



Title	Reading Thomas Pynchon as a Story about America ()
Author(s)	Nakatani, Hitomi
Citation	長崎大学教育学部人文科学研究報告, 53, pp.51-64; 1996
Issue Date	1996-06-28
URL	http://hdl.handle.net/10069/33377
Right	

This document is downloaded at: 2018-11-14T21:58:54Z

Reading Thomas Pynchon as a Story about America (I)

Hitomi NAKATANI

America plays an important part in Pynchon's fiction. In *The Crying of Lot 49* (1966) [later *49*], the female quester-protagonist wonders for the first time in her life what America really is. In *Gravity's Rainbow* (1973) [later *GR*], the Rocketman-turned-woman realizes he loved America, the woman, the other extremity of sexual opposition, and that she too loved him. He finds America is closely related to his identity and values. On the other hand, in *V.* (1961) America seems less significant than Vheissu, Valletta in Malta, or Europe itself. As in *49* and *GR*, *V.*'s main characters move incessantly and widely within their spatial-temporal boundaries to gain a feeling of identity or of being alive. In search of identity or self-realization, the three protagonists¹ are inert in America, living decadent lives, and at last come together to Malta. Herbert Stencil then leaves Malta to continue his quest in the far north, Stockholm. Benny Profane runs through the silent, pitch-dark night, with an American girl, on the eastern edge of Valletta, then leaving for somewhere beyond the Mediterranean—possibly for the East or America. Paola Maijstral is also going back to her authoritarian split-up husband in America.

What is really suspended here is a possibility for the young protagonists to acquire a sense of integration or identity in the North, or in America, after the initiation in Malta, the land of pure woman. The topic is fully explored in *49*, *GR*, and the latest book *Vineland* (1990), in which we find a daughter's quest for her mother in the highly-technologized America. Pynchon's works show how America functions as a spatial-temporal boundary for the questers, and their open-endedness suggests the problem is dealt with in a series by him. In this respect, his works are about America. In this paper I will explore *V.*'s spatial-temporal boundary to discuss why Pynchon chooses to leave Valletta and go to America, and whether America will offer a space for the protagonists to acquire self-realization.

1. Twentieth — Century Sons Astray

Born in 1901, Herbert Stencil of *V.* is this century's child in search of his mother, as if finding the origin of his being would offer him a sense of identity. To Hugh Godolphin and his friend, Rafael Mantissa, the pursuits of other Vs—Vheissu and Venus—work magic, and they doubt the established values, so come to take different attitudes to the given society. On the other hand, for Herbert the pursuit of the Lady V. seems entropic. Exploring her entire history strengthens his suspicion that his quest adds up only to the recurrence of an initial V. with different entities. He reaches not for the signified, but for various traces of signification. What he and V. do is play hide-and-seek, and he is caught in the dead end of the innumerable possible signifieds of the symbol V.

V. is for Herbert, however, something that must always be there, constantly sought after, but never found. He does not really want to resolve his mother's identity and the mystery surrounding her. He never stops questing, since he is animated only while questing and fears inanimation, which for him is equated with death and sleep. He experiences everything with his motto of "Approach and avoid,"² which can be compared to "keep cool, but care" (342-43), and he talks about his experiences whether he has an actual listener or not. Or rather, he lives his life, "stencilizing" the stories he experiences and acting out fantasies that would make it more real than it really is, satisfied with what he makes. He makes up his own versions of the stories, for example, enlarging a thirty-minute story of Kurt Mondaugen's life in South-West Africa to tell it in much more detail to Eigenvalue. Without questing for and weaving out story after story about V. through stencilizing, he cannot feel he is truly living a life. While narrating, he always refers to himself "in the third person" and objectifies himself so that he appears "as only one among a repertoire of identities." He can impersonate any identity through a "[forcible] dislocation of personality" (51). Thus, he can be anybody in any place, at any time. Suppressing his true personality produces a temporary sense of identity which makes him feel alive, but he goes far from his true identity. As his name indicates, the narrator Herbert has a problematic identity, empty but disruptive, since "a stencil is an *empty form* within which one may draw variations *ad infinitum*."³

