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Manipulating Uncertainty: Thomas Pynchon's Quest for Mysterious Aesthetics

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Dedication

To the memory of my father

Abstract

The loss of truth that represented the postmodern fiction was built upon the widespread loss of certainty that appeared as a result of the Second World War. However, the concept of truth in relation to the subject appeared as an aesthetic achievement of self-judgment. In this thesis, we argue that postmodern novelist Thomas Pynchon manipulates the postmodern widespread ideological loss of truth by depicting it as a controlling mystery to conceptualize a planned aestheticism that represents a valued notion of the self-achieving individual. In particular, the thesis aims to show Thomas Pynchon as a novelist who takes advantage of postmodernism. The failure of truth to represent an exact certainty leads the subject to establish a firm self-judgment to replace the old perspectives of opinion making. This replacement is called subjectivity. In G. W. F. Hegel's philosophy, the subjective notion of the individual should be related to art to create a certain aestheticism in art works. Considering the postmodern loss of truth and Hegel's philosophy of aestheticism, Thomas Pynchon takes advantage of the postmodern defeat of truth by representing his works as postmodernist, or as most critics do, to achieve more artistic objectives. This can mainly be proved by analyzing the three main aspects of aestheticism which are freedom, experience and imagination. . As an artist, Thomas Pynchon should depict these steps to achieve an aesthetic piece of art, as it is shown in Hegel's aesthetic lectures.

Key Words: Thomas Pynchon, postmodernism, truth, aesthetics, manipulation.

ملخص

يبني مفهوم الحقيقة الذي يمثل الكتابة النثرية لعصر ما بعد الحداثة على نفيه و اعتباره غير موجود نتيجة للحرب العالمية الثانية. في هذه الأطروحة، روائي ما بعد الحداثة توماس بينشون يعالج فقدان الحقيقة على أنه سر السيطرة على جمالية العمل الأدبي و الذي يتلخص في إعطاء قيمة فريدة للذات في ما يخص صناعة القرار. ويهدف هذا البحث لإظهار مزايا توماس بينشون كروائي. غياب الحقيقة يؤدي لإقامة حكم ذاتي راسخ ليحل محل وجهات النظر القديمة في صنع الرأي وهذا ما يسمى باستبدال الذاتية. في فلسفة جي دبليو إف هيغل، ينبغي أن ترتبط فكرة الذاتية بالفن لخلق جمالية معينة في الأعمال الفنية. بالنظر إلى فقدان ما بعد الحداثة من حقيقة وفلسفة هيغل الجمالية، توماس بينشون يستفيد من ما بعد الحداثة لتحقيق أهداف جمالية. وهذا يمكن أن يثبت بشكل رئيسي من خلال تحليل الجوانب الرئيسية الثلاثة من الجمالية التي هي الحرية، والخبرة والخيال. . كفنان، يجب على توماس بينشون تصوير هذه الخطوات لتحقيق قطعة جمالية كما هو مبين في المحاضرات الجمالية لهيغل.

الكلمات الرئيسية: توماس بينشون، ما بعد الحداثة، الحقيقة، الجمالية، الاستغلال.

Résumé

Le dogme de réalité qui a représenté la fiction postmoderne est basé sur la déperdition de certitude suite de la deuxième guerre mondiale. Toutefois, le concept de la réalité en relation avec l'artiste est apparu comme un accomplissement esthétique de ce dernier. Dans cette thèse, je soutiens que l'auteur postmoderne Thomas Pynchon manipule la perte postmoderne de la vérité pour conceptualiser un esthétisme qui représente une notion de l'autoréalisation individuelle. En particulier, la thèse vise à montrer les avantages de Thomas Pynchon comme un postmoderne qui s'est ouvert la voie en tant que romancier. L'échec de la vérité pour représenter une certitude exacte conduit le sujet à établir un jugement pour remplacer les anciennes perspectives d'opinion. Ce remplacement est appelé subjectivité. Dans la philosophie de G. W. F. Hegel, la notion subjective de l'individu doit être liée à l'art pour créer un certain esthétisme dans les œuvres d'art. Compte tenu de la perte postmoderne de la vérité et de la philosophie de Hegel de l'esthétisme, Thomas Pynchon profite du postmodernisme en représentant ses œuvres comme postmoderne pour atteindre des objectifs plus artistiques. Cela peut notamment être prouvé en analysant les trois principaux aspects de l'esthétisme qui sont la liberté, l'expérience et l'imagination. En tant qu'artiste, Thomas Pynchon représente ces trois étapes avant d'atteindre une pièce esthétique d'art.

Mots clés: Thomas Pynchon, le postmodernisme, la vérité, l'esthétisme, la manipulation.

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General Introduction

Background

“Thomas Pynchon is an enigma shrouded in a mystery veiled in anonymity.”¹

The *CNN* report and other reports² on Thomas Pynchon instigate a certain approach of analyzing the writer’s fiction in our work. It is an approach that is inspired by the intellectuality and the beauty in which the report itself is written. “Thomas Pynchon is an enigma” suggests that the writer is difficult to analyze. What comes to mind here are writers like James Joyce and Virginia Woolf. However, the reporter says that he is an Enigma “Shrouded in a mystery” what makes one think of Edgar Allen Poe and the mystery that surrounds him. Though, Thomas Pynchon is “Veiled in anonymity”. Hence, Thomas Pynchon is an unknown James Joyce and Edgar Allen Poe. How can an unknown James Joyce and Edgar Allen Poe be analyzed, and in which approach can he be handled?

The new philosophical approach of analyzing literature is a very effective approach for “The great critic must be a philosopher, for from philosophy he will learn serenity, impartiality, and the transitoriness of human things.”³ Thomas Pynchon’s fiction needs serenity and impartiality. However, fiction is art⁴ and the artistic way of analyzing art is by approaching it aesthetically⁵. Frederic Hegel is considered as the father of aesthetics. A grasp on Hegel’s philosophy is needed.

Hegel’s thinking could be traced in the various philosophies that he presents during his career. He participates in the aesthetical scene that includes several philosophers from his

¹ *Where's Thomas Pynchon?* by Charles Feldman, *CNN* (5 June 1997)

² Thomas Pynchon’s fiction is like a drug, plunging the addict into a shadowy world of paranoia and conspiracy” By Ian Rankin.

³ W. Somerset Maugham (1874-1965) *British novelist and playwright*.

⁴ “Fiction is art and art is the triumph over chaos” John Cheever.

⁵ “It is self-evident that nothing concerning art is self-evident anymore” Theodore W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*.

peers, formers and contemporaries. Hegel shares the attempt to define aesthetics with philosophers like Emanuel Kant and Michel Foucault. Kant illustrates aesthetics in saying about an object, for example, “That is a beautiful “. Kant believes that such aesthetic judgments should have a key distinctive feature. They are neutral, which means that we take pleasure in something because we give it the judgment of beautiful, rather than judging it beautiful because we find it pleasurable.⁶

Michel Foucault’s aesthetical perception is different from Kant’s and Hegel’s. Foucault relates aesthetics as an appreciation of objects to existence. In Foucault's philosophy, experiences of oneself are not particular, but are a part of relations. The individual constitutes a certain relationship between him and himself. Foucault designated the relation to oneself and one's existence as the main area of ethical concern and the most important field where aesthetic values are to be applied.⁷ The philosopher’s aesthetic notion mainly relies on subjectivity.

Although, Hegel’s philosophy of art is merely influenced by Kant, the philosopher has traced his own Hegelian path towards aesthetics. Hegel’s aesthetics can be clearly explained by a reference to the end of art. The philosopher understands aesthetics as the happening of truth. Contrarily to Kant’s and Foucault’s aesthetics, Hegel relates aesthetics to certainty and truth. The traditional aesthetic approach refuses to do so. This rejection is a consequence of a progress of thought that has shaped the world we live in.⁸

Hegel’s philosophy of art has drawn its own face, with a reference to the former philosophies, but with a rejection of some of them. The fact brings about a certain thought

⁶ In *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (1755), Kant talks about aesthetics by dealing with pleasure and beauty and the relation between them. Kant thinks that pleasure is produced by the appreciation of the beauty in objects.

⁷ Michel Foucault’s aesthetics of existence are well explained in his book *L’usage du plaisir* or *The use of Pleasure* (1984).

⁸ Hegel’s philosophy of aesthetics is usually related to Kant and Heidegger, however, the philosopher has shaped a unique form of aesthetics based on the acceptance of truth as fundamental in art work.

that proves a certain evolution of the philosophy of aesthetics throughout history. This development has passed by different periods to reach the contemporary one. The contemporary aesthetic philosophy is categorically related to postmodernism.

The latter is neither a category nor a material object. It cannot be considered as a theory that includes a work of intellectual eminence and logic. Postmodernism seems to be homogeneous with aesthetics. This is proved by the celebration of freedom that both postmodernism and aesthetics show. If the postmodern aesthetics is Hegelian, it would consider truth as existing and factual in all domains. If it is Kantian, it would celebrate beauty as an appreciation of objects. However, it is Foucaultian because it relates beauty to the subject. Michel Foucault, like any other postmodernist, has gained the right to own the postmodern characteristics, even in philosophy, by their lucid manifestation of them.

Foucault is not the only postmodernists that exist in the world. Postmodernism is characterized by Ihab Hassan, in *The Postmodern Turn*, as a term that signifies Jacques Derrida, Jean-Francois Lyotard (philosophy), Michel Foucault, Hayden White (history), Jacques Lacan, Gilles Deleuze, R. D. Laing, Norman O. Brown (psychoanalysis), Herbert Marcuse, Jean Baudrillard, Jurgen Habermas (political philosophy), Thomas Kuhn, Paul Feyerabend (philosophy of science), Roland Barthes, Julia Kristeva, Wolfgang Iser, the “Yale Critics” (literary theory), Merce Cunningham, Alwin Nikolais, Meredith Monk (dance), John Cage, Karlheinz Stockhausen, Pierre Boulez (music), Robert Rauschenberg, Jean Tinguely, Joseph Beuys (art), Robert Venturi, Charles Jencks, Brent Bolin (architecture), and various authors from Samuel Beckett, Eugene Ionesco, Jorge Luis Borges, Max Bense, and Vladimir Nabokov to Harold Pinter, B. S. Johnson, Rayner Heppenstall, Christine Brooke-Rose, Helmut Heissenbuttel, Jurgen Becker, Peter Handke, Thomas Bernhard, Ernest Jandl, Gabriel Garcia Márquez, Julio Cortázar, Alain Robbe-Grillet, Michel Butor, Maurice Roche, Philippe Sollers,

and, in America, John Barth, William Burroughs, Thomas Pynchon, Donald Barthelme, Walter Abish, John Ashbery, David Antin, Sam Shepard, and Robert Wilson.⁹

Ihab Hassan's attempt to describe postmodernism by listing the prominent figures of the movement is an attempt to formalize what we call a movement. Nevertheless, there are some prominent figures of postmodernism that refuse to be associated to movements. One of them is Thomas Pynchon. The latter is known for his complex novels. His fiction and nonfiction writings include different subjects, genres and themes, counting the fields of history, music, science, and mathematics. Thomas Pynchon won the 1974 U.S. National Book Award for Fiction for his novel *Gravity's Rainbow*. The writer also served two years in the United States Navy and studied at Cornell University to get a degree. He published several short stories in the late 1950s and early 1960s. After that, he began composing the novels for which he is best known: *V.* (1963), *The Crying of Lot 49* (1966), *Gravity's Rainbow* (1973), and *Mason & Dixon* (1997). One important thing about Pynchon is that few photographs of him have ever been published, and rumors about his location and identity have circulated since the 1960s.¹⁰

Thomas Pynchon's refusal (theoretically) to accept the inclusion of his name within the popular list of postmodernists comes as a result of his unique understanding of literature, fiction, and art. Thomas Pynchon's fiction is scientific, dense, complicated, paranoid, conspired, and inimitable. Plenty of scholars have devoted their entire life to study and criticize his fiction; one of them is Harold Bloom. Bloom's introduction to *Modern Critical*

⁹ Although Ihab Hassan mentions a lot of names to which postmodernism can be associated, however, he thinks that they are too heterogeneous to form a movement.

¹⁰ Few biographies were published about Pynchon, though, there are some electronic sources that are devoted to the biography of pynchon, one of which is *Thomas Ruggles Pynchon Jr.: A Man Born Through a Sea-Change From Out of An Oyster*. The information mentioned is taken from the site.

Interpretations: Thomas Pynchon (1987)¹¹ is considered as one of his greatest canon of the twentieth-century American most inspiring writers and the greatest works of American art produced in the same century. Harold Bloom shows the importance of Thomas Pynchon in the introduction to this book. He explains the significance of the writer in establishing a unique way to convince the reader that there exists a conspiracy against him premeditated by the system.

Harold Bloom deals with Thomas Pynchon's fiction as a source of paranoia and conspiracy. Due to the complexity of Pynchon's fiction, plenty of scholars, like Harold Bloom, choose to analyze the paranoia-conspiracy side, not because of the insignificance of the literary context but because of the puzzling paranoid context that the critique tries to unwrap.

Lots of scholars deal with the issue of paranoia in Thomas Pynchon's fiction among which is Albert Rolls.¹² The latter has written loads of articles that analyze the works of Thomas Pynchon. In most of them, Rolls shows a great interest in the issue of paranoia and conspiracy, an interest that reflects the great will to unwrap the complexity of the writer's fiction.

The issue of paranoia is not the only issue that attracts Pynchon's critique's interest. Nihilism is a very important subject that is detected in Pynchon's criticism. Thus, most criticism of Thomas Pynchon tackles two main aspects which are the loss of truth (that leads people to be paranoid), and nihilism that controlled the American society and Thomas Pynchon's fictional society after the war. This wave of criticism can be divided into two main parts according to the main theme that dominates each one of them. The first faction of critics sees Pynchon as a nihilist writer similar to those who emerge as a result of destructing wars.

¹¹ A collection of articles published and introduced by Harold Bloom.

¹² In his essays *Thomas Pynchon and the Vacuum Salesman in Guadalajara* and *The Two V.s of Thomas Pynchon, or From Lippincott to Jonathan Cape and Beyond*

The second group of critics shows the paranoid society that appears in all Pynchon's novels. The latter is the most significant aspect that controlled Pynchon's criticism.

Criticism on Pynchon has always been paranoid in the sense that it is more about contradiction between critics than about Pynchon's works themselves. Critics sank in this paranoid world to become a part of it.¹³ This handling of Pynchon and his fiction changed in a way the direction of the study of his works as a piece of prose and literature or rather as a piece of art. Most Critics ignored that Pynchon's works can be studied from this perspective.

The very few groups of critics¹⁴ who have already dealt with Pynchon's works as a piece of art show the chaotic literary contexts of his fiction that appears in new literary techniques that go with the scientific context of the texts. This kind of studies ends up by giving a chaotic picture of the writer's fiction but not a beautiful aesthetic one.

Art for art sake is a concept that has evolved in literary and philosophical debates since the nineteenth century. It expresses the value of art that should be divorced from utilitarian and ethical functions. It is the way literature should be written or fiction as a part of it. Indeed, significant works¹⁵ were devoted recently to the study of fiction as a piece of art referring to the writing of imaginative worlds that depict the subjective interest of characters and individuals free from realistic concentrations.

Critics of Thomas Pynchon have generally avoided the artistic perspectives of his works; as a result, the concept of aestheticism has not been thoroughly examined. A well

¹³ As George Levine and David Leverenz refer to in their introduction to *Mindful Pleasures*

¹⁴ *Paranoia and the Aesthetics of Chaos in Thomas Pynchon's Gravity's Rainbow* by George B. Moore is the best example of this kind of criticism.

¹⁵ Joanna Russ' *Towards an Aesthetic of Science Fiction* is a significant work that can illustrate this kind of writings.

study and analysis of both aesthetics and Thomas Pynchon's fiction can result a new handling of both Pynchonian fiction and the philosophy of aesthetics.

Statement of the Problem

In our work, Thomas Pynchon is neither approved nor proved to be aesthetic or to represent an aesthetical work; rather he is depicted in an image of quest for aesthetics to come out with achievements that are more or less successful regarding the kind of quest that he looks for. Thomas Pynchon's kind of quest is clearly seen in the paranoia and the conspiracy concepts that control the themes of his novels. Thomas Pynchon looks for mystery and since he is a postmodernist or he belongs to the era of postmodernism, the writer uses or, to a certain extent, manipulates the loss of truth that characterize postmodernism to make his reader believe and enjoy the hidden mystery behind the themes of his novels.

This study examines the fiction of Thomas Pynchon in light of subjective aesthetic theory of Hegel that has been overlooked along with the Kantian and the postmodern Foucaultian theories. It analyzes the manipulative technique that Thomas Pynchon uses towards the postmodern loss of truth by depicting it as a controlling mystery to conceptualize a planned new aesthetics that represents a valued notion of the self-achieving individual.

This study will mainly focus on the same ideas considered in other critical works on Pynchon's fiction as conspiracy, paranoia and chaos, however, with a different point of view. It will represent the study of Pynchon aesthetically as to open a debate about the analysis of his fiction from this perspective. In addition, it will confirm Thomas Pynchon's manipulation of postmodernism as a notion to settle this aesthetic view.

It will defend the suggested hypothesis formed in the words: Thomas Pynchon manipulates the postmodern widespread loss of truth by depicting it as a controlling mystery

to conceptualize a planned new aestheticism that represents a valued notion of the self-achieving individual.

Methodology

The thesis methodological division considers the basic aspects of aesthetics. Aesthetics of every artistic work may include an aesthetic experience, freedom and imagination.¹⁶ For Kant, the aesthetic experience is a category that goes along with the aesthetic freedom, whereas, the aesthetic imagination is a result of the aesthetic experience.¹⁷

Before analyzing Thomas Pynchon's works relying on the three aspects of aesthetics, we have to consider Thomas Pynchon's aesthetic idea. Thomas Pynchon's aesthetic idea is different from the standard one. The writer is depicted in the thesis with a reflection on the notion of aesthetics in history and that of his contemporaries to come out with his own view of the concept that is characterized by manipulation.¹⁸

Thomas Pynchon's aesthetic idea draws a different dimension of aesthetics for his works. Aesthetic freedom comes first in Thomas Pynchon's novels for he has to free himself from the old concepts of quest that are totally different from his. After that, the reader of Thomas Pynchon's novels is depicted in an aesthetic experience of the writer's themes of paranoia and conspiracy. Finally, our work presents the aesthetic imagination and achievements of Thomas Pynchon's journey towards aesthetics. The aesthetic freedom, experience, and imagination are all considered, in our thesis, as a Pynchonian aesthetic experience.

For a better location of information, the dissertation will be based on MLA style (Modern Language Association).

¹⁶ Emmanuel Kant. *Critique of Judgement*. 1790.

¹⁷ Kim, Kisso. *Kant and the Fate of Aesthetic Experience: A Deconstructive Reading PhD thesis*. Graduate School of Binghamton: New York, 2007.

¹⁸ A view that is going to be discussed in the core of the thesis.

Literature Review

The two parts of the dissertation are critical, analytical, and methodical. Hence, they require a more qualitative literature. Quantitative literature is used to bring supportive data concerning the literary and philosophical discussions. Each part relies on specific primary and secondary sources that serve the dominating theme. Mainly, the primary sources are Thomas Pynchon's novels and his early collection of short stories, G. W. F. Hegel's original lectures on aestheticism, Kant's *Critique of the Power of Judgment* and original books of postmodernists.

The first part relies on Thomas Pynchon's earlier short story *entropy* and other stories in the collection of short stories *Slow Learner* that represents an original view point of the writer concerning truth. Moreover, it will insert opinions of G. W. F. Hegel and Kant to open a discussion about truth as a controlling theme. The second part depends on Thomas Pynchon's *V*, Michel Foucault's famous postmodernist criticism. In addition, it will analyze novels like *Gravity's Rainbow*, *The Crying of Lot 49*, *Against the Day* and *Vineland*, *Mason and Dixon*, and *Bleeding Edge* in light of the philosophy of aesthetics.

Structure

Our thesis is divided into two parts. The first one represents the central theme of truth manipulation. It shows how Thomas Pynchon, in an early short story, depicts an unstable opinion about the postmodern world. By opening a discussion using the philosophy of aesthetics of Hegel and Kant, Pynchon reveals a manipulating doubt of certainty. In the construction of the aesthetic idea, truth postulates something conditioned or something far from certainty. Pynchon depicts this moment with a variety of abuses and overwriting that represents a forcing method of convincing the reader. The same methods are used after the construction of the aesthetic idea where we find that truth is not self-sufficient. In this stage,

Pynchon forces the understanding of concepts on characters rather than developing them. In this Part, Thomas Pynchon concludes that truth is not absolute and it is relative to other factors. At this moment, we realize that uncertainty is an old concept and not typically postmodern. Therefore, Thomas Pynchon manipulated the widespread postmodern truth to defend a more artistic, and aesthetic fiction.

The second part deals with Thomas Pynchon's aesthetic experience. Pynchon uses a well ordered plot that includes all of his novels to justify his manipulating new aesthetics. In the third chapter, we deal with the aesthetic quest. Pynchon launched a manipulating epistemological perspective of the human history in relation to truth. This is what we call the freedom of aestheticism. The latter paved the way for an absence of ethics, apocalyptic perception of life and an inspiring untrue. The first step was meant to deny the existence of any given truth in the contemporary world. An early stage of the quest was achieved through his first novel *V*.

History in Thomas Pynchon's *V* is an endangered species. Using the novel, Thomas Pynchon refers to an inner structure or a hidden landscape. It is a secret *V* that should be reached through characters. What comes to mind here is history, as if it is lost and cannot be found what results a huge doubt about its existence as a concept based on the old perspectives. Postmodern philosophers, like Michel Foucault, tackled this aspect with a similar point of view. Foucault sees himself not as a historian but as a writer who creates fiction. He says that what can history produce is only fiction.

History cannot be recognized as true by Thomas Pynchon so is truth itself. The story of truth in the postmodern traditions begins with a modernist: Rene Descartes. Descartes¹⁹ discovered that our five senses, sight, smell, touch, taste, sound, cannot give absolute certain knowledge about the world. We all make mistakes. These mistakes often occur because of faulty sense perception. We think we see water on the roadway, for instance, but it turns out an optical illusion. Certainty cannot be attained through sense perception so is through other sciences. At this point, the subject is free from historical restrictions and he is released to experience aesthetics.

The fourth chapter deals with Thomas Pynchon's mysterious aesthetical experience through his novels *Gravity's Rainbow* and *The Crying of Lot 49*, *Vineland*, and *Against the Day*. The aesthetic experience can be defined as the value of the piece of art that can be found beautifully when the reader deals with it. The fiction of Thomas Pynchon is claimed to be aesthetical because of the aesthetic experience that the reader goes through during the process of reading the writer's fiction. This experience is achieved through a determined fiction within fiction. Thomas Pynchon created fictional worlds within novels to accomplish a valued mystery.

Conspiracy dominates the atmosphere of Pynchon's novels from their early beginning. In *Gravity's Rainbow*, the author depicts a mysterious conspiracy behind the V Rocket. The reader is always concerned with finding the secret behind this conspiracy. This concern can go over the main point of aesthetics which is experience. Solving a mystery with the absence of an absolute truth is the beauty of fiction within fiction.

¹⁹ Descartes, René. *Meditations on First Philosophy: in Which the Existence of God and the Distinction of the Soul from the Body are Demonstrated*. Trans. Donald A. Cress. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1993.

Paranoid characters in Thomas Pynchon's novels infect the reader. The latter becomes paranoid himself to experience the irrational fear and distrust of others. This experience is the second main aspect to develop an aesthetic experience through releasing fiction within fiction. Paranoia is mysterious; hence, the reader is puzzled.

The aesthetic experience can also be seen through the chaotic life that is depicted in Thomas Pynchon's fiction. It resembles the condition of disorder achieved through a fictional world. Here, the most important role is played by the character and the reader. The latter watches the character while he experiences confusion and enters an endless abyss. In addition, he enjoys a variety of a well-organized style and risky linguistics.

The fifth chapter is the last and the main important step of Thomas Pynchon's quest for aesthetics. It explains how Thomas Pynchon's grown imagination, after a long quest, achieves an intellectual status for itself. Intellectually, Thomas Pynchon can unreservedly juxtapose concepts. Continuously, the writer persists in presenting and representing the same themes in his late novels with a more acceptance of them by the reader.

The second part realizes Thomas Pynchon's quest for aesthetics which goes through three main aspects: the total depart from history as an important aspect of human life, the experience of aestheticism and the accomplishment of the targeted manipulation through imagination.

Part One
The Aesthetic Idea

Introduction

“What is that unforgettable line?”

Samuel Beckett, *Happy Days*

Samuel Beckett refers to Postmodernism as a memorable line of history²⁰. It is one of those lines that were written by a huge number of theorists, ideologists, writers, philosophers and common persons that participated in a way or another in the redaction of the human kind life. One can wonder about the number of lines that were written on history. It is huge for certain. Or one should reformulate the matter to ask rather about the number of lines that should be remembered in history.

Undeniably, Postmodernism is a significant line of history. It is the stage that changed men's life vitally. The line is written by various writers that participate in the process of its formulation. Postmodern line writers are divided into three parts. The first one writes about the term itself and others like postmodernists, postmodernity, and postmodern. The second writes about the term as a movement that appeared subsequently after the Second World War. The third writes about its significance as a term and a movement.

This Part deals with postmodernism as a movement that had a great influence on artists especially fiction writers. Thomas Pynchon, as an eminent figure of the postmodern period, was an important writer of the postmodern history. His fiction participated effectively in the writing of this period, but before all, he was influenced by it. The influence gave him an idea that goes through several steps. First, postmodernism represents an implausible truth that overwhelmed the author. The latter goes back to a huge treasure of historical and theoretical

²⁰ . In his play *Happy Days*, Samuel Beckett refers to postmodernism as it is seen in his heavy reliance on postmodern concepts such as the transgression of the body, the performative identity and the failure of truth to conceptualize itself within society.

opinions on truth. Second, it reflects a general idea on truth and art in a complicated aesthetic idea that is divided into two parts: the one that explains the author's need of art and aesthetics and the other that portrays postmodernists contrarily to Pynchon as subjectivists. Finally, it goes beyond aesthetics and depicts Pynchon himself in an abandonment of history as a whole to write a unique line form based aesthetically on a pynchonean idea.

Chapter One: Construction of the Aesthetic Idea

1.1- Implausible Truth

The implausible truth is the absence of certainty that appeared in the American society as a result of the Second World War. This reality about truth being inexistent was astonishing for the American society after its appearance in the 1960s. A lot of factors were responsible of the truth's surprising denial, one of which is the new philosophical skepticism. The latter is a new philosophical wave that came to doubt and reject the philosophies that claim to hold ultimate truth. It is this astonishment that made the truth implausible for Americans. America like any other nation has witnessed the shift from the age of certainty that is represented by modernism to the concrete absence of it embodied in postmodernism.

In his article *The Social Production of Postmodern Skepticism*, Steven Ward presents ideas of Foucault, Baudrillard, Lyotard and Derrida on the notion of skepticism in postmodernism. Ward sees that the four philosophers represent the most complicated vision of skepticism in the postmodern era. The philosophers agree on the fact that the current knowledge (that was current few years ago) does not embody a fair vision of society and the world as a whole. They see that it is not fair enough to have such spectators of life as the modernist who see and give a wrong vision of the world. This kind of spectators tends to hide the truth and reality about humanity. Baudrillard, Lyotard and Derrida see that it is not very important to change the facts revealed by modernists by a more appropriate truth, as it is important to change the spectators themselves (247).

Ward says that " In postmodern skepticism, however, the culprit that foils the arrival of truth is not radical change in nature but rather the shifting terrain of power configurations (Foucault 1972), incommensurable language games (Lyotard 1984), simulational technologies (Baudrillard 1983) or arbitrary linguistical hierarchies (Derrida 1976) within culture" (247).

These philosophers see that the most remarkable problem that humanity faces (during the domination of the modern era) is the sickness of culture transferred and constructed by inappropriate spectators. Ward believes that the postmodern philosophers tend to be rebellion like many other philosophers that appear in history, however, the only difference that distinguishes them from other philosophical rebellions is the fact that postmodernists refuse to stay silent in front of the culture manipulation and abuse (248). Ward says that:

"Over the last twenty years it has created wide-ranging intellectual coalitions, formed distinct "schools," established journals, written books, held conferences and made appearances in the popular media. Its shouts of the unreliability of all epistemological strategies of truth-seeking are often louder today than the cries of objectivity, reliability and absolutism at the other end of the knowledge spectrum" (248).

Ward concludes his paper by admitting that postmodernism is a large term that includes different concepts, thoughts, and ideas, however, he says that skepticism is the only conception that unites all of the postmodernists' aspects. He believes that postmodernists share the attempt to attain one shared truth that is based on the search for it by means of doubt and suspicion (260).

Skepticism is one of the basic concepts that represent the notion of postmodernism, and so is controversy. Generally, most of the movements that appear in history and call for change are based on reason and rationality, however, postmodernism rejects rationality in all its sorts and see that it limits the human's thinking. In his article *Introduction: Postmodernism and Rationality*, Nick Turnbull believes that the importance of postmodernism lies in its disagreement with the old concepts. He sees that its controversy attracts the scholars' attention and will to search and write more about it (5).

Turnbull thinks that these new ideas that came into view with the coming of postmodernism are new trended regarding the American culture. He sees that postmodernism is a result of European, and especially, French influence from philosophers like Michel Foucault (5). Nonetheless, America is claimed to be one of the most conscientiously observant societies currently (Gandolfo 1). It has demonstrated a doubtful view towards the belief in truth ever since the Second World War. A grasping analysis of the postmodern most common definitions and studies can demonstrate the real meaning of skepticism that leads to the “implausible truth.”

One of the most important figures of the postmodern scene is Jean-Francois Lyotard. In his book, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, the writer gives an expressive description on the postmodernists. He says:

I have read an art historian who extols realism and is militant for the advent of a new subjectivity. I have read an art critic who packages and sells "Transavantgardism" in the marketplace of painting. I have read that under the name of postmodernism, architects are getting rid of the Bauhaus project, throwing out the baby of experimentation with the bathwater of functionalism. I have read that a new philosopher is discovering what he drolly calls Judaeo-Christianism and intends by it to put an end to the impiety which we are supposed to have spread...(71)

According to Lyotard, the postmodernist is the historian, the artist, the architect, and the philosopher who revolutionizes his mind to conceptualize more subjective works. Lyotard sees that the historian is not even a historiographer in the postmodern condition; he is the subjectivist whose concern is to purge realism. He sees that an artist is no more an avant-

gardist; he is rather the salesperson of “Transvantgardism”. The architect is the proponent of Bauhaus, the eminent figure of modern architecture. And the philosopher is the creator of ideas out of the religious firmness. Lyotard calls artists to go back to the core of community and heal it from the shattering of it. Lyotard sees that artists are the responsible of establishing a certain identity to community.

Postmodernism is a conceptual idea that includes several fields. The *Routledge Companion to postmodernism* describes the term as a philosophical movement based on skepticism about cultural norms, old authority and conventional wisdom (Sim 3). In *Explaining Postmodernism*, the writer says that the term refers to the call of postmodernists to revolutionize and participate in the new era, the one of anti-modernism (Hicks 1). Otherwise, one can simply say that the word stands for its semantic meaning, thus, postmodernism is the period that comes subsequent to modernism.

Referring to the pre-postmodern period, that is the modern one, one can point out that the expression reveals a kind of development. The idea of development comes directly from the unconscious linguistic culture that each person has. It is said that a computer is modern because it has some new functions that have never existed before. It is said also that a house is modern because it is designed in specific architectural modern designs. It is said that a country is modern because it doesn't comply with the world order. It is said that a *person* is modern because he doesn't obey the old criteria of a traditional life.

If modernism refers to development then postmodernism refers to its opposite. The opposite of progress can be retreat. But, a kind of ambiguity is marked here. How can humanity step from progress to retreat? And our linguistic package cannot accept that. The question has two possible answers, either our linguistic heritage is erroneous or the term modernism is illusionist. If our linguistic legacy is incorrect, the problem is superior to a

word. One should doubt all the existing terms and their reference to concepts. If the word modernism is illusionary, the culpability is on its concept only.

Postmodernism suggests the second possibility. It says that modernism, as a linguistic word and as a concept, is misleading. The word modernism is based on two main ideas. First, we refer to the idea of rational independent individuals who think and act separately from other individuals; second, to the idea of absolute scientific knowledge and truth. Modernists' reflection of their ideas is illustrated as follows: "Modernism had two great wishes. It wanted its audience to be led toward a recognition of the social reality of the sign [...]; but equally it dreamed of turning the sign back to a bedrock of World/Nature/Sensation/Subjectivity which the to and fro of capitalism had all but destroyed." (Clark 9). This quotation is taken from a history book by J.G Clark, an art historian. Although, the writer is not a modernist, the words reflect the influence of modernism on intellectuals. The writer says that the great modernists' wish was to attract the artistic eye of the audience. But the greatest second wish, the writer adds, was to turn the sign's recognition towards world, nature, sensation and subjectivity, which is the transcendental aspect of modernism that is based on the awareness of nature as an important path to ideas.

The quotation shows the influence of modernism on intellectuals. The writer reflects what the modernists intended to transmit to this portion. He depicts the aim to spread symbolism socially and target to turn it to nature. The passage comes as a participation in the modernists' stream of writings to spread the modern ideology. The quotation shows two ideas or rather two possibilities. Either modernism is a tricky movement that can deceive even intellectuals or it is an ideological precise idea that could convince critics. Effectively, the idea of modernism continued to have a great influence on critics until the emergence of postmodernism as a movement and an idea.

Postmodernism launched an ideological war on modernism and deleted its existence. Postmodernism denied the legacy of modernism to conceptualize its own one. The reason is that modernism and postmodernism are oppositional in their senses. Referring to truth, postmodernism believes in the ultimate absence of it, while modernism believes in the ultimate existence of it. The fact made it easy for postmodernism to deny modernism by beating its belief in truth. An example of this is found in Theodore D. Kharpertian's book *A Hand to Turn the Time: The Menippean Satires of Thomas Pynchon*, in which he says that truth can be beaten easily by creating false premises that may lead to true as well as false conclusions. Their result is always uncertainty. He gives the example of the insects by saying that no insects have six legs, considering this as statement "A" that leads to statement "B" in which he states that no spiders have six legs to come with the conclusion that no spiders have six legs (20). The result may be true, which means that spiders do not have six legs. But since the two statements that lead to this conclusion are false, the conclusion is always doubtful.

As soon as the term Postmodernism started to be used critically, modernism signaled the beginning of the end of modernism. The term was first used in the title of a book entitled *Postmodern Resurfaced* in 1934 and in 1939 and in the 1940s. There is, however, very little permanence between these early uses and the discussion on postmodernism in the 1960s. The only field in which one finds actual continuity is literary criticism, at least from the early 1950s onwards, when Charles Olson chooses the term and begins to use it to refer to an anti-modernist turn in contemporary poetry with a specific anti-rationalist position. Olson's influence by Heidegger, and the impact of the French new criticism on American literary criticism near the beginning of the 1960s²¹, formed a recognition of postmodernism with a set of anti- Enlightenment arrangements that survive to the present time (Bertens 19).

²¹ New criticism was a formalist movement in literary theory that dominated the American literary criticism in the middle decades of the twentieth century (Searle, Leroy. "New

Charles Oslen was the first to use the term but not the first to think about it. Indeed, lots of thinkers²² considered the idea roughly in a way or another, taking into consideration the number of books, criticism and art works that emerged subsequent to Oslen's work. One should wonder and ask: why it had such an effective ground to delete the proved ideologically powerful modernism? Earlier, we referred to the two possibilities that justify the effective influence of modernism which are the precise or the deceptive modernism. If modernism is a deception for the people who believed in it then postmodernists are not deceived, but if it is truly precise, postmodernists should prove the opposite.

Modernists influenced both common and intellectual groups, though the influence could not mislead postmodernists (the term *mislead* is taken contextually from the postmodern vocabulary). They were doubtful, cynical, suspicious, and distrustful about the existence of modernism as a true concept. Jonathan Lethem says: "What exactly is postmodernism, modernism without anxiety" (Quotes). The quotation reflects two significant points. It shows the direct relation between modernism and postmodernism and the postmodernists' consciousness of that.

The comparison between modernism and postmodernism comes as follows: the first one is a movement in art, architecture and philosophy that was given the title of enlightenment. Modernists' main figures like Sigmund Freud and Albert Einstein defended the primacy of truth over doubt. In addition, they had elevated reason over faith. They believed in the purity of knowledge and certainty. A modernist was the one who believed that truth can be reached through question and investigation. However, postmodernism is typically based on the rejection of the preceding modern principles of enlightenment and reason. It

Criticism" in *The Johns Hopkins Guide to Literary Theory*, 2nd edition. Edited by Michael Groden, Martin Kreiswirth, and Imre Szeman. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005. Available online in PDF from the University of Washington).

²² Lot of thinkers and writers considered and recognized postmodernism as a term and as a movement taking for instance The Black Mountain Poets and the Beat Generation.

embodies skepticism about the overarching truth and any endeavor to find one. Postmodernism says that any attempt to find one truth results in an individual interpretation of reality (Bertens 5).

Unquestionably, every idea should be able to set its main beliefs to itself. One critic of a secondary work on postmodernism said that the author minimally supposed that modernism failed to see that ‘every reading is a misreading.’ The reviewer ignored to see or confess that on that principle, his reading of the book he was criticizing was indeed a misreading (Erickson 10). Here lies the biggest problem of postmodernism. The latter is ambiguity. Postmodernists say: “Don’t try to interpret any given idea in the world because you are certainly going to fall in the trap of individuality.” This is what this thesis calls the implausible truth.

Postmodernism deny certainty in a way but not another. It says that it is untrue that a certain truth exists in any sort of way in reality. Accordingly, the relation between truth certainty and reality should be presented regarding the modern and the postmodern views. To say that something is true is to admit that it is true independently from what we may expect, want or suppose (Luntley 3). To say that something is certain is to know without any hesitation that something is true. Reality can be described as the opposite of fiction. Something real doesn’t require interpretations (Kerr 76).

Modernists admit that truth is real and the individual should be certain about it. They rely on certainty to explain reality. Postmodernists say that truth is unreal and the individual should be uncertain about it. They rely on uncertainty to deny reality. Truth, then, is divided into two categories entitled as follows: *absolute truth* and *relative truth*. The first one is the modernist one. Norman Geisler and Frank Turek define truth in their book *I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist* as being exposed instead of being created, which means that

truth has always been present, it just stays hidden until someone comes and find it. They also say that truth has the ability to extend through all human cultures because of the logical nature of it. They give the example of mathematical symbols which are all the same for all cultures. They also refers to the static nature of truth that cannot be modified throughout time. Concerning change, Geisler and Turek say that only someone's conviction about it has the ability to change, but truth stays static perpetually (37-8).

