordinary but quite sensible narrator' (p. 57). For Dyson, Carraway's involvement is 'impersonal, in that his own emotions and destiny are not involved' (p. 40), while Shain sees Carraway's presence as unobtrusive (p. 35). Again, J.E. Miller, E. Scott Fitzgerald: His Art and Technique (New York, 1964), regards Carraway as 'a disinterested observer' (p. 118).


41 Thus for Berryman the narrative is the 'history' of Carraway's 'disenchantment' (p. 104); McCormick observes that 'it is through Carraway's responses that we respond' (p. 37); N. Friedman, 'Versions of Form in Fiction - Great Expectations and The Great Gatsby', Accent, 14 (1954), 246-64, concludes that 'Gatsby himself is unaware of the cultural implications which are supplied by Nick' (p. 254).
novel, with its tension between the authorial creation and Carraway's representation of events. Taken to extremes, an insistence on the question of narratorial reliability, separated from its context within the novel, may result in absurdly reductive criticism; for example, 'if the reader cannot accept Carraway's statements at face value, then the integrity of the technique of the novel is called in question'.\textsuperscript{42}

Narrative technique, in this argument, is deprived of the very complexities and tensions which dramatize the conflict between idealism and realism, between the spatial myth of the virgin land and the actual history of American society. A stylistic study of the narrative, however, reveals a systematic idealization and reshaping of events which proves to be characteristic of Carraway's activity as narrator. The novel's 'technique', in effect, presents the reader both with a narrative and a narratorial activity; Carraway's narrative, far from being an opaque act of reportage, can only be understood through an examination of what he does as narrator. The question of reliability does not go far enough towards a comprehension of how our understanding of the novel is altered by a knowledge of how Carraway has constructed his narrative, and is, in any case, in some ways beside the point. Carraway's consciousness shapes the narrative, and Gatsby's story is a dependent construction explicable only in the context of that consciousness; Carraway is the 'man of two parts, the participant and the observer' (Sklar, p. 175), and it is here that a study of Carraway's activity may usefully begin.

On a number of occasions, Carraway is careful to point out that he is the teller of a story: 'Only Gatsby, the man who gives his name to this book, was exempt from my reaction', or 'reading over what I have written so far, I see I have given the impression that the events of three nights several weeks apart were all that absorbed me' (BH, 1, pages 126, 169). Narratorial interventions of this kind direct attention to Carraway's role.

\textsuperscript{42} G.J. Scrimgeour, 'Against The Great Gatsby', Criticism, 8 (1966), 75-86 (p. 83).
as a detached narrator and imply an objectivity, or at least an impersonality, in his relations with his subject. Such seems to be the claim when he goes on to add that these 'were merely casual events in a crowded summer, and, until much later, they absorbed me infinitely less than my personal affairs' (BH, 1, p. 169). These statements must be read carefully, however; apart from the characteristic hyperbole of 'infinitely less', it is significant that, irrespective of his reactions at the time, retrospectively Carraway now is assigning significances to certain events which the form of the narrative serves to communicate. Carraway's 'personal affairs' are summarily dismissed in barely a page of text, while the three nights in question occupy the first three chapters. A reinterpretation of events has taken place, so that what is given is not a contemporaneous record but rather the substance of that reinterpretation. The role of the detached narrator becomes useful at this point, therefore, since such a reinterpretation will be more readily acceptable coming from an objective chronicler than from someone subjectively involved in these happenings.

By adopting this dual role of observer and participant, Carraway is able to suggest an objective basis for what is, in fact, his subjective perception, indeed idealization, of events. His present tense commentary, distinguished from the past tense of the story, allows him a detachment which appears to distance him from his historical materials; often, it is used to suggest a timeless universal against which these materials are being judged:

We've always been unusually communicative in a reserved way, and I understood that he meant a great deal more than that ... The abnormal mind is quick to detect and attach itself to this quality when it appears in a normal person, and so it came about that in college I was unjustly accused of being a politician, because I was privy to the secret griefs of wild, unknown men (BH, 1, p. 125).

A characteristic of Carraway's commentary is exemplified here; a timeless universal or law of human existence or behaviour, marked by a present
tense, is set alongside a particular case of that universal in operation, marked by a past tense, enabling Carraway to define the criteria for comprehending local events. In this case, his ability to attract privileged communications is set against a supposed quality of the human mind which he himself exemplifies.

On closer inspection, this structure is less straightforward than Carraway would have us believe. A quality of unusual perceptiveness, for example, is germane to the subsequent claim that Carraway has access to Gatsby’s 'secret griefs'. Commonly, moreover, Carraway's universals support his view of the other characters: 'the bored haughty face that she turned to the world concealed something - most affections conceal something eventually'; 'now I was looking at it again, through Daisy's eyes. It is invariably saddening to look through new eyes at things upon which you have expended your own powers of adjustment'; 'there is no confusion like the confusion of a simple mind, and as we drove away Tom was feeling the hot whips of panic'; 'he had reached an age where death no longer has the quality of ghastly surprise' (EH, 1, pages 170, 207, 223, 258).

These pronouncements, concerning Jordan, Daisy and Tom Buchanan, and Henry Gatz respectively, convey Carraway's attitudinal speculations about these characters although seeming to stem from general laws. The past, apparently conforming to these universals, may only be being brought into line with Carraway's perception of events; Carraway's dual role permits either of these possibilities, the resolution of which requires an examination of his narrative strategy.

At the heart of this strategy is Carraway's reconstruction of events, retrospectively, in a significant order; this is not the order in which Carraway experiences these events, but rather a later interpretation of them. In effect, Carraway's narration of the sequence of events is embedded in his later reflections upon them; the naive eye which experiences Gatsby's mystery is, in fact, a subordinate function of the reflective
consciousness which assigns significance to that experience. This reflection radically re-aligns the pattern of events from Carraway's present moment of narration, a re-alignment seen most clearly in statements which cannot be set into any strict experiential chronology. The assertion of Gatsby's 'extraordinary gift for hope, a romantic readiness', for example, is part of an intriguing prologue which introduces both Gatsby's 'heightened sensitivity' and the 'foul dust' which corrupts his dream before Gatsby has appeared in the novel (BH, 1, p. 126). Gatsby is defined, in a sense, before he enters the stage; his character is not allowed to emerge from the progressive development of the narrative but rather is, from the outset, something given. Again, Carraway's first sighting of Gatsby one evening reinforces a mystery already presented to the reader in a preliminary fashion (BH, 1, pages 141-142); in the opening chapters, indeed, the fantastic gossip surrounding Gatsby is allowed to precede the revelation of his actual history. His claims to the contrary notwithstanding, Carraway's careful construction of this fabulous Gatsby frames and shapes his readers' responses to the story he has to tell. In short, Gatsby's "meaning" is given before his story has been told.

The reporting of Gatsby's actual history poses another sort of problem. Jordan Baker's account of events in Louisville five years earlier, and Carraway's reports of conversations with Gatsby, flesh out this history. Jordan's account, however, is problematical in that it is itself embedded in Carraway's reporting of his conversations with her about Gatsby; Carraway now becomes the sole source for what Jordan says. Similarly, Carraway's own conversations with Gatsby are consistently reported indirectly, leaving Carraway as the only source for what Gatsby

43 In this sense, Millgate is right to argue that the movement of the book is designed to 'illustrate, emphasize, and justify' Carraway's interpretation (p. 336); Millgate, however, does not discuss this in the context of Carraway's idealist reinterpretation of events.
says. Without an actual record of these conversations, independent of Carraway's report, Carraway's version of them becomes unchallengeable.

Carraway is less than straightforward in his manner of reporting, moreover. Half the narrative is over before Carraway, referring to Gatsby's story, claims that 'he told me all this very much later, but I've put it down here with the idea of exploding those first wild rumours about his antecedents, which weren't even faintly true' (BH, 1, p. 204). This belated removal of 'misconceptions' can hardly be said to undermine the fabulous structure which Carraway has painstakingly built. This first report of Gatsby's history is immediately subsequent to Gatsby's reunion with Daisy, the high-point of Gatsby's recovery of the ideal. The actual history, therefore, follows the history of the ideal, so that the experience of the narrative is of an actual history framed by an ideal history, where the ideal in this sense defines the real. Gatsby's actual past is withheld long enough for the ideal to be established, rather than being introduced here to dispel that ideal; the 'wild rumours' are an integral part of the Gatsby myth which embodies the ideal. Carraway only relates the invention of Gatsby's 'Platonic conception of himself' (BH, 1, p. 202) once the resumed affair with Daisy has ended (BH, 1, p. 242), and his own childhood ideal is described towards the end of the novel (BH, 1, pages 264-65). His own sense of an 'identity' with the American continent, a sense which shapes much of the narrative, is revealed only after this shaping has taken place.

In addition to this problematic objectivity, Carraway's narrative contains further ambiguities. Such may be the case with Carraway's claim that, though his father 'didn't say any more', he and his father have 'always been unusually communicative in a reserved way, and I understood that he meant a great deal more than that' (BH, 1, p. 125). Carraway is claiming a heightened communication based upon limited information; either he is remarkably perceptive or he is being less than honest. Certainly, communication and reserve are an unusual combination, and yet
it is upon such things that Carraway's reportage often depends.

Carraway's claim to be 'one of the few honest people' he has known \(\text{(BH, 1, p. 172)}\) bears crucially on his claim that Gatsby is one of his 'privileged glimpses into the human heart' \(\text{(BH, 1, p. 126)}\); late in the novel, Jordan recalls Carraway's condemnation of bad drivers:

'You said a bad driver was only safe until she met another bad driver? Well, I met another bad driver, didn't I? I mean, it was careless of me to make such a wrong guess. I thought you were rather an honest, straightforward person. I thought it was your secret pride'. \(\text{(BH, 1, p. 266)}\).

Carraway's honesty, thus, is cast into doubt.

Carraway's perceptiveness is questionable in other statements: 'she nodded at me almost imperceptibly'; 'after an infinitesimal hesitation he included Daisy with a slight nod'; 'he put out his broad, flat hand with well-concealed dislike' \(\text{(BH, 1, pages 131-32, 135, 216)}\). To be phenomenologically accurate, these descriptions demand remarkable powers of perception. What is certain about this 'well-concealed dislike', for example, is that it contains an attitudinal comment about Tom Buchanan, suggesting an interpretation disguised as empirical fact; this supposedly privileged insight may be no more than subjective bias.

The most telling case of Carraway's procedures is his presentation of Gatsby and the 'green light', emblem of the ideal:

I saw that I was not alone - fifty feet away a figure had emerged from the shadow of my neighbour's mansion and was standing with his hands in his pockets regarding the silver pepper of the stars. Something in his leisurely movements and the secure position of his feet upon the lawn suggested that it was Mr. Gatsby himself, come out to determine what share was his of our local heavens \(\text{(BH, 1, p. 141)}\).

At night, without any lights, and at some distance, Carraway feels able to speculate on the behaviour of a man he has never met:

But I didn't call to him, for he gave a sudden intimation that he was content to be alone - he stretched out his arms toward the dark water in a curious way, and, far as I was from him, I could have sworn he was trembling. Involuntarily I glanced seaward - and distinguished nothing except a single green light, minute and far away, that might have been the end of a dock \(\text{(BH, 1, pages 141-42)}\).
Either Carraway's perception is remarkable, or he has attributed significance here in a retrospective reinterpretation of events, if not actually invention of detail. The conjunction between Gatsby's trembling and Carraway's 'involuntary' turning to the light is particularly important, implying a connection between Gatsby's supposed state and the influence of the light. The movement of Carraway's narrative is from Gatsby's putative prayer to Carraway's sighting of the light, a conjunction of two perceptions of Carraway's; the implication, however, is that these two things are more than merely conjunct, but are interrelated, and that Gatsby is also looking at the light and trembling as a result. Carraway does not directly state such a connection, but it is his narrative strategy to invite the reader to infer such a relationship.

No definite statement of a necessary connection between these perceptions is made. Carraway, nonetheless, employs a strategy of implication analogous to his policy of indirection in reporting Gatsby's conversation. In fact, Gatsby is heard to mention the light only once, and then in Carraway's presence, telling Daisy "if it wasn't for the mist we could see your home across the bay ... you always have a green light that burns all night at the end of your dock", to which Carraway adds that 'he seemed absorbed in what he had just said' (BH, 1, p. 198). It is unclear, in this conversational context, whether this utterance is a mere pleasantrty or has deeper meaning for Gatsby; certainly, it has such meaning for Carraway. It is to Carraway that Daisy says 'present a green card. I'm giving out green-' (BH, 1, p. 207), the price of a kiss.

The evidence of a later conversation gives stronger evidence for saying that it is Carraway who is assigning meaning here. The sight of a yacht in the bay prompts Gatsby to remark to the Buchanans, "I'm right across from you" (BH, 1, p. 217), but it is Carraway who elaborates the symbolic context: 'our eyes lifted over the rose-beds and the hot lawn and the weedy refuse of the dog-days alongshore. Slowly the white wings
of the boat moved against the blue cool limit of the sky. Ahead lay the scalloped ocean and the abounding 'blessed isles'. The narrative strategy here is again most informative. Carraway moves from a plural perception to the perception of a boat without any specific perceiving referent; however, while this second perception is given as contingent upon the first, a relationship between the two is an implied possibility. Thus, the subsequent image of the 'blessed isles', the ideal, becomes potentially a plural conception, and so Gatsby's as well as Carraway's description of the scene. If this is not directly asserted, again the reader is invited to consider the possibility by Carraway's device of placing, side by side in the same perceptual frame, the verifiable plural perception and his own interpretation of that perception. This boat image returns in the closing image of boats beating 'against the current', in Carraway's extended statement of the ideal, suggesting its significance for the idealist representation of events.44

By the close of the novel, this accumulation of implications has hardened into an assertion of fact: 'I thought of Gatsby's wonder when he first picked out the green light at the end of Daisy's dock. He had come a long way to this blue lawn ... Gatsby believed in the green light, the orgastic future' (BH, 1, p. 269). This confident conclusion contradicts the uncertainty and speculative status of the perceptions and actions in question; indeed, it is more plausible to talk of Carraway's wonder at seeing the light. It is this last shift from suggestion to assertion, finally, which reveals Carraway's strategy. Throughout his narrative, Carraway has been careful to avoid being drawn into direct statement, preferring an indirect mode; in this way, he has made himself the sole source of information, but has also disguised this fact by using contingency and implication as the connective tissue of his narrative surface.

44 Sea images occur several times; Daisy suggests pushing Jordan and Carraway 'out to sea in a boat' (BH, 1, p. 149); Gatsby's parties have their 'sea-change of faces and voices and colour' (BH, 1, p. 156), and Carraway does not trust any 'obliging and indifferent sea' to sweep his 'refuse' away (BH, 1, p. 266).
Consequently, the reader seems to make these connections. At the same time, by reminding the reader that he is the detached narrator and commentator, Carraway reserves for himself a privileged access to information, which raises the status of the implications he makes. Carraway's hope is that the cumulative effect of his privileged "guide" to the events in the narrative will be to create an assent to his version of events. By using an implicatory mode, he ensures that the developing narrative will not become bogged down in an argument over the empirical verifiability of what he says, which would be the case if he used a stative narrative mode. Nonetheless, he must come as close to assertion as he can, using his privileged status, to gain this assent; otherwise, he remains a participant in the story involved in the creation of a specific version of events. If Carraway's concluding assertion, which is not empirically verifiable, is to be believed, then Carraway's privileged communication must be believed; if it is not, Carraway is seen in the act of manipulating the evidence to suit himself.

The idealist belief in 'the unreality of reality' is Carraway's belief (BH, 1, p. 203) and he has set out to prove it by proposing its opposite, the reality of the ideal. The reader is never allowed direct access to the proposed champion of the ideal, Gatsby, however; rather, the narrative remains enclosed in the interpretative structure of an intermediary, namely, Carraway, and the evocation in Carraway of 'an elusive rhythm, a fragment of lost words' which he 'had heard somewhere a long time ago' (BH, 1, p. 213). In this statement, Carraway reveals himself as the actual source of the ideal. Gatsby's dream has been accepted as the subject of the story, so that the ideal has been seen to have an actual existence in one man's life; if the novel now appears to dramatize Carraway's attempt to convince an audience that his own ideal has had an actual historical life personified in Gatsby, a different account of the narrative must be given. Carraway's strategy of
indirection becomes the means of fabricating an apparent reality out of idealist speculation, namely the reality of Gatsby's ideal. In the discussion below, this strategy is examined as it is embedded in the novel's stylistic structures, which in turn illustrate the tension between verifiable reality and the idealist imagination.

A stylistic analysis of Carraway's narrative reveals a systematic use of certain linguistic forms, including a characteristic set of verbal, adverbial, pronominal and clausal structures, which have in common an implicatory rather than a stative function in the text. Among the verb forms is 'seem', as in the following examples: 'he seemed to fill those glistening boots until he strained the top lacing'; 'Miss Baker, who seemed to have mastered a certain hardy scepticism'; 'it was one of those rare smiles ... It faced - or seemed to face - the whole eternal world for an instant'; 'he seemed absorbed in what he had just said ... it had seemed very near to her, almost touching her. It had seemed as close as a star to the moon'; 'what was it up there in the song that seemed to be calling her back inside?' (BH, 1, pages 130, 137, 162, 198, 211). Carraway says something respectively about Tom, Jordan, Gatsby and Daisy here, but these are not assertions about facts in the world which can be empirically verified independently from Carraway's statement of them. Rather, they are suggestions about how the world might be; Carraway avoids, in this way, any questions about the verifiability of what he is saying, while insinuating his own attitudinal responses to these characters, something especially important in Gatsby's case. The reader is given only the way things "seem", which is to say the way things seem to Carraway; the narrative, therefore, confines the reader to the reflective and formative consciousness which perceives the world in this way. By making no direct claim about how the world is, Carraway's
use of implication becomes a ready defence against charges of misrepresenting the real world; at the same time, nonetheless, Carraway intends the reader to see his reflection of the world as an accurate record of events.

A withdrawal from statement of fact is seen also in the use of 'suppose' and 'suspect': 'I suppose she had begun dealing in subterfuges when she was very young'; 'I suppose he'd had the name ready for a long time, even then', 'what could you make of that, except to suspect some intensity in his conception of the affair that couldn't be measured?' (BH, 1, pages 171, 202, 245). The supposition here concerns Jordan and Gatsby; again, Carraway makes no claim to know verifiable facts, but presents only his own suggestive determination of what Jordan's and Gatsby's histories may have been. Carraway gives us his reflection upon these histories; the actual histories themselves are beyond the reader's reach, so that there is no evidence available for any alternative to Carraway's account. Assuming the reader's provisional assent to his account, however, Carraway regularly follows his suppositions with extended interpretations, especially of Gatsby, which work on the basis that the original supposition is probably accurate. The privileged status of the storyteller is a crucial element in supporting Carraway's claim to an accurate, if imaginative, apprehension of events; Carraway's manipulative techniques are intended to bring supposition closer to statement of fact.

This effect is reinforced by Carraway's use of 'think': 'he hadn't once ceased looking at Daisy, and I think he revalued everything in his house according to the measure of response it drew from her well-loved eyes'; 'I think that voice held him most, with its fluctuating, feverish warmth, because it couldn't be over-dreamed' (BH, 1 pages 197, 201). Again, what Carraway "thinks" about Gatsby cannot be verified independently from Carraway's narration. This is true also of what 'occurs' to
Carraway: 'I stared at him and then at Tom ... and it occurred to me that there was no difference between men, in intelligence or race, so profound as the difference between the sick and the well'; 'possibly it had occurred to him that the colossal significance of that light had now vanished forever' (BH, 1, pages 222, 198). This use of 'occur' introduces, moreover, an ingenious subtlety into the narrative. 'Occur' implies an unmediated mental act, or even a passivity, which disguises Carraway's activity as originator of these ideas; Carraway, the logical subject in the first sentence above, becomes its grammatical object, his agentive role hidden in the sentence surface structure. An attitude of passivity and non-agency, indeed, proves characteristic of Carraway: 'her voice compelled me forward breathlessly as I listened'; 'I began to look involuntarily out the windows for other cars' (BH, 136, 263).

If Carraway's formative agency in the narrative can be disguised, claims to objective observation become more plausible.

Modal verbs also prove useful to Carraway. The use of 'must', for example, allows for the statement of a logical necessity which implies a necessary relation without asserting an actual, verifiable relation: 'I must have stood for a few minutes listening'; 'there must have been moments even that afternoon when Daisy tumbled short of his dreams'; 'for a transitory enchanted moment man must have held his breath in the presence of this continent' (BH, 1, pages 131, 200, 268). Given the discursive context of narration, these sentences do not assert verifiable certainties; these, again, are speculations. They take on a logical necessity, however, which is a lexical feature of 'must', and Carraway frequently builds a dependant speculation upon this: 'she must have seen something of this in my expression, for she turned abruptly away' (BH, 1, p. 238). Although Carraway is working back from the empirical fact to the supposed cause,

45 Carraway also implies a compulsion in his claim that turning to the green light is an involuntary act (BH, 1, p. 266).
in this instance from Jordan's action to his own facial expression, the logical structure of the sentence has made the verifiable reality subordinate to the hypothetical contextual condition, namely Carraway's expression. Again, Carraway's imaginative act seems to define the known reality.

Generally, the use of modals reduces the stative function of verbal structures: 'he might have despised himself, for he had certainly taken her under false pretences'; 'he invented just the sort of Jay Gatsby that a seventeen-year-old boy would be likely to invent'; 'he could climb to it, if he climbed alone, and once there he could suck on the pap of life' (BH, 1, pages 243, 202, 212). In each of these sentences, Carraway speculates on Gatsby's thought-processes, where definitive statement is not possible.

Certain characteristic adverbials create similar effects. A frequent use of 'as if' and 'as though' has an effect similar to the use of 'seem', in presenting the reader with the reflection of external reality in Carraway's consciousness, allowing Carraway to control the resemblances being offered: 'in the room was an enormous couch on which two young women were buoyed up as though upon an anchored balloon'; 'a stirring warmth flowed from her, as if her heart was trying to come out to you'; 'something was making him nibble at the edge of stale ideas as if his sturdy physical egotism no longer nourished his peremptory heart' (BH, 1, pages 131, 136, 141). Attitudinal interpretation replaces factual statement: 'I saw that the expression of bewilderment had come back into Gatsby's face, as though a faint doubt had occurred to him as to the quality of his present happiness'; 'he looked around him wildly, as if the past were lurking here in the shadow of his house' (BH, 1, 200, 212). Such resemblances carry the idealist vision which Carraway projects onto

46 There are, in fact, nearly seventy uses of the 'as if' form in the novel.
Gatsby; the question of their accuracy cannot arise, since direct access to what is being reflected is impossible. Carraway has made himself, quite literally, the mirror up to nature; how far he is a mere reflector, and how far he alters the proffered reality, becomes a crucial concern.

A logical certainty is also implied in the use of 'evidently' and 'apparently' which has no corresponding phenomenological certainty: 'evidently it surprised her as much as it did me, for she yawned'; 'but evidently the sound of it pleased Gatsby for Tom remained the "polo player"' (BH, 1, pages 133, 208). Once more, the verifiable actuality is embedded in a speculative imagination. A lexical feature of 'evidently' is that of obviousness or even self-evidency, and it is difficult to argue with the claim that something is self-evident without any contrary evidence; Carraway is implying that these are things which, being evident, are inarguable. The discursive context of this form, at the same time, suggests a less than certainty, with 'evidently' meaning 'in the light of available evidence'; what had seemed an assertion of fact is actually a speculation about probable causes. A like speculativeness enters such descriptions as the 'apparently new' dog leash, Tom 'gruffly polite, but obviously not remembering', or Carraway's characterization of the wooing of Daisy where 'doubtless there was a certain struggle and a certain relief' (BH, 1, pages 250, 205, 245).

The usefulness of 'probably', 'possibly', and 'perhaps', is straightforward enough: 'he had probably discovered that people liked him when he smiled'; 'possibly it had occurred to him that the colossal significance of the light had now vanished forever'; 'perhaps my presence made them feel more satisfactorily alone' (BH, 1, pages 203, 198, 199). In each case, Carraway speculates about Gatsby. A similar use of implication appears in a careful use of indefinite pronouns: the 'something' worrying Tom (BH, 1, pages 135, 141); Gatsby, 'searching for something to do on the day that Dan Cody's yacht dropped anchor', or wanting 'to recover something,
some idea of himself perhaps' (BH, 1, pages 203, 212). This imprecision is important, since the 'something' Gatsby seeks is the ideal whose existence is in question; the ideal, in effect, attaches to an entity whose reality is imprecise and perhaps illusory.

In diminishing, or omitting altogether, direct statement of referential relations in its characteristic clausal structures, the narrative again adopts a policy of indirection. At its simplest, this involves a use of conjunction and disjunction, rather than subordination, in clause-linkage; clauses are linked as sequences or contingencies using 'and' or 'but'. Relational structures, consequently, are implied rather than stated: 'he seemed to fill those glistening boots until he strained the top lacing, and you could see a great pack of muscle shifting when his shoulder moved'; 'she didn't say any more, and after a moment I returned rather feebly to the subject of her daughter'; 'he talked a lot about the past, and I gathered that he wanted to recover something' (BH, 1, pages 130, 140, 212). In the last example above, thus, the relation between what Gatsby says and what Carraway deduces from this is rendered as a contingent rather than a dependent structure; the sentence surface structure does not commit Carraway to an assertion of a necessary relation, however much a relation may be implied. Such contingency is often highlighted, moreover, by a syntactic simplification which sees series of clauses separated out into distinct sentences. One sign of this is sentences beginning in 'and' or 'but': 'And, as I walked on I was lonely no longer'; 'But I didn't call to him, for he gave a sudden intimation that he was content to be alone' (BH, 1, pages 127, 141). The introduction of a major syntactic division reduces the sense of continuity and relatedness between contingent statements.

Severe restraints are placed on the uses of subordination; some syntactic or semantic feature will regularly diminish the sense of relatedness. The subordinator 'so', for example, appears most often as part

47 Approximately ninety per-cent of the uses of 'so' in the novel can be described in this way.
of a conjunction or after a major syntactic break: 'I had no girl ..., and so I drew up the girl beside me'; 'And so it happened that on a warm windy evening I drove over to East Egg'; 'So he was aware of the bizarre accusations that flavoured conversations in his halls' (BH, 1, pages 188, 129, 175). Alternatively, the subordinate relation is connected with some negative state: 'when I came back they had both disappeared, so I sat down discreetly'; 'I saw that for some reason of his own he was determined not to come, so I stood up' (BH, 1, pages 147, 261). Indeed, Carraway frequently presents himself as reacting to some negative condition, implying an absence of agency or what might be called a principle of avoidance: 'I saw that turbulent emotions possessed her, so I asked what I thought would be some sedative questions' (BH, 1, p. 138). Carraway acts, here, to avoid an emotional scene with Daisy. The few unequivocal cases of subordination are confined to Carraway's explicit assumption of more traditional narratorial conventions of scene-setting: 'the motor road hastily joins the railroad and runs beside it for a quarter of a mile, so as to shrink away from a certain desolate area of land'(BH, 1, p. 142). While the privileged observer may claim an understanding of causation and other relations, the participant does so less easily; a division into overt and disguised subordination, therefore, corresponds strictly to the dual roles of observer and participant.

Conditional clauses, finally, are important in the narrative: 'if personality is an unbroken series of successful gestures, then there was something gorgeous about him, some heightened sensitivity to the promises of life' (BH, 1,p.126). This forms part of Carraway's famous prologue in which he gives his initial definition of Gatsby. Carraway has constructed a conditional form in which a general principle, in this case relating to human personality, is followed by a dependent particular, Gatsby's personality, illustrating that principle. Given that this is a conditional structure, the ontological status of the general principle is doubtful.
Nonetheless, this is quite in keeping with Carraway's implicatory mode. True to his established tactics, moreover, Carraway presents an accomplished definition of personality before the defining evidence drawn from Gatsby, compromising the act of definition itself. Again, although his general law is not unequivocally established, Carraway proceeds as if it were to portray Gatsby's 'sensitivity' in some detail. In doing so, Carraway presents an image of the tension central to the debate which Fitzgerald is dramatizing, a tension between the conditional form of the surface structure and the form of the hidden structure which Carraway's interpretations would imply. Carraway would convert the conditional reality into a statement of an ideal; this attempt to transform the ideal into an apparent reality is the novel's central drama. Consequently, discussion must now concentrate on the presentation of this ideal in the narrative.

At the heart of the ideal is the achievement of the transcendental moment, the 'eternal present' (BH, 4, p. 288). Carraway's continual reference to apparently timeless universals is one part of his attempt to present such an ideal structure. Again, Gatsby is accredited with idealist attributes in such things as his smile, with its quality 'of eternal reassurance ... that you may come across four or five times in life' which seems to face 'the whole eternal world for an instant, and then concentrated on you with an irresistible prejudice in your favour' (BH, 1, p. 162). Gatsby's 'universe of ineffable gaudiness' becomes the exemplum of transcendence (BH, 1, p. 202). Within this construction, however, lies the same tension running throughout the novel; this 'universe' is both divine and secular, ineffable and gaudy. Carraway is satisfied with an implication here, and his use of the second-person 'you' introduces a narratorial impersonality, or at least referential imprecision, which obscures the fact that he is the source of this idea by suggesting an experience available also to his readers. The resolution of this tension, nevertheless, is central to any understanding of Fitzgerald's treatment
of the transcendental impulse. Given that the narrative consistently returns to the narratorial consciousness, it seems logical to seek evidence in what can be learned about Carraway.

Characteristically, Carraway tries to isolate 'moments' which may be images of the transcendent moment. 48 Daisy, for example, takes his hand, 'for a moment ... promising that there was no-one in the world she so much wanted to see'(BH, 1, p. 131); this contrasts with a mid-western attitude of 'sheer nervous dread of the moment itself' (BH, 1, p. 134). Carraway's own early sense of 'identity with this country for one strange hour' finds an echo in Gatsby's Platonic sense of himself 'at the specific moment that witnessed the beginning of his career' (BH, 1, pages 265, 202). Conversely, Carraway also senses a temporality which contradicts the moment in his 'haunting loneliness' at seeing 'young clerks in the dust, wasting the most poignant moments of night and life' (BH, 1, p. 170). Remembering that Carraway is himself such a clerk, this applies most of all to him; this 'dust', moreover, picks up the notion of the 'foul dust' corrupting Gatsby's dream (BH, 1, p. 126). Time is a constant threat both to Gatsby and Carraway. Gatsby, thus, worries that it is 'too late' as he waits for Daisy to arrive at Carraway's house, looking at his watch 'as if there was some pressing demand on his time elsewhere' (BH, 1, p. 191). During their meeting, Gatsby knocks into a 'defunct mantlepiece clock' and has to catch it 'with trembling fingers, and set it back in place' (BH, 1, p. 193); his control over time, significantly only over a broken time-piece, does not auger well for his attempt to 'repeat the past' (BH, 1, p. 212). Indeed, Gatsby seems to be 'running down like an overwound clock' now that he has met Daisy again (BH, 1, p. 197); the man who had been 'penniless' and 'without a past' is running out of time (BH, 1, p. 242), caught, in the words of the song he commands a house-guest to play, 'In the meantime/In between time' (BH, 1, p. 200). His 'universe of ineffable gaudiness' spins

48 Eighty such moments may be distinctly identified in the novel.
itself in his brain 'while the clock ticked on the washstand' \((BH, 1, p. 202)\).

If this were the sole manifestation of Carraway's transcendentalist impulse, it could be judiciously argued that he sees both the attractions of the ideal and the problems of attaining it. Carraway, however, is as likely to try to arrest time as he is to transcend it; life, after all, 'is much more successfully looked at from a single window', in a deliberate limitation of perception whose unity depends precisely on such a limitation \((BH, 1, p. 128)\). This 'single window' perception emerges in Carraway's fondness for the arrested images of photography, the illusion of timelessness; Jordan is a face from 'rotagravure pictures of the sporting life' or 'a good illustration' \((BH, 1, pages 139, 266)\), while West Egg resembles 'a night scene by El Greco' \((BH, 1, p. 265)\).\footnote{Myrtle Wilson seems to present 'one emotion after another' like 'a slowly developing picture' \((BH, 1, p. 223)\). The photographs of Gatsby and Cody especially fascinate Carraway \((BH, 1, p. 108)\), and Henry Gatz's sense that a photograph of his son's mansion is 'more real to him than the house itself' echoes this way of seeing. By writing down the names of Gatsby's guests 'on the empty spaces of a timetable' now 'disintegrating at its folds', Carraway reveals his impulse to spatialize time, to reduce everything to a spatial stasis and simultaneity \((BH, 1, p. 172)\).

It is this impulse which creates Gatsby's world as it appears in the novel, a reified world defined by its accumulation 'of enchanted objects' \((BH, 1, p. 198)\). In the world of the eternal party, the guests are reduced to another item beside 'the whisperings and the champagne and the stars', the orchestra a 'pitiful of oboes and trombones and saxophones and viols and piccolos, and low and high drums' \((BH, 1, pages 155, 156)\). People are 'primary colours, and hair bobbed in strange new ways, and shawls beyond the dreams of Castile' \((BH, 1, p. 165)\); the human world becomes a list of objects. Conversely, the object world is animated, as 'floating rounds of cocktails permeate the garden', 'Gatsby's gorgeous

\footnote{Carraway is, indeed, an excellent illustration of Bergson's 'cinematographic' illusion of simultaneity; see chapter 1, p. 29.}
car' lurches, a taxi groans, or a limousine is 'dilatory' \((BH, 1, \text{pages 158, 174, 188, 211})\). Thus Daisy's 'ripe mystery' for the officers stationed in Louisville is one of romances 'that were not musty and laid already in lavender but fresh and breathing and redolent of this year's shining motor-cars' \((BH, 1, \text{p. 242})\). Carraway's enchantment with Gatsby's world is an enchantment with this reified world; Cowley's observations concerning the development of a consumption ethic become important here.

Further limitations on Carraway's temporal awareness also suggest this intoxication with the immediate surfaces of a glittering object-world. His consciousness of temporal relations, as with subordinate relations, is reserved for the role of narrator: 'the Middle West now seemed like the ragged edge of the universe' \((BH, 1, \text{p. 127})\). The use of 'now' as a sentential adverb, here, implies an awareness of his own historical development on Carraway's part, an awareness of relations in time. Carraway also implies an understanding of Gatsby's history from the standpoint of the retrospective storyteller: 'Now, in the reaction, he was running down like an overwound clock'; 'Now it was again a green light on a dock' \((BH, 1, \text{p. 100})\). Much more often, however, 'now' appears in the structure 'x now' as a non-sentential adverb, recording an immediate perception without implying any temporal antecedent: 'a line of French windows, glowing now'; 'there was dancing now on the canvas in the garden'; 'she wanted her life shaped now, immediately - and the decision by some force - of love, of money, of unquestionable practicality - that was close at hand' \((BH, 1, \text{pages 130, 161, 245})\).\(^{50}\) This last example of Daisy's need for immediate, spatial definition, might be taken as a definition of the debased form which the transcendental ideal has taken in this world.

The possibility that the ideal has become an intoxication with the present moment is raised by the descriptions of Gatsby's parties:

\(^{50}\) Nearly three-quarters of the uses of 'now' in the novel are in this form.
By seven o'clock the orchestra has arrived, no thin five-piece affair... The last swimmers have come in from the beach now and are dressing upstairs; the cars from New York are parked five deep in the drive, and already the halls and salons and verandas are gaudy with primary colours... The bar is in full swing (BH, 1, p. 155).

This present tense suggests a present-centred intoxication, rather than the timeless entity of the ideal. Daisy's voice 'that the ear follows up and down, as if each speech is an arrangement of notes that will never be played again' is another example of this (BH, 1, p. 132). Later, Carraway remarks that 'the instant her voice broke off ... I felt the basic insincerity of what she had said' (BH, 1, p. 139); a reasonable assumption would be that Carraway is literally entranced by Daisy, unable to judge her, while she speaks. There are also two clear cases of intoxication in the novel; the party at Tom's New York apartment where 'everything that happened has a dim, hazy cast over it', and the first of Gatsby's parties at which 'two finger-bowls of champagne, and the scene had changed... into something significant, elemental, and profound' (BH, 1, pages 147, 161).

It is at least possible, now, that the famous closing eulogy to the ideal is a further case of intoxication with the experience of 'a brief transitory enchanted moment' in which man 'must have held his breath in the presence of this continent' (BH, 1, p. 268). This closing affirmation of the ideal, certainly, is based on a speculative structure whose stability depends upon the success of Carraway's narrative strategy. Once this strategy is understood, the movement of the final paragraphs also becomes clear:

He had come a long way to this blue lawn, and his dream must have seemed so close that he could hardly fail to grasp it. He did not know that it was already far behind him, somewhere back in that vast obscurity beyond the city, where the dark fields of the republic rolled on under the night.

Gatsby believed in the green light, the orgastic future that year by year recedes before us. It eluded us then, but that's no matter - tomorrow we will run faster, stretch out our arms further... And one fine morning -

So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past (BH, 1, p. 268).
Three crucial shifts in the narrative, finally, lay bare Carraway's strategy. The narrative shifts from third-person to first-person reference, from singular to plural, and from past to present tense; that is, it shifts from Gatsby's supposed past to a present plurality which includes Carraway. Gatsby merges with Carraway in the final statement of the ideal, in the present moment of the narrative itself. Thus, the 'orgastic future' is Carraway's continuing ideal of the transcendental moment, a dream of recovering an ideal which, indeed, is the true beginning of the story Carraway has to tell; his narrative has been the record of just such an attempt to recover this ideal in a reinterpretation of Gatsby's story.

In the light of the preceding discussion, it is now possible to propose an adequate characterization of Fitzgerald's treatment of the ideal of America in what is, certainly, his most extended examination of this theme. Two crucial facts have emerged. Firstly, the transcendental ideal has undergone significant mutation in Carraway; Carraway's 'moment' is an immersion in the material surfaces of a world of commodities, a reified absorption in the glitter of objects rather than an idealist and metaphysical attitude. Indeed, the 'transcendental' perspective has all but disappeared; as a result, the status of the ideal has been altered. It is no longer clear that the transcendental ideal can be traced back to a historical moment, as Carraway suggests in describing the possible reactions of the first Europeans on landing in America. Carraway needs to claim that the vision of transcendence, the experience of timelessness, has once been a historical, an actual experience, to endorse his claim that such an experience can be recovered and experienced again.

In this context, Carraway's narrative strategy becomes a vital piece
of evidence in determining Fitzgerald's treatment of this ideal. Using implication, imprecision and indirection in specific and systematic ways, Carraway undertakes to transform the actual world, and with it the particular historical manifestation of the 'ideal' which he himself claims to encounter, into the image of the ideal as he perceives it. Carraway, in effect, idealizes the facts at his disposal, and it is this process of idealization which is revealed in an examination of Carraway's behaviour as narrator of the story. By modifying his reader's perception of the world, Carraway hopes to transform the world itself, the object of this perception, in the image of the definitive ideal with which he informs his narrative. The reader perceives only the forms of Carraway's narrative act; it is this very fact, however, which allows the reader to see Carraway's idealizing processes at work. Such processes, therefore, belong correctly to a characterization of Carraway's activities rather than to Fitzgerald's own act as creator of the novel; *The Great Gatsby* is a novel about an idealist transformation of material reality, rather than Fitzgerald's own idealization. Fitzgerald, then, examines certain recurring American perspectives, rather than merely reiterating them; his novel resolves itself into a study of certain ways of perceiving, rather than an enunciation of some reality. Such stative action belongs to Carraway, and to Carraway's attempt to objectify and give substance to his own particular concept of the ideal, to have his own perception accepted as an adequate statement of empirical reality.

The altered status which must be given to the 'ideal' at the heart of Fitzgerald's debate has an immediate relevance to a critical appreciation of Fitzgerald's work. This ideal has been seen by many critics as having a specific historical occasion in Gatsby's life, a life lived in pursuit of this ideal, however much they have differed in their assessments of its existential possibilities. On the evidence which now can
be brought regarding Carraway's perception and behaviour, however, the subject for discussion is less certain. Carraway's perception and interpretation of Gatsby's life, rather than this life as such, is all that can be known from the narrative. So sparse are the know facts about Gatsby which are verifiable independently of Carraway's narration, the 'Gatsby' presented in the narrative can accurately be described as Carraway's creation; Gatsby, in short, is the embodiment of Carraway's ideal, the representative emblem of Carraway's imaginative idealization of the world. Consequently, Gatsby's life can no longer be adequately interpreted as the record of the historical possibilities of the ideal, either for one of his own contemporaries like Carraway, or for those seventeenth-century sailors to whom Carraway refers at the close of the novel. The historical moment in which the ideal is achieved, the transcendent moment as a lived reality, is also framed by Carraway's narration, and so is also revealed as Carraway's imaginative construction. Both Gatsby and the ideal are known only as the reflections of the narrator's consciousness, hidden from the reader by the very narrative techniques which characterize Carraway's activity as the reporter and interpreter of Gatsby's story; this story, essentially, is an idealist structure. Once 'Gatsby' is seen in this way as Carraway's own idealist projection, the empirical basis of Carraway's report is cast, at the least, into doubt. On the evidence of Carraway's procedures, moreover, the supposed empirical basis of the story can only be understood once it is seen to depend on these very procedures and to be a systematic fabrication of an apparent reality without a verifiable empirical reference.

The Great Gatsby, thus, becomes the record of the means whereby one human consciousness, influenced by an idealist dream, tries to construct an idealist entity under the guise of reality. Fitzgerald's debate between the real and the ideal is, in effect, a discussion of the ontological status of certain ways of framing the world, and the reality of
Carraway's construction, rather than its valuation, is the principal question asked. Carraway's narrative is a case-history of the development of an antihistorical idealism, and the formation of an idealist historiography. Carraway has tried to make the ideal appear real; Fitzgerald's creation, however, has revealed this process in operation. For this reason, it pertains centrally to any account of the antihistorical strand in American culture, in exploring both the operation of the antihistoricist idea and the important role of this idea in the developing history of American society. In a more subtle creation than he has often been accredited with, Fitzgerald can be said to have found a central dynamic of that society, and an important element in its cultural history. His subject is the 'illusions of a nation' \( \textit{BH}, \text{2}, \text{p. 194} \), and the consciousness which accompanies those illusions; his characters either end in disillusionment, or in a cul-de-sac where they must prove 'the unreality of reality' like Carraway \( \textit{BH}, \text{1}, \text{p. 203} \). In either case, Fitzgerald indicates that the antihistorical impulse has destructive and constrictive consequences.
Chapter 3
Ernest Hemingway: Ritual Life and the Flight From Time

In the introductory cultural survey in chapter one, it was suggested that Hemingway may be seen as an heir to the attitude of transcendental wonder characteristic of a writer like Thoreau. It was also suggested that, on the evidence of Hemingway's presentation of this perspective, the transcendental "moment" has undergone major modifications in the decades intervening between him and Thoreau. Given Hemingway's influential position in twentieth-century American literature, therefore, this represents a significant development; at the same time as Fitzgerald is exploring the illusory ideal of a unique, timeless land, Hemingway is trying to retain some sense of that ideal, however much reduced in comparison to the ideal of the transcendentalists. Hemingway's response to a felt loss of the ideal space of the virgin land is an inward-looking metaphysic, an "inner space" possessing characteristics similar to that earlier ideal but without any external referent in some actual land. The ideal becomes a generalized existential supposition, used as a response to what Tanner calls a 'horror of vacancy' (The Reign of Wonder, p. 236); it is, therefore, a defensive strategy lacking Thoreau's confidence and sense of certainty.

This diminished and diminishing sense of a transcendental possibility has important consequences for any examination of Hemingway's work. The identification of an idealist element in Hemingway's writings seems to contradict what has almost become an orthodoxy about him, namely that he is a strictly materialist writer intent on objective reporting of empirical reality. The 1954 Nobel Prize citation, thus, enshrines Hemingway as one
who 'honestly and undauntedly, reproduces the genuine features of the hard countenance of the age'. An assumed correspondence between the content of Hemingway's work and the famous style, with its apparent elimination of subjective reference, has been taken as the central evidence in favour of this reading. A few of Hemingway's own maxims are regularly repeated here. A writer must 'put down what really happened in action; what the actual things were which produced the emotion that you experienced', and use the 'element of timelessness in the emotion to record 'the real thing, the sequence of motion and fact which made the emotion'. Phrases like 'the real thing' have a particular resonance for Hemingway. Again, the writer must confine his creative act to this real thing and not enlarge upon what it is he is recording; prose 'is architecture, not interior decoration' and only that which is 'absolutely necessary and irreplaceable' should appear (DA, p. 182). Hemingway, indeed, goes further than this to suggest that 'if a writer of prose knows enough about what he is writing about he may omit things that he knows', in the expectation that the reader will be able to supply them; 'the dignity of movement of an iceberg is due to only one-eighth of it being above water' (DA, p. 183). If a writer can once see the world 'clear and as a whole', he need not state everything since 'any part you make will represent the whole if it's made truly' (DA, p. 261).

Immediate empirical evidence, then, is the only admissible material for the writer, and a strictly objective reportage of actuality the only method. What Hemingway is claiming here is a style which, as Malcolm Cowley remarks, 'seemed to be a transcription of the real world'. It demands, of necessity, an impersonality akin to the typical manner of the journalist. William James's 'radical empiricism', it would seem, has

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1 Ernest Hemingway, Death in the Afternoon (London, 1932), pages 10, 182. Subsequent references to this edition are given parenthetically as DA.

2 Malcolm Cowley, 'Hemingway at Midnight', New Republic, 111 (1944), 190-95 (p. 190).
provided Hemingway with a literary aesthetic: 'to be radical, an empiricism must neither admit into its constructions any element that is not directly experienced, nor exclude from them any element that is directly experienced'. This radical empiricism offers a way of apprehending 'pure' experience, which is 'the instant field of the present' (James, p. 13).

His own claims to the contrary notwithstanding, however, Hemingway's mode of presentation is less straightforward than might seem to be the case. The famous 'iceberg' metaphor, for example, allows for a narratorial objectivity only if a partial exposition can indeed be said to stand for the whole. By refraining from giving an exhaustive account of the 'real thing', Hemingway has introduced a principle of selection into his method, if not an actual interpretative act into his representations of events in the world. Hemingway's hope that the reader will supply information not expressed in the surface structures of the sentences which constitute his works indicates that an inferential structure is central to his method. His works, in fact, are far from determinate structures, and demand the exercise of an implicit subjectivity; Hemingway needs a reader's interpretative act, a subjective response to a bare surface of seemingly objective fact, for his method to work effectively. The reader must supply the unseen bulk of the 'iceberg' to complement Hemingway's own exposition of objective fact; given this condition, it is no longer possible to claim that Hemingway produces a 'transcription' of the real world. What he transcribes is an experience and a perception of that world which, as was seen in Fitzgerald, is something quite different from a statement of how the world is.

A yet more significant indication of Hemingway's idealist leanings appears in his idea of a fundamental 'timelessness'; the 'real thing', it turns out, will be valid always if only it can be stated 'purely enough' (DA, p. 10), an idea basically similar to William James's conception of

3 William James, Essays in Radical Empiricism, p. 22.
'pure' experience as an absolute to which temporality is not essential (James, p. 67). 4 Certainly, Hemingway is indebted to James for a philosophy which celebrates the primacy of the immediate moment over historical consciousness. The interpretation of what this 'timelessness' means in Hemingway introduces an important area of critical contention. For John McCormick, Hemingway is an idealist 'post-Romantic', working from the 'impulses and practices of writers in the historical Romantic period', for whom fiction is 'a form of knowledge in which history may and frequently does equal illusion'. 5 Hemingway's world 'of ever unfolding present, rather than past, events', constructed as 'a series of existential moments', firmly places him in the American antihistoricist tradition. (Fiction as Knowledge, pages 114, 116). This tradition, in Hemingway's case, takes the form of a depleted consciousness, a consciousness confined to the immediate experiential moment. For other critics, conversely, this ahistorical perspective has seemed sufficient proof of Hemingway's transcendentalist leanings, leading towards an idealist 'sensation of timelessness in time ... presented as a pattern of action in time so exactly in accord with what has always happened everywhere that there is no discrepancy between the immediate enactment and the eternal act'. 6 The fisherman in The Old Man and the Sea, thus, is claimed to discover a 'transcendent purpose' in his struggle with a great marlin (Sylvester, p. 132).

The consequences of these divergent interpretations are very different. Where one critic suggests that Hemingway's aesthetic is a diminution of

4 The antihistoricism implicit in James's philosophy is discussed in chapter one.


the possibilities of human consciousness, another will claim that this same aesthetic is an expansion of consciousness into an awareness of universality, and indeed eternality. This latter view tends towards a mystical interpretation of Hemingway; his own remark that the truest writing should lead to a 'fourth and fifth dimension', thus, has sent numerous critics in search of his meaning here. A 'fifth-dimensional prose', thus, draws on a 'literary ideal ... of "immediate empiricism"' in an attempt to communicate the immediate experience of "the perpetual now"'. This use of 'empiricism' is a curious one, since what is being proposed is that the immediate experience has resonances from a mystical, race-memory, suggested by 'recurrent myth or ritual patterns' (Carpenter, p. 714). Both these interpretations, however, take it as agreed that it is Hemingway's characteristic style and structure which provides the evidence of what Hemingway does when he attempts to create this sensation of timelessness. In the discussion below, therefore, Hemingway's style, often mentioned but all too rarely examined in any depth, will be taken as the major evidence upon which an analysis of Hemingway's aesthetic may be made. Such a stylistic analysis can reveal the cultural and psychological implications rooted in Hemingway's modes of representation, and so reveal Hemingway's 'objectivity' to be a radically anti-historical subjectivity which is itself the correlate of a residual idealist perspective. This perspective remains consistent throughout Hemingway's literary career; Hemingway's 'cult of sensation', thus, does not establish a material world, but rather a world of perceptual sensation coincident with individual sensory experience, a world without objective reference.

The crucial evidence which suggests that Hemingway's perspective is a diminution rather than an enlargement of consciousness is found in the forms of possible relatedness of things in the world as represented in the stylistic structures characteristic of his writing. These forms witness a drastic limitation of explicit relatedness both between sentences and, clausally, within sentences. In _Fiesta_, Hemingway's first novel, this limited knowledge of relational pattern has been seen as a faithful record of the psychological trauma of a post-war generation intent on leaving the past behind and getting on with the immediate business of daily existence. A limited apprehension of structure, in this argument, leads to a 'singularity ... in the sense of emotional isolation ... inseparable from the novel's theme of moral atrophy'. The expatriates who populate the world of _Fiesta_, and in particular the novel's narrator Jake Barnes whose famous wartime wounding has invited much critical attention, are certainly isolates who have separated themselves from the social and historical circumstances and developments around them. There is certainly a sense of fragmentation in the novel which derives, at some level, from the particular experiences of the major characters. It is for this reason that Delmore Schwartz criticizes Hemingway, seeing in him a 'lost generation' attitudinizing narrowly confined to a particular time and place and soon to become outdated and out of place. If individual isolation is one correlate of a disordered and fragmented social fabric and the meaning of Hemingway's style, however, a problem soon emerges once Hemingway's work as a whole is examined. The stylistic structures of _Fiesta_ remain characteristic of Hemingway throughout his


literary career, which suggests that the psychological complexes which these forms represent cannot, after all, be given a single and local historical referent. Rather, an existential ideal is encoded in Hemingway's narrative techniques, an ideal substantially unchanged in the course of his various writings. This ideal may be said to be present in embryonic form in *Fiesta*, and to have been refined in Hemingway's subsequent works in the sense that a progressive elimination of particular referents, like the Great War, paves the way for a generalized statement of this ideal in a late novel like *The Old Man and the Sea*. With this in mind, therefore, the following analysis of *Fiesta* should be seen as an examination of Hemingway's characteristic narratorial consciousness at an early stage of its development.

Hemingway's arrangement of statements is characterized by its regular use of paratactic structures, structures lacking overt connectives between the individual items. With this absence of explicit relatedness, sentences become associated by juxtapositioning, contingency, and sequentiality, as in the following example: 'she cuddled against me and put my arm around her. She looked up to be kissed. She touched me with one hand and I put her hand away'.

Here, Jake Barnes is describing an encounter with a Parisian prostitute; although he is actually narrating a group of causally related actions, however, the description which he gives consists of a group of discrete statements associated only contingently in serial sequence, without a causative or relational pattern marked in the surface structure of his sentences. Using such a form, the narrative suggests a random universe where a patterned world might otherwise be discerned, or at least suggests a world to which the narrator is not going to assign pattern. Barnes describes his own activity, as well as that of those

12 Ernest Hemingway, *Fiesta* (London, 1927), p. 21. *Fiesta*, the title given to the European edition of *The Sun Also Rises*, is the preferred usage here; subsequent references are abbreviated parenthetically in the text as *F*. 
people whose behaviour he is relaying to the reader, in this way:

I went out on to the sidewalk and walked down towards the Boulevard St. Michel, passed the tables of the Rotonde, still crowded, looked across the street at the Dôme ... Someone waved at me from a table. I did not see who it was, and went on. I wanted to get home ... I passed Ney's statue standing among the new-leaved chestnut-trees in the arc-light. There was a faded purple wreath leaning against the base. I stopped and read the inscription. (F, p. 37).

Barnes seems to record his movements in a journalistic shorthand as a series of discrete facts, presenting them as if by a sequence of grid references mapping his progress. The single continuity, in this structure, is the subject 'I' present at each point in the sequence.

In such a sequence, Barnes provides all the relevant individual facts about what he does on one particular evening, giving an apparently factual and neutral account of what takes place. As an example of the 'iceberg' technique of omission and minimum statement, however, this indicates something curious about Barnes's method of recording events. What Barnes omits are the conjunctions, adverbs and prepositions which would provide the connective tissue of his narrative, registering relations of cause, purpose, result, and so on. There seems no very obvious reason for some of these omissions; such is the case, for example, with the lack of an overt marking of the relation between Barnes's walking past the Dôme and his wish to get home, or his stopping at Ney's statue from a curiosity to read the inscription on a wreath. Nonetheless, Barnes adopts a narrative technique which suppresses the expression of grammatical functions which a more complex syntax of relation and subordination would not suppress.

Other examples of this idiosyncratic syntactic simplification can provide us with clues about Barnes's rationale here. Barnes recalls an exchange with Brett Ashley late one evening: 'She was gone out of the room. I lay face down on the bed. I was having a bad time ... I was lying with my face away from her. I did not want to see her' (F, p. 66). Again, statements are arranged sequentially, without relational markers; the relation between Barnes's feelings and Brett's presence must be
supplied by the reader. Other evidence in the narrative makes this possible; we learn that Barnes's impotence has placed a strain on his relationship with Brett, a strain leading to despair newly brought into the forefront of the narrator's consciousness by Brett's arrival at his apartment with her latest lover. In looking back on these events, Barnes is suppressing an unequivocal statement of the relations involved here, and other examples suggest that this is a purposive, motivated obscuration of relational pattern rather than some stoical understatement: 'Brett stood by the bar. Cohn was talking to her'; 'I said good night to Brett at the bar. The Count was buying champagne' (F, pages 30, 36). There are important causative relations hidden in these contingent statements. Cohn has gone to the bar in pursuit of Brett, firstly, driven by a growing infatuation with her, while Count Mippipopolous's presence is part of his own plan to seduce Brett. In both cases, the seemingly contingent juxtaposition of Brett with some man at some bar obscures a planned relationship which Barnes is quite conscious of, but wishes to present as a random occurrence without particular meaning; both men sooner or later will become Brett's lover. The consciousness of this fact is deeply hurtful and disturbing for Barnes, whose own impotence constrains his relations with Brett. Therefore, he suppresses those relations denied to him, preferring to present them as contingencies, in order to cope with his own anxieties. A similar procedure is followed in reporting his reactions to this meeting with Brett: 'I was thinking about Brett ... Then all of a sudden I started to cry. Then after a while it was better and I lay in bed and listened to the heavy trams go by and way down the street, and then I went to sleep'. (F, p. 39). The emotional response, the crying, is presented as contingent to his thinking about Brett; a selective principle is at work, by which certain known relations remain unstated. Barnes's narrative technique serves as a defensive strategy which may create an apparent detachment in which he is protected from the intrusions of the outside world, the intrusions of social and historical
circumstance. Such a technique, consequently, indicates that Barnes's narrative is far from the objective reportage which it had first seemed to be.

A fracturing of syntax produces a similar effect: 'There was a crest on the announcement. Like Zizi the Greek duke. And that count. The count was funny. Brett had a title, too. Lady Ashley. To hell with Brett. To hell with you, Lady Ashley'. (F, p. 38). This disconnected syntax fragments the train of Barnes's thinking, and submerges certain important linkages in that train of thought. An invitation to a wedding reminds Barnes of Mippipopolous, which in turn prompts him to think about Brett Ashley, with whom Count Mippipopolous is currently having an affair. Barnes, however, wishes to thrust from him his consciousness of this relationship, and indeed the entire expatriate group of a wealthy and leisured upper-class; Barnes is himself, on the contrary, not of this group and is in Paris because of his job as a foreign correspondent for a news agency. Not only does he break complex sentences down into sequences of simple sentences, he also breaks down single clauses into smaller units when the occasion demands. Such a fracturing does not capture the rhythm of conversation, as is often supposed, but is rather a characteristic Hemingway mannerism which contravenes the bases of conversation in mutual intelligibility and a commonality of reference. It extends a disconnectingness of perception; while the complex sentence orders experience by its use of subordination and relations, Hemingway's preference for 'serial, simple sentences' is a declaration of 'the integrity of each thing that happens' where 'no one thing at the moment it is occurring can possibly be seen as subordinate to some other thing not then occurring'. Such a usage can be taken as a rejection of 'the presumptuousness of imposing upon human undergoing a synthetic scheme of proportion', an appropriate

13 L. Ziff, 'The Social Basis of Hemingway's Style', Poetics, 7 (1978), 417–23 (p. 421). Ziff sees this style as appropriate only to the fragmented world of the early fictions; he does not see the construction of a disconnected world as a constant concern in Hemingway.
attitude for an age in which 'public ideals are false and truth resides solely in unverbalized private experience' (Ziff, pages 420, 422). This interpretation becomes problematical, however, when similar stylistic traits are seen to emerge from Hemingway's later so-called 'public' novels To Have and Have Not and For Whom The Bell Tolls. Hemingway's style has less to do with a measured response to contemporaneous social-historical conditions than it has to do with his personal pursuit of an existential ideal; the pursuit of a style of isolation will increasingly be envisioned in terms of this ideal as opposed to being a personal physic to set against a fractured social world.

Contingency again characterizes the typical syntactic formations in Hemingway; a regular use of simple conjunction without explicit subordination, marked by 'and', points to a consciousness determined not to judge, compare, or ascribe meaning between separate statements. For example:

It was a warm spring night and I sat at a table on the terrace of the Napolitain after Robert had gone, watching it get dark and the electric signs come on, and the red and green stop-and-go traffic signal, and the crowd going by, and the horse-cabs clippety-clopping along at the edge of the solid taxi traffic, and the poules going by, singly and in pairs, looking for the evening meal. (F, p. 20).

Barnes presents himself as a passive receptor for a sequence of immediate perceptions; this use of simple conjunction commits him to no statements regarding relatedness. The internal clause structures of sentences are stripped of resultative, causative, or consequential subordination: 'the daughter came up and wanted to know what we would drink. The proprietor got up on a high stool beside the dancing-floor and began to play the accordion... Someone asked Georgette to dance, and I went over to the bar' (F, p. 26). In each sentence, a relation between two events is rendered as a contingency, and even the relation of heat to human perspiration is

14 The extreme case is the narrator of 'After the Storm' in Winner Take Nothing (1934), whose 165 uses of 'and' pack into a story of just six pages.
recorded in this way: 'It was hot and we came off the floor perspiring' 
\((F, p. 26)\). The significance of this use of 'and' becomes clear if some 
form like 'so that' is substituted in its place.

Yet again, the rationale of such a clause-formation becomes clearer 
in some cases where Barnes has reason to reduce the sense of relatedness 
to a minimum. Such is the case where Barnes records Brett Ashley's 
entrance into a Paris bar surrounded by an entourage of young homosexuals:

'With them was Brett. She looked very lovely, and she was very much 
with them' \((F, p. 26)\). The possibility that Brett's present happiness 
is connected to her present company is disagreeable to Barnes. On a 
number of occasions, indeed, Barnes chooses to obscure certain things 
about Brett: 'she stood holding the glass and I saw Robert Cohn looking 
at her'; 'Her head was back. I saw her face in the lights from the 
open shops, then it was dark, then I saw her face clearly ... The street 
was dark again and I kissed her'; 'my arm was around her and she was 
leaning back against me, and we were quite calm' \((F, pages 28, 32, 33)\). 
Again, Cohn's attraction to Brett is intolerable to Barnes, and is given 
as a contingency. This same tactic is used by Barnes in his record of 
what takes place after he and Brett leave this bar that same night. By 
recording only the immediate sensation of passing through alternate zones 
of light and shadow as their taxi travels through night-time Paris, 
Barnes avoids committing himself to an overt statement of an equation 
between this environmental condition of changing light and his own 
perception of Brett sitting beside him; his ability to see Brett is 
contingent upon the necessary condition of being in a zone of light in which 
such a sighting is possible. Other possible relations are also absent 
from the clause structures. That Barnes will kiss Brett only in darkness, 
for example, presented as a merely contingent circumstance, is actually a 
suggestive insight into Barnes's attitude towards his relationship with 
Brett; nonetheless, this relation has been eliminated from the sentence 
structure as it is given, in what amounts to a concealment of vital
information crucial to any understanding of the nature of Barnes's relationship with Brett.

Critical disagreement over the meaning of these structures runs parallel to the divergent interpretations of Hemingway discussed in the opening section of this chapter. The idealist interpretation is present in the view that Hemingway's characteristic serial coordination is a rejection of the organization of experience 'into hierarchies of abstraction, value and time', since 'polysyndeton democratizes sensations and impressions' and preserves their 'primitive fullness and immediacy'. Against this, 'the and coupling suggests that there is no judgemental relationship between the clauses connected'; it is 'anti-historical', the representation of a world 'of ever-unfolding present rather than past phenomena'. The first viewpoint here depends on a somewhat eccentric analysis of the conjunction 'and', ignoring its limited grammatical function; besides this, it is quite unable to cope with the central uses of 'and' in the novel which are under discussion here. These forms can be understood only once two aspects of Barnes's narrative techniques are recognized. Firstly, Barnes is not only isolated, he is also engaged in creating specific areas of isolation and detachment for himself by confining normal consciousness to sensory immediacy. Secondly, his use of simple structures, with their lack of relational and dependent patterns, may be used to cloak actually existing forms of relatedness, rather than merely to record an actual absence of relationship.

This constriction of consciousness is further characterized by the limited occasions where Barnes does use subordination, as for example in his use of the subordinator 'so (that)'. Excluding reports of direct speech, which give less reliable information about the narratorial consciousness, this form appears in a specific set of structures. Firstly, there are thirteen occasions where 'so' appears in a sentence-initial position: 'So we thought deeply for a while'; 'So I gave him two copper coins'; 'Two of our Basques came in and insisted on buying a drink. So they bought a drink and then we bought a drink'; 'Brett was wearing a Basque beret. So was Mike' (F, pages 52, 111, 123, 154). The major syntactic division introduced by the separation of related statements into distinct sentences attenuates a logical subordination underlying these statements; the Basques buy Barnes a drink as a result of their insistence on doing so, for example, and yet Barnes's sentence structures weaken this subordination by introducing a syntactic contingency. The surface syntactic structure, as it were, is at odds with the implied semantic structure of these statements, where this syntactic contingency runs counter to a semantic subordinate relation; in short, Barnes's syntax depletes the relational impact of 'so'. This usage complements the use of simple conjunction in clause structures, in allowing the narrator to avoid, or at least attenuate, any statement of relational pattern. The last example cited above, moreover, may be another case of Barnes obscuring certain things about Brett Ashley. Mike is Brett's upper-class English fiancé, a reminder once more of Barnes's own constricted relationship with Brett; his presence beside Brett, and even his wearing a beret similar to Brett's beret, is not a random event.