As Tanner suggests, all Stencil's techniques of "self-duplication and self-extension may be construed as protective screens for avoiding direct engagement with reality."⁴ Refusing to commit himself to the given world, he wants to vanish from it and run into the aesthetic world of his stories. He lives only in his own aesthetic making, so his condition can be described

as similar to that of the Remedios Varo's girls who are confined in the tower to weave out the Earth, though Stencil confines himself. As the creator of his spatial-temporal boundary, he is trapped in what he has artistically and solipsistically created, rather than "trapped in the hothouse of the past,"⁵ obsessed with the past of excess. Wherever he goes, the boundary of his self exists not outside but inside his artistic self, as well as the narcissistic world of art.

Another one of this century's children and a quester, Benny Profane is astray in the streets. Since his discharge from the Navy, he was a road laborer. Not a good worker, he can not even get a driver's license. He has been traveling for a year and a half on the streets, which have "fused into a single abstracted Street" and often appear in his nightmares. Doing nothing special but moving around the streets, he is a human "yo-yo" (2) and yo-yoing symbolizes his state of mind, as does his religious identity, half Catholic and half Jewish. When grown up, he does not change, still "a great amoebalike boy, soft and fat" (27). Symbolically with the insubstantial body, he is a quester of authentic existence, astray on the Street, facing the crisis of self and trying to understand the dissolution of his body.

Benny is a self-styled schlemihl. A sworn enemy of the inanimate, he is their constant victim. He cannot keep good company with things, can not live in peace in the world of the inanimate. So he tries to piss at the sun so that he can "put it out for good and all," because of his believing "[inanimate] objects could do what they wanted. Not what they wanted because things do not want; only men [do]. But things do what they do" (17). He hates things, but paradoxically, longs for their state of being, their directness, and power. As Frank D. McConnell suggests to us, Profane is "trapped in the net of his own body, his own deep dread of inanimate objects (alarm clocks, shoelaces, atom bombs), and his fear of involvement with other human beings."⁶ That is, he is trapped in the binary oppositions: animate/inanimate and self/other, especially in respect to the body. Spatially, he is entrapped in "here" and temporally, in "now." The past signifying nothing, he is not a type who can learn from experiences of the past or construct a meaningful present from the past. Narcissistic like Herbert, Benny can not truly love others, not having the guts to love. A motherly figure in *V.*, Rachel Owlglass, who loves him, criticizes him for his failure of courage or will. He refuses to change, however, declaring to her that "' [schlemihls] don't change'" (359). A fragmentary self, he struts and frets upon the Street, on the surface of the Earth. His spatial boundary is two-dimensional and quite narrow, and now is his time.

Stencil's and Benny's situation is the same as that of the whole Sick

Crew members, since both of them come into friendly relations. The Crew consists of many nihilistic, decadent men: Slab, "referring to himself as a Catatonic Expressionist and his work as 'the ultimate in non-communication'"; Raoul, a writer for TV; Fergus Mixolydian, the self-claimed "laziest living being in Nueva York," who becomes so lazy that he devises "an ingenious sleep-switch" and he himself becomes "an extension of the TV set" (45) — he does become a thing. Spending their time mostly in a bar, all of them experience the "now" rather than truly live their lives. As pseudo-artists, they only imitate or just talk about art, rather than create something. With "a hothouse sense of time, no knowledge of life, and at the mercy of Fortune" (46), they are lost not only in the here and now, and the world of art, but in animate/inanimate oppositions.