A discussion of Geisler's and Turek's attitude towards truth can reveal different aspects that are linked to it. Truth is linked to science, culture, time, religion, and subjectivity. Science states that truth exists already and the scientists' work is presently to discover it. Supposedly, the scientist can discover that the sun will rise tomorrow at a specific time, but the sun exists already in the universe. The fact is a discovery. The discovery can be spread through different cultures because truth has the ability to extend through cultures. It cannot be changed on the following day, week or month because truth is unchanging. It is not a Christian or a Buddhist belief that the sun will rise tomorrow at 5 o'clock. And it is not a personal attitude that makes it rise at that time. These facts make truth unchangeable.

The second possibility is that of the postmodern relative truth. Postmodernists say that truth is relative because of many reasons. Jim Leffel summarizes postmodern relativism this way: "Relativism says the truth isn't fixed by outside reality, but is decided by a group or individual for themselves. Truth isn't discovered but manufactured. Truth is never changing, not only in insignificant matters of taste or fashion, but in crucial matters of spirituality, morality and reality itself" (31).

According to Leffel, truth is totally the opposite of that of the modernists. According to postmodernists, the sun rises at 5 o'clock because a group of scientists decide that. The fact

is not discovered, it is rather manufactured. It can be changed regarding the changing tastes of people and their spiritual and moral beliefs.

Alexander Jackson explains the concept of relative truth in his article *The Inflexibility of Relative Truth* by giving the example of food. He says that when someone tastes a specific food and admits that it is delicious, it does not mean that it is indeed tasty for all of us. Jackson says that curry could be tasty for him but not for his friends. When such a thing happens, Jackson and his friends disagree, and each one of them claims to be truthful and the others to be false. Jackson believes that some facts could not have a grasp on truth, which means that they could not own the whole truth. Here, truth depends on the taste of each one of them (Jackson and his friends). It is relative to the flavor of each one (409).

Jackson's description of relative truth shows that not all facts, aspects, and concepts may have an absolute truth. Some are just incapable of holding the whole truth. Hence, truth here is divided between people and tastes. When truth is divided, it cannot be absolute since different opinions are held here. The fact proves that the postmodern idea of truth could be justifiable, and/ or true.

Jackson argues in his paper that even relative truth itself is "inflexible." He suggests two ideas that may explain his claim. The first one is that what seems to be true for someone is actually the consequence of a generally accepted truth (409). Here, we can think of religion. If someone thinks that stealing is considered as a sin, it is not necessarily true that it is a sin, however, the truth here comes from a general belief that exists in a specific society. The second possibility that Jackson gives is that ambiguity paves the way for truth to be relative because it allows some unacceptable facts to be acceptable by relating them to other aspects (409). To illustrate this possibility, we can think of a woman who has a very sick son and needs money to buy medicaments for him. To reach her goal, the woman may look for

inappropriate work that could provide much money in few time. Unacceptable work here could be acceptable if we relate it to circumstances. The third possibility of Jackson's relative truth is that the truth about the already mentioned relative truths are not actually appropriate in absolute truth, whereas, they are for relative truth. The fact of listing these kinds of truth is in itself unsuitable for the absolute truth (409).

Jackson's theory proves that there is no inappropriate or absent truth in relativism. everything could be related to other things to have its own possibility to be true. Even the truth about these propositions is relative in itself. If we list such examples and justify them, it is because we need to reveal the truth about them. Our words are related to the purpose of revealing and explaining them. Relativity here justifies the means even if these means are examples of thieves and improper women.

The discussion of truth's relativism and absolutism comes as an achievement of postmodernism as a new movement. Previously, the postmodernist was barely a part of the audience, currently he is an opponent of modernism. This is due to the character of the postmodernist himself. He is not a simple audience, he is critical and vital. Stuart Sim sees that the postmodernist is the opponent of the scientist, the philosopher, the historian, the architect and the artist in general who believes in enlightenment and rational ideology which came to dominate the western culture (7).

Postmodernists criticize and assess modernism in various ways and the result is the implausible truth. The latter is the one that overwhelmed artists and formed fundamentally the aesthetic idea. A clear analysis of the basic background of the fundamentals of uncertainty can help conceptualize the aesthetic idea in Pynchon's early fiction.

1.2-Behind Uncertainty

Behind uncertainty lays a historical background, a cultural tradition, a religious belief and a subjective judgment. The postmodern uncertainty is a result of not only modernism but of a huge treasure of truth in relation to knowledge. This section is going to discuss the construction of the aesthetic idea that dominates Pynchon's thinking and attitudes before the emergence of postmodernism. In addition, it is going to conceptualize it in the postmodern scene using the theme of manipulation.

The aesthetic idea has been associated with truth. Greek philosophers have generally related the concept of philosophy to the one of truth as being closely connected. They believe that wisdom is based on the understanding of those truths which are mainly essential to human life that should mainly be based on them. In the Presocratics, in Plato and Aristotle, and in the whole huge institutions of Western philosophy which followed them, this connection between truth and philosophical knowledge was generally essential. The idea of separating philosophy from the perception of truth or even of attacking truth as the base of philosophical and human life was absolute (Bowie 1).

The Greek philosophers' thinking is only an instance of the huge definitions, theories and schools of truth throughout history. There are two main categories of truth schools: "The Substantive" and "The Minimalist" theories. The substantive includes five main theories: correspondence, coherence, constructive, consensus and pragmatic. The first one is described as the theory that says that true beliefs and true statements belong to the valid state of matters. It links thoughts to statements. It is traced back to ancient Greek philosophers such as Socrates, Plato and Aristotle (Prior 223). The second (coherence) believes that truth necessitates a proper fit of fundamentals within an entire "system." Very often, coherence is taken to involve something more than a simple logical consistency. Frequently, there is a condition that the schemes in a "coherent system" provide common "inferential support" to each other (Prior 224). The third (constructive) believes that truth is constructed by social

procedures and it is historically and culturally specific, and that it is in part formed through the supremacy struggles within a community. “Constructivism” sees all of our knowledge as “constructed,” because it does not reveal any peripheral “transcendent” realities (May). The fourth (consensus) and the fifth (pragmatic) are close to each other. The consensus believes that truth is whatever a group or a kind of people agrees upon in a sort of way, while the pragmatic sees that truth is proven only if it is put into practice (Peirce 716-20).

The *minimalist theories* are new hypotheses that explain the significance of the word truth itself. There are two kinds of the minimalist theories: “the performative theory” and “the redundancy theory.” The first one says that truth is performed. One can give the example of the bride who says, in specific circumstances (those of the wedding ceremony) “I do”, to insist that truth is the fact of performing the *speech act*. The second minimalistic theory demonstrates how truth is redundant, which means that, for example, to prove that “snow is white” is like to prove that “snow is white” outside the sentence, means in nature (Ramsey 34).

Finally, one should mention the *pluralist theories* because of the importance they represent. They believe in all the precedent theories. Michael Lynch, in his book, *Truth as One and Many*, argued that we should see truth as a practical property able of being developed and manifested in different properties like correspondence or coherence (Lynch 1).

Truth is correspondent, coherent, constructed, agreed upon, and proved. One should be confused at this point. What method should be used to choose and justify facts? The following is an application of the five methods of truth measurement to the concept of postmodernism: first, postmodernism manifests truth because we think of it and we state it frequently. For example, people use the expression “I am certain about postmodernism” to leave no space of discussion and the others accept it as true. Second, postmodernism is true because its

fundamentals are coherent within a system, the one of postmodernists. Third, it is true because it is constructed through certain social procedures. Fourth, it is true because a group of people make it coherent within society by agreeing on it. Fifth, it is true because it has already been put into practice, and it has proved to be true.

The application of the foregoing definitions of truth to postmodernism seems reasonable before the emergence of postmodernism itself. Postmodernism rejects not only the possibility of having several definitions and theories of truth, but truth itself and the possibility of having such a concept as well. Having available definitions that might help conceptualize and judge postmodernism in academia seems to serve postmodernism itself, but the latter refuses to have such a blessing. The fact goes back to a special cultural tradition that concerns fundamental changes in society, that of the repositioning of culture.

The existence of such a huge number of theories and definitions on truth provides a triangle of manipulation concepts. Manipulation takes the form of three basic perceptions: social power abuse, cognitive mind control and discursive interaction (Van Dijk 95). Socially, manipulation is defined as unlawful domination confirming social inequality. Cognitively, manipulation as mind control includes the intervention in processes of understanding, the configuration of “biased mental models and social representations such as knowledge and ideologies.” Discursively, manipulation commonly entails the standard “forms and formats of ideological discourse”, such as highlighting our qualities, and oppositely emphasizing others’ defects. These levels of analysis show how manipulation is unlike “legitimate mind control” in influence and providing information, for instance, by specifying that manipulation is in the best interest of the “dominating” group and against the best interests of “dominated” groups (Duits 1).

The desertion of truth comes as a result of the huge pressure forced by the modern and the pre-modern theorists to explain and justify truth. The pressure is presented in the form of an obvious manipulation. To comprehend and analyze manipulative discourse, it is vital to look first at its social environment. It is assumed that one of the characteristics of manipulation, for instance as different from influence, is that it entails power and domination. A study of this power measurement involves an account of the kind of control that some social factions or groups exercise over others. It is also assumed that such control is as a first stage a “control of the mind”, that is, of the beliefs of the receiver, and not directly a control of the actions of receivers based on such manipulated beliefs. In order to be able to implement such social control of others, though, social groups have to please personal and “social criteria” that enable them to influence others in the first place. The analysis here is limited to social criteria, and does not take into account the influence of psychological factors, such as character traits, intelligence, learning, etc. In other words, the work is not interested in what might be a ‘manipulating personality’, or in the specific personal way by which people manipulate others (Clegg).

The “Social conditions of manipulative” control therefore need to be planned , at least at the “macro level of analysis” in terms of group membership, institutional position, profession, material or representative resources and other issues that describe the authority of groups and their members. Consequently, parents can manipulate their children because of their situation of control and authority in the family, professors can manipulate their students because of their institutional place or profession and because of their knowledge, and the same goes for politicians who manipulate voters, journalists who manipulate the audience of media discourse or religious leaders who manipulate their followers. This does not say that children cannot manipulate their parents, or students their teachers, but this is not because of

their position of power, but as a form of opposition or dissent, on the basis of personal characteristics (Van Dijk 361-2).

The problem of postmodernists lies in this point. They have been manipulated socially for decades, not because they belong to lower classes or have a lower educational level, but because of them being under the control of the widespread characteristics of truth judgment formed by the old authorities of modernism. Postmodernists preferred to step into the category of the rebellions that deny and ignore the old perspectives to be able to form their movement. The rebellion is a form of liberation from the old authorities that were constructed through and in many domains.

Manipulating people includes manipulating their minds, means, beliefs, such as knowledge, opinions and ideologies which control their actions. It is seen, though, that there are many types of “discourse-based mental influence, such as informing, teaching and persuasion, that also shape or change people’s knowledge and opinions.” This indicates that manipulation need to be distinguished from other forms of “mind management”, as it has been done in social terms, means, in terms of the context of discourse. In order to be able to distinguish between legitimate and illegitimate mind control, we first need to be more explicit about how discourse can “affect” the mind in the first place. While the mind is “extraordinarily complex”, the way discourse may influence it unavoidably includes complicated processes that can only be managed in real time by applying “efficient strategies”. There are a huge number of cognitive studies that show how understanding can be influenced by various contextual or textual manipulations (Van Dijk 365).

The legitimate and the illegitimate mind control include the way strategies are applied on persons. The modern strategies are the ones that rely on argumentation as it is shown in the “minimalist theories” and other theories on truth. They allows an extraordinary mind control

of persons. It is the reason why postmodernists call for a total independence from the mind manipulation presented by modernist and pre-modernist theorists.

Manipulation as defined here is presented mainly through discourse, that is, including “non-verbal characteristics, such as gestures, facework, text layout, pictures, sounds, music, and so on.” It is noted that, as such, discourse arrangements are not manipulative; they only have purposes or influences in specific communicative situations and the way in which these are interpreted by participants in their context models. For example, as predetermined, manipulation is a social practice of power abuse, involving “dominant and dominated groups”, or institutions and their customers. This means that in principle the “same” discourse may be manipulative in one situation, but not in another situation, means, the manipulative meaning of text and talk depends on the context models of the receivers, considering their examples of the speakers or writers, and their intended goals and intentions. Manipulative discourse typically occurs in public communication controlled by “dominant political, bureaucratic, media, academic or corporate elites.” This means that further contextual constraints prevail, namely on participants, their roles, their relations and their typical actions and cognitions. In other words, discourse is defined as manipulative in terms of the context models of the participants. That is, as critical analysts, we evaluate discourse as manipulative in terms of their context categories, rather than in terms of their textual structures (Van Dijk 372).

The sort of manipulation presented here refers to the example of the correspondence and coherent theories of truth that are based on specific circumstance and not general terms of understanding.

Behind uncertainty lie all the previous factors. Truth has been studied, and restudied by hundreds of theorists, but in ended up being smartly manipulative. Hence, postmodernists

rejected the old and established the new. But the new establishment seems to bring striking new ideas that require a sustained attention.

The postmodernists' study of the proceeding theories and definitions of truth constructs a Hegelian idea of aesthetics for several reasons. In an early speech, Hegel describes Greece and Rome as "the soil that all civilization must stand on and spring from." However, he advocates the alteration of the relation between antiquity and modern times. This vague assessment of antiquity marks his speech with both a "primitivistic and a progressive savor." On the one hand, he agrees on the commencement in ancient literature "a quasi-religious character."²³ On the other, he upholds the substitution of the German language for Latin. Our study of the ancient world at once alienates us and brings us home to ourselves. In the Lectures in the Philosophy of History (1837), Hegel describes antiquity as the "dawn" of humanity. The escalating light shed by the sun can be compared to the development of man's "subjective freedom", arising from his "self-consciousness." In this comparison, Hegel inscribes his anthropology in the German intellectual tradition that was initiated by Lessing and developed by Herder and Kant (Torbidoni 54).

Hegel evokes the classical world in a beautiful way. He says that that the classical study of the ancient world is an enlightening factor based on self-consciousness that develops effectively the freedom of judgment. The latter represents the postmodern aesthetics. Postmodern aestheticism relies mainly on self-freedom and self-determination.

In this chapter, it is shown that postmodernists are rebellious, but according to Hegel's theories they are not. They are subjectivists who appreciate and respect the old perspectives. Opinion making attitudes, for Hegel, are used as an enlightenment line that helps them establish freedom. But the idea is confusing here. How can such an extreme disagreement

²³ Ancient literature was characterized by its religious character and Hegel takes it as a blessing beginning for the coming modern thinking.

between modernist and pre-modernist movements be an agreement? The solution is reached through one way. Postmodernists consider the previous theories on truth and self judgment as false but original at the same time. One should argue that postmodernists are mainly and essentially artists who appreciate freedom more than the previous theorists. We should refer to the fact of denying science as an important part of knowledge. So, if modernists give a light to postmodernists, they do so by emphasizing the existence of science as an emphasis on their ignorance of art as a main aesthetic element based on the denial of truth and science. So, if the classical world inspired Hegel by its self-consciousness to develop subjective freedom, the modern world inspired the postmodern one by its trust in science to develop uncertainty and it ended up with a glorification of art.

1.3- The Call of Art

The call of art is the call of postmodernists to artists (like Thomas Pynchon) to get rid of the scientific fatalities and certainties²⁴ and orient themselves rather to the denial of them. The call is meant to lead, not only specific groups of people but all persons who believe in uncertainty as the right way, towards subjectivity. The following is a discussion of the notion of art in relation to truth as to demonstrate the core of the aesthetic idea. The section will discuss the notion of the absence of truth in relation to art with a postmodern eye.

In his book *Truth, Art, and Life*, Babette E. Babiche discusses the theme of his book in relation to Nietzsche at the early beginning of his book. He thinks that Nietzsche, although he is not considered as neither a philosopher nor a scientists, offers a very significant idea about truth in relation to art and science. He says that Nietzsche has such a significant question that should be asked regarding the issue of truth in relation to art, which is the question about the

²⁴ Stephen R. C. Hicks refers to postmodernism in his book *Explaining Postmodernism* (page 1) as a revolutionary era that liberated humanity from the oppressive strictures of the past. Hicks, Stephen r. C. *Explaining Postmodernism*. New Berlin: Milwaukee, 2004.

meaning of truth itself. Nietzsche believes that the process of questioning stands for the benefit of truth itself. He sees that the "objective" observation of facts does not make science real, rather it is questioning and investigating that makes truth more possible. Although, Nietzsche seems to agree with Kant on the point of questioning, however, he departs from the Kantian belief as far as he denies the existence of truth (1).

Babiche thinks that Nietzsche shows no belief in the existence of truth, even in science. He sees that Nietzsche opens up a discussion that mainly relies on challenge to identify the sense of truth. It is a discussion that is similar to the Heideggerian "question of the question" that is mainly relied on doubt (1).

Gregory Schufireider suggests that Heidegger's "question of the question" leads us to the incidence that happened when Heidegger commented on Van Gogh's painting in a way that underestimated it. Schufireider claims that Van Gogh's painting seemed to be indistinct and vague to Heidegger. He says that the latter could see no beauty in plastic arts and he preferred the linguistic ones like poetry. Schufireider believes that Heidegger preferred poetry over painting for he claimed to see no truth in plastic arts. The vague nature of them leave no space for a clear understanding of their significance. The incidence reveals a certain truth on Heidegger. The truth is that the philosopher believes in truth, but only in art. He does not include all arts for he sees that art is the one that should be understood. Heidegger, Schufireider argues, thinks that painting, giving the example of Van Gogh's painting, is not included in truthful art as far as it is vague for him (331).

Harold Pinter, the famous British Dramatist, in 1958 wrote a very expressive passage that refers to the truth in relation to art. He said: "There are no hard distinctions between what is real and what is unreal, nor between what is true and what is false. A thing is not necessarily either true or false; it can be both true and false" (qt in Pinter 22). In his lecture

Art Truth & Politics for the 2005 Nobel, he adds: " I believe that these assertions still make sense and do still apply to the exploration of reality through art. So as a writer I stand by them but as a citizen I cannot. As a citizen I must ask: What is true? What is false?" (22).

Pinter sees that, in art, there is no feature that could differentiate between the true and the false. Truth in art can be easily beaten by the false and vice versa. His words show that the artist can use the real and the unreal to serve his artistic work. Pinter's saying reveals a fundamental element that is necessary for the understanding of truth and art. In reality, truth in art is the one that makes the artistic work beautiful. As far as truth serves the beauty of the work, it is true, otherwise, it is the false. It is up to the artists to decide where to use the true and false in his work (22).

Truth in art does not rely on facts or experiments. It relies on the artist's inspiration. The will of the artist to give a beautiful image of his work justify his domination of truth in his work. In an article that was written in 1945, Bertram E. Jessup discusses the idea of truth in relation to art in a lucid way. He says that in art, truth can hold a specific value in order to have an aesthetic appreciation, or it can give no importance to truth for aesthetically truth is not important. Hence, he relates truth to the aesthetical value of it in a specific piece of art. He gives the example of prose where a character may hold a specific truth in his characterization to give the reader a way to understand and appreciate it (110).

In his article *Truth as Material in art*, Jessup adds that this occurrence of valuable truth in art could not appear in all kinds of art. He sees that it could emerge in poetry but not in music, painting or even in sculptor. However, Jessup believes that there is a "counter-truth" that exist since the age of Plato that comes to oppose Truth theory. The "counter-truth" theory is based on the rejection of the existence of truth in the artistic works. "counter-truth" theorists depend their claim on the scientific nature of truth that is far from the artistic one.

They say that the artistic work should be completed by itself without reference to any outside truth. In other word, they claim that the artistic work is completely imaginative. Counter-truth theorists, Jessup says, do not believe in the existence of scientific facts in artistic work. Even if they exist, this kind of theorists do not consider them as facts, but as probabilities that are created by the artist himself.

An analysis of Jessup's articles shows that Counter-culture theorists that he talks about in his 1945 article underestimate the value of truth in artistic works, whereas, truth theorists value the notion of truth in their works for they need truth, in some cases, to convince and let the reader or the viewer appreciate the value and the beauty of their works.

Few years after Jessup's article, Alexander Sesonske wrote an article in which he discusses the idea of truth in art, and in which he makes it clear that he was not meant to solve the problem of truth in art, however, he provides a clear study of this issue. Sesonske gives three elements in which he summarizes the existence of truth in art. He says that there is "surface truths, embedded truths, and embodied truths (345).

Concerning "the surface truth, Sesonske argues that the existence of truth in the lines of a poem, for example, may assure the existence of truth in a work of art. If the poet includes truthful facts that are apparently obvious in the lines of his work, it means that truth exists in the artistic works. Sesonske guarantees that there is such a truth in poetry lines. Consequently, the surface truth for Sesonske affirms the real existence of truth in art (349).

To illustrate, Sesonske says that we can refer to the historical novels (349) in which the writer chooses a period of time by which he interferes in a specific incidence of history. In such works, truth can appear without analysis or reading between the lines. It does not require special capacities of appreciation because the writers tells the truth in simple clear words. What we can understand here is that when truth appears in the surface, it is not considered as

an artistic value, as it is shown in Jessup's suggestion. Rather, it can be seen as a fact that exists somewhere in a book. Novels here can be compared to historical documents in which the writer narrates what really happened in a certain era. However, Sesonske sees that the surface truth could participate in the aesthetic experience of the reader because some readers see that the aesthetic experience is improved by realizing and understanding that what they are reading is actually real (349).

Concerning the "embedded truth", Sesonske portrays them by referring to metaphors. He says that metaphors attracts the reader of a fictional or a poetic work to think about the metaphor and to look for truth in it. He believes that metaphors evoke the reader's curiosity and will to read between the lines of a certain artistic work to find the secret behind the juxtaposition of concepts. Sesonske thinks that there is always a specific truth hidden behind metaphors (350).

Concerning the "embodied truth", Sesonske argues that this kind of truth does not exist in a specific line or a certain expression , but rather appears in the whole work. In other words, it is the truth about the work itself. For example, the whole novel or poem reveals a certain big truth about something and this truth is embodied in it. The "embodied truth" could not be understood if the reader does not read a huge part of the work, if not the whole work because it lies in the message that the writer wants to convey (351).

Sesonske sees that the "embodied truth" serves more the artistic message of the writer. This kind of truth leaves a large space for an authentic aesthetic experience. Sesonske says: " Such truths-that man is mortal, that youth and beauty fade with passing time, that courage and integrity sometimes triumph over cruelty and deceit" (351) may function more in the aesthetic experience and appreciation of the work.

Brian X. Baxter refers to the embodied truth in his article *Art and Embodied Truth*. He devotes the beginning of his article to talk about the embodied truth in visual arts like music and architecture. He says that it is not an easy task to find out the embodied truth in a work of architecture or music because the claimed truth is not said in clear words or even in vague ones. He makes it clear to the reader that the only means to understand these "non-representational" works is by understanding the conventions of each one of them. Architecture or music have some conventions that interpret their works. However, these conventions are not available for everyone to learn them. For Baxter, words can say more than symbols (189).

Baxter believes that the existence of truth in artistic works like architecture and music does not play an important role in their understanding. The aesthetic experience of this kind of art is achieved through ambiguity and not through clear truth. Even if a sort of truth appears in them, it is true for the conventions of each one of them. The ordinary concept of truth should not include all the elements of the conventions of these arts (189).

Baxter, Sesonke, Jessup, Pinter, Schufireider, Babiche are all scholars whose researches on the concept of truth contribute to the understanding of our work. The reference to the nature of truth in artistic works along with the differentiation between truth in each kind of art participates in the understanding of truth and the absence of it in artistic works. The fact may justify the postmodernists' and especially Pynchon's answer to the call of art. Postmodernists and Pynchon are familiar with these notions including the use of imagination in artistic work as a means to reveal certain truths, the value of truth in artistic works and the counter-theory of it, the surface, embedded, and embodied truths that are revealed in art.

Artists who answer the call of art are meant to be, in that section, the postmodernists who applied the aesthetics (that construct the aesthetic idea that is meant to be explained in

that part) in relation to truth. Artistic truth or true art are two conceptions that seem unfashionable to talk about since lots of critics and thinkers deal with the issue in a way. Heidegger's idea of art is that of "Great Art" which exists only in the past. This Great Art is not representational but that of work and dynamic artistic process. He sees that the art we experience in galleries is repeatedly taken out of its historical context and it should be ineffective in our eyes. Heidegger refers to, not only the historical world's significance, but also our vital assessment with the 'thingly' nature that we sense in art. In addition, the pursuit of nature or 'thinglyness' leads us to "force the work into a pre-conceived framework which automatically disallows us from ever accessing it" (Heidegger 167).

Certainly, Heidegger's idea is an old conception of art because he presents a direct relation between art and history, while postmodernists reject his idea fundamentally. Michel Foucault, an eminent figure the postmodern philosophy, tackled this aspect with a similar point of view. Foucault sees himself as a historian, a writer who creates fiction. He says that what history can produce is only fiction (Foucault 53). The idea that should be understood here is that the postmodern call of art is not that which relates art to history.

There are other descriptions of art that can help identifying the postmodern one. In the past, art has been commonly defined as imitation or representation (Plato 5), or as a means of communication. However, the notion of art seems to be easy and difficult to explain at the same time. The rational definition of art is that it is the thing that you can handle, however this handling lacks a basis on which it can stand (Tolstoy 1).

Traditional definitions as frequently demonstrated in contemporary discussions of the definition of art, characterize art works by one type of property. The properties are "representational properties, expressive properties, and formal properties" (Adjian). Consequently, there are representational or mimetic definitions, expressive definitions, and

formalist definitions, which hold that artworks are characterized by their possession of, respectively, representational, expressive, and formal properties. It is easy to find mistakes in these simple definitions. For example, possessing representational, expressive, and formal properties cannot be sufficient conditions, since, obviously, instructional manuals are representations, but not typically artworks, human faces and gestures have expressive properties without being works of art, and both natural objects and artifacts produced for the homeliest utilitarian purposes have formal properties but are not artworks (Adajian).

The traditional view portrays a weak character of the traditional art. It is easy to hold uncertainty about it since the characteristics of art as representational, expressive and formal can be portrayed by other fields and institutions. Postmodern art again rejects the traditional view. Postmodernism stays away from the modernism. An example can be given here is the postmodern artist who intends to use colors in his work of painting in order to give more chances, possibilities, and interpretations to his work, contrarily to the modernist one who tends to stick on one standard of colors that always reflects the same meaning, which is rationality.

There are other contemporary explanations that handle art from a different perspective. “Conventionalist definitions” do not believe that there is a link between them and aesthetic properties, formal properties, expressive properties, or to other types of property that are considered as essential explanations of art. Conventionalist definitions, however, are heavily influenced by the appearance of artworks that seem to differ fundamentally from all previous artworks in the twentieth century. Artistic works like Marcel Duchamp's “ready-mades”, objects that are considered to be normal like snow-shovels (*In Advance of the Broken Arm*) or bottle-racks, and theoretical works like Robert Barry's *All the things I know but of which I am not at the moment thinking* appear to be far from the old definitions of art that are traced in the

traditional properties explained above. Some philosophers who have a certain tendency towards history have a special influence on the conventionalists theories. The influence came as a result of these philosophers' awareness of the development of art in its aesthetical form in the modern era (Theories of Art).

Until this stage, postmodernism disagrees fundamentally with the former theorists. The previous view is, historically speaking, contemporary since it appeared during the twentieth century; however, it portrays a modernist, avant-gardiste view that insists on fundamentals of art which is totally rejected by postmodernist because of its opposition to freedom.

Adjian says that “The foundation for institutional definitions was laid by Arthur Danto, better known to “non-philosophers” as the long-time influential art critic for the “*Nation*.” (Adajian). He sees that Danto created the term “artworld” to refer to “an atmosphere of art theory.” Danto's definition could be analyzed as a definition of art work. He sees that a work of art is the one that has a certain attitude that reveals a specific point that he uses in order to involve its audience, being readers or viewers to see and judge. Danto considers audience as an important element that fulfills the artistic work. Another element that Danto considers important in the work of art, adds Adjian, is history. He sees that history can be a good means of involving the reader within the work (Adajian).

For postmodernists, the institution that Adajian talks about is modernism. Because of this critical perspective Bernet sees that postmodernism does not accept the full meaning of development as an essential philosophy of art and truth. It rather sees itself in criticizing and deconstructing the ideals of modernism. Postmodernism the principles that concern the development of knowledge and its relationship to higher education as merely modernists (Bernet 2).

It has already been pointed out in the previous title that postmodernists prefer to see art from a unique perspective. They see it as a free beautiful subjective opinion portrayed in a work of art. Postmodern art called its artists, and they answered bringing a fundamentally different form of beauty.

Dewitt Parker explains, in his book *The Principles of Aesthetics*, the difference between the understanding of art and the admiration of it. He says that a simple person could have the ability to adore things like furniture of his house, however, the same person is not able to give an appropriate definition of art. Parker says that ordinary people are, for most of the time, not able to justify their choices in terms of art. He even goes beyond this to talk about artists who are able to present an opinion about a specific piece of art, he says that those artists are not able to do so when it comes to talk about their own works (1).

Parker thinks that there is huge difference between knowledge and appreciation. He explains his idea by referring to skillful people who are capable of giving suitable ways of doing certain jobs in specific fields and compare them with the artists who tend to present unique pieces of art but when it comes to explain the mystery of them, they show no ability. Parker believes that enjoying art is far from comprehending it. He refers to those artists who defend their incapability of justifying their art by claiming that art is obscure over man's level of thinking. He says that this kind of artists is not able to see the angle from which art is judged and explained. He believes that these artists do not serve for the good will of aesthetics (Parker 1).

According to Postmodernism, individualism is the core of art. However, Jennie McClellan says in her article *Beauty in a Postmodern World*, that individualism takes the individuals out of their societies. It does not leave space for connections to take place or develop. She sees that there is no such a great need for individualism since other people may

come and contradict it by presenting other viewpoints and arguments. MacClellan blames individualism for the disappearing connection between persons within society. In addition, she refers to the new widespread manner of thinking that favor the other over the self. She sees that, because of individualism, people feel unconsciously unhappy and stressful (MacClellan).

Consequently, with this attitude, everything loses sense. This is what this work sees as the core of the postmodern aesthetic idea. It is a sad and pessimistic idea that reflects the postmodernists' disillusionment rather than enlightenment.

1.4- Subjectivists Postmodernists

The postmodernists' aesthetic idea is mainly based on subjectivity. The latter formulated the last part of the postmodern aesthetic idea. The last part of the postmodern aestheticism is based mainly on two important aspects. The first one is the importance of subjectivity as independent from the social traditional definition of the term. The second one is the emphasis on the new brought subjectivity that is illustrated through the postmodern feminist and religious views.

In his article *A Prophecy of Possibility: Metaphorical Explorations of Postmodern Legal Subjectivity: Comment*, Austin Sarat sees that every time a different era or age emerges, its special divination and foresight emerges with it. He says that, frequently, different sorts of prophets come to adopt an age and run it with their beliefs. Some prophets are meant to defend their own beliefs in the day of judgment and eternity, others usually come to suggest "possibilities." Sarat Gives Santo as an example of the prophets of possibilities. He says that the man came to propose a possibility that is based on utopianism. Sarat Sees that postmodernism belongs to these eras when prophets come to introduce a new possibility to

humanity. He tackles its ideologies as possibilities and considers postmodernists as the prophets of that period. He also sees postmodernism using a utopian eye, which means that his depiction of the period is over reality (616).

One of the possibilities that Austin Sarat talks about and that he sees essential in the postmodern so-called prophesy is subjectivity. Sarat sees that the postmodern subjectivity should have its own legacy within the law of history for it brings a change to civilizations as any other movement did. Sarat always refers to Santos whom he sees important in discussing the subject. Santos believes that postmodernism could have its inheritance because it makes an effort and tries to use imagination in order to establish new views and visions to recognize concepts. Its visions are totally relied on an inspiration that comes from an attempt to establish a new way of life (617).

Subjectivity is, thus, a very important issue that emerges with the emergence of postmodernism. Its importance lies in the fact that the postmodern ideology depends heavily on its perceptions. It is the recognition of the subject over society, it is individualism, it is freedom, and it is independence. These are concepts that seem to be common for most of the people. We can list them by a small grasp on its definitions, however, subjectivity appears to be ambiguous for postmodernists themselves.

In his study to Don DeLillo's fiction and biography, Randy Laist admits that DeLillo does not show a clear perception of the concept. He says that, although DeLillo is categorized as the most influential postmodernist in terms of fiction (along with writers like Thomas Pynchon), his attitude towards subjectivity looks vague and complicated. The writer's attitude towards the subject leads literary critics to divide their attitudes into two. A group of critics believe that DeLillo enhances the postmodern conflict with the modern claimed enlightenment that is based on the belief in science and reason (1). Being so, DeLillo should be considered as one of

the postmodernists, whom Sarat names the recommenders of change for they recommend it by suggesting an assembly of ideologies and concepts among which is subjectivity.

As Sarat says, subjectivity got its legacy in the law of civilizations. The first group of Delillo critics argue that the writer adopts this legacy, however, there is a second group of his critics who claim that he refers to society and its culture in identifying the notion of subjectivity. Using Frank Lentriccia's book *White Noise*, Laist claims, in his book *Technology and Postmodern Subjectivity in Don DeLillo's Novels*, that Delillo calls his readers to keep the unity of their cultures and societies because it is this unity that categorizes the strength of the self (1). Laist adds that *White Noise* is considered as an opposing book to the one of Joseph Dewey in which he claims that Delillo's works are considered as indexes of the self-esteem and awareness of the value of the self (2).

Bruce McComiskey gives a definition to the postmodern subjectivity in his article *Composing Postmodern Subjectivities in the Aporia between Identity and Difference* by comparing it to the modern one. McComiskey does not deny the existence of a certain subjectivity in the modern era, but he says that it is different from the one of postmodernism. He argues that the modern subjectivity is characterized by the subject's relation to society and his objective view of the others.

As a result of what has been mentioned, from theories that concern subjectivity to opinions about its existence and legacy in the postmodern era, subjectivity presents an indispensable part of postmodernism. It is an important element of the postmodernists' intended change. Without subjectivity, postmodernism could get closer to the modernists' ideology, a thing that is fundamentally rejected by postmodernists.

In the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, Kant argues that the judgment of taste is based on the subjectivity of the individual, however, it has universal authority. It is our subjectivity that chooses what pleases and what displeases us by means of feeling instead of

using concepts. The *a priori* character of taste, that Kant talks about portrays the transcendental principle of the general tolerability, and only such a transcendental principle can be, as Kant calls it, a *sensus communis*. His argument is that this principle comes from the free play of our cognitive faculties, and has to be common sense that everyone has since everyone has the same cognitive capacities (kant 122).

Kant believes in the universality of Subjectivity. The latter, then, is an essentially social thing that comes through connections within society. Beiser sees that when subjectivity is a process of individualism, it is a process of socialization as well. He believes that the individual cannot be isolated in an independent environment, but continually engaging in interaction with a close world. Hence, Beiser sees that Culture is considered as a part of the whole subjectivity of any society that is witnessing transformation (3). Beiser says that "Subjectivity is both created by it and creates it in turn, but also by other things like the economy, political institutions, communities, as well as the natural world" (3).

Subjectivity is mainly defined by Lauer Quentin, in her work *The Triumph of Subjectivity: An Introduction to Transcendental Phenomenology*, as an experience of events entirely by oneself. Mainly, the subject is the form of an existing being while subjectivity is the substance, and the procedure of subjectivation. The latter is the change of what it means to be that subject. Lauer believes that it is a typical philosophical question of whether the self, or the subject, is a passing or permanent aspect of existence. Whatever the answer to the problem is, it can be said that subjectivity, which is the way that the subject expresses itself, constantly undergoes change, though still retains characteristic, depending on the subject who has the potential to influence its own subjectivity. Lauer thinks that subjectivity is constantly undergoing change because what makes up our psychic experience is a wide range of perceptions, sensations, emotions, thoughts and beliefs that, through the route of time, and our

relation to space, continually generate transformation in terms of our subjective relation to the world (Lauer 28).

Postmodern subjectivity is different from the previous social and individual definitions of the term. Postmodernists aim to convince us that we should be doubtful about any concept of self or subjectivity. Any such concept may be bound up with and hold up unsafe and oppressive myths.

One of the best examples that illustrate the postmodern subjectivity is the feminists' attitudes and the gender issue. Benhabib Seyla claims the death of men, in her book *Feminism and Postmodernism: An Uneasy Alliance*, by saying that there is a process of "Demystification of the Male Subject of Reason" in postmodernism (Benhabib 543). Benhabib claims that the Postmodernists depict men or the independent subject (according to the theoretical and the realistic reasons) as reliant, historically and culturally to the changeable social, linguistic, and discursive practices. However, she claims that feminists argue that gender and the diverse practices supplying its constitution is one of the most vital backgrounds in which to position the supposedly "neutral" and "universal" subject of reason. Benhabib says that the western philosophical tradition expresses the profound structures of the experiences and consciousness of a self which it claims to be delegate for humans. But in its sincere categories western philosophy destroys differences of gender as these form and structure the experience and subjectivity of the self. Western reason situates itself as the discourse of the one self-identical subject, thereby blinding us to and in fact illegalizing the presence of the other and differences which do fit into its categories. From Plato over Descartes to Kant and Hegel western philosophy gives a theme to the story of the male subject of reason. Postmodernism however celebrates the presence and the power of the

subject by insisting on the difference between genders and the ability of each one of them to be more successful in society (Benhabib 543).

The Atheists postmodernists present the second example of the postmodern subjectivity. Charlotte Allen says that the postmodern theology broadens from “militant atheism to village atheist.” All the chief postmodern writers were atheists, such as Foucault, Derrida, Lyotard, Bataille, Barthes, Baudrillard, Macherey, Deleuze, Guattari, and Lacan. Charlotte Allen admitted that Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, “and their “followers were all confrontational atheists, with all the intolerance and totalitarian tendencies of that breed” (52).

Derrida said in a speech lecture he gave before a convention of the American Academy of Religion in 2002, ‘I rightly pass for an atheist.’ However, when asked why he would not say more clearly ‘I am an atheist,’ he replied, “Maybe I’m not an atheist.” Derrida claimed to be an atheist and not an atheist at the same time because both the existence and then on existence of God demands a universal declaration about reality, but Derrida does not have the will to make such an absolute claim. Taking into consideration the previous idea, Derrida’s theology is related to his postmodern preference of ambiguity (Rorty 33).

Postmodern subjectivity now is exposed clearly. Postmodernists are extremely subjectivist because they doubt subjectivity itself. Derrida’s example shows how a postmodernist is totally obsessed with the idea of freedom from the condemnation of truth. Derrida refuses to admit that he is an atheist as not to fall in the trap of categorization. So are the feminists: they defend the female’s issue strongly to leave no space for a possible domination of male.