Another characteristic use of 'so' sees it used in conjunction with a negative. There are some twenty examples of this structure; for example, 'no-one was stirring downstairs, so I unbolted the door and went out'; 'Brett was stopped just outside the door because she had no hat, so we went out again'; 'I knew I could not get into the ring in time to see the
bulls come in, so I shoved through the crowd to the fence'; 'I could not make the elevator work, so I walked up' ([F], pages 130, 178, 225, 278).

In each case, Barnes's action is predicated on a negative condition - the absence of people, the lack of a hat, a lack of time, or the nonfunctioning of an elevator.\textsuperscript{18} Taken together, these forms, although encoding a subordinate relation which includes causation, illustrate a revealing curiosity about those modes of action involving Barnes himself to which he will attribute any relatedness. Barnes's extensive loss of agency, or perhaps his wish to represent himself as having lost such agency, is revealed in this relational pattern formed around absence, incomprehension, closure or negation, something which becomes particularly significant when associated with Brett: 'she was not there, so I sat down and wrote some letters ... Brett did not turn up, so about quarter to six I went down to the bar ... Brett had not been in the bar either, and so I looked for her upstairs' ([F], p. 50). Barnes's actions very largely depend upon a series of existential negatives, of which one of the most important is the negated relationship with Brett; he seems able, in effect, only to perceive his own behaviour in relation to a negative state, which is again a serious constraint upon his ability to understand relational patterns. Causal relations only cease to be a problem for Barnes, and so can be safely represented, when they involve some generalized environmental condition completely outwith human agency, like the weather: 'it was hot enough so that it felt good to wade in a cold stream' ([F], p. 45).\textsuperscript{19}

In the light of this systematic elimination or attenuation of relational structures elsewhere, therefore, the one consistent pattern which does

\textsuperscript{18} This structure is also found in Fitzgerald, in \textit{The Great Gatsby}, as indeed is the use of the conjunction 'and'; the place of these forms in Carraway's manipulative techniques in Fitzgerald's novel may suggest an interesting possibility with regard to Hemingway's use of them.

\textsuperscript{19} Barnes will also admit an occasional statement of causation if this relates to some generally unknown or uncertain event. Thus, he talks about a crowded restaurant: 'Someone had put it in the American Woman's club list ... so we had to wait forty-five minutes for a table' ([F], p. 88).
emerge from Barnes's narrative now assumes particular significance. The uses of 'so' which are used as unequivocal statements of relations are all associated with the various ritual activities which constitute Hemingway's famous 'code'. This is a vital configuration because these activities are the substance of the residual ideal at the base of Hemingway's supposed aesthetic. In *Fiesta*, fishing and bullfighting are given an importance which makes them appear qualitatively different from every other experience: 'It was a hot day, so I slit them and shucked out the insides'; 'the sword handlers opened the heavy leather sword-cases so the red wrapped hilt of the sheaf of swords showed'; 'Romero flicked his cape so the colour caught the bull's eye'; 'Romero was close enough so the bull could see him' (*F*, pages 138, 243, 249, 252). These two structured forms of behaviour, the act of fishing and the act of bullfighting, are presented as consistent, whole, and the end product of a conscious intent to achieve a patterned mode of existence. This pattern carries over, indeed, into associated fiesta activities such as drinking: 'he tipped the big five-litre bag up and squeezed it so the wine hissed against the back of his throat' (*F*, p. 180). The aficionado recognises the techniques of the ritual act as a source of pattern, and Barnes attempts to convey this knowledge to Brett: 'I told her about watching the bull ... and got her to watching the picador place the point of his pic so that she saw what it was all about, so that it became more something that was going on with a definite end' (*F*, p. 192). In direct contradiction of his narratorial behaviour for most of the novel, Barnes here takes it upon himself not only to assert pattern, but also to instruct others in such a pattern. Indeed, Barnes's single certain causative act in the novel is his proposal and planning of the trip to Pamplona for the fishing and the bullfights, and this is marked in the stylistic form of the relevant statements: 'I ... put in extra time at the office getting things ahead so I could leave it in charge of my secretary when Bill Gorton and I should shove off to
Spain the end of June'; 'I wrote out an itinerary so they could follow us'; 'he had gotten the money I sent him from Paris and renewed my subscription so that was all set' (F, pages 81, 99, 111). The signification of this experience is embedded in the language of the narrative, in so far as it is presented as patterned behaviour.

For Hemingway, the bullfight is 'a tragedy' which is 'well ordered' and 'strongly disciplined by ritual', and the aficionado is one 'who has this sense of the tragedy and ritual of the fight' (DA, pages 15-16). In Fiesta, the bullfighter Romero signals this in his performance which 'was all so slow and so controlled' (F, p. 250); his ability to stand 'altogether by himself' (F, p. 188) is the mark of the ideal of a perfect self-sufficiency which comes, for the bullfighter, 'from living every day with death' (DA, p. 59). He moves from 'a complex emotional state to a more economical, or orderly state, which is maintained by various rituals of survival'. It is this final achieved state of being which has been claimed by some critics as the proof of Hemingway's transcendental ideal; the further characterization of the activity associated with this state as a ritual of survival, however, points to the diminished form which this ideal has taken in Hemingway. If Barnes has established a behavioural pattern in the bullfight as a source of meaning, this pattern must nevertheless be seen against the loss of pattern in substantial areas of Barnes's life. The more 'orderly' state which Barnes achieves seems rather more a


21 N. Comley, 'Hemingway: The Economics of Survival', Novel, 12 (1979), 244-53 (p. 245). Comley traces the interaction of the ritual act with economics, which further suggests the alteration in the ideal - the ideal which becomes a pursuit of money recalls many Fitzgerald characters. Money, in fact, has a causative quality for Barnes: 'I paid my way into enough things that I liked, so that I had a good time' (F, p.171). See also P.D. Morrow, 'The Bought Generation: Money in The Sun Also Rises', Genre, 13 (1980), 51-69; 'money serves as a continual means for Hemingway to define and develop his characters within their circles of frustration' (p. 55).
radical simplification of experience than a discovery of an essential truth about experience, \(^{22}\) a depletion rather than an expansion of consciousness, a defensive strategy, in short, against a void of non-being. In some areas of his life, Barnes has already implied that an encroaching negation is influencing his daily life; the trip to Pamplona, thus, becomes a temporary stay against such a negation.

A constraint on possible temporal pattern accompanies this limitation on the expression of causative relatedness; this constraint confirms the antihistoricism latent in Barnes's reluctance to report more than a sequence of immediately contingent events. This is seen most clearly in serial constructions using the temporal adverb 'then' as part of a simple conjunction: 'I watched a good looking girl walk past ... and then saw the first one coming back again'; 'I was bored enough. Just then from the other room someone called; 'the taxi went up the hill, passed the lighted square, then on into the dark, still climbing, then levelled out on to a dark street behind St. Etienne du Mont ... then turned on to the cobbles of the Rue Mauffetard ... I saw her face in the lights ..., then it was dark, then I saw her face clearly' (F, pages 20, 23, 32). 'Then' is being used here to record a conjunction between certain discrete moments, rather more than being used to describe a continuous development over time whose overall pattern the narrator wishes to convey. Something of the significance of this structure may be seen by comparing Hemingway's characteristic form '(and) then X' with the different form of 'X then'; a statement such as 'I watched one girl walk past and then saw a second girl come back' would become 'I watched one girl walk past and saw a second girl come back then'. In this latter sentence, where 'then' appears in a final position, the sequential implication is replaced by one of temporal structure; the narrator here tries to relate two perceived events in a temporal pattern.

\(^{22}\) Such a simplification recalls, perhaps, Carraway's resolve to look at things through a single window in *The Great Gatsby* - a resolve to admit only such information as fits the narratorial perspective.
The focus of the statement has been altered so as to identify the temporal relationship between the two events.

The use of the adverb 'now' also illustrates the forms of temporal awareness which Barnes allows himself. Characteristically, 'now' is used to mark an immediate experience or perception; 'she was sitting up now'; 'we were sitting now like two strangers'; 'I liked it now'; 'he was being confidential now'; 'the steer was down now'; 'I was not groggy now ... The crowd were running fast now' (F, pages 33, 34, 111, 116, 162, 225).

Although he is narrating events in a past tense, Barnes consistently strives to render these events as if they were happening at the present moment, in the same moment as his narration. The form 'X now' records an immediacy of perception, without an explicit temporal referentiality; only the present state, the experiential immediacy, is reconstructed.

Barnes seems to wish to re-experience things which have happened to him, to relive the experience rather than to construct a retrospective pattern for that experience; as a result, his narration presents an incomplete action, a non-finite immediacy which now emerges as a general existential ideal in Hemingway.

If the successive events in the narrative are recorded outwith any apparent overall temporal pattern, however, there yet remain residual areas where Barnes is prepared to commit himself to the presentation of such a pattern. The important point to observe here is that these areas of observed pattern are essentially the same areas where Barnes is seen to perceive causative relations, as marked in his characteristic clause structures. An awareness of temporal pattern is marked by a use of 'now' as a sentential adverb, in the form 'now X'; for example, 'we were going through farming country ... Now as we went higher there was a wind blowing the grain ... Now there were only patches of grain' (F, p. 122). In a

23 Again, there is a parallel here with an idealist desire to repeat the past in The Great Gatsby.
sentence-initial position modifying the entire statement, 'now' marks an explicit temporal referentiality; the focus of the sentence is on a temporal disjunction from the preceding statement, recording two or more discrete points in time which the narrator is setting into a temporal structure. As he travels into the mountains to Burguete, Barnes is fully aware of the passage of time; the significance of such an awareness is that it becomes apparent just as Barnes is setting out on his fishing trip, itself a ritually patterned form of behaviour. This awareness is an integral element in the act of fishing itself: 'they looked nice in the ferns, and now the bag was bulky' (F, p. 139). The fiesta also offers a focus for temporal pattern: 'Now on the day of the starting of the fiesta of San Fermin they had been in the wine-shops ... since early morning' (F, p. 175). Again, Barnes perceives the decline of the powers of a famous bullfighter over the course of time: 'Belmonte was no longer well enough. Things were not the same and now life only came in flashes' (F, p. 248). The dimensions of Barnes's temporal consciousness are either immediate sensory perception or the ritual act; significant pattern once more adheres to ritual and its attendant techniques. Interestingly, Barnes adds Brett to his sources of temporal pattern: 'her eyes had different depths ... Now you could see all the way into them'; 'That was it. Send a girl off with one man. Introduce her to another to go off with him. Now go and bring her back' (F, pages 33, 277). Barnes feels that his relationship with Brett is like being 'in a nightmare ... something repeated', a ritual which he feels is 'something I had been through and that now I must go through again' (F, p. 77).

Barnes's narrative is one where 'the historical past cannot be evoked' (McCormick, American Literature 1919-1932, p. 49); a perception restricted to immediacy 'is so pervasive in Hemingway's novels that it appears to be a mode of thought for Hemingway'. 24 One obvious source of this constrained

24 J. Graham, 'Ernest Hemingway: The Meaning of a Style', Modern Fiction Studies, 6 (1960), 298-313 (p. 298).
consciousness is the history of psychological trauma which leads Barnes into an isolation which offers him security from his burdensome anxieties. His contingent world, with its strictly limited causative and temporal patterns, is one defence against the strain of social relations. This strain is constantly placed before the reader. Conversations, for example, are characterized by frequent questions and imperatives, mostly negative; during her first meeting with Barnes in the narrative, Brett tells him, "Don't talk about it ... Don't talk like a fool"; "Don't touch me ... You mustn't" (F, pages 29-30, 32). Barnes responds with "Don't you love me ... Isn't there anything we can do ... Don't you want to?" (F, pages 32, 33-34); the final conversation between Brett and Barnes follows this pattern, indeed, with Brett telling Barnes, "Don't get drunk ... Oh Jake, we could have had such a good time together", and Barnes's reply "Yes ... Isn't it pretty to think so" (F, p. 286). This confinement of consciousness to immediacy, however, cannot be entirely attributed to the specific psychological malaise of the war-wounded Jake Barnes. Barnes is also concerned to present an ideal behaviour, the substance of whose purpose is contained in the remark made by Harris, another of Hemingway's fishermen, that it is "wonderful how one loses track of time up here in the mountains" (F, p. 146). Barnes chooses a form of isolation as much as he has a form of isolation imposed upon him; if Barnes creates for himself a world of strictly limited pattern, nonetheless whatever psychological disability such a world involves is a disability or limitation found throughout Hemingway's works.

This concept of a behavioural ideal need not necessarily contradict the evidence in the text of a diminished consciousness of relation and

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25 This point is made in M.L. Ross, 'Bill Gorton, The Preacher in The Sun Also Rises', Modern Fiction Studies, 18 (1972-73), 517-27 (p. 518). The further claim that Gorton's own positive imperatives gain him a special position undervalues Gorton's peripheral status in the novel.
pattern. Rather, such evidence points to the ideal being itself a diminished reflex of the transcendentalist perspective. As the possible dimensions of consciousness are constricted, the ritual act which contains the potential of 'timelessness' becomes the maximal available pattern against a background of general disorder; an ideal remains integral to the perception of the world, but its situation has changed. Again, the evidence of Barnes's motivated obscuration of certain patterns of relationship, contradicting as it does the commonly held view that Barnes's values 'depend on an undistorted view of the actual conditions of life', points to the diminishing status of the ideal. Barnes's entire narrative strategy, indeed, is far from objective. In the opening chapter, Barnes presents what seems to be a biography of Robert Cohn by an interested, but anonymous, first-person narrator: 'Robert Cohn was once middleweight boxing champion of Princeton. Do not think that I am very much impressed by that as a boxing title, but it meant a lot to Cohn' (p. 9). This seems to be the beginning of a biography by a detached narrator of a man called Robert Cohn; on one occasion, indeed, Barnes refers directly to 'the story' he is telling, and so to his role as storyteller (p. 111). Throughout his narrative, Barnes continues to interject commentaries on everything from hotels to bullfights in a present-tense separated from the past tense of the narrative. Although Barnes does not quite carry through this dual role of storyteller and participant as completely as does Carraway in The Great Gatsby, this oblique beginning requires some comment; this is not, after all, Cohn's biography, and Cohn is soon revealed as the foil against whose incomprehension of the 'code' the aficion of the others is measured. Before his own involvement has become clear, Barnes has begun his antagonistic portrait of Cohn; one possible reason for the opening of the novel, literally a false start, may be an

attempt to present this hostile picture from the position of a detached narrator, with the different expectations this creates from that of an admittedly subjective account. Barnes distrusts Cohn as he distrusts 'all frank and simple people, especially when their stories hold together' (F, p. 9). Barnes's own story, of course, quite literally does not hold together except as a random series of contingencies; given his manipulation of his narrative elsewhere, however, it becomes a possibility that Barnes is also manipulating the sorts of relatedness which may occur, thus giving the appearance that only the 'code' activities contain a pattern.

The achieved ritual pattern embodies a general ideal in Hemingway. Barnes's 'trauma' is integrated into this pattern in the subsequent fiction, to become a generalized existential condition against which the code is enacted. A specific social-historical condition is generalized into an extra-temporal, exteriorized, existential given. In the discussion which follows, the development of this ritual pattern will be traced, firstly in the works from In Our Time (1926), through A Farewell to Arms (1929), to 'The Snows of Kilimanjaro' and 'The Short Happy Life of Frances Macomber' (both first published 1936), and secondly in the later works For Whom the Bell Tolls (1941) and The Old Man and the Sea (1952).

A year before Fiesta, Hemingway published the short stories of In Our Time. War and violence are the main themes of this collection, and the concluding two-part story 'Big Two-Hearted River' has, in Nick Adams, another war-traumatized hero. This story contains an early expression of a typical ritual activity, the fishing-trip, in which Adams can leave 'everything behind, the need for thinking, the need to write, other needs'.

27 Ernest Hemingway, In Our Time (London, 1926), p. 208. Subsequent references to this collection are abbreviated to IOT.
Like Jake Barnes, Adams is leaving behind a world of causation, relation, and temporality, and his one explicit agentive act in part one of the story is a suppression of mental activity in physical activity: 'his mind was beginning to work. He knew he could choke it because he was tired enough' (*IOT*, p. 222). Apart from the additional similes about the tent and a rising trout, there is little figurative language (*IOT*, pages 215, 216); description is functional, or semantically vacuous in forms like 'nice', 'good', 'big', and so on. The narrative proceeds by serial contingency, and while mental descriptive verbs are absent, sensory and physical descriptive verbs abound. What reference to emotional states is made is minimally informative, as in 'he felt all the old feeling' (*IOT*, p. 207).

This immersion in immediate physical activity and sensory perception is important, and on closer inspection it reveals some further characteristics of Adam's consciousness. Of thirty-six verbs of seeing in part one, for example, six are the neutral form 'see', as in 'he saw a mist rising' (*IOT*, p. 219). 'See' makes no implication of conscious agency or meditation behind the perception; for a thing to be seen, there need be no considered act of perception. Most acts of 'seeing', however, are both conscious and directed; the twenty uses of 'look' are explicitly locational and directional, a looking at, down, up, and so on which encodes a conscious mapping of a spatial pattern in the external landscape. Thus, 'Nick looked at the burned-over stretch of hillside'; 'he turned and looked down the stream'; 'he lay on his back and looked up into the pine trees' (*IOT*, pages 205, 207, 213). The very consciousness of the act of perception suggests a search for perceptual structure, a straining after a spatial pattern, a 'being' in a landscape. Indeed, even the uses of 'see' are rarely unmediated: 'Nick did not see'; 'as far as he could see': 'he could hardly see them' (*IOT*, pages 206, 209).

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28 Ziff notes these facts, and the 'feeling of receptivity rather than activity' which goes with them (p. 418). This receptivity is essentially a mental passivity, however.
The few explicit forms of temporal relatedness in part one are also associated with patterns observed in the physical environment:

Nick was happy as he crawled inside the tent. He had not been unhappy all day. This was different though. Now things were done. There had been this to do. Now it was done ... He had made his camp. He was settled. Nothing could touch him. It was a good place to camp. He was there, in the good place. He was in his home where he had made it. Now he was hungry (IOT, p. 217).

Each statement of temporal pattern originates in a perceived external relation to the surrounding landscape. A form of temporal pattern is the primary achievement of Adams's search for a sensory-perceptual coherence, indeed, and comes from the successful completion of a ritualistic order of tasks. Adams has achieved a spatial order, the secure location of 'his home where he had made it', by following a set ritual of actions. In so doing, he has both ordered the landscape and created a location for himself within this landscape. His achieved present state of being, the existential 'now' which he is describing, is the internal equivalent of this sense of completion and settlement in the structured environment of the 'good place'; the spatial pattern thus achieved is the external analogue of inner order, and becomes the base for the ritual order of the fishing which will follow. Opposing this present state is a past state of incompleteness, marked by the pluperfect auxiliary 'had'; Adams's temporal awareness focuses on the shift from this past incompleteness to the present settlement, and on the newly achieved spatial coherence which will allow him to enter the immediacy of ritual behaviour. Like the trout 'keeping themselves steady in the current with wavering fins' (IOT, p. 206), Adams directs his actions towards a ritualized calm.

Part two of the story sees Adams engaged in the fishing ritual, having found a locational pattern appropriate to such rituals in the first part of the story. His conscious thoughts now concentrate on fishing: 'the rod bent in jerks, the trout pumping against the current. Nick knew it was a small one'; 'he thought of the trout somewhere on the bottom'; 'the line went slack and Nick thought the trout was gone' (IOT, pages 235, 238, 244).
There is no evidence of him straining to perceive spatial order as before, which suggests that his effort to obtain a coherence based on sensory perception has proven successful. His immediate perception is free to fix on the fish and fishing: 'he saw the trout in the water'; 'he had never seen so big a trout'; 'he could see deep channels' (IOT, pages 234, 237, 240). Where perception is consciously performed, it too is fitted to the requirements of the fishing: 'he looked down at the swirl of water'; 'It looked deep enough'; 'he looked down the river' (IOT, pages 232, 243, 246). The purposive creation of perceptual structure has become a facet of the fishing itself.\(^{29}\)

Fishing has also become a correlate for emotional order. At the outset, Adams is 'excited', and his actions characterized by speed; he is 'too hurried to eat breakfast' though 'he knew he must', and so 'rapidly he mixed some buckwheat flour with water' (IOT, pages 227, 229). The river, also, is characteristically 'smoothly fast' or 'fast deep water' (IOT, pages 227, 246). When Adams hooks a trout, 'his heart stopped with the excitement' and he loses the fish (IOT, p. 237); haste, or uncontrolled behaviour, is inimical to the ritual, and so Adams 'reeled in slowly. The thrill had been too much'. Subsequently he acts slowly and with care, for 'he did not wish to rush his sensations any', and 'slowly the feeling of disappointment left him. It went away slowly'; 'it was all right now' (IOT, pages 238, 239). Now, as the trout 'rushed', he 'eased downstream with the rushes' (IOT, p. 241); where before he 'wallowed', now he walked and 'worked the trout' (IOT, pages 235, 240). The efficacious technique which successfully completes the act of fishing also establishes an associated internal emotional order.\(^{30}\)

In the context of this act, Adams is able to acknowledge both causative and temporal patterns: 'he had

\(^{29}\) Unlike part one, there is no significant preponderance of 'looking' over a neutral 'seeing' here; 'see' occurs six times in a total of fourteen verbs of seeing. The explicit records of perception are also much fewer, about one-third the number of part one.

\(^{30}\) Such is the relaxation of tension, an informal second-person voice appears now for the first time: 'You could always pick them up there on the Black' (IOT, p. 242).
wet his hand before he touched the trout, so he would not disturb the
delicate mucus that covered him'; 'he dropped the grasshopper so the
current took it'; 'now the water deepened up to his thighs'; 'now the
stream was shallow and wide' (IOT, pages 235, 243, 236, 241). Relatedness
is an aspect of the fishing, invoked by the operation of its ritual tech-
niques; temporal pattern, indeed, now forms around the spatial states of
the river, the location of the ritual, so that a perception of these
varying states becomes a correlate for an awareness of pattern.

Adams's fishing trip is an early case-history of the ritual act, an
act in which he finds the security of structured experience denied him
elsewhere in his life. Ritual simultaneously constrains consciousness
within a narrow delimitation and informs it with a spatialization of
temporal structure within an immediate 'now'. If the 'fifth dimension'
appears anywhere, then it is in this pattern of techniques as responses to
environmental stimuli: 'there was a tug on the line. Nick pulled against
the taut line'; 'a trout struck and Nick hooked him' (IOT, pages 233, 240).
An interior pattern is achieved through an alignment with external
structures of ritual act and environment. Certainly, one source of the
retreat from social relatedness and rational consciousness is the trauma
of war; in 'A Way You'll Never Be', Adams mentions the head wound which
led to his being 'certified as nutty', and how he 'noticed everything in
such detail to keep it all straight so he would know just where he was'. 31
Again, in 'Now I Lay Me', Adams reveals how he used an imagination of
fishing to combat the terrors of being in the front line; the concept of
fishing seems here to be a stay against psychic disintegration. Nonethe-
less, the evidence of In Our Time suggests that Adams is returning to
structures learned in youth as much as he is responding to the specific

31 Ernest Hemingway, The Fifth Column and the first Forty-Nine Stories
(London, 1939), pages 500, 502. Subsequent references to this
collection will be abbreviated as E.
experience of war. Adams's prewar education informs his postwar life; in the Michigan woods, he has already been initiated into death ('Indian Camp'), the rituals of hunting as the converse of socialized relations and the perils of domesticity ('The Doctor and the Doctor's Wife', 'The End of Something', 'The Three Day Blow'), and violence ('The Battler'). The return to the woods, therefore, is both an escape and a return to an idealized virgin land, in search of that state of consciousness which is the last reflex of the ideal; the achieved pattern which awaits him there is the minimal pattern which will prevent him from falling into a void of complete formlessness.

This attempted flight from a changeable, temporal world into an idyllic changeless atemporality, a movement at the heart of Adams's ideal, reappears in a more complex form in A Farewell to Arms. In this novel, the record of Frederic Henry's experience of war, the narrative proceeds by a series of paired opposites, the interrelated dualities of war and peace, social life and private life, temporality and atemporality. The safe and seemingly timeless enclave of a private world of peace is consistently opposed by a fluid, public one of war whose nightmarish experiences are usually related to the inevitable intrusions of temporality into human existence. Henry's vision of a controlled and stable state of being, with its attendant rituals, is threatened by 'the dominance of emotion over intellect: the temporal and subjective over the spatial, objective and visual'; emotion is 'related to time and change; and time and change are "uncontrollable"', while intellect is related to 'the spatial, the timeless and hence the seemingly controllable'. This identification of control, suppression of the emotional life and spatial coherence with an ideal state of being is

32 C.S. Burhans Jr., 'The Complex Unity of In Our Time', Modern Fiction Studies, 14 (1968-69), 313-28, calls this Adams's 'initiation into actuality' (p. 319).

33 W. Adair, 'A Farewell to Arms: A Dream Book', Journal of Narrative Technique, 5 (1975), 40-56 (p. 43). This fear of change is also a feature of Fiesta; W.J. Stuckley,'The Sun Also Rises on its Own Ground', Journal of Narrative Technique, 6 (1976), 224-32, sees the 'pleasure' of the fiesta 'spoiled by the inevitable change that always takes place in human affairs' (p. 227).
characteristic also of Nick Adams and Jake Barnes. Like Adams, Henry seeks an escape from the temporal world into an idyllic timelessness formed within an ideal landscape; one such landscape appears in the Swiss Alps. Unlike Adams, however, Henry has no sustaining ritual with which to approach this ideal; the reality of war, progressively borne in upon him, cannot be offset even by Adams's defensive strategy. In A Farewell to Arms, as a result, Hemingway's perception of human consciousness is as bleak as anywhere in his writings, since Henry is quite unable to maintain an idealized timelessness in the face of his actual experiences. The failure of this ideal can be traced in the tension between the sets of opposites listed above.

Book one opens with Henry's rapid résumé of eighteen months of a war apparently unfolding along a seasonal pattern of spring offensive, autumn rains, winter stalemate, and renewed spring offensive. In retrospect, Henry is able to perceive a temporal pattern to his early experience of the war; the 'late summer' sees him 'in a village that looked across the river and the plain to the mountains', while 'in the fall when the rains came the leaves all fell' and 'at the start of the winter came the permanent rain'. He is also able to compare this first year with a second year where 'now there were the stumps and the broken trunks and the ground torn up' (AFA, p. 14); after a winter's leave, Henry returns with the spring and observes that 'it was all as I had left it except that now it was spring' (AFA, p. 18). A pluperfect tense marks Henry's awareness of change and temporal pattern; thus, the second year is 'very different from the last fall when we had been in the country', and the

34 Carlos Baker, 'The Mountain and the Plain', Virginia Quarterly Review, 27 (1951), 410-18, sets up a symbolic dualism of 'mountain' and 'plain' which carry 'a natural-mythological structure' (p. 416). While physical locations are certainly important, however, they should be seen as the correlates for attitudes towards time; one might recall Harris's remark in Fiesta about losing track of time in the mountains.

35 Ernest Hemingway, A Farewell to Arms (London, 1929), pages 11, 12. Subsequent references are abbreviated as AFA.
forest had been green' (\textit{AFA}, p. 14).\textsuperscript{36} This consciousness of temporal pattern is again given an analogue in external spatial coordinates, in the structural relatedness of a specific landscape. In this way, the war seems to present another ritual order, and allow Henry a distanced narratorial objectivity.

The pattern of war does not prove to be sustaining, however, and Henry's initial perception of the war as a human activity running parallel to seasonal and ritual patterns proves illusory. Henry returns to the front-line to find a much-changed world in which all pattern will soon dissipate in the disastrous defeat at Caporetto; war has no cyclical pattern after all. This dissolution of the tenuous social fabric built around the war among soldiers, doctors and ambulance drivers like Henry, moreover, is prefigured in Henry's own dissipation of his winter leave in bars and brothels; in these places, 'the room whirled and you needed to look at the wall to make it stop ... and the world all unreal in the dark and so exciting that you must resume again unknowing and not caring in the night' (\textit{AFA}, p. 21). Such night-time loss of spatial location recurs in the battle scenes themselves, which are typically night scenes.\textsuperscript{37} Night threatens Henry, and he must 'care very much' and endeavour to awaken with 'all that had been there gone and everything sharp and hard and clear' (\textit{AFA}, p. 21); without such care, a loss of spatial location and perceptual coherence will ensue.

The danger of such dissipation is highlighted, moreover, in Henry's sense of the missed opportunity of engaging a true ritual, namely hunting. It is only on returning to the front-line that Henry regrets his not

\textsuperscript{36} A.E. Davidson, 'The Dantean Perspective in Hemingway's \textit{A Farewell to Arms}', \textit{Journal of Narrative Technique}, 3 (1973), 121-30, notes a narrative dualism which allows Henry both a lucid retrospective report and a confused immediate record of events.

\textsuperscript{37} Adair (1975) also traces a dualism of 'dark' and 'light', where the dark sections of the narrative, typically the scenes of war, stand for a temporal world, and the light sections, as in the Swiss Alps, represent an atemporal idyll.
making use of an invitation to visit the camp priest's family during his leave: 'I had wanted to go to Abruzzi. I had gone to no place where the roads were frozen and hard as iron, where it was clear cold and dry ... and the peasants took off their hats and called you Lord and there was good hunting' (AFA, p. 20). A coherent world, in both social stratification and individual perception, is a world in which 'good hunting' is possible. Though Henry cannot explain 'the difference between the night and day and how the night was better unless the day was very clean and cold', he realises that the priest understands: 'He had always known what I did not know and what, when I learned it, I was always able to forget. But I did not know that then, although I learned it later' (AFA, p. 21). The priest knows the clarity of the true ritual, and observes the false patterns of behaviour adopted by the soldiers.

It is through his developing relationship with Catherine Barkley, rather than in any ritual activity, that Henry is weaned away from war. Only after he is wounded, and so has learned the reality of war and temporality, does Henry commit himself to this relationship. Both temporal and causative relations attach to a literal wounding: 'his shoulder was smashed ... he had not felt bad but now the shoulder had stiffened'; 'I followed his hands with my eyes. Now he was bandaging'; 'I was cold and my leg hurt so that it made me sick' (AFA, pages 66, 68, 71). Once away from the war zone, the war and the wounding cease to structure the world, and perception contracts to immediate perceptions: 'I could not tell what part of the town we were passing through ... but when they unloaded the stretcher I saw a market place'; 'my legs hurt me

38 Later, in hospital, Henry talks to an orderly from the Abruzzi, and the subjects of hunting and fishing recur (AFA, pages 81-82).

39 In the latter half of book one, chapters six to twelve, there are eight uses of 'now'; the two 'now x' forms both relate to wounding. The causative 'so' similarly occurs in relation to hospital techniques (AFA, pages 72, 83).
and I looked down at them, still in the dirty bandages, and seeing them knew where I was'; 'when I saw her I was in love with her' (A E A, pages 91, 99, 102). During book two, the blossoming of the romance with Catherine, patterns of spatial location are achieved by sensory perception, and the resulting idyllic atemporality is fractured only once by a memory of wounding: 'at the field hospital they had the look of not too freshly ground hamburger steak. Now they were crusted and the knee was swollen and discoloured' (A E A, p. 106). Similarly, causative relations appear only in relation to war: 'it is just a chemical choking, so you do not feel' ; 'I was very healthy ... so that it was not long after I was first on crutches before I was through with them' (A E A, pages 116, 126). Escaping the destructive temporality of the war, Henry and Catherine retreat into a defensive position which seems to be an atemporal ritual, as marked by the modal 'would':

Suddenly she would dip down to kiss me while I was doing it, and I would take out the pins and lay them on the sheet and it would be loose and I would watch her while she kept very still and then take out the last two pins and it would all come down and she would drop her head and we would both be inside of it and it was the feeling of inside a tent or behind a falls. (A E A, pages 122-23).

A ritualized behaviour forms their separation from time; the inability of this relationship to sustain such a pattern, however, will ultimately signal the failure of the relationship, which in Henry's terms means the failure of its ritual structure.

The summer idyll soon gives way to autumn and a resurgent temporal world, one sign of which is a significant increase in the explicit marking of temporality. 40 Book three returns Henry to the front-line: 'Now in the fall the trees were all bare'; 'now I was tired and there was nothing to do'; 'there would be many sick now the rains had started'; 'and

40 For example, there are twenty-one uses of pluperfect 'had' during the idyll, pages 91-142; from pages 143-170, recording the return to the war, there are thirty-one usages - proportionately three times the number of the earlier section, a significant statistic.
now it was raining again' (AEM, pages 173, 176, 191, 197). The community of soldiers dissipates, the army is retreating and Henry is powerless in the face of such events; destruction and temporality have become twin facets of this now existential condition. The old pattern is revealed as a falsehood:

I was always embarrassed by the words sacred, glorious, and sacrifice and the expression in vain. We had heard them, sometimes standing in the rain almost out of earshot, so that only the shouted words came through, and had read them, on proclamations that were slapped up by billposters over other proclamations, now for a long time, and I had seen nothing sacred ... There were many words that you could not stand to hear and finally only the names of places had dignity (AMS, p. 195).

If the recognition of the hunting ritual was the major discovery of book one, the realization that war is a false ritual is the discovery of book three. In war, both location and language become confused, as patriotic speeches dissolve into a rain-obscured landscape; only the spatial integrity of place remains of value. Retreating from Caporetto, Henry retreats from war itself, as a mode of existence, and from temporality, with significant temporal pattern now narrowing to the means necessary for such a retreat: 'Now I know we must find one if we hoped to get through'; 'Now, Aymo's car, in backing so that we might get out of a blind road, had gotten into the soft earth'; 'Now that we could not go our own pace I felt very tired' (AEM, pages 210, 214, 234). 41

Henry now heads for Milan and Catherine, hidden in a railway flat car and 'not thinking only feeling', having realized that war and Catherine are incompatible: 'you did not love the floor of a flat-car nor guns with canvas jackets ... but you loved someone else whom now you knew was not even to be pretended there; you seeing now very clearly and coldly' (AEM, p. 245). In choosing Catherine, Henry returns to a sensory immediacy: 'I was not made to think. I was made to eat ... Eat and drink and sleep with Catherine' (AEM, p. 246). Book four sees their reunion and flight.

41 Necessary survival reflexes are also part of this restricted sense of relatedness; for example, 'the timber swung slowly so that the bank was behind me and I knew we were in an eddy' (AEM, p. 240).
to Switzerland, another 'clear' and 'cold' place of spatial integrity. Both thought and temporal pattern are suppressed: 'I lay down on the bed and tried to keep from thinking'; 'it was clear daylight now and a fine rain was falling ... I was sure we were in Switzerland now ... The road came quite close to the lake now and I saw a soldier coming out of a café' (AFA, pages 271, 292).

Only the rowing techniques for crossing the lake require a relational consciousness (AFA, pages 286, 289), and this crossing is clearly a flight from time. Once in Switzerland, the ritual sensory immediacy of the Milan hospital is recovered in the frozen Swiss landscape, as the use of 'would' again suggests:

Mr. and Mrs. Cuttingen lived downstairs and we would hear them talking sometimes in the evenings ... Downstairs there was a parlour where they sold wine, and sometimes in the evening we would hear carts stop outside ... It was lovely in bed with the air so cold and clear ... if I woke in the night...I knew it was from only one cause and I would shift the feather bed over, very softly so that Catherine would not be weakened (AFA, pages 306-07).

Henry is not permitted a permanent refuge in this frozen landscape, however; indeed, his attraction for such frozen locales suggests an inability to cope with a living landscape and offers little more than a temporary escape. His immediate world offers an insufficient location for any abiding structure; the disengagement from the war does not free him as much as it renders him passive, helplessly without a ritual technique. Purposive relations, therefore, are attached to negative states: 'she did not come and I hung the papers back on the rack'; 'we went out in the snow but it was drifted so that we could not walk far'; 'no-one answered so I turned the handle and went in' (AFA, pages 309, 313, 335).

This last example records Henry's helplessness during Catherine's labour and death in book five, in which the narrative comes full circle back to a deadly temporal existence. Of ten uses of 'now' in book four, only one is in the form 'now x', as marking temporal awareness; this records Henry's perception of how a waitress reacts to him and Catherine (p. 263).

Of the fourteen occurrences of 'now' in book five, the three 'now x' forms all deal with the childbirth.

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43 Of the fourteen occurrences of 'now' in book five, the three 'now x' forms all deal with the childbirth.
the timeless idyll is threatened:

Catherine could not walk very far now ... when there was a good day we had a splendid time and we never had a bad time. We knew the baby was very close now and it gave us both a feeling as though something were hurrying us and we could not lose any time together (AFA, p. 327).

The 'good time' is coming to an end, as winter's freeze becomes spring rain: 'and this was the price you paid for sleeping together. This was the end of the trap ... Catherine had a good time in the time of pregnancy ... So now they got her in the end' (AFA, p. 336). This final restoration of temporality signals death, as Henry sits helplessly waiting in the hospital: 'so now I sat out in the hall and waited to hear how Catherine was' (AFA, p. 345). Henry's awareness of temporality, finally, is associated with Catherine's death, which may account for the relish with which he eats two meals during Catherine's labour, as a retreat to an immediate sensory world.

Henry's relationship with Catherine Barkley replaces war as the central circumstance of his existence; it does not, however, offer itself as a viable alternative pattern capable of dealing with the problem which war was unable to deal with, namely the problem of time. Emotional dependency, particularly male-female, no more solves the problem of temporality than do other, less private relations. The idyll can have no substance since Henry, unlike Adams or Barnes, has been given no true ritual, despite the ritualization of the relationship with Catherine. This lack in Henry may either point to his being the least secure of Hemingway's heroes, or to the basic inadequacy of the ritual life in coping with such shattering actual experiences as happen to Henry in Italy. He does not go to the Abruzzi for the hunting, and has to fish out of season while waiting to cross into Switzerland (AFA, p. 269); while Henry blames himself for not going to the Abruzzi, his inability to complete the act of fishing is a circumstance beyond his control. Indeed, it may be appropriate to speculate on how realistic it is for Henry (or Hemingway) to consider taking a break from a lengthy trench war so as to
go hunting, especially if such hunting is to take place in a frozen winter season. The problem of social-historical relations remains whether or not Henry goes hunting, and the problem of time simply becomes the most general expression of this problem which includes human relations, themselves social-historical complexes. Henry's specific failure to attain the atemporal ideal, then, should be seen as a significant insight into the idealist ritual unity sought by the Hemingway hero. This ritual seems unable to cope with a number of situations and relations, not the least of which is relationship between male and female, and so constrains the possible dimensions of human consciousness within narrow and highly specific limits.

Further mutations of the ritual occur in two important stories written after A Farewell to Arms, both of which involve hunting on African safari, 'The Snows of Kilimanjaro' and 'The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber'. In the first of those stories Harry, a writer dying of gangrene, looks back over his life while he awaits a rescue plane:

So now it was all over, he thought. So now he would never have a chance to finish it ... For this, that now was coming, he had very little curiosity. For years it had obsessed him, but now it meant nothing in itself ... Now he would never write the things that he had saved to write ... Maybe you could never write them ... Well, he would never know, now (FC, p. 156).

As he approaches death, he tries to assign pattern to his life. The temporal pattern he arrives at, however, is conceived as a set of negative relations: 'you made an attitude that you cared nothing for the work you used to do, now that you could no longer do it'; 'now if this was how it ended ... he must not turn like some snake biting itself ... when he was no longer in love ... was only lying, as to this woman, now'; 'now he would not care for death' (FC, pages 161, 162, 174). The negativity of

44 In Across the River and Into the Trees (1950), another version of the Italian campaign appears in the history of Colonel Cantwell; Cantwell retains the facility of successful hunting and fishing, and solves the woman question by reducing the woman, a countess thirty years his junior, largely to an instrumentality. It may not be unimportant that Henry's own instructor in the meaning of the hunting ritual is a priest, committed to celibacy.
his present life is an accumulation of a life's negations and a life of
telling lies where 'you kept from thinking and it was all marvellous',
of regret for 'each day of not writing' which 'dulled his ability and
softened his will to work' (E, p. 161). Only death remains for him:
'the one experience that he had never had he was not going to spoil now'
(E, p. 169).

Harry's experiences which he had 'saved to write' will not be set down
in his projected works of literature; nonetheless, they are recaptured
and relived in five italicized passages. The first begins, 'Now in his
mind he saw a railway station', and proceeds through a sequence of imag¬
inative reconstructions structured around vividly immediate sensory
perceptions: 'he was standing with his pack and that was the headlight of
the Simplon-Orient cutting the dark now and he was leaving Thrace then:
after the retreat. That was one of the things he had saved to write'
(E, p. 157). The dying man here strives to recapture a sense of
a felt experience, the present participles encoding a sensory immediacy;
his last act, in this sense, is to repossess his past as an immediate
reality, and to contain the valued moments of an entire life in the present
moment. His final thing he 'had saved to write' is not written in italics,
however, and so appears initially to be a real event, in which he is flown
to the summit of Kilimanjaro at the moment of death:

he saw them all standing below, waving, and the camp beside the hill,
flattening now, and the plain spreading ... while the game trails ran now
smoothly...the zebra, small rounded backs now ...seeming to climb as they
moved in long fingers across the plain, now scattering as the shadow came
towards them, they were tiny now ... and the plain as far as you could
see, grey-yellow now ... and then another plain, hot now' (E, p. 177).

This complete, immediate sensationism is a final act of imagination and
not an actual event. Harry, the compromised and failed writer, achieves
a degree of accomplishment in this final act of interior imaginative
creation, in being able to visualize himself freed from a lifetime's sense
of futility. At the heart of this release is a sense of an achieved
immediacy which implies a freedom from the temporal pattern of a life of
negation; Harry's imagined flight to freedom, as well as being the moment of his death, is an imagination of a flight from this very negation.

'The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber' illustrates Hemingway's idea that intensity, not duration, is the appropriate criterion upon which experience ought to be valued; time should have no place in assessing existential value. As the story opens, Macomber has fled from a wounded lion, leaving his wife Margaret and the hunter Wilson to pretend 'that nothing had happened' (EC, p. 107). Negatives again characterize the narrative, while perception is strained so that among verbs of seeing the conscious 'look' predominates: Margaret 'looked at both these men as though she had never seen them before'; 'She looked curiously at her husband ... looked away from him and back at Wilson' (EC, p. 109). On the following day, when Macomber is successfully initiated into the hunting ritual, this preponderance of 'looking' gives way to a more relaxed 'seeing', suggesting a ritual-perceptual integration similar to that experienced by Nick Adams. 45 Again, temporal pattern is an intrusion into the ritual, and is particularly associated with Macomber's wife; 46 'Wilson looked over at her without smiling and now she smiled at him'; 'she is away for twenty minutes and now she is back, simply enamelled in that American female cruelty' (EC, pages 109, 111). Macomber's initiation overturns temporality: 'look at that beggar now, Wilson thought ... he liked this Macomber now ... Beggar had probably been afraid all his life. Don't know what started it. But over now ... Be a damned fire-eater now' (EC, p. 135). Macomber is a changed man, an initiate like Wilson now.

Macomber's existential triumph is the achievement of Hemingway's ritual immediacy, leaving behind a crippled condition associated with his rich wife. Panicking as a wounded buffalo charges, Margaret Macomber kills

45 Explicit verbs of seeing tend also to group around the hunting episodes, suggesting some perceptual pattern associated with the hunting itself.

46 These are the uses of the 'now x' construction; there are, besides, some twenty-one usages of 'x now' forms.
her husband by mistake, but Wilson suggests that Macomber is finally destroyed by his wife's incapacity, a crude image of the debilitations of social relatedness. She terminates his ritual life, a crime against the ritual code; Hemingway's considerable anti-feminism is never stronger than here, since there is no reason for supposing that Margaret intended to murder Macomber as Wilson claims. The fundamental enemy of the ideal, however, is social relatedness as such, and particularly male-female and domestic relations; the pursuit of the ideal, by means of its attendant ritual patterns of behaviour, may only proceed once such social-historical relations have been left behind. A severe constriction of perception, behaviour, and relational pattern is a prerequisite of the achieved ideal existential condition.

4

A number of critics have argued for a significant shift in Hemingway's position from the late 1930s onwards. Hemingway, it is argued, moves from the perspective of the individual isolate towards a more social viewpoint, a changed perspective which now admits a greater possibility for relational pattern. The Hemingway hero is no longer the wounded outcast, but rather is vitally engaged in the surrounding social fabric. Thus, To Have and Have Not (1937) rejects an 'atomic individualism and irresponsibility', while Robert Jordan in For Whom the Bell Tolls (1941) is 'the first of Hemingway's heroes to be reconciled with society'. This development culminates in Santiago, the fisherman of The Old Man and the Sea (1952), whose agony 'of active and isolated individualism' leads him to a

47 E. Johnson, 'Farewell the Separate Peace', Sewanee Review, 48 (1940), 289-300 (p. 300). Johnson's title bears out his assertion that between Henry's famous 'separate peace' and Morgan's engagement in To Have and Have Not a significant change has occurred.

discovery of 'solidarity and interdependence'. Hemingway is suddenly a social novelist, with a new social consciousness, and for some critics this shift has opened up a breach in Hemingway's writings between this new content and the familiar Hemingway style. For Fiedler, thus, Hemingway's 'anti-style' is betrayed by inappropriate material in the later fiction, while Ziff sees this fiction as merely parodying a style which has remained 'relatively unchanged after his world view had changed' (Ziff, p. 422).

The actual evidence for such a change in Hemingway turns out to be rather flimsy. The significant sections of To Have and Have Not are not the clumsy gestures towards political thinking given to a group of tourists in the Florida Keys, which contain some of Hemingway's worst writing; rather, the exploits of Harry Morgan, a professional fisherman and thus an initiate in the ritual, contain the only memorable incidents in the novel. Morgan is another Hemingway isolate, the hunter, without political commitment. Similarly, the focus of For Whom the Bell Tolls is on the code behaviour of Robert Jordan, perhaps Hemingway's most self-sufficient hero, rather than the wider social-historical circumstances of the Spanish Civil War; the war serves primarily as the setting for Jordan's achievement of a ritualized pattern of behaviour. Jordan's own debates with General Golz about the larger implications of the war, for example, are largely extraneous to the major movement of the novel. Finally, the evidence of the last two novels published in Hemingway's lifetime, Across the River and Into the Trees and The Old Man and the Sea, points to a basic continuity in Hemingway's work. In the former novel, Cantwell is another of Hemingway's war-scarred isolates, now grown middle-aged but without a changed perception of the world; Cantwell's last days of life, moreover, are framed within two hunting trips. Santiago, in the latter of these


works, is simply Hemingway's natural man to whom social relations are irrelevant; he is the most socially marginal character in Hemingway's work, without family, history, largely even without a community of like-minded individuals.

Once the content of these later novels is seen to be consonant with the rest of Hemingway's work, any problematical tension between content and style ceases to exist; indeed, the stylistic continuity of the work is seen to have a parallel continuity in Hemingway's chosen materials and themes. Rather than proposing a radical shift in perspective towards a social-historical reality, Hemingway uses these later novels to amplify and generalize a positive existential ideal. Ritual activity which had once been associated with a specific historical condition, typically a post-war trauma, is now to be taken out of such a historical context and naturalized to a general existential landscape. Hemingway's isolates are no longer presented as psychological case-studies, but as archetypes responding to a general or universal representation of human existence, and using their ritual technical skills to pattern a ritualized world. The hunter, bullfighter, or fisherman becomes self-sufficient in the exercise of his abilities, secure in a ritual life outside time; he seeks an ideal, and there is, indeed, a 'transcendent purpose in the stringent individualism' such a character adopts (Sylvester, p. 132). Again, the trauma becomes the necessary form of adversity against which the ritual is enacted. A threatening encounter, no longer a personal crisis but a generalized existential norm, is sought out by the hero as he pursues his idealist fate. This form of adversity is internalized as an existential prime integral to the ritual act and the discovery of 'a new morality in action'.

Social readings of the later Hemingway mistake this generalization of the 'code' for a rejection of asocial individualism, whereas

this later fiction is the apotheosis of such individualism; in the following discussion, this development will be traced successively in *For Whom the Bell Tolls* and *The Old Man and the Sea*.

In *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, a system of values is constructed which is based upon a valuation of experience by intensity, as opposed to a valuation by temporal duration. Hemingway’s epigraph from John Donne, that 'no man is an *Iland* intire of itselfe; every man is a part of the *Continent*, a part of the *maine*', seems less of a social metaphor than it is a metaphor for a 'symbiosis of man and nature', a spatial metaphor appropriate to his own ideal. The pattern which Robert Jordan seeks lies in a heightened sensory experience, an experience of total immersion in immediacy, and he perceives one image of this experiential ideal in the fruition of his relationship with Maria, one of the guerilla band he is sent to contact:

all his life he would remember the curve of her throat ... and for her everything was red, orange, gold-red ... and it all was that colour, all of it, the filling, the possessing, the having ... For him it was a dark passage which led to nowhere, then to nowhere, then again to nowhere, once again to nowhere, always and forever to nowhere ... all time always to unknowing nowhere, this time and again for always to nowhere, now not to be borne once again always and to nowhere, now beyond all bearing up ... holdingly all nowhere gone and time absolutely still and they were both there, time having stopped and he felt the earth move.

In this highly ritualized rhetoric, Hemingway describes an experientially attained sense of totality, as the use of universal pronouns like 'all' indicates. By means of a negation of the self, achieved in a suppression of consciousness rather than in any transcendence of the body, Jordan experiences a complete integration into immediate sensory experience. A spatialization of sensibility, a 'filling', 'possessing' and 'having', is recorded in a repetitive, spatial succession of sensations; existing


53 Ernest Hemingway, *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (1940; London, 1941), p. 163. Subsequent references are abbreviated as FWBT.
'always and forever', this spatialized consciousness negates temporality and indeed, in a form like 'now not to be borne once again and for always', temporal pattern appears to have been transformed into atemporality. Sexual union here stands as a paradigm of the ritual timelessness which is the source of all value in Hemingway; 'all life', Jordan thinks to himself, is 'to-day, to-night, to-morrow, to-day, to-night, to-morrow, over and over again (I hope)' (FWBT, p. 169). Jordan's parenthesis reveals, however, that this is a belief rather than an established certainty: 'I suppose it is possible to live as full a life in seventy hours as in seventy years; granted that your life has been full up to the time that the seventy hours start and that you have reached a certain age' (FWBT, p. 169). Life is an intensity, not a duration; its quality, therefore, has no temporal or historical dimension, and remains an ideal which can be attained only if a ritual education has first prepared the way for an initiation into the experiential ideal.

The ideal, once more, demands a constriction of consciousness, and no pattern outside the ritual pattern may be admitted; temporal relatedness, consequently, must be eliminated. Similarly, mental activity must be restricted to the needs of the ritual's perceptual structures. An awareness of other forms of relation, indeed, endangers the successful completion of the ritual activity, so that Jordan warns himself that he is 'a bridgeblower now. Not a thinker' (FWBT, p. 24). Such an attitude, the viewpoint of the professional technician that he is not required to consider the consequences of his actions, is quite in keeping with a characteristic lack of any significant discussion of the wider social-historical context in which Jordan is presently acting. It is 'not his business' to plan the offensive or otherwise take responsibility for the development of the war; indeed, his mind 'is in suspension until we win the war' (FWBT, pages 24, 245). Ritual technique focuses consciousness into empirical, physical activity and controls thought. One must perform strictly according to
one's technical speciality, for 'you have only one thing to do and you must do it' (*FWB*, p. 50); the code behaviour leads to a definition of human experience as an instrumentality, and human happiness itself depends upon the achievement of such a condition. Taken together with the rejection of political thought and the injunctions against 'bad thinking' (*FWB*, pages 167, 170), this polemic against thought becomes more significant than the anti-intellectualism often ascribed to Hemingway. Not critical thought, but all conceptual thought is the object of his attack; thought obstructs the realisation of the ideal consciousness, the universal 'nowhere' as Jordan puts it. The primacy of sensory perception demands a complete immediacy which will forestall any comparative or judgemental faculties:

So if your life trades its seventy years for seventy hours I have that value now and I am lucky enough to know it. And if there is not any such thing as a long time, nor the rest of your lives, nor from now on, but there is only now, why then now is the thing to praise and I am very happy with it. Now, ahora, maintenant, heute (*FWB*, p. 170).

Atemporality, finally, is envisioned as an ideal space, just as 'now' ceases to act adverbially, as an adjunct to a continuing process, and comes to be nominalized; the ritual act stands for an absorption into the ideal space of that abstract 'now' which is 'the thing to praise'.

A 'deliberate refusal to admit the free play of the higher intellectual faculties - reason, speculative thought, and imaginative vision' underlies Hemingway's idealist construction here. Out of a sense that time is contracting due to the external circumstances of public event and environment, Jordan develops the notion of making up 'in intensity what the relation will lack in duration and continuity' (*FWB*, p. 172). The external coordinates of the narrative, the predetermined chronology of the Republican offensive, seems to make this 'good system of belief'

54 R. Evans, 'Hemingway and the Pale Cast of Thought', in *Ernest Hemingway: A Collection of Criticism*, edited by Arthur Waldhorn (New York, 1973), 112-26 (p. 115). For Evans, Hemingway has thus created a world 'devoid of history and time' which is 'an animal world'. Isaac Rosenfeld, 'A Farewell to Hemingway', *Kenyon Review*, 13 (1951), 147-55, goes further; 'behaviourism' is Hemingway's 'only psychology', for 'in behaviourism there is nothing more to learn' (p. 152).
also appear inevitable, born of an unavoidable experiential truth: 'you have it now and that is all your whole life is; now. There is nothing else than now' (FWBT, p.173 ). This is a system of belief, however, constructed out of the very limitations which Jordan has placed on human consciousness. There is no inevitability about the system of belief adopted, since there is no absolute requirement that consciousness should be diminished in this way. The existential ideal which emerges from the experiences being narrated, therefore, does not come directly from a predetermined pattern of universal existential conditions, but rather from the choices which the narratorial voice has made with regard to admissible patterns of relatedness.

This structure is recapitulated in a second scene involving Jordan and Maria: 'now Robert Jordan lay with the girl and he watched time passing on his wrist ... as he watched the minute hand he found he could almost check its motion with his concentration' (FWBT, p. 373). Maria has virtually become an instrumental means towards this ritualistic stoppage of time, since 'he could see its movement clearly and steadily now and he held Maria close now to slow it':

Then they were together so that as the hand on the watch moved, unseen now, they knew that nothing could ever happen to the one that did not happen to the other, that no other thing could happen more than this; that this was all and always; this was what had been and now and whatever was to come. This, that they were not to have, they were having ... now and before and always and now and now and now' (FWBT, p. 374).

In this passage, an absolute immediacy is marked by the fact that 'now' appears some forty-two times in a paragraph of just three hundred words; the status of this immediacy as a belief, moreover, is confirmed by the quasi-religious tone which accompanies this statement of an ideal that there is 'no now but now', an entity which abides 'now and forever now', in a unity where 'one and one is one is one is one is one is still one is still one'.

55 There are over 850 uses of 'now' in the novel, including some 350 in direct conversation; approximately 75% are of the 'x now' form, a significant indication of a predominant immediacy.
The usages of 'now' in the rest of the novel further clarify the
dimensions of Jordan's consciousness of relational pattern. Outside direct
reportage of conversations, three major areas of temporal pattern appear;
these depend on a sensory apprehension of environmental information, on the
technical expertise in the performance of the ritual act, and on the relations-
ships with the women María and Pilar. The third case comes as a matter of
course from the paradigmatic significance attached to the relationship with
María, a relationship which is emblematic of the ideal timelessness which
Jordan seeks. This relationship provides Jordan with a sense of structure,
so that from the outset María is a source of focus and order: 'Now she
looked him full in the face'; 'his voice was all right again, now that she
was gone'; 'he ran his hand over the top of her head. He had been
wanting to do that all day, and now he did it'; 'Now as they lay all that
before had been shielded was unshielded' (FWBT, pages 32, 36, 72, 75).
Jordan is already patterning his own life relative to María prior to the two
episodes discussed earlier in which their relationship comes to fruition.
These experiences merely confirm the significance of this relationship:
'you have made love to this girl and now your head is clear, properly
clear'; 'now stop thinking that sort of thing. Think about
María'; 'now Robert Jordan lay with the girl and he watched time passing
on his wrist ... Now while she still slept he turned her head and put his
lips to hers' (FWBT, pages 165, 168, 373). In the closing scene of the
novel Jordan, wounded and unable to escape, instructs María in the meaning
of this pattern: "Now you will go for us both ... Now you see it ... Now
I see it is clear. Now thou wilt go for us both. Now you are going.
Now you have said you will go... Now stand up and go and we both go" (FWBT,
pages 454-45). Jordan here sets out his belief that they have created a
unity together which exists beyond time. What might initially seem to be
a temporal pattern, marked in the text by the 'now x' construction, turns
out to be the representation of a belief in a transcendental pattern. It
is her understanding of this pattern, again, which makes Pilar important to Jordan: 'she knows what time is all about. Yes, he said to himself, I think we can admit that she has certain notions about the value of time' (FWBT, p. 171). 'Time', in this context, does not mean historical consciousness, but a belief in the primacy of the immediate moment. Pilar, a fierce guerilla fighter herself, understands the idealized ritual, and might well be described as an honorary member of that male fraternity which includes Adams, Barnes, Macomber and Henry; 56 it is Pilar who is given key passages describing the beginnings of the war and bullfighting (FWBT, pages 104-134, 185-193).

A second source of pattern comes from a use of sensory perception to produce a spatialized pattern of relations in a specific landscape. This is a habitual mode of perception for Jordan, as it is also for Adams, Barnes, and Henry: 'he saw, now that he no longer looked into the glare, that the mountain slope was a delicate new green; 'as Robert Jordan lay there, the sky now full of the high hammering roar of motors, there was a new droning roar'; 'and now Robert Jordan watched Pablo's face' (FWBT, pages 42, 80, 215). Jordan perceives a pattern here which has some relation to time; given that this pattern is achieved in immediate sensory responses dependent upon environmental stimuli, however, this is a reduced and attenuated temporality. Temporal pattern has become a spatialized pattern of immediacies.

Finally, a degree of pattern is derived from Jordan's proven expertise as a saboteur, the activity which encodes Jordan's particular form of ritual behaviour: 57 'Now he was noting the points where the explosive

56 Female heroism, in Hemingway, requires a considerable defeminization, as happens to Pilar; again, Brett Ashley's male-ness is significant. The other favoured image of woman is one of passive animality, as with Maria; otherwise, the woman is the rich bitch, like Dorothy, the 'bored Vassar bitch' of The Fifth Column (K, p. 15). Finally, Hemingway will solve the sexual question by removing the female altogether in The Old Man and the Sea; Henry's instructor in A Farewell to Arms, again, is a priest.

57 Military rituals and behaviour, generally, provide characters with pattern; this is true of the guerillas Joaquin, Anselmo, and Andres (FWBT, pages 303, 322, 371), as well as a Falangist officer or Commissar Marty (FWBT, pages 313, 411).
should be placed'; 'Now he was sitting at the table with his notebook ... figuring all the technical part of the bridge blowing'; 'Now he had finished the demolition project'; 'Now as he worked, placing, bracing, wedging, lashing tight with wire' (FWBT, pages 42, 225, 226, 422). Such virtuosity creates a patterned activity, since his 'thinking of the problem of the bridge' brings everything 'clear and hard and sharp as when a camera lens is brought into focus' (FWBT, p. 165). Technique combines with ritual and immediate sensation to provide Jordan with a limited area of conscious patternning. This pattern, again, as with Adams or Barnes, depends upon a limitation of thought, a constriction of perception, and a narrowly determined definition of behaviour, all of which tend towards a reduction of the human into an instrumentality.

The Old Man and the Sea carries the ritual life still further, into a yet more constrained consciousness. Santiago's life is a succession of contingencies, and he recognizes only present sensations: 'he had gone eighty-four days now without taking a fish'; 'he only dreamed of places now'; 'the sun was two hours higher now ... there were only three boats in sight now'; 'the water was a dark blue now'. Spatial contingency provides the primary pattern of his life: 'it was cold now in the time before daylight'; 'he looked across the sea and saw how alone he was now'; 'he felt very tired now and he knew the night would come soon' (OMAS, pages 50, 54, 58, 66). Santiago lives an atemporal existence, a succession of immediacies, in a pattern derived from the exterior environment; similar examples of a dependence on spatial pattern abound on every other page.

The immediacy of Santiago's existence is emphasized by a characteristic use of present participles to record the continuous processes in which the

58 Ernest Hemingway, The Old Man and the Sea (London, 1952), pages 5, 22, 29, 32. Subsequent references to this edition are abbreviated as OMAS.
perceiving consciousness is immersed:

In the dark the old man could feel the morning coming and as he rowed he heard the trembling sound as flying fish left the water and the hissing that their stiff set wings made as they soared away in the darkness ... He was sorry for the birds, especially the small delicate dark terns that were always flying and looking and almost never finding (OMAS, pages 25-26).

Santiago's is a world in constant motion: 'just then the fish jumped making a great bursting of the ocean and then a great fall ... the boat was going fast although line was still racing out and the old man was raising the strain to breaking point'; 'the shark's head was out of water and his back was coming out and the old man could hear the noise of skin and flesh ripping ... there was only the heavy sharp blue head and the big eyes and the clicking, thrusting, all-swallowing jaws' (OMAS, pages 81, 102). This overwhelming sense of immediacy, however, leads towards the sense of a frozen, spatialized world in which time is suspended; any genuine sense of continuous process, in fact, would require a historical consciousness as a condition of its existence. A consciousness completely immersed in immediate events cannot perceive the pattern of events. Santiago's overwhelming sensory intensity, thus, finds a stylistic analogue in the nominalization of verbal activity to be found in forms such as 'the hissing', 'a great bursting', or 'the clicking, thrusting, all-swallowing jaws'; an event in the world becomes an entity in the world, which is to say that a temporal activity comes to be rendered as a spatialized condition of the external world.