Herbert, Benny, and the Whole Sick Crew members are trapped in their solipsistic self-confinement, spatially and temporally: Herbert in the timeless, entropic hothouse of stencilization/narrative art and in his isolation from the given world; Benny in the Street, the now, and in the binary oppositions of animate/inanimate; the Crews in the bar, in the "now" and the inanimate. These 20th-century sons astray need to reconstruct their spatial-temporal boundaries: go over the solipsistic boundaries, jumping over them or diving deep into some underground. Experiencing the New York City sewer where pets-turned-wild alligators are hunt, Benny and Stencil do not live in the true underground. The literal and symbolical underground would surely join Hugh Godolphin's Vheissu, the South Pole, and Valletta of Malta.

2. Underground Network

Hugh was born in 1859, about one generation before Victoria Wren, and does not have close contact with V. the lady who challenges the 20th-century children directly or indirectly. Hugh does not change through her, the person, but through the ubiquitous metaphor of V.—Vheissu—that makes him doubt the given values. Even if Vheissu were only a hallucination, as he tells us, "it was not what [he] saw or believed [he] saw that in the end is important. It is what [he] thought. What truth [he] came to" (190). The existence or nonexistence and public recognition of Vheissu do not matter to him. What matters is that Vheissu is beyond patriarchal values and it has changed him.

Vheissu is a place in Hugh's Edenesque-turned-demonic memory of his exploration, and it somehow connects to the South Pole. Knowing about

the mysterious Vheissu, the explorer started for the Pole, thinking “‘there, at one of the only two motionless places on this gyrating world, [he] might have peace to solve Vheissu’s riddle.’” There he received an answer to his existential question, as well as the riddle, after planting a flag in the ground to show he was the first to reach the place in human history. Two or three feet deep in the ground, he struck clear ice and saw a strange light, then cleared a space to find the corpse of a Vheissu spider monkey, which was perfectly preserved with its rainbow-colored fur. The corpse is “‘a mockery of life’” (189), and Hugh knows another world opens deep under the ground, motionless and timeless.

Vheissu turns out to be just like “‘any other godforsakenly remote region.’” It is not an unusually “‘restful place,’” having no “‘universal cures, nor even panaceas for human suffering’” and exhibiting “‘barbarity, insurrection, internecine feud.’” However, the difference is that it is a land of color, beyond rationalization. There everything changes colors and shapes just like in “‘a madman’s kaleidoscope’” (155), and there is no center, nor consistency. Even “‘dreams are not, not closer to the waking world, but somehow, …they do seem more real’” (155-56), “‘with shapes no Occidental ever saw’” (155). Hugh continues to explain that it is as if it were a woman, “‘a dark woman tattooed from head to toes’” (156), whom you would think you had to be with, close to her, every minute of your life. Vheissu is a “woman,” a feminized space, and more importantly, it is a vision of the Void, though it sounds like a children’s fantastic bedtime story or a fairy tale. Hugh saw what was beneath Vheissu’s skin— “‘Nothing’” (188), and knew it was just “‘a gaudy dream…: a dream of annihilation’” (190). The land of woman is in itself a land of “Nothing.”

After knowing what Vheissu really was, Hugh began to react to the given world differently. He did not claim the honor of being the very first to reach the South Pole, paying little attention to fame or success any more. Vheissu presented him with a miracle that intruded upon his life and drastically changed him and his values. In the Foppl’s African siege party, he meets Vera Meroving, another version of the Lady V. In “the state of siege” which is “V.’s natural habitat” (50), Hugh is witnessed changing clothes with the Lady V., which suggests to us that he symbolically becomes a *woman*, internalizing the feminine values. Rafael Mantissa, Hugh’s bosom friend, is another person who experiences the same miracle as Hugh’s to construct his new values, so that he “belonged to that inner circle of deracinated seers whose eyesight was clouded over only by occasional tears” (145-6).