Postmodern extreme subjectivity reflects the postmodern aesthetic idea. Postmodernists were implausibly surprised by the bold truth about the modern manipulating certainty which

led them to manipulate the implausible truth ironically. The latter paved the way for an extreme subjectivity and self-judgment defended by postmodernists as an extreme right.

One should wonder about the defensive attitude of postmodernists against subjectivity. The answer is found in the philosophy of postmodernists themselves. Postmodernists glorify uncertainty to the extent of doubting one of the important elements that uncertainty calls for, which is subjectivity.

Thomas Pynchon is one of the most important figures of the postmodern scene. One can admit that he has exactly been passing by the implausible manipulating truth. In addition, he has also been an ironic subjectivist as any other postmodernists.

Chapter Two: Beyond Aesthetics

2.1- Pynchon and the Line of History

Thomas Pynchon, as a writer and as a postmodernist, has always failed to see a solid existence of truth. The fact is clearly traced in his fiction. In *Mason and Dixon*, Thomas Pynchon says: "Who claims truth, truth abandons" (Mason 350). In this saying, Pynchon calls those who claim the existence of truth to come and prove it by any means. He is quite sure that truth abandons them like it abandons him, that is why he opens up a sort of challenge against those who claim it by dealing with the issue of history. Pynchon continues: "History is hir'd, or coerc'd, only in Interests that must ever prove base" (Mason 350). The abandonment of truth reflects a different and a unique way of presenting the postmodern line of history. Pynchon denies truth categorically and claims its abandonment as an important part of history. He even goes beyond it by denying history itself. The writer represents truth using a postmodern skeptical eye and history using a tough attitude towards truth.

Referring to history, many postmodern writers and academics show the same attitude as Thomas Pynchon. In her Book *Sublime Desire: History and Post 1960s Fiction*, Amy J. Elias says that, With the exception of TV reality shows, Consumerism Culture, Capitalism, and other unhistorical factors, Postmodernism finds a lot of difficulties in accepting history as a narration of human life with facts. She agrees that postmodernists seldom believe in historical facts and constantly deal with them skeptically and ironically. Elias adds that the reason behind this attitude is the philosophical and social underground of postmodernism that refuse all types of , what she calls, "historical knowledge." Elias gives the example of postmodern literature that is conscious of the motive behind the historians who study history and whose only target is to control the past and revise it in their way (xvii).

Elias is not the only writer who deals with history and postmodernism, Linda Hutcheon, in her book *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction*, argues that postmodernists deal with the issue of history paradoxically. She says that, in their analyzing of history, postmodernists prefer first to set grounds and processes upon which historiography is based, then criticize those grounds along with the basic of grounding, what Hutcheon finds paradoxical. The writer says that postmodernists set a solid ground upon which they base their analysis of history which is facts. Postmodernists do believe and admit that there are facts and events that happened in the past, and which are historical, however, their problem lies in the fact of knowing them in the present. Hutcheon claims that postmodernists' only problem with history is historiography. Postmodernists, with the critique of their own ground, doubt the ground upon which historians rely to transmit historical facts (92).

Linda Hutcheon's paradoxical theory does not skip the fact that postmodernists disbelieve history itself. Elizabeth Deeds Ermarth devotes a whole book to talk about the crisis of postmodernism and history. In her book *Sequel to History: Postmodernism and the Crisis of Representational Time*, Ermarth talks about the real postmodern crisis of history and the subject. She sees that they are linked to each other to a certain extent. The writer talks about a certain surpass beyond history and beyond the subject. She notices that postmodernists do not believe in the writing of history and the engraving of time. Postmodernists see that, in writing history and engraving events and time, one should rationalize his mind of consciousness, something that postmodernists neglect and disbelieve (6).

Other Critics prefer to handle the issue from a different point of view. Hilary Chute devotes an article that was published in 2011 to talk about the popularity of postmodernism after a great research from her part. The writer finds that a lot of books that handle the

contemporary era talk about aspects of postmodernism but do not mention the term "postmodernism." Chute gives the example of the series' *Critical Terms for Art History*, a collection that includes all aspects of postmodernism like "Biomedica," "Cybernetics," "New Media," "Hardware / Software / Wetware," "Net- works," and "Systems," but do not mention the word postmodernism (360). One should wonder about the reason behind this disregard of such a term. The reason may appear in the postmodernists' refusal to accept history and the noting of it. Since postmodernists refuse to admit the reliability history and historiography, one could say that they avoid being called by certain or any appellations that could note the movement by a name.

In his 1971 article, *POSTmodernISM*, Ihab Hassan tends to talk about the importance of change in men's life. He gives the example of the Greel Gods "Dionysus and Cupid" who brought a great change in ancient Greeks' life using violence. Hassan shows no negative attitude against the way in which both of Gods bring change, but he stands against history that tends to minimize the heroes' deeds by noting them. Hassan sees that the interesting endings are no more interesting if history and historians notice them. He says that history mark these endings with the numerous interesting ending in its many pages, so that they are no more remarkable for men. Hassan sees that history kills important events with its chronicles of continuity for every single hero that comes in history with a change is noted in the continuous chronicles of change, something that Ihab Hassan refuses categorically (5-6).

As a Postmodernist, Ihab Hassan attitude is not astonishing, seeing the many other negative attitudes against history from the part of other postmodernists like thelma z. Lavine who thinks that the huge number of theories that appeared after the Second World War are responsible of the denial of the integrity of history along with the individual, the self. In his article *Postmodernism and American Pragmatism*, Lavine argues that there is a great link

between Postmodernism and the American Pragmatism (especial the one of John Dewey that introduces a interpretation of the contradictory norms of modernity). Lavine claims that the French continuous development of postmodern theory from social to philosophical is the one and major responsible of the "anti-enlightenment, anti-rationalism, anti-foundationalism, anti-realism and anti-humanism" pressure group that consist categorically of "the prewar Marxist existentialism" that was right away defeated by structuralism to leave a space for post-structuralism to take place. The latter was destructed by Jack Derrida. Lavine admits that, all of Foucault, Lyotard, Baudrillard, Deleuze and Guattari form a pragmatic change that led to the disbelief of reason. Lavine sees that the postmodern rejection of history is categorically included in the list, and sees that history was refused by postmodernists because of those theorists along with reason and enlightenment (111).

In *Postmodernism and History*, David Goodman evokes an event that is considered as very important in the debate of Postmodernism and history. In his article *Postmodernism and History*, the writer talks about a controversial debate happened between the years 1986 and 1987 on the issue of history in relation to Postmodernism. He says that an article was published in 1986 by his writer Thomas Bender calling for a new synthesis to the American history and the writing of it. The synthesis that Bender called for is based on the idea of "Public Culture" along with the inspiration of "an audience to history." Bender's idea, Goodman adds, is based on the avoidance of fragmentation of human history. He says that instead of having fragmented documents that note history that exist here and there, people should have a speaking public culture that note all important events. Goodman talks about the stream of criticism that came after the publication of Bender's article in the *Journal of American History*. He says that the huge number of critiques who are radically conservatives stood against Bender's idea for they think that historians are "privileged" over any speaking

culture. They answered using articles that were published in the same journal for about a year after its publication (19).

The Controversy depicted in Bendler's and the conservatives' conflict on the issue of history reveals a great refutation of history. The conservatives that Goodman talks about signify, what we may call in our thesis, the modernists or the anti-postmodernists for, although Bendler's opinion is somehow moderated, but it portrays a great neglecting of history writing. Bendler preferred to find an alternative to what historians do to history. He actually found that the public speaking culture can be a better way to note history. Bendler chooses to go back to ancient ways of marking historical events rather than trusting the current way, or in other words, the way that is used since centuries.

Thomas Bendler is considered as one of those who have a negative attitude towards history. It is also the case of Adem Kelly who sees that the problem of postmodernism and history is a problem of relation. Postmodernists refuse firmly the writing of history by those historians who dominate past events. He sees that they carve them using their own ways. Kelly says that a number of US authors refuse to be called or noted as Postmodernists in historical texts (393). He gives the example of Egan's novel *Look at Me* that looks extraordinary in terms of skipping history. Egan, says Kelly, insists on the strong existence of the present and the continuity of it. She believes in the importance of space over time, like many other postmodernists, Kelly adds. Egan sees that the past should be forgotten and the present should continue eternally without any real marking of it. Kelly says that the author insists on the "contemporary loss of history" as lots of postmodernists do. He says that a great importance lies in this issue and the loss of history plays an important role in the existence of Postmodernism (394).

Different claims, attitudes and opinions are presented by postmodernists, being philosophers, fiction writers, or critiques to omit the existence of tough historiography, or simply history. Thomas Pynchon, as a fiction writer and as a Postmodernist shows the same attitude towards history and history writing.

Menand Louis deals with the issue of historical events and Thomas Pynchon in his article *Do the Math: Thomas Pynchon's Latest Novel* in a comparative way. Menand says that Pynchon depicts the Modern history in a sort of war.

[Pynchon] thinks ... that modern history is a war between utopianism and totalitarianism, counterculture and hegemony, anarchism and corporatism, nature and techne, Eros and the death drive, slaves and masters, entropy and order, and that the only reasonably good place to be in such a world, given that you cannot be outside of it, is between the extremes. "Those whose enduring object is power in this world are only too happy to use without remorse the others, whose aim is of course to transcend all questions of power. Each regards the other as a pack of deluded fools" (Menand).

Pynchon tends to depict the modern history in a complete conflict between all kinds of concepts, utopianism and totalitarianism, counterculture and hegemony, anarchism and corporatism, in order to draw attention to the fact that history likely depict events using categories. As it is mentioned in the previous paragraphs, Ihab Hassan has a similar attitude towards history. He thinks that history kills events in its continuous chronicles. Thomas Pynchon seems to have the same attitude. He sees that "Those whose enduring object is power in this world are only too happy to use without remorse the others, whose aim is of course to

transcend all questions of power" (Menand). Pynchon sees that History is dominating because it lets people see powerful objects over derived ones.

Pynchon shows his rejection of history by using different ideas and concepts. Shawn Smith argues, in his book *Pynchon and History: Metahistorical, Rhetoric and Postmodern Narrative Form*, that Pynchon's fiction represents a great awareness of the influence of the past on the present. Shawn describes Pynchon's fiction as historical to a great extent because he thinks that Pynchon is really aware of the importance and the influence of history on people's life. Pynchon, Shawn says, is considered as a historical novelist for his style and technique are quite different from those of other writers like Luckas whose writing looks firmly like a documentary. Shawn sees that the complication and the difficulty we find in Thomas Pynchon's novels are meant to transfer a message from the part of the writer. Pynchon uses complexities as a "strategy", Shawn says, to embody the impact of the great transformation from the modern to the postmodern. Pynchon uses massive fictional worlds with a lot of obscurity to convey to the reader the greatness of the change that we live in, a change from the old modern world that was based on reason and rational attitudes to a more complicated presented world that cannot be easily told or narrated, that is why Shawn evokes the issue of history and its registration. Shawn depicts the relation between Pynchon and history in a complicated relation between the past and the present. He says that Pynchon perceives history with a pessimistic eye, taking into consideration all the encyclopedic novels that he has written like *V. Gravity's Rainbow*, *Vineland*, and *Mason and Dixon*, in which he narrate with details the "epic" of the postmodern era. In doing so, Shawn relies on the texts of Edward Mendelson who sees that Pynchon's fiction is similar to that of James Joys, in terms of narrating the epic of a nation using details. Although Mandelson refers to Pynchon's novels as historical for he sees him trying to note history, however, Shawn insists on Pynchon's inability to accept the fact of controlling history and historical events by noting them. He sees

that Pynchon prefers to maintain the transformation between the past and the present to manage the continuity of the present like many other postmodernists do (1-2).

Stefen Matisich uses, in his book *Lines of Flight: Discursive Time and Cultural Desire in the Work of Thomas Pynchon*, Ronald Barthes's essay *The Discourse of History*, in which he argues that Historians in their deeper sense of history refuse to accept and appreciate the negative side of historical events. The result, sees Barthes, is a course of legends, prodigies, and myths that are traced in every single line of history. Matisich uses Barthes' point of view to justify Thomas Pynchon's use of "Parody" in his fiction, especially in his novel *V.* to narrate his stories. In *V.* Thomas Pynchon uses, Matisich says, the third person narration of the story, which is similar to that of the historian that he uses to narrate historical event (Matisich30). In *The Discourse of History*, Barthes says: "The historical fact is linguistically associated with a privileged ontological status: we account what has been, not what has not been, or what has been uncertain [...] historical discourse is not acquainted with negation" (qt in Matisich 30).

Barthes thinks that historians can only see the optimistic side of history, only remarkable events can be traced in history. The Second World War can be used as an example to illustrate Barthes' idea. Historians narrate the destructing battles, the treaties, allies and all what happens during the War. They even tell about the causes that led to such a great war, however, they never mention what could happen if the causes were different and if the war never happened. Historians are eager to exciting, and interesting events that happen in history, not to those that did not happen. They are like journalists who feel excited to distressing events, just to have a suitable background to practice their job.

Matisich compares those historians to Thomas Pynchon who uses the third person narration to present remarkable events in his novels, giving the example of *V.* However, he

says that Pynchon can be compared to those historians only in one case, which is the linguistic discourse. Historians use such a discourse that is based on narrating events objectively, counting what happens in history without giving interpretations or possibilities. Thomas Pynchon narrates the events of his story using the third person without any interference of him (Mattesich 31-2).

Mattesich gives himself the opportunity to put Pynchon in the same discourse as historians because of the linguistic reason he gives, other critiques never do. Scott Sanders argues, in his article *Pynchon's Paranoid History*, that there is a serious conspiracy behind history. He says that human life and events are totally controlled by a hidden society that directs them. He sees that the conspiracy behind history is utterly like the one of the Puritans who used God and church to control the early Americans' life. Sanders says that the very appropriate hypothesis that suits what happens and what is happening in history is the existence of secret hidden people who control societies from the dark. He says that the fact can be detected in the numerous number of coincidences that happen in life without having reasonable explanations (177-8).

Sanders opinion can be considered as the most powerful opinion that can explain the counterfeit of history in the postmodern era. Huge number of postmodernists suggest thousands of conspiracy theories to explain the different events that happen in life. If a war or a revolution takes place somewhere on earth, postmodernists present a conspiracy theory that suits it. Even natural disasters are interpreted in a doubtful way by postmodernists.

Sanders sees that Thomas Pynchon is one of those postmodernists who strongly believe in conspiracy theories especially the one of history. He says that Pynchon's novels can be considered as one of the most important, if not the very important, novels that draws the reader's attention to the conspiracy surrounding him. In his novels *V.* and *Gravity's Rainbow*,

Thomas Pynchon depicts, with a paranoid eye, a suspicious style. Thomas Pynchon awes a "conspiratorial vision" of history structure in its basis. Sanders claims that this distrust of history goes back to theological roots as the church used to control the society's life and events. The most suitable example that could be given here is the puritan society (178).

Apart from being a fiction writer, Thomas Pynchon refuses to be noted or remembered in history. In their article *Fast Learner: The Typescript of Pynchon's V. at the Harry Ransom Center in Austin*, Herman Luc and John M. Kraft talk about the occasional attainment of Thomas Pynchon's original typescript of his novel *V.* along with the original copies of letters to his friends Faith and Kirkpatrick Sale that were written between 1960 and 1964. They say that the acquirement of such document is considered as a great achievement in the history of Pynchon's criticism (1). Thomas Pynchon never broadcasts his life or talk about his works to media. The only thing that represents him is his fiction. Luc and Kraft say that his introduction to his early and only collection of short stories *Slow Learner* is not considered as Pynchon's only words. They say that there is also an article that Pynchon wrote to *The New York Magazine*, which is basically nonfictional, talks about the Watts Riots (1).

Luc and Kraft see that this absence of material that comes from Pynchon himself is considered as a difficulty for Pynchon critiques, especially when the critique is "genetic" (1). Thomas Pynchon, however, is not as interested in leaving raw material for his critiques as he is for leaving no space for history to note him. Many researchers try to do biographical research on Pynchon but the material is really insufficient as Luc and Krafft say (1).

Pynchon has such a tough attitude towards history that makes him very different from any given writer that America or the world has ever known. Thomas Pynchon's attitude towards history is typically postmodern. David Cowart says that Pynchon has a genealogical view towards history. He presents his idea by depicting Pynchon as an unconventional

historians. Previously, Cowart says, Pynchon claimed himself to be an accurate fiction writer in terms of history, however, he is proved to be a "curious" accurate historian. Cowart argues that Pynchon owes the same attitude, as Nietzsche and Foucault, in terms of genealogical history. Cowart refers to Foucault as an unordinary historians because of his attitude towards historians and historiography. Foucault sees that what historians do nowadays has no flavor and is likely similar to documentaries. Pynchon seems to have the same opinion as Foucault for he turns to be genealogical historian as well. The length of his novels, claims Cowart serves as a proof of Pynchon's use of genealogy in narrating stories. Pynchon uses a lot of details in narration as a means to dominate the reader's understanding of historical fact, but without admitting it directly. He uses a kind of control over the reader's mind to distract his attention to the fact that he is actually narrating historical events (385-6).

In his article *Pynchon, Genealogy, History: Against the Day*, David Cowart adds that Pynchon's technique of narrating historical events genealogically is meant to help the reader change his opinion about certain attitudes that he learned unconsciously from the dominating powerful systems. Pynchon wants, in a way, to change the old (mainly the modern) intellectual attitude towards powerful systems which is always the same. He thinks that the group of intellectuals that claim to be, for most of the time historians, is dominating the reader's mind by narrowing his attitudes towards governmental systems, as an example. Without admitting to be one of them, in narrating history and awing opinions, Pynchon writes as much as he can, in terms of fiction, to be able to revolutionize the reader against the old intellectual attitude towards history especially history of power and all what concerns its discourse (386).

Thomas Pynchon is incapable of admitting that he writes history because of the strong negative attitude that he has towards historiography. Pynchon's main concern is order and its

establishment in society. He tries to change the reader's view towards power in order to participate, along with Michel Foucault and others, in a new world order based on the continuity of the present or like Khachig Tololyan says in his article *Prodigious Pynchon and his Prodigy* the entropic World. Tololyan deals with the issue of history in relation to entropy. He says that "paranoia, uncertainty, choice and history" has a continuous relation to entropy. Pynchon considers these elements as "issues" rather than elements, and he gives them much of importance in his fiction. He says that Pynchon uses the term "Entropy" constantly in his fiction, especially in his short story *Entropy*. Pynchon considers that the whole twentieth century history is based on an "entropic process" in one "closed system" (226). Tololyan continues:

As time goes on, this causes a homogeneity of energy-content among any system's parts (atoms, individuals, institutions, countries) and results in the creation of a static and oppressive order. The ability to provoke change depends on the existence of differences in energy levels within closed systems, or on opening the system to new, charismatic sources of human energy. Barring the discovery of such new sources, as Norbert Wiener, the "father of cybernetics" and a frequent source for Pynchon said, "while the universe as a whole . . . tends to run down, there [remain] local enclaves whose direction seems opposed to that of the universe at large, and in which there is a limited and temporary tendency for organization to increase. Life finds its home in some of these enclaves."⁸ ("Enclaves" is a recurrent word in Pynchon's "Entropy.") (226)

Toloyan gives history a scientific explanation that tends to be more Pynchonian. Pynchon uses entropy in his novels in order to clarify to the reader the world order and how it works. All the world is based on one order, that by the time results an element that dominates the other elements within the same system. To bring a change, says Toloyan, there should be a different element that exists within the system, or at least there should exist a new source that could bring this element. Pynchon refers to certain "enclaves" in his novels that can bring change to humanity and establish order. Without these enclaves, entropy can last forever.

Pynchon considers himself as one of these enclaves in denying history. He believes that he is one of these charismatic elements that exist within the world system and that can bring change. On the one hand, he tries to be a genealogical historian that can defeat the new concept of power by writing long novels in which he narrates history through a different eye. On the other hand, he uses complicated thematic issues in which he explains the world order that is totally entropic, and in which he presents definite solutions based on new charismatic elements that can defeat the oppressive ones by changing the world view towards history.

Pynchon is afraid of the fall of humanity after the long domination of the oppressive elements that he refers to in his fiction that is why he works constantly to bring about order. He always continues to beat the wrongly perceived concept of history using his fiction. Joseph W. Slade claims, in his article *Thomas Pynchon, Post-industrial Humanist*, that almost all of Pynchon's novels handle the issue of history. He says that it is either a man that comes from the past to chase a woman (like the example of *V.*) and who is likely in charge of the wars that happened in the twentieth century, or a housewife that pursues a conspiracy behind a network that comes from the sixteenth century (the example of *The Crying of Lot 49*), or a group of characters that try to chase a firing site of a German rocket during the Second World War (the example of *Gravity's Rainbow*) (54).

Slade says that all of Pynchon's characters, that are totally numerous in every single novel, are related to historical events. They are either a Nazi character or an "African rocket expert" or a "red army officer." Slade claims that Pynchon intends to use this collection of characters that come from different societies in order to understand and explain to the reader the American, European and Soviet governance of third world countries. It is always a problem of the dominating power for Pynchon, a problem of bureaucracy (54). Slade says that Pynchon's unique concern is the " with the modern human condition and with the past that has shaped it" (54).

The past is always haunting Pynchon. Although he claims that he denies history as a whole, however, he falls in the trap of history that is chasing him everywhere. Ralph Schroeder says that, in his view of history, Thomas Pynchon is influenced by Weber's view of it. Like Weber, Pynchon is concerned with history and its relation with science, technology and politics. The only difference between them is that Weber is only concerned with the American history, however Pynchon tackles the history of humankind (like we have seen in the previous paragraphs) (164).

Thomas Pynchon's concern with history is illustrated in many ways. He is either concerned with its refusal of it as a means of dominating the oppressive powers that history produces them, or with the continuity of the present over the past as means of killing the chronological orders of events that eradicates heroic incidents by means of putting them together as a group. He is also concerned with order and organization which he sees should dominate the entropic world that we live in.

Thomas Pynchon, despite his denial, has written his own line of history that is based on his refusal of the old way of noting it (mostly historiography). He feels that he should get

rid of it to move or establish new norms that suit his thinking, and more importantly his fiction.

As it is referred to at the beginning of this chapter, the postmodern line of history was mostly written by postmodernists themselves. They preferred to deny the existence of such a word as “history” to write the postmodern vague line unconsciously in a historical manner. Thomas Pynchon is one of the main writers of this line. Thomas Pynchon’s attitude towards history is similar to the postmodernists’ one.

There are two significant aspects that should be taken into consideration while examining the postmodern history in relation to Thomas Pynchon’s fiction: fact and purpose. Referring to facts, postmodernists (as it is referred to in the previous sections) see that the human history shows no absolute truth about any given aspect of life or events that can be considered as a fact. What it shows is only half of the truth that cannot bring certainty. Therefore, logic is also absent in the postmodern thinking.

Purpose is regarded as the second main aspect to describe the postmodernist view concerning history. Early historians and philosophers reflected on history as an important portion of human value as to give meaning to people’s life concerning ideas and beliefs. However, Thomas Pynchon depicts history as a nihilist part of human life. Most of short stories in his collections *Slow Learner* reveal a kind of nihilism and disillusionment towards history among which is *Small Rain* whose character returns from the Second World War and finds dead bodies. Most Postmodernists doubt that a precise telling of the past is possible because they distort the difference between fact and fiction—some even claim that all historical accounts are fiction. Foucault is one of the originators of this postmodern approach to history, which offers a thoughtful challenge to the standard (Foucault 57).

Truth lets down Thomas Pynchon as well. The words that he uses, “Truth abandons”²⁵ reflect the skeptical eye with which he sees facts. But, one should wonder about the outside circumstances that he might have been through to have such an attitude. Is it a common ideology or an attracting movement? No one of these answers is possible. Thomas Pynchon is an exception.

Thomas Pynchon as a person preferred to stay as mysterious as his novels. The fact that he never appears in public and talks about his books, leaves an empty room for literary theory and interpretation speculative. This is reflected in literature about Pynchon. Most of the 20th century eminent scholars of American literature are involved in his work. But also to other artists he is a steady source of inspiration, not only to writers like Paul Auster, Don DeLillo or Susan Sontag, but also to movie artists. Filmmakers like David Lynch, Quentin Tarantino or Jim Jarmusch continually process postmodern elements and subjects (Dittmer 2).

The fact that Thomas Pynchon never appears to public suggests that there is no possibility that his attitude is a result of an outside influence. However, there is still another possibility that suggests an inner constructed personal attitude against possible social, political, ideological or moral circumstances. The writer was living the early ages of his adolescence directly after the Second World War. Perhaps the reason behind the mentioned attitude is merely disillusionment with the Second World War and the destruction that it left.

Disillusionment goes back to a special social and intellectual background of the writer himself. Although there are no available sources, biographies or autobiographies that deal with Thomas Pynchon’s life, there are some hints however that can provide a certain basis to analyze this mysterious writer. He was an engineering physics student before interrupting his studies to serve two years in the navy (Bloom 12). The young Pynchon changed the direction

²⁵ In Mason and Dixon, Pynchon says “Who claims truth, truth abandons.”

of his academic studies as soon as he came back to university. The shift from scientific studies to literary ones requires a deep analysis.

According to Hegel, the individual's will is the core of the individual's existence, continually seeking actuality and effectiveness in the world. Hegel perceives a "hierarchy" of elements in an individual's mental make-up in which the will occupies the highest position (Hughes 171). As one of Hegel's biographers wrote, the Hegelian will is that in which consideration and desire, mind and heart, 'are combined in freedom.' One can recognize "personality" with the will's struggle to actualize itself. Hence Hegel writes that 'a person must translate his freedom into an external sphere in order to exist as an idea' and that 'personality is the first, still wholly abstract, determination of the absolute and infinite will.' According to Hegel, 'personality is that which struggles to lift itself above this restriction of being only subjective and to give itself reality, or in other words to claim that external world as its own' (Hughes 171).

According to the previous paragraph, postmodern personality is a typical Hegelian one. Thomas Pynchon was totally surprised by the mechanical, military and industrial world that he lived in during the two years that he served on the navy. The military-industrial complex had a great negative influence on the young Pynchon. He probably concealed a creative personality behind the scientific academic title that he had. The aftermath of the military service of Pynchon was a revolutionary one. He wills strongly to and defends his sovereignty against the external world. The will was subjectivist for certain. But it was so that he didn't allow his external rebellion to stay external. He took a direct action against science by changing the field. The fact reflects the insistence of Pynchon on the depicted willing subjectivity. Another example is the change in his way of writing after being unsatisfied about his early fiction. The fact is dealt with in the following title.

2.2- Pynchon and Aesthetics

The story of Thomas Pynchon and aesthetics is a story of a slow learner. In his introduction to his early republished short stories under the title of *Slow Learner*, Pynchon's stories clearly show the different approaches of subjects that would become major themes throughout the rest of his work: interaction between social classes, conflict with authority, tension between the sexes, and understanding the nature of entropy. He says:

My best hope is that, pretentious, goofy and ill-considered as they get now and then, these stories will still be of use with all their flaws intact, as illustrative of typical problems in entry-level fiction, and cautionary about some practices which younger writers might prefer to avoid (Slow 2-3).

Concerning the interaction between social classes, Thomas Pynchon, along with postmodernists, reveals a distinctive attitude. Hal Foster gives a list of artists, in his book *Postmodern Culture*, who are mainly postmodernists, who may give an overview of the concept of modernism. He mentions John Ashbery in poetry, Robert Venturi in architecture, Andy Warhol in pop music, John Cage in photography, Clash, The Talking Heads and The Gang of Four in rock music, and William Burroughs, Eshmael Reeds, and Thomas Pynchon in fiction. Foster gives these names as examples to show the wave of artists that came essentially against "the complex, ironic academic" modernism. He says that all of these artists are interested in one main issue, which is the social classes between the past modern world and the current postmodern one (111).

Foster says that this list came mainly against the "established form of high modernism (111). He believes that its main target is to get rid of the high modernism's dominance essentially at universities, museums, internet, and every foundation that concerns society and art. Artists in the list see that modernism has established a dominance based on supremacy

over other mores that came before or comes after it. Foster thinks that the modern culture is "subversive and abstract", a fact that led postmodernists to neglect and combat it. Foster gives another list that exemplifies those modernists like T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, Wallace Stegner, James Joyce, and Marcel Proust. Foster argues that the list of postmodernists felt a kind of oppression from the part of modernists, a fact that turned the second list to be a kind of enemies to the first one. Foster continues to say that modernists turned out to look like "dead bodies" or cold status that should be destroyed by postmodernists (112).

Foster claim that the postmodernists' list want to eradicate the old separation between the high class culture and the mass popular culture. Modernists have always believed in academia and art to belong to the high class, or the elite. This notion of superiority concern postmodernists to a great extent. Foster says that postmodernists established newer ways in art to oppose modernists. For example, in media and broadcasting, postmodernists started to be captivated by more light shows like TV series taking for instance *Reader's Digest*. Concerning fiction, postmodernist prefer science fiction, mystery writings, popular biographies, and all what concerns fantasy (112).

Foster thinks that modernism has established a high class culture with tough roots since he compares its artists to status. He sees that this high culture stands behind the postmodernists' negative attitude towards modernism in general. Postmodernists refuse the separation created by modernists, consequently they erase the separation definitely.

Thomas Pynchon is one of those postmodernists who give a huge interest to the issue of social classes and its relation to modernism. W. Lawrence Hogue Considers Thomas Pynchon, along with Paul Auster as the most important postmodern writers. His characterization comes from the attitude that each one of them embodies towards modernism. Both of the writers represent a unconstructive position towards the so-called "modern

enlightenment and reason" in terms of fiction (42). Hogue considers the modern enlightenment as "a totalized, rationalized subsystem of enlightenment world-system" (42). Modernists, adds Hogue, launch a philosophical, social, and psychological perceptions of theories that have a great relation to reason, however, they allow no social change in terms of classes. Hogue thinks that modernists tend to leave space for no change in the traditional division of society for they think that this division has already been the most powerful element of western society. He says that modernists do not consider the subject and believe in no subjectivity distant from that of their own (42).

Hogue depicts Auster's and Pynchon's opinion in a total opposition to the modernists' attitude towards subjectivity and, especially, towards society, social classes and social division (42). Hogue says that both of the writers tend to "delimit the other as a means of controlling and assuring white, masculine, privileged identity/selfhood, which they never throw into crisis" (42). Pynchon and Auster aim to show, using fiction, their great interest in society and social classes by launching an ideological combat against the modern dominating social division that has always existed. They see that modernists, despite their claim to bring enlightenment, preferred to keep the old western high class domination to assure a control of the elite over the common mass of people.

Hogue's attitude reveals the core of the problem between Thomas Pynchon and modernists that lies in the wrong and/ or the right perception of intellectualism. In his book *Everybody's America: Thomas Pynchon, Race, and the Culture of Postmodernism*, David Witzling talks about the presence of African culture in the works of Pynchon. He says that there is a strong existence of African customs, society, and ethnicity in Pynchon's works. Witzling sees that the modern fiction presents a tough continuation of, what he calls "whiteness", something that Pynchon opposes and attempts to change. Witzling says that Pynchon is one of the rare white writers who temps to handle the issue of "Africanist

presence", as Toni Morrison Says, adds Witzling. He states that Pynchon is considered as one of the most important white writers who give much importance to the negro presence in their novels regarding customs, music, characters and even dialect language. Witzling refers to Pynchon from Norman Mailer's point of view, that he demonstrates in his book *The White Negro*. Mailer thinks, that Pynchon is one of those Euro-American fiction writers who attempt to revolutionize against the Euro-American modern writers. Euro-American fiction writers tend to maintain a white standard of writing, and that standard concerns both style and theme (4).

Thomas Pynchon tends to elevate the African culture in his novels as an attempt to overcome the over promoted white culture in the works of modern American culture. The tendency comes as a result of his interest on society and social classes. Pynchon sees that modernists praise the high class white culture over the negro low culture (if we can say so). As an endeavor to eliminate this separation, he gives much value to the negro culture in his fiction.

Dealing with the issue of social classes, Thomas Pynchon does not give importance to the presence of literary and fictional names in his works. In his article *Dimming the Enlightenment: Thomas Pynchon's Mason and Dixon*, Victor Strandberg says that Thomas Pynchon rarely mentions names of authors in his novels. He says that the reason behind this absence of writers' names in his fiction does not come due to an unawareness of Thomas Pynchon, but rather to a consideration from the part of Pynchon of the importance of the view point of each one of them that may influence his writing. Strandberg confirms that the only names that Pynchon mentions in the introduction of his collection of short stories, *Slow Learners*, are names of rebels, and radicals whose position resembles the one of Pynchon (102). Concerning music, Strandberg adds, Pynchon never mentions classical music

celebrities, rather he prefers to give large space for Jazz Music bands like "Bird, Elvis, Spike, Jones, Bop, Rock and Roll, and Swing" (102).

Strandberg states that, in literature, Pynchon's only concern is to cite names of social radicals along with titles like *Lolita*, *Howl*, *Tropic of Cancer*, *Playboy Magazine*, Norman Mailer's *The White Negro*, and above all the Beat writers, who promoted a sane and decent affirmation of all what we want to believe about American values" (qt in Strandberg 102). Strandberg believes that Pynchon values these titles and consider them as the aristocratic list that he could not see on the aristocratic list of the age of reason. Pynchon, adds Strandberg , shows a special adoration to Jack Kerouac's *On the Road*, that is mostly a general encyclopedia of postmodern themes and events like mystery and freedom. Strandberg thinks that Jack Kerouac and others do not form a classical aristocratic list of writers, however, for Pynchon , such a list serves more his ambitions and will to change (102).

Thomas Pynchon's attitude towards the aristocratic literature comes from a deep belief in the elimination of social classes. He sees that writers from the age of reason devote their entire life and works to talk about the white Christian Anglo-Saxon person who is embodied in one standard character. He sees that this kind of writers tend to marginalize the ethnic groups like Africans and Hipsters who are more or less as important as the white people. The fact explains the reason behind his adoration of certain writers like Jack Kerouac and Norman Miller who share with him a certain rebellion. He forms, along with them, a group of authors who demand change in terms of social classes. The only means that they have is their fiction writing. Pynchon and these writers are the new intellectual group that seems to be eager to defeat the old one that claims to bring change and reason, but tends to keep the segregation, even in their writings.

Thomas Pynchon proves to have a great interest in social classes during the Postmodern era. Jackson Turner Main says, in his book *Social Structure of Revolutionary America*, that the social structure and classes division has always been a rising issue in the Americans life (1). He thinks that "major movements such as the revolts of Bacon and Leisler, Shaysites and Regulators, even The American Revolution have been interpreted as arising out of economic inequality" (1). Out of these protests came schools of criticism like the Marxist one that claims a governmental oppression over the low class of people. They see, says Main, that there exists a social conflict between the high class and the low class in society. Main adds that Marxists came to oppose the already existing conservatives who deny categorically the existence of social classes. Main adds that the historians' attitude towards social classes is always vague. He sees that they do not give so much space for details to come and show the truth about this division. Hence, the space is left for conservatives and rebels to confront each other (1).

Thomas Pynchon, as one of the most interested writers in the issue of social classes takes the trend of the rebels who claim the existence of social oppression over low class. Regarding his opinion about history and historians (an opinion that we have seen and discussed in the previous title), Pynchon could never believe in facts and debates that history presents on the issue, nor could he belong to the conservatives who deny the existence of social classes. Pynchon prefers to belong to the group of Bacon and Leisler, Shaysites and Regulators, and The American Revolution who defend the rights of social class.

Pynchon shows a great interest in social classes. The reason behind this interest is his belief that he could participate in changing the social status quo. Robert L. McLaughlin admits that artists like poets and writers could have a serious influence on the governmental legislation. He uses Shelly's saying "Poets are the unacknowledged legislators" to justify his claim in his article *Post-Postmodern Discontent: contemporary Fiction and Social Word*. He

says that literature could have an enormous influence on the legislation of laws (53). McLaughlin gives examples of some literary and fictional works that had great impacts on the legislation of important laws in America such as "Melville's *White-Jacket* (1850) influencing legislation banning flogging on US navy ships, Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852) crystallizing the debate over slavery or Sinclair's *The Jungle* (1906) inspiring the creation of the Pure Food and Drug Act" (54). Although, McLaughlin thinks that literature could have a governmental impact, however, he admits that the greatest influence it could have is mostly social. He sees that literature changes people's way of thinking and understanding concepts. He believes that literary works, as those that establish new legislations, could evoke the social consciousness towards social classes. He supposes that such works have the ability to change the subjects' life since all of them represent doubt and question the social order (53).

Thomas Pynchon shows a great interest in the interaction between social classes. He considers the subject as an essential issue that should be treated in his novels. The second issue to which Pynchon gives much importance is his own conflict with authority. Pynchon sees that the government owns the same attitude as the one of modernists.

When Paul Royser, the retired teacher of literature and the director of the interactive archive of the Nebraska University decided to publish his own chronological on Thomas Pynchon, he handled an interview with a fan of Pynchon. One of the most important question that were asked in this interview is " Why has, do you think, Thomas Pynchon's privacy been so well respected so far, despite the intensive speculation about his identity that there is out there - at least among his fans? (24). The fan asked a very fitting question that suits the identity of Pynchon. Pynchon is a controversial writer and many controversial writer appear in history now and then, but no one of them has ever kept his identity secret from media and public for almost 54 years. A logical wondering should emerge about the governmental reaction towards Pynchon's doubtful attitude. Royser answers by saying:

" Well, he has a good lawyer and is consistent about keeping a low profile and does not seem to miss the celebrity status that he might have. I think his true fans respect his desire to keep out of the public eye. Really, if I had written the things about the US government that he has, I would constantly be on the move and looking over my shoulder. Look, the government tried to hound John Lennon out of this country, and then he got assassinated. I'm sure there's a pretty thick FBI file on Pynchon" (24).

Royster's answer reveals the nature of the relationship between Pynchon and the US government. Pynchon has a complicated relationship with the government for two reasons: first, because of the hidden identity that he chose to keep for the rest of his life since 1963, and second, because of the attitude towards the US government that he shows in his novels.

One should wonder about the tough attitude that Pynchon has towards his government. David Seeds says in his book *The Fictional Labyrinths of Thomas Pynchon* that the latter, although he appears to be similar to his contemporaries considering the "black humor" fiction that he presents, however, his fictions seems to be more serious and real. Pynchon relies on reality in choosing the themes of his works, also when it comes to details, Pynchon often refers to real characters and events that takes place in history or in the current period of the novel. Seed sees that Pynchon's fiction is more intellectual. His claim relies on the fact that Pynchon's plots are more or less disjointed and discontinuous. The reason behind this fragmentation, Seed adds, is that Pynchon prefers to stay hidden and inherent. Seed gives the example of *V.* in which the plot looks very fragmented and discontinuous. Sometimes Pynchon refers a specific period of time in history, other times he goes back to more ancient events from the past. Seed believes that this extreme use of fragmentation goes back to Pynchon's intention to keep the basic on which the plot of his novels stand secret (7).