Given this diminished consciousness of temporal pattern, it comes as no surprise to find that other forms of relation are also suppressed in the narrative. Certain specific forms of emotional and interpersonal relationship, thus, are hidden beneath a surface syntactic contingency, and so are presented as non-necessary relations; for example, 'it made the boy sad to see the old man come in each day with his skiff empty and he always went to help him' (OMAS, p. 5). The boy's feelings about Santiago, and his
subsequent actions dependent upon those feelings, are presented as two merely contingent conditions. Again, Santiago acts on the basis of environmental stimuli rather than a causative awareness, as recorded in such statements as 'then the weight increased and he gave more line' (*OMAS*, p. 41). Consequently, subordinate and referential structures are few, and strictly limited. The referential subordinator 'so', for example, appears in a characteristic sentence-initial position, its subordinate function attenuated by a major syntactic division: 'The sun was on the old man's left arm ... So he knew the fish had turned east of south'; 'But he could not find a spoon and his sardines were rotten. So he hooked a patch of yellow Gulf weed with the gaff as they passed' (*OMAS*, pages 64, 98). Subordination is permitted an unmediated expression only in association with ritual structures: 'the glow of Havana was not so strong, so that he knew the current must be carrying them to the eastward'; 'each sardine was hooked through both eyes so that they made a half-garland on the projecting steel'; 'he crowded the current a little so that he was still fishing correctly' (*OMAS*, pages 45, 28, 30). This structure is characteristic also of Santiago's interior conversations: 'No matter what passes I must gut the dolphin so he does not spoil'; 'You must devise a way so that you sleep a little if he is quiet and steady' (*OMAS*, pages 75, 76). The ritual act, with its associated techniques of fishing and seamanship, is the solitary location both of perceived causative pattern and of agentive activity by Santiago. Hemingway further develops this contingent world by expanding his use of simple linkage to include patterns of disjunction, using 'but' frequently in sentence-initial position: 'He was shivering with the morning cold. But he knew he would soon be warm'; 'I could make the line fast. But then he could break it'; 'Perhaps I should not have been born a fisherman, he thought. But that was the thing I was born for' (*OMAS*, pages 22, 42, 48). The sense of discontinuity, in this way, is enhanced.

Like causative relations, temporal relations are consistently reserved
for the ritual behaviour of fishing; 'Now the man watched the dip of the three sticks over the side of the skiff ... It was quite light and any moment now the sun would rise'; 'Now the old man looked up and saw that the bird was circling again'; 'Now is no time to think of baseball, he thought. Now is the time to think of only one thing. That which I was born for'; 'Now he was ready. He had three forty-fathom coils of line in reserve now'; 'Now I will pay attention to my work and then I must eat the tuna so that I will not have a failure of strength' (OMAS, pages 28, 34, 37, 41, 54). Certainly, Santiago recognizes a pattern here, but a pattern that is timeless rather than temporal; relatedness is confined to the single pattern of the ritual act, with its special techniques and knowledge. He must kill the marlin as a demonstration of 'what a man can do and what a man endures':

'I told the boy I was a strange old man', he said. 'Now is when I must prove it'. The thousand times that he had proved it meant nothing. Now he was proving it again. Each time was a new time and he never thought about the past when he was doing it (OMAS, p. 64).

The ritual has provided Santiago with a behavioural structure, and even an identity; it is, as he himself claims, what he was born for, the single sustaining structure in his life. It is not, however, a temporal pattern except as a pattern of immediacies; the ritual has no past but must be renewed constantly, where each performance of the ritual stands separate, a discrete event unrelated to any other event which has occurred at some other point in time. The further implication, that Santiago also has no past, renders his identity as tenuous as the ritual itself; without memory, a historical consciousness, he cannot perceive the act as a whole, but must remain enclosed within it.

It has been argued that Santiago is the triumph of the Hemingway ideal, the embodiment of a 'synthesis of immediate experience and mysticism' (Carpenter, p. 718). In Santiago's case, certainly, the ritual life is stripped to its barest, most minimal form; everything that is
extraneous to the ritual enactment of the 'code' has been stripped away. Santiago is the final reflex of the ritual, a ritual which has been progressively generalized in Hemingway's works. This minimal form, however, presents the most nearly unconscious of Hemingway's ritual initiates, a man who is illiterate, elderly, impoverished, and alone, more removed from social-historical consciousness than any other character in Hemingway. The mutations of the ritual act, as it has become generalized, have seen an ideal of atemporal existence apparently strengthen as specific social-historical references have been lost. In fact, this process has demanded a progressive constriction of the dimensions of human consciousness; the complexity of human existence is attenuated into ever simpler formulas, ending in the formulaic heroism of Santiago. In fleeing from the reality of temporal existence and the complexity of human existence in time, the Hemingway hero flees his own humanity; the ritual degenerates from a possible transcendent ideal into a defensive justification of this flight, an excuse for an abandonment of temporal consciousness. If Hemingway's famous style develops only marginally, the central content of the fiction is rendered down into ever simpler forms.

The consequences of Hemingway's rituals, his modes of representation, and his presentation of an ideal human consciousness, are not insignificant for subsequent American literature: 'if Hemingway was ... a victim of assumptions that go back to our national beginnings, he has also, as a writer, reinforced these assumptions, bodied them in new images, and transmitted them in the myths that for too long now have shaped our attitudes and our lives'. Hemingway reproduces, not the 'hard countenance' of his own age, but rather cultural myths deeply embedded in the American experience. While he can be set into the dominant antihistoricist tradition of American transcendentalism, however, it is also the case that Hemingway presents a much reduced vision, a much humbler ideal. In abandoning significant

patterns of relatedness, Hemingway ultimately endorses a constricted consciousness and a diminished being progressively reduced to a mere instrumentality or a performing behaviourist animal. A new elect, the initiates of the ritual, is created out of a romance with a mythic ritualism of violence, a romance which continues to dog American social life. Hemingway's atemporal idealism subverts historical consciousness itself, a dangerous attitude in a society which seems intent on living in the here and now, eradicating historical awareness. He presents a progressive diminution of human consciousness to a selective and idio-syncratic partiality, a consciousness increasingly removed from the apprehension of a totality. In this sense, he stands as a significant spokesman for a complex of attitudes which has drawn both support and antagonism up to the present day.
Chapter 4
Bernard Malamud: The Recovery of History

1

The antihistorical ideal outlined in chapter one finds another expression in the recurring dream of a new life, absolutely separated from the past, which is characteristic of Malamud's central characters. Typically, this dream leads the Malamud protagonist into a search for some dimly perceived ideal which stands apart from his actual historical experience, unrelated if not clearly opposed to his past life. The Malamud quester journeys in the hope of finding some new existential circumstance quite distinct from the conditions which have previously informed his personal history; this personal quest, in this sense, is analogous to the American national ideal of a unique, timeless space persisting beyond history. In the course of this journey, however, the ideal proves to be unattainable, if not actually illusory, and the quester is thrown back upon those very patterns of social and historical experience which he had sought to leave behind. The ideal cannot be maintained in the face of his continuing experience of a social-historical world. This pattern of character development has generally been agreed by critics to form a fundamental element in Malamud's major work. As was the case with both Fitzgerald and Hemingway, however, a major divergence in the critical interpretation of this pattern has occurred. On the one hand, an essentially idealist critique has interpreted Malamud as a mid-twentieth century idealist, the inheritor of an antihistoricist perspective, for whom the notions of alienation and absurdity have become crucial in the expression of a failed transcendental ideal. Conversely, a socially and historically-rooted critique has seen Malamud as a conscious opponent of such an idealist structure, for whom
the loss of this ideal means not alienation, but rather a recovery of psychic wholeness precisely in a recovery of social-historical consciousness. The debunking of this ideal, thus, is one outcome of an increased understanding both of the self and of society which the protagonist gains from his experiences on his journey. The following discussion will sketch out these two critical positions and then present an overview of Malamud's work in the context of this debate, arguing that the latter approach provides the more adequate framework for discussing Malamud's fictive creation. An extended analysis will then be given of two novels, *The Assistant* and *The Tenants*, these providing respectively examples of a consciousness which has recovered a historical sensibility and of the psychic fragmentation attendant upon a consciousness which remains enclosed within the ideal.

A representative expression of the idealist critique is given by Jonathan Baumbach, when he suggests that the post-1945 American novel 'is not so much concerned with social defeats and victories as with adamic falls and quixotic redemptions ... the novel of the fifties explores by and large the shadow landscape of the self'.

\[1\] Within this structure, Malamud presents a 'tremulous private life confronted by a mythic public scene', in which the adamic hero 'undergoes a mythic journey to test the stuff of his heroism' (Baumbach, pages 102, 106). The setting of this journey is a modern cognate of the spatial metaphor of a unique America; *The Assistant*, for example, is set in a 'timeless and placeless New York landscape' provided with 'a kind of metaphysical climate' (p. 120). Again, Malamud 'abstracts' his central characters 'from their historical circumstances and treats them poetically and mythically'.\[2\] At its most extreme, this concentration on mythic elements has produced the claim that the

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'ritualistic system' of The Natural, Malamud's first novel, 'is the broad formulation of Malamud's world of meaning' and 'the necessary reference text for a reading of his subsequent fiction'. This seems to exaggerate the significance of this largely atypical Malamud work.

Another variation of the idealist perspective employs the concepts of alienation and absurdity. Thus, 'Malamud has chosen to create the least dramatic of all possible versions of the Absurd: a vision of the commonplace as Absurd'. One example of this absurd world is given by the Bobers in The Assistant; their life, 'in which space and time seem irrelevant', is less 'a portrait of evolving history' than it is 'a blighted sense of routine'. For M.F. Schulz, the Malamud hero is caught in a vicious paradox, in trying simultaneously to find an accommodation with the world and a new identity in relation to eternity, 'the absolute yardstick of his growth and actions'; this search for identity links him 'in an "ennobling interchange" with the permanent' even as he becomes aware of a mortality 'which alienates him from wholeness of being'.

For Helen Weinberg, conversely, the transcendental ideal remains attainable; while in the 'absurdist novel' there is a 'complete disjunction between the social-political systems of men in the world and a system of higher being', in the 'activist novel' the hero can construct 'an image


of a transcendent self', making himself 'a particular in absolute relation to an Absolute'. The pattern of development in Malamud is from 'the vision of the absurd novel ... in which the hero is ultimately defeated by accepting the guilt of his past' towards 'the vision of the activist novel ... in which the hero denies the past ... by living in the present toward a privately defined transcendent, future self' (Weinberg, p. 169).

According to this idealist critique, the Malamud character is either condemned to inevitable fragmentation or attains the unity of mythic and transcendent pattern. In either case, social-historical factors play no part in the development of the 'new life'. All possible patterns are absolute and predetermined, leaving the protagonist eventually 'frozen into ritual attitudes'. Such an interpretation runs counter to Malamud's own statement that the concept of imprisonment in his work is 'a metaphor for the dilemma of all men throughout history', whether this be the 'primary prison' of 'necessity' or the 'man-made-prisons of social injustice, apathy, ignorance'. Malamud himself endorses an openness and possibility in human development when he declares that 'our most extraordinary invention is human freedom' (Field & Field, p.12). The idealist view cannot account for this developmental possibility. A more fruitful approach to Malamud, therefore, is one which can adequately account for the internal dialectic in Malamud's work, in the development of a relative historical consciousness which replaces an idealistic absolutism. This alternative pattern of character development has been succinctly described by Robert Ducharme as follows:


Malamud's modern questers always begin by trying to escape their own pasts, the limiting and imprisoning forces of their old lives. But this quest for freedom is frustrated, as Marcuse has described, by trying to escape from the everpresent past. The search for a new and better life by the Malamud hero involves an attempt to escape responsibility for the larger social life of other men in the present. Thus, the desire to escape the past serves as a metaphor for the flight from responsibility in the present. What Malamud's questers must learn is that they need to deny the tyrannical demands of the ego and submit themselves to a personally delimiting involvement with other lives; this necessity is frequently, though not exclusively, learned through a love experience.

The quester discovers that the rejection of social-historical pattern leads only to the illusion of a new life. On the contrary, the fulfillment of the 'new life' demands a rediscovery of social-historical relations. Without this rediscovery, he will remain confined within a fragmented world and a diminished consciousness, unable to comprehend his own experience and development as a conscious being. With a renewal of the historical sense, actual possibilities for self-growth and self-understanding are created. In the place of an absolute world of ideal structures, there is now a relative world of possibilities.

In fact, Malamud 'is far from being a pessimistic determinist'; he demonstrates both 'how a man may help to imprison himself' and how 'an imprisoned man can forge a new self in his reaction to the imprisoning forces' (Tanner, *City of Words*, p. 324). For Tanner, the basic movement 'from immaturity to maturity' crucially involves a new sense of involvement with others which is founded upon a restored historical consciousness (Tanner, p. 323):

10 Robert Ducharme, *Art and Responsibility in the Novels of Bernard Malamud* (The Hague, 1974), p. 99. Ducharme's reference to Herbert Marcuse is to *One Dimensional Man* (London, 1964), and the concept of 'the progressing rationality of advanced industrial civilization' which aims to eliminate 'the subversive contents of memory'; Marcuse argues that historical consciousness, 'the mediation of the past with the present', militates against this antihistorical rationality (pages 98-100).

The search for a new freedom usually ends in an imprisoning tangle of relationships and commitments and responsibilities. The attempt to deny time and evade the impingements of history yields reluctantly and painfully to the discovery that when a man sets out on his travels he is involved willy-nilly in various processes and large networks of events which the individual can neither resist nor reshape. To be born is to be born into history; and various thoughts and theories concerning the freedom and invulnerability of the individual self fade before the experienced fact of involuntary involvement in the lives of other people. (Tanner, p. 333).

This recovery of 'responsibility' is the crucial moment in the transformation of the Malamud protagonist and is clearly far removed from the private transcendentalism which provides one inspiration for his original journey; at its heart is a substitution of historical awareness for an ideal. His characteristic repudiation of 'the identity imposed on him by history' in 'an Emersonian bid' for freedom is shown to be 'not only an error but an impossibility' (Tanner, p. 330). In short, the Malamud hero comes 'to accept the entanglement in history together with the responsibility for those who are similarly entangled'; in doing so, he is able to create a unity out of a variety of disparate elements and so bring together 'the values of the past in their clash with the impasses of the present'. Perhaps the last word on this critical debate, however, should be left to Malamud himself:

I am quite tired of the colossally deceitful devaluation of man in this day ... Whatever the reason, his fall from grace in his eyes is betrayed in the words he invented to describe himself as he is now: fragmented, abbreviated, other-directed, organizational, anonymous man, a victim, in the words that are used to describe him, of a kind of synecdochic irony,


the part for the whole. The devaluation exists because he accepts it without protest.  

In Malamud, the fragmented, partial man may make progress towards a regained wholeness if he will only protest against his diminution. An effective protest, moreover, demands that he abandon the private solipsism which is one result of his personal idealism, a condition made possible by a recovery of social-historical relatedness.

The journeys made by Malamud's questers vary greatly in detail, but they nonetheless share one common feature: each journey is a movement away from a past life. Both Ray Hobbs and Frank Alpine, in The Natural and The Assistant respectively, travel from an undefined western location to a large city 'looking for a better opportunity', 16 while for Levin in A New Life, escaping New York for the Pacific coast, the journey is in the opposite direction. Again, Yakov Bok and Arthur Fidelman, in The Fixer and Pictures of Fidelman, travel to Kiev and Rome in search of an ideal. For each one, the imagined destination is a new life far-removed from the old; success on the baseball field, an end to a rootless drifting, and an escape from alcoholism into teaching, from the Jewish Pale of Settlement, or from failure as an artist, successively beckons the Malamud hero. In each case, the journey seems to confirm an American ideal of free movement; a freedom of settlement, a social mobility, and an economic betterment, are all analogues of the spatial metaphor of the virgin land.

This journey is not as straightforward as the Malamud protagonist thinks, however, for a successful completion of the ideal transformation can only be accomplished at the expense of major areas of consciousness. His diminished consciousness, in turn, adversely affects the hero's

15 Quoted in Granville Hicks, 'Literary Horizons', Saturday Review of Literature, 46 (12 October, 1963), 31-32 (p. 31). The quotation is from Malamud's acceptance speech on receiving the National Book Award for The Magic Barrel.

16 Bernard Malamud, The Assistant (1957; London, 1959), p. 30. Further references to this edition are marked parenthetically by the abbreviation A.
actual experiences. An early idealist, Henry Levin, is 'tired of the past -tired of the limitations it had imposed upon him', and so he changes his name to 'Freeman'. This act rebounds upon him when he woos Isabella, a Jewish woman whom he believes to be an Italian princess. She gives him three opportunities to admit that he too is Jewish, and his failure to do so leads to her eventual rejection of him, telling him that 'my past is meaningful to me. I treasure what I suffered for' (MB, p. 132). A similar fate awaits Hobbs in The Natural, a man in flight from his past who is 'ashamed to be recognized, to have his past revealed like an egg spattered on the floor'. Hobbs realises too late the significance of Iris Lemon's words: 'We have two lives, Roy, the life we learn with and the life we live with after that. Suffering is what brings us toward happiness' (N, p. 159). Belatedly, he admits that 'I never did learn anything out of my past life, now I have to suffer again' (N, p. 237).

The elimination of the past produces only an illusion of a "free-man"; without a historical sense, social and interpersonal relations remain incomplete and constricted. It is significant that the one Malamud character who makes no journey, but remains rooted to a solipsistic retreat, is the one who is driven into psychic fragmentation and madness. Harry Lesser, in The Tenants, creates for himself an asocial and ahistorical cocoon; his story traces the progress of a diminishing ability to differentiate between a dreamlike and hallucinatory inner world and the external reality around him. Indeed, this hallucinatory world becomes Lesser's sole perceptual structure; Lesser's disintegrating consciousness, thus, stands as a graphic image of the ultimate consequence.


18 Bernard Malamud, The Natural (1952; London, 1963), p. 56. Subsequent references are given as N. Cronin, in 'A Choice of Profession', in Idiots First and other Stories (London, 1964) also thinks that 'the past interfered if you let it' (p. 76). Like Hobbs, he does not learn from experience.

While Dubin's fate is less extreme than Lesser's madness, nonetheless Dubin is also constrained by a diminished historical sense: 'He had felt there was much purposeful forgetting in his life; now it all seemed purposeful ... not to live in active remembrance of the sadnesses of the past' (*LL*, p. 311). Dubin finds himself caught between an ideal ahistorical retreat and an awareness that 'he could not escape the imprisoning consciousness, the fixed self nailed to its past' (*LL*, p. 317).

Unlike other Malamud protagonists, Dubin makes no voyage of self-discovery, but remains rooted to a condition characterized by 'the terrible sense of human frustration, of time hanging heavy and no way forward'.

A way forward is possible, nonetheless, for a number of Malamud's characters. Frank Alpine's idea of a 'new life' is transformed by his involvement with the Bober family; an assumption of responsibility for his own past, including his own part in a robbery of Bober's store, leads to a responsibility towards other people, and 'the painful emergence of selflessness from selfishness' (*Tanner, City of Words*, p. 327-2). Seymour Levin also accepts responsibility towards others, and acknowledges his own past; in doing so, he surrenders his dream of teaching in Cascadia College, and takes responsibility for Pauline Gilley and her children. Along with this dream, Levin must relinquish the spatial ideal of the western land itself, an ideal of 'pioneers in covered wagons

19 An extended analysis of Lesser's development is given in section three below.

20 Bernard Malamud, *Dubin's Lives* (London, 1979), p. 40. This novel is subsequently referred to as *LL*.

entering this valley for the first time', a place 'without visible or tangible connection with the past'. Levin's 'west', in fact, is actually a 'space corrupted by time, the past-contaminated self', and he must learn that 'the past hides but is present' (ANL, pages 160, 59); there is no ideal, no timeless land.

For Yakov Bok, 'the past was a wound in the head', and so his journey out from his home village to Kiev is an attempt to leave this past behind. His arrest on a fraudulent charge of ritual murder, however, makes him realise that 'being born a Jew meant being vulnerable to history', with the result that his adopted stance of a free-thinker, free from social and historical patterns, is overturned by his experiences subsequent to this arrest (F, p. 165). Bok commits himself to a responsibility, first to his father-in-law, secondly to his wife, and finally to all those like himself suffering at the hands of the Czarist autocracy: 'once you leave you're out in the open; it rains and snows. It snows history, which means what happens to somebody starts in a web of events outside the personal' (F, pages 330-31). This is the crucial realisation which the Malamud traveller arrives at; indeed, even when Malamud's characters have remained where they are, like Bok's family in the enclosure of the shtetl, 'the historical evil had galloped in to murder them there. So the "open", he thought, was anywhere' (F, p. 331). As soon as someone tries to deny the past, the past will make its influence felt. Again,

22 Bernard Malamud, A New Life (1961; London, 1963), pages 12, 76. Subsequent references are given as ANL.

23 Leslie A. Fiedler, 'Malamud's Travesty Western', Novel, 10 (1976-77), 212-19, makes the point that the novel concerns a failure 'to become a Westerner' (p. 214). Malamud's further implication, however, seems to be that the spatial myth, the 'virgin land' itself, is an illusion.

Arthur Fidelman, 'oppressed by history', flees to Italy only to be met by 'a Jewish refugee from Israel'. This 'refugee', Susskind, immediately makes demands upon Fidelman, beginning with the greeting of 'shalom' uttered 'for the first time in his life' (PF, p. 13). Like Bok, Fidelman must come eventually to a commitment to social-historical relations, before he can return to America 'as a craftsman in glass' who 'loved men and women' (F, p. 168). Fidelman's 'new life', as with every other new life in Malamud, becomes possible only once the 'old' life has been recognised and accepted.

2

The quester in *The Assistant*, Frank Alpine, is an unemployed drifter, apparently living an asocial and ahistorical existence, who has arrived in New York in search of some barely defined better life. Here he is persuaded to rob a grocery store, in the course of which the store-owner, Morris Bober, is injured; out of this event a relationship is formed between Alpine and the Bober family. Alpine begins by trying to make amends for Bober's injury by looking after the store; subsequently, this relationship deepens as Alpine begins to learn from the example of Bober's life until, after Bober's death, Alpine assumes Bober's responsibilities both to family and the family business by a kind of symbiotic exchange. In this way, Alpine commits himself to a regained involvement in human relationships. Morris Bober's years of toil are invested with value by Frank Alpine; the relationship between 'the life and death of Morris Bober' and 'the guilt and retribution of Frank Alpine', in effect, has 'the first life creating the pattern and possibility of the second' (Baumbach, p. 448). While Bober's life has become

one of unremitting toil and the defeat of possibility, for Alpine it represents a social involvement and a history; quite literally, it is the future he would not otherwise have had.

In order to understand Alpine's transformation, however, the source of this development should first be investigated in the life and history of Morris Bober. This life might usefully be divided into two related areas. Firstly, there is the grocer's public life as a store-keeper in which he expresses his relation to a social-historical world; this 'life' expresses both the effects of a social structure which fragments human consciousness by making social life alien to private life, and Bober's responses to this situation. Secondly, there is Bober's private life as head of his family; here certain human values no longer possible or functional in public life can be maintained. For Bober, these two parts of his life have become substantially separated, being based on what amounts to rival systems of value; Alpine, learning Bober's human values, will attempt to reintegrate these areas of experience into a common purpose and pattern.

Within the immediate environment of the store, the arena of Bober's public life, one striking narrative characteristic emerges. There is a constant, and insistent, definition of Bober's spatial location at any given moment of time; the language describing his daily routine, for example, is packed with locational and directional adverbs. Moreover, this routine is substantially lacking a temporal component. Bober's historical consciousness is massively reduced, while his awareness of spatial pattern is correspondingly increased. Spatial definition, in fact, has become important precisely as a consequence of this minimal perception of temporal pattern. Bober's public life is not as un-patterned as it might at first appear, but rather is given an alternative patterning based on spatial structures; this daily routine, indeed, can almost be ordered into a graph recording Bober's movements between
specified locations. Such a pattern, however, presenting as it does the maximum possible pattern obtaining within the life of the store, also presents an eloquent expression of the alienation of private from social life in this world. In his public life, Bober finds coherence solely in physical movement and the perception of space, as against the greater pattern possible for the private man. The relational structure of life in the store is a reduced pattern of spatial location, a diminished mode of existence which stands opposed to a private life in which a temporal sense may still be cherished. Once in the store, Bober enters a world in which only the immediate moment can be known.

This habitual specification of spatial location and direction, the unifying element in Bober's perception of the world, uses three basic spatial oppositions, represented by a systematic prepositional usage. Bober, it seems, may move 'up' or 'down', 'out' or 'in', and 'back' or 'forwards'. These lines of movement, moreover, are associated with internal states which record Bober's reactions to the external world. Some activities group around the positive modes of 'up', 'out' and 'back'; corresponding to these spatial states are the family home above the shop and an upswing in fortune, the world outside the shop, and the retreat both into the backshop and memory of better times. Other actions have a negative signification, as 'down', 'in', and 'forwards'; these are correlates for a downturn in fortune and descent to the shop, as well as the actual incarceration in the immediate reality of the shop itself. Some indication of the nature of this present reality is given by the fact that the spatial indices which correspond to the positive, life-affirming areas of Bober's existence all entail a retreat from his immediate experience; conversely, engagement in a public world involves negative, alienated areas of experience. The specific configuration of Bober's spatialized pattern, thus, reinforces the sense of a diminished and fragmented form of existence.
The ways in which Bober can situate himself, then, are a strictly limited set, which also encode his perceptual and psychological constraints. The first characteristic movement, and prepositional opposition, involves an 'upwards' movement: 'He finished the soup and went upstairs. The going up was easier than coming down' (A, p. 13). Attention is especially focused here by our expectation that it is normally easier to descend than to ascend a stairway. This 'going up' contains more than a simple physical activity; Bober's store 'was always a marginal one, up today, down tomorrow - as the wind blew. Overnight business could go down enough to hurt' (A, p. 14). 'Up' relates both to a personal sense of well-being and an economic well-being; conversely, the 'coming down' represents both a psychological and an economic set-back. In effect, the store has become an extension of Bober's life which threatens to dominate every other aspect of his life. This existential and economic marginality, indeed, where well-being varies 'as the wind blew', has already been suggested by the opening sentence of the novel: 'The early November street was dark though night had ended, but the wind, to the grocer's surprise, already clawed' (A, p. 7). Hope is itself an upward movement, and despair a descent; thus, the conclusive evidence of a new supermarket opening in the neighbourhood 'shattered the hope he had climbed into' (A, p. 15). Hope is a tenuous state, as are the memories of a more agreeable past which become possible once Bober retreats upstairs to the security of his apartment.

Secondly, Bober may move 'in' or 'out'. Most of his life is spent enclosed within the store, able to look at the outside world only as a spectator. Bober longs to be outside, nonetheless, and associates this

26 This restricted, spatial location of consciousness invites comparison with a similarly constrained consciousness common among Hemingway's major characters; see chapter three above.

spatial circumstance with a happier existential condition bound up with a memory of the past: 'he wished fleetingly that he could once more be out in the open, as when he was a boy' (A, p. 9). Being 'in the open' stands contrasted with the present entombment in the 'long dark tunnel' of the store:28

not for an age had he lived a whole day in the open. As a boy, always running in the muddy, rutted streets of the village, or across the fields, or bathing with the other boys in the river; but as a man, in America, he rarely saw the sky. In the early days when he drove a horse and wagon, yes, but not since his first store. In a store you were entombed (A, p. 9).

This sense of openness, significantly, attaches to a rare example of a historical consciousness; in the immediacy of the store, of course, such a consciousness is hardly possible.

The third spatial coordinate involves a 'backwards' movement. Thus, 'Morris went back to waiting' (A, p. 8); 'waiting', an activity whose result is inactivity, is a characteristic form of behaviour for Bober, suggesting as it does that Bober's activity is dependent on the potential activity of some other person. This backwards movement is a return to a routine of habitual behaviour, and to an activity whose temporal definition lies beyond Bober's control. Bober cannot terminate or focus this condition, but he is able to initiate it. More typically, when Bober moves 'back' he moves out of the store into the backshop where the family spend much of their time: 'he sat in a chair at the round wooden table in the rear of the store'; 'there were times when he went into the back, poured himself a spout of coffee and pleasantly thought of selling' (A, pages 8, 9). In the back, Bober is able both to dream and to think of the past, having removed himself briefly from the oppressive immediacy of the store: 'Morris was standing before the faded couch, looking out of the rear window at the back yards. He had been thinking of Ephraim' (A, p. 10).

28 In 'The Prison', another store-keeper feels himself trapped 'in old mistakes' (MB, p. 97).
This remembrance of his dead son finds a spatial correlate in Bober's physical position and the direction of his present perception; again, it is significant that at a later stage Frank Alpine, in a sense becoming a surrogate son, will come to live in the back-shop. In contrast to this backwards movement, the store constantly threatens to call Bober forward, into the spatial location of his existential anxieties. One such anxiety is prompted by the non-appearance of regular customers: 'When Nick Fusco failed to appear, Morris got up and stationed himself at the front window, behind a large cardboard display sign' (A, p. 8).

The demands of his immediate environment have forced Bober into a reduced awareness of the possibility of his life. This immediate condition largely rules out any consciousness of causality and temporal reference, leaving a public world structured by spatial relationships; indeed, Bober's residual historical sense has also been translated into spatial correlates. In this world, the perception of movement is virtually equivalent to a total perception of the universe. In the absence of causal reference, events appear to be random; Bober, consequently, is largely deprived of an agentive capacity, a loss which is most painfully felt in his sense of not fulfilling such responsibilities towards his family as providing an education for his daughter.

In Bober's daily life, events are typically connected by a simple conjunction: 'but the front door opened and a girl of ten entered'; 'after a while the hall door opened, and Nick came out' (A, pages 7, 9). Contingent structures such as these are an inevitable consequence of a consciousness which is substantially confined to spatial relatedness. The reader knows that the door opens, in these two examples, because someone has caused it to open, but the surface syntactic structures only record a serial contingency between two discrete events and not a dependent relation.29 Moreover, the verb 'open' is used intransitively.

29 This minimal relatedness, of course, is precisely Hemingway's ideal pattern, as was discussed in chapter three.
in both examples; consequently, the logical object of the verb, 'the door', becomes its grammatical subject, with the logical subjects 'a girl' and 'Nick' not present in the surface syntax. The form of the sentence, thus, suppresses the agentive actor in these events as well as the causative relationship. Even the simplest of events cannot be attributed with more than the most minimal relatedness.

This question of opening doors, in fact, reveals an intriguing pattern from among the kinds of constraint imposed on Bober. Three distinct forms of entry into the store can be detected. An intransitive use of 'open', as in the cases above, marks an absence of causative relations. 'Open' is also used transitively: 'Julius Karp opened the front door' (A, p. 24). Doors have a symbolic importance in the novel and here Karp, the landlord, is given a control over the door denied to Bober; Karp, indeed, has a considerable influence over Bober’s future. An inability to control the opening of doors becomes a physical analogue of the existential anxieties in the novel. Finally, the verb 'enter' is used of people with whom Bober feels ill at ease: 'a girl of ten entered'; 'Otto Vogel, the meat provisions man, entered' (A, pages 7, 9). The girl will want credit and Vogel, being German, is distrusted by Bober. Most interesting of all is Bober’s daughter: 'Helen removed her hat as she entered the grocery' (A, p. 19). This implication of tension, however, is not wholly unexpected; Helen feels trapped by the store, and Bober is ashamed of his inability to provide her with the things he feels she should have. Even after Bober’s death, this tension remains: 'she never entered the store'; 'Helen, carrying her briefcase, entered the grocery and found Frank' (A, pages 218, 220). In these late examples, the unease has been transferred to Alpine, who by this point has assumed the grocer’s role. It seems, then, that the act of entering the store, the most performed act in the narrative, serves to identify the relation of the grocer to the person who enters.

Bober’s public life has become an area of his existence which is virtually alienated from him. In this part of his life, both temporal
and emotional relatedness has been suppressed, to be replaced by a pattern of spatial relations. Since these spatial coordinates for his inner states present a structure independent of Bober, a structure which appears to be fashioned in the external physical environment around him, Bober's inner life itself seems to become separated from him, a function of his environment. By a process of "spatialization", Bober's consciousness in this public area of his life has come to seem independent of him, with an objective existence located in a specific physical space. This constriction of consciousness seems analogous to the process which Lukács calls the reification of human labour:

As labour is progressively rationalized and mechanized his lack of will is reinforced by the way in which his activity becomes less and less active and more and more contemplative. The contemplative stance adopted towards a process mechanically conforming to fixed laws and enacted independently of man's consciousness and impervious to human intervention ... must likewise transform the basic categories of man's immediate attitude to the world: it reduces space and time to a common denominator and degrades time to the dimension of space.

This loss of agency in the face of an external determining pattern, with its attendant reduction of human consciousness, is familiar enough from the spatial structures of Bober's daily routine. In this diminished perception of the world, 'time sheds its qualitative, variable, flowing nature; it freezes into an exactly delimited, quantifiable continuum filled with quantifiable "things" ... in short, it becomes space' (Lukács, p. 90). A fragmentation of consciousness has occurred, giving rise to the social impotence Morris must endure; in an environment where 'time is transformed into abstract, exactly measurable, physical space', both the 'object of labour' and 'the subjects of labour must likewise be rationally fragmented' (Lukács, p. 90). This reified consciousness, in short, is characterized by its 'radical incomprehension ... when faced with the

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phenomenon of history'; a loss of historical consciousness predicates, in turn, a reduced, fragmented consciousness.

An examination of Bober's perceptual activity reveals similar characteristics to those associated with his physical activity; causality and referentiality are again replaced by a spatial order based upon contingency. This loss of causative understanding occurs most dramatically in the use of the verb 'appear': 'there appeared a sign in the empty store window announcing the coming of a new fancy delicatessen: 'one night there appeared in the white light a stranger, a gaunt German'; 'since the appearance of H. Schmitz across the street ten months ago, all times were bad' (A, pages 14, 15, 14). The appearance of this rival storeowner is unforeseen, threatening and mysterious. Bober cannot assimilate these events into any pattern; nor is he able to discover any agency behind these developments, a fact indicated by the absence of an overt grammatical subject in these statements. 'Appear', in fact, regularly introduces events or states whose origins are obscure and which have therefore become mysterious: 'after him two more customers appeared'; 'Nick Fusso failed to appear' (A, 24, 8). In these examples, 'appear' marks Bober's incomprehension of whatever pattern might be operating in the life of his store.

Acts of seeing, in general, are crucial to an understanding of Bober's consciousness. Statements such as 'Morris was now visible at the window' or 'now the store looked like a long dark tunnel' suggest that Bober is threatened with a nonexistence which takes a form of invisibility as its spatial index (A, pages 9, 8). The perceptual act of seeing confirms a spatial pattern, and can militate against such invisibility. Thus, perceptual activity is again used to achieve a spatial coherence, a

32 Another supermarket appears to threaten the storekeeper in 'The Cost of Living' (Idiots First and other Stories, 1964).
strategy marked stylistically by locational and directional adverbs: 'he looked absently through the square windowless window .... to see if anybody had by chance come into the store' (A, p. 8). Bober is careful to find a precise spatial coordinate for his perceptual act. Such acts, moreover, are most commonly intentional acts of 'looking', as opposed to nonspecific and random acts of 'seeing'; the perceptual location which Bober consistently seeks involves a conscious act designed to create a spatial relatedness between himself, as the perceiving subject, and some external environmental condition, the perceived state or object. The perceiver relates himself to the world he is seeing by means of such locational actions; in this way, he creates an order in which a consciousness, however reduced, may exist. The urgent necessity of this activity is indicated by the tension which is a feature of characteristic forms like 'scanned', 'stared out', 'gazed into', and 'peered'.

Bober, quite literally, watches the world go by, although he has at least made himself into a fixed point with reference to which spatial patterns can be constructed. Just as obtained with his physical behaviour, however, so too Bober's perceptual behaviour is confined to a limited set of constructions. Since what he sees is the equivalent of what he knows to exist, such a construction encodes the limitations on his world. The first constraint is given by a characteristic construction in which 'seeing' is made dependent upon some other, antecedent perceptual act: 'he was startled to see a customer'; 'the grocer would peer through its dusty windows, trying to see through shadows'; 'Morris peered at it sharply but could see nobody in it' (A, pages 8, 15, 26). A deliberate, conscious perceptual act dominates the neutral act of 'seeing'. In some sense, an unmediated, spontaneous mode of perception is neither possible nor useful to Bober, and must be made dependent upon a previous conscious

33 This activity again recalls Nick Adams's procedures in Hemingway's In Our Time. For Bober, however, the achieved spatial pattern is no ideal, but rather a last defensive stay against complete breakdown. See chapter three, section three.
perceptual act; the subordination of 'see' as an infinitival complement forms the linguistic marker of this dependency. The strain which Bober is under, moreover, produces some curious statements: 'looking, that same night, from the street into his store, he beheld Taast and Pederson' (A, p. 158). Here Bober dreams that two rival grocers are robbing his store; this curious use of 'beheld' is not found elsewhere in the novel.

Again, Bober laments that 'in America, he rarely saw the sky' (p. 9). His voyage to America, far from opening up the possibilities carried in the American spatial metaphor, has resulted in a narrowing of perception. An unrestricted vision is associated with the open possibility of the past and with whole days spent 'in the open' as a boy; given Bober's immediate existence, such vision with its associated historical awareness is barely possible. Yet again, an unmediated 'seeing' is denied by the immediate reality; 'seeing' is associated with early manhood, a period prior to the fragmentation of Bober's life, and correspondingly is seen as a movement backwards and outwards into the open spaces of memory. Both 'seeing' and temporal consciousness, however, are now suppressed beneath spatial relations; 'Sometimes when he looked up ... he was startled to see a customer', 'from time to time he looked absently through the square-windowless window' (A, p. 8). Bober here establishes his relation to the world in a routine based upon spatial patterns. When a salesman calls out to him '"see you Monday'" Bober does not answer, because he cannot speculate about the future or whether indeed he will himself be "visible" at some future date.

There are some cases of 'seeing' allowed full expression, however, usually as an accompaniment to significant emotional disturbance. Such is the case with Ida Bober's reports of her husband's reaction to memories of their dead son: 'His wife saw his wet eyes'; 'Ida saw he was annoyed' (A, pages 10, 12). Again, as Bober passes Karp's crowded store 'he saw Louis waiting on a customer while four others crowded the counter', or he
thinks that a buyer for his own business 'will see with one eye the store is dead' (A, pages 20, 21). The evidence of Karp's success and of his own failure as a storekeeper is all too plain to Bober. Where some emotional trauma is involved, as here, perceptions force themselves on Bober; it may be that Bober would rather not 'look' at these things but is forced to 'see' them anyway.

The most significant use of "see", thus, comes during the robbery scene: 'Morris saw the blow descend and felt sick of himself' (A, p. 28). This attack signals all the fears which Bober's modes of perception have enumerated; in a downward movement, he falls 'without a cry. The end fitted the day' (A,p.29). The clarity of perception in this instance stands contrasted with Karp's warning about the robbery: "'You saw that grey car ... This is the third time I saw it in the last twenty minutes'", to which Bober replies, "'there is nobody in this car, I saw myself'" (A, pages 25, 27). Bober cannot 'see' this possibility until it actually happens. This image of downward motion, both perceptual and physical, recurs during Bober's death-scene: 'the spring snow moved Morris profoundly. He watched it falling, seeing in it scenes of his childhood' (A, p. 199). If this childhood memory recalls a happier time, nonetheless Bober's present reaction, to leave the store and shovel snow, brings him to his fatal pneumonia. As with the robbery, Bober's perceptions let him down: 'to his surprise the wind wrapped him in an icy jacket'; "'Tomorrow is April ... What kind of winter can be in April?'" (A, pages 200, 202). Bober's depleted temporal consciousness leads him into a misinterpretation of his spatial environment. The snowstorm brings death rather than freedom and seems, indeed, to be breaking down barriers between the exterior and the interior world: 'He watched a thousand flakes push at the window, as if they wanted to snow through the glass and in the kitchen' (A, p. 201). Human mortality finds a physical analogue in a snowstorm, as Bober's last recorded thought implies: 'I gave away
my life for nothing. It was the thunderous truth. Was the snow still falling?’ (A, p. 205).\footnote{This idea recalls Yakov Bok’s notion that ‘it snows history’ (F, p. 281), a recurrent metaphor in Malamud.} Bober’s 'spring' begins only after death, the final savage irony of his life: 'in the cemetery it was spring. The snow had melted on all but a few graves, the air was warm, fragrant' (A, p. 209).

Morris Bober is a man whose public life is poised 'at the edge of dissolution';\footnote{Marcus Klein, \textit{After Alienation: American Novels at Midcentury} (Freeport, New York, 1970), p. 275.} this condition remains the overwhelming reality of the social man in the novel. Bober the private man, however, retains and represents human values which are in conflict with the novel’s social world, and it is his retention of these values, in spite of a social pressure to abandon them, which provides for his exemplary status in the novel. These values, preserved against a rival value-system appropriate to the alienated social world of commercial exchange, are what Bober has to teach to Frank Alpine. Bober remains consistently unwilling to fashion human relations after the model approved by this social world. This is true even of the most impersonal of relations with such customers as an old Polish woman: 'A large brown bag of rolls stood in the doorway along with the sourfaced, grey-haired Poilisheh huddled there, who wanted one' (A, p. 7). This conjunction of woman and rolls seems to imply that these are two similar kinds of 'thing', conjunct entities; Bober's relation to the woman, indeed, is represented as an exchange of a roll which in a sense objectivizes their relationship. Bober, however, does not see the relation in this way at all. Rather, it is a human relation, a personal commitment; thus, he insists on rising from his sick-bed at six o'clock to open the store for the old woman. Again, Bober appreciates why Tessie Fuso unexpectedly enters his store: 'She was making amends for Nick's trip around the corner that morning. He cut her an extra slice of ham'

34 This idea recalls Yakov Bok’s notion that 'it snows history' (F, p. 281), a recurrent metaphor in Malamud.

(A, p. 26). A human exchange takes place beneath this economic exchange. 36

Bober's social life, as it turns out, cannot be represented as a complete alienation; it also dramatizes an opposition of different value-systems which provides the key to understanding his attitude towards this life. At the heart of this conflict stand two opposing interpretations of 'value' and 'trust'. When the daughter of an unreliable customer asks 'can you trust her till tomorrow for a pound of butter', she is asking both for economic credit and human trust (A, p. 7). Bober the businessman replies 'no more trust', but responds altogether differently to the girl's distress when, nonetheless, he gives her what she asks; human compassion overrules commercial sense almost automatically in him. Though the social environment has made the expression of such responses difficult and impractical, it has not made it impossible for Morris Bober. It is a measure of this world, in fact, that such human responses should have become as marginal as they have.

This conflict of values is most directly portrayed in the antithetical viewpoints given to Bober and Karp, his landlord. It is Karp, for example, who tells Bober that 'the neighbourhood was better than Morris gave it credit (for schnapps, thought the grocer)' (A, p. 14). Karp's liquor-store is the only successful business in this neighbourhood, however, which indicates that, though his idiom here suggests a human definition of 'credit', Karp is actually thinking of credit as a financial value; Bober's parenthetical comment tends to support this judgement. Karp is free, in fact, to be generous with his economic credit; it is left to Bober to dispense human credit. Bober dislikes the assumptions which underlie Karp's attitude to other people, and so thinks that 'he would allow the liquor dealer his bottles and gelt just not to be him. Life was bad enough' (A, p. 26).

36 A similar view is taken by another storekeeper in 'The Bill', who thinks that 'if you were really a human being you gave credit to somebody else and he gave credit to you' (MB, pages 146-47).
Karp, for his part, is scornful of Bober's commercial ineptitude: 'whereas Karp in whatever he touched now coined pure gold, if Morris found a rotten egg in the street, it was already cracked and leaking. Such a one needed someone with experience to advise him when to stay out of the rain' (A, p. 137). It is impossible for Karp to understand how Bober can reject him, the man who can supply the expertise required for survival in this world:

Karp came to the uncomfortable conclusion that although Ida was still friendly to him, he would this time get nothing for free from Morris; he wasn't going to give in. He reacted coldly to this insight, would give back what he got - so let it be indifference. But indifference was not a commodity he was pleased to exchange. For some reason that was not clear to him Karp liked Morris to like him (A, pages 137-38).

Interestingly, even Karp seems to want more from Bober than economic exchange.

Karp speaks for the social world of the novel. Thus, it is 'the nature of clerks to steal from those they were working for'; this must be true, because Karp had stolen from his employer (A, p. 138). Theft is, after all, an economic relationship, and money is Karp's master.

Similarly, Bober is a failed businessman because 'some were born that way', while a relationship between Jew and Gentile will lead to trouble 'by an unchangeable law' (A, pages 137, 139). Karp is at home in this determinist world seemingly structured according to universal laws in which any aspect of human life may be monetarized. In this world, 'a relation between people takes on the character of a thing and thus acquires a "phantom objectivity", an autonomy that seems so strictly rational and all-embracing as to conceal every trace of its fundamental nature: the relation between people' (Lukács, p. 83). This 'phantom objectivity' attached to interpersonal relationships adds to the general sense of an alienation of human qualities, and enlarges the phenomenon noted earlier in the process of 'spatialization' which characterizes Bober's own physical and perceptual behaviour.
Other characters also consider the question of trust. Among these is Helen Bober, torn between rival definitions of value. Her dream of a college education seems distant, since she is 'only a high school graduate with a year's evening college credit' (A, p. 17). Although she wants 'a future in love', she also feels her educational deficiencies as an impediment to her relationship with Nat Pearl, a wealthy law student; consequently, she cannot decide whether this relationship prompts 'torments of conscience' or 'disappointment at being valued under her expectations' (A, p. 17). Ida Bober, again, thinks that she 'could not really trust Frank. Yes, he had helped the business, but how much would they have to pay for it?', while Alpine himself protests to Bober, '"You don't have to be afraid to trust me. I am an honest man"' (A, pages 113, 52). Each of these characters is caught in a conflict between economic value and human value, the value-systems of public and private life which are championed by Morris Bober and Karp respectively. For Bober, the quality of human relations remains the source of value or 'credit', while for Karp, value is contained in the measurable exchanges of economic life. In Karp's world, 'qualitative human relations' have been transformed into 'a quantitative attribute of inert things'; human qualities and abilities have become a kind of merchandise, commodities which 'are no longer an organic part of his personality' (Lukács, p. 100). In retaining his sense of the human basis of social relations, Bober is resisting this reduction of human life. It remains true that the qualitative potential of temporal consciousness has been substantially denied Bober by the immediate reality of his social existence as signalled by the characteristic spatialization of his experience. Nonetheless, Bober retains a belief in a qualitative life by refusing to accept Karp's quantitative exchange-values; in so doing, Bober sets a limit to the fragmentation of his own existence.

The values defended by Bober stand as a source of human relationship in spite of a social structure which is built on the suppression of such relations. In the competitive world of the novel, as Norman Leer observes, 'those who are ethically motivated are in conflict with the prevalent tone'; this does not mean, however, that 'ethical commitment is no longer a social but a personal alternative'. Bober, for example, certainly sees his relations with his customers as more than a purely commercial matter. Human values may be residual in the social world but they nevertheless retain a presence. Moreover, although Bober's own life has become largely static and determined by the time the novel begins, other characters have not yet resigned themselves to a loss of possibility; Frank Alpine, for example, has come to New York 'looking for a better opportunity' (A, p. 30). Such characters are engaged in an effort to resolve their fragmented existence and 'to become whole again' (Leer, p. 91). Alpine seems 'like a man with two minds', and 'only when Helen happened to come into the store or the back while he was there, did he seem to relax, become one person' (A, p. 113). Both Alpine and Helen Bober possess split personalities, and both try to end this condition in seeking a psychic regeneration and a reintegration of the private and the public, the two major areas of their lives. While Alpine is relatively successful in his efforts, however, Helen hardly progresses at all; the reasons why this should be so provide crucial evidence about the nature of character development in the novel.

Helen reveals her abiding dread when she declares that 'the world has shrunk for me ... I want the return of my possibilities' (A, p. 42). Her problem, however, is that she is unclear as to how her 'possibilities' might be regained, for her initial attraction to Nat Pearl and the prospect of economic improvement brings her into conflict with an antithetical set

of values which she has learned from her father. An insecurity stems from her inability to choose between the rival systems. In a sense, her relationship with Pearl fails because she too, like her father, cannot escape a basic principle of 'honesty'; the name Bober, indeed, means 'you had no sure sense of property, as if it were in your blood and history not to possess' (A, p. 19). She is attracted to Pearl's world of economic possibilities but cannot quite discard her father's human possibilities. A similar ambivalence dogs her relations with Frank Alpine, in whom she sees another ideal, an ideal of free movement 'in the open world' (A, p. 95). Alpine becomes her vision of an American ideal, an ideal which is inevitably destroyed once Alpine abandons his former life to assume her father's life and responsibilities, the very emblem of her own sense of confinement. From the outset, as in the relationship with Pearl, Helen's sense of Alpine's value is caught between the rival value-systems of the novel. Her initial reaction to Alpine is 'the impression he would come in and ask for a handout', so that she 'had made up her mind to give him a dime' (A, p. 32). A monetary solution is brought to her accurate perception of Alpine's need; although she recognizes a human relationship is developing, she finds it difficult to assign an appropriate valuation to this relation. Again, her reaction to Alpine's present of a book and a scarf is that 'for gifts you pay', and so she rationalizes her returning these presents on the grounds that Alpine will need all his money if he is to enroll at college: 'You should have got your money back ... you'll need every penny for the fall' (A, pages 104, 108).

These gifts threaten Helen, in that they seem to be love tokens which demand a relationship outwith the economic system of the social world. She feels Alpine 'valued her more than she was altogether sure she wanted to be'; he makes demands upon her, having seen 'a hunger in her eyes he couldn't forget because it made him remember his own' (A, pages 121, 59).

39 The prospect of Alpine's going to college becomes another of Helen's dreams; such an eventuality would allow Helen a surrogate education.
Slowly, however, her attitude towards Alpine changes, 'as if something had altered familiar weights, values, even experience' (A, p. 121). She rejects Nat Pearl with the rebuff "'was a couple of times in bed a mortgage on my future?'"; here she expresses an attitude quite different from the one sensed earlier by Alpine when she sits beside him on a bench as if 'she would be asked to take a lease on it' (A, pages 151, 110).

Helen's changed perspective proves, nonetheless, to be fragile; after Alpine has forced himself upon her late one evening, 'she felt a violent self-hatred for trusting him, when from the very beginning she had sensed he was untrustable' (A, p. 161). In changing from a monetary to a human evaluation of Alpine, Helen now feels she has made a disastrous mistake. Alpine cannot be accorded 'human trust', and by the close of the novel Alpine has been only partially successful in persuading her to change her mind about him once more.

Frank Alpine's transformation has rather more permanence than is the case with Helen. From the moment of the robbery, a bond is forged between himself and Morris Bober, a bond which eventually will lead Alpine back to a social-historical engagement. Bober, indeed, becomes a mirror in which Alpine sees a part of himself clearly for the first time. Alpine actually watches the robbery in a mirror: 'a cracked mirror hung behind him on the wall above the sink and every so often he turned to stare into it' (A, p. 27). The key word here is stare, suggesting as it does some sudden recognition and heightened perception in Alpine. Alpine, 'staring into the mirror, waved frantically, his black eyes bulging, but Morris saw the blow descend' (A, p. 28); the significance of the mirror is borne out by the fact that, despite the detailed descriptions of the store which have gone before, the mirror now is mentioned for the first time. This image of the mirror is repeated elsewhere: 'he was afraid to look into the mirror for fear it would split apart and fall into the sink'; 'when

40 The mirror relationship is noted by Leer, p. 91.
he saw his face in the mirror he felt a nose-thumbing revulsion' (A, pages 80, 159). Bober also notes this mirror-image relation between Alpine and himself when he remarks that 'I am sixty and he talks like me', while Alpine suggests that his reason for working in Bober's store is to 'get more experience' (A, pages 37, 34). This notion of 'experience' plays an important part in establishing the nature of the relationship between Bober and Alpine. Initially referring to commercial expertise, 'experience' comes to mean the lived experience of Bober's life in which Alpine discovers the values which alter his world-view. Alpine will eventually take over the responsibility for this 'experience' in assuming Bober's historical and social experience into himself; he will live Bober's life, in a sense, ensuring its continuity.

Initially, the store is no more than a respite from the fluid outside world. Alpine has 'all his life been on the move, no matter where he was ... Here he could stand at the window and watch the world go by' (A, p. 56); here he is 'quits with the outside world'. Free of social-historical patterns, however, he cannot see any value in this life, so that opening the store for one old woman 'for three lousy cents was a joke but he did it for the Jew' (A, p. 56). Again, he keeps a part of the store's takings for himself, reasoning that 'taking this small cut was his way of showing himself he had something to give' (A, p. 80). The Bobers are solely a business arrangement for him, rather than a human relationship, and so he reasons, 'what the hell are they to me so that I gave them credit for it?' (A, p. 67). Helen, too, becomes a relationship he intends to exploit 'for what it was worth' (A, p. 59); an economic value-system determines Alpine's reactions at this time.

An uneasiness accompanies this outlook, however, and though he tells himself he is 'doing them a favour, at the same time making it a little worth his while', he feels 'a quiet grief' at stealing from Bober (A, p. 80). He is unsatisfied, 'thinking thoughts about his past, and wanting a new life' (A, p. 58). Small changes begin to appear in his attitudes
towards the Bobers, as when he realises that the Bobers' Jewishness has ceased to matter to him: he felt this elated feeling, as if he had crashed head on through a brick wall but hadn't bruised himself' (A, p. 113). He becomes Bober's pupil, in effect, learning the meaning of 'suffering' as the exemplum of human relations: '"If you live you suffer ... I suffer for you ... you suffer for me"' (A, p. 116). Alpine, for his part, resolves to return the monies he has embezzled from Bober. The 'new life' is not achieved as easily as this, however, and Alpine makes a vital mistake in thinking that 'the past was the past and the hell with it ... Let bygones be gone' (A, p. 145). On the contrary, the past catches up with him when Bober discovers both his theft and his part in the robbery before he himself can volunteer this information to the grocer. In suppressing his past actions, and in denying responsibility for his past, Alpine destroys the possibilities for human relationships. Ordered from the store by Bober, Alpine's desperation leads him to rape Helen, and so destroy 'the last of his good hopes ... his chance at a future' (A, p. 160).

Alpine now finds himself excluded from the pattern of relations he has found with the Bober family just at the point where he has finally realised the value of those relations to him. In attempting to deny the past, Alpine has only succeeded in destroying his possibilities in the present. He has, however, learned this lesson and finally admitted that no good can come from a denial of social-historical responsibilities and relations. In a crucial insight, he now sees his old existence as a rootless and isolated noncommitment which denies him valuable and necessary interpersonal relations. His apparent freedom of movement is in reality only an illusion of freedom beneath which lies a rigorous environmental determinism:

his goddam ed life had pushed him wherever it went; he had led it nowhere. He was blown around in any breath that blew, owned nothing, not even experience to show for the years he had lived. If you had experience you knew at least when to start and where to quit; all he knew was how to mangle himself more. The self he had secretly considered valuable was, for all he could make of it, a dead rat. (A, p. 160).
Without the store, he 'might as well be dead' (A, p. 169); only the store, spatial coordinate for Bober's life, can give Alpine the 'experience' which might establish a new life for him. However much Bober's own social-historical existence has become attenuated, it still presents an emblem of significant existential improvement for Alpine, whose old life represents the greater alienation and dissipation. Alpine's only hope, now, is that he will be able at some future date to rectify his mistakes 'with discipline and with love' (A, p. 168). Thus, it is from this point that he acts to create the conditions for a new life, taking over the ailing Bober's responsibilities to family and family business without expectation of reward, knowing he has 'used up all his credit' (A, p. 179). The store no longer represents an economic arrangement; the 'credit' which Alpine now strives to create for himself is a human value which may only be gained from his commitment to the Bobers. A change has taken place in him, so that he can with justice tell Bober that 'you can trust me now'. Alpine, indeed, now has reached a situation where 'he lived in the future, to be forgiven' (A, pages 180, 211). After Bober's death, the significance of this change is recognized by Ida and Helen Bober: 'as they toiled up the stairs they heard the dull clanging of the register in the store and knew the grocer was the one who had danced on the grocer's coffin' (A, p. 210). This reference is to an incident during Bober's funeral, when Alpine slips into the grave; the 'grocer' now refers to Alpine, who has in some sense taken over Bober's social-historical experience. Alpine has assumed Bober's responsibilities and, indeed, has revived Bober's ambition of giving Helen a college education, something which represents for him 'the privilege of giving her something she couldn't give back' (A, p. 214). The novel ends on a sequence of events resembling the opening of the novel; after washing his face in the backshop, Alpine lets in the old woman who complains of the cold, then watches Nick Fuso slip out to the rival store, and finally welcomes the
regular travelling salesmen. Alpine merely confirms the basis of his new life when he himself becomes a Jew; in doing so, he affirms the continuity between Bober's life and his own life, now lived according to a new value-system and within a new range of social-historical patterns of relationship.

Morris Bober provides an example from which Alpine learns the value of social involvement and historical consciousness. Social life remains an area of relative estrangement and disjunct consciousness; there is, however, also a sense of Alpine recovering a purposeful pattern in this life which many years of failure had weakened in Bober. For Alpine, being the 'grocer' represents more than the immediate reality it has come to mean for Bober. Rather, it presents him with a personal identity solidly founded on a historical experience which will allow him to live 'in the future', and so attain an openness and a possibility which his own life has lacked to this point. Moreover, some measure of reintegration of public and private life has been attained. Having himself achieved an 'honesty' in the store, Alpine has ensured the continuing applicability of Bober's values in the social world. He has achieved a meaningful, if limited, homology between social activity and the value of human relations, particularly in so far as being the 'grocer' becomes the public expression of his commitment to the Bobers. Public life is given a meaning in its relation to private responsibilities. There is, then, a qualified affirmation in Alpine's development in the novel, a development which confirms Bober's human values and 'experience' by contesting an immediate reality which fragments human consciousness.

The contemporaneous critical response to *The Tenants* suggests that Malamud has broken new ground in this novel, having abandoned the patterns which had hitherto characterized his work. His new hero, a novelist called Harry Lesser, appears neither to make a journey of self-discovery nor to regain an involvement in interpersonal relationships. Lesser's violent
confrontation in the novel with the black writer Willie Spearmint, moreover, has been seen as evidence of a new concern with the pressing question of ethnicity in America; given the heightened sensitivity to racial questions in the decade immediately preceding the writing of The Tenants, this seems a not unreasonable way of viewing the novel. 41 Typical early reviews talk about 'the spiritual conflict between black and white cultures', 42 or 'the fate of a well-disposed, if self-loving, white man who tries to explore the new Black Continent'. 43 In retrospect, however, the novel can be seen to involve more than a specific, historically localized response to an immediate social problem. Beneath the novel's surface level of a social fragmentation expressed in a racially-based confrontation and separation, Malamud's characteristic themes may still be identified. The Malamud protagonist must rediscover social relatedness and a historical consciousness if his dream of a new life is to become a reality; without this rediscovery, he will remain constricted within a depleted consciousness. A careful examination of Harry Lesser as he is presented in the novel reveals him to be Malamud's most powerful portrayal of just such a constriction and diminution. Lesser, the novelist writing novels about writers writing novels about novelists, is a man locked into a self-referential solipsism which leads him eventually into disorientation and insanity. Lesser's retreat from social interaction and historical relations, indeed, would seem to be Malamud's antipathetic characterization of the favoured persona of the 'Literature of Exhaustion', for whom such a solipsism has become the last reflex of free space. 44 The Tenants, therefore, may be interpreted as

41 Thus, for example, J.A. Allen, 'The Promised End: Bernard Malamud's The Tenants', in Bernard Malamud: A Collection of Critical Essays, edited by Field and Field, 104-16, sees the novel as a vision of 'race hatred versus brotherhood' (p. 105). See also Cynthia Ozick, 'Literary Blacks and Jews', also in Field and Field, 80-98.


44 See chapter one, section four, and particularly note 75.
Malamud's attack on contemporary asocial and ahistorical fictions.

Brita Lindberg-Seyersted has suggested that the key to understanding Lesser's consciousness lies in a patterning of tenses which shapes its development.\(^45\) Events reported in a present tense are progressively conflated with events reported in a past tense; coupled to narrative shifts from third to first-person narrator, this marks a gradual collapse of Lesser's capacity to distinguish real from imagined events. Lindberg-Seyersted argues that a surreal effect is achieved as fantasy and reality merge. Such a merger seems at variance with Malamud's characteristic technique of juxtaposing dream and reality in order to present the disjunction between inner life and external event.\(^46\) Malamud's concern in this novel, however, is to present the mechanics of a contracting consciousness increasingly unable to perceive the actual pattern of existence, and the merging of fantasy and reality is one important factor in this process.

The novel opens with Lesser immersed in an immediate continuous present whose stylistic analogue is the present tense which carries both his actions and his own commentary upon these actions:

Lesser catching sight of himself in his lonely glass wakes to finish his book. He smelled the living earth in the dead of winter. In the distance mournful blasts of a vessel departing the harbor. Ah, if I could go where it's going. He wrestles to sleep again but can't, unease like a horse dragging him by both bound legs out of bed. I've got to get up to write, otherwise there's no peace in me. In this regard I have no choice. 'My God, the years'.\(^47\)

This present existential moment is associated with a felt loss of personal agency in the face of some external compulsion and with a sense that time


\(^{46}\) See M.L. Ratner, 'Style and Humanity in Malamud's Fiction', Massachusetts Review, 5 (1963-64), 663-83; Ratner discusses Malamud's 'basic stylistic technique' of creating patterns of 'dream and surrealistic situation juxtaposed with reality' (p. 667).

\(^{47}\) Bernard Malamud, The Tenants (1971; London, 1972), pages 3-4. Subsequent references are abbreviated as T.
threatens existence itself. There is, moreover, a curiosity in this opening which reveals an important feature of Lesser's habitual modes of perception. The logical syntactic relation in this first sentence places Lesser's 'sight' of himself prior to his awakening, the opposite from normal expectation of the order of events. The construction 'wakes to finish his book', furthermore, implies that the act of waking is a deliberate, purposeful act, another departure from normal usage. As used here, waking and sleeping suggest that Lesser is in an intermediate condition of 'waking dream', as if awake but not conscious, which he can move in and out of at will.

Lesser's use of a mirror image, however, provides a possible explanation of this construction. Unlike Alpine's mirror-relationship with Bober in The Assistant, in which an interpersonal, social relation is formed, Lesser's reflective consciousness has no referential location beyond itself. Rather, Lesser is constrained within a solipsistic, inner-directed perspective; Lesser's central relationship is with his own image of himself, and so he is hardly interested in any relations external to such an inner debate. His own reflection of himself, thus, becomes the major reference-point for the patterning of an existence largely consisting of immediate sensation and perception. In the opening sentence of the novel, Lesser is able to move from a non-conscious state into a consciousness of relational pattern only because he now perceives a literal mirror-image of himself, given an exact spatial index in the reflection in a mirror. This self-reflexive relationship may also occur within Lesser's imagination, without a literal spatial objectification: 'though he remembers none although his sleep is stuffed with dreams, Lesser reveries one touched by fear: Here's this stranger I meet on the stairs' (T, p. 4). This use of 'reverie' as a transitive verb taking an agentive subject is even more unexpected than the transitive use of 'wake', since reverie is an undirected state analogous to dream in normal usage; on the contrary, 'reverie' here appears as a directed action. This "action"
has no correlate in the external world; what Lesser is able to do in such a construction, however, is to imagine a situation in which he does become agentive, in constructing an inner world of imagined events. Within this inner world, these events seem to take on an independent, objective existence, where 'reverie' becomes a purposeful activity capable of forming a relational structure. Lesser's imagination constructs a new consciousness, as it were, by becoming a mirror reflecting back to him an image of himself living another life. In a self-validating construction, Lesser forms the "mirror" which will reflect Lesser's alternative life. Lesser, in effect, is engaged in creating an imaginative life entirely separated from his actual life and it is this imaginative life, complete with an agency and a pattern denied in real life, which the present tense narrative carries.

The typical reverie imagines an immediate sensory paradise, freed from the demands of daily life:

Now that the imagination is imagining Lesser imagines it done, the long labor concluded at last. Relief, calm, mornings in bed for a month. Dawn on the sea, rose lighting the restless waves touching an island waking, breathing the freshbreath...Ah, this live earth, this sceptred isle on a silver sea, this Thirty-first Street and Third Avenue. This forsaken house. This happy unhappy Lesser having to write (T, pages 4-5).

