

## Into a Chaotic World : The Breaking of Boundaries in Thomas Pynchon' s V.

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Into a Chaotic World: The Breaking of Boundaries in

Thomas Pynchon's *V*.

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by

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## Introduction

Two characters appear in Thomas Pynchon's *V.*, Herbert Stencil and Benny Profane though it is not correct to affirm that they are "protagonists". The narrative is divided into two sections: Profane's and Stencil's. Profane spends his days without having a special purpose while Stencil seeks to solve the mystery of *V.*. In his early work "entropy", Pynchon also describes two characters alternately. These two characters do not actually meet in this short story although they are the only inhabitants of an apartment. In *V.*, however, Stencil and Profane become acquainted, and they eventually start on a journey together to Malta to look for *V.*. Just as Profane and Stencil are contrasted, it seems that contrasts and oppositions are important structuring elements in the novel. Many opposed ideas and images are juxtaposed and contrasted in the narrative; the purpose of this thesis is to discuss the use of contrastive elements in *V.* and the way in which the narrative then destroys the boundary between oppositions. The following is the outline of this thesis.

The problem of how to approach the novel and interpretive method is dealt with in the first chapter. In addressing this problem, we will stress the opposition between the categories of "information" and "noise". Stencil obtains some information about *V.* that he follows up; however, the readers come to doubt the accuracy of

these clues and wonder which of the various references to V—the various Vs — are useful in solving the mystery. The act of understanding always involves a choice between various options. In other words, the distinction between information and noise is essentially ambiguous, so “interpretation” involves an act of choice and the formation of boundaries.

The idea of “inanimate” vs. “animate” is examined in Chapter Two. The word “inanimate” is used extensively in *V*. Because it is the negation of animate, the word “inanimate” implies the contrasting notion of the “animate”. The word inanimate not only suggests the absence of life. When it is used as a metaphor, it refers to severe, overwhelming conditions in which people lose their humanity. Though Profane regards himself as not liking inanimate things, there is room for doubt as to whether Profane himself has human feelings. Many other human beings and robots in the novel also cross the border between animate and inanimate, human and machine.

The theme of “hothouse” and “street” are focused on in the third chapter. This contrast seems to be that which is most explicit in the novel. For example, in the epilogue, Stencil’s father refers to the contrast in terms of a “double vision”<sup>1</sup>. They have political meaning here. It can be seen that each idea deals with some aspect of Stencil and Profane. Furthermore, a hothouse, a closed space, is associated with the idea of entropy which is ultimately a dominant theme of this novel.

In Chapter Four, the themes of chaos and multiplicity are discussed in detail based on the preceding three chapters. In *V.*, the characteristic of “chaos” can be understood as something fragmental, and the fragmentariness makes the order of “superior/inferior” uncertain. Moreover, when the fragmental episodes in the novel connect with each other, the reader’s interpretation is enriched.

The ultimate mystery of *V.* is dealt with in the fifth chapter. The mystery cannot yield an answer. However, it can be said that *V.* is the figure through which dismantled dichotomies are materialized, because *V.* appears in the form of various human figures and also as letters or illustrations. Furthermore, I would like to pay attention to the ultimate vagueness and incompleteness of human cognition.

In 1959, C. P. Snow held a lecture titled “Two Cultures and Scientific Revolution” at Cambridge University. The phrase “Two Cultures” referred to the division between literary and scientific activity. Snow described the poor mutual understanding in both fields, and he referred to the second law of thermodynamics, that is, the law of entropy as an example of a literary persons’ ignorance of science.<sup>2</sup> It might be an interesting coincidence in refutation of Snow’s statements that Pynchon uses the idea of entropy and describes the dissolution of boundaries in *V.*.

## Chapter I      Information and Noise

One of the fundamental structures of this story is that of Stencil's quest for V.. However, it is very difficult for the readers of *V.* to gain a clear idea of what V. is, for reasons I will consider later. Many letter Vs appear in the novel, but when they are not connected to the mystery of V., they become useless fragmental objects, "noise". In this chapter, I will consider the relation between information and noise. Stencil's act of searching and interpretation and the reader's reaction to his behavior will help to clarify these ideas.

I will survey the way in which the mystery of V. appears in the novel. There are numerous Vs, and we can classify these Vs into several categories and patterns.

First, there are the women's names which begin with the letter V., for example, Victoria Wren, Vera Meroving, V., Veronica Manganese. These women and "Bad Priest" in Chapter Eleven might be the same Lady V., because they share something in common, such as an ivory comb or an artificial eye. However, other characters like Viola, "oneiromancer and hypnotist" (487), the rat Veronica and the man Vogt, also have the initial V but it is not obvious that such names are always connected with the Lady V..

Second, the letter V appears in place names such as Vheissu, Venezuela, Vatican, Vesuvius, Valletta and so on. In these words,

Vheissu is given special emphasis in Chapter Seven as the fantasy place which Hugh Godolphin has found and the word which the British Consulate pays attention to as an important code. Valletta is the capital of Malta and Stencil's father Sydney dies at sea near the island.

In addition to the above-mentioned words, there are words like Venus, Via, Vergeltungswaffe, Virtú, Väterliche Züchtigung, victory, virgin, voyeurism. There are also descriptions which establish associations with the shape of the letter V visually: for instance, the rows of streetlights which seem to converge on a vanishing point by the rule of perspective, spread thighs, a green delta in a desert and a triangular stain on a dish. We can find various Vs in the novel.

Herbert Stencil travels around the world in search of information concerning V.. Stencil embarks on his pursuit of the mystery after finding the journal which his father has left behind. Stencil gets some clues about the Lady V., and he feels that the Lady V. is connected with some conspiracies. However, his search does not progress directly toward a clear resolution of the woman's real identity, and a plot is revealed. The phrase "Approach and avoid" (51) is used to characterize his attitude toward this search:

Finding her: what then? Only that what love there was to Stencil had become directed entirely inward, toward this acquired sense of animateness. Having found this he could hardly release it, it was too dear. 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. Approach and avoid. (50-1)

If a mystery is solved, there is no longer any mystery; Stencil tries to avoid a definite answer in order to continue his search. There is a reason for his behavior. Several years before he begins his search for V., he has spent an idle, irresolute life, much of it sleeping. Therefore he fears returning to the life of sleep after his goal is attained. Searching for V. itself is “joyless” (50) for Stencil, but he finds a “sense of animateness” (51) in the act of searching, so he cannot stop it.

Stencil sometimes undertakes “[f]orcible dislocation of personality” (58):

“Forcible dislocation of personality” was what he called the general technique, which is not exactly the same as “seeing the other fellow’s point of view”; for it involved, say, wearing clothes that Stencil wouldn’t be caught dead in, eating foods that would have made Stencil gag, living in unfamiliar digs, frequenting bars or cafés of a non-Stencilian character (58)

This act throws doubt on the reliability of his telling. In addition to that, the information which Stencil obtains from Sydney Stencil’s journal is described through eight persons’ points of view in Chapter Three, but the possibility is suggested that most of these

descriptions are “impersonation and dream” (59). In other words, Stencil might have added or changed information provided by the eight points of view to accord with his own interpretations.

In Chapter Seven, it is suggested that “information” is in fact altered by Stencil. Stencil suspects here that the Lady V. was concerned with a plot about some international problem in the period of the First World War. It is because some Vs, such as Victoria, Vheissu, Venus and Venezuela appeared at the same time in Florence in 1899 and Stencil gets to know that there was activity by the British Consulate. Stencil goes to the dentist Eigenvalue’s office and asks him about the plot; however, Eigenvalue is skeptical about Stencil’s idea of a “plot”. He thinks that the plot does/did not exist just because cavities occurred in one tooth. Furthermore, Eigenvalue uses the word “Stencilized” (241); he means that when Stencil retells a story which he has heard from another person, the content of the story is distorted. The word “stencil” means a pattern which has a letter or figure cut out of it. In the same way, the information which Stencil obtains begins to figure in a “plot” by passing through the pattern of “Stencil” himself.

However, Stencil does not always believe in the existence of the “plot”. He sometimes thinks that there is only repeated appearance of the initial V and inanimate objects. Moreover, he dreams that searching V. is only a dream, and he is puzzled about the vagueness of the choices he confronts: which clues should be followed, which clues should be discarded.

It can be said that it is characteristic that Stencil's search is not clear about the direction and the hypothesis which he draws from the process of his search. There seem to be two reasons for his ambiguous attitude toward the mystery. The one reason is, as mentioned before, to continue the search is important to him, so Stencil does not force himself to find an answer, and he prefers this condition of irresolution and delay. The other reason is that Stencil is in a dilemma which arises with regard to interpreting information. That is to say, the more clues there are about V., the more uncertain the figure of V. becomes. It is not only Stencil that confronts increasing information, the reader of *V.* experiences the same situation.

The reader of *V.* also has a question about what V. is. As Melvyn New points out, "we, as readers, parallel his activity."<sup>3</sup> However, as Stencil is confused, and because he remains in a state of confusion, the reader too experiences the difficulty of resolving the mystery.

Because the chapters in which the Lady V. appears are interpreted from Stencil's point of view, it can be said that he is the narrator of that section. In Chapter Sixteen, Stencil pronounces and writes down the phrase "Events seem to be ordered into an ominous logic" (484) again and again. Tony Tanner finds a resemblance between Stencil and Pynchon in this episode:

Stencil is doing a little what Pynchon is doing throughout

the book, so that the text is marked by a constantly shifting calligraphy, as it were, and we can read it in different ways with differing degrees of certainty and dubiety about whether or not events *are*, or *seem*, ‘to be ordered into an ominous logic’<sup>4</sup>

As Tanner says, the reader can read *V.* in different ways, but the reader also knows that the information given by Stencil can be “Stencilized”, so the reader cannot trust that information as material of use in solving the mystery.