Surviving from Vheissu, Hugh had an impulse to speak about it, the Otherness within, or to let those lovers of beautiful appearances realize

“the suicidal fact that below the glittering integument of every foreign land there is a hard dead-point of truth and that in all cases—even England’s—it is the same kind of truth, [that] can be phrased in identical words” (169). Returning from Vheissu and the South Pole, he also came to believe “[everyone] has an Antarctic” (224) leading to Vheissu and nobody can escape it. Vheissu is the “only nexus” [of Hugh and Evan Godolphin, the father and the son] which “stood preëminent in [Evan’s] catalogue of outlandish regions where the Establishment held no sway ” (143). It is the end point or goal for both explorers: the father in quest of a motionless point on the gyrating earth of patriarchy, and his son revelling against the Establishment. The existence of Vheissu is the legacy a father will hand down to his child so the child can build his self and values in his life.

Did Old Sidney Stencil, possibly the same generation as Hugh and Rafael, experience the miracle? Unlike them, Sidney goes astray. A typical patriarchal man, he is obsessed with its hierarchical values. Also as an English spy, he is a man of the Establishment. Before his death, he is on Malta and wonders: “what gift of communication could ever come from a woman[?]” (444). For him, Malta, a pure matriarchal island, is a “[treacherous] pasture” where everything combined would “undermine what virtù he [has] brought through sixty years on the go ” (460). He doubts women’s capacity or rather, he has a negative view of Woman/ Otherness within, and this is why he does not change.

Some natives of the Vheissu district were the first to become aware of “’a subterranean network of natural tunnels’” “‘which lace the earth’s interior at depths,’” when they had explored the volcanoes of their own region. The existence of this underground network was “’known only to the inhabitants of Vheissu, the Royal Geographic Society in London, Herr [Hugh] Godolphin, and the spies of Florence’” (181). The British Whitehall knew of the existence of this anti-world and feared its overall invasion into the country, since it was “where the Establishment held no sway” (143). The Establishment wanted to keep Vheissu unknown to its people, since Vheissu was not a place of rationalization but colorful visions and dreams /unconsciousness, not masculine but feminine. To a Westerner with traditional values, it is Otherness, foreign to all patriarchal points of view. In order to reach the consummate self, one must internalize values of all Otherness or admit the non-patriarchal values. Vheissu and the South Pole, motionless and timeless places or vacuums in patriarchy, offer him a chance to de-construct his spatial-temporal boundary for finding his consummate self.

3. Women in Progress

As Luce Irigaray suggests, "Woman is neither open nor closed. She is indefinite, in-finite, *form is never complete in her.*" Such a woman-in-progress, Paola, our last protagonist in *V.*, is on her way to discovering the consummate self. She is, therefore, often invisible in the novel, literally and metaphorically. When she first appears in the Sailor's Grave bar, in the opening scene of the novel, she "could be any age she wanted," and any nationality, for she "knew scraps it seemed of all tongues" (6). A "self" yet fully unshaped, she can be a black prostitute, thus undulating between white/black binary oppositions, or the given self and Otherness represented as a black and a prostitute. She can speak one or two words of all patriarchal languages, and yet cannot find her own voice. With a broken body/self and a broken family, she makes a bid for integrity. In the hierarchical value standards of the given world, she seeks for her own values.

Paola's spiritual development is not initiated until she hears Fausto, her poet father, speak about her and *V.* in the final, extreme phase of inanimate things. Another *guru*-father, like Hugh to his son, Fausto tells her first about his own character development from innocence to doubt. An English-Maltese, he begins as a man of duality, discourses about the Establishment /patriarchy and the repressed/matriarchy. He says in his confession: "...in dream there are two worlds: the street and under the street. One is the kingdom of death and one of life. And how can a poet live without exploring the other kingdom, even if only as a kind of tourist?" (304) Like Hugh, Fausto is ready to explore the underground, another world. He is the only witness of the death of the Bad Priest, the last *V.*, in Malta. He also sees the Maltese children leaving her to die. Telling about the last *V.* and what the children did to her, he tries to prompt Paola's self-awareness that she was one of those children and makes her to recollect why she left the last *V.* to die.