This immediate, vibrant scene seems more tangibly, sensibly alive for Lesser than does the external world. The description of specifically cerebral activity, moreover, is sparse and uninformative beside this evocation of 'the once more sensuous smells of land surrounded by the womanly sea' (T, p. 4); these 'once more sensuous smells' are presented as a recurrent phenomenon, an intoxicating immediacy which represents an imagined ideal. The suggested sources of this reverie are more literary than they are rooted in actual sensory experience, however, as the reference to John of Gaunt's famous speech in Richard II reveals. Gaunt's 'sceptred isle' and 'other Eden' of an ideal England provides Lesser with a literary model for his paradise, indicating that the sensuousness of
this reverie is a matter of words rather than sensations, idea rather than experience. It appears that Lesser's 'reverie' makes little reference to any actual landscape or experience and is rather the writer's self-referential, self-conscious construct which carries his own image of himself as 'the artist as broad swirling river, flowing freely amid islands of experience' (T, p. 15).

From this opening sequence of reveries, the narrative returns to a past tense narrative which records Lesser's actual existential circumstances and a more verifiable empirical world; the narrative division here is substantiated by the fact that Lesser's continuing commentary is given in a present tense. This simple narrative division does not remain constant throughout the novel, however; rather, the tense-pattern records the progressive conflation of subjective reverie or hallucination with the third-person narration of an objective reality, until finally hallucination has become Lesser's only "reality". Lesser's attempted construction of an alternative 'life' of the imagination, containing an existential pattern impossible in his daily life, is doomed to failure; this inner life will eventually exclude all sense of an external world and leave Lesser enclosed in a personal nightmare of madness. The use of tense does not distinguish subjective image from a more verifiable reality. By the end of the novel, in fact, the past tense has come to mark Lesser's hallucinatory world, his new "reality", while the present tense now marks events external to his own imaginings, the obverse of the initial configuration of tenses. This very transposition of tenses, however, provides the key to the character development which is at the heart of the novel, and which traces the development of Lesser's madness. The ability to separate inner life from external event, at best tenuous, is eventually submerged beneath a hallucinatory perception. Lesser's "reality" at any

given point is marked by the use of a past tense, rather than the past
tense marking an objective, external reference. As the past tense becomes
the habitual mode of Lesser's self-enclosed inner life, the development of
his madness can be traced throughout the course of the novel. This
development is confirmed by Lesser's increasing tendency to use a third-
person reference in his reveries, seeing himself as a character in some
alternative life of his own creation.

The second main section to use a present tense introduces Levenspiel,
the landlord who inspires many of Lesser's terrors:

Lesser knew the doorbell was ringing and went on writing. It rang
insistently.
   It rings forever.
   Levenspiel ringing.
   The writer sits at his desk and talks through two rooms. He knows
the words and music, they've sung it together many times before, begun
with assertions of mutual regard (T, p. 16).

This tense shift corresponds to a shift from a narration of external facts
to the record of Lesser's imagination. At the precise moment that Lesser
hears the doorbell, past tense 'rang' becomes present tense 'ring', and
finally present participle 'ringing'. Much of his ensuing encounter with
Levenspiel, including their conversational exchanges, is reported indir-
ectly through Lesser's subjective perception of events. While what occurs
seems to be an actual encounter, moreover, curious elements in Lesser's
reportage are already present; specifically, a certain theatricality in
his perception of events suggests that Lesser sees himself as an actor in
a drama, responding to such stage directions as 'then to business' (T, p.
17). Levenspiel himself becomes an actor in Lesser's hallucinatory
inner life; as chapter one ends, Lesser imagines himself trapped in a
blazing building set alight by Levenspiel. This reverie is now explicitly
a literary creation, with Levenspiel 'resembling mysterious stranger if
not heart of darkness', a clear reference to Joseph Conrad's Heart of
Darkness which recalls the stranger imagined in the opening scene of the
novel; another 'stranger' will appear near the end of the novel when
Lesser imagines a confrontation with Willie on the stairs.

A further period of past tense narrative now follows before a present tense episode which strengthens the argument that the present tense correlates at this point to a hallucinatory perception. At the specific moment that Lesser begins to smoke marihuana, a present tense begins to be used:

Lesser holds the sweet-burning smoke down till the room turns radiant and grand. Arches soar, the rose window flushes deep rose. Bells bong in a drowned chapel. Now this cathedral is a floating island smelling of forest and flowers after summer rain ... We're alone on this floating island, Willie ... We're moving with the current. (T, p. 48).

The substance of this hallucination is again a paradisal island, an island which forms Lesser's characteristic image of the ideal existence for a writer: 'think of this sacred cathedral we're in, Willie ... this flower-massed, rose-clustered, floating island. I guess what I mean is what about art?' (T, p. 50). A shift back to the past tense marks an end to this hallucination: 'Lesser, lonely at his sad little party, gets to talk to Willie's girl. She had been wandering through living room and study, perhaps to evade him' (T, p. 51).

The immediacies of hallucination and novel-writing are cognate experiences for Lesser; thus, 'if you've been writing a book for ten years time adds time to each word; they weigh like rocks - the weight of waiting for the end, to become the book ... So much I no longer see or feel except in language. Life once removed' (T, p. 106-07). Lesser is afraid of becoming a passive vehicle for a literary activity which appears increasingly independent of his own volition. Such is his obsession with finding literary form, indeed, Lesser begins to perceive his own life as extension of literary activity:

As Lesser leaves the last gallery, wondering what would happen if he went home and picked up his pen, a blue-hatted black woman in the lobby drops a mirror out of her cloth handbag ... A girl in a voluminous silk-lined black cape coming out of the ladies' room quickly walks away from it (T, pages 112-13).
The woman in the cape is Irene, Willie's mistress, a source of fantasy for Lesser who 'had often thought of her, sometimes while writing' (T, p. 113). An ambiguity in this statement implies that Irene may have become a projection of the literary act. If the adverb 'something' qualifies the main clause, then the sentence means that Lesser often thinks about Irene, on some of which occasions he is also writing. Conversely, if 'something' qualifies 'writing', the relation between the two clauses becomes more than a mere contingency. Lesser now thinks about Irene on those specific occasions when he is writing, such thoughts having become dependent on the act of writing. Lesser's surprise at meeting Irene 'though he invents surprises of this sort easily enough in his fiction' again suggests a conflation of external event with inner imagination (T, p. 113). Irene comes to seem like a character in one of Lesser's self-reflective fictions: 'They walk up Sixth to the park ... The park is of diminished reality to Lesser, tight, small, remote. The book he is writing is unbearably real in his thoughts' (T, p. 114-15). The actual landscape is less "real" than the landscape Lesser creates in his imagination, in which he himself is a character; thus, 'Lesser sees himself leaving her at the wall' (T, p. 115). Lesser's self-reflexive narcissism, in effect, is beginning to transform the representation of the world of the novel. Unable to 'see or feel except in language', Lesser begins to see himself as an actor in a self-created drama, while Irene is progressively reduced to a mere stimulus of the literary act: 'What she has told him has set off an excitement. He feels in himself a flow of language' (T, pages 107, 119). 49

When Lesser next pursues Irene, hallucination has begun to dominate his perception; he 'sees a letter in Irene's box, one he has written often but not on paper. He imagines Willie reading it by matchlight' (T, p. 137). 49

49 A similar pattern of behaviour occurs with Dubin; thus, 'writing is a mode of being. If I write I live', or 'I've given up life to write lives' (W, pages 105, 316).
"See" is beginning to mean "imagine" in Lesser's vocabulary. As he seems to watch Irene's apartment, there are significant shifts from facts about the world to facts about Lesser's imagination of a world:

The letter speaks of Lesser's love. Willie reads it and sets it afire with a match. Maybe he would if he were there, if the letter were there. But Willie's in his room on the fourth floor of Levenspiel's deserted house, hard at work on his new book. Lesser ... walks back and forth in his room, but when he sits down at his desk he does nothing desperately and gets up (T, p. 137-38).

Neither Willie nor Lesser, in fact, are present at this scene. A past tense "reality" only enters Lesser's relationship with Irene after they have made love, although there are indications that the affair retains a hallucinatory quality for Lesser:

But mostly what happened was that he was often high on reverie and felt renewed energy for work. When passing under a leafless maple tree he thinks of Irene and a blessing descends. Then he notices its branches swollen with buds and has this livened hunger to write (T, p. 150).

Irene supplies the content for an intoxicating reverie, becoming in a sense material for Lesser's narcissism, since she 'helped him write freely' (T, p. 151).

Willie Spearmint's development follows a similar pattern to that of Irene. Willie becomes less of an actual character as Lesser's hallucinatory terrors transform him into a stereotypical racial demagogue; indeed as 'Willie' comes to be Lesser's creation, he takes on the shape of Lesser's fears. While Lesser reads Willie's manuscript the wind makes 'a keening sound outside his window' and Lesser experiences another hallucination: 'a door slammed in the distance and slammed again, Lesser jumping twice as he read. He heard whispering voices in the hall. Willie, wandering, talking to himself? Levenspiel muttering? Explorers from a ship offshore?' (T, p. 58). The actual hallucination is identified by the present participles. Other associated perceptions are presented in a past tense, however, which suggests that they are to be taken as verifiable "fact"; this may be an early case of a hallucination becoming a reality
for Lesser. Lesser's precis of Willie's novel, again, very largely the only information given about this novel, reveals something of Lesser's attitude to Willie. The novel, partly autobiographical, is subsumed into Lesser's present tense commentary: 'the book was mainly naturalistic confessional ... "I" grows up in redneck Mississippi in pure black poverty' (T, p. 60). What is, on the available evidence, a novel which tries to achieve a degree of historical understanding, now becomes the record of a series of contingent immediacies. Lesser, in effect, reconstructs Willie's novel into a pattern similar to his own consciousness, a pattern which conforms exactly to Lesser's experience of reading the novel. The record of Willie's second manuscript confirms that this is the case, as can be seen in the differentiation of Lesser's present-tense precis from the past tense quotations from the work itself:

In the last scene of the chapter the mother has a visitor who drops in every other night. ... He was an ofay who liked to pretend to talk nigger talk. It made him feel good to do it though it was fake black talk. (T, pages 102-03).

To Willie's claim that literature, like experience, is specific to the social-historical patterns involved in its creation, Lesser replies that 'if the experience is about being human and moves me then you've made it my experience. You created it for me. You can deny universality, Willie, but you can't abolish it' (T, p. 75). Lesser seems intent on obeying this rubric quite literally, in taking possession of Willie's 'experience' for his own purposes. He does not learn from another's 'experience' in quite the same way as does Alpine in The Assistant; rather, 'experience' comes to mean any reflection of himself.

A subordination of Willie's 'experience' to Lesser's inner life, in fact, characterizes subsequent relations between the two men. Lesser's fantasy of being on a desert island with a black woman bears references to Othello. It would seem, also, that fantasy and the external world have come together, since the dream, 'she curses Lesser', proceeds
without interruption into actual event, 'Willie raps on the door' (T, p. 77). The outside world now intrudes into reverie, rather than the reverse. Again, Lesser imagines himself in Harlem: 'Here's Lesser enjoying Harlem... He sees himself walking on Eighth above 135th, drifting uptown alone on the wide dark sea' (T, p. 89). 'Lesser' has become a character in Lesser's fantasy-world of imagined events. Control over his imaginative faculties is diminishing, however, for an element of threat now enters Lesser's idyll: 'Sam flips open his eight-inch mother-of-pearl switchblade, as Lesser, at his desk on Thirty-first near Third, brushes the reverie aside' (T, p. 90).

This fear recurs in two violent songs attributed to Willie which Lesser dreams (T, p. 145), and in two hallucinations. In the first of these, 'he had visions of a pack of rats, or wild dogs; or a horde of blacks descending as he tries to go up. His head is riddled with bullets' (T, p. 174). Lesser is aware of the threat embedded in this hallucination, and struggles to rid himself of it: 'Enough or I'll soon be afraid to breathe. He went up two steps at a time... He heard waves softly hitting the beaches, shut the door with a relieved laugh and trotted quickly up to his floor'. A crucial sequence of tense shifts occurs here. Lesser escapes the hallucination, as marked by a return to a past tense; other elements of hallucination, however, enter into this recovered "reality", which suggests that Lesser's ability to distinguish inner image from the external world is collapsing. Immediately following his return to the refuge of his apartment, moreover, Lesser has a hallucinatory vision of Willie in a 'war canoe' landing on his 'tiny accursed island' (T, p. 175). In another present tense reverie, Lesser imagines events prior to his arrival, in which his own manuscript has been destroyed.

Significantly, Lesser's return to 'writing' after this loss is given by a present tense, an immersion in immediacy: 'he sits at his desk in his daylit spacious study... typing as fast as he can' (T, p. 181). Lesser retreats back into his "island". This immediacy is no longer
easily identifiable as 'reverie', however, while the past tense narrative cannot be ascribed an empirical veracity with any certainty. On the one hand, the 'stranger' of earlier hallucinations now forms part of the past tense narrative: 'he saw himself fleeing naked down the fire escape, holding to his heart his new manuscript. Sometimes as he wrote he would picture the heavy-breathing landlord touching a match to a rubbish pile in the cellar' (T, pages 195-96). This recurrent phantasm has apparently become a reality for Lesser, who now searches the basement for the stranger; the accompanying past tense indicates that this is the case. Conversely, the hallucinatory present now seems to incorporate events which may actually have happened, as the use of a present tense implies:

He swears he hears stealthy footsteps in the hall, takes a bread knife out of the kitchen table drawer, foolishly flings open the door and sees no one. Was it somebody real?... He goes to Irene's doctor and is told he is suffering from a deficiency of vitamin B. He is injected at intervals, feels healthier, and writes faster. (T, p. 199).

An inner world which began as hallucination, distinct from an empirically verifiable public world, now seems to Lesser to be more real than any actual world. His discovery that Willie has returned to the building, thus, is presented as if an imagined event, although it may actually have taken place:

One morning as the writer, standing in the January snow, is emptying his wastebasket into the dented rubbish can in front of the building, he discovers a barrelful of crumpled typewritten yellow balls of paper. Lesser, horror-struck, drops the lid with a clang on the can. Willie's back, I knew it in my bones. (T, p. 199).

The real 'Willie' has long since been submerged beneath Lesser's phantom; the anti-semitic, bloodthirsty writings which Lesser discovers when he 'again lifted the lid and rooted around in the mass of rolled balls in the can', therefore, belong to this phantom, identified at this point in the narrative by a past tense. (T, p. 199). Lesser himself is the author of these writings; these stand as one embodiment of Lesser's own
terrors, thus, just as his invention of the threatening stranger projects such terrors outward into a seemingly objective source independent of him.

Lesser makes one last attempt to create an imaginative structure which will encapsulate and pattern his experiences: 'Here's this double wedding going on, that's settled in his mind' (T, p. 206). In a tribal marriage ceremony, white man and black man are to marry black woman and white woman respectively, and so resolve the social and psychological tensions which are at the root of Lesser's impending breakdown. It is precisely the self-reflexiveness of Lesser's consciousness, however, which precipitates his breakdown and, finally, his conflation of hallucination and "reality":

Fog seeped into the building, filling each empty floor, each freezing room, with deadwater smell. A beach stank at low tide. A flock of gulls, wind-driven in a storm, had bloodied the cliff and lay rotting at the foot of it. One night Lesser, hearing footsteps as he trod down the stairs, glanced into the stairwell. In the dim light he caught a sight of a black man with a thick full beard (T, p. 220-21).

Such self-reflexive perception encloses Lesser in a hallucinatory world, in which he seems able only to passively watch his surrogate self live out its nightmare:

The writer was nauseated by not writing. He was nauseated when he wrote, by the words, by the thought of them.

Each morning, nevertheless, I held the fountain pen in my hand and moved it along the paper. It made lines but no words. A great sadness came on me.

They trailed each other in the halls. Each knew where the other was although the terrain had changed. (T, p. 229).

The 'writer', one of Lesser's imagined selves, is irrevocably committed to the creation of another imagined self, the 'Lesser' who now engages in a murderous confrontation with the stranger 'Willie', his imagined antagonist. Lesser's inner "lives", it would seem, finally feed upon one another in such a way as to destroy Lesser's sanity.

In The Tenants, Malamud investigates a solipsistic consciousness in
which the activity of writing stands as the emblem of an inner space completely removed from any social-historical relations. The pattern of Lesser's inner life consists, at the end, of little more than the notion of 'writing' as an ideal existence, cobbled together by a fabric of literary allusions. To begin with, whenever Lesser 'sees himself once more at his desk, writing, he can't imagine he will settle for less than a sufficient ending' (T, p. 107). In this context the verb 'imagine', though it may also be being used idiomatically in the sense of 'believe', is likely to refer to a literal act of imagination; once in the chosen role of 'writer', Lesser cannot formulate in his imagination the possibility that the imaginative act will not create pattern. For Lesser, indeed, the imaginative act is the source of all pattern, and what he cannot imagine does not exist. After his manuscript is destroyed and he must begin writing anew, however, this sense of ultimate pattern is lost to Lesser. Writing has become an immediate activity without an end purpose, represented by an intransitive verb in a narrative which records simply that 'Lesser writes' (T, p. 182). Finally, he loses all remnants of control over this activity, and 'rereading the words he sees scenes he hasn't written, or thinks he hasn't' (T, p. 225).

Lesser's ideal 'island' proves, moreover, to be less of his own creation, his own image, than he had supposed. In addition to the allusions to Richard II, Othello, and Heart of Darkness, a veritable plethora of literary references shape Lesser's existential ideal. Robinson Crusoe becomes the model for his imagined relationship with Willie (T, pages 7, 30), while his imagined journey to Harlem 'alone on the dark sea' echoes Coleridge's ancient mariner 'alone on a wide, wide sea' (T, p. 89). 50 Again, Lesser echoes Milton in imagining himself piloting a boat on 'the

Galilean lake', or as Twain aboard a 'Mississippi steamboat' \(T, \ p. \ 15\). \(^{51}\)

Lesser and Willie engage in a hallucinatory poetic contest, each parroting William Blake's 'The Tyger' \(T, \ p. \ 51\); in other hallucinations, Lesser echoes Othello and parodies Robert Frost in suggesting 'home is where, if you get there, you won't be murdered' \(T, \ p. \ 25\), \(^{52}\) while Wordsworth, Macbeth, Keats and Valéry are also alluded to \(T, \ pages \ 11, 25, 105, 111\). Lesser's own novel, with its writer-hero writing another novel about a novelist searching for love through the medium of literary creation, takes its title from King Lear as 'The Promised End'. This allusion is a final ironic commentary upon Lesser's behaviour, for the 'promised end' is not Lesser's achieved state of patterned existence through the literary act; rather, Kent's question, 'is this the promised end?', is his response to Cordelia's death, where the "end" is Doomsday, the abrogation of all pattern. \(^{53}\) Kent's notion of 'the promised end' exactly fits Lesser's final condition. Appropriately, then, Lesser's literary epigraph echoes the onset of Lear's madness: 'who is it that can tell me who I am?' \(^{54}\)

One measure of Lesser's solipsistic retreat, therefore, is his creation of a self-reflexive world of linguistic structures which hardly refer at all to an external, empirical universe. Words no longer include a necessary relation to a verifiable phenomenological world or signify a publically agreed world of meaning. Language need have no semantic value; rather, Lesser has given it a largely formal function:

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53 King Lear, V. iii. 265.

54 King Lear, 1. iv. 237.
this is where Lesser's book was conceived more than a decade ago, died a premature (temporary) death, and seeks rebirth. Lesser is a man of habit, order, steady disciplined work. Habit and order fill the pages one by one. Inspiration is habit, order; ideas growing, formulated, formed. He is determined to finish his book where it was begun, created its history, still lives (T, p. 183).

Pattern, history, life itself, have narrowed to the formal arrangement of words on a page, the definitive behaviour of Lesser's immediate life. Despite his hope of learning 'through some miracle of transformation as he writes', Lesser can only 'follow the words' (T, pages 192, 226). In the extract above, for example, a regular structural pattern of units of three has been adopted, to form an almost ritualistic syntactic patterning; thus, 'inspiration' becomes 'habit, order, ideas'. As a result, semantic pattern is less important than syntactic pattern. The fact that habit, order, and discipline are not synonymous terms has less significance for Lesser than the fact of their formal arrangement. The formal structures of words may be contradicted by their semantic relations; for example, 'Lesser dresses unwillingly, disappointing surprise, because he had gone to bed in a fire of desire to write' (T, p. 3). A problem arises with the phrase 'disappointing surprise'. If 'disappointing' is an adjectival form here, it must contradict 'surprise'; a surprise, being unexpected, cannot normally involve disappointment which demands a degree of previous expectation. Again, if 'disappointing' is a verbal form, the same problem arises; one cannot normally set out to disappoint a surprise. Formal structures may even subvert semantic interpretation: 'on the roof was once an attractive small garden where the writer liked to sit after a day's work, breathing, he hoped, as he watched the soiled sky' (T, p. 11). Difficulty arises over the status of 'breathing'. Either 'breathing', like the parenthetical 'he hoped', refers back to 'the writer' as the nearest preceding noun phrase, or it is taken with the first-mentioned noun phrase of the main clause, namely 'garden'. Normal syntactic logic points to the former being the case, producing
the semantic oddity of 'Lesser hoped he breathed'; semantic logic, conversely, would favour the latter interpretation.

This emphasis on formal arrangement at the expense of semantic content can only lead to a depletion of the possibilities of language, and with this a constriction of Lesser's imaginative world. Lesser's history becomes an individual case-history of a wider social process, in this context, where 'the tension between appearance and reality, fact and factor, substance and attribute tend to disappear' and 'discourse is deprived of the mediations which are the stages of the process of cognition and cognitive evaluation' (Marcuse, *One Dimensional Man*, p. 85). This 'closing of the universe of discourse' by the promotion of an 'acceptance of that which is offered in the form in which it is offered' precisely describes the development of Lesser's consciousness (Marcuse, pages 78, 91). Similarly, Lesser adopts 'self-validating analytical propositions which function like magic-ritual formulas' and proclaim the 'reconciliation of opposites by welding them together in a firm and familiar structure' (Marcuse, pages 88-89). Either semantic contradiction is suppressed, or it is avoided by the use of a vacuous phraseology reduced to a minimal semantic value. This can be seen in such characteristic statements as the following: 'now the imagination is imagining Lesser imagines it done'; 'the empty hall was empty'; 'her nude blackness dancing in the dance'; 'a stranger is a man who is called a stranger'; 'a wedding is a wedding' (*T*, pages 4, 25, 77, 90, 217). Lesser is content with platitudinous utterances devoid of significant meaning; the formal structure of such statements alone gives them any value for him.

Lesser's retreat from social relatedness and from historical pattern ends in a literal retreat into silence, or at least a language whose semantic value has so diminished as to become a virtual equivalent of silence. For Malamud, the psychological correlate of this process is psychic disintegration; solipsism becomes insanity. *The Tenants*, thus, cannot be viewed narrowly as a treatise on contemporary race relations.
Rather, it is an assault upon a contemporary narcissism evident in contemporary art, literature and philosophy. Lesser's ideal may appropriately be placed alongside Lewis's Adamic hero or Hassan's radical innocent, or any other recent mutation of the antihistorical tradition in American culture. In the story of Harry Lesser, Malamud has set out one version of this tradition and his own rejection of it. Lesser's inner 'life' proves to be the most deluded of all idealist dreams imagined by Malamud's questers, and his breakdown thus acts as a negative confirmation of the characteristic pattern of psychic regeneration in Malamud. Only in a recovery of social-historical consciousness, a historical identity and a social relatedness, can the Malamud protagonist finally discover his new life.

55 See chapter one, section two, notes 19 and 23.
Chapter Five

Ken Kesey: Historical Consciousness and the Quest for Autonomy

1

The works of Ken Kesey represent a further chapter in the debate surrounding history and historical consciousness in American cultural life. Kesey's narratives demand an eventual perception of historical events in their totality where 'the Scenes Gone By and the Scenes to Come flow blending together in the sea-green deep while Now spreads in circles on the surface'.¹ This philosophical and stylistic axiom, however, has again become a source of critical dissension. On the one hand, Kesey is seen to continue the idealist aspirations of Transcendentalism, with its anti-historicist perspective. Tanner, for example, talks of Kesey's quest 'for the absolute NOW, the pure present ... to pass beyond all structurings of reality' (City of Words, p. 382). Kesey's notorious experiments with hallucinogens form one part of this endeavour.² Conversely, Kesey's stylistic patterning of tenses serves as 'a reflector of psychological states'; in One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest, thus, the narrative shifts, to the past tense to signify that Bromden is back in the world of time again and is able to face the torments of the past and look forward to a future where each day holds the possibility for growth and development rather than endless repetition. The present tense recurs only in traumatic scenes where the Combine temporarily has the upper hand (as during the shock treatment).³

1 Ken Kesey, Sometimes a Great Notion, p. 14. Subsequent references are abbreviated as SKN.


From this standpoint, Bromden's "now" represents a radical depletion of consciousness, and Bromden's development is towards a more expansive temporal awareness. The interpretation of Kesey's attitudes towards social patterns, again, divides into two critical positions. In the idealist view, Kesey advocates an unrestricted individualism. His two novels, consequently, record the stands which Randle P. McMurphy and Hank Stamper make against social patterning; the specific social structures of a hospital and a labour union, represented respectively by Nurse Ratched and Draeger, threaten the individual. The opposing viewpoint argues that Kesey attacks certain specific social patterns, rather than social pattern as such. McMurphy's war against Ratched's regime, for example, is more than simply a private male-female contest; an emphasis on Kesey's antifeminism results in a distorted, partial reading of the novel. Rather, Ratched has a representative value as an ideologue for a determinist, behaviouristic order in which human activity becomes predictable and manipulable according to absolute laws. Ratched's mechanistic, reified world, therefore, is countered by an authorial perspective which is 'not so much antifeminist as antiskinnerian', an attack on the social philosophy of B.F. Skinner and his followers.

McMurphy champions an open world in which individual autonomy is possible within a structure of voluntarily agreed interpersonal relations.

A stylistic analysis of the developmental structures at the heart of Kesey's work, as opposed to the biographical speculation which has tended to dog assessments of Kesey, indicates that this latter view is the most


5 M.N. Boardman, 'One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest: Rhetoric and Fiction', *Journal of Narrative Technique*, 9 (1979), 171-83 (p. 178). Skinner's contribution to the antihistoricist tradition is discussed in chapter one; see chapter one, section four, note 90.
appropriate approach to Kesey. The structural significance of the struggle between McMurphy and Ratched lies in its representation of opposing conceptions of social organization as these interact with the primary drama of the novel, namely the developing consciousness of its narrator, Chief Bromden. Bromden's internal psychic drama mirrors on external social struggle; Kesey himself describes the novel as 'the battle going on in the Indian's mind between this man and the Combine that is loose in America' (quoted in Boardman, p. 180). A mechanistic, technologically powerful 'Combine' with its behaviourist ideology sees man as a machine devoid of internal motivation, and proposes a strict external determinism. McMurphy challenges the 'Combine' by demonstrating the formative faculty available to the individual in the achievement of a personal identity, and proposes an open system of continual process, essentially historical, where identity is created in a dialectic between the individual consciousness and external social structures. In so doing, McMurphy sets Bromden an example which energizes him into an assertion of his own identity in contesting the diminution of the possibilities of consciousness which the 'Combine' has imposed. By the end of the novel, moreover, a genuine community has begun to emerge among the inmates of the hospital. In Sometimes a Great Notion, Leland Stamper's return to Oregon is characterized as a return to social relatedness and historical being after a period of asocial, narcissistic self-absorption; this Oregon, moreover, is far removed from the ideal land of the pioneer myth. Leland also rediscovers a genuine community; despite their disputed supplying of the Wakonda lumber company, the Stampers have much more in common with the striking lumbermen than does Draeger, the union official. Against Draeger's belief that 'the world is always the same' (SN, p. 13), Leland

6 Tanner, for example, spends most of his discussion of Kesey on Tom Wolfe's account in The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test (1968), to the detriment of his discussion of Kesey's own works.

7 McMurphy's tutelary example is discussed in B.A. Leeds, 'Theme and Technique in One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest', Connecticut Review, 37 (1974), iv. 35-50; Martin (1973-74) notes the relation between the McMurphy-Ratched conflict and Bromden's modes of perception.
comes to see the temporal dynamic in human experience. Kesey's own notes for his second novel indicates its continuity with the earlier work: 'Lee's combine', thus, is 'a ticker tape of dying, a manufacturer of robot identities bent on death, an outside yet inside thing'.

The crucial factor in this struggle for identity is a recovery of a sense of historical being, the suppression of which sense had been one foundation of the power of the 'Combine'. Bromden and the two Stampers start to perceive a pattern of temporal references and relations which allows them an understanding of the development of their personal histories. From confinement in an immediate present existence in which the world can only be seen in contingent, spatial terms, Bromden finds an alternative world of possibility as he recovers and exercises the patterning capacity of a temporal perception. A rediscovered consciousness of social-historical being is the way to a regained knowledge of self, a personal autonomy; Bromden's psychic journey ends with a prediction of a return home and a consideration of a personal future which had seemed impossible before. A return home becomes the central narrative event in Sometimes A Great Notion, with Leland's return to Oregon after a twelve-year exile. At the heart of Leland's return is his reawakened sense of certain past events which he has tried to repress; it is, indeed, an end to an amnesia. In both novels, thus, a systematic pattern of tenses functions as a stylistic marker of a consciousness which is developing from the atemporal immediacy of a diminished and determined existence, registered by a present tense, towards a historical consciousness and an alternative world of possibility given in a past tense. At each point in this development the use of tense serves as a stylistic correlate for the existential conditions and consciousness of the various narrative voices. The following discussion traces this pattern in these two novels as it records both Bromden's psychic struggle and its interaction with the McMurphy-Ratched confrontation, and the growth of historical understanding in the relationship between the two Stamper brothers.

Bromden first appears in the novel in a state of almost total disorientation and passivity, using the disguise of a deaf mute as an escape from the strain of maintaining a personal identity against the Combine. The Combine totally determines his life, confining him to an immediate consciousness. Bromden's narrative, thus, uses a present tense to record a minimal awareness of causality, relatedness and structure: 'they laugh and then I hear them mumbling behind me, heads close together. Hum of black machinery, humming hate and death'; 'she'll spend the day sitting at her desk and looking out her window and making notes on what goes on in front of her'.

The world as it appears to Bromden is a series of conjunct, immediate processes whose operations lie beyond his own understanding. The absence of a perceived personal history, moreover, has serious implications for any sense of identity. An early omission of referential pronouns, for example, suggests something of this depleted consciousness: 'just old Broom Bromden the half-breed Indian back there hiding behind his mop and can't talk to call for help'; 'Chronics are divided into Walkers like me, can still get around' (OFCN, pages 5, 14). The depletion of a sense of identity finds a linguistic manifestation in a tendency to omit the personal pronouns 'I' and 'we'.

Fear, a vital weapon of the Combine, conditions Bromden's hospital existence: 'I creep along the wall quiet as dust in my canvas shoes, but they got special sensitive equipment detects my fear and they all look up' (OFCN, p. 3). Denied access to a personal history and to temporal reference, the inmates are confined to the hospital's immediate world where fear militates against the exercise of a temporal consciousness.

9 Ken Kesey, One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest, pages 3, 4. Subsequent references to this edition are abbreviated as OFCN.

10 A similar structure appears during the final shock treatment (p. 270); this case is discussed below.
Bromden observes that he tries 'to get my thoughts off someplace else — try to think back and remember things about the village ... But like always when I try to place my thoughts in the past and hide there, the fear close at hand seeps in through the memory' (OFCN, p. 6). Initially this fear seems to express a paranoia. Such appears to be the case with Bromden's violent antipathy to being shaved: 'I hold back the yelling. I hold back till they get to my temples. I'm not sure it's one of those substitute machines and not a shaver till it gets to my temples; then I can't hold back' (OFCN, p. 7). This reaction, however, recalls Bromden's two hundred previous shock treatments administered through an electrical apparatus fixed across his temples. Although Bromden is certainly disoriented, confusing the shaver with the shock machinery, he has legitimate reason for terror of machines, and his conquest of this fear will become the key to a rediscovery of identity. The cry of 'Air Raid' which accompanies Bromden's final shock treatment, moreover, links this to the wartime experience of an army fog-making machine used to blanket airfields during air-raids (OFCN, pages 270-71). Bromden visualizes all assaults upon consciousness and perception by analogy with this actual experience; 'fear', therefore, comes to seem like a 'fog' which blurs perception. A disorientation is evident in Bromden's perception of an inner psychic condition as a 'fog' external to him but he tries, nonetheless, to account for his present condition in terms of his past experiences.

This treatment has come to be used on the basis that anyone who challenges authority is pathologically violent and must be punished; no longer medical, it becomes simply 'aversive conditioning' designed to induce a predetermined behavioural norm.11 Fear, then, is a form of behavioural control which affects memory; as such, it remains a decisive

11 This is Skinner's term for negative reinforcement in behavioural conditioning — the avoidance of threatening stimuli; see Beyond Freedom and Dignity, chapter two. The punitive use of ECT is discussed in C. Ackroyd, K. Margolis, J. Rosenhead, T. Shallice, The Technology of Political Control (London, 1977), pages 271-75.
determinant of Bromden's consciousness for as long as he is confined to an immediate present, and is unable to comprehend his own inner life. Use of the shaver precipitates an erasure of consciousness:

when the fog clears to where I can see, I'm sitting in the day room. They didn't take me to the Shock Shop this time ... They got enough of those things they call pills down me so I don't know a thing till I hear the ward door open (OFN, p. 8).

A period of waking "unconsciousness" results, in which Bromden is at the mercy of the hospital régime. This 'fog' represents a surrender of an autonomous consciousness, something Bromden realises when he observes that one day he will 'quit straining and let go completely' to lose himself 'in the fog' (OFN, p. 39). All that now stands between him and this eventuality is his interest in McMurphy, the new admission; the 'fog-machine' is not 'turned up full' in McMurphy's presence, a first indication of McMurphy's influence on Bromden's consciousness.

Bromden's diminished consciousness, with its perceptual distortions, regularly associates this fear with a machine imagery. Once again, disorientation takes the form of an externalization of inner psychic states into an imagination of physical machinery. Bromden is unable to discover the sources of his perceptions and to recognize inner states until he is able to reassert an autonomous consciousness. McMurphy's accusations about Nurse Ratched, for example, produce 'a whine of fear over the silence', and Bromden hears 'the machinery in the walls catch and go on' (OFN, p. 56). Rebellion against Ratched's rule interferes with the 'machinery', a machinery that is actually a symptom of Bromden's hallucinatory present. Again, 'the speaker in the ceiling says,"Medications", using the Big Nurse's voice' (OFN, pages 31-32). Bromden attributes agency to the mechanical instrument of this sound rather than to Ratched, its human source. This inability to perceive causative relations is another characteristic of Bromden's present condition; on a number of occasions, for example, Bromden reinterprets his own reaction to Ratched
as an environmental coldness which she is capable of producing. Most significant among these delusions is the fog-machine itself, the emblem of the Combine's determinist controls: 'the more I think about nothing can be helped, the faster the fog rolls in' (OEKN, p. 110). McMurray's actions, conversely, tend to disperse the 'fog':

Nobody complains about all the fog. I know why, now: as bad as it is, you can slip back in it and feel safe. That's what McMurray can't understand, us wanting to be safe. He keeps trying to drag us out of the fog, out in the open where we'd be easy to get at. (OEKN, p. 123).

A surrender to the fog is like a surrender to the shock treatment, as if 'the current generated by the fiends in that room was conducted in a beam along the fog and pulled me back along it like a robot' (OEKN, p. 125). In remembering the army's 'fog-machine', Bromden notes that 'fixing my eyes on something was the only way I kept from getting lost' (OEKN, p. 125); McMurray is to become his locative focus within the hospital.

This machine imagery forms a characteristic expression of Bromden's confused present. It is not entirely inappropriate, however, as a description of the Combine's behaviourist régime, given the characteristic behaviourist rejection of inner motivation in favour of a complete environmental determinism. Bromden's trauma, indeed, may be seen as an extreme variety of a behaviourist perception where humans become components of a mechanistic universe created, maintained and expressed in mechanistic terms. In this view, McMurray's continued opposition to the hospital schedules, in full knowledge of the punishment this will bring upon him, cannot but be pathological; people do not act against negative reinforcement. Significantly, the incidence of machine imagery diminishes as Bromden acts against external determination, in a rediscovery of an

12 Machine-like imagery, indeed, is characteristic of behaviourist thinking; Skinner, thus, talks about a 'technology of behaviour' (Beyond Freedom and Dignity, p. 10).
inner life of purposive agency. Initially, however, Bromden sees himself as the passive instrument of the Combine's machinery. Nurse Ratched, with her 'wheels and gears, cogs polished to a hard glitter, tiny pills that gleam like porcelain, needles, forceps, watchmakers' pliers, rolls of copper wire', is one part of that machinery:

I'm mopping near the ward door when a key hits it from the other side and I know it's the Big Nurse by the way the lockworks cleave to the key, soft and swift and familiar she been around locks so long. She slides through the door with a gust of cold and locks the door behind her (OECN, pages 3-4).

Ratched becomes disembodied as the key itself, engaged in a violent and ambiguous act of 'cleaving'; 'cleave' is simultaneously a destructive splitting and a sexual coupling with machinery. Ratched's patients, again, are either 'Acutes' or 'Chronics' who are 'machines with flaws inside that can't be repaired' (OECN, p. 14). Shock therapy, medication, and surgery are reconditioning techniques designed to get the inmates 'adjusted to surroundings' (OECN, p. 26). Bromden's further belief that Ratched has moved on 'to adjusting the Outside world too' suggests some awareness of the social policy underlying her activities, even if this is expressed in fantastic images. His notion that what he has to say is 'the truth even if it didn't happen' may be an appropriate way of assessing his narrative (OECN, pages 26, 8).

In addition to his shock treatment, indeed, Bromden has further cause to fear machinery rooted in his personal history. His terrors produce a nightmarish vision of a cannibalistic power-plant hidden beneath the hospital: 'It - everything I see - looks like it sounded, like the inside of a tremendous dam' (OECN, p. 83). This recalls a cotton-mill visited in his youth, and the 'rattling of people and machinery, jerking around in a pattern' (OECN, p. 36). It has a specific referent, moreover, in 'the men in the tribe who'd left the village in the last days to do work on the gravel crusher for the dam.
The frenzied pattern, the faces hypnotized by routine. These workers are reduced to automata, absorbed into a mechanistic process. This takes on an added significance when it is realised that a massive hydro-electric development was begun on the Columbia River in the nineteen-thirties, the period in question; part of this development, Grand Coulee, stands as the largest single power-plant in the world. Industrialization becomes an assault upon the tribal communities along the Columbia which include Bromden's tribe, and Bromden can see 'the US Department of Interior bearing down on our little tribe with a gravel-crushing machine' (OECN, p. 131). Bromden's memory of this process imaginatively recalls Marx's account of the alienation of labour: 'in manufacture the workmen are parts of a living mechanism. In the factory we have a lifeless mechanism independent of the workman who becomes its mere living appendage'.

Bromden's diminished and fragmented consciousness becomes explicable only in relation to his specific historical experiences of dispossession, both physical and cultural, modern warfare, and internment in an asylum. His eventual release in his very act of telling his story, thus, takes the suggestive shape of an undamming: 'it's gonna roar out of me like floodwaters' (OECN, p. 8). This act is Bromden's repossession of his historical experience in his rejection of the status of externally determined product engineered to a predetermined pattern.

During part one of the narrative, then, Bromden remains rooted in the immediate present, with only a residual sense of personal identity: 'they think I'm deaf and dumb ... If my being half Indian ever helped me in any way in this dirty life, it helped me being cagey, helped me all these years' (OECN, p. 3). McMurphy's influence, however, begins to appear


14 An interesting comparison with Malamud's The Assistant emerges here. Malamud sees psychic fragmentation as an alienation of social life, while Kesey sees this same process in an elimination of private life. In fact, they approach a shared theme from opposite directions but arrive at a similar conclusion; for both, a recovery of social-historical consciousness is the way towards a recovered psychic wholeness.
in brief shifts to a past tense. A comparison with his own father, for example, occurs to Bromden: 'he talks a little the way Papa used to, voice loud and full of hell', and his laugh 'sounds real ... the first laugh I've heard in years' (*OPCN*, p. 11). This laugh, a habitual signal of McMurphy's ability to make 'dials twitch in the control panel' which contrasts with Bromden's own silence, threatens to unmask Bromden's disguise (*OPCN*, p. 17):  

McMurphy stops when he gets to me and hooks his thumbs in his pockets again and leans back to laugh, like he sees something funnier about me than about anybody else. All of a sudden I was scared he was laughing because he knew the way I was sitting there ... staring straight ahead as though I couldn't hear a thing, was all an act. (*OPCN*, p. 22).  

Bromden remembers 'all this part real clear'; the interaction between McMurphy's actions and Bromden's consciousness reactivates an awareness of temporal pattern. 

Nurse Ratched's arrival brings such awareness to an abrupt end, as a return to a present tense indicates: "Mr. McMurry". It's the Big Nurse' (*OPCN*, p. 24). Ratched, indeed, indicates that she alone controls time: 'she stands there tapping that thermometer against her wrist watch, eyes whirring'. Her's is a world 'of precision efficiency and tidiness like a pocketwatch with a glass back, a place where the schedule is unbreakable' and where 'efficiency locks the ward like a watchman's clock' (*OPCN*, pages 27, 29). The ideal world is one where all experience is reducible to a quantifiable, externally determined entity. Ratched's system finds its emblem, therefore, in the domination of the clock, a mechanical spatialization of time, at the expense of an internal temporal consciousness. Again, Ratched 'takes off her wrist watch and looks at the ward clock and winds the watch and sets it face toward her', or takes McMurphy's file from the doctor 'and puts it back

in the basket under her watch' \(\text{\textit{OFcn, pages 40, 45}}\). According to Bromden, this power over time-pieces extends even to an ability to alter the speed at which they run \(\text{\textit{OFcn, p. 73-74}}\).

McMurphy also invites comparison with Taber, an earlier rebel whose eventual fate was lobotomy, and this in turn recalls Bromden's worry over his medication:

He goes off, grumbling ... wondering about those capsules. I got away once holding one of those same red capsules under my tongue, played like I'd swallowed it, and crushed it open later in the broom closet. For a tick of time, before it all turned into white dust, I saw it was a miniature electronic element \(\text{\textit{OFcn, p. 33}}\).

Bromden here conflates memory with mechanistic delusion, which suggests that this is only a partially successful restoration of temporal awareness. McMurphy's puzzlement at the daily ward 'Group Meeting', again, causes Bromden to remember Bancini's outburst with a 'strong, angry copper tone to his voice that no one had ever heard before' \(\text{\textit{OFcn, pages 48-49}}\). On one occasion, Ratched's controls falter as Bancini, crippled by brain damage incurred during birth, momentarily achieves a clarity of vision: 'he stood up straight and steady, and his eyes snapped clear. Usually Pete's eyes are half shut and all murked up' \(\text{\textit{OFcn, p. 50}}\). A past tense, representing an expansion of consciousness, is opposed by the present tense of habitual depletion of consciousness. Bancini's sudden awareness, moreover, causes the orderlies to 'twitch with confusion, like machines throttled full ahead and with the brake on' \(\text{\textit{OFcn, p. 51}}\).

Bancini's message is simple: "That's all it is, nothin' but a lotta baloney ... Ya see, I can't help it ... I was born dead. Not you". Bromden realises that 'he had come to life for maybe a minute to try to tell us something ... and the effort had drained him dry' \(\text{\textit{OFcn, p. 52}}\); Bancini's one moment of insight, nonetheless, remains a point of coherence for Bromden.

McMurphy is a newcomer to the ward and sees it with fresh, uncondit-
ioned eyes. Thus, he objects to the musak which is played continuously. Harding, another patient, suggests that continued repetition means that this soon 'simply slides out of our hearing, the way the sound of a waterfall soon becomes an unheard sound to those who live near it' (OFCN, p. 76). Bromden pays close attention to this conversation:

'Do you think if you lived near a waterfall you could hear it very long?' (I still hear the sound of the falls on the Columbia, always will - always - hear the whoop of Charley Bear Belly stabbed himself a big chinook ... from a long time ago).

Bromden's parenthetical response argues against the comparison of taped music with a waterfall. For him, the sound of the waterfall has remained at the level of consciousness as a major element in his memories of childhood. If this music is at all like a waterfall, it is only like the mechanized waterfall of the hydroelectric complex along the Columbia which has contributed so much both to Bromden's personal disintegration and to the dissipation of the tribal community. The waterfall which Bromden remembers, conversely, predates this process and remains clear in his mind as a feature of tribal life along the river. It is important for Bromden, therefore, that McMurphy sets up a card-school to compete with this sedative music, his 'spiel' getting 'louder and louder to match it': 'I could of watched McMurphy at that blackjack table all night, the way he dealt and talked and roped them in', Bromden recalls, with the laugh which 'banged around the day room all evening' (OFCN, p. 79). This opposition to the normal hospital routine prompts Bromden to a clearer perception of his surroundings.

The morning after his admission sees McMurphy's next move against this routine:

Come morning, McMurphy is up before I am, the first time anybody been up before me since Uncle Jules the Wallwalker was here. Jules was a shrewd old white-haired Negro with a theory the world was being tipped over on its side during the night by the black boys ... Like Jules, I'm up early in the mornings to watch what machinery they're sneaking onto the ward (OFCN, p. 88).
Again, the shift from present tense to past tense signals Bromden's response to this unscheduled behaviour. McMurphy's voice seems to be 'joggling the wiring in all the walls', indicating that 'the new guy is different ... just as vulnerable, maybe, but the Combine didn't get him'; McMurphy 'never gave the Combine a chance ... because a moving target is hard to hit' (OFON, pages 88-89). A further rebellion follows when McMurphy decides to clean his teeth before the time allotted to this activity, catching the ward orderly off-guard: 'I feel good', Bromden remarks, 'seeing McMurphy get that black boy's goat like not many men could. Papa used to be able to do it' (OFEN, p. 91). Bromden's father and McMurphy share an ability to ridicule figures of officialdom and remind Bromden of 'what laughter can do' (OFEN, p. 92).

With the sound of the key in the lock, signalling Ratched's arrival, Bromden is returned to the immediate present and a present tense narration. Her appearance, however, initiates a more major confrontation over McMurphy's use of the tub-room for his card-school. McMurphy meets her outside the toilets apparently wearing only a towel round his waist, and there is a momentary possibility that she will lose her composure; however, 'all the hate and fury and frustration she was planning to use on McMurphy is beaming out down the hall at the black boy' (OFEN, p. 95). This conflict continues at the next 'Group Meeting', at which McMurphy has persuaded the ward doctor to raise the idea of a carnival, a notion previously propounded by Taber. Ratched easily rejects this idea, but this is only McMurphy's opening gambit in a larger strategy aimed at a permanent securing of the tub-room. His successful achievement of this objective marks his first substantial alteration to the ward discipline. Bromden, however, is only briefly convinced of McMurphy's success: 'I thought for a minute there I saw her whipped. Maybe I did. But I see

16 The use of laughter also appears when McMurphy and the doctor arrive at a Group Meeting 'grinning and talking' (OFEN, p.103).
now that it don't make any difference ... She's too big to be beaten' (OFCN, p. 109). The excitement of a regained historical consciousness, given by a past tense, is succeeded by the depressing reality of the hospital's immediate régime, given by a present tense: 'right now, she's got the fog machine switched on ... and I feel as hopeless and dead as I felt happy a minute ago'.

The balance of power now swings back to Nurse Ratched as McMurphy fails to get the television viewing hours changed to fit the times of the World Series baseball. A further failure to complete a bet to lift the hydrotherapy unit in the tub-room has a particular significance for Bromden; McMurphy's inability to overthrow this mechanization of water-power seems to underline the limits of his strength. Consequently, Bromden slips back into the fog, to find an extreme detachment in which he sees himself literally absorbed into a photograph of the Ochoco mountains:

I push my broom up face to face with a great big picture Public Relation brought in one time when it was fogged so thick I didn't see him ... there's a path running down through the aspen, and I push my broom down the path a ways and sit down on a rock and look back out through the frame (OFCN, p. 122).

McMurphy's seeming failure precipitates a crisis for Bromden in which the 'fog' threatens to gain a permanent hold over him. Bromden is only too aware that his anxiety in the past over this condition has lead to behaviour which resulted in his being sent for shock therapy:

I don't have to end up at that door if I stay still when the fog comes over me and just keep quiet. The trouble was I'd been finding that door my own self because I got scared of being lost so long and went to hollering so they could track me ... I had figured that anything was better'n being lost for good, even the Shock Shop. Now, I don't know. Being lost isn't so bad. (OFCN, p. 126).

17 The significance of this act is confirmed when Bromden rips this machine from its moorings and uses it to effect his own escape by smashing down a window; Bromden attains a power McMurphy lacks, in this regard.
Bromden's instinct is to choose a safe immediacy over the problems attendant upon a temporal awareness and a reflective consciousness.

This is a false refuge, however, the product of fear rather than genuine choice; the fog 'rolling in thicker' than even before is a reflex of the danger McMurphy poses to Bromden's silent retreat (OFCN, p. 127). Bromden also realises that a total disintegration of consciousness now threatens him:

I been accustomed of late to just let things alone when they appear in the fog, sit still and not try to hang on. But this time I'm scared, the way I used to be scared... I never seen it this thick before, thick to where I can't get down to the floor and get on my feet if I wanted to and walk around. That's why I'm so scared; I feel I'm going to float off someplace for good this time. (OFCN, p. 128).

The magnitude of this fear outweighs Bromden's fear of the Combine, so that he begins to fight the Combine's mechanistic world and to take an active part in his own life. Bromden now searches for pattern, and finds it first in the ramblings of Colonel Matterson: 'I can see what he's driving at. He's been saying this sort of thing for the whole six years he's been here ... Now .... I'm trying to hold him for one last look to remember him'. (OFCN, p. 129). An act of understanding allows Bromden a relationship with the Colonel which has previously been impossible, given the repression of all inner facility for perceiving such a pattern. Bromden now looks 'hard enough to understand', determined to discover pattern for himself; if Matterson, one of the most hopeless 'Chronics', can communicate meaning, the inevitability of psychic disintegration becomes less secure. Again, Bromden resists the 'fog' by focusing on Bancini in a resurgence of human concern and a recognition of social relations:

There's old Pete, face like a searchlight ... He tells me once about how tired he is, and just his saying it makes me see his life on the railroad ...I can see all that, and be hurt by it, the way I was hurt by seeing things in the Army, in the war. The way I was hurt by seeing
what happened to Papa and the tribe. I thought I'd got over seeing those things and fretting over them. There's no sense in it. (OFEN, p. 129-30).

A conflict is in progress within Bromden between his sense of a social-historical world and his feelings of impotence which tell him to remain in a depleted, immediate consciousness. His protective self-absorption proves incompatible with his reawakened sense of a social being.

Finally, McMurphy catches Bromden's eye, 'still trying to pull people out of the fog' to vote for an alteration of the television viewing hour. McMurphy requires a majority of the forty patients to vote with him, but since half of these patients are 'Chronics' this seems impossible until Bromden publicly registers a personal agency in voting with the others:

It's too late to stop it now. McMurphy did something to it that first day, put some kind of hex on it with his hand so it won't act like I order it ... Just by the way the nurse is staring at me with her mouth empty of words I can see I'm in for trouble, but I can't stop it. McMurphy's got hidden wires hooked to it ...

No. That's not the truth. I lifted it myself. (OFEN, p. 136).

This final shift into a past tense registers the realisation of personal agency, in an act which undermines the rigged electoral system on the ward; Bromden, in fact, has joined the 'Acutes'.

Part one of the narrative ends on this first public rebellion, and although Bromden returns to a terrified immediacy while he is cleaning the windows of the staff-room during the emergency meeting called to discuss McMurphy, he has made two important discoveries: 'there's no more fog any place' and 'all the machinery in the wall is quiet' (OFEN, p. 141). His fear, while not yet firmly under his control, has diminished somewhat in response to McMurphy's success over the television vote. Subsequently, a substantial period of patterned existence follows for Bromden in spite of his concern over 'the way the Big Nurse acted so confident in that staff

18 This is Bromden's most direct statement of how the war has affected him. The implication is that his hospitalization follows from these wartime experiences.
meeting' (OEJN, p. 150). As part two opens, McMurphy has temporarily gained the upper hand, as the other patients 'started letting fly at everything that had ever happened on the ward they didn't like'; Bromden himself recalls that 'there was times that week when I'd hear that full-throttled laugh ... and I'd quit worrying about the Big Nurse and the Combine behind her' (OEJN, pages 158, 152).

This recovered consciousness remains unstable, however, as one particular event suggests. One night Bromden is 'even able to see out the windows' (OEJN, p. 154). Previously, fear has prevented even the contemplation of the outside world, but Bromden now is able to extend his area of reference beyond the confines of the hospital buildings; this represents a major advance in Bromden's consciousness. His 'sudden yen to get up out of bed and do something' establishes an inner motivation, as well as both a sensory and a temporal perceptiveness: 'the stars up close to the moon were pale; they got brighter and braver the further they got out of the circle of light ruled by the giant moon. It called to mind how I noticed the exact same thing when I was off on a hunt with Papa' (OEJN, p. 155). As he looks out, Bromden hears movement behind him: 'I didn't turn, but I knew it was the black boy named Geever ... I heard a whir of fear start up in my head' (OEJN, p. 157). Terrified at being caught in a breach of the ward schedules, Bromden is returned to the hospital's constrictive present: 'the black boy took my arm and pulled me around. "I'll get 'im", he says'. At the precise moment that Geever speaks, Bromden's narrative shifts to a present tense.

The incident with Geever anticipates Bromden's next major crisis. This comes when McMurphy learns that his commitment is for an unlimited term, at the discretion of the hospital staff, and so decides that prudence will best serve his interests. With McMurphy's apparent retiral from the struggle, the Combine appears to have won; Bromden, as a result, again surrenders to a preordained routine. As the hospital life-guard, himself committed, explains this situation to McMurphy, Bromden 'remembered
what the Big Nurse had said in the meeting, and ... began to feel afraid' \((OFCN,\ p.\ 162)\). His fear proves to be prophetic, because McMurphy does not support his fellow patients at the next ward conference. Bromden looks along 'the cancelled row of faces' until his gaze 'came to McMurphy ... and the white tubes in the ceiling begin to pump their refrigerated light again' \((OFCN,\ p.\ 164)\). The immediate present, with its mechanical delusions, becomes the dimension of Bromden's consciousness once more. The ward schedules are re-established, and fear is back in control: 'whatever it was went haywire in the mechanism, they've just about got it fixed again' \((OFCN,\ p.\ 170)\).

Ratched's resumption of control proves as brief as McMurphy's brief abstention from their conflict. Bromden senses a change in McMurphy 'three weeks after we voted on TV' following a conversation with Harding in which he learns that most patients are voluntary admissions \((OFCN,\ p.\ 177)\). Bromden wants to tell him 'not to fret about it' since he can see 'that there was some thought he was worrying over in his mind', but at that moment McMurphy indicates an intention to contest Ratched's confiscation of the patients' cigarettes and starts up 'a high, excited pitch' in Bromden's mind \((OFCN,\ pages\ 177,\ 185-186)\). This use of a past tense signals Bromden's anticipation of McMurphy's return to the fray, and his own perception is again 'sharp and clear and solid'. With one action, McMurphy confirms Bromden's hopes: 'he stopped in front of her window and said in his slowest, deepest drawl how he figured he could use one of the smokes he bought this mornin', then ran his hand through the glass' \((OFCN,\ p.\ 190)\). Part two of the narrative ends on this note, with Bromden's autonomous consciousness once more established in a past tense narrative norm. Bromden has greater confidence in his own capacity to perceive relational pattern, moreover, and has advanced his own revitalization some way by this point. McMurphy's specific act of smashing the glass in Ratched's office window, indeed, echoes the idea that release takes the form of an undamming: 'the glass came apart like water splashing'. 
Part three of the narrative sees McMurphy's agitation for a deep-sea fishing trip which attracts Bromden despite his fears that his participation would be a public declaration that he is not a deaf-mute. With the prospect of such a declaration before him, thus, Bromden comes to re-examine the history of this disguise he had felt forced to adopt: 'I remembered one thing: it wasn't me that started acting deaf; it was people that first started acting like I was too dumb to hear or see or say anything at all' (OFCN, p. 198). The 'deaf-mute' is a repressive identity imposed upon him by a hostile society, and Bromden can pinpoint his first awareness of it:

I think it was once when we were still living in the village on the Columbia. It was summer ...

... and I'm about ten years old and I'm out in front of the shack sprinkling salt on salmon for the racks behind the house, when I see a car turn off the highway (OFCN, p. 198).

This is Bromden's imaginative reconstruction of events surrounding the purchase of the tribal lands for the building of the dam. In it Bromden suggests the initiation of a diminution of consciousness in another shift from past to present tense. To the government officials, Bromden is not a conscious being but rather something less than human: 'not a one of the three acts like they heard a thing I said' (OFCN, p. 201). This realization leads, in turn, to the mechanistic view of humanity which characterizes Bromden's traumatized state; he imagines he sees 'the ... seams where they're put together', and the eyes of one official 'like the numbers in a cash register' (OFCN, pages 201-02). Immediately after Bromden remembers these events, his actual abandonment of the protective mask of silence takes place, and confirms the progress of his developing consciousness. As Geever removes Bromden's secret hoard of chewing-gum from beneath his bed, McMurphy begins to sing 'does the Spearmint lose its flavor on the bedpost o-ver niiliiliite' (OFCN, p.205). Bromden's annoyance turns to amusement: 'the more I thought about it the funnier it seemed to me. I tried to stop it but I could feel I was about to laugh'. The
power of laughter again works against an external determinism as Bromden accepts chewing-gum from McMurphy: 'before I realized what I was doing, I told him Thank You' (OEJN, p. 206). Reentering the world of speech, a medium of interpersonal interaction, represents a significant step towards regaining psychic wholeness. By rejecting silence, Bromden has gained a confidant to whom he can relate his own history.

Such a recovery of social relatedness prepares the way for the climactic fishing-trip which confirms the full restoration of an autonomous consciousness to Bromden. This trip, indeed, is something of a transformation for all of its participants from the moment they begin to grin openly in the face of Ratched's chagrin at McMurphy's successful planning of the expedition. Even Ellis, one of the worst 'Chronics', has a not inappropriate comment; he pulled his hands down off the nails in the wall and squeezed Billy Bibbit's hand and told him to be a fisher of men' (OEJN, p. 222). The party's confidence steadily increases once it is outside the hospital. Initially cowed by a garage attendant able to exploit their shame at being from the asylum, they slowly build a community spirit as they head out to sea, a spirit denied them within the hospital itself. McMurphy shows the way by using their status as mental patients to their own advantage, warning the attendant that they are 'every bloody one ... hot off the criminal-insane ward' (OEJN, p. 224). Liberation may still be a long way off, given that 'you can't really be strong until you can see a funny side to things', but the attainment both of a personal identity and of a social relatedness now at least seems possible (OEJN, p. 227). Bromden himself talks of an increasing 'calmness' which accompanies their sea-voyage. (OEJN, p. 233).

Once at sea, the fishing itself becomes the focus of a mounting excitement which culminates in Bromden catching a huge silver salmon:

I heard McMurphy laughing and saw him out of the corner of my eye, just standing at the cabin door ... Harding finally saw McMurphy wasn't going to do anything, so he got the gaff and jerked my fish into the boat ...
like he's been boating fish all his life... I thought, He's bigger'n any fish we ever got at the falls. He's springing all over the bottom of the boat like a rainbow gone wild! (OE/N, p. 236)

This immediacy is qualitatively different from the constrictions of the hospital. Recording rather an ecstatic intensity of experience which reintegrates Bromden within the cultural traditions of his people, this present act stands compared to the salmon-fishing along the Columbia. There is a definite sense of release here, counterpointed by the life force of McMurphy's laughter: 'you have to laugh at the things that hurt you just to keep yourself in balance ... It started slow and pumped itself full, swelling the men bigger and bigger' (OE/N, pages 237-238). In this cathartic laughter, Bromden has a sudden vision of an encompassing unity and totality of experience in 'a laughter that rang out on the water in ever-widening circles, farther and farther, until it crashed up on beaches all over the coast, on beaches all over all coasts, in wave after wave after wave'.

With this vision, part three of the narrative closes upon a complete restoration of autonomous faculties of agency and temporal perception within Bromden. Bromden has learned how to keep the self in 'balance' and is almost ready, indeed, to face the outside world. Before he can do so, however, the final confrontation between McMurphy and Ratched must take place. As soon as the patients return to the hospital, Ratched begins a new strategy. McMurphy is not the selfless hero the others think he is, but rather a clever individual using his 'capitalistic talent' to exploit them for his own benefit (OE/N, p. 253). In the world of the Combine self-interest alone directs human behaviour; McMurphy's only reply to such a charge, therefore, must be some act which is either disinterested or positively detrimental to his own interests. Such an act happens when McMurphy, assisted by Bromden, aids a patient who is being victimized by one of the orderlies, since the punishment for assaulting an orderly is shock treatment. By joining McMurphy in this
act, Bromden himself precipitates his last major crisis of identity which accompanies what is to be his last shock treatment; the outcome of this therapy will decide whether or not the 'Combine' can reassert control over him.

Once back on the Disturbed ward, mechanistic imagery dominates Bromden's perception of this 'prison mill stamping out license plates', in reconditioning dangerous patients into externally authorized identities (OECN, p. 263). Bromden's preliminary medication, moreover, causes a shift back into the present which represents such an identity, as another shift from past to present tense indicates: 'I looked in mine, and there are three of those red capsules. This tsing whirs in my head I can't stop' (OECN, p. 267). Fear once more dominates Bromden's perception of the world, producing a distorted perspective in which machinery becomes agentive and dominates a human world which itself appears, conversely, progressively reified. This fear again threatens his very sense of self, as is marked stylistically by the loss of those personal pronouns which refer both to Bromden and McMurphy:

Up above the light whines, tube long and white and icy. Can smell the graphite valve, like the smell in a garage. Can smell acid of fear ... Something goes to blowing wind over my hollow bones, higher and higher, air raid! air raid! ...

Climbs on the table without any help and spreads his arms out to fit the shadow ... A hand takes off his wristwatch, won it from Scanlon, drops it near the panel, it springs open (OECN, p. 270).

The destruction of McMurphy's watch stands as an emblem of the desired outcome of the treatment, in an elimination of the capacity to tell the time; the fact that McMurphy retains a temporal awareness despite this theory indicates that the Combine's spatialization of time, symbolized in its control over time-pieces, need not give it a control over time itself.

19 This occurrence echoes an earlier occasion in which Bancini's final loss of conscious faculties is given an objective correlate in the destruction of his watch (OECN, p. 53).
Bromden, nonetheless, has to struggle to offset the stupefying effects of the electric shock, in which struggle he draws upon similar kinds of support from McMurphy and his own father. McMurphy has some advice for Bromden: 'he gives me the wink and speaks to me ... He said something when he winked' (OFN, pages 270-71). This tense shift records the utility of McMurphy's words as a perceptual focus for Bromden. Again, the father is 'broad and big with a wink like a star' and tells Bromden that a 'good Injun boy should know how to survive on anything he can eat that won't eat him first' (OFN, p. 272). Bromden remembers this advice because the father, Tee-Ah-Millatoona, had once forced him to eat ants, while the sensation of the electric shock is like being eaten by ants; by analogy with the ants, Bromden is being told to "eat" the shock before it eats him. The conflation of these statements by McMurphy and Tee-Ah-Millatoona is further suggested in the ambiguous referentiality which characterizes Bromden's specification of what this 'wink' signifies:

What was it he said when he winked?
One flew east one flew west (OFN, p. 273)
What did he say?
...wonder how McMurphy made me big again.
He said Guts ball (OFN, p. 275).