Furthermore, the reader encounters more Vs than Stencil does. As David Seed says, “V-words suddenly proliferate bewilderingly, words which Pynchon capitalizes so as to catch the reader’s eye. On only one page we find Via, Ponte Vecchio, Vaporetto, and Visitor’s Guide”<sup>5</sup>; the reader is able to find these instances of the letter V easily because capital V is frequently used in proper nouns and nouns of German. There is also the use of non-capitalized V in the novel, to which the reader might also pay attention. Moreover, as the streetlights are associated with the shape of V in Chapter One, various Vs can appear anywhere even if Stencil is not present in the scenes. Therefore, it can be said that the reader has much more information about V. than Stencil.

We can make a choice as to which information about V. we prefer, for example, if we choose the description of the Lady V., and consider the relation between Sydney and Veronica which is recounted in the epilogue, we can reach the conclusion that V. is

Stencil's mother and his search means a search for his origin. However Stencil himself states that a question having to do with whether "he believes her to be his mother" (49) is ridiculous. There is room for doubt as to whether we can understand his real intention from his words, but it is certain that if we focus on the information of "V. as Stencil's mother", there is too much information which has little relevance. However, if the reader thinks that all Vs in the novel are connected, he must depend on imagination to solve the mystery, like Stencil.

Therefore we must be conscious of not only the information given but also human behavior in the making of meaning and interpretation. In Chapter Nine, the engineering student Kurt Mondaugen observes radio waves in Southwest Africa. A man named Weissman changes these radio waves into the alphabet. He extracts the letters "GODMEANTNUURK" from the line of letters, and then the letters become "KURT MONDAUGEN" when they are rearranged. In the reminder of the letters "DIEWELTISTALLESWASDERFALLIST", we can read a proposition from Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*: "The world is all that the case is" (295). It is easy to affirm that that kind of interpretation is strained. However, it depends on individual assessment whether it seems that interpretation is distortion. Weissmann's decoding follows the principle of picking out every third letter from the line of letters. Since it produces results, it is possible to see it as an

effective mode of interpretation.

It should be noticed that Stencil and Weissmann try to find meaning in the information which they come upon by chance. If the reader tries to form an interpretation which satisfies him, he is more or less acting like Stencil and Weissmann. This story suggests that it is in human nature to find meaning even in the random collection of information. "Kilroy", the picture of a voyeur made from a part of a "band-pass filter", is one well-known example.

However, to find meaning involves a problem, that is, the assessment and ranking of information. For example, as the word "inanimate" is used repeatedly in *V*, words which appear many times are considered as key words in the novel. Moreover, it is probable that there are many readers who focus on the Lady V. in many V-words. In this way, the importance of information in the story is repeatedly stressed. In other words, frequency of a piece of information decides the significance of the information. Furthermore, if there is important information, there is also unimportant information, noise. It is an arbitrary function of human consciousness to choose some pieces of information and to find meaning in it.

However, if we try to refer to information without bias, it might be very difficult. In Chapter Seven, Eigenvalue regards those living in the twentieth century as follows:

Perhaps history this century, thought Eigenvalue, is rippled with gathers in its fabric such that if we are situated, as Stencil seemed to be, at the bottom of a fold, it's impossible to determine warp, woof, or pattern anywhere else. By virtue, however, of existing in one gather it is assumed there are others, compartmented off into sinuous cycles each of which come to assume greater importance than the weave itself and destroy any continuity. (161-2)

People at the bottom of a fold cannot look over the whole of it. Therefore, they are only able to have one point of view in one particular place. In other words, when information is received, understanding without bias is impossible.

Let us summarize the main points in this chapter. The existence of an unknown object V. is suggested, so Stencil and the reader try to determine its real nature. However, the story is filled with various V-words and the shapes of V. Stencil finds a relation among some of the Vs. To relate is one of the methods of information processing. In addition to that, when the reader regards one fragment of V as of little connection to the mystery of V., that V becomes useless. To discard is also one method of information

processing. V-words are classified into information and noise by relating and throwing away.

We should notice the way of establishing the border between information and noise. Concerning the mystery of V., the standard which divides information into noise is whether it is useful in the effort to solve the mystery. However, like something which is “Stencilized”, if one finds excessive intention in the collection of V, it becomes useful information for him, but for another man who does not trust the interpreting itself, the same elements seem to be noise. Moreover, when we stop interpretation, there is only a random collection of objects, and it means that there is only noise. Therefore, noise can be divided into several patterns, as follows: (1) noise which is regarded as a useless element, (2) noise which arises as a result of doubtful interpretation, (3) noise which exists because it cannot be interpreted. That is to say, noise results from both making a border and not making a border.

This ambiguous distinction between information and noise can be explained from the definition of words. The word “noise” sometimes refers to “useless information”, so noise is a part of information. When we recognize “noise” in that way, the contrastive structure of information-noise does not exist. In short, categorization varies with the definition of words. Gordon E. Slethaug refers to the relation between information and noise as follows:

The point . . . is that all information and noise coexist,



travel the same channel, and, indeed, constantly cross channels. The act of interpretation is an act of selection which incorporates information and noise in varying kinds, amounts, and degrees. The dividing line between noise and information is always uncertain, fluid, and ambiguous.<sup>6</sup>

He emphasizes the ambiguity in determining the difference between information and noise.

We can also consider the negative image of the word “noise”. Specifically, some V-words in the novel have the function of increasing the degree of disorder in this story. V. is a mystery and when it is solved, the mystery will disappear. Some Vs might be regarded as noise at first sight, but they play a part in maintaining the existence of mystery. If Stencil’s activity is supported by the unsolved question, it can be said that the complexity of the mystery has a meaning.

However, Morry Hite says:

if V. exists, her “plot” is so far-reaching that it effectively makes the contemporary world a closed system, subject to eventual entropic rundown that terminates in a state of chaos. If V. does not exist, her absence effectively guarantees that the world is already chaotic.<sup>7</sup>

According to Hite, a view of the world as chaos is pervasive in V. whether V. exists or not. In this chapter we have paid attention to V. as a sign attached to pieces of information. However, to discuss Hite’s

reading, we should look at  $V$  from different points of view, and also understand the idea of entropy in the narrative. Moreover, noise and chaos are connected notions, so after thinking about these topics, we would like to come back to the question of  $V$ ..

## Chapter II     Animate and Inanimate

Like Pynchon's V-words, the word "inanimate" often appears in *V.*; there are in fact "almost sixty occurrences in the novel"<sup>8</sup>. This word takes on a broad meaning in text; it refers to minerals, to disasters such as earthquake or flood, but in addition, and especially, to artificial things like machines and robots. Many critics suggest the connection between inanimate objects and the decline of the world in *V.* as I mention later, but the problem does not exist in the inanimate objects itself. The anticipation of the decline seems to arise in the situation where animate objects, human beings, have something to do with the inanimate objects. We can see the various kinds of mixing of animate and inanimate in the novel, and the most remarkable appearance of the mixing is in the body of the Lady V.. The change from animate to inanimate is noticeable, and it is such that we are led to reconceptualize the concept of the human. If the change is "decline", "animate" is a more desirable condition than "inanimate", but this novel also questions such a proposition.

First, we will examine the relation and mixing between animate and inanimate.

We come to know that Benny Profane is not sympathetic towards the inanimate objects in Chapter One. He calls them

“hostile objects” (18), and he always struggles with them. For instance, he is injured by a razor; he cannot adjust the temperature of a shower and his shoelace snaps. Profane is used to such troubles, so he realizes that “inanimate objects and he could not live in peace” (31).

Profane’s dislike for inanimate objects also applies to people who love objects: for example, in the episode where he sees Rachel Owlglass caress her car, the MG, he has nausea. He sees Rachel and Da Conho, a machine gun maniac, and thinks that “something had been going on under the rose” (16), so some critics regard the love for objects as an ominous symptom. For example, Tanner says, “there is very little chance of any genuine communication”<sup>9</sup> referring to Rachel’s speaking to her car in “MG-words” (20).

Inanimate objects are not the only objects of observation in *V.* They are actually combined with and become part of the human body. There are a lot of variations of animate-inanimate mixture in the novel. One of the examples is plastic surgery. In Chapter Four, Evan Godolphin, a First World War pilot receives “allografts: the introduction of inert substances into the living face” (100) because of a crash. There is the implication that his face cannot keep its shape because of “[f]oreign-body reaction” (100). Another example is the insertion of electrical switches in the body. Fergus Mixolydian has a sleep switch in the skin of his arm. He always watches television, so the switch works to turn the television off when he falls asleep; thus he becomes “an extension of the TV set” (52).

Bongo-Shaftsbury also has an electric switch in his arm. He says, “[w]hen the switch is closed like this I act the way I do now. When it is thrown the other— . . . Everything works by electricity” (78). Both of the examples appear at different points in the novel, so it seems that the convergence of animate and inanimate appears in the novel—and in the twentieth century—constantly.

Furthermore, this kind of combination appears in the body of Lady V.. Some parts of her body are made by inanimate objects. For example, in Chapter Nine, we are told Vera Meroving has an artificial eye, and in addition, that the Bad Priest has a wig and an artificial foot and the Priest has a sapphire inlaid in her navel in Chapter Eleven. If these characters are regarded as the same person, it can be said that the number of inanimate objects in Lady V.’s body gradually increase; she is a remarkable example of the change from animate to inanimate. The Bad Priest finally has her artificial body parts taken away by children in a process called “the disassembly of the Bad Priest” (369). The word “disassemble” emphasizes the machine-like image of the Lady V.

People seem to become like to inanimate objects in *V.*; moreover, there are machines which play an important role. SHOCK and SHROUD are among these. SHOCK is a manikin who is used for experiments with car accidents and SHROUD is a manikin for measuring radioactive rays. There are some scenes in which Profane talks with SHROUD in his imagination, so SHROUD seems to be alive. As Elizabeth Campbell points out “the mannequins SHOCK

and SHROUD have as much character as many other characters in the novel, their level of existence being about on a par with that of Fergus Mixolydian"<sup>10</sup>; in this sense, there is little difference between human and machine in the novel. The border between human and machine is not decided in terms of whether they have "emotion" or "voluntary intention" or not.