V. was born Victoria Wren in 1880, appeared in Alexandria and Cairo in 1898, and in the South-West Africa of 1904. In the next appearance, a nameless lesbian in Paris in 1913 (age 33) loved a young ballet dancer Mèlanie l'Heuremaudit. Then she began to be "aware of her own progression toward inanimateness (385). This happened among inanimate things and near the inanimate people of the tourists' resort, in the two-dimensional space, and in the world of fetishism and voyeurism. Their love was not expressed in a pattern of dominance/submissiveness or lover/loved separateness, but it took its most inanimate form: she loved Mèlanie as an object, loved her without contact, and caressed her with her eyes. Victoria was then "replaced

by V.; something entirely different, for which the young century had as yet no name" (386). She turned from a flesh-and-blood person to the symbol V, unidentifiable, and endlessly displaced with innumerable, possible signifieds. Her "space" falls from the given world to the verbal one of designification. Or rather, she is becoming a V-metaphor, as well as a human being.

V. was then found in Valletta, Malta, in 1919, as Veronica Manganese (age 39). Riot was her element, and in her the street and the hothouse—two extremes of the world, according to Stencil's dichotomy—were resolved by some magic. Here V. acquired a false eye, leg, and teeth, and a star sapphire in her navel, becoming an inanimate thing. Her next alias was the 42-year-old Vera Meroving in the German South-West Africa of 1922. In Foppl's siege party during an uprising of the Bondelzwarts against South African rule, she had a sado-masochistic relation with Lieutenant Weissmann, who suggests to us an interesting discovery of the coded message that the "'world is all that the case is'" (259). Here she was in some integrated world of sadism and masochism. The last Lady V. was skillfully disguised as a male priest (from age 57 until 63 when she died) in Valletta. As a female disguised as a male, she seems androgynous, but her final self was realized in the other opposition, the inanimate, and she longs herself to become a metaphor—to be inanimate like a place. She dies, crying with a sound "so unlike human or even animal sound that [her cries] might have been only the wind blowing past any dead reed" (322).

Dead, and yet V. leaves some trace for younger generations as "a remarkably scattered concept" (364) of the inanimate or of the anti-Establishment. As a concept, V. "cannot be dead" (421) but hereafter is felt by everyone in any place. V. continues to exist as "'a symptom [, as Vheissu does in everyone,] always alive, somewhere in the world'" (445). As well as a sign,

V. is an omnipresent symptom of the anti-Establishment in the opposite form of the binarity: male, in her appearance, and inanimate. We must remember there was Vheissu or the South Pole, in conspiratorial V-connection, before the Lady V. exists, which indicates there were many Lady V.s turning into V-metaphors. V. emblemizes a conspiracy against the animate world—the male-dominated patriarchy, its counterforce/countervalues.

In Malta V. functions as a *guru* to the children. As the Bad Priest, "embodying a feminine principle, acting as complement to all this bursting, explosive male energy" (192), V. inspired them with totally different values, such as nihilism, advising the girls to "become nuns, avoid the sensual extremes—pleasure of intercourse, pain of childbirth," and the boys "to find strength in—and be like—the rock of their island." She maintains "the object of male existence was to be like a crystal : beautiful and soulless"

and that they should seek "mineral symmetry, for here is eternal life." She preached to them to reject the given sexual system, seek "the immortality of rock" (319), and acquire the virtue of the inanimate.