McMurphy is unlikely to have narrated the Indian chant 'one flew east', and likely to have said 'guts ball'; the precise relationship is less important, however, than the shared source of pattern which McMurphy and the father represent.

The chant is particularly important to Bromden because the meaning of his entire hospital experience seems to be embedded, in miniature, in this rhyme which his grandmother used to recite:

Ting, Tingle, tingle, tremble toes, she's a good fisherman, catches hens, put 'em inna pens ... wire blier, limber lock, three geese inna flock ... one flew east, one flew west, one flew over the cuckoo's nest ... O-U-T spells out ... goose swoops down and plucks you out' (OFN, p. 272).

'Mrs Tingle Toes', the sinister fisherman, is Ratched herself; Ratched
pens up her patients and controls both machinery and locks, 'wire blier' and 'limber lock', while her 'tingle' is given a literal expression in the electric shock she has the power to command. The 'hens' are her patients; McMurphy's first description of the inmates is of a 'bunch of chickens at a peckin' party' (OFCN, p. 55). The 'three geese in a flock' suggest McMurphy, Tee-Ah-Millatoona, and Bromden himself; McMurphy 'swoops down' to rescue Bromden, while the father's assumption of an alien identity brought to him by a European wife suggests an eastward movement opposed to Bromden's literal and metaphorical journey westward to the sea during the fishing trip which restores him to tribal patterns. It may even be that the 'cuckoo's nest', using the slang meaning of 'cuckoo' as 'lunatic', is the asylum. If this is the case, then 'cuckoo's nest', like Bromden's own description of Ratched as 'Big Nurse', is heavily ironic; the cuckoo divests herself of maternal responsibility by placing her eggs in another bird's nest. The young cuckoo, thus, is out of place; indeed, there is no such thing as a cuckoo's nest since cuckoos do not build nests, which suggests that Ratched's 'nest' may similarly be an illusion given form only by the patients' terrorized present existence. The description of Bancini as 'an old clock that won't tell time' but 'just keeps ticking and cuckooing without meaning nothing' also suggests that the 'cuckoo' stands for any living organism without a consciousness.

McMurphy is also the 'bull goose loony' who leads the flock of patients, and references to geese abound in the rest of the novel (OFCN, p. 18). For example, his voice 'swoops down' and he regularly 'gooses' other patients (OFCN, p. 88). Bromden remembers the army lieutenant with the fog-horn which sounds like 'a goose honking', a locational guide. His father's talk about geese, again, forms part of his strategy to undermine the government officials: 'Geese up there, white man. You know it. Geese this year. And last year. And the year before and the year before' (OFCN, p. 92). Before these officials realize what is happening, the tribal council has 'busted up laughing fit to kill'; using the power of
laughter, Tee-Ah-Millatooona indicates a different value-system from that of the government men, along with his contempt for the notion of industrialization as progress. Finally, Bromden himself sees a flock of geese at the instant he is again able to look out of a window, their 'high, laughing gabble' speaking eloquently of their freedom from the sorts of external determinism found in the hospital.

By concentrating on the message encoded in the rhyme, Bromden can resist the 'electric-storm' of the shock treatment and make sense of its distorting effects on his perception:

I thought the room was a dice. The number one, the snake eye up there, the circle, the white light in the ceiling ... is what I've been seeing ... in this little square room ... means it's after dark. How many hours have I been out? It's fogging a little, but I won't slip off and hide it. No ... never again ...

I stand, stood up slowly (OEJN, p. 275)

Bromden's final triumph over external control is given in this final shift back to a past tense narrative: 'I saw an aide coming up the hall with a tray for me and knew this time I had them beat'. He comes 'fighting' out of the fog 'in less than a day' and remembers that 'when the fog was finally swept from my head it seemed like I'd just come up after a long, deep dive' (OEJN, p. 276).

While the final act in Bromden's inner drama is now completed, the McMurphy-Ratched conflict has still to run its course, to end in McMurphy's assault upon Ratched which destroys her power but also leads to McMurphy's own lobotomization. Bromden learns a final lesson from this, that there can be no achieved, final existential condition, but only a non-finite, continuous process: 'The thing he was fighting, you couldn't whip it for good. All you could do was keep on whipping it, till you couldn't come out any more and somebody else had to take your place' (OEJN, p. 303).

20 Geese seem to have a special meaning for Kasey. Hank Stamper, for example, prevents his cousin killing a Canada goose and senses a value in its 'free, bright, yodelling toll' (enis, pages 443-45, 397).
With McMurphy destroyed, Bromden himself must assume responsibility for the continuing struggle to maintain individual integrity. To complete his rehabilitation, therefore, Bromden must now physically break out of the hospital's confinement, as he has already done in a psychological sense; symbolically, it is the hydrotherapy unit which supplies him with the weapon to break down the window which bars his escape. Once on the outside, he can begin to consider possible futures for himself, the final stage in the reclamation of a historical consciousness:

I might go to Canada eventually, but I think I'll stop along the Columbia on the way. I'd like to check ... to see if there's any of the guys I used to know back in the village who haven't drunk themselves goofy. I'd like to see what they've been doing since the government tried to buy their right to be Indians... Mostly, I'd just like to look over the country around the gorge again, just to bring some of it clear in my mind again. I been away a long time. (OICN, p. 311).

Though the departure from the hospital is an escape, it also facilitates a return to social and cultural relationships; Bromden has regained a social-historical being. Bromden's future remains a conditional one, as his use of conditional verbs indicates. The direction of his development, nonetheless, is sufficient to identify Kesey's optimistic belief in the autonomy of the individual, and his rejection of social determinism.

A struggle to recover identity in a recovery of personal history is again the developmental structure of Sometimes a Great Notion. Both Leland and Hank Stamper undergo a process of self-examination in which the recognition of historical being is the means to a consciousness which extends beyond a constricted, ahistorical immediacy. Once more, the narrative progresses by means of a systematic pattern of tenses, and follows an internal debate within the novel over the relation of historical experience to human personality. This debate, then, is worked out within a consciousness
alternating between an unstructured immediacy and a structured temporal awareness.

The novel opens on an image of atemporality:

The first little washes flashing like thick rushing winds through sheep sorrel and clover, ghost fern and nettle, shearing, cutting... forming branches. Then, through bearberry and salmonberry, blueberry and blackberry, the branches crashing into creeks, into streams. Finally, in the foothills... the actual river falls five hundred feet and look: opens out upon the fields. (SJN, p. 1).

The flooded river is an image of natural forces beyond human control, and a 'flood time' beyond human temporal pattern. (SJN, p. 5). Such forces threaten all human pattern, indeed, and in particular the Stamper house which is set upon the continually eroding riverbank; 'sitting fierce in its tangled nest', the house embodies the attitude of the Stampers themselves in refusing to surrender to their constantly shifting environment (SJN, p. 1). By tying his father's severed arm to the end of the pier 'eight or ten feet above the flood's current', moreover, Hank Stamper gestures as much to the river itself as he does to the Wakonda townspeople on the other bank. The Stampers are determined to resist the erosion of relational pattern.

This resistance becomes all the more significant when it is addressed, not simply to the atemporality of the natural world, but also to an ahistorical consciousness existing in a human world of 'quagmire time':

all up and down the West Coast, there are little towns much like Wakonda... Towns dependent on what they are able to wrest from the sea in front of them and from the mountains behind, trapped between both. Towns all hamstrung by geographic economies, by rubber-stamp mayors and chambers of commerce, by quagmire time... all so nearly alike that they might be nested one inside the other like hollow toys. Wiring all corroding, machinery all decaying (SJN, p. 44).

Human agency is absent from a decaying world characterized by its predictability and sameness. In such a closed system which restricts consciousness to the immediate world, all pattern comes to seem merely contingent to human action. Kesey suggests this contingency by collating within a
single frame sequences of images drawn from disparate spatial and temporal locations:

In the Snag the jukebox continues barrel-assing across the countryside:

\[ I'm \ movin' \ on, \]
\[ Just \ hear \ my \ song \ldots \]

Floyd gets his car started and begins trying to retrace his path back out of Portland. The postman mounts the steps, Draeger finds a motel and in the office, under a softly fluttering fluorescent lamp, shakes his head and politely refuses the motel manager's offer to buy him a drink (\textit{SN}, p. 55).

A series of present tense statements are set in sequence without any obvious or necessary relation between them; Wakonda, Portland, and New York, the locations for the lumbermen, the union officials and Leland Stamper respectively, are yoked together within the same immediate frame. This spatio-temporal simultaneity becomes the more striking for being itself framed within a past tense narrative in which referential pattern does appear. The narrative goes on, "'I used to do some log work myself, y'know', the manager had mentioned'; the pluperfect 'had' serves to reintroduce a temporal pattern. Tense shifts of this kind regularly signal changes in the narratorial consciousness.

'Quagmire time', an ahistorical immediacy, characterizes numerous characters' existence in the novel, and suggests something of their attitude towards experience. Chief among these is Draeger, the union negotiator, whose thoughts and actions are given in a present tense:

Yet actually - he watches the scenery swim past his windshield - it doesn't seem such an unpleasant land, for all the rainfall ... It's a bountiful land, too, so it's easy as far as survival goes ... those are very nice homes and not at all the sort one would imagine housing a terrible depression. \textit{(Homes of retired pharmacists and hardwaremen, Mr. Draeger)} ... these homes seem a far cry from terrible hardship. \textit{(Homes of weekend tourists and summertime residents)} (\textit{SN}, p. 3).

Draeger is an unreliable guide to this world, as the parenthetical responses to his narrative indicate; his viewpoint flatly contradicts the Stamper assessment of this landscape. Such misunderstanding encapsulates the ahistorical view in the novel, with its reliance upon a superficial immediacy predicated upon a rejection of historical perspectives. The symbol of
the severed arm, thus, challenges Draeger's theories of human behaviour, 'a gesture of grim and humorous defiance' which seems 'a deliberate refutation of all he believed to be true, knew to be true about Man' (SjN, p. 9). Draeger's is a faith 'forged over an anvil of thirty years, a precise and predictable faith ... a neatly noted-down, red-ribboned package of truth about men, and Man', a perspective appropriate to the determinist world which he inhabits. For Draeger, all human experience can be rationalized into a set of fixed, behaviourist laws; in particular, 'Love - or the Fear of Not Having It, or the Worry about Not Having Enough of It, or the Terror of Losing It - certainly does conquer all. To Draeger this knowledge was a weapon' (SjN, p. 10). This 'love' turns out to be a quantity or a possession dependent upon fear or greed. Draeger, indeed, sees all human qualities as quantifiable and marketable commodities. In keeping with this view, thus, he must deny all evidence of historical process: 'the world is always the same ... the past has nothing to do with the ways of men today' (SjN, p. 13). Consequently, Draeger cannot comprehend the Stamper history which Vivien Stamper relates to him; as she says, he just wants 'a reason, two or three reasons. When there are reasons going back two or three hundred years' (SjN, p. 12).

The most extreme exposition of Draeger's philosophy is given by Teddy, the local barman, who sees in Draeger a superhuman ability to control the 'forces' operative in human experience. In particular, Draeger can manipulate the 'weed of fear' because he is no offspring of Wakonda's 'native dirt ... rich in stupidity', but rather is 'something wonderfully special' and unafraid of 'the forces in the dark' (SjN, pages 348, 356, 350). Draeger, indeed, is one of these natural forces himself. This concept of a fundamental natural force gives Teddy's interpretation a distinctly fascistic overtone with his talk of 'natural' superiority beyond any historical structures. Such a view will be contrasted, eventually, with Hank Stamper's realization that strength is relative, and never absolute.
There are a number of other images of ahistorical consciousness in the novel. Indian Jenny's life, for example, revolves in an invariable routine around her monthly pension cheques, while her father sits in front of a television and 'spends a lot of his time adjusting his Westerns' (SGN, p. 203). So completely has his native cultural identity been destroyed, he must seek a surrogate self in the mass culture of an alien and hostile society, and so accept its historical perspectives. Within the Stamper family itself Jonas, the grandfather, espouses an ahistorical vision. Jonas sees the family's continuous westward movement as a family sin, the 'Curse of the Wanderer ... bitter curse of the Faithless; always turning their backs on the lot God had granted' (SGN, p. 16). A dissatisfaction with stasis is incompatible with Jonas's religious determinism just as much as it contradicts Draeger's secular determinism. For Jonas, the 'volatile feeling' of Oregon threatens his faith in an extrahistorical and absolute permanence: 'there was no permanence ... All vanity and vexation of the spirit. One generation passeth away, and another cometh: but the earth abideth forever, or as forever as the rain lets it' (SGN, p. 22). This new land, visibly in a process of continuous change, denies any permanent pattern in human affairs, so that Jonas cannot accept, as does his son Henry in building his house directly on the riverbank, that human effort alone stands against the processes of deconstruction and erosion which are manifest in their new environment. On the contrary, his Calvinist imagination sees the very sensuousness of this landscape as evidence of threat, with its early morning 'low, green fog' which suggests 'some misty other-world dream'. Jonas flees back to the safe aridity of the Kansas plains, therefore, although this seems to be a kind of death; the narrative moves from his departure straight to his funeral 'exactly forty years later' (SGN, p. 25), suggesting a forty years in an asocial, ahistorical wilderness.

Such a view forms the antithesis of the perception of human existence
which Leland and Hank will come to in the course of the novel. Just as the house stands against an erosion of physical pattern in the ahistorical natural world, the brothers oppose the loss of perceptible pattern and the determinism which accompanies the ahistorical attitude to human experience. On the contrary, human experience is given a fundamentally historical character which is described in a number of ways in the novel. The first of these emphasizes totality:

Look ... reality is greater than the sum of its parts, also a damn sight holier. And the lives of such stuff as dreams are made of may be rounded with a sleep but they are not tied neatly with a red bow. Truth doesn't run on time like a commuter train, though time may run on truth. And the Scenes Gone By and the Scenes to Come flow blending together in the sea-green deep while Now spreads in circles on the surface. (SN, p.14).

Reality is a totality greater than the sum of its parts; no number of partial views can ever equate to reality. Kesey's narrative technique follows this principle in trying to present as many views as possible, as they interact and form relations. The idea that life can be neatly packaged and 'tied with a bow' belongs to Drawger's quantifiable, determinate world, and not to the non-finite, qualitative and relative world in which the Stampers search for a sense of historical relatedness. There can be no single, absolute 'reality' of the kind which Draeger talks about. Rather, Kesey's emphasis is on a variety and a plurality of views interconnecting with one another; above all, he is concerned to resist a deterministic objectivization and quantification of the temporal dimension of reality, for this is part of the behaviourist ideal championed by Nurse Ratched and Draeger.

Various illustrations of this concept of totality are given in the course of the novel. Thus, there is the 'viz-yoo-al rarity' of an optical toy, where no matter from which angle it is studied, 'your gaze you'll notice comes out someplace else. Seenow: the spheres lie concentrically one inside the other like diminishing glass balls' (SN, p. 44). Perception cannot be compartmentalized into partial perspectives. Again,
the fate of a squirrel which has relied on partial understanding makes a similar point. This squirrel lives in a couch which it 'knew from the Inside' only, and so when the couch is recovered it becomes confused and flees to a new home in a drain and drowns during the next major rainfall (SGN, p. 148). Its mistake is in distrusting what it knows already, since only the outside layer of the couch has changed: 'to know a thing you have to trust what you know, and all that you know, and as far as you know in whatever direction your knowing drags you'. Any superficial awareness, whether of physical structures or the 'now' which forms the surface of the temporal totality, only courts disaster. Another way of imagining this totality is to think of a sequence of overlapping segments whose junctions, because of the overlap, are indeterminable:

Time overlaps itself. A breath breathed from a passing breeze is not the whole wind, neither is it just the last of what has passed and the first of what will come, but is more - let me see - more like a single point plucked on a single strand of a vast spider web of winds, setting the whole scene atingle... As prehistoric ferns grow from bathtub planters, As a shiny new axe, taking a swing at somebody's next year's split-level pinewood pad, bites all the way to the Civil War (SGN, p. 200).

No 'piece' of time can be quantified, isolated, and extracted from the continuous whole; the idea that such a spatialization can occur, as in Draeger's red-ribboned packages, is the delusion of a false consciousness.

If time 'overlaps itself', then memory may resemble an echo. This idea also disagrees with Draeger's endlessly malleable "reality", for if you 'sing with the echo', you must also take care 'in choosing your key or your tempo' (SGN, p. 286):

there is no changing of the pitch if you start too high, no slowing down of the tempo if you start too fast... because an echo is an inflexible... task-master: you sing the echo's way because it is damned sure not going to sing yours... you cannot help feeling, for a long time after, that any... song you sing is somehow immutably tuned to an echo yet unheard, or relentlessly echoing a tune long forgotten-

A hard lesson though this may be, this metaphor does not point towards a rival determinism. The 'echo', the historical consequence and the
relation to the past, begins in an act of choice. Once the choice is made, however, it cannot be reversed or eradicated; each act has its consequence, and so the act of choice should be made with a regard to this fact, acknowledging responsibility to the historical relations thus brought into existence. This remains true, moreover, whether or not we are conscious of the 'echo' of our acts. Even while immersed in the immediacy of 'the Daily Dance', we dance 'to an echo of a song or a song still unechoed' (SN, p. 322). One such echo comes from the nuclear bomb-blast at Hiroshima, where the noise of the actual blast 'was only the first faintest murmur of an explosion that is still roaring down on us, and always will be' (SN, p. 529). Hiroshima is a crucial case of what Marcuse calls the 'recognition and relation to the past as present' (One Dimensional Man, p. 99), the historical consciousness of the indelible imprint of past events on present reality. As Kesey's narrator observes, 'the reverb-eration often exceeds through silence the sound that sets it off; the reaction occasionally outdoes by way of repose the event that stimulated it; and the past not uncommonly takes a while to happen, and some long time to figure out'. Taking an understanding of the meaning of Hiroshima as a case in point, it is argued here that a contemporaneous, immediate perception will not suffice.

Hank and Leland, then, come to this consciousness of 'overlaps' and 'echoes' in rejecting the 'quagmire time' of Draeger's ahistorical world. This recognition comes partly from introspection and partly from the development of the relationship between the two brothers, as they come to understand an attitude embodied in the very location of their own house:

no houses at all stand on the bank. Or no houses at all ... if one excludes this single house that acknowledged no zone of respect for nobody and surrendered seldom a scant inch, let alone a hundred or so yards. This house stands where it stood ... It is known through most of the western part of the state as the Old Stamper Place ... because it stands as a monument to a piece of extinct geography, marking the place where the river's bank once held' (SN, p. 4).

The crucial tense shift in 'stands where it stood' gives the clue as to
the meaning of the house's construction. Unlike every other home along the river, it has stood firm against erosion, and so become itself a historical referent.

Hank's first insight into what this means comes at age sixteen, from a wall plaque left him by Jonas which bears the motto 'Blessed Are the Meek'; his father Henry has altered this to 'NEVER GIVE AN INCH!' (SIN, pages 30-31). At the outset of her affair with him, his stepmother Myra explains the meaning of Henry's motto to Hank: 'it hung there and I never had no more idea than a duck what all was behind it till I was sixteen and she told me what she knew about it' (SIN, p. 31). Hank's recognition of meaning is signalled by a shift from present tense to past tense narration, the stylistic cognate of a growth of historical consciousness: 'It's late spring ... She stands there at the window, fluttering around like, waiting for me to say something about her being lonely ... all of a sudden her head jerks back up to that plaque. Like something finally dawned on her. It was weird' (SIN, pages 35-37). After Myra tells him the effect which the plaque is having on him, Hank 'really began to see that plaque' (SIN, p. 38). Henry's message proclaims an existential strategy for a world where the only surety is the 'treacherous impermanence' of things (SIN, p. 100).

Hank has also learned something of the river; 'you want me to tell you a thing or two about rivers?', he asks at one point (SIN, p. 100). During a meeting with the union lumberjacks, Hank remembers finding three wild kittens as a boy, and placing them in a cage beside the river. Overnight subsidence leads to the kittens being drowned, and the boy's grief is recorded in a present tense: 'the whole bank where the cage stood is gone ... as though a quick slice had been made into the earth' (SIN, p. 107). This memory turns on the present discussion of 'fair advantage', and recalls Hank's 'little contract' with the river; although he 'never understood why until that afternoon in Wakonda at the union meeting', he realizes that the river, too, wants 'its fair advantage' (SIN, Pages 109-110).
At the centre of Hank's process of self-discovery is his relationship with Leland, his half-brother and Myra's son. The development of this relationship can also be traced by a pattern of tenses, from a confusion and uncertainty associated with a predominantly immediate consciousness given by a present tense, to a resolved relational pattern given by the past tense of temporal perception. Initially, therefore, Leland's return creates problems for Hank by introducing new elements into Hank's life for which he has no integrative pattern. During their first meeting, Hank uses a present tense: 'during the ride across the river, when I see how skittish he gets from my deviling, I half expect him to holler, "Ah, Hank!" and go storming off. But things are different' (SN, p. 115).

As yet Hank has not fathomed what changes have taken place, and so Leland's presence unsettles him:

Am I ever gonna have to shape him up. But not right now. Later. Leave him be right now. So I walked on in the house, determined and diplomatic (SN, p. 120).

This shift from present to past tense corresponds exactly to a lifting of tension which accompanies a physical separation of the brothers. Once out of Leland's presence, tension lifts from Hank's perceptual faculties and a recovery of a consciousness of pattern to his experience, represented by a past tense, becomes possible.

This tension is resumed during Leland's first day as a logger. Although Hank wants to communicate with Leland, his subjective memory of that day is that 'all that ride up the river I sit like a knot on a log, no notion in the world how to talk to him or what to talk about' (SN, p. 172). Parts of that day cannot be integrated into a perceived temporal pattern:

See when lunch blew I walked back to the crummy, but Lee isn't anywhere to be seen...I cut back and find him crapped out in the grass... So I sat down near the kid and started eating ... when all of a sudden up he comes with a squall like a wild man, whopping himself all over. (SN, pages 186-87).

A shift to a present tense signals Hank's proximity to Leland; a past
tense may be resumed once he finds that Leland is asleep, but once Leland
suddenly recovers consciousness Hank is again under threat, and the present
tense is restored. Similarly, Hank's recall of his once rescuing the
young Leland from quicksand, prompted by the new occasion of his rescuing
the adult Leland from a gang of youths, reveals a differentiation between
a patterned past event and an unpatterned present:

I'd expected him to be scared stiff when I got him out of that dune hole,
but he'd fooled me there too ... And now, when I ask him if he wasn't
scared of them punks that was giving him a hard time there on the beach,
he acts the same way, giddy, like he'd been drinking' (SN, p. 320).

Hank is not in control of the relationship with Leland, as he had been in
the past.

Hank tries unsuccessfully on several occasions to resolve his mis-
understanding with Leland. On the first day he tries to explain his
feeling about logging, and after one night's drinking he almost achieves
an understanding on the subject of Myra, the brothers' major source of
contention. Nonetheless, a gulf remains between them. In discussing
why Hank regularly allows himself to be manoeuvred into fighting Big
Newton, their mutual miscomprehension is clearly illustrated. For Leland,
the man who 'goes over Niagara Falls in a coffee can' does so 'because that's
as good a way as any to get dead', while for Hank this is 'as good a way as any to
stay alive' (SN, pages 321-22). This conflict reaches crisis-point as
a result of Leland's attraction to Viv, Hank's wife, just as Hank's affair
with Leland's mother had precipitated an earlier confrontation. Hank
becomes aware of something happening which he cannot quite define: 'there's
something different happening but I don't know what, or more there is some-
thing different going to happen and nobody knows for sure what' (SN, p.439).
A vague anxiety attaches to Leland's activities: 'I follow after the
squeak of Joe's radio. Like in a dream. Can't seem to get my mind off
that pick-up, on my business. And we headed out' (SN, p. 481).
Hank's uncertainty corresponds with an unpatterned immediacy, recorded in
a present tense.
The routine of the logging, therefore, comes as a relief from such anxiety for Hank: 'the three of them meshed, dovetailed ... every tiny piece is clicking perfectly. When this happens everyone watching knows ... that this bunch - right now, right this moment - is the best of its kind in the world' (SN, p. 498). This meshing together presents an image of atemporal pattern which seems to offer a respite from the problems associated with temporal awareness, a secure immediacy. It is not an enduring pattern, however, and is violently shattered when a runaway log amputates Henry's arm and traps Joe at the edge of the river:

And a wind, heavy with rain, came up from the river through the fern and huckleberry like a deep-drawn breath ... and Hank feels the air about him swell with that wind, gathering with it, just as he rocks the saw free ... he turns back to the log in time to see a bright yellow-white row of teeth appear splintering over the mossy lips to gnash the saw from his hands... Henry drops his screwjack Gaw! ... Joe Ben hears the mental scream behind a curtain of fern (SN, p. 500).

Hank's reverie, an escape from the problems associated with interpersonal relations and historical understanding which are initiated by Leland's return, is abruptly shattered by this horrific accident. There seems to be no respite from a remorseless environment, and the reverie itself seems an illusion:

(Except it wasn't a dream, just crystallized calm. For I'm wide awake, so wide awake my brain has run off and left time behind. Time will start ... in a minute ... I been asleep. I just woke but time ain't started yet ... If I can just break loose, then in a minute I'll) 'Joe!' (in a minute I'll) 'Joby! Hang on, I'm comin'!' (SN, p. 502).

An inner struggle is in progress between a safe, if debilitating, immediacy and a temporal consciousness, as the continuing juxtapositioning of present tense and past tense narrative voices indicates. With the luxury of a self-reflexive reverie now denied him, Hank surrenders himself in an exhausted acquiescence to external determination: 'I was relieved to know I would be able to rest before much longer ... Just a little bit more, just get the old man up to the pick-up and in town ... and maybe then
it will be over. Finally finished' (SNN, p. 512). As Hank now views it, the conflict begun when 'the old man nailed that plaque' has revealed no sustaining pattern. Anxiety becomes resignation, moreover, when he finds Leland and Myra together: 'I didn't recall what was on my mind till I pulled the pick-up up to the garage, and that reminded me of seeing him and I don't recall all of it until I look out across the moonlit river (SNN, p. 521). A vital truth has been borne in upon Hank by these events, by his failure to prevent Joe's drowning and his impotence in the face of the relationship between Leland and Myra: 'there ain't really any real strength ... not strength like I always thought, I could build and thought I could live, and thought I could show the kid how to live ... there's just different degrees of weakness' (SNN, pages 523-24).

This realisation, that 'you can't ever fake being weak, you can only fake being strong', is the most lasting effect which Leland's return has upon Hank's perception of the world. It has made him 'quit faking' that human strength is an absolute, and shown him the relativity and mutability which characterizes all living things (SNN, pages 527-28). His disillusionment at finding a lifetime's belief to have been a falsehood, consequently, has the immediate effect of producing a retreat into an unpatterened immediacy. Anxiety now characterizes relations with Viv as well as with Leland: 'Viv or me didn't say a word ... I imagine she figures I'd just rather not talk. She don't have any way of knowing what I know' (SNN, p. 546). Again, the present tense carries the anxiety over Leland's activities. Leland and Hank are to have a final confrontation, however, which changes their relationship once more; while Hank thinks that 'it was all done and over', Leland 'had a different notion' (SNN, p. 608). Now it is Leland who is perpetuating the struggle to maintain a

21 Hank's realization that absolute strength is only a mask to disguise degrees of weakness parallels a like discovery made by Bromden about McMurphy. One sign of Bromden's development, indeed, is his progressive elimination of comic-strip heroic imagery for an understanding of McMurphy's own human frailties and weaknesses.
sense of the relatedness of their experience.

As Leland prepares to leave Oregon, he provokes Hank into a fight which he believes will drive a wedge between Hank and Viv. To begin with, Hank is confused by Leland's behaviour: 'He just stands there grinning at me ... what's he got going now for the chrissakes?' (SN, p. 609). At this point, part of the river-bank collapses, a significant occurrence in that it brings the question of erosion once more into mind, and also in that it prepares the way for Hank's final understanding of Leland's strategy: 'It wasn't the cave-in that made me spin my wheels ... it was something else, something I seen at the house ... And the kid seen it, too, way before I did' (SN, p. 610). Hank's undefined anxiety now becomes clear to him; it concerns Viv, since it is through Viv that Leland is attacking him. Viv is watching them from across the river, and Hank understands that Leland wants her to see him being beaten up by Hank: 'then it all come over me ... really come over me, just how nigger slick he's got it all balanced out'. With this insight, the anxiety which blocks his relation to Leland is removed, and a resumption of the past tense narration indicates that a historical consciousness has also been recovered. The endless struggle is activated again, 'because he'd finally made standing pat tougher than advancing, and losing ground easier than standing pat' (SN, p. 611). The two brothers finally fight out their conflict, after which Hank has recovered the will to carry on the logging business, and to maintain pattern against the forces of decay; he declares his intention, thus, by tying Henry's severed arm to the end of the pier.

Just as Hank's relationship with Leland eventually gives rise to a deeper understanding of their shared history, so Leland learns from his encounter with Hank. At university in New York as the novel opens, Leland is living in exile from his family in an asocial, ahistorical isolation. This exile takes the form of a literal removal from temporal consciousness. Henry's parting words, thus, seem 'a litany spoken over
me ... listened to only for the rhythm, a chant in a primitive dialect, an incantation perpetrating a spell; anesthetized time; nothing moves and everything is at once’. (SGN, p. 40).22 Frozen into a limiting ahistoricity, Leland still sees himself as the boy who witnessed his mother's adultery with his half-brother, and who has carried that brother's parting challenge with him from Oregon: 'you should be a big enough guy now, bub' (SGN, p. 43). Leland exists in an immediate present brought into being by the traumas of his childhood; his twelve-year exile has been built upon a repression of that past.

The past is not dead, however, but only lying dormant below consciousness. A postcard from Hank requesting Leland's return and repeating his challenge breaks in upon Leland's retreat like a bomb-shell; his challenge 'was perhaps what broke the spell' (SGN, p. 63). Leland has assumed that he 'was beyond being bugged' by his past: 'I was certain that Doctor Maynard and I had succeeded in dismantling the past, second by ticking second, like a time-bomb team' (SGN, p. 67). Hank's postcard undermines this assumption, coming as an 'invitation that requests my humble presence at a gathering being held twelve (twelve? that long ago? Jesus ...) twelve years previous to the day of its delivery' (SGN, p. 68). He is being invited to return, in fact, to the precise moment at which he left twelve years earlier; at least in so far as his family is concerned, nothing has changed during these years.

Thus, Leland journeys homeward towards a historical experience which he thought had been excised from his memory. His journey signals his anxiety over this return, presented as it is through the drug-induced nightmare of a depressive who is terrified of 'mighty Stamper Hall' with its 'lovable little gnome', its terrifying 'giant' and its patriarch 'Henry (Stamper) the Eighth', respectively Joe, Hank, and Henry Stamper

22 This mystical 'litany' would seem to be an antithetical characterization of the transcendentalist attitude: it is, after all, an anaesthetic, a stasis, and a distortion of perception.
Leland only shakes off this hallucination as he arrives in Oregon, 'seeing half-remembered farmhouses and landmarks stroking past' and unable to escape 'the sensation that the road I travelled moved not so much through miles and mountains, as back, through time' (SN, p. 89). A dimly recognizable landscape awaits him which is full of echoes that his immediate perception cannot explain. Hearing Hank working on the foundations of the house, for example, Leland recognizes 'the mocking echo of something that had once been very familiar'; 'that was why the sound was so damned confusing', he reflects, because he 'recognized it' (SN, p. 140).

These echoes of the past conflict with the atemporal existence Leland has formed for himself away from Oregon. A boat horn sounds, 'like a signal from a dream', and brings back memories of his 'fouled-up past'; he remembers bitterly being denied the chance to run 'barefoot in bib overalls along these ways where quails piped and field mice hid' (SN, pages 226-27). Influenced by this newly rediscovered landscape, Leland almost reaches an understanding with Hank: 'we were swollen and ripe for an instant together, ready for picking' (SN, p. 214). Before his homecoming, he would typically let his mind 'wander back to stand gaping, perplexed and horrified, on the brink of my past', blaming his life on 'some convenient villain' or 'convenient trauma' (SN, p. 227-28). Now his perception of his history has altered: 'my intentions had cooled down and my heart warmed up, and a family of moths had taken up residence in my suitcase and chewed my slacks and my certainties full of holes' (SN, p. 228). The fixed, determinist scheme Leland had brought with him from the east, with its atemporal laws which recall Draeger's universal verities, is under attack from an alternative, relative and historical perception. Like Hank, Leland experiences an inner conflict between a seemingly secure immediacy and an indeterminate historicity. A world of static certainties is broken down, and the confrontation with Hank plays

23 These hallucinatory terrors recall Bromden's fears.
a central part in this process: 'Hank succeeded in once more shattering my certainty' (SN, p. 337).

Such 'certainty' is not shattered easily, however, and Leland is resistant to Hank's influence over him; nor does he willingly surrender his atemporal refuge and accept the past. Old suspicions and imaginings reoccur to him, as Myra's ghost continues to brood over his relationship with Hank in a dream of revenge which resurfaces to block a complete understanding of past events. Jonas's horror of impermanence is also experienced by Leland:

'This past is funny, Viv; it never seems to let things lie, finished. It never seems to stay in place as it should ... And some things out of the past keep troubling the present, my present ... so much so that I felt I had to eliminate the past, to destroy it' (SN, p. 259).

Like Draeger, Leland longs to see all human experience as fixed, repetitive, and determinate, a continuous replaying of 'the same dull old scene' (SN, p. 435). His hatred of Hank, leading to his seduction of Viv, offers just such a fixed idea. The reawakening of historical consciousness, with its destabilization of all such certainties as he takes 'a running jump at the womb' back through his own history, threatens the fixed pattern by which Leland has lived all his adult life. The trauma of his return, therefore, centres on his sudden and rapid passage from a child's to an adult's consciousness (SGN, p. 308).

Leland's plan for revenge, formed in the isolation of his inner, imaginative life, falters in the face of his experience of the actuality of Oregon. Viv, for example, becomes less the imagined instrument of Leland's revenge as he comes to see her as a human for whom he feels a growing love. Similarly, his attitude towards Hank changes in the course of the novel. In particular, Leland realizes that Hank is not the superhuman figure of his childhood fantasies; the discovery of Hank's weakness, moreover, does not transform Leland into a new superman. Leland's 'ritual of vengeance' does not turn him 'into a Captain Marvel', but merely creates
'another Billy Batson' (*S*N, pages 527-28); like Hank, he learns that there is no absolute strength, only degrees of weakness. This realization is crucial to Leland's actual transformation, for this is what he has previously been wary of, and now he begins 'to suspect that there might be a whole lot more' to their conflict than either he or Hank know (*S*N, p. 594). In astonishment, Leland mirrors Hank's recognition of the meaning of their struggle when he reflects that 'for once, I wasn't able to run for my miserable life ... I could only move forward' (*S*N, p. 613). Consequently, he defends himself against Hank as they 'finally, totally wholeheartedly embraced for our first and last and oh so long overdue dance of Hate and Hurt and Love' (*S*N, p. 614).

Both Leland and Hank are joined in the struggle to sustain a living pattern, in relation to the river as much as to each other. Viv's revelation that Hank is to go ahead with bringing the logs downriver has Leland feeling 'raped by time itself', and yet he knows he must join Hank in this act because their conflict has taught him that he is fighting for his life 'to get it, to win it' (*S*N, p. 621). In running away from the past, he had surrendered the last inviolable stronghold of the self to a false consciousness. His recovery of a sense of historical pattern, therefore, is crucially involved in his insight that to surrender this stronghold 'for any reason other than love is to surrender love':

Hank had always known this without knowing it, and by making him doubt it briefly I made it possible for both of us to discover it. I knew it now. And I knew that to win my love, my life, I would have to win back for myself the right to this last stronghold. Which meant winning back the strength I had bartered away years before for a watered-down love. (*S*N, p. 623).

As the novel ends, Draeger tells Viv that he 'still don't understand what happened', to which Viv replies 'Maybe that's because it's still happening' (*S*N, p. 627). The struggle which she has been describing has no finite dimensions, unlike the 'watered-down love' which corresponds to Draeger's determinist perspective; the novel, rather, returns full
circle to the image of the severed arm twisting 'in the billowing rain', a defiant gesture against the forces of decay and illusion.

One critic has concluded that Leland and Hank remain confined within a fractured and incomplete existence and must learn 'the necessity of submitting oneself totally' to 'the forces of the wilderness', in realizing the 'absurdity of the human condition' (Sherman, p. 196). Such a view runs exactly counter to the developmental structure we have been discussing in Kesey's works. Leland and Hank, rather, move towards a world which is relatively less fractured than the constricted, immediate worlds in which they are first seen. Their defiance of the river, indeed, becomes all the more courageous for their new understanding of the relativity of human energy and strength. A static, determinist view is replaced by a social-historical consciousness able to perceive qualitative value in human experience, a consciousness which proclaims an open, dynamic world. If there is a human correlative for the Oregon wildernesses, it is to be found in the ahistorical immediacy of a Draeger or a Jonas. The Stampers, like Chief Bromden, oppose Draeger's determinism in defending the possibilities of the autonomous historical consciousness and 'the subversive contents of memory' (Marcuse, One Dimensional Man, p. 98). Kesey's representation of human individuation, therefore, envisages a process of character formation in which internally realized patterning faculties engage external conditions in a process of dialectical interaction.
Chapter Six

Joseph Heller: The Problem of Individuation in a Determinist World

1 The now familiar dichotomy between the idealist and the historicist perspectives reappears in the critical assessment of Heller's work. In particular, radically divergent interpretations of Heller's presentation of individuation and identity have come to be made. On the one hand, Heller is seen as a disappointed idealist for whom the American ideal of unbounded individualism has been frustrated by an absolute and enclosing determinist environment. Heller's world 'of absolute entrapment, of permanent apocalypse and built-in catastrophe', therefore, echoes the pessimistic antihistoricism of Henry Adams discussed in the opening chapter.1 A sense of self is maintained only at the verge of the dissolution of the self in the face of an absolute external determinism. Conversely, while admitting the problems of retaining an autonomous identity within such a determinist structure, other critics have rejected the absolutism of the idealist approach. These critics have been concerned to show Heller's understanding of specific social-historical developments and structures, and his interest in the relative possibilities for an open, nondetermined existence. Heller, in such a view, is concerned with particular social questions rather than some universal existential condition, and maintains the need for a historical consciousness in discussing the historical formation of an enclosing social determinacy.

For the idealist critic, Heller presents an absurd universe. The war in *Catch-22*, thus, exemplifies 'an unchanging condition of absurdity and terror' or is 'merely an illustration of the absurdity of the human condition itself'. Heller's 'programmatic meaninglessness', in Nash Smith's striking phrase, must then produce an ahistorical world in which Heller's treatment of time 'sustains the feeling that all of the novel's multitudinous actions are happening, now'. The absurd world is a world devoid of meaningful pattern, and so is without historical pattern.

The adequacy of this reading, however, is challenged by Heller's own rejection of the notions of a 'literature of silence' or a 'literature of exhaustion'. When questioned about his attitude towards these critical ideas, Heller has made his own position quite clear: 'I don't believe in the "death of art". I don't think it is even meaningful when strictly applied to literature, for the writer who does genuinely believe - and Samuel Beckett comes close - in the absurdity of it really couldn't write'. A more subtle appreciation of the complex relation between Heller's style and his materials, the form and the content of his works, needs to be made.


Charles B. Harris, for example, while arguing that *Catch-22* uses an 'absurdist theme with absurdist techniques', nonetheless claims that the novel 'not only protests absurdity but rejects it as ultimate reality'. Other critics go still further, in suggesting that the absurdity 'is only a surface phenomenon' beneath which lies 'the horror of death and dehumanization'. Unlike Camus, for whom 'the absurdity of the universe inheres in its nature and in that of man', in Heller 'it is man's attitudes and institutions - both susceptible of alteration - which are absurd' (Richter, p. 165). Heller, in short, is dealing with social-historical structures rather than with ontological absolutes. While the claim that *Catch-22* is structured around an 'interplay between present narrative and the cumulative repetition and gradual clarification of past actions' may overstate a systematic formal arrangement in this novel, this idea offers a fruitful approach to Heller's fictive creation. An understanding of the historical processes which have led to the determined immediacy of *Catch-22* can reveal the focus of Heller's critique of contemporary America.

On a number of occasions Heller has indicated the targets for his writings. He has talked of 'the contemporary regimented business society' or of Yossarian's superiors as the symbols of the civilian hierarchies, political and economic, of the Cold War.' Also referring to *Catch-22*, Heller has said that he is 'not interested in the subject of

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war. I wasn't interested in the war in *Catch-22*. I was interested in the personal relationships in bureaucratic authority' (Jones, *War and the Novelist*, p. 52). The corporate bureaucracy, whether military as in *Catch-22*, economic as in *Something Happened*, or political as in *Good as Gold*, is at the heart of Heller's novels. Thus, Tanner talks of the military structure of *Catch-22* as a behaviourist effort at achieving 'an absolute organization which will eliminate human vagaries and subordinate every individual impulse to a pattern of mechanical efficiency' (*City of Words*, p. 72). In this 'corporately structured war machine', real life 'takes place within the administrative network: what happens in the office is vital, what happens in the field of battle is peripheral' (Miller, p. 236: Way, pages 261-62). Both sympathetic and antagonistic critics have seen this bureaucracy as Heller's central subject, talking on the one hand about his critique of 'the whole mystique of corporation capitalism', or on the other hand about his immoral 'spitting' at 'business and the professions, at respectability, at ideals, at all visible tokens of superiority'.

Heller takes bureaucracy and the bureaucratization of life as the primary fact of the modern world, of a society in which 'functionally rational bureaucracies are increasingly used in human affairs and in history-making decisions' and where 'bureaucratically instituted élites are increasingly sources of historical change'. In the words of Robert McNamara, a representative bureaucrat, 'the real threat to democracy comes not from overmanagement, but from undermanagement. To undermanage


reality is not to keep it free'. In the discussion below, following Heller's own suggestion that Catch-22 and Something Happened respectively deal with 'the external world' and 'the interior world', this concern with bureaucratization will be examined as it is worked out in Heller's novels. In Catch-22 and Good as Gold, Heller explores and satirizes the structures and procedures of the corporate bureaucracy, focusing especially on its modes of discourse. These linguistic forms encode a logic of domination which permits a determining control over the forms and content of communication, itself an emblem of the determinist system. Something Happened, conversely, explores the interior psychology of one representative, corporate functionary, in the person of Bob Slocum. Slocum's history stands as a case study 'of a consciousness resisting its own freedom and responsibility' and 'always seeking a vision of continuity that will alleviate his dread of time'. Taking both the exterior and the interior accounts together, Heller's work becomes not so much a portrayal of an absurd reality as a representation of a social structure in which Slocum's surrender to an external determination is 'simply a normal aspect of a normal, if horrendous, situation'.

The world of Catch-22 is one in which the activities of an administrative apparatus, complete with its own operational rationale, have taken on an


apparent life of their own at the expense of the human world. Human identities and relations are reduced to largely formal entities dependent upon the administrative reality of forms, statistics, and records. An airman who is killed in action before he can formally register his arrival cannot, in turn, be registered as dead: 'because he had never officially gotten into the squadron, he could never officially be gotten out'. Doc Daneeka is declared dead when his name is discovered among the flight-crew of a crashed aircraft, even although Daneeka is very much alive and visible to the administrative officers (C, p. 334). Medical treatment is reduced 'to an exact science' by two orderlies quite regardless of the reality of the actual patients processed by them, while hospitalized patients are treated according to the medical chart attached to their beds whether or not these charts correctly correspond to the actual occupants of those beds (C, pages 32, 286). In each case, the formal entity determined by the administration becomes equivalent to the authorized reality, regardless of any human actuality which might be associated with this formal reality. On the one hand, the human is progressively reified, as in the case of the 'soldier in white' who is 'filed next to the Texan' on one hospital ward, or the communications colonel 'transmitting glutinous messages from the interior into square pads of gauze' rather than coughing blood (C, pages 10, 14). Conversely, the administrative machinery seems to become agentive, as in the case of Major Major promoted to major 'by an IBM machine with a sense of humor almost as keen as his father's' (C, p. 85). Such a situation represents a logical, if extreme, extension of the bureaucratic mentality which must consider the human world impersonally, and manipulate people 'as though they were figures, or things'.


20 Erich Fromm, *The Sane Society* (London, 1956), p. 126. Mills also describes the bureaucratic perspective as one which sees the world as 'an object to be manipulated' (p. 114).
As the formal reality of the bureaucrat becomes detached from the substantive actuality of human experience, the consciousness of such experience diminishes. The figures on administrative reports begin to lose any necessary relation to an empirical reality, as 'reality' comes to be determined by the internal, self-reflexive operations of the bureaucratic apparatus itself. Such bureaucratic activity need have no substantive referent, so that in 'a single productive minute' Major Major 'might endorse twenty separate documents each advising him to pay absolutely no attention to any of the others' (C, p. 91). Each new document instructs him to disregard all previous documents, in an expanding plethora of noninformation which inverts the expected understanding of what productive activity entails. Dunbar seems to have taken this rationale to heart when he attempts to increase 'his life span ... by cultivating boredom'; thus, he loves shooting skeet 'because he hated every minute of it and the time passed so slowly' (C, pages 9, 37-38). His life becomes a succession of self-canceling experiences of nothingness, a construction of an experiential void based upon an antihuman rationale. Absurd as Major and Dunbar may seem, examples of this inversion of expected logic abound in the administrative world. Major's father is paid well by the government 'for every bushel of alfalfa he did not grow', while Colonel Cathcart is 'an alert, hard-hitting, aggressive marketing executive' who is so awful he becomes sought after 'by firms eager to establish losses for tax purposes', a self-made man 'who owed his lack of success to nobody' (C, pages 82, 27). No alfalfa is grown and no marketing ability is shown, but this non-productivity has a use within the totality of corporate activities. The administrative elite are concerned to establish their complete control over all activities under their management, and are able to do so by establishing a complete control over the possible forms such activities might take; nonproduction is part of this formal control of the corporate monopoly.
Power has passed, then, to that group which controls and defines the forms of behaviour, employment, language, and most especially communications in general.21 This is satirized in the activities of ex-PFC Wintergreen, who is able to determine the outcome of the dispute between Generals Dreedle and Peckem 'by throwing all communications from General Peckem into the wastebasket' (C, p. 26). Again, the power of the bureaucrat is presented in extreme form in Yossarian's activity as hospital censor, who by 'attacking the names and addresses on the envelopes' is able to obliterate 'whole homes and streets, annihilating entire metropolises with careless flicks of his wrist' (C, p. 8). Yossarian's apparently harmless fun is mitigated by the sense that this is, indeed, the operational practice of those military planners who decide the fates of entire cities as an administrative, formal problem quite independent of the resulting destruction and human misery. Such seems to be demonstrated, for example, by the reaction of the planners after Yossarian moves the bomb-line on the operations map (C, p. 118). With the bomb-line formally moved north on the map, the bureaucracy is convinced that the bombing has, in fact, moved north.

The dissociation of formal structures from their substantive referents in a material world is at the heart of Heller's account of the bureaucratic style of corporate America. Clearly, the interpretation of this style is crucial to any adequate account of Heller's fictive creations. The bureaucrat's typical, formal activity is 'discontinuous from anything that might be considered "things themselves"' and creates 'a closed world whose "illusory depth" becomes its inhabitants' only "reality"'.22 This 'problematic and radical discontinuity', however, can be taken either as a general existential condition or as a local,

21 This development is central to Pynchon's writing, and is discussed in chapter seven below.

historical development (Davis, p. 66). Once more, we must decide whether this discontinuous world corresponds with an ontological condition, or whether it can be seen as part of a historical process. In this context, Marcuse's discussion of what he terms 'the language of total administration' is of especial significance.\(^{23}\)

In *One Dimensional Man*, Marcuse describes the pattern of a new domination of man in which a total identification of the individual with the established society has taken place. In 'the closed operational universe of advanced industrial civilization', logic has been transformed into 'the logic of domination'; the 'new totalitarianism manifests itself precisely in a harmonizing pluralism, where the most contradictory works and truths peacefully coexist in indifference' (Marcuse, pages 124, 61). All thought and action opposing and contradicting the established society is to be eliminated or absorbed into that established reality, so that all possible thought and action becomes restricted to the immediate operations of the given social organization. In a promotion of 'positive thinking and doing', 'transcendent, critical notions' come under attack (Marcuse, p. 85).

This 'one dimensional' world also has its characteristic styles of discourse, in which 'the tension between appearance and reality, fact and factor, substance and attribute tend to disappear', leaving a language permeated by 'magical, authoritarian and ritual elements' which encourage 'the acceptance of that which is offered in the form in which it is offered' (Marcuse, pages 85, 91). Milo Minderbinder's modes of argument and procedure provide one analogue of this style in *Catch-22*. Against the objection that he is using German military aircraft in his cartel, Milo can reply that 'those planes belong to the syndicate, and everybody has a share' (*C*, p. 249). The fact that Milo is trading with the

\(^{23}\) Herbert Marcuse, *One Dimensional Man* (London, 1964), p. 84. There are many similarities between this discourse and that of Lesser in Malamud's *The Tenants*. See chapter four, section three.
enemy in time of war is invalidated by his formal contract which claims to associate each individual on the Pianosa airforce base with his cartel agreements: 'the Germans are also members in good standing of the syndicate, and it's my job to protect their rights as shareholders' (C, p. 251). Again, Milo is able to divorce the reality of his deal to bomb his own air-base from the formal considerations of his contract: "Strafe", said Milo ... We have no choice ... It's in the contract" (C, p. 253). The formal, abstracted record of Milo's business dealings is thus held to be quite distinct from the actual effects of such dealings on people's lives. Milo's healthy company books are all important, the human reality uncenemoniously brushed aside.

Milo's fantastic exploits satirize a self-justifying method which proceeds by a radical separation of the formal ends of any act from its means and consequences. Only formal or technical criteria may be applied to economic phenomena, which thus become abstracted from human reality into a technocratic logic available only to the technocrat himself. All Yossarian needs to know, Milo constantly suggests, is that he too has 'a share'; in this way, Milo may maintain his economic dominance. Another aspect of this method is its adoption of 'self-validating analytical propositions which function like magic-ritual formulas'; speech 'moves in synonyms and tautologies' in a 'reconciliation of opposites' which serves to undermine contradiction in rendering 'discourse and communication ... immune against the expression of protest and refusal' (Marcuse, pages 88-89). As Marcuse describes this style of discourse, the 'clean bomb' and 'harmless fall-out' become only 'extreme creations of a normal style' (Marcuse, p. 82).

Theodor W. Adorno, Prisms, translated by Samuel and Shierry Weber (London, 1967), also addresses himself to this point; he observes an 'irrationalism' in cultural criticism which has 'wrenched the mind out of its dialectic with the material conditions of life' (p. 24).
Tautology and oxymoron are also characteristic features of Heller's linguistic world. Cathcart, the advertising executive, is a representative example of such features in operation: 'Colonel Cathcart was conceited because he was a full colonel with a combat command at the age of only thirty-six; and Colonel Cathcart was dejected because although he was already thirty-six he was still only a full colonel' (C, p. 185).

General Peckem remarks that 'while none of the work we do is very important, it is important that we do a great deal of it' (C, p. 314).

Milo, again, in describing his operational rationale observes that 'bribery is against the law ... But it's not against the law to make a profit, is it? So it can't be against the law for me to bribe someone in order to make a fair profit, can it?' (C, p. 260). By conjoining two facts which are not normally related to each other, namely that bribery is illegal and profitability is not illegal, Milo seems to be able to overturn the first of these propositions which contradicts his business behaviour. His logic removes an impediment to his activities by reconciling what would not otherwise be reconciled, illustrating Marcuse's idea that 'the rational rather than the irrational' has become 'the most effective vehicle of mystification' in proposing a spurious rationality which conceals 'the irrationality of the whole' (Marcuse, pages 189-90).

With the elimination of substantive contradiction from the normal style of communication, a logic of domination is brought into being. A serious purpose, then, is at work beneath the surface absurdity of this style. Numerous examples of this logic might be given from Catch-22. Clevinger's trial, for example, reveals a radical transformation of the idea of justice: 'Clevinger was guilty, of course, or he would not have been accused, and since the only way to prove it was to find him guilty, it was their patriotic duty to do so' (C, p. 79). This logic is elaborated by Scheisskopf in the playscript Clevinger's Trial: 'I could be a judge too, sir. As long as I'm prosecuting him and defending him, I would be able to see both sides of the question and probably have
an unprejudiced view'. In fact, this logic eliminates the 'question' itself, or at least empties it of substantive content to leave it a purely formal, indeed rhetorical, question. By an operational logic whereby the operations of the dominant group define all possible events in its own terms, the fact that Clevinger is guilty follows from the simple fact of his accusation. The authoritarian impulse of this logic is revealed in Colonel Korn's response to Clevinger's dangerous educational meetings: 'there was no telling what people might find out once they felt free to ask whatever questions they wanted to', and so under 'Colonel Korn's rule, the only people permitted to ask questions were those who never did. Soon the only people attending were those who never asked questions, and the sessions were discontinued altogether' (C, p. 35).

Other administrative officers also prove themselves adept in this style. Captain Black defends his 'Great Loyalty Oath Crusade' to Milo, for example, on the grounds that 'this whole program is voluntary ... The men don't have to sign ... But we need you to starve them to death if they don't' (C, p. 113). Milo himself asserts that if the men 'had any loyalty, they would buy my cotton till it hurts so that they can keep right on buying my cotton till it hurts them some more' (C, p. 259). As Chaplain Tappman realises, an ability to operate this style is a pre-requisite of survival in the world of Catch-22:

Common sense told him that telling lies and defecting from duty were sins. On the other hand, everyone knew that sin was evil, and that no good could come from evil. But he did feel good; he felt positively marvellous. Consequently, it followed logically that telling lies and defecting from duty could not be sins. The chaplain had mastered, in a moment of divine intuition, the handy technique of protective rationalization (C, p. 356).

Again, a formal logic obscures the irrationality of what is being said as an actual form of behaviour, as 'common sense' is inverted by this tech-


26 Marcuse discusses this 'operationalism' in *One Dimensional Man*, pages 12-13, 85-87.
nique of 'protective rationalization'. The Chaplain perceives a contradiction in his life whereby an immediate experiential good seems at odds with his moral sense of truth and responsibility. Far from concluding that all is not well with his immediate existence, however, the Chaplain chooses to follow the logic of his situation and harmonize contradiction where he can.

Heller's description of this technique of 'protective rationalization' again satirizes an actual style of technocratic rationality in which discussion is carried out independently of its human relevance, confined to an administrative logic. Herman Kahn, for example, calls for an objective discussion of thermonuclear war, and takes it upon himself to discuss mutual annihilation. On the use of force, thus, he argues that 'it is perfectly possible for us or the Soviets to use force in a reasonable fashion'; this remains true 'even though it may be unreasonable, if not immoral, to settle disputes by the use of force. Having unreasonably or immorally decided to use force, one can still wish to see it used reasonably as opposed to recklessly'. Kahn invites us to consider reasonable means of implementing unreasonable policies. To the operationalist mind, there is no contradiction here between public policy and material reality; if a policy exists to implement force, that policy becomes reasonable regardless of its actual consequences. Irrational behaviour is promoted under the guise of rationality. This radical divorce of technical discussion from social reality and human reference has been diagnosed by Erich Fromm as 'a low-grade chronic schizophrenia'.

The result of this reasoning is a mode of discourse mirroring the closed system of the bureaucracy which finds its most striking image in the 'soldier in white':

27 Herman Kahn, *Thinking About the Unthinkable* (London, 1962), p. 73. The title of Kahn's work itself exemplifies the elimination of contradiction.
28 McNamara, thus, asserts that 'assured destruction is the very essence of the whole deterrence concept' (*The Essence of Security*, p. 52).
Sewn into the bandages over the insides of both elbows were zippered lips through which he was fed clear fluid from a clear jar ... When the jar on the floor was full, the jar feeding his elbow was empty, and the two were simply switched quickly so that the stuff could drip back into him (C, p. 10).

The idea of a total administrative determinism, of course, is at the heart of 'Catch-22' itself:

There was only one catch and that was Catch-22, which specified that a concern for one's own safety in the face of dangers that were real and immediate was the process of a rational mind. Orr was crazy and could be grounded. All he had to do was ask; and as soon as he did, he would no longer be crazy and would have to fly more missions ... If he flew them he was crazy and didn't have to; but if he didn't want to he was sane and had to. (C, p. 46).

The 'spinning reasonableness' of this argument exemplifies the logic of domination which entraps characters in the world of Catch-22.

Given this enclosing bureaucratic structure, it might now be appropriate to ask if Heller sees any possibility of breaking down this determinism. The central character in the novel, Yossarian, is faced with an existential crisis; as he says, 'between me and every ideal I always find Scheisskopfs, Peckems, Korns and Cathcarts. And that sort of changes the ideal ... I see people cashing in on every decent impulse and every human tragedy' (C, p. 435). For most of the novel, Yossarian finds a mode of survival in using the bureaucratic style to his own advantage, as Chaplain Tappman comes to do. Yossarian tells the Chaplain, for example, that 'as far as I know, I'm the only Captain Yossarian I know, but that's only as far as I know (C, p. 12). Again, he is distinguished from Clevinger by his ability to decode the bureaucrat's manner of speech:

'I want someone to tell me', Lieutenant Scheisskopt beseeched them all prayerfully. 'If any of it is my fault, I want to be told'. 'He wants someone to tell him', Clevinger said. 'He wants everyone to keep still, idiot', Yossarian answered. (C, p.68).

Idealists like Clevinger or Nately, who has lived 'almost twenty years without trauma, tension, hate or neurosis, which was proof to Yossarian of just how crazy he was' (C, p. 243), fare badly in this world. Self-
centred pragmatists, on the contrary, are able to survive by adopting the administrative rationality. Eventually, however, Yossarian is forced into a choice between joining the Cathcarts and Korns or escaping from their system. He finds he 'must save himself outside of the system in order to subvert it' (Solomon, p. 865). This escape has been seen as 'a steady progression towards commitment' or as 'an avoiding leap' (Way, p. 265; Tanner, p. 80). Clearly, the meaning of Yossarian's final 'jump' is crucial to an understanding of the novel; Yossarian's claim that he is 'not running away from my responsibilities. I'm running to them' needs to be investigated (C, p. 440).

By accepting that personal survival depends upon an ability to use the bureaucratic logic and discourse, Yossarian commits himself to an immediate, contingent world. This world is characterized by an operational logic in which, as with Major Major's self-cancelling memoranda, only the present statement is valid; no sense of historical pattern may be discovered in such a structure. Yossarian finds himself in a contingent world, therefore, which has its stylistic analogue in a characteristic use of simple clausal conjunction, using 'and' or 'but'. His activity as censor, for example, is presented as a disconnected, apparently random activity:

It was a monotonous job, and Yossarian was disappointed to learn that the lives of enlisted men were only slightly more interesting than the lives of officers ... To break the monotony he invented games. Death to all modifiers, he declared one day, and out of every letter that passed through his hands went every adverb and every adjective ... One time he blacked out all but the salutation 'Dear Mary' from a letter, and at the bottom he wrote, 'I yearn for you tragically. A.T. Tappman, Chaplain, U.S. Army' (C, p. 8).

Yossarian engages in a game with forms which seems to have no connection to any substantive reality. Such behaviour will later be revealed as irresponsible, since it does affect people's lives; Tappman is brought to

30 This form is familiar from Hemingway; see chapter three, section two.
trial as a subversive on the basis of this particular letter signed in his name. Nonetheless, Yossarian's world is habitually contingent: 'he had decided to live forever or die in the attempt, and his only mission each time he went up was to come down alive'; 'Aarfy had been no use to Yossarian as a navigator or as anything else, and Yossarian drove him back from the nose vehemently each time' (C, pages 29, 49). In perceiving his own life as a largely contingent pattern, Yossarian seems to be modelling his existence upon the perceived structure of his surrounding environment: 'he had decided to live forever or die in the attempt, and his only mission each time he went up was to come down alive'; 'boys on every side of the bomb line were laying down their lives ..., and no one seemed to mind'; 'Colonel Cathcart went away from General Dreedle with a gulp and kicked the chaplain out of the officers' club, and it was exactly the way it almost was two months later ..., and the chaplain was ready now to capitulate to despair' (C, pages 10, 16, 279). This existence, in effect, is presented as a series of conjunct immediacies.

The sense of a merely contingent pattern of relatedness is reinforced, moreover, by the syntactic separation of what would otherwise be contingent clauses. Sentences beginning in 'and' register this form: 'And when Yossarian tried to remind people, they drew away from him'; 'And if that wasn't funny, there were lots of things that weren't even funnier'; 'And Yossarian also did not understand why Milo needed ... to invest in the letter'; 'McWatt went, and McWatt was not crazy. And so did Yossarian'; 'And it was indeed an objective Peckem who gazed at Colonel Scheisskopf' (C, pages 16, 17, 60, 300, 314). An analogous use of 'but' in initial position adds to the implication of contingency: 'But Yossarian couldn't be happy'; 'But Yossarian knew he was right'; 'But Yossarian still didn't understand'; 'But Aarfy was already back in the apartment when Yossarian arrived' (C, pages 16, 20, 59, 155). At the very least, the transformation of complex structures of conjunct
clauses into simple sentences serves to mitigate relational patterns. This is particularly so when the second clause, beginning in 'and' or 'but', becomes the first statement in a separate paragraph, as is often the case.

As a corollary of this reduction of substantive relations, formal structures are created which contain logical relations without any necessary reference to any actual, verifiable relational structures. For example, 'on the other side of Havermeyer stood the tent McWatt no longer shared with Clevinger, who had still not returned when Yossarian came out of the hospital'; 'no one was around when Yossarian returned from the hospital but Orr and the dead man in Yossarian's tent ... Yossarian didn't like him, even though he had never seen him. Having him lying around all day annoyed Yossarian so much that he had gone ... several times to complain'; 'McWatt was the craziest combat man of them all probably, because he was perfectly sane and still did not mind the war'; 'by the time of the mission to Bologna, Yossarian was brave enough not to go around over the target even once' (C, pages 18, 22, 59, 139).

In the first two examples, relational pattern is formed around a man who is actually absent or a 'dead man' whom Yossarian has never seen and who does not, in fact, live in the tent. The formal pattern, incorporating Clevinger and Mudd, does not correspond to the actual pattern in which these men do not appear. Pattern, this is, forms around negative conditions and consists of formal relations significantly deprived of substance. The syntactic encoding of formal complexity, in the use of subordination, goes ahead despite the semantic incongruity which derives from this. This syntactic form, at odds with a semantic content which appears contradictory if not meaningless, parallels the emphasis given to formal considerations quite independently of substantive actuality which is characteristic of the bureaucratic apparatus itself.

31 This is precisely the characteristic perspective taken by Lesser in Malamud's The Tenants; Lesser's personal solipsism mirrors the self-reflexiveness of Heller's bureaucracies.
The latter two examples exemplify the syntactic complexities which carry the oxymoronic containment of contradiction which is at the heart of the bureaucracy's logic of domination. The opposition of insanity and sanity or courage and cowardice is eliminated in a syntax which formally associates these elements in a single statement.