There is a firm relationship between Pynchon and mystery. He never reveals the background of his novels, nor he talks about the real persons upon whom he bases his characterization. He even does not reveal his real identity. The fact brings, for the second time, Royser's suggestion that Pynchon hides from the government, a suggestion that requires a serious analysis of his attitude towards it.

In his short story *Entropy*, Thomas Pynchon writes:

This was in early February of '57 and back then there were a lot of American expatriates around Washington, D.C., who would talk, every time they met you, about how someday they were going to go over to Europe for real but right now it seemed they were working for the government. Everyone saw a fine irony in this. They would stage, for instance, polyglot parties where the newcomer was sort of ignored if he couldn't carry on simultaneous conversations in three or four languages (Slow 66).

Pynchon seems to mock on those American expatriates who were supposed to go to Europe to express their opposition to the American government, but who also found themselves work for it few years later. Hypothetically, Pynchon refers here to some fictional characters who did exactly the same as Ezra Pound and T. S. Eliot, but who ended up by establishing political parties. Pynchon appears to oppose those American intellectuals who submit to their authorities. He sees that the intellectual's role lies in resisting the political oppression not the opposite.

Pynchon's conflict with the US authority occupies so much space in his early and late novels. The writer gives a great interest to his opposition regarding the US authority, so are his critics who tend to provoke this issue often in their works. It is one of the themes that

seems to have an effect on Pynchon's aesthetics, however entropy seizes more space in Pynchon's fiction.

Entropy is a theme that attracts Pynchon's attention during the early beginning of his career as a fiction writer. In his collection of short stories *Slow Learner*, Pynchon introduces a short story entitled *Entropy* that tackles the issue of order and disorder in the American society. In his article *Ironic Distance in Thomas Pynchon's Entropy*, Julián Jiménez Heffernan believes that entropy is a fundamental theme of Pynchon's fiction. He discusses the several views of critics that tackle the issue of entropy. He says that Judith Chamber claims that entropy is considered as Pynchon's greatest metaphor, however, Tony tanner sees that entropy is Pynchon's greatest achievement in terms of ideas (298).

Entropy is Pynchon's supreme idea by which he reaches the top of his credit as a controversial writer. It is a theme that he chooses as a means to introduce his unique idea about the world. It is an idea that is based on chaos and disorder. Pynchon sees that a world controlled by modernists is a world that lives in entropy. In order for a world to return to its order, he has to pass by a series of wondering to reach order, a concept that is always contradicted with entropy in Pynchon's fiction.

Heffman believes that there are two possibilities by which we can read the concept of entropy in Pynchon's fiction. The first possibility is that the concept refers to the disorder that the real world lives in along with the characters in his novels. The second possibility is that entropy is a notion that Pynchon uses to organize the textual vision of his fiction (or in other words disorganize it). Heffman thinks that the structural order of Pynchon's fiction is completely entropic (298).

Entropy as a theme in Pynchon's novels reflects the entire disorder that the characters live in. They are depicted in an unstable state of mind where they cannot decide what to think

and what to do. It is a state that controls most of them. Pynchon intends to show his interest in entropy by means of creating characters and events from the past and the present and by confusing the reader with dates and events that are full of flashbacks. This is what we call the entropy of text. The writer tends to structure his novels and short stories using different historical backgrounds that seem to have no relation with each other.

Seed sees that the short story *Entropy* is considered as Pynchon's first attempt to handle the issue of entropy that becomes essential in his next novels. It is an attempt to bring science to literature and fiction (135). Pynchon intends to convince the reader that science can be literarily handled. In his article *Order in Thomas Pynchon's Entropy*, Seeds chooses to give scientific definitions of the word, that he takes from *The Webster Third New International Dictionary*, in order to show that there is no obvious relation between the title and the context of the novel. He states that

"1. [In thermodynamics] A quantity that is the measure of the amount of energy in a system not available for doing work... 2. [In statistical mechanics] A factor of quantity that is a function of the physical state of a mechanical system... 3. [In communication theory] A measure of the efficiency of a system (as a code or a language) in transmitting information... 4. The ultimate state reached in the degradation of the matter and energy of the universe: state of inert uniformity of component elements; absence of form, pattern, hierarchy, or differentiation (qt in Seed 136).

Seed's attempt to explain the term scientifically comes as an intention to bring into view an understanding that is strange to some, if not all, of his readers. Readers are not familiar with intensive scientific topics that occupy Pynchon's themes. In *Entropy*, Pynchon

talks a little about science in the context, however, he introduces entropy thematically and textually (as Heffman says) as a means to pave the way for more intensive scientific themes.

As it is the case of Pynchon, Seed intends to show the real meaning of entropy by means of defining it scientifically so that he can convince the reader of the literary significance of it. In his article, Seed continues by saying that the second definition of entropy that he presents does not have a significance in Pynchon's short story (136). He says that it does when "being only glanced at briefly in Callisto's dictation" (36). Concerning the other definition, Seed sees that entropy as an imposed intensity of action is traced in "Callisto's hot-house to Mulligan's party and finally to Saul's apartment below that, we can see that the apartments form a schematic analogue to the fourth, first and third definitions respectively" (136).

Seed considers that these implications of entropy within the story's scenes in a way that requires thinking and understanding of Pynchon's way to introduce a new type of fiction based on the beauty of science. Regarding *Entropy*, Pynchon seems to be convinced that there is a certain beauty that we can trace in the implication of scientific concepts within the story's scenes and structure.

Entropy is a theme that interests Pynchon and introduces his idea on aesthetics along with the conflict between social classes, that we have seen previously, history and his own conflict with the authority. All of these themes are going to be essential in Pynchon's perception and application of aesthetics.

Pynchon's idea on aesthetics is also influenced by the loss of truth. It is a theme that dominates his early fiction. Truth in Pynchon's early fiction is associated with the conflict between social classes regarding the state of mind that Pynchon puts himself in along with the popular culture believers who think that the modernists' high class domination comes from

their controlling over truth by means of reason and rationality. Pynchon and low class believers see that the modernists cover the real meaning of truth. Also, the loss of truth is related to history that Pynchon believes to be forged and manipulated by the modern historians. Concerning Pynchon's own conflict with the US authority, the writer seems to be eager to show that the government is practicing a series of manipulations of truth in order to dominate the public. Entropy is the concept that Pynchon intends to use in his coming novels to show the complete disorder that humanity lives in because of the modernists.

Regarding the discussed themes in relation to truth, Pynchon decides to manipulate the postmodernists' loss of truth (in which he believes as well) to introduce his own view of aesthetics. Pynchon as an intellectual living in that period was influenced by the emerging flow of definitions, ideologies and practices to become a part of them. He was a college student when the world was trying to get by the new orders and dogmas. The new intellectual has written a number of short stories during that period. Later, they emerged as a book collection called: *Slow Learner*. The latter shows the writer's influence by the widespread disillusionment and nihilism as a character in the real postmodern society.

The analysis of the concepts of truth along with the definition of manipulation demonstrates Thomas Pynchon's manipulation of the postmodern conceptual loss of truth. In his collection of short stories *Slow Learner*, Thomas Pynchon demonstrates heavily his reliance on the loss of truth to conceptualize his own notions of it. In the introduction to this collection of short stories, the writer says: "Everybody gets told to write about what they know. The trouble with many of us is that at the earlier stages of life we think we know everything- or to put it more usefully, we are often unaware of the scope and structure of our ignorance" (8).

The quotation reveals the early intentions of the writer to hit truth. The collection of stories *Slow Learner* was written between 1959 and 1964²⁶. The period witnessed the shift from modernism to postmodernism. Thomas Pynchon had to apply one of the manipulative ways for the sake of taking advantage of the widespread loss of truth. He used a discursive way to manipulate the postmodern loss of truth. The fact was achieved by highlighting the dreadful side of the phenomenon and ignoring the fine side of it.

In *The Small Rain*, in the collection *Slow Learner*, the main character is a soldier who is sent to clean up the dead bodies after the Nazi attacks on American territories during the Second World War. In *Law-lands*, in the collection *Slow Learner*, the main character is a lawyer who reveals his intention of having children without being engaged in a marital relationship. In *Entropy*, in the collection *Slow Learner*, the main characters are a board of crazy people who live in a mess of a colorful party in which they act indifferently. The characters of Thomas Pynchon's early fiction act like postmodernists. Although, Thomas Pynchon has confessed that he was not satisfied with the stylistic level of his early fiction, he did not intend from the beginning to use this stream of ideas to introduce a different kind of fiction.

Slow Learner shows that Thomas Pynchon started as a postmodernist²⁷ who was implausibly astonished by the manipulating modern certainty. In addition, he manipulated, in return, its anti-enlightenment light to establish his own subjective aesthetics that are based on the rejection of academia, science and the established knowledge. The fact is clearly shown in the strong defense of the common mass of people against the elite that is shown in *Slow Learner*.

²⁶ Peter drucker suggests that the shift from modernism to postmodernism happened between 1937 and 1957 while he was writing.

Drucker, Peter F. *Landmarks of Tomorrow*. New york : Harper Brothers, 1957.

²⁷ A postmodernist is the one who believes in the total absence of truth and certainty and claims science to be illusive and useful.

In the short story *The Small Rain*, the main character spends a whole day, which is the time of the story, picking up dead bodies from a small island after a destructive hurricane. Then, he goes back home thinking about his whole life after this experience (Slow). The main character reflects the present disillusionment that reveals the author's spirit. Using this story, Thomas Pynchon pushes the reader to think again about his life taking into consideration that the dead bodies stand for the Second World War victims.

Thomas Pynchon is interested, as a first stage, in changing the domination of the elite in society. Consequently, he shows a direct interaction with the common groups. In *The Small Rain* from *Slow Learner*, he shows sympathy with this portion of society, the common mass of humanity, whom "while in theory capable of idiocy, are much more apt to display competence, courage, humanity, wisdom, and other virtues associated, by the educated classes, with themselves." (Slow 3).

Using an analysis of the writer's early short stories, an idea of his opinion about the common people is constructed. Thomas Pynchon sees that the common's ethical attitudes in the face of the elite lead to the recognition of the common people's superiority over the elite. The common is humble, brave, and smart. It is moral and human. A common people's person wills to do the good over the evil. He is responsive and sociable. He is an efficient member in society. Despite the bad conditions that a common's member can live in, he is always optimistic (Slow).

Thomas Pynchon is inspired by the common people, and the result of the inspiration is *Slow Learner*. It is mainly a defense of them. There are two main reasons for Pynchon's inspiration that are related to each other. The first reason is totally ethical. Thomas Pynchon assumes that the elite educated class of people has dominated and eliminating the common throughout history. The fact gave him the pretext to abolish history from the postmodern

dictionaries by depicting it as a “dead culture”. Because of Pynchon’s conviction of the preterite’s superiority, he wanted to give them back their right as a superior class over the elite.

The second reason is aesthetic. Thomas Pynchon sees that it is beautiful to defend the people’s rights as an achievement of the ethical. He constructed in his early fiction an aesthetic idea that is based on beautifying the preterite’s defense. It is ethical to honor the lower class and it is aesthetical to prefer ethics.

The themes tackled in *Slow Learner* are mainly close and related to those of the fiction that came after this publication. But, why does Thomas Pynchon punish himself by publishing such an introduction. The following example (that is taken from his introduction to *Slow Learner*) is an astonishing self-judgment that has never been written by any writer. Thomas Pynchon says:

It is only fair to warn even the most kindly disposed of readers that there are some mighty tiresome passages here, juvenile and delinquent too. At the same time, my best hope is that, pretentious, goofy and ill-considered as they get now and then, these stories will still be of use with all their flaws intact, as illustrative of typical problems in entry-level fiction, and cautionary about some practices which younger writers might prefer to avoid (*Slow 1*).

In this passage, Thomas Pynchon blames himself of writing such a collection because of the undeniably bad style of its stories. However, he insists that they are always useful and readable for they represent his early fiction. The reason behind the regret of (the *slow learner*) Pynchon of writing *Slow Learner* is typically aesthetical. The early aesthetics depicted in his novels are those that reveal obedience to the denied postmodern ideology that is based on

disillusionment only. After reflection and the small experience that Thomas Pynchon constructed, he found himself following the stream as a typical modernist. If Thomas Pynchon had to follow someone, he should have followed himself. The fact was later discovered by him. So, he called himself a “slow learner” and decided to get rid of the old fiction he was writing and establish his own one far from academia and ideologies.

This hypothesis is supported by his decision to hide in unknown places during his whole life. The writer is rarely seen on streets up till now. And he has never given an interview or discussed his novels with theorists and critics or even journalists. Here lies Thomas Pynchon’s aesthetic idea.

Thomas Pynchon’s aesthetic idea is a stream of inspirations and convictions on the pre- and the post- modern world developed by the writer himself and manifested in his early short stories as an introduction to more detailed recitals in later novels. The idea relies mainly on the representation of the way of thinking and opinion making that Thomas Pynchon is supposed to develop during the beginning of his career as a fiction writer.

The idea is constructed through an analysis of Pynchon’s attitude towards the pre-postmodern world and the postmodern ethics. The writer sees that the world was living in darkness, the one of the modern ideologies regarding the social classes, history, authority and order. However, his reaction against the modern world was different from that of the rest of the postmodernists. They called for change randomly to fall in the trap of consensus. This is what was avoided by Pynchon. Pynchon wanted to be unique. He wanted to be a real postmodernist.

Our thesis explains the difference between the postmodern aesthetics and Thomas Pynchon’s aesthetics as follows: postmodernists believed in the aesthetics of the subject. They preferred to own self-judgment that is beautifully based on the inner side of person. However,

Thomas Pynchon's aesthetics are based on the subjective personality. If he was to be rebellious, he should do by not letting the title postmodern movement include him.

Conclusion

Thomas Pynchon's aesthetic idea is a stream of ideas and convictions described in this part and adopted analytically by Thomas Pynchon, through his early short stories, as an attempt to introduce the aesthetic implementations presented in the coming parts of our work and the subsequent works of Pynchon. The aesthetic idea is based mainly on a careful study of the postmodern history and Thomas Pynchon's convictions. Its achievements are the following: first, postmodernism and the loss of certainty represent an implausible truth (that chock them) to postmodernists themselves and prepare them critically to form a critical but not rebellious aesthetic attitude towards the old certainty. Second, it presents the core of the aesthetic idea always in relation to truth. Third, it brings the example of Thomas Pynchon, who will be the main theme of the work, to show the influence of such an implausible truth, an aesthetic manipulation, on him to become a manipulator himself as a result of a progressive aesthetic idea studied previously.

Part Two

Thomas Pynchon's Aesthetic Experience

Introduction

"Every Weirdo in the World is in my wavelength."

Thomas Pynchon

Thomas Pynchon once told his friend Siegel that every person who seems to be strange is actually interesting for him. Pynchon tends to be inspired by the weird people who are probably being dominated by the sense of paranoia and conspiracy that we trace often in Pynchon's fiction. This inspiration paves the way for Pynchon to experience a process of writing that is dominated by strange characters and events. It is the same experience that Pynchon wants his readers to pass by.

The saying reveals Pynchon's enjoyment of mystery, an enjoyment in which he sees a depiction of beauty in its postmodern vision. Pynchon's idea of aesthetics is based on the reception of beauty in a form of mystery that is dominated by the concepts of paranoia and conspiracy. Pynchon's aesthetic experience is mysterious, and to achieve it, he has to pass by several steps.

First, Pynchon experience a conception of quest. He launches a beginning of a journey towards aesthetics by searching for the truth behind the old concepts of life and religion in relation to quest. Pynchon finds out that the old views of life are misleading and do not fit his journey. At this time, he sees that he has to establish his own ones in order to achieve his intended experience.

Second, Pynchon implies his conceptions and convictions towards the sense of aesthetics on his novels by means of conceptualizing mystery, paranoia and conspiracy concepts in the themes of his novels. In this section, we learn about the reader who experiences the core of his aesthetics.

Third, we discuss Pynchon's celebration of his achievements by learning about his accomplishments in the intellectual, social, and artistic side that appear to be continuous even in his latest novels.

Chapter Three: The Quest

3.1- Transmitted Quest

He would dream perhaps once a week that it had all been a dream, and that now he'd awakened to discover the pursuit of V. was merely a scholarly quest after all, an adventure of the mind, in the tradition of *The Golden Bough* or *The White Goddess*.

Thomas Pynchon/ *V.*

After constructing a Pynchonian aesthetic idea, Thomas Pynchon is ready to free himself from the old perspectives of aesthetics. This is the reason why he started a kind of quest for freedom. Thomas Pynchon refers to the concept of quest in his early novel *V.* The writer uses his fiction to reveal his own view of the concept. Quest for Pynchon is a dream to be realized, and a mystery to be solved. Characteristically, Pynchon's view of quest seems ordinary since the past ancestors have always had early visions of a quest that will be achieved later, however, Thomas Pynchon's idea of freedom is the one of aesthetics. The writer thinks that it is beautiful to be free. It is beautiful to have a subject in society that is totally vivid. It is vivid secretly, surreptitiously, as to reflect the splendor. The collectivity of such beauty forms a kind of an inner subjectivity. It is in and within society to form a secret society, an upturned quest that ends instead of starting in the bottom of *V.*

Thomas Pynchon's quest is fictional. It is beautiful because it is secret. It is the one that deleted the old fiction. It brought up a mysterious entity that paved the way for and launched an overweighed freedom ready to be used and manipulated by postmodernist subjectivists.

Transmitted quest is a heading that refers to the influences of the early concepts of the quest for freedom on Pynchon that we suppose may clarify his journey. The notion of quest goes back to thousands of years of religious realm and the religion's opponents that call for freedom. The latter is mainly introduced by the subjective realm.

In *Quest Religion, Anti-Fundamentalism, and Limited Versus Universal Compassion*, C. Daniel Batson et al. demonstrate an experiment on persons that believe in the eternal religious quest. The writers want to identify the extent to which these persons may support a religious belief that is contradictory to theirs. The results are shown to be surprising for the writers. Most of the sample support to compromise with certain beliefs that are more or less against human nature, however, they show a severe attitude against the sin itself. One of the examples the writers give is of a woman who admits that she cannot bear gays. Batson et al. say that she writes severe answers against them (135).

Another experiment is presented in Stephen W. Krauss' Robert W. Flaherty's article, *The Effects of Tragedies and Contradictions on Religion as a Quest*. The experiment relies on a study that was applied on certain people who confront life problems and challenges. It seeks to prove that the individuals who face unbearable situations in life like death and crimes along with catastrophic failures in studies and career tend to enter into a religious quest to look for a replacement or at least answers to their questions. This kind of individuals tends to blame their religious beliefs for their failures and see that if they question these convictions, they may find others that could satisfy their needs in life (113).

The results of Krauss' and Flaherty's experiment come as follows: most of the people who face difficult problems in life enter into a series of questioning on their convictions and existence especially those who already have doubts about their own beliefs. The results also involve mood and temper in identifying change. Most of the people who enter a religious

quest tend to have a common changing mood in their everyday life. Krauss and Flaherty include the "self-deception" in their results and see that it could push the individuals into a religious quest. All the results that the two writers demonstrate depend mainly on the willingness of the subjects to start a religious quest. Usually this kind of persons have a hidden will to change their religion, and the exposure to severe problems provoke this will to come into view. Sometimes, even the individual himself does not pay attention to this will until life contradicts him (121).

Another experiment is given by Brian A. Kojetin et al. in their article *Quest: Constructive Search or Religious Conflict?* Their study depends on the measurement of religious quest relying on the influence of anxiety and temper on the individual. It is a comparison with the previous quests (111). The results show that several patterns participate in leading individuals to approach a religious quest. Their questionnaire shows different answers. The first one shows that education in schools and universities may lead people to question their own beliefs, the ones they learn from their parents and churches. Others' answers prove that some people handle a reading process in which they search for truth concerning religion, and they assure that they face an inner conflict concerning religion. A group of people see that their own questioning of their own beliefs is in itself a value and quality that they own. Another portion blame the tension that they have towards the world as whole for leading them to approach an eternal religious quest. There are others who see that their religious quest is the basic element of their beliefs. In addition, many of them believe that the construction of their own identity requires a religious quest. Also, The religious quest seems to be insufficient for some people to change their own beliefs, although they own it. The last two groups have a sense of guilt towards their quests despite the adaption of it similarly to those who have a Qhugé problem concerning the value of life as a whole (113-4).

A third study is determined by Jerry Goldfried and Maureen Miner in their article *"And Who Is My Neighbor?" II: Quest Religion as a Source of Universal Compassion*. In this study, Goldfried and Miner suggest that the individuals who tend to orient themselves towards the religious questioning and quest are more likely those who have more religious compassion towards the different beliefs. They apply their study on a group of undergraduate students who show a bias towards religious quest. The result of their study show that this type of people, although they seem to own a specific tolerance towards those who have different religious beliefs and lifestyles, however, they seem to show a religious prejudice towards the fundamentalists, especially those who stick on orthodoxy. Goldfried and Minner contradict the results of their study to those of Batson et al. in which they depict the individuals with religion quest orientation in a total intolerance with gays (694).

Similarly, C. Daniel Batson, Patricia A. Schoenrade suggests that there are two types of religious people: the first type can be traced in the kind of people who consider religion as a way to reach the end that leads him two eternity, and the second type who sees that religion is the end itself. The first portion of religious people, argues Batson and Schoenrade, are the ones who show efforts in worshiping their God and satisfying him by the prayer and the meditation which they learn from their God. The second group sees that the attainment of the right religion is the end itself, and the belief in a specific God seems to be sufficient to reach the end (417).

Relying on Batson (1976) and Batson and Ventis (1982) researches on religion, Batson and Schoenrade see that the measurement of religion depends on the "Quest" measurement. They claim that many researchers and journals have devoted a large space to study the concept of quest for the two kind of religious people, however, they did not give importance to the concept of quest. Many people approach religion from that side, the side of quest. Batson and Schoenrade see that the third kind of religious persons is usually the one

who questions the other religions. It is the kind that seems to be in a continuous search for truth concerning religion.

Batson and Schoenrade suggest that this kind of religious quest was ignored by researchers because of the identical ambiguity in it for usually the religion searchers do not adopt a final religious distinctiveness. Nonetheless, Batson and Schoenrade mention Batson's and Ventis' opinion in which they claim to assume a similar analysis of the three kinds of religious persons (618).

Thomas Pynchon, as an individual who shows a tendency towards religious quest, has a unique perception of the term "quest." Regarding his biography, after attending courses in Cornell University, Pynchon has inscribed in U.S. Navy, and stayed for a time in Norfolk, Virginia. He is also thought to have served in the Sixth Fleet in the Mediterranean (Royster 1). This experience is meant to show that Thomas Pynchon may have faced difficult situations in which he experienced troubles and even anxiety and temper. Pynchon seems to be opposing to the US foreign policy during that time (and even during the times that follow), that is why he majors in English as far as he returns to Cornell (Royster 1). The writer is thought to have contrasting ideas that are shown to stand against the modernist total reliance on science and reason. We suppose that Pynchon decided to change his career from a scientist to literary man.

Concerning Pynchon's religious beliefs, it is not quite evident that the writer follows a specific Christian doctrine. The literature on this issue (as we have already said that the biographical studies of Pynchon are really poor) is lacking. However, we believe that he follows a certain Christian belief that appears in his novels.²⁸ Pynchon intends to launch a quest for freedom, not exactly due to a lack of belief in Christianity; however, it is a result of

²⁸ Author Ruby Victoria Price devotes a whole book to talk about the Christian references in Pynchon's novels. Her book is entitled *Christian Allusion in the Novels of Thomas Pynchon*.

a lack of belief in modernism. Its ideologies and beliefs are meant to be the ones that he does not own, however they seem to be dominating. As it is mentioned in the previous researches the individual tends to initiate a quest if he starts doubting the beliefs that he learned from his parents. It is exactly the case of Pynchon. Due to his rejection of the modern values, he decides to look for a replacement that begins by a quest.

Jeffery Straiger suggests, in his article *James Wood's Case against "Hysterical Realism" and Thomas Pynchon*, that literature "has succeeded religion as the prime locus of truth about ourselves" (Straiger 636). Regarding the saying, Pynchon has chosen literature over modernism, including its religion, to reach the truth about the world and especially about himself. It is probably true that Pynchon was looking for freedom when he left the engineer career to devote his life to literature and fiction.

Religious quests are characterized by their attempt to reach probable freedom and certain enlightenment. The religious quests in history of human kind can be divided into two parts among which Thomas Pynchon is going to be included logically. The first category is the pure religious quest which is usually led by a leader who is entitled mostly as a prophet, and a group of followers who believe in his ideologies and leadership. The second one is totally human. It is led by a leader who is generally considered as a hero followed by a group of ideologists.

The first kind of quest is the religious one. Thomas Pynchon refers to the religious quest in his novel *V*. He deals with the main Islamic character, Mahdi the redeemer, Dejal Antichrist, and Asrafil along with Gebrail (V 83) as a means to reveal his intentions to search for religious reality even in other religions, like the Islamic one. Thomas Pynchon looks for religious answers like many of the previous prophets did.

Prophet Moses travels from Egypt to Medina as a kind of a religious quest. Allah says in the holy Qur'an:

He (Moses) entered the city at a time when its inhabitants were unaware and found two men fighting there—one from his party and the other from his enemy. The one from his party asked for his support against the other from his enemy. So Moses hit him, dealing him a fatal blow. He said, "This is part of Satan's handiwork. He truly is an outright and misleading enemy." (Surat al-Qasas: 28.16)

The above mentioned event reveals to us a situation in which the Prophet Moses (pbuh) witnessed a fight involving a man from his own party with whom he sided against, the other. Though he did not intend to kill him, the man died from the blow. The Prophet Moses (pbuh) realized that it was his mistake. The moral of this account is that, when a person acts wrongly, it is unjust to support him simply because he is from one's own party. In the Qur'an it is intended that the Prophet Moses (pbuh) referred to his wrongful action, that is, his assumption of the superiority of the man from his own party, as "Satan's handiwork." Alerted by his conscience, the Prophet Moses (pbuh) promptly grasped that this sentiment was evil from the influence of Satan, and, accordingly, sought refuge from it in Allah and repented. In the following verses, we read of the exemplary and conscientious approach adopted by the Prophet Moses (pbuh) (Oktar 24):

He said, "My Lord, I have wronged myself. Forgive me." So He (Allah) forgave him. He is the Ever-Forgiving, the Most Merciful. He said, "My Lord, because of Your blessing to me, I will never be a supporter of evildoers." (Surat al-Qasas: 28.16-17) Morning found him in the city, fearful and on his guard. Then suddenly the man who had

sought his help the day before, shouted for help from him again. Moses said to him, "You are clearly a misguided man." (Surat al-Qasas: 18)

As it is mentioned in verses, aware that his safety was in jeopardy, the Prophet Moses (pbuh) spent the night on guard against any possible harm from the Pharaoh and his people. The next day, the event related in the above verse took place; the man who asked the Prophet Moses' (pbuh) for help the previous day came to him with a similar demand, this time against another man. The man hoped to receive Prophet Moses' (pbuh) help yet another time, based on the fact that he was from his own people. However, the Prophet Moses (pbuh) avoided repeating the same error. Aware that his companion was not in the right way, he refused to help him. Turning against the Prophet Moses (pbuh), this person who was the actual criminal, displayed his great depravity (Oktar 25):

But when he was about to grab the man who was their common enemy, he said, "Moses! Do you want to kill me just as you killed a person yesterday? You only want to be a tyrant in the land; you do not want to be a reformer." (Surat al-Qasas: 28.19)

In any case, Prophet Moses (pbuh) was considered a person who killed an Egyptian. Meanwhile, Pharaoh and the leading followers discussed the Prophet Moses' (pbuh) punishment, even the possibility of executing him. Someone who overheard the discussion came to warn Prophet Moses (pbuh). Upon this warning, the Prophet Moses (pbuh) left Egypt (Oktar 26):

A man came running from the furthest part of the city, saying, "Moses, the Council are conspiring to kill you, so leave! I am someone who brings you good advice." So he left there fearful and on

his guard, saying, "My Lord, rescue me from the people of the wrongdoers!" (Surat al-Qasas: 28.20-21)

The second kind of quest is the one that we call in our thesis the "humanist quest". Thomas Pynchon refers to this kind of quest in his novel *V.* whose world is abandoned and the characters in it leave less space for humanity and human feelings. In his novel *V.* Thomas Pynchon says: "Humanity is something to destroy" (V.79). The passage talks about humanity and human race in general which face a kind of dehumanization while the main character of *V.* tries to save herself by searching for humanity. One of the founding fathers, main chief of the humanist quest is Buddha. The Buddha is said to have traveled in the Gangetic Plain, in what is now Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and southern Nepal, teaching a diverse range of people: from nobles to servants, murderers such as Angulimala, and cannibals such as Alavaka. Although the Buddha's language remains unknown, it's likely that he taught in one or more of a variety of closely related Middle Indo-Aryan dialects, of which Pali may be a standardization (Xing 9).

Malcolm X is another example that illustrates the humanist quest. He had visited the United Arab Republic, Sudan, Nigeria, and Ghana in 1959 to make arrangements for a tour by Elijah Muhammad. After Mecca he visited Africa a second time, returned to the United States in late May, and then flew to Africa again in July. During these visits he met officials, gave interviews, and spoke on television and radio in Egypt, Ethiopia, Tanganyika, Nigeria, Ghana, Guinea, Sudan, Senegal, Liberia, Algeria, and Morocco. In Cairo, he attended the second meeting of the Organization of African Unity as a representative of the Organization of Afro-American Unity. X and Buddha represent a good example of the peaceful fight for freedom and the holly quest for humanity and human feelings (Watson 20).

The quest for freedom is an expression that goes back to thousands of years ago, when a cursory glance at ancient history shows clearly how in different parts of the world, with their different cultures, there arise at the same time the fundamental questions which pervade human life: Who am I? Where have I come from and where am I going? Why is there evil? What is there after this life? These are the questions which we find in the sacred writings of Israel, as also in the Veda and the Avesta; we find them in the writings of Confucius and Lao-Tze, and in the preaching of Tirthankara and Buddha; they appear in the poetry of Homer and in the tragedies of Euripides and Sophocles, as they do in the philosophical writings of Plato and Aristotle. They are questions which have their common source in the quest for meaning which has always compelled the human heart (Gilbert 20).

In *Building Your Own Theology*, R. S. Gilbert says that human beings are creatures who wonder. Indeed, a case could be made that, when our capacity to wonder is diminished, so too is our humanity. Wondering serves no apparent practical purpose. Unlike scientific knowledge, which provides answers, wonder leads us into the realm of mystery. From the beginning of the human enterprise we have been on a quest for meaning in the face of the great mystery that envelops us. Modern science has not quenched our thirsting after meaning and purpose. Our science helps us grasp and make sense of the infinite. The search for meaning knocks at the door to the infinite. Science can solve the problem of how to build a nuclear bomb. We need to rely on more than science to determine whether or not to use one. Science can detail every stage in our physical development, and yet we still wonder: Why are we here? Were we made under the gaze of a loving creator or merely by chance? Has creation been a blessing or a curse? Science provides us with partial truths, and yet we long for ultimate truth (21).

The religious quest and the humanist one (The religious path is a term that refers to the quest for religious freedom and an escape from the religious persecution while the humanist

one is a quest for freedom and liberty that should be gained from corrupted governments and societies) are two paths that seem to influence Pynchon in a way or another. The two kinds of quest transmit to us the main idea on quest that a person like Thomas Pynchon may have as a common person before being a writer. He was thought that religious quests are sacred. Although the possibility of a Christian to have an overview of Moses' quest depending on Islam is weak, Thomas Pynchon is an intellectual person²⁹. In addition, Moses quest is also mentioned in other holy books like the bible.

Thomas Pynchon resembles Prophet Moses in the case of launching a quest after a specific tyranny from his own people. The Egyptian people for Pynchon are the modernists whose ideology tends (unconsciously) to dominate Pynchon and execute his will to change the world. During prophet Moses' era, the Egyptian people used to have a similar style of life as the one of modernists. The royals and intellectuals controlled society by means of conceptualizing reason and rationality and hide behind them.

Malcolm X's quest became a tradition that any American can know about, and what has seemingly influenced Thomas Pynchon. Red, the Negro shoeshine boy in *Gravity's Rainbow*, is supposed to be Malcolm X for the character's events in the story seem to be similar to the ones of Malcolm X. Like Red, Malcolm moved to Boston to live with his older half-sister, worked a variety of jobs including shoeshine and became involved in Boston's "underworld fringe," pimping among other things. In addition, buddha's quest has widely spread throughout the American communities in the twentieth century.

In one of the rare articles that Thomas Pynchon has written and published, the author talks about religion:

²⁹ The idea of Thomas Pynchon being intellectual is standards. In a New York Magazine Profile based on the narrations of Thomas Pynchon's Fiends, the report states that all of his fiends confess that he was very intellectual and cultivated. From the November 11, 1996 issue of New York Magazine.

“As religion was being more and more secularized into Deism and nonbelief, the abiding human hunger for evidence of God and afterlife, for salvation - bodily resurrection, if possible - remained. The Methodist movement and the American Great Awakening were only two sectors on a broad front of resistance to the Age of Reason, a front which included Radicalism and Freemasonry as well as Luddites and the Gothic novel” (Luddite).

Thomas Pynchon refers to the shifts that history has witnessed and that marked many different religions and convictions. The writer does not deny or insist on any one of them; however, he says that humanity has always been hungry for more and more evidences of god and his existence. Thomas Pynchon realizes the importance of religion in the individual's life. The cited quests could play an important role in his intellectual life. Also, the writer realizes the importance of the humanists' quests as well.

Between religious quests and humanists' ones, Thomas Pynchon plays an important role in the aesthetic freedom in the postmodern scene. The apocalyptic reception of such views is mainly the reason behind the construction of the idea of aesthetic freedom. The writer sees the world from an optimistic but indeed apocalyptic side. The following title is going to discuss the way Pynchon sees quest in relation to postmodernism.

3.2- Apocalyptic Perception

Apocalyptic perception is a term that we choose in this part to refer to Thomas Pynchon's dramatic pessimistic view of things as far as they reach his consciousness. Thomas Pynchon received the concept of quest dramatically and pessimistically. He received quest apocalyptically as any other ordinary postmodernist. In *The Passion of the Western Mind*, Richard Tarnas characterizes the postmodern condition as one that is "subversive of all paradigms." He explains that we can find at the core of postmodern style of criticism the

awareness that reality is "at once multiple, local and temporal, and without demonstrable foundation" (395) Because we now understand reality as consisting of a multitude of dimensions that are all constructs of human symbol using an imaginative inclinations, we can no longer sustain any grand cosmological theories without producing "empirical and intellectual authoritarianism" (Tarnas 395). The literalism of modernity is now being rejected as too narrow a perspective from which we can survey our ideational landscapes. One result of such relation of all notions is that we can no longer theorize without being suspicious of our complicity in reaffirming traditional world views that institutionalize and codify our selves (Tarnas 395).

Yet, as Tarnas points out that there is a strong reemergence of Romanticism³⁰ in the contemporary West. Such contemporary Romanticism appears in contrast to the postmodern disposition to deconstruct the roots of our thinking. According to Tarnas this postmodern style of Romanticism operates as a means to the "radical integration and reconciliation" of contemporary culture. "Faced with such a problematic and difficult intellectual situation," Tarnas writes, "thoughtful individuals engage the task of evolving a flexible set of premises and perspectives that would not reduce or suppress the complexity and multiplicity of human realities, yet could also serve to mediate, integrate and clarify" (Tarnas 399).

It has become the task of many contemporary thinkers to develop an intellectual vision that accounts for the profound diversity of the world and humanity. This romantic vision of cultural revitalization must also be capable of bringing some sense of coherence to the experience of fragmentation characteristic of postmodernity. There is the need of an

³⁰ Romanticism is an intellectual movement that emerged in Europe by the end of the 18th century. It was characterized by its emphasis on emotions and individualism. (David Levin, *History as Romantic Art: Bancroft, Prescott, and Parkman* 1967)

alternate paradigm that will provide sustainable and fertile ground for the "generation of unanticipated new perspectives and possibilities in the future" (Tarnas 399).

Michael Barkun in *Disaster and the Millennium* presents the following as a nutshell definition of millenarian movements:

[They] are social movements which expect immediate, collective, total, this worldly salvation. They anticipate the complete destruction of the existing social order, political, and economic order, which is to be superseded by a new and perfect society. They frequently couple this anticipation with an active desire to speed the inevitable result, often through violent, revolutionary means (18).

This description sounds rather like postmodernist. Postmodernism proceeds from the assumption that traditional ways of viewing the world are wrong; it then de-legitimizes such metanarratives leaving space open for the postmodern Romantic impulse to speculate upon a brighter future. Such challenges to the legitimation of traditional paradigms of thought must, at some level, invite social change in general.

The available means of social change, however, are not always violent in nature. As the title of Barkun's book suggests, disasters play a role in the onset of millennial thought and movements. Disasters upset the social ordering of the world that surrounds a community. Furthermore, such communities need not be understood as merely rural in character. Urban expressions of millennialism have become more and more frequent with the appearance of mass communication, which allows us to experience disasters vicariously as well as enabling an unprecedented potential for the dissemination of the "revealed truth" of a group's apocalyptic vision (Barkun 18).

Barkun talks about the myth of the Eternal Return of the dragon that symbolizes an apocalyptic reception of concepts. With the resurgence of a style of thought based on the myth of Eternal Return may come a more realistic and less compulsive approach to the self and society because the Hero myth can be seen to be an idealistic praxis in regards to its optimism and romanticism, its fantasy of apocalyptic revitalization, its call for the deinstitutionalization of self and society, and the story of dramatic events causing the end of time and bringing about a new and improved world. In contrast, the myth of the Eternal Return suggests that life is not a story, instead life moves "from anticlimax to anticlimax." There is to be no real sudden change for the better, for as much as the hero must slay the returning dragon every year, so too do radical and new ideas eventually become institutionalized and must then be nullified. The myth of the Eternal Return represents a less idealistic and more realistic view of things: it suggests that any dramatic change is not for all time, that things work in cycles, that there is no one way of representing the world, and that all things operate in conjunction (Barkun 20).

In relation to the myth of the return, Thomas Pynchon presents a similar attitude towards the apocalyptic vision. In Pynchon's early novels, it is an open question as to whether life is inherently meaningless or whether the meaning has been drained from the world by Modernism. If it is the case, is it an accident, or is it a conspiracy? Pynchon refuses to decide, offering instead plots that might be "plots," in which various protagonists search for clues as to who or what Manichean force might be causing the destruction. Do things just happen, or do they happen for a reason? On the one hand, Pynchon implies that a paranoid hermeneutic is preferable to meaninglessness, and that an imposed allegorical meaning is more comforting than the Void. On the other hand, Pynchon gives real weight, through his use of historical facts, to the possibility that the V is, indeed, a plot whose agents are trying to

destroy the world, whether they know it or not. This is the complex dialectic of the Zero and the One in Thomas Pynchon's allegory of the V (Allegoria).