The Priest was ubiquitous so the children, "poets in a vacuum," like the poet Fausto who was willing to go into the depths to find truth, sustained their observations through "'group awareness.'" They kept the most watchful eyes for three years and the Priest "was fit vehicle for their scepticism" (318). The fakeness of V. and her preaching is symbolically revealed when they see her hurt in an air raid, and they dissect her body to find a female, fake identity, made up of inanimate things. Seeming as powerful as the leather-winged Lucifer, Hitler, or Mussolini, the Priest/V. is left to die or rather, is *killed* by the children. They sense her sophism and know the inanimate is nothing, since it never creates anything. They were not blind to her preaching of extremity or radicalism, knowing "full well that if every girl became a sister there would be no more Maltese: and that rock, however fine as an object of contemplation, does no work: labours not and thus displeases God, who is favourably disposed towards human labour" (319). Paola was one of those children who rejected V.'s nihilistic radicalism of the inanimate.

The Maltese children's discourse does not originate from binarity; their space is not two-dimensional with opposing vectors, but that of dimensionless vectors. The fact of their leaving V. to die suggests they have overcome or outgrown her. Both patriarchal values and V.'s radicalism they experience in the land of pure woman are the "parent" concepts from which the children reach their own synthetic one.

There is a certain fondness for the Manichaeon common to all children. Here the combination of a siege, a Roman Catholic upbringing and an unconscious identification of one's own mother with the Virgin all sent simple dualism into strange patterns indeed... But if their idea of the struggle could be described graphically it would not be as two equal-sized vectors head-to-head—their heads making an X of unknown quantity; rather as a point, dimensionless—good—surrounded by any number of radial arrows—vectors of evil—pointing inward. Good, i.e., at bay. The Virgin assailed. The winged mother protective. The woman passive. Malta in siege.(317)

In the story, V.'s ivory comb was handed over to a little girl, who is Paola. She is expected to be her descendant, one who has reached a fertile synthesis of binary oppositions and can cause a miracle and change in a person. We must remember she functions, already before she comes to Malta, as "another world" to be intruded into McClintic Sphere. He is an

alto saxophone player at the V-Note, a bar, and sees people in terms of a dialectic of on/off, flip/flop and crazy/cool which is a similar dichotomy to animate/inanimate. Through the real affection of Paola, he is beginning to see something new.

We can compare Paola, mothered by Malta the matriarchal land and christened with V.'s radicalism, with Rachel Owlglass. Rachel cares for Profane and the Whole Sick Crew, though stays aloof from the decadent Crew members. She outgrows the narcissistic Crew. She also cares for her roommates, Paola and Esther, especially the latter by setting up her nose operation and trying to prevent her abortion. Rachel helps Esther, since Esther is weak and victimized, and Rachel loves her. More than any one else in the book, Rachel seems to harbor a genuine capacity for love, but her love is always motherly. When he hears her speaking in "MG-words" (18) to her car as if it were a lover, Benny feels his vocabulary is made up of nothing but wrong words, while hers is sometimes witty and passionate. Her love and passion are dangerously emotional, however, and she is in the same extreme world of things as V.'s. On the other hand, reading the note Paola leaves for her, Rachel finds Paola lives in another extreme world of proper nouns, persons, places, and no things. Unlike Rachel, Paola outgrows the binary world of the animate/inanimate, but her life is fragmentary, lacking the links. As well as the Lady V., both Rachel and Paola, contrastive types of daughter generation, are women-in-progress. Pynchon focuses his attention on the possibility of self-realization for the new "daughter" initiated in the island of "mother" and going back to America.

4. From Valletta to America

V.[the Lady V. or Vheissu], its discourse and values function to undermine the legitimacy of Western discourse: "the fiction of continuity, the fiction of cause and effect, [and] the fiction of a humanized history endowed with 'reason'" (286). All these are thrown into confusion, cornered to Nothing. It was in Valletta that the Maltese children learned of the illegitimacy of the Western values and the danger of the trap of rigid binary oppositions, and also knew the extreme matriarchal values are wrong. Valletta, Vheissu and the South Pole where Hugh reaches his final awareness are all connected underground in the name of Conspiracy to destroy the patriarchy and negate its values. The chance of psychological wholeness is offered in the South or East with Non-Western values, but not on the surface of the Earth, instead deep below.