Other structures, actually sequences of random events, are presented as if some necessary relation existed between the different components of a complex syntactic form. A fight in the officers' mess is a case in point:

Pandemonium broke loose. It took almost a full minute for Appleby to disentangle himself from Orr's flailing arms and legs ... It was a night of surprises for Appleby, who was as large as Yossarian and as strong and who swung at Yossarian as hard as he could with a punch that flooded Chief White Halfioat with such joyous excitement ... he busted Colonel Moodus in the nose with a punch that filled General Dreedle with such mellow gratification that he had Colonel Cathcart throw the chaplain out ... (C, p. 55).

This is not, as the syntax might suggest, a highly ordered group of related events, but rather a random sequence of very disorganized happenings. Similarly, hysteria may be given a formal pattern if a syntactic complexity is brought to its description: 'the ward had turned into chaos. The patient delirious with the high fever leaped into the aisle and almost knocked over the patient with one foot, who accidentally brought the black rubber tip of his crutch down on the other's bare foot' (C, p. 357). It would seem that relational pattern may be assigned to events if they are merely contingent to one another, but cannot be thus assigned where a substantive relation does exist. This represents an extension of the Catch-22 logic of the bureaucracy, by means of which only the bureaucracy's abstracted forms may readily be assigned a syntactic complexity. Not surprisingly, then, the bureaucrat is regularly permitted a formal relatedness denied to others. Colonel Cathcart, for example, is 'a slick, successful, slipshod, unhappy man of thirty-six who lumbered when he walked and wanted to be a general ... dashing and
dejected, poised and chagrined' (C, p. 185). Cathcart, of course, is the exemplum of the bureaucratic reconciliation of opposites. This bureaucratic monopoly of formal logic and linguistic complexity finds its zenith in Milo Minderbinder's business enterprises:

'I make a profit of three and a quarter cents apiece when I sell them to me and a profit of two and three quarter cents apiece when I buy them back from me. That's a total profit of six cents an egg. I lose only two cents an egg when I sell them to the mess halls at five cents apiece, and that's how I can make a profit buying eggs for seven cents apiece and selling them for five cents apiece. I pay only one cent apiece at the hen when I buy them in Sicily' (C, p. 227).

Milo's egg monopoly illustrates the mystifying function of logical argument in this world. It is a prime example, moreover, of the power of bureaucratically determined forms, divorced from their substance, to mould patterns of behaviour. To the unsuspecting airmen, Milo appears to be selling seven cents' eggs at five cents, thus undercutting the price in Malta in the formally recognized egg-market. No-one realises that Sicily is the real market, and one cent the true price per egg. In seeing only the form and not the substance of Milo's activities, the men fall prey to his monopolistic manipulation, believing that they are the beneficiaries of some near-miraculous dealing rather than the victims of such dealing.

Yossarian is shaken from his tacit acceptance of this logic by a realization that it cannot be used to the advantage of any individual. As Major Danby remarks, no-one can escape the bureaucratic web which can 'prepare as many official reports as they want and choose whichever ones they need on any given occasion' (C, p. 432). Two experiences, a night journey through Rome and the death of a young airman, challenge his use of this bureaucratic rationality and discourse. By looking at his reactions to these events, some sense of the possibilities and limits of Yossarian's personal growth may be grasped.

Yossarian's experiences in Rome include his last major encounter with the ever-expanding clauses of Catch-22. An old woman tells him that
'Catch-22 says they have a right to do anything we can't stop them from doing' (C, p. 398). Subsequently, it occurs to Yossarian that 'Catch-22 did not exist', but that 'it made no difference. What did matter was that everyone thought it existed, and that was much worse, for there was no object or text to ridicule or refute' (C, p. 400). Catch-22, that is, has no substance except in the capacity of the administrative structure to dominate the thinking of the administered population. Throughout the novel Yossarian has sought for some substance beneath the formal structures of this world, in the hope of interrogating it so as to discover a useable human rationale within it. His attempt to pursue the bureaucrat 'through all the words in the world to wring the knowledge from him' which might explain the war and Snowden's death, however, now seems doomed to frustration (C, p. 35). This realisation is traumatic for Yossarian, since it suggests that the bureaucratic form is self-sustaining and impenetrable. There seems to be no prospect of altering or intervening in the operations of a closed system. A personal manipulation of the bureaucratic logic as a means of survival, moreover, now appears as an illusion.

Having come to these conclusions, opposition to the bureaucracy seems futile. This sense is reinforced by the scene Yossarian finds on entering 'the dark, tomblike street' of a Rome where 'nothing warped seemed bizarre any more in his strange, distorted surroundings ... slanted in weird, surrealistic perspective' (C, p. 402). He finds a night 'filled with horrors' in which it seems that 'mobs with clubs were in control everywhere' (C, pages 405, 407). Answers to his most searching questions seem unobtainable:

He wondered how many people were destitute that same night even in his own prosperous country, how many homes were shanties, how many husbands were drunk and wives socked, and how many children were bullied, abused or abandoned... How many winners were losers, successes failures, rich

Minna Doskow, 'The Night Journey in Catch-22', Twentieth Century Literature, 12 (1966-67), 186-93 points out the similarities between this night journey and Dante's Inferno; a similarly crucial night journey in Pynchon's The Crying of Lot 49 is discussed below in chapter seven, section three.
men poor men? How many wise guys were stupid? ... How many honest men were liars, brave men cowards, loyal men traitors, how many sainted men were corrupt ...

(C, p. 403).

The elimination of contradiction which is the major achievement of bureaucratic logic again prevents Yossarian from uncovering the substantive actuality beneath the surface forms of this world. Surface forms dominate perception, and Yossarian is unable to differentiate between honesty and dishonesty, courage and cowardice, and so on. Consequently, any sense of pattern, apart from the established pattern of the determinist system, seems to have gone: 'featureless shapes flowed by him noiselessly as though borne past immutably on the surface of some rank and timeless tide' (C, p. 407). Both spatial and temporal coherence have disappeared from Yossarian's perception of the world.

This seeming discontinuity stems directly from Yossarian's personal crisis, from his sense of an inhuman, immutable system around him. While Aarfy is able to rape and murder with apparent impunity, for example, Yossarian is arrested for the formal transgression of being in Rome without papers. Yossarian's loss of faith in the possibility of a patterned world, therefore, finds a stylistic analogue in the prominent use of paratactic structures in this episode: 'the night was raw. A boy in a thin shirt and thin tattered trousers walked out of the darkness on bare feet. The boy had black hair and needed a haircut and shoes and socks. His sickly face was pale and sad' (C, p. 403). This young boy is perceived in a sequence of discrete images, a disconnected perspective repeated on a number of occasions:

On the other side of the intersection, a man was beating a dog with a stick like the man ... in Raskolnikov's dream... The dog whimpered and squealed in brute, dumfounded hysteria ... A small crowd watched. A squat woman stepped out and asked him please to stop... Yossarian quickened his pace to get away, almost ran. The night was filled with horrors... At the next corner a man was beating a small boy ... Yossarian recoiled with sickening recognition. He was certain he had witnessed that same horrible scene sometime before (C, p. 405).
In such a disconnected world, the relations between immediately contingent scenes become obscure and problematical. Despairing of finding pattern, finally, Yossarian accepts an offer of repatriation from Colonel Cathcart, in exchange for which Yossarian must appear to endorse Cathcart's regime; 'he was home free: he had pulled it off' (C, p. 419).

The problem which exercises Yossarian for the rest of the novel is whether or not he should go through with this incorporation into the determined pattern. An inner struggle is in progress between a desire to formulate an alternative pattern and a surrender of personal relational faculties:

Yossarian was moved by such intense pity for his poverty that he wanted to smash his pale, sad, sickly face with his fist and knock him out of existence because he brought to mind all the pale, sad, sickly children in Italy that same night who needed haircuts and needed shoes and socks (C, p. 403).

The complexity of the syntax here contrasts with the syntactic simplification which accompanies Yossarian's immediate world. Yossarian would rather avert his eyes from a scene which invokes all of the vicious social reality hidden behind the bureaucratic forms. Contingency, it would seem, is rather less an intrinsic feature of this world than it is a consequence of Yossarian's refusal to acknowledge certain patterns. The 'concealing shelter' of a 'drifting, lightless, nearly opaque gloom', thus, offers an escape from such a recognition (C, p. 407).

Yossarian does not long remain in accord with this immediate world, however, for at the precise moment at which he accepts Cathcart's offer he is stabbed by Nately's ex-girlfriend, who blames him for Nately's death. In doing so, she recalls another moment of recognition: 'Someone had to do something sometime. Every victim was a culprit, every culprit a victim, and somebody had to stand up sometime to try to break the lousy chain of inherited habit that was imperilling them all' (C, p. 397). This message is repeated in a final, complete revelation
of the meaning of Snowden's death during one of the many bombing missions, in Snowden's wounding:

Here was God's plenty, all right, he thought bitterly as he stared ... He wondered how in the world to begin to save him ... It was easy to read the message in his entrails. Man was matter, that was Snowden's secret ... The spirit gone, man is garbage. That was Snowden's secret. Ripeness was all (C, pages 429-30).

Yossarian decides to reject Cathcart's offer and to accept his own responsibilities which have come with maturity, the 'ripeness' he shares with Edgar in *King Lear*. He realises that 'getting stabbed by that bitch was the best thing that ever happened', because in the hospital he finally realises that he must reaffirm this 'spirit'; he is not running away, but rather running towards his 'responsibilities' (C, pages 437, 440). Yossarian's future remains uncertain, as is Bromden's future at the close of *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*. Like Bromden, nonetheless, Yossarian is breaking out of an immediate, contingent world where an external determinacy renders individuals into passive ciphers. If Yossarian's 'jump' seems more a leap of faith than a reasoned alternative to Catch-22, it does have specific sources which are recoverable from the novel and which indicate that Yossarian is not rejecting all pattern and relation. His jump, that is, is not the idealist motion of the transcendentalist into some ideal space, whether exterior or interior. Rather, Yossarian rejects the specific logic, discourse, and forms of the bureaucrat and technocrat. Such a rejection is, in effect, a rejection of an antihistorical perspective. To confirm that this is the case, however, we must carry this discussion forward to *Good As Gold*, where many of the themes of Catch-22 are resumed.

33 'Ripeness was all' echoes Edgar's speech in *King Lear*, V. ii, 9-11, 'Men must endure/ Their going hence, even as their coming hither;/ Ripeness is all', where ripeness is a cognate of maturity.
In *Good as Gold*, Heller carries his attack on the bureaucratic style to the heart of the corporate structure, the President's office at the White House, in the record of Bruce Gold's attempt to win admission into the corridors of power. Washington beckons him to an ideal America: 'he glanced out of the window at official Washington and caught a glimpse of heaven'.

This heaven, he believes, confers on its inhabitants God-like powers. Responding to Lieberman's request for 'a secret CIA grant', therefore, Gold adapts Emerson for his own purposes in replying 'hitch your wagon to my star' (*GG*, p. 159). Gold's source in Emerson makes this clear: 'that is the wisdom of a man, in every instance of his labour, to hitch his wagon to a star, and see his chore done by the gods themselves'.

An 'inventive ability to relate anything to anything else', Gold's mastery of the bureaucratic style, promises to gain him entry into this ideal world (*GG*, p. 46); Gold's potential as a 'house ideologue' is his passage to greatness.

The tautological and oxymoronic style of the military bureaucracy of *Catch-22* reappears in the characteristic discourse of the political administrators in *Good as Gold*. As Ralph Newsome, a presidential aide, informs Gold, they need 'an independent voice in our control', for the president 'doesn't want yes-men. What we want are independent men of integrity who will agree with all our decisions after we make them' (*GG*, pages 341, 53). The Presidency requires the appearance of independent support and open debate to validate its behaviour as the result of democratic processes. Such processes are largely formal, however, without any substance; there is no actual independence, integrity or debate.

34 Joseph Heller, *Good as Gold* (London, 1979), p. 121. Subsequent references are given parenthetically in the text as *GG*.


36 This phrase is Z. Brzezinski's. Brzezinski claims that 'the largely humanist-oriented, occasionally ideologically-minded intellectual dissenter' has been replaced by the specialists 'who become in effect house-ideologues for those in power' (*Encounter*, January 1968, p. 22).
Newsome's so-called 'oxymoronic' style, thus, might more correctly be described as pseudo-oxymoronic, since the point of this style is not to present images of contradiction but rather to eliminate contradiction and dialectical thinking (GG, p. 122). This reconciliation of opposites informs everything Newsome says: 'we'll want to move ahead with this as speedily as possible, although we'll have to go slowly'; 'we have no ideas, and they're pretty firm. Seize control. This Administration will back you all the way until it has to'; 'you can just about have your pick now, unless you can't. That much is official, although it has to be approved, and it must remain secret until we announce it, in case we decide we won't' (GG, pages 53, 191, 206). A circular logic turns irrational behaviour into the semblance of rationality as, for example, when Newsome suggests that Gold might meet the President at an 'Embassy ball':

'He wants to meet you at the Embassy Ball, in front of photographers. Try to come if you're invited'.
'If the President wants to meet me there', said Gold, 'it seems to me I'm important enough to be invited'.
'If you aren't important enough to be invited', countered Ralph, 'he won't want to meet you there' (GG, p. 424).

Gold is keen to accept Presidential patronage despite his knowledge that his statements are misinterpreted by Newsome, with his ironies turned into affirmatives and his jokes taken as serious statement. The meaningless phrase 'contemporary universal constituency', used in a review of the presidential memoirs, provides his introduction to the White House (GG, p. 47). Subsequently, Gold's writings are plundered for useful phrases. An article entitled 'nothing succeeds as planned' is quickly picked up since 'if nothing succeeds as planned ... then the President has just the excuse he needs for not doing anything' (GG, p. 76). Again, the article 'Education and Truth or Truth in Education' is invaluable since, as Newsome tells Gold, 'you've given us just the ammunition we need to end all federal aid to public education' (GG, p.146).
In this alliance of political bureaucrat and academic intellectual, Heller satirizes the absorption of critical thought into the established ideology of the political elite, as all criticism is reduced to an empty form. Heller's bureaucrats, in fact, merely exaggerate an actual style in which Conover, the career diplomat, can say that 'at least seventeen times that I can remember I lied in public under oath ... And that's not just an old man's boasting. I'll take my oath on it' (G7, p. 373). At a press conference, for example, press aide 'Ron', picking up Gold's reply of 'I don't know', employs a technique of pseudo-honesty: 'I have an announcement to make. As you know, this President conducts an open Administration and is committed to total truth. In keeping with that policy, I have to announce that I have no announcement to make. Nothing's happened since yesterday' (G7, p. 200). Heller here mimics Ron Ziegler, the Nixon press aide during the Watergate hearings famed for his prowess in this style, and in particular the press conference at which Ziegler revealed that the President did, after all, know about the Watergate break-in. Woodward and Bernstein record this as follows:

At first Ziegler's resistance was firm. There were no contradictions between the President's latest statement and what had been said before ... previous statements from the White House had been based on 'investigations prior to the President's action' and on 'the previous information' and on 'information available at the time'. Now 'new information' had led to the latest 'standing statement of position' ... 'This is the operative statement ... The others are inoperative'.

Any new statement of policy cancels all previous statements, which cease to have any operational value; only the present moment is permitted by the operationalist logic. Sidney Lens quotes another example of such logic, in recording a press conference at which an army information officer is questioned about some atomic weapons missing after a mid-air collision between two airforce planes. Asked where information might be obtained, the officer replied 'from me. I have no comment to make about

anything, and I cannot comment on why I have to say no comment'.

In accepting Newsome’s logic, Gold admits the failure of his liberal idealism, with its attendant existential anxieties: 'all his words had a starkly humanitarian cast; yet he no longer liked people'; 'Gold knew that the most advanced and penultimate stage of a civilization was attained when chaos masqueraded as order, and he knew we were already there' (GG, pages 73, 325). Central to this anxiety is the loss of any faith in a historical consciousness: 'history was a trash bag of random coincidences torn open in a wind' (GG, p. 74). As Christopher Lasch puts it, the collapse of liberal culture 'finds an especially poignant illustration in the collapse of the historical faith', where the past 'appears "irrelevant" even to those who devote their lives to investigating it'.

The most striking emblem of this antihistoricist world is Newsome’s idea of exchanging wives, like cars, for newer, younger models every year (GG, pages 123, 210). Nothing exists beyond immediate gratification in this world, for a 'disintegration of time pervades the consumer society'.

One area of Gold’s life, nonetheless, remains to challenge his acceptance of Newsome’s perspectives. Crucially, this is his past history, the 'webwork of his origins' from which he had hoped to escape into a solipsistic 'citadel of noninterference' (GG, pages 174, 288). Gold is only too well aware that his pursuit of a personal integration into 'the glittering new social circles awaiting him in Georgetown' demands an abandonment of his past 'Jewish experience' (GG, p. 275). The fragility of his memory augurs well for this integration. Events around him and the demands of his family, however, create problems for Gold, who finds he


must seek 'refuge at night in the fantasy of his childhood that he was not really Bruce Gold and that his family was not really his family' (GG, p. 256). In the daytime, waking reality his family threaten his professional ambitions; his wife hopes that he 'wouldn't ever do anything to make us ashamed', while his sister Joanie asks him 'We're your family, Bruce. Do you want us to call you doctor too?' (GG, pages 115, 182). The family's attitude to the pursuit of assimilation into the dominant social group is summed up in the father's contempt for Henry Kissinger, an emblem of such an integration; 'he ain't no Jew', declares Julius Gold (GG, p. 42). Even the Jewish FBI agent sent to investigate him tells Gold that he is 'a shonda to your race' (GG, p. 267). This particular character, the stranger who reminds the central character of the past history which he has been trying to forget, is familiar from Malamud.

Gold's development in the novel sees him ultimately reject Newsome's bureaucratic logic in a definite new commitment to personal relations and historical consciousness. His choice, in this respect, is a more reasoned, purposeful and directed act than is Yossarian's final jump; Gold's responsibilities are tangibly present in his family. In the course of the novel Gold is forced to re-examine the nature and meaning of his 'experience' as his enthusiasm for political office wanes. This subject is first brought to his attention when he contracts to write a book on 'the Jewish experience', prompted by the prospect of substantial financial rewards: 'Jews were a cinch. It was as good as gold' (GG, p. 16). The past, Gold thinks, is a marketable commodity, echoing Newsome's perspectives. Such commercialization of experience, in its reduction to exchangeable quantities, carries much of the novel's satire. Gold's marketing of his own 'Jewish experience', indeed, unfavourably characterizes the

41 This development again recalls a major pattern in Malamud, in the debates over 'experience'.

consumer vogue for 'ethnicity' in contemporary America; the mass pro-
duction of a commodity ethnicity promotes a false understanding of historical
processes. A related market, namely the sale of memoirs, biographical
revelations or mere gossip, also features prominently in the book. This
idea is first introduced by Gold's well-received review of the President's
memoirs, which work offers Heller considerable scope for exposing irrational
behaviour: 'this President is a very busy man. He has to keep doing so
many things a lot faster than he's able to write about them, even when he's
doing nothing more than writing about all the things he's supposed to be
doing' (GG, p. 49). An overriding concern with producing a public image
once again leads to the creation of formal structures depleted of sub-
stance.

Once begun on this new work, Gold is faced with a recognition which
he has been consistently turning away from: 'my problem is that I've got
to write about the Jewish experience in America and I don't even know what
the Jewish experience is' (GG, p. 87). A number of characters claim that
their is the Jewish experience, or that Gold has not felt that experi-
ence himself. An implication in the novel, however, is that part of the
Jewish experience lies precisely in this attenuation of a felt group
experience. Assimilation into the dominant culture, as part of Marcuse's
'one dimensional society', comes under increasingly savage attack,
particularly in Gold's invective against Kissinger. The Jewish experi-
ence in America, Gold learns, includes a tendency to lose a separate
cultural identity in a general homogenizing process exemplified in the
cults of ethnicity and celebrity. Eventually, on the death of his older
brother, Gold must assume responsibility for his family. Before this
point is reached, however, Gold has already grown disenchanted with the
bribery and corruption of Washington intrigue, thinking that he 'would
almost rather be a Jew' (GG, p. 328). On the very eve of meeting the
President, Gold is forced to leave on hearing the news of his brother's
death, and soon after this he rejects a government appointment GG, pages
Having abandoned a projected commercial memoir of Kissinger, finally, Gold finds himself 'stuck only with the book on the Jewish experience in America' (GG, p. 443). As the novel closes, having at last visited his mother's grave and watching some Jewish children playing baseball, Gold thinks that 'he owed Pomoroy a book. Where could he begin?' (GG, p. 447). He has come full circle back to his original question; having rejected the ideal of an assimilation whose result is a loss of historical perspective, he must now recover that historical sense. His flight from history has failed, and his future is uncertain; nonetheless, he has abandoned the bureaucracy's styles of thinking and speaking, and perhaps we are to infer that his critical faculties may once more find their voice.

4

In Something Happened Heller turns to an interior portrait of the bureaucratic psychology in the narrative of Bob Slocum, a manager in a large corporation. The opening of the novel sets out Slocum's conception of existence within such an organization:

I get the willies when I see closed doors. Even at work, where I am doing so well now, the sight of a closed door is sometimes enough to make me dread that something horrible is happening behind it, something that is going to affect me adversely ... I can almost smell the disaster mounting invisibly and flooding out toward me through the frosted glass panes. My hands may perspire, and my voice may come out strange. I wonder why.

Something must have happened to me sometime. 43

Slocum presents a fearful world dominated by circumstances beyond his control, symbolized in the closed door. 44 His present tense narrative,

42 Intriguingly, Good as Gold ends on a note similar to Philip Roth's Portnoy's Complaint (1969); both novels end on the word 'begin' and a question.
43 Joseph Heller, Something Happened (London, 1974), p. 3. Subsequent references are abbreviated parenthetically as SH.
44 This same complex afflicts Bober in Malamud's The Assistant; see chapter four, section two.
moreover, suggests an entrapment in an immediate present, and thus an ahistorical consciousness; unable himself to discover an existential pattern, his future becomes an image of disaster. A determinism also dominates human relations: 'Green's got the whammy on me', and 'nothing can change the whammy that springs up between one person and another and usually lasts a lifetime' (SH, p. 45). Slocum is anxious to convince the reader of the absolute determinism which removes all personal agency from this world: 'I find it impossible to know exactly what is going on behind the closed doors of all the offices on all the floors occupied by all the people in this and all the other companies in the whole world' (SH, p. 15).

Slocum's behaviour as narrator, however, is less than straightforward. He is careful to confine himself to speculation and suggestion, and thus avoids definitive statement by using the formula 'something happened'. Whether this records a genuine uncertainty or rather is a device to absolve him from responsibility for his actions is a matter of considerable importance in the novel. His so-called 'whammy', for example, will eventually prove to be less than absolute, as his promotion over Green reverses the relation of dominance between them. Such a relation is based on social status and economic circumstances rather than being a derivative of some universal law. Again, the exclusion exemplified by the closed door proves not to be an irrevocable, mysterious state of nature. Upon promotion, Slocum can say that 'everyone must be kept in suspense about new decisions that might emerge from meetings behind closed doors in which I am now a participant' (SH, p. 552). In an interesting ambiguity, it is unclear whether Slocum participates in the 'meetings' or the 'closed doors'. This domination through 'suspension', in either case, is a structure certainly in the control of human groups, which suggests a duplicity in Slocum's attempt to represent such relations as

45 Slocum's narrative behaviour, in this respect, suggests certain similarities with Carraway in The Great Gatsby; see chapter two, section three.
conditions beyond human determination.

By a systematic use of imprecision and indeterminacy, Slocum seeks to support his claim that a determinist world predicates his own loss of agency and responsibility: 'I have a feeling that someone nearby is soon going to find out something about me that will mean the end, although I can't imagine what that something is' (SH, p. 16). Slocum presents himself as the passive recipient of external forces, even to the extent of representing himself as the mere instrument of his own emotions or actions which have somehow gained a separate life independent from him:

All at once, it is of obsessive importance to me - more important to me now than anything else in the whole world - that they stay, and that I be the one that is driven out. Out of my study. My eyes fill with tears; I don't know why, they are tears not of anger but of injured pride. It's a tantrum, and I am obliged to give myself up to it unresistingly. (SH, p. 157)

He is 'obliged' to surrender to this tantrum brought on by his family, a condition similar to other external determinants of behaviour. Such a surrender, however, depends upon a sense of helplessness which is at odds with the wilfullness usually associated with a 'tantrum'. Moreover, Slocum's self-consciousness here opens the possibility that he is adopting the role of the much put-upon father and feigning impotence only to retain the initiative in his continuing family battles. His exit seems too theatrical, as if it has been predetermined before he cries 'I'll go!'

Slocum's description of random, contingent events happening all at once in a confusing immediacy, thus, contains elements which seem to contradict his representation of an absolute determinism. He has an image in his mind of how this scene will look if he decides, after all, to allow his 'tantrum' to take possession of him.

The nature of Slocum's determinism becomes the key to understanding his psychology. Throughout his narrative, Slocum presents himself as largely confined to an immediate moment marked stylistically by a consistent use of a present tense narrative. Temporal reference is restricted
to the present: 'I am bored with my work very often now'; 'we are all silent at the table now'; 'all of them are laughing hysterically now' (SH, pages 33, 117, 164). Memory is fragmented and seems beyond Slocum's own control.  

There are times now when it seems to me that I may not have been any place at all for long periods of time. Whatever happened to all those truly important parts of my past that no longer exist in my memory and have been ignored or forgotten by everyone else? (SH, p. 134).  

Such an amnesia supports Slocum's sense of a threatening 'something'. On the other hand, the case of the tantrum exemplifies what might be called Slocum's 'habitual externalization of his own actions and decisions' (Klemptner, p. 551). In particular, Slocum regularly locates his own decisions behind the screen of a corporate 'we'. Slocum's circumlocutory representation of his own eventual involvement in decision-making quoted earlier, for example, is a case in point; his 'I' is given in a dependent clause which is embedded at several levels of subordination below the impersonal main clause, 'everyone must be kept in suspense' (SH, p. 552). In effect, Slocum's use of an impersonal, corporate mask finds its stylistic analogue in this reduction of personal agency to a dependent status within a subordinate clause.  

For Slocum, the company provides a predetermined behavioural role: 'we get all legal holidays off and take days off with pay whenever we need them'; 'we have twenty-nine offices now... we are well educated and far above the average in abilities and intelligence. Everybody spends. Nobody saves' (SH, pages 18, 21). Such statements communicate a corporate ideology which provides the rule by which Slocum lives, despite its

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46 Searles (1976-77) quotes an interesting remark, in this context, from Kurt Vonnegut's review of Something Happened in the New York Times Book Review (6 October, 1974); Heller had told Vonnegut that he envisaged Slocum as an executive of Time Inc. (Searles, p. 74).

47 Such externalization, of course, characterizes Bromden's malaise in One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest; see chapter five, section two.
contradiction in the actuality of corporate life. The statement that 'we make money and have fun', therefore, seems to Slocum quite consonant with his other statements that 'we average three suicides a year' or 'people in the company like to live well and are usually susceptible to nervous breakdowns' (SH, pages 23, 21). Irrational behaviour is rationalized by the bureaucratic logic and discourse of the corporate world: 'most of us like working here, even though we are afraid, and do not long to leave for jobs with other companies' (SH, p. 23). Once again, in the world of Heller's novels a formal structure is given a determining position quite independent of its substantive referents; although the basis of personal relations inside the company is fear, the employees enjoy working for it because the corporate ethos is founded upon 'fun' and community spirit. Such an elimination of contradiction between corporate form and corporate substance recalls the worlds of Catch-22 and Good as Gold. In Something Happened, however, Heller approaches this subject through the interior psychology of a representative bureaucrat. Slocum's own attitudes and behaviour, including the very syntactic forms in which these are expressed, endorse the bureaucratic world-view. In the last example above, Slocum once again uses syntactic form to obscure the substance of corporate life, in the uncertain status of the parenthetical 'even though we are afraid'. Given this parenthetical status, there is no necessary relation between this fear and the main clause which records pleasure in working for the company. The contradictory statement that people enjoy working for a company whose fundamental condition is fear, therefore, is attenuated by the merely contingent connection between enjoyment and fear which is implied by the parenthetical form. With 'fear' given a reduced status, attention is redirected to the possible conjunction between the two remaining clauses, and so between work satisfaction and company loyalty.

A careful investigation of Slocum's linguistic behaviour, then, reveals a character in the process of manufacturing a determinist world. The company, presented as an abstract objectivization of an ideal, benign
master, appears self-sufficient in order to disguise Slocum's active function within it. Its behaviourist codes are Slocum's own creation, although presented as if examples of universal laws in operation: 'everyone drinks and takes two hours or more for lunch. The men all flirt. The women all respond' \((SH, p. 22)\). This is true also of Slocum's sinister parody of a popular dance-rhythm: 'We goose-step in and goose-step out, change our partners and wander all about, sashay around for a pat on the head, and promenade home till we all drop dead' \((SH, p. 30)\). Slocum, in short, 'refuses to confront his dread of freedom in a void by blaming that dread on something external', transferring his determinist perspective onto a putative external entity \((Klemptner, p. 551)\). The following discussion examines the various forms which this transference takes, and their consequences for Slocum's interior life.

One aspect of this reification of interior life is revealed in Slocum's obsession with technique and organization: \(^{48}\) 'I wanted to see what it would feel like to hear the hospital tell me that someone I knew was dead. I wondered how it was done; I was preoccupied and even titillated by this problem of technique' \((SH, p. 7)\). Death may be rationally organized if it is reduced to a formal technique; significantly, this aspiration is given in a rare past tense, suggesting that it is one possible area of pattern for Slocum. Again, Slocum draws up organizational charts for relations within the company:

So I scare Green, and Green scares White, and White scares Black, and Black scares Brown and Green, and Brown scares me and Green and Andy Kagie... I know it's true, because I worked this whole color wheel out one dull, wet morning on one of those organizational charts I am always constructing \((SH, p. 32)\).

\(^{48}\) William H. Whyte, *The Organization Man* (1957; Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, 1960), observes that to the bureaucratic mind 'technique is the key' to the solution of human relations \((p. 52)\).
Slocum's 'color wheel' reduces people to mere ciphers, the human basis for such a formal representation hidden behind this abstraction. Although Slocum's formal criterion is arbitrary in using this resemblance of surnames to colours, he produces from it a determinist structure. The ancient wheel of fortune, signifying randomness, would seem to have become the emblem of a rigid determinacy which again fits into a temporal pattern, as signified by Slocum's shift from present to past tense.

By using such technical devices, Slocum is able to produce a formal rationale for irrational behaviour. This applies both to company and familial relations:

In the office in which I work there are five people of whom I am afraid. Each of these five people is afraid of four people (excluding overlaps), for a total of twenty, and each of these twenty people is afraid of six people, making a total of one hundred and twenty people who are feared by at least one person. (SH, p. 13).

In the family in which I live there are four people of whom I am afraid. Three of these four people are afraid of me, and each of these three is also afraid of the other two. Only one member of the family is not afraid of any of the others, and that one is an idiot. (SH, p. 355).

Only idiocy, or madness as in the case of Martha, a company typist (SH, p. 17), cannot be calculated and predicted according to the quantifiable, formal pattern. Slocum's own suggestion that 'my name means nothing that I know of and I don't know where it came from', however, again suggests a duplicity at work (SH, p. 32); Slocum is, in fact, one of the earliest recorded names in New England and so identifies a New England heritage. 49

Slocum extends his classifications to the 'Happiness Charts' based on abstract criteria of 'envy, hope, fear, ambition, hatred... disappointment' (SH, p. 34). In theory at least, the bureaucrat believes that any human attribute can be analysed in this way, quite independent of human

behaviour and experience. To a man who can say of himself 'I am an illustrated flow chart', all human activity is reducible to figures on paper (SH, p. 401). Consequently, all behaviour seems externally conditioned. Indeed, so trapped does Slocum claim to be, he borrows 'adjectives, nouns, verbs and short phrases' from the people around him and so feels 'trapped inside their smaller vocabularies like a hamster in a cage' (SH, p. 75). This sense of a formal reality existing quite independent of any human actuality finds its most extreme expressions in Slocum's recurrent use of filing-systems as analogues for human existence. His youthful experience in the records office of an insurance company provides a formative image for Slocum: 'the sheer immensity of all those dead records, the abounding quantity ... like joined, ageless towers from the floor almost to the ceiling, that, vast unending sequence of unconnected accidents that had been happening to people and cars long before I came to work there ... and are happening still' (SH, pages 20-21). Here is a quantifiable, determinate system of contingent events which has eliminated all qualitative distinction. All life becomes codeterminous with the statistical life of the records office.

Any human experience, therefore, can be abstracted to a predictable, formal basis. Death becomes a matter of filing the appropriate forms, as it was in Catch-22. Slocum, for example, can write off his mother and Martha so that they become 'dead records in my filing system long before they are even gone'; the dead are 'settled cases of people who were closed' (SH, pages 104, 370). He can consider institutionalizing his idiot son to 'erase him, cross him out, file him away' (SH, p. 130). Similarly, Slocum suggests that his colleague Green has 'written his children off, filed them away, closed them out like dead records' (SH, p. 178). Sexual experience is also associated with the 'gloomy, silent mausoleum for dead and decaying records', since it is here that Slocum has his formative sexual encounters with the voluptuous Virginia: 'I could have lost my cherry in her juicy box at age seventeen right there
on that same desk between Property Damage-1929 and Personal Injury-1930' (SH, pages 98, 372). Employment, sexuality, and death can all be reduced to a complex formal pattern, as Slocum's description of Virginia's death indicates:

She was out of a job, one of the unemployed; she had been let go for committing suicide and would probably have difficulty finding a suitable position anywhere (in her new condition and without favorable references) else but in one of the file cabinets downstairs where I would have laid her if I could while she was still alive and kicking (SH, p. 486).

Slocum uses a sequence of puns to suggest correlation here. Death is unemployment, employment is sexuality ('a suitable position') and sexuality is death and the files ('laid' in a file cabinet). Elsewhere, sexuality and temporality are conjoined in an external, economic relationship: 'this fiscal period, I am flirting with Jane' (SH, p. 23). Slocum is alternately concerned to get his 'dime's worth' from a young female cousin, or anxious about his 'dime-sized prick' and Virginia's 'good graces' without which he 'would have felt penniless' (SH, pages 360, 367, 381). Sexuality is a mode of domination in Slocum's world where 'getting laid (or talking about getting laid) is an important component of ... company conventions'; such domination is transferred to family life as well as a way to 'manipulate and exploit' his wife (SH, pages 66, 121). Green's warning to Slocum to stop flirting with Jane because 'she isn't pretty enough. Her salary's small' neatly encapsulates this thinking; sexuality is an exchangeable commodity, even as women are 'interchangeable', which should be used to confer social status (SH, pages 413, 434).

Generally, human qualities are mechanized and reified, so that a suicide becomes a 'breakdown' or a man 'ceases to operate...and we have another minor malfunction in Personnel' (SH, p. 40). People must function mechanically for the good of the company, and 'do their best to minimize friction (we are encouraged to revolve around each other...like self lubricating ball bearings, careful not to jar or scrape)' (SH, p. 41).
By the same logic, people who 'break down' must be repaired: 'one girl and one man have each been out for extended absences because they broke down. Both have been fixed and are now back working for me' (SH, p. 22).

Slocum's own idiot son is a 'defective' machine who 'would be a reject' in a factory; Slocum portrays him as 'receiving stimuli linearly in unregulated currents ... as though like radio signals through a turnip or through some finely tuned, capstan-shaped, intricate, and highly sensitive instrument of ceramic, tungsten, and glass that does everything but work' (SH, pages 337, 407).

Perhaps the most revealing aspect of this reifying perspective comes in Slocum's use of cinematic metaphors. Thus, he will lower his head at funerals 'the way I see people do in movies', or will manipulate his dreams 'like a good censor or movie director'; his earnest wish is 'to be able to photograph all my dreams with a motion picture camera' (SH, pages 8, 167, 399). Dreams, of course, cannot be controlled in this way, but the desire for such control is an important clue to Slocum's thinking. Slocum wishes to restore control over those areas of mental activity which most threaten him, and film is a mechanized, quantifiable simulacrum of time which offers the possibility of such control. Cinematic time, like Bergson's cinematographical illusion of simultaneity, substitutes a determinate, manipulable material for historical process. In expressing his wish that human experience be represented in such a way, Slocum reveals the underlying ideology of control which dominates his perspective. Loss of control represents Slocum's worst fear: 'Green knows he often pushes too hard ... but he simply cannot control himself. (He is out of his own control)'; 'there are things going on inside me I cannot control and do

50 A measure of this reasoning can be given, once more, by reference to Kesey's Chief Bromden; such thinking as this is a major symptom of psychic fragmentation. Slocum, however, wishes to present his own psychic malaise in the guise of an externally determined rationale.

51 Bergson's position with regard to the debate over historical consciousness is discussed in chapter one, section four.
not admire'; his daughter 'is skidding and falling ahead, resolutely out of control' (SH, pages 38, 133, 142). This last example contains a semantic incongruity, moreover, which recalls the problem surrounding Slocum's use of 'tantrum' and further characterizes his narratorial method. According to Slocum, his daughter resolves to behave as if she is out of control; the implication, therefore, is that this loss of control is a malicious subterfuge by which she determines to disturb Slocum's ordered life. While Slocum presents his own wilful behaviour towards his family as beyond his control, he presents their uncontrolled behaviour in turn as wilful. In this way, he transfers agentive action onto other people. Towards the end of the novel, Slocum reveals why he presents familial relations in this way:

I am better off these days at the office. I feel safer, even when at home (I don't feel safe at home. I feel things are going inexorably out of control. Things are not out of control at the company), if I can concentrate all my attention on the office, where the tasks are discernible, the obligations all cut and dried. (SH, p. 552).

Family life is not 'cut and dried' and so Slocum must present it as something outside a determinate structure, by its very nature uncontrollable. In doing this, he avoids a commitment to relations and responsibilities which are indeterminate, open, and subject to change; by his operational logic, one cannot be responsible for conditions outwith the established, determined behavioural regime.

Slocum is able to avoid the expression of personal agency and responsibility by presenting a twofold external determinism which makes his public life seem dependent upon the company and his private life seem irrevocably random. The most expansive expression of such determinism is seen in a characteristic hyperbolic discourse which leads towards an apocalyptic cosmology:

I've got anxiety; I suppress hysteria. I've got politics on my mind, summer race riots, drugs, violence and teenage sex. There are perverts
and deviates everywhere who might corrupt or strangle any one of my children. I've got crime in my streets. I've got old age to face ... I've got the decline of American civilization and the guilt and ineptitude of the whole government of the United States to carry around on these poor shoulders of mine.

And I find I am being groomed for a better job.
And I find - God help me - that I want it. (SH, p. 67).

As he lists this series of contingent, externally determined conditions, Slocum claims to be no more than a passive instrument of some unspecified agent. A paratactic syntax encodes a dissociated, contingent world without perceptible pattern. The offer of a new job, for example, is presented as an unexpected, unpredicted event rather than the end towards which Slocum has been consciously working. By claiming an inability to understand the development of events, in essence an inability to perceive temporal pattern, Slocum is able to obscure his own participation in the actual succession of events; he neither knows he is to be offered a new job, nor that he wants it, until the immediate moment that the offer is made.

The ultimate source of Slocum's cosmological determinism is implied in some of his oblique remarks; for example, 'there are the many other worries that I know assail Green because the company is large and mainly Protestant' (SH, p. 44). Slocum suggests a WASP background on a number of other occasions; he lives 'in a gorgeous two-story wood colonial house with white shutters on a choice country acre in Connecticut'; he tells Kagle not to 'worry about your job. If you lose it, it's God's will', and then remarks 'It is God's will... I've got Kagle's job' (SH, pages 359, 540). These last two statements are formally separated in the text, given as merely contingent conditions, but Slocum's implication is that there is a causative relation here; God's will, and not his own scheming, gets him his promotion. Slocum's own name, whose implication he is so anxious to deny, further specifies a Puritan background. What Slocum is doing here is manipulating the Protestant ethic to suit his own purposes, hiding behind a Puritan predestinarianism. As Weber describes
this ethic in his classic essay, the division of mankind into damned and
elect is absolute, as determined by 'a transcendental being, beyond the
reach of human understanding, who with His quite incomprehensible decrees has
decided the fate of every individual and regulated the tiniest details of
the cosmos from eternity.'\(^{52}\) This ethic, so influential in the early
development of capitalism, is appealed to here not so much as a genuinely
held belief as to a useful ideological support for Slocum's claim that an
absolute determinism dominates all human action.

Using this social ethic as his support, Slocum goes on to develop an
individual psychology which is also characterized by an apocalyptic
perspective. The reification of inner states, thus, is given its extreme
expression where Slocum imagines his thought-processes objectivized into
warring beings: 'I have a universe in my head. Families huddle there
in secret, sheltered places. Civilizations reside. The laws of physics
hold it together. The laws of chemistry keep it going... No-one governs
it' (SH, p. 398). Inside this random, determinist world, an internal
civil war is raging: 'No-one's in charge. I am infiltrated and beseiged,
the unprotected target of sneaky attacks from within ... I am infested
with ghostlike figurines (now you see them, now you don't), with imps and
little demons' (SH, pages 398-99).\(^{53}\) Just as the external world appears
to be in a state of apocalyptic crisis, so too this interior 'independent
metropolis' seems to be in a Spenglerian decline, as the 'evil, sordid,
miniature human beings' who populate Slocum's brain are continually
hatching out anew (SH, pages 533, 536). Slocum is not responsible for
the evil he does to others. Rather, these 'infiltrators' into his head are
to blame as they engage in an apocalyptic mutual annihilation: 'Ugalino
eats a head: mine (that son of a bitch)' (SH, p. 536). This reference


\(^{53}\) This vision echoes Leland's hallucination in *Sometimes a Great Notion*; see chapter, five section three. Here, too, this is an
extreme reflex of the antihistorical perspective.
is to the scene in Dante where Ruggieri is discovered in the ninth circle of Hell eating the head of his earthly rival Ugalino; the ninth circle is the area where traitors to kin, country and friends are imprisoned, and these two rivals stand as images of treachery from a particularly vicious period of Italian history. \(^{54}\) Coming as it does just after a discussion of his rivalry with Kagle, moreover, this reference to Ugalino may provide an analogue for corporate politics as well as for Slocum's internal warfare, a mirror-image of those politics.

Slocum's world of 'permanent apocalypse', as idealist criticism would have it (Lewis, \textit{T}rials of the \textit{W}ord, p. 226), is revealed on closer analysis as a consciously formed structure and the representative ideology of this world, rather than a cosmological absolute. \(^{55}\) For the reified 'consciousness of immediacy', historical consciousness has been replaced by 'the notion of catastrophe, which is the result of heteronomic action' (external action), so that history 'appears as a function of a \textit{demiurgic action}' (Gabel, \textit{False Consciousness}, p. 151). \(^{56}\) The appeal to 'God's will', or the fear of evil 'demons' inside his head, is Slocum's expression of this catastrophic perspective. This perspective serves Slocum as an operational logic rather than simply recording his authentic convictions, however, and is used as a screen behind which Slocum can act without seeming to act, or act while seeming to deny personal freedom and responsibility. Some of the syntactic complexities of what might accurately be called a strategy of misrepresentation have already been pointed out; the following discussion offers a more systematic examination of Slocum's linguistic behaviour, from which crucial evidence about his narrative may be derived. Ambiguity, lack of specificity, oxymoron are just some of


\(^{55}\) Slocum, thus, is in direct line of descent from both the modernists and the historiography of the Adams brothers; see chapter one, sections three and four respectively.

\(^{56}\) Erich Fromm, \textit{Escape From Freedom}, second edition (New York, 1965), also makes this point in his discussion of authoritarian thinking; its determinist foundations are again expressed in a belief in catastrophe (p. 194).
the ways in which he is able to subvert the possibility of opposition to
his view.

The opening pages of the novel introduce a number of forms which prove
to be characteristic of his discourse. Indefinite adverbs like 'something',
'maybe', 'probably', 'almost', modal verbs such as 'may' or 'must', and
the use of negatives all suggest a strategy of suggestion rather than
direct assertion. For example, 'my hands may perspire ... Something must
have happened to me sometime. Maybe it was the day I came home unex-
pectedly'; 'I don't want to find out ... I don't want to know ... I never
call ... I try not to talk' (SH, pages 3, 6). Using this imprecision,
Slocum hopes to secure himself against the criticism of misrepresenting
material reality by confining himself to shadowy possibilities and
hypotheses. The use of 'must', for example, implies a necessity which
derives from a lexical feature of the verb, while in fact a sentence like
'something must have happened' commits Slocum only to a statement of
probability. Slocum's self-judgement is similarly provisional: 'probably
I should be ashamed of myself ... possibly I should be proud of myself'
(SH, p. 24).

The utility of such devices is illustrated in the following extract:

Sometimes when I do lose my temper with him (usually without realizing I
have done so until afterward) and begin to bark demeaning, threatening
remarks (I have called him 'sissy' more than once merely by warning
him contemptuously not to act like one, although I never intend to do just
that while I am doing it and will detest myself afterward for having
done so and seek some face-saving way of apologizing to him. Usually by
letting him see I am no longer angry with him and offering to buy him
something expensive I think he wants), shouting, probably (without knowing
I am doing so and denying that I am if charged), with my lips deranged,
probably, and my teeth bared and my whole red or bloodless face glaring
at him, probably, my daughter will fling herself between us heedlessly to
shield him from me (SH, p. 258).

Slocum here describes a characteristic scene from family life, as the iterative
'will' suggests, which seems to incorporate a confession of viciousness
towards his son. The repetition of 'probably', however, qualifies this

57 This is precisely the strategy of Carraway in The Great Gatsby; see
chapter two, section three.
confession by rendering it as something less than an assertion of empirical fact. To say that he probably acts in one way is also to imply the possibility that he may have acted in a quite different way. This is, in short, a pseudo-confession which subtly slants the narrative in Slocum's favour. The form 'when I do lose my temper' is also significant, as becomes clear when it is compared to the simpler form 'when I lose my temper'. This introduction of the auxiliary 'do' also implies that there are other occasions when Slocum does not lose his temper.

Slocum's use of parenthesis further qualifies his confessional mode. Apart from the problems of basic comprehension which are created by the sheer complexity of the syntax, also part of Slocum's method, Slocum uses his parenthetic voice to undermine his overt statement. In what one critic terms 'the monitorship of the overt Slocum by the parenthetical Slocum', Slocum is able to qualify each statement by inserting some other statement which reduces its assertiveness (Costa, p. 171). He shouts, thus, without knowing he is shouting, or loses his temper without realizing that he has. As the narrative progresses, moreover, the parentheses proliferate and lengthen until they threaten to swamp the direct narrative, focusing attention on themselves as a result. By using qualifying parentheses in this way, Slocum substantially diminishes the thrust of his confessional narration even as he seems to make such a confession. Slocum would seem to have absorbed the bureaucratic style of rationalizing contradiction, thus, in an internalized version of the modes of dialogue found in Catch-22 and Good as Gold.

This use of parenthesis is also found in a habitual use of parenthetical verbs: 'I am cordial and considerate to many people I detest (I am cordial and considerate to just about everybody, I think, except former girlfriends ...)'; 'a number of the old ones ... hold me to blame, I'm sure, for having helped bring them to ruin'; 'it's already too late for

58 See also Susan S. Klemptner, 'Slocum's Parenthetical Tic: Style as Metaphor in Something Happened', Notes on Contemporary Literature, 7 (December, 1977), 9-10.
him, I suspect'; 'she doesn't really want to flirt at all, I suspect'; 'something took place, I felt, that made me awful to her' (SH, pages 41, 50, 56, 107, 308). The parenthetic aside establishes the provisional or hypothetical status of the statement which it modifies. Consequently, Slocum is able to forestall any discussion of the truth-value of what he says by confining himself to forms of implication and suggestion rather than definitive statement. Again, echoing the bureaucratic style of a Cathcart or a Newsome, Slocum protects himself from attack by confining himself to a self-validating discourse which makes no determinate statement. In order to establish his own determinist forms, indeed, Slocum must refrain from asserting a determinate substance. He sets up a formal structure which he hopes will dominate perception quite independent from its substantive reality, as his disorienting use of parenthesis reveals; form is used to obscure or to subvert meaning. Slocum himself observes that 'I sometimes think of saying something and am not certain afterward if I did. Even in conversations I know are imaginary, I'm not always sure I remember what I've imagined' (SH, page 486). This suggested conflation of interior imagination and external actuality, coupled to a radically depleted temporal sense, is an extreme case of Slocum's basic strategy of implication and uncertain statement.

The logical extension of this parenthetic mode of discourse, therefore, is Slocum's version of the bureaucratic language which plays such a significant part in Heller's other novels. Adopting this style, Slocum is able to excise oppositional elements by conjoining contradictory statements into a single, harmonised statement: the salesmen 'are cheerful, confident and gregarious when they are not irritable, anxious and depressed'; Martha 'listens to him with great intensity because she is paying no attention to him at all'; 'it's a wise person, I guess, who knows he's dumb, and an honest person who know's he's a liar' (SH, pages 27, 30). Slocum reveals, perhaps, more than he realises when he indicates that 'digging out valuable information of no importance distracts
and amuses me' (SH, pages 32-33), as Gold's activities in Good as Gold confirm. The value of certain information lies in its noncommunicative function, in its contribution to a closure of discussion; 'value' is determined by the operations of the corporate bureaucracy, and has no conceptual distinctiveness independent of these operations.

Human relations, likewise, adopt this pattern. In the company, 'we are all on a congenial first-name basis, especially with people we loathe' (SH, p. 42). Green's reason for dismissing people is that 'he has no reason', while he tells Slocum 'don't lie to anyone around here unconvincingly if you want to keep working for me. I don't want anyone working for me to be held in contempt by anyone but me' (SH, pages 43, 410).

Lying and conviction are perfectly compatible, even desirable, except when the lie is discovered; a convincing lie becomes a truth in this world. The rationalizing of irrational behaviour takes many pathological forms: '"You're a liar", Brown tells me pleasantly'; 'I cannot really say to my wife: "I'm sorry". She would think I was apologizing'; 'we want him to be different, and superior. (But we also want him to be not much different ...)' (SH, pages 58, 118, 259). Part of the strangeness of these statements can be attributed to Slocum's own gallows-humour, but this in no way diminishes the fact that this is a characteristic style of speech for Slocum. Discrimination and contradiction have been eroded by a tautological and oxymoronic language which seeks to dominate communication and forestall disagreement, the appropriate mode for 'creative conformists'.

59 Thus, 'we want him to be like we want him to be', or 'someday I'm afraid I might want to do what I'm afraid I might want to do' (SH, pages 259, 476). Underlying disharmony is masked by a superficial harmony, a formal unity abstracted from any substantive actuality. Such a form derives directly from the corporate bureaucracy:

The people in the company who are least afraid are the few in our small Market Research Department, who believe in nothing ... there is no way of knowing anymore whether the information on which we base our own information for distribution is true or false. But that doesn't seem to matter; all that does matter is that the information come from a reputable source. (SH, p. 28).

Although these researchers 'are not expected to change reality', they are expected to find 'ingenious ways of disguising it' by 'converting whole truths into half-truths and half-truths into whole ones' (SH, p. 28). This last maxim might well be taken as Slocum's own narrative strategy.

Conversational exchanges likewise become tautological:

'If you're really so worried, why don't you start doing the things you're supposed to do?'
'What am I supposed to do?'
'The things you're supposed to do'. (SH, p. 54).

Conversation may also founder upon contextual misunderstandings:

'Jesus. Look at you right now. You're supposed to be a distinguished white-collar executive'.
'Don't take the name of the Lord in vain', he jokes.
'Don't you'.
'I've got a good sales record', he argues. (SH, p. 55).

Kagle's reply that he has 'a good sales record' is out of place in this exchange; it actually answers a previous question, but here seems to reply to Slocum's injunction not to blaspheme. Slocum does not make the mistake, as Clevinger does in Catch-22, of taking conversations at face-value. In response to Green's questioning, Slocum admits that Kagle is nicer and a better person than Green but that he prefers to 'belong' to Green whom he likes better; Green replies, 'Now we're talking intelligently' (SH, p. 418). Slocum has realized that this is not a genuine conversation, but rather a set routine designed to establish Green's superiority over him. To talk 'intelligently', then, is to read the operational logic beneath the superficial conversational exchanges. This device is used, in turn, on Slocum's own family:
'She adores you. Can't you tell?'
'She never says she does.'
'Neither do you.'
'I don't adore me.'
'You know what I mean.'  (SH, p. 188).

Here Slocum deliberately misunderstands his wife's question about his understanding of their daughter's 'adoration' of him, and so undermines their conversation. Genuine communication becomes impossible, as for example in his answers to his wife's questioning about divorce:

'Don't you want a divorce? You can tell me if you do.'
'No, I can't.'
'You can.'
'I can't even tell you if I don't.'  (SH, p. 380).

Slocum avoids answering by turning their conversation into a linguistic game.

In *Something Happened*, Heller portrays the interior psychology of an individual who has become locked into a determinist structure akin to the closed systems found in his other novels. Slocum flees his own freedom and responsibility by creating a mask of determinism around his actions. The final event of the novel, in which Slocum kills his son, is also the conclusive example of this 'refusal to cope with the evident responsibility we all bear for our actions and the corresponding freedom with which we choose them' (Klempner, p. 556). A cry of 'something happened' brings Slocum to the scene of his son's accident and to what seems another, horrific catastrophe: 'he is screaming in agony and horror, with legs and arms twisted brokenly and streams of blood spurting from holes in his face and head' (SH, pages 561-62). In fact, the boy's injuries are minor, but Slocum is determined to use this event to confirm his perception of the world.

The precise delineation of his actions suggests a deliberation on Slocum's part: 'I can't bear to see him suffering such agony and fright. I have to do something. I hug his face deeper into the crook of my
shoulder. I hug him tightly with both my arms. I squeeze' (SH, p. 562). This is not a spontaneous act of love, but rather an act which has been signalled elsewhere in the novel. Slocum prepares the way, in effect, for a reading of this last event which will be favourable to him: 'I love him so much I just know he is going to die'; 'something bad is going to happen to him ... and something bad is going to happen to me too, because it does happen to him' (SH, pages 166, 230). The death itself is prefigured when the son asks Slocum how he will get rid of him and Slocum replies 'with hugs and kisses' (SH, p. 235). By killing the boy, Slocum completes the determinist system of his immediate existence by destroying the last major contradiction of this existence. The son, with his spontaneity, his lack of competitiveness and his openness to human relationships, reminds Slocum of himself as he once was:

He seemed lost and distant and passive to me in a way it seemed I had once been myself and still feel I am at times when my guard lets down and all my strength ebbs away; I have always wanted him immune to abuse and defeat. So I abused and defeated him instead with my unctuous homilies. (SH, p. 285).

Such reminders of the 'fragmented little boy' who was Slocum threatens his present moment; consequently, he excludes from his present consciousness 'everything outside the concrete experience of the person I am now', imagining a second Slocum who experiences those things 'of which I did not wish to become a part' (SH, pages 134-35). In killing his son, he destroys a mirror-image of his own past.

Subsequently, Slocum gets his promotion and completes his determined pattern: 'systematically, I am putting my affairs in order. I tick them off my list' (SH, p. 566). Control has been established: 'everyone seems pleased with the way I've taken command' (SH, p. 569). Slocum's preoccupation with creating determinism, even as he uses syntactic ambiguity and implication as a narratorial mask, ends in a final assertion of a completely determined, rationalized behavioural régime. A complete, predetermined régime, indeed, is a prerequisite to Slocum's own assumptions
of 'command'. Such an apparent rationale, however, is achieved only at the cost of an irrational dehumanization in which Slocum can murder his own son and yet claim that this is an inexplicable catastrophe. Slocum's story, thus, is revealed as the record of a monstrous delusion that all human behaviour can and should be subordinated to an absolute behaviourist control. Behind this form of rationality lies an actual irrationality and even madness; the destruction of historical awareness and the elimination of open possibility by an absolute predictability, rather, diminishes Slocum's humanity. Slocum's narrative, however, also indicates that the determinism of the corporate state is a human creation, and therefore not absolute. The world is not absurd, Heller is suggesting, except as people choose to represent it as absurd. They may do so for a variety of reasons. In Slocum's case at least, absurdity becomes a deception behind which the dominance of a particular social group may secretly be achieved, and Heller sets himself the task of exposing the operations of this logic of dominance.
Chapter Seven

History, Society and the Individual in Thomas Pynchon

The reader who turns to the critic for some elucidation of Pynchon's difficult materials may find only another degree of difficulty. Depending upon the particular critical emphasis, Pynchon may be described as an anarchist, a psychologist, a Calvinist or a physicist, with little discussion of how these partial aspects of his fictions may be formed into an integrated totality. Pynchon's very expansiveness seems to predicate, and even necessitate, a criticism fragmented along disparate, dissociated paths. Other critics, however, do demand a holistic approach to Pynchon's 'encyclopaedic narratives', in arguing against a partiality which diminishes the sense of a developmental interaction between the various aspects of the work. A closer inspection of these rival approaches, moreover, reveals more than a simple methodological opposition; on the contrary, the choice of a partial or a holistic method regularly corresponds to a dichotomy between an idealist and a historicist perspective. The Freudian id, Calvinist millenarianism, and thermodynamic law, thus, are among the most common representations of an ideal, ahistorical structure.


2 This term appears in E. Mendelson, 'Gravity's Encyclopaedia', in Levine and Leverenz, 161-95.
Critical assessment of Pynchon, in short, centres upon the continuing American cultural debate over historical consciousness. Before moving to a discussion of the development of this debate within Pynchon's work itself, the following discussion will briefly examine these divergences in critical opinion and investigate the adequacy of the rival idealist and historicist approaches.

A representative example of the idealist position is to be found in the use of the concept of entropy. Tanner, for example, argues that V is 'certainly about a world succumbing to entropy' (City of Words, p. 153). Pynchon's major subject, namely the catastrophic history of the twentieth-century, becomes a late stage in the universal decay of energy predicted by thermodynamic law. Human experience, consequently, is predetermined by an absolute cosmological system, which further suggests that historical consciousness cannot pattern human experience. Such is the conclusion of the paradigmatic story entitled 'Entropy', which divides between Callisto's hermetic retreat into his 'tiny enclave of the city's chaos' and Mulligan's chaotic party in the apartment below. These two characters have a representative value since 'man is just such a two-storied house of consciousness', irretrievably divided into the theorist whose perception of pattern is achieved only by retreating from the present and the pragmatist 'engulfed in the riotous present' (City of Words, p. 155). In either case, a sense of historical continuity is lost, and even the human impulse to form pattern is cast into doubt by 'the possibility that the plots men see may be their own inventions' (City of Words, p. 156). Pynchon's world is a 'closed system', and 'the measure of its condition is entropy'; however much he may try, man cannot significantly intervene in this long process of entropic disintegration predicted by universal physical law.

This use of entropy, however, soon begins to incorporate semantic resonances which go beyond its strict scientific context. Once it is agreed that the concept of entropy elevates 'chaos to the level of scientific fact', and that it is the principle 'which gives unity' to Pynchon's work, entropy takes on the guise of a scientific support for an absurdist vision.\(^5\) Pynchon becomes, for example, 'a child of his time who finds the absurd nature of life something with which he begins',\(^6\) and the historical episodes of \(V\). argue that Western culture 'has exhausted itself in an absurd and deadly colonialism'.\(^7\) Discussion of entropy develops into a protestation of absurdity and a closure of historical discussion; if human society is condemned to irreversible entropic decline, human experience becomes absurd. Other critics, conversely, rescue entropy from this nihilist vision only to relate it to other apocalyptic phenomena. The theme of pentecost in \(V\)., for example, becomes a 'pentecostal entropy', a 'lively death - a death which maintains expressiveness in tongues'.\(^8\) Again, history is 'a vile invention specifically designed to interfere with the random exhaustion of human energy', and Pynchon has adopted a Manichaean perspective in order to stand 'outside history, free, not at all surprised by the evil he discerns in this sublunary world'.\(^9\) Entropy has become a mystical experience which predicated an end to history.\(^10\) Similarly, a concern with universal arche-


\(^8\) W.T. Lhamon, 'Pentecost, Promiscuity, and Pynchon's \(V\).: From the Scaffold to the Impulsive', in Levine and Leverenz, 69-86 (p. 70).


types, or the 'spectacle of historical repetition' (Schmitz, p. 118), posits a determinate, ahistorical structure in which human experience can be fixed as a 'series of recurring human, emotional situations'.

A mystical element is also present in the claim that the release of massive energy 'abrogates direction' and leaves only a 'constant, alogical transformation', which means that history 'cannot be grasped, or contained'.

Whether 'entropy' leads to an absurdist, a mystical, or an apocalyptic reading of Pynchon, it consistently becomes a support for an antihistoricist perspective.

Such a reading assumes that Callisto, for example, speaks unequivocally for the author, despite the fact that Callisto's fear of imminent entropy proves to be unfounded. Callisto's story, in fact, is not a chronicle of entropic decline so much as it is a history of the pathological behaviour of a man who is convinced that such an eventuality may actually happen. "Entropy" is not an event in the story but rather a way of perceiving the world, a twentieth-century manifestation of apocalyptic thinking.

Similarly, Herbert Stencil's history in V provides a case-study in this apocalyptic thinking as it dominates the life of one man driven, as Pynchon puts it, to an idealist "impersonation" of history; Stencil's obsession with entropy leads him to recast history into a form which will support his entropic vision. The social and political consequences of this vision, therefore, explored most fully in the determinist aspirations of the warring factions in Gravity's Rainbow, prove to be more germane to Pynchon's fictions than the scientific hypothesis of entropic decay. "Entropy" is a cultural phenomenon: 'there is no mysterious force behind V., but there is our misplaced impulse to uncover some Power

11 M.H. Begnal, 'Thomas Pynchon's V.: In defence of Benny Profane', Journal of Narrative Technique, 9 (1979), 61-69 (p. 62). This search for mythic or recurrent phenomena forms another aspect of the antihistoricist impulse; see chapter one, section three.

external to man which is the source of our insane dream of annihilation.  

An investigation of the contexts in which Pynchon introduces the notion of entropy confirms the cultural, or even ideological, value which entropy has assumed for a Callisto or a Stencil: 'Henry Adams, three generations before his own, had stared aghast at Power; Callisto found himself now in much the same state over Thermodynamics' ('Entropy', p. 280). Faced with the prospect of massive social upheaval, Adams finds refuge in an extra-historical schema of perpetual struggle between natural forces outwith human control: 'satisfied that the sequence of men led to nothing and that the sequence of their society could lead no further, while the mere sequence of time was artificial, and the sequence of thought was chaos, he turned at last to the sequence of force'.  

So, too, Stencil seeks a law of force in his quest for 'V', and actually imitates Adams's practice in the Education of referring to himself 'in the third person' so that 'Stencil' will appear as 'only one among a repertoire of identities'. Stencil's story does not prove that "history" is false; on the contrary, it sets out a false historicity which distorts the perception and representation of social-historical processes, to produce a false consciousness based upon an apocalyptic mentality which is expressed in forms varying from a Calvinist predeterminism to the programmatic determinism of National Socialist race-theory. Pynchon's subject, consequently, proves to be not simply history but also an idealist transformation of historical experience which is characteristic of American cultural production.