What exactly do we mean by the term spiritual quest? Is it a search for some divine entity? The etymological dictionary defines 'spirit' as 'soul', 'courage', 'vigor', 'breath' etc (from Old French *espirit*, from Latin *spiritus*). And the word 'quest' is described as "a search for something". So, by spiritual quest, we mean a search for one's soul or self. It's nothing but the search for one's own self. One will know the meaning of life only if one knows oneself. Thus the spiritual quest signifies a journey from ignorance to enlightenment. Socrates, in his *Maxim*, says that the goal of philosophy was to "Know Thyself"(Gorsuch 47).

In *Rethinking Postmodernism: Essays on the Recent Fiction of Thomas Pynchon*, Peter Lang talks about a certain power in the postmodern world that lies in the artists ability to express and change ideas as he wants. He gives the example of Thomas Pynchon whose attitude is similar to his one. He says that, according to Pynchon, the artists is the most powerful individual within society. Pynchon thinks that the individual's power is not apparent, as we think, but it is hidden in his art. He believes that the artist prefers to hide this power behind his fiction to be able to dominate and influence his art freely because he sees that he is not controlled by any given power, either conventional or governmental. (Lang 24).

Forrest Mcculer says that Pynchon use of a long list of characters in his novels oblige his reader to classify this list carefully along with the sort of events, that is equally long, to be able to understand the plot of his novels. He says that Pynchon's novels are disordered and confusing. However, Pynchon's novels force the reader to conceptualize the events within the real world in order to understand them and find consistency. Mcculer sees that Pynchon pushes the reader to compare his novels with real life as a means of interpretation to events.

(McCuller). *V.* demonstrates that the act of interpreting human life results in simplifications. If human behavior could be understood by a coherent system then that system would predict behavior. Humans would only to fulfill the expectations of that system, like mechanisms. In the novel the above image of a mechanical man suggests that this may be where society is headed (V 436).

Transmitted quest shows the possibilities of quest concepts that Thomas Pynchon may come through in a way or another throughout his life. It shows how the religious quest of Moses or any other prophet can influence Pynchon apocalyptically. On the other hand, it shows how humanist quests like those of Malcom X and Buddha can turn him radically into a political and a social rebellious. This is the reason why Pynchon has to free himself from society, and his self from his old self. The coming title is going to discuss the influence of the apocalyptic reception of quest on Pynchon that will lead to an aesthetic freedom of the self.

3.3- Influences on Pynchon

Influences on Pynchon are the movements, periods, and writers that influenced Thomas Pynchon radically. There are several influences that had a great impact on Thomas Pynchon among which is the idea of the artist standing apart from the influences of society. The idea can easily be traced back to James Joyce. Stephen Dedalus, the main character in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, says near the end of the novel: "When the soul of a man is born in this country there are nets flung at it to hold it back from flight. You talk to me of nationality, language, religion. I shall try to fly by those nets" (qt in Shord 6). He continues with this line of thought:

"I will not serve that in which I no longer believe whether it call itself my home, my fatherland or my church: and I will try to express myself in some mode of life or art as freely as I can and as wholly as I

can, using for my defence the only arms I allow myself to use—
silence, exile and cunning” (qt in Shord 11).

The arms that Stephen will allow himself to use are those of the mind; to free himself, he will not use violence nor will he use technology, but the spectacle of his imagination (Shord 11).

It is quietly obvious that Pynchon rejects those restrictions in which most humans involve themselves taking for instance nationality, language, and religion. He refuses to be associated with standard over which he has no control. Rather, Pynchon prefers to create his own restrictions, that are mainly relied on the rejection of criteria in general.

Other factors that could be considered as influences on Thomas Pynchon are the political orientations, for along with his emphasis on sociopolitical themes in his novels, such as racism and imperialism, his awareness and appropriation of many elements of traditional political directions could be proofs of his big interest in politics (Krafft, Duyfhuizen and Tölölyan 54).

In his novel *V*. Pynchon says:

“I am the twentieth century. I am the ragtime and the tango; sans-serif, clean geometry. I am the virgin's-hair whip and the cunningly detailed shackles of decadent passion. I am every lonely railway station in every capital of Europe. I am the Street, the fanciless buildings of government. the cafe-dansant, the clockwork figure, the jazz saxophone, the tourist-lady's hairpiece, the fairy's rubber breasts, the travelling clock which always tells the wrong time and chimes in different keys. I am the dead palm tree, the Negro's dancing pumps, the dried fountain after tourist season. I am all the appurtenances of night” (V 454).

On the one hand, Pynchon is influenced by the twentieth century aspects. From the railways, roads, transportation to the metropolitan cities, all of that is clearly taken into consideration by the writer and which can be seen in his later novels. On the other hand, Pynchon seems to be sorry about the disappearance of nature because of the industrial invasion and the tourists that require concrete jungle cities. The sentence "I am the dead palm tree" from the passage discloses Thomas Pynchon's apology for nature.

Thomas Pynchon's interest is not narrowed within the political sphere; high culture and low culture are well discussed in his novels. Pynchon's works explore philosophical, theological, and sociological ideas exhaustively, in very reproachable ways. His writings demonstrate a strong affinity with the practitioners and artifacts of low culture, including comic, books and cartoons, pulp fiction, popular films television programs, cookery, urban myths, conspiracy theories, and folk art. This blurring of the conservative boundary between "High" and "low" culture has been seen as one of the defining characteristics of his writing. (Krafft, Duyfhuizen and Tölölyan 54)

In his article *Law, History, and the Subversion of Postwar America in Thomas Pynchon's The Crying of Lot 49*, Robert Hansen sees that Pynchon has revealed himself in his fiction and non-fiction as an aficionado of popular music. Song lyrics and mock musical numbers appear in each of his novels, and in his autobiographical introduction to the *Slow Learner* collection of short stories, he reveals a fondness for both jazz and rock and roll. The character McClintic Sphere in *V.* is a fictional composite of jazz musicians such as Ornette Coleman, Charlie Parker and Thelonious Monk (Hansen 589). Hansen refers also to the same passion of popular culture in several novels of Pynchon like *The Crying of Lot 49* in which the lead singer of "The Paranoids" sports "a Beatle haircut" and sings with an English accent. In the closing pages of *Gravity's Rainbow*, there is an apocryphal report that Tyrone Slothrop, the novel's protagonist, played kazoo and harmonica as a guest musician on a record released by The

Fool in the 1960s (having magically recovered the latter instrument, his "harp", in a German stream in 1945, after losing it down the toilet in 1939 at the Roseland Ballroom in Roxbury, Boston, to the strains of the jazz standard "Cherokee", upon which tune Charlie Parker was simultaneously inventing bebop in New York, as Pynchon describes). In *Vineland*, both Zoyd Wheeler and Isaiah Two Four are also musicians: Zoyd played keyboards in a '60s surf band called "The Corvairs", while Isaiah played in a punk band called "Billy Barf and the Vomitones". In *Mason & Dixon*, one of the characters plays on the "Clavier" the varsity drinking song that will later become "The Star-Spangled Banner"; while in another episode a character remarks tangentially "Sometimes, it's hard to be a woman" (Hansen 589).

Another passion to music appears in his introduction to *Slow Learner*, Pynchon acknowledges a debt to the chaotic bandleader Spike Jones, and in 1994, he penned a 3000-word set of liner notes for the album *Spiked!*³¹, a collection of Jones's recordings released on the short-lived BMG Catalyst label. Pynchon also wrote the liner notes for *Nobody's Cool*, the second album of indie rock band Lotion, in which he states that "rock and roll remains one of the last honorable callings, and a working band is a miracle of everyday life, which is basically what these guys do." He is also known to be a fan of Roky Erickson³².

Investigations and digressions into the realms of human sexuality, psychology, sociology, mathematics, science, and technology recur throughout Pynchon's works. One of his earliest short stories, *Low-lands* (1960), features a meditation on Heisenberg's uncertainty principle as a metaphor for telling stories about one's own experiences.

Heisenberg's uncertainty principle tells us, roughly speaking, that all physical quantities that can be observed are subject to unpredictable fluctuations, so that their values are not

³¹ Spike Jones. *Catalyst*. CD. 1994.

³² Lotion. *Nobody's Cool*. *Giant Records*. 1996. CD.

precisely defined. Consider, for example, the position x and the momentum p of a quantum particle such as an electron. The experimenter is free to measure either of these quantities to arbitrary precision, but they cannot possess precise values simultaneously (Davies ix).

Pynchon's influence by physics and science in general can be clearly seen in his early short story *entropy*. In this story, he introduced the concept which was to become synonymous with Pynchon's name. Another early story, "Under the Rose" (1961), includes among its characters a cyborg set anachronistically in Victorian-era Egypt (a type of writing now called steampunk). This story, significantly modified by Pynchon, appears as Chapter 3 of *V*. "The Secret Integration", Pynchon's last published short story, is a delicately handled coming-of-age tale in which a group of young boys face the consequences of the American policy of racial integration. At one point in the story, the boys attempt to understand the new policy by way of the mathematical operation, the only sense of the word with which they are familiar.

The Crying of Lot 49 also refers to entropy and communication theory, and contains scenes and descriptions which satirize or appropriate calculus, Zeno's paradoxes, and the thought experiment known as Maxwell's demon.

In the philosophy of thermal and statistical physics, Maxwell's demon is a thought experiment shaped by the physicist James Clerk Maxwell to "show that the Second Law of Thermodynamics has only a statistical certainty" (Cargill 24). It shows Maxwell's point by theoretically telling how to break the Second Law: a container of gas molecules at equilibrium is divided into two parts by an insulated wall, with a door that can be opened and closed by what came to be called "Maxwell's demon" (Cargill 25). The demon opens the door to let only the faster than average molecules pour through to a preferential side of the chamber, and

only the slower than average molecules to the other side, causing the favored side to gradually heat up while the other side cools down, thus decreasing entropy (Cargill 25) .

Gravity's Rainbow also investigates homosexuality, celibacy and both medically authorized and illegal psychedelic drug use. *Gravity's Rainbow* describes many varieties of sexual fetishism, including sado-masochism, coprophilia and a borderline case of tentacle rape, and features numerous episodes of drug use, most notably marijuana but also cocaine, naturally occurring hallucinogens, and the mushroom *Amanita muscaria*. *Gravity's Rainbow* also derives much from Pynchon's background in mathematics: at one point, the geometry of garter belts is compared with that of cathedral spires, both described as mathematical singularities. *Mason & Dixon* explores the scientific, theological, and socio-cultural foundations of the Age of Reason, while also depicting the relationships between actual historical figures and fictional characters in complicated detail and, like *Gravity's Rainbow*, is an typical example of the genre of historiographic metafiction (Winston 287).

Influences on Pynchon are summarized in society, political orientations, high and low culture, and mathematics and physics influences. All of these can be traced later on in his novels and works, but what can of trace can be seen in the Pynchonian fictional visage is what should be looked for.

What has seemingly influenced Thomas Pynchon appeared in the themes of his novels. The influence inspired him to look for a kind of beauty that is weird and terrible. The following title is going to discuss the aesthetic freedom that Thomas Pynchon presents in his novels. It is mainly inspired by the aesthetics of the great German philosopher Hegel. So the study is going to deal with the idea of the aesthetic freedom presented by Thomas Pynchon and its relation to Hegel's aesthetics of freedom.

3.4-Terrible Beauty

Thomas Pynchon's quest is beautiful because it is entropic. It demonstrates mysteriously the whole world between order and disorder. It beautifies the entry and smartens the core. It opens up the whole world to discussion in a conspiring way. Conspiracy, entropy and quest are related together to form a beautiful freedom.

Beauty, for Hegel, is the mediation between the sensible and the rational. In other words, you need both elements to be able to call something beautiful. Beauty is the rational turned sensible. This embodiment can happen in three different ways: symbolic art, classical art, and romantic art (Hegel Lectures 321).

In *Hegel: Reinterpretation, Texts and Commentary*, Kaufmann argues that Hegel's early speech on aesthetics defines Greece and Rome as the soil that all civilization must stand on and spring from. Yet Hegel asks for modification in the relation between antiquity and modern times. This ambiguous appraisal of antiquity marks his speech with both a primitivistic and a progressive savor. On the one hand, he accords the initiation in ancient literature a quasi-religious character. On the other, he upholds the substitution of the German language for Latin. Our study of the ancient world at once alienates us and brings us home to ourselves (Kaufman 303).

Kaufmann also refers to *Lectures in the Philosophy of History* (1837), where Hegel describes antiquity as the dawn of humanity. The increasing light shed by the sun can be compared to the development of man's subjective freedom, arising from his self-consciousness. In this comparison, Hegel inscribes his anthropology in the German intellectual tradition that, initiated by Lessing and developed by Herder and Kant, acquires full expression in Schiller's *On the Aesthetic Education of Man in a Series of Letters* (Kaufman 303).

Joseph Maximilia, the prince of elector of Bavaria has once pointed Hegel as a Hegel a Professor of Philosophical Propaedeutics and Rector of the same institution. He did so for the task of bringing reformation to the classical studies. Hegel describes the old world as reality³³. Hegel has written an ensuing paragraph in which he relates antiquity to the modern era. It is a paragraph that insists on the preservation of the past and the insistence on the present and the future. Hegel praises the wisdom of the Bavarian government as perfectly suitable to the requirements of the time, because it preserves and revives the essential of the old principles in relation to the new world (Horst 110).

These opposition between antiquity and modernity appear in a scene of conflict in Hegel's s speech which permanently move between a regressive and a progressive attitude. By relating his idea on reformation to the teaching of classical languages, Hegel shows a "unanimous objection" to the learning of Latin as the only means of higher education. He sees that a civilized nation should use its own language to talk about . Hegel gives the example of the German people who he sees able development their own language. Hegel sees that Latin as a language is very far from the German culture. He sees that despite the link that may appear between the Latin and German people, they stay far from each other in terms of culture and science (Horst 110).

Hegel considers the balance between the old civilizations and the modern ones as a basic element that should be implemented in order to develop the modern form of education. The claim here is similar to that of the German language that should invade the German society and culture instead of the Latin one as a means to develop the country's own science. However, Hegel argues that the classical literature is the basic of all sorts of education. Accordingly, He says that ancient culture is the most important elemnt that education needs in

³³ Reality here refers to the actual events that take place in Hegel's life.

order to develop (Hegel 321), since “we agree that excellence should be our starting point” (Hegel 321).

Hegel's aesthetics call for the important relation between the past and present and how the individual should free himself from the past. Thomas Pynchon's aesthetics is not so far from that Hegel. Pynchon's work is certainly preoccupied with creating such a disturbance, but is at the same time limited by the degradation of tragedy discussed above. Pynchon is faced with the task not only of *portraying* this disturbance (as most of his critics have recognized), but of portraying it in such a way as to render his protagonist's struggle beautiful and redeeming. Since there is no longer an inherent dignity in being destroyed by the forces opposed to the individual, Pynchon must (and, I will argue, *does*) create a new type of protagonist who opposes the world in an altogether different fashion from the traditional tragic hero, and who reacts in a new *but life-affirming* way to the forces conspiring against her.

This brings us back to the second idea, which can be partly expressed by the question: who or what are these conspiring forces? The answer is: we don't know! This is because the postmodern world is essentially one of uncertainty. Much as in Pynchon novel, the progress of human knowledge has served only to open a much larger set of questions, a set of questions whose answers are also questions. This can be well demonstrated by the advance of scientific knowledge. In Wilde's day, the theory of evolution seemed to present a holistic *solution* to the age old-problem of human origin. Moreover, it reinforced the notion that all answers were within reach, and that it would take only a series of similar scientific breakthroughs to solve all the other puzzles that bound human ignorance. In Pynchon's world, however, the tone has been set not by Darwin but by Einstein and Heisenberg, men who have actually pressed into formula the impossibility of human omniscience. In contemporary science, the rules are about

what we *cannot* know for certain (the Uncertainty Principle) and the limitations of a single point of view (Relativity) (Wallen).

Thomas Pynchon benefited from the apocalyptic perception of the concept of quest to free himself aesthetically. The aesthetic freedom is explained by the previous presentation of Hegel's aesthetic freedom and its direct relation to Thomas Pynchon's aesthetics. Thomas Pynchon's aesthetic freedom is well portrayed in his early novel *V*. the following part is going to discuss the end of Thomas Pynchon's quest for the aesthetic freedom and how it is upturned as a symbol of the mysterious V.

3.5- Upturned End of Journey

Thomas Pynchon upturns the form of his quest. It started a quest in the form of two story lines that last for hundreds of years and goes by tens of crises to meet at the end of the novel *V*. at the moment of truth. The latter is a depiction of the self consciousness of the postmodern subject who suffered for a period of time. He is ready now to celebrate the deserved freedom.

Stencil and Benny are the two main characters of Thomas Pynchon's novel *V*. They represent Thomas Pynchon's quest for aesthetic freedom. Throughout the novel, the main characters look for the secret V. but what is V? This chapter attempts to prove that V is the aesthetic freedom that Thomas Pynchon tries to find out.

Benny Profane is supposed to be the novel's hero along with Stencil as an anti-hero, or rather an anti-detective. Katrin Amian refers to Stencil's fruitless attempt to find out the dream of epistemological success that conventional detective plots achieve, in her book *Rethinking Postmodernism*. She says that both of the characters fill the novel with a lot of sense-making activities that stimulate the reader's interpretive skills but inflexibly resist resolution, and adds that the multiple guesses, hypotheses, and possible answers to the V-

mystery that *V.* produces serve as a key to understand the novel's quest. *V.*'s acts of guessing and sense-making can reflect on two "moments of frailty" within the process of reality constitution (Amian 70). In Pynchon's novel, the subject's relationship to the world is clearly marked as creative, since the process of making sense is marked by "nothing but guessing" and involves productive acts of object formation as soon as sense-making enters the area of thought and signification (Amian 70).

In *V.* Stencil seems to be indifferent to the marks that the twentieth century may leave for the coming generations. However, he thinks that the historians may change the fertility of this century by their curiosity to find out more to be told: "Stencil looked around without much curiosity. It was all the same. What a warped idea of cities one got in this occupation! If no record of this century should survive except the personal logs of F.O. operatives, the historians of the future must reconstruct a curious landscape indeed" (V 574).

Stencil's attitude represents "moments of frailty" by his weak curiosity about the lack of originality in the twentieth century. Stencil tries to look for the best explanation of the lack of originality in the century by supposing that historians may do this role by investigating and adding then an interesting landscape to the era.

The two characters are launch a quest for a sense of personal meaning within a world that oppresses the individual and prefer the system. Profane is important as an individual because he is unable to relate to objects in the way that almost every other character in *V.* can. Common among these characters is a tendency towards being nomadic. None of them can stay in one place for long, Profane calls himself a human yo-yo, because he spends most of his time moving up and down the East coast; Stencil travels over much of the world looking for *V.*, or people who knew her. Later in *The Crying of Lot 49*, Oedipa, after leaving her home to execute Pierce Inverarity's estate, never returns to it; instead, she travels all over

Southern California searching for clues. While in *Gravity's Rainbow*, Slothrop moves about Europe in the aftermath of World War II trying to avoid being captured by allied agents who want to examine him. This rootless existence allows each character to evade the paralysis of living within a system, of fulfilling a role and developing a routine. Though they exercise no influence on the system, however, they establish themselves as individuals with all the flaws and shortcomings of a human being (Shord 8).

Stencil and Benny represent Pynchon in two main points of view: the first one deals with the serious quest for V, that is freedom and the second one the unwise way of life that ends up looking for V also. The fact shows the uncertain quest that Thomas Pynchon reveals.

Much of the uncertainty that appears in Pynchon's novel comes from its heavy reliance on the space of creative possibility. Amian sees that *V.* pushes the spontaneous force of the reader to be creative to an intensive level because it confronts its reader with the effects of estimation and reveals what happens if the subject's creative efforts to produce reality are no longer reasonable and socially limited by "intersubjective" exchange. The novel goes beyond pleasure in these moments of creative play by exposing the exciting elements of control at work in each and every act of creation. *V.* performs the cultural work of both reflecting on and participating in its creativity and power (Amian 70-1).

Besides uncertainty, Stencil and profane are the two main heroes of Thomas Pynchon's quest for freedom. They represent the uncertain quest of him. The story of Stencil's and Profane's quest ends by a date between the two that concludes their journey and Thomas Pynchon's one.

Stencil's and Profane's Rendezvous interprets their final meeting at the end of Thomas Pynchon's novels *V.* Benny and Profane start out having different paths but end up meeting together at the end of the novel to form a kind of a "V". *V.* shows that the quest is upturned.

Ordinary quests start from the bottom to reach the top as to go out of ignorance, tyranny and domination to enlightenment. However, Thomas Pynchon's quest starts from the top to reach the bottom as to come out of the intellectual superiority to reach the bottom of the common people.

Pynchon's *V.* is portrayed in two distinct plots. Benny Profane represents the core of the first one. His characteristics are traced in being a self-styled schlemiel, a veteran of the Navy who spends his time moving throughout the East Coast (in the novel his movement is called "yo-yoing") between New York City and the naval base at Norfolk, Virginia. Joseph Slade describes Profane's life in his book *Thomas Pynchon* as the life that has no real purpose, and Profane as the one that has no deep attachments to anyone; his parents are never mentioned, and his girlfriends come and go. He takes only jobs that are by their nature temporary. At one point he is a night watchman in a crazy kind of computer laboratory; at another he is part of a crew that roams New York's sewers at night, shooting the alligators that have been flushed down when they grew too big to be pets. His friends are a group who call themselves the Whole Sick Crew; like him, they have no sustaining purpose in life (Slade 55).

The other continuing storyline through the novel *V.* has to do with a mysterious woman who began appearing around the time of a crisis in East Africa before World War I. This woman is mentioned in history as the Fashoda affair, which was the reason behind bringing about an armed conflict between Great Britain and France. The woman is called by many names (Veronica, Victoria, Vera), all beginning with the letter V. She appears in other places, as well, first in German Southwest Africa at a time of native rebellion, living among a besieged group of Europeans in a fortified farmhouse. She is also in attendance when a group of South Americans in Italy is planning a revolution in their homeland (V).

The presence of the women within the novel reveals the importance of the characters in representing Pynchon himself because Victoria is Pynchon in the sense that she appears everywhere like him in the novel. Her symbolism lies in her ability to represent V with its entire concept. Pynchon stands for V as its journey to search for freedom. To look for freedom, Pynchon has to exist everywhere like Victoria.

If Victoria represents Thomas Pynchon, stencil and Benny represent his freedom quest journey because the two characters' journey appears to be full of events, ups and downs, many places and disordered decisions. In one of the passages in Thomas Pynchon's *V.*, he says:

“Losing faith is a complicated business and takes time. There are no epiphanies, no "moments of truth." It takes much thought and concentration in the later phases, which themselves come about through an accumulation of small accidents: examples of general injustice, misfortune falling upon the godly, prayers of one's own unanswered” (V).

The passage shows the state of the characters during their journey. It is full of doubt and instability. The characters doubt religion by doubting the sufficiency of prayer. Also, they doubt the events that they encounter in their everyday life, accidents and others. Their state looks like the one of Thomas Pynchon during his journey in search for freedom. He starts and continues to a long time doubting his ancestors and even his co-writers and intellectuals.

In his article *The Waste Land of Thomas Pynchon*, Peter O'connor compares Pynchon's novel *V.* with T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*. He says that T. S. Eliot, during his time, the time of modernism, had a different vision of the world, contrary to that of modernists. He sees that Eliot had a nostalgic vision of the past over the present, and saw that the modern period was a period of shattering, fragmentation and misleading. Eliot neglected all aspects of modernism,

among which is the Marxism that was meant to value the individual and bring him spiritual peace. Also, he considered the anti-Christian wave as a part of modernism and did not see any cure in its ideology. O'Connor sees that Eliot and other artists who felt lost and misplaced in the early beginning of the 30s were more than disillusioned. He gives the example of Joyce and Faulkner who celebrated the age with all its beliefs and ideologies of reason and rationality.

In *V*, Pynchon gives evidence of its symbolism for both the shape of the letter and the letter itself. O'Connor says that the reader of the novel is pushed to think about different interpretations and give multiple opinions on the possible meaning of it. The reader of the novel is always wondering whether V is a letter that refers to the beginning of a specific word or a shape of something like a road. O'Connor sees that the mentioning of the different cities of the world that start with a "V" along with the shape of the road and the name of the woman could have a special symbolization (54) like "Valletta (the capital of Malta), Venezuela, the mystical Vheissu, Botticelli's Venus, the image of the parallel lines of streets appearing to converge at the horizon. And the lady V herself, whether as Victoria Wren, Vera, Veronica, or the Bad Priest, has multiple manifestations" (54).

O'Connor suggests that "V" may refer to the queen Victoria of England. He sees that queen Victoria symbolizes comfort, development, peace, and stability. He believes that the reference to the queen is all symbolizing because she comes from the nineteenth century, so this allusion is devoted to her spirit. The queen may also refer to the point that humanity is in a process of development to reach a stable point. Nevertheless, when the individual's stability is disturbed and troubled, his desire for it augments. O'Connor thinks that the modern period portrays this stability that is disturbed by new ideologies. He sees that such deceptions lead to "fascism" since Pynchon relates the characters of his novel to the Italian and German "fascists" (54).

O'Connor compares Pynchon's novel *V.* to T. S. Eliot's poem *The Waste Land*. He thinks that both of them represent characters with similar views. In *The Waste Land*, the poets who talk in the story refuse to accept the world they live in, a world of formalism and rationality. Thus, they alter poetry lines in which they express their neglecting and refusal of the modern time. *V.* is like a part of the modern literature, it is anti-modern. Eliot is similar to Pynchon in his time, he is anti-modern. He says that humanity should get rid of the modern ideologies by means of perceiving an "apocalyptic vision of the time, a vision that kills the era radically to bring into view another one, that is by several means full of doubt questioning (54).

Michel H. Begnal refers to the waste characters of Pynchon's *V.* in his article *Thomas Pynchon's V. in Defense of Benny Profane*. He believes that the most complicated issue in the novel is the search for "V." The main character Stencil enters into a "labyrinth" to find the secret behind the letter "V." Begnal sees that Pynchon devotes a huge part of the novel to depict the adventures that refer to "V" in different times and places. The writer moves from time to time, period to period, and place to place to reveal some hints that may lead to "V." what makes scholars and critics usually in difficult tasks to draw a storyline out of the novel (61).

It is possible that the events seem to be in a complete disorder, however, Pynchon tends to depict his novels in a form of chaos in order to insist on the shattering of the characters due to the influence of modernism. Begnal sees that, despite the unstable situation that Stencil appears in, he insists on keeping his search for "V." During the time of the novel, he never gives up looking for the truth and the mystery behind the letter. He suggests that the quest for "V" is a quest for Stencil's wisdom. The latter considers this search as a life or death issue because the answer on his questions about life depends on the fact of getting the "V" or not. That is why sometimes we read that Stencil is afraid of thinking about the end (61).

In the novel, Stencil says "To sustain it he had to hunt V.; but if he should find her, where else would there be to go but back into half-consciousness? He tried not to think, therefore, about any end to the search" (55). Begnal argues that this fear from reaching the end has a certain justification for the reader could gain a certain solution for the complexity behind "V." at the end of the novel, nor could Stencil find an answer for the many inner questions that he has to be able to reach reason and sanity. It is impossible to know what "V" is, is it a person, a city, a road, a book, or a letter nor is it possible to identify the time of its existence. Two possibilities are suggested by the author which are the past and the present and the reader begins to wonder about its existence in the future. Begnal says that Pynchon leaves no opportunity for the reader to reach the truth, or at least to come closer to it. "V" is always far from being real or existent, however, it is often close to be reached. Pynchon prefers to keep the truth behind it as a secret (61).

Pynchon decide not to give the occasion for Stencil to find the secret behind "V", however, he gives him the opportunity to narrate the story of his quest. Begnal suggests that the reason behind the failure to find the "V" underground is that Stencil creates his thoughts and acts on them. He never relies on certain truths and facts. All what he offers to himself are imaginary ideas and sometimes hallucinations (61-2) Begnal's depicts Stencil in an unjust situation. Pynchon gives the character the will to choose his acts while he is not able to fulfill them or to choose a good basis for them. Stencil is an insane character since during all the time of the novel he looks for sanity. One should wonder if this "V" requires sanity to be identified. We suggest that "V" is mysterious, vague, and unreachable that is why Pynchon gives Stencil the mission of looking for it. Stencil is a typical postmodern character who lives in a continuous situation of wondering and questioning. "V" is one of the secrets (that we suppose could be a conspiracy) that the postmodern characters are eager to identify and find by any means, even by creating imaginary facts and acting on them .

Contrarily to Stencil, Profane is a character that never narrates his acts. Pynchon chooses to tell his deeds and wills by himself for several reasons. Begnal believes that Profane chooses to deal with history by regarding the relation between events and people rather than dealing with it in a linear system. He compares his lifestyle to those of other people, a method that he prefers to adapt in order to have a background of living. Pynchon depicts Profane in a state of imitation of the other characters' life (64). Begnal says that "When he hears the various true or apocryphal stories about Father Fairing, who attempted to found a parish so that he could convert the rats in the sewers" (64) Profane wonders in the novel that: "It is this way with sewer stories. They just are. Truth or falsity don't apply" (120).

Begnal gives others examples that are more or less suitable in revealing Profane's way of thinking. He gives the example of the albino alligator that he pursues through the tunnels with his shotgun. He says that profane thought that he waited for him. Also, he gives the example of Profane when he goes to see his parents, he says that Profane does not find them at home, however, he acts as if they are home. He prepares a meal and lives the emotions of the family life (64).

Pynchon refers to this action by saying: "Profane was sure that the world would be worse without mothers like that in it. He stayed in the kitchen an hour, while night came along, wandering through this field on inanimate food, making bits and pieces of it animate, his own" (379). The last example that Begnal gives takes place in the day before he goes to Malta. One of the characters (Rachel) says that he loves Paola Maijstral (64). In *V.* he says: "'Come on baby,' she said, too close to crying, 'this one's for free. For love. Climb on. Good stuff, no charge" (385). Begnal says that Benny hesitates, but: "He climbed on anyway" (385).

Begnal claims that Profane is considered as Pynchon's chosen character to represent the twentieth century. The mentioned scene proves that the character loves to act using his

emotions, however, he is more realistic, and rational. He is the picture of the historian in the novel (64).

Pynchon gives two contradictory characterizations to the main characters of the novel. In our thesis, we suggest that the two represent the two sides of Pynchon's character. On the one hand, Pynchon is the postmodern character who lives in an unstable state of mind continuously. He is the one who lives in chaos and acts randomly because of his apocalyptic vision of the world. On the other hand, he is the intellectual who believes in the importance of history and its effects on the evolution of the world, that is why he thinks before he acts. Pynchon is the author who writes complicated, chaotic novels, however, he is also the author who hides from authority and the other people because he is aware of the effects that his novels may have.

Stencil and Benny symbolize Pynchon's quest for freedom at the end of their story which symbolizes the end of Pynchon's quest. At the end of the story, Benny and Stencil meet despite the absence of any sign throughout the story that may refer to a possibility of a meeting of them. Benny and Stencil meet at the end of the novel to form a kind of V.

The meeting marks the end of Pynchon's quest for aesthetic freedom. It is upturned but not necessarily negative, for Pynchon sees concepts in a different way. For example, he sees that the lower class of people is superior to the higher one.

Thomas Pynchon's aesthetic freedom is summarized in his attempt and will to look for an alternative freedom that is different from the modernist conception. He sees that the modernist freedom is tyrannical and manipulative. Thus, he received apocalyptically the traditional concept of religious quests and humanists' ones. Pynchon goes back to a literary influence that introduced a terrible understanding of beauty for him. The latter is discussed in the chapter using Hegel's concept of the aesthetic freedom. Pynchon's quest is portrayed in his novel *V.* which depicts the two different lives of Benny and Profane whom, though their

lives take two different trends, but have to meet at the end because the upturned quest has to be completed and the aesthetic freedom has to be realized by all portions of society.

Chapter Four: Mysterious Beauty

4.1- Paranoid Individual

“Paranoids are not paranoid because they're paranoid, but because they keep putting themselves [...] deliberately into paranoid situations.”

Thomas Pynchon- *Gravity's Rainbow*

Thomas Pynchon's aesthetic experience refers to the acquisition of concepts and images by the reader during the reading process of the writer's fiction and the apprehension of beauty in it. The relation between fiction and aesthetics is summarized in the kind of experience we have of the objects that we announce beautiful and on which experience fiction and its particular judgment of taste can be founded³⁴. The two concepts have not been well discussed in the history of aestheticism and fiction, or literature in general. In dealing with the aesthetic experience that the reader goes through in reading Pynchon's novels, one important element appears: paranoia. The latter is an expression of degeneration.³⁵ Degeneration here refers to the collapse that the paranoid person feels after hallucinating a conspiracy that people prepare against him. Pynchon's fiction handles the issue with a huge number of examples. But what relation can be found between paranoia and art as a reflection of art is what this part is going to discuss.

Pynchon's aesthetic experience is the experience of a fiction full of paranoia and conspiracy. The experience is summarized in the manipulation of mystery as a means of conceptualizing the beauty that comes from the widespread paranoia and conspiracy within society. The writer makes the reader go through his own experience by the realization of a special appreciation of paranoia and conspiracy.

³⁴ This explanation of the aesthetic experience is taken from Kant's book *Critique of Pure Reason*, translated by Norman Kemp Smith, London, 1929. P 82.

³⁵ Kraepelin, E.—Manic depressive psychosis and paranoia

Thomas Pynchon's aesthetic experience is first found in the concept of paranoia and its relation to the pynchonian fictional individual. The individual in Thomas Pynchon's novels is always afraid of being watched by other individuals, society or even technology. Such a term requires more explanation and discussion.

The term has been used to refer to:

Normal suspiciousness, to persecutory delusions, to persecutory delusions in combination with delusions of reference, to persecutory delusions in combination with grandiose delusions, and to all types of delusions. Clearly, the direct study of persecutory delusions should only involve those individuals reporting beliefs concerning harm (Freeman and Garety 46).

Paranoia is a psychological term that explains a psychological illness. The previous quotation depicts the illness using two important terms: Suspiciousness and persecutory delusions. Paranoid people are always in a situation of doubt. They doubt every single event that comes across their lives. If a car comes across the one of the paranoid, and that causes an accident, the paranoid considers this as a plan made by some strangers or aliens aimed to cause his death. However, this may be a simple example of what the paranoid character may think.

According to Daniel Freeman and Jason Freeman, Paranoia is considered as an illness that belongs to the neurosis illnesses, however, it does not have a relation with "delusions and hallucinations" as a paranoid condition. They see that it can be categorized as an exaggerating form of depression that comes as a result of the unsuitable environment and difficult situations (Freeman and Freeman 18).

Miller et al. see that Paranoia is considered as an “antagonistic” behavior that directs to problems in “interpersonal” relationships, among which are the aggressions by which these individuals react against the things they are afraid of. An example given by the writers is the one of the tangled people who often think that the others are discussing their issues and even conspire against them. Miller et al. believe that this kind of people do not have the ability to see that the situation in which they are is a result of their “antagonistic behavior.” An essential point is brought by the writers to draw attention to those paranoid persons who seem to be disordered, whereas, they are not fully chaotic (266).

In his review of *The Crying of Lot 49*, Ted Gioia reveals that Pynchon intend to change the perception of paranoia among people, a perception that "Kafka and Orwell" tend to create. He sees that both of the writers like to portray a hard understanding of paranoia, whereas, it is a state of mind and a situation that exists in our daily life. Gioia believes that Pynchon illustrate his thinking by himself since he, personally, hides from media and even neighbors and fans to live in an unknown place forever. The fact can serve as an evidence to prove that paranoia is a state of an individual that exists in society, and it is far from being a fictional condition (Gioia).

The crying of Lot 49 is Pynchon's novel where the reader can experience the aesthetics with the paranoid individuals used in the novel. It is a novel that tells the story of a woman, Oedipa Maas, possibly finding the centuries old conflict between two mail distribution companies, Thurn und Taxis and the Trystero or Tristero (Crying). The former actually existed, and was the first firm to distribute postal mail; the latter is Pynchon's invention. Oedipa Maas and the rest of the characters, each one of them depict the paranoid individual explained at the beginning of the chapter.

In the Crying of Lot 49, as in *Gravity's Rainbow*, there are two steps that the reader passes through in order to reach the targeted aesthetic experience. Thomas Pynchon leads his reader, first, to be fascinated by the exposition of paranoia showed by the character as an individual in the novel and, second, to appraise this paranoia as a last step to reach beauty. The two steps are the responsible of the process of the beautification of paranoia.

The exposition of paranoia in Pynchon's fiction appears in his successive novels *The Crying of Lot 49* and *Gravity's Rainbow*. In *The Crying of Lot 49*, Oedipa Maas is a character whose paranoia story began when her ex-boyfriend, Pierce Inverarity, dies and she becomes co-executor of his estate. After that, Oedipa's life changes fundamentally. In one passage in the novel, the author says:

“She touched the edge of its voluptuous field, knowing it would be lovely beyond dreams simply to submit to it; that not gravity's pull, laws of ballistics, feral ravening, promised more delight. She tested it, shivering: I am meant to remember. Each clue that comes is supposed to have its own clarity, its fine chances for permanence. But then she wondered if the gemlike "clues" were only some kind of compensation. To make up for her having lost the direct, epileptic Word, the cry that might abolish the night” (Crying 118).

In this passage, Oedipa starts a stream of thoughts where she wonders about the clues that she faces since she became the co-executor of her ex-boyfriend estate before she starts to doubt all of them thinking about the possibility of them being a kind of compensation to her for losing the direct word, a fact that can be interpreted as a dreadful effect of paranoia on her.

This passage should be considered as one of the best examples of Pynchon's exposition of paranoia in his two novels, *The Crying of Lot 49* and *Gravity's Rainbow*. Oedipa

is paranoid, and the fact leads her to doubt any optimism that she or her sub-consciousness starts to think about.

An essential task that should be tackled in all of Pynchon's works is the examination, criticism, and dramatization of paranoia. In an essay on "The Mechanism of Paranoia" Freud talks about a typical case and connects his clinical observations with the inclination in German literature ("Faust") and music ("Tristan and Isolde") that Pynchon deals with in his novel *The Crying of Lot 49*. "We should be inclined to say," writes Freud, "that what was characteristically paranoid about the illness was the fact that the patient [...] reacted precisely with delusions of persecution [...] At the climax of his illness, under the influences of visions which were 'partly of a terrifying character, but partly, too, of an indescribable grandeur,' [the patient] became convinced of the imminence of a great catastrophe, of the end of the world [Soon he believed] he himself was "the only real man still surviving,' and the few human shapes that he still saw—the physician, the attendants, the other patients—he explained as being ... 'cursory contraptions'" (Freud).