Valetta is “‘named after a man,’” but symbolizes “‘feminine gender, a peninsula shaped like the *mons Veneris* [of a woman and it] is a chastity belt’” (438). The island is “alienated from any history in which cause precedes effect” (460), and from the patriarchal logos and its discourses. History in patriarchy is the record of an evolution of linear time, while in Valetta, all the past seems to be alive here and now. It is a timeless space. Malta has a long history as a matriarchal land, beginning with “‘a perfectly historical personage,’” Mara, “‘Maltese [word] for woman.’” She is a spirit and her “‘inhabited plain [is] the peninsula whose tip is Valetta, her domain’” (434). A “‘teacher of love’” (435), she is not “‘a raving beauty’” (434), but “‘tall, slim, small-breasted and bellied.’” She looks like “‘some kind of fertility goddess,’” “‘a quaint, hermaphrodite sort of deity.’” Rather, she is asexual and disguise is “‘one of her attributes’” (435). She not only nurses the ship-wrecked and teaches love to every invader, but also teaches the wives to “‘love their own bodies, [shows] them the luxury of a woman’s love’” (436) when she is caught in the Turkish Sultan’s castle. She also teaches the eunuchs how to restore potency so that they may enjoy one another. As “‘the archetypal anima,’” Mara exercises a political strategy to inspire them to practice narcissism and homosexuality, radically different values from the Moslem sensibilities. In Malta, there is “[church-approved] copulation for the purpose, and glorification, of motherhood” (291). So Mara’s land—V.’s home/motherland and her origin—is that of Mother where children outgrow Her and reach their self-realization to be truly born again through experiencing both Father’s and Mother’s values. A stepping stone, Malta is a place of self-integration for everyone, since it is “pure and a motley of races at once” (290).

Patriarchy is attacked by Mara [Mother], the goddess of love, prohibited in patriarchy; ubiquitous V-metaphors with underground plots such as Captain Hugh Godolphin’s Vheissu or Rafael Mantissa’s Botticelli-Venus; and the protean Lady V. As Malta was symbolically attacked by the Europe, the matriarchal values are attacked by the patriarchal, and driven to bay. It suffers the absurdly devastating male violence of Nazi bombers, yet somehow manages to survive. Valetta [the metaphorical V.], the Bad Priest [the last phase of the Lady V.] and her origin Mara [Woman or Virgin Mary] are used to make a person doubt the given values, to reach the synthetic values of the patriarchal and the matriarchal, and attain his spatial-temporal boundary for self-realization. Countervalues or antitheses against the patriarchy, Valetta and V have to be synthesized, since both patriarchal and matriarchal values need to be internalized for self-integration. Mother’s radicalism is just a dangerous weapon. It should be taken over in a renovated form as it was

done by Paola and the Maltese children.

Malta is the clenched fist around a yo-yo string to which the "yo-yo" protagonists of *V.* finally come. It is the place of arrival as well as the beginning for their further travel/quest, as the Maltese greeting "*saha*" means both Hello and Good-by. Discouraged in his pursuit of the Lady *V.*, Herbert asks Fausto Maijstral if he is after his own extermination. The *guru* replies to him by gesturing toward Valletta, whispering, "'Ask her. Ask the Rock [of Malta]'" (425). As one of the Eastern religions tells us, "'an object—a rock [—is] the highest condition we can attain.'" Becoming a rock/thing, losing selfhood in the patriarchal sense of the word, we become "'more and more a blob, with no worries, traumas, nothing: only Being'" (93). This does not mean to become, literally, a thing, but to reach the condition of Being according to Eastern philosophy. As a God-like artistic self of his own narcissistic works, rejecting the given world, Herbert can not learn from Malta, and continues to live in his own solipsistic world of art, still believing the Lady *V.* is alive. Wherever he goes in the South, East, or North, he will never reach his substantial individual space, since he will never dive deep into this world.