The above-mentioned episodes are examples in which people begin to look like inanimate objects physically, but there are some cases in which people can be inanimate even if they do not put artificial things into their body. In *V*, there are situations in which people are "dehumanized". Fausto Maijstral has lived in Malta in the period of the Second World War and he writes a reminiscence of these days. Malta was bombed every day and Fausto recollects those days using the word inanimate frequently in his record: "From quick to the inanimate" (343); "As Fausto II and III, like their island, became more inanimate, they moved closer to the time when like any dead leaf or fragment of metal they'd be finally subject to the laws of physics" (344); "Fausto II began to detect signs of lovely inanimateness in the world around him" (345). In this way, Fausto is conscious of the inanimateness of him and of the world, that is seen as a symptom of "decadence" (344).

We can see another example of dehumanizing in the conversation of Profane and SHROUD. SHROUD points out the similarity between the thousands of corpses at Auschwitz and a heap of disused cars. His simile suggests the extreme dehumanized

situation in the war period, but people also easily become like “corpses” in daily life:

“Get in there at rush hour,” said Slab. There are nine million yo-yos in this town.”

Stencil took this advice one evening after five. . . . Vertical corpses, eyes with no life, crowded loins, buttocks and hip-points together. Little sound except for the racketing of the subway, echoes in the tunnels. Violence (seeking exit): some of them carried out two stops before their time and unable to go upstream, get back in. All wordless. Was it the Dance of Death brought up to date? (323)

This depiction implies that “loss of humanity” is not a limited phenomenon in extreme situations.

In this way, the boundary between animate and inanimate is ambiguous, and people seem to approach the condition of inanimate objects.

Many critics regard the tendency of becoming inanimate as a sign of the deterioration of the world, and this is the principal theme of V..<sup>11</sup> This understanding might come from the many descriptions of war or disturbance in the novel, but in addition, there is also the influence of Henry Adams. In his *The Education of Henry Adams*, Adams sees a dynamo at the Great Exposition in 1900 and experiences a great shock. Before the event, he had considered the power of the

Virgin to influence man, but with the appearance of a dynamo, “a mind like that of Adams felt itself helpless; he turned from the Virgin to the Dynamo”<sup>12</sup>, and says, “[f]orty-five years of study had proved to be quite futile for the pursuit of power; one controlled no more force in 1900 than in 1850, although the amount of force controlled by society had enormously increased.”<sup>13</sup> Because the idea of uncontrolled power relates to the rules of entropy, Dwight Eddins explains the connection between Adams and Pynchon as follows:

Pynchon has left his critics no choice but to address themselves to the Adams connection. . . especially as it projects an entropic decline into a chaotic, dehumanized neutrality. This decline is figured, in the now-familiar symbolism, by the metamorphosis of the life-affirming Virgin into the life-negating dynamo. Pynchon’s stroke of inspiration is to personify the latter as a grotesque simulacrum of the former, a mechanized apostle of disorder and death.<sup>14</sup>

Eddins’s assertion seems quite reasonable, and it brings much of the novel into perspective.

However, this theme of “decline” is associated with Stencil’s hypothesis. He connects the appearance of Lady V. to “Armageddon” (161). However, the information is “Stencilized” to some extent, so readers should be careful about coming to the same conclusion as the distorted interpretation of the situation by “Stencilized”. It is no



wonder that one has questions like “is loss of humanity really decline?” or “what is humanity?” On the one hand *V.* implies that the movement from animate to inanimate is decadence, and on the other hand, it makes readers reconsider ideas of “animate” and “inanimate”.

I would like to refer to an episode of Profane again. As I mentioned before, Profane hates inanimate objects. However, we should notice that Profane is also not good with people, especially women. When a woman approaches him with sexual intentions, he thinks, “[w]hy? Why did she have to behave like he was a human being” (141), and he tries to avoid her. Although he hates inanimate objects, he cannot fit himself into a particular idea of the human. Moreover, Profane is introduced as “a schlemihl and human yo-yo” (1) at the beginning of the novel. Seed regards his schlemielhood “as a self-protective label which further reduces his responsiveness towards complete passivity”<sup>15</sup>. Therefore dislike for objects does not necessarily mean Profane’s differentiation from them; he may himself in fact have attributes of the inanimate. We cannot assert that his schlemielhood involves a “change” from animate to inanimate. Seed mentions, “Pynchon is careful to point out that his [Profane’s] dress is exactly the same at the end of the novel as at the beginning, thereby suggesting that he has not changed at all.”<sup>16</sup> If we consider Profane’s unchangeability, it can be said that he is inactive by nature and that is his character as a “human being”. As contrasted with Profane, Rachel always takes care of Profane and

makes efforts to maintain her relationship with him. She loves her car but it does not mean she dislikes human beings. Tendencies to keep people at a distance or to love a car are in each character's personality, so we cannot call this a "loss of humanity".

Furthermore, there has been a tendency to think of the human body as a kind of machine for a long time, and the transition in the idea of man is mentioned in *V*:

In the eighteenth century it was often convenient to regard man as a clockwork automaton. In the nineteenth century, with Newtonian physics pretty well assimilated and a lot of work in thermodynamics going on, man was looked on more as a heat-engine, about 40 per cent efficient. Now in the twentieth century, with nuclear and subatomic physics a going thing, man had become something which absorbs X-rays, gamma rays and neutrons. (302-3)

The recognition that body function is a mechanic system is not so new. By finding similarities between human and machine, we have been able to understand human beings. Then, why does the present age feel the approach of man and machine to represent "decline"? It is because the mechanizing of human body becomes real not only a metaphor. Plastic surgeries or switches in the body involve the mechanization of a part of the body. The progress of mechanization leads to the appearance of automaton or robot. In Chapter Fourteen, automatons are used in a new ballet. Itag, an avant-garde artist, says that these automatons are "[n]ot like machines at all" (427).

Inanimate objects also transcend their inanimateness and, ultimately, they become substitutes for human beings. Itag explains, “[a] decadence . . . is a falling-away from what is human, and the further we fall the less human we become. Because we are less human, we foist off the humanity we have lost on inanimate objects and abstract theories” (437). Therefore, the word “decadence” is an expression of people’s uneasiness and they “foist” their fear on inanimate objects.

There is one more reason for why we cannot affirm that “animate” is superior to “inanimate”; that is to say, every human being finally becomes inanimate, when he or she dies. “Animate” must be “inanimate”, but in the case of inanimate objects, machines can work in the inanimate state, and minerals can always preserve that inanimate condition, so they are living “in death”. The immortality of inanimate objects can fascinate human beings, so the Bad Priest preaches, “[s]eek mineral symmetry, for here is eternal life: the immortality of rock” (366). When we consider this point, to change from animate to inanimate is not decline. Therefore there is no absolute hierarchy in animate-inanimate.

Inanimate objects do not entrap people into a scheme with their own will. People hope for the progress of technology and the creation of new machines, so if people are overwhelmed by the existence of inanimate objects, it comes from the fear that they cannot control their creation. However, this results from overconfidence in their abilities to think that controlling is possible.

The similarity between animate and inanimate, human and machine are not a “symptom of decadence” itself.

The boundary between “animate” and “inanimate” is quite ambiguous and they approach each other in this novel. To be accurate, V. implies that “animate” and “inanimate” have both properties and they sometimes supplement each other. Therefore their mixing does not progress in one direction; the situation is more complex involving, chaotic movement which is not possible to explain by the “decline”.

## Chapter III     Hothouse and Street

The “hothouse” and the “street” are contrastive concepts in the novel, like “animate” and “inanimate”; Stencil and Profane, the two male characters who appear alternately, are described in connection with these two words. Stencil is a man of the “hothouse” and Profane is a man of the “street”. The “hothouse” and the “street” seem opposites in nature, but this contrast is not as simple as the dichotomies which have been discussed in the previous two chapters. The “hothouse” and “street” environments are sometimes described in fairly similar terms. The reason for their similarity can be explained from the principle of entropy which often informs Pynchon’s work, and from the relation between these two words and time.

Let me cite some examples of this contrastive pair in *V.* At first, the concept of the “hothouse” is expressed quite clearly in “Foppl’s Siege Party” (248) in Chapter Nine. The scene is set in Southwest Africa in 1922. This area had been a German colony, so many Europeans were living there at that time. However, the Bondelswarts, natives of the region, start a revolt, and the Europeans take refuge in the house of the farmer Foppl. He says to the visitors, “To hell with them out there. Let them have their war. In here we shall hold Fasching. Bolt the doors, seal the windows, tear

down the plank bridges and distribute arms. Tonight we enter a state of siege" (248). Then "the house and grounds were sealed off from the outside world" (248). Isolation from the outer world and the closed space are connected with the creation of a "hothouse" atmosphere.

The airtight house primarily functions as a refuge to protect those within against disturbance from the outer world. The house of Foppl reminds us of a scene in "Entropy", a short story which is often compared in its structural resemblance to *V.* In "Entropy", two characters, Callisto and Meatball Mulligan, are also described in turns, and Callisto creates a hothouse in his apartment:

patches of scarlet, yellow and blue laced through this Rousseau-like fantasy, this hothouse jungle it had taken him seven years to weave together. Hermetically sealed, it was a tiny enclave of regularity in the city's chaos, alien to the vagaries of the weather, of national politics, of any civil disorder.<sup>17</sup>

Callisto tries to maintain an order separated from the chaos of the world creating a hothouse.