The idealist critic, echoing Stencil's obsession with 'grand conspir-

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16 Parallels can be drawn, in this respect, between Pynchon and Fitzgerald, whose work also centres on this idealist impulse.
acies or foretastes of Armageddon', has lost all sense of the 'weave' of history, one might say, and is caught in a fold of the historical cloth, unable 'to determine warp, woof or pattern anywhere else' (V., p. 155). Pynchon's concern with 'pattern and probability', therefore, at variance with the 'more absolute and static epistemologies' of the idealist, demands an understanding of the social-historical processes underlying the cultural forms portrayed in his work. 17 Puritanism, for example, is most adequately treated as a social phenomenon, where the Pilgrims' arrival is 'the beginning of a process whereby theologically based categorization degenerated into secular classification which assumed, for secular ends, theological sanctions'. 18 The progressive discovery of Slothrop's Puritan heritage in Gravity's Rainbow reveals both the history of theocratically-sanctioned modes of domination, and the related history of economic and political power in America. Slothrop's apocalyptic vision, again, is a phenomenon whose explanation 'is essentially historical', lying in specific 'cultural forces' which have promoted 'a death wish' whose ultimate goal 'is the reification of humankind'. 19 As Edward Mendelson has argued, Pynchon has abandoned transcendentalist and modernist preoccupations for a rediscovered holistic, historical perspective:

In its attention to the interior landscape, recent fiction has forgotten the density of the exterior one. Modernism prefers to speak of the world of politics and ethics in personal and aesthetic terms. Pynchon does the opposite. In this book, character is less important than the network of relations existing either between characters, or between characters and social and historical patterns of meaning. 20

18 J.M. Krafft, 'And How Far-Fallen: Puritan Themes in Gravity's Rainbow,' Critique, 18 (1976-77), 53-73 (p. 56). This secular use of Calvinist theology also appears in Heller's portrait of the corporate manager in Something Happened; see chapter six, section four.
In the discussion which follows, this historical approach will be used as a means of unpacking a fiction concerned with 'large historical processes which at once limit freedom and are themselves established by individual acquiescence and choice' (Mendelson, p. 8). Both the elimination of human autonomy and the rediscovery of open possibility are revealed as human creations in Pynchon's work. Stencil's 'impersonation' of history, it will be argued, is but one manifestation of a flight from historical consciousness which is central to the institution of determinist systems. Conversely, other Pynchon characters like Oedipa Maas and Roger Mexico strive for a historical vision which makes possible a recovery of personal autonomy.

Stencil's search for a general principle of force which will reveal the meaning of historical events begins with a discovery in his father's journal:

Under 'Florence, April, 1899' is a sentence, young Stencil has memorized it: 'There is more behind and inside V. than any of us had suspected. Not who, but what: What is she. God grant that I may never be called upon to write the answer, either here or in any official report' (V., p. 53).

With the beginning of his search for 'V', apparently a common element in the succeeding crises of contemporary history, Stencil's random prewar life gives way to a movement 'from inertness to - if not vitality, then at least activity', and to an 'acquired sense of animateness' (V., p. 55). An internal change produces a sense of purpose, as Stencil strives to answer the question of 'what V is'.

Something of the self-reflexive nature of this search, however, is already indicated in the circumstances surrounding this first discovered reference to V. Stencil does not seek the meaning of some first-hand experience, but rather the meaning of a reference in a written document
which is itself concerned with written documents and bureaucratic structures. This lack of a direct access to the events in question, coupled with problems arising from the unreliability of his assembled documentary evidence, dogs Stencil's effort of historical comprehension. Documentation, rather than history, becomes his major preoccupation, and this documentation itself seems to be more concerned with the maintenance of Stencil's own recovered 'animateness' than with an outward-looking historical consciousness. Stencil gathers 'dossiers to fill up dead Sunday afternoons' and assumes disguises 'to put off some part of the pain of dilemma on various "impersonations"' (V., p. 62). In this way, he is able to use his 'repertoire of identities' to construct a semblance of historical pattern: 'around each seed of a dossier, therefore, had developed a nacreous mass of inference, poetic licence, forcible dislocation of personality into a past he didn't remember and had no right in, save the right of imaginative anxiety or historical care, which is recognised by no-one' (V., p. 62). As the novel progresses, Stencil's 'dossier' expands to keep pace with his sense of an accelerating destructiveness in contemporary history, and so encodes his sense of entropic decay. Stencil's story, thus, records the development of an apocalyptic vision. Additional consequences, however, follow from Stencil's flawed historical sense, with its falsified documentation designed to justify his entropic mentality. Such self-validating behaviour, in which historical events are invented in the image of a historical model for which they are themselves intended to provide material proof, has its reflexes in the social and political cross-currents of the twentieth-century. The chronicle of Stencil's idealization of history is also the record of an attitude which may itself influence historical events; the Nazi sense of such an ideal, in the notion of a national and racial "destiny", is one such attitude which influences Stencil's narrative.

Stencil begins his chronicle in the Egypt of 1898 with a confrontation between the secret agents of several competing European empires. These
supposed events, extrapolated from a few clues in his father's journal, provide Stencil with his first image of history as a mysterious conspiracy:

Had Porpentine gone to Egypt like old Stencil to Malta, perhaps having written his own son that he felt like some other spy, who'd in turn gone off to die in Schleswig-Holstein, Trieste, Sofia, anywhere? Apostolic succession. They must know when it's time, Stencil had often thought; but if death did come like some last charismatic bestowal, he'd have no real way of telling. He'd only the veiled references to Porpentine in the journals. The rest was impersonation and dream (V. p. 63).

In reconstructing this episode, Stencil 'the quick-change artist' provides the 'eight impersonations' which carry his version of events, and which also introduce the first problematical variable into the narrative. (V., p. 61). Stencil's eight witnesses are servants who are peripheral to the main action and whose access to useful information is doubtful; Stencil invents unreliable witnesses. These witnesses, moreover, have a tendency to see through 'signs' and 'dreams'. It is the waiter A'ieul, for example, 'teeming inside with sad and philosophical reflections', who postulates Porpentine's seduction of Victoria Wren, V.'s first incarnation (V., p. 64). The idea of Victoria as a 'balloon-girl' reflected in a 'waxed mirror', again, comes from the factotum Yusef, a balloon-lover whose dreams intertwine with the continuing narration of Victoria's story:

Soon he was daydreaming again of balloons.
At the bottom of the steps sat the girl, Victoria, centre of a curious tableau. (V., p. 68).

The conjunction of dream and narrative implies that this narrative 'tableau' is also part of Yusef's dream. Similarly, Victoria's convent education is recounted by Rowley-Bugge, a man 'subject to visions', while the conspiracy discovered by Waldetar, a train conductor, is dubious at best: 'Waldetar fell into reverie which continued on past Damanhur (where he saw the Arab and blue-lensed German again conversing)' (V., pages 72, 81-2). What Waldetar "sees" is also likely to be part of this reverie.
Under examination, therefore, Stencil's narrative proves to be periph- 
phrastic and indirect, proceeding by means of hypothetical witnesses whose 
testimony, doubtful in itself, is subject to still more imaginative mutation. 
By presenting his vision indirectly, however, Stencil hopes to disguise his 
own role as the architect of this evidence behind the assumed objectivity 
of a third-person report; his own adoption of Adams's habit of referring 
to himself in the third-person is another aspect of this strategy. At the 
same time, he must control any overt assertiveness to avoid the charge of 
manipulating evidence, and so he introduces a degree of indeterminacy into 
his 'impersonations'. Stencil wishes to determine his reader's apprehen-
sion of events, but to avoid being seen to do so.21 On occasions, he 
permits a predictive certainty to enter the narrative, as the iterative 
'would' indicates: 'Bongo-Shaftsbury's approach would be through the 
glamorous actress Victoria'; Rowley-Bugge 'would go on, into tomorrow, the 
next day, the next'; Hanne 'would go on watch' (V., pages 65, 72, 89). 
Such determinacy is permissible in a third-person report, with its appear-
ance of objectivity. At other times, Stencil's purposes are better served 
by an indeterminacy, and nowhere more so than in his reportage of 
Porpentine's death by using an anonymous present-tense narrator. This 
present-tense supplies an immediacy and imperfect understanding curiously 
at odds with the perceptiveness of previous narrative personae, to the 
extent that characters already known to the reader now become mysterious 
and unknown; 'a man wearing blue spectacles', 'a girl in a flowered dress', 
and 'another ... only a shadow' are otherwise identifiable as Lepsius, 
Victoria and Bongo-Shaftsbury (V., p. 94). Now it is the reader who must 
identify these characters, since the narrator indicates his own inability 
to do so. The narrator, moreover, suggests that he is ignorant of 
causality and aware only of contingency: 'the red-and-white-faced man comes 

21 In this respect, Stencil's idealization follows a pattern similar to 
Carraway's implicatory and suggestive modes in The Great Gatsby; see 
chapter two, section two.
through his curtains holding a drawn pistol. The pistol smokes'.

Narrative uncertainty or unreliability has become another useful narrative strategy, in so far as it introduces a mystery which protects Stencil's 'impersonation' from too close a scrutiny. This narrator will not even state that the man holding the pistol is the man who fires it, but only records two contingent events. The net result of these various strategies is that Stencil's narratorial perspective is never fixed; assertion may become hypothesis and clarity become mystery, or vice versa. Stencil's attitude to 'V', one of 'approach and avoid', might equally describe his narratorial stance towards the historical actuality corresponding to his documented sources (V., p. 55).

Stencil's 'impersonations' betray their origins, however, in so far as they share their creator's apocalyptic outlook. In a world of competing forces, social order equates with "balance"; Victoria, for example, seems at first to maintain 'a kind of flirtatious equilibrium' between her rival suitors (V., p. 74). When Girgis sees Porpentine overbalance and fall off the ledge from which he has been spying on Victoria, on the other hand, a danger signal is given (V., p. 86); imbalance is one sign of a collapsing order, and Victoria has become its catalyst. The fear of a growing inanimateness presents another aspect of this vision of impending collapse. Aïeul views two British agents as 'minor chess pieces' related by a geometrical pattern, and speculates on a possible 'argument from design' which might 'be predicated on that instant only' (V., p. 65). Europe has become a chess-board whose every square, 'however you cut it, remains inanimate' (V., p. 66). This inanimacy, projected outwards from Stencil's own fear of inertness as a sign of the impending catastrophe, also afflicts his witnesses; Aïeul is 'outwardly inert', Yusef 'a fixture on the wall', and Waldetar 'merely train's hardware', while Rowley-Bugge belongs with the 'automata' of the 'Baedeker world' (V., pages 68, 80, 71).

In this way, Stencil incorporates Victoria's 'colonial doll's house' into his own ahistorical perspective, so that the historical actuality of colonialism becomes obscured: 'apocalyptic thinking is, as many victims of colonialism
in the novel cynically observe, simply a grandiose penance devised by Western Colonial rulers for their own spiritual comfort'. To the 'tourist', the colonial has indeed become an object; this process of reification has been carried to such an extent that Puerto Rican immigrants now see their home as a place where they might 'live like a tourist' in 'the Caribe Hilton' and watch puertoriqueños' (V., p. 139). Stencil's vision of inanimacy does not express a general physical law, but is rather an attitude with an identifiable historical expression.

The conspiratorial sense is further developed in Stencil's next historical episode, set in the Florence of 1899, as told to Eigenvalue, his dentist. While acknowledging that 'most of what he has is inference', Stencil continues to imagine 'grand conspiracies or foretastes of Armageddon'. Eigenvalue observes that this vision is based only upon 'the surface accidents of history'; 'cavities in the teeth occur for good reason ... there's no conscious organization there against the life of the pulp, no conspiracy. Yet we have men like Stencil, who must go about grouping the world's random caries into cabals' (V., p. 153). For Stencil, however, conspirators again gather in beer-halls in search of 'Hofbrauhaus of the spirit like a grail ... a krug of Munich beer like a chalice' (V., p. 203). Spy-networks enclose the whole of Europe, as certain elements from the Egyptian episode reappear. Evan and Hugh Godolphin are both prone to hallucinatory dreams, to 'hallucinations belonging in a spy thriller' or 'a dream of annihilation' which seems 'more real' than the waking world (V., pages 158, 206). The conspirators are obsessed with balance; Mantissa is sure that history repeats 'the same patterns', while the Gaucho has adopted a Machiavellian system of paired opposites, 'virtú' and 'fortuna', 'liberty or slavery', which provides for an equilibrium of forces (V., p. 160). Again, imbalance becomes a threat when Evan overbalances on first meeting Victoria, or the Gaucho suspects that Victoria and Mantissa have overrated 'virtú' and 'the fox' in turn; these terms stand for the statesman's attributes of force and cunning, and the overemphasis of one aspect at the expense of

the other represents an imbalance (V., p. 199).  

Stencil's sense of conspiracy, however, has increased from the Egypt episode. Mantissa's 'Figli di Machiavelli' and the German beer-hall chart the first signs of an incipient fascist movement. The theme of colonialism, too, takes on more sinister overtones in the apocalyptic fantasy of Hugh Godolphin, 'hero of the Empire' (V., p. 156). Godolphin is obsessed by the fever-induced, racial hallucination of a land, 'Vhiessu', where 'even your dreams become flooded with colors' which record the 'skin' of a land resembling 'a tattooed savage' with his 'harem of dusky native women' (V., p. 170). This racial-sexual fantasy from the 'private colonies of the imagination' becomes a public matter when a telegram to his son Evan is intercepted by the intelligence networks: 'Unwise to say too much ... Vhiessu' (V., p. 158, 157). Once the British Consulate reopens a file on the Godolphins, the Venezuelan Consulate becomes interested and interprets 'Vhiessu' as code for Venezuela and the Gaucho's revolutionary activities; this seems to be confirmed when Hugh Godolphin flees to Mantissa, the Gaucho's partner in crime, and Evan Godolphin is arrested by British Agents. A series of coincidences confirms the sense of Vhiessu, one man's hallucination, as a public conspiracy, to the extent that Vhiessu becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy given life by the conspiratorial urge. One of the spies hears from his landlady the story of the 'barbaric and unknown race... even now blasting the Antarctic ice with dynamite, preparing to enter a subterranean network of natural tunnels', a story which precedes the

23 The Machiavellian system championed by 'the Gaucho' represents another attempt to formulate an ahistorical structure based on a universal law; for an account of the notions of the 'fox' and the 'lion' as the twin attributes of the 'prince', see Nicolo Machiavelli, The Prince, translated by G. Bull (Harmondsworth, 1975), p. 99.

24 In a later episode, Mondaugan dreams of a Munich beer-hall in a reference which indicates the historical associations which Pynchon means to invoke. The Beer-Hall Putsch of 1923 launched Hitler as a national politician; the beer-hall has, in any case, an association with a certain type of German national assertiveness.

25 Godolphin's hallucinations present a preliminary treatment of a subject which will prove central to Pynchon's vision of the apocalyptic impulse in Gravity's Rainbow; see section four below.
The description of 'Vhiessu' appears to grow out of the preceding speculations about it, something quite feasible if these speculative developments all take place in Stencil's imagination. Stencil has become, after all, 'He Who Looks for V. (and whatever impersonations that might involve)', with his 'grand Gothic pile of inferences' (V., p. 226).

By the time that Godolphin reappears in South-West Africa at the time of the 1904 native uprisings, in an episode which has become, in Eigenvalue's term, 'Stencilized', 'the privacy of dream' has given way to 'the real thing' now that 'our Vhiessus are no longer our own ... they're public property' (V., pages 228, 248). Stencil's sense of an expanding apocalyptic phenomenon is revealed in his record of the development of private dream into public policy in the savage racial creed expressed by Von Trotha's 1904 'Extermination Order'. As Foppl remarks, 'Von Trotha ... is reckoned to have done away with about 60,000 people. This is only 1 per cent of six million, but still pretty good' (V., p. 245). Events in the German colony, that is, foreshadow the European holocaust, as the dreams which have dominated Stencil's 'impersonations' become a nightmare of racial, sexual and apocalyptic fantasy turned into actual deeds. Foppl's 'Seige Party', in which his European guests are trapped in his house by the uprising, becomes an image for the fate which faces Europe. 26 Once again, moreover, Stencil's witness loses his balance when confronting 'V', now

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26 This 'siege' mentality is, perhaps, another part of Stencil's inheritance from Henry Adams; see chapter one, section four, notes 68 and 69.
known as Vera Meroving, as he enters Foppl's sadistic world (V., p. 236).

Mondaugan, Stencil's informant, mirrors this apocalyptic vision in
dreaming a mad Mardi Gras which follows a curve 'taking human depravity as
ordinate', a beerhall revel resembling 'a writhing perhaps of damned in
some underworld' (V., pages 243-44). Dream and external reality become
indistinguishable as he succumbs to a fever, like Godolphin before him;
he hears a Dies Irae, for example, 'though he may have dreamed that too',
and he also experiences 'an increasing inability to distinguish Godolphin
from Foppl' (V., pages 252, 255). Mondaugan's evidence, as transmitted
by Stencil, also suggests a conflation of Mondaugan with Foppl: 'eighteen
years ago everyone was in better condition. You were shown how his upper
arms and thighs had become flabby'; 'most of the time, thank God, you were
with your own kind ... you killed them without the sheep's eye' (V., pages
256, 257). While Mondaugan is the speaker of the first statement here,
Foppl seems a likelier candidate for the second; if this second statement
does come from Mondaugan then he seems himself to be impersonating Foppl's
account. In doing so, Mondaugan echoes Stencil's narratorial behaviour, a
further indication that Stencil may be the ultimate source of this represen-
tation of events.

This 'Stencilization' of Mondaugan's story again presents an idealist
interpretation of history which is being used to disguise actual historical
events. Behind this apocalyptic perspective lies the Nazism of Foppl and
Lieutenant Weissmann, and their sadistic fantasies now worked on 'a live mass,
a real human population' (V., p. 248).²⁷ Foppl's determinist 'symmetry'
of 'destroyer and destroyed' foreshadows a systematic racial ideology and a

²⁷ Another aspect of this determinist perspective is implied by the fact
that it is Weissman who decodes Mondaugan's data from atmospheric
noise as reading 'the world is all that is the case' - the first
proposition of Wittgenstein's Tractatus Philosophicus. Plater (1978,
p. 6) misinterprets this reference as proof of Pynchon's commitment
to closed systems; on the contrary, this is proof of Weissmann's need
to discover such a system, i.e. proof of its ideological function.
belief in an 'engineering design for a world he knew with numb leeriness nothing could now keep from becoming reality' (V., p. 273). As Mondaugan leaves Foppl's mansion, the attitude of the remaining guests looks forward to the Nazi ideal of a master-race set above the other, inferior races by a universal law: 'the morning's sun bleached their faces a Fasching-white he remembered seeing in another place. They gazed across the ravine dehumanized and aloof, as if they were the last gods on earth' (V., p. 279). This memory comes, in fact, from Mondaugen's feverish beer-hall hallucination; like Godolphin's nightmare of Vhiessu, Mondaugan's nightmare seems set to become reality in a powerful belief which will have a significant influence over future historical events.

When 'V' next emerges in Paris in 1913, she has become the mysterious woman who has an affair with the ballerina Melanie L'Heure-Maudit. Stencil's evidence is again doubtful, however, in that it is based on the testimony of an old sewer worker who had seen 'a woman who might have been V' (V., p. 132). This identification of 'V' is Stencil's own interpretation of his "Paris dossier", but his judgement of the Paris affair is undermined by his belief in the other "sewer" story of Father Fairing, a mad priest who claims to have converted some New York sewer rats and to have had an affair with a rat called Veronica. Stencil seems oblivious to Fairing's all too devious insanity, driven to prove connections between his scraps of information; his belief in the Paris 'evidence', in fact, only suggests a new phase in Stencil's imagination of inanimacy. Melanie 'functions as a mirror' to V in being 'not real but an object of pleasure', and the 'love-play' between the two women is an 'impersonation of the inanimate' set against a background of 'inanimate' landscapes (V., pages 399, 404, 410). V's 'progression towards inanimateness' is 'only another version of tourism' which serves 'the Kingdom of Death' (V., pages 410-11).

Stencil's final impersonation forms the novel's epilogue and is an imagination of his father's death on Malta. Despite the conclusion of Maijstral, his Maltese informant, that the pursuit of V is an 'obsession'
similar to the artificial growth of a 'hothouse', Stencil hopes finally to uncover V's identity in Malta (V., p. 448). Sidney Stencil's experiences, however, closely resemble his son's previous inventions. His father also enters an unstable world where the 'politics of the street' threaten to induce a total collapse of the social order 'like an epidemic or earthquake'; he has survived the 'Armageddon' of the Great War only to discover that there is 'no gift of tongues', despite the evidence pointing towards a final apocalypse (V., pp. 471, 461). In a sense, the son and the father become the same person in order to cross through the 'dream-wall' of V's villa to join her in a 'hothouse-time' (V., pages 475, 489). Having come to a place 'where all history seemed simultaneously present', Sidney Stencil seems to his son to have found 'an alienation from time' (V., pages 481, 489). This escape from historicity represents Stencil's own ideal; as he has V ask his father, 'shall I tell you where I have been since our last closed room?', so too Stencil ultimately encloses himself in his own closed room with his obsession about V. Stencil's quest for V, initially a way of maintaining a sense of self against a fear of inanimacy, becomes a self-reflexive activity which promotes this very state of reification. His achievement is not a historical understanding, but rather an elimination of historical consciousness which leaves him enclosed in the vain, solipsistic pursuit of evidence for an entity which he himself had invented in the first place as a stay against inertia.

The 'last room' of Stencil's imagination is contemporary America itself, where the New York artists called 'the Whole Sick Crew' represent modern equivalents of Stencil's own decadents. The 'Crew' also has 'a hothouse sense of time', and reminds Stencil of Foppl's party with its 'Dance of Death': 'here was the Whole Sick Crew, was it not, linked maybe by a

28 This 'hothouse' behaviour recalls Callisto's solipsistic retreat in 'Entropy' - a metaphor for obsessional self-absorption.

29 Maijstral's own evidence is highly suspect, being dominated by dreams and hallucinations very similar to those of Stencil himself. The value of Maijstral's journal, if indeed it has not already been 'Stencilized', is that it presents a vision complementary to Stencil's own view; imbalance, inanimacy, the absolute rule of physical law, and apocalypse are Maijstral's obsessions.
spectral chain and rollicking over some moor or other. Stencil thought of Mondaugen's story, The Crew at Foppl's ... the disembodied smiles or pouts which might serve, perhaps, as spoor for next generation's Crew' \( (V., \text{p. 296}) \). The contemporary scene is merely 'the Dance of Death brought up to date', another stage in an eternally self-perpetuating phenomenon \( (V., \text{p. 303}) \). Its art, again, is 'Romanticism in its furthest decadence ... an exhausted impersonation of poverty, rebellion and artistic "soul"' \( (V., \text{p. 56}) \). In this, it simply echoes Stencil's portrait of an earlier Parisian decadence, and a 'Romanticism' in which 'the act of love and the act of death are one' \( (V., \text{p. 410}) \).  

Eigenvalue sums up the Crew's aesthetic as a 'technique for the sake of technique - Catatonic Expressionism' \( (V., \text{p. 297}) \). Crew members produce 'nothing but talk', 'a kind of shorthand' based on the determinist belief that language consists of little more than a finite number of 'building blocks' related by a finite set of arrangements \( (V., \text{p. 297}) \). Logically, therefore, the Crew is 'bound to run out of arrangements someday', a frightening prospect for Eigenvalue: 'this sort of arranging and rearranging was Decadence, but the exhaustion of all possible permutations and combinations was death' \( (V., \text{p. 298}) \). The behaviour of the Crew is similarly predictable and determined:

The sink on which Stencil now sat would become Melvin's perch: he would play his guitar and there would be horahs and African fertility dances in the kitchen before midnight. The lights in the living room would go out one by one, Schoenberg's quartets (complete) would go on the record player/changer, and repeat, and repeat ... the promiscuous Debby Sensay (e.g.) would be on the floor, caressed by Raoul, say, or Slab, while she ran her hand up the leg of another, sitting on the couch with her roommate - and on, in a kind of love feast or daisy chain \( (V., \text{p. 57}) \).

The individual actors in this 'chain' have become arbitrary, as the parenthetical 'e.g.' and 'say' imply; Crew behaviour repeats itself, like

\[ 30 \text{ Slade (1974) misses Pynchon's satirical intentions when he takes this attitude literally, as a statement of authorial belief, arguing that the death-instinct is a liberating value: 'the desire for annihilation is a desire for freedom' (p. 232).} \]
the record-player, and tends towards a single, determined form which mirrors the state of entropy.  

The Crew, in effect, are the contemporary champions of Stencil's apocalyptic ideology, and represent Pynchon's critique of a contemporary decadent Romanticism which celebrates this apocalyptic vision. Fergus Mixolydian, for example, has a 'sleep-switch' installed in his arm which links his conscious life to the life of his television set, and so becomes 'an extension of the TV set' (V., p. 56). Raoul and Slab, respectively, write for television's 'sponsor fetishes' and paint 'the ultimate in non-communication' (V., p. 56), while Mafia Winsome's epic novels have established a 'sisterhood of consumers' for her theory of 'Heroic Love', with its racial and fascistic overtones (V., p. 125). Her husband, consequently, worries over a contemporary song which praises Davy Crockett because it transforms 'a corrupt legislator and an indifferent pioneer' into an 'example of Anglo-Saxon superiority' who is 'a hero such as Mafia might have created after waking from a particularly loony and erotic dream' (V., pages 219-20). Stencil's vision reaches its zenith in the consumer culture of contemporary America, to which it makes a significant ideological contribution. Among the "artists" of this culture, therefore, must be

31 Crew parties look back to Mulligan's party in 'Entropy' and forward to similar parties in Gravity's Rainbow. The 'airless void' of the 'Duke di Angelis quartet' is an early version of Catatonic Expressionism (Entropy', p. 290). With a sidelong glance at the work of John Cage, the Quartet seek a music, without sound or instruments, which exists only in the mind of the musicians.

32 Slab is certainly a satire on the New York School of Abstract Expressionism. Harold Rosenberg has encapsulated this school's extreme subjectivity: 'the gesture on the canvas was a gesture of liberation, from Value - political, aesthetic, moral'; quoted in I. Sandler, Abstract Expressionism (London, 1970), p. 270. Rosenberg's own contributions to a contemporary antihistorical ideal are discussed in chapter one above; see section two, note 24.

33 Mafia herself has more than an echo of Ayn Rand, an unrepentant polemicist for a capitalist ethic and a variety of superman theory in novels like The Fountainhead (1943).
counted Eigenvalue with his faddish concept of 'psycho-dontia', and the plastic surgeon Schoenmaker who offers 'cultural harmony' to his patients (V., pages 153, 103). Schoenmaker will reshape the female face in accord 'with an ideal of nasal beauty established by movies, advertisements, magazine illustrations', and thus sell admittance to 'the big Westchester in the sky where all God's elect, soon or late, ended up' (V., pages 103, 50). The plastic surgeon, then, becomes the representative symbol of a reificatory attitude which symbolizes the contemporary obsession with artificially created beauty or youth. Schoenmaker's surgical creations begin in an 'alignment with the inanimate' and become sado-erotic perversions (V., p. 101). His decision to become a plastic surgeon, indeed, begins with the wartime mutilation of Evan Godolphin, the hero of his youth, and is his inheritance of the Godolphin obsession with inanimacy - an obsession itself originating in Stencil's impersonations.

Although Stencil's vision dominates the contemporary scene, however, Pynchon is careful not to portray the Crew's allegiance to this view as an inevitable recognition of a universal order. On the contrary, Pynchon portrays a social world which both shapes and is shaped by the people who populate it; human choice and responsibility remain as creative possibilities. If personal agency has been lost to an external determinant, therefore, this too involves a choice, namely the choice not to exercise personal autonomy. Stencil's imagination of an accelerating inanimacy, for example, is related to his extreme introspection; the asocial 'hothouse' in which he has enclosed himself actually hastens his sense of a reified world. McClintic Sphere's compromise with the mechanistic logic of 'yes or no, or one or zero', again, is his own choice (V., p. 293). Unlike Oedipa in The Crying of Lot 49, Sphere is content with a muted opposition to this logic: 'love with your mouth shut, help without breaking your ass or publicizing it: keep cool, but care' (V., pages 365-66). Certainly, there are few alternatives to Stencil's vision in V., but this should be seen against the progressive
enlargement of open possibilities in Pynchon's later novels. From the point of view of Pynchon's work as a whole, V. can be seen as an early stage in a developing sense of a recoverable human reality obscured behind the various determinist systems which Pynchon's protagonists must grapple with. Oedipa, thus, will go beyond Sphere in seeking a personal liberation from the reified world of consumer behaviour, while Roger Mexico will go even further in pursuit of a social world based upon the voluntary association of individuals.  

Even given the restricted possibilities for the exercise of human choice and responsibility in V., moreover, the central biographies of Rachel Owlglass and Benny Profane indicate that a measure of personal agency is also possible here. Rachel and Benny come to differing perceptions of their shared world as a result of the different choices which they make concerning that world. For Rachel, this choice means a rejection of the identity conferred upon her by a suburbia peopled by 'Rapunzels' shut up in 'the magic frontiers of a country where the elfin architecture of Chinese restaurants, seafood palaces and split-level synagogues is often enchanting as the sea' (V., p. 25). In rejecting this world, she must abandon her own fetishistic attraction to inanimate objects which had horrified Profane, and recover her 'sanity and aloofness from the Crew' (V., p. 283); in this respect she resembles Oedipa, another 'Rapunzel-like' prisoner of the prevailing social conditions. Benny Profane, conversely, makes no commitment to human relations as Rachel does, and remains content to see himself as a schlemihl who 'lies back and takes it from objects' even as he admits that 'inanimate objects and he could not live in peace' (V., pages 288, 37). In an imaginary conversation with the robot 'SHROUD', Benny has the robot summarize the consequences of accepting Stencil's reified world: 'me and SHOCK are

34 The developmental structure of Pynchon's body of work, in this sense, argues against the view that it is the chronicle of entropic decline; as Pynchon's vision becomes more expansive, his sense of both determinist structures and liberatory impulses is enlarged.

what you and everybody will be someday'; 'remember the photographs of Auschwitz? Thousands of Jewish corpses, stacked up like those poor car-bodies. Schlemihl: it's already started' (V. pages 286, 295). By his refusal to acknowledge human relations and his abandonment of a historical consciousness, Benny condemns himself to the status of an object; Auschwitz is but the extreme result of this reified, ahistorical perception. The flight from responsibility and understanding, therefore, ushers in a dehumanized world modelled upon Stencil's apocalyptic impersonations of historical events. In *The Crying of Lot 49*, Oedipa Maas will carry through Rachel Owlglass's endeavour to oppose this attitude.

3

In *The Crying of Lot 49*, Pynchon's second novel, certain of the themes in *V.* are given a fresh examination. Stencil's obsession with documentation, for example, becomes Oedipa's more extensive consideration of communication itself, particularly as it has been influenced by recent developments in electronics. Oedipa comes to examine the nature of her evidence, accumulated during her own investigations into the historical development of the twentieth-century, in a way in which Stencil does not. The conspiratorial organizations which reappear in the twilight worlds that Oedipa discovers during her search, therefore, bear crucially on her deliberations; she must determine whether these cliques offer a real alternative to the determinist systems of the established society, or whether they merely ape these systems. This examination of information, in effect, directs Oedipa progressively into a consideration of the quality of her evidence, and so to the nature of her sources. During this process she also comes to investigate both the contents and the methods of communicated information as social and political phenomena which reveal cultural, philosophical, and ideological choices and perspectives.

This last aspect of Oedipa's development in the novel is particularly
important since the novel's use of information theory, with its concept of information entropy, has been put forward as further evidence for a theme of entropic decay in Pynchon's work. The cultural context of this idea, as Pynchon introduces it, is lost in such an interpretation, because information theory is both a scientific system and a system of belief for certain characters in the novel. Nefastis, for example, believes that he can produce a perpetual-motion engine and so contradict the theory of entropy by combining the equations for entropy in both thermodynamics and information theory. In so doing, he will prove Maxwell's theory of an intelligent 'Demon' which can pattern molecular behaviour without itself using up energy, and so avoid making any contribution to entropy. Oedipa is not convinced that there is any necessary connection between the two types of entropy, and that Nefastis has not constructed a 'metaphor' from mere coincidence (CL49, p. 107). Her caution is well-founded, for no general theory can be formed to contain these two applications of entropy. In thermodynamics, increasing entropy corresponds to an increase in disorder and certainty; the most predictable physical system is one where no energy remains available for work, a maximum of disorder or entropy. In information theory, conversely, an increasing entropy predicts a decrease in disorder and uncertainty; the most predictable informational system is one where there is a minimum of disorder, as the informational content of the system tends towards zero. The very proliferation of information experienced by Oedipa suggests, in information theory, an anti-entropic development. The general point which has to be made, however, is that the notions of "order" and "disorder", "certainty" or "entropy", mean very different things in these two sciences, and the attempt to combine them seems an act of belief rather than a scientific fact.

One might also add, in this context, that other key questions are often ignored in this debate over entropy. Entropy itself belongs to the

36 The very name 'Nefastis', suggesting a 'nefarious' criminality, seems to warn the reader about this character.
Newtonian model of the physical universe as a finite system tending towards decay, a model which has suggested a scientific equivalent for notions of nemesis. It belongs, therefore, to a model of the universe which has been supplanted to a large degree by twentieth-century advances in atomic physics. In this newer model, uncertainty has returned as the basic principle of the behaviour of matter. Again, the equation of machine-intelligence with human intelligence assumes the validity of the Newtonian system. The concept of entropy, in effect, belongs to a given historical epoch and can be seen as a historically specific attitude. In any case, as the physicist Louis Brillouin has observed, living systems are never perfectly isolated and predictable so that 'the entropy content of a living system is a completely meaningless notion'.

Information theory deals only in quantities of information, and not in qualitative evaluation; the human and cultural factors involved in communications find no place in this theory. Oedipa's major discovery, on the contrary, is that communications systems are formed by their social-historical circumstances.

Norbert Wiener, the pioneer of information theory, himself makes this same observation when he argues that a most urgent concern of the information analyst should be the social-political monopoly of the means of communication:

It is only in the large community, where the Lords of Things as They Are protect themselves from hunger by wealth, from public opinion by privacy and anonymity, from private criticism by the laws of libel and the possession of the means of communication, that ruthlessness can reach its most sublime levels. Of all these antihomoeostatic factors in society, the control of the means of communication is the most effective and most important.

The argument that communications, networks are value-neutral, technological matters, is itself an ideological attitude. Similarly, the adoption of

39 The technocratic assertion that ideology is dead is itself an ideological position; see chapter one, section two, notes 25 and 26.
entropy as a universal system is an ideological construct leading either to a 'dogmatic totalitarianism that springs from science worship', or to an apocalyptic perspective which no longer serves 'to diagnose, explain, and deplore the degradation of culture' but rather 'provides a positive rationale for 'minimal' art and the pleasures of chaos'. Oedipa's own growing openness to new information and experience signals her rejection of this attitude.

Oedipa's first confrontation with questions of information and of structure follows from her being named as an executrix of Pierce Inverarity's estate, an edifice whose complexity is mirrored in a like syntactic complexity:

One summer afternoon Mrs. Oedipa Maas came home from a Tupperware party whose hostess had put perhaps too much kirsch in the fondue to find that she, Oedipa, had been named executor, or she supposed executrix, of the estate of one Pierce Inverarity, a Californian real estate mogul who had once lost two million dollars in his spare time but still had assets numerous and tangled enough to make the job of sorting it all out more than honorary. (CL49, p. 9).

The enormity of this task places a severe strain upon Oedipa's sense of structure, and neither 'the greenish dead eye of the TV tube', 'the name of God', nor feeling 'as drunk as possible' seems to alleviate her difficulty. This initial reaction will prove to be prophetic, for the mass media, mystical revelation and intoxication all fail to explain Oedipa's successive discoveries. Nonetheless, Oedipa feels a need for some pattern which might clarify the significance of this event, and so she attempts to order her memories of Inverarity into some concrete form:


41 Rudolf Arnheim, Entropy and Art: An Essay on Order and Disorder (London, 1971), pages 11-12. Arnheim's comments are directly relevant to the notions of a literature of 'silence' or 'exhaustion' discussed in chapter one; see section four, notes 74 and 75.
she thought of a hotel room in Mazatlán whose door had just been slammed... 
a sunrise over the library slope at Cornell University ... a dry, dis- 
console tune from the fourth movement of the Bartók Concerto for 
Orchestra; a whitewashed bust of Jay Gould that Pierce kept over the 
bed on a shelf (CL49, p. 10).

By assembling these images of her past life with Inverarity, a series of 
snapshots frozen in time, Oedipa tries to give a semblance of order to her 
memories of him.

Oedipa's achieved order, however, lacks any sense of historical 
continuity; pattern is resolved into a succession of static moments.42 
Her own daily routine is similarly objectified as a series of reified 
states from which personal agency has been omitted:

through her trip to the market in downtown Kinneret-Among-The-Pines... then 
through the sunned gathering of her marjoram ... reading of book reviews... 
into the layering of a lasagna, garlicking of a bread, tearing up of 
romaine leaves ... into the mixing of the twilight's whisky sours ... she 
wondered, wondered, shuffling back through a fat deckful of days which 
seemed ... more or less identical (pages 10-11).

These habitual activities are not given as verbal acts, but rather have 
been nominalized as collective nouns, while the only mental descriptive 
verb, 'wondered', takes no predicate and offers no satisfactory account 
of Oedipa's thoughts. This linguistic form expresses the reified per- 
ception characteristic of a world of commodity relations, and identifies 
Oedipa's initial condition in the novel. Oedipa's seduction by her co-
executor Metzger, again, is presented in this way: 'So it went: the 
succession of film fragments on the tube ... the boozing, the tireless 
shivaree of voices and guitars from out by the pool. Now and then a 
commercial would come in, each time Metzer would say, "Inverarity's", or 
"Big block of shares"' (CL49, p. 41). Only Inverarity's commercial

42 The Bergsonian notions of 'simultaneity' and 'cinematographical illuision' prove once again to be central to the antihistorical attit- 
ude indicated by this pattern.
empire seems at all animate, a further confirmation of the reification of the human world. Even the alternative 'Tristero' system, indeed, is presented in the reified and fetishistic form of a strip-tease, 'as if the breakaway gowns, net bras, jewelled garters and G-strings of historical configuration that would fall away were layered dense as Oedipa's own street-clothes in that game with Metzger' (CL49, p. 54). "History", in this view, may be spatialized and possessed as an objective quantity or commodity; wherever Oedipa looks for evidence of structure, she encounters this reified perspective.

San Narciso, Inverarity's 'domicile and headquarters', best exemplifies this reified world. Itself reminiscent of a printed circuit, it is a landscape of objects where a route through the industrial quarter is a 'hypodermic needle' feeding into 'the vein of a freeway, a vein nourishing the mainliner LA' (CL49, p. 26). This is also the site of Yoyodyne, Inverarity's munitions factory and another reified world: 'the air-conditioning hummed on, IBM typewriters chiggered away, swivel chairs squeaked ... while high overhead the long silent fluorescent bulbs glared merrily; all with Yoyodyne was normal' (CL49, p. 87). The representative story of Yoyodyne concerns the executive 'automated out of a job' by a computer on the recommendation of the efficiency expert who is his wife's lover (CL49, p. 113); life resides in a machinery which has reduced the human into mere instrumentality. For Mucho Maas also, to whom cars have become 'metal extensions' of their owners, the hallucinatory image of people being broken down into their constituent parts, as if in a 'spectrum analysis', represents an ideal (CL49, pages 13, 142):

No matter who's talking, the different power spectra are the same, give or take a small percentage ... Everybody who says the same words is the same person if the spectra are the same only they happen differently in time, you dig? But the time is arbitrary. You pick your zero point anywhere you want, that way you can shuffle each person's time line sideways till they all coincide. (CL49, p. 142).

Mucho, who comes to seem 'a walking assembly of a man', presents an
extreme case of a technological mystique which ends in the reification of
the human and in a mechanically quantifiable world (CL49, p. 140).

The conspiratorial groups opposed to Inverarity's monopolistic systems
also operate in San Narciso. These groups share a concern over the postal
monopoly as an instrument of state power. The Peter Pinguid Society,
for example, believes that the true objective of the American Civil War
was the suppression of private mail routes, and it is through Mike
Fallopian, a society member, that Oedipa learns of a secret mail system in
modern California. The plot of 'The Courier's Tragedy', playing in a
San Narciso theatre, seems to provide further evidence for this alternative
system; at the centre of this play is the murder of a Thurn and Taxis
courier at the hands of an underground group opposed to the official postal
monopoly. An uncertain line in a pornographic variant of this play,
moreover, gives Oedipa the name, 'tristero', under which she will collect
her information on these alternative communications systems. As data on
this 'Tristero' begins to accumulate, a picture emerges of a struggle
between official and underground communications networks which crosses
cultural, historical and geographical frontiers. To the adherents of the
'Tristero', it suggests nothing less than a general, extrahistorical
principle which may be set into the dualistic framework of an eternal
struggle between centripetal and centrifugal social forces. 43

Oedipa's investigation of Inverarity's estate, therefore, draws her
into a further exploration of structures which have been formed in opposi-
tion to this estate. In order to make sense of this proliferation of
information, however, she finds she must examine the nature of the
evidence which she has accumulated in the course of her search, and decide
whether she is dealing with universal laws of social forces, with historical

43 The comparison with Brooks Adams's laws of social 'energy' may be an
appropriate one here. Adams argues that human history follows a
universal cycle of centralization and decentralization of social forces;
see chapter one, section four, note 63. The 'Tristero', thus, would
be a decentralizing force locked in eternal opposition to the central-
izing force represented by Inverarity.
structures, or with an idealization of historical processes which uses the notion of universal law as an ideological support. Under such an examination, the evidence for the 'Tristero' proves to be as uncertain as Stencil's evidence for 'V'. Oedipa is left largely with the appearances of things, unable to verify the accuracy of her information; such ambivalence is expressed linguistically in a characteristic use of modal and conditional verbs, by the use of 'seem' and 'as if', and by indefinite pronouns. 44

The origins of the Peter Pinguid Society are a case in point:

What happened on the 9th March, 1864, a day now held sacred by all Peter Pinguid Society members, is not too clear. Popov did send out a ship, either the corvette Bogatir or the clipper Gaidamak, to see what it could see. Off the coast of either what is now Carmel-by-the-Sea, or what is now Pismo Beach, around noon or possibly towards dusk, the two ships sighted each other. One of them may have fired; if it did then the other responded. (CL49, pages 49-50).

There is very little about these events which can be ascertained with any degree of certainty. The signs of the Tristero are similarly ambiguous: 'it might be something sexual, but she somehow doubted it'; 'would its smile, then, be coy, and would it flirt away harmlessly backstage ... or would it instead ... bend to her alone among the desolate rows of seats and begin to speak words she never wanted to hear?'; 'at the word, Driblette's face abruptly vanished, back into the steam. As if switched off'; 'revelations which now seemed to come crowding in exponentially, as if the more she collected the more would come to her'; 'it seemed that a pattern was beginning to emerge' (CL49, pages 52, 54, 79, 81, 89).

Evidence for the Tristero is significantly qualified by the conditional, speculative and ambiguous manner in which it is presented. This uncertainty does not worry the advocates of the Tristero, for whom it has become a matter of belief; the Tristero's followers have a vested interest in conspiratorial pattern as one manifestation of an ahistorical ideal. Fallopian, for example, dismisses the discrepancies in his story by saying that 'we don't try to make scripture out of it', while Arrabal argues that

44 These forms recall Carraway's narrative strategies in The Great Gatsby; see chapter two, section three.
'the higher levels have their reasons' (CL49, pages 50, 121). His protestation to the contrary notwithstanding, however, Fallopian does indeed make 'scripture' out of the Tristero, by making it an existential given beyond historical comprehension. Oedipa's very susceptibility to uncertainty, conversely, leads her in a very different direction from Fallopian. Her awareness of uncertainty creates the possibility of a non-determinist perception of the world; the terrifying aspect of her quest, indeed, is that there can be no end to informational input in an open system, and hence no absolute certainty. As the conspiratorial and apocalyptic perspectives of the Tristero groups prove an inadequate explanatory framework, Oedipa is forced to look elsewhere, to cultural and historical factors, for an understanding of communications and information.

From the moment that Oedipa turns to the 'dead eye' of her television for some indication of pattern, the power of the electronics media pervades the world of the novel. A symbiotic relationship seems to exist, in fact, between the actions of these media and human behaviour, something which eventually will prove crucial to the progress of Oedipa's understanding of information. Inverarity, for example, uses a series of cinema-inspired 'voices', including a 'comic-Negro' and a 'Gestapo officer', while Dr. Hilarius, sounding 'like Pierce doing a Gestapo officer', uses a number of 'faces' such as his 'Fu Manchu' (CL49, pages 11, 16). Metzger has his 'Baby Igor' voice from his child-actor days and Mucho Maas an 'earnest broadcasting voice' (CL49, pages 31, 139). Media-created identities coalesce with, and indeed supplant, the identities which characters imagine for themselves; identity becomes, to borrow a notion of Stencil's in V., a series of 'impersonations'. In extreme cases, this may lead to a closed system created from the complete collapse of any distinctiveness between media and personality. While Oedipa's lawyer is obsessed with the fictional lawyer in the television series 'Perry Mason', her co-executor Metzger is an actor turned lawyer. As Metzger seduces Oedipa, moreover, one of his old films is being televised and interacts
with this event: 'on the screen New Zealanders and Turks were impaling one another on bayonets. With a cry Oedipa rushed to him, fell on him' (CL49, p. 42). Later she awakens to 'come in on a sexual crescendo in progress, like a cut to a scene where the camera's already moving'. This sense of herself as an image in a film renders Oedipa as the passive projection of some external control, and indicates another aspect of her reified perceptions.

'The Courier's Tragedy', a central aspect of the Tristero, continues this interaction between performed image and reality. Driblette, the stage-director, sees himself as 'the projector at the planetarium' who controls the play and who alone can 'give the spirit flesh', since 'all the closed little universe visible in the circle of that stage is coming out of my mouth, eyes' (CL49, p. 79).45 Significantly, Driblette commits suicide on the day the play closes, his life having become completely co-existent with his part in its performance. When Oedipa herself asks, 'Shall I project a world?', she indicates the attractions of Driblette's total subjectivity, even although his dream of absolute control actually leads to solipsism and eventual death (CL49, p. 82). Generally, the influence of the media leads to a distorted perception and behaviour. Thoth's dreams are infiltrated by 'the tube', while Nefastis links his sexual activity to news bulletins about China's 'profusion of life', and Mucho sees himself as an 'antenna' beaming 'out across a million lives a night' (CL49, pages 91, 98, 144). Even the final auctioning of Inverarity's stamp collections, 'lot 49', is given as the performance of 'a puppet-master' from 'the priesthood of some remote culture' (CL49, p. 183). The 'projector' and the 'puppet-master' equally proclaim absolute power for their images and performances.

Self-discovery for Oedipa, therefore, centres on her discovery of this

45 Driblette's claim here echoes Foppl's symbol of absolute power in V. - a mechanical planetarium housed in his mansion's basement driven by a 'generation of slaves' (V., p. 239).
projector's power to shape human identities: 'as things developed, she
was to have all manner of revelations ... about what remained yet had somehow,
before this, stayed away' (CL49, p. 20). She becomes aware of the
'absence of an intensity, as if watching a movie, just perceptibly out of
focus, that the projectionist refused to fix', and of the 'curious, Rapunzel-
like role' she has assumed as a result of her acceptance of the projection-
ist's power (CL49, p. 20). She realises, moreover, that she has abetted
her own "imprisonment" by believing that a 'magic, anonymous and malignant'
determines her life (CL49, p. 21). This is a particularly vital dis-
covery, since a belief in transcendent 'magic' is also at the heart of the
belief in the Tristero systems. Oedipa comes upon numerous signs of a
'concealed meaning', a 'religious instant', or 'some immediacy ... some
promise of hierophany' as she passes through San Narciso; these signs
demand that she accept a mystical, transcendental foundation for communi-
cation (CL49, pages 24, 31). This 'promise of hierophany', however, actually
attaches to Inverarity's housing and factory complexes. Oedipa's
impulse towards revelation is caught up in a new technocratic mysticism
which has adjusted "magical" perceptions to fit the needs of the estab-
lished society. The new 'religious instant' belongs to Inverarity and
the determinist structure which he represents; Inverarity's actual commer-
cial operations lie hidden behind this mask of asocial, ahistorical mysticism.
In rejecting a belief in 'magic', therefore, Oedipa can become something
other than Inverarity's instrument, his 'dark machine in the centre of the
planetarium', and can begin to comprehend the social-historical actuality
behind the mystique of San Narciso (CL49, p. 82). 'Magic' is revealed as
a part of the ideological apparatus of Inverarity's empire, as a cultural
attitude which supports his domination. Once Oedipa sees beyond this

46 C.N. Davidson, 'Oedipa as Androgyne in Thomas Pynchon's The Crying of
Lot 49', Contemporary Literature, 18 (1977), 38-50, observes Oedipa's
opposition to sexist stereotyping. This argument is only partly correct,
however, since the external cultural determinants of identity are global,
rather than simply sexual, in the novel.
magic, beyond Inverarity's reified world, she can begin to recover a sense of the human world which she has denied herself by her previous acceptance of this perspective. From this point onwards, Oedipa finally comes to grips with the meaning of Inverarity's legacy to her.

Just as Inverarity's 'magic' begins to lose its powers of mystification, moreover, so too Oedipa comes to a clearer understanding of the 'Tristero' as 'a calculated withdrawal, from the life of the Republic, from its machinery' \(CL49\), p. 124. Each act of opposition to the official communications systems reveals an 'alienation' or 'species of withdrawal' \(CL49\), p. 123. The Tristero does not so much embody the predictable result of some general law of force as it expresses a sense of alienation and disinheritance in contemporary America. Oedipa's investigation of the underground mail-system eventually brings her to a dying alcoholic who confirms this sense of a forgotten population 'cammed each night out of that safe furrow' enjoyed by the majority of the population \(CL49\), p. 125. Like a 'memory bank to a computer of the lost', this man becomes an emblem of Oedipa's discoveries, his alcoholic delirium 'a trembling unfurrowing of the mind's ploughshare' which leads to the 'unfurrowing' of Oedipa herself \(CL49\), pages 126, 128). His delirium tremens is also the time differential of calculus, 'a vanishingly small instant in which change had to be confronted at last for what it was'; similarly, Oedipa is sent 'screeching back across grooves of years' in a traumatic collapse of all previous certainty and sense of pattern \(CL49\), p. 129. This sense of diminishing certainty and definition leads her to feel 'as if there could be no barriers between herself and the rest of the land' \(CL49\), p. 177). The loss of certainty, however, is a prerequisite to a recovered sense of social processes in a rejection of a "magical" viewpoint, for it is at this point that San Narciso loses its 'residue of uniqueness', to be 'assumed back into the American continuity of crust and mantle' \(CL49\), p. 177).

At this moment, therefore, Oedipa finally rejects the idealist vision of an ideal America. For a discussion of the history of this notion, see chapter one, section one.
San Narciso, Oedipa realises finally, is 'an incident among our climatic records of dreams and what dreams became among our accumulated daylight' (CL49, p. 178). Inverarity's legacy is America itself.

A new realization of the cultural constraints on consciousness, coupled to a rejection of determinist perspectives based upon revelation and apocalypse, makes possible the growth of a personal openness in Oedipa. A new generation's questioning of 'the most beloved of folklores', for example, stands in stark contrast to her own student days during the McCarthy years when a 'national reflex to certain pathologies in high places' conditioned thought and behaviour (CL49, p.103). Oedipa is impressed particularly by students in a 'nose-to-nose dialogue' which compares favourably with the previous determinism of 'another pattern of track, another string of decisions taken, switches closed, the faceless pointsmen who'd thrown them now all transferred' (CL49, p. 104). This challenge to the official monopoly of information does not, like the Tristero, maintain the perspectives of the official systems by a process predicted by a 'mirror-image theory' of paired opposites (CL49, p. 162). On the contrary, the closed system of a dualistic switching system based upon one or zero, yes or no, has been completely rejected.

This rejection of binary logic is a central part of Oedipa's development. Throughout her investigations of Inverarity's legacy and the Tristero, Oedipa is faced with an absolute system of paired opposites marked stylistically by a characteristic 'either-or' construction. Immediately after she discovers that she has become Inverarity's executor, for example, she looks back over her life and sees a 'deckful of days which seemed ... more or less identical, or all pointing the same way subtly like a conjurer's deck' (CL49, p. 11). Either her days are identical, or they

48 Oedipa refers at this point to the student movements of the 1960s. A representative poster from this period sums up the reified attitudes which Oedipa now rejects, in satirizing California University's computerized identification system: 'I am a UC student. Please don't bend, fold, spindle, or mutilate me' (quoted in R. Segal, America's Breeding Future, p. 238).
have been made to appear so by some magical sleight of hand. Metzger either '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' (CL49, p. 31). The Tristero begins 'either with the letter from Mucho or the evening she and Metzger drifted into a strange bar', while at Yoyodyne she meets Koteks 'by accident ... or howsoever' (CL49, pages 45, 84). Frequently, Oedipa is offered a choice between a random or a planned event, a choice which is crucial to her understanding of the Tristero: 'either Trystero did not exist, in its own right, or it was being presumed, perhaps fantasied by Oedipa'; 'either you have stumbled indeed ... onto a secret richness and concealed density of dream; on to a network by which X number of Americans are truly communicating ... Or you are hallucinating it. Or a plot has been mounted against you... Or you are fantasying some such plot' (CL49, pages 109, 170-71). Either the Tristero is a genuine discovery, or it is born of conspiracy or the hallucination of a conspiracy. Oedipa, however, is not satisfied with this reasoning, and seeks a sense of totality symbolized by the ocean which stays 'inviolate and integrated' regardless of 'what you did to its edges' (CL49, p. 55). Against the determinist 'either-or' constructions, therefore, can be set other forms which mark an open possibility: 'if one object behind her discovery of what she was to label the Tristero System ... were to bring to an end her encapsulation in her tower, then that night's infidelity with Metzger would logically be the starting point for it' (CL49, p. 44). This 'if-then' form marks a dependent relationship, rather than a fixed and static antithesis, in which the truth-value of the dependent statement hinges upon the truth of the initial statement. Once again, the crucial aspect of this construction is its introduction of a degree of uncertainty. If Oedipa is never completely freed from an imposed social role, she may at least question the social determinants of identity by adopting an attitude which admits uncertainty, and so move away from any fixed determinism.

As the novel develops, Oedipa is able to use her growing sense of
dependent and relative relations to synthesize her information, and progress beyond the partial perspectives of the 'either-or' form. The Tristero, consequently, now appears in a different light: 'yet if she hadn't been set up or sensitized ... what after all could the mute stamps have told her' (CL49, p. 45). Oedipa becomes aware of the possibility that certain information may have been designed to elicit a predetermined response from her. She realises, indeed, that her informants hope to convince her of a particular interpretation of their information: 'if miracles were, as Jésus Arrabal had postulated ... intrusions into this world from another, a kiss of cosmic pool balls, then so must be each of the night's post horns' (CL49, p. 124). Arrabal speaks for a determinist system which has assumed a magical form. Again, 'if Tristero has managed to maintain even partial secrecy, if Thurn and Taxis have no clear idea who their adversary is', then the latter would come to believe 'the Scurvhamite's blind, automatic anti-God' (CL49, p. 165). This Manichaean interpretation of the Tristero depends upon two conditional statements, and so becomes no more than one way of seeing the phenomenon. An introduction of conditionality, in effect, renders all information less than certain, and opens the way for a wider consideration of the uses and purposes of information; the ahistorical, idealist perspective of the Manichaean may now be examined as an interpretative attitude rather than a given, predetermined fact or law.

The close of the novel sees Oedipa's rejection of 'either-or' forms as no longer 'syntactically or experientially meaningful', in favour of 'ambiguity, uncertainty, and barely-perceived intuition'. Possibility replaces a deterministic absolutism, as Inverarity's own motivation is considered: 'he might himself have discovered The Tristero ... or he might even have tried to survive death, as a paranoia' (CL49, p. 179). However, if Inverarity had 'only died, nothing else', and 'if San Narciso and the

49 A. Kolodny and D.J. Peters, 'Pynchon's The Crying of Lot 49: The Novel as Subversive Experience', Modern Fiction Studies, 19 (1973-74), 79-87 (p. 79). Kolody and Peters only discuss the last pages of the novel; this pattern, however, can be traced throughout the novel.
estate were really no different from any other town, any other estate, then by that continuity she might have found The Tristero anywhere in her Republic'. The Tristero, Oedipa realises, is a characteristic response to the social-historical developments signalled by San Narciso and Inverarity's estate, a reaction against a homogenizing culture based upon monopolies which must exclude diversity: 'she had heard all about excluded middles; they were bad shit, to be avoided; and how had it ever happened here, with the chances once so good for diversity?' (CL49, p. 181). As Oedipa sees beyond the reified world of San Narciso to its social-historical actuality, she becomes conscious of the contradictions between a contemporary society based upon mechanistic perspectives and binary languages, and a diverse American past. The binary language of the computer becomes the emblem of a determinist philosophy which denies possibility and debate, 'for it was now like walking among matrices of a great digital computer, the zeroes and ones twinned above' (CL49, p. 181). Oedipa is aware of the influence which this attitude has had upon American cultural history, as she lists the paired opposites of transcendent ideality and mundane materiality created by such a perspective:

behind the hieroglyphic streets there would either be a transcendent meaning, or only the earth. In the songs Miles, Dean, Serge and Leonard sang was either some fraction of the truth's numinous beauty ... or only a power spectrum ... Ones and zeroes. So did the couples arrange themselves... another mode of meaning behind the obvious, or none. (CL49, pages 181-82).

She waits, therefore, 'if not for another set of possibilities to replace those that had conditioned the land to accept any San Narciso ... then at least, at the very least, waiting for a symmetry of choices to break down'. By replacing an 'either-or' mentality with an 'if-then' perception, Oedipa has set this process in motion:

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. (CE49, p. 182).

This last revelation turns on a tautology. There is a real 'Tristero' or only America, and if the latter is the case then Oedipa becomes 'alien' and 'unfurrowed'. These are the characteristics, however, of the Tristero itself, suggesting that if there is no Tristero in the external world then Oedipa must turn herself into a kind of Tristero. The passive housewife, living within the determinist parameters of a sophisticated communications network, has become an active agent against this system, able to evaluate the information placed before her despite the pressures brought to bear by the "projectors" of information.

As Oedipa accumulates more and more information, she is forced into an effort of synthesis and qualitative examination. This search for a holistic understanding leads her away from determinist structures towards an uncertainty which is the very prerequisite of her achieved sense of an open system of possibility. Given such an existential condition, therefore, her reexamination of the self in the act of rediscovering social-historical processes cannot be given a final resolution. Oedipa's explorations are themselves a continuous process, and if she is left in a state of uncertainty as the novel ends, awaiting the auctioning of Inverarity's stamp collection, then this uncertainty does not mark the failure of her quest but rather its most important success. Like the social world she has come to see, Oedipa is an open system continuously admitting new information, and uncertainty is the base of such a system. In the exercise of what Marcuse calls a 'liberating subjectivity', Oedipa is able to imagine possibilities which defy 'the rationality and sensibility incorporated in the dominant social institutions' and so step out 'of the network of exchange relationships and exchange values'.

ends the novel at an auction, an exemplum of such exchange relations, her presence at this event maintains and extends her progressive discovery of new information and new possibility.

4

The nature of historical understanding and the interpretation of evidence again prove to be central questions in *Gravity's Rainbow* (1973), Pynchon's most 'encyclopaedic' novel to date. In their search for the sources of human identity, characters in this work may follow the examples of Stencil or Oedipa respectively, in adopting an apocalyptic antihistoricism or a perspective based upon uncertainty and possibility. Depending upon their interpretation of the accumulated evidence of human experience, that is, characters come to understand both themselves and their society in very different ways. On the one hand, human thought and behaviour are finally determined by universal law. Alternatively, human experience is shaped by social-historical processes. From these rival views, therefore, characters project a fixed, deterministic world or an open world of possibility, and the tension between these two attitudes is at the heart of the dramatic interaction between characters in the novel.

The importance of characters' projections and interpretative acts is indicated immediately in the opening passage of the novel, where a characteristic strategy of the text may be identified. A hallucination of apocalypse, in which a massive rocket-strike destroys a city, opens the novel: 'a screaming comes across the sky. It has happened before, but there is nothing to compare it to now'. The very fabric of existence and consciousness of people 'all out of luck and time' is on the verge of destruction, as they are driven 'around the blind curves and out the lonely spurs' towards 'Absolute Zero'. All pattern is about to be swept away by

the overwhelming immediacy of these events, as registered stylistically by the use of a present tense, participles, and verbal nouns. The reader faces a problem, however, in that the hallucinatory nature of these imagined happenings is only revealed once this passage has been completed. In what has been called a 'concretization-deconcretization structure', the seeming description of an external reality is only revealed retrospectively as the description of an internal hallucination or dream; the 'ontological stability of external reality' cannot be assumed (McHale, p. 90). The suggestion that this scene consists of 'half-silvered images in a view finder', moreover, compounds the problem (GR, p. 3).

This imagination of apocalypse is familiar from Stencil's 'impersonations' in V., but in Gravity's Rainbow the subconscious world of dream and fantasy can more completely assume the appearance of an objective reality than is possible in V. The differentiation between conscious and subconscious worlds is correspondingly more difficult. It is this very difficulty, however, which is at the heart of Pynchon's perception of contemporary history. Stencil's vision of apocalypse and annihilation, with its correlative subconscious impulses, is no longer a matter of private imagination, but has itself become a historical agency as it has found a concrete social expression in phenomena like National Socialism. The difficulty in interpreting this novel, therefore, is not so much the general ontological problem of whether or not there is such a thing as "reality" as it is the problem of discovering the sources, the forms, and the uses of specific interpretative responses to a given social-historical condition. A vision of annihilation, like the notion of passive creatures driven along a predetermined path also familiar from The Crying of Lot 49, expresses one such interpretative act. Pynchon's narrative technique, in fact, parallels a world where subconscious fantasy can become a national ideology and so appear in the guise of objective reality. Gravity's

Rainbow deals, in Erich Fromm's striking phrase, with a 'pathology of normalcy' which goes beyond individual neurosis to produce a 'socially patterned defect' characteristic of a whole society, but unseen by any individual member of that society.  

Indications that the apocalyptic incidents in the novel are projections of this pathological perspective soon begin to appear. The opening passage records a dream of Prentice, the 'fantasist-surrogate' whose ability to project himself into other people's dreams and 'to take over the burden of managing them' is much esteemed by the corporate elite of the 'firm' (G.R., p. 12). These managed dreams share an apocalyptic attitude; a colonial administrator, for example, has a fantasy stretching back to 'his Kipling Period, beastly Fuzzy-Wuzzies far as eye could see' in which a cataclysmic termination of empire is imminent. Another diplomat is terrified of being 'assimilated by his own growing Adenoid' which has become a cannibalistic monster and begun to devour people selected according to a 'new election, a new preterition' (G.R., p. 15). Other employees of the 'Firm' also have apocalyptic fantasies. Rollo Groast, for example, adapts biological science in his explanation of the strange phenomenon of 'autochromatism', an ability to change skin pigment at will. Certain skin-cells, Groast argues, continue to act as nerve cells and so retain a 'cell-memory that will, retrocolonial, still respond to messages from the metropolitan brain' (G.R., p. 147). Such cells activate an 'old and clandestine drama' which recalls the conspiratorial sensibility of the imperialist mind; the history of empire, therefore, runs parallel to general biological law. Groast's rival theoretician, Nora Dodson-Truck, proposes another equally antihistoricist interpretation, in rejecting Groast's notion that this phenomenon witnesses the centripetal movement of living cells towards their home 'back in the CNS' (G.R., p. 148). On the

53 Erich Fromm, The Sane Society, p. 15.
contrary, the biology of such cells indicates a centrifugal decay in which each cell is fated to 'go epidermal' and perish at the 'interface', to become part of the outermost layer of dead skin. For Nora, the biology of skin-cells provides an analogue for her own 'ideology of the zero', a belief in the universal law of decay (GR, p. 149). The behaviourist Pointsman, again, sees himself as the resolution of Manichaean dualities, 'protagonist and antagonist in one' (GR, p. 278); like Groast, he subordinates his scientific expertise to his mystical preoccupations.