A coward concerning love, Benny does not weigh Women's values and thinks women see only one aspect of things. His coming to Malta is just an accident, and he is asked by Herbert to guard Paola so that Herbert can concentrate on his search of *V.* During the former visit there as Benny was a sailor, he did not receive any suggestion for his identity crisis. In this stay, he does not, either. But while he continues to run on the Street of Valletta with a female American student/tourist, his two-dimensional space becomes enlarged, upward, symbolically. He senses he has gone to the edge of Valletta, the eastern tip of Malta, and beyond the Mediterranean and most probably, he will reach America from which the girl comes. For Benny, there seems to be at least a possibility of self-realization in America, since he can jump from his two-dimensional Street.

Paola is made aware by her father that she negated *V.*'s radicalism. The matriarchal island produces, in Mara [Woman] and the Lady *V.*, nihilism, inertia, narcissism, and the radical politics of the inanimate. Paola knows these are thanatonic in the way the patriarchal attacks are, literally and metaphorically. Neither patriarchal values nor matriarchal ones in the extreme are hers. After this awareness or the second initiation in Valletta, she is going back to America. *GR* says American Death occupies the entire continent of Europe. With new values of her own renewed from the Mother's, Paola is going back to the strongest stronghold of patriarchy. Her husband's name, "Pappy" Hod, symbolizes the power of patriarchy.

Will America offer an individual space for self-realization to the Maltese child who is tricked out of the dangerous siege of V.'s radicalism into the awareness of her fakeness by Fausto her *guru* with a Jungian mana personality? Pynchon's choice of Paola's leaving Valletta [matriarchy] for America [patriarchy] is suggestive of the answer, the unwritten part of the text. She goes from V. to A., that is, to the turned-over V. with the Non signal. She is going from one extreme to another, to the overthrown matriarchy, which is not the excluded middle, the place of integration. This suggests Paola's and Benny's possibilities of self-realization in America are negative. American patriarchy is so tough and repressing for Paola, and Benny just finds how to run away from the Street: continue to run in order not to stop in the Street. The WASP American girl who is running with him and, unlike Paola, does not internalize the synthetic values will not help him. After the title and contents, the typologically playful text has a V-shaped sign with many small Vs in it, and every chapter title is written also in the shape of V. This tells us the quester/protagonists of *V.* leave various possible signifieds of V. for innumerable signifieds of the overthrown V. Wherever the questers go in America, it is the land of negative anticipation. *V.* is a story about the *victory* of self-integration, as well as about the Lady V and various V-metaphors. In the following 49 and *GR*, the key questions are explored: what America really is, and what makes it hard for quester-protagonists to reach consummate self there.

Notes

¹V.'s counterpoint structure seems to tell us its protagonists are Herbert Stencil and Benny Profane, but Paola should also be regarded as one, since she appears throughout the novel, and accompanies them to Malta, trying to reach consummate self, which is the topic of the novel.

²Thomas Pynchon, *V.* (1963; New York: Bantam Books, 1981) 44. All subsequent references will be given in parentheses.

³Martina Sciolino, "Objects of Postmodern 'Masters': Subject-in-Simulation/Woman-in-Effect" in Thaïs E. Morgan, ed., *Men Writing the Feminine: Literature, Theory, and the Question of Genders* (Albany: State Univ. of New York Press, 1994) 159.

⁴Tony Tanner, *City of Words: A Study of American Fiction in the Mid-Twentieth Century* (1971; London: Jonathan Cape, 1979) 164.

⁵Tanner, 165.

⁶Frank D. McConnell, *Four Postwar American Novelists: Bellow, Mailer, Barth and Pynchon* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago press, 1977) 166.

⁷Luce Irigaray, translated by Gillian C. Gill, *Speculum of the Other Woman* (1974; Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1985) 229.

⁸Dwight Eddins, *The Gnostic Pynchon* (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1990) 59.