However, here we should take into consideration the second law of thermodynamics, the notion of entropy. In the introduction of *Slow Learner*, the collection of short stories which contains "Entropy", Pynchon refers to his interest in the idea of entropy, a concept which he has gotten from Norbert Wiener's *The Human Use of Human Beings*, which explains entropy as follows:

As entropy increases, the universe, and all closed systems in the universe, tend naturally to deteriorate and lose their distinctiveness, to move from the least to the most probable state, from a state of organization and differentiation in which distinctions and forms exist, to a state of chaos and sameness. . . . there are 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.<sup>18</sup>

In short, the degree of disorder always increases in a closed system. If we apply this recognition to the condition of the "hothouse", there is high probability of collapsing order within the hothouse because a hothouse is a closed space. In "Entropy", Callisto tries to make an "enclave" but to create a hothouse is to create a closed system after all.

Actually, the house of Foppl cannot be said to be a peaceful world which contrasts with the outside. Foppl whips and kills a Bondelswarts man in the basement of his house. Mondaugen suffers scurvy and grows weak. Moreover, the people who watch the revolt outside the house are described as follows:

They leaned toward the battle: cords of the neck drawn tense, eye sleep-puffed, hair in disarray and dotted with dandruff, fingers with dirty nails clutching like talons the sun-reddened stems of their wine goblets; lips blackened with yesterday's wine, nicotine, blood and drawn back

from the tartared teeth so that the original hue only showed in cracks. Aging women shifted their legs frequently, makeup they'd not cleaned away clinging on blotches to pore-riddled cheeks. (293)

Mondaugen feels "a soul-depression" (295) in this situation and leaves the house. By the last few weeks of Mondaugen's stay, "a third of their number were bedridden: several, besides Foppl's Bondels, had died" (294). According to the second law of thermodynamics, when entropy reaches its maximum, a system approaches a "heat-death", a state in which heat does not transfer. Foppl's house also seems to reach a stagnated state of "heat-death" as a consequence of the frantic party.

Foppl's Siege Party is a story which Stencil tells to Eigenvalue, but Eigenvalue has doubts about the truth of the story and interrupts:

I only think it strange that he [Mondaugen] should remember an unremarkable conversation, let alone in that much detail, thirty-four years later. A conversation meaning nothing to Mondaugen but everything to Stencil. (264)

As Eigenvalue points out, it is quite possible that Stencil makes the story more coherent in his mind. Fausto Maijstral uses the word "hothouse" to describe Stencil's attitude and supposes, "V. was an obsession after all, and that such an obsession is a hothouse: constant temperature, windless, too crowded with parti-colored sports, unnatural blooms" (483). In this way, Stencil's mind is itself



regarded as a kind of hothouse. Stencil lives in a world of logic in which V. is connected to the historical plot, and that situation is called the “hothouse”; therefore, Stencil is also locked in a closed system which gradually approaches disorder.

Secondly, we will examine the concept of the “street”. The connection between streets and Profane is described in more obvious ways than that between hothouse and Stencil. In the early part of the novel, Profane is introduced as follows: “Since his discharge from the Navy Profane had been roadlaboring and when there wasn’t work just traveling, up and down the east coast like a yo-yo; and this had been going on for maybe a year and a half” (2). He lives on the road even if he has a job. However, we learn that Profane is not necessarily comfortable with streets:

After that long [yo-yoing] of more named pavements than he’d care to count, Profane had grown a little leery of streets, especially streets like this. They had in fact all fused into a single abstracted Street, which come the full moon he would have nightmares about. (2)

It must be noted that Profane’s nightmare of the street is similar to the image of increasing entropy. Difference in some streets disappears, and they become “a single abstracted Street” (2). A street seems to have an open system in contrast to a hothouse as a closed system in appearance. From the point of view of thermodynamics, it is possible that order is maintained in an open system because the system receives some energy from the outside.<sup>19</sup>

However, in Profane's nightmare, streets also converge and intersect with each other, and come to a dead-end.

Actually, streets are often described as a chaotic environment in *V.* For example, in the scene where Profane is involved in a scuffle of boys, he notes, "Behind them [Profane and his friends] the street was chaos" (156). Another example occurs in Fausto's autobiography. He considers the scene of streets in wartime:

the desert, or a row of false shop fronts; a slag pile, a forge where the fires are banked, these and the street and the dreamer, only an inconsequential shadow himself in the landscape, partaking of the soullessness of these other masses and shadows; this is 20th Century nightmare. (347)

Fausto walks through the bombed city and sees the landscape of wasted streets as resembling a bad dream. Therefore, he calls the street "the kingdom of death" (354).

All these things make it clear that "hothouse" and "street" are situated as opposites: one is interior and the other is exterior, but they display the same tendency towards increasing disorder.

Sydney Stencil compares the "hothouse" and the "street" clearly:

"If there is any political moral to be found in this world . . . it is that we carry on the business of this century with an intolerable double vision. Right and left; the hothouse and the street. The Right can only live

and work hermetically, in the hothouse of the past, while outside the Left prosecute their affairs in the streets by manipulated mob violence. And cannot live but in the dreamscape of the future.

“What of the real present, the men-of-no-politics, the once-respectable Golden Mean? (506).

Sydney asserts that people’s attitudes tend to the extremes and moderation has disappeared. However, he uses the phrase “double vision” at the same time. This phrase suggests a kind of diplopia, a condition in which one sees a single object as two objects. That is to say, when people are in the position of looking over the twentieth century, they see the state of the hothouse and the street at the same time. The opposite concepts of Right and Left, the hothouse and the street, do not come together in a moderate synthesis, but both appear before those living through the twentieth century simultaneously. Therefore, in a sense, Sydney implies with the phrase “double vision” the dissolution of the border between the “hothouse” and the “street”, despite of his assertion that there is no “Golden Mean”.

But we must become more cautious with regard to Sydney’s way of thinking. The important thing to note is that a hothouse is compared to the past and a street is compared to the future or dream. This comparison is used in other scenes. For example, the scene of Foppl’s Siege Party is interrupted by the description of “days of von Trotha” (254) in 1904. Foppl tells the story of these days to Mondaugen eagerly. Vera Meroving also has a special impression of

the year 1904 and says, "Lieutenant Weissmann and Herr Foppl have given me my 1904" (261). Moreover, Fausto writes in his autobiography: "Why? Why use the room as introduction to an apologia? Because the room . . . is a hothouse. Because the room is the past, though it has no history of its own" (325). Speaking of the street, Profane states, "There was no more work under the street. What peace there had been was over. He had to come back to the surface, the dream-street" (157). Furthermore, Profane dreams about the street when gets on the subway: "This was all there was to dream; all there ever was: the Street" (35). Sydney Stencil says that there is no real present because the "hothouse" implies the past and the "street" implies the future. Deborah L. Madsen also suggests, "[b]oth time-schemes constitute a rejection of the present"<sup>20</sup>. However, it seems reasonable to suppose that the "street" indicates not only the condition of the future but also a broader concept of time.

To consider the issue of time, it is appropriate to refer the following comment by Fausto:

The street of the 20th Century, at whose far end or turning — we hope — is some sense of home or safety. But no guarantees. A street we are put at the wrong end of, for reasons best known to the agents who put us there. If there are agents. But a street we must walk. (347)

Fausto compares the twentieth century to a street. In this novel, scenes are situated in various periods, but the narrative's "present"

is 1955 and 1956, in other words, the middle of the twentieth century. If this point is taken into consideration, the “street of the 20th century” is the concept of time which contains the past and the future. Furthermore, the street is the place where people walk as Profane wanders. That is to say, streets indicate the fluidity of time which passes from the past to the present, from the present to the future. In comparison with a “hothouse”, which is a space in which to shut a past memory tightly up, a “street” is the setting of forward movement while keeping a memory.

“Moving around” is a phrase applied to both Stencil and Profane. Profane is a man who walks streets as I have mentioned before, but Stencil is also a wanderer in the world. When he first appears in the novel, Stencil is introduced as “the world adventurer” (47). “Born in 1901 . . . Stencil was in time to be the century’s child” (48), that is, Stencil is a peripatetic walking through the twentieth century. Stencil done little before 1945; in the more immediate past, he has been looking for V., however, it is in the “present” of the middle of the century that Stencil actually moves about. Because time passes, it is impossible to actually grasp “the real present” in our hand. However, it seems that the behavior of walking the street itself is the basis of the existence of “the real present”. In other words, both Stencil and Profane are passengers through the street of the twentieth century, and that behavior creates the past and is connected to the future.

Furthermore, this act of perennial transition is precisely what

defines them and their activity. Many critics point out the contrastive structure which defines Stencil as paranoiac and Profane as a schlemiel. It seems that Stencil endeavors to search for clues but Profane's walking has no purpose: "Streets (roads, circles, squares, places, prospects) had taught him [Profane] nothing" (31). However, because the motto of Stencil's search is "approach and avoid", he does not advance straight to a goal, but wanders a street which is continually winding. Therefore, we can regard both of them as schlemiels. Moreover, the life of Stencil after beginning the search for V. is described as follows: "he began to discover that sleep was taking up time which could be spent active. His random movements before the war had given way to a great single movement from inertness to—if not vitality, then at least activity" (50). This passage indicates the importance of activity for Stencil. The final stage of the increase of entropy is the cessation of all movement. However, Stencil and Profane are walking in the "street" of the twentieth century; this movement shows that the present system will not reach its end even if these two men symbolize the "hothouse" or the "street". Of course, if the law of entropy applies to the system, the system might reach a stagnant condition in the end. However, as Fausto stated, there is "a street we must walk". The sign of disorder is found in both the "hothouse" and the "street" in this novel, so to keep moving is the best approach which people can choose. Therefore, Profane and Stencil continue to move.

We should not overlook the fact that Profane and Stencil not

only display similar traits but also become acquainted with each other. “Entropy” has a structural resemblance with V. as I have mentioned before, but Callisto and Mulligan do not meet. However, the stories of Stencil and Profane are narrated alternately, but they go together to steal a set of false teeth from Eigenvalue’s office in Chapter Thirteen, and after that, they leave for Malta to search for V. together, because Stencil tells Profane to go there. It might suggest an organic combination of the different systems that the two men who symbolize the “hothouse” and the “street” work together. The importance of the encounter of different elements in the novel is a subject to be considered later.