Freud's explanation of paranoia serves extensively Pynchon's characters. In *Gravity's Rainbow*, Thomas Pynchon writes:

"I mean what they and their hired psychiatrists call delusional systems. Needless to say, 'delusions' are always officially defined. We do not have to worry about questions of real or unreal. They only talk out of expediency. It's the system that matters. How the data arrange themselves inside it. Some are consistent, others fall apart" (Gravity 644).

Thomas Pynchon's characters believe, as Freud's therapy of the illness suggests, in the usefulness of psychiatrists, as a way to heal paranoia. The characters are convinced of the fact

that no reality exists. There is no distinction between the real and the unreal, all that matters is the method.

The method is the self balance that each individual can achieve. For Pynchon, the balance is not achievable for every individual, some characters can reach the equilibrium and others cannot. The latter is Tyrone Slothrop's case in *Gravity's Rainbow*. Slothrop becomes more and more paranoid throughout the novel, and starts to think that he is monitored by someone or a group of people. In one of the scenes, He escapes from the casino into the post-war wasteland of Europe, "The Zone", searching for the 00000 and S-Gerät.

In *The Crying of Lot 49*, Pierce Inverarity is a California real estate mogul whom Oedipa had an affair with. Pierce never appears directly to the reader, but his deeds reflect an obvious paranoid personality. Pierce died a year before the beginning of the book and left Oedipa as co-executor of his will; she does not know why since she had not heard from him in over a year. They had traveled to Mexico together because Oedipa was trying to escape her boring life in Kinneret. After that, she realized that she could not escape through Pierce.

Inverarity's paranoia appears in his will to leave his heritage, with the mystery that it contains for Oedipa. The latter has already left him before his death. Apparently, the fact left a psychological influence on him. Inverarity has already faced a mysterious dilemma in identifying the "Tristero" secret. Before his death, Inverarity decided to appoint Oedipa as the co-executor of his heritage including the mystery that haunted him for a long time. This will reflects two kinds of paranoia: the Tristero's and Oedipa. As any ordinary paranoid, Inverarity wanted to find a link, or a relation between Tristero and Oedipa for he believed in a conspiracy chasing him.

However, Oedipa herself knows nothing about the Tristero, or at least this what appeared at the beginning of the novel to be. The mysterious Tristero appears in pieces and symbols to Oedipa who is never sure whether Inverarity created a labyrinth to laugh at her, or whether he was trying to live beyond death or if the Tristero is real or if she is crazy.

The case of Inverarity and Oedipa reveals the intense degree of paranoia that each character of Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot* suffered from. Even though Oedipa was appointed co-executor of Inverarity's heritage, the latter did not trust her regarding the weird will to have Oedipa as co-executor and the mysterious events that follow that. Oedipa, on the other hand, shows no faith in Inverarity's deeds. She doubts the whole events that she faces throughout the novel, even Inverarity himself and his heritage.

The exposition of paranoia in Pynchon's novels is intense. Characters appear to alienate themselves from themselves and others (Oedipa, Much Maas, Dr. Hilarius). Characters seem to drive themselves to the edge of destruction and the motif can be studied at different levels. It often takes the form of a cultural phenomenon, symbolic of postmodernism that has been studied by theorists like Fredric Jameson and Inhab Hassan. Additionally, Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49* features paranoia as a rhetorical means of challenging the different systems that control and shape the American way of life, the master narratives of American history, the firm belief in science, in a nutshell all the codified areas of the American society (Anastasescu 2).

An example of a paranoid character that challenges a system that controls the American life is Geoffrey "Pirate" Prentice from *Gravity's Rainbow*, a captain in the British Army, a secret agent in *Gravity's Rainbow*. He has a special talent for living the fantasies of other people, a talent appreciated by those who direct espionage for the British government. Prentice is in charge of collecting the remains of V-2 rockets fired by the Germans, so that the British can learn as much as possible about the rockets and how to combat their effects.

The Crying of Lot 49 is a novel that seems to appear to confront the concept of order and organization against entropy. Ana Anastasescu argues, in her book *Paranoia in Public Discourse and in Aesthetic Representation in the Crying of Lot 49*, that Oedipa Mass should be considered as a character that belongs to the middle class American society during the 1960s. She sees that the middle class of that period is considered as the class of consumers who tend to have a comfortable simple life. The character is depicted by Anastasescu in a complete dissatisfaction with the life of tools and things that seem to be uncomfortable for her, however, she receives a letter that takes her out of the empty world she was living in. Anastasescu says that she gets a heritage that appears to be symbolizing at the end of the novel

when her boyfriend represents a precious collection of stamps to her. This collection represents the American heritage as a whole (2)

Anastasescu continues her analysis by revealing the secret behind Oedipa's motivation to find out the underground of the sign (the muted post horn), that she thinks is the puzzlement in which she enters after the finding of the sign. Oedipa shows several attempts of detecting to chase after the sign as a means to identify its meaning. Anastasescu says that by the end of the novel, the main character discovers the secret behind the sign. It is a secret organization named "Trystero." The aim of this organization is to provide underground communications. Its discovery comes due to Oedipa's efforts when she tries to understand and deduce the available information and data available for her. Anastasescu believes that the secret is not completely revealed because of the several signs of the post horn that disturbs her understanding until the end of the novel (Anastasescu 2).

Anastasescu questions the concept of paranoia in Pynchon's novel using the main character Oedipa. The latter is in a permanent state of questioning about her existence. Anastasescu is like Oedipa, she questions the existence of the character within and outside the novel. Oedipa does not know the truth about the information she gains, so is Anastasescu, she cannot arrive to the point of understanding the difference between the fictional characters and the real ones, among which is Pynchon himself (2).

Laplanche and Pontalis claim that the paranoid fiction of Thomas Pynchon belongs to a list of a similar one that appeared in North America. According to their research, the works paranoia and schizophrenia are central in the North American science fiction. J. Laplanche and J. B. Pontalis define paranoia as:

"chronic psychosis characterized by more or less systematized delusion, with a predominance of ideas of reference but with no weakening of the intellect [...]. Along with delusions of

persecution, Freud places erotomania, delusional jealousy and delusions of grandeur under the heading of paranoia" (Laplanche and Pontalis 296).

Laplanche and Pontalis point out that contrarily to schizophrenia whose characteristics are "dissociation," "splitting", lack of coherence, thinking, deeds and fondness, paranoia has no relation with the studied symptoms (Laplanche and Pontalis 298-9). Paranoia is a state of mind that could be studied by intellectuals or social activists who tend to analyze the individual's behaviors. According to psychoanalysis, paranoia is a consciousness that is usually different from the social one. Laplanche and Pontalis see that this consciousness leads to a psychological illness that we call paranoia. In literature, authors use paranoia to characterize someone who is out of the ordinary as a means to narrate a specific psychological state (299).

Laplanche and Pontalis believe that paranoia, as it is characterized in fiction and literature, could exist in our daily life. They say that Kraepelin and Freud use the term "paraphrenia" to refer to this kind of paranoia. Laplanche and Pontalis add that paranoia becomes a dominant theme in the current American fiction. It tackles the themes of conspiracy and doubts (299).

The spread of paranoia as an important theme in the postmodern American fiction does not make of Thomas Pynchon an ordinary writer for his use of paranoia is totally different from the one of his peers. Thomas Pynchon beautifies³⁶ paranoia for the reader after exposing it by involving the reader with the events that take place in his novels. The involvement aims to make the reader himself paranoid about what goes on in the writer's fiction.

³⁶ To beautify here means to focus on the concept of mystery in it that the reader finds interesting to discover rather than focusing on terror, and this is the idea that our thesis focuses on.

The novels that use the word paranoia as often as Thomas Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow* have an influence on the reader in a way that makes his paranoid about it and even its use. Not only is it the narrator's most appreciated word and concept (the word even gives birth to a new English verb: Tyrone Slothrop "paranoids from door to door" in a Nice hotel); the characters in Pynchon's work also frequently refer to themselves as paranoid.

Bersani refers to a problem that he sees serious in the paranoid individuals. He says that when these paranoid people are aware of their problem and admit it, it is because they see other individuals as paranoid as themselves. He sees that this admission is considered as a means that the paranoid use to leave no space for other people to accuse them by this characteristic. In his article *Pynchon, Paranoia, and Literature* L. Bersani says that a paranoid may say: "You must think I'm really paranoid about people's opinion of what I write" can be given to us as: "I'm really paranoid about people's opinion of what I write," but the result of that anxiety as paranoid can only come from others. These others can of course also exist in me, and I can make a clinical joke of my own worries, but I would not have them if I were not also convinced of their rightness. "I" can never be the subject of "I am paranoid" as an uncontested, undivided judgment" (Bersani 99) .

Making the reader paranoid about the events of the novel as well as those of his life is also seen in the Anubis crew of *Gravity's Rainbow*. " The moving anxieties of the Whole Sick Crew, their dissipation and their fin de siecle posturing recapitulate the "anxiety of everyone living in a world none of us wants to see lit into holocaust.[...]Call it a kind of communion, surviving somehow on a mucked-up planet[...]our planet"(Gravity 193–94). In *The Crying of Lot 49* and *Gravity's Rainbow*, Pynchon elaborates on the concern that the period since the end of the Second World War has witnessed "a unique quantitative [...] [and] qualitative jump in industrial production, consumption, and waste; the acceleration of interrelated processes of thermodynamic and informational entropy" (qt in. Coughran 269).

In *The Critique of the Power of Judgment*, Kant offers a theory of artistic expression in which he claims that a work of art is a means through which an artist expresses an 'aesthetic idea' (Kant). Regarding Kant's theory, Thomas Pynchon should reveal an aesthetic idea in writing his two novels *Gravity's Rainbow* and *The Crying of Lot 49*. However, aesthetic for Pynchon may be different from what it is for Kant.

Aesthetics for Hegel as it is for Kant are more natural than for Pynchon. Hegel insists that man is "born to religion, to thought, to science" (Harries 11). Hegel's and Kant's achievement requires therefore "nothing besides birth itself, and training, education, industry, etc" (Harries 11) Art "demands a specific disposition, in which a natural factor plays an essential part" (Harries 11). Artistic genius is a gift. In the successful work of art the spirit incarnates itself so completely in the rational that it becomes impossible to abstract the embodied meaning from the sensible presentation. This impossibility has its counterpart in the artist's inability to distinguish between what in his work is really his own and what has come to him as a gift of nature. Just as aesthetic appreciation is sinnliches Wissen, sensible (or should it be sensuous?) knowledge, so artistic creation is sinnliche Gestaltung, not simply a shaping of the sensible, but a shaping that is itself sensible" (Harries 11). As a product of spirit, the work of art has a meaning, but the incarnation of this meaning in the sensible makes it impossible to capture it in concepts without destroying that unity of sense and spirit on which, according to Hegel, beauty and art rest. To thought art is essentially a mystery (Harries 11).

According to Hegel, art has always relied on mystery in identifying its beauty. Accordingly, Thomas Pynchon really understood that and adopted it in a perfect way. In identifying Thomas Pynchon's beauty of his two novels *The Crying of Lot 49* and *Gravity's Rainbow*, one essential element appears. Thomas Pynchon portrays the two novels by

selecting the very small details of its paranoid characters to demonstrate to the reader. The fact makes an adoption of what is an aesthetic experience to Hegel.

Paranoia leads to mystery. A paranoid character is always in a state of doubting the events that go around him and consider them as a mystery. In involving the reader in the paranoid state, he experiences the mystery with the paranoid character. The events that take place in *The Crying of Lot 49* (Oedipa's discovery of the Trystero, Pierces weird heritage, the series of signs that Oedipa finds out throughout the novel) all of them are mysteries that characterize the beautification of Pynchon's novel. The reader sees them as beautiful because he appreciates the process of discovering the mystery behind them.

Hegel says that the artist's achievement as an artist requires only a birth and a good education. However, when it comes to the creation of an artistic work, it is difficult for the artist to identify his own work from the nature's gift. Thomas Pynchon's nature is the one of the Second World War where paranoid people surround him from everywhere. His work might come from his environment, which logically results from such paranoid characters, or it might come from him as a paranoid person, since he does not appear to public ever.

Thomas Pynchon is not interested in identifying the source of his inspiration, rather his interest as an artist, and as Kant says, is to create aesthetically a work of art that the reader should appreciate. Whether the appreciation of mystery that lies behind the paranoid characters reaches all the readers or not, Pynchon's artistic creation depends mainly on mystery and its identification.

4.2- Conspiracy and Society

The exposition of paranoia and the readers' involvement within the stream of it leads to a society that believes in conspiracy. Thomas Pynchon's society is the one that believes in the counterfeit of society structure. The two successive novels of Pynchon, *Gravity's Rainbow*

and *The Crying of Lot 49* demonstrate the targeted society that Pynchon considers as beautiful as he considers paranoid individuals as aesthetical.

The society under conspiracy appears firstly in *The crying of Lot 49* as Oedipa discovers and begins to unknot what may or may not be a worldwide conspiracy. Oedipa Mass discovers evidence that Trystro has a long history as an alternative communication network that has been operating in the Western Worldwide alongside and divorced from the established systems of information, but whether this history is fictional or real still remains a question for her. One of her weird new friends calls her to tell her that he has found an old US stamp with the post horn and the slogan "we await silent trystero empire." Oedipa becomes confused as to whether that could have a meaning or not (Crying 128).

As Oedipa starts to identify the fake from the real, or at least this what she thought at the beginning, she discovers that the signs trace back to the estate of her ex-boyfriend Pierce Inverarity. After that, Oedipa begins to wonder about an actual existence of a marginalized world of some people who want more freedom from the oppression of the established organizations and control of information to join instead

"a network by which X number of Americans are truly communicating whilst reserving their lies, recitations of routine, arid betrayals of spiritual poverty, for the official government delivery system; maybe even onto a real alternative to the excitement, to the absence of surprise to life, that harrows the head of everybody American you know, and you too sweetie" (Crying 128).

Oedipa's discovery of the secret organization leads her to realize that she is living in a society that is totally controlled by conspiracy. Not only Oedipa is under conspiracy, but all

Americans are. They are by another equivalent secret organization that runs another great system of communication that includes a great number of people.

The focus on the American society in Pynchon's novel comes especially on the society in the late sixties. In this novel, we can see a combination between different social and cultural elements such as the culture of suburbia, hippie rock singers, druggies, conspiracy groups, theater, actors, lawyers and paranoids. Oedipa Maas tries to put these arbitrary elements together and tries to make "constellations", to find an fundamental order or pattern behind them, but the more she tries, the more she gets lost in the contiguous chaos (Rezaei and Samani 84-5).

Referring to the culture of suburbia, in the United States, suburb can refer either to an outlying residential area of a city or town or to a separate "municipality" or "unincorporated" area outside a town or city. David Brooks says "when it comes to suburbia the American imagination is motionless" (7). The quotation means that the American suburbs has always been static and out of the movements that exist downtown.

Thomas Pynchon cites the culture of suburbia in *The Crying of Lot 49* to include every single side of the American society hoping to find an explanation to the secret society that Oedipa was discovering. She believes that the American society under conspiracy even by the suburbs, even though it is known that the suburbs have always been motionless.

As it is the case for the suburbia culture, it is indeed for the hippie rock singers and druggies. Oedipa doubts them as well to be some conspiracy groups that plan against her society to conceptualize their own organization. The conspiracy groups need more analysis.

Conspiracy groups are demonstrated in chapter four when Oedipa realizes that she is uncovering a very large conspiracy that dates back centuries to a very old group. She decides not to tell the government about what she has found out. The old group that Oedipa finds out

divides the American society into two parts: the first one includes the common people who are considered as the victims of conspiracy, and the second one includes the secret group who plans for the conspiracy against the first part.

Conspiracy groups are well discussed in *Gravity's Rainbow*. In one of the passages, Pynchon says:

“There is a theory going around that the U.S.A. was and still is a gigantic Masonic plot under the ultimate control of the group known as the Illuminati. It is difficult to look for long at the strange single eye crowning the pyramid which is found on every dollar bill and not begin to believe the story, a little. Too many anarchists in 19th-century Europe—Bakunin, Proudhon, Salverio Friscia—were Masons for it to be pure chance. Lovers of global conspiracy, not all of them Catholic, can count on the Masons for a few good shivers and voids when all else fails.” (Gravity 587).

Regarding Thomas Pynchon's fiction, we identify one of the most important conspiracy groups that dominate the American society, which is the illuminati group. The latter is shown in *Gravity's Rainbow* as an old organization that existed hundreds of years ago and still exists until now, as it is depicted also in *The Crying of Lot 49*. The only difference between the past and now is that the organization is no more secret for some people, one of them is Oedipa Mass, who discovered their biggest secret.

The discovery of the conspiracy group secret is also exemplified by Slothrop in *Gravity's Rainbow* who reveals the familiar Pynchonian paranoid question: “Is there a conspiracy surrounding me or am I just delusional?” Other characters reveal other questions that require an equally interpretation. For example, the rocket engineer Franz Pökler has to

deal with the interpretive problem of the apparently altering identity of his daughter Ilse, whom he can meet but once a year. Russian officer/agent Tchitcherine roams the Zone tracking down his Herero half-brother Enzian of Bleicheröde, who in turn considers the V-2 rocket a sacred scripture of sorts (Haag 84). Samilu Haag shows in *Interpretations of Gravity's Rainbow* that despite the major characters' irregular sensitivity to reading and interpreting, "ludicrously manifest", for instance, in Slothrop's capacity to hear quotation marks in speech, they are far from being the most talented sign-decipherers in the Zone. The novel is overloaded with hermeneutic freaks: Säure Bummer, who interprets reefers; the beats car-reading Miklos Thanatz; Eddie Pensiero, who interprets shivers (Haag 84).

In her thesis *Fiction as Interpretation / Interpretation as Fiction*, Naomi Schor supposes that the character of the novel has the will to enhance his capacities of interpretation. She sees that writers like Thomas Pynchon intend to create fictional characters in their fiction and give them the authority to read and interpret the events using metaphors. This kind of character reads and interprets in a fictional world in which he exists. Schor suggests that this kind of characters uses a certain approach that depends on the analysis of the events they narrate to give the opportunity to the reader to approach the novel from their point of view. A best example of this kind of characters is traced in Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow* (Schor 165-182).

All these capacities of Pynchon's characters to read and interpret refer to the conspired part of society. A conspired character within a conspired society is more sensitive to the event surrounding him, and the result is extraordinary capacities to trace conspiracies.

As it is the case for the paranoid individual who involves randomly the reader within a pynchonian novel, the conspired society, as well, involves the reader as a part of society within the novel.

The use of mystery in *The Crying of Lot 49* as a basic key of the plot aims to involve the reader within the novel. Pynchon Uses this attachment as a means to drive the reader to ask questions about the Trystero, and Pierce Inverarity. These wonderings are meant to push the reader to be curious about disclosing more secrets. They are usually attracted from the obvious side of the novel because the reader's involvement within the novel is one of Pynchon's most important techniques. Mystery is also regarded as one of the most attracting means of Pynchon to provoke the reader's curiosity. Pynchon uses these techniques in all his novels among which is *The Crying of Lot 49* and *Gravity's Rainbow*.

In *The Crying of Lot 49*, Pynchon says:

“Such a captive maiden, having plenty of time to think, soon realizes that her tower, its height and architecture, are like her ego only incidental: that what really keeps her where she is magic, anonymous and malignant, visited on her from outside and for no reason at all. Having no apparatus except gut fear and female cunning to examine this formless magic, to understand how it works, how to measure its field strength, count its lines of force, she may fall back on superstition, or take up a useful hobby like embroidery, or go mad, or marry a disk jockey. If the tower is everywhere and the knight of deliverance no proof against its magic, what else?” (Crying 10-1).

In this passage, Pynchon tries to involve the reader to think about conspiracy in a positive way. Oedipa faces a stream of thoughts where she thinks about her life as a whole and what may be accidental or not. Oedipa realizes that there is a super power which is external that keeps her where she is. She tries to use her female capacities to examine and identify the power, but the trick doesn't work for she believes in the superiority and the capacity of this power.

The power that Oedipa surrenders to is the one of conspiracy. She is totally fascinated by it. She can be satisfied being under the conspiracy of the group of conspiracy. One of the possibilities that may lead her to surrender is the fact of being paranoid. The latter is an illness and the illness could have a power out of the patient's control.

Pynchon's relation with paranoia is the relation of a considerable part of society. After the 1950s, and when postmodernism marked its beginning, paranoia marked its domination over a great part of the American society. The paranoia domination has its background in the previous century. In the 19th century, the concept of paranoia appeared thoroughly in literature.

Paul Davis, in his book *Physics and Philosophy*, proves that Pynchon is not the first writer to use the theme of paranoia in his novels. Without a mentioning of Pynchon, Davis says that Charles Brockden Brown's *Wieland* is claimed to be the very first-person narrative novel in the American history of paranoid novels. He believes that scholars should give more credit to this writer taking into consideration that he is a pioneer in his writing. Davis sees that paranoia in fiction is measured and given value, not by its overuse, but by the importance that the writer gives to it in his novel. He thinks that most of the nineteenth century writers who tackled the theme of paranoia did so by means of detailing its aspects rather than giving it more importance in the theme of the novel. The example of *Wieland* is the one of the nineteenth century writers (18).

The nineteenth century dealings with paranoia in a different way from that of Pynchon do not make of Pynchon a pioneer in this genre of fiction. A glance at the postmodernist fiction reveals that most contemporary writers try to bridge the gap between science and literature. In the late twentieth century, discontinuous dynamics and chaos theory gave the writers a fresh supply of inspiration that we trace in the works of Tom Stoppard, and Don DeLillo. The

latter use concepts of thermodynamics and information theory to “portray societies saturated with technologies that can by turns become liberating or threatening” (Heise 2).

What makes Pynchon a pioneer is the beautification of science fiction, and the beautification of conspiracy. The control of the individual and the tyranny of technology finish in *Gravity's Rainbow* where, using the destruction of World War II as a demonstration of humanity's growing inhumanity, modern society is exposed as a vast circular conspiracy where governments function in the best interest of the corporations that provide them with weapons to fight wars, which, in turn, gives those corporations more money.

So far, the mixture of weapons, regarding science fiction, and conspiracy do not show any beautiful side of Pynchon's fiction. However, this particular arrangement is designed to make life luxurious enough for the individual, by providing technological comforts, that he must submit to what amounts to suicide, the sacrifice of his individuality, in order to provide for his family and to uphold his patriotic duty through the production of weapons designed to kill other individuals who are slaves to the same system but are on different sides.

The conspired society is satisfied by the conspiracy of the government to make them serve their benefits. The reason is the dream of the luxurious technology that results from the obedience of conspiracy.

Many characters in Pynchon's novels can be adopted on McLuhan's theory of self-amputation through the identification with objects. It is used to understand better the process at work within Pynchon's fictional world. The basis of McLuhan's argument is that, “The youth Narcissus mistook his own reflection in the water for another person. This extension of himself by mirror numbed his perceptions until he became the servomechanism of his own extended or repeated image” (Shord 4-5). McLuhan derives Narcissus from the Greek narcosis, which translates to numbness. Narcissus automatically identifies with his own

image; he does not recognize himself. The point of the myth in a modern context, according to McLuhan, is "the fact that men at once become fascinated by any extension of themselves in any material other than themselves" (qt in. Shord 4-5). Narcissus becomes a "closed system"; he is no longer a social being. Through this process he becomes inhuman; he no longer communicates or thinks, rather, like an object (Shord 4-5).

The basic influence on Thomas Pynchon's characters is technology. Oedipa, Slothrop or any other character of Pynchon's novels are fascinated by the technology and its objects to become themselves parts of it. The fact leads to an obedience to conspiracy.

Observation is an important element in understanding a conspired society. It is the feeling of Oedipa, Pierce, Slothrop and other characters in *The Crying of Lot 49* and *Gravity's Rainbow* to be observed by other secret societies and conspiracy groups. This observation should be linked to paranoia and conspiracy.

Although one could argue that observation, paranoia and conspiratorial interpretations are different from each other, they are connected, if only in the sense that the rise of observation sets the conditions for the development of conspiracy theories which, in turn, leads to paranoia about observation. Yet, in the accounts of cultural commentators, notions like paranoia and conspiracy theory are taken for granted. There is little critique of the limitations of these concepts and little discussion of what the effects are of positioning oneself as paranoid or of labeling others as paranoid. One can say that the evidence of a paranoia/conspiracy culture functions as a counterpoint to observation culture. The conceptual resources should be criticized as to bring themselves to bear in understanding this culture. However, researchers were unsuccessful to get rid of their corrective government, either because such culture arises from individual psychological development or cultural processes.

One might use these resources to examine some of the effects of both positioning the other (an individual, group, organisation, nation and so on) as paranoid and of adopting a conspiratorial position oneself. What do we do when we call others paranoid and what do we do by believing in conspiracy theories? Calling others paranoid means that we belong to a conspiracy group. That is, we are the observers of these paranoid people. Believing in conspiracy theories means that we are paranoid, which means that we are the observed people (Harper 2).

We have already seen that the conspired society is satisfied by the fact of being conspired to achieve the enjoyment of luxury provided by technology. Also, the conspiracy groups are satisfied by observing and watching their benefits achieved by the conspired society. The depiction of the two sides in Pynchon's novels is claimed to be aesthetical, however, one of the two sides is meant to be more beautiful.

In his article *Aesthetic concepts and Aesthetic experiences*, Derek Matravers specifies the relation between the aesthetic and the non-aesthetic. The denial of positive condition governing, which means, to deny both that there is an analytic connection between non-aesthetic and aesthetic terms and that any set of non-aesthetic properties would be causally sufficient for the correct application of an aesthetic term is to be discussed. If that set is taken as part of a broader set of non-aesthetic properties that constitute a work of art (or perhaps a work of art in a certain context) (Matravers 295-6).

If we consider that conspiracy groups are non-aesthetic, the fact leads automatically to the society under conspiracy to be aesthetic. The opposite makes the conspiracy groups to be aesthetic.

Matravers gives the example of a vase; it might be that, for vase-blowers, this is a technical term defined thus: a vase is fragile if the glass out of which it is made is less than 0.5

mm thick. Uses of the term along these lines, being condition-governed, would not be aesthetic. It is clear, however, that if any term can be used aesthetically, fragile can. I look at a vase, am overwhelmed by its fragility and exclaim, 'Gosh, that vase is fragile!' Already we can see trouble for someone who says that, in their aesthetic uses, terms refer to aesthetic properties. For if the term used aesthetically refers to an aesthetic property and the term used non-aesthetically refers to a non-aesthetic property, the term would be ambiguous; a reduction for obviously it is not ambiguous (Matravers 295-6).

Thomas Pynchon's aesthetic experience starts from here. The reader experiences the mystery of the conspired society and the conspiracy groups depending on the importance that he gives to each side of them. Pynchon depicts the conspiracy groups as being hidden and mysterious. The reader's experience here is the one of investigation aiming at discovering the mystery behind them. It is like saying "Gosh, who are these people." The fact reveals a clear beautification of these conspiracy groups.

In addition, Pynchon portrays the society under conspiracy as being overwhelmed by the conspiracy groups. The fact makes a second overestimation of conspiracy that intends to beautify it. Thomas Pynchon's fiction here looks like the gothic literature. The technique of the latter is to take an object of desire and project it into the external world as an object of fear (Kosofsky vi-vii).

It is desirable by the readers to read about a mysterious secret organization that hides a lot of secrets behind it. Pynchon's technique is to add scary scenes to enable the reader to enjoy it. One of the techniques that are used by Pynchon to beautify mystery is the use of details, an aspect which is going to be discussed in the following part.

4.3- Detailed Details

The Poet L. E. Sissman, in his review of *Gravity's Rainbow* review for *The New Yorker*, said of Pynchon:

"He is almost a mathematician of prose, who calculates the least and the greatest stress each word and line, each pun and ambiguity, can bear, and applies his knowledge accordingly and virtually without lapses, though he takes many scary, bracing linguistic risks. Thus his remarkably supple diction can first treat of a painful and delicate love scene and then roar, without pause, into the sounds and echoes of a drudged and drunken orgy" (138).

Pynchon's prose is well known for the use of details in a very organized way so that the reader follows the details precisely. Pynchon's artistic value is often compared to that of James Joyce's *Ulysses* (Ruch). Joyce divided *Ulysses* into 18 chapters or "episodes". At first sight, the book may appear unstructured and chaotic; Joyce once said that he had "put in so many enigmas and puzzles that it will keep the professors busy for centuries arguing over what I meant," which would earn the novel "immortality". The two schemata which Stuart Gilbert and Herbert Gorman released after publication to defend Joyce from obscenity accusations made the links to the *Odyssey* clear, and also explained the work's internal structure.³⁷

Peter Brooks defines the plot of *Ulysses* as follows: "The organizing line and intention of narrative [...] best conceived as an activity, a structuring operation elicited in the reader trying to make sense of those meanings that develop only through textual and temporal successive" (2).

³⁷ "The bookies' Booker." *The Observer* (London). 5 November 2000. Retrieved 2002-02-16.

Thomas Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49* and *Gravity's Rainbow* have so much in common with *Ulysses*: Complicated structure and chaotic style. If we look at the critical reception, concerning structure, that both of novels had, we see that the novels have not been well studied.

Samuli Hägg suggests that Pynchon's novels have not been extensively studied from a narratological perspective because Pynchon exploded onto the scene of literary criticism during the 1970's, before narratology truly became influential in Anglo-American critical discourse. The few years after the publication of *Gravity's Rainbow* (1973) produced several powerful monographs and critical anthologies on Pynchon that seem largely to have set the thematic tone of later achievements of the so-called Pynchon industry. While Pynchon's textual difficulty has in this tradition been duly acknowledged and often meditated upon, it has for the most part served as a self-evident, or given, backdrop for thematic interpretations, not as a primary object of study (14).

After that, the novels have seen a stream of criticism regarding the structure and the style. *Gravity's Rainbow*, as T. Tanner says, is a work of "such vastness and range that defies--with a determination unusual, even in the age of 'difficult' books" (69). It offers a supreme vastness of scope and an exceptional variety of themes and content. Pynchon represents the "intricate networking of contemporary technological, political, and cultural systems," and "in the style and its rapid transitions," he attempts to adjust the "dizzying tempos, the accelerated shifts from one mode of experience to another" (Poirier 12). *Gravity's Rainbow* is shaped by the memories of the Second World War, its end and "its immediate aftermath. It is a book of remembered origins and unexpected endings that highlights the persistent continuation of the responsibility of those who live in present that lies between (69).

Richard Lock explains Pynchon's fictional style, in his New York Times Review of *Gravity's Rainbow*, as a fear of emptiness, which Pynchon converts into the very appearance of megalomaniac paranoia, the creation of plots and counterplots, epic catalogues, unifying symbols and metaphors, strong verbal energy, detailed descriptions of natural and man-made environments, "local lifestyles, manic good times, college humor and rowdiness leading to drunken and drugged orgies, sexual perversions and reversals of role, and finally to an obsession with the sado-masochistic conversion of human flesh to mechanical contrivance, dead matter" (Locke 5).

Thomas Pynchon's fiction tends to be postmodern because what is called postmodernism in literature today is usually, as it is the case for Pynchon, characterized by intense self-reflexivity and openly parodic intertextuality. Linda Hutcheon says that the term in fiction means that it is usually metafiction that is equated with the postmodern (Hutcheon 3).

Waugh says that metafiction is a literary tool used to self-consciously and systematically draw attention to a work's status as an artifact. Metafiction, Waugh adds, poses questions about the relationship between fiction and reality, usually using irony and self-reflection. It can be put side by side to presentational theatre, which does not let the audience forget it is viewing a play; metafiction forces readers to be aware that they are reading a fictional work (Waugh 148).

The lack of exact definitions of postmodernism leads people to accept any given definition without asking. Linda Hutcheon sees that postmodernism lacks the sense of accuracy and stability, and she blames postmodernism for not giving interest to history being a possible source of both. Hutcheon gives the example of postmodern architecture that was

the first art to introduce this sense in its works by introducing Venice Biennale as a theme in 1980. The work relies on the use of the past as a means to maintain stability and accuracy (3).

Contrarily to architecture, the past for fiction is only used as a repetition of historical events in literary texts. History in the past was represented in fiction in a form of historiography. It is a kind of novels that resembles to historical documents in its narrations. Hutcheon gives the example of *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, *Ragtime*, *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, and *The Name of the Rose*. (Hutcheon 3).

Pynchon's fiction is metafiction in the sense that it deals with textuality and intertextuality regarding history in his novels: *The Crying of Lot 49* and *Gravity's Rainbow*. Regarding *Gravity's Rainbow*, Locke says that the narratives of the novel include a number of descriptions of sexual encounters and drug use by the main characters. It also refers to severe dialogues between characters discussing the sense of history, art science and philosophy. The characters interfere in a varied discussion using unusual poems that go back to the 1940s pop culture. This kind of narratives appear and reappear in all Pynchon's novels. Lock says that most of his novels include the singing of silly songs and the repeating of ridiculous poems. (Lock 2). According to Richard Locke, "megalomaniac paranoia is the operative emotion" (2) that controls the novel and pushes the characters to be motivated (Locke 2).

Lock illustrates the use of paranoia along with other themes like sacrifice by Pynchon's novel *Gravity's Rainbow*. Usually, this kind of themes could not have a resolution before the end of the novel or in the epilogue of the many characters. *Gravity's Rainbow* exemplifies the character Pig Bodine who also occurs in Pynchon's novel *V*. He would later become a chronic avatar of Pynchon's multifaceted and consistent fictional world, appearing in almost all his novels thereafter (Locke 2).

Prose is a style of writing that is denied to be aesthetical by many literary critics and philosophers³⁸. Dewitt Parker admits that literature is claimed to be out of the fine arts list. It is a claim that we can trace in several books. Parker says that the scholars who regard the claim usually argue that literature lacks the beauty of form and context in comparison with other arts like painting and music. Parker believes that other arts like music and painting are more likely to express themselves for they take advantage of the senses they provoke in order to reveal their beauty. Painting impresses the sightseeing with beautiful colors and symbols. Music plays with the ear using several sounds that may inflame the feelings. Nonetheless, literature is considered as a bland art that sacrifices the dealing with the senses in order to reveal an imaginary thought using only words. Parker says that sometimes poetry could gain the same influence as painting and music. (Parker).

Thomas Pynchon's prose should be proved to be aesthetical. Taking the example of *Gravity's Rainbow*, The plot of the novel is complex, including over 400 characters that join several lines of narratives which interconnect with each other (Tarnar 74). These narratives include different themes that Tarnar lists as " V-2 rocket, interplay between free will and Calvinistic destiny, breaking the sequence of nature, behavioral psychology, sexuality, paranoia and conspiracy theories such as the Phoebus cartel and the Illuminati. *Gravity's Rainbow* draws heavily on themes that Pynchon had maybe met at his work as a technical writer for Boeing, where he edited a support newsletter for the Bomarc Missile Program support unit" (Tanner 74).

All of these details used by Pynchon are supposed to work for his benefit as an aesthetical writer. As it is the case for beautifying paranoid and conspired societies, Pynchon beautifies his prose by including so many details about every single thing of the novel to

³⁸ One of which is Dewitt H. Parker who writes in his book *Principles of Aesthetics* that prose is incompletely beautiful in the sense that poetry and painting can be more beautiful.

make the reader enjoys the discovery of mystery behind these details. The novel is narrated by many distinct voices, a technique further developed in Pynchon's much later novel *Against the Day*. The style and tone of the voices vary widely: Some narrate the plot in a highly informal tone, some are more self-referential, and some might even break the fourth wall. Some voices narrate in drastically different formats, ranging from movie-script format to stream of consciousness prose.

Frederic Nietzsche indicates that showing by hiding and hiding by showing is one of the aesthetical most successful techniques of prose (Melberg 140). By showing the secret societies and the conspiracy groups in *The Crying of Lot 49* and *Gravity's Rainbow*, Pynchon achieves an aesthetical prose that aims at capturing the reader's attention by mentioning so many details about these groups. By hiding and keeping the secrecy of the conspiracy groups, Pynchon captures as well as the reader's attention by pushing him to think about the possibilities that lay behind these groups. An example is *Gravity's Rainbow* where many plots become increasingly interconnected, revolving around the identity and purpose of the elusive 00000 Rocket and *Schwarzgerät*.

Pynchon's textual practice is considered as a sensibility. Sensibility here refers to way in which the feelings and effects that the writer uses to cover his genealogical links to the universalizing liberalism (Witzling 29).

4.4- Fiction and Reality

Thomas Pynchon's aesthetic experience goes through the combination of the fictional events that happen in his stories with reality. So many of the facts that he includes in his *Gravity's Rainbow* and *The crying of Lot 49* are actual facts that happened in real life.

In his article *Pynchon and Relativity: Narrative Time in Thomas Pynchon's Later Novels*, Simon Du Bourcier refers to writers of fiction who are often credited with creating

worlds: the world of a particular author is a particular novel. He says that sometimes we mean simply a social milieu, sometimes-particularly in the case of science fiction or fantasy- we literally mean a different planet, but often, a fictional world is something less easy to define. A fictional world may differ from the real world in a variety of ways, such as being populated by fictitious characters in not only the private but in the public sphere too, with imaginary politicians, corporations or countries. De Bourcier sees that a story may feature miraculous technologies or implausible coincidences. It may be set in the future. Nevertheless, we will probably understand it to be saying something about our world, about here and now (De Bourcier45).

In the course of trying to wind up Inverarity's estate, Oedipa is trapped in a world that apparently only makes sense in terms of conspiracy. The novel "move[s] from a state of degree-zero mystery – just the quotidian mixture of an average Californian day – to a condition of increasing mystery and dubiety" (Tanner 56).

Oedipa gathers evidence that apparently implies the existence of a possible underground organization, the Tristero which may or may not exist (and may also be spelled "Trystero") engaged in a broad ranging plot against the official mail service, that is, the official system of national communication. As clue after clue "turns up," Oedipa becomes increasingly captivated in the desperate pursuit of either some exact evidence, or just an important denial, of the existence of the Tristero. Geoffrey Lord sees nothing that Oedipa "discovers" is verifiable; everything presents an appearance of artifice, including seemingly actual facts, events and people. Oedipa's inquiries frequently move into the past, often via arcane and bizarre histories, and she may do some painful self-examination along the way; nevertheless, the direction of Oedipa's search remains one of external discovery. If there is any meaning, the narrative seems to locate it in a world hidden from her reach behind the signs of the extraordinary world (Lord 147).

This hidden organization is associated by many scholars to the one of the "Illuminati." Vernon Stauffer defines the Illuminati in his book *New England and the Bavarian Illuminati* as a secret organization that includes several people who intend to fight against the religious dominance over society and to establish their own way of life. Illuminati members take an oath of secrecy and pledge obedience to their superiors. Members are divided into three main classes, each with several degrees, and many Illuminati chapters drew membership from existing Masonic lodges. The goals of the Illuminati are to eliminate superstition, prejudice and the domination of government, philosophy and science by the Roman Catholic Church, to decrease oppressive state abuses of power, and to support the education of women and encourage their treatment as intellectual equals (Vernom 1).