At the heart of these apocalyptic projections lies the Rocket, both the symbol and the literal objectification of the various mysticisms of the novel. Ölsch, architect of the Nordhausen missile factory, views the Brenschluss point at which the rocket-burn ends as a transcendent moment frozen in time and space; this belief is based on the fact that the temporal variable disappears from the equation for the rocket's flight at Brenschluss (GR, p. 301). Pokler becomes 'an extension of the rocket', while Mondaugen invents an 'electro-mysticism' of 'the cathode, the anode and the holy grid' and Thanatz sees the rocket as 'a baby Jesus' (GR, pages 402, 404, 464). For all 'rocket-mystics', the Rocket becomes 'a holy centre' (GR, p. 508). The Schwarzkommando rocket-troops, Hereros from South-West Africa, actually divide into rival sects of rocket-worshippers. While Ombindi leads the 'Revolutionaries of the Zero' in the pursuit of 'racial suicide', Enzian opposes this death-cult whose location, like the Nordhausen works, is 'under the earth ... this locus of death' (GR, pages 317, 322). In this, he is joined by Tchitcherine, his half-brother, who fears 'German dreams of the Tenth-Elegy angel' (GR, p. 341). Tchitcherine's reference to the 'angel' of Rilke's Ruino Elegies also recalls the fact that Blicero, the Weissmann of V, who has become the commander of the rocket-troops, distorts Rilke's sense of the moral

54 The introduction of these 'Schwarzkommando' explicitly resumes the South-West Africa episode of V; this racial death-wish is a development of Von Trotha's program of racial extermination, with the Hereros themselves continuing this process.
value of suffering into a sadistic and ritual celebration of pain.\textsuperscript{55} Blicero's 'Wandervogel in the mountains of Pain' is directed towards the achievement of 'our new Death Kingdom' (\textit{G R}, pages 99, 723);\textsuperscript{56} his final firing of the '00000' rocket with Gottfried enclosed in its 'Imipolex shroud', thus, represents the final expression of an erotic attraction to the experience of annihilation.

The Rocket, then, 'has to be many things' to many people and assumes 'a number of different shapes in the dreams of those who touch it' (\textit{G R}, p. 727). This sense of impending apocalypse, however, has consequences far beyond the individual sensibilities of those characters who have adopted an attitude. The 'Firm', for example, is interested in using this sense to extend its domination into areas of the human subconscious; Prentice's management of fantasies is a case in point. Something of this interest emerges in an early sodium amytal experiment upon Slothrop, whose racial terrors are considered useful basic material for a projected propaganda campaign directed at the German racial subconscious. Under the influence of the drug, Slothrop imagines a scene in a Boston ballroom where he is forced to flee down a toilet bowl to escape being raped by Negroes; subsequently 'shit-sensitized now', he hallucinates 'a jam-packed wavefront' of excrement which threatens to sweep him away (\textit{G R}, pages 65, 66). At the heart of these racial and apocalyptic fantasies is Slothrop's Puritan heritage of the 'three American truths' of 'shit, money and the Word' (\textit{G R}, p. 28).\textsuperscript{57} The Firm is aware of this heritage and its potential as a means

\textsuperscript{55} See R.M. Rilke, \textit{The Duino Elegies}, translated by J.B. Leishman and S. Spender (London, 1939), p. 91: 'Some day, emerging at last from this terrifying vision,/ May I burst into jubilant praise to assenting angels!' ('Elegy Ten', lines 1-2).

\textsuperscript{56} Blicero takes his cue from Rilke's Tenth Elegy: 'Alone, he climbs to the mountains of Primal Pain / And not once does his step resound from the soundless fate' (lines 104-05).

\textsuperscript{57} The relations between money, anal eroticism and Puritanism have become a standard argument in Freudian psychology, a fact Pynchon seems to be well aware of; see Norman O. Brown, \textit{Life Against Death}, pages 234-304. Brown's contribution to an antihistoricist ideal is discussed in chapter one, section three, note 50.
of domination; this investigation of the Puritan subconscious, with its various sexual, racial, and excremental complexes, is intended to further the Firm's knowledge in this area. The potential power to be gained from a control of the human subconscious is a powerful lure; Puritanism, after all, is but one historical occasion upon which this potential seems to have been temporarily realized.

A further example of a manipulation of subconscious fantasies occurs with the use of 'Oneirine', another drug with hallucinogenic and 'time-modulation' properties (GR, p. 348). This drug is discovered during Jamf's researches into morphines, and its usefulness is obvious to a chemist who sees the benzene ring of organic chemistry as a metaphor for social power, 'a blueprint ... so that there would be a field of aromatic chemistry to ally itself with secular power' (GR, p. 412). Wimpe, another chemist-mystic, develops this notion of control. From the state's point of view, the problem of standard morphines is that the more effective the relief from pain, the greater the addiction to the drug. The ideal drug, therefore, is one which is able 'to abolish pain rationally, without the extra cost of addiction', allowing a complete bureaucratic control over pain; with addiction, an uncontrollable variable, abolished, what is left is 'real pain, real deliverance', controllable and marketable 'quantities tied directly to the economy' (GR, pages 348, 349). Oneirine is also useful to a man like Jamf, with his 'National Socialist chemistry', as a stimulant to a subconscious racism, as in the case of Margherita Erdmann's 'Jewish Fantasy' (GR, pages 578, 476). Margherita, a confirmed Oneirine user, comes to the resort town of 'Bad Karma' shortly before the invasion of Poland. Here, it seems, she becomes involved in a ritual slaughter of Jewish children, giving vent to racial-sexual impulses which are a 'broken act from an earlier time' and an earlier religion 'old as Earth' (GR, p. 478). This secret fulfilment of such fantasies, an early experiment in the use of pain as a source of power, will indeed give way to Wimpe's systemization and mass production of pain in the Nazi holocaust.
Margherita's later journey to Blicero's 'Castle' on the 'Heath', a petrochemical plant where she is coupled in erotic union with the mystical 'Schwarzgerät' of the Rocket, suggests a continuation of this particular experiment (GR, p. 486).

Experimentation into the subconscious also takes the form of psychic research, where the uses of an apocalyptic sensibility are again a major concern. The 'Ouspenskian nonsense' of Eventyr's séances, is but one means of 'meddling into the affairs of invulnerable Death' (GR, pages 30, 40). These psychic 'gatherers of light' see the control of death as the ultimate in power; by using Eventyr, they can contact 'the Weimar decadence' of pre-Nazi Germany and the earlier séances of Asch, in which Pokier's 'fantasy, death-wish, rocket-mysticism' is encountered for the first time (GR, pages 152, 154). The object of this exercise is the recovery of the early history of such fantasies, which include the 'Götterdämmerung mentality' of 'the corporate Nazi crowd' who attend Asch's séances (GR, pages 163, 164). In their collective dream of a terror-weapon, the 'L-5227, L standing for light', which will present them with absolute power, this 'crowd' reveal their active desire for the apocalypse. Theirs is a mysticism born of 'the very substance of death' whose creed is 'death to death-transfigured' (GR, p. 166).

The uncertainty of any evidence obtained in this way is less important than the belief that psychic phenomena can and should be subordinated to the service of a political creed. One of Eventyr's psychic contacts is Feldspath, an expert on 'control systems, guidance equations, feedback situations', who believes that 'the whole German inflation' was specifically designed to drive engineers into 'Control work' (GR, p. 238). This 'control work', like Jamf's drug Oneirine, is aimed at rationalizing 'the Rocket's terrible passage' into 'bourgeois terms', by the development of

58 Ouspensky's mysticism is a formative influence on a number of modernists; see chapter one, section three, note 49.
a feedback system which is able to regulate the threat from the 'true forest' where the 'demons' of 'destruction' are to be found (GR, p. 239). Feedback becomes a metaphor for social control, and the breakdown of feedback an image of social disintegration. Feldspath's greatest fear, a fear shared by some of the Firm's researchers, is that social feedback systems may be destroyed by uncontrolled experimentation upon the human subconscious. Such an eventuality may result from an experimentation with racial terrors, as in the use of the 'legend of the black scapeape we cast down like Lucifer' in a propaganda campaign against Germany (GR, p. 275). As with the experiments on Slothrop, such a study leads eventually to a Puritan death-instinct: 'their feelings about blackness were tied to feelings about shit, and feelings about shit to feelings about putrefaction and death' (GR, p. 276).

Treachle, for one, is sure that these repressions 'had incarnated real and living men', the Schwarzkommando (GR, p. 277). The belief in a racial threat, like the belief in apocalypse, may become an actual historical phenomenon if it is believed widely enough, and particularly if it becomes an influential aspect of state ideology and policy.

Attempts to control social relations by the manipulation of an apocalyptic perspective abound in the novel. This perspective, however, is characteristically a celebration of death which points towards annihilation rather than salvation. The actual consequences of this irrationality undermine the apparent rationalization of these forces which Wimpe, Feldspath, and others of like mind claim to have achieved. Reason and scientific investigation serve irrational, mystical purposes, and nowhere more so than the cabal of seven behaviourists who have turned Pavlov's *Lectures on Conditioned Reflexes* into a bible which circulates amongst

59 Wolfley (1977), also observes Luther's complex of 'anal repulsions associating blackness, excrement and death' (p. 880). The fact of Luther's revelation having taken place in the privy of Wittenberg monastery is also seized upon by Brown in *Life Against Death*, pages 202-10.
them 'on a weekly basis' (GR, p. 47). For Pointsman, the release of repressed energy in psychiatric patients, known as abreaction, has become an emblem of the demiurge: 'nothing can really stop the Abreaction of the Lord of the Night unless the Blitz stops, rockets dismantle, the entire film runs backward ... but the reality is not reversible' (GR, p. 139). With each strike, 'the Lord further legitimizes his State'; treatment of the 'rocketbombed, Lord of the Night's children', therefore, only releases the forces of death from the repressed subconscious into the social world. Pavlov's 'Book' becomes Pointsman's 'submontane Venus', the key to his experience of the ultimate mystery; rather than developing a science which will control destructive subconscious impulses, Pointsman only contributes further to the destructive forces in human society. As Richard Poirier has put it, characters in Pynchon's work become 'instruments of the plots they then help promote': 'their consequent dehumanization makes the prospect of apocalypse and the destruction of self not a horror so much as the final ecstasy of plotting and of power.'

The destructive impulses evident in twentieth-century history, sketched out in V., become an inescapable reality in Gravity's Rainbow. With the wholesale incorporation of subconscious destructiveness into social forms, a mass ideology based on apocalypse may produce actual apocalypse. The worship of the 'Rocket', indeed, is only at the beginning of its history in the period in which Pynchon's novel is set; an apocalyptic world-view has since become central to the ideologies of super-power politics, cold-war tensions and nuclear-deterrence. Blicero believes, thus, that America has become the site for 'that special Death the West had invented'; as Europe perishes in its own death-cult, 'American Death has come to occupy Europe' having 'learned empire from its old metropolis' (GR, p. 722). At the conclusion of the novel, American agents are busily appropriating German

rocket technology, and the German rocket engineers are largely destined for America; it is in America, moreover, that Blicero's dream of a 'new Deathkingdom' on the moon will reach fruition (G.R, p. 723). From Blicero's point of view, a continuity of apocalyptic thinking seems assured.

"Apocalypse" can now be viewed as a recurrent resort of characters seeking an absolute, determinist system which might resolve the problems arising in an uncertain, unstable world. Prentice's nightmare of a single-track railway in the midst of an apocalyptic rocket-strike is paralleled several times in the novel, as in Slothrop's hallucination of a runaway 'MTA subway train' of excrement, Pointsman's 'train of linkages', Katje's 'train' in the 'country of the dead' and Gwenhidwy's apocalyptic 'switching-locomotive' (G.R, pages 66, 89, 132, 171). Such nightmares express subconscious terrors and desires which collectively form a sense of an ahistorical determinism in all human experience. These areas of the human subconscious do not remain private matters for the psychiatrist and patient, however, but become social phenomenon as they surface in social attitudes, ideologies, and political creeds. As has already been suggested, this eventuality is central to Pynchon's sense of the developmental processes of recent history. Pointsman's 'train of linkages' embodies his mechanistic conception of social structures, a social philosophy opposed by Roger Mexico's sense that the war has 'shunted' love aside and destroyed the 'signallings of love' (G.R, p. 133). The desire for and terror of apocalypse, as revealed in various experiments with drugs and the occult, becomes raw material for Pointsman's attempt to mould human behaviour and social structures in the image of his mechanistic ideal. In this sense, the apocalyptic impulse has been taken up by the 'corporate crowd' as a means of domination and as a philosophical or ideological support for their conception of society. The 'Firm', we might say, is the socialized and politicized expression of the novel's subconscious. In order to more fully comprehend the significance of this apocalyptic
mentality, therefore, we must now turn to the social-historical manifestations, uses, and interpretations of such a mentality. Three main areas emerge from such an investigation, and these are detailed in turn below: Puritanism, the behavioural sciences, and communications systems.

A Puritan determinism pervades many of the social structures of the novel. Prentice's early record of the colonialist's fantasy of 'elect' and 'preterite', for example, recurs in Enzian's 'preterite clan', in Van der Groov's belief that he is 'impersonating a race chosen by God' when he exterminates the preterite dodo which seems a 'Satanic intervention' into the creation, or in the 'preterite' denied access to Asch's séances for the 'corporate Nazi crowd' (G.R, pages 100, 110, 163). The theocratic division of creatures into elect and preterite, the blessed and the damned of Calvinist predeterminism, becomes a support for hierarchies of race and class. Such a division is especially significant for Slothrop, linked through his family to the New England theocracy, since it is this family which has supplied the 'toilet paper, banknote stock, newsprint' which is the 'medium or ground' for 'shit, money, and the Word, the three American truths' (G.R, p. 28). His own 'Slothrop's Progress' is a rewriting of Bunyan's pilgrim which follows his erotically conditioned sensitivity 'to what is revealed in the sky'; 'the hand of God' has become one with the Rocket, however, as Slothrop projects an apocalyptic termination of history (G.R, p. 26). 61

6:43:16 BDST - in the sky right now here is the same unfolding, just about to break through, his face deepening with its light, everything about to rush away and he to lose himself, just as his countryside has ever proclaimed ... slender church steeples poised up and down all these autumn hillsides, white rockets about to fire, only seconds of countdown away, rose windows taking in Sunday light, elevating and washing the faces above the pulpits defining grace, swearing this is how it does happen - yes the great bright hand reaching out of the cloud ... (G.R, p. 29).

Slothrop, conditioned by his upbringing to look for signs of Armageddon, merely incorporates the Rocket into his already established world-view.

61 This sense that 'time' may suddenly come to an end is also part of Callisto's imagination in 'Entropy'.
Slothrop is more than the heir to a Puritan perspective, however, for he is also a laboratory animal whose responses to apocalyptic fantasy are being tested by Pointsman. In particular, Slothrop's erotic relationship with the Rocket is a source of interest, and so Slothrop is returned to continental Europe as part of a continuing investigation of his 'American reflexes' (p. 197). Once in France, 'Dancin' like a fool through that Forbid-den Wing;/Waitin' fer th' light to start shiver-ing', Slothrop's 'Puritan reflex of seeking other orders behind the visible, also known as paranoia' is allowed a free rein (pages 203, 188). Given that the Puritan sees human life as 'the product of remote control', and given that 'paranoia is the last refuge of the Puritan imagination', Pointsman also hopes that Slothrop will provide information on the conspiratorial mentality which is so vital to the Firm's social controls. Driven on by his 'Proverbs for Paranoids', Slothrop arrives finally in Geneva and Zurich, 'Zwingli's town' where 'spies and big business' form the modern initiates 'into the Puritan Mysteries' (pages 257, 267); Zurich will be Slothrop's final resting-place before he enters the German 'Zone' and confronts his own annihilation.

To understand the development of 'Slothrop's Progress', therefore, his various European peregrinations should be seen in relation to 'Pointsman's Progress' in completing his behaviourist investigation of Slothrop's Puritan past (p. 169). Pointsman is drawn to Slothrop by his search for 'the stone determinacy of everything, of every soul', having learned of the 'Schwarzknaib enterprise' in which the young infant had been conditioned by Jamf to respond to a plastic used in the mystical Rocket (pages 86, 286). Slothrop, consequently, becomes another of those 'pretty children' whose 'innocence' Pointsman hopes to use, and upon whom he seeks 'to write... new words of himself, his own brown Realpolitik dreams' (p. 50). By sending Slothrop to Europe, Pointsman hopes to discover the exact nature of

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Jamf's conditioning, and so possess the power over Slothrop and his erotic responses to the Rocket. His agent Dodson-Truck takes notes on Slothrop's responses, for example, after Katje Borgesius is slipped into Slothrop's bed 'like nickels under the pillow for his deciduous Americanism', in the hope of learning something about Slothrop's sexual behaviour (GR, p. 211). Slothrop's subsequent travels in the 'Zone' of post-war Germany sends him still further into the 'surreal dreamland' of 'the white European unconscious'; within this landscape, Slothrop's 'ancestors will reassert themselves' as both his Puritan and his Rocket conditioning impel him towards an apocalyptic perspective (GR, p. 281). At the Nordhausen rocket-works in the Brocken mountains, the continuity between the Puritan past and the newer Rocket worship is established. Brocken is both the site of occult activity and the 'very plexus of German evil' now flourishing 'Swastika-banners of ripped red satin' beneath which 'Titans had to live'; it recalls, moreover, the 'one genuine Salem Witch' in Slothrop's family (GR, p. 329). This world of the 'Titans' is, in fact, the proper location for apocalypse, referring as it does both to the race of giants cast out from heaven by Zeus and the American missile systems named after them.

The further he travels into the 'Zone', the more Slothrop's thoughts

63 It is significant, in this context, that Katje is a descendant of the legendary exterminator of the Mauritius dodo, Franz Van der Groov. Late in the novel, Van der Groov's Puritan compulsion to eradicate apparent signs of imperfection in the Creation is revealed as Katje's own fantasy, now being managed by Prentice (p. 620-21); Katje, in short, shares Slothrop's apocalyptic imagination.


65 This witch, Amy Sprue, has a forerunner in 'Crazy Sue Dunham', a cult-figure for the children in Pynchon's The Secret Integration (1964; London, 1980). Like Amy, Crazy Sue opposes the theocratic rule by her celebration of charismatic, religious ecstacies.
and behaviour are dominated by such underworld fantasies. In Berlin, he imagines that 'the white woman with the ring of keys comes out of her mountain' to beckon him to a subterranean world (GR, p. 374). Again, he sees himself as 'Tannhäuser, the Singing Nincompoop' held by 'some Venus in some mountain'; this 'Tannhäuserism' is a love of being 'taken under mountains' to 'the comfort of a closed place, where everyone is in complete agreement about Death', and represents a Wagnerian twilight which transmutes northern European folklore into a Nazi mythology (GR, pages 364, 299). On his actual visit to Nordhausen, Slothrop seems to hear ghosts from the adjacent labour-camp at Dora proclaim the 'Raketen-Stadt', the embodiment of the death-cult (GR, p. 297). Unfortunately for Pointsman, Slothrop also becomes an increasingly unreliable informant as his perception and comprehension of the conscious world diminishes before a progressively dominant subconscious of fantasy and dream. Rather than possessing the Rocket's power, Slothrop is himself possessed, and finally destroyed, by this power; by the time that he has reached the launch sites at Peenemünde, Slothrop has already 'begun to thin, to scatter', and 'likewise groweth his Preterition sure' (GR, p. 509). Slothrop, the 'last of his line, and how far-fallen', has joined the Preterite, and so his ultimate destruction is assured according to Puritan cosmology (GR, p. 569). Even the charismatic, preterite heresy of William Slothrop, the 'first American Slothrop', cannot prevail; Slothrop's usefulness to the 'Firm', therefore, is at an end (GR, p. 535).

66 For Pynchon's use of Wagner, see Marjorie Kaufmann, 'Brünnhilde and the Chemists: Women in Gravity's Rainbow', in Levine and Leverenz (1976), 197-227.

67 William Slothrop's pamphlet 'On Preterition' almost certainly echoes William Pynchon's tract On the Meritorious Price of Our Redemption (1650). Pynchon's forebear, one of the Winthrop settlement of 1630, is a historical opponent of the Massachusetts theocracy whose dissent is most germane to Pynchon's own preoccupation with Puritanism.
Slothrop is destroyed, in essence, because he is increasingly possessed by the conviction that an absolute cosmological divide between 'elect' and 'preterite' predetermines human destiny. His journey into the Zone in search of his own history only serves to confirm this sense of 'remote control'. The social-historical circumstances of this apocalyptic belief, consequently, are progressively obscured as Slothrop's historical consciousness is diminished by his surrender to his 'preterition'. The town clock of Zurich only reminds Slothrop of New England where 'the hour could never be read', leaving the temptation 'to surrender to the darkening year ... to the hour without a name' (R, p. 267). The manipulation of Slothrop's Puritan sensibility by various behavioural scientists, moreover, deepens his sense that 'all in his life of what has looked free or random, is discovered to have been under some Control, all the time, the same as a fixed roulette wheel' (R, p. 209). To the behaviourist, also, all human experience is determined and quantifiable, and future behaviour is absolutely predictable: 'the odds They played here belonged to the past, the past only. Their odds were never probabilities, but frequencies already observed' (R, p. 208). Pointsman's agents, indeed, are specifically instructed to distract Slothrop's attention away from the removal of his 'ID, his service dossier, his past' (R, p. 210). The 'War' itself, having reconstituted 'time and space into its own image so that 'the track runs in different networks now', suggests a social system based upon behaviouristic principles (R, p. 257).

Even before entering the 'Zone', Slothrop notices that 'a lot of stuff prior to 1944 is getting blurry now' (R, p. 21). As his personality disintegration proceeds inexorably, his historical awareness continues to shrink. Once inside the Nordhausen underground works, therefore, Slothrop also enters an existential state which refers back to Prentice's apocalyptic hallucination that opens the novel:

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 there is no more History, no time-travelling 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' (G R, p. 303).

Margherita Erdmann's hallucinatory experience with Imipolex G, 'the material
of the future' which forms the outer skin of the mystical Rocket, confirms
the erotic undercurrent to this imagination of apocalyptic immediacy:
'things, memories, no way to distinguish them any more, went tumbling down-
ward through my head ... I was evacuating all these, out into some void'
(G R, p. 488). Slothrop has also tumbled into this void, approaching his
own disintegration as 'omens grow clearer, more specific' and his
scattered personality takes on the appearance of a film-strip of 'past
Slothrops, say averaging one a day', 'fifth columnists' waiting to deliver
him 'to the furious host' (G R, pages 623-24). Once his 'preterition' is
completed, the meaning of America's 'come-hitherings, incredible promises'
to Slothrop is revealed as he becomes 'a cross himself, a crossroads';
this is the location for a gibbet, the heretic's fate, where his own end
mirrors that of 'the sus. per coll. crowd dangling ... off of the Slothrop
family tree' (G R, pages 623, 625, 329). At 'the last instant', he dreams
of some 'fat-haunched gnädige Frau Death' (G R, p. 625):

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 ... (G R, p. 626).

Slothrop has failed in his effort to turn the detritus of 'preterite seed...
preterite snot, preterite tears' into 'a record, a history: his own, his
winter's, his country's', and this final imagination of 'what is revealed
in the sky' records his death as a conscious being (G R, pages 626, 26).

From this point onward, Slothrop appears in the novel only in the guise
of an actor in his continuing subconscious hallucinations. He becomes one
of the 'Floundering Four' of a futuristic 'factory-state' who are fighting
the primal drama against a Father who is 'trying episode after episode to kill his son', or he is trapped inside a Boston refrigerator which has tempted him to climb into the 'grid' of a world frozen into 'changelessness' (F R, pages 674, 678). Slothrop's hoped-for escape from the Firm's controls can only be achieved in an annihilation of consciousness, leaving him at the mercy of those subconscious repressions which the Firm's experimentation has helped to intensify. In one fantasy, he dresses in a blonde wig to look like 'Fay Wray', the victim of King Kong, the archetypal racial threat, while in another he is drowned in a toilet, 'trapped inside their frame with your wastes piling up' (F R, p. 694). As a result, he is unable to understand the meaning of a scrap of newsprint upon which is portrayed the 'giant white cock' of Hiroshima; he has, in effect, been 'scattered all over the Zone' in a kind of cataclysmic fall-out which follows the destruction of his consciousness (F R, pages 693, 712). This eventuality follows the existential law formulated by the engineer Mondaugan:

'Personal density ... is directly proportional to bandwidth'
'Temporal bandwidth' is the width of your present, your now. It is the familiar 'At' considered as a dependent variable. The more you dwell in the past and in the future, the thicker your bandwidth, the more solid your persona. But the narrower your sense of Now, the more tenuous you are. (F R, p. 509).

'Now', present existential being, is dependent upon historical being. If, as in Slothrop's case, the sense of historical continuity is lost, then personal identity is also lost. 68

In the end, Slothrop falls victim to those latent destructive impulses which he carries as a result of his Puritan background. If his destruction is to be adequately comprehended, however, contemporary mutations of the apocalyptic world-view must be added to Slothrop's New

68 The claim in Wolfley (1977) that Pynchon calls for an end to Freudian repression, the very stuff of any 'collective history', in 'making the unconscious conscious' is not in fact borne out by Pynchon's work. On the contrary, this 'abolition of history' celebrates a death-instinct (Wolfley, p. 876).
England heritage. Slothrop lives in a modern State where 'a million bureaucrats are diligently plotting death and some of them even know it', and 'the enterprise is systematic death' (GR, pages 17, 76). The Firm's interest in Slothrop is only one part of their interest in the 'Führer-principle', and how best to use 'techniques developed by the corporations' to rationalize charismatic forces (GR, p. 81). Since 'the true war is a celebration of markets', such a rationalization can effectively use the economic stimulus of 'mass death' to create an absolute, closed system, an 'establishment and disestablishment of an astonishing network of market operations winking on, winking off across the embattled continent' (GR, pages 105, 112). Every aspect of human experience must be incorporated into this system. Motherhood, for example, becomes a 'civil-service category', while a children's city, 'Zwölfkinder', has been built in Germany as one way of controlling 'innocence': 'in a corporate State, a place must be found for innocence' (GR, pages 219, 419). Racism becomes a commercial enterprise in the children's games of Bloody Chiclitz, 'Juicy Jap' and 'Shufflin'Sam' (GR, p. 558). The power of the Word, again, must be accommodated to the new forms of a secular society. A ready example of this process appears in Tchitcherine's secondment to the committee for the 'new Turkic Alphabet' instituted during the 1920s and 1930s, where an alphabet needed to be formulated in order to integrate a previously non-literate people into the Soviet educational and ideological system. In the disputes and power-struggles among the various sub-committees of this new alphabet, Pynchon satirizes both the sectarian


70 For an account of this, see T.G. Winner, 'Problems of Alphabetic Reform Among the Turkic Peoples of Soviet Central Asia, 1920-1941', Slavonic and East European Review, 31 (1952-53), 133-47. Pynchon follows Winner in all major details.
politics of this period of Russian history and Russian formalist criticism, while dramatizing the power which a control of the 'Word' makes available to contemporary authoritarian regimes. The struggle of these linguistic bureaucrats is a literal emblem of the struggle for the minds of the population. This struggle for control finds another form in the work of those organic chemists who, no longer 'at the mercy of Nature', can decide 'what properties they wanted a molecule to have' (GR, p. 249). In the case of the Rocket-plastic 'Imipolex G', these properties are 'Kraft, Standfestigkeit, Weiß', strength, stability and whiteness, properties indistinguishable from 'Nazi graffiti' (GR, p. 250).

The most graphic illustration of this determinist perspective is given by the behaviourist's laboratory, with its 'rationalized forms of death' and experimental mazes which mirror the structure of the Firm's 'grid' itself (GR, p. 230). It is here that Pointsman attempts to unravel the mysteries of his 'Book', the writings of Pavlov which seem to offer him the prospect of absolute control. Pointsman is especially interested in Pavlov's 'ideas of the opposite', a dualistic system which may explain Slothrop's pathological responses to the Rocket. As Pavlov discovered, abnormal behavioural responses to conditioned reflexes may be experimentally induced in a predictable sequence: the paradoxical phase, in which strong stimuli have weak responses and weak stimuli have strong responses, the equalization phase where all stimuli have the same response, and the ultraparadoxical phase where strong stimuli lose all responses and negative stimuli become positive, that is become excitatory rather than inhibiting. Pointsman's hope is that Slothrop's positive response to the Rocket is the last of these phases, and that he himself, having discovered the physiological base of the Rocket's power over humans, will accomplish

71 Pointsman's 'Book' refers to I.P. Pavlov, Lectures on Conditioned Reflexes, translated by W.H. Gantt, 2 vols (London, 1941). In particular, volume two, containing speculations about possible physiological bases for psychiatric phenomena, is the source of Pointsman's mysticism.
his own 'Realpolitik dream' (G.R., p. 50).\textsuperscript{72} Slothrop becomes Pointsman's 'miracle and human child', the messianic instrument of the Rocket, with Pointsman himself becoming the priest of a new religion based on the behaviourist laboratory where 'all the animals, the plants, the minerals, even other kinds of men, are being broken and reassembled every day, to preserve an elite few' (G.R., p. 230). Pavlov's experiments, therefore, have long since ceased to be a matter of science as they have become a matter of religion and ideology whose specific purpose is to maintain a social elite in political power.\textsuperscript{73} The experiments on Slothrop exemplify the use of this power, in the pursuit of still more power through an investigation of the racial-sexual subconscious. Pointsman maintains his own research facility, indeed, by manipulating the sado-erotic, coprophiliac obsessions of General Pudding, his departmental head, which hark back to Pudding's experience of the 'Armageddonite filth' of the Great War (G.R., p. 233). Although this act of domination takes a different form from Blicero's sado-masochistic modes of domination, Pointsman and Blicero share common purposes, goals, and indeed perspectives on the world.

A fantasized dialogue between 'Mr. Information' and 'Skippy', set in a subterranean world beneath a ruined city, sums up the behaviourist perspective:

\begin{quote}
Come back, here, to the points. Here is where the paths divided. See the man back there. He is wearing a white hood. His shoes are brown. He has a nice smile, but nobody sees it. Nobody sees it because his face is always in the dark. But he is a nice man. 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 (G.R., p. 644).
\end{quote}

The 'nice' man is Pointsman, the behaviourist, who controls an absolute

\textsuperscript{72} The quotation on p. 49 of Gravity's Rainbow comes from I.P. Pavlov, Lectures on Conditioned Reflexes, chapter 55.

\textsuperscript{73} The political and philosophical uses of behavioural science are discussed in chapter one above; see section four, notes 87 to 91.
system of pleasure or pain, symbolized as 'Happyville' and 'Pain City', by means of his behavioural systems of reinforcing the desired forms of behaviour using rewards and punishments. In this simplistic 'either-or' world, 'Happyville' is finally to arrive 'under the mountain' in a surrender to the manipulated responses determined by the behavioural controls of the established order (C.R. p. 645). This fantasy is the goal to which the apocalyptic imagination has been moving from the opening passage of the novel, with its hallucination of an evacuation from the destroyed city.74

To complete this survey of the determinist impulse in the novel, some consideration should now be given to the influence of a highly centralized communications apparatus upon the perception and representation of individual identity. As Oedipa found in The Crying of Lot 49, communications media dominate the social apprehension of reality, in making identity dependent upon media projections. Consequently, characters become mere extensions of media images by a process of alienation which divorces their socially determined self-image from any inner awareness of personal identity. Jessica, for example, in a sense becomes her 'Fay Wray look', having accepted the racial and sexual implications in the film King Kong (1933) as the basis for her self-image (C.R. p. 57). Similarly, Osbie Feel imitates the actor Bela Lugosi in White Zombie (1932), while Pointsman fears a 'mummy's curse' or sees himself as 'Fu Manchu' (C.R., pages 106, 139, 278); both men look to horror films for an identity. Slothrop's own travels in the zone seem like scenes from German expressionist cinema. A devastated Berlin resembles a film-set where someone 'is cleverly allowing for parallax, scaling, shadows all going the right way'; later, as Plechazunga the 'German expressionist pig', he arrives in Cuxhaven where 'the stairstep gables ... rising, backlit' mirror the surreal architecture

74 This 'either-or' world is familiar from The Crying of Lot 49. Pynchon's style at this point, with its use of parataxis, vacuous adjectives, and general lack of syntactic complexity, seems a parody of Hemingway's prose style, and thus an adverse comment on Hemingway's aesthetic; see chapter three above.
of Wiese's film The Cabinet of Doctor Caligari (1919) (R, pages 374, 568, 567). Having himself passed through 'Neubabelsberg, the old movie capital of Germany' which now houses the Potsdam conference 'lit up like a Hollywood première', Slothrop can come to see himself as 'Rocketman', ordered to enforce the wishes of 'the guardian and potent Studio' (R, pages 371, 380, 437). The cultural formations of the media have assumed a determining function in relation to human identity.

The 'Studio', then, is another representation of a determinist system. From the opening fantasy of an evacuation which is 'all theatre' and which is later found to be 'replaying now', moreover, this system can be seen to parallel the apocalyptic antihistoricism which underlies other such absolutist frameworks (R, pages 3, 49). A parallelism between media projection and apocalyptic fantasy emerges in an early episode which is enclosed within the following sequence, as if a cinematic flashback: 'the camera follows as she moves deliberately nowhere longlegged about the rooms, an adolescent wideness and hunching to the shoulders, her hair not bluntly Dutch at all, but secured in a modish upsweep with an old, tarnished silver crown' (R, pages 92, 113). This episode contains Blicero's sadistic manipulation of Katje and Gottfried. These events, or at least Katje's memory of them, then become a 'film' apparently being projected as part of a conditioning experiment upon a laboratory animal called Grigori, an image of a closed system of a perpetually repeating stimulus and response. Like the experiments on Slothrop's subconscious, the resulting 'film' expresses an attempt to use subconscious impulse and fantasy as a means of controlled domination.

The content of this 'film' centres on Blicero's perversion of a well-known German folk-tale, Hansel and Gretel, to fit the contemporary scene of the holocaust. The oven in which the witch threatens to cook the two children becomes 'Der Kinderschan' of the Nazi death-camps, the focus of
Blicero's sado-erotic fantasies (GR, p. 94). By this transformation of Germanic folk-lore, Blicero hopes to take 'this Northern and ancient form' and use it as a 'preserving routine' which will rationalize 'what, outside, proceeds without form or decent limit' (GR, p. 96). As such, this 'Hexeszuchtigung' or 'witch's chastisement' represents an updating of his 'Väterliche Züchtigung' or 'fatherly chastisement' practised in South-West Africa (V, p. 267). This institutionalization, and indeed eventual sanctification, of sadistic and racial fantasy does not lead, however, to a 'preserving routine' as Blicero had hoped, since the final mutation of 'the Oven we fattened you for' is the 'womb' of the mystical Rocket (GR, p. 751). As the novel ends, Richard M. Zhlubb, a Los Angeles cinema-manager, imagines himself being smothered by 'a plastic shroud' which recalls the Rocket's 'Imipolex shroud', and so brings the death impulse up to date (GR, pages 756, 751). Inside his theatre, a film 'has broken down' on the final image of 'a bright angel of death', in an imagination of the predicted annihilation:

in the darkening and awful expanse of screen something has kept on, a film we have not learned to see ... it is now a closeup of the face, a face we all know—

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

The 'film' we have been watching is a projection of the apocalyptic dream which the Rocket embodies for a modern consciousness. This Rocket, both prefigured in the film and actually falling on this theatre, suggests

75 L. and P. Opie, The Classic Fairy Tales (London, 1974), observe that the analogy between this story and Auschwitz did not go unnoticed at a post-war exhibition of children's literature in Munich (p. 257).

76 'Zhlubb', who bears a striking physical resemblance to Richard M. Nixon, also recalls the early fantasy of the 'Adenoidal' monster with his own 'chronic adenoidal condition' (GR, p. 754).
that a dream of annihilation may have so penetrated certain social structures as to have become a social reality, and perhaps even a social imperative.

Like the behaviourist, the 'projectionist' dreams of absolute power. Von Goll, for example, believes that his films create reality and that his mission is 'to sow in the Zone seeds of reality' (GR, p. 388). He sees the world in terms of an 'elect and preterite' held in 'a cosmic design of darkness and light', and predicts the day when life will mirror film: '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 ... then' (GR, pages 495, 527). His own films, founded on the 'charismatic flesh' of 'an annihilating white', celebrate power and apocalypse; 'Alpdrucken', for example, uses 'two shadows' which echo the 'two gigantic shadows' of the Brocken Spectre, with all of its accumulated inferences of Rocket-mysticism, the occult, and Nazism (GR, pages 579, 394, 330). In this belief in 'the rapid flashing of successive stills to counterfeit movement', therefore, the antihistoricist ideal finds its most persuasive metaphor (GR, p. 407). Continuous processes may be spatialized into determinate quantities and then rationally fragmented according to the Newtonian system of mechanics, a perspective which progressively expands from laws of motion into human lives and laws of history. Consequently, the rocket engineer and the media projectionist share a common outlook, since 'film and calculus' are both 'pornographies of flight' (GR, p. 567). In each case, time has been reduced to a spatial integer, to leave behind only a Bergsonian 'simultaneity'.

Although the ramifications of this antihistorical determinism occupy most of Gravity's Rainbow, any secure investigation of the novel must also come to terms with the alternative world of uncertainty and possibility.

77 A further link between Von Goll and Blicero may be inferred from the fact that Von Goll's main actress, Margherita Erdmann, at one point becomes another 'Gretel' (GR, p. 485).
which Pynchon sets against this determinism, as he had done previously in *The Crying of Lot 49*. In addition to an investigation of the historical, cultural, and psychological origins of the modern world's 'dance of death', Pynchon offers another way of interpreting the proliferating information and experience which is set before characters in the novel. Roger Mexico, rejecting equally the 'imbecile fascist rot' espoused by the research into 'invulnerable death' and the war-system's subversion of love 'in favor of work, abstraction, required pain, bitter death', champions this alternative vision (*C R*, pages 33, 41). Himself the 'anti-Pointsman', Mexico's training as a statistician favours a system of multifarious probability against one of binary determinism:

> 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 anywhere in between. Like his master I.P. Pavlov before him, he imagines the cortex of the brain as a mosaic of tiny on/off elements. Some are always in bright excitation, others darkly inhibited ... But each point is allowed only the two states: waking or sleep. One or two ... But to Mexico belongs the domain between zero and one - the middle Pointsman has excluded from his persuasion - the probabilities (*C R*, p. 55).

Mexico's mathematics express the language which Oedipa finally comes to, and form a symbolic correlate for a world of uncertainty and open possibility. In suggesting that we should 'junk cause-and-effect', Mexico strikes at the foundations of Pointsman's world. (*C R*, p. 89).

Mexico's opposition to Pointsman continues in that, himself 'innocent as a child', he threatens Pointsman's dream of power, a dream founded upon a domination of 'innocence' (*C R*, p. 56). Speaking in the moral voice of the child, a voice with a long history in American culture, this 'young anarchist in a red scarf' destabilizes Pointsman's 'Realpolitik' dream of a world where 'mothers and fathers are conditioned into deliberately dying in certain preferred ways ... leaving their children alone in the forest' (*C R*, p. 176). 78 For a Pointsman or a Blicero, human beings are to be seen

78 Significantly, when Roger takes Jessica to a pantomime, it turns out to be 'Hansel and Gretel', and is interrupted in due course by a rocket-strike (*C R*, p. 174).
as machines which may be rationally fragmented into a disassembly of their parts. This is the ideological support for a social system of 'War' which must expedite 'barriers between our lives' and continue 'to divide this way, and to subdivide, though its propaganda will always stress unity'; the stability of the Firm's 'Empire' depends upon the maintenance of 'a machine of many separate parts' (G R, pages 130, 131). For Mexico, on the contrary, the Christmas 'children's story' speaks of a destruction of 'the boundaries between our lands, our bodies, our stories, all false, about who we are' (G R, p. 135). In an impulse towards community and totality, the emblem of the child is crucial to a rejection of 'who you're supposed to be registered as' or 'who the Caesars say you are' (G R, p. 136). Similarly, Mexico's openness to love, in his 'long skin interface' with Jessica, belongs to the 'middle' which Pointsman denies:

his life had been tied to the past. He'd seen himself a point on a moving wavefront, propagating through sterile history - a known past, a projectable future. But Jessica was the breaking of the wave. Suddenly there was a beach, the unpredictable ... new life. Past and future stopped at the beach ... he wanted to believe it too, the same way he loved her ... believe that no matter how bad the time, nothing was fixed, everything could be changed (G R, p. 126).

What Mexico rejects here is not so much 'history' as the false pattern of Pointsman's reified world, and the sense of an absolute, predetermined existential 'wave' propelling him through life according to universal laws. In the act of human relationship, indeed, Mexico recovers a historical consciousness which previously had been denied him as he served the 'War'.

This concern with 'openness' is the first sign of the 'counterforce' opposition to the Firm. Slothrop's own residual autonomous historical sense centres on a time 'when the land was still free and the eye innocent' (G R, p. 214). This 'innocence' has been destroyed, however, by the combination of Calvinist and behavioural conditioning, the social consequence of which is revealed in Slothrop's changing attitude to the 'land' as he begins 'quoting Saturday-afternoon western movies dedicated to
Property' (GR, p. 264). The Argentinian anarchist Squalidozzi is more aware of this development in his realization that 'we tried to exterminate our Indians, like you: we wanted the closed white version of reality we got— but even into the smokiest labyrinths ... the land has never let us forget' (GR, p. 264). As Squalidozzi puts it, 'Buenos Aires sought hegemony over the provinces. All the neuroses about property gathered strength'. If Squalidozzi's perception of the decentralizing force of anarchism does not give rise to a genuine historical understanding, it does at least begin to oppose determinist ways of thinking.

As this opposition begins to emerge, rival dreams and subconscious life-instincts appear to oppose the death-instincts incorporated into the dominant social forms. With the increasing monopoly of information in the hands of a ruling elite, other pathways to understanding need to be found; thus, 'those like Slothrop, with the greatest interest in discovering the truth, were thrown back on dreams, psychic flashes, omens, cryptographies, drug-epistemologies, all dancing on a ground of terror, contradiction, absurdity' (GR, p. 582). Such information, precisely Oedipa's experience in her search for the Tristero, proves inadequate in Slothrop's case; his dreams of Enzian offering him 'a way out', or of an escape to Denmark with Bianca Erdmann, or of a child speaking to him across a flame, do not save him from disintegration (GR, pages 360, 493, 282). Other characters, however, have a stronger fantasy of 'counterforce'; one such fantasy is relayed by Prentice on behalf of the embryonic opposition, like 'some very extensive museum' with 'new wings that generate like living tissue' (GR, p. 537). Säure Bummer, again, defends Rossini where 'lovers always get together' in a drug-inspired debate with Gustav, who champions the 'German dialectic' which ends with Webern's 'dodecaphonic democracy' (GR, p. 440).

In doing this, Bummer opposes Gustav's apocalyptic musicology, in which Webern's death at the hands of some American soldiers represents 'the young barbarians coming in to murder the Last European'.

79 This sentiment exactly mirrors the attitude struck by Foppl's guests in V., as 'the last gods on earth' looking out at the approaching barbarians (V, p. 279).
Other characters appear, retrospectively, to have been opponents of the Firm's 'grid'. Enzian, for example, looks back on the lost 'tribal centre' as an 'era of innocence' before European imperial expansion introduced its own death-instincts (G.R., p. 321). In realizing that 'you are free. We all are', Enzian comes to understand that the Rocket persisted 'in its darkness, our darkness'; the Rocket, and all it entails, is born as much from human choice as its own, technological considerations (G.R., pages 288, 520). From his own drug-epistemology, moreover, Enzian offers some valuable advice:

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 (G.R., p. 521).

Enzian's advice, as the use of participles indicates, is to look for the processes which determine the social-historical circumstances of human life; this search will itself be a continuous process. In his recall of an era of 'innocence', Enzian remembers a world that is very different from the established reality, and so has some information upon which a comparative evaluation and comprehension of the established social structures may begin to be made.

The final part of the novel sees the emergence of this 'Counterforce', even as 'Their enterprise goes on' (G.R., p. 628). As Prentice explains to Mexico, both 'They-systems' and 'We-systems' exist, and both are based on 'delusional systems'; the only difference is that the 'They-systems' are 'always officially defined', and so have the authority of the established society behind them (G.R., p. 638). Any system, therefore, is a provisional expediency, or hypothesis, and so the counterforce must create 'delusions about themselves' as a pathway towards a nondeterminist alternative to the official system. Although Jessica has left him for 'a bad cinema spring', therefore, Mexico continues to dream of the 'full range of life' she had
given him (GR, p. 628). In doing so, he resists the dualistic 'either-or' mentality to which Jessica has returned, where 'War' and 'Peace' become respectively 'the condition she needed for being with Roger' and the condition which 'allows her to leave him'. Mexico can see only 'the same flows of power' in both war and peace, and finally realises that he must reject the Firm's 'doubleminded' logic and really 'have to decide' (GR, p. 713).

Mexico's fantasies, too, indicate an unwillingness to allow his subconscious to be dominated by the established society. Even if only in fantasy, he can urinate on one gathering of industrialists, and nauseate another at one of Jessica's dinner-parties (GR, pages 636, 715). An army barber, again, imagines that hair is based on a 'time of innocence' when all the hairs 'were once distributed perfectly even'; his job, therefore, is one of 'reconstructing' the hair as 'an agent of History' (GR, p. 643). In another 'delusional system', the fantastic history of Byron, the immortal light bulb, is followed from the 'innocence' of his 'Bulb Baby Heaven' to a mythic status as the champion of the preterite (GR, p. 647). Byron's imagined heresy is his challenge to the 'design hours' of 'Phoebus', the light-bulb cartel, and his increasingly random escapes from destruction which contradict the cartel's absolute determinism. This history forms a satire against a corporate elite which must invent the 'Bulbsnatching Heresy' to protect its monopoly. Like Slothrop's Puritan ancestors before it, Phoebus is aware 'that guilt, in proper invisible hands, is a most powerful weapon', and indeed it is Lyle Bland, Slothrop's uncle and agent for the 'Schwarzknebe' experiment on the baby Slothrop, who invents the 'heresy' (GR, p. 652). Not only is it 'a sin both against Phoebus and against the Grid' to steal bulbs, this is a double sin since 'it also means that same somebody is not putting any power in that socket'. Byron's story, indeed, might well stand for all of the counterforce fantasies. While the Grid's overall domination of the mass of 'bulbs' remains secure, Byron nonetheless pursues his dream of
destroying such domination by urging 'the need for solidarity against the cartel' (R., p. 653). Although Byron's youthful dream 'of organizing all the bulbs in the world' now seems an impossibility, his very opposition to the cartel has demonstrated that 'the Grid is wide open, all messages can be overheard'.

This uncertainty in the 'grid', in the possibility that the resources of dream, the human psyche, and even the human subconscious might be used against the domination of human populations by a manipulation of subconscious death-instincts, is perhaps as hopeful a statement as Gravity's Rainbow can make. The task which Pynchon takes upon himself, namely that of comprehending the social-historical conditions which lie beneath the ideological surfaces of twentieth-century history, is an enormous enough task in itself. Even if no elaborate, ready-made alternative to an antihistoricist perspective of apocalypse, reification and absolute determinism emerges from this effort of comprehension, however, this should not in any sense undermine Pynchon's fictive explorations of contemporary historical events. Pynchon's cultural and psychological studies, rather, form a necessary prerequisite for the consideration of an alternative, open world; the apocalyptic worldview objectified in the Rocket is a contemporary reality whose origins, features, and uses are most germane to this task. Pynchon's alternative to the closed system sees characters searching, often gropingly and usually uncertainly, for a holistic overview of the continuous processes of social-historical development. Such an overview is founded on the very principle of uncertainty, indeed, which posits a root indeterminacy in both individual and collective human experience. Pynchon's narrative, then, becomes both an internal dialogue with itself and an external dialogue with its reader which does not propose any ending, but rather a nonfinite, dialectical process. In the song which ends the novel, a heretical hymn composed by William Slothrop, Pynchon closes the narrative with an invitation to community rather than with an image of destruction: 'There is a Hand to turn the time,
thy Glass today be run,/Till the Light that hath brought the Towers low/
Find the last poor Pret'rite one' (G R, p. 760). Having clearly identified himself with 'our crippl'd Zone', Slothrop's song now affirms the value and the salvation of the preterite in rejecting the Puritan hierarchization which finds its way into the various closed systems of the novel. This song also expresses a belief in historical continuity, and its final words, 'Now everybody-', recall an earlier song of hope and community: 'Maybe we should stick together part o' the way, and/Skies'll be bright-er some day!/Now ev'rybody' (G R, p. 677). In its insistence that everybody join in its chorus, this song indicates, in a concise form, the expansion of Oedipa's individual concern for human relationship into a wider, communal concern, and at the heart of this concern is a conviction that human choice shapes the human world.
Afterword

With Pynchon's closing invitation to a communion which looks hopefully toward the future, the shape of the American novel has come a considerable way from Hemingway's retreat into an isolated immediacy. This is not to suggest that optimism or an impulse towards community only enters the American literary scene with Pynchon and his contemporaries. Pynchon's significance, rather, lies in his sense of a vital connection between personal and communal possibilities. In Pynchon, optimism is rooted in a vision of community which is made possible by a comprehension of the community's social-historical life-processes, an attitude quite distinct from an ideal of unlimited personal possibility existing beyond society and history. Consequently, Pynchon does not share the nihilism of the twentieth-century idealist who feels trapped within social-historical structures inimical to the transcendental ideal. His sense of community, again, does not depend upon an utopian ideal of a perfected American society lying in the past or the future, as determined by some extrahistorical principle. For Pynchon, self and society are bound together by an understanding of the underlying historical processes common to them both. The perception of a nonfinite, uncertain, continuously changing historical process, indeed, lets Pynchon reject a world conceived in determinist, ideal terms. A root indeterminacy and uncertainty lies at the heart of human experience, making possible an optimism even as Pynchon details the horrors of recent history. Pynchon's historical sense, in short, gives him an understanding of the continuous, developmental relation between self and society which is denied to the transcendentalist or the nihilist.

The significance of the diverging views of a Hemingway and a Pynchon, then, lies in the reopening of historical debate witnessed by the latter's work. A recovery of historical perception calls into question those
idealist perspectives which have dominated American cultural life. Turner's conception of America, for example, continued by more recent historians like Lipset and Nash Smith with their conceptions of a 'first new nation' or a 'virgin land', has been challenged by other writers such as Cunliffe, Pole and Noble. Similarly, the maintenance of an idealist literary tradition by critics as various as Lewis, Hassan, Hoffman and Poirier, with their 'American Adam' or 'radical innocence', has been reexamined in the work of Howe, Lynen, Tanner and Kermode, among others. As the idealist conception of America has come under scrutiny, the notion of a unique America freed from history into Turner's ideal space of unbounded possibility, in particular, has been given a fresh analysis as a philosophical and ideological proposition rather than as an existential and metaphysical given.

In the preceding chapters, the development of the idealist perspective and its historicist reexamination has been investigated as it has informed the work of a number of twentieth-century novelists. Increasingly, the idealist position has been under pressure, as evidenced by the sense of crisis which is Henry Adams's legacy, through the modernism of Pound and Eliot, to the contemporary apostles of apocalypse and decay. The 'literatures' of exhaustion, silence and absurdity, for example, record some of the ways in which the idealist has presented this crisis. A fear of entrapment and alienation determined by social-historical circumstances, in effect, signals a fear of losing the limitless spatial and metaphysical possibilities promised by the transcendental dream. On the one hand, the idealist writer has responded to the felt loss of a physical 'space' by retreating into an imaginative 'inner space', as in Poirier's notion of 'a world elsewhere'. Conversely, he has reduced the dimensions of his 'outer space' by retreating from contemporary society into a solitude which finds a major exemplum, for American culture, in the work of Ernest Hemingway. In either case, the ideal 'space' has narrowed into a defensive retreat which can be set against encroaching social-historical
patterns of relatedness.

Given this diminution of the ideal, Hemingway can be taken as a representative figure for the fate of the ideal in the twentieth-century. His natural world, always the location of an ideal life, presents an imprecise, generalized landscape. After *In Our Time*, this ideal world is no longer the specific American space shaping a unique American character, the very emblem of an unbounded personal autonomy as extolled by the nineteenth-century transcendentalist. Rather, it would seem to be any space the Hemingway hero can find away from contemporary western civilization. Again and again, this character is drawn to the margins of modern civilization, to the peasant societies of Spain, Italy and the Caribbean or to the pre-industrial societies of East Africa. The behaviour of the Hemingway hero, moreover, is confined to a highly selective set of ideal acts, the signs of the ritual enactment of his "code". As Hemingway's work unfolds, this narrow range of activity becomes a generalized ideal which is far removed from the unbounded possibility of the transcendent ideal. Whole areas of human experience are lost to this figure as he flees social relations and attempts to deny historical pattern, both of a personal and a collective kind.

Hemingway's landscape sets the tone of the modern ideal space where, as Norman Mailer's own war-wounded hero says in *The Deer Park*, 'everything is in the present tense'. Mailer's own attempts to write 'instant history', coupled to his particular brand of millenarianism, testify to his own search for a new ahistorical ideal (Kazin, *Bright Book of Life*, p. 238). Such efforts notwithstanding, however, this 'present tense' represents a failure of historical understanding rather than a positive ideal. This is, for example, the constricted present of Rabbit Angstrom in John Updike's *Rabbit Run* (London, 1961). Updike's present tense narrative records an attempt to escape historical pattern into an immediate life of perpetual motion. Rabbit's story, however, begins and ends

on the image of a basketball player being crowded out of a game, an emblem of Rabbit's sense of the diminution of the ideal space. In Saul Bellow's first novel *Dangling Man* (1946), conversely, an escape from social and historical pattern is actually achieved, but the mitigating circumstances with which Bellow surrounds his narrator crucially qualifies his representation of the ideal. Joseph's army call-up releases him from social-historical pattern into an immediate present which suggests an ideal "inner space"; Joseph is given the possibility of an unbounded imaginative space. The elimination of a social-historical dimension to his life, however, leaves Joseph in a state of inertia which approaches paralysis, from which he must escape into the regimented pattern of army-life to save himself. Just as for Rabbit Angstrom there proves to be no unlimited external space, so also Joseph finds that the inner space of the ideal is, in reality, a void.

The twin discoveries of Rabbit and Joseph are central to the fate of the transcendental ideal as it enters the work of those contemporary novelists who have begun to interrogate the ideal in the light of their own recovery of a historical understanding. As the sense of this ideal has grown tenuous in the twentieth century, a number of major novelists have begun to question the idealist conception of America, so that an alternative historicist viewpoint begins to emerge. This thesis has not attempted to present an exhaustive account of the many and multifarious forms taken by this development. Rather, it has concentrated on five novelists who share a reawakened historical consciousness, but whose own diversity of style and content indicates something of the complexity of these writers when taken as a group. These writers cannot easily be gathered under one banner or set into one school. There is no one formula which will identify their works. Certain contemporary criticism, indeed, tends to introduce divisive generic terms which suggest a non-commonality between them, seeing the romantic in Fitzgerald, the moralist in Malamud, and the anarchist, the absurd and the apocalyptic in Kesey, Heller and Pynchon respectively. It has been one part of this thesis, however, to argue for a fundamental
similarity of perspective between these writers, in their various efforts to recover an understanding of the historical process. In so doing, each comes finally to reject the idealist conceptions which have dominated their culture.

The work of Scott Fitzgerald, therefore, provides a useful introduction to the modern history of the ideal, in that it forms around a debate between idealist and historicist interpretations of the American new world. Successively, Blaine, Patch, Gatsby, Diver and Stahr pursue their individual imaginations of the ideal, but in each case some corruption is revealed within the ideal vision. None of the women who are associated with the ideal prove actually to be ideal; the reality of Gloria, Daisy or Nicole is one of greed, selfishness, and even incest. The Fitzgerald idealist, again, succumbs to the lethargy of a Patch or a Diver, or the criminality of a Gatsby or a Stahr. Fitzgerald also uncovers the self-destruction or the self-deception which follows the pursuit of the dream. In The Great Gatsby, indeed, he has provided a case-history in this impulse towards an idealization of experience in the thought and behaviour of Carraway, his narrator. Crucial evidence in Carraway's narrative strategy of implication and supposition, both in his linguistic usage and in his carefully selective memory, reveals a character in the process of realigning his experience of Gatsby, imaginative as well as actual, into a form which can carry his own idealist conception of the wider American experience. It is this very process of idealization, rather than the encroachments of history and society, which ultimately imprisons Fitzgerald's characters. The pursuit of the ideal, and the continued denial of social-historical relations, leads to an ambiguous consciousness in which the idealist, like Gatsby, seeks to repeat an idealized experience without ever coming to understand it. Carraway's existential crisis, as well as its apparent resolution, therefore, proves to be a function of his idealist perspective.

This attempted idealization of experience reappears in the work of Malamud, where once again characters imprison themselves as a result of their ideal visions. The characteristic Malamud protagonist searches
for a new life freed from a past which records only a series of personal limitations, economic, political and social. In an ideal movement out of past social-historical circumstances, he hopes to discover new possibilities. During his journey, however, this figure finds no ideal life, and eventually he realises that he must reexamine his past life if he is to understand his experiences. The development of Alpine in *The Assistant*, for example, may stand as representative of this pattern. Alpine comes to New York seeking a new 'opportunity' which will erase the failure and dissipation of the past. In his encounter with Bober, a poor grocer, however, he finds that his perception of this opportunity begins to change, until he comes to accept Bober's commitments and responsibilities both to family and family business. Bober provides Alpine with a model for a meaningful past, in effect, as Alpine discovers a purpose and a value in Bober's history which causes him to examine his own history. Through his commitment to Bober's values, Alpine discovers a meaning to Bober's life which Bober himself has largely lost sight of. The store is not a 'tomb' for Alpine as it was for Bober, but rather that location in which he may recover a history and a future possibility. Helen Bober's idealization of Alpine's purposeless past life as an emblem of unbounded possibility, moreover, further emphasizes the significance of Alpine's development. Such an ideal can lead only to a solipsistic "inner" space and eventually, in the case of Lesser in *The Tenants*, to the breakdown of self. Lesser's landscape, recalling the image of Jefferson's deserted mansion in Fitzgerald's *The Last Tycoon*, forms around a void; such would seem to be Malamud's answer to Poirier's 'world elsewhere', and to the narcissistic ideal of the writer enclosed within his own imaginative universe.

If Fitzgerald and Malamud have turned their attention to the imaginative 'inner' space of the modern idealist, Heller focuses on the sense of entrapment within social-historical patterns which has given rise to a contemporary nihilism. Bureaucratic structures, military and political, enclose the respective worlds of *Catch-22* and *Good as Gold*. These struc-
tures demand a total determination of human thought and behaviour, despite his final leap at the end of *Catch-22*, there is no ideal space into which Yossarian can escape. The random world of these two novels, however, recalling also the disjunction and determinism of Hemingway's world, is not presented as a universal system by Heller. Syntactic simplification, for example, does not so much record an absence of relational pattern as it encodes a purposive elimination of relational comprehension perceived as part of a domination by given social-historical systems. The bureaucratic apparatus presents a world in which historical understanding is not possible, thereby hoping to confine characters to its own present reality; its logic of domination, expressed particularly in its enclosing styles of discourse, seeks to incorporate all possible opposition. Such an interpretation is confirmed by *Something Happened*, where Heller turns to a psychological case-study of a representative bureaucrat. Slocum, Heller's narrator, again rejects all social-historical pattern to his public life within a corporate management structure; his private life, moreover, comes to fit the pattern established by this corporately defined identity. As in Fitzgerald and Malamud, this ahistorical space is achieved by means of an idealization of experience, in which Slocum presents his own thoughts and behaviour in relation to a predetermined idealist form. Slocum's strategy, like that of Carraway, depends upon a strategic use of implication and supposition both to insinuate the ideal of an absolute cosmological law and to disguise his own manipulation of the narrative. His achieved ideal, moreover, represents an advance over the personalized ideals of a Carraway or a Lesser, suggesting something of the changes he effects upon the ideal. The ideal is now projected onto a corporate structure rather than an individual person like Gatsby, and thus appears embodied in a social institution. Lesser's murderous proclivities which derive from his idealist self-absorption, again, are rationalized by Slocum as the operation of an external, implacable law. In Slocum's ability to rationalize the irrational and to defend an authoritarian, dehumanized structure, Heller observes the continuing vitality of the idealist impulse and the dangerous implications of a social philosophy
founded upon an elimination of the historical sense.

Kesey also begins with a sense of entrapment, and to some extent takes up where Heller leaves off. Beginning with the fact of a depleted historical sensibility, Kesey explores the social mechanisms responsible for this condition and then traces an attempt to recover a historical perception as the contemporary social reality becomes comprehensible to his protagonists. In both his novels, Kesey's narrators develop a historical awareness which allows them to reassess their lives and to leave behind a narrow immediacy which had hitherto enclosed them; this development is traceable in a systematic pattern of tenses. Once again, the recovery of a personal past is a prerequisite of any rediscovery of personal possibility and autonomy, and at the heart of the recovered past is a commitment to human relationships. Bromden's realization that the hospital ward has formed into a community, for example, records his perception of the crucial change which has taken place; the human reality beneath the reified world of Nurse Ratched's domain is once more visible to him. Although external determinist pressures remain powerful in Kesey's world, therefore, while the external landscape remains a dangerously fluid place, Kesey is not content to admit that a traumatized immediacy is an incurable existential malaise. His present tense, in other words, is not that of the amnesiac heroes in Hemingway's In Our Time or Mailer's Barbary Shore. For Kesey, a historical consciousness, with its attendant sense of possibility, may yet be achieved.

Returning finally to Pynchon, we find an exploration of the idealist imagination in the context of its most extensive social-historical consequences for twentieth-century civilization. The self-destructiveness of a Lesser, the narcissism of a Carraway, and the dehumanization of self of a Slocum, have expanded into larger ideologies and social structures in Pynchon. In particular, Pynchon charts the development of an apocalyptic frame of mind which has its modern origin, in his novels, in Henry Adams. Apocalypse becomes an ideology for Pynchon's corporate 'Firm' as it pursues a vision of total domination over human thought and behaviour, consciousness
and subconsciousness. From Stencil's fabrication of an individual sense of history as apocalypse in *V.*, we move to the socialized forms of apocalypse in *Gravity's Rainbow*. As Pynchon explores these patterns, however, he develops a historical sense which opens up the closed, ideal world to reveal a very different world founded on uncertainty and probability. In doing so, he finally comes to reject the idealist conception of human autonomy as an unbounded movement in the metaphysical space of the transcendental moment. Indeed, the final words of his last published work enunciates a message equally supported by Fitzgerald, Malamud, Kesey and Heller. We are all to join in William Slothrop's song of hope and community, which demands that we exercise our historical sense: 'now everybody -'.
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