It was observed in this chapter that the “hothouse” and the “street”, Stencil and Profane, reveal contrasts but they also share common ground. Those relations can be figured as the shape of V. The concepts of “hothouse” and “street” are understood as different viewpoints of one thing, the double vision. This is the same as a single point divided into the two branches of the shape of V. Moreover, Stencil and Profane had lived different life styles but they encounter each other. This is the same as a point where two lines converge. Therefore, these dichotomies are not the parallel lines that never meet eternally, nor the extreme ends of a straight line. However, they do not assimilate completely. We may conclude that the “hothouse” and the “street” are elements of the city which establish the fundamental settings of the novel.

## Chapter IV      Chaos, Fragment, Periphery

We have examined three patterns of dichotomies which serve to structure the narrative in Pynchon's *V.*, and we can see that these dichotomies are not simply oppositions, but function as an occasion for reconsidering the act of contrast itself. Therefore, in this chapter, I would like to examine the chaotic quality of this novel in which borders are dissolved. First, I will summarize the aspects of the dichotomies in *V.*. The breakup of the border means a situation in which the ordering of the various elements in the novel is lost and chaos arises; thus, we will pay attention to the fragmentariness of this novel to define the meaning of the word "chaos" in the context of *V.*. Second, I will discuss the technique in this novel whereby fragmental elements come together and connect with each other.

At first, let us sum up the previous chapters and explain how borders disappear. Chapter One treats the contrast between information and noise, and concludes that human cognition classifies the components into information and noise. Cognition—how it is we come to know—is an important issue. There are various examples suggesting how "animate" and "inanimate" are united in Chapter Two. The border is dissolved by vagueness as to which is the more dominant. Furthermore, in Chapter Three, we observe the contrast between the "hothouse" and the "street" from the entropic point of



view and emphasize the resemblance of these concepts. In this way, it is possible to point out the resemblance or arbitrariness of the distinction between two opposites; it is in these terms that we can begin to define these features as “dissolution of borders”. However, it should be noticed that they are not completely blended even when concepts begin to look most similar.

I quoted the view of Sydney that the “Golden Mean” does not exist any more. Certainly, the middle is not described as an ideal condition in this novel.<sup>21</sup> For example, Schoenmaker remarks on the plastic operation of Esther’s nose:

To none of them did it occur that the retroussé nose too is an aesthetic misfit: a Jew nose in reverse, is all. Few had ever asked for a so-called “perfect” nose . . . . All of which went to support his private thesis that correction—along all dimensions: social, political, emotional — entails retreat to a diametric opposite rather than any reasonable search for a golden mean. (103-4)

Various conditions in *V.* do not always change into their opposite in spite of Schoenmaker’s statement; however, at the same time, moderation does not yield satisfaction. For instance, to introduce artificial objects into the human body does not have a positive implication. Moreover, even if we assume that the present is the middle in the time scale, the behavior of Stencil and Profane would only emphasize that the present is also a moment of uncertainty.

Originally, the fusion of the elements in the novel is

impossible because novels are made of words. If we think of water, the blending of hot water and cold water results in lukewarm water, and the condition of lukewarm water can be understood as moderation. However, to use language is an act of differentiation. The world has already been separated into discrete entities when we express something by words. Therefore, elements never achieve perfect fusion in the world of the novel *V.*

The collapse of dichotomy implies a chaotic condition like that of increasing noise or entropy, but we must be careful about how the “chaos” is defined in the novel. The conditions described in *V.* are not homogenization like “heat death”, because language itself differentiates among conditions. For example, the distinction between “animate” and “inanimate” arises out of the moment when the word “inanimate” is used in the narrative. Furthermore, when some events in some episodes describing the search for *V.* are identified as significant information, others simply become noise. In this way, the act of writing and reading a book functions as a force which works to prevent homogenization.

If we take this nature of language into account, how can the breakup of border and chaos in *V.* be understood? They might be defined initially as simply “the lack of simplicity”. In other words, comparison makes the novel’s complexity stand out rather than makes for a simple contrastive structure. To understand a novel is not necessarily equal to expressing the theme of the novel in a concise sentence, so the complexity or the chaos in *V.*<sup>22</sup> occur not as

the disappearance of difference but as fragments or a mosaic. Therefore it seems important to notice the fragmental episodes and the periphery of the novel.

The fragmentariness of *V.* is expressed in part as multiplicity of the time, and the place and the characters handled in it. For example, as for the temporality of the novel, it moves in through various years—1955, 1898, 1913 and so on—and these moments do not progress from past to present. Time oscillates in every chapter and even within one chapter, that is to say, time is nonlinear. Therefore, fragments of each episode compose the novel. Just as for time, space is also fragmented and discontinuous. Many places serve as settings, like New York, Florence, Southwest Africa, and Paris. Moreover, almost none of the characters appear through the whole of the novel; the number of the scenes in which one character appears is limited. In this way, scene and focus frequently shift, so it is difficult to find a consistent plot. It is probably with the “eight-impersonations” in Chapter Three that the fragmentariness of the episodes is represented most clearly. As I have mentioned before, this chapter consists of eight fragmentary scenes though they might be seen as Stencil’s “impersonation and dream” (59). Characters become narrators except in the eighth part (which is reported by an omniscient narrator), and the scenes are described from these points of view. The figures who are in a café, the Austrian consulate, a train and so on witness the company of

Porpentine, Goodfellow and Victoria Wren. The behavior of the people being watched emerges from the synthesized reading of these scenes. Originally, Chapter Three was based on one of the short stories of Pynchon, "Under the Rose", but this short story does not use the method of multiple points of view. Therefore, it can be said that *V.* is fragmental narrative in comparison to "Under the Rose".

Furthermore, there are many allusions to other books. According to Tanner, "one can detect traces of Conrad, Lawrence Durrell, Evelyn Waugh, Melville, Henry Adams, Nathanael West, Djuna Barnes, Faulkner, Dashiell Hammett and many other writers"<sup>23</sup>. For example, the name of Adams is actually found in the novel and the last scene of "waterspout" (533) recalls, "the sinking of the *Pequod* in *Moby-Dick*"<sup>24</sup>. In other word, allusions to or associations with these writers are scattered throughout the single novel. This is another example of its cyclopedic, mosaic quality.

The large quantity of episodes in *V.* makes it difficult if not impossible to summarize the plot. As John W. Hunt points out, there are many comical episodes in this novel.<sup>25</sup> For example, Ploy sharpens his artificial teeth and bites people in revenge for removal of his teeth. Pig Bodine approaches radar, becomes temporarily sterile and is nearly killed. If one regards "the search of *V.*" as the dominant storyline in this novel, it would not be necessary to include these kinds of episodes. However, *V.* actually consists of a large number of this kind of episode, and even the story of Profane is not really necessary if "the quest for *V.*" is the single theme. In this way,

the act of drawing up a plot itself creates a difficulty in understanding the novel. This is an example where simplification does not lead to clarity.

Importance of periphery should also be noted, that is to say, minor things as an expansion of the fragmentariness. Of course, the use of the words like “periphery” or “minor” necessarily indicates the existence of the dichotomy, “center/periphery”, and “major/minor” and this contrast is connected to an order in which the center is superior and the periphery is inferior. Moreover, *V.* reveals a situation where the dichotomy exists linguistically but the extremes are mixed practically. Therefore it is necessary for an understanding of the novel to pay attention to the peripheral condition and reconsider what constitutes the superior or dominant element.

The group identified as “The Whole Sick Crew” is one clear example of periphery. This is an assemblage of artists but they are described as follows:

The pattern would have been familiar—bohemian, creative, arty—except that it was even further removed from reality, Romanticism in its furthest decadence; being only an exhausted impersonation of poverty, rebellion and artistic “soul”. For it was the unhappy fact that most of them worked for a living and obtained the substance of their conversation from the pages of *Time* magazine and like

publications. (52)

This description might suggest a negative image of the Crew, and critics regard the Crew representing “the lack of imagination”<sup>26</sup>. However, John Dugdale asserts, “It need hardly to be said that the Crew are degenerate representatives of their era, . . . postwar culture proper consists of their heroes, who are either mentioned by name in the text . . . or alluded to through parody”<sup>27</sup>. The Crew’s activity might be imitation of the styles of other artists. For example, Slab makes a series of paintings titled “Cheese Danish” so his room “was already littered with Cubist, Fauve and Surrealist cheese Danishes” (300). However, the assumption that imitation is not art might have already collapsed in contemporary art. Take the works of Andy Warhol for example. Warhol exhibited *210 Coca-Cola Bottles* in 1962. Bottles of Coca-Cola are lined in rows, covering the whole canvas. Warhol’s *Brillo Box* is a work which simply imitates the lettering and design on a box of cleanser. *The Disquieting Muses (After de Chirico)* copies the work of Giorgio De Chirico; in *V., Mystery and Melancholy of a street*, another work of Chirico, is referred, and Dugdale points out the relation between Chirico and the narrative.<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, many works of Warhol are silkscreens so they can be easily duplicated, thus, the distinction between original and simulacrum is ultimately confused. In an age where this kind of product is accepted as “art”, it is not proper to see only a negative meaning in the activity of the Crew. For example, a character named Brad, whose alma mater seems to be an Ivy League school,



joins in the party of the Crew, and Grant points out:

Brad's attempt to straddle the two worlds of the mainstream and the counter culture (Holton 329)<sup>29</sup>, while it reflects Pynchon's serious interest in cultural oppositions, is ironic in that Brad is likely to experience only a simulacrum of counter cultural attitudes via his peripheral exposure to the Crew.<sup>30</sup>

However, it is also difficult to differentiate between the counter culture and its imitation in an age where the counter culture itself is recognized as mainstream culture.<sup>31</sup> Of course, the Crew's activity is not always highly artistic, but if their existence plays a role in calling into question the order between original and simulacrum, they have a significant role in the novel even if their productivity is low.