Such an organization seems to look like the one that Oedipa finds out about in *The Crying of Lot 49*. Their similarities are secrecy, the aim to dominate a more powerful governmental organization, and even the fact of being an old organization.

One of the main things that can lead the reader of *The Crying of Lot 49* to search for reality in the novel is the difference between the modern and postmodern that is real in fact. It is characterized by the shift from an individual to a collective reality that is largely influenced by the development of mass media during the twentieth century. First published when the world was still settling into this new, common existence, *The Crying of Lot 49* exemplifies what this change meant in both its story and in the structure of the text itself. The series of narratives and the narrative form are both centered on a creation of information; Oedipa weaves her way through chaos surrounding the Tristero, an underground communication system, while Pynchon's readers engage with the text in a similar quest for meaning. While the written word, the means of communication that is central to the novel on both levels, has not changed with the transition to the postmodern era, society has -- and so has the way in which it understands and utilizes this medium. *The Crying of Lot 49* presents the idea that

truth and reality in postmodernity are socially constructed out of a balance between order and disorder and asks its protagonist and its readers to create meaning out of chaos.

Another possibility is that Thomas Pynchon may be writing an autobiography. His characters reflect a somehow possible characterization of him.³⁹ The fact leads the reader to search for truth in every single event that takes place in the story. The autobiography possibility should be analyzed.

The writing of autobiography demands of the author that he or she should not merely craft the best story but, instead, should employ it in the best suited way, present the fact softly, to tell the unvarnished truth, and to present the structure of a life without the fiction. Accordingly, we might ask how we should judge works where in the Line separating fact and fiction is intentionally vague. Are they to fall under the province of aesthetic or ethical judgement? Are readers meant to alternate between the two depending on their sense of the truth-value Of the passage in question? Or, instead, are both types of judgement insufficient for the task, and should they be set aside in favor of some mixture or replacement? Alternatively, are we meant simply to ignore this line separating, on the one hand, fiction and fact, and on the other, Aesthetics and ethics? (De la Durantay 304).

The one clear answer to be had is in response to the last of these questions: no. Pynchon seems to encourage his reader to evaluate the degree of fact in his fiction and the degree of

³⁹In *A Journey into the Mind of P* (an educative video on Thomas Pynchon), Webmaster Richard Lane claims that there are two Pynchons, the one who acts like normal people, “gets up, has his coffee and read the paper” and the other one who is created by criticism of articles and books. He says that Thomas Pynchon is claimed to represent most of his Characters.

fiction in his facts⁴⁰. To simply ignore the distinction would require ignoring a great deal of the text itself.

If we take the example of *The Crying of Lot 49*, we see that there exist a kind of autobiographical writing in Pynchon's novel. The novel tells the story of Oedipa Maas and her desire to uncover the truth about a secret organization. The novel starts off by introducing Oedipa's ordinary middleclass life in the imaginary town of Kinneret, with its familial chores, trips to the market, "the layering of a lasagna, the garlicking of a bread" (Crying 10), the making up a "deckful of days which seemed [...] more or less identical" spiced up only by the "too much kirsch in the fondue" Tupperware parties (Crying 9) and the omnipresence of the "greenish dead eye of the TV tube" (Crying 9). Oedipa inhabits a commodified, consumerist world dominated by the television void: the theme songs of television shows (Hunteley and Brinkley), the "visit" of *The Shadow*, a well known comic book made into a TV series, the legal TV drama *Perry Mason* that her lawyer takes as a orientation, numerous cartoons and so on.

All these shows may appear as a reference to Thomas Pynchon's real life in his early twenties. The reader is pushed to make a link between the lives of Pynchon and Oedipa because Pynchon never gives real facts about his life to the public. This is one of Thomas his aesthetic experiences. Through his fiction, he gives the possibility of writing an autobiography and let the reader experience the sense of exploring about a weird writer who keeps his personal life secret.

Some scholars have argued that the aesthetics of everyday life involves a fundamental rethinking of the concept of the aesthetic beyond the strictures of art. For instance, Yuriko

⁴⁰ One Proof is his late novel *Mason and Dixon* that narrates a real story of two scientists Charles Mason and Jeremiah Dixon and their collaboration in the Mason and Dixon line in British North America.

Saito has argued that, by relying on works of art as paradigmatic objects of aesthetic experience, we have imported exacting features of the art world into our general theory (qt in Melchionne 438-9). This bias toward works of art comes at the cost of understanding the invasive role of the aesthetic in our lives. To understand properly the aesthetics of everyday life, we must set aside models overly dependent on the fine arts. However, Christopher Dowling has raised objections to some of the more determined claims animating the field and has proposed a more limited characterization, which he terms ADLI weak.³ ADLI weak relies on criteria associated with the conventional fine arts. For Dowling, values such as critical significance and discursiveness 'can be extended to include experiences from daily life'(qt in Melchionne 438-9). Dowling thinks that these criteria should guide the analysis and evaluation of everyday aesthetic life.

Considering that Pynchon could have written an autobiography by writing *The Crying of Lot 49*, then the aesthetics of his everyday life encounters the one of his fiction. Though, Oedipa is a woman, Pynchon may be talking about himself discovering some secret conspiracy groups. The fact is proved simply by his reaction against the discovery which is his disappearance from public ever since.

Thomas Pynchon may also be mixing between two aesthetics of his real life and the one of his art. That is, Pynchon's fiction may be influencing him and leading him to act like the characters in his novels. The possibility is that Pynchon created Oedipa but was influenced by her later on.

The great real influence on Thomas Pynchon is postmodernism. Charles Newman, for instance in his book *The Post-Modern Aura*, begins by defining postmodern art as a "commentary on the aesthetic history of whatever genre it adopts" (Newman 1). This would, then, be art which sees history only in aesthetic terms. However, when claiming an American

version of postmodernism, he abandons this metafictional intertextual definition to call American literature a "literature without primary influences," "a literature which lacks a known parenthood," suffering from the "anxiety of non-influence" (qt in Hutcheon 5). On the one hand, Newman wants to argue that postmodernism at large is determinedly parodic; on the other, he asserts that the American postmodern deliberately puts "distance between itself and its literary antecedents, an obligatory if occasionally conscience-stricken break with the past" (qt in Hutcheon 5). Newman is not alone in his viewing of postmodern parody as a form of ironic break with the past, but as in postmodernist architecture, there is always a paradox at the heart of that "post": irony does indeed mark the difference from the past, but the intertextual echoing simultaneously works to affirm textually and hermeneutically the connection with the past (Hutcheon 5).

The postmodern break with the past that is mentioned above does not serve Pynchon aesthetically. Pynchon is supposed to be influenced by the great change that the world witnessed after the Second World War. This influence resulted in a conspired and paranoid fiction that suits the stream of conspiracy theories which appeared during that period. If postmodernism is not mature and marks an ironic change, so is Pynchon's fiction.

Another opinion claims postmodernism to be dominant in its period. Rachel Adams' argument relies on an understanding of postmodernism as the leading form of avant-garde literary experimentalism during the Cold War, a period marked by the "ascendance of transnational corporations", the confusions of decolonization, fears of nuclear holocaust, and the partitioning of the globe into ideological spheres. Dark humor; themes of paranoia, skepticism, and conspiracy; preoccupation with close reading and textuality; and complex formal testing characteristic of the most canonical works of postmodern literature can be historicized as a response to what Alan Nadel has called the "containment culture" of Cold War America. By this account, the formal and

conceptual innovations of a group of authors that includes Pynchon, Ishmael Reed, Robert Coover, Don DeLillo, John Barth, Donald Barthelme, Kurt Vonnegut, Kathy Acker, William Gaddis, William Gibson, and others belong to an era of literary history that came to an end in the late 1980s (Adams 250), which means before *The Crying of Lot 49* and *Gravity's Rainbow*.

This more historically and stylistically enclosed understanding of literary postmodernism seems more useful than one that extends from the years after World War II into the present. Rachel Adams gives examples of the latter, in his article *The Ends of America: The Ends of Postmodernism*, that include Michael B1rub's proposition that postmodernism is a name for the era of globalization that we now inhabit and Marcel Cornis-Pope's division of postmodern literature into pre- and post-Cold War varieties. Most famously, Fredric Jameson describes postmodernism as the "cultural logic of late capitalism," a periodizing concept, but one with no apparent end in sight. Couched in such expansive terms, postmodernism is an unwieldy category that encompasses such strikingly different historical contexts and expressive forms that it threatens to become incoherent. Defining it more narrowly as a particularly successful mode of narrative experimentation that declined with the waning of the Cold War alleviates this problem and provides an opportunity to consider the distinctive features and historical circumstances of a new chapter in American literary history (Adams 250).

Belonging to the postmodern era, Thomas Pynchon's fiction is considered as more real than other postmodern works. In *The Crying of Lot 49*, Tristero, refers to the W.A.S.T.E./Tristero stamps when compared to the U.S. Postal Service stamps (1). Thomas Pynchon's fiction is more real than fictional because although truth is as obscure and inaccessible as the Tristero, it reveals a kind of reality. Truth in the form of 'hard' evidence is rendered unreadable and it cannot be discerned with a readymade explanation, but it does include the

“swirl of houses and streets” of our cookie cutter, ‘circuit card’ communities and “the hieroglyphic sense of concealed meaning” that lies beneath.

The postmodern reaction to mainstream in the novel is connected by the Tristero symbol of the muted post horn. However, the W.A.S.T.E. system, assuming that it exists, is a discordant opposition without a clear motive or plan for resolution. W.A.S.T.E. is an alternative that offers no alternative solution. Each person Oedipa encounters that bides by some cause affiliated with the symbol or is in some way connected to the muted post horn, has their own sense of the emblem's history in terms of how it relates to his immediate cause, even though none of these men appear to know the true history of the symbol, if there is one. Objective reality or truth is not the point. Perception of truth as applied to one's identity and the expression of that identity is of significance. For example, Mike Fallopian, an employee of Yoyodyne, receives letters through the Tristero that bear no real message or significance. He, nor any of the employees at Yoyodyne who use the alternative postal system, express anything of significance. They don't attempt to change the systems in which they live and make them any better. He is rebelling for the sake of rebelling, and it appears, for no other reason. However, Fallopian is an inconsistent, untrustworthy character, as are all of the men in the novel, since he ultimately embraces corporate showmanship and suggests that Tristero is all in her head.

The story of Oedipa and the other characters in the novel is like the one of Thomas Pynchon and the reader. In his picture of conspiracy, Thomas Pynchon portrays characters that doubt all the events that come across their story, and the other characters accuse them of being paranoid. The reader of Thomas Pynchon accuses him of being paranoid as well, but the shift from reality to fiction and from fiction to reality makes the reader himself.

This can be considered as one of Thomas Pynchon's traps of the reader to involve him within the experience of paranoia. The reader seems to be out of the fiction at the beginning to

play the role of judge of Thomas Pynchon. However, as soon as he finds out the relation between the events in fiction and their relation to those in reality, the reader starts to experience himself the paranoid results of it. At the beginning, the paranoid experience seems to be annoying, however, it becomes beautiful with the flow of events that does not leave for the reader any chance to judge but just to experience the beauty of it.

In this chapter, Thomas Pynchon is presented as an artist who tries to make his reader go through an aesthetic experience that results in an enjoyment of his artistic work. However, as an artist, he is different from the ones that come from old perceptions of the word art. His aesthetic experience is marked on the paranoia and conspiracy line.

First, Pynchon shows how the individual within *The Crying of Lot 49* and *Gravity's Rainbow* and the individual as a reader experience the concept of paranoia together. The two form the society that Pynchon wants to form to reach the experience of paranoia in a group. All of that is depicted aesthetically, as beautiful by Pynchon and it is proved by the reader's enjoyment of it.

Second, Pynchon uses a different kind of fiction, different from that of his contemporaries, to give another kind of aesthetic experience which is that of the fiction itself. The writer used a huge number of details to guarantee the reader's involvement in the novel. In addition, he makes a clear link between the events in fiction and those of reality to give more seriousness and value to his fiction. The fact aims to make the reader believe in the aesthetic experience that he lives.

Chapter Five: Achievements

5.1- Aesthetic Intellect

After constructing a firm idea on aesthetics with the typical measurement of facts that Thomas Pynchon goes through in the early years of his fiction writing, the writer experiences a meditation on the sense of freedom. The latter is indeed used by Pynchon as a means to reach the targeted aesthetic experience in which he represents the core of his aesthetic idea. The fourth and last step of Pynchon's quest for mysterious aesthetics demonstrates several achievements of his journey. This chapter discusses the achievements of Thomas Pynchon's mysterious aesthetics.

In her Article, *The Role of Imagination in Aesthetic Experience*, Anne Sheppard argues that imagination plays an important role in our understanding of representational art (especially literature) giving the reason that imagination helps the receiver see the intended picture as if it were a representation in real world.⁴¹ Thomas Pynchon relies on the upgrading of the aesthetic awareness of his reader by extending the imaginational power of him. The organization of the steps of his journey towards aesthetics plays an important role in realizing the task. The aesthetic experience develops the power of the aesthetic imagination of Thomas Pynchon's readers.

The aesthetic imagination explores the possibilities suggested by the connection of the aesthetic experience. Pynchon's aesthetic imagination is divided into three possibilities that I call, in this chapter, achievements, which are: the intellectual achievement, the spiritual achievement and the continuity of achievement. In the intellectual achievement, Thomas

⁴¹ Anne Sheppard is a lecturer in Classics at Royal Holloway and Bedford New College, University of London. Her article *The Role of Imagination in Aesthetic Experience* was published in the Journal of Aesthetic Education. Vol. 25, N.4, Winter 1991, by Board of Trustees of the University of Illinois.

Pynchon demonstrates through his novels *Vineland* and *Mason and Dixon* his intellectual unique existence within the postmodern world.

The last part of our work reveals the targeted achievements that the writer reaches after constructing the aesthetic idea and realizing the aesthetic freedom and experience. Pynchon's aesthetic achievements are clearly seen at the level of intellectuality that is traced in his late fiction regarding novels like *Vineland* and *Inherent Vice*.

In the *Fictional Labyrinth of Thomas Pynchon*, writer David Seeds refers to Thomas Pynchon's fiction as more intellectual than many other writers of his contemporaries like Joseph Heller and Bruce Jay Friedman. He says that his fiction is more precise and experimental. The idea of the intellectual achievement that is going to be discussed in this work is inspired by this David Seeds' article (Seeds).

In Pynchon's *Vineland*, we read about Zoyd, a character whose awkward behavior is analyzed by the writer. In one of the passages, he says: "He put it down instead to stubbornness, plus drug abuse, ongoing mental problems, and timidity, maybe only a lack of imagination, about the correct scale of any deal in life, drug or nondrug" (6). Pynchon gives various suggestions that can be the cause of Zoyd's awkward behavior. One of the reasons is the lack of imagination. The writer thinks that the lack of imagination can lead people to behave strangely. The meaning here lies in the collective imagination that a society may represent which leads to similar behaviors for the whole society. In lacking the common imagination, Zoyd acts strangely, or this is what the society thinks about him. One should wonder about the kind of imagination that the writer talks about. Imagination is a large word that can be explained variously.

Imagination is defined by Tamar Gendler, in his essay *Imagination*, as an imagined thing that forms a particular kind of mental image of that thing. Imagining is characteristically

distinguished from mental states such as *perceiving*, *remembering* and *believing* in that imagining *X* does not necessitate (that the subject consider) *X* to be or have been the case, while the contrasting states do. It is distinguished from mental states such as *desiring* or *anticipating* in that imagining *X* does not necessitate that the subject wish or expect *X* to be the case, while the contrasting states do. It is also sometimes to be distinguished from mental states such as *conceiving* and *supposing*, on the grounds that imagining requires some sort of quasi-sensory or positive representation of *X*, whereas the contrasting states do not (Gendler 1).

The new effort at a fairly total record of the uses of the term *imagination* comes from Leslie Stevenson, who specifies twelve of “the most powerful conceptions of imagination” that can be seen in recent discussions in “philosophy of mind, aesthetics, ethics, poetry and [...] religion ” (Stevenson 238). The twelve conceptions of imagination are mentioned in the abstract of her article *Twelve Conceptions of Imagination* as follows: “(1) The ability to think of something not presently perceived, but spatio-temporally real. (2) The ability to think of whatever one acknowledges as possible in the spatio-temporal world. (3) The ability to think of something that the subject believes to be real, but which is not. (4) The ability to think of things that one conceives of as fictional. (5) The ability to entertain mental images. (6) The ability to think of anything at all. (7) The non-rational operations of the mind, that is, those explicable in terms of causes rather than reasons. (8) The ability to form perceptual beliefs about public objects in space and time. (9) The ability to sensuously appreciate works of art or objects of natural beauty without classifying them under concepts or thinking of them as useful. (10) The ability to create works of art that encourage such sensuous appreciation. (11) The ability to appreciate things that are expressive or revelatory of the meaning of human life.

(12) The ability to create works of art that express something deep about the meaning of life. (Stevenson 238).

Throughout his career, Pynchon provokes all kinds of imagination mentioned in Stevenson's article in his readers. His novels are a kind of an unfailing source of postmodern culture, "Tom is quite a writer. He's been credited, justly, with perfecting encyclopedic postmodernism in his third novel, *Gravity's Rainbow*, as well as in other kaleidoscopic epics and a few books he'd call potboilers and others would call the minor work of a giant" (Kachka).

The huge number of themes that Thomas Pynchon uses serves to explain and transmit his idea of aesthetics. This dissertation deals with a number of themes in the various parts handled among which are imperialism, paranoia, conspiracy theories, and jazz and pop cultures. The themes enrich not only the novels, but the readers' progressive imagination.

Imagination in Pynchon's novels is not governed by reality. It is all what concerns mind and what it forms as fiction. Reality is usually opposed to beauty. In *Vineland*, Thomas Pynchon says:

"Easy. They just let us forget. Give us too much to process, fill up every minute, keep us distracted, it's what the Tube is for, and though it kills me to say it, it's what rock and roll is becoming - just another way to claim our attention, so that beautiful certainty we had starts to fade, and after a while they have us convinced all over again that we really are going to die. And they've got us again" (267).

The writer refers to certainty using the character Zoyd to reveal what in this dissertation called the pynchonian *imagination*. Pynchon's imagination is clearly seen in the beautification of the loss of certainty that he represents as a fiction writer. In the passage, Zoyd is fed up with

the rock and roll bands who claim to bring life to the people who believe in the beautiful certainty that used to exist before their appearance. Zoyd is annoyed by the rock and roll culture and bands; however, he is not able to withdraw from the scene because he is a part of it. His state as a character being influenced by the new culture (the one of rock and roll and the one postmodernism) is like the state of Thomas Pynchon as a writer. Thomas Pynchon believes in the beauty of the old belief of certainty, however, he finds himself obliged to legalize the new one. It is his imagination as an intellectual that leads him to react similarly.

Pynchon's reference to imagination in his novel *Vineland* reveals an aesthetic objective behind it. An explanation of this idea can be achieved by analyzing the aesthetic imagination of Kant.

Hannah Ginsborg describes the idea of aesthetics as the one of the "free play of faculties" in her article *The Definition of Art*. She says that Kant believes in the freedom of imagination. He sees that it should not be neither controlled nor restrained by any influence, rather it should appear in a total harmony with the self. Ginsborg refers to the "free play" method that Kant applies on the imagination. He admits that imagination can co-exist with many other perceptions and objects, however, it has a complete freedom in choosing their influence on its senses. Imagination should have the freedom needed in adapting itself with these concepts (Ginsborg).

Kant's perception and presentation of imagination is related generally to the absence of the notion of *concept*. Concepts for Kant are neglected by imagination. If something is conceptualized, the imaginative side of it disappears immediately. Pynchon's relation to imagination can be summarized in the rejection of the notion of concept in his fiction and prefers to settle an imaginative image for it.

Ginsborg continues by saying that Kant's view of imagination is the one of "synthesis". Kant sees that imagination plays the role of choosing, organizing and picking the appropriate concepts for it. Ginsborg describes this process as a self-controlling procedure in which imagination is the regulator and ruler of the received concepts (Ginsborg). She says that "The free play thus manifests, in Kant's terms, "free lawfulness" or "lawfulness without a law" (Ginsborg). Thus, imagination, for Kant, appears in an open state of understanding. Kant leaves much space for commentators to interpret his perception of imagination (Ginsborg).

Imagination can be the thinking of the unreal to be real or vice versa. Pynchon's thinking of the unreal to be real is demonstrated aesthetically in his fiction. To say that he undergoes an aesthetical idea, freedom and experience to reach imagination is to refer to aesthetics.

Pynchon explains the vague understanding of Kant's aesthetic imagination. Since imagination does not conform to reality, the imagination is free to visualize the whole thing he wants on one hand, and beautifies it on the other hand. He imagines that the mystery that lies behind paranoia and conspiracy gives the feeling of pleasure to the reader of his fiction to achieve an imaginative world of his own achievements. These achievements appear in his late works.

One of these achievements is the pynchonean intellectualism that he realized in his novel *Vineland*. David Thoreen sees that *Vineland* is Pynchon's wake call to the American voter, who, like Rip Van Winkle and Pynchon's own protagonist Zoyd Wheeler, has been sleeping for twenty years. Indeed, both texts involve scenes of awakening (Thoreen 45). The first sentence of Pynchon's novel reads: "Later than usual one morning in 1984, Zoyd Wheeler drifted awake in sunlight through a creeping fig with a squadron of blue jays stomping around on the roof" (3), a warning updating of this midstory passage from "Rip

Van Winkle": "On awaking he found himself on the green knoll. He rubbed his eyes-it was a bright, sunny morning. The birds were hopping and twittering among the bushes" (16).

Rip has obviously slept later than usual, and Irving points up this satire by having Rip say to himself that "Surely [...] I have not slept here all night" (16). Calling for his dog, Rip is "only answered by the cawing of a flock of idle crows" (17); these crows are changed in Vineland by the blue jays that, in Zoyd's dream, had been carrier pigeons, "each bearing a message for him" (3). The military formation of the blue jays with their egotistical "stomping," the "creeping" fig, and the profusion of "messages," evoke the many-tentacled military and government bureaucracies that shape so much of modern life-and their publicly accountable apex, the president and commander-in-Chief (Thoreen 45).

Irving's and Pynchon's characters are alike in the sense that each one of them tries to create an intellectual awakening for him. It is also the case of the writers themselves. Pynchon, not after a sleeping period, but after a long journey, tries to create an intellectual platform of him that relies on imagination and achieves aestheticism.

Pierre Bourdieu is a philosopher who treats intellectualism as a negative influence on aestheticism. He sees that aestheticism should stay far from intellectualism because the latter ruins the beauty of the former. Bourdieu, however, his opinion seems paradoxical. If he is so intensely committed to exorcising the traces of philosophical intellectualism in his thought, why is his treatment of aesthetics so thoroughly intellectualist (Bourdieu 81).

Unlike pragmatism, anti-intellectualism shows aesthetic experience as a method of opposing the controlling power of intellectualism with its fetishization of art's objects and its limiting of art's meanings to those explained in terms of natural art and historical facts. Bourdieu thoroughly criticizes the role of aesthetic experience and its qualitative immediacies, although he insists that the only valid form of aesthetic appreciation involves

what he calls "the science of works of art." If Bourdieu's obvious intellectualism in aesthetics is mystifying, the paradox seems still more remarkable when we keep in mind that aesthetics has always been the cultural domain (and the philosophical discipline) par excellence for opposing intellectualism. Art is so often praised for its expression and evocation of emotion, for its rich modes of feeling, for its sensuous pleasures of experience has long showed as the typical counterexample to claims that reason and intellect give the only source of all meaning and value (Bourdieu 81).

Bourdieu sees that intellectualism imprisons art within certain standards of thinking that stands against the artistic thinking. To think artistically is to stay far from basics and rules. However, the fact of dealing with the two, aesthetics and intellectualism, with such an attitude that reveals certain basics shown by Bourdieu is to establish a scholarly attitude as well.

One should wonder about Pynchon's attitude towards this. Pynchon supposedly conceptualizes an aesthetic imagination summarized in the achievements that he targeted from the early beginning of his quest for mysterious aesthetics. One of these achievements is an aesthetic intellectualism seen in the intellectual stage that the writer reaches through his imagination. Philosophers like Bourdieu refuse to relate intellectualism and aestheticism for the reason that the two are contradictory. Intellectualism is a concept that is usually associated with rules, standards and regulars, art is however related to all that concerns imagination and fiction.

The relation between art and imagination is explained in Kant's approach to imagination. It can be understood in Kantian lines that function to build a second nature from the material provided by the first nature. The second nature that the artist imaginatively builds in fine representation is one in which themes essential to the inner life are disclosed in ways as their nature permits, then, in their aesthetic comprehension, we take them into

ourselves directly in experience, with attendant affect. Thereby the values they convey are responsible either to become our own or else to adapt established ones (Kant).

Pynchon establishes an intellectual imagination that comes from the first nature of aestheticism which is the artistic idea. The second nature of it is experience and freedom. Imagination is an adaptation of the idea through experience and freedom. This adoption can be identified intellectually.

Pynchon is an aesthetic intellectual who uses his artistic imagination to conceptualize his aesthetic freedom and experience within the current intellectual background. To achieve this, he published his novel *Vineland*. The novel is mainly a source that talks about concepts that concern the postmodern era and their ironic juxtaposition.

5.2_ Juxtaposed Concepts and Others

Juxtaposition refers to the insertion of concepts side-by-side. In art this is usually done with the purpose of bringing out a particular quality or making an effect, mostly when two contrasting or opposing elements are used. The viewer's attention is drawn to the similarities or differences between the elements.

Our traditional understanding of juxtaposition is the one of the white versus the black, the high versus the low, or the positive versus the negative. It is an understanding that can be traced in our minds as soon as the word is held. As pupils in school, juxtaposition in the painting class is the drawing of a man with a dark pencil in front of his barely seen shadow. The idea of juxtaposition in art that is handled here is inspired by the use of some authors, like Pynchon, of contradictory concepts analogously in order to produce a certain influence on the reader. Our reading of Pynchon's novels shows that the writer uses juxtaposition with a considerable extent in his novels, especially the late ones

Pynchon's *Vineland* shows the extent to which the writer uses juxtaposition of concepts to realize his targeted aesthetic intellectualism. However, whether the way he uses to juxtapose concepts changes their meaning of them or not can be seen after an analysis of the concepts.

Pynchon juxtaposes postmodern concepts to establish a new way of seeing their meaning. This method plays an important part in his intellectual achievement. The latter can be explained by depicting the juxtaposed concepts that he uses and relating them to the contemporary intellectual movement.

In his article *Spectres of Marx in Thomas Pynchon's Vineland*, Skip Willman sees that Pynchon takes advantage of his own use of "fantasy" by which he portrays the conspiracies behind the opponents as a means to reveal his idea on history being cyclical. Willman says that Pynchon's reference to conspiracy is considered as an initial to a series of political criticism that reveals the writer's opposition to the US authority. Willman refers to Salman Rushdie's review of the novel in which he says: "What is new here is the willingness with which Pynchon addresses, directly, the political development of the United States, and the slow (but not total) steam rolling of a radical tradition many generations and decades older than flower power" (qt in Willman 199).

Willman refers to Pynchon's first three novels in his first three novels, *V.*, *The Crying of Lot 49*, and *Gravity's Rainbow*, as a means to reveal his juxtaposition of paranoia and anti-paranoia that exist in the same world. He says that the two produce a dilemma that dominates the readers. Willman believes that *Gravity's Rainbow* and *The Crying of Lot 49* tackles the issue of paranoia in a religious ways, whereas, *Vineland* represents an ironic vision of paranoia (Willman 199).

The first example of the juxtaposition of concepts, that Pynchon uses in his novels, is seen in the opposition of the political and religious aspects. Paranoia in terms of religion is opposite to the political one for religion has always been opposite to politics throughout history.

The division of church and state is a lawful and political principle derived from the "First Amendment to the United States Constitution", in which we read, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof" (qt in Arrington 180). The phrase "separation of church and state", which is not included in the Constitution itself, is generally traced in an 1802 letter by Thomas Jefferson to the Danbury Baptists, where Jefferson mentions the combined effect of the Establishment Clause and the [Free Exercise Clause of the First Amendment]. It has since been quoted in some opinions given by the United States Supreme Court (Arrington 180).

The separation of the church and the state is a term that serves the juxtaposition of paranoia in politics and paranoia in religion. Religion is separated from the church because it represents an opposite view of the politics of some countries like the United States of America. If we take the example of democracy, we see that the church sees it as an opposition to its principles and the amendments of god. Meanwhile, politics refuses to take religion as a guide towards legislation. Hence, a juxtaposition of the two concepts appears clearly between political paranoia in *Vineland* and the previous novel's one.

Another juxtaposition of concepts is found in *Vineland*. The Californian Thomas Pynchon's *Vineland* has marked its shift from the peak of the hippies to the age of conformity under Nixon and Reagan. However, against the consistent mechanisms of religious and social control come out many signs of social restitution. John McClure, one of the first critics to deal with spiritualities in Pynchon, offers a summary of the "kaleidoscopic" spiritual landscape in

Vineland, which includes “Buddhism and other Eastern traditions, nature religion, the occult, martial arts mysticism, [and] certain forms of evangelicalism” (36). McClure’s argument about *Vineland*’s “ontological pluralism” involves their late claim that the novel shows the negative opinion against modernity (26). In fact, many of the spiritual rituals featured in *Vineland* are “commercialized” and they involve, rather than stay apart from these colorized universe in the book, ruled by laws and relations of power (36).

Juxtaposition appears in *Vineland* for another time to describe the total opposition between the hippies’ life and the age of conformity under Nixon’s and Reagan’s administrations. This juxtaposition brings out the effect that the writer intends to reach by presenting such juxtaposition, which is the mutual imbrication of the ironic distinction between the hippies’ life that the American society has witnessed before going back to conformity which signifies to a certain extent the religious life.

Vineland, indeed, is a novel that differs from Thomas Pynchon’s previous fiction. One should wonder about the reason behind this change. Pynchon is writing more from some imaginative vitation than from a personal experience, like he did with novels like *Gravity’s Rainbow* and *The Crying of Lot 49*. The songs found in *Vineland* are clearly seen to be imaginative. One would find it difficult, for example, to confirm that the songs here are as entertaining as those appearing in earlier works. In fact, only “Floozy with an Uzi” is as good as the Rocket limericks from *Gravity’s Rainbow*. Equally, the images of Tokyo and environs astonish one less than the rich evocation, in the previous novels, of places and times distant from the reader’s and the author’s-experience: turn-of-the-century Alexandria and Florence, Paris on the eve of the Great War, the stateless German “Zone” in the aftermath of World War II. In his analysis of *Vineland*, Norman Mailer marks the absence of the rich troves of recondite information -the ethnography of South-West Africa, the mechanics of rhinoplasty, the history of postal systems, the firing sequence for V-2

rockets. Invention, in short, flags. Thanatoids and the Ninja Death Touch do not give the pleasure or shock of the alligators in the sewer, the parody of Jacobean revenge drama, and Brigadier Pudding's coprophagy (Mailer 200).

Vineland is a novel that proves the extent to which Thomas Pynchon is influenced by his imagination rather than being influenced by his own experience. The fact proves a certain pynchonian intellectualism which is totally different from the postmodern one. The postmodern intellectualism is characterized by relativism. It is a collective relativism (cultural relativism), and an individual relativism (subjectivism) at the same time. These two types of relativism are often in opposition to each other because of the different political views, for example socialism contra liberalism. But indeed they are both part of the same Postmodern Intellectualism (Toboll 4). The postmodernist intellectual juxtaposition that is summarized in the common, or the cultural, and the subjective relativism is different from the one of Pynchon.

In *Vineland*, Pynchon talks about the modernization of power by imagining a harmony of media, power and economies. Hannah Möckel-Rieke sees that the novel is neither a longing for some memories of the sixties nor a reflective memory of a failed student revolution. Instead, the novel handles the difficulty of how such political experiences can be transformed from one generation to the next. The novel depicts how technologies of recording, storage, and circulation of historical knowledge in various media participate in an continuing battle over the definition of the past. The novel appears as a chronology covering several generations of shifting techniques of power and resistance and their relation to the development of media. Regardless of an apparent psychological 'depth' in the portrayal of the characters and a fairly linear form of narrative, the realistic outcomes of the novel are clearly adapted though elements of the gothic and the historical romance (Möckel-Rieke 53).

Pynchon's intellectualism is influenced by his imagination. If we compare it to the postmodern intellectualism, we see that, even though postmodernists are divided into two opposing groups of subjectivist and culturists, both believe in collectivism. The fact proves a withdrawal of Pynchon from the postmodern scene to follow his imagination and conceptualize a pynchonean intellectualism.

Pynchon is considered as the most important writer in the last sixty years. His writing has debatably generated enough critical in the second half of the twentieth century. Presently, there exist two active scholarly journals and about one hundred critical texts and essay collections devoted entirely to interpreting Pynchon's challenging 'encyclopedic' narratives. The author's remote nature has also resulted in critics using his extremely influential fictions as a means to portray the man behind the page. In spite of a continuous refusal to assume a public persona, Pynchon has been broadly considered as an enthusiastic social commentator, mathematical whiz, philosopher, music aficionado, and postmodern satirist, among others (Macleod 1).

Pynchon did not only use *Vineland* to demonstrate to the reader and the critical world his intellectual achievement, *Against the Day*, his longest oeuvre (2006), has also strengthened such scholar debate about the writer.

Regarding its frightening scope, Pynchon's *Against the Day* is pervaded by a sense of interconnectedness, editor Christopher Leise cleverly asserts. It represents a the treasury of genres, discourses, ideas, and facts that cannot be fully accounted for by any one mind, save that of the septuagenarian Pynchon (5). In fact, *Against the Day* begins with the 1893 Chicago World's Fair and follows hundreds of characters across nearly three decades. *Against the Day*, Accordingly, disorients the reader with schizophrenic juxtapositions between First World War historical digressions and scatological fantasies. Severs and Leise emphasize XXX on the

three predominant dimensions of the book's pursuits: narrative strategies, scientific belief and faith, and politics and economics. The first clarifies Pynchon's complex narrative constructions in *Against the Day*, disentangling its mind-bending textual labyrinth to show how Pynchon revels in manipulating generic devices and postmodern ideological variables in order to critically evaluate historical cultural eras and social mores (5).

Brian McHale's essay, *Genre as History: Pynchon's Genre-Poaching*, is particularly convincing and insightful, asserting that "*Against the Day* is a library of entertainment fiction ... passed through the looking glass, rendered differently, altered: parodied, revised and demystified, queered" (24). McHale specifically explains how the Tom Swift-inspired adventure, permanent Western, and spy thriller genres are signified in Pynchon's novel through the practice of 'mediated historiography', which he defines as 'the writing of an era's history through the medium of its popular genres' (25).

The criticism pointed by Christopher Leise's and Brian McHale's is an example of how critics feel delve closer to the 'heart' of Pynchon's oeuvre. What is referred to here is textual analysis on Pynchon's depictions of geopolitical systems, religion, and the wonderfully enigmatic concept of entropy (which has been linked with the author ever since he named his 1960 short story after the thermodynamic quantity). *Against the Day* has no shortage of significant scientific and spiritual allusions, ranging from characters exploiting the dangerous possibilities of time travel to reminiscent scenes with talking ball lighting (11).

Against the Day has also stimulated literary critic Christopher K. Coffman's attention that is seen in his overly ambitious attempt to inspect 'popular' religions with spatial dimensions in order to expose the importance of worldly ecology in the novel (93). However, he fails to realize this, not as a result of writerly enthusiasm, but because of the author going too far for a healthy connection. However, Kathryn Hume does a better job at unraveling

Pynchon's religious and political positions in *Against the Day*, she notes that it is 'his least paranoid novel' (169). This declaration isn't without value. However, it does show a key oversight in this edited collection: the absence of attention devoted to Pynchon's steady appeal and flashy play with the dark forces of conspiracy and paranoia. For Pynchon, politics and economics typically result in the threatening blooming of grand conspiracies, featuring secret power structures and corrupt governing bodies. In this sense, *Against the Day* is no different.

Graham Benton who gives a wide textual-historical investigation of disorder, broadly illustrates the narrative and thematic importance of conspiracy. Leise concludes the opening chapter to Pynchon's *Against the Day: A Corrupted Pilgrim's Guide* with the claim that 'every Pynchon novel calls for worthy guides, lamps to light the way home. But this novel may need more lamps than most to illuminate its unsuspected importance' (11). This is the kind of guide that will give loyal readers and experts welcome additional lighting (Macleod 1-2).

One of the most important pieces of criticism that asserts the importance of Pynchon's *Against the Day* and the writer's intellectual achievement as a whole is Earl's interesting criticism of *Against the Day*. He says:

"Tom" being in this case Thomas Pynchon, and "longest sentence" no this longest Sentence ever, just the longest sentence in his very long novel, *Against the Day*—long Sentences (like long novels) being one of Pynchon's most recognizable stylistic signatures, One of many distinctively Pynchonian reading pleasures—famously Proustian too, of course, not to mention Jamesian, Woolfian, Steinian, and Faulknerian, and it was Joyce who took the long sentence to its

absolute limit at the end of *Ulysses*; but one's First impression is that Pynchon uses the long sentence in his own way, that his are Different somehow, and here I will try to give some substance to that impression"(197).

Earl adds that if *Against the Day* were an opera, its arias would be the considerably long, twisting or tangled sentences, occurring every dozen or so pages, sentences devoted to development, description, digression, or what we call extending—always in the narrator's voice, interestingly, and often counting Whitman's epic catalogues, but also sometimes positioned to capture climactic action in slow motion (without speech), or sometimes just drugged-out wanderings, seemingly but not really random, into alternate histories or fantasy landscapes— sometimes stretching to whole paragraphs, sometimes even the better part of a page, avoiding semicolons, surprisingly—while the rest, the bulk of the book, written in long error shorter sequences of short, or at least shorter, sentences, consisting largely of narrative and dialogue, would be the recitative. Like opera fans, we maybe transfixed throughout, eyes wide-open, ears too (mouth too), but if you are like me, do you not catch yourself sometimes, maybe even most of the time, waiting for the next aria? (Earl 197).

Thomas Pynchon's aesthetic intellectualism is seen in the juxtaposing of concepts and in the long streaming sentences found in *Vineland* and *Against the Day*. The intellectual value is found in the literary as well as the contextual one.

5.3- Flashback to Early Achievements

This part is a study of Pynchon's early attitudes towards society and ethics. It is an attempt to prove that he constructed, through his views as an intellectual and as an author, an aesthetic idea on the individual value based on his readiness to change the traditional view of

the "preterite"⁴² from an idiot common mass of people to a more apt and competent group for the sake of glorifying this portion of persons. This part deals with Pynchon's beautification of the ethical values of the preterite.

The collaboration between aestheticism and ethics is an old perspective that goes through the preference of good over evil. It is an attempt to beautify the ethical values of the individual. Pynchon as an early postmodern writer, and as a witness of the swing from the modern to the postmodern, represents an exceptional conduct of this issue. In his early collection of short stories, *Slow Learner*, the writer defends the common mass as an ethical fortification of this group of people against the intellectual high class.