Moreover, there is the following reference about people who have become social outsiders, in other words, "freaks and pariahs" (99), because of the failure of surgery:

No good at all in any of the usual rungs of society, where did they go?

(Profane would see some of them under the street. Others you could meet at any rural crossroads in America. . . . how many women had looked and shied? . . . a hole on the cheek, would never speak secret words with any extra mouth.) (99)

This quoted sentence suggests that we can meet outsiders under the street, in addition, Fausto Maijstral regards "under the street" as



the kingdom of life (348). Grant suggests again:

The realm beneath the street is the refuge of only some of these victims of the culture's failure to heal its wounded. The street itself—the Street of the twentieth century?—is populated by others. Again Pynchon's sympathy for and interest in the passed-over members of society surfaces in a passage of marked poignancy.<sup>32</sup>

The interest in outsiders can be found in some of Pynchon's works like *The Crying of Lot 49*.<sup>33</sup> Not to mention the Whole Sick Crew, Profane spends his life without meaning as a human yo-yo, and Stencil might not settle in a steady job. The age and nationality of Paola Maijstral is uncertain because her records are lost in the war and “Paola knew scraps it seemed of all tongues” (7). Therefore, it can be said that most of the characters in *V.* are outsiders.

I have proved that the episodes of the novel are fragmental and disjointed. However, readers could not read the text as a novel if these episodes were simply random pieces, but there is a technique by which episodes are related to each other in *V.* Therefore, we can read *V.* as a complex of information even if a simple main line of the plot is not discernible. Thus, we will consider the connection among the elements next.

As I suggested in the third chapter, “meeting” and “connecting” are significant phenomena in *V.* One of the reasons there is a connection among the episodes is that fragments share a common

imagery. If a word which begins with V is used in the novel, the word necessarily draws the reader's attention, and the reader finds relevance in these V-words. Like the V-words, the word "inanimate" functions as an intermediary which ties the fragments of many episodes within the novel. Rachel and Da Conho's love of objects is similar to fetishism of the Lady V., and the false teeth of Ploy are related to the artificial objects in the body of the Bad Priest. Weissmann and V. are both "transvestite". In this way, minor episodes are often connected to the Lady V., so even if one tries to concentrate on the description of the Lady V., small episodes come into notice and attach to the search for V..

The words such as "hothouse" and "street" are sometimes used as description for a situation like the following: "having somehow escaped the hothouse of his fellow Sephardim" (74). This sentence suggests that a character leaves his community, but it is uncertain whether we should imagine this in terms of a closed space where entropy is increasing. Nevertheless, the use of the word "hothouse" connects this scene to the other "hothouse" situation. Furthermore, the definition of a word depends on the context, so when a word appears in different context, it should be recognized as creating a complex of those images. The political reading of "the hothouse as Right and the street as left" by Sydney is one example in which a definition influences the whole of the narrative. When fragmental episodes are related by a single word, the domain of the meaning which the word contains is broadened, so a kind of feedback happens

between the word and the context.

Another example of the connection is found in the scene in *V.* where Stencil and Profane are at a park after stealing the artificial teeth from Eigenvalue's office. Someone in the park asks what day it is and another man replies that it is Tuesday, but actually it is Saturday. After that Stencil and Profane exchange the following words:

"So what year is it."

"It is 1913," said Stencil.

"Why not," said Profane. (423)

Chapter Fourteen begins after the conversation and the situation of this chapter is 1913 Paris, thus this conversation functions as the medium between 1956 and 1913. Stencil's speech seems intentional, or metafictional, but the illogic of the conversation becomes easier to accept because of the voice which has already mentioned the wrong day before the conversation.

Though fragmental episodes are scattered in *V.*, they seem to form a network by weak combination, and multiple interpretation becomes contingent on our focus. Let me stress again that the "chaos" in *V.* is not a condition whereby the difference of all objects is dissolved but results from an accumulation of fragmental episodes. Therefore, it is more accurate to characterize it as "chaos-bound" rather than "chaos". The term "chaos-bound" means a system which exists in a state between order and chaos. Biological research has

revealed that the evolution of living organisms is most active in this “chaos-bound” state.<sup>34</sup> The randomness of the novel also leads to multisegment interpretation in *V.*

The last chapter will closely examine the question of “what *V.* is” based on the previous discussion. It is obvious that this enigma cannot be solved, but like the novel *V.*, the mystery of *V.* is a complex which contains topics like information, body and entropy. Facing this complexity would be an opportunity to become more aware of the complexity of cognition itself.

## Chapter V      What is V?

This chapter returns to the basic question, "What is V.?" in light of the discussion thus far. As we noted, borders in the novel are ambiguous and many fragments of information are connected by weak conjunction. This phenomenon also applies to the mystery of V., that is to say, the V. itself embodies the dismantling of a dichotomy. The examples of ambiguity in the figure of the Lady V. or V-words have been cited before, and they are briefly recapitulated in this chapter. However, a satisfactory answer cannot be worked out in a complex world which consists of fragments. It is difficult to avoid the contradictions which accompany any answer. Then, is it meaningful to ask this question? What does it really mean to ask: What is V.?

First, it should be noted that V. does not appear as a single fixed figure and its fragmentariness leads to the expansion of V.'s domain.

It was stated that figures or words related to V are discovered everywhere in the novel in Chapter One, and Chapter Two refers to the assimilation of inanimate objects to the Lady V.'s body. These two chapters suggest that V. is an ensemble of metaphysical information and corporeal body. Sidney Stencil had written in his

journal: "There is more behind and inside V. than any of us had suspected. Not who, but what: what is she?" (49). With this question, we should change a cognitive frame that assumes that V. is a woman. The indetermination between "physical" and "non-physical" is, to put it another way, the materialization of information. The following quotation is a scene in which Stencil tells about V. which he has encountered in his search to Profane and some vagrants.

V. in Spain, V. on Crete: V. crippled in Corfu, a partisan in Asia Minor. Giving tango lessons in Rotterdam she had commanded the rain to stop; it had. . . . Stencil that way had left pieces of himself—and V.—all over the western world.

V. by this time was a remarkably scattered concept.  
(418)

V. appears all over the world as fragments of Stencil's telling. Of course, it is uncertain whether V. is human, and even if it is, whether it is the same person each time, but each fragment of V. which he reports on makes the mystery much larger. As a result of the fragmentation, V. becomes a monster-like figure which surpasses spatial bounds.

Furthermore, V. is sometimes understood as a figure which exceeds not only spatial bounds but also ordinary human time. Stencil comments on the presence of V. as follows:

To go along assuming that Victoria the girl tourist and Veronica the sewer rat were one and the same V. was not at

all to bring up any metempsychosis. . . . If she was a historical fact then she continued active today and at the moment. . . . (240)

V. is not a figure which has undergone “metempsychosis”; that is to say, it has not died once and revived again. In other words, V. has continued to live. It is natural if we consider V.’s quality as information. A word which starts with V or a figure which looks like V can occur at any place in the novel, and if all of the Vs are regarded as “V.”, “V.” maintains its existence regardless of the time factor. However, because the concept of V. has a creatural attribute of the Lady V., confusion arises when we recognize the fact that V. can exist beyond time. The metaphysical V. and the corporeal V. are combined again. Actually, the Lady V. is also discovered at various times and places, so the expression; “she continued active today and at the moment” connects naturally to the mobility of the Lady V.. Moreover, the scenes involving the Lady V. are not necessarily described in linear flow of time. In Chapter Eleven the Bad Priest (a Lady V.) dies during the Second World War, but events described in Chapter Thirteen occur in 1913, and the epilogue in 1919, so she appears again in the novel. That is to say, the Lady V. does not revive, but she attains immortality in the nonlinear time of the novel.<sup>35</sup>

In this way, V. can be recognized as both code and person; this indeterminacy makes V. into something much broader than a character in the usual sense. As we can see from the description of Victoria as having “some obvoluted breed of self-aggrandizement”

(209), V. develops according to a process of expansion. Furthermore, Stencil believes that "V.'s is a country of coincidence, ruled by a ministry of myth. Whose emissaries haunt this century's streets" (485). "Coincidence" is one of the factors which make for the weak combination I have mentioned before. With the fragmental pieces of information about V., it is difficult to explain the necessity of their connection, but for that reason, the elements which can be connected increase, and the organization of V. becomes larger and more complex.

Secondly, we will discuss V.'s character as a periphery. It is confirmed that there is no necessary order between the center and the periphery in chapter four. The same definition can be applied to the concept of V.. Originally, V. is a central theme in the novel and thus it is the title of the novel. However, when we look at episodes involving V., we observe both its superficiality and "heretical" characteristic.

The episode of Vheissu suggests superficiality to the mystery of V.. Hugh Godolphin is fascinated by this enigmatic place and he points out its features as follows: "The Colors. So many colors. . . . They are, they are Vheissu, its raiment, perhaps its skin" (177-8). The word "skin" seems to suggest a body within it, but Godolphin also says, "It was not till the Southern Expedition last year that I saw what was beneath her [Vheissu's] skin. . . . Nothing. . . . It was nothing I saw" (215). The colorfulness of Vheissu does not have a



deeper source beneath it nor does its skin conceal its inside, that is to say, there is no core, center or soul in Vheissu. The superficiality of Vheissu is also characteristic of other V-words, because the apparent resemblances among the various Vs, for example, simply in the use of initial V or V-figure, establishes a connection among each element.

We might also note the description of the Lady V.'s mechanization which reminds us of a science fiction text. Let us consider the following quotation.

Stencil even departed from his usual ploddings to daydream a vision of her [V.] now, at age seventy-six: skin radiant with the bloom of some new plastic; both eyes glass but now containing photoelectric cells, connected by silver electrodes to optic nerves of purest copper wire and leading to a brain exquisitely wrought as a diode matrix could ever be. Solenoid relays would be her ganglia, servo-actuators move her flawless nylon limbs, hydraulic fluid be sent by a platinum heartpump through butyrate veins and arteries. (444)

The image of the Lady V. as an android woman relates to "an all-electronic woman" (414) which Profane imagines and the robots like SHOCK and SHROUD. In Chapter Two, I have quoted some examples of the mixing of "animate" and "inanimate", and the dissolution of the border sometimes leads to a tragic condition such as dehumanization. However, in the sections dealing with the

android V., the tone of the narrative is not so serious and it is similar to a cyberpunk novel. In this subculture-like description, the problem of “animate” vs. “inanimate” is treated from an unemotional point of view. Moreover, an android is often recognized as a kind of freak<sup>36</sup>; so this is another example of the peripheral position V. occupies. In addition to this, the Lady V. has a peculiar sexual inclination. Chapter Fourteen shows this side of her. V. has a fetishistic affection for a girl named Mélanie. A fetish is, according to V. herself, “[s]omething of a woman which gives pleasure but is not a woman. A shoe, a locket . . . une jarretière” (436). Fetishism itself is possibly categorized as abnormal behavior; but also, as Berressem put it, “fetishism is related to the fear of castration and is thus first a male domain” in Freudian psychoanalysis.<sup>37</sup> In other words, the Lady V. deviates from the definition of fetishism because she is a woman. Furthermore, the Lady V. says that “fetish is not a woman” (436), but she loves Mélanie; a woman is regarded as an object of fetishism breaks with the definition of fetish.<sup>38</sup> That is to say, V.’s aptitude does not belong to normal habitude, but she also breaks with an abnormal category. Moreover, the Lady V. seems to be interested in “sadism, sacrilege, endogamy and homosexuality” (439), which reveals Lady V.’s character as an outsider. Stencil considers this in a previous scene: “It did bring up, however, an interesting note of sexual ambiguity. . . . Truthfully he didn’t know what sex V. might be, nor even what genus and species. . . . V. might be no more a she than a sailing vessel or a nation” (240). This scene is only one reference

to the broadness of what V. represents, but “sexual ambiguity” can be found actually in the corporeal V. as we have seen.<sup>39</sup> V. contains not only the image of “freaks”, but also of the “queer”.

In these peripheral or minor attributes of the V. figure, the most conspicuous character is one of chaotic decadence. Unused information about V becomes noise and the novel dissolves into chaos. If the “animate” becomes like “inanimate”, it is regarded as a symptom of decadence as we noted. The street and the hothouse are described as places where entropy is increasing, and the lady V., Veronica is depicted as follows: “Riot was her element, as surely as this dark room, almost creeping with amassed objects. The street and the hothouse; in V. were resolved, by some magic, the two extremes” (527). Furthermore, Stencil also considers V. as something “ominous” (484).

He [Stencil] had discovered, however, what was pertinent to his purpose: that she’s been connected, though perhaps only tangentially, with one of those grand conspiracies or foretastes of Armageddon which seemed to have captivated all diplomatic sensibilities in the years preceding the Great War. V. and a conspiracy. (161)

We can find the sense of decadence from the various points of view of V., so it can be one interpretation that V. is closely connected to decline and decadence. However we can wonder whether V. really participates in a conspiracy. The Lady V. exists in the places of confusion, but she does not seem to control those conditions. Stencil

supposes that there is a connection between V. and conspiracy, but with the provision that she is “only tangentially” involved. Furthermore, because the information about the Vs is scattered everywhere, “what V. is” depends on the particular bits of information we select. If we choose the decadent episodes, the collection of Vs can indicate decadence.

But, even if we do not choose information, V. is strongly associated with decadence. Entropy is denoted by a probability of disorder, so that if all V-words are enumerated, it is quite probable that the collection of words seems disorganized and leads to an impression of decadence. Therefore, I quoted Hite’s assertion in the end of chapter one (“if, V. exists, her ‘plot’ is so far-reaching that it effectively makes the contemporary world a closed system, subject to eventual entropic rundown that terminates in a state of chaos. If V. does not exist, her absence effectively guarantees that the world is already chaotic.”), and his view is illuminating if the law of entropy is taken into consideration. However, the decadence is not necessarily a sign of pessimism. It can be said that disorder is the natural condition because it is more probable state than order. Preserving order is more unusual. In this sense, the conventional connection of “order-normal-good” and “disorder-abnormal-bad” is corrupting.

As we have discussed, the breakup of dichotomy which occurs in the novel is contained within the concept of V. itself. Moreover, as Cowert suggests when he uses the expression “Anti-Venus”<sup>40</sup>, V. is

an “anti” figure. Now we should return to our starting point. That is the question of how the category of V. has been characterized in the present discussion. The boundaries delimiting the being which is to be assigned the figure are also uncertain. I have not referred to all of V-words, nor is a specific V treated intensively as an assumptive V.. If V. is a single object, Victoria and Vheissu are narrated as different orders of thing, so neither of them could be V.. However, this argument treats both of them as the attributes of V. and such a method is possible. Therefore, we should note that the vagueness of cognition is linked to the vagueness of any answer to the question “what is V.?” itself.

Why is the mystery of V. unanswerable? It is because the cognitive frame, which decides the territory of useful information, is uncertain. If a frame is not established, the range of applicable information is extended infinitely. For example, when a reader of V. reads another book or newspaper, finds a letter V and conceives a relevance to the mystery of V., the information about V. diffuses outside of the text and increases. The excessive amount of information obstructs cognition.

However, an attempt to find a meaning in V. is not fruitless. The concept of the “heuristic” can greatly assist us here. This term means a rough way of cognition when an algorithmic or formulate approach cannot solve a problem.<sup>41</sup> In daily life, human beings often recognize a situation by rough understanding, because of the

limit of time. We do not have to access enormous information by setting a frame by ourselves. Therefore, it is possible to understand the *V.* heuristically. For instance, we can concentrate on the episodes of the Lady *V.* which occupy considerable space within the novel. However, the scene of the Lady *V.* is limited to some periods and interludes, so at those points we may come to feel the lack of information. It is suggested repeatedly that the borders disappear in the novel, but readers also come to notice the vagueness of their cognitive frame in their by reading of *V.*

Furthermore, people often find meaning in meaningless objects, like the example of "Kilroy"; so even if all of the *V*-words are unrelated fragments in reality, it is quite possible that we will find some meaning at the moment the *V*-words are presented. Open-ended cognition does not cause trouble in the daily life, because it is rough to the extent of creating no problem. However, in *V.*, Stencil, an interpreter, exists inside the novel and his behavior is referred to as "Stencilized", so the reader of the novel comes to be aware of the reader's cognition frame, which is usually unconscious, and becomes a source of unease for its vagueness.

A perfect interpretation of *V.* does not in fact exist. However, if a reader is "satisfied" with his or her interpretation, the interpretation can be an answer. Therefore, the most sincere attitude we can assume is that of establishing a cognitive frame again and again, aiming to reach a stage of satisfaction. In this sense, Stencil's "approach and avoid" is not a fault because he does

not come to a conclusion easily.

Let me summarize the main points in this chapter. V. is an embodiment of the dissolution of borders arising from a choice or connection from various fragments of notions which contain both animate and inanimate, corporeal and intangible. The vagueness of V. is an opportunity enabling us to notice the inevitable vagueness in human cognition. Our question, "what is V.?" returns as the question, "What do you think V. is?" Some critics have examined the meaning of the word "Vheissu". Hite interprets it as "Wie heisst du?" that is, "What is your name?"<sup>42</sup> and Ronald W. Cooley asserts that it means "V, he is us; V she is u"<sup>43</sup>. As they point out, the existence of V. itself yields a question or reflects our own image like a mirror. It might, perhaps, be concluded that the mystery of V. is the producer of the repeated question: What is V.?

## Conclusion

At first, let me summarize the main points in this thesis. The extremes in *V.* mix in any situation and their borders become uncertain. In particular, the novel always rejects a ranking between its various elements. The novel *V.* and the mystery *V.* arise out of the multiplicity of various disordered fragments of elements, and uncertainty of human recognition is exposed by the trials for understanding this complex *V.* and *V.*.

It is noticed that the uncertainty in *V.* is not limited to a single actual situation of mixing where, for example, a human being becomes like a robot. That is to say, the language, which denotes such a situation, inevitably constructs borders, so the property of language makes for further complexity. For instance, I have stated that *V.* is a “fragmental” novel, but this is not precise in the strict sense of the word. In a situation where borders are uncertain, no element can exist as a single independent “fragment”. However, because the language divides such an uncertain situation, a gap between an uncertain situation and a verbal expression arises. In other words, language becomes all the more unclear because it is clear. Situational uncertainty is fixed by language, and the contradiction makes for much uncertainty. This double uncertainty leads to the chaos in *V.*.



Furthermore, chaos is necessary in *V.* as a “space” which possesses the potential for connecting various episodes and making a mysterious complex of *Vs.* In particular, the multiple interpretations yielded from the chaos cannot have absoluteness beyond a domain of “possibility”, but the glimmering possibility implies the existence of movement in chaos. Stencil calls Profane “[d]eracinated” (411), and the episodes or characters in this novel also do not have roots, that is, a definite origin, and they seem to drift and connect with each other. Drifting is not a self-motivated movement, and it does not have directivity, but movement also means that a system has not reached extinction, and the lack of a goal prolongs the lifetime of the movement.