Slow Learner demonstrates Pynchon's early approach to the American society. It shows the widespread disillusionment that followed the Second World War that was an enlightening factor that radically changed people's viewpoint concerning society. The enlightenment is portrayed as an ethical value that changes the old perspectives of social order. The latter can be changed only if the preterite dominates the American society.

Postmodernism mainly refers to the disillusionment with society, the individual and the self. In fact, it is mainly concerned with nihilism. In his article, *The End of Nihilism*, Richard White claims that modernism marks the end of nihilism in terms of declining all human values and denying any meaningful end of life. He says that the very common meaning of nihilism made a way into the western dictionary with the coming of modernism, especially the sense of apocalypse and the end of history (White 161). White uses Nietzsche as the best example of a nihilistic person for Nietzsche claims himself to be a good nihilistic because he

⁴² The Preterite, as it is explained in Pynchon's *Slow Learner*, is a word that refers to the lower class of people. It is usually used to differentiate between the educated elite and the ignorant people (Slow).

lived through nihilism and came out of it. White adds that Nietzsche's "Death of God" and "Eternal Recurrence" can serve as good examples of an exceptional nihilist (162).

Certainly Nietzsche illustrates what nihilism may represent and how a nihilist could be in the modern era, however, philosophers and authors like Thomas Pynchon embody a similar tendency towards nihilism in the postmodern era. It is a tendency that is based on disbelieving modernism itself. Postmodern nihilism relies on the same principles of neglecting the meaning of life and religion, but it also eliminates modernism.

Waters Brent says in his book, *From Human to Posthuman: Christian Theology and Technology in a Postmodern World*, that postmodernism denies the dominance of the human mind over society, enlightenment through science and reason, and the advancement of society through moral progress (13). His definitions are a sort of nihilism in a way that eliminates the main basis of modernism, which is science. Since postmodernism is also a kind of nihilism, Waters definitions represent only some of the huge perspectives that came into being with the emergence of postmodernism as a concept.

One of the most important fields of influence that celebrated postmodernism was literature, particularly fiction. In *Postmodern Analysis*, Jost Jurgen claims that Postmodern fiction represents a world of fragmentation and nihilism that lead the reader to believe in the absence of truth (Jost). Fragmentation and nihilism are demonstrated through several images in the postmodern fiction.

Robert Detweiler says that, in the postmodern fiction, the individual is depicted in a struggle with society on the sense of history. He says that history is portrayed as a fantasy that leads the reader to think about it fictionally and not truly (232). Detweiler deals with postmodernism theologically. He gives four trends that he finds working in Contemporary fiction. He Says: "the need to let language speak itself, the disappearance of the subject, the

evocation of presence, and the shaping of alternate worlds. These are not only theological trends, of course; they are, for example, philosophically, psychologically, and linguistically determined as well" (225).

The four trends are meant to summarize what postmodernism represents. Postmodernists need a kind of change in terms of language, society and history. In the beginning of their era, they launched a series of meditation on the sense of life and social order. Everything witnessed a change in a way or another. The common people's life came first.

Thomas Pynchon, as an eminent postmodernist, deals with this kind of change in his early fiction. In his short story *Entropy*, (as Julián Jiménez Heffernan says in his article *Ironic Distance in Thomas Pynchon's "Entropy"*) the reader can clearly see an ironic indication in the story's language. Heffernan says that Pynchon uses different techniques to draw the reader's attention to certain words, one of which is the use of italics, etymology and translation. Heffernan claims that this sort of language is considered as a "betrayal" of the common attitude towards language (304). Heffernan confirms Pynchon's readiness to change the common (modern) attitude towards language.

Dealing with the individual, the external world and the subject, Thomas Pynchon reveals a special conduct in his fiction. In his article *Thomas Pynchon's Philosophy of the Self in "The Crying of Lot 49"* , Matthew W. Binney argues that the writer in his search for the subject's position in the outside world converses between the Habermasia unconditional world in which the subject uses the very known universal norms to determine things and the Foucaultian conditional world in which the creates conditional norms to understand them. Binney uses the attempt of Oedipa Mass (The protagonist in Thomas Pynchon's novel, *The Crying of Lot 49*) to determine the tristero's secret through reasoning. He says that Pynchon

intends to show Oedipa's inability to succeed using reason (unconditional norms), to prove the importance of creating the one's own conditions in order to understand the world (18).

Pynchon's negative attitude towards the Habermasia unconditional judgment comes as a support to the idea that claims a pynchonian neglecting of the standard social norms and order. The author's attitude embodies the basic postmodern belief, which is the loss of truth. Pynchon, as many other postmodernists, believes in the unattainable truth within the identified social order. He believes that the individual should establish his own norms in order to judge his deeds and the society around him.

Pynchon, as an intellectual living in that period, was first influenced by the emerging flow of definitions, ideologies and practices to become later a part of them. He was a college student when the world was trying to deal with the new orders and dogmas. The new rising intellect wrote a number of short stories during that period which later emerged as a short story collection called: *Slow Learner*. The latter shows the author's influence by the widespread disillusionment and nihilism in the postmodern society.

In *Gravity's Rainbow*, Thomas Pynchon tackle the preterite's issue spiritually by comparing this group of people to God. Pynchon says:

“Nobody wanted to hear about all the Preterite, the many God passes over when he chooses a few for salvation. William argued holiness for these "second Sheep," without whom there'd be no elect. You can bet the Elect in Boston were pissed off about that. And it got worse. William felt that what Jesus was for the elect, Judas Iscariot was for the Preterite. Everything in the Creation has its equal and opposite counterpart. How can Jesus be an exception? could we feel for him anything but horror in the face of the unnatural, the extracreational?

Well, if he is the son of man, and if what we feel is not horror but love, then we have to love Judas too. Right? How William avoided being burned for heresy, nobody knows" (565).

Thomas Pynchon uses the book of William Slothrop (the main character in *Gravity's Rainbow*) to talk about the value of the preterite, a value that is totally denied by the puritan community in Boston. The puritan community, William argues, want to deny the existence of the ordinary people, who never dream to become elects, however, without them there would be no elects. William Slothrop blame Christianity who protects the high class puritans and bless them with salvation rather than blessing the "Second Sheep" as he calls the preterite. Slothrop sees that, although Judas betrayed Jesus Christ, he should be loved and solved, for he was neglected as the preterite.

The passage from *Gravity's Rainbow* reveals a huge Pynchonian revolt against the current social standards that overestimate the high class over the low class. Pynchon illustrate this neglecting by comparing the ancient social order that includes the puritans and the preterite to the current social order that incorporates the high class and the low class.

Pynchon's early fiction depicts the common people's life in a continuous disbelief and denial of every part of truth. In his article *Hawking Radiation and Black Hole Entropy in Gravity's Rainbow*, Zhu, Jian-Yan claims that Pynchon's novels show the loss of truth that controlled the Preterite's daily life for a whole century. People are shown to be fragmented because of the change caused by the war (Zhu 248).

In a recent article of Tobias Meinel (*A Deculturated Pynchon? Thomas Pynchon's "Vineland" and Reading in the Age of Television*), the writer argues that most of Pynchon's novels reflect the era in which they were written. He gives the example of *Gravity's Rainbow* in which we learn about the 1970s and the fragmentation that controlled the era. Meinel says

that this kind of fragmentation comes as an opposition to the political tyranny that ran the period (452).

In "*The Small Rain*", the main character spends a whole day, which is the time of the story, picking up dead bodies from a small island after a devastating hurricane. Then, he goes back home thinking about his whole life after this experience (Slow 28). The main character reflects the present disillusionment that shows the author's spirit. Using this story, Pynchon pushes the reader to think again about his life taking into consideration that the dead bodies stand for the Second World War's victims.

Disillusionment, nihilism and fragmentation are the postmodern characteristics that replace the modern truth, reality and certainty. Most of postmodernists, including Thomas Pynchon, believed in these characteristics and took them for granted. But, in what way did they accept them as true? This question can be answered through analyzing the postmodern Ideology as an enlightening disillusionment.

In his *Entropy* from *Slow Learner*, Pynchon's attitude towards history discloses a great disappointment. He depicts the latter as an endangered species. Using the novel, he refers to a heat death of culture (Levine 113). What comes to mind here is history, as if it is lost and cannot be found, what results a huge doubt about its existence as a concept based on the old perspectives. Postmodern philosophers, like Michel Foucault, tackled this aspect with a similar point of view. Foucault sees himself as a historian, a writer who creates fiction. He says that what can history produce is only fiction (Foucault 136).

There are two significant aspects that should be taken into consideration while examining the postmodern history in relation to Pynchon's fiction: fact and purpose. Referring to facts, postmodernists see that the human history shows no absolute truth about any given aspect of life or events that can be considered as a fact. What it shows is only half

of the truth that cannot bring certainty. Therefore, logic is also absent in the postmodern thinking.

Purpose is regarded as the second main aspect to describe the postmodernist view of history. Early historians and philosophers reflected on history as an important portion of human value as to give meaning to people's life concerning ideas and beliefs. However, Thomas Pynchon depicts history as a nihilist part of human life. Most postmodernists doubt that a precise telling of the past is possible because they distort the difference between fact and fiction—some even claim that all historical accounts are fiction (Bulter). Foucault is one of the originators of this postmodern approach to history, which offers a thoughtful challenge to the standard (Foucault X).

Pynchon's *Slow Learner* is an attempt to draw the reader's attention to the traditional conspiratorial view of life. The writer portrays the illusionist image of history as a grasping step to include all life domains. As far as history is counterfeit, all sciences and domains are so too. Accordingly, there is a significant conspiracy here. The prior philosophy, science, literature and others manipulate history and the widespread belief in truth to validate their ideologies and theories. Thomas Pynchon wakes up the reader and enlightens his view to the fact that history is deceptive. The postmodernist disillusioned is important to enlightenment. This is achieved through Pynchon's *Slow Learner*.

Postmodern ethics affirms the values of indifference, free time, and idleness. The recreation of satisfaction, pleasure, and private fulfillment is the highest ideal. The adoration of personal independence and diversity of lifestyle become important. Pluralism provides a diversity of values, with individual options, but without legitimacy. Differences in ideology or religion are treated as fashions and exterior. The culture of personal freedom, leisure, the natural, the humorous, seriousness, and freedom of expression emerge as something sacred.

The irrational is legitimized through affections, intuitions, feelings, sensuality, and creativity (Lipovertskiy 14). All these take place within the framework of postmodernism and this is what the postmodernists call enlightenment.

An enlightened generation should be ethical in a way or another. It is a part that comes from darkness to light. The postmodern generation calls for a totally different perception of life that relies mainly on disbelief in truth. Hence, truth becomes the wrong path to ethics. The disillusioned person is the enlightened and this is thoroughly depicted in *Slow Learner*. Characters are fragmented and disillusioned, but they are portrayed as heroes with heroic behaviors and views.

Characters in Pynchon's stories are taken from different fractions of society. For example, in *The Small Rain*, the main character is a soldier and in *Law Lands*, it is a lawyer. But they share the same views and wills of life. They defend freedom and independence from the past. In *The Secret Integration*, characters discuss in different ways the meaning of integration. In reply to the word's "integration" being, Grover, the boy genius, provides the calculus definition. Later it is realized that the parents were discussing the other meaning of "integration", white and black kids in the same schools, was what was really meant. Carl's family, who is Negro, is a sort of prompt for the change of the area, a simple aim, a clarification for the bigoted comments made by Tim's mother and reflected around the neighborhood, and gives glow to the mockery of Hogan's transmit to Mr. McAfee's help. Carl, although accepted by the boys as a legitimate member of the Junta, could only be related to by grownups as an "imaginary playmate", someone who is talked about and reflected through secure White uptown eyes, then left to safely disappear at day's end (Slow 120).

Integration is the main characteristic of the postmodern view of life. The blacks should be mixed with the white, the old should cope with the young's way of life, the intelligent should

give an area to understand the idiot, men should respect women's freedom and finally, the modest lower class should be given the same significance as the educated higher one. The latter is the most important for Pynchon to demonstrate his view of postmodern ethics.

Pynchon's aesthetic idea is an array of inspirations and convictions on the pre- and the post-modern world developed by the writer himself and appeared in his early short stories as an introduction to more detailed treatment in later novels. The idea relies mainly on the representation of the way of thinking and opinion making that Pynchon extends during the beginning of his career as a fiction writer.

The idea is constructed through an analysis of Pynchon's attitude towards the pre-postmodern world and ethics. He sees that the world was living in darkness, the one of the elite high class domination. He sees that characters in novels and people in real life should be disillusioned, fragmented, and disappointed to achieve the enlightenment needed for change. If people realize that the pre-postmodern world is no more than a forged dilemma that leads nowhere but down the anti-ethic path, they can follow the aesthetic postmodern idea.

Pynchon is interested as first stage in changing the domination of the elite in society. Consequently, He shows a direct relation with the Preterite. In *The Small Rain*, he shows sympathy to this portion of people, the common mass of humanity, who "while in theory capable of idiocy, are much more apt to display competence, courage, humanity, wisdom, and other virtues associated, by the educated classes, with themselves." (Slow 3).

Using an analysis of the writer's early short stories, an idea about his opinion about the preterite may be constructed. Thomas Pynchon sees that the Preterite's ethical attitudes in the face of the elite lead to the recognition of the preterite's superiority over the elite. The preterite is humble, brave, and smart. He moral and human. A preterite person wills to do well

and avoids evil. He is responsive and sociable. He is an efficient member in society. Despite the bad conditions that a preterite member can live in, he is always optimistic.

Pynchon is inspired by the preterite and the inspiration's result is *Slow Learner*. It is mainly a defense of the common mass of people. There are two main reasons for his attitude that are related to each other. The first reason is totally ethical. He assumes that the elite educated class of people dominated and eliminated the preterite throughout history. The fact gave him the pretext to abolish history from the postmodern dictionaries by depicting it as a "dead culture". Because of Pynchon's conviction of the preterite's superiority, he wanted to give them back their right as a superior class over the elite.

The second reason is aesthetical. Pynchon sees that it is beautiful to defend the people's rights as an achievement of the ethical. He constructed in his early fiction an aesthetic idea that is based on beautifying the preterite's defense. It is ethical to honor the lower class and it is aesthetical to prefer ethics.

Pynchon's aesthetic quest is achieved through three steps. The First one is the enlightenment of the character and the reader through disillusionment, the second is the conviction of Thomas Pynchon of his ethics, and finally, the aestheticization of the ethical defense of the preterite. Hence, it is proved that Pynchon's idea on aesthetics is completely ethical. It is a defense of the lower class of people as a beautiful sacred attempt to achieve a real artistic work.

5.4- *Mason and Dixon*

After an analysis of Pynchon's own view of ethics, it is proved that he has proved a great achievement as a writer and beginner in the harsh postmodern world. However, Thomas Pynchon's late fiction proves to have another view of achievement far from that of the early one.

Pynchon's *Mason and Dixon* is a novel that demonstrates the continuous achievements of the writer as an intellectual and as a spiritual enthusiast, if in a different way. It is 733 pages long and talks about paranoia, conspiracy, and every theme associated with Pynchon. The achievement lies mainly in the contextual and apparent weight that the novel represents. The accomplishment is proved by the way critics handle the novel.

Historians are not supposed to read Thomas Pynchon's novel, *Mason and Dixon*, to look for further information about the book's main characters, Charles Mason and Jeremiah Dixon, the two English astronomers who devoted five years of their lives (1763-1768) creating the boundary between Maryland and Pennsylvania. If they look for historical information, they will find the same information found in the brief entries in the Dictionary of Scientific Biography. There are other reasons that may drive someone to read Pynchon's best-seller. One of the reasons is that historians will find that, although Pynchon has a weakness towards the caricature that gives way to a Jewish George Washington and a Benjamin Franklin who in ordinary conversation completes epigrams such as "strangers heed my wise advice,-never pay retail price" (Mason 267), the series and depth of the author's historical knowledge is astonishing. He has dealt with both of the details of eighteenth-century astronomy and the cultural history of colonial Pennsylvania. In addition, readers will also discover that "Pynchon's "faux- Augustan prose, invented doggerel", and numerous chaotic characters- together with a talking dog and an exiled French master chef- lend *Mason and Dixon* the tempting feel of an eighteenth-century novel" (Grey 878-9). In addition, historians should read *Mason and Dixon* because Pynchon analyzes his characters and their world with a unique sympathy and genuineness. He converts what might have been a simply amusing historical novel into a moving and deep meditation on the search for truth (Grey 878-9).

Pynchon's unique dealing with *Mason and Dixon* as a quest for truth instead of being a simple historical novel is one of his continuous achievements as a writer. The latter chooses to conceptualize the quest for truth in this novel as a means to attract the reader to meditate looking for truth as well. Pynchon aims to gather, constantly, a pynchonean reader that is familiar with this kind of novels. Pynchon has also proved a will to learn and tackle history along with astronomy.

Another achievement is his continuous concern with the dilemma of certainty in the postmodern world. In their quest for certainty, His main characters often meet different realities, created by dreams or hallucinations and untied up with the powerful forces that make postmodern life dividing and unexciting. Before reaching the utopian area, his protagonists should first realize that their own reality is the result of deception, fake, hypocritical conspiracy, deceitful, dishonest cunning, and the paranormal-forces that, in *Mason and Dixon*, appear as conspiring Jesuits, Freemasons, illuminati, Kaballists, and Jacobites, of whom the older Mason tells the younger Dixon, "anyone who was seventeen that summer [...] was a Jacobite" (Mason 312).

In *Mason and Dixon*, Pynchon argues that things do not usually look like what they are supposed to be for characters in Pynchon's earlier novels. This realization was revealed for the two protagonists of *Mason and Dixon*, it is taken completely for granted and also something that science someday assures to trounce (Grey 878-9). Pynchon continues to beat truth through his characters, though they are scientists.

In addition to establishing the boundary line that bears their name, Mason and Dixon participate in the largest scientific activity of the eighteenth century, which is the tracking of the transit of Venus. The theory of that project is to settle on the space between the sun and the earth to have a result that would provide the complete diagram

of the universe. Mason and his assistant Dixon through their ability of observing the project, find themselves in Dutch South Africa, where Pynchon begins his description of their partnership. Born of an eighteenth-century belief that the universe is restricted and fundamentally rational, their partnership rests on the supposition that the face of the earth can be understood through the careful application of universal, rational principles (Mason).

Though they belong to the modernist era, Pynchon's characters believe in the unlimited space of knowledge and doubt every theory that has been established before. Therefore, the writer continues to give the doubting unfaithful characterizations to his characters in his late fiction.

No characterization of these characters suggest that Pynchon depicts Mason, Dixon, and their world as purveyors of mindless optimism. Instead, he implies a persistent and melancholy sense that rational means may not lead to rational ends. (Grey 878-9).

The Reverend Wicks Cherrycoke, an alleged associate of Mason and Dixon and the narrator of Pynchon's story, says of the two astronomers' best known achievement:

Here at the northeast corner of Maryland, the Geometrickal Pilgrim may well wish to stand . . . at this purest of intersections mark'd so far upon America. Yet, Geomancer, beware,-if thy gaze but turn Eastward by an Eye-lash's Diameter, thou must view the notorious Wedge,- resulting from the failure of the Tangent Point to be exactly at this corner of Maryland, but rather some five miles south, creating a semi-cusp or Thorn of that Length, and a doubtful ownership,-not so much claim'd by any one Province, as prize'd for its Ambiguity,-

occupied by all whose Wish, hardly uncommon in this Era of fluid identity, is not to reside anywhere (Mason 469).

In the passage, the narrator deals with Mason and Dixon's achievements as a great triumph. Mason and Dixon, in Pynchon's novel, fight against their own will and education, to realize what they realized. The standards of the eighteenth century compel the characters to limit their own way of thinking and views of the universe. However, through the postmodern characterization that Pynchon gives to them, they could fight for an "Era of fluid Identity".

Thomas Pynchon's continuous achievements are aesthetical. Earlier, in his first attempt at fiction writing, he achieves an important success in supporting the preterite as a unique intellectual achievement. With *Mason and Dixon*, and as a late experience of fiction writing, he continues to emphasize the themes accomplished in his middle fiction such as postmodern characterizations, paranoia, conspiracy, along with producing other themes and characters. Mason and Dixon are characters from the eighteenth century, from a century that believes in standards and limits. However, with their persistence and postmodern characterizations, they achieve great success in the scientific field.

5.5- Bleeding Edge

Bleeding Edge is Thomas Pynchon's latest novel. It was published in 2013 and considered as Pynchon's most paranoid novel. It deals with the 11 September event that took place in New York and changed the history of the country ever since. Many critics have published their works on this novel to enhance the quality of Pynchon's criticism, however, this thesis deals with this novel to highlight Pynchon's continuous achievements regarding the themes he deals with.

March Kelleher, the leftwing paranoid blogger in *Bleeding Edge* invites the heroine, Maxine Tarnow, to remember "what Susan Sontag always sez", Maxine responds: "I like the streak, I'm keeping it?" (Bleeding 73) But March – the novel's voice of irrational seriousness – persists, correcting her: "If there's a sensibility you really want to talk about, and not just exhibit it yourself, you need 'a deep sympathy modified by contempt'" (Bleeding 73) Sontag's idea clarifies manifestly what Pynchon has undertaken in *Bleeding Edge*. It brings a question important to him and to all contemporary artists, from writers to directors to choreographers: if the present day is paranoid, infantile, obsessive, can a work of art capture this without taking on these attributes itself?

The answer is obviously no, and this is indeed the continuous achievement of Pynchon's career as a writer. His novels are well known for the integration of conceptual paranoia and conspiracy, but what is not known is the influence of two concepts on the writer. Although the disappearance of the author ever since 1963 could bring some hints of him being paranoid, however, the fact was not really dealt with effectively by his critics.

As a way to insist on the paranoid aspect of Pynchon's novels, we notice an article on paranoia from the Seventies that deals with Pynchon's works particularly as both a manifestation of and commentary on the significance of paranoia in our culture. Authors Hendrik Hertzberg and David C. K. McClelland distinguish between clinical paranoia and paranoia as a social phenomenon, the paranoid tendencies of more or less ordinary people (51).

Pynchon's paranoia is neither clinical nor social. It is pynchonian in the sense that he is the first author that is hidden from society media for decades. The fact proves the continuous intellectual achievement of the writer. Pynchon is indeed the first intellectual who

preferred to stay far from the mediatic eye to meditate in loneliness and abstraction of his works.

Bleeding Edge is handled by critics as a novel that cannot fail. *A Guardian Book Review* argues that the novel is a persisting one throughout centuries. It says that it is a multi-character analytical story; its events take place in 2001 in a New York thrumming with undertakings related to Silicon Alley, the home of Manhattan's tech companies. Its themes deal with the 9/11 events, which spread punctually through the internet, and because of capitalism. In addition to this thematic affluence, the fact that Pynchon insists on different genres such as detective story, chick lit, teen lit, scientific, Tom Wolfean social satire, and the fact that it takes almost 300 pages, most of them refer to pop culture and the scale of investment that Pynchon asks indirectly his reader to believe in. Like a major bank, like a marriage, "*Bleeding Edge* is an idea too big to fail-at least, not without grand-scale disillusionment" (Stevenson T.).

In his review of the novel, Lee Konstantinou says that *Bleeding Edge* is the first novel of Pynchon in which he admits the existence of the 9/11 attacks in the United States. He refers to a probable interview that Pynchon may have had with a the Japanese magazine "Playboy. Although he doubts the reliability of this interview (taking into consideration that Pynchon never hold interview because of the solitude attitude that he has), Konstantinou talks indicates the statement that Pynchon may have said: "bin Laden may not even exist." He says that Pynchon doubts the existence of Bin Laden as he does with the 9/11 attacks (171). Pynchon is a great believer in conspiracy theories, and a huge attack that happens in the core of New York City Wall street tower could not bring him a conviction towards its honesty. Konstantinou says that " a full-blown response to the terrorist attacks from *Bleeding Edge*

may be disappointed, not least for its flirtation with theories that 9/11 was a so-called false-flag operation, an inside job" (171).

Konstantinou insists on the conspiracy that always controls Pynchon's mind, as it is the case for him being paranoid. The last published novel of Pynchon seems to bring no difference in the presentation of the two common themes in his novels. It is always a significant incidence that has many secrets and questions behind it along with many characters that try to unwrap the incidence in a world full of doubt and chaos.

Bleeding edge is a continuous achievement of the writer because it impresses critics as his novels have always done. It is also a continuous achievement because it handles one of the most important themes of his fiction, which is conspiracy. The theme analyzed by Pynchon constructs a theory by itself. His societies under conspiracy and individuals are authorized by him to attract the reader to feel conspired himself, and here lies the "Pynchon's theory of conspiracy. On one hand, it looks like the other kinds of conspiracy; however, it influences the reader fictionally. The strength of Pynchon as a theorist of conspiracy appears in him being a writer and an artist.

Conspiracy theories assert that we should be careful and open up our eyes because conspiracy exists everywhere and resistance in this case is useless, and innocence is a kind of ridiculousness. Such theories claim that they explain everything and indeed may appear to explain a lot but they do not. A good postmodernist, like a 9/11 truther, can give the luxury of contempt for innocence (Chabon). "Thomas Pynchon's *Bleeding Edge* is best considered not as the explanation of a master of ironized paranoia coming to hold with the cultural paradigm he helped to describe but as something much more courageous and riskier: an attempt to acknowledge, even at the risk of a theatrical organ chord, that paradigm's most painful limitation" (Chabon).

Bleeding Edge is the last and the most interesting novel of the writer that proves the continuous achievement of his fiction. It is an evidence of his continuous intellectual identity that differs from the postmodernists' one being paranoid and intellectual at the same time. It also shows the continuous existence of the pynchonian themes and their success.

Conclusion

This part discusses Pynchon's aesthetic experience. It handles Thomas Pynchon's quest for aesthetics. It depicts him in a journey between the past and the present looking for the truth about modernism and the notion of quest. Furthermore, it deals with the concept of the aesthetic experience in relation to Pynchon's fictional characters subjectively. It shows the obsession that the postmodern characters in Pynchon's novels have towards the other, the stranger, the weird and even the ordinary. The aim is mainly to reach the point where Pynchon mystifies this obsession to arrive at the exceptional pynchonean aesthetics.

The part discusses the influence of paranoia on the whole society as a result of its impact on the individual. A paranoid individual leads to a total conspired society that lives and believes in conspiracy. Conspiracy leads society in Pynchon's fiction to participate in a chaotic life. This part is the core of Pynchon's aesthetic experience because the reader of Pynchon's novels passes by the real meaning of beauty for Pynchon.

The part tackles Thomas Pynchon's ordinary experience. The reader is shown to be responsive to Pynchon's style of writing, the vocabulary that he uses, and everything that concerns words. One section analyses the two well-known pynchonean styles which are: the non-linear style and the square style. Both of the styles demonstrate the mysterious aesthetics that Pynchon wants to achieve. The second section handles the technique that Pynchon uses in his fiction which is metafiction or fiction within fiction, and the relation between fiction and reality concerning Pynchon's novels.

Thomas Pynchon's aesthetic imagination is an achieving imagination. First, Pynchon published *Vineland* to be one of the most important pynchonian fictions that represent the writer's intellectual identity. Pynchon's intellectualism is different from the postmodernists' one because it is aesthetic. Pynchon's intellectualism conceptualizes his aesthetic beliefs within the beauty-neglecting intellectualism of postmodernists and even modernists. The fact is achieved through the juxtaposition technique presented in *Vineland*. The technique is proved to be effective on the reader's perception aesthetically and intellectually. The intellectual achievement is apparently realized due to the aesthetic maturity that Pynchon constructs by surpassing the aesthetic idea, freedom and experience.

Thomas Pynchon also realizes a continuous achievement. Going back to his very early fiction experience, the writer realizes a great intellectual and ethical achievement through his collection of short stories *Slow Learner* by means of defending the preterite over the high class portion of people. And coming back the most recent fiction, Pynchon continues to have great intellectual achievements through his novel *Mason and Dixon*, in which he gives postmodern characteristics to eighteenth century characters that realize what they intend to do in the scientific field through doubting the old limits and standards of science. In the last novel *Bleeding Edge*, Thomas Pynchon introduces to his readers his continuous insistence on the conspired and paranoid fiction characters that mark a unique characteristic of most, not to say, all of his fiction.

General Conclusion

The thesis is an attempt to develop an aesthetic approach to postmodern fiction in general and Thomas Pynchon's in particular with regard to the notion of beauty. The idea originated from a consideration of the ability of a postmodern art work to produce real aesthetics with established standards of beauty expounded by philosophers such as Hegel and Kant. However, the attempt, as it is, failed in front of the new postmodern standards (if we can call them so) of beauty. The early first reading process of the work faced an astonishing contradiction between the old values of beauty and the new stream of the neglected values, for how could an era that is full of doubt and uncertainty, even on the sense of beauty, produce an artistic aesthetic-based literature like the one of the Decadent Movement.⁴³

The postmodern beauty is revealed to the reader of philosophical works (like the ones of Michel Foucault)⁴⁴ and fictional pieces (like Don DeLillo's)⁴⁵ as controversial. It is noticed that Postmodernism is characterized by different concepts and understandings, and this is the reason behind its mystery. The first understanding is that it is associated with the various fields and domains of life. It is an artistic, a musical and a literary movement. It deals with cinema, architecture, design, digital communications, political science and language. It is also a philosophical movement. Facts make it ambiguous, though, ambiguity is the reason behind its power.

Our thesis determined that the idea of postmodernism is close the works of Thomas Pynchon. Pynchon claims not to follow any intellectual or philosophical movement⁴⁶, however, he portrays through his fiction⁴⁷ a slight image of postmodernism. The intended

⁴³ The Decadent movement is a late 19th-century artistic and literary movement of Western Europe (Decadence and the making of modernism, David Weir).

⁴⁴ One example is *The Subject and Power*, a book published by the writer in 1982, which discusses the power of the subject nowadays and its reflect on the era of postmodernism.

⁴⁵ An example of Don DeLillo's fictional works that reflect postmodernism is *White Noise* published by Viking Press in 1985.

⁴⁶ Postmodernism is also considered as a philosophical movement.

⁴⁷ Especially the early ones like *Slow Learner* and *V*.

image is divisive. The writer claims that he is not a postmodernist, but still he depicts the contemporary era with so much doubt and few certainty.

Thomas Pynchon is a postmodernist, a particular postmodernist. He is a postmodernist in terms of quality not quantity. He deals with uncertainty in a satirical way, as many other postmodernists do. So, he is postmodernist, but only a halfway. He does not go to the extreme of postmodernism. Postmodernist extreme mainly refers to the disillusionment with society, the individual and eventually the self (Waters 13).

Thomas Pynchon is not a nihilist but still postmodernist. He is aware of the danger that such an era may bring to humanity⁴⁸; however, in some of his works he reflects some positive views. The passage from *Mason and Dixon* “The general public has long been divided into two parts; those who think that science can do anything and those who are afraid it will” (Mason and Dixon) discloses Pynchon’s awareness of the importance of science, something that is denied by postmodernists. However, when asked about the complexity of *V.* Pynchon replied: “Why should things be easy to understand?” What we understand here is that the writer intends to complicate his fiction with the purpose of mystifying concepts for readers.

The fact makes it clear that Pynchon is not a fully integrated with postmodernism. Nonetheless, postmodernism suits the new kind of fiction that he brings to the reader and literary critics. The new kind of fiction and the way he uses to introduce it, then to professionalize it is the theme of our work.

The fiction which introduces to the public after the years of his army service⁴⁹ is entirely based on mystery. Thomas Pynchon strongly realizes that the power of

⁴⁸ Regarding the widespread loss of truth

⁴⁹ It is said that during the years of his army service, Thomas Pynchon was negatively influenced by the war and changed to English as a field to be taught by Vladimir Nabokov.

postmodernism is shown in the divisive mystery that reveals the main thematic event of the postmodern scene.

In all probability, Pynchon decides to beautify the intended mystery as a way to introduce an aesthetical fiction by means of manipulating the widespread postmodern uncertainty. Thomas Pynchon manipulates the widespread loss of certainty by depicting it as a controlling mystery to conceptualize his new view of aesthetics based on the notion of mystery and paranoia.

Thomas Pynchon's new vision of aesthetics is not realized through one step or by one means. The writer passes by a whole journey of quest for aesthetics. It is divided in this thesis into four parts

The first part is an analysis of the aesthetical factors that we suggest may influence the writer. The influences are analyzed through studying the attitudes of the writer towards other philosophical and literary works; an attitude mainly exposed through his fiction.

The writer never appeared in public or media ever since 1963⁵⁰. We are left with no other source that reflects the writer's views but his fiction. Pynchon's early fiction that is the *Slow Learner* collection reveals some of the early aesthetical views that we claim has influenced the writer.

The central ideas handled in Thomas Pynchon's construction of the aesthetic idea concern the implausible loss of truth that emerged in the American society after the Second World War and that is proved to go back to centuries ago. Implausible truth has seemingly influenced postmodernists who see rather truth in individualism and subjectivity. Thomas

⁵⁰ Thomas Pynchon is included and classified as the first most reclusive celebrity in the world according to the online Time magazine. He is the first and the last writer who never appeared to the public for almost fifty years.

Pynchon, as any other postmodernist, was astonished by the implausible truth. However, Pynchon manipulated the absence of truth to construct his own view of aesthetics, a fact proved in his collection of short stories *Slow Learner*.

In the second part, Pynchon constructs an aesthetic idea by manipulating uncertainty, but this is just the early phase of his quest for aesthetics. The second phase is the freedom from the old perspectives and views of quest and the creation of a new belief in the concept. We suppose that he has used a well ordered plot that includes all of the concepts of quest that may have existed in history to form his own view. For an aesthetic quest, Pynchon launched a manipulating epistemological perspective of human history in relation to truth. The latter paved the way for an absence of ethics, apocalyptic perception of life and an inspiring uncertainty. The first and the second were meant to deny the existence of any given truth in the contemporary world. An early stage of the quest was achieved through his first novel *V*.

Using the novel *V*, Pynchon refers to an inner organization or a hidden landscape. It is a secret V the meaning of which should be reached through the main character. What comes to mind here is history, as if it had vanished and cannot be found, resulting an overwhelming doubt about its existence as a concept based on the old perspectives.

In comparison with other concepts of religious and human quests, Pynchon receives apocalyptically the early notions of the concept. He is also influenced by different political, social and literary and philosophical waves and concepts like the concepts of freedom in Hegel's aesthetics. The religious and human notions of quest along with the other philosophical and social influences form Pynchon's own view of aesthetics that is represented by the two V.'s main characters Stencil and Profane. The two characters represent Pynchon's own journey towards aesthetic freedom. Pynchon's novel *V* portray the two different lives of Benny and Profane whom, though their lives take two different trends, but has to meet at the

end because the upturned quest of Thomas Pynchon has to be completed and the aesthetic freedom has to be realized.

After freeing himself from the unsuitable perspectives of beauty, Pynchon presents to his readers a unique experience of his own aesthetics. His aesthetic experience is the experience of paranoia and conspiracy. The experience is summarized in the use of mystery as a means of conceptualizing the beauty that comes from the frequent paranoia and conspiracy within society. The writer makes the reader go through his own experience by the realization of a special appreciation of paranoia and conspiracy.

Thomas Pynchon's aesthetics are paranoid and conspired by the postmodern technological spirit and by the loss of truth they result. The writer shows how the individual within the novels *The Crying of Lot 49* and *Gravity's Rainbow* and the individual as a reader experience the concept of paranoia together. Pynchon achieves this experience by using a different kind of fiction, different from that of his contemporaries, to give another kind of aesthetic experience which is that of mystery. He uses a huge number of details to guarantee the reader's involvement in the novel. He makes also a clear link between the events in fiction and those of reality to give more seriousness and value to his fiction

After constructing an idea on aesthetics and meditating on the sense of freedom as a means to reach the targeted experience that he prepares for during the early years of fiction writing. The fourth and the last step of his quest for mysterious aesthetics, Pynchon demonstrates an aesthetic achievement of his journey. His aesthetic achievements are serially linked to the aesthetic experience in terms of inspiration. Pynchon's aesthetic experience is considered as a source of inspiration for the aesthetic achievement for experience provokes imagination. The last part discusses the main achievements of Pynchon's aesthetics relying on the aesthetic imagination.

Thomas Pynchon's intellectualism is different from the postmodernists' because it is aesthetic. The Pynchonian intellectualism conceptualizes the aesthetic beliefs of him within the beauty-neglecting intellectualism of postmodernists and even modernists. Pynchon's intellectualism is achieved through the juxtaposition technique presented in *Vineland*. The technique is proved to be effective on the reader's perception aesthetically and intellectually. Pynchon also realizes a continuous achievement. Going back to his very early fiction experience, the writer realizes a great intellectual and ethical achievement through his collection of short stories *Slow Learner* by means of defending the preterite over the high class portion of people. Coming back to the recent fiction, Pynchon continues to have great intellectual achievements through his novel *Mason and Dixon* and *Bleeding Edge*, in which he implies postmodern characteristics on the eighteenth century characters who realize what they intend to do in the scientific field through doubting the old limits and standards of science.

This thesis has undertaken a journey into the mind of Thomas Pynchon⁵¹. It investigated and analyzed all the facts that may have a relation to the writer. The main means that the thesis has used to achieve a clear depiction of the journey is probabilities. Pynchon is a very ambiguous writer to whom we have only eight novels and some of personal articles that may represent his own views. We are left with hypotheses that could be proved and approved through studies. We have suggested that Pynchon goes through a quest for mysterious aesthetics by means of manipulating the loss of truth. We claim that because no writer can write for scientific tasks only, Pynchon writes for the task of pleasing his reader. Though, Thomas Pynchon's means of realizing that is different for he lets his reader go through a mysterious experience of the current phenomenon of conspiracy theories and paranoia, but the achievement is worth seeing. The writer goes through a whole journey of fifty years of writing to be able to have a Pynchonian view of aesthetics.

⁵¹ The term « A journey into the mind of P' is also used in a documentary produced by Dublin Film Production that has inspired our work at the early beginning of data collecting.

Future studies look forward to focusing on the response of Thomas Pynchon's readers. The reader response theories may be applied to the Pynchonian novels for the writer relies openly on his readers' reaction towards the opinions and the feelings he provokes in them. Future studies may also analyze Thomas Pynchon's articles, like *A Journey into the Mind of Watts*.

Future studies of Pynchon will undertake the same experience of the lack of information and the ambiguity that surrounds the writer. However, they could be more fruitful in seeing with Pynchon's eyes that the postmodern beauty is the beauty of paranoia. The current events of wars and revolutions with no positive reaction against them prove that Thomas Pynchon is able to look into the universe.

Thomas Pynchon's future studies will be more fruitful if he appears to the public and media after his long absence. He may explain and express his own view of things, he may say that our suggestion is mistaken or right, but that would be another era of Thomas Pynchon's fiction criticism.

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