The act of reading *V.* is an energy from which a closed system like a book is affected from outside, and an interpretation makes order in the chaos of narrative. That is to say, an interpretation might serve to diminish entropy. This is similar to the endeavor of Meatball Mulligan in “Entropy”, as he tries to arrange his chaotic room<sup>44</sup>. However, the entropy in the novel *V.* is not easily reduced. As I mentioned in Chapter Five, the novel points out the uncertainty of human cognition in response to our question of “what is *V.*?” A reader notices the degree of entropy in his act of interpretation by the reflection of his interpretation; he reconsiders the ordering of elements in *V.* Therefore, the novel and the reader are feedback systems which generate unceasing movement.

We come to the conclusion that the complexity of *V.* becomes

more complex by the interaction between uncertainty inside and outside of the novel. In other words, the border between the novel and its exterior is also undetermined, chaos-bound.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Thomas Pynchon, *V.* (1961; New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1999) 506. All ensuing references to the 1999 edition are given parenthetically.

<sup>2</sup> C. P. Snow, *Two Cultures: and A Second Look* (1959; London: Cambridge University Press, 1965) 14-5.

<sup>3</sup> Melvyn New, "Profaned and Stenciled Texts: In Search of Pynchon's *V.*," rpt. in *Thomas Pynchon: Modern Critical Views*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1986) 97.

<sup>4</sup> Tony Tanner, *Thomas Pynchon* (London: Methuen, 1982) 43.

<sup>5</sup> David Seed, *The Fictional Labyrinths of Thomas Pynchon* (Hampshire: Macmillan & Co, 1988) 91.

<sup>6</sup> Gordon E. Slethaug, *Beautiful Chaos* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2000) 95.

<sup>7</sup> Morry Hite, *Ideas of Order in the Novels of Thomas Pynchon* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1983) 48.

<sup>8</sup> J. Kerry Grant, *A Companion to V.* (Athens: the University of Georgia press, 2001) 10.

<sup>9</sup> Tanner, *City of Words* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1971) 160.

<sup>10</sup> Elizabeth Campbell, "Metaphor and *V.*: Metaphysics in the Mirror," *Pynchon Notes* 22-23 (1988): 62.

<sup>11</sup> Tanner, *City of Words* 157. He writes, "Every situation reveals some new aspect of decay and decline, some move further into chaos or nearer death. . . . On every side there is evidence of the

‘assertion of the Inanimate’”.

<sup>12</sup> Ira B. Nadel, ed., *The Education of Henry Adams*, by Henry Adams (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999) 321.

<sup>13</sup> Adams 325.

<sup>14</sup> Dwight Eddins, *The Gnostic Pynchon* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990) 52.

<sup>15</sup> Seed 73.

<sup>16</sup> Seed 74.

<sup>17</sup> Pynchon, *Slow Learner* (1984; Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1998) 83-4.

<sup>18</sup> Norbert Wiener, *The Human Use of Human Beings* (1950; New York: Da Capo Press, 1988) 12.

<sup>19</sup> Ludwig von Bertalanfy takes living organisms as an example of open system, and says, “In all irreversible processes, entropy must increase. Therefore, the change of entropy in closed systems is always positive; order is continually destroyed. In open systems, however, we have not only production of entropy due to irreversible processes, but also import of entropy which may well be negative. This is the case in the living organism which imports complex molecules high in free energy. Thus, living systems, maintaining themselves in a steady state, can avoid the increase of entropy, and may even develop towards states of increased order and organization.” Ludvig von Bertalanfy, *General System Theory*, rev. ed. (New York: George Braziller, 1973) 41. Bertalanfy is a scientist who proposed the “general system theory” in the middle of the

twentieth century. This theory sought to investigate a general principle in creature, non-creature, or social systems, so Bertalanfy's proposition will be useful for understanding the concept of entropy and the tendency to the borderless in scientific studies in this era.

<sup>20</sup> Deborah L. Madsen, *The Postmodernist Allegories of Thomas Pynchon* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991) 41.

<sup>21</sup> Deleuze and Guattarri offer an interesting suggestion about the middle: "The middle is by no means an average; on the contrary, it is where things pick up speed. *Between* things does not designate a localizable relation going from one thing to the other and back again, but a perpendicular direction, a transversal movement that sweeps one *and* the other away, a stream without beginning or end that undermines its banks and picks up speed in the middle." Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000) 25. Originally published as *Mille Plateaux*, volume 2 of *Capitalisme et Schizophrénie* in 1980.

<sup>22</sup> Yoshihiko Kihara defines Pynchon's works as "complexity novel (fukuzatu-kei syosetsu)", a translation of Tom LeClair's term "systems novel". Yoshihiko Kihara, *Thomas Pynchon: Museifusyugi-teki Kiseki no Utyuu* (Kyoto: Kyoto Daigaku Gakujutsu Syuppankai, 2001) 212-215. Tom LeClair, *In the Loop: Don DeLillo and the Systems Novel* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987). Slethaug also discusses *The Crying of Lot 49* from the perspective of

chaos theory. Pynchon's works have discussed in connection with the complexity theory or chaos theory recently.

<sup>23</sup> Tanner, *Thomas Pynchon* 40.

<sup>24</sup> John Dugdale, *Thomas Pynchon: Allusive Parables of Power* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990) 100.

<sup>25</sup> John W. Hunt, "Comic Escape and Anti-Vision: *V.* and *The Crying of Lot 49*," *Adversity and Grace: Studies in Recent American Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), rpt. in *Critical Essays on Thomas Pynchon*, ed. Richard Pearce (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1981) 35.

<sup>26</sup> Joseph W. Slade, *Thomas Pynchon* (New York: Warner Paperback Library, 1974) 98.

<sup>27</sup> Dugdale 101.

<sup>28</sup> Dugdale has discussed the use of De Chirico in the novel in detail. See Dugdale 80-85

<sup>29</sup> Robert Holton, "In the Rathouse of History with Thomas Pynchon: Rereading *V.*," *Textual Practice* 2.3 (1988)

<sup>30</sup> Grant 33.

<sup>31</sup> "Pynchon's *V.* anticipated the decades that made of it something of a cult novel which expressed, in turn a large measure of a generation's values. In this light, *V.* can be seen as a link between the surrealist movement and the counterculture of the Sixties." Michael W. Vella, "Thomas Pynchon's Intrusion in the Enchanter's Domain," *Twentieth Century Literature* 35 (1989) 143.

<sup>32</sup> Grant 63.

<sup>33</sup> The following is comments of Oedipa, a protagonist in *The Crying of Lot 49*, on the peripheral position: “She [Oedipa] thought of other, immobilized freight car, where the kids sat on the floor planking and sang back, happy as fat, whatever came over the mother’s pocket radio; of other squatters who stretched canvas for lean-tos behind smiling billboard along all the highways, or slept in junkyards in the stripped shells of wrecked Plymouths, or even, daring, spent the night up some pole in a lineman’s tent like caterpillars, swung among a web of telephone wires, living in the very copper rigging and secular miracle of communication. . . .” Thomas Pynchon, *The Crying of Lot 49* (1965; New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1999) 149.

<sup>34</sup> See Susumu Kuroishi, “Jikososhiki-riron no Gendankai,” *Jikososhiki-sei towa Nanika*, eds., Tamito Yoshida and Masahito Suzuki (Tokyo: Minerva Shobou, 1995) 209. In addition, the meaning of the word “chaos” differs from field to field: “Although in contemporary nonscientific usage ‘chaos’ has come to denote confusion and disorder, in contemporary understandings of science the word has an affinity with the original Greek: it suggests the paradoxical state in which irregular motion may lead to pattern and disorder and order are linked” Slethaug xxiii. Therefore, If “chaos” in *V*. is defined in accord with the meaning quoted above, the word “chaos” is a synonym of “chaos-bound”.

<sup>35</sup> On the issue of nonlinear time and the immortality, see the following passage from *Slaughterhouse-Five*: “The most important

thing I learned on Tralfamadore was that when a person dies he only *appears* to die. He is still very much alive in the past, so it is very silly for people to cry at his funeral. All the moment, past, present, and future, always have existed, always will exist. The Tralfamadorians can look at all the different moments just the way we can look at a stretch of Rocky Mountains, for instance.” Kurt Vonnegut, *Slaughterhouse-Five or Children’s Crusade* (1969; New York: Dell, 1991) 26-7.

<sup>36</sup> Rosi Braidotti says, “Since the sixties a whole youth culture has developed around freaks, . . . Today, the freaks are science fiction androids, cyborgs, bionic woman and men, . . .” *Nomadic Subjects: embodiment and sexual difference in contemporary feminist theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994) 92. Braidotti’s discussion about the connection between mothers, monsters, and machines is suggestive when we consider the nature of the Lady V..

<sup>37</sup> Hanjo Berressem, “V. in Love: From the ‘other scene’ to the ‘new scene’,” *Pynchon Notes* 18-19 (1986): 7-8.

<sup>38</sup> Berressem regards the Lady V.’s fetishism as Pynchon’s deconstruction of psychoanalysis. See *Pynchon’s Poetics: Interfacing Theory and the Text* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993) 53-81.

<sup>39</sup> Mark D. Hawthorne suggests the mixing of gender in *V.* See “A ‘Hermaphrodite Sort of Deity’: Sexuality, Gender, and Gender Blending in Thomas Pynchon’s *V.*,” *Studies in the Novel* 29 (1997): 74-93.



<sup>40</sup> David Cowert, *Thomas Pynchon: The Art of Allusion* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois Press, 1980) 20.

<sup>41</sup> See Kouichi Hashida and Hitoshi Matsubara, “Jyouhou no Bubunsei,” *Fukuzatsusei no Umi e : Seimei kara Syakai made—12 no Tobira*, Seigo Matsuoka et al. (Tokyo: NTT Syuppan, 1994) 180-95; Hiroyuki Kaiho, “Fukuzatsusa to Tanjyunsu no Hazama de,” Matsuoka 202-215.

<sup>42</sup> Hite 54.

<sup>43</sup> Ronald W. Cooley, “The Hothouse of the Street: Imperialism and Narrative in Pynchon’s *V.*,” *Modern Fiction Studies* 39 (1993) 313.

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